GLAD TIDINGS!

February 2026

Gathered by the lake,
we are
Embraced by God
to **grow**
Empowered by Christ
to **care,**
Enriched by the Holy Spirit
to **celebrate**



Congregational United Church of Christ Neenah / Menasha

Hello Church!

To be founded as a church during Lent is no small thing.
In the mid19th century, Lent was not a symbolic idea, it shaped the rhythm of daily life for people whose days were marked by physical labor, uncertainty, and fragile hope. When this congregation took shape in Northeastern Wisconsin, it was born not in a season of ease or abundance, but in a season that tells the truth: about what it means to rely on God in the wilderness.

The roots of this church reach back to March 1846, when Rev. O. P. Clinton moved from Lake Mills to Winnebago Rapids, the original name for Neenah. His move was an act of faith. He encouraged others to join him, and eventually 13 of the original 20 people followed, relocating to a new and uncertain place because they believed that church was not something you waited for, it was something you built together.

Like Lent itself, those early years were marked by improvisation, humility, and persistence.

By the summer of 1848, the congregation gathered for its first worship service, not in a sanctuary, but at the bar of a hotel in Menasha. Rev. Clinton later recalled:

"It was no uncommon occurrence for men to drop in for their drinks during service, and as they could not do otherwise, they waited impatiently while I had occasion to preach uncommonly long." *(CUCCNM Archives)*

It was worship in the midst of interruption, sacred words spoken amid clinking glasses and restless listeners, a reminder that from the beginning, this church was not set apart from ordinary life, but deeply embedded within it.

In the weeks and months that followed, worship moved wherever space could be found: to a small upper room in a private residence on Coral Street, then to the Decker House in 1849, and finally to the Clinton School House, where the congregation was formally organized.

This constant movement tells its own Lenten story. Lent refuses permanence. It teaches that holy ground can be found anywhere people gather in faith. It reminds us that church is not defined by architecture, but by commitment, by people who keep showing up, even when the setting is uncertain and the future unclear.

To organize a church in 1851, during Lent, in a developing frontier community, was an act of courage shaped by humility. Lent is the season in which the church practices honesty: naming brokenness, resisting injustice, and choosing conscience over convenience. From its earliest days,

Continued on next page

this congregation embodied that spirit, formed by people willing to wrestle with the moral questions of their time and to risk comfort in the pursuit of faithfulness.

Lent also insists that faith is unfinished work. It is a journey rather than a destination, marked by repentance, renewal, and trust in God's presence even when clarity feels distant. That rhythm shaped this church's beginning and continues to shape its identity.

Born in Lent, this congregation learned early how to travel light, widen its welcome, listen across differences, and gather in unexpected places. Those early gatherings, in hotel bars, upper rooms, schoolhouses, set a pattern that echoes across generations: faith lived in public, community built through perseverance, and hope rooted in shared risk.
Nearly 175 years later, we are still living out that Lenten calling. We are still a church willing to tell the truth, to make room at the table, and to trust that God is at work even when the path is unclear.

We were founded in Lent:
not on triumph,
but on trust,
not in certainty,
but in faith that God would meet us wherever we gathered.

And God did.

Amen and alleluia,

Pastor Rob



175th Annual Meeting
February 1st
After worship
Light Lunch will be served



Melanie Nault will be on vacation Feb 16-20th. If you have any questions contact Pastor Rob or Alanna Smith.



Long time member **Pam Klockzien**, passed away January 18th. Please keep Connie and Pam's family in your prayers. Private family services will be held and Pam's wish was for you to have a beverage of choice, preferably a Margarita, and shoot off a party popper in her memory.



2/06 Len Hoehne
2/09 Don Kleist
2/09 Betty Curtis
2/11 Paul Swatscheno
2/14 Adam Chaffin
John Oakley
2/16 Lenny H.
2/18 Annabeth H.
2/26 Brandon Oakley-Janness
2/28 Dawn Welling

Wedding Anniversaries

February 8th
Rev John and Carol Tschudy

We would like to wish all a happy birthday or anniversary. If your birthday or anniversary was omitted , or you would rather not have it published, please contact church office.



Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers:

Ongoing Prayers:

Patty Hoehne, Adam Anderson, Dave Zernicke, Crystal Lingenhag, Ann Luebke, Larry Olson, Shirl Alix, Tiffany Williams, Dar Schuff, Jerry Hupe.

Homebound:

Judy Doornbos in California, and Carol Wilcox.

JOIN US FOR OUR 3-WEEK ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:

FAITHFUL IN EVERY GENERATION:
175 YEARS OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND WELCOME*
Sundays at 10:15 AM

*We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Mowry Smith and Denise Stewart. Mowry spent months combing through our archives for information to support this series, and Denise created much of the curriculum for our Sunday School so their lessons share our church's history with the next generation.

- Feb. 1: **Justice** & the Civil War – Communion Sunday
  - ◊ What's the Scoop Sunday School w/ Jeff Stewart – Civil War Reenactor
  - ◊ Annual Meeting w/ Lunch after worship with special presentation by Jeff Stewart
- Feb. 8: **Peace** & the A-Bomb
  - ◊ Camp Sunday – Ethan Meylink speaker
- Feb. 15: **Welcome**, ONA, our 88 Yr. Relationship with Scouting America
  - ◊Celebrating Scout Sunday
  - ◊Serving cake and ice cream after worship

Greetings Fox Valley Community table Partners,

2025 was quite a year, and I am in awe of how much we did together.
We served 8,416 meals across 102 dates. That's 1,130 more than 2024, a 15% increase. The needs grew and we were right there to help. We went beyond providing a meal in many ways. We shared hygiene items, hats and mittens, hand warmers, gas cards and bus fares. When SNAP benefits stopped we rallied and provided extra groceries. We see our neighbors and give kindness and dignity.
We touch lives, and our consistency over time has a big impact. We've created a safe place where guests can set down their heavy loads and enjoy belonging in our community while being nourished by your great cooking. Guests often thank me for our meals, and that gratitude belongs to all of you. For example, 3 young roommates had a rent increase and were grateful to find meals and supplies to help get them through the month. A young man brought his friend in to enjoy a good meal, they hadn't had a meal in days and were thrilled to leave with a to go for later. This one really got me - a man who had been a regular guest hadn't been in for weeks. I knew he didn't have stable housing and worried about him. He stopped by to say he got connected with services in Oshkosh and found a place to live. He's getting back on his feet. He thanked us for caring for him and helping him through the tough time. Thank you from many of our guests, we are making a real difference.

My heart is filled with gratitude for everything each of you do for FVCT. Your organizing, cooking, baking, serving, dishwashing and donating is all important. I get to see the impact your work has in the lives of our guests, it is beautiful work.

Thank you for caring for our neighbors.



COMMUNITY TABLE
FEBRUARY 17

Come help and share a meal with guests and other church members. Sign up to donate, work or cook on the board in the hall. Last Community Table there were close to 100 meals served!



CHOIR PRACTICE DURING LENT

February 18th through April 1st choir practice will be at 5:15 . If you are thinking about joining the choir this would be a good time since it is earlier in the day. Any questions contact Jill jellenrosen@gmail.com

TALENTS

WEDNESDAYS IN LENT AT CUCC:
A SIMPLE MEAL. A DEEP CONVERSATION.
AN UNLIKELY LENT.

Lent invites us to slow down, gather together, and pay attention to how God is at work—sometimes in the most unexpected places. This year, Congregational United Church of Christ invites the community to journey through the season with **Wednesday Night Lenten Soup Suppers & Conversation**, a time of simple food, thoughtful conversation, and shared reflection.

Ash Wednesday – February 18

We begin our Lenten journey on **Ash Wednesday** with a simple evening together:

- **6:00 PM – Soup Supper**

6:30 PM – Worship with Imposition of Ashes

All are welcome. Come for a simple meal. Stay for an unexpected Ash Wednesday Service.

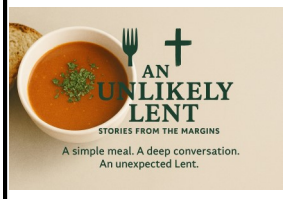
Lenten Soup Suppers & Conversation Series

February 25 • March 4 • March 11 • March 18 • March 25

Each Wednesday evening during Lent, we will gather around the table for nourishment of both body and spirit:

6:00 PM – Supper *Soup • Bread • Mac & Cheese for Kids • Dessert*

6:30 PM – Conversation Series: *An Unlikely Lent*



This year's theme, ***An Unlikely Lent***, invites us to explore short videos that highlight often overlooked people within the Easter story—those who live on the margins, move through the background, or appear in between the moments we usually focus on. As we reflect together, we will discover how God is at work in unexpected places and through unlikely people.

These evenings are designed to be accessible, thoughtful, and welcoming to all ages and stages of faith. There is no pressure to speak, just an open invitation to listen, reflect, and wonder together.

Join us on Wednesday nights this Lent as we share a simple meal and meaningful conversation. ***An Unlikely Lent*** invites us to open our eyes to surprising movements of grace and to consider how resurrection continues to meet us in quiet, ordinary, and unexpected ways.

All are welcome. Bring a friend. Come hungry—for soup, for connection, and for hope.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE TO CUCCNM

1. Cash or check in the offering plate or by mailing it to the church.

2. Have your bank send an electronic check. (Bill Pay)

3. Use our QR Code that is linked to our website. Your giving will be taken through Pay Pal were you will use your credit card. *This option charges a fee to the church.*

If you have any questions, please contact Melanie in the church office. office@cuccnm.org or 920-725-4873

Church Information
1511 Nicolet Blvd.
Neenah Wi 54956
920-725-4873

Website: www.cuccnm.org

Pastor
pastor@cuccnm.org

Church Office
office@cuccnm.org

Christian Education Director
ce@cuccnm.org

Wider Church Contacts:

www.ucc.org
(United Church of Christ)

www.wcucc.org
Wisconsin Conference

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

Upon receiving the schedule, please review it to ensure you are available when scheduled. If you are unavailable, please use the contact information to find a replacement for yourself. Please notify the church office **office@cuccnm.org** with the schedule change. Thanks to all for your continued support and service as volunteers! **If you would like to be added to the schedule please contact the church office. We are always looking for substitutes !**

Task	2-1-2026	2-8-2026	2-15-2026	2-22-2026
Liturgist	Chris Parsons	Anthony Britten	Darrell Parsons	Paul Stinson
Head Usher	Mary Janness	Signa Meyers	Terri Flesburg	Sherri Jischke
Usher 4		Gary Joosten	Mark Brandenburg	Alan Gear
Usher 2	Leon Flesburg	Darrell Parsons	Debi Brandenburg	Arthya Puguh
Usher 3	Wendy Remmel	Chris Parsons	Signa Meyers	Sue Dollhopf
Refreshments	Ralph Liesch	Mary Liesch	Scott Olson	Paige Puguh
Acolyte	Evie J	Olin M.	Christopher S.	Dylan L
Singing Bowl	Chloe R.	Leif M	Colin S.	Garrett L
Reader	Sophie R.	Dylan L	Colin S.	Camryn R
Music	Chloe R	N/a	Aubryn	N/A
Mission Moment	Chloe R	Ava N	Lars H.	Diana & Annabeth H
Communion Shepherd	Carmin T. Cassie S.			
Communion Prep	John La Prairie			



<u>YOU</u> CAN HELP SERVE!

The Ministry of Spiritual Life would like to continue to offer a time for fellowship and snacks after worship each Sunday, but needs your help. We are asking those with surnames starting with "O" through R" to bring in 1 dozen cookies, bars (need not be homemade) or a gallon of juice sometime during the month you are assigned. Label the item "Fellowship" and take to the kitchen freezer/or bring them to the lounge .Your contribution is much appreciated! Watch for your turn to share as your "letter" comes up! Questions contact Terri Flesburg .Here is the schedule:

February: O-R,

March: S, **April:** T-V, **May**: W-Z





SUNDAY SCHOOL DURING FEBRUARY

3k-8th grade attend Sunday School from 10:30am-11:15am, while 9th-12th grade will attend Sunday School from 11:30am-12:15pm on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Youth in 3K-8th grade will start the morning off in church with their parents and will be excused to class with their teachers following The Way (the children's message). Youth ages 3K-5th grade need to be picked up in their classroom (room 4 & 6) by their guardian. Older youth will be excused to the lounge after class. To register for Sunday School, email Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org

The 1st Sunday of every month will be What's the Scoop? A one-room classroom for youth 3K-12th grade, in Fellowship Hall. Youth will return to worship for Communion.
Classrooms will be divided as follows:
3K-2nd grade- in room 4, taught by high school youth, during worship
3rd-5th grade- in room 6, taught by a rotation of adults, during worship
6th-9th grade- in room 7, taught by 2 adults, during worship
9th-12th grade- in room 7, taught by Pastor Rob, AFTER worship (3rd Sunday of the month).



YOUTH GROUP

Friday, February 6th the youth, grades 6th-8th & 9th-12th, will be going ice skating at The Plaza, downtown Neenah. We are asking for $5 payment to help cover half the cost. Youth can bring their own ice skates, if they want. They will meet at the church at 6:00pm to start youth group, and end at The Plaza. Parents are asked to pick up their youth at The Plaza.

MISSION TRIP



The High School youth are heading to Colorado Springs, CO June 13-21, 2026. You can help support them through direct donations or joining them at their next fundraisers. If you know of a high school youth who would like to attend the mission trip, please reach out to Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org.

CAMP, RETREATS, & YOUTH MISSION TRIPS

Every Sunday in February there will be a Mission Moment about the wonderful opportunities the congregation has to participate in outdoor ministry. You won't want to miss their stories. On February 8th, Ethan Meylink, counselor at Daycholah Center, and member of our church, will be at church, to tell us what Daycholah Center has planned for this summer and to answer anyone's questions, as well as play camp games with the kids during Sunday School.



Wear your favorite tie-dye shirt and be ready to have some fun!

HEY CAMPERS OF ALL AGES!

Now is the time to start thinking about camp registration. A complete camp schedule and registration online can be found at www.ucci.org. Camp is open for campers as young as 4 and families! Registration is open now. A camp personalized calendar was made and emailed to each family, helping you to know what camps are right for your youth's ages. If you have any questions about camps, please ask Alanna.
Scholarships are available for all campers. Once your camper is registered, please email me a copy of the registration so I can start the scholarship process. Email Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org.

FUNDRAISERS FOR FAITH DEVELOPMENT FUND

Saturday, February 20th: Parents Night Out 6:00-9:00pm. Bring your kids, ages 3years-5th grade to church and let our teenagers watch them while you enjoy a very much deserved night out! A Free-Will Donation will be accepted. Tell your friends! https://www.facebook.com/share/1CB1JyGgVW/

SPECIAL OFFERING FOR FEBRUARY :

Faith Development Fund

Life of the Church Youth Opportunities

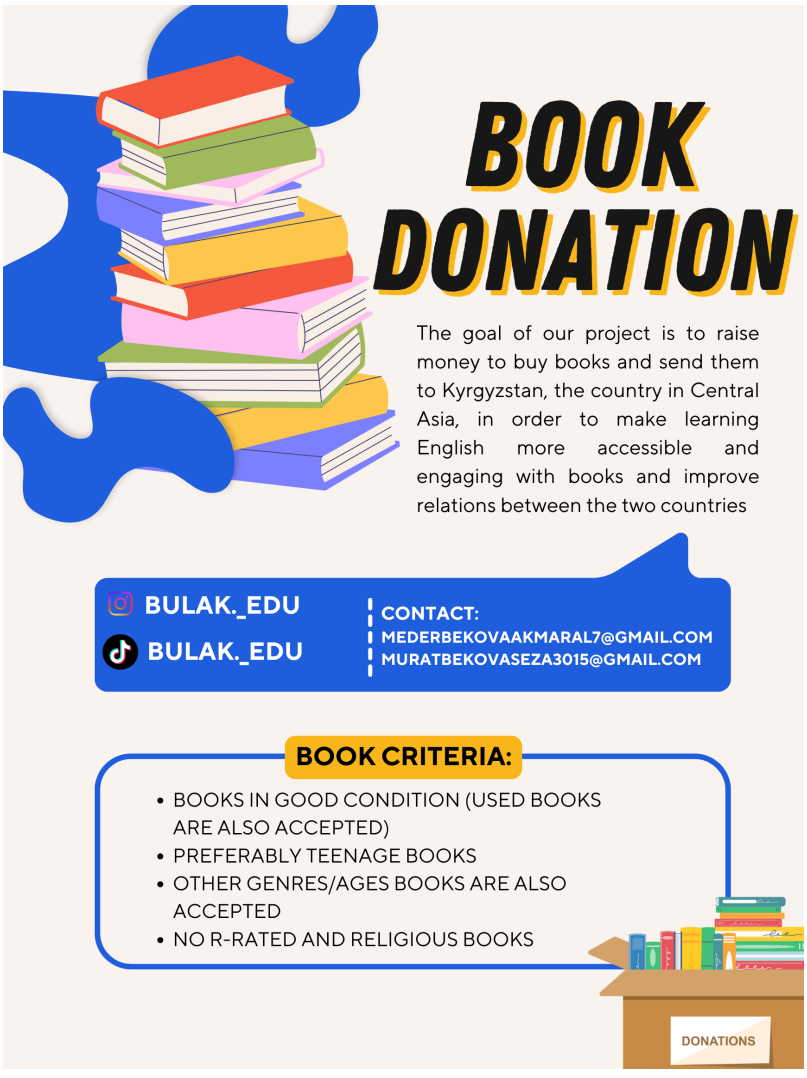
Acolyte Sign Up (3rd grade & up): https://signup.com/go/BmsHdox

Singing Bowl Sign Up (any age): https://signup.com/go/ouBnEQZ

Read in church (4th grade & up): https://signup.com/go/MerrYVS

Communion Shepard (any age): https://signup.com/go/bwYDRnu

Musical Talent (any age): https://signup.com/go/eNLSCBZ



FAITHFUL IN EVERY GENERATION: 175 YEARS OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND WELCOME:

February 16, 1851 – February 16, 2026



As we celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Congregational United Church of Christ of Neenah–Menasha, we look back with gratitude on a legacy shaped by courage, compassion, and each generation, our congregation has responded to injustice, conflict, and exclusion with a gospel-rooted dedication to healing, justice, and radical welcome. What follows is a brief history of how this ministry has taken root and grown within our life together.

1851–1866: Reconciliation in a Time of Slavery and Civil War

The story of our church began on February 16, 1851, when the Rev. J.W. Walcott and a group of 7 men and 11 women gathered at Father Clinton's schoolhouse to form what was then the First Congregational Church of Menasha. Yet the church's roots reach even deeper. Rev. O.P. Clinton had arrived in the region in 1846, inspiring a small band of settlers to form a worshipping community in what was then Winnebago Rapids (now Neenah). In those early days, services took place wherever space allowed—including, famously, the bar of a Menasha hotel, where Rev. Clinton recalled preaching while patrons waited for their drinks.

Even before the Civil War erupted in 1861, our congregation demonstrated a bold moral conviction that would define our history. Sometime prior to November 8, 1860, the church adopted a public resolution condemning slavery as a sin and affirming the Christian duty **to "rebuke all sin… remove all oppression… and secure equal rights to all men."** This statement, preserved in our archives, stands as one of the earliest and clearest expressions of our commitment to justice.

As the nation moved through the election of Abraham Lincoln, the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the long years of the Civil War until its end in 1865, our congregation's stand for the enslaved aligned our local witness with Christ's ministry of reconciliation—advocating for those oppressed, healing social divides, and proclaiming freedom as a sacred truth.

1941–1946: Reconciliation in a World at War

Nearly a century later, the world once again faced immense turmoil. During World War II, the pages of *The Congregational Clarion* reveal the congregation's spiritual wrestling and moral reflection during a time of fear and sacrifice.

By 1945, our church counted 28 members serving in the military and roughly 70 living veterans. Editorials from early that year spoke honestly about national anxiety, yet also urged the church to work for a peace **"worthy of the cost."** This call to moral accountability—refusing vengeance and advocating for a just and lasting peace—reflected our congregation's ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

Pastor Rev. Elmer S. Freeman wrote frequently about reintegrating returning service members through education, employment, and care, reminding the congregation that supporting veterans is an act of dignity and love.

Following the war's end in September 1945, Rev. Freeman urged the church to participate in rebuilding communities around the world—churches, hospitals, schools, and societies devastated by conflict. This post-war ministry embodied reconciliation not only locally but globally.

The pastoral letters also wrestled with the ethics of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki, urging Christians to seek alternatives to mass destruction and to affirm the value of every human life.
By 1946, Rev. Freeman called the church to rebuild its own ministry in a spirit of unity that recognized all people—including African Americans, Japanese Americans, and neighbors of differing religious traditions—as brothers and sisters in Christ. His words still challenge us today.

1960s-2025: Reconciliation Through Radical Welcome –Becoming an Open and Affirming Church

The ministry of reconciliation took new shape in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as our congregation entered a season of study, prayer, and discernment around the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. Following decades of national legal and social change—from the Stonewall uprising (1969) to the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015—our church embraced this reconciling call. On April 24, 2016, we were officially certified as an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation by the UCC's ONA Coalition. Our statement, adopted that same year, declared:



"We are committed to and believe in welcoming everyone to fully participate in our ministry… We invite all people… to share their diverse talents, so all can grow and practice a unity of faith that transcends our differences."

This covenant extended our ministry of reconciliation beyond sexuality and gender identity to embrace people across all ages, races, ethnicities, cultures, economic backgrounds, and abilities. It was—and remains—a public commitment to inclusion, love, and justice.
In June 2025, our congregation joyfully participated in Fox Valley Pride for the first time, continuing to widen the circle and bear witness to Christ's radical welcome.
Even in a time when national policies and rhetoric created fresh wounds—such as the January 20, 2025, executive order removing federal recognition of transgender individuals—our church reaffirmed its calling: to repair harm, protect dignity, and stand alongside all who are **marginalized.**

A Legacy Worth Celebrating – A Calling Still Before Us

Across 175 years, through slavery and civil war, world conflict and reconstruction, and the ongoing work of full inclusion, our congregation has lived into the Ministry of Reconciliation—a ministry of justice, healing, and radical welcome.

This is our heritage.
This is our calling.
And this is the work we continue, with God's grace, into the next 175 years.

[*A special thank you to member Mowry Smith III who researched all the historical data for our series: Faithful in Every Generation: 175 years of Justice, Peace, and Welcome!]

FEBRUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 **10:15 am** **Worship:** What's the Scoop **11: 15 am** Annual Meeting	**2**	**3** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**4** **6:30pm** Adult Choir	**5** **6:30pm** Ministry Council	**6**	**7** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
8 **Camp Sunday** **10:15 am** Worship S.S. 3K- 8th **11:30am-12:15pm**	**9**	**10** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**11** **6:30pm** Adult Choir	**12**	**13**	**14** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
15 **Scout Sunday** **10:15 am** Worship S.S. 3K- 8th **11:30am-12:15pm** H.S. SS Crosswalk	**16**	**17** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **NO** Bible Study **10:30am** Community Table	**18** **Ash Wednesday** **6:00 pm** Soup Supper **6:30 pm** Worship with Imposition of Ashes	**19** **12:00pm** Bags to Benches	**20** **1:00 pm** Needlers	**21** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
22 **10:15 am** Worship S.S. 3K- 8th **2:30pm** Fun with Friend's: Bowling @ Rolling Thunder	**23**	**24** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**25** **5:15 pm** Adult Choir **6:00 pm** **Lenten** Soup Supper **6:30 pm** Conversation : Unlikely Lent	**26**	**27**	**28** **6:00pm** AA Meeting



DISCUSSION GROUP
Tuesdays at 8:30-9:30 am
We meet at Four Seasons Restaurant in Neenah for breakfast and lively discussion about current events and faith trends
1104 South Commercial Street, Neenah
Everyone is Welcome!

NEEDLERS



Share Fellowship and do Needlework
All who like to do (or learn to do) any type of needlework.

Needlers meet the 3rd Friday of the month.
February 20th at 1:00pm

LIVE

Sunday Worship is in person.
Services will be broadcast **live on FB** every Sunday morning and later put on our website.

Click below to find our FB page
https://facebook.com/CongregationalUCCNeenahMenasha/
It will be posted on the church website later in the day.



Do you have Anniversary or birthday cards laying around?
Dar Schuff who sends out our monthly birthday and anniversary cards is in need of more greeting cards. Please bring them to church office. Thank you!

BAGS FOR BENCHES
3rd Thursday of month
February 19th
12:00-2:00 PM



Want to be a part of our recycling program and have fun at the same time? Come and fellowship while we sort plastic bags for our next bench. Questions contact Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org





Ministry Council

Moderator:
Signa Meyers

Vice Moderator:
Sue Knuth

Secretary:
Chris Parson

Ministry of Faith Development
Becky Nichols

Ministry of Service:
Mary Janness

Ministry of Spiritual Life
Terri Flesburg

Ministry of Stewardship
Jeff Nichols

At Large:
Connie Regazzi
Sherri Jischke
Chuck Luebke

Church Historian:
Mowry Smith

Communication Coordinator
Marilyn Kostrzak

Time and Talent Coordinator:

Personnel Committee
Dan Jischke

Pastoral Relations Committee
Kerry Fox, Patty Hoehne, Bob Nault

Rev. Rob Van Ess Pastor,
pastor@cuccnm.org
Melanie Nault, Admin. Assistant,
office@cuccnm.org
Alanna Smith, Christian Ed. Dir.,
ce@cuccnm.org

Congregational United Church of Christ
of Neenah / Menasha
1511 Nicolet Blvd.
Neenah, Wi 54956
920-725-4873
www.cuccnm.org
office@cuccnm.org



<u>Feb 1st, 8th & 15th</u>

3 week Church Anniversary Celebration

Feb 6th: Youth Group: Ice Skating

Feb 17th: Community Table

Feb 18th : Ash Wednesday

Soup Dinner and Service

Feb 20th: Parent Night Out

Feb 22nd : Fun with Friends : Bowling

Feb 25th : Lenten Soup and Conversations

More information inside