



Saints Alive!

Vol. 24, Issue 1: Lent 2026

Invitation, Not Intensity: Beginning Lent with an Honest Heart

By Rev. Dr. Kristian Bendoraitis

As we stand looking back at the start of a new year and at the same time on the threshold of Lent, I find myself thinking about how often we want a clean start. A better routine. A clearer prayer life. A more disciplined faith. There is something in us that loves the idea of beginning again.

But the older I get, the more I wonder if God is less interested in our fresh starts and more interested in our real hearts. Yet Scripture rarely begins with human resolve. It begins with God's faithfulness. Before we promise anything, God has already promised. Before we improve, God is present. Spiritual writers often remind us that spiritual growth is not about climbing higher but about going deeper—about consenting to reality as it is. They gently insist that faith is not a self-improvement project but a place where we are loved in our limits. This feels especially important as we approach Lent.

And yet, Lent can easily become another arena for spiritual ambition. We give something up. We take something on. We measure our sincerity by our discipline. Here also, the prophets whisper that God is not impressed by performance. God desires truth in the inward being. God desires mercy, justice, tenderness. God desires us. So what if the new year is not about becoming impressive, and Lent is not about becoming intense—but about becoming honest? Honest about the ways we mistakenly long for control. Honest about the ways we hide. Honest about how tired we are of pretending we are stronger, kinder, more prayerful than we really are.

The desert season of Lent mirrors the wilderness Jesus walked—a place stripped of noise and illusion. Wilderness does not reward pretending. It reveals what is already there. Hunger. Fear. Dependence. And, surprisingly, belovedness. When we are reflective, instead of rushing to fix ourselves, we may notice where God has already been faithful. We may see that even our failures carried seeds of grace. And when we enter Lent gently, instead of harshly judging our shortcomings, we may discover that repentance is less about self-condemnation and more about re-orientation—turning again toward Love.

This is the quiet miracle of the Christian story: transformation does not begin with shame. It begins with invitation. In a culture that urges us to optimize, Lent invites us to simplify. In a world that celebrates certainty, the new year can become a space for curiosity—Where is God already at work? What is asking to be released? What is asking to be received?

Perhaps the most faithful way to “make it real” this season is not to promise we will finally get it right. Perhaps it is to bring our real lives—our unfinished prayers, our inconsistent devotion, our complicated hopes—into the presence of God without disguise. And there, in that unguarded place, something shifts. We discover that God has not been waiting for a better version of us to appear. God has not been tallying our Lenten disciplines. God has been here all along—steady, patient, quietly forming Christ within us.

So as the year begins, and as Lent approaches, we might pray not for spiritual intensity but for spiritual sincerity. Not for dramatic change, but for deeper trust. Not for a flawless fast, but for a softened heart. The good news is that, even in our halting attempts, we are already held. And from that place—held, known, loved—we begin again.

Outreach By Sybil Wendling

The Outreach Committee is looking forward to coordinating with Pastor Kristian on a new member class. In advance of that, we are working on updating the ALPC group ministries booklet so that we can provide up-to-date information to prospective members.

If you head up any of our small groups, session committees, or other ministries, please email the following information to Sybil Wendling (sybilwendling@gmail.com) by March 1:

- Name of small group ministry
- 2026 chairperson name
- Contact information you would like used in the booklet
- Meeting schedule
 - 2026 dates, or
 - Standard meeting pattern (for example, 3rd Thursday at 1 p.m.)
 - Standard meeting location

Current booklet group descriptions will be used. A draft of the booklet information will be sent to the chair of each group before it is published for any corrections/additions. If you know of anyone else who might be interested in membership, please share any contact information with Sybil.

The Outreach Committee is also looking for new members who are excited about birthdays, parades, helping out at Cornerstone, or smiling at people in the narthex. No experience required!

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Human Resources:

Approved Terms of Call By Sarah Waggoner

Each year at the annual congregational meeting, the pastors proposed Terms of Call are voted on by the members of the congregation. At the 2026 annual congregational meeting held February 8, Terms of Call providing one additional Sunday vacation day were put before the congregation. After discussion, an amendment providing two additional Sunday vacation days was proposed from the congregation. This amendment was voted on and passed. As such, the Terms of Call voted on and approved at the annual meeting include four weeks (Presbytery minimum) and two additional Sundays of vacation time. The approved Terms of Call are provided on the next page (page 3).

2026 Terms of Call
Kristian A. Bendoraitis
Avon Lake Presbyterian Church

Total Effective Salary

Subject to Board of Pension (BOP) Dues \$ 75,000

Other Income

Retirement Account 403(b) Contribution \$ 2,250

Total Income **\$ 77,250**

Annual Employer BOP Dues

Pension, Death, Disability (10%) \$ 7,500

Medical (Member Only) \$ 13,125 (17.5%)

Vision and Dental (Member Only) \$ 500

Total Reimbursable Expenses

Auto/Misc. Professional \$ 3,500

Continuing Education \$ 1,500

Total Annual Package **\$103,375**

Annual Paid Vacation Four Weeks plus two additional Sundays

Annual Paid Study Leave Two Weeks

Annual Paid Family Leave Twelve Weeks

Notes:

1. "Family Leave" is defined as including, but not limited to: leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child; leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member; leave to heal following a loss or tragic event. Book of Order Section G-2.0804
2. A sabbatical will be provided at a minimum of eight weeks after every six full years of employment. The actual length of the sabbatical is subject to Session approval when the sabbatical plan is submitted.
3. Board of Pensions medical dues for the Congregational Pastors Package increased to 17.5% (2026) from 16% (2025).
4. The Presbytery of the Western Reserve updated the Minimum Terms of Call to include \$1,500 continuing education reimbursement for 2026, up from \$1,000 in 2025.
5. The pastor determines the split in the Total Effective Salary between cash salary and housing allowance. Kristian has elected to take 100% in salary.
6. The dollar value of Kristian's 3% raise will be deposited directly into a 403(b) retirement account sponsored by the Board of Pensions. Set up as a matching contribution, it is therefore not subject to BOP dues.

Worship and Spiritual Life

By Lee Lohr

The mission statement of the Worship and Spiritual Life Committee is to: Create an opportunity for people to encounter the Triune God, be moved by the Holy Spirit, and meet the living Jesus Christ in word, music, art, silence, community, and liturgy. We have been doing this mostly by providing for worship -- preparing communion elements, assuring appropriate worship space, engaging various worship volunteers, and arranging for special services. Although worship enhances people's spiritual lives, our committee has been looking for new ways to help people feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18, there will be a service that evening starting at 7:00 p.m. Throughout Lent, there will be four prayer stations in the sanctuary. They will be open after worship on Sundays and during regular office hours. If you are interested in experiencing the prayer stations in the evening, please contact Lee Lohr (440-396-6593) to arrange for that. Healing Prayers will continue on Sundays; however, during the week, there will be a basket with several scripture passages upon which to reflect in that spot. Other prayer stations will include a place with candles and prompts to pray for someone you know, a place with coloring pages to help you quiet yourself as you reflect on how your life is going, and a place with a mini labyrinth and paper finger labyrinths. If you are not familiar with labyrinths, it is a path similar to a maze that is a meditative practice where you let go of distractions, pause at the center for insight, and reflect on thoughts as you return to the entrance. We hope that you will choose to experience the prayer stations and feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.



HELP MAKE SUNDAY MORNINGS WELCOMING

We're inviting volunteers to serve as Greeters, Worship Assistants, or Communion Servers. Whether you've served before or not, we'd love to have you.

Contact Lee Lohr to Sign Up!

LeelaAnn60@gmail.com

Missions By Beth Janis

"It's so cold I saw a snowman drinking coffee."

How about helping pack 80 brown bag lunches the second Sunday each month? You can fill bags with tempting food or help make sandwiches. It's quick and easy.

If you like to bake, we need cookies or bars that can fit in a lunch-sized plastic bag. We are also able to use Girl Scout cookies or "store bought" treats.

You may want to shop for items for Teenagers leaving the Foster care program for independent living or college. We have lists of suggested items. Learn more from Judith on Sunday March 8th.

ALPC is part of a faith based group called Lorain Cooperative Ministries. (LCM) As a part of this group we help provide meals and food pantry supplies for people in the Lorain area. LCM is hosting a Bake Potato dinner fundraiser. How about getting a group together to enjoy the food and fellowship.

Remember when we filled "hygiene bags" in the foyer? Well, we are going to fill reusable bags again with some helpful items for people that do not have a safe or permanent home. This is sponsored by LCM and ALPC mission funds.

We value your time and talents. If you have suggestions for mission projects please speak with ALPC mission group members Kathy Navarro or Marian Conn. As always you may reach out to Beth Janis.

A Note from Kathy Navarro

Thank you all for your prayers during Lanny's illness. We both felt them plus your love and kindness shared with visits and meals.

For those who asked, the brass Band of the Western Reserve's next concert will be Saturday, March 7 at 7:00 p.m. It is at Medina High School's performing arts center. Tickets are \$12 for seniors.



www.bbwesternreserve.com



Looking Back with Gratitude, Leaning Forward with Hope

By Terry Vine

As February settles in, we're taking a moment to look back with gratitude and look ahead with trust in the new things God is doing among us. 2025 brought us many moments of connection, creativity, and growth across our ministries, and we're thankful for the ways God worked through our community.

Our partnership with Cornerstone Preschool continued to deepen through shared experiences like Vacation Bible School, Grandparents' Day, Trunk or Treat, and Rally Day—simple moments that helped families feel at home in our church community. Youth Revival brought energy and curiosity that reminded us how alive the Spirit is in our young people. Sunday School and our adult learning opportunities created spaces where people felt supported, known, and encouraged in their walk of faith.

As we move further into 2026, we're also stepping into a new season. With our Director of Children and Family Ministries' departure, we recognize this as an important moment of transition. We're grateful for the good that was offered in past years, and at the same time, we're genuinely open to the fresh opportunities this change brings. Many in our congregation have expressed a sense of renewed hope, and we share that sense of possibility. We believe God is giving us room to breathe, to listen, and to imagine together what a healthy, collaborative future can look like.

We also want to acknowledge Kristian's steady leadership, partnership, and guidance to both our staff and the Christian Education Committee. He invests significant time and care in supporting this ministry, and we are deeply grateful for the way he continues to lead us with wisdom and grace. As a committee, we stand with him as we move forward together.

A Special Invitation to the Congregation

With the director's role now open, this is a moment for all of us to step forward together. We truly need the time, talent, and creativity of our church family to help carry this ministry into its next chapter.

If you love teaching, organizing, supporting families, helping with youth, planning events, or simply offering a steady presence, **we would love to have you join us.** Whether you can give an hour a month or a few hours a week, your gifts will make a real difference.

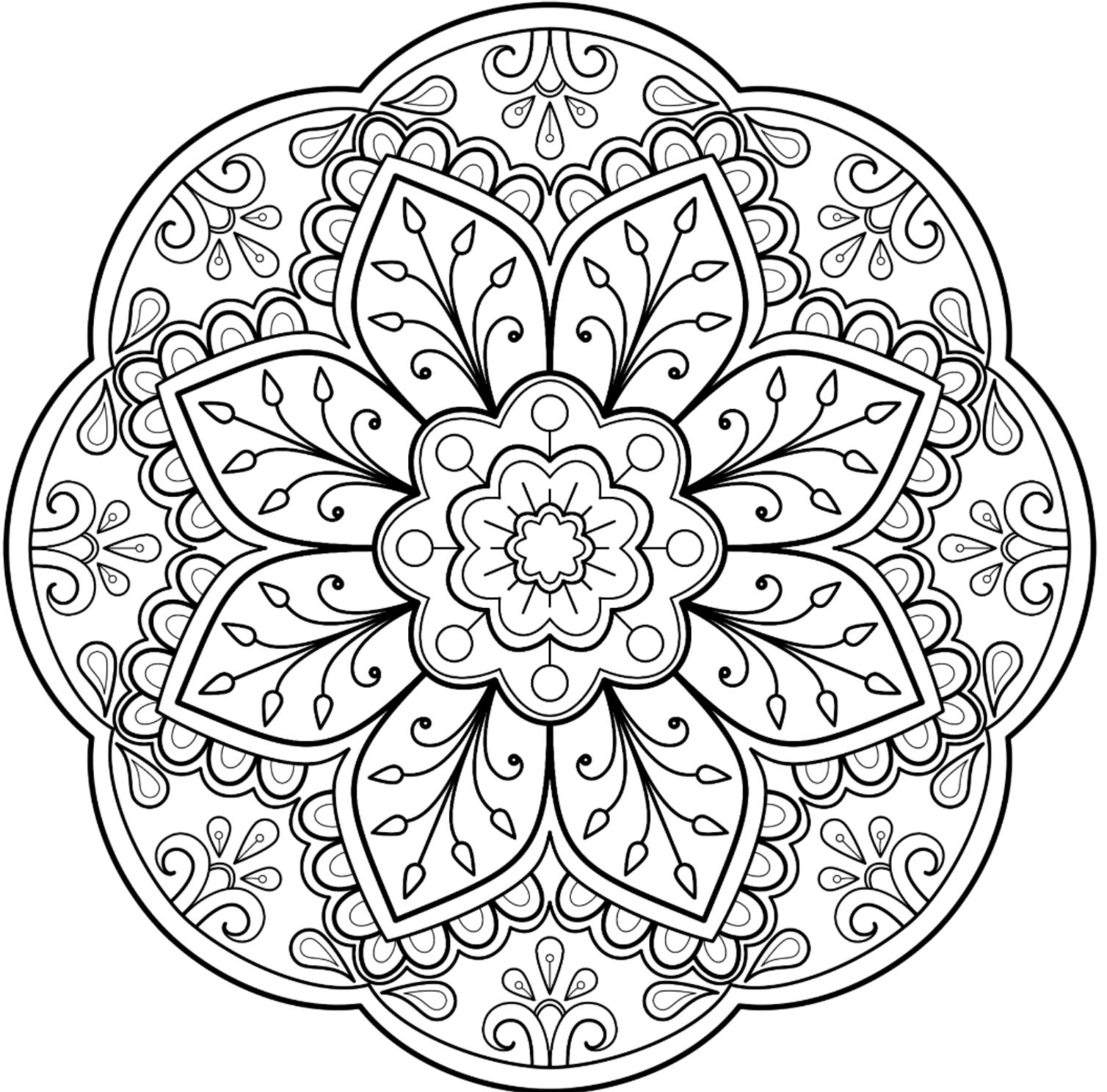
This is a season of possibility—and your involvement can help shape what comes next.

Our committee remains committed to nurturing faith across all ages and creating spaces where people can learn, grow, and experience Christ's love in real and meaningful ways. We're moving ahead with openness and hope, trusting that God is already preparing the way.

Lenten Activities

We want you to feel the peace of Lent and experience our Prayer Stations, even if you are unable to come in person.

Quiet yourself. Reflect on how your life is going as you color in this mandala.





Let go of distractions.
Place your finger at the start
of the path and follow along,
pausing at the center for insight. Reflect
on your thoughts as you exit the labyrinth.

Prayer Prompts

Where is God inviting you to deeper honesty this Lent?

What is one burden you need to release into God's care?

How might repentance look like returning to love rather than striving for perfection?

Where do you see signs of quiet resurrection already beginning in your life?

What wilderness space in your life might God be using to form you?

Where are you being called to practice mercy? Toward yourself or someone else?

What false security or comfort is God inviting you to loosen your grip on?

How is Christ inviting you to follow more closely this season?

Treasured for Good: Honoring 34 Years of Service

By Sarah Waggoner

February 1 was a special day as we celebrated Marcy Uhl and her 34 years of service as Treasurer of ALPC. A celebration during the service, as well as a reception



following the service, embraced themes from *Wicked*, Marcy's favorite musical. Attendees wore pink and green in various shades, the prominent colors used in the musical, to add to a festive atmosphere. During the service, Marcy was called forward to be honored with a rendition of "For Good" from *Wicked* with words rewritten to reflect her time at ALPC. Following the song, a slideshow was shown of photos of Marcy and the many ways that she has been involved at ALPC over the years. At the conclusion of the slideshow, Marcy was presented with a basket containing gifts from her ALPC family, both past and present. Drawing on Marcy's interests, the basket contained bookstore gift cards, two bottles of wine, a one year membership to Cooper's Hawk Wine Club, teas and tea cups, a puzzle created from a 1960's pen and ink drawing of the church, a gift card to Bistro 83, funds set aside for the purchase of a piece of music for the choir, several *Wicked* themed items (tote bag, suncatcher, candles, honey), and a small vacation fund. To add to the celebration, the chancel choir sang two of Marcy's favorite anthems, "How Will They Know" and "Joy in the Morning", both by Natalie Sleeth. Kristian offered a prayer over Marcy, expressing gratitude for her service and wishing her well on her retirement journey. The reception following the service was joyful, as attendees wished Marcy well and enjoyed beautiful and delicious desserts of cake and cupcakes in pink and green, with some being Marcy's favorite flavor--coconut!

Thank you, Marcy, for your service and dedication, and congratulations and best wishes on your retirement!

With heartfelt thanks from Marcy Uhl

How does one adequately thank those who created a day so special and heartwarming, that it will remain a "treasured" memory for years to come?

The celebration to commemorate retiring as treasurer at ALPC was one of the most special days of my life. I certainly felt God's spirit that day. I felt His loving arms wrapped around me, by the presence of everyone there. Thanks each of you for your love and kind words. We are truly a church family.

I'd like to extend my appreciation to the committee that planned and implemented the occasion – Sarah, Kenzi, Emilee, Kathy H, Cindi and Beth J. Thanks to Deb R. and Sandee for the beautiful flowers from the deacons. Thanks to Shannon Brunner for the beautiful cake and Alix Dansizen for the awesome cupcakes. The gift basket contained all my favorite things! Thanks to those who helped make it so wonderful. And thanks to all those contributing to the celebration.

The biggest surprise was the personalized rendition of "Because I Knew You." It is my favorite song from my favorite play and it always brings tears to my eyes. When the words are a bit different in order to fit the occasion, I so needed the tissues I had left at my seat. It was tough to get through it without sobbing. A world of thanks to Sarah, Susan R. and Rick for your hours of writing and rehearsing such a moving song. And I'm told, I wasn't the only one looking through tears.

Finally, thanks for my church family, my choir family, my fellow staff members, dear long-time friends and my dear Gary for making the day unforgettable.

I have never felt so blessed.



We've heard it said
That people come into our lives for a reason,
Bringing something we must learn;
And we are lead to those who help us most to grow,
If we let them,
And we help them in return.

*Thank you, Marcy, you're a friend to us all.
We know we're who we are today
Because we know you!*

From the budget to the actuals
To the audit each year,
From payroll to expenses,
Hoping it is clear.

*Receipts were sometimes late,
But received with a smile!*
Because we know you,
We have been changed for good.

Though you're retired,
We're thankful that you are still in our chancel choir,
From anthems to Magnificat.

You sing with joy,
Our first sopranos are much better when you're with us;
And we miss you when you're not.
Chicago, Florida, both are dear to you.

*The memories that you share,
Bring music to our hearts.*

From walking in the morning,
With church friends through the woods,
From ambassador to elder,

*So many roles to name.
Thirty-four years as Treasurer,
We thank you with love.*

Because we know you,
Because we know you,
Because we know you,
*We have been changed
For Good.*



Finance By Cathy Graves

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” – *Luke 6:38*

As we reflect on the blessings and faithfulness of this past year, we are reminded that our giving—of time, talent, and treasure—is a reflection of God’s generosity toward us. The financial position of ALPC continues to be strong, thanks to the ongoing stewardship and faithful generosity of our congregation.

Our checking, savings, and long-term investment balances remain healthy, providing a solid foundation for ministry and mission. The 2026 approved budget of \$330,284.94 is nearly unchanged from the 2025 approved level of \$332,414.86, allowing us to remain steady while including a 3% salary increase for staff as a cost-of-living adjustment and recognition of their faithful service. The actual spending for 2025 came in slightly under budget at \$322,340.24—evidence of continued careful fiscal management.

The 2026 budget currently anticipates a \$49,000 deficit, but several encouraging factors help offset this projection:

- Since Session approved the budget, additional pledge cards totaling about \$10,000 have been received.
- We also continue to receive generous giving from members and regular visitors who do not submit pledge cards.

With the recent departure of our Christian Education Director, we expect a staff cost savings of approximately \$9,000 until the position is filled.

It is important to remember that the budget outlines the maximum anticipated expenditures. Session, committee chairs, and staff work faithfully throughout the year to identify efficiencies and cost savings wherever possible. In addition, ALPC currently holds over \$70,000 in encumbered funds, and Session continues to evaluate expenses to determine whether some of these funds can appropriately be used for expenses.

Per Capita Requested. As part of our shared responsibility with the wider church, we continue to collect Per Capita contributions, which help support the mission and administration of the Presbyterian Church. ALPC pays \$40 per member, for a total of \$8,600. To date, we have received \$2,580 toward this amount. If you have not yet contributed and are able, please consider offering your Per Capita gift to support the work of the broader church family.

Through careful planning, responsible stewardship, and the abundant generosity of our congregation, ALPC remains well-positioned to continue serving as a beacon of faith, hope, and love in our community. Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and prayer as we move forward together into another year of ministry and mission.

	Jan. YTD Actual		YTD Budget
Total Income	\$36,621.05		\$27,048.33
Total Expense	\$36,344.33		\$35,407.07
2026 Net Income (Loss)	\$276.72		(8,358.74)

For questions regarding church finances, please contact Cheryl Dean or Cathy Graves.



Easily give to ALPC and pay your Per Capita online →



From Winter's Chill to Easter Joy:

Deacon Updates

By John Weeden

It's been a long, cold winter, but the milder days of March are just around the corner and the Deacons at ALPC are hoping to make the rest of this 'freeze' a little bit warmer through fun times and fellowship with our church family!

On Sunday, March 15, we will be celebrating 'Pie Day' with a variety of pies served directly after our Sunday service! All are invited to bake your favorite pie, from a sweet coconut cream to a savory potpie, this is your moment to show us what you've got! And if you excel at tasting over baking then that's alright too...whatever your preference we hope you join in!

On Easter morning, we will be rising with the Son, (oh yeah, I did it!) gathering for our traditional Sunrise service, at lake's edge, on the cliffs of North Point Drive in Avon Lake. I have come to LOVE this service! It feels absolutely timeless...coming together in nature to hear the Word of God; the lake birds flying over head, the new growth pushing up through the frosty ground, and the distant horizon painted with the most beautiful, vibrant colors from the light of the rising sun! We will have piping hot coffee and a bonfire to warm us up as we open ourselves to Kristian's sermon, as we gather together by the water! We will be gathering 15 minutes before sunrise, but feel free to come early and stay late, enjoying the scenic lake view!

Later that same day, the Deacons at ALPC will be serving our traditional Easter breakfast of steamy hotcakes, savory sausage, and juice/coffee served directly after the Easter service. We encourage each of you to bring friends and family to join us for this time of worship and great fellowship!

Please remember that the Deacons are here to offer rides to anyone in need to church, appointments, or anywhere else you'd like to go. Please contact Kenzi at the church office and we will do what we can to get you where you need to be! As always, we thank you for these opportunities to serve you and wish each of you a blessed season filled with love, laughter, and the presence of our loving Lord.

Lenten Worship Services

Palm Sunday - March 29 - 10:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday - April 2 - 7:30 p.m.

Good Friday - April 3 - 7:30 p.m.

Easter Sunrise - April 5 - 6:45 a.m.

Easter - April 5 - 10:00 a.m.

ALPC Annual Chili & Soup Cook-Off 2026

The annual Cook-Off took place Sunday, February 8. Golden Ladle winners were Mike & Cheryl Dean for Best Soup (Crockpot Chicken Corn Chowder) and Terry Vine for Best Chili (White Chicken Chili).

Thank you to everyone who prepared delicious entries and to all who came out to support — and sample — the culinary creations!



White Chicken Chili

INGREDIENTS

- 
- 1 small Yellow Onion, diced
 - 1 tbsp Olive Oil
 - 2 cloves Garlic, finely minced
 - 2 cans Low-Sodium Chicken Broth (14.5 oz)
 - 1 can Diced Tomatoes with Chilies (10 oz)
 - 1 1/2 tsp Cumin
 - 1/2 tsp Paprika
 - 1/2 tsp Dried Oregano
 - 1/2 tsp Ground Coriander
 - 1/4 tsp Cayenne Pepper
 - Salt & Pepper, to taste
 - 1 pkg Light Cream Cheese, cut into small cubes
 - 1 1/4 cup Corn, frozen or fresh
 - 2 cans Cannellini Beans (15 oz)
 - 2 1/2 cups Cooked Chicken, shredded
 - 1 tbsp Fresh Lime Juice
 - 2 tbsp Fresh Cilantro, chopped, plus more for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a 6-quart Dutch oven or stock pot over medium-high heat.
2. Add onion and saute 4 minutes.
3. Add garlic and saute 30 seconds longer.
4. Add chicken broth, tomatoes, and seasonings.
5. Bring mixture just to a boil then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 15 minutes.
6. Drain and rinse beans then measure out 1 cup.
7. Transfer 1 cup of beans to a food processor along with 1/4 cup broth from soup. Puree until nearly smooth.
8. Add cream cheese to soup along with corn, whole and pureed beans. Stir well. Simmer 5-10 minutes longer.
9. Stir in chicken, lime juice, and cilantro.

Crockpot Chicken Corn Chowder



INGREDIENTS

3 cups Cooked Chicken, shredded
1 can Cream of Chicken Soup (10.5 oz)
1 can Corn, drained
1 can Cream-Style Corn
2 medium Potatoes, diced
1 cup Carrots, chopped
1 cup Celery, chopped
1 small Onion, diced
1 cup Milk
2 cups Sharp Cheddar Cheese, shredded
2/3 cup Brown Sugar
2-3 tbsp. Garlic Powder
Salt, Pepper, Paprika

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put all ingredients into the Crockpot except the milk and cheese.
2. Stir everything gently to combine.
3. Cover and cook on low 6-7 hours (or high 4 hours) until the potatoes are tender.
4. About 30 minutes before servicing, add milk and cheese.
5. Stir well and let the cheese melt completely.
6. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.



Music Notes By Rick Fortney

May the Lord bless you as you journey with Him to Jerusalem, the Cross, and to Everlasting Life.

The Friday before Palm Sunday, March 27 at 7:30 p.m., we begin our focus of Holy Week with a concert by TrueNorth Chorale and Chamber Orchestra, performing John Rutter's *Requiem* (1985). This is a seven-movement choral work that serves as a personal meditation on life, death, and the hope for eternal light. Written in memory of his father, the work is characterized by its intimate, lyrical, and comforting tone, heavily influenced by Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. The piece moves from darkness toward light, specifically culminating in the "Lux Aeterna" (eternal light). Composed following the death of his father, the work is designed to provide solace and comfort to the living. Rutter blends traditional Latin liturgical texts (such as *Requiem Aeternam, Pie Jesu, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Lux Aeterna*) with English biblical verses from the Book of Common Prayer, including Psalm 130 ("Out of the Deep") and Psalm 23 ("The Lord is My Shepherd"). The piece is recognized for its ability to blend sacred music with a sense of human frailty and ultimate peace, offering a message of hope rather than sorrow. The seven sections of the work form an arch-like meditation on the themes of life and death.

Palm Sunday we will pass out traditional palm branches and parade into the sanctuary together, waving palms and singing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor".

We are talking about offering a Seder dinner in Hart Hall prior to our Maundy Thursday service. Christians often participate in a Seder Meal during Holy Week to connect with the Jewish roots of Christianity, gaining a deeper understanding of the Last Supper, and experience the symbolic connection between the Exodus story and the sacrifice of Jesus. It serves as an educational tool to visualize the "Lamb of God". Because Jesus' final meal with his disciples was a Passover celebration, many Christians use the Seder to contextualize the origins of the Eucharist or Communion. The Seder meal connects us to Jewish roots and our spiritual heritage by participating in a tradition that honors the history of ancient Israel. The elements of the

Seder (such as the lamb, unleavened bread, and wine) are often interpreted as symbols that point to the death and resurrection of Jesus. We participate in the Seder to educate and honor the roots of our faith.

A Seder meal is a traditional, ritual-heavy feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. The Hebrew word *Seder* literally translates to "order" or "procedure," referring to the 15 specific, prescribed steps followed during the meal to retell the story of the Israelites' Exodus from slavery in Egypt. It is a deeply symbolic, experiential, and intergenerational event designed to pass the story of liberation from one generation to the next. The central purpose is to fulfill the biblical command to retell the story of God delivering the Israelites from Egyptian slavery 3,500 years ago. Participants are meant to see themselves as having personally left Egypt—moving from slavery to freedom. Specific foods (bitter herbs, matzah, charoset) are eaten to represent the bitterness of slavery and the haste of the escape. The Seder is designed to engage children, who are encouraged to ask questions.

The center of the table features a Seder plate with 6 key items, each representing a part of the Exodus story:

Maror: Bitter herbs (often horseradish) representing the bitterness of slavery.

Chazeret: A second bitter herb (like romaine lettuce).

Charoset: A sweet mixture of fruits, nuts, and wine/cinnamon, representing the mortar used by slaves.

Karpas: A green vegetable (usually parsley) dipped in salt water, representing the hope of spring and the tears of slavery.

Zeroa: A roasted lamb shank bone, symbolizing the Passover lamb sacrifice.

Beitzah: A roasted egg, symbolizing the festival sacrifice in the Temple and the cycle of life.



Additionally, three pieces of Matzah (unleavened bread) are placed on the table, representing the bread of affliction eaten in bondage and the bread of freedom eaten during the escape. The Haggadah is the "guidebook" for the evening, containing the



story, prayers, and instructions for the meal. Participants drink four cups of wine (or grape juice) to represent the four promises of redemption. A piece of matzah is broken early, hidden, and must be found by children at the end of the meal. An extra cup of wine is poured for the prophet Elijah, representing the hope for a future messianic age of peace. The Seder concludes with this phrase, expressing hope for ultimate redemption.

On Good Friday we will once again share in a Tenebrae service, *Song of the Shadows*. *Song of the Shadows* by Joseph M. Martin (with narration by Pamela Martin) is a sacred choral cantata, a "service of darkness" (Tenebrae) that invites reflection on the final days of Jesus Christ's life. The work moves from the waving of the palms to the agony of Calvary, focusing on themes of sacrifice, love, betrayal, and redemption. The "Shadows" of Life addresses the "dark night of the soul," using the story of Gethsemane and the crucifixion to explore themes of grief, penitence, and sorrow. Despite its mournful tone, the work finds hope in the midst of despair, emphasizing that "wherever there are shadows, there is also Light". It is a deeply moving, dramatic, and emotional work.

Join us Easter Sunday for our Sunrise Service overlooking Lake Erie on North Point Drive in Avon Lake, 6:45 a.m. There will be an Easter Breakfast served by our Deacons at 8:30 a.m. followed by our Easter service at 10:00 a.m.

Session Highlights

from the February 17 meeting

- The meaning of "Why do we exist?" was discussed as a way to begin defining who we are.
- The Deacons will host another Pie Day on March 15, so plan to bring any kind of pie to share, sweet or savory (e.g. blueberry pie, pizza pie, chocolate chess pie, shepherd's pie).
- The Easter breakfast will be served after the service on Easter instead of before as previously done so as to allow more people to mingle together.
- The new office software package, Realm, is having data input and will be able to help track giving after Lynn Morway retires from her position as Financial Secretary.
- In 2025, 112% of the pledged amount was received, thanks to your generosity.
- Giving in January was typically strong due to some members giving their whole pledge for the year.
- The Financial Director is now allowed to move excess funds out of checking into savings to take advantage of the interest rate. The threshold was set at \$40,000.
- A laptop was purchased for the new Financial Director.
- The position description for Director of Cornerstone Preschool was approved, and a new person hopefully will be found by May to allow Julie to train them over the summer.
- The position description for Director of Christian Education will be promoted as for full or part time depending on the applicants we find.
- Session was reminded of an existing policy that when Avon Lake City Schools are closed, so is the office. As usual, staff are still working, but are not required to come in to the office.
- During the time of transition, Christian Education has divided committee tasks among the committee members, and therefore we will not host an Easter egg hunt. Creative solutions for Vacation Bible School are being discussed.
- Adult education and children's Sunday School are in good shape through May.
- On March 8, Mission will host a Foster Care representative to give a Moment for Mission.
- During lent, there will be four prayer stations in the sanctuary open during office hours for people to use.
- The pastor wants to meet one-on-one with the Ruling Elders, just as he meets with the staff.
- Kristin will look into the most efficient and effective way to train the Elders and Deacons on boundaries, child protection, and anti-racism as required by the denomination.

Saints Alive! Is the seasonal newsletter of
AVON LAKE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Winter - Spring - Summer - Fall - Advent

Our worship services begin at 10:00 am every Sunday.

Live streaming of our services:

 @AvonLakePC |  @avonlakepresbyterianchurch6047

Our Sunday services will air on ALC-TV beginning the following Wednesday,
And continue every day throughout the week at 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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