



"Living Our Faith in Jesus Christ
Through Acceptance, Service, and Love."

Celebrating the Journey

February 2026 *Newsflash*

Sunday Worship weekly at 10:00 a.m.

**Services are livestreamed and can be accessed on
YouTube, Facebook, and www.algonquinucc.org**

FROM PASTOR JIM

As I sit in the Pastor's office on Monday, January 19, I am saddened by the Bears' loss to the Rams. Our visions of a Superbowl Championship no longer dance through our hearts.

Yet, I am also joyful. Joyful to be back serving in ministry with all of you, the disciples of Jesus living at their discipleship as members of The Congregational Church of Algonquin. It has been an inspiring 19 days; leading worship, reconnecting with old friends, and making new friends. I look forward to our time, however long it will be, of ministry together.

Throughout my years of ministry, the closing words to The United Church of Canada's Statement of Faith has shaped me: "In life, in death, in life beyond death God is with us, we aren't alone, thanks be to God." In our time together may these words guide us, that in all we face together God will be with us.

Thanks be to God.

Pastor Jim



Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

WELCOME PASTOR JIM BENZING

Welcoming a Servant Leader: The Ministry of Pastor James Benzing

We are blessed to introduce Pastor James Benzing, a man whose life and ministry are defined by a simple, powerful guiding principle: *"We must pray as if it all depends upon God and act as if it all depends upon us."*

A Foundation of Faith and Service

A native of Wapakoneta, Ohio, James's journey began at St. John United Church of Christ. From his early days in Sunday School to earning the rank of Eagle Scout in Troop 131, James developed a heart for "servant leadership." This calling led him to Heidelberg University and later to Eden Theological Seminary, where he was ordained in 1987.

For Pastor James, the ministry isn't just the job of one person at the pulpit—it is the calling of the entire congregation. He views his role as an "enabler," helping every member discover their own unique call to serve God's world.

A Legacy of Care

Throughout his career, James has served numerous communities across Illinois, including:

- St. John's UCC (Granite City), where he met his wife of 35 years, Deborah.
- Christ Memorial Church (Blue Island), where they welcomed their daughter, Rachel.
- Congregational Church of Algonquin, Immanuel UCC of Bartlett, and First Congregational Church of Carpentersville.

Beyond the church walls, James has served as an on-call chaplain at Advocate Sherman Hospital, providing comfort to those in their most vulnerable moments.

An Active Retirement

Though he "officially" retired in 2015, James remains a vital force in the Chicagoland area. He is a highly sought-after supply preacher and a beloved substitute teacher in local schools. Whether he is guiding a congregation through a transition or helping a student in the classroom, his charismatic energy and "contagious" kindness are always on display.

When he isn't serving the community, you can find James rooting for the St. Louis Cardinals, lost in a good book, or enjoying time with his family and dogs.



NEW & IMPROVED PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE



Because we as a church acknowledge the importance of a healthy relationship between the pastor and the congregation, the council has determined this is an opportune time during our transition to a settled pastor to re-establish this committee. And we've already started! The deacons nominated Anna Benjamin (chair), Nancy Kneip, and Bill Hellyer to serve, who were approved by the Church Council.

We started with an exit interview with Pastor Bob, combined with guidance from him on how a pastoral relations committee should function. The committee will meet regularly with the pastor and create a relationship that is based on friendship and trust. When the pastor has new ideas they may want to implement with the agreement of council, we can help provide introduction and support for them. If there are issues the pastor is concerned about, we can help to resolve them.

Likewise, when a member wants to come to us for a change they would like to see, or even a direct conflict they have, we will be responsible for working with them and the pastor to resolve this. To help make this an easier process, the committee is working on a form for the person to fill out to explain what the issue is, who is bringing the issue, and what the expected resolution may be.

This is all in beginning stages, and we will continue to look for guidance from Pastor Jim as well as suggestions from others. We look forward to new, improved pastoral relations!

SAVE THE DATE



Voting Q&A
February 8th | After Worship
Fellowship Hall

Illinois Primary - March 17th
Early Voting begins as soon as
February 5th

The graphic features several circular buttons with the word 'VOTE' and an American flag motif. To the right is a word cloud shaped like a map of Illinois, with words like 'PRIVILEGE', 'SOCIAL JUSTICE', 'RACISM', and 'SEXISM' visible.



Dixieland Sunday Service
February 15 | 10:00 AM



Ash Wednesday
Service

February 18 | 7:30 PM

The graphic shows a heart-shaped container filled with grey ash, with a cross shape pressed into it. The container is set against a dark wood background with a purple cloth and olive branches.



Family Easter Event
Saturday, April 4
10:00 AM

The graphic features a teal wooden background with pink tulips and decorated Easter eggs.

SAVE THE DATE & WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SAVE THE DATE

**Please see our online calendar for the most up-to-date information*

FEBRUARY 1ST

First Sunday—Food Pantry Offering
 Women's Fellowship 11:00 AM
 Search Committee Q&A 11:00 AM

FEBRUARY 2ND

Ministry of Christian Ed (Zoom) 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 4TH

Senior Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 5TH

Bibles & Brew (Port Edward) 6:00 PM*

FEBRUARY 8TH *Shepherd U.*

Cub Scout Sunday
 Fair Trade Sunday
 Ministry of Trustees Meeting 8:30 AM
 Ministry of Missions Meeting 9:00 AM
 Social Justice Advocates—Election Q&A 11:00 AM
 Search Committee Q&A 11:00 AM
 Ministry of Deacons Meeting 11:15 AM

FEBRUARY 9TH

Ministry of Finance Meeting (Zoom) 6:30 PM

FEBRUARY 10TH

Social Justice Advocates (Zoom) 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 11TH

Senior Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 13TH

Church office closed
 Women's Bunco 6:00 PM

FEBRUARY 14TH

Men's Fellowship 9:00 AM

FEBRUARY 15TH

Dixieland Sunday
 Women's Fellowship 11:00 AM

FEBRUARY 18TH

Ash Wednesday Service 7:30 PM

FEBRUARY 19TH

Newsletter Deadline

FEBRUARY 21ST

Senior Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 22ND *Shepherd U.*

Church Council Meeting 11:00 AM

FEBRUARY 24TH

Social Justice Advocates (Zoom) 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY 25TH

Senior Game Afternoon 12:30 PM
 Senior Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM

FEBRUARY WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

FEBRUARY 1st: The 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Micah 6:1-8

Psalms 15

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

Note: The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be served.

FEBRUARY 8th: The 5th Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-9a, (9b-12)

Psalms 112:1-9, (10)

1 Corinthians 2:1-12, (13-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

FEBRUARY 15th: The Transfiguration

Scripture: Exodus 24:12-18

Psalms 2 or Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

FEBRUARY 18th: Ash Wednesday

Scripture: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

FEBRUARY 22nd: The 1st Sunday in Lent

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Psalms 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matt 4:1-11



THANK YOU!

Dear members and friends of the Congregational Church of Algonquin,

I am literally composing this note one month to the day from my last Sunday serving as your pastor. And what a special day it was. You were all so gracious and supportive as we worshipped together, shared memories, celebrated accomplishments, and enjoyed coffee and goodies. And perhaps most meaningful to me, being able to have my whole family there to witness, and even join in musically in the service. My only complaint is that it was all too brief and I was unable to really say farewell to each of you individually, not to mention, that a number of you were unable to attend given that it was the Sunday after Christmas.

And then in a heartbeat, the calendar flipped over and the new year was upon us - and I am officially retired. It has been an adjustment, but I'm getting accustomed to the new lifestyle, but admittedly, I am having trouble remembering what day of the week it is. Thank God for daily medications and the pill box that reminds me!!

I also want to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to you for your generosity with the thoughtful gift-giving, both as individuals and as a community. It is always a joy to be the recipient of those special "offerings," if you will. And you can be assured that however the funds are used, it will honor all of you and be part of making some new memories; both tangible and intangible. Again, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

In closing, please know that I will continue to keep you in my prayers; those of you dealing with hardships and health challenges, the search committee, and the congregation as a whole as you seek to live out God's will and purpose at 109 Washington street, but also as you engage the wider community amidst all the turmoil and chaos. If ever there was a time for you to step up and make a difference, it is NOW! May God's richest blessings be upon each of you and the faith community that God has created through you, for you, and for the world. Blessings.

Pastor Bob Wang (a.k.a. PB or PBob).

FELLOWSHIP!

LOVE FELLOWSHIP?
LOVE COFFEE?

Volunteers are
needed to serve
during Fellowship
Hour!



Sign-up in the Narthex or contact the Church Office

Coffee Hour is so much fun, don't you agree! We have several openings to serve ; please sign-up!

Pick a date that is a special occasion for you, birthday, anniversary, birth of a child, etc., we want to celebrate with you!

THANK YOU!

Junior Girl Scout Troop 425 would like to extend a warm **thank you** to the ladies of the church for donating the yarn used to make scarves for those in need. We also want to thank Miss Anna and Miss Jo for their patience and kindness in teaching us how to crochet! To date, we have completed three scarves, which were donated to the Ministry of Missions Winter Outerwear Accessory Collection. Thank you for supporting our troop and helping us serve the community!



GROUPS & STUDIES



WOMEN'S BUNCO NIGHT

Friday, February 13th at
6:00 p.m. - \$5.00 entry fee

Join us for a fun-filled, competitive evening of playing Bunco while enjoying wonderful food and benefitting a good cause.



SENIOR AFTERNOON OF GAMES

Senior Afternoon of Games will be held on Wednesday, February 28th. Dessert will be served; feel free to bring a snack for yourself!



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Meetings are held the 2nd Saturday of each month at 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall. Saturday, February 14th will be our next Men's Fellowship Breakfast.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

From now through the first week of March, we will meet on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month immediately following worship. This shift to daytime meetings will make travel easier and safer during the winter months.

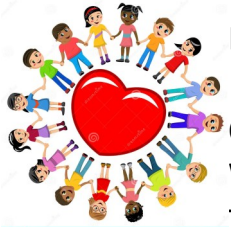
MISSION EVENTS & NEWS!

1st Sunday Collection - Special Offering for the ALITH Food Pantry Sunday, February 1st "Be a Neighbor, Feed a Neighbor"



Food Donations: There continues to be a great need in our community for donations of non perishable food. Food donations can be left in the shopping cart by the elevator or dropped off at the pantry at 1113 Pyott Road, Lake in the Hills. A current needs list can be found in the Narthex. The food pantry will also take plastic grocery bags to be used by pantry clients.

SALLY NORRIS COPE FUND



Donations have been made to the following organizations, each for \$500.00. February-Turning Point; April-Save the Children; May- Feed My Starving Children; June-Home of the Sparrow; September NICWA (National Indian Child Welfare Association), November—Kids in Need, McHenry County, December - The Night Ministry.



WINTER OUTERWEAR ACCESSORY COLLECTION

A heartfelt thank you to all who donated items for this collection. Because of your generosity, we collected: 35 hats, earmuffs, 11 scarves, 34 pairs of gloves & mittens, and 15 pairs of socks. The items were delivered to the Willow Creek Care Center in Crystal Lake, where they will be distributed to neighbors in need. Thank you for helping our community stay warm!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Watch for updates on future Mission opportunities:

- Feed My Starving Children *or* Northern Illinois Food Bank
- Assist with Prairie Trail Bike Path *or* Fox River Clean-Up



STYROFOAM RECYCLING

We are still unable to accept Styrofoam for recycling. Please dispose of Styrofoam in your regular garbage.

MINISTRIES & MORE



FAIR TRADE

Sunday, February 8th

When you purchase products that meet Fair Trade standards, not only are you supporting and compensating workers with fair wages for their talents and labor, you're also contributing to protecting the planet. Visit our Fair Trade table in Fellowship Hall, where you can browse and purchase quality Fair Trade products like coffee and tea. Visit our website or contact Nancy Kneip for more information.



**THE HEAVENLY ATTIC - Open
Friday and Saturday from
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

In the month of December, the Heavenly Attic board directed \$500 to Gigi's Playhouse. Headquartered in Hoffman Estates, GiGi's Playhouse provides free therapeutic, educational, and research-driven programs for individuals with Down syndrome through its 40 locations across the U.S. and Mexico.

For the month of February, The Heavenly Attic has selected the Pioneer Center of McHenry as the recipient of a \$500 donation. The Pioneer Center serves as a crucial resource in our area, offering dedicated services for individuals dealing with mental health issues, developmental disabilities, and homelessness. If you would like to learn more or donate to this organization, visit their website at <http://pioneercenter.com>.

Total Operating Fund Income		
Income	\$ 21,015.12	YTD \$ 330,352.23
Total Operating Expenses		
Expenses	\$ 26,386.06	YTD \$ 324,777.19
Net	(\$5,370.94)	YTD \$ 5,575.04
Mortgage Balance *		\$ 122,456.74
Checking Account Balance		\$ 15,777.15
OCWM \$250 plus member contribution	\$ 617.00	YTD \$ 8,944.00
Capital Expenditures		
Refer to Capital Fund for details	-	\$ 36,260.00
Memorial Funds		
Income	\$680.00	\$8,865.00
Expenses (Christmas Cantata—4 musicians)	\$900.00	\$11,935.26
Net	(\$220.00)	(\$3,070.26)
Control Check	Ok	Ok

As of December 31, 2025



MINISTRY OF MISSIONS

PROJECT IDEAS

The Ministry of Missions appreciates ideas for mission projects. Please share ideas with any Missions member (Barb Erion, Peg Nesser, Wynn Ann Roggeveen, Alice Woertendyke, Paula Evans, Kris Panzloff), or by putting a note in the container in the Narthex.

February

Birthdays

2/1	Marcie Nordlund	2/13	Mark Pociejewski
2/5	Michelle Tarosas	2/18	Nolan Pociejewski
2/6	Kathleen Dittmann	2/27	Christie Drasler
2/7	Seth Jolitz		
2/8	Nidia Kulack		
2/9	Kelly Hellyer		
2/11	Harold Knautz		
2/12	Peggy Schwab		

Anniversaries

2/5	Fred & Nancy Ekstrom
2/10	David & Kathy Kistler
2/29	Eugenia & Michael Szekely

If we missed your birthday or anniversary,
please notify the Church Office.

In Our Thoughts. In Our Prayers.

OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Carol Briggs	Bobbie Reed
Lynne Carlson	Dick Roggeveen
Fred Ekstrom	Sue Kreibich
Nancy Ekstrom	
Elsie Fry	
Gary Gray	
Pat Hemmingsen	
Janet Kelley	
Gary Parker	

OTHERS IN NEED OF PRAYER

Lauren Aggen
Tony Tarosas
Martha Wallace

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts and humbly ask you to please watch over those in our thoughts and prayers. Grant unto them your divine healing touch. May they feel your presence with them, bringing them strength and hope. Amen.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Thank you to the following for their memorial contributions.

Honoring Pat Kramer

June Casterson

Anna & Bob Benjamin

Honoring Don Schmidt

Tina Ash

Gina Orazi

Steve & Karen Guenther

Kathy Jamison

Honoring Mary Westerbeck

David & Kathy Kistler

David Aggen

Mary Whitney Beck

Carol Whitney

Julie Whitney Kewley

Honoring Ron Martens

Anna & Bob Benjamin

Honoring Joe Varhula

June Casterton

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

(Prayer for Peace)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.



Lenten Prayer for Ash Wednesday

God of goodness and mercy,
Hear my prayer as I begin this Lenten journey with you.

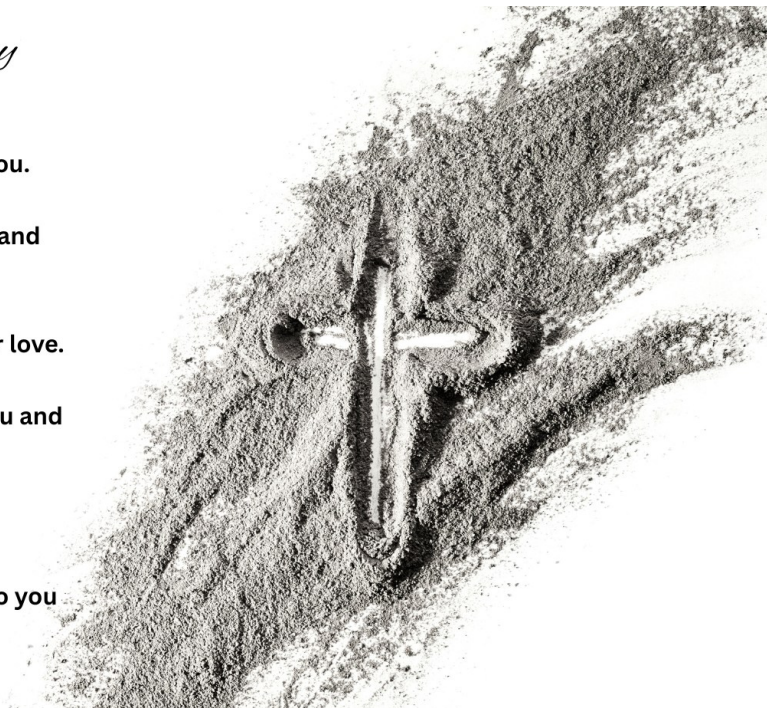
Let me be honest with myself as I look into my heart and
soul, noticing the times I turn away from you.

Guide me as I humbly seek to repent and return to your love.

May humility guide my efforts to be reconciled with you and
live forever in your abundant grace.

Transform me this Lent, heavenly Father.

Give me the strength to make myself 100% available to you
every day as I prepare for Easter.
Amen.

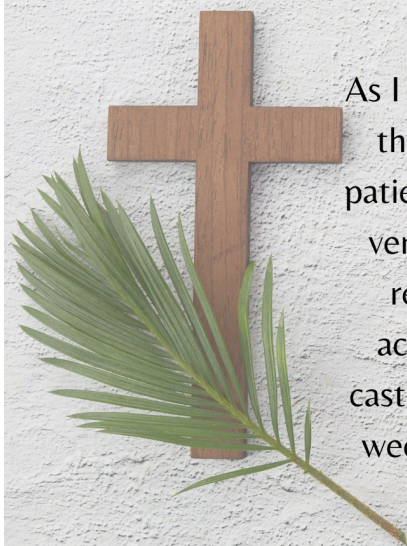


Lenten Prayer for Sundays

Heavenly Father,

As I enter another week of my Lenten journey, guide me to
the path that leads to you. Fill my heart with gratitude,
patience, strength, and peace as I strive to become the best
version of myself. Let me hear your voice in the deepest
reaches of my heart. Give me rest in you. Help me to
accept others, showing them your great love instead of
casting judgment. Stay with me through the busy days this
week and remind me that when I need comfort, solitude,
wisdom, or guidance, I can always turn to you.

Amen.



CCA STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Interim Bridge Pastor: Rev. Jim Benzing

Office Manager: Ashley Hrynko

Moderator: Dan Reebe

Vice Moderator: Nancy Kneip

Past Moderator: Bill Hellyer

Ministers of Music: Bev & Greg Tipps



**Please submit March
Newsletter Articles by
February 19th**

The Congregational Church of Algonquin

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Office hours: Monday — Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.