



Christian Fellowship Church Of Eldora



March/April 2026

A Newsletter of the
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Not the Lent I Imagined

By Pastor Susan

If you are under any illusions that pastors have (or should have) it all together, I plan to shatter that right now. This reflection is late (sorry Carol) in part because I could not for the life of me settle on something to write about. But I've heard you should write what you know, so, a review of my journal entries since Lent began has become the inspiration for this piece.

As a pastor, I am aware every year that Lent is coming, but somehow, I'm startled by its arrival regarding my own personal practice. I had planned to set aside a block of time beforehand to prayerfully consider with God how I ought to practice fasting, prayer, and almsgiving during Lent this year. I wanted a slow, unhurried, thoughtful entry into Lent. But February started off gangbusters with an onslaught of meetings, deadlines, planning, big decisions affecting family, and keeping up with the daily/weekly life of the church, not to mention trying to daily attend to my own soul, house, and partner. And it hasn't stopped. It probably won't for the foreseeable future.

So, my Lent this year feels more like a whitewater rafting trip than a contemplative float down the river. My intention (and desire) to set aside extra time for daily readings, prayer, and regular silence and solitude has been strangled by life. I'm betting I'm not the only one. Maybe your intentions to engage Lent more meaningfully this year vanished like a mist. Maybe it caught you off guard too, or maybe you started off great, but a few days or a week in, the wheels fell off the wagon.

So, what now? Give up? Back down? Aim to try again next year? Not at all. Sometimes we get to choose our Lenten practices, and sometimes life does. For me this year it's the latter. I can abandon my intent to Lenten practice altogether, or I can do what I can, as I can. Lent is a sacramental walk into the wilderness, and the wilderness can be unpredictable. However, Lenten practices are intended to redirect our attention, energy, and desire. Fasting directs my attention to where my desires have become disordered (I want what I want when and how I want it); prayer redirects my attention to my own neediness and to God who is the source of everything; and almsgiving turns my attention to my neighbor who needs what I have.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

My God-given responsibilities may not allow time to read all the Lenten devotionals I want, but I can still listen for God's Lenten messages to me in my regular Scripture reading (and boy, has He been talking to me about some character issues that need to change!). My schedule may not allow the extra time in prayer that I planned, but I can attend to God's prompts, praying as I go for those people and situations that pop into my mind "randomly." And I can still fast without a curated plan because each day, I am fasting from my will for doing Lent my way.

My practices this year look very small, ordinary, and mundane. But I am practicing how to accept from God's hand whatever he offers me in the daily (and unwanted) trials, frustrations, and disappointments that show me the cracks in my character and cue me to turn to God in prayer, call me to practice patience when I don't get my way, and provide opportunities to offer to my neighbor what I have (time, attention, gifts) without holding anything back. In a way, Lent is more "Lenty" because I'm not the director of it, God is. I am learning to become less while he becomes more.



Worship through Art

As you pass by the bulletin boards near the east and west side doors, you may or may not notice that the posters there mysteriously change every so often. This is the covert work of Joan Riskedahl, artist in residence at the Christian Fellowship Church. In addition to these visual encouragements to our faith, Joan has also painted 14 pieces depicting the Stations of the Cross (which will be on display both at the church and at the community Good Friday service this year), as well as a very large painting of the Holy Family, which was displayed during Advent and Christmas on our church altar.



Joan has connected with the arts since childhood (Crayola, visual, performing, musical) and enjoys writing poetry, decorative needlework, crocheting, knitting (she's part of the Healing Threads ministry making prayer shawls for people experiencing difficulties), and hand sewing projects. She also plays piano, participates in bell choir, and has recently begun learning the Tongue Drum. "It is defined as a melodic percussion instrument, but my definition is a calming, prayerful and sacred instrument."

Her favorite artistic medium is watercolor paint, which she picked up in 2018. "It moves and has a life of its own. Sometimes it flows into something unexpected, but beautiful. We call those 'happy' accidents! It reminds me of the Holy Spirit flowing through me, although this is NOT by accident." Joan is often inspired by nature, a scripture verse, or song that brings a visual to mind that she feels she has to paint. "This is how I feel God speaks to me. My prayer is that the gifts God has given me through my works of art/music will touch others in a personal way – the way that only He can – and that what they see or hear may be just what is needed at that moment." Joan is currently working on a watercolor project for Advent – stay tuned!

Art is often a "back door" through which God can access our hearts and souls with messages of what is good, true, and beautiful. That's why when we see paintings or pictures, or hear a piece of music, our hearts soar with joy and tears come to our eyes. It's important to pay attention in those moments because God himself is trying to communicate specifically to you. We hope that you'll come see the Stations of the Cross this month (they'll also be posted on our website if you can't make the trip) or that you'll make time to interact with other art in your own way and listen for what God might want to say to you through it.

Members present: Steve Foster, Rosanne Foster, Scott Swartz, Jim Johnson, Pastor Susan, Pastor Pat, Dave Dunn, Trista Nelson, Mary Swartz, Blair Donaldson, and Vic Reist.

Dave Dunn called the meeting to order, and Pastor Pat read the devotions. Last month's minutes were accepted.

TRUSTEES –

- Steve and Scott are repairing a faucet at the parsonage.

FINANCE –

- Scott Swartz gave the financial report. Income for January was \$13,563 and Expenses were \$12,575. The \$10,000 down payment was made to Rob's Heating and Cooling for the boilers.

NEW BUSINESS –

- Aaron Swartz was approved as the new custodian for 15hours per week at \$10 per hour.
- The alternative pregnancy center will be open the first Wednesday of the month along with the monthly soup luncheon.

OLD BUSINESS –

- The strategic planning committee has plans for clearing out some of the unneeded items in the church.
- The parts to the boiler are in but cannot be installed until Rob's sends in the "advance notice of installation" to the state. He has the paperwork and is working on it.
- The quarterly potluck is scheduled for February 22.
- Ash Wednesday will be celebrated February 18 at 5:30 pm.
- Scott reported that all the streaming worked well last week!

Steve made the motion to adjourn, Vic Reist seconded. Dave adjourned the meeting.



January 2026

	YTD	BUDGET 2026	2025 YTD
Income			
Pledges, Offerings and Donations	\$13,563		\$15,280
Expenses			
Staff Expenses	\$10,490	\$136,628	\$10,348
Buildings and Utilities	\$1,797	\$46,150	\$2,138
Worship	\$52	\$5,200	\$180
Ministries and Misc	\$236	\$4,425	\$498
Total Outflows	\$12,575	\$192,403	\$13,164
Fund Balances as of 1/31/26			
General Fund	\$36,392		\$41,201
Building Fund	\$5,756		\$12,676
HOPE Fund	\$4,541		\$4,417
Savings Account	\$5,098		\$7,008
Memorial Fund	\$12,846		\$13,157
Youth Fund	\$9,428		\$9,435
Mission and Nurse Funds	\$2,722		\$2,715
Trust Fund	\$130,143		\$126,144
Davison Scholarship Trust	\$76,331		\$76,505
NON-BUDGET ITEMS			
HOPE expenditures	\$500		\$500
Benevolence Giving	\$925		\$1,025
Misc projects	\$10,000		\$0



March Birthdays

- Mar. 01 - Charlie Creps
- Mar. 03 - Dorothy Davison
- Mar. 05 - Taylor LaFrenz
- Mar. 07 - Brandon Vinton
- Mar 08 - Linda McEwen
- Mar. 14 - Douglas Minter, Jr.
- Mar. 15 - Herbie Reist
- Mar. 16 - Emma Inks
- Mar. 16 - Ivan E. Miller
- Mar. 16 - Shorty Reinertson
- Mar. 20 - Mark Seward
- Mar. 23 - Nicole Hess
- Mar. 23 - Jenna Roling
- Mar. 28 - Jim Peters
- Mar. 29 - Ella Anderson
- Mar. 30 - Kat Konomi
- Mar. 30 - Vic Reist

Sunday, March 01
Communion/Bread of Life
 9:30 Worship Service

Sunday, March 08
 9:30 Worship Service

Sunday, March 15
 9:30 Worship Service

Thursday, March 19
 3:00 Prayer Ministry

Sunday, March 22
 9:30 Worship Service

Sunday, March 29
Palm Sunday
 9:30 Worship Service



Thursday, April 2
Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 3
Good Friday

Sunday, April 05
Easter Sunday
Communion/Bread of Life
 9:30 Worship Service

Sunday, April 12
 9:30 Worship Service

Sunday, April 19
 9:30 Worship Service

Thursday, February 19
 3:00 Prayer Ministry

Wednesday, October 22
 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship

Sunday, April 26
 9:30 Worship Service



April Birthdays

- Apr. 02 - Brian Hobson
- Apr. 04 - Aaron Clemons
- Apr. 08 - Lucy Anderson
- Apr. 08 - Garrett Anderson
- Apr. 08 - Ashley Grego
- Apr. 12 - Douglas Minter, Sr.
- Apr. 14 - Tara Jenson
- Apr. 15 - Deb Crosser
- Apr. 18 - Phyllis May
- Apr. 23 - Jim Johnson
- Apr. 25 - Elsie Silvey
- Apr. 28 - Lucas LaVelle
- Apr. 28 - Leone Crandall
- Apr. 30 - Craig Cobb
- Apr. 30 - Wanda Hobson

Special Blessings



Happy Birthday, Clarence!!



HUGE thanks to Christian Fellowship Church!!! Our first day at our new location in Eldora was amazing!!!



Alternatives Pregnancy Center



POTLUCK

Christian Fellowship Church of Eldora
1415 12th Street
Eldora, Iowa 50627

Non-Profit Organization
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Funny Church Bloopers | Choir Singing . . . and Laughing

1. The Rector will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing 'Break Forth into Joy.'
2. Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
3. Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again, giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
4. If you need to heave during the Postlude, please do so quietly.
5. Next Thursday, there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
6. The 'Over 60s Choir' will be disbanded for the summer with the thanks of the entire church.

Stacy Marshall
GodTube

For an update on Ukraine, please click this link.

<https://eldoraiacfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/ministry-newsleter-chernihiv-ukraine-february-2026-us.pdf>

Ans-a-gram The initial letters of the answers (in order) will provide an anagram of the final solution, which is an Old Testament book.

1. His offering was not favourably viewed (4) [Genesis 4:5]
2. God first said, 'Let there be ...' (5) [Genesis 1:3]
3. Where Abram's brother, Haran, died (2) [Genesis 11:28]
4. Called while ploughing a field (6) [1 Kings 19:19]
5. Garment to conceal the face (4) [Exodus 34:33]
6. God with us! (O.T. spelling) (8) [Isaiah 7:14]
7. First Christian martyr (7) [Acts 7:59]
8. What God renamed Jacob (6) [Genesis 35:10]
9. Disciple of Jewish mother and Greek father that Paul met at Lystra (7) [Acts 16:1]

(All Bible references from NIV)