

A Joyful Noise!

February 2026

Hello Fellow Travelers,

Last month we received our ten books for the first year of the Mitten Project. This year's theme for the multigenerational work of the Mitten Project is nature, and all ten books have a nature theme.

The first book that I am reading is *The Serviceberry, Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. In the past I have heard excerpts from this book and her previous one, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, so I thought this was a great place to start. Ms. Kimmerer is an Indigenous scientist and a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology.

This book has led me to a lot of thinking.

Most of us live inside what Robin Wall Kimmerer calls a consumer economy. We are trained to ask, What does this cost? What do I get? Is it worth it? From grocery stores to online shopping carts, almost everything in our lives comes with a price tag and a transaction. We exchange money for goods, labor for wages, time for productivity. It's efficient. It's familiar. And it can quietly shape how we see the world — and even one another.

But in her book, *The Serviceberry*, Kimmerer invites us to remember another way of living: the gift economy. In the natural world, she writes, the Serviceberry bush does not sell its fruit. It gives it away — abundantly. Birds, bears, humans, and soil all receive, and in turn they give back through seed, care, and relationship. Nothing is hoarded. Nothing is wasted. Everything circulates.

In a gift economy, the central questions aren't "What does this cost? But rather "What has been given?" "What is needed?" "How do we respond with gratitude?"

What a way to live. She illustrates through her book what the Bible teaches us.

Scripture never describes God's world as a marketplace. It is described as a table. A garden. A body. A feast. Jesus doesn't invite people to purchase grace; he multiplies bread. He doesn't charge admission; he feeds crowds. He doesn't negotiate forgiveness; he gives it. Over and over, the biblical story tells us that God's economy is rooted not in scarcity, but in abundance.

God's economy is built on gift and reciprocity: Receive freely. Give generously. Trust that more will come.

That's very different from the consumer story that whispers, "There's not enough. Protect what's yours. Measure your worth by what you produce or purchase."

In the church, we sometimes slip into that consumer mindset without noticing. We start to think of worship as a product, ministry as a service, stewardship as paying dues, and faith as something we “get” instead of something we practice together. But church is not a store. It’s a living ecosystem.

Every person who walks through our doors carries gifts that cannot be bought: listening ears, casseroles, prayers, stories, laughter, snow-shoveling, rides to appointments, hands that set tables, hearts that notice who is missing. These are not transactions. They are offerings.

Kimmerer reminds us that in a gift economy, gratitude becomes the engine. When you receive a gift, you naturally want to give in return — not out of obligation, but out of relationship. The cycle keeps moving. The community stays alive.

That’s what stewardship really is. Not paying for church but participating in God’s circulation of grace. Not funding an institution but nourishing a body. Not scarcity thinking, but abundance living.

In a small, rural community especially, we already know this truth. We borrow tools. We share harvests. We show up when someone is sick. We plow each other out. We pass recipes and stories along with casseroles. Long before anyone writes a check, the gift economy is already happening.

The church simply names it, blesses it, and joins it.

So maybe the invitation for us is this:

Where have we been living like consumers when God is calling us to be givers?

Where have we been afraid of running out when God is promising enough?

Where can we practice gratitude that turns into generosity?

The serviceberry does not ask who deserves its fruit. It just offers it. And in doing so, it feeds the whole community.

May we do the same — trusting that in God’s economy, love multiplies, gifts circulate, and abundance grows whenever we choose to share.

See you along The Way,

Pastor Patty

Barbara, Paula, Hank, Anna, Brad, Mike

Prayers For...

Those who have lost loved ones.



UCC Church of the Month

As part of our continuing efforts to work together with our fellow United Northern Association churches as a community of faith, we invite you to pray this month for the ongoing mission and ministries of

1st Congregational Church of Onekama UCC

Flowers

If you need the assistance of the church for Altar Flowers, please call the office 231-882-4922.

BIG

For our **B.I.G.** donations this month, we are collecting cans of **Soup** benefitting **BACN** and **Benzie Food Partners**.

Web Links

Michigan Conference News: michucc.org

Church Facebook Page:
facebook.com/BenzoniaCongregational

United Northern Association Facebook Page:
facebook.com/UnitedNorthernAssociationUCC

Church YouTube Page:
<https://www.youtube.com/@FirstCongregationalBenzoniaUCC>

Church Instagram Page: @benzoniauucc



Happy Birthday



- 1 Judy Polhamus
- 2 Peter Moss
- 2 Leah Johnson
- 2 Barry Hahn
- 4 Ryan Strom
- 8 Christy Case
- 8 Mary Gehring
- 8 Elizabeth Neiger
- 9 Chris Jones
- 13 Kim Weaver
- 13 Shelley Marshall
- 14 John Gehring
- 14 Delores Jones
- 16 Lynn Hopkins
- 21 Will Jones
- 23 Donna Knox
- 25 Wyatt Brown
- 28 Ezekiel Wear
- 28 Jenni McLean
- 29 Marsha Case
- 29 Marilee Strom

Coffee Hour Hosts

- Feb 1** Barb Brian
- Feb 8** Souper Bowl Sunday
- Feb 15** Chris Stone
- Feb 22** Jenni McLean

Souper Bowl Sunday

Now Throughout February



Soup Can Collection
Benefitting BACN and
Benzie Food Partners
NFC vs AFC
Blue bins in
the Fellowship Hall

Sponsored By Outreach

Christian Education Event

Blind Date
with a Book

mystery books of
various genres

clues to help you choose

\$5.00 each

This fundraiser benefits the
Christian Education Fund.



Don't miss out on the fun!!

Blind Date with a Book is back!!

4 Easy Steps to Enjoy...

Pick out one or three from the
clues that are written on the
wrapper.

Put the donation in the fishbowl.

Go home and into your comfy
spot.

Unwrap and enjoy.

Souper Bowl

Sunday

February 8, 2026

Following

Worship Service

MENU

Choice of Soups

Bread

Dessert

Beverages

PLUS

Quarts & Cups Available To Go

Proceeds support service projects

Grief

During the last year or so, we have experienced a lot of loss in our congregation. The board of Deacon's are wondering if we should have a support group of some kind to help people going through this transition period.

If you might be interested in beginning this kind of support, please let us know. We were thinking something casual, you tell us what you need.

We can offer a safe place to gather and share experiences and opportunities to help each other.

If interested please contact Patty, the office or Chris Jones.



As we make bigger tables, not
higher walls...

You are invited to dinner.

February 14th

At 5:30

Come as Ones or Twos or
Whole Families.

All are welcome

A Way to Give:

Making a charity a beneficiary is a meaningful way to extend your values and care beyond your lifetime. One of the simplest ways is through a will or trust. You can name a charitable organization to receive a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or the remainder after other gifts are made. An attorney or estate-planning professional can help ensure the language is clear and legally sound. It's also wise to use the charity's full legal name so your gift is directed exactly where you intend.

Another common option is to name a charity as a beneficiary on financial accounts. Retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and some bank or investment accounts allow you to designate beneficiaries directly through the institution. This approach is often easy to update and does not require changing your entire will. Simply request a beneficiary designation form, list the charity, and keep a copy with your important documents. Reviewing these designations regularly ensures they still match your wishes.

Finally, it's helpful to communicate your plans. Let your family know about your intentions and consider informing the charity as well. Many organizations can offer guidance on how to structure a gift so it aligns with your goals and may recognize your generosity in ways that matter to you. By planning carefully and thoughtfully, naming a charity as a beneficiary becomes a lasting expression of generosity and stewardship.

We assume that the bequest is unrestricted unless otherwise stated, to be used at our discretion. If that is not your wish, then it should be stated.

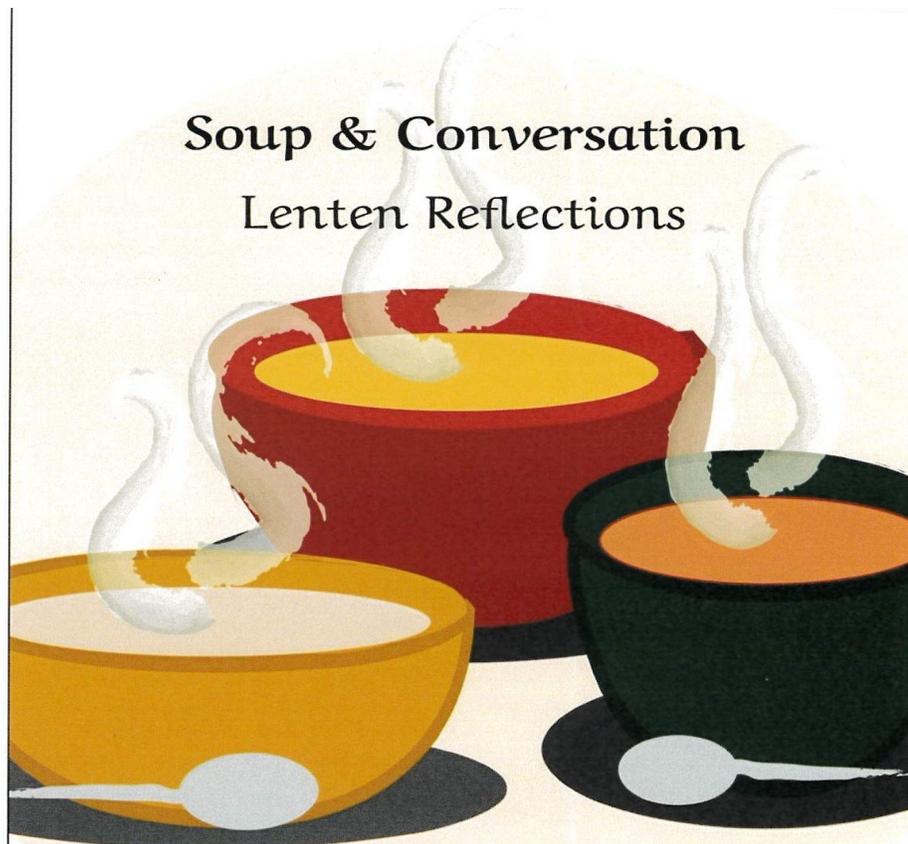
Soup and Conversation.

Join us on the first and third Wednesdays of February and March for a warm meal and conversation.

The theme is *Love God, Neighbor, and Enemy* and how timely can that be in today's world, as well as during our Lenten journey.

See you February 4th at 6:00.

Soup & Conversation Lenten Reflections



Wednesdays
Feb 4, 18, Mar 4, 18
6:00 pm

February 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 BIG Sunday 10:30am Worship/ Communion	2 7pm AA (Barn) 7pm Boy Scouts	3 5pm Community Family Mentors (Barn)	4 6pm Soup & Conversation 7pm AA (Barn)	5 10:30am Women's Radiant Qigong (Barn) 5pm AA (Barn) 7pm NA (Barn)	6 12pm WAA (Barn) 7pm AA (Barn)	7 8:30am Men's Breakfast
8 9:30am Deacons 10:30am Worship 11:30am Souper Bowl Sunday	9 9am Trustees 11am Commodities Distribution 7pm AA (Barn) 7pm Boy Scouts	10 5pm Community Family Mentors (Barn) 7pm WAA (Barn)	11 7pm AA (Barn)	12 10:30am Women's Radiant Qigong (Barn) 5pm AA (Barn) 7pm NA (Barn)	13 12pm WAA (Barn) 7pm AA (Barn)	14 5:30pm Valentine Dinner
15 9:30am Christian Ed 10:30am Worship	16 7pm AA (Barn) 7pm Boy Scouts	17 5pm Community Family Mentors (Barn) 5pm council 5:30pm Single MOMM 7pm WAA (Barn)	18 8am Benzie Cty Community Chest 6pm Soup & Conversation 7pm AA (Barn) 7pm Ash Wednesday Service	19 10:30am Women's Radiant Qigong (Barn) 5pm AA (Barn) 7pm NA (Barn)	20 12pm WAA (Barn) 7pm AA (Barn)	21 8:30am Benzie Zonta
22 10:30am Worship	23 7pm AA (Barn) 7pm Boy Scouts	24 5:30pm Single MOMM 7pm WAA (Barn)	25 7pm AA (Barn)	26 10:30am Women's Radiant Qigong (Barn) 5pm AA (Barn) 7pm NA (Barn)	27 12pm WAA 7pm AA (Barn)	28

ACROSS

- 1 Swallowed Jonah
- 5 “__, she is broken that was the gates of the people;” Ezek. 26:2
- 8 An arched structure
- 12 Son of Jacob and Bilhah Gen. 35:25
- 13 “Asahel was as light of foot as a wild __.” 2 Sam. 2:18
- 14 “__, and it shall be given you;” Matt. 7:7
- 15 “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and __ not the things which I say?” Luke 6:46
- 17 Dressed in clothing
- 19 Sends up the Space Shuttle
- 21 Rocky Mountain state (abbr.)
- 22 “And washed us from our sins in his __ blood,” Rev. 1:5
- 24 “To him that overcometh will I grant to __ with me in my throne.” Rev. 3:21
- 25 “How long will it be __ they believe me,” Num. 14:11
- 26 “I will break also the __ of Damascus,” Amos 1:5
- 27 “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is __.” Matt. 26:41
- 29 Son of Abinoam Judg. 5:1
- 31 Cut stone
- 32 1002 to Augustus
- 34 Sibling
- 35 National (abbr.)
- 36 Pays
- 39 “Fearful __ and great signs shall there be from heaven.” Luke 21:11
- 42 Electrical Engineer (abbr.)
- 43 Fractional portions
- 44 Greeting
- 45 Son of Ham Gen. 10:6
- 48 Resurrection holiday
- 51 “Thou anointest my head with __;”
- 52 Son of Zilpah Gen. 35:26
- 54 Follows Micah (abbr.)
- 55 “The same is he that heareth the word, and __ with joy receiveth it;” Matt. 13:20
- 57 2nd river in Eden
- 59 “But it shall not be __ with the wicked,” Eccl. 8:13
- 62 The Red __
- 63 Follows Esth.
- 64 Last Book (abbr.)
- 66 “And said unto the __, Peace, be still,” Mark 4:39
- 67 “Thy kingdom is __ everlasting kingdom,” Psalm 145:13
- 68 Civic laws
- 69 Converse
- 71 Schooner state (abbr.)
- 72 Follows Gal.
- 73 King of Assyria brought men from here 2 Kgs. 17:24
- 75 Charged particle
- 77 Abram’s brother: Lot’s Father
- 78 “For God so loved the world, that he gave __ only begotten Son.”
- 79 Ark

DOWN

- 1 Gave two mites
- 2 Anno Domini (abbr.)
- 3 __ of Moses
- 4 Son of Seth Gen. 5:6
- 5 King of Damascus 2 Cor. 11:32
- 6 “__, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” Isa. 55:1
- 7 Man with palsy healed by Peter Acts 9:33-34
- 8 Flower pot
- 9 Son of Abijam 1 Kgs. 15:8
- 10 United Kingdom (abbr.)
- 11 Spiny protuberances
- 16 “__ no man any thing, but to love one another;” Rom. 13:8
- 18 Taken from Adam to create Eve
- 20 __ of the Covenant
- 21 Crows call
- 23 “If ye shall ask any thing in my __, I will do it.” John 14:14
- 26 2nd Hebrew letter
- 28 Relatives
- 30 “And they departed from Hazereth, and pitched in __.” Num. 33:18
- 31 Follows Zeph.
- 33 Perfect
- 35 First Hebrew month Esth. 3:7
- 36 Opposite of cos (Mathematics)
- 37 A green vegetable
- 38 Transgression
- 39 “And blessed is __ that believed;” Luke 1:45
- 40 “Praise ye __ Lord.”
- 41 “The nobleman saith unto him, __, come down ere my child die.” John 4:49
- 46 “I will cause the sun to go down at __,” Amos 8:9
- 47 16th Hebrew letter Psalm 119
- 49 “And God __ that it was good.” Gen. 1:10
- 50 Follows Col.
- 52 “And the men of __ rose against me,” Judg. 20:5
- 53 Interpretation of name Tabitha Acts 9:36
- 55 Son of Berechiah 1 Chron. 15:17
- 56 Father of Joshua
- 57 “Glory to __ in the highest,”
- 58 Before Esth.
- 60 The lion
- 61 Michigan, Huron & Erie
- 63 The Baptist
- 65 “But shun profane and __ babblings;” 2 Tim. 2:16
- 68 Certified Public Accountant (abbr.)
- 70 “Is any thing __ hard for the Lord?” Gen. 18:14
- 72 Emergency Room (abbr.)
- 74 Six to a Roman
- 76 Symbol for the element sodium

1		2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10		11
			12				13			14				
15	16		17		18			19	20				21	
22		23		24				25				26		
27			28		29		30				31			
		32		33		34				35				
36	37				38				39				40	41
42				43									44	
45		46	47						48		49	50		
		51				52		53		54				
55	56				57				58		59		60	61
62				63				64		65		66		
67			68					69			70		71	
		72				73	74			75		76		
77						78				79				

First Congregational Church of Benzonia UCC
901 Barber Street, P.O. Box 234
Benzonia, MI 49616

A Joyful Noise!

First Congregational Church Of Benzonia UCC
Benzonia, MICHIGAN



Office Phone: 231-882-4922

Office Hours: M—F 9am—Noon

Office Email: secretary@benzoniacongregational.org