



THE MESSENGER

Vol. 70, Issue 3

April 2026

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:3-5).

We are coming to the end of our 40-day Lenten journey of abstinence from something we regularly do, to free up time to spend in prayer, devotion, and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I shared in my March message, I have faithfully prayed several Psalms each morning since mid February. I have also found the “Sing the Hours” daily prayers to be very meaningful. Each morning this 17 minute video devotion has helped me to center my mind and heart on Jesus prior to praying the Psalms. On some days I have also prayed the “Sing the Hours” evening vesper prayers just prior to retiring for the night. This journey has, for me, provided a great boost to my faith in Christ.

Now a word about Holy Week, March 30th to April 4th. Over my nearly 40 years serving the UMC, I have always participated in Holy Week services. In the 1980s and 90s, Kenmore UMC held community Good Friday services from noon to 3pm featuring 7 different pastors from area churches. As I recall, the format centered on the “Seven Last Words of Christ.” Each of the seven 25 minute worship segments was led by a different pastor, and participants could come and go as they pleased during the three hours. I always stayed for the entire service because, at that time, I was responsible for operating the sanctuary sound equipment along with caring for the “behind the scenes” work. I cherish the memory of those experiences because they led me to experience the great benefits of participating in Holy Week services.

In my 40 years serving the Church, I have always encouraged people to participate, as much as they are able, in the various Holy Week studies and services. Why is this important? Well, we Christ’s followers are pretty good at telling and retelling the story of Jesus’ birth, and some of his teachings like the Golden Rule and the Good Samaritan parable. Each year we also look forward to celebrating Palm Sunday and our Easter morning services. However, when it comes to knowing Jesus’ hard teachings and the story of his arrest, mock trial, and crucifixion, many Christ followers have much less experience with these truths of Christ’s gospel.



During the first five Sundays of Lent, I preached on the life experiences of Jesus and his disciples during the week leading up to the crucifixion. My goal has been to help you and me better understand and experience the depth of Jesus' love for people, demonstrated by ALL the suffering he went through so that we might live with God eternally. On March 22nd, I ended that sermon series describing Jesus' encounter with the Roman governor Pilate who sent Jesus to the Cross. Jesus' Holy Week experiences climaxed with the crucifixion, which is the event Christ's followers look to as the means of our salvation. And we cannot *fully experience* the joy of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday without first having reflected on all Jesus experienced during the week leading up to his crucifixion.

Each day of Holy Week this year will offer an additional opportunity to hear and reflect on Jesus' passion story that led him to the Cross. Please see the calendar in this newsletter for the full schedule. Here I will highlight two special services: Maundy/Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

On Maundy/Holy Thursday, April 2nd at 7pm, Pastor Ted Brelsford has invited Churchill to come to Faith UCC, 8651 Boston State Rd, for a service titled "In Remembrance of Me." In that service, several people (including me) will offer dramatic readings featuring some of the people who witnessed Christ's experiences in that final week. The service will end with a retelling of the Last Supper and the celebration of Holy Communion. In this way, we will do what the Apostle Paul proclaims: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

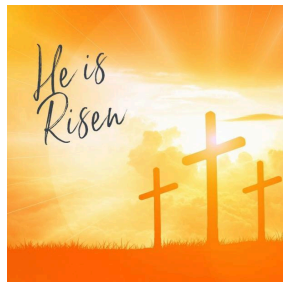
Then on Good Friday, April 3rd at 7pm in the Churchill sanctuary, I will lead us through a "Stations of the Cross" worship service. I have done this service several times in the past, and I am always told by participants how meaningful the service is for them. The service moves through 14 Scripture passages detailing the road to the Cross, each one enhanced by an image depicting the scene, along with a moment of silent reflection. Several Lenten hymns are spread out through the readings, and I will give a short reflection on how I have been changed by the Cross of Jesus.

I encourage you to participate in as many Holy Week activities as you are able. I can guarantee that the more we reflect on Jesus' experiences during his Holy Week, the more meaning and joy we will experience on Easter Sunday, and

beyond. May God continue to lead, guide, empower, and protect the Church's ministry. Amen. ~ Pastor John Loeser

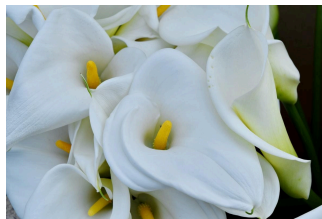


EASTER SONRISE SERVICE



We will once again have a continental breakfast following the 7:00 a.m. Sonrise service on Easter morning, April 5th. The service will be held outside, weather permitting, and all are welcome to attend and stay for breakfast in the parlor. Help with providing the food is much appreciated. A sign-up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY



Is extended to Jewel Dye and family with the passing of her brother Calvin Neureuther.



United
Women
in Faith

~ Nancy Schwab

Thursday, April 9th -- 10 a.m. -- We will have a regular business meeting and finish making plans for the rest of 2026. Our participation in the May 2nd HymnFest will also be discussed. Please come and join us as we continue to support our church in many ways. Bring a lunch; coffee, tea and dessert will be provided.

Friday, April 24th -- The first spring Fish Dinner will be held and we will have our UWF baked goods table. We hope you can donate lots of good breads, coffee cakes, brownies, cookies, etc. to make the sale a success.

Saturday, April 25th -- Niagara Frontier District Gift Day will be held at Attica UMC. When I receive the list from the District of the items needed as "gifts" for various organizations in the Buffalo area, I will share with you via the Messenger and there will be a table set up in the narthex for your donations.

Saturday, May 2nd -- "Sundays in the 60's" is the theme of the 2026 HymnFest at Churchill. Mark and several others have been working on this event and he has planned beautiful music to share as we continue to celebrate Churchill Memorial's 60 years. A continental breakfast will be from 9:30-10:15, followed by the program at 10:30. Help will be needed to provide the food for the breakfast and to work in the kitchen that morning. More information will be available at our April 9th meeting. The Quilt Ladies have made another beautiful quilt under the direction of Mary Ann Kreuder, and it will be given away to a lucky member of the audience. We hope you will help spread the word about this special music program and invite your friends and family to come and enjoy the morning together.

EMAIL REMINDER

Rev. Loeser's E-mail address is jploeser@gmail.com.



HYMN FEST 2026 - Sundays in the 60's

~ Mark Vona

Churchill Memorial opened its doors in September of 1965. That makes this year its 60th anniversary. In that time many families and many people have worshipped here and become attached to this church and still, thank the Lord, the doors are open for worship.

Churchill has a very interesting history, even connecting our history with that of WKBW! It's in a beautiful building and in a beautiful location. I feel lucky to have met and worked with this longstanding church community. Although I have been here almost 30 years I consider myself a bit of an outsider. That may sound odd to you but not to worry. I don't think of that as a negative and I don't take it personally. The church has a long history that goes back well before I showed up. This church has been and is full of good people and I'm happy to take my place in the lineup. 60 years! Last spring and summer there was talk of how we might mark this milestone and how we might celebrate it. Well, the Churchill United Women in Faith is once again this year sponsoring a Hymn Fest and I believe this upcoming Hymn Fest gives us an opportunity to do just that. Let me posit my idea in full.

You may have noticed that my choices in our weekly worship music spans many styles and eras: from classical and old fashion hymns, to jazzed up classics, to the new 'praise music'. I guess you could say I have an eclectic taste in music. Well, quite frankly church music has gone through some big changes in the past 60 years so I don't feel those choices are out of step. There is a shift in churches toward music from diverse musical influences and music with high energy. This is true across the board for many churches and, by the way, that doesn't mean you have to like it all. I suppose there's a bit of the Barnum & Bailey in that - LOL !

As a child of the 60's I have always been aware of the many songs from the 60's that are suitable in church. Songs like Turn, Turn, Turn, One Love, Put Your hand in the Hand, etc, etc..... The '60's spawned what is referred to as the Jesus Movement and the 'Jesus Freaks'. The era espoused brotherly love and sang about it constantly. That brings me to the reason I'm writing this

to you now - I'd like to call Hymn Fest 2026 - - Sundays in the '60's - a hymn fest with a twist!! Let's have some fun with this music and celebrate our church; its past and its present!

Hymn Fest 2026 will feature hymns and church-worthy pop music from the 1960's. The Churchill musicians will perform and also help everyone to join in with the many songs that are appropriate from that era - and it will all be accompanied by a pop/rock combo! Watch for more information and please plan on attending if you are at all able, and bring a friend. They'll thank you. The church needs you. **Saturday, May 2nd, 10:30am.** I hope to see and hear you that day. God Bless!

HYMN FEST REGISTRATION INFORMATION

~ MaryAnn Kreuder

Registration forms are available in the narthex and have been attached to the April Messenger.





MESSENGER ARTICLES

~ Sandy Wittmeyer

Articles are due on the third Thursday of each month, **April 16th**, to churchillmessenger@gmail.com for the May Messenger.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE BLANKETS+ 2026

~ Nancy Schwab

Thank you for your dedication to providing Blankets for Church World Service. Thanks to you, families in need across the country received blankets when they arrived at the shelters. You helped them stay warm and shared God's grace with them, making a difference in their lives.

This year Churchill Memorial members gave \$2495, the most ever donated in the 32 years we've been supporting the CWS Blankets program! For your wonderful support of Blanket Sundays and on behalf of all the families you have helped, but may never meet -- THANK YOU!

ADMINISTRATION BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

~ Mike Campbell

The Ad Board met on Tuesday, January 27th at 5:45PM. Attending the meeting were Pastor John, Mike Campbell, Nancy Schwab, Jewel Dye, Judy Murdoch, Diane Helmbrecht, and Dan Schwab. The group opened the meeting by sharing what they were thankful for. Pastor John announced the services planned over the next couple months including Maundy Thursday at Faith UCC on April 2nd, Good Friday at 7PM at Churchill on April 3rd, Easter Sunrise Service 7AM at Churchill on April 5th, and Easter Sunday Service 10:45 on April 5th. We will be having communion every Sunday during lent and preaching the book of Mark on the Passions of Christ.

Mike gave the Child Center report that is now up to 75 children attending. Nancy Schwab gave the Worship and United Women of Faith reports. Doug



submitted a summary of Trustee activities prior to the meeting. He and Jay are working to fix the TV connection problem in the sanctuary. The trustees are considering having a fund raiser initiative to buy a zero turn lawn mower.

Under Outreach, Pastor John suggested that we implement a Pastoral Care Committee. He will work with Jewel to implement. Rick Roehner submitted a Finance report that Mike presented. We ended 2025 with a ~\$22k surplus due to decreased pastor costs for the first half of the year. The 2026 budget is forecasting a ~\$26k deficit. For 2026 there are 27 pledges totaling \$73,297 in the Stewardship campaign. Under PPR Judy Murdoch reported that we had received a \$5,000 grant from the conference to be applied towards the pastor's salary. We can reapply for the grant every 6 months for 3 years.

Under New Business we discussed and approved the program "The Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, Lead Courageously" program which helps support clergy outside the USA. The Board approved the appointment of Dan Schwab as the new chairman of Churchill's Administration Board.

Pastor John closed the meeting with a Prayer. The next meeting will be April 14th, 2026 at 6PM.

FASHION SHOW AT BOLO



Bread of Life Outreach, BOLO, is having a High Tea and Fashion Show on **Saturday, April 25th from noon to 3:30** at the Colden Fire Hall, 8448 Gutekunst Road, Colden. This is a major fund-raiser that helps support the food pantry in our area. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased at Gabe's on the Hill Thrift store or by mail to BOLO Tea Tickets, PO Box 113, Colden, NY 14033. Include a check made out to BOLO, your full name and number of tickets you'd like. Tickets have sold out fast in the past, so if you'd like to attend, send your check right away.



CHURCHILL CHILD CENTER



The Child Center continues to grow with attendance now ~75. With the growth there is a need for more employees. The Center is advertising to hire caregivers and a part time administrative assistant. Contact Connie Lux the Center Director at 716-941-6649 if interested. The Child Center Board is exploring the possibility of upgrading the playground area. Quotes are being solicited from equipment suppliers with the plan to implement upgrades this spring/summer.

SPRING FISH DINNERS

~ Mike Campbell



The 2026 Spring fish dinners will be held on **Friday, April 24th and Friday, May 8th**. We will be making German potato salad on the Thursdays before, April 23rd and May 7th. Look for sign up sheets in early April. We look forward to seeing everyone then and for warmer weather....Please!

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. ~ 1 Peter 1:3



APRIL 2026

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
March 29 Palm Sunday 10:45 Service <i>Communion</i>	March 30 2:30 pm and 6:15pm Bible Study at Colden UMC	March 31 10:00 am Spiritual Formation Class	1 1 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm Choir	2 7:00 Holy Thursday Service at Faith UCC	3 7:00 pm Good Friday Service at Churchill Memorial	4
5 7:00 am Easter Sunrise Service - <i>Breakfast served after</i> 10:45 Service <i>Communion</i>	6 <i>Pastor John is on vacation through April 12</i>	7	8 7:00 pm Choir	9 10 am UWF Meeting 7 pm Trustees	10	11
12 10:45 Service <i>Coffee Hour</i>	13 2:30 pm and 6:15pm Bible Study at Colden UMC	14 10:00 am Spiritual Formation Class 6:00 pm Ad Council	15 1 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm Choir	16 <i>Messenger Articles Due</i>	17	18
19 10:45 Service	20 2:30 pm and 6:15pm Bible Study at Colden UMC	21 10:00 am Spiritual Formation Class	22 1 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm Choir	23 7:00 - 9:00 pm Parlor in Use	24 4:30 - 7:00 pm Fish Dinner	25 Niagara Frontier Gift Day - Attica UMC
26 10:45 Service	27 2:30 pm and 6:15pm Bible Study at Colden UMC	28 10:00 am Spiritual Formation Class 11:00 Worship Meeting	29 1 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm Choir	30		

