

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**First Sunday of Lent**  
**February 22, 2026**

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\*\*\*\* *Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

GATHERING BELL

*At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.*

PRELUDE

*We Pray Now to the Holy Spirit*, Dietrich Buxtehude

Ellen Bradley

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Paul Ashby

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

**Whoever you are...and wherever you are on  
life's journey... you are welcome here!**

OPENING REFLECTION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Beth Rakestraw

The stories of Jesus being tempted to do evil destructive acts seem so far from our experience.

**Yet, don't politicians and Presidents claim to turn stones into bread when they lie and say the economy is great again for the poor and working class?**

And leaders dare to sell Bibles with their name on the cover to promote the image that angels lift them up as they ignorantly lift up a Bible upside down in front of a church.

**Sadly, there are leaders who want to take all the kingdoms of the earth and even announce a shopping list of other nations...**

Perhaps the temptations of Jesus are still with us.

**May the courage and humility of Jesus guide us to renounce greed, arrogant pride and the lust for power and control over our neighbors.**

\*\*\*\*HYMN Song Folder #54

*Beyond the Days*

All

*Refrain*

Beyond the days of hope and mystery we see a light of faith renewed,  
and in our longing we thirst for guidance to walk with you day by day.

Forty days and nights, you guide the steps of our journey.  
May your presence be felt in the whisper of your voice. *refrain*

Not on bread alone are we to walk on this journey.  
Speak the words that give life to the yearnings of our hearts. *refrain*

In your hands, O God, we feel the touch of your guidance.  
Keep us safe in your care: may your gentleness be there. *refrain*

On our Lenten path, we see the dawn of a new day,  
Be our vision of hope; be the promise of our lives. *refrain*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Respond to each shared prayer request with "Peace, Shalom, Salaam."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts**

**as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Beth

OFFERTORY

*Thank You for the Valleys*, Cindy Berry

Choir

\*\*\*\*DOXOLOGY (tune: *Old Hundredth*)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise God all creatures here below.  
Praise God for all that love has done.  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

\*\*\*\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Beth

**Holy One, we are grateful we do not need all of the treasures and gold of this earth to have a meaningful and joyful life. Save us from the temptation to measure our success in terms of bank accounts, bitcoin and stocks. Free us to be loving, content, and generous. Amen**

\*\*\*\*HYMN NCH 497

*Guide My Feet*

All

Paul Heintzleman, guitar

Guide my feet while I run this race (*repeat twice*)  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

Hold my hand while I run this race(*repeat twice*)  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

I'm your child while I run this race (*repeat twice*)  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

Stand by me while I run this race (*repeat twice*)  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

SCRIPTURE

1st Kings 19:1-9; Matthew 4:1-11

Beth

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

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Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

‘God will command his angels concerning you,’  
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.’ ”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

MESSAGE

*“Do Tests End When You Finish School?”*

Paul

\*\*\*\*HYMN

*When We are Tested (tune: Slane)*

All

When we are tested and wrestle alone,  
famished for bread when the world offers stone,  
nourish us, God, by your word and your way,  
food that sustains us by night and by day.

When in the desert we cry for relief,  
pleading for paths marked by certain belief,  
lift us to love you beyond sign and test,  
trusting your presence, our only true rest.

When we are tempted to barter our souls,  
trading the truth for the power to control,  
teach us to worship and praise only you,  
seeking your will in the work that we do.

When we have struggled and searched through the night,  
sorting and sifting the wrong from the right,  
Savior, surround us with circles of care,  
angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.

\*\*\*\*BENEDICTION

Paul

\*\*\*\* SUNG BENEDICTION

*World Peace Prayer*

All

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,  
From despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace,  
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,  
Let peace fill our universe!

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

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**Today's Worship Leaders**

preacher  
liturgist  
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Beth Rakestraw  
Ellen Bradley

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