

Macon United Methodist Church
190 W Bell Street, Macon, IL 62544; (217) 764-5133
February 22, 2026 **First Sunday in Lent**

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Every year, we begin lent by joining Jesus in the wilderness, witnessing the temptation, and examining what Jesus' temptation means for us. This year, we come to the wilderness afresh, ready to pay attention and encounter mercy at work in the midst of temptation, distress, and the help that comes along the way.



RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL

PRELUDE

GATHERING **Welcome, Announcements, Celebrations**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

***CALL TO WORSHIP (unison)**

Today we follow Jesus into a wilderness full of isolation, fatigue, hunger, thirst, and temptation. We follow, trusting in God's mercy. We witness Jesus resist the siren calls of sensationalism, notoriety, and misuse of power for selfish gain. We recognize God's mercy at work in the face of temptation. We notice the angels who tend Jesus, messengers of care in a harsh and lonely place, we pay attention to God's merciful presence that did not abandon Jesus and does not abandon us now. We come to the wilderness together, clinging to the truth that we are not alone--God is with us. We gather to worship God, whose unfailing mercy journeys with us into the wilderness of our lives. Thanks be to God! Amen!

OPENING HYMN** ***"Grace Greater Than Our Sin" **(UMH # 365)**

1. **Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.**

**Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!**

2. **Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold, threaten the soul with infinite loss;
grace that is greater, yes, grace untold, points to the refuge, the mighty cross.**

**Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!**

3. Dark is the stain that we cannot hide. What can avail to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide, brighter than snow you may be today.
Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!

4. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see his face, will you this moment his grace receive?
Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!

OPENING PRAYER

As the apostle Paul wrote: If you confess with your lips that Jesus Christ is lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). These words contain the good news that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

COMMUNITY PRAYERS (pastor)

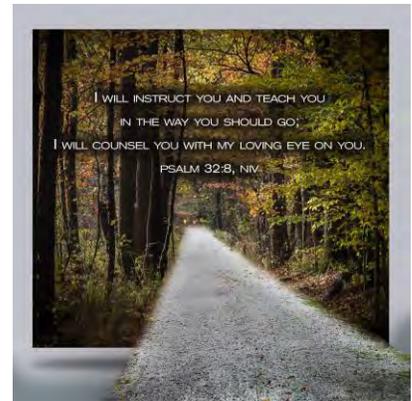
SILENT PRAYER (pastor)

THE LORD'S PRAYER (all)

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 32

The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven, whose sin is covered over, is truly happy! ² The one the Lord doesn't consider guilty—in whose spirit there is no dishonesty—that one is truly happy! ³ When I kept quiet, my bones wore out; I was groaning all day long—every day, every night!—⁴ because your hand was heavy upon me. My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought. ⁵ So I admitted my sin to you; I didn't conceal my guilt. "I'll confess my sins to the Lord," is what I said. Then you removed the guilt of my sin. ⁶ That's why all the faithful should pray to you during troubled times, so that a great flood of water won't reach them. ⁷ You are my secret hideout! You protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of rescue! ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you about the direction you should go. I'll advise you and keep my eye on you. ⁹ Don't be like some senseless horse or mule, whose movement must be controlled with a bit and a bridle. Don't be anything like that! ¹⁰ The pain of the wicked is severe, but faithful love surrounds the one who trusts the Lord. ¹¹ You who are righteous, rejoice in the Lord and be glad! All you whose hearts are right, sing out in joy!



MESSAGE

“In the Wilderness”

**Beverly J. Matthews, PsyD
Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor**

HYMN

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

(UMH # 140)

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; as thou hast been, thou forever will be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

***DOXOLOGY**

(UMH # 95)

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)**

Surprising God of mercy, you meet us in wilderness places and walk beside us through trial and temptation. Even when we feel alone, your grace is never far, your presence never absent. In this moment of giving, we offer not just our resources, but our trust that you are already at work, shaping us through challenge, strengthening us through sacrifice, and surrounding us with unseen angels. Use these gifts to bring hope where there is hunger, healing where there is pain, and light where there is despair. May what we give reflect our desire to walk more closely with you, even in the hard places. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

CLOSING PRAYER (pastor)

Holy God, by the grace of Jesus Christ, You know the tests and trials we face, journey with us through this wilderness, come to us with ministers of healing and visit us with messengers of hope so that we may return to you in faith. Believing the good news of the gospel through Jesus Christ our savior. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

“Because He Lives”

(UMH # 364)

1. God sent his Son, they called him Jesus; he came to love, heal, and forgive; he lived and died to buy my pardon, an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow; because he lives, all fear is gone; because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.
2. How sweet to hold a newborn baby, and feel the pride and joy he gives; but greater still the calm assurance, this child can face uncertain days because he lives. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow; because he lives, all fear is gone; because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.
3. And then one day I'll cross the river; I'll fight life's final war with pain; and then as death gives way to victory, I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know he reigns. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow; because he lives, all fear is gone; because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.

BENEDICTION (pastor)

Go now, in the comfort and blessing of god's mercy, trusting that wherever you go, god's steadfast love surrounds you, sustains you, and supports you for the journey ahead. Amen.

POSTLUDE

**Beverly J, Matthews, PsyD
Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor
217 825 9010**

ATTENDANCE LAST WEEK: 36

ATTENDANCE GOAL: 70

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESENCE AND SERVICE

Sun. Mar. 01 8:30 am Confirmation Class
Sun. Mar. 01 9:00 am Sunday School
Sun. Mar. 01 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service
Sun. Mar. 01 11:15 am Trustee's meeting, Pastor's Office
Mon. Mar. 02 6:00 pm United Women in Faith meeting; Fellowship Hall
Sun. Mar. 08 9:00 am Sunday School
Sun. Mar. 08 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service
Sun. Mar. 15 8:00 am Men's Breakfast; Fellowship Hall
Sun. Mar. 15 9:00 am Sunday School
Sun. Mar. 15 10:00 am Worship and Zoom Service

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Feb 22	Henry Moyer	Feb 22	Kelsey Stewart
Feb 25	Eric and Lori Nixon	Feb 26	Cole Rappe`
Feb 28	Imy Benge		

MISSIONS



Items requested by the food pantry are: Any kind of cereal, cereal bars or oatmeal; canned fruits and vegetables; canned soup; canned pasta; mac and cheese; shampoo; and antiperspirant. Cash donations are always welcome. **CEREAL Competition** A competition between the ladies and gentlemen of Macon UMC has begun collecting cereal for the Interchurch food pantry ending February 28, 2026.

SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Mar. 01 Beverly Matthews Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor
Mar. 08 Kirk Yenerall, Certified Lay Minister
Mar. 15 Keith Baker, Lay Speaker
Mar. 22 Beverly Matthews Certified Lay Minister, Supply Pastor
Mar. 29 Mark Dallner, Lay Speaker

CHURCH FINANCES 2025

Finances for our church finished in the black for 2025. The ending balance in our checking account is \$17,361, thanks to your faithful giving. It is always good to have a rainy-day fund. During our last checkup on our furnace boiler, the service technician estimated a new furnace boiler could be \$50,000 to \$60,000.

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Confirmation class will be first and fourth Sundays at 8:30 am for one hour in the pastor's office using the book Confirm which can be purchased online through Cokesbury.

BOOK FOR GRIEF

I have books for Grief Share in the trunk of my car if anyone is interested. They are free and are spiritually based.

