



The Masthead

The Newsletter of Mayflower United Church of Christ

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Office Hours: 9:00-1:00 Monday-Friday

February 2026



11TH ANNUAL HUGE GARAGE SALE

Saturday, February 7th

8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Come make our treasures your new treasures! We will have kitchenware, clothes, tools, toys, wall art, collectables, books, puzzles, clothes, jewelry, electronics, furniture, sports equipment, and more!

Your helping hands will be needed to help set-up Monday-Friday, Feb. 2-6 from 9-12 in Fellowship Hall. Then on Saturday, Feb. 7th, you can shop for the treasures that you have found!

The Church Council Members

Mike D'Amico - President

Marion Grant - Vice President

Scott Cressman - Treasurer

Judy Dudley – Secretary

Members

Linda Eddy

Bev Greenia

Nina Ribinski

Pam Rose

Glenn Schattschneider

Special Dates for February 2026

- Black History Month, *February 1-28, 2026*
- Groundhog Day, *February 2, 2026*
- Valentine's Day, *February 14, 2026*
- Presidents Day, *February 16, 2026*
- Ash Wednesday, *February 18, 2026*

The Love God Desires



God's love is never meant to stop with us; it's meant to flow through us. When we love others, we reflect his very heart. As 1 John 4:12 (NIV) reminds us, "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

This is the true mark of a Christian — love that reaches beyond comfort zones, opinions and differences. Jesus said in John 13:35 (NIV), "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The world is watching, not to see how loudly we profess our faith but how deeply we practice it. Every act of compassion, every gentle word and every moment of grace reveals something divine — God's love at work in us. The more we give that love away, the more it grows within us, mirroring the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for all.

So ask yourself: Does the world recognize you as his disciple by the way you love?

The Upside-Down Blessing



The Beatitudes are more than poetic lines from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. They're a radical redefinition of what it means to be blessed. The Greek word *makarios* doesn't just mean "happy." It describes a deep, untouchable joy that pain, loss or hardship cannot erase. As scholar William Barclay wrote, it is "the joy which shines through tears."

Jesus flips the world's idea of success upside down. The "blessed" aren't the powerful or prosperous, but the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek and the merciful. Imagine reading them as "Congratulations, you who feel broken, God's kingdom belongs to you!" His words assure us that, even in suffering, we stand in God's favor.

Real blessing isn't about shiny possessions or smooth sailing. It's the steady, saving presence of God — a life preserver tossed to us when we're struggling to stay afloat. And it's not just an individual promise. Jesus spoke these blessings to a community, a we more than a me. Together, as the body of Christ, we find comfort, strength and the courage to live with joy that nothing in life or death can take away.

Spring Cleaning for the Soul

Ash Wednesday is February 18, 2026, and it marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent hints of spring, a time when the earth begins to awaken from a winter's nap, and new growth bursts forth all about us.

More personally, it is an opportunity to enter into a springtime for our spirit. For centuries Christians have used the 40 days of Lent to seek spiritual growth. Sincere repentance, a changing of heart, casting off old sinful practices and seeking to commune with our creator help us go in the right direction. Spending serious time in silence and prayer focuses our attention. Reading spiritual literature, becoming more knowledgeable about the New Testament, meeting in small groups with other Christians to share personal stories of faith can all be immensely stimulating. Joining with others to serve the helpless and hopeless can strengthen our spiritual life. Lent is a time to let God do "spring cleaning" within us. It's our opportunity to allow God to help us toss out the "stuff" that hinders us and then freshen up the "new creature" we are meant to be as followers of Christ.

Puzzle!

Puzzle!

We see hearts everywhere and love sharing cards and greetings with friends and family.

Use the code to discover a special message from God — perfect for any day, any month.

CODE:

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Jeremiah 31:3



A Vision Rooted in Faith and Freedom

Washington's wisdom has been an inspiration for large numbers of our leading men and women in every decade since his time. He had the uncanny foresight of seeking to build a nation upon the bedrock of strong patriotism, unquestioned integrity, opportunities for all, high ideals and love of God.

May our great land, conceived in prayer for peace, bring new concepts of living to all the peoples of the world.

— *James Francis Cook*, in *The Etude*

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Shine Without Wax



How sincere are you, really? How honest, dependable, and genuine? These are traits that shape our character and help others see Christ in us.

The word *sincere* comes from an old Latin phrase meaning “without wax.” In ancient Rome, potters sometimes used wax to hide cracks in flawed pottery. Buyers would hold each piece up to the sunlight to see if it was truly solid and not hiding any imperfections.

When we allow the light of Christ to shine through our lives, it reveals both our rough spots and our strengths. The good news is that Jesus never shames us for the cracks; he restores us. As his light works within us, we grow into people of integrity who are whole, authentic, and sincerely his.

Mountain-Top Moments

In Matthew 17, we read a remarkable story about Jesus taking Peter, James and John up a high mountain. What seemed like an ordinary hike turned into a moment that changed their understanding of who Jesus really is. Matthew writes, “And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (Matthew 17:2, NASB). The disciples saw Jesus in a brilliant, heavenly glory — a glimpse of his true identity as the Son of God. But that wasn’t all. A voice from the cloud declared, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5, NASB). Imagine the awe and holy fear those disciples felt. Just like many of us would, they fell to the ground, overwhelmed by God’s presence. Yet Jesus didn’t leave them trembling. He came close, touched them and said those comforting words we all long to hear: “Do not be afraid.”

After the moment passed, Jesus led them back down the mountain and into everyday life again. This powerful encounter reminds us that Jesus is truly the Son of God — radiant, holy and worthy of our worship. But it also shows us his heart: gentle, reassuring and near to us when we are afraid.

We may not stand on that mountain, but we can still experience our own “mountain-top moments” — times in worship, prayer or Scripture when we glimpse God’s glory in a fresh way. And just like the disciples, we are invited to rise up, follow Jesus and listen to him every step of the journey

Bible Quiz



The New Testament uses several Greek words to describe love. Which of the following best represents the selfless, sacrificial love that God shows to humanity?

- A. Eros
- B. Phileo
- C. Agape
- D. Storge

Answer: C (See John 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 13)

Stop, Look and Listen

Why should we observe Lent?

We observe Lent because it causes us to STOP. Lent says, "Stop and rest awhile." Lent says, "Stop doing wrong."

We observe Lent because it tells us to LOOK. Look inward for an honest self-examination. Look upward to see the cross of Christ with healing and love. Look forward to the hope of the Resurrection.

We observe Lent because it tells us to LISTEN. Listen to the words of Christ. Listen to the voice of God. Listen to the winds of the Spirit of God.

Stop, look and listen. These three words

are important for our safety in travel, but they may also be helpful for our journey through the days of Lent.

A Taste of Loving-Kindness

A Sunday school teacher once asked her class, "What do you think the Bible means when it speaks of loving-kindness?"

A young boy thought for a moment and replied, "Well, if I were hungry and someone gave me a piece of bread with butter on it, that would be kindness. But if they added a spoonful of jam, that would be loving-kindness."

Christian Symbol



CORNERSTONE — The cornerstone is a symbol for Christ. It has Old Testament roots in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 28:16). In the New Testament, Christ is called the cornerstone in Ephesians 2:20. The IHC and XP on the stone's sides are abbreviations for "Jesus" and "Christ" in Greek.

Masthead Worship Team Report

Here are some dates for your diary with the lead up to Easter which is on April 5th this year.

February 15th – we will have an interesting service as Pastor Rick merges Transfiguration Sunday with Mardi Gras. We will have an amazing band. Bring your beads.



February 18th – This will be our Ash Wednesday Service at 4pm. Please note the new time for this service. The ashes will have been made from the Blue Christmas stars, on which the Names of people we love were written.



March 6th – World Day of Prayer. The church will be open for prayer from 10-4 and Shirley Smith will be looking for volunteers to sit in the church for perhaps one hour at a time. There will be some prayers printed and available.

Newsletter or Bulletin Announcement Ideas for February

God's Love in Action — Valentine's Week

"We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NIV). This month, let's share God's love in simple ways — a kind note, a prayer, a helping hand. Look for ways to bless someone around you!

Ash Wednesday and Lent

Join us as we begin the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday reminds us of our need for grace and the hope we have in Jesus. Let's walk together toward the cross and the joy of Easter.

Celebrating Marriage and Commitment

February is a beautiful time to honor the gift of marriage. Pray for couples in our church and community, and thank God for relationships built on faith, love and grace.



Mayflower's Second Silent Auction

Saturday, February 21st during our Italian Dinner

The Activities Team is soliciting items for our Silent Auction! We will be passing out forms for you to list what you might donate.

We will appreciate items such as: gift vouchers from your hairdressers? Massage therapist? Golf course? Tickets to the movies, museums, or plays? Gift baskets of sports items? Specialty food items? Pet items?

What can you do as an individual? Bake cookies - soup- bread once a month for 3 months? Offer a special dinner for a few folks-fondue, Mexican, Italian, Indian perhaps? Do you have a time-share to offer? Pet sitting? Round of golf? Fishing trip? Craft lessons? Drive in your sports car? 1:1 computer lesson? Tailoring of clothing? Pickleball lesson?

Be creative! Think of something that others might buy!

Plan on bidding! Remind your guests that there will be a Silent Auction, so they are prepared to bid. Credit cards and checks will be accepted.



Fun-Raiser!

Mark your calendar! Save the date of Saturday, February 21st at 5:30 for our second annual Italian dinner! Mayflower wants to gather for one more special meal with our church family. We know that many of them will be heading north for the summer so we're planning this just to see you, your friends and neighbors!

The menu will include many favorites—Garden Salad, Caesar Salad, Lasagna (also available as GF), Pasta (also GF) with Bolognese sauce and/or meatballs, or meatless. There will be Italian/garlic bread, iced tea, several desserts, including Tiramisu and pizzelles, Pina Colada Mocktails, or BYOB.

Our price is \$30, or \$50 for 2. Tickets will be available online, after church on Sundays, or through the church office M-F between 9-12.

In addition, we will be having a Silent Auction where you bid on many different items ranging from tickets to see a Mighty Muscles baseball game, wine specialties, gift cards and many other items. Please read our separate article on the Silent Auction for more details.

Online tickets: www.MayflowerNaples.com





ENJOY YOUR FOOTBALL GAME & HELP FEED THE HUNGRY

Our Mayflower Church joins the National Souper Bowl of Caring to feed the Hungry.

Homemade soup and breads will be sold on Sunday, Feb. 8th before and after worship.

Proceeds and donations will support our mission outreach to **St Matthew's House**.

Thank you to everyone for your generous support of this important mission.

You can help by making soups or breads to help raise monies, or help by purchasing these great homemade food donations.

Any donation of monies or whatever you can do to help will be greatly appreciated ❤️

Before and after service, you may purchase soups for \$10, muffins and baked items for \$5 and loaves of homemade bread for \$10



DID YOU KNOW?

FREE

All of our programs are free to families in Golden Gate City.

1300

Total students in our pre-school, parent, after-school and adult education programs.

93%

of our 4-year-olds are at the recommend developmental stage for kindergarten .

100%

of our 6th graders have an A or B grade point average.

GRACE PLACE AT A GLANCE

Bright Beginnings

More than a Pre-school! An Early Learners (Birth-5YO) Family Literacy Program!

The mission of Bright Beginnings is to cultivate confident, capable and literate parents prepared to guide their child through the crucial years of early development and successfully prepare them to transition to formal schooling at a level with their peers.

Academy of Leaders

A K-12 After-School Program Igniting Learning for Academic Success!

The mission of Academy of Leaders is to improve student achievement in core academic subjects, develop leadership habits and provide opportunities for students to learn the skills needed to be college and career ready. Participation in our after school and summer programs supports curriculum during school year.

Adult Education

A Program for Adult Learners to Build Confidence with Necessary Skills

The mission of the Adult Education program is to furnish the knowledge and skills necessary for adult learners to succeed in the acquisition of the English language and to nurture the assimilation process to the culture of the United States.





February 2026

How to achieve financial goals: Short-term, long-term & everything in between

As you look to the future, you can see yourself saving for a purposeful retirement, giving generously to your favorite causes and supporting your family through life's milestone moments. To achieve those financial goals, it helps to draw up a solid plan.

By setting meaningful, concrete objectives, you can treat your money as a tool to help you attain what matters most to you, your loved ones and your community. It's a process that takes patience, persistence and a series of thoughtful steps.

Set SMART financial objectives

As you identify what you want to accomplish with your money, set goals that are SMART. The acronym helps you remember to make your goals specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

- **Specific:** Define each goal in detail. Ask yourself questions that begin with who, what, when, where, why and how. Your answers will help clarify what you hope to achieve.
- **Measurable:** Determine how you'll track your progress, in real numbers. Is success based on how much you deposit in a particular account? How often you take a certain action? How long it takes to reach a milestone? Markers along

the way will ensure you're on the right path.

- **Achievable:** Set realistic goals. Don't aim to save \$1,000 a month if your income and expenses can't accommodate it. Instead, pick an attainable monthly savings target—whether that's \$500, \$100 or \$50. You could also set your savings goal as a percentage, such as 10% or 20% of your income; this can make it easier to stay the course as your income fluctuates.
- **Relevant:** Focus on the reasons your goals are important. Are you saving for an early retirement? Why? Do you have travel aspirations? Grandkids to care for? A post-retirement career you're eager to launch? If goals are grounded in your values, you'll be more motivated to pursue them.
- **Time-bound:** Use target dates and timelines to track your progress. If you simply plan to save a certain amount by the time your child enters college, you might not hit your mark. Instead, set smaller savings goals as checkpoints along the way. Then, if your efforts don't keep pace with your plans, you have time to adjust.

Consider short-term vs. long-term financial goals

Not all financial goals require extended timelines. It's important to identify objectives you can check off within a few months or years, too. Examples of [short-term financial goals](#) might include paying off a credit card or setting up a budget. Such accomplishments can then help you reach long-term goals like paying off your

mortgage or funding your kids' college education.

Test for success

Make sure each of your financial goals passes your personal "acid test"—that it's truly valuable to you and you're willing to go the extra mile to make it happen. If you encounter hurdles along the way, you're more likely to clear them if you've already thought about what you'll do—or give up—to keep forging ahead.

A goal can be "Achievable" and still present some challenges. You'll want to anticipate obstacles and be ready to pivot. That may mean [building up an emergency fund](#), so you can leave other accounts alone if unexpected expenses arise. Or you might obtain [disability](#) or [life insurance](#) to make sure progress toward your goals continues in the event of illness, injury or death.

Draw up your plan

SMART goals are a solid start. Next, you need a financial plan to map out the strategies to achieve them. There are a lot of perceptions around what it takes to make and [maintain a financial plan](#). You can write everything in a notebook. You can build detailed spreadsheets and set phone alerts to prompt check-ins. Or you can work with a financial advisor to visualize a variety of strategies that evolve as you make progress and your circumstances change.

Put your plan in motion

Once you have a plan, it will help you take action. Let's say your goal is to sock away enough money in two years to cover living

expenses for six months. You plan to get there by [setting aside some income](#) from every paycheck. Now, it's time to open a dedicated account and set up automatic deposits. The financial plan inspires action to help you work toward meeting your goal.

Sidestep roadblocks

Everyone hopes that their financial plan advances with minimal disruption, but stumbling blocks can arise - both within and beyond your control. For example, emergencies are outside of your control, but tapping your emergency fund for non-emergency spending is a block you can avoid. To help you avoid and recover from stumbling blocks, your financial plan could include establishing separate accounts based on specific financial goals or expenses.

And, of course, everyone faces setbacks sometimes, so don't view them as a reason to give up on your goals. Instead, see them as an opportunity to refine your approach.

Keep your emotions in check

Regardless of how well you've prepared, life will occasionally trip up your financial plans. Emotions may run high. That's natural. But strive to manage those reactions. Acknowledge any feeling of financial stress, but don't let it fuel rash decisions that could alter your long-term trajectory.

For More Info Call Thrivent Financial Associate David Contessa at (2



| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 Jed & Susan Stolberg – Anniversary Walking Moai - Sugden Park | 4 Jay Snyder - Birthday | 5 | 6 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am | 7 Garage Sale 8:00 am – 1:00 pm |
| 8 Souper Bowl Sunday  | 9 | 10 Book Club 7:00 pm | 11 Bible Study – 10:30 am Potluck Dinner 5:00 pm | 12 Clarice Camp - Birthday | 13 Ellen Davis – Birthday Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am | 14 Ladies Lunch 12:00 PM  |
| 15 | 16 Linda Eddy - Birthday | 17 | 18 Bible Study – 10:30 am Ash Wednesday Service 4:00 pm | 19 Susan Stolberg – Birthday | 20 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am | 21 Italian Dinner & Silen Auction 5:30 pm |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 Candi Tipton – Birthday Villas HOA Mtg 4:00 pm – 6:00 | 26 Bob Davis - Birthday | 27 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am Choir Lunch 12:00 pm | 28 |

