



February 2026

First Church Communicator

Monthly Newsletter of Castle Rock First United Methodist Church



An Unlikely Lent

What Is Lent?

Lent is a forty-day season of reflection and repentance stretching from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, mimicking the time Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. Derived from an Old English word for the "lengthening" days of spring, this period invites Christians to strengthen their relationship with God through self-examination, service, and sacrifice. While it is a solemn time of preparation for Easter, Sundays are excluded from the forty-day count; these "mini-Easters" provide a weekly break from fasting to offer a joyful glimpse of the coming Resurrection.

Connect with us at www.fumccr.org

Sunday Morning Worship 9 a.m.

Community Faith Time 10 a.m.



We Start with Ashes

by Pastor Matt Franks

Join us February 18th Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary and stay to help with Knot Again.

Ashes to Go: at the Corner of Wilcox and 4th street from 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

With all that is happening in our world, as we enter the holy season of Lent, I find myself deeply in need of Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. As ashes are placed on our hands or foreheads, we hear these words:

Remember: from dust you were created, and to dust you shall return.

We begin with ashes because we begin with truth. Ashes remind us of who we are—and who we are not. These words are not meant to frighten us or shame us; they are meant to free us. We are finite. We are human. We are not in control in the ways we sometimes pretend to be. And still—God loves us.

Ash Wednesday invites us to tell the truth about our lives: about the places where we are weary, the ways we fall short, the relationships that need healing, and the habits that need changing. In the Wesleyan tradition, confession is never about condemnation; it is always about grace. We name what is broken not because we are hopeless, but because God is faithful to heal.

We also begin with ashes because repentance is an act of love. To repent is to reorient our hearts toward God and toward one another. Ashes mark the moment we want to do better. They call us back to the practices that shape us: prayer, generosity, fasting, service, and mercy.

Perhaps most importantly, we begin with ashes because Lent is not a journey we take alone. When ashes are placed on our hands or foreheads, they are placed on all of us—young and old, longtime members and first-time guests, the confident and the questioning. The ashes are a visible sign that we belong to one another, and that we belong to God.

Ash Wednesday does not end in ashes. It points beyond them. The cross traced on our bodies is a promise: death does not have the final word. God is still at work, bringing new life out of what seems lifeless.

So we begin with ashes—not to dwell on our brokenness, but to make space for grace. Not to focus on what we lack, but to remember who holds us. From these ashes, God is already preparing something new.

Peace and Love Light your Way,

Pastor Matt Franks
matt.franks@fumccr.org

Lenten @Castle Rock FUMC

2/18 Ash Wednesday

3/29-4/4 Holy Week

3/29 Palm Sunday

4/1 Stations of the Cross from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. in the Sanctuary

4/2 A Holy Potluck 6 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

4/3 Good Friday Service 6 p.m.

4/5 Easter Sunday 6 a.m. Sunrise Breakfast | 9 a.m. Modern Service | 11 a.m. Traditional Service

Contemporary Study's Lenten Study

Book: *Remember: God's Covenants
and the Cross*
By Susan Robb

Rev. Sarah's Contemporary Issues Group will discuss Susan Robb's book during Lent. The book traces God's covenants throughout the Old Testament, showing the character of God's promises to the people of Israel. The author leads readers through the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, followed by the new covenant established on Maundy Thursday. The Lenten story culminates with an examination of the cross as another example of God's promise for a new world.

In Person: February 23 to March 30 6:30 to 8:00PM

Zoom: February 20 to March 30 6:30 to 8:00PM

Contact Rev. Sarah for a Zoom Link at sms11@mindspring.com

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

will begin their Lenten Study on February 24th with a "to be determined" resource. Watch the weekly blast and Sunday link for details.

Communion During Lent

Communion will be served following Worship during Lent. Starting 2/22

Holy Week

Stay tuned for the Holy Week info

Community Faith Time

Joint Group Study

Starting: 2/22 in Fellowship Hall at 10 a.m. following worship.

Join us for our Community Faith Time Joint Lenten Study with *LIFT Group & Soul Cafe* as we explore the Easter story through a fresh lens with Rachel Billups' book, *An Unlikely Lent*.

Rather than focusing only on the familiar highlights, we'll step into the crowd to learn from the overlooked figures—the side characters, the skeptics, and the faithful in the margins.

Together, we will discover how themes of devotion, courage, and unexpected alliances can transform our own faith today. Come with eyes wide open to the "unlikely" ways God is moving, reminding us that the resurrection is not just a past event, but a living invitation into something new.

This study will have an intergenerational focus, if you need Child care for our little ones under age of 5 please let Pastor Matt know.

If you want to read the book you can by picking it up on Amazon or Cokesbury

If you have questions please let Pastor Matt know.

Rev. Sarah Shares

1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Common English Bible

If I speak in tongues of human beings and of angels but I don't have love, I'm a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and I know all the mysteries and everything else, and if I have such complete faith that I can move mountains but I don't have love, I'm nothing. ³ If I give away everything that I have and hand over my own body to feel good about what I've done but I don't have love, I receive no benefit whatsoever.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, ⁵ it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, ⁶ it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. ⁷ Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails. As for prophecies, they will be brought to an end. As for tongues, they will stop. As for knowledge, it will be brought to an end. ⁹ We know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, what is partial will be brought to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, reason like a child, think like a child. But now that I have become a man, I've put an end to childish things.

¹² Now we see a reflection in a mirror; then we will see face-to-face. Now I know partially, but then I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known. ¹³ Now faith, hope, and love remain—these three things—and the greatest of these is love.



As we write that valentine card, let us acknowledge:

The love we seek is always patient, With this love, we are able to make it through delays problems and suffering without becoming anxious. This love we seek is a comfort.

The love we seek is always kind. It is always wanting to do good and bring happiness to others. This love springs forth out of compassion, It is just the thing we need to make our way through the chaos of this world.

The love we seek has no envy, boasting or arrogance. It comes to us with gentleness of heart. This love has no agenda but to give support. It is there in time of great need.

This love we seek helps us to rejoice and find what is true. It keeps us positive at those times it would be easy to slip into the negative. With this truth we find reasons to smile. This smile is genuine and comes from the heart.

This love we seek is the support needed to endure all things. It is there in times that are difficult and challenging as well as times of great joy.

As we reflect, may our eyes be open to the life tools of faith, hope and love. May our journey show us that the greatest of these tools is love.

NO ONE HAS TO FACE LIFE'S CHALLENGES ALONE.
OUR STEPHEN MINISTERS CAN HELP.



Find out more info.
<https://www.fumccr.org/stephenministry>



Stephen Ministry from Both Sides

By Lisa Andrews

I remember the first time I was assigned a Stephen Minister. Life wasn't going well, I was frustrated and depressed by my husband's condition after a bad accident. My Stephen Minister would listen to my frustrations and give me a respite from everyday irritations. Talking and having someone listening helped tremendously. I could open up without the fear of what I said being talked about. Confidentiality is the corner stone of Stephen Ministry. We met regularly for almost a year.

Fast forward sixteen years. My husband died on the sixteenth anniversary of his accident. My family, pastor and the church were very supportive during this time. After his memorial service and every one had gone back to their lives, it was suggested I meet with a Stephen Minister. Our Stephen Leader, Cheryl Smith paired me with a loving and caring Stephen Minister. We met weekly for coffee and caring. My care giver didn't advise me, but lovingly led me to make decisions that wouldn't end up being mistakes I might regret. She was there to listen when emotions boiled to the surface. During one of our last meetings she suggested I would be a good Stephen Minister.

The next year a new class was formed and I took a leap of faith. In the eleven years since, I have had several care receivers with various situations. I have been both honored and blessed to be there when they needed someone to walk with them in Christian love.

As someone who has experienced both sides of Stephen Ministry, I wholeheartedly recommend this ministry. You can connect with our Stephen Leaders, Pastor Matt or Rev. Sarah. You don't have to go through hard times alone.

Monday Mornings Just Got a Whole Lot Brighter

While most people meet the work week with a groan, a growing group in downtown Castle Rock has found a way to flip the script. Every Monday at 10 a.m., Coff33 serves as the backdrop for Marvelous Mondays—a weekly gathering dedicated to food, drink, and the simple art of human connection. There is no rigid agenda. Instead, the focus is on authentic fellowship where neighbors become friends over pastries and lattes. The impact of these gatherings is best described by those who pull up a chair each week:

"I truly look forward to the Marvelous Monday coffee gatherings each week. While I never know who will be there, or what the conversation will be about, it always lifts my spirits. This is where loving your neighbor begins!" — Jonathon Cole-Morrison

"Marvelous Monday has been an opportunity to get to know others on a more personal basis. It's great fellowship!" — Lisa Andrews

All are invited to the table for fellowship and connection. See you Monday.

The opportunity to connect with various groups within our church brings us not only into fellowship but also discipleship with our friends as we share and listen to each other. We gain insight into others' faith journey and discover ways to "pass it on" beyond our church walls. We can also learn about discipleship from other Christian resources beyond our own community.

One of the easiest ways to witness discipleship in action is to pick up a copy of The Upper Room, an interdenominational daily devotional featuring brief stories written by Christians around the world. Each page features an individual faith experience alongside a scripture or two and a prayer. This publication covers two months and is available free just outside the sanctuary door. Pick up your March-April issue at the end of February.

Books can also inspire our commitment to discipleship. Adam Hamilton, pastor of UMC Church of the Resurrection, has written many inspiring books. You might start with *Simon Peter: Flawed But Faithful Disciple*. We can also inquire of Pastor Matt about other books written by contemporary theologians.

We can find inspiration from watching other churches worship when they are streamed online, like the Church of the Resurrection (<https://resurrection.church/>), the Washington National Cathedral (<https://cathedral.org/>), or perhaps the church in your hometown.

Pastor Matt has given us much to reflect upon in delivering his recent GROW sermons. May your faith journey be blessed as you connect with others — other Christians and nonbelievers as well.

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'" John 8:31

Looking ahead to March and the season of Lent, I would love to hear from you and share your responses here to any one of these questions:

- How have you chosen to GROW your faith?
 - Where have you gathered?
 - What have you reflected upon?
 - How have you offered your gifts?
 - How have you walked with others?

Explore the Connection Point

www.fumccr.org/connectionpoint

a place to connect our social media, and learn more about Castle Rock FUMC. You can check in, view the Bulletin, share prayer requests, and easily give online, all in one convenient space.

A Word of Thanks

Thank you very much for all who continue to pray for Keith and our daughter Dena.

This time in our life is so very hard for our family. Cancer has taken over our lives.

Your prayers are much needed still. God is truly with us.

Love to you all !!!

Diana & Keith Bramer

G.R.O.W. Retreat

A look at United Methodist Social Principles

by Lois Price

Have you ever wondered exactly what United Methodists Believe? I have been curious.

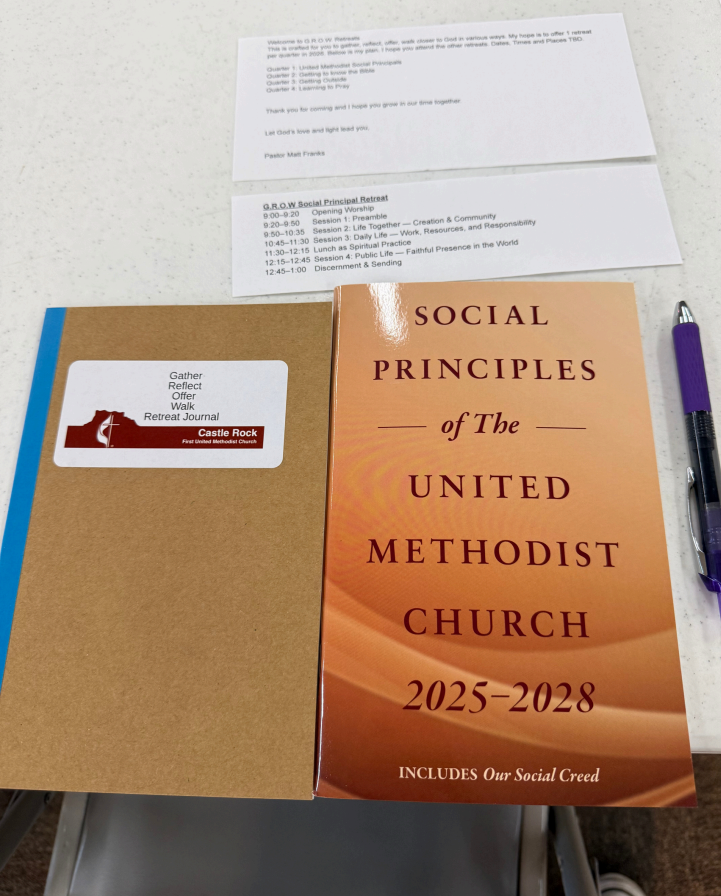
January 31 Pastor Matt led a retreat for the six people who attended. He guided us through the United Methodist Social Principles as completed in 2020 and adopted by General Conference Charlotte, 2024. This included Global United Methodist Church, not just the denomination in the United State.

We learned about the Wesleyan tradition of Social Holiness, and the social principles including Community of All Creation, Economic Community, Social Community, and Political Community. We each received a booklet of the statements of these principles and summaries of them, including Our Social Creed. I find it interesting that these statements are very inclusive and written with a “yes, and” perspective. I learned that we don’t have to completely agree on every point of these principles to belong to the local church, district, conference or the Global United Methodist Church.

We participated in discussions and opportunities for debate surrounding several statements from the social principles we studied. I found it enlightening to hear points of view that I hadn’t considered.

If you missed the retreat and are curious, I recommend reading the booklet we used. Pastor Matt had a few left if you want to satisfy some of your curiosity.

Lois Price



Youth Update

by Josh Hay

Our February FUMY meetup event is Thursday, February 19th when we will be supporting our very own Emily Franks in her performance of Young Frankenstein the Musical. It starts at 7pm, but we'll plan to meet in the Douglas County High School lobby at 6:30pm. Students and parents who can make the performance, please let me know so we can buy tickets ahead of time and all sit together. Tickets at the door is an option, too, if it's a last-minute decision.

Also, for any students planning on going on this Summer's mission trip to Red Bird Missions, we will be having a BINGO Spaghetti Dinner the following Thursday, February 26th from 6-8pm. We would appreciate students (and any parents that can help) to arrive by 5pm that evening to help set up and prepare the meal. This will serve as a social event for the congregation and community, but also a fundraiser for our trip!

And as a reminder, our monthly Fun Thursday FUMY meetups are in addition to our weekly LIFT community faith time EVERY SUNDAY! Even though this study is multi-generational, it is always great when youth attend and lend their unique perspectives.



All are welcome to join BINGO Game Night

On Thursday, February 26th from 6-8pm, the youth will host a BINGO Game Night as a fundraiser for this summer's intergenerational mission trip to Red Bird Mission in Beverly, KY.

The cost is \$15 per person which will include BINGO cards and a spaghetti dinner!

All are welcome for an evening of food, fun, fellowship, and fundraising!"

VIPP - Very Important Point Person

Volunteers are needed to spearhead activities that take groups to museums, concerts, the mountains, educational events, etc. It is a one-time commitment. Previous events have included the Colorado History Museum, Indian Paint Mines in Calhan, viewing the fall colors, Flying W Ranch. Is anyone up for a trip to Breckinridge to visit the Father Dyer sites? Sign up at the welcome desk at the Church or email Pastor Matt for more questions.

Knot Again Is Back!!!

Huge thanks to everyone who helped Knot Again surpass our 2025 goal! As we kick off 2026, our new target is to complete at least 12 sleeping bags, and we need your help to get there.

You can support this mission by joining us for fellowship and knot-tying at 6:00 PM Wednesday Dates: (Jan 28, Feb 18, March 18, and April 15), or by donating clean blankets in any condition.

Whether you can give your time or spare linens, every bit helps. For email reminders, please contact Kari at kasorah@yahoo.com.

THE

CASTLE ROCK ORCHESTRA PRESENTS

XYZ'S OF AMERICANA!

KORNGOLD

LAURIDSEN

MANCINI

NEWMAN

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XAVIER

YORKUM

ZIMMER

FIRST UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH OF CASTLE ROCK
1200 SOUTH STREET, CASTLE ROCK

3PM SUNDAY
MARCH 1, 2026

WWW.CASTLEROCKORCHESTRA.ORG

Year to Date December 2025

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| | \$ |
| Revenues | 221,165 |
| Expenses | |
| | \$ |
| Personnel | 108,503 |
| Conf Apportionment | 22,389 |
| Trustees | 42,906 |
| Church Office | 9,489 |
| All Other | 3,772 |
| | \$ |
| Total Expenses | 187,059 |
| Net Total | \$ 34,106 |

Help and Hope Super Bowl Canned Good Offering The next canned food drive for Help and Hope is Sunday, February 8, when we “vote” for who we think will win the Super Bowl with food donations. Place your items underneath the team you want to win in the sanctaury starting this Sunday.



King Soopers/Safeway Gift Cards:

Did you know that 5% of your grocery purchases can be returned to our church if you have a Safeway gift card to load and reload OR have signed on with King Soopers and designated FUMCCR as your nonprofit organization? Did you know these funds help fund projects in and around the church? Would you like to help bring us back into the \$2-3K column?

If you frequent Safeway, simply purchase a grocery card from Theresa Kepple and add money. That card becomes the card you use to purchase groceries. If you wish to use King Soopers, go to Kingsoopers.com/CommunityRewards and follow Step #1 to create an account and Step #2 to register our organization (FUMCCR). You will need to add our NPO number which is NPO#QM168.

Publications Submissions

Blast and Link Submissions If you have church photos, a related project or event to promote, or a card of thanks or invitation to share with our church, please email your copy no later than Tuesday morning to Julie Bailey at juliesings@gmail.com

Deadlines...

Newsletter Info: 21st of every month

The Link: Tuesday's 5 p.m.

The Eblast: Thursday Noon

Don't forget to like and share on our social media

Facebook, Instagram, Youtube

@castlerockfumc

Upcoming Events

February 12th

12 p.m. Leah Circle

February 18th

6:30 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service

8 a.m.-4 p.m. Ashes To GO

6 p.m. Knot Again

March 1st

3 p.m. Castle Rock Orchestra

March 18th

Knot Again 6 p.m.

April 1st

Stations of the Cross

April 2nd

A Holy Potluck 6 p.m.

April 3rd

Good Friday Service 6 p.m.

April 5th

Easter Services

6 a.m. Sunrise

9 a.m. Modern

11 a.m. Traditional

May 31st-June 7th

Red Bird Mission Trip

October 8-17th

Wesley Tour of England

Every Wednesday

4 p.m. Bell Choir Practice

5:30-7 p.m. Chancel Choir Practice

Marvelous Monday's

10 a.m. @ Coff33 in Downtown Castle Rock

Serve as a Liturgist, Communion

Steward or Acolyte

Sign Up At welcome desk

Monthly Newsletters are online or in the Welcome Area