

Test Message - March 2026 Newsletter

From Church Office <firstchurchlima+live.com@icontactmail.com>

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First Evangelical & Reformed Church
Informer Newsletter
March, 2026

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From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Church Family,

As we continue walking through this Lenten season, I find my heart returning again and again to one simple, foundational truth found in Deuteronomy 6:5:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Everything begins here.

Before we talk about loving our neighbor, before we wrestle with forgiveness, before we consider how to be a witness in the world, we are called to love God - fully, completely, without division. Lent gently brings us back to this center. It slows us down long enough to ask an honest question: Is my love for God whole, or has it become fragmented?

It is possible to love God with our words but not our schedules. To sing in worship but resist Him in our decisions. To appear devoted outwardly while inwardly distracted. The command in this verse is not about emotion alone. It is about allegiance. It is about orientation. It is about allowing every part of who we are - heart, soul, and strength - to belong to Him.

When our love for God is rightly ordered, everything else begins to take shape.

From that, love flows the way we treat others. Real love moves toward people. It notices. It serves. It forgives. It

CALENDAR

Please click the Bible to view important events. (Anniversaries and Birthdays.)



Sunday School, 9 AM
Worship, 10:15 AM

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March 3, 2026
Bible Study at Alicia's every Tuesday unless otherwise noted.

March 4, 2029
Ladies Aid meets at Western Sizzlin at noon.

March 5, 2026
Elder Meeting, 4 PM

March 8, 2026
Gathering Meal following worship

extends grace even when it is undeserved. We love this way not because it is easy, but because we ourselves have been loved this way. Christ did not wait for us to become worthy. He moved toward us in mercy. When we truly grasp that, our relationships begin to change.

Lent also asks us to examine our hearts with courage. Not to condemn us, but to align us. God has never been impressed with appearance alone. He looks deeper. He sees what no one else sees – our motives, our private struggles, our hidden hurts. Integrity begins in those unseen places. What we nurture in secret will eventually shape what is visible in public.

Perhaps one of the hardest expressions of love is forgiveness. Holding on to resentment can feel protective, but over time, it becomes heavy. Forgiveness does not deny that we have been hurt. It simply releases the right to carry the burden alone. When we forgive, we place justice into God's hands and allow Him to free our hearts. That kind of love reflects the heart of Christ.

And yet, none of this is sustained by our strength alone.

The love God calls us to is enduring love – steady, patient, and faithful. There will be days when our love feels thin. Days when we respond poorly. Days when we fall short of who we want to be. But even then, God's love for us does not falter. His love endures. It sustains us while He continues shaping us.

This season also invites us to consider our spiritual appetite. What are we truly hungering for? It is possible to stand near the things of God without deeply desiring Him. But when we hunger for righteousness – when we truly long to grow – God promises to meet us there. He fills those who come to Him with open and willing hearts.

So, as we journey forward together, my prayer for us is simple: that we would return to wholehearted love. Not performative faith, but sincere devotion. Not divided loyalty, but surrendered hearts. Not appearance alone, but integrity from the inside out.

May we love the Lord our God with all that we are. And as we do, may His love naturally overflow into our homes, our church, and our community.

Grace and peace to you all,  
Pastor Ed

#### Member Spotlight

This month's spotlight is on Melissa (Missy) Grapner. Her family members are her husband Jeff Grapner, her parents Pat and Paul Offenbacher her brother Brian Offenbacher of Lewis Center, her stepson, Mason of Georgia.



Missy has attended First Evangelical & Reformed Church for 48 years. She was baptized, confirmed and married here. Currently she is Vice President of Deacons. In the past, she watched children in the nursery.

service.

March 8, 2026  
Daylight Savings  
Time Begins.

March 9, 2026,  
Trustees meet at 6  
PM and Consistory  
meets at 7 PM.

March 17, 2026  
St. Patrick's Day

March 20, 2026  
Spring Begins

March 21, 2026  
The Men's Breakfast  
is at 8:30 AM here at  
the church.

March 29, 2026  
Palm Sunday



#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Ladies Aid will meet on March 4 at Western Sizzlin at noon.

The Men's Fellowship Breakfast is Saturday, March 21, 2026. They meet every third Saturday of every month at 8:30 AM in the church Fellowship Hall for breakfast. All are welcome to attend.

Our next Gathering meal takes place on March 8, 2026, following the Worship service downstairs in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring a dish to share. All are welcome.

Tithing envelopes - There are a few left in the hallway for pickup. The year in envelopes runs from March

Her favorite aspect of the church events is getting to know other people. She loves hearing the stories of the older members. Stories like when they got married and about their careers.

She is currently employed by Walmart in Upper Sandusky as a People Lead. Her hobbies are going to the beach, shopping, and spending time with an old friend.

Thank you, Missy. We appreciate all that you do.

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

### LENT SERVICES IN APRIL

**Maundy Thursday** Service is on April 2nd and will also be held at the Presbyterian church at 7 PM. The address is 1100 W. Market Street in Lima. All are welcome!

The **Good Friday** Service will be held April 3rd here at First E & R, 320 W. Wayne Street, Lima, Ohio. The service begins at 7 PM. All welcome!

2026 to March 2027. Use your current envelopes through the end of February. Due to the cost of postage, we will not be mailing.

### **SOUPER BOWL UPDATE!**

Our goal was 500 cans but we surpassed that goal. We collected 430 cans of soup, 238 packages of Ramen for a total of 668 cans / packages of soup. We also collected 20 boxes of crackers!

Awesome! Good job everyone! Thank you, First Church for your generosity to the area needy!



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### **Update Email Address**

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