



# First Church of God

## Our Mission: Bringing Lives Into Focus with Christ

7968 US Rte. 23, Risingsun, Ohio - Website: [risingsunfcog.org](http://risingsunfcog.org)

Church email: [fcogrisingsun@gmail.com](mailto:fcogrisingsun@gmail.com) - Phone: 419-457-3971 - Pastor Paul J Rutledge

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Pastor's Meditation
- Through the Bible in a Year
- Safety Team
- Yacht Club
- Men's Retreat
- Chili Cook-off
- Save the Date
- Family Night
- Community Lenten Service
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Maundy Thursday
- Church Garage Sale
- Easter Special offering
- Women's Breakfast Club
- Many, Many Thanks
- Rainforest Falls VBS
- Devotional by Robert & Tonya
- March Calendar

## Pastor's Meditation – March 2026

As March arrives, many of us are finalizing our NCAA tournament brackets while looking ahead to Easter and the promise of spring.

This month's meditation reflects on a meaningful experience from November 2023, when I traveled to Kenya to represent Winebrenner Seminary. Alongside two fellow pastors, I had the privilege of teaching introductory Old and New Testament courses to Kenyan pastors. The two-week experience was both enriching and deeply rewarding.

During our final days in the country, we participated in a safari at Nairobi National Park, the world's only wildlife park located within a capital city. There, animals such as giraffes, antelopes, flamingos, hippopotamuses, and other wildlife gathered around a small lake that sustained life in the area. As we observed this scene, one pastor remarked that "the Bible is like a divine watering hole." His words captured a powerful truth: Scripture is a source of guidance, renewal, and nourishment for people from every walk of life.

This image echoes Psalm 1, which describes those who delight in God's instruction as "blessed" and compares them to "a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season" (Psalm 1:3). Just as a tree draws strength from a reliable source, those who root themselves in Scripture find spiritual vitality and endurance.

When we submit ourselves to God's wisdom, our foundation remains secure, and we are not "like chaff that the wind blows away" (Psalm 1:4). Through thoughtful engagement with God's Word, we receive the nourishment needed to bear fruit that lasts.

I know that many of you are reading through the Bible in a year. It is my hope you are encouraged to keep at it every day, and as you engage, you are nourished and bear fruit.

If you have an item to put in the newsletter, please submit it to Susie Hoffman by the 3rd. Sunday of the month. Susie's email address is [fcogrisingsun@gmail.com](mailto:fcogrisingsun@gmail.com)

*"the Bible is like a divine watering hole."*

## Through the Bible in a year

Friday, February 20th we had our first meeting of people that are working on reading through the Bible in a year. We had food and fun, and then we dug into what we had read thus far. It was a robust conversation, from Tonya defending Job's wife to why God put in so many details in Leviticus. There was even a part of the conversation where we were glad that there were not any junior aged children there. I have never belonged to a book club, but I imagine this what it would look like. We plan to meet again in March. If you would like to join us and haven't started reading yet or have fallen behind pick up on the day of the year that it happens to be and join us in March.

## Safety Team

The Q2 Safety Team Schedule was set out via the text thread and a copy was also hung in our locker. Please remember, If you have a conflict, please try to find a substitute/trade. If you cannot please let Tim know. Remember to check the KFC Schedule. It was sent out via the team thread and posted on our locker door as well.

## Yacht Club

Next Breakfast will be on Sat. March 7th at 8:30am at Tim's house

## Men's Retreat

Men mark your calendars, This year's retreat will be the weekend of Sept. 25-27.

## Saturday, March 14, Chili Cook-Off

This is OPEN to EVERYONE!



Registration from 4:30-5pm. Dinner and judging starts at 5pm. \$8 to enter a chili.

Prizes will be awarded! Cost to eat: Adults \$8, Kids under 12 \$5, Family of 4 \$20.

Meal includes: Bowl of your favorite chili, cornbread, dessert, and a drink (pop or water)

**MEN-** don't forget to bring the items you signed up for-If you forgot what you signed up for, see Tim

**Ladies\*Save the Date\*** Ladies appreciation Dinner will be on Saturday, May 9th. Details and invitations coming soon.

## Family Night!

April 1, 5:30-7pm will be the last night of KFC and this will be a Family Night! The meal will be tacos and nachos along with soft serve ice and all of the toppings! There will also be games and a Bible point!

## Community Lenten Services:

Sunday's 6-30-8pm

March 1, Christ's Church of Burgoon, 3269 Main St., Burgoon

March 8, St. Paul's U.M.C. 126 Union St., Risingsun

March 15, Amsden U.M.C. 8180 W. County Road 28, Fostoria,

March 22, Risingsun First Church of God, 7968 US 23 Risingsun

March 29, Gibsonburg Community Church, 795 W. Madison, Gibsonburg

## Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 28, 2pm

at First Church of God, Risingsun

Easter Story, Egg Hunt, Games & Snacks!

## Maundy Thursday service:

Thursday April 2. We start at 6pm with the Ordinance of Feet washing. If you can't come right at 6pm, come when you can. After feet washing we'll have our Agape Love Feast, and end with Holy Communion.

## Easter Sunday—April 5th.

6am Sunrise Service

8:15 Worship, 9:30 Sunday School, 10:45 Worship

## Church Garage Sale



Church garage sale,

May 15 9am-4pm and May 16, 9am-?

This is a great opportunity to go through your house and donate items you no longer use! Please no car seats, strollers, anything that may have a recall, electronics, TV's or particle board furniture.

## Easter Special Offering

We are coming upon the time of year where we celebrate the sacrificial death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. With the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins, we are blessed with the opportunity for eternal life. Eternal life is a gift from God, the same God that knows everything about us, and is the source for all that we have. Deuteronomy 8:18 says, "You shall remember the Lord your God. For it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant, which he swore to your fathers, as it is this day."

With this scripture in mind, we would like to offer everyone a chance to remember God in a special way financially this Easter Season. The Board of Deacons will use your generous financial gift this Easter season towards repairing the

altar windows, food pantry, church camp fees or mural fee for handicap lift. If you would like your gift to go to another area of ministry within the church, or to the General Fund, please specify on your offering envelope.

Please remember all the ministries of the church in your prayers and that all we do brings glory to God. Thank you for your prayers and gifts. May God richly bless you this Easter Season and throughout the year. Your Servants in Christ, The Deacons

## Women's Breakfast Club Dates!

March 28- monthly breakfast, 9am

April 18- monthly breakfast, 9am

April 26- Spaghetti Lunch (donation),  
dine-in and carry-out (carry-out  
available following 1st service)!

### **MANY, MANY THANKS!!!**

The Women's Breakfast Club cannot thank you all enough for your more than generous support of our Pay-To-Eat breakfast on February 15! The wonderful donations amounted to a huge \$767!! The money has been divided three ways in the approximate amount of \$255 and sent to the Elmwood Local Schools food pantry, the Gibsonburg Schools lunch program and the Lakota Local Schools lunch program! Each school system is so grateful to receive such thoughtful help to feed our kids! Thank you, as well, to the ladies who prepared breakfast dishes, provided beautiful table decor and helped in the kitchen...it was quite an event...and, thank you, Brenda Creeger, for sending checks out so quickly! Our church is blessed in so many ways by our Lord and Savior and sharing those blessings with others warms the heart! What would we do without this loving church family?!

## Rainforest Falls VBS—July 19-23. 6-8:15pm

At Rainforest Falls, kids explore the nature of



God! Rainforest Falls is filled with awesome Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear, and touch! Hands-on science experiments, team-building games, unforgettable Bible songs, and tasty treats are just a few of the standout activities that help faith flow into real life. Plus, we'll help kids discover how to see evidence of God in everyday life—Register your youth on the church website by June 19, for a free T-shirt!

## Devotional for March by Robert and Tonya Theis

*James 1:27 (ESV)*

*27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

## His:

As I read this verse and a few commentaries, I came across the following that I found insightful: Pure and lasting religion is not perfect observance of rules and observances; instead, it is a spirit that pervades our hearts and lives. I found the quote went well with this month's topic, caring for the elderly and those who may need companionship. James, in his writings, explains that our faith will be seen in our daily life. Orphans and widows, with the elderly also falling into this grouping, often fall into the "poor" class in first-century Israel. Paul, in the writings of 1 Timothy, addresses the care for widows within the church. Widows and the elderly often rely on their family to offer support, but in many cases, that support is nonexistent. That would reduce their options to begging, selling themselves into slavery, or starving. Fast forward to today, we as Christians, i.e. the Church, should step in and help these three groups when their families do not. Remember, when we are in Christ, we are adopted sons and daughters, making us all one family.

What exactly does that look like in 2026?

*Romans 12:4-6 (ESV)*

*4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,*

*5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:*

As believers who are one body in Christ, we need to remember the importance of communication and community. We should not be like the cat who attacks its own tail, who looks at it moving back and forth as if it has a mind of its own, separate from the body who gives it life. We need to strive to be one body with one goal, to serve God. If we, as a people and as a church, were to cut off those who are in need, what would that say about the church to those outside of it?

As I prepare for Lenten service, this subject ties nicely into the topic of "I AM the Vine." Christ is Lord and we are His workmanship. It is the Father who is the vinedresser, He trims the branches that do not bear fruit. When we do not care for those within the church that are unable to care for themselves, we are inadvertently playing God, attempting to separate the branches from the vine. Christ is the vine that gives life, and when we cut off the least of us, we are attempting to be the vinedresser, trimming the branches that are not bearing fruit. It is important to remember; we are all the branches. We have life because of the vine, and it is for us to produce fruit, not to be the vinedresser. Only God sees how everything ties together, and each of us may be producing fruit that the other person does not

know of.

Now, what significance does that have for us? I am not much of a gardener, and if you are like me, you may not normally relate vines and fruit to your day-to-day life.

We have a responsibility to aid one another and not be complacent. Do not be lazy with the blessings that God has given you, and in doing so, fail to bless others through asking how they are doing, reaching out to the lonely, visiting the shut-in, etc. Do not turn a blind eye to those in need within your congregation. Do not feign ignorance, saying "I knew she lost her husband months ago, but I did not realize she was in need." Do not say, "I have been meaning to stop and visit the elderly, but there is only 24 hours in a day." We all have the same number of hours in the day, so prioritize what God deems important, and not what the world deems important. Live for God, not the world.

Lastly, do not assume others are doing it. When we assume others are helping, it often leads to no one helping. Remember what James tells us later in his book, John 4:17, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." When Proverbs 10:4 tells us, "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich," not only is that wisdom for worldly progression, but it also serves as a reminder not to waste all our time and blessings on what is temporary when we should focus on what is eternal. We love because He first loved us. Go forth and be the salt and light of the world.

### **Hers:**

As we move through this season of Lent toward Easter, many of us are looking forward to the warmth of our church traditions and the joy of family celebrations. Personally, I am so grateful for this community. I often think back to this past Thanksgiving, when Robert and I felt so deeply seen. We were blessed by a family who offered to open their home to us for the holiday, and even by a preteen who reached out just to make sure we weren't alone and invited us to his family's holiday table. That feeling of being "looked after" is one of the greatest gifts the body of Christ can offer. We already had plans for the holiday, but it was a blessing to know that people were thinking of us. This is an example of the beautiful spirit of compassion in our church. Yet James 1:27 nudges us to look even closer - to the places that are often quiet and the people who might be suffering in silence.

Therefore, it made me think about the other members of the church and the hope that they were also being looked after throughout the year and during the holiday season. There are many among us who, like Robert and me, don't have a large circle of family nearby. They may have no parents, kids, or siblings to visit and lean on. There are older people in our congregation who may be all alone throughout the week and the holidays be-

cause they are widowed and their kids are far away.

There are also people who are silently hurting because they do not want to ask for favors or inconvenience people, because they are unable to drive at night, or they are just too sick without the ability to go places on their own. While others are in nursing homes, surrounded by people, but utterly alone for the friends and family they shared their whole life with. Is it not Psalm 71:9 that states, "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone?"

It is James in 1:27 that started me off on this line of thinking. It is our job as a church body to care for the church family when needed. This does not mean that one person must do it all, but as a church family, we should make sure that all our members who are in need are taken care of whether they currently show up every day or are homebound. In fact, 1 Corinthians 12:25-27 explains that all the parts of the church body should care for one another equally. We should be able to meet the body's needs if we all help where we can, when we can.

It is crushing to think that a brother or sister might miss a time of fellowship simply because they live fifteen minutes away and feel like a burden. As Romans 15:1-2 states, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up."

Loneliness and the loss of independence do not follow a calendar and can be very hurtful to people as they get older. This is especially true if they were once active in a great body like our church. It is just important that we do not leave them behind and forget about them, because we believe their family is there to help them, that they will ask for help, or that they are not around.

You do not have to visit everyone, but perhaps your gift could be to occasionally drive someone, make a phone call, send a text, send an email, or write a letter. When everyone uses their unique gifts, our church can excel. I will end with 1 Timothy 5:4, which explains that we need to take care of our own parents and grandparents first. But our church body is also a family. After you take care of your house, I invite you to look outward. Taking care of others is a magnificent way to glorify God year-round.

Reflection / Thoughts:

Is there someone whose face you haven't seen in the pews lately?

Who in our church family might be waiting for a "nudge" of connection today?

How can we make it easier for those who feel like an "inconvenience" to ask for help?

God bless.

# First Church of God March 2026

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship Safety—Steve & Chris Tim W. & John	2 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 6:30 Congregational prayer	3 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	4 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 5:30-7pm KFC 6:30 Sign language	5 9am Bible Study 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	6 8:30-9:30 walking	7 8:30am Men's breakfast @ Tim's 3:30 Burgoon Baseball clinic
8 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship Safety—Scott & Susan Adam & Justin 4:30pm 4-H	9 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 6:30 Council meeting	10 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	11 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 5:30-7pm KFC 6:30 Sign language	12 9am Bible Study 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	13 8:30-9:30 walking	14 4:30 registration 5 pm dinner & judging <b>Chili Cook-off</b>
15 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship Safety—Jim D. & Tim J. Randy & Nicole 2pm Miller hall rental Lobby	16 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 6:30 Congregational prayer	17 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	18 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 5:30-7pm KFC 6:30 Sign language	19 9am Bible Study 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	20 8:30-9:30 walking	21 3:30 Burgoon Baseball clinic
22 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship Safety—Kent & TJ Pam & Jeff 6pm Lenten Service	23 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 6:30 Congregational prayer	24 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	25 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 5:30-7pm KFC 6:30 Sign language	26 9am Bible Study 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	27 8:30-9:30 walking	28 9am Women's breakfast <b>2pm EASTER EGG HUNT</b>
29 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship Safety—Brad & Tim J. Brittney & Mike	30 8:30-9:30 walking 10:30-12:30 LifeWise 6:30 Congregational prayer	31 10:30-12:30 LifeWise	<b>April 1</b> <b>FAMILY NIGHT</b> <b>5:30-7</b> <b>(Last night of KFC)</b>	2 6pm foot washing, meal and service Maundy Thursday	3 <b>Good Friday</b>	4