

# The MUD Church

*Emanuel United Church of Christ*

13989 Township Rd. 127

P.O. Box 121

Upper Sandusky, OH 43351

419-294-4144

[www.themudchurch.com](http://www.themudchurch.com)



## *Corner of Corn and Beans*

A few weeks ago I had a case of what you might call "Writer's Block." In my case, I couldn't get my mind wrapped around a good sermon for the approaching Sunday morning, and the closer Sunday got, the more anxious I became.

It didn't help that I was distracted by things outside my control. That's a struggle, isn't it? To have things get set in motion that you can't control, but they hold your attention for far too long. The news brings us many things like that – things we can't control. Our daily lives bring us things like that – things we can't control.

For a preacher, that silence can feel like failure. We are supposed to have words. We are supposed to listen for God and translate that listening into sentences that carry hope, challenge, and truth. And when the words do not come, it is tempting to assume that we have done something wrong. That we have not prayed enough. That we have not listened carefully. That we are somehow unworthy of the task.

That can happen to all of us at any time. We find ourselves without answers or without direction, and we begin to wonder if the God of our faith is failing us. As I began to put my sermon blockage in that perspective, I began to realize that, perhaps, I needed to preach about

"not knowing" because not knowing is not foreign to our faith. It is woven through our scriptures, our prayers, and our lives far more deeply than we like to admit.

Many of the most prominent stories in the Bible involve not knowing. Moses had no idea how he was going to represent God, and was probably pretty anxious about it as he walked away from the burning bush. Mary was probably full of doubt when she was informed she would be raising God's son.

Here's what we tend to misunderstand; Not knowing is not a failure of faith. Not knowing is the very soil from which our faith grows!

As that Sunday approached, I began to realize it was not that I had nothing to say, but that I was resisting what needed to be said. Maybe the sermon was not supposed to resolve our uncertainty but to name it. Maybe the most honest word I could offer was not an answer, but a truth: that we do not always know, and that God is still present anyway.

Not knowing humbles us. It reminds us that God is God and we are not. It breaks the habit of turning faith into a system we can master instead of a relationship we must trust. When we do not know, we are forced to lean—not on our understanding, not on our preparation, not on our confidence—but on God's presence.

And that presence does not depend on our clarity.

I think we sometimes imagine that

*Continued . . .*



***Holy Week  
Schedule  
at Mud  
Church  
See back page***



*Continued from front page . . .*

God speaks most clearly when we are most prepared, most articulate, most certain. But again and again, the Bible suggests the opposite. God speaks in wilderness spaces. God meets people when they are confused, afraid, or lost. God shows up when plans fall apart and answers do not come.

Many of us are living there right now. We do not know what comes next. We do not know how long certain struggles will last. We do not know how to fix what feels broken in ourselves, in our families, in our communities, or in our world. And we may be wondering why God has not made things clearer.

If that is you, hear this: you are not failing at faith. You are practicing it.

Faith is not the absence of questions. It is the decision to keep walking even when the path ahead is foggy. It is the willingness to sit with God in the quiet, even when no clear instructions are given. It is the courage to say, "I don't know," without walking away.

The Christian story does not promise us full understanding. It promises us Emanuel—God with us. Not God with our explanations. Not God with our certainty. God with us. And sometimes that "with us" looks like standing in the pulpit with no clear sermon. Sometimes it looks like sitting at a bedside with no words. Sometimes it looks like praying the same prayer over and over with no immediate answer. Sometimes it looks like simply showing up, again and again, trusting that God is at work even when we cannot see how.

I do not know what God is doing in every situation represented here today. I do not know all the reasons behind our pain or our confusion. I do

not know how every story will unfold. And maybe admitting that out loud is not weakness, but faithfulness. Because when we stop pretending to know, we make room for God to be God.

*- Pastor Jay*

### ***LENT/ASH WEDNESDAY***

The season of Lent arrives early this year, starting with Ash Wednesday on February 18. The Mud Church will offer its traditional Ash Wednesday service starting at 7:00 p.m.

Lent is a 40-day solemn Christian season of prayer, fasting, and worship, running from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday on April 2, serving as preparation for Easter. It mirrors Jesus's 40 days in the desert, focusing on repentance, self-reflection, and spiritual discipline, including abstaining from meat on Fridays.

### ***Lent Purpose and Significance***

- ✦ **Preparation for Easter:** A time for spiritual growth, reflection, and renewing baptismal promises, leading to the celebration of Christ's resurrection.
- ✦ **Reflection on Jesus's Sacrifice:** It commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring temptation, and preparing for his ministry.
- ✦ **Time of Repentance:** A period to turn away from sin, practice self-denial, and draw closer to God.

## ***Christmas to Winter Wonderland at Mud Church***

We counted exactly one hundred people in attendance at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. With the church so full, the sounds of singing and worship was very beautiful and meaningful. Most people stayed for a while after the service for fellowship time. It was a wonderful way to bring in the celebration of Christmas! One month later, however, the weather turned frigid and we were hit with a snowstorm. The church looked like it was located above the Arctic Circle!

**We invite and encourage all who can to attend our special worship services over the next couple of months (See page 3). If you can not make it, however, on the next page are some ways you can observe the special times of Lent and Holy Week on your own at home.**



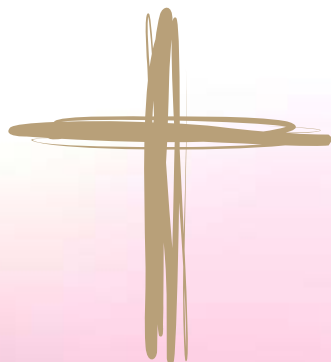
## *How to celebrate ASH WEDNESDAY AT HOME February 18, 2026*

**Items needed:** White mask, black craft paint, artist brush, Bible, cross, candles.

Ash Wednesday signifies the beginning of Lent, which in the church is a time of preparation for the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The best known tradition of Ash Wednesday is the mark of a cross applied to a worshipper's forehead, painted onto the skin with moist ashes. The sign of the cross is an outward sign of our need for repentance. (Repentance is the act of admitting the sinful errors of our ways and promising to change those ways.)

Create an altar space on a small table, or the kitchen table. Center the cross and light two candles, one on each side of the cross.

Have someone in the household read Ecclesiastes 3:1-20. Discuss and pray upon how God is always present, always creating, and always moving us through the seasons of our life. Discuss and pray about how you can be thankful. Admit your mistakes – things you've done or said, and things you've left undone or unsaid – and ask for forgiveness. Then, remind yourself that the forgiveness of God, and the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, are there for the asking!



## *How to celebrate MAUNDY THURSDAY AT HOME April 2, 2026*

**Items needed:** Bible, cross, three candles, wine or grape juice, bread, simple meal. (If desired, research the type of meal Jesus and the disciples might have shared that night.)

Maundy Thursday is the celebration of Christ's Last Supper with his disciples. It is the moment when Jesus introduced to the world what we now call Holy Communion.

Arrange your cross and candles as a centerpiece to your supper table. Prepare and serve a simple meal with the candles lit. Select someone to read Matthew 26:17-30. Share the bread and wine/juice with each other. Pray together out loud, or silently. Clear the dishes and clean things up in silence, thinking about how Jesus was arrested and how his torture was just beginning. Leave the Bible, cross and candles on the table for Good Friday.



## *How to celebrate GOOD FRIDAY AT HOME April 3, 2026*

**Items needed:** Bible, Cross and Candles left from Maundy Thursday.

Good Friday is observed as the day Christ was crucified. Jesus was nailed to a cross and hung until dead, in the tradition of Roman capital punishment tactics.

Select someone to read Matthew 24:32-56. Discuss what a violent death Jesus endured. Read John 3:16 and discuss the powerful meaning of God sacrificing his son in such a horrible way in order for our sins to be forgiven. Pause in silent prayer to confess your sins – things said and done, and things left unsaid and undone. In silence, remove the Bible, Cross and Candles to another room, then return and meditate in silence upon the emptiness and sadness of Jesus' death.

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Issue 1, February 2026

## EMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Worship with  
Us Every  
Sunday in  
Person or Live  
on Facebook*



Sunday Service - 10 a.m.  
Sunday School - 9:15 a.m.

419-294-4144

13989 Township Rd. 127, Upper Sandusky, OH

Support our ministry  
with an online gift at  
[www.themudchurch.com](http://www.themudchurch.com)



**The Mud Church is a member  
of the Upper Sandusky Area  
Ministerial Association**

Watch the Emanuel Facebook page  
during Holy Week for daily video  
presentations from local  
pastors with messages  
about Jesus!

**March 29 - April 5**



For advertising information, contact Pastor Jay Scott, 419-689-0436

## *Holy Week at The Mud Church*

**Palm Sunday, March 29** – Celebration of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem to a crowd waving palm branches. Sunday morning worship at 10:00.

**Maundy Thursday, April 2** – Celebration of Jesus' last supper with his disciples, and the introduction into Christianity the ritual of Holy Communion. Join us for a church potluck starting at 6:30 p.m. followed by a meditation by Pastor Jay, and Communion.

**Good Friday, April 3** – Honoring of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Mud Church will present a special worship service at 7:00 p.m.

**Easter Sunday, April 5** – Also known as Resurrection Sunday, we will celebrate Christ's rising from the dead with an entire morning of worship and activity we call "Praise and Pancakes." We'll start with Sunrise Worship at 7:30, then a pancake/sausage breakfast, followed by Sunday School at 9:15 and Easter worship at 10:00.

