

THE GRACE CHURCH VISITOR

VOL. 83 | FEBRUARY 2026 | NO. 8

From the Pastor



Dear Friends of Grace;

February will see the beginning of Lent. Lent is from a Latin word meaning "Spring." Of course, Lent and Easter happen in the Spring, but there are some things I like to think about at this time. Spring is a season of change. It starts out cold, maybe icy or snowy, wet, muddy. Then it becomes warmer, more sunny, and soon the bulbs are pressing up green growth. Birds will be coming back in a few weeks to build their nests. Animals will be searching for food in the wild and feeding their young. Life is coming. But now, it's dormant. It will go from death to life. How fitting.

For so many Christians, Lent is a time of reevaluation. It's about emptying ourselves of our self-centered concerns and becoming actively aware of the concerns of Heaven, which are the concerns for others. It's a time where we feel chilled and isolated in so many ways and take steps to grow closer to God. For the past three decades, I have not given something up as I have tried to take on something for Lent. I've taken on a deeper sense of awareness of my own soul, seeking how I can be healed where I am broken, and be more healing for others. I have an annual Lenten discipline that involves watching my DVD of "Jesus Christ, Superstar" and listening to Faure's "Requiem." I read certain devotionals from my shelves and specific scriptures, and I expand my prayer list. I will preach at our church's Ash Wednesday Service, February 18 at 6:30 pm. Ash Wednesday is an amazing service for me, it strikes at the root of my soul about discipleship as followers of Jesus. And, I will lead a Lenten Study for all who wish to attend.

This year the Lent Study is "The Lord's Prayer" by Adam Hamilton. How many times in worship do we *recite* the Lord's Prayer, but we aren't really *praying* it? This six-week study is designed to remind us of just what we're praying, what Jesus wanted us to learn from it, and how it can help us grow in faith and practice. It will start on the first Sunday of Lent, February 22 at 6:00 pm and will go for six weeks, Palm Sunday (March 29) being the last week.

(continued on page 3)

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Grace


Office Hours:
Monday — Friday
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

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- Correct your address
- Submit news to be published in *The Visitor*

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February Birthdays

Alexandra Franco	2/2
Lorijo Lounsberry	2/4
Velda Frette	2/5
Val Gregori	2/12
Judy Brekke	2/14
Cora Hermanson	2/16
David Barclay	2/18
Mindy Kardell	2/20
Brian Jensen	2/26
Ruby Matheason	2/27



February Lectionary

February 01

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15;
1 Corinthians 1:18-31;
Matthew 5:1-12

February 08

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 112:1-9;
1 Corinthians 2:1-12;
Matthew 5:13-20

February 15

Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2;
2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

February 22

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32;
Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Deadline

Deadline for submitting *Visitor* information is the 20th of each month. Information for the weekly bulletin and *This Week at Grace* is due in the office by noon on Wednesdays.

February Volunteers

February 1

Liturgist Gail Remis
Tech The Feil Family
Ushers..... Jim and Shelley Hassebrock, Del Johnston

February 8 (Scout Sunday)

Liturgist Cathy Hermanson
Tech Louis Reeder
Ushers..... Judy Brekke, Gene and Erma Schaeffer

February 15

Liturgist Del Johnston
Tech TBD
Ushers..... Rod and Sue Bohner

February 22

Liturgist Kurt Carlson
Tech TBD
Ushers..... Brian and Dee McNamara

G.R.A.C.E. Team "E"

Gene & Erma Schaeffer - chr, Rod & Sue Bohner, Carroll & Judy Brekke, Val Gregori, Jim & Shelley Hassebrock, Adam & Valerie Hubert & Family, Del & Kris Johnston, Alyssa Loots & Family, Sharla Mander, Brian & Dee McNamara, Dave & Linda McVicker, Peg Muxfeldt, Claudia Pauk, Nate & Malinda Warwick & Family

Our Prayers and Thanksgivings

Judy Andrew – Friend's husband with cancer

Raejean Bickelhaupt – Recovering from a stroke

Corinne Brown – Recovering from a fractured foot

Dave & Marlene Doolittle – Grandson deployed to the Middle East; all deployed soldiers

Marlene Doolittle – Recovering from knee replacement surgery

Kevin Larson – Beginning chemotherapy

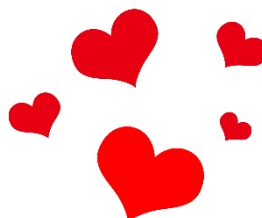
Gail Remis – Grandson and Carlos' nephew with health concerns

Taylor Family – Ongoing needs

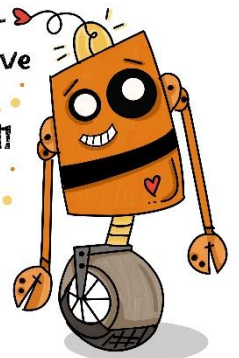
Our Nation – Peace, wisdom, and healing amid unrest and division

**** Hospitalized or in an emergency?**

Please notify Pastor Phil



No batteries
needed-
Jesus' love
never
runs out!



Our Gifts

Offering January 4 - January 25
\$10,806.50

Our Presence

Attendance January 4 - January 25
Total 251/Avg. 63

Our Service

Thank you to our January Liturgists: Gail Remis, Cathy Hermanson, Del Johnston, Gloria Sampson

Thank you to our January tech team: Louis Reeder, Kurt Carlson, Louis Reeder, The Feil Family

Thank you

Thank you so much for your support of the 2025 Angel Gift Program! Because of your kindness, we were able to help 85 children from 31 families. I am truly grateful for your generosity and believing in the mission of the program.

Thank you,
Alyssa Loots

Thank you

We as a family of Joan Doolittle want to thank everyone at Grace for prayers and kind words at our mother's memorial service. Thank you to Pastor Phil Webb for all of his support and prayers. Our mother loves Grace church and always said if she wasn't at church her week wasn't complete. Again, thank you so much.

David and Marlene Doolittle
John and Amanda Doolittle
John and Lori Anderson

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday falls on **February 18** this year. We invite you to join us for our **traditional Ash Wednesday service**, including the imposition of ashes, at **6:30 p.m.**

Come and worship with us as we begin the season of Lent together—a time of reflection, prayer, and preparation of our hearts for Easter.

From the Pastor (cont.)

Starting on Monday, February 23 at 10:00 am, we'll have an identical study for six weeks. That way if no one wants to go to study in the dark, or needs to miss a class, they can choose Sunday night or Monday morning for that week. Books are \$17.00 and are available in the church office during the week. Please don't let the cost of the book prevent you from participating. Let me know, and it can be worked out so you won't have to miss.

So, with Lent beginning Ash Wednesday on March 18, and the Lenten Study on February 22 and 23, we are heading into a Lent of spiritual introspection and growth and service.

Sincerely in Christ,
Phil Webb, pastor

Lenten Study: The Lord's Prayer

This Lent, Pastor Phil will be leading a study on *The Lord's Prayer* by Adam Hamilton, inviting us to reflect deeply on one of the most familiar and meaningful prayers of our faith. Together, we will explore the rich meaning behind each line of the prayer Jesus taught, discovering not only what we ask of God, but also what God asks of us.

Sessions will be offered on **Sunday evenings at 6:00 p.m.** or **Monday mornings at 10:00 a.m.**, beginning **February 22 (Sunday) / February 23 (Monday)** and concluding **March 29 (Sunday) / March 30 (Monday)**. Both sessions will cover the same material, allowing you to choose the time that best fits your schedule.

Books will be available for purchase in the narthex or office. The cost is **\$17 per book**, with **large-print editions available for \$19**. If you are able, please consider making an additional donation to help cover the cost of a book for someone who may not be able to afford one but would like to participate in the study.

Join us as we prepare our hearts for Easter, deepen our understanding of prayer, and grow together in faith during this Lenten season.



Mission Brunch

Thank you to everyone who generously supported our January Mission Brunch, benefiting the Roland-Story Food Pantry. Your gifts will make a meaningful difference for individuals and families facing food insecurity during this difficult time.

Our **February Mission Brunch**, on **Sunday, February 22**, will support **United Methodist Camps**. These camps provide wonderful opportunities for youth and families to grow closer to God through fellowship, faith-building, and the joy of camping. It's a mission that nurtures faith, friendships, and lifelong memories.

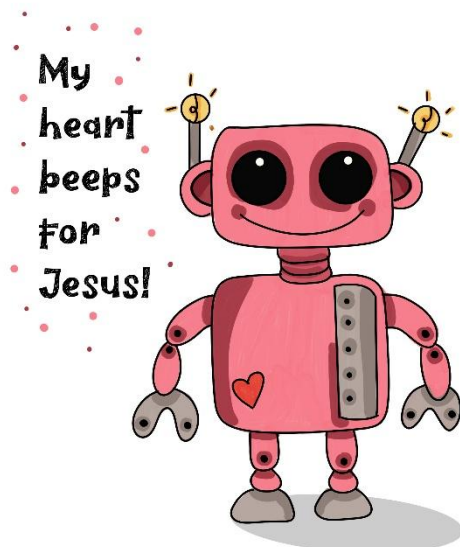
We will enjoy a delicious egg bake following worship, and as always, the quarter tube will be available during the service. Let's come together to be a blessing to United Methodist youth and families by supporting this worthy mission.

Bible Study opportunity

A new Bible study led by Brian McNamara will begin on Tuesday, January 27 at 7:00 p.m. This study will meet every Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. through March 31 and is open to everyone who would like to dig deeper into Scripture.

The study will be held at the new building at Brian's home, located at 305 Sunday Ave. in Story City. Participants are encouraged to read Genesis 1–2:4 in preparation for the first session.

All are welcome to attend—come ready to learn, reflect, and grow together in faith.



Second Saturday at Six



Looking for a fun date night on Valentine's Day?

Or coming on your own and hoping to spend the evening with friendly,

welcoming people? Join us on **Friday, February 14, at 6:00 p.m.** for **Second Saturday at Six!**

We'll enjoy a relaxed evening of games, laughter, and fellowship. Bring your favorite snack to share—maybe something pink or red to fit the Valentine's theme! Whether you come with a date, friends, or on your own, you'll find a place at the table.

Come join us for a night filled with fun, connection, and joyful community—we'd love to see you there!

Food Pantry

This year, **Grace United Methodist Church** is **proud to be in charge of the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry!** The responsibility rotates among the local churches, and 2026 is our turn. Louis Reeder and Jan Feil are leading this ministry and doing a fantastic job, but running the pantry is a big task, and they sometimes need extra hands from our Grace members.

One way to help is when the food truck from Des Moines delivers pantry supplies on the **1st and 3rd Fridays** of each month. With a few volunteers, unloading and putting away the food usually takes only **about 30 minutes**. Deliveries typically come between **10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.**, and a more specific time is given a couple of days beforehand.

For February, we need **2–3 helpers on February 6 and 20**. If you are available one or both days, please contact Louis or Jan—they will let you know the exact time once it's scheduled.

Thank you for stepping up to help our community and support this important ministry during Grace's year of leadership!



UWF January Update

The Grace Women of Faith met on January 14 with 13 women in attendance, along with Pastor Phil Webb, Miss Lena, and Marvin Kokemiller. The meeting opened with Scripture, as Patsy shared Romans 8:21, setting a thoughtful and faith-filled tone for the evening.

During sharing time, Sharla joyfully announced that she will become a grandmother in August. She also read Micah 6:8 and spoke about mission giving, distributing pledge cards for women to prayerfully consider their individual commitments. The group was encouraged by thank-you notes from shut-ins who received visits and cookie tins in December, with a note from Louise Bauman read aloud.

Patsy shared information about Mission U, a learning and spiritual growth opportunity to be held in Ankeny next July, and announced that the Conference Church Camp Secretary will visit the group during the February meeting.

The program was led by Gail, who shared insights from her five-month “Mastery of Transformational Training” workshop, reflecting on personal growth and reaching one’s fullest potential. Fellowship concluded with dessert provided by Tep—strawberry salsa with cinnamon crisps—along with coffee and tea.

The Grace Women of Faith continue to grow in fellowship, service, and faith as they support missions and encourage one another.

Special Music

Gail Remis shared a beautiful liturgical dance during worship on Sunday, January 18, performed to “Alabaster Jar” by CeCe Winans. Her movement was a meaningful expression of faith and worship. Thank you, Gail, for sharing your gifts and talents with us.



“Soup”-er Bowl



It’s time once again for our annual **“Soup”-er Bowl** challenge! On **Sundays, February 1 and February 8**, we invite everyone to join in a little friendly competition while helping a great cause.

Bring **cans of soup and crackers—or any food pantry item**—to “vote” for the football team you think will win the Super Bowl. Beginning February 1, you’ll find a table in the **narthex**, with each end labeled for one of the two Super Bowl teams. Simply place your donations on the end of the table for the team you’re cheering for.

Let’s have some fun, see which team is the congregation favorite, and at the same time help **restock the food pantry** with much-needed items. Every donation makes a difference—thank you for participating!

Honoring Dale Henricks



Grace United Methodist Church is pleased to share that Dale Henricks, a longtime member of our

congregation, will be honored by the Roland-Story Community School District with the naming of the high school auditorium in his honor.

A naming ceremony will be held on Saturday, February 7, at 4:00 p.m. Dale Henricks served as Superintendent of the district until 1999 and played a key role in the construction of the auditorium. His dedication to education, the fine arts, and student opportunities has left a lasting impact on the community.

The Dale W. Henricks Auditorium will stand as a tribute to his leadership and vision. Grace United Methodist Church extends its heartfelt congratulations and thanks to Dale for his years of service to our community.



Overdue Recognition



On Thursday, December 4, the Story City Lions Club was honored to announce this year's recipient of the Lions Club Community Service Award: Patsy Jensen!

Patsy, a long-time member of Grace United Methodist Church, has been a

familiar and beloved presence in Story City for many years. Her commitment to the community spans over 50 years, and she remains actively involved in her church and many service organizations. From local events to community initiatives, Patsy's dedication can always be counted on.

We were so pleased to see her recognized! Thank you, Patsy, for your years of service and for making Story City a stronger, warmer community for all of us.

Camping

The Camping Task Force (Kurt Carlson, Ray Hults, Gini Michel, Candi Holm, Lorijo Lounsberry, Pastor Phil Webb) updated the church's Policy for use of camping funds:

The church will pay 50% of the registration fee for an Iowa United Methodist Church Camp or Riverside Bible Camp for high school age and under, also adult special needs members of Grace UMC, Story City.

If one of our campers is not able to go to camp with the church only providing 50%, we encourage you to talk with Pastor. The Pastor knows of opportunities for camperships through the conference and other possibilities for funding.

It is the desire of the church that with the change in policy that all members eligible for registration assistance do not miss out on camping because of the change from 100% to 50%.

2025 Missions Wrap Up



Missions are a vital part of our ministry at Grace, and we are so grateful for a congregation that shares in that commitment. In 2025, together we made a real difference in our community and beyond!

Through our Mission Brunch Sundays and quarter tube ministry, we contributed \$4,542.38 to support various causes. Our birthing kit ministry created 26 kits, contributing to a total of 2,204 kits made for Midwest Missions, while our mat weaving ministry made 15 mats, adding to the 1,081 mats completed overall.

We also had two groups of volunteers travel to Midwest Missions in Jefferson, where they learned more about the missions they support and helped with tasks like preparing rice and soy blessing bags, assembling student kits, and sewing items.

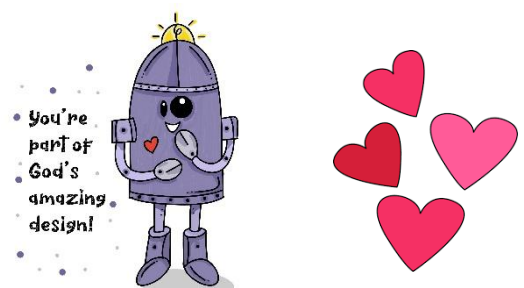
And this is just a small portion of the work our congregation accomplished in 2025. We are truly blessed to be able to help so many missions throughout the year. Let's continue being a **mission-focused church** in 2026!

Volunteers Needed



Each Sunday, a volunteer runs a simple PowerPoint during worship to display hymns, prayers, and service elements. No advanced computer skills are needed, and training is provided.

We are looking for additional volunteers to sit in the balcony and advance the slides during the service. This is a great way to support worship and be involved in the life of the church. If you're interested, please contact the church office. Thank you for considering this ministry.



Coming Soon



We're excited to share some good news — sometime in February, Grace will be getting a brand-new website! This is a much-needed update, and we're looking forward to giving our church an online space that better reflects who we are today.

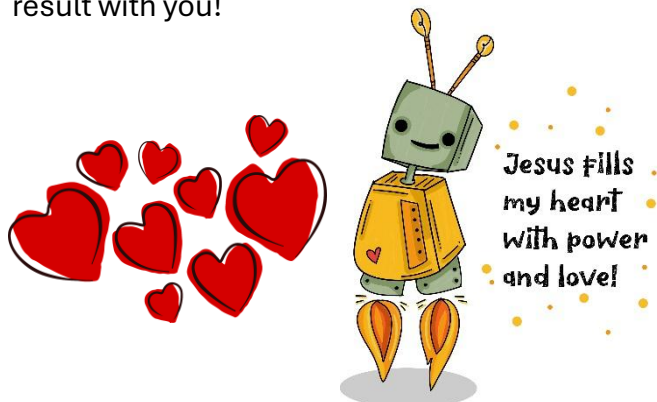
As part of this update, we'll be starting fresh with a new web address and a new church email address. The new email will begin early in February, so you may notice messages coming from a different address. Don't worry — for a while, we'll be watching both the old and new email accounts to be sure nothing is missed. When the new email address is ready, we'll give you plenty of notice to update your address book so you can stay connected.

The new website will have a fresh look and be easy to use, making it simpler for everyone to find information about Grace, upcoming events, and what's happening in the life of our church. Our goal is to make it welcoming, clear, and helpful for everyone.

The Ad Council Committee has approved Shannon to work extra hours in February to make this project possible. She will continue her regular morning duties and, for a short time, work in the afternoons to focus on building the new website and updating our online presence.

Our hope is that this new website will help keep our church family connected, share the wonderful things happening at Grace, and even help new people find their way to us.

Stay tuned — we can't wait to share the finished result with you!



From the Office of Bishop Kennetha J. Bigham-Tsai

January 27, 2026

Dear Friends,

I know that you have been watching the events in Minneapolis and around the country with dismay and anguish. First, the killing of Renee Good, then Alex Pretti, who was shot ten times as he knelt, subdued. We've all been asking hard questions as we have watched these events unfold. What is happening to our country? What are we becoming as a nation?

I stand with you in prayer and solidarity as you grapple with these questions. I stand with you as you build beloved community as an antidote to hatred and violence that is growing around us. I know that together we stand with the people of Minneapolis and all over this country in solidarity and mourning.

I would commend to you the [statement from the Council of Bishops](#), which has already been posted on the website. I am also including [here](#) an address that I gave at McKendree University in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference during the week of MLK celebrations. This address was in honor of their MLK Humanitarian Awards recipients^[1]. In it, I make a case for building beloved community “for such a time as this.”

Please join me in considering the ideas in this address and praying about ways we can live out Dr. King's vision. Also, join me in prayer for the families and friends of Renee Good, Alex Pretti, and others killed or displaced by ICE actions around our nation. Pray also for our country and the world.

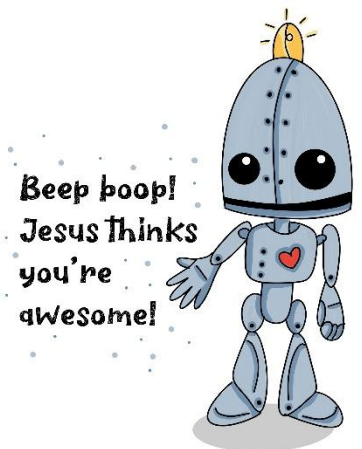
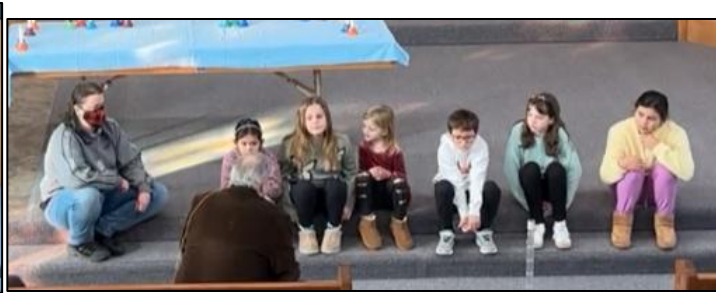
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai

Pictures of Grace



January was a quieter month at Grace, but it was still filled with meaningful moments. We were blessed by the children's bell choir sharing "*Jesus Messiah*," enjoyed the leadership of several wonderful liturgists, and even shared a few smiles while bopping balloons together one Sunday. We gathered around the table for a meaningful time of communion and found ways to worship together even when illness required us to be creative — with Pastor Phil keeping his distance one Sunday and recorded music filling in when Rhonda wasn't feeling well. Our children also collected quarters for our monthly mission, reminding us that even small gifts can make a big difference. Through it all, we were reminded how truly blessed we are to worship and share fellowship together as a church family.



Grace UMC Council

Unofficial Minutes Monday October 27, 2025, 6:30 pm.

Present: Gloria Sampson (Chair), Pastor Phil Webb, Jan Feil (Missions), Mindy Kardell (Education), Jim Hassbrock and Kurt Carlson (Trustees), Patsy Jensen (UMW), Cathy Hermanson (Worship/rec. secretary)

Pastor Phil offered prayer and Gloria opened the meeting.

Minutes: Jim/(Patsy) moved the November minutes to be approved. Motion carried.

Finance: All 2025 bills paid by end of year. Repaid loan from Trustees in full. Authorized first apportionment payment for 2026. Year-end Endowment money distributed among accounts.

Committee Reports: Ministry Areas

Worship - Cathy reported candle care moved from Altar concern to G.R.A.C.E. teams. Choir on hiatus until Wed. March 4. Special services – Scout Sunday (recognize our scouts – no flag service), Ash Wednesday – 6:30 service on Feb 18. Del/Kris Johnston would like to help organize a youth-led worship service this spring. Possible dates are being considered.

Education – Mindy reported another youth lock-in was held on December 26 – 4 students/5 adults (Phil, Mindy, Judy A, Janet, Donyel) service project was to clean the communion trays. Plans for another lock-in during spring break.

Missions – Jan reported a truckload of food, personal hygiene, and cleaning products from Harvest Home was delivered to the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. Our December brunch and quarter tube yielded \$902.42 to be sent to the Taylor family. Our January Brunch/quarter tube sent \$528.48 to the Roland-Story Food Pantry. We will host the Souper Bowl Food collection on Feb. 1st and 8th. Our February mission focus will be on United Methodist camps. Our 2025 Brunch/Quarter tube congregational giving totaled \$4,542.38.

UWF: Patsy reported eight members delivered goodie tins to 16 recipients this year – another successful, enjoyable project! At their January meeting individuals made their pledges for the year. In February, they are looking forward to a guest coming to speak to them about our United Methodist camps.

Committee Reports: Administrative Area

SPPRC: Cathy reported the committee will take the Darbonne Staff Parish guidelines and evaluate a section each month to amend/update in 2026. Rhonda Hampton has submitted her resignation as worship pianist after many, many years of faithful service effective July 1, 2026. Gloria added that Larijo Lounsberry has also submitted her resignation as financial secretary after 23 years (+17 at Oelwein). Council thanks both of these talented, generous women for their many years of selfless contributions to our Grace Church family!

Leadership Development: Phil/(Jim) moved Denise Carlson to be installed as chair of the SPPRC. Motion carried.

Trustees: Jim reported new flooring will be installed in both lower-level bathrooms in February. Kate Eads from Grimes has been hired to evaluate and finish the sound system project begun in 2025. Mindy asked if she could also look into the cord situation around the sanctuary piano.

Pastor's Report: Phil shared committee work on updating the Darbonne document update will begin. He announced a Lenten Bible study on the Lord's Prayer. He is looking for special music to be shared at the Ash Wednesday worship service.

New Business: Phil shared a hand-out outline of website replacement options. In 2024 when the church computer crashed, we lost our website log-in credentials. After exploring several options, Phil and Shannon developed a proposal highlighting the elements of our two best platform options considering services, costs and ease of maintenance. Council voted for the option using Tithe.ly which is designed specifically for churches and includes many tools already built in, making set-up and ongoing management easier. It includes website hosting and unlimited storage, mobile-friendly design, built-in church tools (calendar, sermon library, giving options, contact forms). Video embedding (YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo), search engine optimization and tech support. It is recommended by United Methodist Communications and is lower cost than comparable church platforms and will scale well as church needs grow. It will be accessible for maintenance on the three office computers. After some discussion, **Jim/(Mindy) moved that we go with the Tithe.ly platform and authorize Shannon to add extra hours to her schedule at \$15/hour for 60 hours over 3 weeks but not to exceed \$1,000. Phil will explore funding options including using memorial money, individual donations and administrative budget. Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:18.

Next meeting will be **MONDAY, February 23, 2026 at 6:30.**

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Hermanson, Rec Sec.

February 2025



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School	2	3 10:00-12:00 Mat Weaving	4 5:00 Children's Bells 5:30 Compass 7:00 Axis	5	6	7
8 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School	9 5:30 Worship Comm. 6:30 SPRC	10 10:00-12:00 Mat Weaving	11 1:30 UWF 5:30 Compass 7:00 Axis	12	13	14 6:00 Second Saturday at Six 
15 8:15 Trustees 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School	16	17 10:00-12:00 Mat Weaving	18 5:00 Children's Bells 6:30 Ash Wednesday Service 5:30 Compass 7:00 Axis	19	20	21
22 8:30 Missions 9:15 Worship 10:15 Mission Brunch 10:30 Sunday School 6:00 Lenten Study	23 10:00 Lenten Study 5:45 Finance 6:30 Council	24 10:00-12:00 Mat Weaving	25 5:30 Compass 7:00 Axis	26	27	28