



# The Messenger

February/March 2025

West County United Methodist  
Parish

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#### Worship

9:30 a.m (L) (W)  
10:00 a.m. Adult Sunday School (F)  
11:00 a.m. (G) (F)  
11:15 a.m. Children's Church JUMP (F)

#### Pastor Wade

(724)777-4795

#### Pastor Ali

(814)241-2269

#### Inside this Issue:

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## February/March 2025

In this letter to you, I am going to introduce a word that imparts fear in the hearts of many. It is a word that many people avoid at all costs. It is a word that a large number of people cringe at just the sound of the word. That word is C H A N G E!

Now that you have been revived and you are conscious again, let's talk about what we are changing!

Beginning with this newsletter, there will only be a newsletter every other month. Each newsletter will contain two months' worth of information. I think I just heard the first comment... "this will never work because we might miss something that we didn't know about." Whoever made that comment, guess what, you are correct. We might miss something. We are going to try our best to make sure that we do not miss anything, but we already know that there might be a learning curve in transitioning to every other month. So, we are asking

for your grace! If we miss something we will be adding announcements to our weekly bulletins and we will be announcing the additions during announcement times before worship!

Someone else just said, “What if I lose my newsletter before the second month ends?” Another very good question. In an attempt to make certain that everyone has a newsletter, we print a few extra newsletters each month. These extra copies typically get tossed in the recycle bin because they are not used. You will actually be doing us a favor by losing yours and taking another one!

I think I just heard another comment, “Pastor, I use my old newsletter to line the bottom of my birdcage.” Sorry, can’t help you with that one! Maybe, get a cat. I heard cats and birds are good companions!

But seriously, we are transitioning to a bi-monthly newsletter. We are doing this to help save some time and some costs in publishing the newsletters. We will also begin to share the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter across our four churches. That is only fair since we are only printing a Parish newsletter now.

If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please contact Mary Beth at the Girard Church (814-774-3069 or girardumc@verizon.net).

Later this year, we will try and coordinate groups of volunteers from each church to help fold and sort printed newsletters. Maybe you can help?!

Every other newsletter, I will share some thoughts with you and, in between, Pastor Ali will share her thoughts so you will still get the flavor of two pastors!

See, change isn’t all that bad after all!!

Until the whole world hears!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pastor Ali", enclosed in a dashed rectangular border. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# February 2025

West County United Methodist Parish Monthly Prayer Calendar  
 Consider how God is asking you to pray through these concerns!



SUN                  MON                  TUE                  WED                  THU                  FRI                  SAT

**01**

Pray for Pastor Ali and Pastor Wade!

**02**



**03**  
 Read Psalm 71. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?

**04**  
 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Fairview UMC!

**05**  
 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Girard UMC!

**06**  
 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Lake City UMC!

**07**  
 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Weis Library UMC!

**08**  
 Pray for everyone, by name, who has a February birthday or a February anniversary!

**09**

Read Psalm 138. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?

**10**  
 Pray through the prayer list from the church bulletin!

**11**  
 Pray for those who clear the snow from our roads and sidewalks!

**12**  
 Pray for anyone who cannot get out because of the weather!

**13**  
 Call someone and tell them that you love them!



**14**  
 Who do you need to forgive? Pray about it!

**16**

Read Psalm 1. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?



**17**  
 Pray for our nation!

**18**  
 Pray for the leaders in the State of Pennsylvania!

**19**  
 Pray for the leaders of Erie County!

**20**  
 Pray for the local community leaders!

**21**  
 Pray for yourself!

**23**

Read Psalm 37. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?

**24**  
 How is it going with your spirituality?

**25**  
 How can you grow to become fully devoted to Jesus Christ?

**26**  
 How can we pray together about our faith journey as a Parish?

**27**  
 Pray and give thanks for our District Superintendent, Rev. Sang Choi.

**28**  
 Pray and give thanks for our Bishop, Rev. Sandra Steiner Ball!

## Family Matters

### Prayer Concerns

#### Fairview

Tim Wilkins  
Laura Farrel  
Harriet Grace  
Andy Miller  
Ellen Hepler  
Jean Pepicello  
Our Church  
Theresa Gebhardt  
People of the Congo  
Kathy Pytlarz

#### Girard

James Jansky-cardiac issues  
Iva Sue Tyson-stage 4 cancer  
Cliff and Kathy Terib-  
ery-health concerns  
Pat Powell-lung cancer  
Holly Miller-stage 4 cancer  
Ongoing health concerns:  
Jacob Hickman  
Rick Hossman  
Samuel William (wife Peggy  
as well)

#### Lake City

Pastor Wade and Pastor Alison  
Berkey  
Pastor Brock Beveridge  
Lisa Clark  
Marilyn Clark – Health  
Tyler Copening  
Lavina Fehr  
Nancy Ward – Cancer  
Marilyn Clark  
Kim Jeffrey  
Bob Fetterman  
Fred & Annie Blarr

Hurricane Recovery  
Countries at War

\*\*Please sign up at the Welcome Center to be included on our prayer email list. In the event that you have a prayer call, please email Sala Downey at salagwen@gmail.com, or call 814-402-3053 and an email will go out to the church list.

#### Weis Library

Barb Trojanovich  
Parish Shut-ins  
Shirley Hall (W)  
Dan Honard (G)

Bernadine Sensenich  
Jim F. - serious health issues  
Charlotte Widdowson  
Shirley George and family  
Larry Crum family  
Joy Klemm and family  
Bev Widdowson  
Glenn Campbell  
Jeff Harbaugh  
Marshall Carner  
Prayers for peace

## Birthdays

### Fairview

2/6-Carol Meyer  
2/8-Courtney Nagle  
2/11-Bob Clark  
2/12-Harry Rudd  
2/16-James Meyer  
2/16-Pastor Wade  
2/27-Sue Knapp  
3/10-Ed Steele  
3/12-Kathy Rudd  
3/18-Stephen Hetz  
3/24-Vladimir Kanazin  
3/25-Doris Wells  
3/27-Timmy Kanazin  
3/31-Lisa Searing

### Weis Library

2/1 Connie Garlick  
2/5 Mike Zboyovski  
2/16 Pastor Wade  
2/23 Christopher Garlick  
3/1 Nancy Gruver  
3/3 Isla Velez  
3/20 Sharon Trojanovich  
3/21 Shirley Hall

### Girard

2/5 Cathy Maloney  
2/13 Jenica Denial  
2/16 Pastor Wade  
2/18 Lisa Reynolds  
2/19 Barb Gunnison  
2/19 Michael Fails  
2/28 Merideth Dreistadt  
2/28 Troy Dreistadt  
3/1 Bill Miller\*  
3/1 Noah Hickman  
3/3 Gerald Michael\*  
3/4 Michael Fails  
3/9 Paul Adamaszek  
3/12 Barb Bolt  
3/13 Michael Wright  
3/14 Kathy Erickson  
3/15 Lucy Mondy  
3/17 Trey Mondy  
3/19 Emma Osterberg  
3/26 Trill Dreistadt\*  
3/27 T. J. Faulkner  
3/30 Russ Teribery  
\* indicates 70+

### Lake City

2/4 Angie Seyler (B)  
2/8 Rick Killian (B)  
2/11 Brian Stelter (B)  
2/12 Mike & Abby Newell (A)  
2/16 Pastor Wade (B)  
2/29 Mike & Jeannie Pacansky (A)  
3/2 Ginnie Meeder (B)  
3/22 Gerald & Diane Harbaugh (A)  
3/23 Brian & Tamara Lehman (A)  
3/26 Glenn Campbell (B)  
B-Birthday  
A-Aniversary

### In Service to Our Country

Tia Nejman     Jeffrey Pacansky  
                         Nathaniel Kibler     Tony Gollmer  
Michael Campbell

To add to or change a prayer concern or birthday listing, please see the contact info on the front page for each church.

## Fairview UMC Preschool

## Wesley Station Preschool

Registration for the 2025-26 school year is now open.

Open house will take place February 23 1-3 pm

Email [fumc.wesleystationps@gmail.com](mailto:fumc.wesleystationps@gmail.com) for more information.

## Education

### JUMP/Education

Children of all ages are welcome to join us for JUMP Sunday school. We meet upstairs after the Children's Message.

### Adult Sunday School Class

The Adult Sunday School Class at FUMC will meet in the library at 10:00 am. Please bring your copy of the Upper Room.

### Girard UMC

The children at Girard UMC have formed "Team Jesus" under the leadership of Nick and Nicole Newell.

## United Women in Faith

UWF Reading Program - We are happy to report 8 participants will receive certificates, at the Spring Mission Study, for completing one of the plans in the UWF Reading Program for 2024. Congratulations to Shirley Bloomster, Cindy Carr, Ellen Hepler, Hillary Kanazin, Susan Vorse, and Yekaterina Kanazin for completing Plan I. Congratulations to Dorothy Super and Laura Wilson for completing Plan II.

New books are arriving for the UWF Reading Program for 2025 and are being shelved. For 2025, books from the 2020, 2021-2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 Reading Program lists are all eligible for Reading Program reporting credit. There are some other ways to receive Reading Program reporting credit. See Dottie Super for a hand-out explaining this.

Spring Rummage Sale – The Spring Rummage Sale will be held on May 16 and 17. Operation Rummage Room work nights are scheduled on March 13 and 27, April 10 and 24 and May 8 from 6 to 8.

Spring Mission Study – This will be held at Fairview UMC on April 26. Registration is at 9:30. The speaker is Betsy Harkins from the Appalachian Ministries Network. Bring a sandwich for lunch. Dessert and beverages will be furnished.

## Worship

Girard

2/2

L-Doug Wright

U-Dan and Pam Wilson

2/9

L-Cheryl Newton

U-Gail Teribery

2/16

L-Iva Housler

U-TBD

2/23

L-Gail Fees

U-TBD

3/2

L-Trill Dreistadt

U- Dan and Pam Wilson

3/9

L-Doug Wright

U-Gail teribery

3/16

L-Cheryl Newton

U-Bob Bensus

3/23

L-Gail Fees

U-TBD

3/30

L-Iva Housler

U-TBD

\*\*Acolyte-Nick Newell

## Readings

February 2: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Luke 4:14-30; Courtney Nagle

February 9: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11; Todd Searing

February 16: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 6:17-26; Hillary Kanazin

February 23: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38,42-50, Luke 6:27-38; Amanda Lasky

March 2: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-36; Samie Ruiz Bueno

Lent sermon series: "Lent-It Is Not that Stuff in the Bottom of Your Pocket!"

March 9: Galatians 2:20, Psalm 103 (The Message) Cindy Carr

March 16: Galatians 2:20, Hebrews 13:1-3; Mel Sundin

March 23: Galatians 2:20, Romans 10:5-13; Greg Gebhardt

March 30: Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8-14; Courtney Nagle

Lake City

Liturgist-February/March Doris Schiller



## Looking Ahead....

### Pauline's Closet

Tuesday, February 4, 3:00-5:00 p.m. and Tuesday, February 25, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Lake City UMC

Gently worn clothing is available free of charge to those in the community in need.

### Pasta Dinner

Tuesday, February 18, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Girard UMC

Dine in or carry out, cost is \$10 for pasta with meat sauce or meatballs, salad bar, bread/butter, dessert, and beverage

### Wesley Station Preschool Open House

Sunday, February 23, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Fairview UMC

### Community Cafe

Monday, February 24, 11:30-1:00 p.m.

Girard UMC

Free lunch open to the community, also browse tables of free health care/cleaning supplies, books, fresh fruit and vegetables.

### White Elephant

Sunday, March 2, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Weis Library UMC

### Ash Wednesday meal/study

Wednesday, March 5, 5:30 (meal), 6:00 (study)

Fairview UMC

This will be an ongoing meal/study on Wednesdays during Lent

### Pauline's Closet

Tuesday, March 11, 3:00-5:00 p.m., and Tuesday, March 25, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Lake City UMC

### Pasta dinner

Tuesday, March 18, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Girard UMC

### Lunch On Us (tentatively named)

Thursday, March 20, Noon

Lake City UMC

A new outreach program for the community, join Lake City for a meal of soup, sandwich, and beverage. Meal is free.



## West County UM Parish February Events

Feb 2nd – Communion all churches

Trustees - Noon– Girard UMC

Feb 4th – Lake City Council – 5:30PM – Lake City UMC

Feb 11th – Pauline’s Closet – 3-5PM – Lake City UMC

Council/Trustees – 6:30PM – Weis Library UMC

Feb 17th – Council – 6:30PM - Fairview UMC

Feb 18th – Pasta Night – 4:30-6:30PM – Girard UMC

Feb 20th – Soup and Sandwich – Noon- Lake City UMC

Feb 22nd--Lake City Ladies lunch, place TBA

Feb 23rd – Wesley Station Preschool Open House – 1-3PM – Fairview UMC

Feb 24th – Community Café – 11:30-1PM – Girard UMC

Feb 25th – Pauline’s Closet- 3-5PM – Lake City UMC

Council – 6:30PM – Girard UMC

## March Calendar of Events for the Parish

Mar 2nd – Communion – all churches

Trustees – Noon – Girard UMC

White Elephant – 3-5PM – Weis Library UMC

Mar 5th – (Ash Wednesday) Lent- it is not that stuff in the bottom of your pockets!

Meal/Study – 5:30 Meal/ 6PM Study – Fairview UMC

Mar 9th – Daylight Saving Time Starts- Turn Clocks AHEAD

Mar 11th – Pauline’s Closet – 3-5PM – Lake City UMC

Mar 12th - Lent- it is not that stuff in the bottom of your pockets!

Meal/Study – 5:30 Meal/ 6PM Study – Fairview UMC

Mar 15th-Newsletter deadline

Mar 18th – Pasta Night – 4:30-6:30PM – Girard UMC

Mar 19th - Lent- it is not that stuff in the bottom of your pockets!

Meal/Study – 5:30 Meal/ 6PM Study – Fairview UMC

Mar 20th – Soup and Sandwich – Noon – Lake City UMC

Mar 24th – Community Café – 11:30-1PM – Girard UMC

Mar 25th – Pauline’s Closet – 3-5PM – Lake City UMC

Mar 26th - Newsletter folding, 1:00 p.m.-Girard UMC

Mar 26th - Lent- it is not that stuff in the bottom of your pockets!

Meal/Study – 5:30 Meal/ 6PM Study – Fairview UMC

Mar 29th - Lake City Ladies lunch, place TBA

April -1st – Lake City Council – 5:30PM – Lake City UMC



### Sacraments and Spiritual Practices Retreat

Where: Jumonville, 887 Jumonville Rd Hopwood

Friday, March 21, 2025 7:00 PM to Sunday, March 23, 2025 1:00 PM

Join the Pittsburgh District Lay Ministry Team for a one-of-a-kind 2-night retreat at Jumonville Camp and Retreat Center, designed to deepen our understanding of the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism within United Methodist theology. Learn the importance of coming to the table of the Lord seeking to have your spiritual needs met. Throughout the weekend we will worship in different settings while exploring these sacred practices alongside other spiritual disciplines, creating a rich and meaningful experience for all. The sacraments of Communion and Baptism, along with other spiritual practices, are what John Wesley called “means of grace,” ways to more fully experience the grace of God in our individual and corporate life as followers of Christ. Leave with the understanding of the benefits the sacraments can provide you including forgiveness, nourishment, healing, transformation, and eternal life. Renew your appreciation for the divine grace made available through these sacraments. This special event is open to everyone and will be instructed by Rev. Josh Demi and facilitated by Carlen Blackstone. This retreat counts as an advanced course for Lay Servant Ministries.

### Ham Loaf Sale

The Girard United Methodist Church and the Rice Avenue Community Public Library are teaming up to sponsor a ham loaf sale. Orders will be taken beginning Monday, March 31, and deadline to order is Wednesday, April 9, by noon. Orders must be placed with the library by calling 814-774-4982. All proceeds will be split between the Girard UMC and the library.

### Easter Flowers at Girard UMC

Order forms for Easter flowers are not yet available, but should arrive in early March. If you are interested in ordering flowers, please call the office at 814-774-3069 for prices and varieties.


# March 2025





West County United Methodist Parish Monthly Prayer Calendar  
 Consider how God is asking you to pray through these concerns!

**SUN                      MON                      TUE                      WED                      THU                      FRI                      SAT**

**01**

|  |   |   |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>02</b>  | <b>03</b>   | <b>04</b>   | <b>05</b>   | <b>06</b>  | <b>07</b>   | <b>08</b>  |
| Read Psalm 99.<br>Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you? | Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Fairview UMC! | Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Girard UMC! |  | Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Lake City UMC! | Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Weis Library UMC! | Pray for everyone, by name, who has a March birthday or a March anniversary! |

|  |  |                                     |   |   |   |  |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <b>09</b>  | <b>10</b>  | <b>11</b>                           | <b>12</b>                                       | <b>13</b>   | <b>14</b>   | <b>15</b>                              |
| Read Psalm 91.<br>Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you? | Pray through the prayer list from the church bulletin! | How is God speaking to you in 2025? | Consider joining the small group study tonight! | Lord, help me to see the diversity that you created and know that it is good! | If you are able, get down on your knees and pray today! | Thank God. For one new blessing today! |

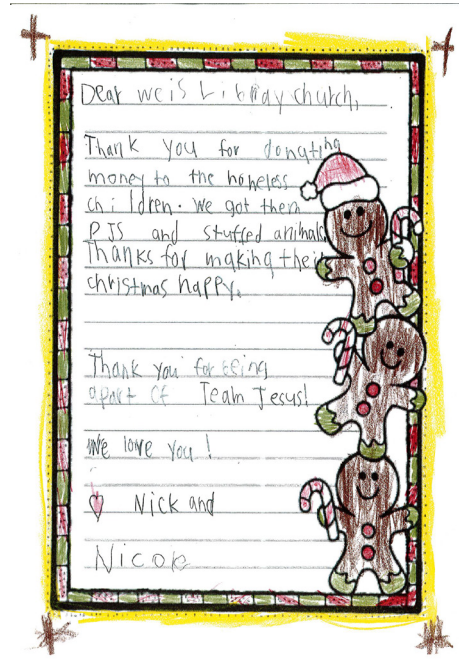
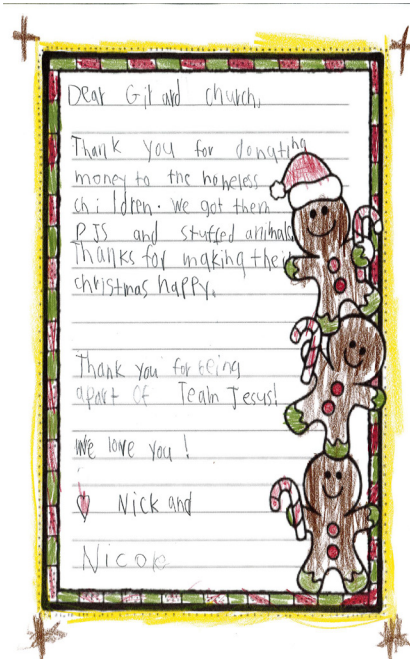
|  |   |                                     |   |  |   |                    |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--------------------|
| <b>16</b>  | <b>17</b>   | <b>18</b>                           | <b>19</b>   | <b>20</b>  | <b>21</b>   | <b>22</b>          |
| Read Psalm 27.<br>Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you? |  | Does your ego ever get in your way? | Pray for those attending the small group study tonight! |  | If the weather is nice, take a walk outside today! What blessings can you find? | Pray for yourself! |

|  |  |                                  |   |                                    |                                     |   |
|--|--|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>23</b>  | <b>24</b>  | <b>25</b>                        | <b>26</b>   | <b>27</b>                          | <b>28</b>                           | <b>29</b>   |
| Read Psalm 63.<br>Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you? | What have you been waiting to do in the Spring season? | Do you like working in a garden? | Pray for those attending the small group study tonight! | Have you seen a spring flower yet? | Invite someone to church this week! | Pray and give thanks for our District Superintendent, Rev. Sang Choi. |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>30</b>  | <b>31</b>  |
| Read Psalm 32.<br>Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you? | Pray and give thanks for our Bishop, Rev. Sandra Steiner Ball! |

Thank you from Team Jesus

Team Jesus would like to thank all those who generously supported the Team Jesus dime project. Your donations of coins (and bills) totaled a whopping \$787.11. With these funds, Team Jesus was able to personally pick out and purchase Squashmallows and pajamas for the children at The Refuge. They also were able to donate a large supply of socks. When a call went out from EUMA for a need to purchase sleeping bags for the homeless, Team Jesus was able to donate \$250. Special thanks to Weis Library for jumping in with a large donation of coins for the project. That's a whole lot of blessings to those in need in Erie County from just some small dimes. Watch for more news on Team Jesus as they plan for their next project.



If you are wanting to give to the California Wildfires, UMCOR is providing that opportunity. Remember that 100% of what you give goes to the cause. If you write a check out, please make the check out to UMCOR and add Advance Number 901670 USDR- California Fires in the memo line. Send directly to them at The Advance 458 Ponce De Leon Ave, NE Atlanta, GA 30308. Or you may go to <https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/901670> and locate California Wildfires and donate.

Other options are to give directly to a United Methodist church located in the middle of this that lost their church building but are still helping those in the community. Pacific Palisades Community United Methodist Church at <http://www.palisadesmethodist.org/giving>. Or you can give to the UMC California Pacific Conference @ [www.calpacumc.org](http://www.calpacumc.org)



Bishop Steiner Ball invites everyone to participate in this Dynamic Prayer during Lent. What if, through prayer, you could tap into the miraculous power of God's Holy Spirit and unleash more than you could ask, think, or imagine into your life and world?

Dynamite Prayer is a 28-day experiment to invite God's resurrection power into the lives of clergy, laity and churches. It's that resurrection power that breaks through our regular routines, our regular kinds of thoughts, words, deeds and actions to focus on what God is trying to say to us in new ways. It's a powerful way to pray that increases our faith and transforms the world as new inspiration and hope is unleashed by God's Spirit.

This 28-day adventure will take you from feeling stuck, overwhelmed, and uninspired to curious and expectant as you surrender your own preferences and ideas and courageously follow the miracles God brings into your life.



We will be having our second White Elephant Gift Exchange on Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup> 3-5PM. Weis Library will host this event in the back of the sanctuary. Bring your wrapped unwanted gift with you and be prepared for a great time full of laughter and delight. If you would like more info, please contact Cyndy Snyder, Pastors Ali or Wade. Our first event was so fun we want even more to come share in this great time together.



Our yet to be named Soup and Sandwich Meal at Lake City will start Feb 20<sup>th</sup> at Noon. We will have different soups and breads or sandwiches each month for the community. This will be a free meal where people can come and enjoy a meal and fellowship with one another. This will take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month! We hope to see you on the 20<sup>th</sup>!

Church Trustees Training – Available for any trustees to attend.  
Where: Edinboro UMC, 113 High Street, Edinboro  
Saturday, February 22, 2025



The WPA Conference Board of Trustees is offering a new training opportunity for clergy, local trustees, District Trustees, and District Boards of Location and Building. Dive into the ever-evolving landscape of ministry and governance, where we'll tackle essential topics such as: property use, insurance, the new Living and Working Conditions of the Pastor, and the new parsonage inspection form. You'll gain insights and explore resources for the unique questions and circumstances your church may face.

10am - 12pm...Clergy

- 1 - 3pm...Local Church Trustees
- 4 - 5:30pm...District Trustees and Board of Location and Building

If you are interested in attending, please let Pastor Wade or Ali know you plan to attend and we can get you registered.

Lent—it is not that stuff in the bottom of your pockets!

Lent begins on March 5, 2025 and it is a time to make, or remake, a connection with Jesus. Lent is a time to consider giving up something to begin walking closer with Jesus.

What if you could find a way to give up something and grow at the same time? So, we think we have a good idea—at least we think so!!! During the Lenten Season of 2025, let us focus on putting God first and growing in faith. We will also look at becoming more like Jesus and showing others how to do the same.

Beginning on March 5 2025, Ash Wednesday, we will start a 6-week small group to help us become more like Jesus. Each Wednesday night will start at 5:30 with a light supper. At 6:00, we will transition into a time of learning and growing. Our goal will be a 45-minute learning session with an additional 15 minutes for questions and answers. We will wrap up by 7:00 each week. Each week we will utilize a resource that has been written by Phil Maynard, a church consultant and pastor, to help us shift from being a church member to a disciple, a follower of Christ for life!

Everyone is invited to participate and there is no cost to participate! We would hope that each participant will commit to the entire six-week program.

Paul writes in Galatians, “My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). As we journey to the cross this year, let’s help each other crucify one struggle in our lives as we find the resurrected Christ within each of our lives.

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOE BOX MINISTRY

This year our shoe boxes were sent to two countries. Some of our boxes were shipped December 11th to Peru. Peru is located on the western coast of South America. It contains a part of the Amazon rain forest as well as Andes mountains, where the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu is a popular tourist attraction. Samaritan's Purse began distributing gift-filled shoe boxes there in 1997 and launched the Greatest Journey, the follow-up discipleship program, in that nation in 2010.

The rest of our shoe boxes were shipped on December 16th to Ecuador, which is located on the equator in South America. Ecuador is known for its export of Panama hats, cacao, and bananas. Samaritan's Purse began delivering Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes to children there in 1997, and in 2009 launched The Greatest Journey discipleship program. With pen and notepads provided by Operation Christmas Child, as well as the student booklet in their own language, children utilized all their senses to learn and understand God's creation, the first in the series of Bible lessons in the Greatest Journey program. They also sang songs and engaged in activities that reinforced the main message of their lesson: Jesus is our Friend. Maria, their trained volunteer teacher, explained in a child-friendly way how to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. Maria said, "These children had never seen a pen or notepad before. They were wearing ragged clothes when they received their shoe box gifts and, for many of them, the shoe box was their first gift in their lives."

Since 1993, Samaritan's Purse has partnered with local churches around the world to deliver 220 million Operation Christmas Child gift-filled shoe boxes to children in need in over 170 countries and territories. Each one – packed full of fun toys, school supplies, and hygiene items by families, individuals, or churches – is sent with prayer that the child who receives it will experience God's love through their simple gifts. In 2023, 11.3 million shoe boxes were collected, and 10 million of these came from the United States. There were 11 nations that year that donated shoeboxes: Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the U.S. The Greatest Gift Gospel story booklet is available in 107 languages. The outreach events to distribute the shoe boxes focus on Jesus Christ, God's Greatest Gift.

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