

Shepherd's Voice

January 2026
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A Little Love Note

From Pastor Melissa

New year, new beginning. New beginnings are always arriving in each new moment. It's interesting, though: as we age, we welcome our beginnings with our former wisdom and experiences in mind and some of our old baggage in tow. What might this new year living in the light of God's love and grace offer?

As we head into 2026, I invite you to draw a star word at our January 4 Epiphany worship service. Or, you can go to God in prayer and ask God for a word. We can pray with our star words and ask God what message God has for us and see how it can guide how we live our lives and open our hearts this year. I also encourage you to prayerfully set aside time to see what comes out when you sit with God's word for you this year: what comes out of you in the form of art? Is there a story it sparks in you? Or a memory? If you would like a soul friend to companion you on this journey of playfully exploring your star word, please let me know!

My prayer for you in this new beginning is that our God, Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, is the guiding light that you follow this and every day.

Love,
Pastor Melissa

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Leadership Team Meeting Summary

Leadership Team Meeting Summary
December 8th, 2025

The Team convened on Monday evening the 8th with all but one member present. Devotion and Leadership Equipping – Vicki shared information about her trip to England and Ireland with the Wesley Heritage group. There was 32 people in the group from all over the US along with a group of 20 from the Global Methodist Church. The tour began in Coventry, England arriving on November 11th. The 2nd day was Epworth, England where Wesley's family (17 children) were raised. Lunch was served at the church on dishes. Cathedrals visited all had stairs and were narrow to navigate, Oxford was next, Wesley was educated there. Wesley was of short stature (5' 2") and required a chair to preach from. Visited John Wesley's new room (Methodist Chapel) in Bristol. Supposed to have communion there but circumstances did not allow that to take place. Instead conducted it outside at Suzanna's gravesite with 32 people. Went to a Roman bath, smelled like sulfur. Visited St Paul's cathedral where Wesley attended in London. Favorite things beside Wesley information was the connectional aspect with everyone in numerous churches. There was a wide variety of people and backgrounds.

Agenda:

- Website update. Jim and Randy are putting together site to get us through the rest of the 2025. They will build with content that we think we need and bring it back to group to see if it meets our needs.
- Updating Northwest Staff Job Descriptions update. Start in 2026 with new team members aboard.
- Northwest will recognize the Leadership Team's outgoing members (Class of 2025), and welcome new members who will begin their terms in January 2026.
- A Task Force is working on policy and procedures for the Leadership Team.
- Leadership Team training on January 12th, 2026 at NW church starting at 6pm. A new Mission Possible (third edition) is being given to members of the Leadership Team that are staying on past the new year and new members starting in January.
- Inclement Weather Plan for the Church – Members will consist of Pastor, Member of Leadership Team and Trustee to make a decision. Metrics to use for making a clear decision: No electricity, no heat, no water, ice covered parking lot or not plowed. Decision made by 7 am that morning.
- Staff Appreciation - Use cards on table to sign from everyone similar to last year. Recognize staff on Sunday, December 21st during church.
- Important dates: Advent/Christmas Eve information:
 - December 21st - Blue Christmas service for those in our congregation and community who have experienced a loss or hardship that makes the holidays difficult for them. Pastor Melissa is reaching out to other churches and organizations with an invitation to attend this service and a meal afterwards. Vicki will need a headcount ahead of the service.
 - Christmas Eve: Services at Prospect UMC will be at 6pm and Northwest UMC will be at 7:30pm. Congregations from both churches can attend which ever time works best for their family.
 - Pledge Update - Randy indicated we have received pledges totaling \$120,835. We expect to receive more pledges with an estimate of 59,250 from them. Non pledge units estimate was 4,500. Brings estimated total to 184,500. 2026 budget is around 190k so it looks like we will be close to meeting the 2026 budget level.
- Leadership Team as voted in at charge conference:
Class of 2026: Julia Gruber (chair), Cam Lauseng, Karol Castens
Class of 2027: Matthew Nunn (co-chair/vice-chair), Vicki Krost, Dan Becker
Class of 2028: Rebecca Ocampo, James Craner, Randy Anderson

Methodism 101

What does it mean to be a United Methodist? Pastor Melissa will be facilitating a 4-part Methodism 101 class from Wednesday, Jan 7-28. We will be exploring our United Methodist heritage and history, theology, the structure of our worldwide church, and an overview of the rich history of our congregations. A membership Sunday will be held on Transfiguration Sunday, February 15, 2025 for those feeling called to become members of their congregation.

Parishioners from both Northwest and Prospect are welcome to attend. This class will serve as a pathway toward membership or as a refresher class for current members. The class will be held at our sister churches to continue to strengthen the bond between the congregations and introduce to new members this relationship between our churches.

Here is the schedule:

Jan 7, 5:30pm	Prospect
Jan 14, 5:30pm	Northwest
Jan 21, 5:30pm	Prospect
Jan 28, 5:30pm	Northwest

Following Christ's Light in 2026

Following Christ's Light in 2026 – Worship Series

January 4 Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18
Epiphany Sunday

January 11 Isaiah 42:1-9; Matthew 3:13-17
Baptism of the Lord / Gratitude and Commissioning Sunday

January 18 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23
Human Relations Day

January 25 Micah 1:1-8

February 1 Matthew 5:1-12

February 8 Pastor Shawna Burnell from Chaddock will preach

February 15 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
Transfiguration Sunday and Membership Sunday

NUMC Book Club

Currently the Book Club is in the midst of reading three books for our next meeting in February 2026. One book shares stories about "unrecorded lives," one book tells about a life transformed by an unexpected "package," and the last book relates a moving story of tragedy and survival by a group of children. The titles are:

Tell Me Everything by Elizabeth Strout, 2024 [Fiction]

The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin, 2014 [Fiction]

Shelterwood by Lisa Wingate, 2024 [Historical Fiction, settings: 1909 and 1990 Oklahoma]

We hope you are enjoying reading this group of insightful titles. Mark your calendars to join us in discussing these titles on Tuesday, February 17th at 6 p.m.

Birthday's

Help us CELEBRATE
our congregation!

Wish them a HAPPY
BIRTHDAY if you see
them this month!!

9th- Terry Haas

13th- Aryana Beene
Claire Lauseng

18th- Dan Becker

19th- JoAnn Stevens

20th- Linda Nicot
Mel Hogan

23rd- Teri Sebesta

25th- Ariana Buck

31st- Ted Osman
Ana Scott

Altar Flowers 2026

The calendar is open
for altar flowers for
the 2026 calendar
year. If you would like
to reserve flowers,
please either email
the office or fill out a
form! The new
calendar will be
posted soon!!

Ash Wednesday

Mark your calendar! Ash Wednesday is Wed. February 18. Prayer group will not meet on Tuesday, February 17. We will meet at 10am on Ash Wednesday to pray and receive ashes.

Inclement Weather

Inclement Weather – Wondering if our church is closed?

Here is our new inclement weather policy: Northwest UMC will close due to inclement weather in the case of a lack of electricity, heat, or water; an icy or unplowed parking lot. The church will email all members on the General Email List, post to Facebook, and post to local closings on WEEK Channel 25. On Sundays, that announcement will be posted by 7am.

On Friday or Saturday, an email reminder will provide the Zoom link so you can participate in worship from your own home if you choose. The Zoom link will remain the same each Sunday.

Staff and Office Information

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