

Shepherd's Voice

February 2026
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A Little Love Note

When my daughter was in second grade, her Christmas gift to my husband and me was a hand-crafted calendar for 2025 with pictures of the season and holidays for each month of the year. She loves “directive draw” videos and utilized that tool for inspiration for our gift. For the month of February, she drew this very cute teddy bear holding a heart. I know I tend to think of hearts and love when I think of this month. But then, I sit with the word and concept of “love,” and Jesus’s teaching from the Sermon on the Mount rings through my mind: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” (Matthew 5:43-45) That’s not the kind of love I typically associate with the month of February; however, it’s the kind of love Jesus commands. For someone to be an enemy, there is history there between you. There are feelings; not good ones, mind you. So, if we feel so strongly about someone, how might we love and pray for them?

In the Buddhist tradition, there is a meditation called “loving-kindness.” For me, I have always connected to myself and to God through movement, so embodying my faith through movement and visualization has always been an interest to me. To begin, tune into your breath and body, inviting Christ’s love and light to shine down through your head and into your heart. I have found it helpful to imagine a stage. First, I see myself on the stage and feel love and kindness toward myself. There’s a reason for this: feeling this toward oneself helps us to actually be more kind and forgiving toward others. Next, invite onto the stage someone you know that you like and feel love and kindness toward them. After that, invite someone onto the stage that you might just know as an acquaintance, maybe someone you saw at the grocery store. Extend kind thoughts to them. Lastly, invite someone you don’t like onto the stage of your mind and extend kind thoughts to them. Focus on their happiness and hope for goodness in their life. After this, I like to clear the stage and ask Christ to extend the light from my heart through my arms and legs, expanding around me. I invite you to end with a prayer to be Christ’s body in your relationships and in the world.

God makes a way out of our “no way” and our categories of those we consider “friends” and “enemies.” This February, let’s love the way Jesus commands: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. It’s the Way of Jesus that liberates us all!

Love, Pastor Melissa

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Birthday's

Help us CELEBRATE
our congregation!
Wish them a HAPPY
BIRTHDAY if you see
them this month!!

1st- Grant Gillett

4th - William Anderson

13th- Faedean Turner

14th- Tony Jones

15th- Kingston Beene

21st- Elaine Hackward

24th- Kathy Lawrence

28th- Dixie Rogers

Altar Flowers 2026

The calendar is open
for altar flowers for
the 2026 calendar
year. If you would like
to reserve flowers,
please fill out a form
with the amount
owed. You can put it
in the offering basket
or turn it into the
office. The new
calendar is up!

Leadership Team Meeting Summary

The Northwest Leadership Team met with Dayspring NAUMC Pastor Patty Johansen and new SAS Facilitator Carol Stufflebeam on Monday, January 12th for training on the Mission Possible 3+ manual for Smaller Churches.

This training will help guide the Leadership Team as we move forward with the SAS church governing model. It was especially important for our new team members who were attending their first meeting.

Carol will be working with the Leadership Team further understand our roles and responsibilities to the church.

We will be sharing updates with the congregation as we learn more.

Lenten Bible Study

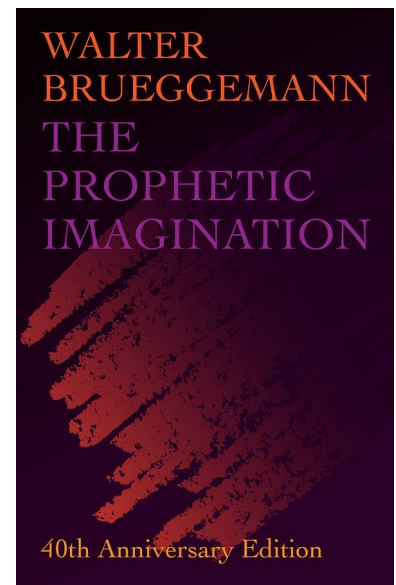
The foundational text for our Lenten worship series is The Prophetic Imagination by Walter Brueggemann, which we will read for our Bible Study. Bible study will be at 6pm at Northwest UMC on Wednesday evenings starting February 25 and going until March 18th. Children's ministry programming will be available during the Bible study so that caregivers with children may participate in the study. Suggested donation for the book: \$15 (We do not want the suggested donation to get in the way of your participation.)

Ash Wednesday- February 18

On Ash Wednesday, there will be two opportunities offered for the imposition of ashes. From 11:30am - 12:30pm, Pastor Melissa will offer Ashes-to-Go at Northwest UMC during the lunch hour, drive-thru or walk-up style outside. In the evening, at 6:30pm, there will be an Ash Wednesday service at Prospect United Methodist Church.

Lenten Worship Series

Northwest & Prospect are sharing a worship series called "The Work of Imagination." Through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, we will confront the pain of the world, embody faithful resistance, and participate in the holy labor of communal transformation. You can expect to meet Biblical characters in our worship services, including Jesus, the Canaanite Woman, a Jerusalem resident, and more! This worship series comes with a treasure trove of resources that the church will be sharing on our Facebook page and regular emails.



Lent Resources

Devotional Packet

Your Prospect and Northwest office administrators, Dani and Mary, are working together to prepare a Lenten packet that includes the devotional, practices for families at your home, a Lenten spiral filled with spiritual practices, and a coloring page. The packets will be available at each church before Ash Wednesday to ensure you begin your Lenten journey the day you receive your ashes.

Wednesday Nights

Wednesday Nights during the Season of Lent starting February 25 - March 18

5:30pm	The Family Table
6:00-7:00 pm	Bible Study
	Children's Ministry
	SoulFix Rehearsal
7:00pm	Choir Rehearsal

During the Family Table, we will share a meal lovingly prepared by the Northwest staff and pastor team, as well as read scripture, pray, and have sacred discussion.

February 25th the Family Table meal will be Chilli and a Taco Bar! Donations for this meal are greatly appreciated. Monies collected above the cost of the meals will be donated to a ministry chosen at the final Family Table.

Staff and Office Information

Pastor

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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 Zeven, 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.