

# Shepherd's Voice

April 2026  
Volume 2, Issue 4



## A Little Love Note

Sitting in the pews of the church that raised me, I flipped through the pages of the United Methodist Hymnal every Sunday. I would spend time in the songs of Jesus' birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection. Since you will be receiving this before April 1, we will take a quick (but not all inclusive) journey through Holy Week song lyrics:

"Hosanna, loud Hosanna!"  
"Let us Break Bread together on our knees"  
"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"  
"What wondrous love is this? O, my soul"  
"Up from the Grave, He arose!" "He arose!"  
"Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!"

Beloveds, I share these lyrics and pray that you sense what they express: joy, wonder, despair, hope, love, and the kind of community God imagines for God's creation: God's kingdom. We have been praying to join in the holy work of imagination with God because as children of God, we are children of hope. We are children, who even in the midst of despair, have the audacity to hope and to rejoice. To still be able to experience awe and wonder. To give thanks. To even, dare I say it, laugh? I invite you to join us for Holy Humor (aka Laughter) Sunday on April 12. Laughter Sunday is a Christian tradition coming from Bavaria in the 15th century called *Risus Paschalis*, or God's Joke, or the Easter Laugh, referring to the ultimate joke God played on Satan by raising Jesus from the dead. Priests would share jokes and amusing stories in the worship service to make people laugh. People would play practical jokes on one another after service. Can you imagine? Well, I invite you to imagine! Because we are going to do it! After worship on Sunday, April 12 is our Town Hall Meeting where you will receive updates from the Leadership Team and other important news from Ministry Teams. Bring your silly spirit and your sense of beloved community.

Until next time, sweet ones, all my 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!!

3rd- Sam Swain  
5th- Phillip Luebcke  
7th- Leanne Gollnitz  
8th- Lisa Rogers  
12th- Sharon Musselman  
22nd- Pastor Melissa Engel  
25th Bob Booth  
27th- Marilyn Anderson  
28th Randy Hammitt  
30th- Aaron Buck

### 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

Hi Church family,

Here's your monthly update about what your Leadership Team has been working on! Friendly reminder: our monthly Leadership Team meetings are open to anyone in the congregation who wants to attend! The Team meets in the Fellowship Hall at 6pm on the second Monday of each month. Our next meeting will be 6pm, Monday, April 13th for anyone who would like to attend!

Please note that any human resources topics about staff must be discussed in an executive session at the end of the meeting; non-Team-members will be excused during executive session to preserve privacy.

- Pastor Melissa and the Leadership team have finished drafting our new Leadership Team Covenant. This is an agreement reflecting our team's values, communication policies, and responsibilities. The Team adopted this Covenant by unanimous vote at our March 9th meeting.
- Many of the activities that the Leadership Team have undertaken involve some "big picture" strategic thinking. In addition to our Covenant, we've also been working on renewing our church's ministry teams, connecting volunteers with the appropriate team, and preparing for our upcoming Leadership retreat.
- Our Leadership retreat will be held at Dayspring UMC in East Peoria on Saturday, March 14th. We're excited to meet with our leadership coach, Pastor Carol Stufflebeam, on some strategic planning and discernment activities to help shape the direction of our work this year.
- Reminder: we will hold a church Town Hall on Sunday, April 12th, immediately after church. This will be the first of our regularly-scheduled quarterly town halls, allowing the congregation and the Leadership Team to consult on church mission and business topics as needed. Please mark your calendars and plan on staying to chat!
- Please remember that Holy Week is approaching and keep your Pastor and church staff in prayer - it can be a very hectic time! Mark your calendars with our important dates!

Next Meeting: April 13th, 2026 @6pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Craner, secretary

## Easter Egg Hunt

The annual Northwest United Methodist Church Easter Egg hunt will follow immediately after Easter Sunday service. Pending good weather it will be outside by the garden. If inclement weather then we will have it downstairs in the basement. Invite a friend to service and stay for the fun afterwards. See who will find the Golden egg for a prize! This year returning we will have our teen volunteer wearing Velcro eggs. See who can catch her for the coveted prizes those eggs carry! Open to ages 12 and under.

## Congregational Care

The Congregational Care team has been implementing ways in which we can stay in touch with and support our church family. On the welcome table you will find cards with contact information to request meals or a greeting card. Please take a card and tuck it in your directory or some other accessible place so you will know whom to contact.

Our meal train is running very smoothly, with thanks to everyone who generously offered to help provide meals when there is a temporary need, due to illness, surgeries, family death and other instances when meals are needed. If you know of someone who might be temporarily needing meals, please contact Dixie Rogers. Phone: 309-472-4336 Email: dixie.lea.smith@gmail.com

If you are aware of someone in our church family who might welcome a greeting card, please contact, Sandy Osman. Phone: 309-360-0519 Email: santedarena@comcasrt.net

Sandy will happily send a card because of illness, family death or an emotional need for which a card might provide some joy. If you are aware of someone who regularly attends church but hasn't been with us for at least a month, Sandy will send a card just to indicate that they have been missed. We wish to confine these cards to individuals within our congregation. When you request a card you can discuss the need with Sandy.

Those of us on the Congregational Care Team are not always aware of the needs of our church family, so we are relying on your help to try to meet these needs. Thank you for assisting us.

Kathy

## Staff and Office Information

### Pastor

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Drop in hours Tuesdays 8:30-10:00 AM  
Or by appointment

### Church Office

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