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# THE SPIRIT - ISSUE 02 - FEBRUARY 2026



## SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP AT 10 AM

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF CHENEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 

Dear friends and readers of this newsletter,

I am hurting, and lately I have a hard time finding the right words. And maybe you can share that experience with me.

You know, I love my life. I love serving Cheney UMC. I mean this sincerely: the best and the healthiest church I have served so far. I love my job. I love my friends, my life here in Spokane, and the gift of being able to travel to Germany regularly. And yet, I find myself carrying a growing sense of shame for having a good life, especially for being someone who can live without fear.

The church takes good care of my healthcare. While many people are facing 18–20% increases in insurance premiums and some, because of expiring tax credits, are bracing for increases of 75% or more. I am still able to pay for what I need. Costs keep rising everywhere, and I am not untouched by that reality, but I am still okay.

At the same time, I see my brothers and sisters who are not white, who are not U.S. citizens, living in deep fear. Family members disappear. People are detained, beaten, or shot. And they wonder if they will be next. I am an immigrant too, but I am white, and I hold a U.S. passport. I do not live in fear.

And I find it so hard to enjoy life when so many around me are suffering.

It is painful to witness the cruelty of our time. To see videos of people being violently abducted or harmed. To realize how fragile safety has become for so many.

In the midst of this heaviness, I stumbled upon a verse from Scripture:

***The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.***

**—Psalm 34:18**

Let me say this clearly:

If your heart feels broken right now, if your spirit feels heavy, that does not mean you are weak. It means you have not lost your humanity.

**Rev. Damian Carruthers**  
Lead Pastor

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And even though holding onto our humanity is painful, it is also what is most urgently needed right now.



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Do not let cynicism steal your compassion.  
Do not let cruelty harden your heart.  
Love all the more fiercely.  
Stay true to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only King we serve.  
And remember his commands:  
Love the enemy.  
Welcome the stranger.  
Feed the hungry.  
Bless the merciful.  
May God bless us, keep us from just singing, and move us into action.

Pastor Damian



**FEBRUARY**  
Birthdays

<b>1</b> Kathryn Schillinger	<b>17</b> Craig Cordill
<b>3</b> JoAnna Cockrum	<b>21</b> Scarlett Arlt
<b>7</b> Herman Crandall	<b>26</b> Mia Simonsen
<b>8</b> Lauren Cordill	<b>28</b> Jon Bennett
<b>10</b> Geoff Bennett	<b>Wilma Carrell</b>



**FEBRUARY**  
Anniversaries

<b>4</b> Roy & Linda Friedman	<b>14</b> Tim & Sandi Tapley
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**If you do not see your name please let the office know and we will put you in our database.**

There are a lot of things going on in our church life. We are planning, praying, and preparing for different events and when they come, they are over and we go on with the next thing. This section in our Newsletter should give us a moment of appreciation and celebration of what we have done and experienced in the last month.

So let's celebrate and be thankful!

### A Christmas Thank You

Dear Cheney UMC Family,

I just want to take a moment to say a heartfelt **thank you** to each of you, and especially to the wonderful leaders who made our Christmas Eve Services so meaningful this year.

Thanks to your support, I was able to travel to Germany and spend Christmas with my family, including my grandparents, who are now 86 and 88 years old. It meant the world to be with them during this special season, and I couldn't have done it without knowing things here were in such good hands.

A huge shout-out to **Carol Kriegh, Rev. Bob Foote**, and all the amazing **children from our Sunday Experience Group** who led our 4:30 PM family service. It was joyful, full of energy, and beautifully attended! You brought the Christmas story to life in such a special way. And thank you to **Rev. Dale Cockrum** for leading our traditional service later that evening, with the beautiful music from the choir and the sacred moment of Communion. That service is always such a grounding, peaceful way to welcome Christ into the world again.

I also want to say a big thank you to everyone who gave so generously during our Christmas Eve offering. This year, your gifts supported the **United Methodist Disaster Response** for communities affected by the devastating flooding on the West Side. As part of our mission to **Seek, Serve, and Share Jesus Christ**, we give because we believe love should be lived out and together, we raised **\$1,256** to help our neighbors in need. That's incredible!

So thank you, thank you, thank you.

May the hope, peace, and joy of Christmas continue to guide us as we move into the new year 2026.

With deep gratitude,  
Pastor Damian

## So... What Is Adult Fellowship Time, Anyway?



Ever sat in church and quietly wondered, “*Okay, but what exactly is Adult Fellowship Time?*” Great question. You’re not alone—and we’re glad you asked! Adult Fellowship happens every **second Sunday of the month**, and it’s our chance to build community beyond Sunday morning worship or weekday small groups. Basically, it’s like a pot-luck meets game night meets church family reunion with fewer casseroles than your grandma’s table, but just as much fun.

Each month, we gather around food (because of course, we are meeting at a Methodist Church!), and then dive into a themed activity or discussion. Sometimes it’s silly, sometimes it’s thoughtful, and usually it’s a little bit of both.

Take December, for example: **White Elephant Party time!** Over 33 folks showed up, and it was a *riot*. Weird, hilarious, and surprisingly useful gifts were swapped, stolen, and occasionally fought over with *very* dramatic flair. Laughter? Abundant. Regret over that singing fish plaque? Also abundant.

Then in January, Pastor Damian hosted a **2025 Trivia Night**, and let’s just say... our memory might not be what it used to be. Questions included: “Who made the most announcements in 2025?” (Spoiler alert: It was *Carol Kriegh* with a whopping 13 announcements. She’s basically famous now.) One game even had us acting out the sermon titles from our Movie Series *charades-style*. If you’ve never seen someone mime “Harry Potter: Sacrificial love” you are missing out. Not every event is strictly for the adults. We’ve had picnics in the park and a pool party at Jim and Patti Sooy’s house where the whole family joined in.

But Here’s the Thing...

We’re currently taking a step back and asking:

**Is Adult Fellowship Time doing what we hoped it would do?**

Does it really help us connect beyond worship?

Should we open it up more to families with kids?

Do we want more game nights? More discussions? More karaoke? (Okay, that last one might be a stretch... or is it?)



This is one of the projects that Pastor Damian and our incoming intern, Henning, are taking on during Henning’s 6-week internship. They’ll be helping us dream up what the next chapter of Adult Fellowship could look like. **We’d love your input!** If you’ve got ideas, feedback, or just want to be part of the team that reimagines this program, please reach out to Pastor Damian: [Rev.damian.carruthers@gmail.com](mailto:Rev.damian.carruthers@gmail.com)

We promise not to make you play charades... unless you *really* want to.

## Cheney United Methodist Church Schedule

**Church Office Hours - Tuesday - Thursday 4:30 - 7:00 p.m.**

**Meals on Wheels every Tuesday and Thursday from 11 am to 1 pm at our Church.**

**Choir Rehearsal Wednesdays from 7:00 -8:30 p.m..**

**Bible Study with Congregational Church - we are meeting weekly on Thursdays from 1:15 to 2:15 pm. For the month of February we will be meeting at the Cheney United Methodist Church**

**Sassy Senior Society meets on February 18 from 2 pm to 3:30 pm**

**Bible Studies:**

**Mondays from 2:00—3:00 led by Margie Lindner**

**Mondays from 7:30—8:30 led by Carol Kriegh**

**Tuesdays from 6:30—8:00 led by Pastor Damian Carruthers (at the church)**

**Wednesdays from 7:00—8:00 led by Saralynn Kerr**

*Contact the office for the addresses, please.*

### “Souper Bowl”

It's going to be a great Super Bowl this year and we can make it a great "Souper Bowl" as well. Historically, more money is spent on snacks for the big game than on any other day of the year. This happens while people right here in our area deal with food insecurity. Here are two ways to help:

1. Donate generously to the soup pot in the narthex on Feb 8. All donations will go to Second Harvest Food Bank which supports other food banks in the area.
2. On Feb 15 bring a can of soup for every touchdown scored during the Super Bowl. These donations will all go to our local food bank the Cheney Cupboard.

## We get an intern in 2026!

Friends, I (Pastor Damian) have great news. This year, a student at the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Reutlingen, Germany, contacted us to ask if he could do his 6-week internship at Cheney UMC. I am thrilled that we can do this and help Henning Künzel on his journey to become a pastor in the United Methodist Church. He will arrive on Monday, February 2, 2026. And here is his own introduction:

Hello everyone,

My name is Henning Künzel. I'm currently 21 years old and I'm studying Theology in my third semester at the Theological Seminary in Reutlingen, Germany. I grew up (at least to a large extent) within the children's and youth ministry of the United Methodist Church, even though my own family hasn't really been involved in church life at all. I originally started studying theology simply out of curiosity about faith, church, and religion. In my youth group, I was known as "*the guy who asked a lot of questions*" and loved long, enthusiastic discussions. Because of that, someone who was more of an acquaintance back then (and is now a very close friend and even my roommate) had the idea to ask me whether I wanted to move to Reutlingen and study theology with her. I said yes... and here I am.

Beyond my interest in theology, what keeps drawing me back to church is the sense of community it gives me. It's not only a place where I feel at home and find strength, but also a place where I am trusted and encouraged to grow beyond myself. Community in Christ is incredibly important to me, and it's actually one of the main reasons I can imagine becoming a pastor one day. Because experiencing and creating that kind of community for others honestly sounds like a *pretty amazing job*.

During my stay, I hope to meet many new people, get a taste of *the American way of life*, and experience the American version of church and Methodism. I heard a couple of things from afar, but I believe actually seeing and living it is something entirely different. I also hope that through my time with you and with Pastor Damian, I'll gain more orientation and clarity for my future path with God.

A few facts about me:

I come from what we call a "blue-light family" in Germany (meaning emergency services) and I followed that path myself for quite a while. I'm a trained paramedic and spent over four years as an active member of the volunteer fire department; although, fun fact, I never actually put out a real fire.

I'm originally from Munich, a city known for Oktoberfest and at least in my humble opinion, being the most beautiful city in the world. As a true Bavarian, I own two pairs of lederhosen and do occasionally wear them to festive occasions (the last time being the closing worship service of last semester). I also love hiking in the mountains, relaxing by lakes in the summer, and for me personally Bavaria, with its beautiful landscapes, is a small piece of heaven on earth.

If I had to choose my favorite Bible verse, it would probably be a very classic one: John 3:16. Being a Christian means, for me, believing that I am so deeply loved that someone I did not know for a long time and did not give much space in my life, was still willing, despite his perfection and innocence, to take upon himself such a terrible punishment for me. I believe it is our task to share this love and this realization. Through his death on the cross, Jesus entered into God-forsakenness in order to meet every human being there, no matter how high or how low they may be. So, we can say to every person: *Where you are right now, Jesus has already been, and he is crying with you, sharing your pain.* But before I drift too far into theology of the cross (one of my favorite areas of study, and something I'd love to talk about with you sometime), I'll move on.

I should also mention that I am a big Star Wars fan. I think that, alongside *The Lord of the Rings*, Star Wars deserves much more space in church culture (episodes IV-VI for sure, I-III maybe, but we don't need to talk about the rest).

If you would like to pray for me, I'd really appreciate prayers for a smooth and uncomplicated entry into the U.S. and for an intense but manageable exam period, during which I can also prepare well for the internship.

To finish, I just want to say how much I'm looking forward to meeting you and spending these weeks with you. From what Pastor Damian tells me, you are a very active, welcoming, and genuinely cool congregation where Christian community is truly loved and lived. I'm excited about what's ahead and wish you God's blessing and a blessed Christmas season.

See you soon,  
Henning



## Adult Fellowship for February and March

For our **February adult fellowship** gathering (February 8) you're invited to watch the Super Bowl game at the Kriegh's, 1528 Ridgeview Dr. Bring a snack to share and enjoy some game day fun and fellowship. See you at about 3! Go Hawks!

Dust off your tap shoes, tune your guitar and find a great chili recipe because the **March adult fellowship** gathering (March 8) will be our annual chili cook as well as a talent show. Look for more info in the weeks ahead!

## Giving Up Bad Theology for Lent

Friends, can you believe we're already heading into Lent and Easter? It feels like we were just singing Christmas carols, and now we're looking at 40 days of fasting, reflection, and spiritual growth.

Traditionally, Lent is a time when folks give up things: maybe alcohol, sweets, social media, or even certain behaviors like gossiping, complaining, or lying. This year, though, we're inviting you into a different kind of fast. One that's a little less about chocolate and a little more about soul work.

We're calling this year's Lent series "**Giving Up Bad Theology for Lent.**"

Yes, you read that right.

Over the years, I've noticed how many theological ideas float around that aren't exactly biblical... and some can even be harmful. Whether it's beliefs about who's "in" and who's "out," or the idea that the Bible fell from heaven and is word by word dictated from God, bad theology can really get in the way of a healthy relationship with God. What do I mean by bad? I am not saying, if people have a specific kind of theology they are bad, what I want to explain and set the focus on is, there is harmful theology, a theology that is bad because it harms other people, people who are created in the image of God.

So together with our intern Henning (while he was still in Germany!), we've put together a schedule of weekly themes that may challenge you, but in the best kind of way. You'll find the full list of topics and dates on the next page.

And here's something new we're adding this year:

Each Monday night during Lent, we'll host a **Lenten Discussion & Lecture Evening** here at the church. Henning and I will lead a deep dive into the theme for the upcoming Sunday; offering more background, space for questions, and some thoughtful (and maybe a little provocative!) discussion.

We hope you'll come with an open mind, an open Bible, and maybe even an open heart to be stretched a little. This is a journey we're taking together not to tear down faith, but to build it up in ways that are life-giving, honest, and rooted in God's love.

Let's give up some bad theology for Lent and see what God might grow in its place.

Pastor Damian

# GIVING UP BAD THEOLOGY for Lent

## Worship and Discussion Schedule



**God's Plan**  
**Ash Wednesday Service**  
**Wednesday, 02/18 at 5 PM**  
**at the Cheney Congregational Church**



**Hell**  
**Monday, 03/09 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 03/15 - Worship**  
**with Intern Henning**



**Biblical Inerrancy**  
**Monday, 02/16 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 02/22 - Worship**  
**with Pastor Damian**



**Wrong Idea of Sin**  
**Monday, 03/16 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 03/22 - Worship**  
**with Pastor Damian**



**The Old Guy in the Sky**  
**Monday, 02/23 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 03/01 - Worship**  
**with Intern Henning**



**A Violent God**  
**Monday, 03/23 - Discussion**  
**Palm Sunday, 03/29 Worship**  
**with Jer Swigart**



**The Devil**  
**Monday, 03/02 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 03/08 - Worship**  
**with Pastor Damian**



**Getting Saved**  
**Monday, 03/30 - Discussion**  
**Sunday, 04/05 - Easter**  
**Worship with Pastor Damian**

## Special Services during Holy Week at Cheney UMC

**Maundy Thursday, April 02 at 7 PM**

**Good Friday, April 03 at 7 PM**

## Bazaar Workshops



©HotCraftOrnaments

The tradition of meeting the last Saturday of the month for a Bazaar Workshop continues in 2026. Each month, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall from 10:00-12:00 to work on a craft together. For January and February, it will be all handwork: owl, heart, tree, and angel ornaments out of denim. Please bring scissors, needle and threads, glue guns, and embellishments (and old denim and flannel shirts to cut up), or your own project to work on.

The Bazaar group is committed to continuing an emphasis on our theme "Joy To The

Earth", by featuring crafts that are recycled, upcycled, and keeping more trash out of the waste stream. A big bonus is the fellowship and connections that we make; we really hope you can join us!

As you dive into your Spring Cleaning, please keep the Bazaar in mind. Items that are particularly popular are jewelry, home décor, seasonal decorations, and vintage items.

You can donate year-round in the tub labeled Bazaar Donations in the stairwell right off the Fellowship Hall.



## Trustee Committee Update

As you may have heard, we have some upcoming projects for our church building that need attention. One of our top priorities is the window wall that faces 4th Street. We need to replace that wall and are looking for design input.

If you have suggestions, we'd like you to share your ideas.

If you know someone that deals in design architecture we'd like that person's reference information.

If you have ideas about fund raising to pay for our larger projects-we want those too.

Our trustee committee is putting together a short survey to gather suggestions from all of the congregation, whether you are new, have been here since we opened (ha), or somewhere in between. Please take time to fill this out so we understand the needs of our church now and have a vision for our future.

We are all stewards of this church property and we want it to be safe, sturdy and attractive to our community. We want you involved in the decision making early on, so we all take pride in the final plan. So, please, pick up a survey at church or online, or in the church newsletter and leave it for us to review.

### Funding Church Projects:

Our current church budget allows for general church maintenance and small upgrades. Larger projects will need separate funding. We come to you for suggestions that do not take away from our regular church giving. Please prayerfully consider ways that we can give beyond our weekly/monthly commitments AND ideas to raise money from outside of our church giving generosity.

We appreciate all ideas so please share.

I'll be giving updates frequently as we gather information.

Blessings to you all,

Patti Sooy

[sooypatti@gmail.com](mailto:sooypatti@gmail.com)

## CHENEY OUTREACH CENTER YOUR LOCAL MINISTRY

*These are the ways we assisted our  
Cheney neighbors in December 2025*

84 households came into Cheney Outreach Center this month

15 day-bus passes were given to assist clients to get to medical appointments and/or work; 4 clients requested gas vouchers for the same purposes

26 households requested and/or received diapers or hygiene products

12 households requested rent assistance

19 households requested utility bill payment assistance

**Santa's Trailer was a huge success, with 89 families served and over 300 presents handed out.**

\*\*\*Thank you for your generous donations!\*\*\*  
I want to wish you all a Happy New Year.

**David L. Smith, Executive Director, Cheney Outreach Center**

CHENEY OUTREACH CENTER MISSION STATEMENT:

WE, AS A PEOPLE OF GOD, BELIEVING WE ARE CALLED IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE TO BE GOD'S HANDS AND HEART TO ALL PEOPLE, HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PROVIDE AN INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE CENTER IN CHENEY. YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. MATTHEW 22:39b

# PARKINGLOT SALE

JUNE 06  
SATURDAY  
2026

SAVE  
THE DATE





**FREE HOT MEAL  
DENTAL HYGIENE INFO & SUPPLIES**

**WHEN**

**5:30 PM MONDAY,  
FEBRUARY 23, 2026**

**FOR ACCOMMODATION CONTACT CHENEY PARKS AND  
RECREATION AT 509-498-9250 BY FEBRUARY 20.**

**WHERE**

**Wren Pierson Building  
615 4TH STREET, CHENEY**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
509.498.9250 [WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM](http://WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM)**



**CHENEY**

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

• *To Seek, Serve, and Share Jesus Christ*



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Return Service Requested

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