

Groce UMC's

The Messenger

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Putting our Trust in Jesus

Remember that God has a plan for us all.

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Cover Photo

Hands reaching in
praise and wonder.

“I Trust You Jesus, Lead the Way”

SUBMITTED BY REV. JILL RHINEHART

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.”¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will restore your fortunes. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”
Jeremiah 29:10-14

I am a planner. Each morning, before my feet touch the floor, I mentally review my agenda for the day. I try to make the most of every moment. On days when I don’t accomplish everything I set out to do, I often end the day feeling frustrated and disappointed with myself for not “doing enough.”

Over time, I’ve realized that this idea of “enough” is something I’ve created in my own mind. It’s where my perfectionism and sense of self-worth can easily take over, leaving me distracted and uneasy rather than grateful and at peace.

Scripture reminds me that the way I plan my life is not always the way God plans it. In Jeremiah 29:11, God speaks words of hope to the people through the prophet Jeremiah, assuring them that the Lord’s plans are for their good—even when those plans look very different from what they expected. When our plans are delayed, altered, or even undone, God’s plans are still unfolding, bringing hope and a future we may not yet see.

These words took on deeper meaning for me after reading *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* by Sarah Young. She writes, “I want you to learn a new habit. Try saying, ‘I trust You,

Jesus,’ in response to whatever happens to you.” I realized how rarely I say those words—out loud and with intention—especially when my carefully laid plans begin to unravel.

As we enter a new year, I want to learn that habit. I want to begin each day grounded in the truth that the Lord knows the plans He has for us—plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future. My response to God this year is simple: “I trust You, Jesus. Lead the way.”

Understanding the context of Jeremiah’s words makes this promise even more powerful. Jerusalem had been captured by Babylon, and many of the people—particularly leaders and those with education and influence—were taken into exile. Though Babylon was a place where they could live comfortably and contribute to the community, it was not home. Through Jeremiah, God told them that although they longed to return, it was not yet time. For seventy years they would live in exile, learning how to remain faithful, trusting that God was still guiding their lives.

Trusting God, then and now, requires more than hopeful wishing. It calls for faithful action—aligning our lives with God’s direction, even when the outcome is unclear. Faith is not passive; it is lived out daily as we place our plans, our hopes, and our future in God’s hands.

As we begin this new year, may we remain dedicated to God, allow God to guide our paths, and trust that—even when life doesn’t go according to plan—God’s plans are always rooted in love.

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” — JEREMIAH 29:11

CHRISTMAS MUSIC CAMP

SUBMITTED BY BECKY WILBURN

If you have never experienced Christmas Music Camp, you've missed out on one of the joys of the Christmas season! This year, on the first weekend of December, we had 8 children, ages 6-10, for 4 hours on Friday evening and 5 hours on Saturday. We did lots of Christmas crafts (our thanks to you for providing all of those pine cones, tissue boxes, and twist ties!), played some games, sang Christmas songs, and learned "Away in a Manger" for the Christmas Music Program!

Now, it's not too early to mark your calendars for our week-long Summer Music Camp. During the week of July 13-17, we will be learning the classic children's Christian musical, "Down By the Creek Bank"! You need to start saving those large round oatmeal containers because we are going to be making drums!



TABLE OF 16



If you are looking to connect with a great group of Groce UMC members, Table of 16 is saving a seat for you! This group meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 11:30 am at Longhorn Steakhouse off of Tunnel Rd. You can join them this month on January 28th for fun and fellowship! For more information, contact Linda Lankton (lanktonlinda53@gmail.com).

New Staff Announcement

We're so excited to announce the arrival of our new church secretary, Mariah Wright! After working in the insurance industry for over ten years, she is looking forward to serving her community in a more meaningful way at Groce UMC. She enjoys reading, traveling, cooking, and supporting local artists.

Say hello and introduce yourself when you stop by the church office Monday-Thursday from 9-2, or email her at gumcadmin@groceumc.org!



VRQ Thanksgiving Meal

SUBMITTED BY KELLEY WOEHLE

This Thanksgiving our church was able to provide a warm and inviting space for the Veteran's Restoration Quarters' Thanksgiving Meal, hosting over 100 local Veterans.

We're so grateful to serve this community, and for all the volunteers who helped make it possible!





The 2026 Altar Flower Calendar is posted on the bulletin board in the front hall. We hope you will sign up to provide flowers for worship on the Sunday of your choice! Flowers can be given to honor special days such as birthdays or anniversaries, in memory of loved ones, or simply dedicated to the Glory of God. Sign up today!

Return to Bethlehem

SUBMITTED BY CHANDLER CARRIKER

A Heartfelt Thank You to Groce United Methodist Church

We are deeply grateful to the entire Groce United Methodist Church community for opening your doors and hearts to host ABCCM's Return to Bethlehem last month. Your generosity and hospitality made it possible for approximately **1,800 guests** to experience the story of Jesus' birth in a meaningful and immersive way.

From the moment visitors stepped into your building, they were welcomed with the warmth and grace that define Groce UMC. Your partnership allowed families throughout our community to walk through Bethlehem, encounter the Christmas story, and discover tangible ways to serve their neighbors through ABCCM's ministries.

Events like Return to Bethlehem are only possible because of faithful partners like you who live out the call to welcome the stranger and share God's love with the community. Thank you for being such an essential part of this ministry and for your continued partnership with ABCCM.

With gratitude and blessings,

Deacon Chandler R. Carriker, ELCA
Church Engagement Officer, ABCCM

Thank You!!!

SUBMITTED BY THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE



Faith

Hope

Love

As we close out the first half of the 2025-2026 school year, our hearts fill with gratitude and unspeakable joy.

Already Family to Family has donated to the middle and high school over \$3,000 covering team meals, choral dresses, a housing cost, 40 Holiday Stockings filled with toiletries, and a family's necessities while facing a medical event.

Currently, a family of faith is gathering hats, scarves, gloves, and hoodies for the MS Resource Room AND... we've lost count of all the towels and washcloths donated and re-stocking of the Rocket Rack with underwear, deodorants, socks, and clothing this fall!

Each Christmas when our Christ-child arrives laid in a manger for His bed and the Shepherds arrive followed by the Wisemen, we absorb how "Love came down" once again. This Christmas, join us as we look back on these last few months to see clearly how our faith continues to bring us together in unexpected ways that in turn, brings hope to so many children and their families who are struggling to make ends meet.

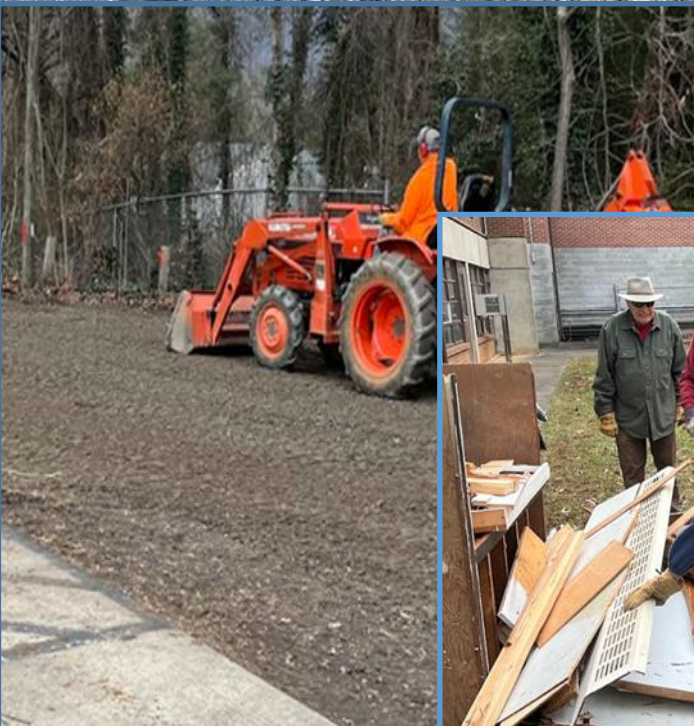
Dear F2F friends,

"This is what Love looks like"....thank you for making it so!

Love, Cindy and Tina

WARRIOR CANINE CONNECTION RELOCATION PROJECT

STORY ON NEXT PAGE—PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY TRUE MORSE



Groce and Home Depot Volunteers Ready Space to Relocate Warrior Canine Connection

Submitted by True Morse

Photos on previous page

Groce based Warrior Canine Connection (WCC) is relocating from Charter Hall to the lower level of the Epworth building on January 2nd . WCC, under the leadership of Amy Guidash, Program Manager, has been located in Charter Hall since 2019, operating basically Monday through Friday. WCC enlists recovering veterans in a therapeutic mission of learning to train service dogs for their fellow veterans.

Will Troxell, Trustees Chairperson (stepping down December 31st after 6+ years – thank you Will!!), and Amy, collaborated in 2025 to plan the relocation into 4 rooms in the lower level of the Epworth building with one of WCC's sponsors, Home Depot, providing significant materials and funding for the renovations including a 5th room that is currently used by the Girl Scouts Brownies group and Alcohols Anonymous.

On December 4th Home Depot volunteers kicked off the renovation effort by removing a number of built-in storage closets and starting the flooring work. Since then, Bob Briggs and True Morse have continued the flooring work, Lonnie Davis of Davis Mechanical installed heating and cooling units, Loring McIntyre upgraded the parking area, the United Methodist Men trimmed the trees along the lane to the lower level and hauled off demolition debris, Interior Painting of Asheville donated labor and material to paint the rooms on December 23rd and 24th, and Boyd McNeely (the Christmas tree lot) loaded and hauled off the trimmed brush and limbs for free on December 26th .

This is such a benefit for both WCC and Groce, as WCC will be in a more functional space for their needs, the Epworth rooms are dramatically improved, and Charter Hall can be used for many other functions supporting God's work at Groce.

The Asheville Citizen-Times and WLOS have done stories on the WCC. For more information about Warrior Canine Connection visit warriorcanineconnection.org.

Holiday Market!

SUBMITTED PHOTOS BY JIM GOSS

Our Christmas Market in November was a huge success! Thank you to all who came out as vendors, volunteers, and visitors!



Birthdays & Anniversaries

01/01 Dawn Sexton

01/02 Nancy Donnelly

Angie Dotson

David Honeycutt

01/04 Alice Barkstrom

01/06 Ed Saxman

01/08 Linda Lankton

Alice Magee

01/11 Angela Woehl

01/20 Carol Arrowood

Jo Ann Squibb

01/24 Kathryn McIntyre

01/29 Pam Budd

01/30 John Bold

01/31 Katie Bartlett

Bernice Clark

01/10 Bill & Debbie Ross (43)



CHRISTMAS WARMING TREE

SUBMITTED BY THE OUTREACH MINISTRY



Thank you for sharing God's love towards the kids at Community High School in Swannanoa during this cold Christmas season with your donations from our "Warming Tree!" The school counselor was so overjoyed and amazed at your kindness and generosity. Miriam Circle also donated 20—\$25 gift cards for students needing shoes, coats, etc. There were so many gloves, hats, scarves, and socks, that the school didn't need them all (like feeding the 5000). So.... Our friends at the Vet's Quarters received a HUGE load of much-needed hats and socks. The guys were excited to get such nice gifts and were very appreciative! There is always a great need for socks. Thank you again for being such a loving, caring church!

Upcoming Events

Groce United Methodist Church Presents

VEE & MR. T

MUSICAL DUO



01/17* 3 PM 954 TUNNEL RD. ASHEVILLE NC

*Rescheduled Date



JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” - 2 Corinthians 5:17						
4 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 5pm Youth Group	5 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 7pm Beekkeepers	6 10am Parkinsons 10:30am Crafters 1:30pm Tai Chi 7pm SMBB	7 4pm Nurture 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	8 10:30am Isaac Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	9 10	
11 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 4:30pm Confirmation meeting 5pm Youth	12 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 6pm Brownies 6pm Guitar League	13 10:30am Crafters 1:30pm Tai Chi 7pm SMBB 7pm Bev. Hills Ex-ec.	14 4pm UMM at VRQ 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	15 10:30am Isaac Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	16 17	3pm Vee & Mr. T Concert
18 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 4pm Confirmation 5pm Youth Group	19 MLK Jr.'s Birthday Office Closed	20 10:30am Crafters 1:30pm Tai Chi 3pm Miriam Cir. 7pm SMBB	21 11:30 Table of 16 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	22 10:30 Isaac Group 1:30 Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	23 24	10am Guitar League
25 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 5pm Youth Group	26 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 6pm Brownies	27 10:30 Crafters 1:30 Tai Chi 5:30 Basket Guild 7pm SMBB	28 4pm BCAC 5:30 Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	29 10:30 Isaac Group 1:30 Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	30 31	