

Groce UMC's

The Messenger

Volume 39; Issue 2
February 1, 2026

God is love!

A Lenten Invitation to Love

Inside

February
2026

Cover Story
Page 2

Birthdays/Anniversaries
Page 9

Reports and Upcoming
Events
Pages 3-10

Calendar
Page 11

Cover Photo

Cross cut-out in a
heart shaped rock with
a sunrise in the back-
ground

“A Lenten Invitation to Love”

SUBMITTED BY REV. JILL RHINEHART

February is a meaningful month, filled with moments of celebration and remembrance—family birthdays, Black History Month, Valentine’s Day, and the beginning of the Lenten season. Lent invites us to slow down, reflect, and prepare our hearts as we draw closer to God.

I’ve been thinking about how simple expressions of love once brought me so much joy—choosing a small Valentine card or a sweet treat for a friend or classmate. Those gestures were never about their cost, but about the care behind them. In many ways, that same simplicity speaks to the heart of Lent.

Lent is often associated with what we give up, but it is also a season that calls us to consider what we can give: our time, our attention, our compassion. What if, during this season, we intentionally looked for small ways to reflect God’s love in our daily lives?

These acts of kindness need not be grand or noticed by others. A gentle word to someone who is weary, a patient moment in a busy line, or a quiet act of generosity can become a sacred

offering when done in love. Through these small acts, God’s presence can be revealed in powerful ways.

As a church, I invite us during this Lenten season to be mindful of how we live out God’s love—not for recognition, but so that others may glimpse God’s grace, mercy, and compassion through us.

The prophet Micah reminds us, “*O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*” (Micah 6:8b). May this Lenten season draw us into a deeper walk with God, as we learn anew how to love our neighbors with kindness and humility.

...rather than following a set of laws dictating to us what the right thing is, we must be led by the Spirit; and with the joy of the already forgiven, rather than the fear of those hoping to be forgiven, we seek to please the Lord.

-- Adam Hamilton,
Seeing Gray in a Black and White World.

Groce UMC – The Music Church



SUBMITTED BY True Morse

From someone who has absolutely no musical talent, thanks to all those leaders and participants who made December such a wonderful music month.

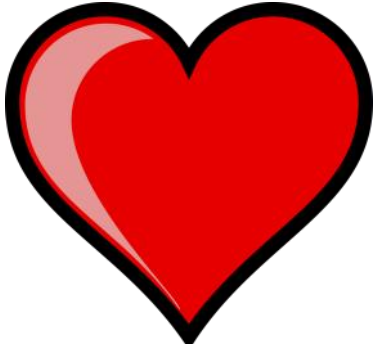
On top of our normal tremendous worship service music, we had:

- Children's Christmas Music Camp December 5th – 7th
- A Tapestry of Christmas Music on December 7th
- Young Music Artist Dalton Howes on December 21st
- And to top it off, the Christmas Eve service!!

Special thanks to our Music Director, Becky Wilburn, in addition to Debbie Ross and her handbell choir, Bill Ross and his brass ensemble friends and Will Troxell's audio/visual expertise (Will – "The Tapestry was maybe the hardest event he ever managed the audio for given all the different elements").



Thank You!



"I would like to say **THANK YOU** to my church friends for all of the cards, phone calls, and cookies that I received during the Christmas season. It meant a lot to know that I was being thought of and I did enjoy!"

— Bernice Clark—

United Methodist Men Want You!

SUBMITTED BY FRED BAILEY AND TRUE MORSE

The UMM invite any and all Groce Church Family men, Groce members or not, to be part of our fellowship and service. We meet at 6:30 on the 1st Thursday of the month (except January) in the Jack Bass Classroom where we share, connect and plan activities that include monthly serving dinner at the Veterans Restoration Quarters and various service projects. We had a great time at our holiday dinner at Cornerstone Restaurant. Contact **Fred Bailey** (828-707-3526) or **True Morse** (743-999-1769) about how to be part of this great group in whatever way fits.





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.

There are many Sundays still available.
Please sign up today!

Nifty Knitters & Crafty Critters

This group meets weekly to work on fun projects and explore their creativity. They will be starting watercolor painting and would love to have you join them!

They meet every Tuesday from 10:30-11:30 in Charter Hall. Whether you are an accomplished artist, or just interested in fun and fellowship, come see what these nifty and crafty creators are up to!



Contact **Pam Rogalski** for more information! (pamr72004@yahoo.com)



The Girl Scout troop sponsored by Groce United Methodist Church is currently selling cookies. Cookies are once again \$6 a package. This year's selection includes the old favorites and the new ExploreMores, a rocky road-inspired cookie. If you'd like cookies, please contact **Virginia Himmelheber** (410-491-2446, vhimmelheb@aol.com) and we'll arrange to get cookies to you.

TL3 Meeting Notes

Submitted by True Morse

January 20, 2026

Attendees: Fred Bailey, Tracey Briggs, Gary Brockway, Phil Crouch, Diane McEntire, True Morse, Jennifer Prince, Jill Rhinehart, Pam Rogalski, John Smith **Absent:** Loring McIntyre

LOVING

Jennifer opened the meeting with prayer. Jennifer and John were welcomed as new members of TL3. The group shared blessings and concerns about each other as well as other members of the Groce church family. Each member shared some of their personal and professional background and passions about Groce.

LEARNING

Recent ministry team chairperson meeting Jill shared that the chairs met recently and discussed having their respective teams developing goals for 2026.

Trustees In Loring's absence True presented Loring's written report that had been distributed to TL3 prior to the meeting. True noted that, as expected, it is a significant process transition from Will being at the church almost all the time to a more dispersed set of roles. Loring and True are continuing to fine tune this with lots of involvement of the secretary, Mariah.

Technology Likely have Will attend at the February meeting to discuss priorities and status. Diane asked about the status of an automated calling system that has been discussed at multiple TL3 meetings. **ACTION**-True will convey to Will that this is a priority for TL3. Jill shared that she implemented an app that has virtually all numbers in it and can call everyone at \$0.08/call as an interim solution. **ACTION**-Jill to communicate how this can be used, who has access, etc.

LEADING

Financials Gary reviewed the end of year 2025 Operations budget results and went over the proposed 2026 Operations budget. There was a net increase of 3 pledging units (63 to 66) from the stewardship campaign but there were 9 pledging units that either moved or passed away so the overall increase was 12. Of the 66 pledges, 48 were \$2500 or more which is much healthier situation compared to 2023 when a large amount of the total pledge amount was concentrated in a much small number of pledging units. 33% of pledging units were \$2500-\$5000 and 39% of pledging units were \$5000 and above. The church loan principal has decreased from over \$60,000 at the beginning of 2025 to \$9,928 due to a combination of monthly principal and interest payments, principal donations from various groups in the church and anonymous gifts from members. The Warrior Canine Connection contributed approximately \$16,000 towards the renovation of their space in lower Epworth through material donations and purchases. (Continued)

TL3 Meeting Notes (cont.)

ACTION—True to obtain more detail on this. A number of items were purposefully added to the budget for 2026 such as the 3% staff raise, part time youth director, youth van rentals, etc. Apportionments are still funded by special offerings

Diane reviewed the hiring and compensation for the new secretary. There were 33 applications of which 4-5 were of interest. 2 were interviewed, one of which was Mariah who impressed the interviewers. Mariah's rate is the same as it was for Veronica. There will be a 90 day evaluation, but everyone agreed it seemed to be a great fit.

Gary noted and explained that the 2026 budget approach is different than most recent years by not balancing the budget by making an overly optimistic increase to an income source, like non-pledged contributions (there was a significant shortfall in the 2025 budget for non-pledged contributions), or making potentially harmful expense reductions. Jill expressed, and others concurred, that God will provide where it is meant to be as long as we are responsible stewards. Phil moved the budget be approved with John seconding. There being no further discussion, the 2026 Operations budget was approved.

Youth ministry director and youth group. Jill shared that the earliest we would lose Kelley, if she is ordained in this first effort, would be June. Jill and SPRC would tackle finding a replacement once it is known Kelley would be leaving this role, noting that this is going to be a challenging role to fill given its part time structure. Jill noted that there are 5 youths going through confirmation and the total number of youth is up.

Next Meeting Dates

February – Sunday, 2/8, after service, Church Family meeting

February – Tuesday, 2/17, TL3

March – Monday, 3/23, TL3

April – Monday, 4/27, TL3

True ended the meeting in prayer

Groce Canasta Card Group

Linda Lankton and Diane Hankins are forming a new group of women to play Canasta once a month for fun and fellowship! Dates and times to be determined, and will be published in the weekly bulletins as well as the church website. So far, the group will include Katie Bartlett, Tricia Clark, Diane Hankins, Betty Jones, Sylvia Nicks, Jill Rhinehardt, Linda Lankton, Pam Rogalski, and Nancy Saxman. If you would like more information, contact **Linda Lankton** (828-231-5443 or lanktonlinda53@gmail.com)



Welcome Table Needs You!!!



The Welcome Table is in need of two volunteers each week to bring desserts for their Thursday meal. Homemade is great, but store bought is fine, too! This is a great way to support the Welcome Table and help our neighbors and friends enjoy a sweet treat after their meal. If you are interested, please see the signup sheet located on the bulletin board outside the front office.

Desserts aren't your thing? We need musicians, too! Providing music during the meal adds fellowship and joy to this worthy ministry. All types of musicians are needed: pianists, drummers, guitarist, flautists, singers, trombonists, and more. Please come share your talent with our community! Contact **Janet Parkerson** for more information (828-702-1901 or hammer4joy@gmail.com).



Remember that the Welcome Table is open to EVERYONE, no questions asked, no need to make a reservation. Please join us every Thursday from 5:00-6:15 for a free community meal.

Lost and Found

SUBMITTED BY MARIAH WRIGHT

Our lost and found box is getting full. There are so many great items in there! Sunglasses, cell phones, earrings, car keys, and MORE! Is any of it YOURS? Better stop by the office and find out, because it will all be emptied on MARCH 2nd. Once it's gone.... It's gone! Contact Mariah with any questions (gumcadmin@groceumc.org)



Birthdays & Anniversaries

02/02 Brad Ledbetter

Kelsey Towery

02/05 Wesley Morgan

02/07 Veronica Bagwell

02/08 Margaret Kuhn

Catherine Shatley

02/12 Diane McEntire

02/14 Mark Slaughter

02/18 Betty Brockway

Mary Ellen Mansfield

02/28 Jill Rhinehart



02/04 Jason and Thera Powell (20)



Upcoming Events

ASH WEDNESDAY

A COMMUNITY SERVICE OF ASHES

FEBRUARY 18, 2026, 5:30 P.M.

--ALL ARE WELCOME--



GROCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

954 TUNNEL ROAD, ASHEVILLE NC 28805

GROCEUMC.ORG

**EAST ASHEVILLE
WELCOME TABLE**



Thursdays

5:00 pm

to

6:15 pm



**at Groce United
Methodist Church**



The Prom Dress & Exchange

FREE prom dresses and men's suits

(free shoes, handbags and jewelry too)
(women's suits and separates available,
as well as men's tuxedos, suits, slacks, jackets, shirts, vests, and
ties)

Friday 3/6 2-6pm
Saturday 3/7 10-6pm
Sunday 3/8 12-4pm

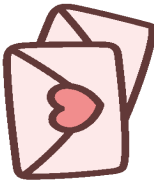
Groce UMC 954 Tunnel Rd Asheville 28805

donations accepted - volunteers welcome - sewist needed
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0844ACAB2DA0F85-61406288-theprom#/>

contact dressupsuitup4free@gmail.com
501c3 chancesforchildren.org/
www.facebook.com/thepromdressexchange/
[@dressup_suitup](#)

SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH—THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY HAVE STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL THE SAINTS WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. - EPHESIANS 3:17-19

FEBRUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 9:00 AGAPE 10:30 WORSHIP	2 11:00 PRAYER GROUP 3:00 HANDBELLS 7:00 BEEKEEPERS	3 10:00 PARKINSONS 10:30 CRAFTERS 11:00 STAFF MEETING 1:00 FIRE INSPECTION 1:30 TAI CHI 5:30 HCAA CHILI	4 5:30 PICKLEBALL 6:00 AA 6:00 CHOIR	5 10:30 ISAAC GROUP 1:30 TAI CHI 5:30 WELCOME TABLE 6:30 UMM	6 6:00 QUINTET	7
8 9:00 AGAPE 10:30 WORSHIP *CHURCH FAMILY MTG (AFTER SERVICE)* 4:00 CONFIRMATION 5:00 YOUTH	9 11:00 PRAYER GROUP 3:00 HANDBELLS 6:00 GIRL SCOUTS 6:00 GUITAR LEAGUE	10 10:30 CRAFTERS 1:30 TAI CHI 7:00 SMBB	11 5:15 UMM @ VRQ 5:30 PICKLEBALL 6:00 AA 6:00 CHOIR	12 10:30 ISAAC GROUP 1:30 TAI CHI 5:30 WELCOME TABLE	13 6:00 QUINTET	14 VALENTINE'S DAY 
15 9:00 AGAPE 10:30 WORSHIP 4:00 CONFIRMATION 5:00 YOUTH	16 PRESIDENT'S DAY 11:00 PRAYER GROUP 3:00 HANDBELLS	17 10:30 CRAFTERS 1:30 TAI CHI 3:00 MIRIAM CIRCLE 6:00 TL3 7:00 SMBB	18 ASH WEDNESDAY 5:30 SERVICE 5:30 PICKLEBALL 6:00 AA 6:00 CHOIR	19 10:30 ISAAC GROUP 1:30 TAI CHI 5:30 WELCOME TABLE	20 6:00 QUINTET	21 CONFIRMATION RETREAT
22 CONFIRMATION RETREAT 9:00 AGAPE 10:30 WORSHIP	23 11:00 PRAYER GROUP 3:00 HANDBELLS 6:00 GIRL SCOUTS	24 10:30 CRAFTERS 11:00 OUTREACH 11:00 LENTEN STUDY 1:30 TAI CHI 6:00 BASKET GUILD 7:00 SMBB	25 11:30 TABLES OF 16 4:00 BCAA 5:30 PICKLEBALL 6:00 AA 6:00 CHOIR	26 10:30 ISAAC GROUP 1:30 TAI CHI 5:30 WELCOME TABLE	27 6:00 QUINTET	28 10:00 GUITAR LEAGUE