

Groce UMC's

The Messenger

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The Duality of Christ

How do our United Methodist perspectives shape the ways we know and love Christ?

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Two images of Christ in
the Groce UMC kitchen

The Duality of Christ

How does our Methodist perspective influence the ways we know and love Christ?

SUBMITTED BY KELLEY WOehl

**But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us
whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.**

— Isaiah 53:5

Cleaning up after Youth last week, I was struck by the two images of Christ that sat upon the kitchen serving line. One, a graphic crucifixion, hands clearly nailed, looking downward in quiet humility. And the other, an objectively more inviting image, Christ robed and smiling, welcoming us in with open arms.

As a Theologian, I found the images fascinating next to one another. They so perfectly captured what I love most about being United Methodist.

First, a bit of Church history. John Wesley was, in training, an Anglican priest. He studied religion at Oxford University where, for his differing beliefs on salvation and the role of the Church in the world, he and his brother, famous hymnist Charles Wesley, were nicknamed “The Methodists.” But the movement that started there would go on to become one of the fastest growing traditions in the newly formed United States.

Part of what made Methodism so well received was its accessibility. Where the “High Church” traditions, like Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Anglicanism, could not reach lower class Americans, casual practitioners, Methodism served as a way to worship without worrying about the “proper” way to dress or worship. People could come as

themselves and be accepted.

Conversely, relative to other “low church” denominations, the Methodism offered a glimpse of tradition, and ensured its pastors were well trained and knowledgeable on church history, theology, and Biblical content and context. Similarly, people across socio-economic classes enjoyed that the Methodists took their work outside the church walls, and prioritized community engagement and activism as a way to live out God’s call in our lives.

So you see, it’s both of these things that make Methodism what it is, the balance between the “High Church” and “Low Church” dynamics, the understanding of Jesus as both a suffering savior, whose crucifixion birthed the world anew, and a friend who calls us into loving relationships with Him. I love the interplay between these two images of Christ because the space between is likely the most accurate reflection of who He was in His ministry, and who He remains today as our savior and friend. Christ is both. At some points, it may serve us to remember the pain of His sacrifice, at other points, we may just need Him to be our friend. And Christ’s image can be both of those things because it is accurate to the beautifully complicated life He led.

**Jesus as both a suffering savior, whose
crucifixion birthed the world anew, and a
friend who calls us into loving relation-
ships with Him.**

CONFIRMATION

SUBMITTED BY KELLEY WOehl

We're holding Confirmation once again, a celebrated tradition that teaches young members about the history, structure, and beliefs of our United Methodist Tradition. This is a formative process, where each Confirmand explores larger questions of life and it's meaning, discerning their own perspectives and beliefs. In confirmation, I found a love for religious traditions and history. As a Confirmation teacher, I hope to provide the space for each participant to find their own joy in religion. This is such an important step in a young person's life, and the Congregation is invited to participate in the following ways:

- Be a Confirmation Mentor!
- Donate to a scholarship for the Confirmands' retreat
- Help make our Confirmation Banner, which will hang in Asbury Hall
- Continue supporting our Youth, welcome them in Worship Service, and attend Confirmation Sunday on March 29, 2026!

I'm so excited for all that is to come. And so grateful for Groce's continual support for our Youth program. **Thank you.**

PLEDGE CARDS

SUBMITTED BY GARY BROCKWAY

As we close our 2025 stewardship campaign, we extend our heartfelt thanks for the faithful generosity shown by the Groce United Methodist Church family. Your commitment continues to strengthen our ministries and support the work God is calling us to do.

If you have not yet returned your pledge card, there is still time. Pledge cards may be:

- Mailed to the church office (PO Box 9459, Asheville, NC 28815)
- Dropped off during office hours
- Placed in the offering plate on Sunday mornings

It is important for church leadership to receive all completed pledge cards as we continue preparing the budget for 2026. Your timely response helps us plan responsibly and faithfully for the year ahead.

Thank you for your continued support of Groce United Methodist Church and its ministries.

A word of thanks

SUBMITTED BY BETTY SWARTHOUT

To my Faith Community

I send thanks for all the cards reminding me I am still part of a Caring Christian Community called Groce.

Also, thanks for the regular visits and phone conversations with Sylvia Nicks being sure I am connected. Thanks for being able to join you in worship through streaming each Sunday.

Words cannot express how much it confirms my belief in how our Lord encourages us to care for each other. Blessings to all as we live with Christ in our daily lives. Amen.

Betty Swarthout

U.M. Deaconess

Origins of Advent

SUBMITTED BY KELLEY WOHL

Have you ever wondered how Advent began? I recently went on a deep dive to learn more about the history of the season. Learn with me!

Advent began in the 4th century as a counterpart to Lent. Typically, baptism was a process that took three years of preparation, which concluded with a 40-day intensive during Lent, and Baptism would take place during/ around Holy Week.

However, when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its official religion, there became a need for another Baptismal season to accommodate the huge influx of new believers. Advent was created as a "leading up" to Christmas, similar to how Lent precedes Easter. This way, the Church could baptize twice as many people without compromising on the ritualized period of studying before formal conversion.

The length of Advent has changed significantly based on tradition and era. At some points, it was as long as 7 weeks! With time, the observance of Advent took precedence over observing the traditional "Twelve Days of Christmas," the period between Christmas and Epiphany, the day which celebrates Jesus's Baptism and the beginning of His ministry.

Today, the UMC, as well as most other mainline Protestant Denominations, follow a 4-week Advent season, thematically organized around concepts the Church hopes to exemplify during the season: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Information from UMC's "What is the History of Advent?" published sept. 17, 2020.

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-history-of-advent-for-united-methodists>

TL3 Meeting Notes

SUMMARIZED AND SUBMITTED BY TRUE MORSE

November 15, 2025

LEARNING

1. **Group sharing of reflections on 2025 and 2026.** Payment of 2025 apportionments, most likely in full since only about \$1,300 remaining. The emergence of the Shaping Our Future framework. Epworth building income and the community the tenants are creating. Opportunity to have Kelley Woehl as our youth director but knowing the challenge of finding her replacement in 2026. Recognition of outgoing leaders and team members during a service in early 2026. Potentially a joint TL3 and ministry team chairs 2026 planning and goal setting session in early 2026. Growth in the youth group and their activities including several members who are mostly experiencing Christ for the first time. Confirmation class. Music camp. Service work by the youth. Every November Sunday worship service so far has exceeded 100. The core of Groce's purpose is discipleship.

2. **Pumpkin Patch report.** Only about 15 pumpkins left out of almost 1100 received. The 15 were donated to the tailgate market. Great leadership by Jane Williams and Jane Davis. As a result of this being a transition year when sufficient funds (\$8,040) will be retained in the Pumpkin Patch fund for pumpkin purchase next year, instead of using loaned funds from internal groups, only \$900 was available for distribution. \$300 to the Groce youth group. \$300 to Chances for Children. \$300 to Beloved Asheville. If there are similar cost and sales results in 2026, there could be \$4-5,000 available for distribution.

3. Trustees, Technology, Communication report

a. New copier lease that will result in savings. New phone system installed but still some programming to occur. New phone system has also resulted in improved WiFi and higher speed internet solving streaming capacity and other issues. Upper level mini-split heating and cooling units are complete and lower level installation starts the week of 11/17. Warrior Canine Connection will relocate from Charter Hall to the lower level of Epworth before the end of the year and is covering the renovation costs other than the electrical for the mini-split heating and cooling units. Annual lease will be sent to the apartment tenants with a cover letter addressing various topics in the week of 11/24. A variety of work items have occurred on the grounds. Will has done an initial walk through of the property with Loring, the incoming trustee chair, and doing further work so it is a smooth transition from him to Loring

b. **Bus and bus shelter sale.** For sale signs will be put on the bus with Fred's number and a QR code for more detailed information. Fred will talk to the sales lot we bought the bus from. Information will be posted on the Groce website but not listed on platforms like Facebook Marketplace. Shelter will be sold separately with an initial price of \$1500. Bus will be sold "as is". If asked if we have any assessments, we will provide the maintenance needs assessments we have. Bus asking price is \$10,000.

4. Staff Parish Relationship Committee

a. **Secretary.** Given Kelley was in an interim role and needs to focus more on her ordainment work, the Secretary position has been posted and 30 applications received of which 3 are being interviewed. The number of hours would be the same as they were for Veronica.

b. **2026 staff compensation increase.** The SPRC recommends to the Finance Committee and TL3 a 3% increase to all staff for 2026.

LEADING

1. Financials by Gary

a. **2025** – Gary shared an overview of the Operations budget through 11/12/25 and thoughts on how the year may finish. Revenues look good except for the approximate \$25,000 shortfall in non-pledged contributions. This has been partially offset by the continued expense control and higher than expected building use income from Epworth upper level rental income. Gary noted there were some discrepancies in the 11/12 financial report that he would clear up with Gayle when she returns. As of 11/17 Groce's overall cash balance is approximately \$80,000. While it is preferred this to be higher, we are in relatively good shape but continue to operate with a very thin cushion. Jill shared that a \$22,000 contribution was received on 11/13 towards the church loan principle, so the principle is now approximately \$17,000.

b. **2026** – Gary did a high level review of the working draft of the 2026 budget.

i. **Revenues.** Positive comments received about the stewardship campaign and the information provided. As of 11/17 there are 58 pledges, 6 of which are new pledgers. There were 63 pledges in 2024. Additional pledges are expected. Gary has written an email reminder to go out the week

TL3 Notes (Continued)

SUMMARIZED AND SUBMITTED BY TRUE MORSE

of 11/17 and the week of 11/24. The working draft budget shows \$260,000 for pledge contribution but that does not include the 8 pledges that came in after 11/12. The current forecast for non-pledged contributions is \$50,000 based on YTD 2025 actual, significantly lower than last year's budget of \$115,000.

ii. **Expenses.** The part time youth director position is included in the budget at \$12,000 of which \$5,000 is covered by a 2025 contribution. Building Maintenance has been reduced. Given the decision to sell the bus that budget has been reduced. Decision was made to increase the new Youth Program budget item by \$2,500 to cover van rental for the mission trip. Technology includes a computer for Jill and for the youth director as well as Square or a similar electronic payment system to minimally support the Pumpkin Patch.

iii. **A motion to provide a 3% raise for all staff for 2026 was made by Phil, seconded by Fred and approved unanimously.** During discussion it was noted that bonuses could be used in lieu of raises if we wanted to make this contingent on the finances but that does not increase individuals' salary to compound over future years. It was noted that 3% is a relatively small increase but it is important to acknowledge the important contributions Groce's staff make even though Groce's financial status does not allow us to do more and that there have not been increases in recent years. It was recognized that the event set up fees that Tammy receives were increased from \$50 to \$75 and more events were being charged setup fees.

iv. **2026 budget approval.** To avoid conflicting with Crawley Lee's tax season, which resulted in 2024 year-end reports and the finalization of the 2025 budget not being ready for the congregation until March, the 2026 budget will be approved via email by TL3 in December to allow Gayle to input the figures into the Crawley Lee system before the end of the year. The recommendation by the Business Leadership Team is that if sufficient pledges, or other income sources, are not identified to balance the budget, Groce will have an approved budget that will show a shortfall, so it is an actual reflection of the revenue and expense forecasts. As is already being done, there will need to be careful attention to revenue trends and opportunities, expense management and overall cash balance.

Pumpkin Patch Totals

SUBMITTED BY JANE WILLIAMS

Total sales: \$12,515, on 10/31 there were 15 pumpkins leftover and donated to East Asheville Market vendors. \$8,040 in seed money for purchase of pumpkins in 2026 without borrowing money (\$4,000) from UMM, UWF, and other ministry groups. After that proceeds were given to Groce Youth, Beloved Asheville, and Chances for Children. **Thank you Church family for all of your support and hard work!**



Christmas Tree Events

SUBMITTED BY TRUE MORSE AND MARSHA VAN RIJSSEEN

Groce and Boyd's Christmas Trees is inviting Groce groups, community organizations, clubs, individuals, etc. to sign up any Friday, Saturday or Sunday November 28th through December 21st (except during worship services and Return to Bethlehem) for a 4-5 hour slot for a table in the front of the church providing activities that are in the spirit of the season and Groce's mission. Examples are selling baked goods/cider/hot chocolate, handmade goods, running a toy drive, playing live music/carolers, anything to make this Christmas season merry for all. Requests will be reviewed and approved by True & Marsha with input from Jill Rhinehart and Will Troxell if necessary. There is no charge to use the space. The church will provide 1 eight foot table, 2 metal chairs, a garbage can and a powered extension cord. You can sign up, or share with others to sign up, go to <https://tinyurl.com/GroceChristmas> or use the QR code.



If you have any questions please contact True at 743-999-1769 or truemorse@gmail.com.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

12/01 Davis Franklin
Debbie Ross

12/02 Patty Rozelle

12/04 Dan Potter
Steve Young

12/05 Jennifer Prince

12/06 Jim Goss
Lois Goss

12/07 Thera Powell
Will Troxell

12/10 Holly Kerr-Harris

12/11 Rebecca Todd

12/12 Alyssa Taylor

12/13 Loran Justus

12/15 Larry Barber

12/16 Bob Cauble

12/17 Sophie Lamb

12/18 Betty Swarthout

12/21 John Morse

12/23 Sylvia Nicks

12/30 Paige Rozelle

12/31 Caroline Hoffert

12/16 Bob & Carolyn Barcafer (58)

12/17 Mike & Sasha Lamb (26)



Upcoming Events



Smoky Mountain
Brass Band

CHRISTMAS CONCERT



DECEMBER 2 7PM

GROCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
954 TUNNEL RD. ASHEVILLE NC



Join us for
CHRISTMAS MUSIC CAMP

December 5 4:00-8:00
December 6 10:00-3:00
December 7 performance at 10:00 worship service

- Singing
- Crafts
- Meals Provided

\$20 per child


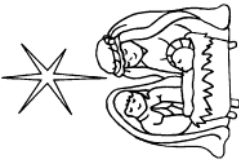


Groce United Methodist Church
954 Tunnel Rd. Asheville NC
Sign up at: groceumc.org



Return to Bethlehem
A Journey of the Heart
— December 11-14, 2025 —

DECEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 7 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship (Music Service) 3pm Shirley Stowell Service 5pm Youth Group	1 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 7pm Beekeepers	2 10am Parkinsons 11am Advent Study Group 1:30pm Tai Chi	3 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	4 10:30am Isaac Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	5 Christmas Music Camp 4-8	6 Christmas Music Camp 10-3 5pm Haw Creek Comm. Picnic
14 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 2pm Return to Bethlehem	15 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 6pm Labyrinth	16 11am Advent Study Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 7pm SMBB	17 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir	18 10:30am Isaac Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 5pm Welcome Table	19 6pm Return to Bethlehem	20 2pm Return to Bethlehem
21 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship 5pm Youth Group	22 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells 6pm Brownies	23 11am Advent Study Group 1:30pm Tai Chi 7pm SMBB	24 Office Closed 5pm Christmas Eve Worship Service	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26 	27 10am Guitar League
28 9am AGAPE 10:30am Worship	29 11am Prayer Group 3pm Handbells	30 1:30pm Tai Chi 7pm SMBB	31 5:30pm Pickleball 6pm AA 6pm Choir Office Closed	“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”		
						— John 1:29