

Nonprofit Org.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Macomb, IL
Permit # 507



Holy Week @ WESLEY

MARCH 29
Palm Sunday



APRIL 2
Maundy Thursday



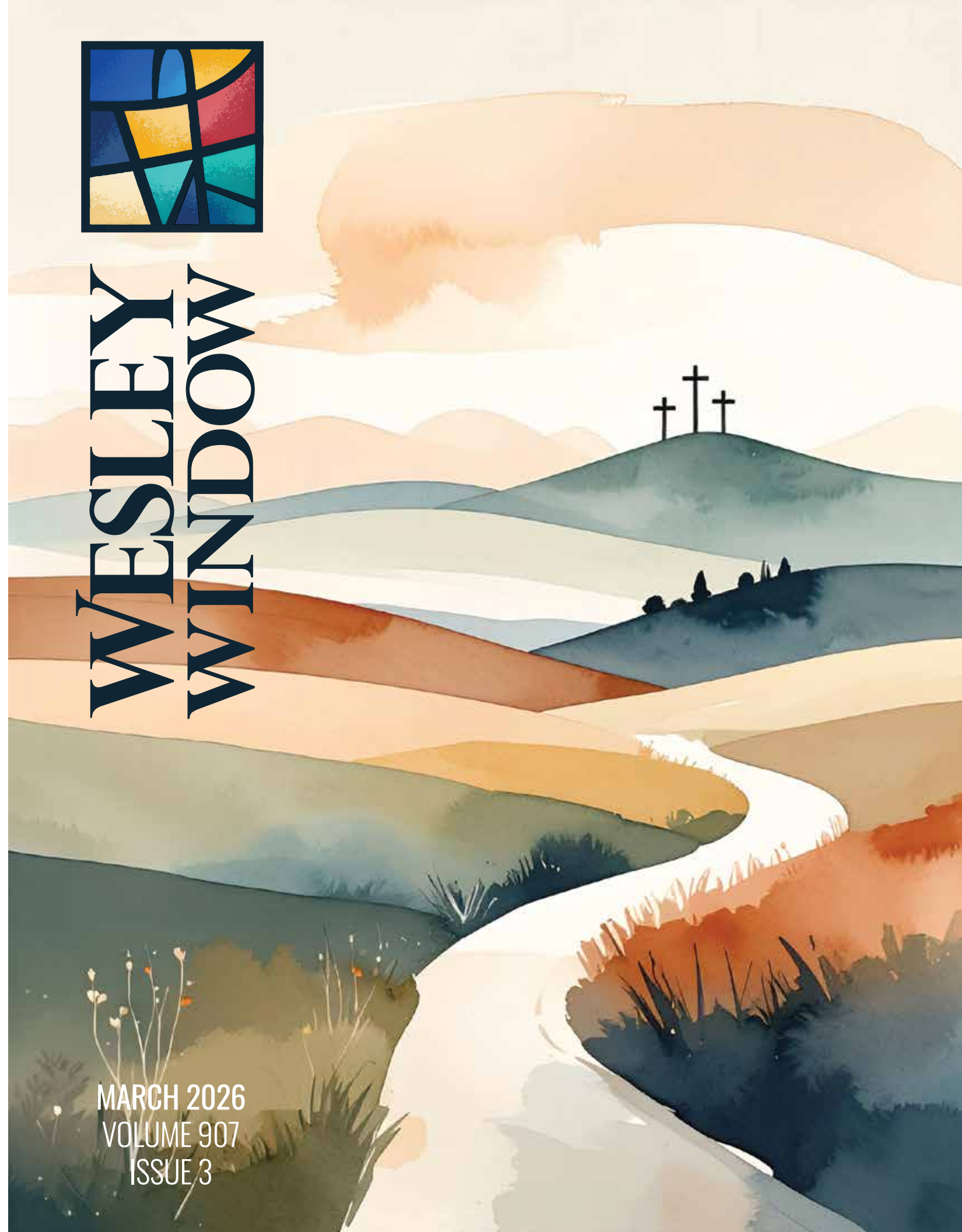
APRIL 3
Good Friday



APRIL 5
Easter Sunday



WESLEY WINDOW



MARCH 2026
VOLUME 907
ISSUE 3



PASTORAL LETTER

pastor don

Growing Through Grief, Grievance and Grace

One of the things your pastors do as part of an annual process with the SPRC (Staff Parish Relations Committee) is an assessment of their ministry, and one of the questions the assessment asks is, "How have you been growing in love of God?"

I thought I'd share my response with all of you, not just the SPRC. My love of God is growing through grief, grievance, and grace.

A search in my Google calendar for the word "funeral" over the last year returned fourteen matches, eight of which were in the last five months. Many were sudden, painful losses. As an empath, I not only walk with families in grief, but I also carry the grief with them. In the dark nights of the soul, I cling, desperately, to the hope that "sorrow may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). For some, pain, sorrow, loss, and the ugliness of the world can widen the chasm between them and God. For me, I cling even more urgently to God and grace—"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding," Proverbs 3:5 says. Sometimes growing in love of God is difficult. It can feel lonely and painful. The Psalmist cried out, "How long, Lord? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13). Jesus felt abandoned, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) Sometimes growth comes through joy, wonder,

and blessings, like trees stretching heavenward in the warmth of the springtime sun and breeze. Other times it comes from roots growing deeper to hold against harsh winter winds, darkness and bitter cold. I hold fast to faith—"the assurance of what is hoped for, and confidence in what is not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)—when the world around me rages on.

My love of God also grows through grievance: cause, complaint or protest. Every year in ministry and every season has taught me that I don't have all the answers and life doesn't always make sense. But as the Apostle Paul wrote, "for we live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinth 5:7). In the void of understanding, what doesn't make sense is filled with hope by God's grace, strengthened by trust in one another, and seasoned by time. What do I mean? For example, it's no secret I was surprised by a move 18 months ago. I wasn't prepared to leave O'Fallon when I did, and I didn't understand why I was moved to Macomb. I had my grievances with God. But a year and half later, I'm beginning to understand. By God's grace, with new eyes, I see. I am justified by faith, as Romans 5:1-4 says, and by faith I have peace; with peace I see, and having seen, I am confirmed. So, I can even boast in what I have "suffered," knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not fail." Growth comes through grievance by grace.

Every day is filled with the opportunity to both bear witness to and experience the grace of God with others, and for that I am thankful. I am thankful for Macomb, thankful for Macomb Wesley, and thankful for the opportunity to grow in my love of God through grief, grievance, and grace!

EASTER OFFERING

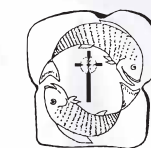
This Easter we are pleased to dedicate our special offering to support three important local ministries that serve our neighbors in need:



Samaritan Well, Inc. provides transitional housing and compassionate support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness here in Macomb — offering not just shelter, but help with the tools and resources needed to find stability and move toward lasting change.



Genesis Garden is focused on emergency shelter and housing solutions for families facing housing crises, helping individuals move from instability to safe, stable living situations. Their work reflects a strengths-based, supportive approach to addressing homelessness right here in our community.



Loaves and Fishes Etc.

Loaves & Fishes has long been a vital food assistance resource for people struggling with food insecurity in McDonough County. After facing funding challenges that led to a temporary closure and subsequent reopening, the need for consistent support remains high as they continue to provide grocery vouchers and essential food resources to hundreds of households each month.

We chose these ministries because more families are depending on them—and because they need encouragement during a season of transition. Your Easter gift will strengthen their work when our community needs it most.

Give by scanning the QR code or by writing "Easter Offering" on your check to Wesley UMC. A giving envelope is included with the newsletter, and in the pews, for your Easter offering.



get to know our wonderful

NURSERY STAFF

Jackie Rouse is a senior at MHS, where she participates in cross country, marching band, choir, Speech Team, Thespians, and more! Jackie recently became the area's first female Eagle Scout and plans to major in engineering in college. Jackie has been working in the WUMC Nursery for four years.

MISSION OF THE MONTH:

Wesley Christian Child Development Center

A Ministry of Wesley United Methodist Church

Growing Disciples from the Very Beginning

At Wesley Christian Child Development Center, children experience more than childcare — they experience Christ-centered love, safety, and belonging.

Serving families in the Macomb area, WCCDC provides:

- ✦ Faith-based learning
- ✦ Developmentally appropriate education
- ✦ A nurturing, family-centered environment
- ✦ Safe, structured classrooms
- ✦ Dedicated, caring staff

Why This Matters

Before children ever sit in a sanctuary pew...

Before they attend youth group...

Before they confirm their faith...

They can begin learning about Jesus in a loving, safe environment. There is no better way to fulfill our church's mission to **"Grow Disciples of Christ"** than by nurturing hearts at the very beginning of life.



Give Online Here!

Where Learning & Faith Grow Together

Infants

- Individual cribs & personalized nap schedules
- 1:4 teacher-to-child ratio

Toddlers

- Engaging activities & structured routine
- 1:5 teacher-to-child ratio

Two-Year-Olds

- Guided play & potty training support
- 1:8 teacher-to-child ratio

Preschool (3-5 years)

- Christian-based curriculum
- Structured, age-appropriate learning
- 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio

School Age

- Safe, supportive care
- Summer Field Trips and Activities
- 1:20 teacher-to-child ratio



COMMITTEE CORNER

Library Update

Sally Sallee for years worked to keep our library ordered and accessible. Since her passing we had been floundering but Paula Baughman volunteered to help. She has lots of ideas but quickly realized that the job was too much for just one person. Dennis Danowski has also volunteered his time and expertise to help advise us. There have been many generous donations for the library, but it has quickly become obvious that there are more than we can fit into our small library space, so efforts are underway to 'sort this out.' We will have to decide which donations we can keep and determine a way to properly identify them. Some will be donated to our excellent community library and some we will make available to anyone in the congregation that might be interested. Stay tuned! We will need additional volunteers eventually so if you are interested please let the church office know!

rick iverson

Blessing Bags

The Social Concerns Committee is again doing a project for the Countryside Care Center, located on the corner of South Johnson and Grant Streets here in Macomb. We will be giving "Blessing Bags" to the residents. Many of the 50 residents do not have family in the area to help with incidental needs. So We have the opportunity to be their family. The staff has suggested the following items: body wash, deodorant, lotion, ankle socks (men and women), lip balm, word search books (large print if possible), and sandwich crackers. The sewing group at Wesley are making the bags for the items. Please bring items to the church anytime during March. The blessing bags will be delivered in early April.

sharon evans

Wesley Leadership & Ministry Teams
Interested in serving or learning more?
Contact the chairperson listed below.

Staff Parish Relations Committee
Chair: Steve Hopper
Meets: 4th Monday Monthly

Board of Trustees
Chair: Jay Cremer & Chris Trennepohl
Meets: 4th Monday Monthly

Finance Committee
Chair: Mike Haefner
Meets: 3rd Tuesday Monthly

Missions Committee
Chair: Jim Olsen
Meets: 3rd Monday Monthly

Christian Education Committee
Chair: Sarah Clemente
Meets: 1st Tuesday Monthly

Nurture Committee
Meets: 3rd Wednesday Monthly

Witness, Hospitality & Communications
Chair: Tim Rice
Meets: 4th Tuesday Monthly

Social Concerns Committee
Chairs: Sharon Evans & Mary Gillingham
Meets: 3rd Monday Monthly

Worship Committee
Chair: Michele Long
Meets: 3rd Monday (Bi-Monthly)

Nominations Committee
Chair: Pastor Don Long

Fellheimer Trust Board
Chair: Marshall Evan

Wesley Christian Child Care Board
Chair: Breann Pumo
Meets: 4th Thursday Monthly

TREE-OF-LIFE-PARISH

With the appointment of Pastor Melly to Beardstown UMC, effective July 1, 2026, Wesley UMC, together with the Bishop and Cabinet of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, is evaluating the needs of our congregation and the availability of clergy throughout the Conference and our District.

Our District Superintendent, The Rev. Dr. James Fielder, met with our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) twice to present a ministry approach used by other churches in the Conference called a “parish ministry model.” He described it as “a Wesleyan connectional model built for today.” A parish ministry brings together a coordinated team to serve multiple congregations with consistent preaching, pastoral care, and shared mission.

Your SPRC unanimously supports the creation of a cooperative parish, Tree-of-Life Parish, that will unite Macomb Wesley, Walnut Grove, and Bushnell UMCs into a single connected ministry team. This model ensures that in addition to having a Senior Pastor, sharing a full-time Associate with Bushnell and Walnut Grove provides Wesley with a second

pastor on staff. Without this arrangement, finding a replacement for Pastor Melly would likely be difficult due to clergy shortages in our Conference and financial limitations here at Wesley.

We believe the Tree-of-Life Cooperative Parish—rooted in our Methodist connectional tradition—strengthens each congregation by providing a reliable pastoral presence through a unified team and creates a sustainable ministry model focused on future growth.

Proposed Staffing Plan:

Directing Pastor, Don Long

Oversees the entire parish ministry team and deploys staff to meet parish-wide needs.

Associate Pastor, (New, Full-Time)

Serves Macomb Wesley 50% of the time and Bushnell/Walnut Grove 50% of the time.

Other Lay leadership

Lay speakers, lay servants, and other leaders will be recruited, trained, and mentored to serve alongside the pastoral team.

Decision Points:

Motion 1 — Form the Cooperative Parish: Approve the creation of the “Tree-of-Life Cooperative Parish” consisting of Macomb Wesley, Walnut Grove and Bushnell, effective on an agreed start date.

Motion 2 — Approve the Clergy Staffing Plan: Approve the staffing configuration of Directing Pastor Don Long and a new full-time Associate Pastor (Macomb Wesley 50%, Bushnell / Walnut Grove 50% shared) with compensation as proposed and full-time benefits per conference standard.



Although each pastor will have a primary area of responsibility, the team functions as a parish staff. This approach creates synergy through shared leadership, collaborative planning, and flexible deployment across the entire parish. The benefits include:

Consistent Pastoral Care: Hospital visits, homebound care, funerals, and crisis response can be coordinated so no single congregation is left unsupported, and no pastor is forced into unsustainable “heroic” leadership.

Pastoral Health and Sustainability: Collaboration reduces isolation and burnout, encourages creativity and shared learning, and allows pastors to focus on call-driven ministry rather than constantly filling gaps.

In summary, the Tree-of-Life Cooperative Parish is more than a staffing arrangement—it is a shared ministry ecosystem. Each congregation retains its identity while gaining stability, consistency, and added capacity through a coordinated pastoral team.

We welcome your questions! Please join us for one of two Q&A sessions:

*Sunday, March 8th
9:45-10:30am Chapel*

*Monday, March 9th
6pm Sanctuary*

With prayer, hope, faith, and opportunity,

*pastor don, senior pastor
pastor melly, associate pastor
steve hopper, sprc chair
rev. dr. james fielder,
district superintendent,
west district, igrc*

