

“The Way Around”

Week Three – Sunday March 8, 2026

WE GATHER

Meeting One Another on The Way

PRELUDE

“*Blessed Be the Tie that Binds*”

J. Fawcett, J. Nageli

WELCOME

THRESHOLD MOMENT

Leader: In our series about this journey called life, we focus today on how the journey changes us. This can lead to not always being understood. Jesus found this out as he pushed against the status quo of his day leading to a fair amount of rejection. Close family, friends and neighbors may cling to an idea of who we are and cannot imagine we have grown beyond that identity. And likewise, we may do the same to them. We are called to move ahead and do what we feel called to do, claiming who we know we are, taking the way around what others think we ought to do and be. And we offer the same steadfast love and encouragement to others.

SONG

“*A Wilderness Wandering People*”

PRAYER FOR THE PATH

God of the Bending Road, be with us on The Way. We find ourselves changed by the things we encounter and the people we meet. We want to grow and yet sometimes the growing pains can be disorienting for everyone. Help us as we navigate the twists and turns, and help us see that others are doing the same. Amen.

* OPENING HYMN

“*Change My Heart, O God*”

Black Hymnal 2152

WE PROCLAIM

Discovering Ourselves on The Way

EXTINGUISHING THE THIRD LENT CANDLE

As we extinguish this third candle, the light fades, but the journey continues. The road with Christ is not always straight or easy. Sometimes it bends around the expectations of others, around fear, around the voices that tell us who we should be. Yet Jesus kept walking, healing, loving, and moving steadily toward Jerusalem. So we remember that even when the path grows dim and the way feels uncertain, Christ is still beside us, gathering us as a hen gathers her chicks, guiding us with quiet courage toward the life God is shaping within us. Amen

“*Stillness*”

Meet me in the stillness, Lord

Be the air I breathe.

Meet me in the stillness, Lord

Free me to receive.

PRAYING FOR OTHERS ALONG THE WAY & THE LORD’S PRAYER

We continue our prayers for those whose journeys are difficult in this moment... *(pause)* We are also reminded that there is so much good along the journey of life. We give thanks for... *(pause)* We pray all these things spoken aloud, and the ones lifted in the quiet of our hearts, and conclude our prayers with the one that Jesus taught us, saying... *(pause)*

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

THE WORD IN MUSIC

“*God Is So Good/Where He Leads Me*”

Arr. J. Coates, Jr.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Our giving today is one way we choose the path of generosity, compassion, and trust in God’s work among us. So let us offer these gifts as a sign that we are following not the expectations of the world, but the way of Christ.

* RESPONSE

“*Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*”

UM Hymnal 94

* OFFERTORY PRAYER

READING

Luke 13:31-34

NRSVUE

SERMON

“*Choosing Our Path Even When Others Disagree*”

WE RESPOND

Opening to the Holy on The Way

PRAYERS FOR GETTING OUT OF OUR OWN WAY

Leader: We pause along the way to offer our whole attention to God in prayer. This is especially necessary when bends in the road require decisions about the way we move forward or we find ourselves unsure. Let us meet God in the stillness, offering our most honest selves.

Dear God, we are not always sure we know what we want for ourselves. We are surrounded by some people who want us to be more than we are, and others who want us to be less. What is worse, we have those same expectations of others. Sometimes that makes it difficult for us to get our heads and our hearts in the same direction. If it is possible, let that cup pass from us, but if not...Amen.

“Stillness”

**Meet me in the stillness, Lord
Be the air I breathe
Meet me in the stillness, Lord
Free me to receive**

Time for Contemplation

Hear this: Whether or not you have any idea of your next steps, or have felt the sting of doubt from others about your journey, God will not abandon you in your quest. Whether or not you know it, believe it, or feel it, Jesus is with you now because Jesus knew rejection, and knows just how hard it can be, for you and for others in your wake. You are forgiven and embraced, especially when you think you may have taken a wrong turn. May it be so.

WE GO FORTH

Continuing with Jesus on The Way

* **Closing Hymn**

“Guide My Feet”

Black Hymnal 2208

Responsive Benediction

The Creator God filled you with breath, inviting you to this journey called Life.

We will follow on The Way.

Jesus, our Guide, showed us what it means to make a new way with Love.

We will follow on The Way.

The Spirit gives us strength to move forward with Courage and Compassion for all we meet.

We will follow on The Way.

May this week be filled with opportunities to let others share with you their journey stories, and for you to share yours so you might come to know each other more fully. May it be so.

Amen. “Buen Camino!”

POSTLUDE

*The flowers adorning the altar this morning are donated
To the Glory of God in memory of Edward I. Shibata by Frances Shibata*

The Way

The Way Around

Week Three

Sunday, March 8, 2026

— *Remembered & Led* —

John Wesley United Methodist Church

Buen Camino

Men's Breakfast: Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, there will be NO Men's Breakfast in March! Our next breakfast is scheduled for Saturday, April 18th at 8:45 am. Details to come.



It's Easter Flower Time!

Check your bulletin or stop by the Welcome or Connect Desk to pick up an order form for Easter Flowers. **Deadline: March 22nd.** For \$15, you can purchase a Lily, Tulips, Daffodil, or Hyacinth in memory or thanksgiving. All dedications will be listed in the Easter bulletin. **Scan the QR Code to submit your form online!**

Lenten Studies – Join Us This Season. All are welcome

Lent in Plain Sight

Mondays | 6:00 PM | Feb. 16–Mar. 30

Join us for a Lenten book study based on *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill J. Duffield. Through Scripture and reflection, we'll explore how God meets us in ordinary, everyday objects on the journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

Give It Up!

Tuesdays | 10:30 AM | Feb. 17–Mar. 31

A seven-session adult Bible study designed to deepen faith through Scripture, reflection, discussion, and prayer as we walk through Lent together.

The Difficult Words of Jesus

Wednesdays | 2:00 PM | Feb. 25 –April 1

Jesus provided his disciples teachings for how to follow God's word. He told them parables to help them discern questions. But sometimes Jesus spoke words that followers then and now have found difficult. Join us for this six-week series.

App tip of the week: Come to the Connect Desk after the morning service to find out how to use the APP to pray with each other! OR email Lianne at connect@johnwesleyumc.org for a private lesson!



WELCOME TO

JOHN WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We are a welcoming and active congregation which seeks to **“LOVE GOD...LOVE OTHERS...SERVE THE WORLD.”**

We invite you to experience meaningful worship services, engaging Bible studies, Sunday school, fellowship, preaching, life-changing local and global mission opportunities and more. We are an active congregation. At John Wesley, there is always room for everyone to become a part of something greater than ourselves. **WE ARE GLAD YOU ARE HERE!**

WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Worship Every Sunday: 10:00 AM

Monday 9th

- Art Exhibition 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)
- *Lent In Plain Sight* Book Study 6 PM (Library)

Tuesday 10th

- Art Exhibition 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)
- *Give It Up* Lent Book Study 10:30 AM (Youth Room)
- Spiritual Growth Meeting 5:00 PM (Library)

Wednesday 11th

- Art Exhibition 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)
- Prayer Meeting 11 AM (Youth Room)
- Staff Meeting 12:45PM (Library)
- *The Difficult Words of Jesus* Book 2 PM (DiAngelis Residence. See Pastor for info)
- Handbell Choir Rehearsal 5:45 PM (Sanctuary)
- Choir Rehearsal 7 PM (Sanctuary)

Thursday 12th

- Worship Committee Meeting 1:00 PM
- Art Exhibition 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)

Friday 13th

- Art Exhibition 15:00 PM – 7:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)

Saturday 14th

- Art Exhibition 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM (Fitzgerald Room)
- Dinner and Discussion 4:30 PM (Fellowship Hall)

New Section: “I ASKED AI”

“Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning.” — W. A. Ward

I continue to be curious about God, people and church. After a quick comment made in our bible study, I drove my car home wondering about what people outside of the church say about us, what we can do as a church to understand ourselves and the world better, and how may God be calling us to respond? So, I thought, why not start asking AI to collect some of the information we as Methodist Christians might be curious about. Hopefully this will lead to more curiosity and to some ideas. My first question was: *What are the assumptions or stereotypes people have about the United Methodist Church in the United States?*

Here is what AI said:

The **United Methodist Church (UMC)** carries a set of cultural assumptions—some fair, some outdated, and some contradictory depending on who you ask. Because the denomination is large, historically influential, and internally diverse, people often project simplified stereotypes onto it. A few show up again and again.

One common assumption is that the UMC is “**the middle-of-the-road Protestant church.**” Many people see it as neither strongly conservative nor strongly progressive, but something in between—what sociologists sometimes call “mainline moderate.” This stereotype comes from its history as a broad national church that tried to hold together different theological perspectives. The assumption is that Methodists avoid extremes and prefer balance, dialogue, and institutional stability. Sometimes that gets interpreted positively as thoughtful moderation; other times it’s caricatured as indecision or theological vagueness.

Another stereotype is that Methodists are **organized, bureaucratic, and committee-driven.** This traces back to the legacy of John Wesley, whose early Methodist societies were highly structured with class meetings, accountability groups, and disciplined practices. Over time, that reputation evolved into the modern joke that Methodists “solve everything with a committee.” In reality, the denominational system—with conferences, boards, and agencies—does reinforce the perception that Methodists are institutional and procedural.

There is also a cultural assumption that the UMC represents **respectable, middle-class Protestantism.** Historically the denomination grew strongly among the American middle class and often became the “civic church” in many towns. Because of that, outsiders sometimes picture Methodist congregations as polite, educated, community-minded, and somewhat conventional—people who run the Rotary club, school boards, and food pantries. The positive version of this stereotype is “responsible and service-oriented”; the negative version is “comfortable and cautious.”

Another common perception is that Methodists emphasize **good works and social service.** The UMC is known for disaster relief, hospitals, schools, and mission work through organizations like the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Outsiders often associate Methodists with feeding programs, shelters, and global aid. Critics sometimes caricature this as “social gospel without theology,” while supporters see it as a natural outgrowth of Wesley’s emphasis on holiness expressed through love of neighbor.

More recently, the denomination has also become associated with **internal conflict over theology and sexuality.** Public attention around debates that eventually led to the creation of the Global Methodist Church reinforced a stereotype that the UMC is a church constantly debating policy and doctrine. For some observers, this signals openness and democratic governance; for others it looks like institutional instability.

Liturgically, there is a softer stereotype that Methodist worship is **traditional but not overly formal**—somewhere between high-liturgical traditions and free-form evangelical worship. People often expect hymns, a choir, a sermon focused on practical Christian living, and a generally welcoming atmosphere.

Finally, there is an enduring stereotype that Methodists are “**nice.**” Congregations are often perceived as warm, friendly, and service-minded. While that’s often true in practice, the downside of the stereotype is that people sometimes assume Methodist churches avoid hard theological questions or prophetic confrontation.

What’s interesting is that many of these stereotypes pull in opposite directions: moderate yet conflicted, structured yet welcoming, socially engaged yet sometimes seen as cautious. The reality is that the United Methodist Church contains a wide range of theological convictions, worship styles, and congregational cultures, which means any single stereotype only captures a fragment of the picture.

Theologically, however, the United Methodist tradition has clear grounding. The denomination’s doctrine is rooted in the **Articles of Religion**, Wesley’s sermons, and historic Christian creeds. At the same time, Methodism has long encouraged faithful thinking rather than rigid uniformity. The framework often called the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**—Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—reflects a belief that Christian truth is engaged thoughtfully and lived out in real life. That openness can look like ambiguity from the outside, but internally it is meant to be a disciplined way of discerning truth.

The United Methodist tradition is built on a **serious call to follow Jesus with both heart and mind**—personal transformation and social transformation together.