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The Spirit ISSUE 10 October 2026

**A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
CHENEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Dear Friends,

I am writing this Thoughtful while I am still in Germany, where I have been spending some time with a Lutheran congregation. A few weeks ago, I participated in an event with them, and experienced something that has stayed with me.

For the third year, this congregation hosted a **Blessing Festival for Couples** in its beautiful church garden, as you can see in the photos.

The invitation was simple: Come and receive a blessing.

Married or unmarried. Together for decades or newly in love. People wanting to renew a blessing they had received years ago, and people who had never received one at all. Everybody was welcome. And they came.

Eighteen couples received a blessing that afternoon. One couple especially caught my attention. They had no real connection to church and described themselves as agnostic. The day before, they had simply walked past a poster advertising the event and thought, essentially, *Why not? A blessing sounds kind of nice.* And so they came.

I have thought about them quite a bit since then.

What can we offer spiritually?

Sometimes I wonder: What do we, as Christians, actually have to give to the world?

Of course, we can serve. We can feed people, give money, work for justice, and help someone who is hurting. Those things matter enormously.

But what do we have to offer spiritually?

Maybe one answer is surprisingly simple: **A blessing.**

What is a blessing?

The Greek word for blessing is *eulogia*. *Eu* means “good” and *logos* means “word” or “speech.”

Benediction comes from the Latin word *benedicere*, which also means “speaking good.” A blessing, quite literally, is a good word spoken over someone.

But Christian blessing is more than simply saying something nice.

The source of blessings.

Think about the ancient blessing from Numbers 6:24–26:

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you...”*

Notice who is doing the blessing. It isn't the pastor. It isn't the priest. It is God.

When we bless another person, we speak God's goodness over them. We entrust them to God's care. We say:

I see you. God sees you. May God's grace surround you. May God's peace accompany you. May God's face shine upon you wherever the road takes you.

The blessing is spoken by us, but its source is God.

The promise of presence

And perhaps that is why even two people who weren't sure what they believed saw a poster and thought, *Yes. I would like that.*

Because who doesn't need a good word spoken over their life? Who doesn't need to hear that they are seen? Who doesn't need the promise that whatever tomorrow brings, they do not have to face it alone?

A blessing doesn't promise that everything will be easy. It doesn't magically make pain disappear. Even the ancient blessing from Numbers doesn't promise success or an uncomplicated life. Its deepest promise is **presence**.

God's face turned toward you. God's grace surrounding you. God's peace going with you. Beyond the church walls.

Maybe that is one of the gifts we as the Church can offer more freely—not only inside our sanctuary, but out in the world: a good word. A blessing.

And maybe we shouldn't be quite so careful about who gets one.

After all, God's goodness has always been bigger than the walls of our churches.

Numbers 6:24–26

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

Pastor Damian



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A Look Back: Worship in the Park

Friends, what a joy it was to worship together in Sutton Park again this summer!

For three Sundays in June, July, and August, we gathered with our siblings from Cheney Congregational Church and the Episcopal Church for worship outside in God's beautiful creation. There is something special about bringing our different traditions together, singing, praying, sharing the word of God and remembering that we are all part of one much bigger family of God.

And our worship made a difference beyond the park!

Offerings from two of our services supported our new **SEED Youth Ministry**, our ecumenical ministry creating an inclusive and welcoming community for young people from all walks of life. Isn't that exciting?!

Our third offering supported Cheney Outreach, and we were especially grateful to welcome Cheney Outreach Director David Smith as our preacher that morning. Thank you, Dave!

And thank you to everyone who gave so generously. We are also grateful for all the people who made these mornings possible, from bringing extra chairs to providing coffee and donuts, setting up and cleaning up, and everything in between. And a special thank-you to Jon for sharing the gift of music with us!

Worshipping together across denominational lines is always a beautiful reminder that there is much more that unites us than divides us. Thank you for being part of another wonderful summer of worship in the park. We'll see you out there again next year!

Pastor Damian



NOMINATE A HERO

For our fall movie series, we are collecting stories of folks who often get overlooked. We want to highlight those in our community who have secret powers or abilities, or just a massive heart, and celebrate them.

In your nomination, tell us the person's name and a bit about why you want to see them highlighted.

We have 4 nominations already, and are looking for 2 more people!

Email the church office with
"Hero" in the subject.
cheneyumc204@gmail.com

It's official: SEED Youth Ministry has begun!

On Tuesday, September 22, we gathered for our very first Youth Group night and what a wonderful beginning it was! We welcomed 5 middle and high school students and had 9 adult volunteers helping make the evening possible.

There was food, laughter, games, conversation, worship, and the beginning of something we have been dreaming about for quite a while: a welcoming, inclusive, Christ-centered community for young people right here in Cheney.

And if you haven't seen the new Youth Room yet, you should! It looks amazing! A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who donated furniture, supplies, time, money, food for the volunteers, and plenty of good old-fashioned hard work to transform the space. What was once just a basement room has become a place where young people can gather, belong, build friendships, ask honest questions, and grow in faith. (If you don't know, the Youth Group Room is at the Cheney Congregational Church.)

SEED Youth Ministry is an ecumenical partnership between Cheney United Methodist Church, Cheney Congregational Church, and the Episcopal Church in Cheney. Together, we are creating something none of our congregations would need to do alone.

We have also been blessed with strong financial support to get us started. A \$5,700 Ministry Opportunity Fund grant from the Pacific Northwest Conference helped launch the ministry, and SEED Campus Ministry has committed \$20,000 over two years toward the cost of our part-time youth ministry leadership: Eryn Wuesthoff!

But those funds are meant to help us start the ministry, not sustain it forever. That's where all three congregations come in. As SEED Youth Ministry grows, we are looking for people who would be willing to become monthly supporters of this ministry. Whether that is \$10, \$25, \$50, or another amount each month, recurring gifts will help us build a sustainable ministry for the years ahead.

You don't have to have teenagers at home to invest in young people. You simply have to believe that they deserve a church community where they know they are loved by God, welcomed as they are, and given space to grow.

Thank you to everyone who has already prayed, donated, painted, moved furniture, prepared food, volunteered, given financially, or simply cheered us on.

The seeds have been planted.
Now let's see what God grows!

Pastor Damian

Tuesdays at SEED Youth Ministry
5:30 p.m. - Youth Gathering
6:00 p.m. - Dinner
6:30-8:00 p.m. - Worship, Games,
Bible Study & Small Groups



Thank You for Being the Church!

YOUTH ROOM



Friends,

After five weeks away in Germany, I came back feeling incredibly grateful not only to be home with you, but also for you.

While I was gone, our wonderful team of lay preachers (Stan Kerr, Ronda Cordill, Laurie Zapf and Caren Lincoln) stepped into the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, sharing God's Word and leading our congregation in worship. Thank you for the time, prayer, preparation, and heart you put into each service! A special thank you also goes to Pastor Bob Foote, who joined us and presided at Holy Communion while I was away.

But what makes me especially thankful is that it wasn't just Sunday mornings. For five weeks, the ministry of Cheney UMC continued. People were cared for. Meetings happened. Ministries continued. Volunteers showed up. Our staff and leaders did what they always do.

The church kept seeking, serving, and sharing Jesus Christ.

And apparently, you all did a pretty great job without me! I'm trying not to take that personally.

Seriously, though, what a blessing that is. A healthy church is never the ministry of one pastor. It is the ministry of a whole community of people who bring their gifts, their faith, their creativity, their compassion, and sometimes just their willingness to show up and help.

Being away for five weeks reminded me again just how many gifted and faithful people call Cheney UMC home. This church belongs to all of us, and its ministry happens because all of us are part of it. So to our lay preachers, Pastor Bob, our staff, musicians, worship leaders, volunteers, committee members, and everyone who quietly kept things moving while I was gone:

Thank you!

It is good to be back. But it is even better to come back knowing that Cheney UMC continues to be Cheney UMC with or without me standing in the pulpit.

What a gift. What a church. And what a joy it is to be your pastor.

Pastor Damian

Dear Cheney UMC friends,

Since our last newsletter came out, we had another emotional service in our church. For more than seventeen years, there has been a familiar presence at the piano at Cheney United Methodist Church. Sunday after Sunday, season after season, JoAnna Cockrum has sat down at those keys and helped us worship.

On Sunday, August 9, we had the opportunity to surround JoAnna with our love and gratitude as we celebrated her retirement as our pianist. And after seventeen-plus years of faithful ministry, there is an awful lot to be thankful for. JoAnna's music has been woven into the life of our church.

She has played for Christmas Eve and Easter morning, for baptisms and funerals, for weddings and ordinary Sundays. She has accompanied us when we sang loudly and joyfully and, no doubt, on a few mornings when the congregation needed a little extra help finding the right note!

Her music has been there for some of the happiest moments of our lives and some of the hardest. That is one of the remarkable gifts of music. Sometimes our hearts are so full of joy that ordinary words simply aren't big enough. Other times, grief leaves us without any words at all. And in those moments, someone begins to play. Suddenly, music becomes prayer.

And we are so thankful that JoAnna has given us that gift. Of course, JoAnna has also reminded us that church music doesn't always have to be quite so serious. There have been those wonderful moments when the sounds of the Shire or the wizarding world suddenly found their way into the sanctuary. And it is difficult to adequately describe the joy of walking toward the pulpit while JoAnna plays Darth Vader's theme.

Think for a moment about seventeen years of Sundays. Think about all the rehearsals, preludes, offertories, hymns, special services, last-minute changes, celebrations, memorials, holidays, and ordinary mornings, and accompanying the choir. Think about all the hours spent practicing music that most of us simply arrived on Sunday morning and enjoyed. Behind every note was a gift of time. Behind every hymn was an act of service. And behind all those years was a faithful commitment to this congregation and to the worship of God.

JoAnna, thank you. Thank you for the countless hours you have given. Thank you for helping us sing. Thank you for knowing when to fill the sanctuary with celebration and when to offer something gentle enough to hold our grief. Thank you for seventeen-plus years of showing up, sitting down at the piano, and sharing your gifts with us. JoAnna, as you begin this new chapter, please know that you carry with you the gratitude, love, and prayers of your Cheney United Methodist Church family. The music you have shared over these many years will continue to echo through this congregation and through the lives of the people who were blessed to hear it. With grateful hearts, we celebrate you. Thank you, JoAnna, for the music, and thanks be to God for you.



Pastor Damian and Cheney UMC



October

Birthdays

5	Linda Friedman	20	JoAn Leaver
	Laverle McCandless	23	Patti Sooy
	Myrna Reynolds	23	Nancy Lindell
6	Bill Clark	23	Pat Sleeth
10	Laurie Murphy	23	John Dupler
12	Austin McCrum	30	Emily Clark
13	Tony Birch		Candace Dress
14	Karla Griffin	31	Collen Leontovich

Wedding Anniversaries

3	Bill & Martha Clark
5	Del & Virginia Fitzner
	Saralynn & Stan Kerr
	Kevin & Tina Thorson
12	Jim & Patti Sooy
20	Kristin & Terry Mansfield
25	Howard & Karen Marsh

Need to update your birthday/anniversary information?
Email the church office!

**Pastor Damian will be attending a conference on theology in Kansas City:
October 7th – October 10th**



OCTOBER 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m. WIC All Day	2	3
4  MOVIE NIGHT: 5 P.M. POTLUCK 5:30 P.M. MOVIE	5 AA Meeting 7-9 p.m. (WIC room)	6 Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	7 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Al Anon Meeting 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Library) Choir 7-8:30 p.m.	8 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m. WIC All Day	9	10
			Pastor Damian out of office	Pastor Damian out of office	Pastor Damian out of office	Pastor Damian out of office
11  MOVIE NIGHT: 5 P.M. POTLUCK 5:30 P.M. MOVIE	12 AA Meeting 7-9 p.m. (WIC room)	13 Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	14 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Al Anon Meeting 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Library) Choir 7-8:30 p.m.	15 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m. WIC All Day	16	17
18  Church Conference 11:30am MOVIE NIGHT: 5 P.M. POTLUCK 5:30 P.M. MOVIE	19 AA Meeting 7-9 p.m. (WIC room)	20 Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	21 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Al Anon Meeting 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Library) Sassy Senior Society 2-3:30pm Choir 7-8:30 p.m.	22 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m. WIC All Day	23	24
25  MOVIE NIGHT: 5 P.M. POTLUCK 5:30 P.M. MOVIE	26  FEED CHENEY 5:30 p.m. Coat Distribution AA Meeting 7-9 p.m. (WIC room)	27 Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	28 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Al Anon Meeting 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Library) Choir 7-8:30 p.m.	29 Bazaar Sorting 9-noon Meals on Wheels 11 a.m.-1 p.m. WIC All Day  Coat Distribution 4:30-6pm	30	31

Pastor Damian's day off is Friday. Please allow him to enjoy his day off and do not contact him on Fridays. Thank you!

Pastor Damian will be attending a conference on theology in Kansas City: October 7th – October 10th

Church Office Hours:	Tuesday	10am-12:30pm
		2:30-5pm
	Thursday	6:30-8:30pm
Choir Rehearsal	Wednesday	7-9:30pm
Bible Studies: contact the church office for addresses.		
With Congregational Church* *Meets at Congregational Church in September	Thursday	1:15-2:15pm
Leader: Margie Lindner	Monday	2-3pm
Leader: Carol Kriegh	Monday	7:30-8:30pm
Leader: Saralynn Kerr	Wednesday	7-8pm

When God Goes to the Movies - The Adventure Begins!

Our new Movie-Based Worship Series begins next Sunday, October 4!

You've heard us talking about it and now it's almost here! This fall, we're spending six weeks with Spider-Man and Batman, exploring responsibility, forgiveness, fear, justice, chaos, identity, and the masks we wear.

And there are two ways to join the adventure:

Sunday evening Movie Nights and Sunday morning worship!

Expect creative worship, movie clips and visuals, interactive elements, music and, of course, movie-themed snacks and fresh popcorn after worship!



MOVIE-BASED WORSHIP Sundays at 10:00 AM



SPIDER-MAN TRILOGY

Oct. 4 — "With Great Power..."
Oct. 11 — "The Hero in All of Us"
Oct. 18 — "Poison in the Soul"

DARK KNIGHT TRILOGY

Oct. 25 — "Fear Out of Control"
Nov. 1 — "Chaos Out of Control"
Nov. 8 — "Behind the Masks"

FREE MOVIE NIGHTS & POTLUCK

Sundays at 5:00 PM at Cheney UMC

Bring a dish to share, grab some popcorn,
and watch the movie with us!

Sept. 27 — *Spider-Man* (2002)

Oct. 4 — *Spider-Man 2* (2004)

Oct. 11 — *Spider-Man 3* (2007)

Oct. 18 — *Batman Begins* (2005)

Oct. 25 — *The Dark Knight* (2008)

Nov. 1 — *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012)



All films are rated PG-13.

DRESS THE PART!

Supersuits? Absolutely. Favorite superhero T-shirt? Yes. Bruce Wayne business attire? We respect the commitment.

Whether you're Spider-Man from any universe, a DC hero, or simply someone wondering what superheroes could possibly have to do with Jesus, there's a place for you here.

The movies begin September 27. The worship adventure begins October 4. See you at the movies!

Pastor Damian

**Our Fundraising Booklet Is Here!**

Friends, over the past several months we have talked, dreamed, asked questions, looked at plans, and imagined what the future of our church building could look like. Now we are excited to share the next step!

Our new Building for the Future Fundraising Booklet is available. It brings together the vision for our building project, the different phases of construction, estimated costs, and information about the different ways you can financially support the project.

If you haven't taken a copy yet, please pick one up at church and take some time to read through it or go to our website and read it in a digital way.

This booklet isn't simply about construction. It is about why we believe these improvements matter: creating a church that is more accessible, welcoming, functional, and ready to serve our congregation and the Cheney community for generations to come.

Continued next page

COMMITMENT SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 15

After you have had time to read, pray, and consider, we will celebrate Commitment Sunday on November 15.

On that Sunday, we will invite everyone to bring a pledge form with two separate commitments:

- **Your General Fund Pledge** supports the everyday ministry of Cheney UMC - our staff, worship, outreach, ministries, utilities, and all the things that allow us to Seek, Serve, and Share Jesus Christ throughout the year.
- **Your Building Fund Pledge** is an **additional** commitment specifically toward our Building for the Future project.

Keeping these two commitments separate is important. We don't want to build for the future at the expense of the ministry happening today!

The commitments we receive will help our Church Council and Finance Committee plan the 2027 budget and, just as importantly, determine what is financially possible for the building project: which phases we can undertake, whether some phases can happen together, and when construction can begin.

Pray. Consider. Imagine.

Between now and November 15, we invite you to do three simple things:

Pray about how you might participate.

Consider what you can faithfully give, whether through a one-time gift, a monthly pledge, securities, or another form of giving.

And imagine what we can accomplish together.

There is no single “right” amount. Every household and every financial situation is different. What matters is that we prayerfully consider what each of us can do as part of this shared effort.

Because ultimately, we aren't simply raising money for a building.

We are preparing a place where children can grow up, neighbors can find community, people of all abilities can participate fully, someone new can walk through our doors and find welcome, and generations we haven't even met yet can experience the love of God.

Building for the Future, together.

The Church Council



Written by Patrick Scriven, PNW Conference Staff, September 08, 2026

Eight United Methodist volunteers spent three days in late August helping families sift the remains of homes lost in the Spokane Complex fires, recovering ceramics, coins, medals, jewelry and family keepsakes from the ash.

The Early Response Team served Aug. 28-30 in the Old Trails area, roughly four weeks after the three fires broke out Aug. 1 and forced the evacuation of some 65,000 people across the Spokane area. Incident command later reported 833 structures damaged or destroyed, and no deaths.

Volunteers came from the Pacific Northwest, Mountain Sky and California-Nevada Annual Conferences, an example of the connectional aid that moves between neighboring conferences when a disaster exceeds local capacity. The deployment was coordinated by Dana and Kathy Bryson, Co-Disaster Response Coordinators for the Pacific Northwest Conference, and followed United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) training and protocols.

The team worked with four households and met 12 family members, including veterans and people connected to local United Methodist congregations. Much of the work was personal property retrieval. Survivors themselves directed the search, pointing crews toward the spots most likely to hold something that survived.

"You cannot replace a house in three days. What you can do is find the wedding ring, or the medal, or the one bowl that came through unbroken. Survivors told us where to dig, and we dug," said Kathy Bryson, Team Leader.

Two Spokane congregations kept the team fed. Covenant UMC and Audubon Park UMC provided three breakfasts, three lunches and four sit-down dinners, plus at least 72 cookies and a supply of peanut bars and brownies that the team declined to count.

"Covenant and Audubon Park fed us every day we were there. Our team could give its full attention to these families because two congregations decided that feeding and housing us was their part of the work," Kathy added.

Early Response Teams are neither first responders nor long-term rebuilders. They arrive in the weeks between, securing property, clearing debris and offering a steady presence as survivors begin to absorb what has happened. The work is as much about accompaniment as it is about labor. Team members spent much of the deployment working alongside survivors and listening to them and to one another.

What you can do to respond:

Recovery in Spokane will continue long after the media turns its attention to the next big thing. Gifts to the **PNW Conference Disaster Fund (Advance #352)** or **UMCOR Advance #901670** support the work ahead.

Give at pnwumc.org/wildfirerresponse or learn more at pnwumc.org/spokane-area-wildfires.

MAKE, BAKE, AND DONATE PEOPLE! AND SORT!

The 2026 Holiday Bazaar will be **Saturday, November 7**; please mark your calendars. Check in each week at the Bazaar Corner in the narthex to get the latest information and dates leading up to our big event, which is a major fundraiser for our church.



In the meantime, you can bring your items to donate to the church and place them in the big box at the top of the stairway by the Fellowship Hall. All items should be in good condition; holiday items, vintage pieces, home décor, and jewelry are our top sellers, as well as the popular hand-crafted and upcycled items.

Sorting and pricing items will take place on Wednesdays and Thursdays (from 9am to noon) through October. See the calendar in this newsletter or the Bazaar Bulletin Board for dates and times. All help is welcome, and you don't need to sign up.

In the Bake Shop, sweet breads and fruit pies sell well, and you can freeze them if you bake them now. The same goes for all the cookies we'll be needing for the extremely popular cookie table.

SEE HEAD ELF SARALYN KERR TO GET INVOLVED.***UMCOR TEAM***



FOR MORE INFORMATION

509.498.9250

WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM

FREE HOT MEAL & COAT DISTRIBUTION

WHEN

**5:30 P.M. MONDAY
OCTOBER 26, 2026**

**FOR ACCOMMODATION CONTACT CHENEY PARKS & RECREATION
AT 509-498-9250 BY OCTOBER 23.**

WHERE

WREN PIERSON BUILDING: 614 4TH STREET, CHENEY

A poster for the "Cheney Helping Cheney COAT DRIVE". The title "Cheney Helping Cheney" is in a script font, and "COAT DRIVE" is in large, bold, green block letters. Below the title, it says "Please Donate NEW COATS ONLY - ALL SIZES". A yellow banner states "Now through October 23 Donate at area schools, churches and businesses." Underneath, it lists the distribution dates and locations: Monday, October 26th at FEED CHENEY (5:30-6:30pm) in the Wren Pierson Building (615 4th Street), and Thursday, October 29th at Salnave Elementary (4:30-6:00pm) on 1015 Salnave Rd. There are illustrations of three coats: a blue parka, a pink hoodie, and a green quilted jacket.

Cheney Helping Cheney
COAT DRIVE

Please Donate
NEW COATS ONLY - ALL SIZES

Now through October 23
Donate at area schools, churches and businesses.

DISTRIBUTION:

Monday, October 26th FEED CHENEY 5:30-6:30pm Wren Pierson Building 615 4th Street	Thursday, October 29th Salnave Elementary 4:30-6:00pm 1015 Salnave Rd
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NEWSLETTER

204 4th St
Cheney, WA 99004
Return Service Requested

The Spirit **ISSUE 10** **October 2026**

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CHENEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH