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# THE SPIRIT - ISSUE 03 - MARCH 2026

## LENTEN SERIES 2026

### GIVING UP BAD THEOLOGY

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF CHENEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## The Same Longing



Friends,

I am writing this thoughtful after having been in the United States for three weeks the first time truly “in Übersee.” Or as you would say here: *over the ocean*.

I started this internship with quite a bit of excitement and honestly, who wouldn't be excited? Especially because I kept wondering how different the world must look when you are thousands of kilometers (about many thousands of miles) away from your own home. A completely different language, a different culture, different people and maybe even a very different way of being Christian or living out the Christian faith.

And I can tell you: in that regard, you really do not disappoint. From different measurement systems (I still secretly calculate in kilometers), to figuring out how exactly doors and windows work here, to the paper size on which I am writing this thoughtful, many things are similar, yet somehow different. You recognize the basic idea, but the details surprise you. And yet, despite all these differences, I keep noticing the similarities, maybe even more than the differences.

When I talk to people here, I realize the themes are familiar. There is uncertainty. Questions about the future. A feeling of losing control. This constant, unstoppable acceleration of life. Hardly any space to breathe, Hardly any room for the “I.” Instead, often just the attempt to somehow keep life together: schedules, expectations, relationships, faith. Whether in Germany or here “over the ocean”: the longing for stability, for rest, for solid ground beneath our feet, it is surprisingly the same.

Jesus experienced exactly this as well in his life and especially in his death. And I believe it is hard to lose the ground beneath your feet more deeply than in the moment when you realize that the very people for whom you gave everything to, whom you devoted your life, that these very people now wish you a cruel death. There is hardly a greater loss of control. Hardly a deeper sense that “everything is falling apart.”

And to reflect on this crime, this perhaps darkest experience of humanity, we enter the forty days of Lent. A time in which we intentionally let go of certain things. A time to pause. A time to recognize what is wrong and to realign our lives.

I would like to invite you (and with our lecture series you are probably used to this by now:) to give up a certain idea: the idea that you are alone with this feeling. And also, the idea that you alone are responsible for holding everything together.

We all know this experience. Regardless of background, nationality, or faith. That feeling of being overwhelmed, of loneliness, of “I don’t know how this will continue.” And even Jesus, God made flesh, walked this path. Not halfway. Not superficially. But in full depth, in real despair. And is that not precisely our calling? In this deeply human experience, we are united as Christians and in truth, united as human beings. Our calling is to make this shared experience more bearable through community. Not to center the “I,” but to discover the “we” in that feeling and experience. To carry and comfort one another.

Jesus did not call us into a community that highlights its differences. He called us into a group of people who share an experience and who have the ability to make it a little lighter for one another. During Lent, as we remember the cross, we are reminded that we cannot hold everything together and we were never meant to. Christ already has. And because of that, we are free to hold one another instead.

Henning Künzel



- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>2 Sue Lynch</b>        | <b>13 Edith Dickson</b>    |
| <b>3 Emily Gainer</b>     | <b>15 Korbin Crandall</b>  |
| <b>4 Virginia Fitzner</b> | <b>16 Shirley Milliren</b> |
| <b>5 Mason Dress</b>      | <b>18 Floyd Cloke, Jr</b>  |
| <b>12 Tim Tapley</b>      | <b>20 George Abrams</b>    |
| <b>Karen Brasefield</b>   | <b>Luke Sooy</b>           |
| <b>Louise Sheard</b>      | <b>21 Ellen Hargrove</b>   |
| <b>Del Fitzner</b>        | <b>22 Karen Marsh</b>      |
|                           | <b>31 Heather Watkins</b>  |



- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>21 Sue &amp; Lonnie Lynch</b>   |                                    |
| <b>22 Nels &amp; Ronda Cordill</b> | <b>25 Dave &amp; Cheryl Reagan</b> |

**If you do not see your name please let the office know and we will put you in our database.**

There are a lot of things going on in our church life. We are planning, praying, and preparing for different events and when they come, they are over and we go on with the next thing. This section in our Newsletter should give us a moment of appreciation and celebration of what we have done and experienced in the last month.

So let's celebrate and be thankful!

### Serviceberry

The Wednesday night study group enjoyed our recent sermon series and book study on "The Serviceberry- Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Along with thought-provoking discussions, we explored using our senses to get in touch with nature. We ended the series by thinking about a place in nature that is special to each of us, then combining our thoughts into poems. We offer them here, with an invitation for you to contemplate a tree, riverbank, or vista that holds a special place in your heart.

From wide expanse  
To sheltering secrets,  
Coming home to  
River  
Canyon  
Tree

It was a starry starry night on the lake  
Blessed with beauty of the water  
We knew we were part of God's creation  
The peace carried us to a calmness that we never knew existed.  
Thank God!

The evening light, reflecting off the trees and water,  
Calming my soul,  
Replacing trouble with peace  
Feeling gratitude for this moment  
Simple joy

Saralynn Kerr

## Souper Bowl Sunday – Thank you!



A Big Thank you to all of you who donated into our **Souper Bowl** that was placed at the entrance to the Sanctuary on Super Bowl Sunday! You donated **over \$1,000** which we gave to Second Harvest Foodbank. They provide food items to most of the food banks and other food programs in the greater Spokane area.

Also, a big thank you for bringing in **over 100 Soup cans** on the Sunday after the Super Bowl which we gave to our local Foodbank here in Cheney. You are awesome!

And then I wanted to let you know about the Souper Bowl Food Drive Challenge of two United Methodist Conferences: **The Pacific Northwest (to which we belong) and the New England Conference.**

Just as the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots on football's biggest stage, friendly competition unfolded off the field through this year's Souper Bowl Food Drive Challenge.

The Pacific Northwest Conference of The United Methodist Church claimed the win in food collection, gathering an impressive 19,751 items for food-providing ministries, while the New England Conference collected 7,804 items. New England, however, led in financial generosity, raising \$16,379.92 compared to \$10,411 from the Pacific Northwest.

Rev. Megan Stowe, district superintendent for the Commonwealth West District in New England, shared, "Congratulations, Seahawks fans, on the game."

Together, churches in both conferences demonstrated outstanding generosity, good-natured rivalry, and a shared commitment to addressing hunger in their communities. This is a victory worth celebrating for its compassion, collaboration, and the lives it will impact.

Pastor Damian

## Cheney United Methodist Church Schedule

**Church Office Hours - Tuesday and Wednesday 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. and Thursday 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**

**Meals on Wheels every Tuesday and Thursday from 11 am to 1 pm at our Church.**

**Choir Rehearsal Wednesdays from 7:00 -8:30 p.m. .**

**Bible Study with Congregational Church - we are meeting weekly on Thursdays from 1:15 to 2:15 pm. For the month of March we will be meeting at the Congregational Church**

**Sassy Senior Society meets on March 18 from 2 pm to 3:30 pm**

### **Bible Studies:**

**Mondays from 2:00—3:00 led by Margie Lindner**

**Mondays from 7:30—8:30 led by Carol Kriegh**

**Wednesdays from 7:00—8:00 led by Saralynn Kerr**

*Contact the office for the addresses, please.*

## Methodist Talen Show for Young and Old

It's Talent Show time! Add that to the annual chili cook-off and March 8 will be a fun packed and delicious evening. Bring your best chili recipe (or side dishes to go with) to the church on Sunday March 8th. We will enjoy the potluck chili meal at 6 p.m. and then move to the talent show immediately after. Acts and audience needed. There's still time to sign up to be in the show. See the door of opportunity. Be as creative as you can be and join in the fun and fellowship!

## Giving Up Bad Theology for Lent

Friends,

Can you believe we're already in the middle of Lent? It feels like we were just singing Christmas carols, and now here we are—40 days of reflection, honesty, and (if we're doing it right) a little bit of holy stretching.

We've now experienced our first Sunday sermon and two Lenten lecture evenings, and if you've been there, you know... this series is not lightweight. It's been thoughtful, challenging, eye-opening, and for many of us, deeply meaningful. We've wrestled with big ideas. We've asked hard questions. And we've been reminded that faith isn't fragile—it can handle our curiosity.

This year's theme is **"Giving Up Bad Theology for Lent."**

And no, we're not calling people bad.

When we say "bad theology," we mean theology that harms, ideas about God, Scripture, sin, or salvation that wound people who are created in God's image. Over time, certain beliefs can quietly shape how we see ourselves and others. Some of those beliefs are life-giving. Others... not so much.

Lent felt like the perfect time to gently lay down the harmful ones.

Together, Pastor Damian and our intern Henning have been guiding us through weekly themes designed to help us re-examine what we believe and why we believe it. Not to tear faith down but to build it back up in ways that are honest, healing, and rooted in God's love.

### **Lenten Discussion & Lecture Evenings**

We meet **Mondays from 7:00–8:30 PM** at Cheney UMC.

Each evening includes:

- Two 20-minute lecture segments
- Plenty of discussion time
- Space for questions
- And yes... popcorn

### **Important Schedule Update:**

There will be **no lecture on Monday, March 16**, as Pastor Damian and Henning will be at the conference office in Seattle.

Instead, the lecture on **"Giving Up the Wrong Idea of Sin"** will take place on **Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 PM at Cheney UMC.**

Mark your calendars so you don't miss it!

If you've been meaning to come but haven't yet, it's not too late. Each week stands on its own, and there is room for you at the table. We also **offer a live stream and the videos will be available on YouTube** for a longer time. Come with an open mind, an open Bible, and maybe even an open heart ready to grow.

Who knows? When we give up theology that harms, we might just make more room for the grace that heals.

See you in Lent,  
Pastor Damian

# GIVING UP BAD THEOLOGY for Lent Worship and Discussion Schedule



**God's Plan**  
Ash Wednesday Service  
Wednesday, 02/18 at 5 PM  
at the Cheney  
Congregational Church



**Hell**  
Monday, 03/09 - Discussion  
Sunday, 03/15 - Worship  
with Intern Henning



**Biblical Inerrancy**  
Monday, 02/16 - Discussion  
Sunday, 02/22 - Worship  
with Pastor Damian



**Wrong Idea of Sin**  
Monday, 03/16 - Discussion  
Sunday, 03/22 - Worship  
with Pastor Damian



**The Old Guy in the Sky**  
Monday, 02/23 - Discussion  
Sunday, 03/01 - Worship  
with Intern Henning



**A Violent God**  
Monday, 03/23 - Discussion  
Palm Sunday, 03/29 Worship  
with Jer Swigart



**The Devil**  
Monday, 03/02 - Discussion  
Sunday, 03/08 - Worship  
with Pastor Damian



**Getting Saved**  
Monday, 03/30 - Discussion  
Sunday, 04/05 - Easter  
Worship with Pastor Damian

## Special Services during Holy Week at Cheney UMC

**Maundy Thursday, April 02 at 7 PM**

**Good Friday, April 03 at 7 PM**

We have a table at the Mayfest on May 09<sup>th</sup>!  
Save the DATE!

# CHENEY MAYFEST



## Growing Faith on Campus: SEED Campus Ministry

SEED



Did you know that Cheney UMC is part of something pretty special happening right on the EWU campus?

Together with Cheney Congregational Church and the Episcopal Church, we support **SEED Campus Ministry**, a ministry rooted in hospitality, conversation, and creating space for students to explore faith during some of the most formative (and sometimes overwhelming!) years of their lives. Pastor Damian is actively involved with SEED and helps lead different events throughout the year. One exciting upcoming opportunity is our **quarterly SEED Study Time**, happening during finals week:

- **Tuesday, March 10**
- **10:00 AM - 4:00 PM**
- **PUB 317 & 319 on the EWU Campus**

During the last week of classes, we open a quiet room in the PUB where students can come study, focus, and breathe a little. We provide coffee, tea, breakfast, and lunch because sometimes a warm drink and a free meal make all the difference during finals week.

Our pastors will be there throughout the day—welcoming students, offering encouragement, and holding them in prayer as they prepare for exams. We pray that students not only use the time well for studying, but also maybe make a connection—with SEED, with a caring adult, or even with God in a new way.

And here's something many people don't know: SEED Campus Ministry owns a parking lot near the university, which is leased to a parking company. That parking lot is what financially supports this ministry and helps cover the costs of events like Study Time and other outreach efforts throughout the year. It's a creative and sustainable way to invest in students! We also donate \$500 worth of milk products to the Student Food Bank at EWU.

If you think of it on March 10, say a prayer for the students at EWU and for the small but faithful ways SEED continues to plant seeds of hope on campus. Because sometimes faith grows best right in the middle of textbooks, coffee cups, and a little finals-week stress.



### **Bite2Go**

Help support the staff that supports our Bite2Go students at Salnave School. UMC will provide grab and go snacks for teachers the first day of school conferences, March 12. Please see Carol Kriegh if you'd like to contribute toward this much appreciated mission project.

## Bazaar Corner

Two reminders:

Every last Saturday of the month we will meet in the Fellowship Hall from 10-12 for crafting and fun. Bring your ideas, craft/sewing projects, and for February 28th, your sewing machine and extra seam binding, if you have any.

Also, as you start your spring cleaning, remember you can bring in bazaar donations all year long. The donation tub is off of the Fellowship Hall in the south stairway area. Home decor, seasonal decorations, jewelry, and vintage items are needed.

## Survey Update

Many thanks to everyone who returned a Survey regarding the future of the building and grounds of our church. Your comments and input are valuable! The compiled Survey results will be posted in the Welcoming Area (formerly known as the Narthex).

What's next? The Trustees will process the feedback from the Survey, make recommendations to the Church Council, then share the outcome of that discussion with the congregation. At this point in time, the 'Window Wall' project remains the top priority for our church. Additionally, the Trustees are currently gathering information from architects that have experience in church building, design and remodeling.

Lastly, surveys will remain available in the Welcoming Area.

In Spirit,  
The Trustees

## Creation Care Update



We had a small group at our first Creation Care Meeting in February, but there are still opportunities to participate in helping to take care of God's Creation throughout the coming weeks and months.

### **Project #1 - Prayer Garden**

At the meeting the Prayer Garden was discussed and ideas started to flow. We are looking for others with knowledge and/or experience on landscaping and gardening with pollinator gardens to help with a draft of a garden for the congregation to make comments and suggestions on.

The main purpose of the garden is to create a space for people to experience God's creation alone or in small groups, while at the same time we hope decrease our water consumption and be lower maintenance.

The next meeting to work on the Prayer Garden is tentatively set for Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> before church (9:00 to 9:45 a.m.) in the library. Please come to the meeting if you are interested.

### **Project #2 - Earth Day/Week (April 22<sup>nd</sup> or the Week of April 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>)**

We are looking for ways to celebrate God's Creation through Earth Day activities. If you have ideas or would like to be a part of Earth Day please let Ronda Cordill, know. We want this to be a Day for Fellowship and Learning about God's World to create small changes that together may have a bigger impact. God is asking us to help care for His World. If you have any ideas contact: Ronda Cordill [r\\_cordill@hotmail.com](mailto:r_cordill@hotmail.com) or (509-993-6753).

Shalom Ministries exists to nourish and uplift people by providing meals and services with dignity and compassion. We have been serving meals (breakfasts/dinners, and now providing sack lunches) to those living on the margins, experiencing homelessness or food insecurity for over 30 years.

On **March 14<sup>th</sup>** a Shalom Ministries Benefit will be at Summit Rockwood Retirement Community, 2903 E 25th Ave, Breakfast will be at 9 a.m. with keynote speaker Judge Mary C Logan. To register go to [www.shalmmeal.com](http://www.shalmmeal.com) to connect to Auctria. Or, you can email Traci Stensland, [tspoonstensland@gmail.com](mailto:tspoonstensland@gmail.com) or call 509-869-9539.

## Greetings from Noah, our Former Intern

It's been now almost two and a half years since I visited you in beautiful Cheney for a month. My internship in your community really has become one of the most influential experiences I have had in all my 5 years of studying theology. One month ago, in late February I was able to finish my final exams and can now call myself now a theologian.



Now that I finished my studies I want to take the time needed to reflect about the last few years, is what leads me to writing this letter to you. I really want to thank you from the deepest of my heart for the hospitality and guidance I got from all of you.

Thinking back, for me the most memorable thing about this time has really been how warm hearted and full of joy and trust everyone had been. Not only on the sunny days, but also when there were hard things to address. On the one side I remember the aftermath of some great wildfires of hard personal conversations, but on the other side also a lot of great get-togethers after worship-service, many good jokes and a lot of laughing and praying together.

Memories like this also remember me about the struggles in my faith that I had in this time. I want to let you know, that my time at your church really helped me to reflect and especially how I felt about these struggles and helped me to make use of them in a good way for me personally

Now that I finished my university degree, I'm thinking about maybe going for a PhD in Practical Theology, where I want to deepen my final thesis on the Psychology of Religion. Maybe without my internship in the USA I wouldn't have come this way, as I actually wrote about special religious coping methods that have been originally researched in the US.

Looking in the future, I also really hope to one day be able to visit you again! Until then, I am wishing you all the best, and God bless you,

Noah

## New Youth Program

Friends,

For over a year and a half, we haven't had a youth group at Cheney UMC. When our high school seniors graduated in summer 2024, Pastor Damian stepped back from offering a youth group. And honestly? Our youth noticed. Mason, one of our own, shared something simple but powerful: *"Everybody goes to a specific youth group in Cheney... but not everyone feels included."* That stuck with us.

At the same time, Pastor Matt at the Congregational Church shared that they also have middle and high school students but no youth group either. So we started talking. What if we didn't each try to do something small and separate... but instead built something meaningful together?

After conversations with the SEED Campus Ministry Board, they approved a vision that we're incredibly excited about: creating a **pipeline into SEED through a Progressive, Ecumenical Youth Ministry right here in Cheney.**

This youth ministry would be:

- Inclusive and affirming
- Ecumenical and community-centered
- A safe space for middle and high school students

A place where everyone is welcome, loved, and accepted just the way God made them. This is about more than programming. It's about living out our mission to *Seek, Serve, and Share Jesus Christ* in a way that reflects God's expansive love.

To make this possible, SEED has committed funding (details are still up for debate), and we are hoping participating churches will also contribute so that we can create a **Youth Pastor position** dedicated to building and nurturing this ministry. We are currently working on a job description and securing financial commitments. Our hope is to begin meeting in **September**, right as the new school year starts.

Here's where you come in.

We're asking for your prayers: for wisdom, for the right leader, for the students who will walk through the door, and for courage as we step into something new.

And we're asking you to prayerfully consider whether you might make a **special donation** toward this youth ministry on a regular basis, above and beyond your regular giving, to help us launch this position with strength and stability.

Imagine a space where a young person who feels out of place anywhere else can walk in and hear: "You belong here." "You are loved." "You matter."

That's the church we want to be.

Thank you for dreaming with us, praying with us, and building with us.

Peace

Pastor Damian



**FREE HOT MEAL  
INFORMATION FROM SNAP**

**WHEN**

**5:30 PM MONDAY,  
MARCH 30, 2026**

**FOR ACCOMMODATION CONTACT CHENEY PARKS AND  
RECREATION AT 509-498-9250 BY MARCH 27.**

**WHERE**

**Wren Pierson Building  
615 4TH STREET, CHENEY**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**509.498.9250 [WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM](http://WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM)**



**CHENEY**

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

• *To Seek, Serve, and Share Jesus Christ*

NEWSLETTER



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