

Return Service Requested

SPOKANE VALLEY  
UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH  
115 NORTH RAYMOND RD  
SPOKANE VALLEY, WA  
99206

**Sunday 9am**  
**Traditional Service**  
**Sunday School & Nursery**

**Pastor**  
Rev. Alissa Amestoy  
**Director of Music**  
Betsy Pletscher  
**Director of Hospitality**  
Margie Manfred  
**Technical Ministry**  
**Co-Coordinators**  
Lexi Shay & Logan Tiedt  
**Coordinator of**  
**Ministries with**  
**Young People**  
Jen Price  
**Nursery Caregiver**  
Chris Nilles  
**Church Secretary**  
Mackenzie Draper  
**Lay Leader**  
Zack Reiber



Check out  
our website!



Scan our new QR  
code for easy  
online giving!

Church Office: 509-924-7262  
Office Hours:  
Mon-Thurs 8 am - 11:30 am  
Friday 8 am - 2 pm

Church website: [www.spokanevalleychurch.org](http://www.spokanevalleychurch.org)  
Church email: [secretary@spokanevalleychurch.org](mailto:secretary@spokanevalleychurch.org)

**OUR PURPOSE:**  
*Spokane Valley United Methodist Church is here  
to invite people to: follow Jesus, love others,  
and transform the greater community through  
the grace of God.*



## connections

january 2026

### The Year in Review...and The Year Ahead! by Pastor Alissa



*What a year of ministry and mission we had in 2025! I had more fun exploring our annual theme of "The Heart of Spokane Valley" than I could have ever imagined and was blessed to learn so much more about who we are at our core and the opportunities the Spirit has invited us to consider as we build a heart for our city. I hope you have felt the same! As we make the turn from 2025 to 2026, I'd like to dedicate this article to looking back at some of the highlights from the last year and wrap it up with a look into the next!*

#### Worship

With our annual theme as our guide, we embarked on a number of worship series inspired by the inner work of connecting ourselves to the "Heart of hearts" and the outer work of extending God's love to others. A few of my favorites were *On A Mission to Love Others*, *Return to Me With All Your Hearts*, and *The Heart of Christianity*. While I might be the only one, I also loved our series on evangelism, *Meet the Goodpeople: John Wesley's Seven Ways to Share Faith!* *The Heart of Neighboring* series, which was inspired by materials and leadership provided by new(ish) member, Dr. Shawna Beese (new mayor of Millwood), got us doing "window work" to be better neighbors and together we put forth a proclamation to the City of Spokane Valley to designate Sept. 28 National Good Neighbor Day for our whole community! And I know we will never forget the year we stepped over the threshold into the season of Advent with an unexpected but well-known personality to guide us: the Grinch! *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes* led us to douse the sanctuary in "grinch green" and reflect on some of the "grinchier" scriptures of our faith – all of which worked to prepare our hearts to truly welcome the Christ Child at his birth on Christmas Eve! By the time you get this newsletter, we will have sung "Silent Night" with our candles, our hearts swelling the with peace, hope, love, and joy of God With Us!

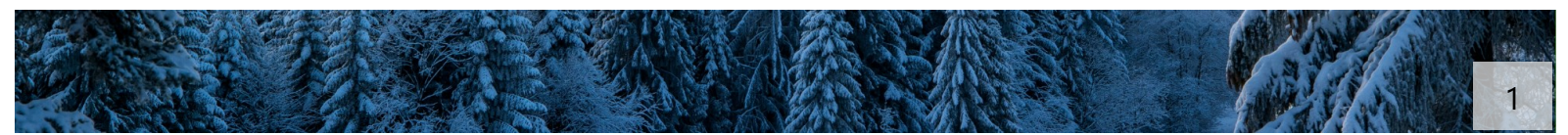
#### Staff Changes

While worship requires a lot of time and dedication by our staff, this year also kept our Staff/Parish Relations Team and their Chair, Joyce Johnson, VERY busy! We blessed forth Luke Henderson (Director of Music), Samantha Anglin (Coordinator of Children's Ministry), Cassandra Strickland (Nursery Care), and Jackie Florian (Sunday School, Coordinator, and then, Associate Coordinator, of Ministries with Young People). Meanwhile, we welcomed Betsy Pletscher to the role of Director of Music, Zachary Bjurstrom as our Church Accompanist, Jen Price as our Coordinator of Ministries with Young People, and Chris Nilles as our Nursery Caregiver.

Amongst all these staff changes, we experienced some unexpected and delightful growth to these ministry areas! God keeps sending us new families and individuals to join us in our mission which means Betsy has been hard at work recruiting and equipping our children and youth to join the sacred music ministry of the church while Jen is expanding our program to help them walk with Christ.

#### All The Rest...

When we weren't worshipping and reordering staff, we were keeping on with the aspects of ministry that have always been and always will be at the heart of who we are. We hosted Hospitality (Cont. on pg. 2)





(Cont. from pg 1) events including Epiphany and Advent Holy Pubs, a Mardi Gras Coffee Chat, and a special National Good Neighbor Day full of activities for members of all ages, we've had lots of fun together as a faith family! Small Groups and Disciple Bible Study kept on meeting and, of course, we've continued to nurture our heart for serving others through mission and outreach as we've deepened our partnerships with many "Ministries that Matter" like Shalom Ministry, Mission Community Outreach Center, and Broadway Elementary.

Our facility has also been busy! In the Spring, a faith community from the Marshall Islands approached us about worshipping in our historic chapel and using the gym for teaching traditional dance and music to their youth. A few of us recently joined them for their celebration of the day the Good News came to the islands on Dec. 7, 1857, and we were treated to both dance and song plus handmade crowns and jewelry made from shells! And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention all the work the Trustees and Finance Teams had to undertake due to vandalism to our HVAC system and Education Entrance. We now have a whole new system in place plus a new security fence and door!

**On to 2026...**

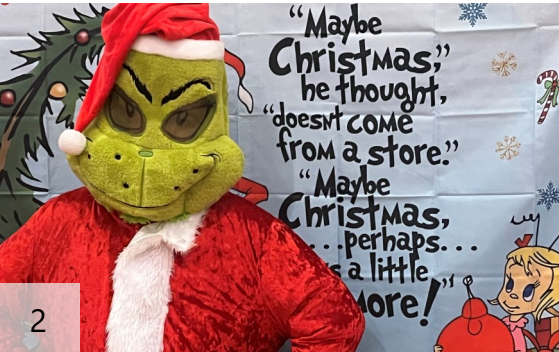
There is so much to celebrate in 2025, and though I couldn't name it all in this one article, it's time for us to look forward to 2026! After much prayer and patience in which I awaited the Spirit's inspiration for our 2026 theme, I finally figured out what our overall focus is meant to be: **Transformed By Grace, By Grace Transforming.** Based on the final part of our mission statement: *We are here to invite people to transform the greater community through the grace of God,* we will spend the next year exploring how God's grace works in our lives – both *within* us to transform us into faithful followers of Christ, but also *through* us to transform the whole world into the kingdom of God! We'll kick off our new annual theme on January 11 with a five-part series called *Transformed by Grace* where we'll learn how we are changed by the work of God's grace both as individuals but also as the Body of Christ!

In closing, I want to thank you for the past year of mission and ministry at Spokane Valley UMC. It continues to be a great blessing to serve as your pastor! The grace and acceptance you've shown me is a gift I cherish day by day. I'm also deeply grateful to our staff who support my ministry and partner with me and our leadership to fulfill our mission as a church! It is with great anticipation and joy that I welcome a new year of ministry together with you all!

- Pastor Alissa



Right: Church members enjoy 45 Degree Brewhouse drinks and snacks as they sing carols, led by Director of Music Betsy Pletscher.

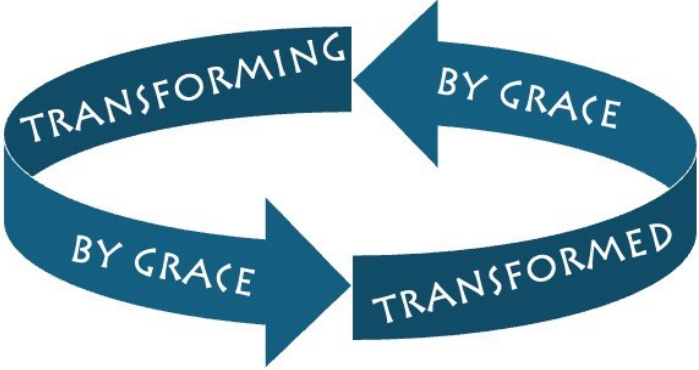


Upper left: The Grinch makes an appearance at the children's Grinchmas Party on December 14th.

Bottom left: The Grinch poses with his most famous quote in the fellowship hall.



# JANUARY



## BIRTHDAYS

- |                            |                             |                            |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>1/2</b> Peter Imathiu   | <b>1/14</b> Jennie Tinsley  | <b>1/22</b> Lynn Salyers   |
| <b>1/7</b> Barbara Bartak  | <b>1/19</b> Thomas Lang     | Marta Prow                 |
| Mackenzie Draper           | <b>1/21</b> Dennis Gottberg | <b>1/24</b> Michelle Bos   |
| <b>1/13</b> Carol Anderson |                             | Nancy Croskrey             |
|                            |                             | <b>1/30</b> Pauli Erickson |

## SPECIAL EVENTS:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1/5</b> 11:00 am Quilters<br>6:30 pm Sarah Circle                            | <b>1/19</b> 11:00 am Quilters                                    |
| <b>1/6</b> 10:00 am SPR (FPR)   | <b>1/20</b> 10:00 am Touched by Cancer<br>2:30 pm Finance        |
| <b>1/8</b> 11:00 am Rachel Circle   | 6:00 pm Coordinating Council                                     |
| <b>1/12</b> 10:00 am Prayer Shawl & Lap<br>Blanket Ministry<br>6:30 pm Trustees | <b>1/22</b> 10:00 am Marlene's Group                             |
| <b>1/13</b> 9:00 am Huddle (225)<br>6:00 pm Mission & Service                   | <b>1/26</b> 10:00 am Prayer Shawl & Lap<br>Blanket Ministry      |
| <b>1/15</b> 10:00 am Marlene's Group  | <b>1/27</b> 9:00 am Huddle                                       |
| <b>1/17</b> 4:00 pm Game Night (Chapel)   | <b>1/29</b> 10:00 am Marlene's Group                             |
|   | <b>1/31</b> All-day Eastern Washington<br>Legislative Conference |

## WEEKLY EVENTS:

- Mondays:**
- 9:30 am Shirley's Group (115)
  - 10:00 am Walkers (gym)

- Wednesdays:**
- 9:30 am Disciple 3 Group (115)

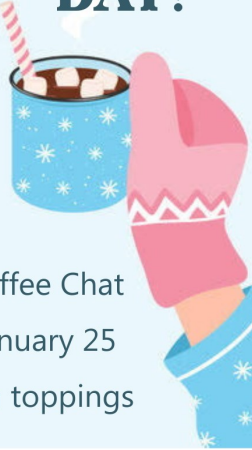
- Thursdays:**
- 9:00 am Thursday Crew
  - 1:00 pm Lois' Group

- Saturdays:**
- 10:00 am Choir Practice



Mark your calendars and be sure to join us for a sweet, warm treat during our annual Hot Cocoa Day after service on January 25!

### HOT COCOA DAY!



Coffee Chat  
January 25  
Fun toppings

Top right:  
Kids who attended the December 14 Grinchmas Party had the opportunity to paint their own version of the Grinch and showed off their artistic skills.



Bottom right:  
In early December, some SVUMC members joined the Marshallese church that meets in our gym and Chapel for a special service.



**Pastor Alissa will be gone January 26-30 for the Board of Ordained Ministry Interviews in Dumas Bay, WA. Please contact the office for Pastoral Care needs or assistance.**

(The image to the right is from when she was working on her Provisional Membership application way back in 2011 – so many books!!



## JANUARY WORD SEARCH

New Year's Day  
Quilt  
Snowboard  
Tea  
Penguin  
Epiphany  
Toffee  
Puzzle  
Poetry  
Farmhouse  
Lego  
Polar Bear Plunge  
Nap  
Birdwatching  
Cloud  
Puddle  
Rubber Duck  
Mittens  
Martin Luther King Jr  
Hug  
Soup  
Kazoo  
Carnation  
Hearth

H	P	W	E	K	C	U	D	R	E	B	B	U	R	M	H	A	R
X	U	J	F	N	B	I	M	Z	L	V	S	Y	A	X	E	J	O
R	D	G	H	C	W	H	E	A	R	T	H	Z	I	Q	G	T	C
M	D	B	K	A	L	V	J	I	B	O	S	R	K	N	N	D	E
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Y	A	D	S	R	A	E	Y	W	E	N	G	Z	Y	I	T	B	L
M	V	R	U	Q	T	J	C	S	N	O	W	B	O	A	R	D	E



## WINTER WORSHIP PREVIEW

**DECEMBER 28 – 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS – FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS**  
Join us for a special all-music worship service continuing the celebration of the birth of Christ! Led by our Director of Music, Betsy Pletscher, and our Traditional Choir, we will journey through the Biblical story with readings from Genesis, the prophets, and the Gospels accompanied by many of our favorite holiday hymns and carols!

**JANUARY 4 – EPIPHANY SUNDAY – CELEBRATION OF THE LORD’S TABLE**  
Come bring your gifts for the Christ Child! Our Lay Leader, Zack Reiber, will start off a new year of worship preaching a sermon called “The Gifts of Christmas” based on the story of the Wise Men in Matthew 2:1-12. We will also extend our gratitude to those who served in 2025 and bless those new to leadership in 2026!

**JANUARY 11 – BAPTISM OF THE LORD – NEW SERIES BEGINS!**  
We will kick off our new annual theme with a series called “Transformed by Grace”!  
Pastor Alissa will preach a sermon called “Transformed by Grace: *Dearly Loved*” based on Matthew 3:13-17. We will also remember our baptisms and come to the waters of grace.

**JANUARY 18 – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
Pastor Alissa preaching a sermon called “Transformed by Grace: *Made Rich in Everything*” based on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. We will also have our Ministry that Matters Moment.

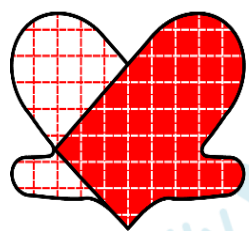
**JANUARY 25 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
Pastor Alissa preaching a sermon called “Transformed by Grace: *Hearts & Lives Changed*” based on Matthew 4:12-23. Stay for our special HOT CHOCOLATE COFFEE CHAT!

**FEBRUARY 1 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
With Pastor Alissa gone the whole week before for the Board of Ordained Ministry Interviews, Dr. Shawna Beese, candidate for Certified Lay Speaker, will preach a sermon called “Transformed by Grace: *Happy and Foolish*” based on 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. We will also celebrate communion together!

**FEBRUARY 8 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
Pastor Alissa will wrap up our first worship series of the year with a sermon called “Transformed by Grace: *Salt of the Earth*” based on Matthew 15:13-20. Be sure to wear your FLANNEL SHIRTS this Sunday!

**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP THIS WINTER AS WE CONTINUE OUR MISSION TO TRANSFORM THE GREATER COMMUNITY BY THE GRACE OF GOD!**





# Helping Hands

serving one another in love  
GALATIANS 5:13

*"Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can."*  
John Wesley



## United Women in Faith

**United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.**

# Thank you

Thanks to everyone who brought cookies and helped with the Broadway Winter Celebration! The children and families of Broadway Elementary had such a fun time!



## THANK YOU!

SVUMC gathered over 170 clothing items for MCOC's Annual Christmas Joy this year!



This month at the Connect Desk, we are collecting men's and women's socks and underwear for VOA/ Crosswalk and the Young Adult Shelter. Men's boxers and women's boxers and briefs, as well as athletic and crew socks are encouraged. Adult sizes only, please. For questions, see the Connect Desk.



## Join us for the 2026

### Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

### 'We Shall Overcome: Building the Beloved Community Today'

### Saturday, Jan. 31

8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Spokane Valley United Methodist Church  
115 N. Raymond St. - Spokane Valley

### PLENARY PANELS & BRIEFINGS WORKSHOPS

*advocacy thru: people power, dialogue, art, songs, faith & organizing;  
Issue workshops on voting rights, Indigenous issues, general overview  
affordable housing, environment, and refugees/immigrants*

### For information, contact

(509) 535-4112 • (509) 358-4273 • [event@thefigtree.org](mailto:event@thefigtree.org)

### RSVP before or by Jan. 26

Suggested donations

In Person - \$35 (\$30 each for group of 5+, scholarships)  
Online - \$25 (\$20 each for group of 5+)

Send to The Fig Tree • 1323 S. Perry St. • Spokane WA 99202  
[secure.givelively.org/donate/the-fig-tree/2026-legislative-conference](https://secure.givelively.org/donate/the-fig-tree/2026-legislative-conference)

### Volunteers Needed!

Sign up at the Connect Desk throughout January to help with the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference. Volunteers are needed to help set up tables, prepare food, greet attendees at the door, direct traffic in the parking lot, and more. For any questions, see the Connect Desk!



### Circle Meetings in January

Sarah Circle - Jan. 5

Rachel Circle - Jan. 8

No Esther Circle this month!



### UWF Book Club

### "The Girl With Seven Names"

by Hyeonseo Cee

Beginning Feb. 22

1:00 pm

Fireplace Room

Interested? Contact Robin Gregory (858-344-7462) or Madelyn Bafus (509-869-8213)

Thank you to the nearly 40 women who attended UWF's Annual Christmas Luncheon, and thanks especially to Rev. Peter Imathiu who delivered the talk! We heard from so many how impactful Rev. Imathiu's words were and wanted to print a portion of it here. If you would like to read the full presentation, find Rev. Imathiu or Madelyn Bafus.

"On one hand, Christmas season in Kenya when I was growing up in the 1960's and 1970's was full of meaning, anticipation, and hope. On the other hand, it presented a devastating sense of sadness and despair. My sense of sadness and despair was associated with social-economic disparity that became so well pronounced at that time. One could clearly identify the impoverished member of the society and the rich people by the way they dressed, the kind of food they were able to access, as well as how they carried out their social activities. My family and I came from the cadre of people who lived on less than a dollar a day. In other words, I was "swimming" in abject poverty kind of background.

My family and I found a sense of meaning and refuge at church. In my church, we were not the only poor people present. The emphasis of the church's teachings was not anchored on material wellbeing but on spiritual health. We ate and drank from the same kind of dish, utensils, and cups and sat on the same pews. Few days before Christmas Day, there used to be a young adult group going round the neighborhood singing Christmas carols. Every Saturday there would be the enacting of the prophets that had prophesied the coming of Jesus, the birth of Jesus and the Holy Family. A day before Christmas, we used to attend the carol service and have a delicious dinner. On Christmas Day, we would attend a Christmas service that comprised of singing, presenting a play about the birth of Jesus Christ, and the appearance of Father Christmas who gave both the children and the adults at least two candies. Also, the Women's Fellowship of the Methodist Church in Kenya donated blankets and foodstuffs to the impoverished members of society and especially the elderly. In all of this, singing Christmas hymns from the Methodist Hymn Book and reading the Christmas story in the Bible left indelible memories in me."

