



CHENEY

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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



NEWSLETTER

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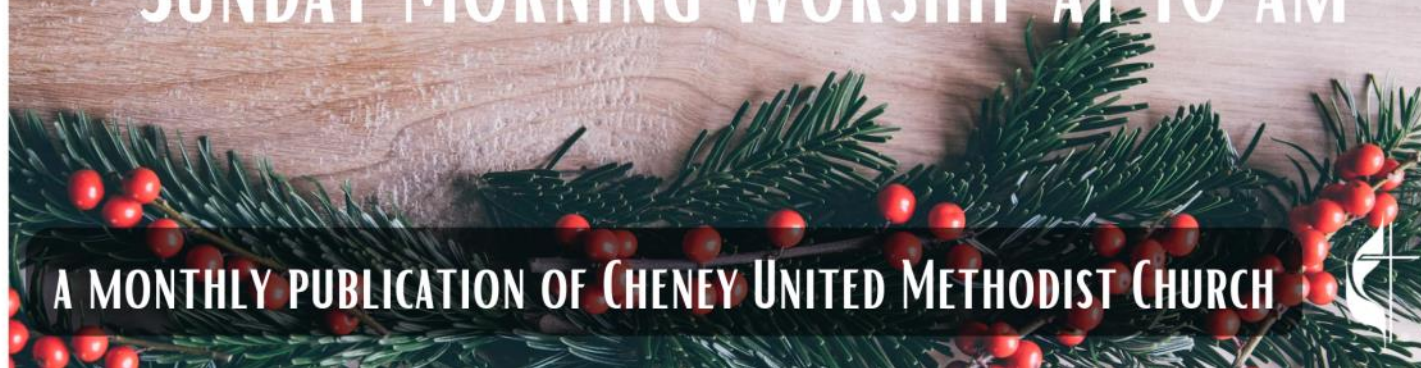
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THE SPIRIT – ISSUE 09 – DECEMBER 2025



SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP AT 10 AM



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF CHENEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



When God Shows Up in Straw and Silence

***“They found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.”
– Luke 2:16***

We humans are great at imagining gods that fill in the gaps of our lives: gods of power where we feel weak, gods of control when life feels chaotic, gods who win because we so often lose. We create gods in our own image, just upgraded. Richer, stronger, shinier.

But then comes this baby. Born in a barn, wrapped in rags, lying in a feed trough. No divine spotlight. No thunder. Just a cry in the cold night. This child is God’s loud “no” to all our projections of unshakable strength and polished perfection.

The word “God” has carried so many meanings throughout history: some awe-inspiring, some terrifying, some hollow. But the Christ child gives us a new reading. A new translation, a new name “Emmanuel”: **God with us**. Not above us. Not aloof. Not unreachable. But right here, close enough to touch. Fragile enough to hold.

In Bethlehem, God didn’t show up cloaked in glory. He showed up as a nobody: a “have-not,” a refugee, someone already marked for death. And in doing so, God rewrote what power looks like.



This baby is the embodied “No” to all our idols. But he is also the radiant “Yes” to a new kind of hope. A hope that doesn’t ignore suffering but lives through it. A hope that dares to believe the world can be remade, not through force, but through love.

Still, we ask:

***If Christ has come, why do children still starve?
Why are strangers still turned away?
Why do some hearts still break under the weight of injustice?***

Rev. Damian Carruthers
Lead Pastor

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These are the honest questions of Advent faith. Not questions of doubt, but of defiant hope. Hope that holds the tension of already and not yet. Because yes, Christ has come. And yes, tears still fall. But because of Bethlehem, we know the tears are not the end of the story.

Belief, then, is not blind certainty. It’s living with open eyes and open hearts in the middle of the mystery. It’s holding the Yes of God’s arrival and the No of our world’s pain in the same hands. And yet, still choosing to sing.

We are not just waiting people, we are people with a past. A beautiful beginning. We come from that holy night, from the angel's song, from the joy of shepherds who found more than they were looking for.

Christ is here. The rose has bloomed in the winter. Beauty has broken into the cold. Let's not forget, we're not just leaning forward in hope. We're also rooted in the joy of that first, sacred arrival.

Friends, I hope this Advent journey will be a meaningful one for you and may you experience Our God, called Emmanuel, God with us.

Pastor Damian



DECEMBER Birthdays

5 - Julie Peck
 9 - Tully Kerr
 9 - Richard Rogers
 11. Fred Carrell
 12 Erik Foien
 Byron Glaze
 18 Carol Kriegh
 Dirk Lincoln

20- Tirzah Grubaugh
 23 Stan Kerr
 26 - Floyd Cloke, Sr
 - Trent Watkins
 29 Mary Jane Shervais
 Sonia Bertsch
 31 Karen Joyce
 Steve Reynolds



DECEMBER Anniversaries

22. Bill & Ellen Hargrove

If your birthday or anniversary is in December and it is not listed here please let the church office know

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!

When God Goes to the Movies: Faith, Fellowship & Popcorn

When we kicked off our sermon series **"When God Goes to the Movies,"** I'll be honest—I wasn't totally sure how it would land. 9 full weeks diving into three different movie franchises: Star Wars, Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. 9 Sundays, 9 Trivia Nights and 6 Movie Nights. It felt a little risky and honestly overwhelming. But it turns out, **God is just as present at the movies as in the sanctuary and sometimes with popcorn in hand.** Each week, we explored the deeper spiritual truths hidden in some of our favorite films. And let me tell you, I was not prepared for how much Anakin Skywalker made me tear up. His journey from that little gifted naïf boy to someone who fell to the lies of this world, chose the dark side and did terrible things... thinking there is no way back from this...When Obi Wan said "You are lost, Anakin", I realized in a new way, how powerful the message of the gospel is: There is always a way back into life with Jesus.

Then there was Harry Potter, who surprised me more than I had expected. I saw in him a Jesus-like figure, not in the "turn water into pumpkin juice" way, but in the way he chooses love over fear, light over darkness. He's someone who *struggles*, who tries his best, and still shows up for his friends and the greater good. In other words: a deeply relatable, wand-carrying example of discipleship.

And it wasn't just about the sermons. We had an absolute blast bringing this series to life in other ways like Trivia Nights at the Mason Jar (which was way more work than I had anticipated: Thanks to the head Trivia team, Macey Fredenberg, Scarlett and Ash Arlt). We had folks show up who'd never set foot in a church and weren't necessarily planning to! One younger student said after our *Lord of the Rings* night: **"Thank you so much for doing this. This is so much fun!"** That right there was the moment I knew: this series is doing what church is supposed to do.

Our Thursday Movie Nights at the church were also a surprising little ministry of their own. We had one visitor come *just* for the movies, not Sunday worship, not Bible study, not even the snacks (okay, maybe the snacks a little). But it created an open door. And isn't that what Jesus is always about: opening doors, setting tables, welcoming people right where they are?

One of my favorite parts of this whole experience was watching people in our church community **step up and bring their gifts** to the table. From trivia planners and popcorn poppers to the amazing Design Team, the music ministry, the hospitality teams during coffee hour and AV tech folks. It really took a whole cast and crew to make this series happen. And honestly? I think we had more laughs and late-night deep talks than during any sermon series I can remember.

A special thank you to Maija, who created the amazing countdown video, to Morgan who created our hilarious trailer video for this series, and edited our Instagram posts.

So if anyone ever asks you why we did this, you can tell them:

Because Jesus didn't just hang out in temples, he met people on roads, in homes, at dinner tables... and if there had been movie theaters in Galilee, I'm pretty sure He'd have been there too.

So stay tuned, we may just have to bring this one back for a sequel.

And here are some words of what our church family had to say:

When God Goes to the Movies was a big hit for me. I enjoyed the decor, the costumes and the interaction during the service. I think what I enjoyed the most was how the pastor was able to pull the movie theme into biblical passages. It was a very fun way to interact with God's word.

Patti Sooy

I loved how Pastor Damian used three popular movie franchises to show that our faith is anything but one-dimensional. Each week offered a meaningful takeaway: from Anakin Skywalker reminding us how fear can lead to poor choices, to Lord of the Rings teaching us that sometimes faith means carrying one another. The series beautifully revealed that God's messages of love, forgiveness, and redemption can be found everywhere, even in the movies.

Sheli Dodson

My brother, my wife, and I spent New Year's 2023 at Cheney UMC visiting Damian and we enjoyed worshipping with you all! Being in Germany, I've have watched most of this movie-series on YouTube. What a fantastic experience! The countdown trailer especially gave me goosebumps—it was truly epic. I was struck by how beautifully it wove the different movie franchises together, highlighting the powerful themes they all share.

Dominik Müller

I really enjoyed the entire ambience between the creations by the design team, and the content of the worship services. I felt it was very powerful to be able to find the inspirational points from these popular movies, and tie them so beautifully with scripture. It accentuated the wider truth that everything in life can and should be opportunities to see God in action, and to live our lives in response to God's direction. God moments can be found in every part of our lives.

Mary Jane Shervais

The trivia events were fun, and helped bring people together in a different setting. And people from around town came, not just church folks. The approach of the bonuses and in-between puzzles was neat to test out.

Marcey Fredenberg

Bombarded by ping pong balls (while crouching behind Caren Lincoln) during service recently, I thought to myself: "I really love this church!" Everyday lessons of fellowship, strength in friendship, forgiveness, and kindness came to light in countless ways. Even when a group of us were stuck in the Slytherin group at trivia (and unfairly picked on, I have to say), we stuck together, had a blast, and raised a little ruckus. The sermon messages were powerful reminders to live our faith, and be both bold and kind in our actions.

Saralynn Kerr

I really enjoyed the movie series. It allowed us an opportunity to look at the teachings of the bible from a different perspective and opened our doors to new people. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to fellowship at trivia and movie night. Who knew we had skilled popcorn makers in our midst!

Caren Lincoln

When I first heard about the 'When God Goes to the Movies' series, I wondered how it would work and it was wonderful. The way our pastor connected Christian themes like courage, friendship, and never being alone with the worlds of Star Wars, Harry Potter, and Lord of the Rings made me see parables differently. I loved singing the themed anthems of our choir: 'Double Trouble' was pure fun, and 'Into the West' was beautiful, even if challenging. And the design team did an amazing job making us feel part of each adventure.

Ellen Hargove

We were really impressed by how the pastors were able to bring in a younger crowd. It was fun for everyone, even for people who wouldn't necessarily call themselves Christian. The whole experience helped us become more open-minded and eager to learn. And all through Star Wars, Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, amazing!

Candace & Andrew

Christians have long argued about how much the divine intrudes into the earthly, with some claiming that God has almost nothing to do with the things we most enjoy, in fact, actively condemning it, while others see sparks of the divine in every corner of the created world. Our pastor not only recognizes those wonderful ways God is actively at work in the world; he invites us to see God even at the movies! And of course, the great themes of the greatest movies appeal to us precisely because they reflect the best and the worst of human life, including the spiritual, and we found them in the worlds created by George Lucas, J.K. Rowling and J.R.R. Tolkien. We who are created in the image of a creating God naturally reflect God's love, grace, and invitation to adventure and abundant life. Pastor Damian, and the teams of those who helped create and lead these nine worship services and created the space where our imaginations could soar helped us move below the surface of films to see God's plan for our lives. Thanks to all who brought the image of the divine into our life theater.

Rev. Dale Cockrum



WHEN GOD GOES TO THE MOVIES

SERIES BEGINS SEPTEMBER 21ST

FEATURING:
STAR WARS
HARRY POTTER
LORD OF THE RINGS

SUNDAYS	TUESDAYS	THURSDAYS
WORSHIP 10AM	THEMED TRIVIA 6:30PM	MOVIE NIGHT 6:30PM
CHENEY UMC	THE MASON JAR	CHENEY UMC

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION

WWW.CHENEYUMC.ORG ★ ALL ARE WELCOME



Bazaar 2025

Christmas spirit was alive and well on November 1st at CUMC. Sleigh bells ringing (you could buy some for \$6), children singing (wait- that was Pastor Damian)- all that was missing was the glistening snow (thank goodness!) Santa exclaimed "Raising over \$5000 for the church places all of you on my Nice List!"



Christmas Time

1. Advent, Nov. 30th Worship 10 AM
Mark 1:1-8 "Slow Down, Pay Attention"

2. Advent, Dec. 7th Worship 10 AM with Communion
Matthew 1:1 - 16 "The Crooked Way to Peace"

3. Advent, Dec. 14th at 10 AM
Christmas Cantata Worship Service

4. Advent, Dec. 21st at 10 AM
John 1:1-18 "The Light in the Darkness"

Christmas Eve, Dec 24th
Family Service at 4.30 PM
Traditional (with Communion) at 7.00 PM
Both services are with Candle lighting.

Dec. 28th at 10 AM Year Review and Carol Singing

Cheney United Methodist Church Schedule

Church Office Hours - Tuesday - Thursday 4:30 - 7:00 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 December we will be meeting at the Cheney United Methodist Church

Sassy Senior Society meets on December 17 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

Tuesdays from 6:30—8:00 led by Pastor Damian Carruthers (at the church)

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

Contact the office for the addresses, please.

Pastor's Absence

Friends,

Our Church Council has graciously granted me a two-week vacation during one of the busiest seasons of the church year—Christmas. This time away will allow me to travel to Germany and celebrate Christmas with my grandparents, who are now 86 and 88 years old.

I will be away **December 22 through January 5.**

If a pastoral-care emergency arises during this period, please contact **Carol Kriegh**, our Lay Leader (krieghcjc@gmail.com) or **Caren Lincoln**, our SPRC Chair (carenllincoln@gmail.com). They are in direct communication with the pastor who will be stepping in during my absence.

I am deeply grateful to our lay leaders and the retired pastors who will be leading worship and caring for the congregation while I'm away. Thank you for your support, your flexibility, and your love.

White Elephants, Full Plates, and Big Laughs

Put on your Santa hats, dig out those jingle bell earrings, and slide into your most festive socks because it's time for one of our favorite traditions at Cheney UMC: **the Annual Christmas Potluck and White Elephant Gift Exchange!**

Join us on **Sunday, December 14th at 6 p.m.** in the church fellowship hall for a night of good food, great company, and gloriously questionable gifts. We'll kick off the evening with a classic potluck meal, so bring your best dish, your holiday appetite, a friend (if you like) and a White Elephant gift.

After we've filled our plates (and maybe gone back for seconds), it's time for the real show: **the White Elephant Gift Exchange**. This is not your average gift swap. No, no, this is the one where you might go home with a disco-ball, garden gnome, a singing fish, or an unused fondue set from 1997. It's all in the name of fun, laughter, and light-hearted holiday chaos.

Here's how it works:

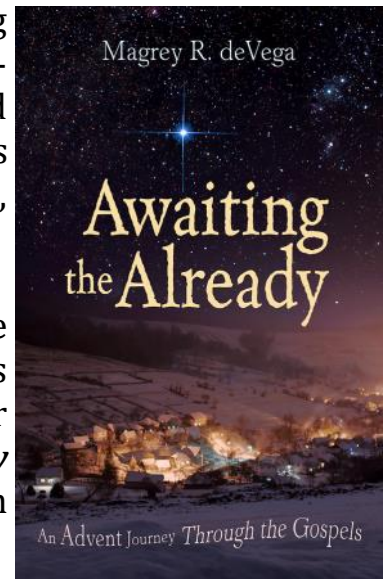
- ⇒ Bring a **recycled or gently used item** from home that might spark some joy (or at least confusion).
- ⇒ If you're buying something, please keep it under **\$10**. This is about creativity, not cost!
- ⇒ The goal is simple: to laugh, to connect, and to celebrate the season with joy. No pressure, no perfection, just a bunch of kind-hearted people sharing food, stories, and the occasional regifted lava lamp. Whether you're brand-new to the church or you've been here since the first potluck in the '30s, you are so welcome.



Advent Book Study: “Awaiting the Already”

Can you believe it? Advent is here and with it comes twinkling lights, Christmas tunes on every radio station, the smell of cider, and the annual wrestling match with wrapping paper and tape. Something about this season just feels *different* and that's no accident. It's a sign that God is up to something new, bold, and holy.

One of our favorite traditions at Cheney UMC is taking time during Advent to go deeper, asking why we celebrate, what this season really means, and how we prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. This year, we're reading ***Awaiting the Already*** by Magrey deVega. It's also the theme for our Advent sermon series!



This short and accessible book takes us through each Gospel's unique take on the Christmas story—or in some cases, the lack thereof (looking at you, Mark!). Each chapter has questions for reflection, a short prayer, and a weekly spiritual practice to try out. It's not just about reading, it's about transformation.

Want to join in? We'd love that! Books will be available for **\$12** (or **\$15 for large print**) and if cost is an issue, don't worry. We've got you covered. There's also an **eBook version** on Cokesbury OR Kindle version on Amazon: <https://www.cokesbury.com/Awaiting-the-Already-2>

All study groups begin the week of November 24, just before Advent kicks off. If you've been thinking about joining a Bible Study, now's the perfect time to jump in.

Mondays: 2 pm – 3 pm led by Margie Lindner & 7:30 – 8:30 led by Carol Kriegh

Tuesdays: 6:30 – 8 pm (including dinner) led by Pastor Damian

Wednesdays: 7 pm – 8 pm led by Saralynn Kerr

**Thursdays: 1.15 pm – 2.15 pm led by Pastor Damian and Pastor Matt Goodale
(not on Thanksgiving though)**

Any Questions? Contact our Pastor: rev.damian.carruthers@gmail.com

**CHENEY OUTREACH CENTER
YOUR LOCAL MINISTRY**

*These are the ways we assisted our
Cheney neighbors in October 2025*

92 households came into Cheney Outreach Center this month

37 day-bus passes were given to assist clients to get to
medical appointments and/or work; 7 clients requested gas vouchers
for the same purposes

26 households requested and/or received diapers or hygiene products

15 households requested rent assistance

14 households requested utility bill payment assistance

*****Thank you for your generous donations!*****

We have started signing people up for the Santa's Trailer with the FBLA from Cheney High School. Please encourage those families in need to come in and sign up. The FBLA will have a student here on Mondays helping get families signed up.

I am working with our Grant to see if we can use funds for food vouchers to help with the SNAP issues.

Thank you for supporting our Cheney Children.

David L. Smith, Executive Director, Cheney Outreach Center

CHENEY OUTREACH CENTER MISSION STATEMENT:

WE, AS A PEOPLE OF GOD, BELIEVING WE ARE CALLED IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE TO BE GOD'S HANDS AND HEART TO ALL PEOPLE, HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PROVIDE AN INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE CENTER IN CHENEY. YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. MATTHEW 22:39b

What to Donate to the Food Bank

Dry Goods

Sauces- Red sauce and Alfredo
Chili, Pasta noodles, Ramen, & Spam
Green Beans, Corn, Peas, carrots, tomatoes, (In Cans)
Canned beans
Canned fruit
Real fruit (oranges, apples, bananas)
Easy Craft Mac & Cheese
Trail Mix & Pretzels
Cans of Chicken and Tuna
Bread and Cheese slices
Bottled water and sports drinks
Darigold Protein drinks
Jars of Peanut butter & Jelly
Rice
Granola Bars
Baking materials (sugar, flour, baking soda, etc.)
Spices and cooking oils
Baby food
Cereal
Oats and Oatmeal
Raisins

"Step In, Step Up, or Step Back – Volunteer Opportunities for 2026!"

Are you ready to be part of our worship services in 2026?

A fresh sign-up list is now available at the door, offering volunteer opportunities for ushering, communion helpers, liturgy readers, and the tech table. Whether you're a seasoned volunteer or someone new looking to get involved, we encourage everyone to consider signing up even if you've been on the volunteer list for the past three years.

This is a wonderful chance to try something new or take a well-deserved break if needed. For anyone interested in starting their journey as a volunteer, this is your moment! Once you sign up, you'll receive a crash course in what each role involves, ensuring you're ready and confident in your new position. Let's come together to support our community and enhance our worship experience!

Pastor Damian



**FREE HOT MEAL
WITH RESOURCES FROM ECEAP**

WHEN

**5:30 PM MONDAY,
DECEMBER 29, 2025**

**FOR ACCOMMODATION CONTACT CHENEY PARKS AND
RECREATION AT 509-498-9250 BY DECEMBER 26.**

WHERE

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

509.498.9250 WWW.FEEDCHENEY.COM



CHENEY

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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



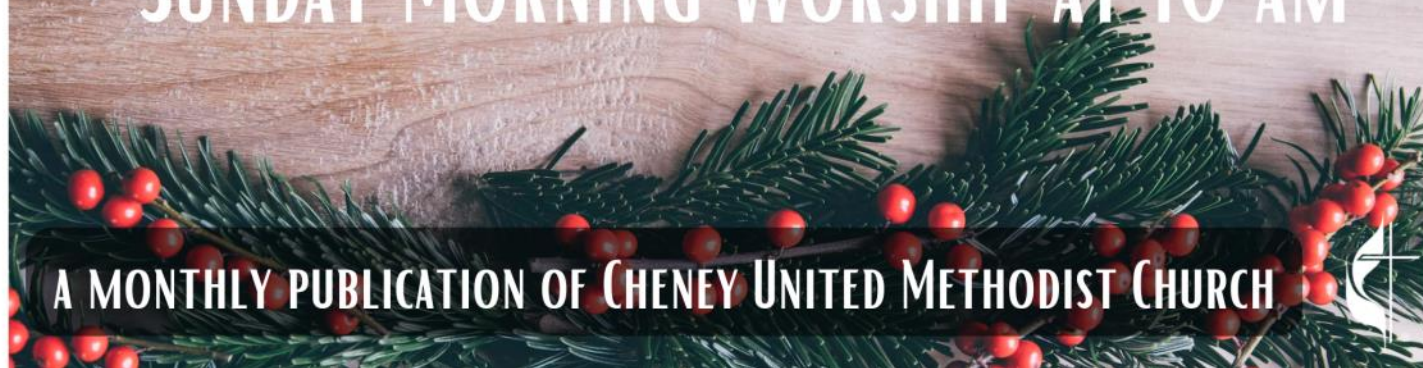
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204 4th St
Cheney, WA 99004
Return Service Requested

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