



Meridian United Methodist  
**Church of the  
Warm Heart**

# FOOTPRINTS

**February 2026**

**LOVING ALL. CHANGING HEARTS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.**

## HIGHLIGHTED HAPPENINGS

### SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:30 a.m.

11:15 a.m.

*\*Both services are broadcast online.\**

### Tuesday Afternoon Bible Study

2:00 p.m.

### SERMON SERIES

**February 2026**

**02.01.2026**

**Passionate Worship**

Deut 6:4-9; Mark 12:28-34

.....

**02.08.2026**

**Hope (Youth Sunday)**

Romans 15:13

.....

**02.15.2026**

**Extravagant Generosity**

Luke 10:25-37

.....

**02.22.2026**

**Don't Hold Your Breath!**

Gen 2:4-7, John 20:21-22

### Groundhog Feed

The United Methodist Men invite you to join us for our annual Groundhog Dinner. Stop by the FLC on February 7th from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. for a sausage dinner (it's ground hog, get it?). Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under.



### Ash Wednesday

Lent begins this month! Join Pastor Mike in the sanctuary on February 18th at 12:30 p.m., or 5:30 p.m. for a moment of reflection and to receive the imposition of ashes.

### Lenten Study

Wednesdays during Lent, 6:30 p.m. in the FLC, Feb 25 – Apr 1

Jesus' final days were full of risk. Every move he made was filled with anticipation, danger, and the potential for great loss or great reward. In *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*, author Amy-Jill Levine shows us how the text raises ethical and spiritual questions for the reader, and how we all face risk in our Christian experience. RSVP with the church office!



### Youth Sunday

Make sure to join us on Sunday, February 8th to show our Warm Heart Youth our love and support as they take charge and lead us in worship.

### Pancake Breakfast

SA Troop #1 is hosting their annual pancake breakfast in the FLC on February 21st. Drop by from 8:00 - 11:30 a.m. for all you can eat pancakes, sausage, eggs, & hashbrowns, plus a silent auction. The cost is \$5 per person (kids 5 and under eat free with a paying adult).



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## January

### NEW MEMBERS:

### DEATHS:

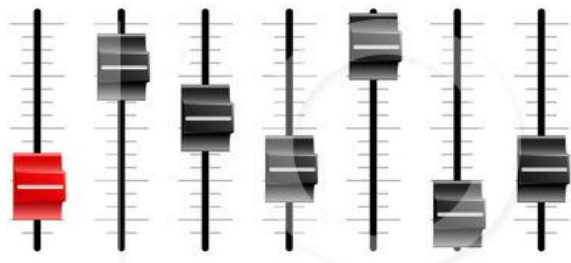
*Please pray for the families of...*  
Maxine Klein

### BAPTISMS:

## JOIN THE TECH TEAM!

The tech team is looking for help running sound and video during Sunday services. No experience necessary – we'll train you! Recent volunteers have described it as "way easier than I thought". For more info, contact Debbie Jones:

[worshiparts@meridianumc.com](mailto:worshiparts@meridianumc.com)



## STAFF

**Senior Pastor** (ext. 104)  
Rev. Mike Benischek [pastormike@meridianumc.com](mailto:pastormike@meridianumc.com)

**Minister of Congregational Care** (ext. 105)  
Lisa Miller [care@meridianumc.com](mailto:care@meridianumc.com)

**Minister of Worship Arts** 208-608-2520  
Debbie Jones [worshiparts@meridianumc.com](mailto:worshiparts@meridianumc.com)

**Family Minister (Children and Youth)** 734-316-9517  
Nicole Walker [family@meridianumc.com](mailto:family@meridianumc.com)

**Office Manager** (ext. 102)  
Angela Perry [office@meridianumc.com](mailto:office@meridianumc.com)

**Receptionist** (ext. 101)  
Lucinda Dyer [receptionist@meridianumc.com](mailto:receptionist@meridianumc.com)

**Bookkeeper**  
Maria Akers [bookkeeper@meridianumc.com](mailto:bookkeeper@meridianumc.com)

**Communications Coordinator** (ext. 103)  
**Video Production**  
Jacob Walker [cc@meridianumc.com](mailto:cc@meridianumc.com)  
[production@meridianumc.com](mailto:production@meridianumc.com)

**Nursery Coordinator**  
Jessie Layton [nursery@meridianumc.com](mailto:nursery@meridianumc.com)

**Organist**  
Kristine Ciulla [organist@meridianumc.com](mailto:organist@meridianumc.com)

**Facility Personnel**  
Dave Scarpellini [maintenance@meridianumc.com](mailto:maintenance@meridianumc.com) (M - Th)  
Don Woods [dandvwoods@gmail.com](mailto:dandvwoods@gmail.com) (F - Sun)

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP

**Administrative Council Chair** Nancy Rountree  
**Staff Pastor Parish Relations Chair** Margaret Pridmore  
**Trustees Chair** Ron Pridmore  
**Systems Administrator** Integrity Computer Consultants  
**Finance Chair** Lori Jones  
**Treasurer** Lori Jones  
**Financial Secretary** Diane Brister  
**Futures Team Chair** Lori Jones  
**United Methodist Men President** Ed Emmel  
**United Women in Faith President** Dixie Jacky  
**Lay Chaplain Coordinator** Faye Gabriel  
**Lay Chaplains** Joyce Bailey, Emma Jean Bedsole, Don Brister, Lynda Cavanagh Sherry Clark, Cassie Collins, Faye Gabriel, Ben Madsen, Lisa Miller, Mary Rich, Cyndi Trimmel  
**Health and Wellness Co-Coordinators**  
Lisa Miller, Sue Mattison

## CHURCH INFORMATION

### MERIDIAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

240 E. Idaho Ave. Meridian, ID 83642  
235 E. Pine Ave. Meridian, ID 83642 - Mailing Address  
Phone: 208.888.2245 Fax: 208.888.5741  
Email: [office@meridianumc.com](mailto:office@meridianumc.com)  
Website: [www.meridianumc.com](http://www.meridianumc.com)  
Facebook: Meridian United Methodist Church

### Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Friday: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

**Prayer & Praise Requests -** [prayer@meridianumc.com](mailto:prayer@meridianumc.com)

# PASTOR MIKE'S MUSINGS

Dear Warm Heart friends and family:

At Annual Conference last June, I was voted in as the Oregon-Idaho Conference Statistician. How does one become the Oregon-Idaho Conference Statistician? Apparently, you show up at Conference to see your name on the list as they are voting you in! Truth be told, I'm happy to do it. I love spreadsheets, math, and keeping historical records. Our Conference has around 150 churches and ministry settings that send in a report with 100+ questions about their membership, attendance, money, etc.

The Warm Heart church also sends in a report. Thank you to our volunteers and staff who have compiled this information for us. Here are a few interesting tidbits from our 2025 year-end report.

## **Membership:**

We increased our membership last year by five people. We had 19 members join, and we lost 14 due to those who moved or passed away. We are 64% female and 36% male. We are thankful for growth—not for our sake, but for those looking for a church home!

## **Attendance:**

We increased our average worship attendance by 5%. In 2024, we averaged 219, and in 2025 year we averaged 230. We are getting closer to our pre-pandemic levels. We also had 235 worship online, also an increase. We are thankful for those in our community of faith that worship together!

## **Baptisms:**

We had a banner year in baptisms at 10, dwarfing the 2024 number of three. Four of these folks were over 13 years of age. Of all of the churches in our conference, only the Cathedral in Boise had more baptisms. We are thankful for these new Christians who are answering the call to faith!

## **Buildings:**

As you've probably experienced yourself, property values continue to rise. In 2025, our property increased in value by close to one million dollars. Of course, that also means more insurance is necessary. We are thankful to have a building where ministry and mission take place!

## **Market value of other assets:**

Our cash, endowments and other securities also nearly doubled—from stock market returns, special gifts and giving. Most of our assets are locked into restricted giving, but we have a buffer of a couple of months worth of expenses, just in case. If you'd like to see the full financial report, feel free and reach out to our Finance team. We are blessed to have faithful givers and a church willing to spend money on ministry!

## **Debt:**

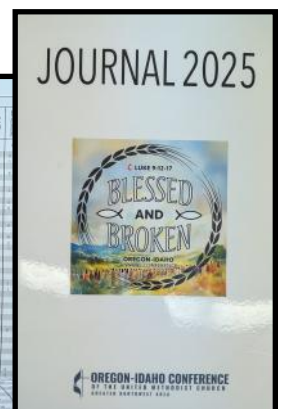
The Church of the Warm Heart has no debt nor mortgage. You are my sixth pastoral appointment—four of my previous churches had debt when I was appointed there. Two of those debts were crippling. We got through those, but I can't thank the leadership of Meridian UMC enough for operating in the black. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

If you would like the full statistical report, or would like to see the reports of all of the churches in our Conference, you can find past year tables on the Conference website ([www.umi.org](http://www.umi.org)). We also have them in our Conference journals in the church office.

See you in worship,

Pastor Mike

**P.S.** I am currently working and scheduling with pastors in our church relationship to help cover Warm Heart pastoral needs when I am on my renewal leave this summer. We're going to be OK! And you'll be blessed to hear from a variety of pastors this June and July.



*Riveting stuff.*

# MINISTRIES & NEWS

## FAMILY MINISTRIES

Last month, I was blessed with an opportunity to attend the Perkins School of Youth and Children's Ministry, a United Methodist conference for children, youth, and family ministers, offered through the Perkins School of Theology in Texas. It was refreshing, encouraging, and packed with amazing opportunities for connection and growth! I'm energized for ministry and so thankful for a congregation that includes staff training in its priorities!

### CHILDREN

**Bible Builders** continues this month, with a one-week break for Ash Wednesday. This fun kids' program meets in the Upper Room (upstairs in the Sanctuary building) from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. every week for Bible stories, activities, snacks, and Angels Alive Choir. New friends are ALWAYS welcome to try it out for a night or become regulars!

**Parents Night Out** is scheduled for every second Friday through May. Drop off your kids (age 4 through 5th grade) for a free night of pizza, crafts, movies, and play while you get in a date night or just relax at home.

At the end of the month, we will present Bibles to our current third graders and kick off our **"Third" Grade Bible Study**. This class will introduce our third graders (plus a few of our fourth and fifth graders) to their Bibles. We'll cover topics like what the Bible is and is not, how to look up verses, and where/how to start reading God's word for yourself! Let me know if you want your kid to receive a Bible and/or join the class.

**Bible Builders & Angels Alive**  
February 4, 11, and 25, 6:00—7:30 p.m.

**Parents Night Out**  
Friday, January 9, 6:00—8:30 p.m.

**"Third" Grade Bible Study**  
Sundays, Feb 22, March 1 and 8, 11:00—11:45 a.m.



With joy,

Nicole Walker  
[family@meridianumc.com](mailto:family@meridianumc.com)

Our children and youth mixing  
at events and during Coffee Hour!



### YOUTH

**Youth Sunday** is on the horizon and we are getting everything ready! Preachers and speakers are practicing their diction, singer are warming up their voices, and musicians are flexing their expert fingers as we prepare to lead the congregation in worship. We hope you'll be there!

After Youth Sunday, we will head out of town for a weekend of connection, relaxation, and spiritual growth. Our Winter Youth Retreat is such a special tradition!

**Youth Group**  
Sunday, February 1, 6:00—8:00 p.m.  
FLC/Youth Room

**Youth Sunday Rehearsal**  
Saturday, February 7, 10:00 a.m.—noon  
Sanctuary

**Winter Youth Retreat**  
Saturday, February 14, 10:00 a.m. through  
Monday, February 16, approx. 12:30 p.m.

**Backpack Program**  
Tuesday, February 17, 3:30 p.m.  
Meridian Food Bank

**Youth Group**  
Sunday, February 22, 6:00—8:00 p.m.  
FLC/Youth Room



Miss Nicole with Greater  
Northwest colleagues in Texas!

# MINISTRIES & NEWS

## CONGREGATIONAL CARE

February invites us to reflect not only on our physical hearts, but also on our spiritual hearts as well. Scripture reminds us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23). This month, the Church of the Warm Heart is focusing on both kinds of heart care, nurturing healthy bodies and putting Jesus at the center of our hearts.

Heart disease remains one of the leading health challenges in our nation. The good news is that many risk factors can be improved through simple, consistent habits. As stewards of the bodies God has given us, we are encouraged to take steps that support long-term wellness.

Helpful reminders:

- Stay active in ways that bring you joy!
- Choose nourishing foods
- Keep up with regular checkups
- Manage stress through prayer, rest, and fellowship

Just as our physical hearts need attention, our spiritual hearts need intentional care too. Here are some ideas:

- Spend time in prayer
- Read the Bible/devotions
- Practice gratitude
- Seek fellowship and encouragement
- Offer forgiveness and compassion

On February 15th, we invite everyone to wear red as a sign in support for heart health awareness and as a reminder of God's love. Sometimes it's the littlest things that make the biggest impact, so choose one small step this month:

- Add a short walk to your day
- Replace one processed snack with a fresh option
- Drink more water
- Pray for someone each day
- Write down three blessings every night

Small acts of care can transform our lives over time. As we move through February, may we remember that God cares deeply about every part of us. Let this month be a time of renewal, healing, and intentional love for ourselves, for one another and for God.

Blessings and good health,

Lisa Miller

## Ladies Day Out

Saturday, February 14th at 1 p.m., Lovejoy's Ice Cream, 3387 N Five Mile Road

Let's enjoy some Valentines fun together. Bring your lunch or order the lunch special: freshly made paninis and a scoop of their yummy, fresh, made-from-scratch ice cream. Please RSVP with Lisa so we can ensure that we have enough seating.

## WORSHIP ARTS

**Handbell Concert** – Join us on Saturday, Feb. 7, at 6:30 p.m. at Central Gym (1415 6th Street South, Nampa) where your Koinonia Handbell Choir will be participating in a (**free!**) joint concert with other ringers at the Snake River Handbell Conference. The group will be under the direction of clinician Brenda Austin. Come support our ringers and enjoy some beautiful music.



**The Warm Heart Media Team** is looking for a few extra folks to help with slides for Sunday mornings and for the Worship Team rehearsals on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. If you can press a space bar on the computer, you are qualified! Contact me for more details and to get plugged in.

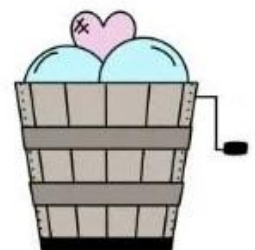
**Join the Cantata** – The Celebration choir will be offering "It is Finished" by Mary McDonald for the April 3, Good Friday service. If you are looking for a short-term singing commitment, this is for YOU! All singers are welcome to join us! Watch your newsletter and eblast for rehearsal times starting in mid-February at 7 p.m. on Thursdays. Questions? See Debbie Jones for more details.

**Calling All Actors** – The Good Friday cantata needs 14 folks to play the part of the 12 disciples, Jesus, and Pontius Pilate on Friday, April 3. Speaking and non-speaking parts available! Contact Debbie Jones for more information or to help!

**Come One Come All (Youth)** – The Rolling Tones Chime choir is always open for youth ringers (6th-12th grades) to join us for a great time of fellowship and ringing on Wednesday evenings (5:30 - 6:00 p.m.). You don't have to be a music reader to join this group – we are happy to teach you!

Blessings,

Debbie Jones  
[worshiparts@meridianumc.com](mailto:worshiparts@meridianumc.com)



# MINISTRIES & NEWS

## FINANCIAL NEWS

I have no doubt that each of you will rejoice as you gaze at the figures to the right. Due to an overwhelming giving effort in December, we were able to finish 2025 with a surplus of \$33,323. I felt confident that we would be able to decrease our deficit after November, but never in my wildest dreams could I have predicted such an amazing end result! Thank you to the awesome Church of the Warm Heart for coming through once again.

For General Operations:	Dec 2025	2025 Final
Given	\$149,092	\$764,445
Need	\$67,886	\$731,122
Outcome	\$81,206	\$33,323

It is time to present the 2026 Budget to the entire congregation. We pride ourselves in complete transparency regarding finances. We have experienced an influx of new members who have joined us from many different churches, different denominations, and methods of raising funds, so I feel a need to explain our budgeting process. We practice Faith-Based Giving here. No one is asked to make a pledge. Our policy is asking the ministers and committees to set a request of how much will be needed to maintain or increase their area of responsibility. Certain fixed costs such as utilities, insurance and other benefits, normal maintenance, marketing, shared giving (which is set by the Oregon-Idaho Conference) and administrative costs are part of the final budget. The Staff, Parish, Pastor Relations Committee (SPPRC) makes recommendations regarding staff raises and starting salaries of new hires. The Trustees Committee, which is charged with the buildings and grounds, evaluates future maintenance needs in addition to the normal upkeep of our campus. Once all the requests are compiled by the bookkeeper, the Finance Committee reviews & submits the budget for approval by the Administrative Council, which is the governing body of the church.

There are many positives as we begin 2026. Our youth and children's programs are growing, our attendance is up, updates to enhance the worship experience have been made, our online viewing is now larger than in-house attendance, and there is an extremely positive feeling as we enter the church every Sunday. With that being said, we know that unexpected events will occur, and we will be asked to make changes as needed to address these events. We are blessed to have dedicated members who are willing and able to make additional gifts when needed. Now, let's look at the 2026 Approved Budget. The budget is essentially in four separate categories:

**Personnel** – Staff wages and benefits. This largest category includes four full-time and eleven part-time employees. (66%)

**Property/Maintenance** – Utilities, property maintenance and repair, janitorial and snow removal services. (15%)

**Shared Ministries** – Our tithe to the Oregon-Idaho Conference includes conference wide leadership and education, worldwide services and missions. (11%)

**Local Ministries and Programs** – Budgets for each of our ministries, as well as marketing and administration costs. (8%)

For General Operations:	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
Personnel	\$489,931	\$511,984
Prop/Trust	\$114,200	\$117,400
Shared Min	\$92,350	\$89,188
Local Prog	\$55,650	\$59,950
Totals	\$753,331	\$778,522

The 2026 Budget has been approved by the Administrative Council. We will need to receive gifts of \$778,522 this year if we spend the entire approved budget figure (which rarely happens). The budget shows a modest increase of 3.34%. Small raises for our staff, which are truly deserved, and normal increases in insurance, utilities, repair costs, and supplies were considered in the budgeting process. Our staff is very frugal. There are no frivolous expenses. Legitimate costs only and only if in the budget.

Not included in the general operating budget but an area that is heavily supported by our church members is that of Dedicated Benevolence. Included in this category are the following organizations, charities, or causes: the Meridian Food Bank, Good Samaritan Fund, Adopt a Family, Crop Walk, the Gideons, Turkey boxes, Card Makers, Veterans Foot Locker, Care baskets, Haiti Well project, Mirror Image, UMCOR, and Memorials. More than \$45,000 was donated in 2025 to the above. Thanks to all who participated in supporting these worthy causes!

I sense an attitude of optimism in our congregation. Things are looking up in many areas. Results are enhanced by prayer and I would encourage each of you to pray about our finances, our dedicated staff, our many volunteers, our elected officials, our first responders, military, and especially that God will continue to bless the Church of the Warm Heart. Please feel free to contact Lori Jones, Finance Chair ([IhJones2021@gmail.com](mailto:IhJones2021@gmail.com)), or Don Brister, Stewardship Chair ([maroontycoon63@gmail.com](mailto:maroontycoon63@gmail.com)), with any questions, as they are available to answer them.

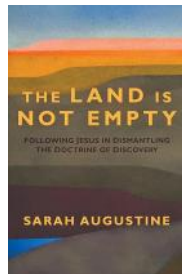
# MINISTRIES & NEWS

## THE BOOK NOOK

Claudia Moberly

Students of the Bible will admit its pages hold some contradictions. The Ten Commandments, listed in Deuteronomy 5, tell the Israelites they must not kill, steal, or covet their neighbors' homes or possessions. Yet, two chapters later, the Israelites are told to go into the land given to them by God and strike down the inhabitants, inherit homes they did not build, crops they did not sow, and goods they did not gather. This second group of verses from Deuteronomy and the Great Commission from Matthew 28 formed the scriptural basis for a series of 15th century documents that came to be known as the Doctrine of Discovery. These rulings from the Pope gave European Christian nations the authority to invade, subjugate, and claim the resources of non-Christian lands. It opened the floodgates for white explorers and settlers who saw free land and resources for the taking. They failed to consider the worth of the people already there, believing their rights were ordained by God; and, therefore, superior to native cultures already in place, who, if not Christians, were deemed to be "heathens, pagans and infidels."

Fast forward six hundred years, and the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery are still felt by native populations around the world. In *The Land Is Not Empty*, author Sarah Augustine unpacks the harm of the Doctrine of Discovery and the ongoing damage of its legacy. In our country, indigenous populations were removed to reservation lands, sometimes far from their homelands, and always with fewer natural resources than their original lands. In other countries, mining operations are encroaching on native populations, polluting the water, uprooting forests, and destroying communities. Short-term financial gain for the few often outweighs indigenous cultures and the balance of nature for the many, including ourselves as we pollute systems interwoven throughout the globe, and life-giving to everyone.



But Augustine is not without hope. Groups are forming, advocating for governments and corporations to reject the Doctrine of Discovery. People can change the decisions made in the past. We can restore God's good creation and lift up the indigenous populations that cared for it for thousands of years before colonization. She claims that what was done in the name of Christ can be undone in the name of Christ. The good news of Jesus means there is still hope for the righting of wrongs. Right relationship with God, others, and the earth requires no less.

"Each spring . . . new shoots emerge from the soil, buds form on trees, animals return as the sun warms the fields, and water flows from snowmelt. We do nothing to earn this, and yet, this renewal comes to us, free of charge. Grace." (*The Land is Not Empty*, p.54)

## UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Dixie Jacky

Have you visited the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights? We have a great opportunity to visit and have a personal docent tour! We will meet at the church by 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, March 12. We will carpool to the Wassmuth Center for our tour, then return to the church by noon. We'll then walk (or drive if you need to) to the Sunrise Cafe in downtown Meridian for a no-host luncheon.

Please call the church office if you plan to attend, and let them know if you can be a driver. You're also welcome to tell me, but remember, I'm forgetful. :)

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If you are interested in some preliminary reading before the Wassmuth Center tour, the UWFaith book club will be reading *The Happiest Man on Earth: The Beautiful Life of an Auschwitz Survivor* by Eddie Jaku for our February 19 meeting. You are welcome to come join us for a brown bag lunch at noon followed by a discussion of the book.

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Our annual legislative advocacy event is coming up fast. In fact, we just met for our first virtual forum, but it's not too late to sign up! The UWFaith invite you to join them for a second virtual forum and an in-person advocacy event. You'll learn about upcoming legislation affecting education funding and the immigrant population, and have an opportunity to meet with state lawmakers. For more information and to register, visit:

[www.umi.org/districtumwsage](http://www.umi.org/districtumwsage)

• • • • •

Kim Thompson will be leading a Soul Care retreat on Saturday, Feb 28, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Hillview UMC. Kim will guide us in finding the inner peace we seek from today's challenges in our daily lives and in our communities

Registration is \$15 and includes a soup and salad lunch. Don't worry about the cost! Our unit will cover the fee if you let me know you're signing up.

Register by email ([judybhalverson@gmail.com](mailto:judybhalverson@gmail.com)) or phone (208-859-2049) by Feb 24.

• • • • •

The UWFaith is asking for new or gently used books to be donated from our church family for the Story Link program. Volunteers take children's books to area prisons, along with a tape recorder. Parent detainees get to choose a book, read the book into the tape recorder, and then the book and recording are sent to their child. Bring your donations into the church office through the month of February.



Church of the  
Warm Heart

Meridian United Methodist Church  
235 E. Pine Avenue  
Meridian, ID 83642

## February Events to Celebrate!

**Please watch the E-Blast and Facebook for additional church events.**

**February 7 – Groundhog Feed, FLC, 4:30 to 7 p.m.**

**February 8 – Youth Sunday**

**February 14-16 – Youth Winter Retreat**

**February 15 – Wear Red to Church for Heart Health**

**February 18 – Ash Wednesday, services at 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the sanctuary**

**February 22 – Third Grade Bible Presentation**

## March

**NEWSLETTER**

**DEADLINE:**

**Wednesday,  
February 25th**

Submissions may be  
emailed to Jacob Walker at  
[cc@meridianumc.com](mailto:cc@meridianumc.com)  
or brought by the  
church office.

**Thank you!**