



February 2026

# THE Messenger

SYCAMORE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

## LENT: LIVING BEYOND DEATH

The story of Lent is the salvation story. Salvation doesn't mean going to heaven after we die. It means being rescued from the power of self-centeredness that rules our lives. Just as the Hebrews were slaves in Egypt, we are slaves to sin and death. Sin works in us in ways we can't seem to control, and death creates bounds for our lives that we can't escape. But just as Moses led the people out of slavery in Egypt, Jesus delivers us from slavery to our self-centeredness. In his death and resurrection we see the grace that sets us free from the power that sin and our fear of death have over us. Jesus leads us to life in Infinite Love.



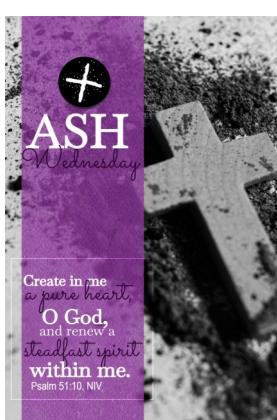
During Lent the scripture lessons will take us through the unfolding of death and new life. We go with Jesus into the desert to face our temptations, and then onward toward the cross—which is really toward resurrection. In the garden, Adam and Eve show us the power of our desires. With Nicodemus we ponder the mystery of being “born again.” Abram models what it’s like to allow God to change our lives. With the woman at the well we name our thirst for the water of eternal life “gushing up in us,” as miraculous (and dependable) as the water Moses strikes from the rock. With the man born blind we experience transformation so profound that others may not even recognize us. In the raising of Lazarus we behold Jesus’ willingness to walk with us through death to something on the other side, and God’s power to make our lives new.

The dry bones will live again.

By God’s grace, we learn to live the resurrection life. We are ready for Easter.

I invite you to observe a Holy Lenten Season....

**Blessings and peace,**  
*Pastor Luis*



As we begin this meaningful season, we invite you to journey through Lent with us. Whether you are able to stop by briefly or stay for worship and supper, all are welcome as we begin our Lenten journey together.

**Ash Wednesday is February 18.** Throughout the day we will offer several opportunities to pause, reflect, and receive the ashes as a sign of repentance and hope. You are invited to participate in Ashes on the Run from 5:45 to 8:00 a.m., a Midday Contemplative Service at 12:15 p.m., or our Evening Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.

**Weekly Lenten Soup Suppers:** During Lent, We will also gather every Wednesday from 6:00–6:45 p.m. in the Commons for a simple meal of soup, salad, bread and dessert. Each supper will include devotionals and time for fellowship between afternoon and evening activities.

**Lenten Study: “Why Did Jesus Have To Die?”**: What if the cross isn’t a transaction to be explained, but a living Word from God meant to transform who we are and how we live? Details about this study can be found on page 4.

**A Lenten devotional resource** beginning on Ash Wednesday will be available to the congregation. You may access it on the church website, watch for the link in the weekly e-news, or pick up one of the limited hard copies available in the Resource Center. If you have questions, please contact the church office.



Rev. Luis Felipe Reyes-Rosario  
LEAD PASTOR  
LFReyes@sycamoreumc.org

Debbie Elleson  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT  
debbie@sycamoreumc.org

Craig Fritz  
ORGANIST  
craigfritz@sycamoreumc.org

Peter Hansen  
MUSIC DIRECTOR  
peter@sycamoreumc.org

Jim McCue  
BUSINESS DIRECTOR  
jim@sycamoreumc.org

Todd Puttkammer  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILY MINISTRIES  
todd@sycamoreumc.org

Becca Rome  
DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP & SPIRITUAL FORMATION  
becca@sycamoreumc.org

Lisa Szydlowski  
ABC PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR  
abcpreschool@sycamoreumc.org

Cory Blanco  
BREAKTHROUGH WORSHIP LEADER  
cory@sycamoreumc.org



Sycamore United  
Methodist Church



@sycamoreumc



## FEBRUARY 2026 WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays at 9:30am  
Children's Sunday School at 9:30am & 4:30pm  
Sunday Evening Service at 4:30pm

[www.facebook.com/SUMCillinois/](http://www.facebook.com/SUMCillinois/) or  
[www.youtube.com/results?searchquery=sycamore+umc](http://www.youtube.com/results?searchquery=sycamore+umc)

### FEBRUARY 1 FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY SERVICES OF HOLY COMMUNION

Micah 6: 1-8  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Matthew 5:1-12

### FEBRUARY 8 FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 58:1-9  
1 Corinthians 2:1-5  
Matthew 5:13-20

### FEBRUARY 15 SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Exodus 24:12-18  
2 Peter 1:16-21  
Matthew 17:1-9

### FEBRUARY 18 ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE AT 7:00 PM IMPOSITION OF ASHES AND HOLY COMMUNION

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17  
Psalm 51  
2 Corinthians 5:20b – 6.10  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

### FEBRUARY 22 FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 2:15-17, 3.1-7  
Psalm 32  
Matthew 4:1-11

# In Our Thoughts & Prayers

## Those for whom we pray:

Nancy  
Diana Grace  
Neil Weir  
Mark McGee  
Matthew Herbaugh  
Jimmy Schmidt  
Bob Clarner  
Norma Clarner  
Jerrica Newby  
Austin & Becca Fraedrich  
and their newborn twins  
Blake Trout  
Bea Skelton

Larry Mathey  
Mike Milyanovich  
Kelly Brens  
Jessica Hagendorf  
Damian  
Becky Sass  
Vicki  
Otto  
Linda Toles  
Regan and James  
Lois Cullison  
Kathy M.

## We extend our sympathies to the family of:

John Rich  
John Olson (Ken Olson's father)

## The Service Personnel and Their Families

SGT Matthew Einhorn  
PFC Timothy Einhorn  
\*CPO Frank Incapreo  
SFC Christopher Isabel  
MSG Matt "Scott" Stewart  
\*LT Matthew Herbaugh  
PO3 Samuel V. Bell  
SSGT Brock Grimaldi  
\*SPC Alexis Jones

\*Maj Steve Haack  
\*CPL Joshua Caraballo  
SPC Sutit Jackson  
PV2 Liam Keller  
E-5 PO Hayden Royer  
E-3 Amanda Royer  
\*PV2 John Archer  
*\*indicates deployed personnel*

## STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

### LENT IS A REMINDER TO USE OUR GIFTS

**"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21 RSV)**



We begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 18. We commonly hear the question, "what are your giving up for Lent?" But Lent is not just about sacrifice; it is about transformation. We turn our hearts back to God because of the symbolic sacrifice of giving up something important to us. We recognize our dependence on God and seek to grow in faith.

Part of our growth in faith includes stewardship, but it is moving beyond a focus on finances. The Lenten journey is about biblical stewardship encompassing all areas of life and inviting us to examine how we are using God's gifts of time, talents, and treasures. This focus recognizes that our lives are not our own – we are caretakers of God's blessings. May you use this season as a time to realign your heart, seeking to serve and glorify God to the fullest.

Giving reflects our belief that God is our provider. You may contribute to the missions and ministries of Sycamore United Methodist Church through regular offertory contributions, by sending a check to the church (160 Johnson Avenue, Sycamore, IL 60178, attention Business Director Jim McCue), by donating on-line at [www.sycamoreumc.org/giving](http://www.sycamoreumc.org/giving), or by texting: "giving" to the church phone number (815-895-9113). Thank you for your faithfulness.

(adapted from a Lenten Message from the Methodist Foundation of Mississippi)

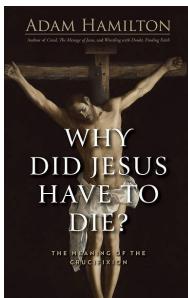
## REMEMBER SUMC IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

A legacy gift is your opportunity to support the church's work beyond your lifetime, to change lives and honor the role the church played in your life, your family's life, our community, and our world. Legacy gifts allow flexibility to respond to the greatest needs of tomorrow. Legacy gifts can benefit the giver through tax savings. Retirement assets are particularly good assets to achieve the best tax outcome for a planned gift. Consult with your accountant, financial planner, or attorney before finalizing any charitable gift.

# OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

- **Basic Info:** We are starting to plan for this year's VBS, *Rainforest Falls*, which will be happening July 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars and save the date for any kiddos age 4-entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade or adult/youth volunteers. We're looking for people for the decor team to make transform the church into the Central American Rainforest.
- **Decorators Wanted:** Those interested are invited to join us on February 1st after the 9:30 worship service, around 10:45. Or, please reach out to Becca Rome or Todd Puttkammer.



## LENTEN STUDY STARTING IN FEBRUARY

- **Lenten Study: "Why Did Jesus Have To Die?":** What if the cross isn't a transaction to be explained, but a living Word from God meant to transform who we are and how we live? This Lent we will explore how Biblical explanation and words can fall short of giving answers, but somehow the cross still speaks to us. Join us this Lenten season as we examine this tenant of our Christian faith on Wednesdays (beginning 2/18) from 11-12 with Pastor Luis or Thursday evenings (beginning 2/19) from 5:30-6:30 with Becca Rome. Register by texting LENT. Copies are coming to the Resource Center soon. (Link here: <https://churchteams.com/m/Register.asp?a=d2M2K2JhZVpEUVE9>)

## YOUNG ADULT

- **Young Adults Fellowship** meets every Thursday evening from 6-7:30. Anyone age 18-29 are invited for dinner and discussion about how God is showing up in our lives. A virtual meeting is available.

## YOUTH MINISTRY

- **SUMC Life Missions** will be starting the fundraising for this year's mission trip to Louisville KY. We have 11 signed up for the trip. We will be bringing back pizzas, Andale tacos, and a couple of others stay tuned.
- **Youth Group** will be every other week. The next youth group is Jan. 4th, 6-8 p.m. We have food, games, and devotion. All are welcome.
- **Breakfast and Devotions (BAD)** started on January 22<sup>nd</sup> we will be meeting once a month coordinating with Sycamore High School's late start schedule and the FCA (Fellow Christian Athletes) schedule.

## NURSERY HELP NEEDED

We are still looking for volunteers for the Nursery, Sunday school, youth group, and Christian Kids. Please contact Todd Puttkammer if you would like to offer your time and talents.

## FAMILY MINISTRY

- The church fundraiser Rockford Icehogs hockey game is January 24<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. BMO Center. Tickets available at <https://www.gofevo.com/event/Sycamoreunited2>

## PRIDE MINISTRY UPDATES

The PRIDE Committee is thankful to those who attended the Thrive educational series with Youth Outlook in January. We look forward to more partnerships in the future. Our monthly Game Nights continue this month 2/21 from 4-7pm. Everyone is welcome to join us. Food, fun, games, and fellowship. Hope to see you soon!



## OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE

### ABC PRESCHOOL MINISTRY NEWS

February Mission Project: DeKalb County Bookshelf Collection.

We collect books for preschool and elementary school aged children for donation to families in need.

Graduation pictures will be done on Friday, February 6 beginning at 9:00 am.

Ash Wednesday is on Wednesday, February 18. Sycamore United Methodist Church will be offering parents Ashes-to-Go during morning drop off time. This is available from 8:50-9:05.

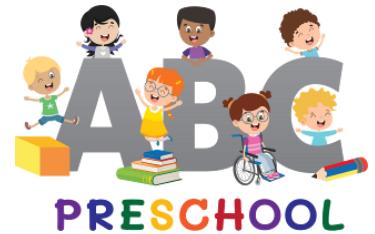
Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held February 26 & 27. Registration for fall 2026/2027 begins Monday, March 2 at 7:00 am for SUMC members, current ABC families and former ABC family attendees. This will be followed by open registration on Wednesday March 4. All registration will be done online.

We are collecting small plastic juice bottles with lids and stickers this month.

We thank Sycamore United Methodist Church for all your support of ABC Preschool. We look forward to working together on many projects during the year.

Blessings,

The ABC Preschool Staff



### WORSHIP, MUSIC AND ARTS

#### **Voices of Youth Ensemble (VOYE)**

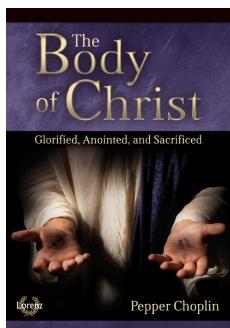
When the Marcy-Newberry Association, a 130+ year-old social services agency founded in 1883, closed its doors, many young people were left with nowhere to rehearse and nowhere to showcase their talents. Out of her deep love and dedication to the craft, longtime director Debra Kelly searched for a way to continue providing an outlet for these students—and from that desire, the Voices of Youth Ensemble was born.



**Every child has a voice, open your heart and listen**

For nearly a decade, Ms. Kelly and her team have continued to work with the youth, encouraging them to be strong leaders, uplift others, positively impact their communities, and appreciate their individual talents. VOYE draws from the power of performance, song, and shared purpose to help young people from under-resourced environments embrace their highest possible selves and grow into confident artists and world citizens.

**Join us on Sunday, February 15 at the 9:30 a.m. service** as we welcome the Voices of Youth Ensemble and experience their inspiring ministry through music.



#### Mark Your Calendars for our Lenten Cantata!

Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Performed by the SUMC Chancel Choir, this beautifully and creatively crafted work by Pepper Choplin invites us to walk alongside Jesus through the final days of His life, reflecting on the meaning of His words and actions as He journeys toward the cross.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE



### HOPE HAVEN FOR FEBRUARY

Prepare or buy just one course or the entire meal to feed 60-65 people! Please call the church (815-895-9113) to let us know if you will be delivering it. Sign-up at the Welcome Center in the Concourse or by calling the church office at 815-895-9113. You may also get on the Hope Haven volunteer list by texting HOPEHAVEN to the church # of 815-895-9113.

### FOOD PANTRY NEEDS FOR FEBRUARY

Canned beans	Crunchy Peanut butter	Salad Dressing	Paper towels	Bar Soap
Crackers	Diced Tomatoes	Canned meals	Toilet Paper	
Canned fruit	Spaghetti sauce	(i.e spaghettios, beefaroni)	Tissues	
Canned veggies	Mayo		Toiletries	



### COAT MINISTRY FINAL DAY: FEBRUARY 23

Our coat ministry is coming to an end for the season, with our final day on February 23. Thank you to everyone who donated coats and supported this ministry. Your generosity helped keep many neighbors warm this winter.



### COLLECTING POP TOPS & PULL TABS FOR RONALD McDONALD HOUSE

Our congregation has joined the Sycamore Middle School students in supporting the Ronald McDonald House. we'll be collecting pop tops and pull tabs thru May.

Please bring your tabs and place them in the container located **on the table under the United Women of Faith bulletin board in the Concourse**. Your small contribution makes a big difference for families in need—thank you for helping us support this cause! So far 4,237 have been collected.

### THE GREATER CHURCH

- District Leadership Training:** If you serve on a committee or would like to learn more about how to serve the church, consider joining us for our greater District Training Day on March 7<sup>th</sup> from 9-noon @ Oregon UMC. More information can be found here: <https://www.umcnic.org/calendar/prairie-south-leadership-training-2026>
- Help Shape the Future of the Church:** A denomination-wide survey open to **ALL** United Methodist Clergy and Laity (available in six languages). It asks what you hope for, what you envision, and what message you want gathering participants to carry forward. It is open until February 15. <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/council-of-bishops-leadership-gathering/survey>

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Our 2nd annual fundraiser is fast approaching. Join us on **Saturday,**

**March 7, 2026**, for "*Country Charm*" and some good old **down-on-the-farm fun!** Enjoy great food, a silent auction, and a live auction.

Tickets will be available in the Concourse on Sundays beginning February 8th.



# CHURCH SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION



The Memorial Committee will be awarding scholarships to deserving and qualified students planning to attend a 2 or 4-year-college or university next year, a trade school, or an apprenticeship program. Applicants for the church scholarships must be an active member of Sycamore United Methodist Church. Church membership is not required for the Karen S. Palm-Hale-Hagen Nursing Memorial United Methodist Endowed Scholarship.

Applications and specific criteria for the scholarships are available in the church office and online at [www.sycamoreumc.org](http://www.sycamoreumc.org). The application needs to be completed and returned to the church office by March 31, 2026. Be sure to use the 2026 scholarship applications to be considered for a scholarship. The scholarships will be awarded in June.

## Scholarship Options:

- A limited number of scholarships of at least \$500 will be awarded from the Church Scholarship Funds. The number of scholarships vary each year and will be determined by the amount of money in the scholarship fund at the time the applications are reviewed in April as well as the applicant's involvement in church activities. Contributions to this fund can be made at any time during the year.
- The \$1,000 Marion B. Marsh Memorial Scholarship will be given to a person entering the freshman year.
- The Barbara J. Rodgers Memorial Scholarship of with a minimum of \$1,000 and a maximum of \$5,000 will be given to a full-time student who has completed the freshman year and is planning to continue his/her undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate studies at an accredited college or university, majoring in a religious or education vocation. Priority will be given to a prior recipient of the Barbara J. Rodgers Memorial Scholarship. If no applicant meets the criteria, the scholarship will not be awarded.
- The Midge Hartsuch Memorial Scholarship of \$500 will be given to a student who will be attending Kishwaukee Community College in Malta. If no applicant meets the criteria, the scholarship will not be awarded.
- Sycamore United Methodist Men Scholarships - Two \$500 scholarships will be available. If only one qualified candidate applies in a given year, a \$1,000 scholarship will be given in both Warren's and Joe's names:
  - ⇒ The Warren Lowe College Scholarship to honor and provide financial assistance to one student who will be attending a 2 or 4-year college or university in the following school year.
  - ⇒ The Joe Villa Helping Hands Scholarship to honor and provide financial assistance to one student who will be pursuing further education in a "hands on" Trade/Technical School or Apprenticeship Program.
- The Ronald and Genevieve Maurer Scholarship -A \$1,000 scholarship for a student at any level of a degree program, trade school, or apprenticeship program with special consideration to a student pursuing an education degree, is attending Northern Illinois University, or Kishwaukee Community College.
- The Karen S. Palm-Hale-Hagen Nursing Memorial United Methodist Endowed Scholarship, based on funds in the account, with the minimum of \$500 will be awarded to one high school senior declaring "Nursing" as their college major or an active college student pursuing a nursing degree each year for their dedication to serving others in the surrounding Sycamore/DeKalb communities. If no applicant meets the criteria, the scholarship will not be awarded. (NOTE: The criteria and application for this scholarship are different from the Sycamore United Methodist Church Scholarship criteria and application.)

# FEBRUARY 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

The deadline for the March issue of The Messenger is February 20th

1 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 10:45 AM VBS Volunteer Mtg 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b> 6:00 PM Confirmation Class of 2026 6:00 PM Middle & High School Youth Group	2 Board of Ordained Ministry in building 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 12:00 PM Food Pantry 6:00 PM Bible Study: The Book of Romans 7:00 PM Trustees	3 6:00 PM GS Informational Meeting 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 1 6:00 PM GS Troop 697 6:30 PM Food Pantry Board	4 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 12:00 PM AARP Tax Preparation 4:00 PM Christian Kids 5:30 PM Children's Choirs 6:00 PM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 6:30 PM Pack 141 Den 7 7:00 PM Chancel Choir	5 9:30 AM ABC Preschool Open House 3:00 PM TOPS 4:00 PM UMM Pancake Study 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 3 7:00 PM Handbell Choir	6	7 7:00 AM GS Cookie Pick-up 8:00 AM UMM Breakfast
8 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b>	9 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 12:00 PM Magic Mondays 12:00 PM Food Pantry 12:00 PM Coat Ministry 4:45 PM GS Troop 5070 5:00 PM Discipleship Committee 5:30 PM Finance/ Stewardship Committee 6:00 PM Bible Study: The Book of Romans	10 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 4	11 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 12:00 PM AARP Tax Preparation 4:00 PM Christian Kids 5:30 PM Children's Choirs 6:00 PM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 7:00 PM Chancel Choir	12 3:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 5 7:00 PM GS Leader Mtg 7:00 PM Handbell Choir	13 No ABC Preschool 6:00 PM GS Troop 912	14
15 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 11:00 AM NOW Circle 6:00 PM Middle & High School Youth Group	16 No ABC Preschool 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 9:30 Ruth Circle 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 12:00 PM Food Pantry 12:00 PM Coat Ministry 6:00 PM Bible Study: The Book of Romans 6:30 PM Worship Comm.	17 9:30 AM Clergy Day Apart 6:00 PM GS Troop 697 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 1	18 5:45-8:00 AM Ashes on the Run 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 10:00 AM Caring Ministry Team Meeting 11:00 AM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 12:00 PM AARP Tax Preparation 12:15 AM Ash Contemplative Service 4:00 PM Christian Kids 5:30 PM Children's Choirs 6:00 PM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 6:30 PM Pack 141 Den 7 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service 7:00 PM Chancel Choir	19 3:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 2 6:30 PM Pack 141 Den 3 7:00 PM Handbell Choir	20 12:30 PM ABC Preschool Staff Meeting	21 8:00 AM UMM Breakfast 4:00 PM Pack 141 Blue and Gold Banquet 4:00 PM PRIDE Game Night
22 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b>	23 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 12:00 PM Magic Mondays 12:00 PM Food Pantry 12:00 PM Coat Ministry 4:45 PM GS Troop 5070 6:00 PM Bible Study: The Book of Romans	24 1:00 PM UWF Missions Team 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 4	25 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 12:00 PM AARP Tax Preparation 4:00 PM Christian Kids 5:30 PM Children's Choirs 6:00 PM Adult Book Study "The Lord's Prayer" 7:00 PM Chancel Choir	26 7:30 AM Breakfast and Devotions for HS Youth 3:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group 6:00 PM Pack 141 Den 5 7:00 PM Handbell Choir	27 No ABC Preschool	28

## 3 SIMPLE RULES

1. Do no harm
2. Do good
3. Stay in love with God.

# United Methodist Men's **PANCAKE SUPPER**



**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5th  
SERVING: 4:00-6:30 pm**

**ALL YOU CAN EAT!**  
Pancakes, Sausage  
Scrambled Eggs  
Applesauce

**COST: \$10/ticket  
\$5 for Children 5-10  
Under 5 Free**

Tickets are available from any of the United Methodist Men, in the church office, in the Concourse on Sundays or by simply scanning the QR Code.



**Would you be willing to help that evening?**  
Sign-up sheets are on the UMM's bulletin board in the Concourse.