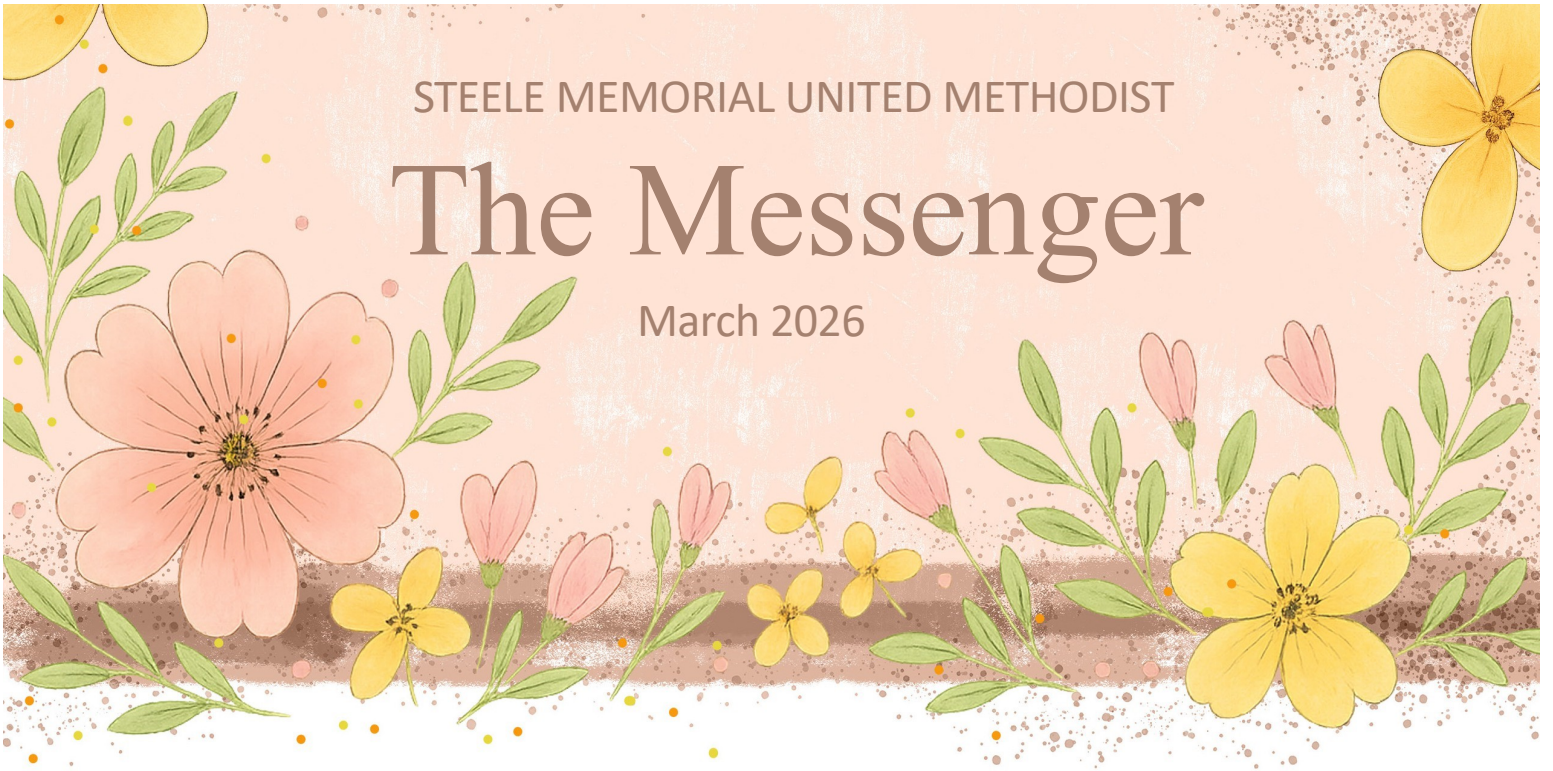


STEELE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST

# The Messenger

March 2026



## What's Inside

- Lent Offers Time of Growth
- The Color Purple
- March Celebrations
- An Irish Blessing
- Weekly Events



## MARCH CALENDAR

- 8 Daylight Savings Time Begins
- 17 Tea-Time Tuesday
- 19 Busy Bees Advisory Board Meeting
- 20 First Day of Spring!
- 29 Palm Sunday

## WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church has announced a leadership transition in the Northern District, marking the retirement of Rev. Neil Leftwich and the appointment of Rev. Greg Markins as the next District Superintendent.

Rev. Neil Leftwich will retire following faithful service as Northern District Superintendent, a role he has held since 2021. Known for his gracious spirit, hospitality, and deep pastoral care, Leftwich has brought steady leadership to the district while walking alongside clergy and congregations through seasons of ministry, discernment, and transition.

Throughout his ministry, Leftwich has served the Church with compassion and dedication. In addition to his years in the West Virginia Conference, he has also served as a pastor and District Superintendent in the Western Pennsylvania Conference. His leadership and pastoral presence have left a lasting impact on the Northern District and the

broader connection.

The Conference has announced that Rev. Greg Markins will be appointed as the next Northern District Superintendent.

Ordained as an elder in 2011, Markins has served in several West Virginia Conference churches as both an associate pastor and lead

pastor. He currently serves at Steele Memorial United Methodist Church in Barboursville. Markins brings a strong commitment to the local church, a collaborative leadership style, and a deep care for clergy and congregational vitality.

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In addition to his pastoral ministry, Markins has been actively involved in Conference leadership. He previously served with the Conference Camping and Outdoor Ministry and currently serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry. He holds an undergraduate degree from Marshall University and earned his Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School.

"This transition reflects both our gratitude for faithful leadership and our confidence in the future God is shaping among us," said Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett. "We give thanks for Rev. Neil Leftwich's ministry and celebrate the gifts Rev. Greg Markins brings as he prepares to serve the Northern District."

The West Virginia Conference invites prayers of thanksgiving for Rev. Neil Leftwich as he enters retirement and prayers of support for Rev. Greg Markins and the Northern District as they begin this new chapter together.

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## LENT OFFERS TIME FOR GROWTH

Many of us know our IQ (intelligence quotient), but what about our SQ (spiritual quotient)?

Lent is a good time to think about the quality of your spiritual life. Do you think about God often...or rarely? Do you pray often...or occasionally? How well do you know the Bible? The Commandments? The Beatitudes? The lives of biblical heroes and heroines?

During Lent, commit to spending more time in prayer. Also consider selecting a book of the Bible or a particular Bible character to study in-depth during this period.

Some people give up items or habits during Lent. If used wisely this discipline can help you abandon things that have been interfering with your relationship with God.

Seek out devotions and books that can help strengthen your spiritual life.

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## THE COLOR PURPLE

We are still in the church season of Lent. Many churches have purple paraments on the altar, lectern and pulpit. Many pastors and choir members wear purple stoles. Why purple?

In ancient times, purple garments were expensive and hard to find. The dye came from rare sea mollusks that had to be crushed to garner their purple fluid. (One ounce of purple dye required 250,000 mollusks!) Then the right kind of fabric had to be placed in the dye, dried and made into clothing, which was time-consuming.

Generally, only wealthy people and members of royalty could afford purple garments. For example, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man "was dressed in purple and fine linen" (Luke 16:19, NRSV).

Purple is used in church sanctuaries during Advent and Lent because Christ is revered as the King of Kings.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### BIRTHDAYS

3-Judy Hayes  
4-Luke Damron  
Andrew Damron  
Lydia Jordan  
7-Mildred Maynard  
15-Ralph Sager  
Peggy Fillmore  
28-Tim Damron

### ANNIVERSARIES

17-Reid & Sue Ann Carroll  
20-Mike & Jean Anne McClung

## WEEKLY EVENTS

### SUNDAY

9:45 a.m.  
Sunday School  
10:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship  
5:00 p.m.  
Prayer Warriors  
(First & Third Sunday)  
5:30 p.m.  
CIA-Children/Youth

### MONDAY

6:30 p.m.  
Scouts

### TUESDAY

8:00 a.m.  
Breakfast w/Pastor  
(Oscar's)

### WEDNESDAY

1:00 p.m.  
Lenten Study

## An Irish Blessing

May you have  
walls to keep out the wind,  
a roof to keep out the rain,  
warm drinks by the fire,  
laughter to cheer you,  
and all that your heart may desire,  
including the love of God within.