

A photograph of a snowy winter scene. In the foreground, there are snow-covered trees and branches. In the background, a brick building is visible on the left, and more trees are covered in snow. The ground is also covered in a thick layer of snow.

UMCWFB

CONNECT. GROW. SERVE.

The Rhythm of Doing... what to do?

FAITH IN ACTION &
SERVICE IN MOTION

NAVIGATING CHANGE

UMCWFB YOUTH CHOIRS
PRESENT: GOD SQUAD

FEBRUARY 2026

WWW.UMCWFB.ORG

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A Reflection From The Pastor

Beloved Church,

As I look across our life together, I am deeply grateful for all that God is doing among us. I see it in the ways you worship with open hearts, serve with quiet faithfulness, care for one another in times of joy and struggle, and keep leaning into our shared calling to build God's Beloved Community. These are signs of a living faith - faith that is not only spoken but practiced. As we move into February, our worship will take on a new focus with a series called "The Rhythm of Doing...what to do?"

This series is grounded in John Wesley's Three Simple Rules, a timeless and deeply practical way of living out our faith: Do No Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God. These simple phrases are not shallow - they are profound rhythms that help us live faithfully in everyday life. Our faith is a gift of grace, but it is never passive. Love, as Jesus teaches it, always moves us toward action. In John 15:12, Jesus says, "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" Love is the heartbeat beneath everything we do - and these rhythms help give that love shape and direction.

Each week in February, we'll explore one of these rhythms together:

February 1 – *Do No Harm: learning how love shapes our words, choices, and responses, even in moments of tension.*

February 8 – *Do Good: remembering that we are saved by grace and created for good works, loving one another as Christ loves us.*

February 15 – *Stay in Love with God: tending our relationship with God so that our doing flows from devotion, not exhaustion.*

My hope is that this series will encourage you - not by adding more to your plate, but by offering a faithful way to live with clarity, purpose, and peace. These rhythms help us love wisely, serve faithfully, and remain rooted in God's grace.

Thank you for being a community that seeks not only to believe the gospel, but to live it. I am grateful to share this table with you - and as we enter this season together, you'll notice that our newsletter is finding a new rhythm as well. So grateful for the giftedness and dedicated work of our new Communications Manager, Emily Ware. My hope is that this publication will be enriching for your own faith development and serve as a helpful resource for staying connected to the life of our church. I also pray it becomes a simple, welcoming way to share the message of Christ and the ministries of this congregation with a neighbor, friend, or family member. May God continue to use all of this to draw us deeper into love, faith, and community.

With gratitude and hope,

**“My command is this:
Love each other as I have loved you.”**

John 15:12

Navigating Change

The ongoing journey to keep our identity relevant.

We've been known as The United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay for many, many years. This year we're examining the relevance of our identity. Does our current name reflect the current reality of what people are looking for in a faith community?

Our church has navigated change before, including changes in name, as part of remaining faithful, relevant, and vital in different seasons of ministry. The church was founded in 1902 and met in the “Little White Church.” In 1942, it changed its name to Community Methodist Church. The name was changed again when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968, forming the United Methodist Church.

We're increasingly aware that our life together extends well beyond any single neighborhood. While we cherish our ties to Whitefish Bay, we also want to ensure that our identity reflects the wide and diverse community God has formed here, and that no one feels like an outsider based on where they live or where they come from.

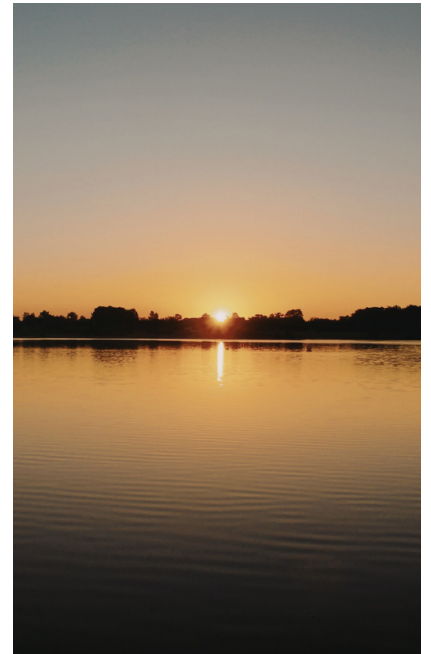
We have a new vision to build a Beloved Community that is caring, authentic and welcoming to all. A place where people can Connect with God and others. Where they can Grow in grace and community. Where they can Serve in ministry and mission.

Looking at our church's name is not a break from who we've been. It's part of an ongoing journey of discernment— how God has continually shaped this community to meet the needs of the time while staying rooted in our core identity and mission. No matter what name we're known by we'll continue to be a United Methodist Church, continuing to align ourselves with the denomination's vision to “form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously.”

Will you prayerfully reflect on why you are part of our church community? What drew you here? What keeps you participating in worship, programs and service opportunities? What do you believe our church stands for?

A multi-generational group has formed to look at developing a new identity for the church. This group is being led by **Jenny Fisher**, Director of Outreach, and **Jeff McClellan**, Lay Leader and member of Servant Leadership Board.

To help guide us in our efforts, please share with us your thoughts on what this faith community stands for by taking a survey using this [link](#) or QR code to the right:





2025 Milestones for UMCWFB

- Volunteered for six days
- Donated over \$9k for lumber & professional contracting of high-level tasks

Join us this year as Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity strives to build 40 homes!

To the UMCWFB Community,

As we wrap up the year, I want to thank you again for bringing your team to volunteer with Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity. Your support helps families build strength, stability, and a safe place to call home and we're grateful to have you as a partner in this mission.

-Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity Staff

We are grateful for the dedication and service of the Men's Ministry Gray Guys, whose behind-the-scenes work helps keep UMCWFB running smoothly and looking its best. Over the past month, their efforts have included water fountain maintenance, ceiling tile replacement, paint inventory organization, and office painting.

Their steady care makes a real difference in the daily life of our church. If you're interested in lending a hand, the Gray Guys would be glad to welcome you. For more information, please contact Dick Steinmetz.



Faith In Action

Church & Society

Last fall, the Church & Society team led a five-week series on the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, inviting thoughtful conversation around faith, justice, and civic engagement.

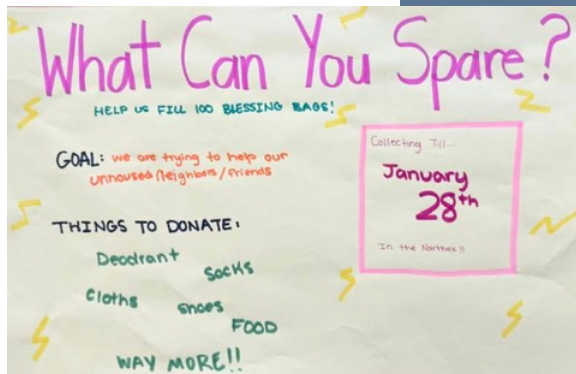
Beginning February 8, the team will host occasional, non-partisan information tables in the Narthex following services, offering resources aligned with United Methodist leadership perspectives.



As part of our ongoing commitment to building a Beloved Community, renovations to the Carpenter Shop will begin in May, supporting a ministry that has served families through church-sponsored Christian childcare for more than 36 years.

The project includes updated HVAC, flooring, cabinetry, classroom improvements, and fresh paint, made possible through Foundation support and generous donors. The 3-4 month renovation will follow all state daycare regulations and our Safe Sanctuary policy as the work moves forward.

Serving with Heart: Youth Blessing Bags Project



In January, our youth partnered with **Spare a Pair** to create Blessing Bags for neighbors experiencing homelessness. Guided by leaders Ryn Botsford, Dan Murphy, and Erin Norris, students learned from Lori of Spare a Pair, invited the congregation to donate, and wrote notes of encouragement for each bag.

Through this project, the youth put compassion and generosity into action, sharing God's love in tangible ways. The completed Blessing Bags will soon be available for congregation members to keep in their cars and offer when they encounter someone in need.

Voices of Youth



“But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer.”

Luke 5:16 (CEB)

Making Space: Palms Down, Palms Up

Even Jesus stepped away from busy moments to pray, reminding us that slowing down helps us stay grounded and connected to God. In Sunday School, Kristal and Erin introduced the youth to the Palms Down, Palms Up prayer, a contemplative practice shared by Pastor Claudia.

Try this practice in your day!

Sit comfortably and invite God's presence.

With palms down, release worries, fears, and concerns to God.

Pause briefly in silence.

Then turn palms up to receive peace, love, and grace.

Close by bringing your hands to your heart, holding what God offers.



Youth Sunday School: Faith in Practice

This January, youth Sunday School centered on themes from Pastor Gary's sermons, inviting students to explore how faith is formed through everyday choices and practices. Together, they reflected on Jesus' example of prayer, rest, and intentional living, even during busy seasons.

Through conversation and simple prayer practices, youth discovered that faith isn't limited to Sundays, it's shaped through daily rhythms, healthy boundaries, and moments of reflection. Our goal is to nurture a space where faith feels relevant, practiced, and connected to real life.



Raising Faithful Families Together

When our family moved to Whitefish Bay in 2022, the UMCWFB played a huge role in helping us feel at home in this community. The congregation welcomed us with open arms and provided us numerous opportunities to connect with other families with young kids to help us feel like a part of the community.

While we certainly do cherish the strong friendships that we have made within the church; what is even more meaningful and important is the opportunity to surround our children with other families who also wish to instill values of stewardship, citizenship, and gratitude to their children, as they navigate the world. The world today often seems darker than we would like. When we look to the future, we sometimes see more cloudy days ahead than the bright days that we remember when thinking of the past. However, by surrounding our children with other faithful families, we hope that our children will grow up grounded by God's words and learn the value of serving others in His name.



We are so grateful for the tremendous growth of the youth/children's ministry at UMCWFB and their intentional efforts to help reinforce what we do at home to guide our kids to walk with God in their daily lives. It is easy to feel the passion and intentionality placed into creating an impactful curriculum that helps guide our kids along their spiritual journey. This coupled with the amazing music ministry that is offered at UMCWFB are just a few pillars that help make our church a strong church home for our member families. We encourage the whole congregation to look for opportunities to recommend and invite others in the community to come feel the warmth of God's love that is being showcased here at UMCWFB.

-Hui & Kristen Zhang Family

From the Kitchen, With Love

Meet Gretchen Kniffin, the heart behind our Faith, Food, and Friendship table

Some of Gretchen Kniffin's earliest memories live in the kitchen. She grew up in a home where everything was made from scratch and time spent cooking together shaped some of her most meaningful childhood moments.

At seven years old, she received her first baking set and began creating on her own. By fifteen, she was working in the food industry, a path that continued through high school, college, and into adulthood. Even while raising her three children, Gretchen carried forward the family recipes she grew up with, preserving traditions rooted in love and care.

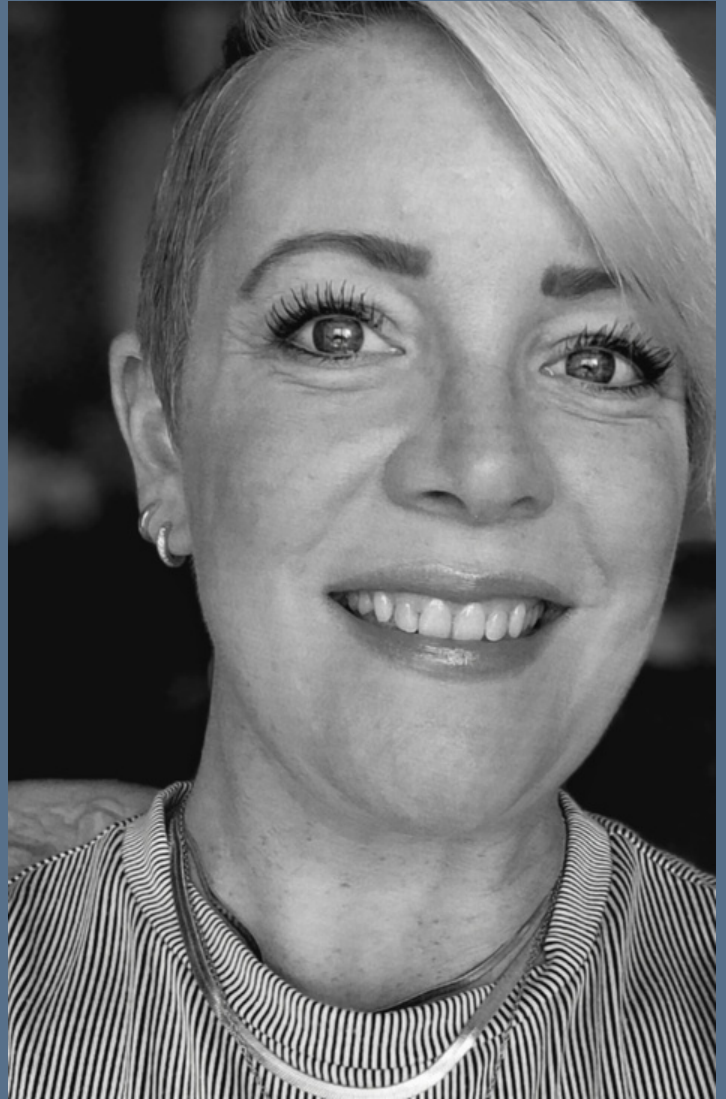
In 2011, she started a baking business called Purely Sweet. A personal health journey later reshaped her relationship with food and led her back to the kitchen with fresh perspective. Through healing and experimentation, she rediscovered the joy of transforming simple ingredients into something nourishing and meaningful.

Much of Gretchen's passion for food was inspired by her father, who passed away four years ago. Preparing the recipes he shared with her continues to keep his memory close. For Gretchen, cooking is a way of honoring family, presence, and connection.

That same spirit fills our Wednesday night Faith, Food, and Friendship gatherings. Each week, Gretchen's cooking helps set the table for more than a meal, it creates space for meaningful conversation, shared community, and faith-centered classes designed to nourish both body and spirit.

Whether you come on your own or with friends, there is a place for you at the table. Join us on Wednesday nights to enjoy Gretchen's cooking, warm community, and the shared rhythms of food, faith, and friendship.

All are welcome.



"Food is something that connects us all, and I truly love being a part of that."

-Gretchen Kniffin

Pete's Potato Salad

A beloved family recipe passed down from Gretchen's dad, Pete. Making this potato salad keeps his memory present and brings generations together around the table.

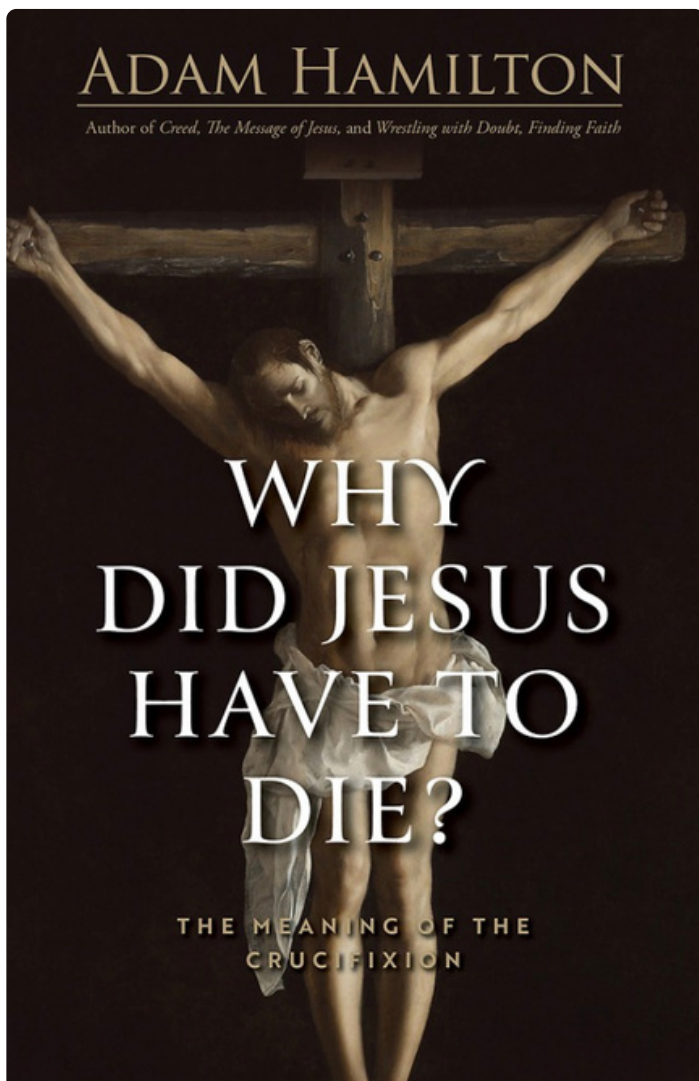
Ingredients

- 18 small red potatoes
- 3 slices bacon, cut into cubes
- 1 Tbs flour (gluten-free works well)
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ¾ cup water
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 Tbs salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped

Instructions

1. Cook the potatoes until fork-tender. Peel while still warm & slice.
2. In a pan, fry the bacon until golden brown. Remove bacon & set aside.
3. Add butter & flour to the bacon fat, stirring until combined.
4. Stir in vinegar, water, sugar, diced onion, salt, & pepper. Bring to a boil & allow the mixture to reduce slightly.
5. Pour the warm dressing over the sliced potatoes & gently toss to coat.
6. Crumble the bacon over the top & finish with chopped green onions.

Best served warm



Lent Small Group Study

This Lent, our church will gather for an all-church small group study of Pastor Adam Hamilton's new book, *Why Did Jesus Have to Die?* Beginning February 22 and continuing for six weeks leading up to Holy Week, we invite both participants and group leaders to take part. Leaders will be provided with the book, discussion guide, and DVD, and simply choose a weekly time to facilitate conversation. A sign-up board will be available in the Narthex. Our hope is to engage at least 150 people in meaningful small-group connection this Lent season.

Save the Date: April 30th - May 2nd Feed My Starving Children Meal Pack Event

We are excited to announce UMCWFB's participation in the Feed My Starving Children meal packing event, to be held April 30th - May 2nd at Portal Industries in Grafton. This is a special year as our church will surpass a combined total of 1 million meals packed in the years of participation. FMSC is a faith-based, world hunger relief organization that sends ready-to-prepare meals to countries around the world suffering from hunger and starvation. The meals are accepted worldwide, easy to prepare and specially designed for the needs of starving and undernourished children. FMSC works through local partners who not only provide the meals to the most needy but also work with communities to help them become more self-sufficient.

Catastrophic hunger has doubled in the last couple years with 6,200 children dying every day due to starvation or hunger-related diseases. Hunger is often a result of war, disease and drought - leaving children as the most vulnerable. Some of the hardest hit areas are Ukraine, Sudan and Gaza. This crisis has been exacerbated by recent cuts in US foreign aid. The meals we pack help to fill the gap and literally save lives.

Anyone can volunteer for a meal packing event - it's easy and fun, with roles for all ages to participate. We pack four ingredients (rice, soy, veggies with essential vitamins and minerals) into sealed plastic bags, and then into boxes ready to ship, during 2-hour shifts.

We have committed to pack 100,000 meals and are currently raising the funds to purchase the ingredients, with \$8000 left to raise. Your donation of any amount will go directly to the meals we pack.

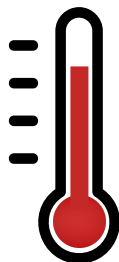
Registration to pack at the event will open on March 15th. Please join us as we turn hunger into hope.

Help us reach our \$30k funding goal!

Donate with the QR code or
check to UMCWFB, marked for FMSC.



\$8k To Go!



North Shore School for Seniors: Explore Spring Course Offerings

North Shore School for Seniors continues its long-standing dedication to nurturing both mind and spirit through learning, curiosity, and meaningful connection. Spring enrollment is now underway, inviting seniors to explore a fresh lineup of engaging classes held right here at UMCWFB on Mondays and Tuesdays, with the spring session beginning March 16th. From history, music, and art to wellness, creativity, and thoughtful reflection, each course offers a welcoming space to learn alongside others who value lifelong growth and friendship. All are invited to attend.

Highlights of this session's offerings are shown below, with additional classes ranging from Artificial Intelligence and Great Lakes Maritime History to Strength for Life, Restorative Sleep and Dreams, and The Art of the Blog. Class details and registration are available at www.nss4s.org, with printed catalogs also available at church.



Join Matt Annin, Principal Horn with the MSO and a UMCWFB member, for a deep dive into the classical works of Prokofiev and Shostakovich in **Powerhouse Composers**. With insights from his career and live horn demonstrations woven throughout, this class offers a rare, up-close look at two of the 20th century's most influential composers.

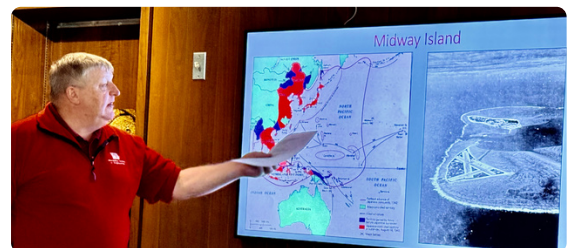
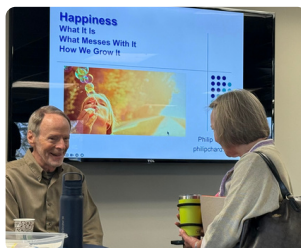


**"NSSS Classes
introduce me to
topics I never
considered before."**

-Fred Ehle, NSSS student



Korean Paper Art: Cards, Gifts + Jewelry will be taught by SeonJoo So, the artist featured through Feb. 27 in the Open Door Gallery at church. The artist says that even without any experience with the art of paper-folding, you will be able make new designs from paper. *"Creating something new and beautiful will make you happy,"* says SeonJoo So.





Service in Motion

Kristal Melbye, UMCWFB's Director of Family Ministries, also brings her passion for movement and mindfulness to our community through yoga and barre classes. These welcoming, all-levels classes create space to strengthen the body, steady the mind, and reconnect with breath - all within a supportive, faith-centered environment. Whether you're looking for gentle restoration or a more energizing flow, Kristal's classes offer a meaningful way to care for both body and spirit while building connection with others at UMCWFB. Classes are open to the community and no pre-registration is required. We hope to see you there!



Monday: 9:00am Barre
Tuesday: 9:00am Yoga
Thursday: 9:00am Barre

All classes are held in Fellowship Hall.

UMCWFB Youth Choirs Present 'God Squad'

Join us for a fresh new action-packed, faith-based musical for all ages that teaches valuable lessons from the Bible in a fun, superhero-themed adventure against modern-day temptations.

The story focuses on a young girl named Cora who is dealing with all of the pressures and stress culture puts on youth these days. With help from the "God Squad", which is a group of superheroes that represent truth, righteousness, love and justice, Cora is encouraged to fight against worldly pressures of a culture that is obsessed with selfishness and popularity. The God Squad teaches Cora to feel empowered through Christian values of love, selflessness and service.

Performances Dates:

Saturday, March 21st 5pm

Sunday, March 22nd 10am

Admission is free and open to the public.
All are welcome!



Questions, please contact **Jenny Fisher**

February Birthday Wishes

1st - Leah Gaffney

2nd - John Douglass

4th - Ellie Jacobson, Cam Goudreau, Elle Rymer

5th - Sarah Laszewski

6th - Wendy Pribbanow

8th - Mary Dietz

9th - Clara Temple, Anna Melbye

★ **10th** - Nancy O'Toole

11th - Doug Brown, Kathy Walker

12th - Lois Goldberg, Neil Bubke

14th - Natalie Hatch, Mike Martin, Miguel Potter, Madeline Fisher, Kristen Zhang

15th - Mark Huber

18th - Luisa Teskey

19th - Jeff Gorsuch, David Sanders

20th - Roanne Barnes, Ria Buor, Lorenzo Mabry

21st - Eva Whitney, Reese Trimble

22nd - Dane Miller

24th - Karen A'Rowan, Jacob Mortallaro, Zachary Bery

25th - Donna Chiappetta, Sophia Veierstahler

26th - Chris Pagenkop

27th - Leinani Mabry

28th - Bill Mulligan, Bob Perry



WOMEN'S
MINISTRY

Winter Retreat

RECHARGE &
REFLECT



Center Your Body, Mind & Soul

- Worship & Devotion
- Forest Bath Meditation
- Crafting & Chair Massages
- Sound Bath Music Meditation

Sat., Feb. 28

9am-3pm

Lynden Sculpture Garden
River Hills

\$30 per person

RSVP by Feb. 21: jfisher@umcwfb.org

Camp Lucerne

“LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS”

JUNE 14-17, 2026

★ GRADES 3-12



Grow in your Faith and
Friendships with us this
Summer at Camp!

Contact Jenny Fisher
jfisher@umcwfb.org





*Becoming a Beloved Community by
Connecting, Growing, and Serving*

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