

Happy Mardi Gras Everyone! In a few days, people in the Durham area will celebrate Shrove Tuesday. On the same day in Louisiana, they will celebrate Mardi Gras. Last year, I was working at a Lutheran Church in Durham and learned about Shrove Tuesday for the first time. In my journey of curiosity, I learned that they were not that different; they both had the same theology and ideas behind it, but they were executed in two very different ways. On Shrove Tuesday, members of the body gather to eat pancakes and other fatty foods to prepare for the Lent season, which has traditionally been viewed as a time for fasting. In Louisiana, Mardi Gras is also based on this same idea, but we also celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Woven throughout the season of Mardi Gras, we see signs and colors that point us back to Christ and remind us of Jesus' humble beginnings. A traditional king cake is made from three strands of dough woven together to remind us of the unity and strength we have in relation to Christ, but also points to the Trinity, One God in three distinct persons. In the king cake, one can also find a little baby. That little baby is Jesus, and it points us back to the search that the kings went on to find Jesus. The colors of Mardi Gras also help to remind us and point us back to God. Green represents the faith, hope, and new life that we find in Christ. Purple represents the justice and the kingship of Jesus, and the justice and kingship that we enter into when we become baptized into the family of Jesus Christ. Gold points us back to riches, the riches we receive in the form and means of God's grace and mercy, but also to the riches that the kings brought to the baby Jesus once they found him. While the outside world sees Mardi Gras as a time when people party, for many who grew up in the church, it is so much more than that. It is a time of preparation and celebration. It is a time that reminds us of why Easter is so important and prepares us for the season of Lent, when people give something up or take something on to feel closer to God. This whole pull of time reminds me of Lamentations 31-8:

"1 For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

3 a time to kill and a time to heal;

a time to break down and a time to build up;

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn and a time to dance;

5 a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 a time to seek and a time to lose;

a time to keep and a time to throw away;

7 a time to tear and a time to sew;

a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

8 a time to love and a time to hate;

a time for war and a time for peace."

Laissez les bons temps rouler (let the good times roll), as they say in Louisiana!

NEW AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Financial Information

Welcome to 2026! May we all move into the new year with hope for a more peaceful world! With the beginning of a new year, I thought it would be a good time to share a few words about the financial results for 2025 and the impact of our choices, so we can make informed decisions as we move through the year. Let me start with a few definitions and what they mean as we seek to be good stewards of what God has given us through the funds at Walnut Grove.

Donations and expenses are managed using two main fund groups: unrestricted funds and restricted funds. Donations to unrestricted funds are those gifts that are made without any restriction as to how they are to be spent. On the other hand, donations to restricted funds are those where the donor directs that they be spent for a specific purpose. This distinction is particularly important when talking about our church budget since the church budget depends on unrestricted giving. Given that restricted donations are earmarked by the donor for specific purposes, restricted funds may only be spent as the donor indicates and may not be used for other purposes. While being good stewards of what God has given us, we know restricted donations are to be part of our living out our baptismal vows in giving. Restricted funds are to be in addition to our regular offerings. As we might imagine, if a large portion of our giving goes for specific purposes not included in our budget, then we might not have the anticipated income to cover our general budget. This background information and distinction help us understand the final 2025 financial position for Walnut Grove.

Our original budgeted expenses for 2025 totaled \$330,819. This is the amount we projected that would be needed in unrestricted giving to do things such as 1) cover our operating costs related to running the church, 2) support the witness and ministries of our church, 3) pay our staff and fulfill our assigned missional giving through conference apportionments. We give thanks for the way our congregation practiced faithful stewardship in 2025. The resources we hold are not simply money, but trust placed in us by God for the sake of Christ's mission. With a budget of \$330,819, we spent \$309,475.91, leaving \$21,322.09 unspent of 2025's budget.

The good news is that we had donations of \$362,440 which is wonderful news! However, \$86,649 is considered designated giving with the majority going to Harvest Festival to help us maintain our church campus. As we do the math, this leaves \$275,791 identified as unrestricted giving. When we look at the difference between what we spent on budgeted items (\$309,476 in 2025) and the unrestricted funds donated (\$275,791 in 2025), we had a shortfall of \$33,685 in unrestricted funds to cover our budget. If we had spent everything approved in the budget, this would have been a shortfall of about \$55,000.

As we move forward in 2026, we want to encourage faithful giving first through tithes and offerings with an understanding that restricted giving is to be above and beyond our calling to give faithfully to the general budget. We are excited to see how the Spirit is going to continue to move in 2026! We want to be generous as we serve an abundant God to work together to glorify God and make disciples. Looking forward to an amazing new year!

Lou Rutledge
Finance Chair

Sunday Night Meal Sign Up

We are looking for five people or groups to sign up to cook a meal for Sunday nights. Sign up here! [SundayNightMeals.mealsignup](https://www.SundayNightMeals.mealsignup)

Sunday Night Meal RSVP

Please sign up if you plan to attend and eat a meal during our Sunday night fellowship! This helps our cooks prepare the right amount of food. [SundayNightMeals.RSVP](https://www.SundayNightMeals.RSVP)

Back to Basics
CHRISTIANITY 101

No matter how long you've been in church, there's always more to learn! Join us Sunday nights as we discuss some core questions of the Christian faith together. Invite your friends!

**SUNDAYS,
6-7 PM**

Walnut Grove
UMC

**STARTING
FEB. 15**

Permission to Pause

A couple of extra words alongside the previous message from me about the Women's Retreat. If cost is a hindrance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Scholarships are available. Also at church, Kara Roberts, Sue Powell, and our Minister of Discipleship, Lauren Birch, will be helping with the planning so you are welcome to ask me or these dear sisters questions as well. Make sure to register, invite a friend, and keep this retreat in prayer as we move closer to our retreat time together. Peace! -Laura

[Link to Register for Permission to Pause](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

February 20-21, 2026



PERMISSION TO PAUSE

A women's retreat focused on Sabbath,
rest as resistance to a hurried life,
and restoration by God's grace.

Open to ages 13 & up.
\$25 registration fee includes 3 meals and an art project.

LOCATION:
Walnut Grove United Methodist Church
7215 Walnut Grove Church Road Hurdle Mills, NC 27541
www.walnutgroveumc.com 919-732-5722

Scan to register or use
link below



bit.ly/wgumcp2p

Early Response Team Training- Saturday, March 7th

We are excited to host this important training, which prepares teams to respond after disasters such as floods, fires, or hurricanes. The basic training is from 8:30am-4:30pm. A four-hour recertification class is available only for those whose certifications have expired within one calendar year. Please register at this link: <https://nccumc.org/disaster/training/>



The poster features a red background with a white hand icon in the top left corner. The main title is in large white letters. Below the title is a paragraph of text. A circular inset image shows two people, one wearing a red vest and a face mask, interacting with a large bag of supplies. To the right of the inset is the date and time. Below that is a white box with registration information. At the bottom, there is a URL and a logo of a white flame with a cross inside.

EARLY RESPONSE TEAM TRAINING at Walnut Grove UMC

ERT Classes help participants understand how United Methodists are involved during a disaster, how we get prepared for a disaster, and what we can do when a disaster strikes. This 8 hour training is required to receive an ERT badge and become part of a fully certified team. A four hour recertification class will be offered as well. Lunch and snacks are provided.

**MARCH 7, 2026
8:30AM - 4:30PM**

**REGISTER ONLINE.
\$20 FEE PER PARTICIPANT.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION :
[HTTPS://NCCUMC.ORG/DISASTER/TRAINING/#ERT](https://nccumc.org/disaster/training/#ERT)



Youth Visit to Judea Reform Congregation, March 13th

Youth and their families, join us Friday March 13th at 6pm for the 6pm Shabbat service at Judea Reform Congregation in Durham. This is a unique opportunity to experience fellowship with our Jewish brothers and sisters in faith. Please let Lauren know if you are planning to attend or have any questions at laurenwelch880@gmail.com

Seeds of Faith – Lent-a-Palooza



Your family's Lenten journey starts here.

Join us for Lent-a-Palooza on
Sunday, February 22 from 12:30pm
– 3:30pm at  **Chestnut Ridge**
Camp and Retreat Center

Ever wondered how to mark the sacred season of Lent at home with kids? Come join us! You and your kids will create tools you can use at home for prayer, scripture reading, service, and other spiritual practices throughout Lent.

This FREE event includes:

- Lunch
- Crafts & Activities
- Storytelling

SCAN HERE




seeds of faith
families growing together

2026 Lake Junaluska Music and Worship Arts Week

Monday, June 22 to Friday, June 26

Let's talk summer with the warmth and beauty of the North Carolina mountains! Registration is now open for this year's music week at Lake Junaluska Assembly. This is an annual event designed for worship leaders, pastors, musicians, and singers of all ages. We will leave from the church on Sunday afternoon, June 21. Worship services and rehearsals start on Monday, June 22. Children who have completed the 3rd grade, youth, and adults are welcome to attend. Chaperones are also needed.

Activities and events include worship services, choir rehearsals, youth talent show, crafts/games, recreation (swimming, etc.) We will stay in a large house overlooking the lake. If your child, youth, or you are interested, let Leigh know at 919-818-3317 or leighmcfalls@gmail.com

Reality Ministries fosters friendships amongst people of all abilities marked by mutuality, authenticity and the reality of Christ's love for all.

Reality
ministries

SPRING 2026 FUNDRAISER

An evening of desserts, story-sharing, and learning how to support Reality's beloved community

**Wednesday, March 11th
7-8:30pm**

The Reality Center
916 Lamond Ave, Durham

Important Health Information

Flu season is upon us. Numbers are high. Several members of our congregation have already had it...and more are likely to get it. There are things we can do to decrease our risk of getting it and to decrease the risk of complications if we do.

- Stay home if you're sick! A general rule of thumb for returning to gatherings is that you should be fever-free for at least 24 hours WITHOUT the use of fever-reducing medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) and feel well enough to resume activity. Even though you may feel like returning sooner, please think of the high risk and especially vulnerable people in church that may end up in the hospital with complications.
- WASH YOUR HANDS! Many folks just do not understand how important this is. For a while, I'm encouraging that we abstain from handshaking. If you shake hands with someone who just shook hands with 3 other folks, it's like you're shaking hands with all 4. (Personally, I don't like shaking hands at all. Many things other than flu are spread through handshaking.)
- Increase cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (doorknobs, faucets)
- Consider masking if you're going to be in a group. Masks do reduce the transmission of respiratory viruses. Hopefully we'll be making some masks available in the back of the sanctuary for a while. Feel free to pick one up and use it (and please take it with you when you leave 😊).
- Get a flu vaccine. Though the strains in the '25-'26 vaccine aren't a great match for the circulating flu strains, some people will get some protection. It improves your chances of not having serious complications even if you do get sick...and it's better than nothing.
- Stay hydrated! If well-hydrated you can better handle these illnesses if you get them.

Things that we do to reduce our risk of flu help with the transmission of other respiratory illnesses as well.

- COVID is alive and well...making us feel lousy and unwell. Vaccine is available.
- RSV is a real issue for young children often putting them in the hospital. Let's protect these babies by getting ourselves vaccinated if 75+ years old OR 50-74 but high risk.
- PNEUMONIA can hit any of us. Any of respiratory viruses and other bacteria can lead to pneumonia. No one needs pneumonia. The more things you prevent, the better your chance of not getting pneumonia. Also check into getting a pneumonia vaccine if you're 50 or older or younger and have high-risk conditions.
- We have at least 2 schools in our end of the county experiencing PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH) right now...there may be more. I don't know about you, but coughing for 100 days and coughing until I throw up is not my idea of a good time. Kids are vaccinated as infants with a booster dose given at 7th grade entry....then we should all get boosters (Tdap) at least every 10 years. Pertussis frequently puts young kids in the hospital. They can't be fully vaccinated until they've received 4 vaccine doses given between 2 months and 18 months of age. We need to prevent pertussis in ourselves to protect them.

MEASLES is near and it won't be surprising, at all, if we get cases. South Carolina has 434 confirmed cases so far...and hundreds exposed and in quarantine. Quarantine for unvaccinated persons exposed to measles lasts from around Day 5 after exposure to Day 21 after last exposure. This means no school, no work, no visitors for at least 16ish days. Fortunately, our vaccine compliance numbers are good (as measured by kindergarten entry data). But we do have pockets of folks who have chosen not to vaccinate and if measles enters those communities, it'll go on for weeks. Even fully vaccinated persons can get measles with enough exposure. Measles complications can last a lifetime.

Measles is the most infectious disease known. If a person with measles is in a room, the virus remains in the air for 2 hours just waiting to jump on an unvaccinated person. Children are usually vaccinated at 12 months-of-age and again at 4-5 years-of-age. People born before 1957 are generally considered to be immune to measles because we probably had the disease...I know I did...I remember it. If born after 1957 and don't know your immunization status, get the vaccine unless you're pregnant or immunocompromised. 1 dose gives good protection, but 2 doses give great protection.

These are interesting times...and scary times for those of us in Public Health and other healthcare-related fields. Please pay attention, seek valid information sources and help us all look out for each other.

Stay well!!

~Judy Butler

Tithes and Offerings

We now have five ways to give to our ministries. If you would like your offering to be allocated towards a specific ministry, please indicate it in the memo of your check or you will be prompted on the website.

1. Give during our weekly Worship Services.
2. Mail in a check to 7215 Walnut Grove Church Road, Hurdle Mills, NC 27541.
3. Use our church [website](#). Click **GIVE** in the upper right corner.
4. Use our "My Church" mobile app. Click GIVE in the lower right corner.
5. Use our Vanco QR Code, which you can find on the back of the Sunday bulletins or right here in the weekly *In A Nutshell*.

Vanco QR Code

As we continually adapt to the gift of technology, Walnut Grove now has a Vanco QR code provided on the back of the bulletin and in the Nutshell for online giving. Simply hold your phone or tablet's camera over the code for the link to Vanco. You may also access the link on our website for convenient giving. Alternatively, cash or check contributions continue to be accepted through our tithes and offerings. Your generosity helps us continue serving Christ and reaching out to our community in mission and faithful witness.



JOYS & CONCERNS

Prayer List

- John Facklam from Charlotte, who is in hospice. Prayers for Tish Nowack, her mother, and sister as they await Mr. Facklam's transition. He is the father of Tish Nowack, one of our Walnut Grove Crafters
- Rick Johnson with health issues. He is friends with Judy Butler and many other church members.
- Locklynn Gribble, premie in NICU. Locklynn's grandmother is a friend of Judy Butler.
- Paul Beck, with health issues. He is a member of Walnut Grove UMC.
- Rev. Meg Hoffman, battling cancer. She's the director of Seeds of Faith at Camp Chestnut Ridge.
- David Leonard having complications from surgery. He is the dad of a friend of Faith Parker.
- Timmy Parker with serious health issues. He is Barry Parker's brother
- Worth Miller with serious health issues. He is a friend and neighbor of Jimmy and Brenda Berry.
- Neil Donnelly with health issues.
- Helen Miller with serious health issues. She is the aunt of Pat Beck's brother-in-law.
- Leo Brooks Populorum (7 Months old), from Pittsboro, has very serious health issues. Leo is the grandson of John and Judy Guibert who are friends of Beverly Huey.
- Ben Lloyd, Cheryl Humphrey's father, with serious health issues
- Gilbert Lee in Prince George, VA, who recently had surgery for cancer. He is Richard Lee's father
- Herbert and JoAnn Cates, both with health issues. They are members of Walnut Grove UMC.
- Jerry Forrester, bilateral lung cancer
- Liz Matthews, friend of Katie Whitaker
- Debbie Langdale diagnosed with stage 5 kidney disease, waiting for transplant. Friend of John and Brooke Sherron

- Kelly Schoch, with brain cancer. She is co-worker of Erica Nading
- Kathy Kimrey with health concerns. She is the sister-in-law of Lorraine Hines and Pam Kimrey.

Prayer is powerful and we love praying for one another!! If you have a request on the prayer list, we would be grateful for any updates needed. This helps us know how to continue praying and when requests may be removed or celebrated. Please let us know how we can best pray for you and your loved ones.

From the Mailbox

Dear Walnut Grove UMC,

Thank you for the beautiful prayer blanket. Your kindness and the prayers woven into it mean so much to me. I'm truly grateful for your love, support and thoughtfulness,

Much Appreciation,

Pastor Mandy

Birthdays

Saturday 2/14 – Will Hall, Bernice Parker, Billy Roberts

Sunday 2/15 – Fred Nading, Tish Nowack, Ben Sykes

Monday 2/16 – Elaine Berry

Thursday 2/19 – Megan Quigley, Malynne Roemmich

Friday 2/20 – Stacey Glenn, Holli Penland, Tommy Roberts

If your birthday is incorrect or missing, please contact Kim at the church office at 919-732-5722 or by email at office@walnutgroveumc.org so we can update our records.

STAYING CONNECTED

[WG YouTube](#)

[WG Facebook](#)

[Website](#)

Serving in Worship

February 15th

Acolytes: Eleanor Whitaker/Isaac Conway

Greeters: Courtney Humphrey/Anita James

Ushers: Courtney Humphrey/Grayson Nading

Scripture: Lorraine Parker

Nursery: Sharon Gates/Pam Kimrey/Aubrey Nading

Financial Rep: Lou Rutledge

Trustee Open/Close: Dan Bledsoe

February 22nd

Acolytes: Corbin Smith/Russell Whitaker

Greeters: Patty Maseth/Ashley Parker

Ushers: Chris & Cathy Boling

Scripture: Scott Humphrey

Nursery: Cheryl S Parker/Krystal Robinson/Grayson Nading

Financial Rep: Tyler Smith

Trustee Open/Close: Mike Roberts

NOTE: If you're unable to serve in your role listed above, please find someone to serve in your place and notify the church secretary of the change. This will allow us to have an updated listing to publish each week.

Upcoming Happenings

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Sunday, February 15 | 9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Worship Service
5:30pm Dinner
6:00pm - 7:00pm Kids Krew, Youth,
Adults (Back to Basics - Christianity 101) |
| Wed., February 18 | 6:15pm Soup Dinner
7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service
Worship Choir (following Ash Wednesday Service) |
| Friday, February 20 | 6:00pm – 9:00pm Women's Retreat – Permission to Pause |
| Saturday, February 21 | 8:30am – 3:00pm Women's Retreat – Permission to Pause |
| Sunday, February 22 | 9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Worship Service
10:45am Children's Church
12:30pm – 3:30pm – Lent-A-Palooza at Camp Chestnut Ridge
5:30pm Dinner
6:00pm - 7:00pm Kids Krew, Youth,
Adults (Back to Basics - Christianity 101) |
| Wed., February 25 | 6:30pm Worship Band
7:00pm Worship Choir |
| Fri-Sat., February 27-28 | Walnut Grove Crafters |

See You Sunday!!