



Panora United Methodist Church

OUR MISSION:

LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR, TRANSFORM THE WORLD

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Sunday Service

9:30 a.m. Worship Service
Sunday School
every Sunday
10:45 a.m. -11:30 a.m.

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Becoming New in God's Name

All of us have had the experience of feeling misled by a sales-pitch. Whether it was buying a used car, or booking a cruise, or casting your vote for a particular politician, it can hurt when we discover that reality doesn't match the promise we were fed. And unfortunately, this can even happen in church.

Today, probably most Christians were given a sales-pitch that when something like this: 'you can have *all* of God's love, extra blessings on earth, and the best imaginable afterlife! And all you have to do is **believe** and **get baptized!** Call *now!*' And this isn't necessarily wrong, per se: faith (as its depicted in the Bible) and baptism *are* the fundamental actions for beginning to follow Jesus. But the part about this 'pitch' that can be misleading is when we imagine we have fulfilled our end of the bargain. And lots of preachers and evangelists have made it sound so *easy*, haven't they? Just open your heart and *believe!* Just come to the revival or to church to *get* baptized. It can happen in a day –maybe even in a single hour! Say the words; receive the water. And that's it. Operation Christian 'complete.'

But the problem with this particular pitch is that it falls far short of our calling and mission as 'Christians.' For in order to 'fulfill' our faith as followers of Jesus, we have to **become** people who resemble Jesus –specifically in the way that we live and in the way that we love. Until we start loving and including people like Jesus did; until we are able to share of our wisdom, time, and resources as he did; until our relationship with God the Father is as intimate as it was with Jesus, then our faith is not yet complete, and our baptismal vows remain unfulfilled. And not once in my life have I seen that happen overnight. In fact, I've never once met a person who has become fully like Christ. Instead, we are all only 'on our way.'

In the Hebrew Bible, the way they talk about living the right/righteous life was by 'upholding the holiness of God's name.' In the ancient Jewish view, it was up to every single Israelite to embody the 'sales-pitch' that the God they worship –who saved them from slavery- was good and trustworthy. It's not enough to say it, they had to *live* it. The way they conducted business, parented their children, and especially the way they interacted with strangers was evidence of the character of their God. And whenever they acted 'rightly,' it bolstered God's holy name. Conversely, if they acted impatiently or dishonestly, then they were defaming God's 'name' or character (because they represent Him).

Today in America, the name of Jesus no longer has a lot of street credibility. And there's only one reason for that: it's because of the people who represent him. *Us*. Now, perhaps more than ever, it is essential that we are honest about being 'works in progress.' We cannot yet call ourselves 'Christians;' we are only sinners, chasing our Lord's footsteps. Following Jesus is a life-long journey. Our progress is incremental. It takes work; but it is only achieved by God's grace. And that is the truth of our good news: not that we have succeeded in becoming perfect or good, but that when we partner with God in His love, God's goodness grows in and through us. May we rededicate ourselves to becoming an honest sales-pitch for Christ.

Our Upper Room Group

Have you been thanked lately? Our group meets on Wednesday mornings at Crafty's Coffeeshop, 9 o'clock, and together we do the day's devotion including the discussion questions in the back. We decided to put our faith into action by thanking all our church's contributors.

So, even though we don't know what you contribute, whether it's time, talent, and/or money, we wish to say "Thank you very much!" We love our church family, we love our building, we love our weekly worship, and we love having a variety of programs to deepen our faith. It's all thanks to you and your giving.

Please know that you are appreciated. We sincerely wish you a happy and blessed 2026.

The gals of the Wednesday morning group

Panora UM Church

Walk to Emmaus

Would you like to have spiritual renewal in 2026? Do you seek a new understanding of God's grace and love? Do you enjoy lively worship and a community with other excited believers? Then the Walk to Emmaus may be for you.

Read about the disciples' walk to Emmaus in Luke 24, and think about attending the next weekend. It is coming up **soon**:

Men's - January 22-25, and Women's - January 29-Feb 1.

You may ask Dennis or Jane for an application form. Do not delay. .



**The next regular meeting of the
Administrative Council will be 6:30 pm,
Wednesday, February 12, 2026.**

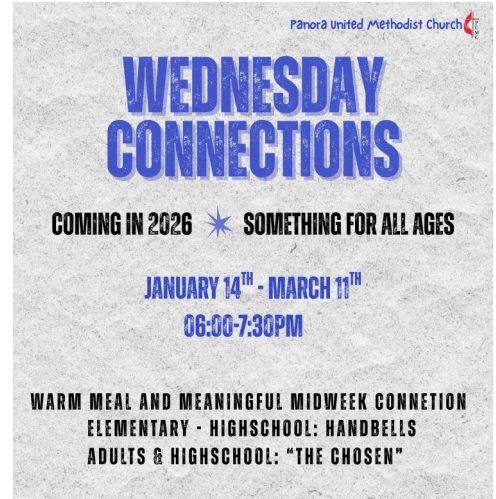
The Education Committee is excited to introduce “Wednesday Connections!”

Beginning **January 14, 2026**, and running through **March 11**, we'll gather for **nine Family Nights** filled with food, fellowship, and faith!

Each evening will begin with a shared **meal**, followed by engaging activities for all ages.

- **Children (elementary through high school)** will have the opportunity to **learn how to play handbells**.
- **Adults and high schoolers** are invited to **watch and discuss *The Chosen*** together.

Join us as we grow in community, faith, and connection on Wednesday nights this winter!



If you are planning on attending please RSVP to Sue Merryman at 641-757-5956 or sign up at the church the Sunday before the Wednesday Connection.

FOOD FOR WEDNESDAY CONNECTIONS - FAMILY NIGHT

DATE	VOLUNTEER	VOLUNTEER	MEAL
January 14	Denise Brobst	Charles Brobst	Maidrites
January 21	Sue Merryman	Jay Merryman	Lasagna
January 28	Kathy Mahoney		Chili
February 4	Jane Shepherd	Dennis Shepherd	Pigs in blankets
February 11			Tomato Soup & Grilled Cheese
February 18	Jody Hamlin	Larry Hamlin	Enchiladas & Chips
February 25	Shanell Wagler	Dave Wagler	Tacos
March 4	Sue Merryman	Jay Merryman	Pizza Casserole
March 11			Homemade Mac & Cheese

Happy Birthday!

(I know there are some of birthdays missing! Please send to Shelley at PUMC@netins.net)
"God was there to hear your borning cry; we rejoice that you are part of our church family!"

January Birthdays

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 – Terry Sprague | 18 – Brad Halterman |
| 6 – Cathy VanGundy | 29 – Brenda Halterman |
| 9 – Kjella Piper | 24 – Hunter Losee |
| 13 – Katy Bassett | 27 – Linda Richey |
| 14 – John Coghlan | 29 – Matt Losee |
| 15 – Gracie Grove, Miranda Laabs | 30 – Dave Brown |

February Birthdays

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 – Jim Adamson | 10 – Kris Laidley |
| 3 – Kathy Coons | 11– Brian Bahrenfuss |
| 7 – Karwyn Gibson | 15 – Linda Dahl |
| 8 – Shari Crouse, Deb Schumacher | 22– Paulette Chambers, Waneta Scott |
| 9 – Kelsey Laabs | 27 – Bill Wright |



UNITED
METHODIST
WOMEN
Faith • Hope • Love in Action

UMW Calendar

January — NO MEETING

February 16 — UMW Meeting at 7:00pm

Hostess:

Co-Hostess: Melody Nims

Lesson: Nancy Moore

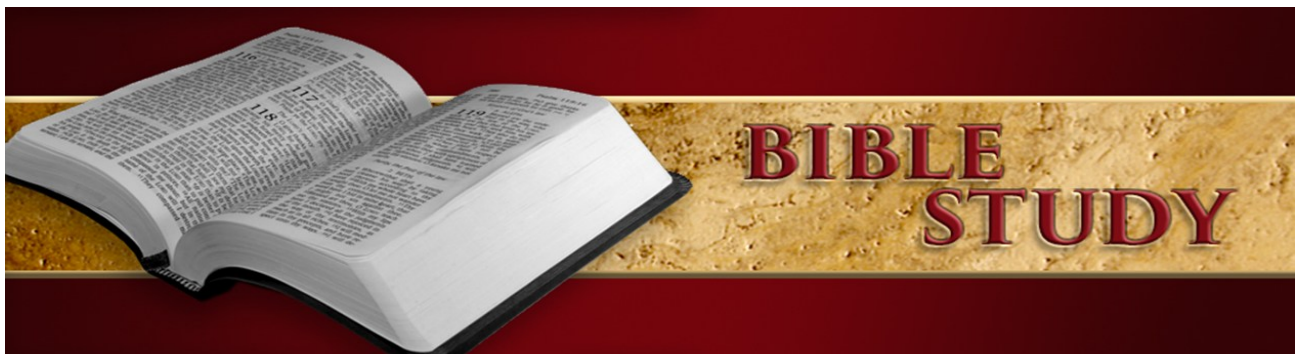
Schedule for Chimes and Choir

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Jan. 08 6:30pm | Chimes Practice | Feb. 05 6:30 pm | Chimes Practice |
| Jan. 11 9:30 am | Chimes Play | Feb. 08 9:30 am | Chimes Play |
| Jan. 22 6:30pm | Choir Practice | Feb. 19 6:30 pm | Choir Practice |
| Jan. 25 9:30 am | Choir Sings | Feb. 22 9:30 am | Choir Sings |

January/February 2026

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Tuesday afternoon, 1:30 p.m.
At Lake Side Village