# The Window

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

# February 2022

# A LIGHT IN THE FOG, by Andy Hamer, Pastor

If you've ever driven in a fog, then you have a ready metaphor for what today's churches sense as we look to the future. It's more than just the historic shifts of the past two years. For decades, Churches have struggled to keep pace with the alterations in the weather patterns of our culture. The storms of the last couple of years have only made it harder to ignore our changing realities. Our God remains unchanged, but how will God's Kingdom unfold in this shifting mission field? We are thankfully driving through the last dregs of the storm, but the fog is next.

Driving in heavy fog can be disorienting, but those with some basic skills and trust in their direction, can still continue the journey. As a church we can hold to the fact that not everything has changed. Just as driving in a fog is still traveling on a road, in a car, using our hands to steer; so the church still moves forward in a community, guided by the Holy Spirit, on a journey of discipleship and outreach.

Ok, but what if this fog goes on for a while? What if the landscape on the other side is more different than we imagine? What can we do in today's journey that might also prepare us for the future?

Let's start with the skills we all know, but sometimes forget:

- Turn off the cruise control God is always refining individuals, churches, and their mission.
- Keep hands relaxed at 10 and 2 We may need to loosen up a bit, so that we can be ready for anything.
- Resist the urge to turn on the high beams Reactive goals just make it harder to focus on what's really important.
- Avoid the distraction of the radio or

temperature controls - Most of our Ministry Teams will tackle tasks that were hard to address during the recent storms. For example, our Sunday worship could be dialed-in a little closer to who we are as a community, and some pieces of our organizational structure could use some "right-sizing". But these are tasks for smaller teams that should not overly distract the rest of us from the big picture in the windshield.

So, what should our big picture focus be? Last summer's discernment process led us to one, overarching priority: Go Build Relationships. Deeper relationships are vital to future discipleship and mission. Recent years have put increasing strain on all communities (including churches). Broken human relationships lie at the root of many current needs in our mission field. Our focus on relationships will not only help us to heal and grow as a congregation, but also to reach out in mission and evangelism in a uniquely relevant way.

Consider these three examples of relational skills we can build to create opportunities for us as individuals, as a congregation, and as missionaries:

### Listening

It is possible to train ourselves to listen better. Pastors, therapists, and even our own Stephen Ministers have done so. In the coming year, our congregation will be provided opportunities to further develop skills in listening:

- To God In all times we should desire to hear God more clearly. Yet we can all sense the importance of God's direction when we're traveling at speed into a fog!
- To one another It can be surprisingly difficult

# A LIGHT IN THE FOG, continued

to care-fully listen to others. Yet, consider how good it feels when someone makes the effort to truly hear you. This is the gift that we need to get better at offering to each other.

• To those outside our church - See above. It's the same!

### **Building Bridges**

The Body of Christ is a New Testament metaphor intended to help churches see their differences as gifts. Even in the earliest years of the Church, the Gospel drew people from different social, political, and religious backgrounds. To outsiders, this uncommon mixing of people and perspectives would have been an incredible testimony to the power of Christ. Moreover, the New Testament clearly shows that much of the early church's success came through God's use of the diverse giftings and experiences in the Body of Christ.

In our time, we have watched even minor differences divide and conquer communities. How can the Body of Christ function with only a few of its parts?

Contrary to what we see around us, God's love and power are still uniquely capable to bridge gaps that others find insurmountable. Even in the last decade, Christian leaders have developed practices to help Christians reclaim the unity and effective variety of the Body of Christ. These skills are essential if we desire to experience the vitality of a New Testament church in the midst of our current environment.

#### Addressing Conflict

Any grouping of human beings creates conflict. Here's what we can learn from the Scriptures to set us up for the future:

- God cares deeply about our relationships with him and with one another
- Human conflict is an unavoidable fact, and ignoring it is unhelpful
- There are appropriate ways to address conflict
- Relationships grow stronger when conflict is addressed

Consider how we might benefit from learning biblically based practices in the art of listening or addressing conflict. Imagine how our congregation would grow if we had more tools to bridge our differences in order to embrace our identity as the Body of Christ. Beyond our internal experience, imagine how these skills will prepare us to reach out to a disillusioned and lonely society. Relational strength and dexterity will be essential for today's churches who wish to engage their surrounding communities and to keep the vitality of their own, internal communities.

We also need to remember that addressing our current challenges doesn't rule out joy. While driving through the fog we can keep the radio on. We can still eat road food, and tell jokes, and experience together the wildness outside the windows. Fog is disorienting, but the change in perspective can be interesting – maybe even refreshing. An anonymous poet once wrote:

Fog grabs my eye, but lets my body pass. Droplets that disdain gravity make even the air pause to reflect.

Glimpses and guesses.
What loom weaves
confusion and possibility?
With eyes open
I walk the raw material of dreams.

Who knows what God will do amongst us in the coming year? We all have hands on the wheel and feet by the pedals. The Spirit of God is alive and working in each of us. What holy dreams are even now unfolding in the fog?

# February At A Glance

At West Hills our mission statement . . . On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world, provides us with the framework for how we live our lives. Here are notable activities this month, in the life of our church, seeking to connect us to God, others, and the world.

Sundays in February - Livestreaming and in-person worship service @ 10 a.m. Following the service, join us for fellowship in Geneva Lounge. For those not attending in-person, we welcome you to watch the service by livestream at: whcomaha.org/live

Discipleship Opportunities Sunday Mornings @ 9:00 a.m.:

- \* Crosswalk Kids meeting temporarily online via Zoom
- \* Youth 406 Journey Groups meeting temporarily online via Zoom
- \* Confirmation students meeting temporarily online via Zoom
- \* "The Prodigal Prophet" discipleship class with Jeff Smith in the chapel until Feb. 13
- \* "Getting to Know You" class with Rick Mason and Julie Zimmerman in the chapel Feb. 20 & Feb. 27

Tuesday Mornings - Men's Bible Study meets at 7:00 a.m. in the chapel in-person and online via Zoom. The group studies the scripture passage for the upcoming Sunday sermon.

Wednesday Mornings - Women's book study at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom. This study is on the book "Holding On When You Want To Let Go" by Sheila Walsh

Wednesday Evenings - Women's Small Group meets at 6:00 p.m. in the chapel. This group uses video-based studies on a variety of Christian topics.

Wednesdays - 406 Youth Group meets at 6:30 p.m. online via Zoom

Thursday Mornings - This group is Co-Ed! Men and women are invited to join this Bible study at 9:30 a.m. in the chapel. The group uses the Serendipity Bible study method and they are going through the book of Exodus.

Feb. 4-6 - Women's Silent Retreat at St. Benedict Center in Schyler, NE

Feb. 17 - Sloppy Joe Ministry Drop Off at the church. Come between 10-4 to the north circle drive and drop your cooked sloppy joe meat and buns in the bins. The food will be taken to the Stephen Center to be enjoyed by many!

Feb. 17, 24 and March 3, 10 - Worship Matters Small Group meets at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Feb. 18 - InterVarsity & West Hills' Valentine Dance - College-age dance at 7:00 p.m.

Feb. 20 - Crossroads Connection meets at 6:00 p.m. in the sanctuary with meal to follow.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Date change for Men's Game Day. New date is Saturday, April 23 with special guest Pastor Hooker from Bellevue Christian Center! \*\*

# WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT?

# by Marti Bloes, Intergenerational Impact Elder

Comments have been made to me ranging from, "What a great idea to have an Elder devoted to intergenerational matters at West Hills," to "Why do we need an intergenerational Elder? We've been doing that for years here at West Hills." It is true that West Hills has done some crossgenerational activities and mentoring over the years, but we need to become more regular and intentional in being intergenerational. Let me try to explain my vision for this position.

In the early church, families worshiped together. There was an intentional time and space for generations to study the Bible and worship together. Children were able to listen and ask questions of the adults as they learned the scriptures together. Then sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, it became common practice in churches to have separate classes for the children. Children might come into the sanctuary for a short time, hear a children's message and then go off to separate areas for their Bible study.

When children are in the sanctuary with the adults, good things happen. For instance, because a young boy was in the sanctuary with his parents here at West Hills, the congregation now claps after Andy presents the scripture reading for the morning. Yes, it was a child who started that. Imagine how it makes him feel every Sunday when all ages clap because he started it. He can now feel that this is "his" church family. Because we have welcomed them, children do not hesitate to yell out an answer at the appropriate time when Andy asks questions of the congregation. This is the impact of intergenerational worship.



As a congregation, we must help our children become a part of the life of the church by guiding them to participate in many ways, from leading worship on Sundays to sponsoring mission projects and more. Children, youth, and adults of all ages are an essential part of the worshiping congregation. We can all grow stronger in these Christ-centered relationships.



As Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." Paul was saying every person is essential. When an age group is not represented, the body suffers, and worship is not inclusive. It is imperative that we incorporate the gifts and talents of young and old. All ages together reflect the true nature of the church in ministry. Each generation has much to gain from the giving and receiving that happens in a shared environment. And all ages become more engaged in the church as a whole because of relationships formed in intergenerational ministries.

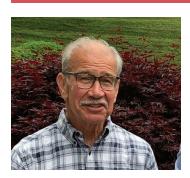
On a Sunday not long ago, I overheard one of our eldest members comment that she had once been in a leadership role at West Hills. This was information I hadn't previously known. When visiting one of our members who can no longer travel to our church building on Sundays, she commented, "I used to be so active at West Hills, and now I don't know anything that's happening there." Through intergenerational ministries, we will be able to hear the stories of those who have so much knowledge about West Hills. These are the folks who have walked where we are and can impart knowledge, encouragement, and love to younger generations.

It is my intention to collaborate with all ministry teams regarding intergenerational opportunities. Relationships are not built solely on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary or in the children's area; we all need to be intentional about building relationships within and across generations. Relationships are everything to God.

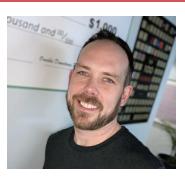
Go build relationships!

# WELCOME NEW ELDERS, DEACON, & NOMINATING TEAM MEMBERS

# **INCOMING ELDERS**



Boyd Dingman
BUILDING & GROUNDS



Chris Hanna
CHILDREN & YOUTH



Marti Bloes
INTERGENERATIONAL
IMPACT



Candy Glasgow MEMBERSHIP



William Scheopner WORSHIP & MUSIC

CURRENT ELDERS			
Caregiving	Karen Lofgren-Anderson		
Finance	Mike Overby		
Mission	Steve Burgess		
Nominating	Peggy Kelley		
Personnel	Gary Anders		
Spiritual Formation	Rick Mason		
Stewardship	Matt Huck		

# **INCOMING DEACON**



Marilyn Moore
CAREGIVING OUTREACH

CURRENT DEACONS					
Caregiving Outreach	Homebound Ministry	Stephen Ministry			
Myrtle Heise	Connie Huck	Cathy Voshell			
Mary Jirak	Deb Johnson	Laura Meyers			
Sheryl Overby	Vacancy	Vacancy			
Ginny Jansen					

NOMINATING TEAM MEMBERS					
Ed Leach	Trink Traudt	Peg Shirley (Incoming)	Dan Travaille (Incoming)	One Deacon that is yet to be determined	

# **WORSHIP OPPORTUNITY!**

# by Kevin Gibson, Director of Worship & Music



# Worship Matters A Four-Week Small Group

Day: Thursdays

Dates: February 17, 24, March 3, 10

Time: 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. Where: Zoom

Facilitator: Kevin Gibson

In this small group, we'll discuss the following topics:

1. What is worship?

- 2. What is biblical worship?
- 3. Who is the audience of worship?
- 4. What does worship do?
- 5. What is the role and function of music and the arts in worship?

For this group, we're using this book, **Essential Worship**. I have several free copies available while supplies last. Or you can purchase a print or Kindle version of the book here.

If you'd like to participate in this group, please contact Kevin at <a href="mailto:kevin@whcomaha.org">kevin@whcomaha.org</a> or call/text 816.517.827O.

# **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:**

# ONE CALL AT A TIME

# by Deb Johnson, Deacon of Homebound Ministry



I talk to my daughter almost every day. She usually calls me on her way home from work after picking up her kids. I look forward to hearing her voice and the voices of my sweet grandkids in the

background. Sometimes the call is just a quick 2 or 3-minute check-in, and other days it turns into a lengthy conversation. No matter how long the call lasts—the best part is that she called!

A call says so much. It says I took time out of my day for you; I was thinking of you; I CARE! At West Hills, we have many opportunities to tell our homebound members that we care. There are 25+ homebound members, or friends of the family, etc. who might need our homebound services.

Homebound ministries provide: 1. Rides to church for our members that are no longer able to drive. (Talk about a great way to build relationships). 2. Homebound Communion (Many relationships can be formed through breaking bread with one another). 3. Homebound Partners, which links homebound members/friends with a contact person who regularly calls, sends cards, and checks in (not only is this a great way to build a relationship, but it's Covid friendly).

If you wish to be a part of any of these homebound offerings, receiving or volunteering to help in one of these areas, please get in touch with Connie Huck 4O2-25O-8875 or Deb Johnson 4O2-96O-8967.

## A call can mean so much!

"A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." Proverbs 11:25 NIV

# CROSSROADS CONNECTION

# by Peg Shirley, Mission Team Member



# **Crossroads Connection is Back!**

West Hills is hosting Crossroads Connection on Sunday, February 2O. Our worship team is leading the worship service at 6:00 p.m. This includes Kevin Gibson serving as the guest preacher and Deena Candler assisting with Communion. Following the service, we'll serve a meal at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. All are welcome to attend the worship service. If you would like to join us for dinner, please give Peg Shirley a call at 402.980.2650 or email her at pjshirley55@yahoo.com, so we can make sure we have enough food for everyone. We have been hosting these events for a few years now. It is a wonderful time of worship and fellowship.

Crossroads Connection is a community of churches in the Omaha metropolitan area who have joined together to assist prison inmates in their transition back to life outside of prison. We work to bridge the gap in the current penal system by helping former inmates find their way back into society through the caring support of Christ's followers. West Hills has participated in these efforts by hosting a worship service and meal. Go to <a href="https://www.crossroadsconnectionne.org/">www.crossroadsconnectionne.org/</a> if you would like to read more about their mission.

# SPIRITUAL CORRESPONDENCE

# by Jana Prescott



Remember, CH ... CH means nothing unless UR in it! It took me a while to think about what this was saying. But wow! UR, in this sense, means YOU ARE! (from Footprints)

I got this comment from a book I have, and to be honest, it did take me a little while to figure out what they were saying to me. I was taking their comment too literally. As I read the beginning, I thought, what can this mean, CH ... CH? I really had to read it all without stopping before I realized that I could "fill in the blank" with "UR," meaning we're all a part of God's church, His creation. So, are you stuck with the beginning of this question and the end of the question, trying to figure out the riddle, or have you figured out that you already know the answer and you belong to the place Jesus is leading us to, His church?

"... you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18) This was a very important comment that Jesus said to Peter, and actually what He said to Peter He is saying now, to each Christian.

# Monday Night Pickleball Starting Soon!

If you've been wanting to learn to play pickleball, right now is a great time to jump in. If you'd like to participate on Monday evenings, or if you would just like to learn how to play, please contact Kevin Gibson at kevin@ whcomaha.org or text/call 816.517.8270.

# BIBLE QUIZ compiled by Gloria Zinn

# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE BIBLE?

- 1. What is the only thing recorded in the Bible that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them?

  A. how to heal the sick B. how to perform some of His miracles C. how to pray D. how to walk on water
- 2. Which prophet warned the Israelites that God "will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord."? A. Jeremiah B. Amos C. Samuel D. Elisha
- 3. Fill in the sentences from Proverbs 29:17: "Discipline your children, and they will give you \_\_\_\_\_." A. love B. joy C. obedience D. peace
- 4. Where in the Old Testament did the Jewish people sign a covenant that they would not intermarry with a heathen (a non-believer in God)? A. Nehemiah B. Leviticus C. Ezekiel D. Zechariah
- 5. Which two disciples healed a man who had been lame since birth and every day was carried and placed beside the Temple gate? A. John and Andrew B. Peter and James C. James and John D. Peter and John
- 6. In what two books in the Old Testament can I find the 10 Commandments?

A. Genesis and Exodus B. Leviticus and Deuteronomy C. Exodus and Deuteronomy D. Deuteronomy and Numbers

- 7. Where did Noah's ark come to rest after the Flood? A. Mount Everest B. The mountains of Asir C. The mountains of Ararat D. Bible doesn't say
- 8. Which of these cities was known as the city of palm trees? A. Jericho B. Jerusalem C. Damascus D. Bethlehem
- 9. What relationship was Aaron to Moses?A. his younger brother B. his cousin C. his uncleD. his older brother
- 10. Which commandment tells us to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy? A. third B. second C. fourth D. ninth
- 11. Who said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" A. Philip B. Nathanael C. Thomas D. Nicodemus
- 12. Who said, "your children obviously sinned against Him, so their punishment was well deserved"? A. Bildad B. Elihu C. Uriah D. Hezekiah

# **JANUARY** Session notes

# Session Approved:

- The Clerk of Session Report for the Annual Report shows a reduction of 53 members in 2021 netting 356 total members of West Hills Church as of January 1, 2022.
- Dissolving the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee Preparation Task Force.
- Job descriptions for Caregiving Deacons.
- Filling two Deacon positions in early 2022.
- Including Strategic Priority activity and Matthew 25 activity in the Elder ministry reports.
- Celebration of Communion on February 20, 2022, at the Crossroads Connection Worship Service.
- Moved the March Session meeting from March 15, 2022 to March 22, 2022.

### Session Tabled:

- The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Task Force mandate and placement in our organizational structure pending written recommendation from the RJR.
- A motion to create a task force to assess the highest use of our property.

To contact Session, send an email to: clerkofsession@whcomaha.org



# **APP SUGGESTION**

How would you like to try a FREE app on your iPhone, computer, or laptop that would bring you daily devotionals, documentaries, commentaries, and testimonials all related to building your faith and understanding God's love for you?

Try the FREE Apps, "Our Daily Bread" or "Our Daily Bread Films!"



If watching videos is your preference, the Our Daily Bread Film app is for you. This app offers daily devotionals on video and commentaries, inspirational

testimonies, and documentaries. One of the documentaries is: "The Holy Land with Dr. John Beck." While watching, you will be taken to regions throughout Israel to experience the land, culture, and customs surrounding the sacred stories of the Bible. Samples of the episodes are "King David's Jerusalem," "Three Faiths," "One Land," and "From Exile to New Hope," just to list a few.



If you prefer to receive a daily audio devotion or like to study the Word using a plan, you might prefer the Our Daily Bread app. Here you will find several reading plans on various

subjects to guide you through the Bible. These plans are great for self-study or within a small group setting. For example, one current reading plan is for Black History Month entitled: "On the Shoulders of Giants." There you will find 28 stories of persistence and determination featuring the lives of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and many other notable Black Americans.

The mission of "Our Daily Bread" is to make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all. In addition to the mobile app, Our Daily Bread can be accessed on Facebook.

suggested by Debbie Chadwick

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Here is a recipe for a nice "comfort meal" perfect for winter from Linda Springsted.

### Chicken Florentine Mac and Cheese



### Ingredients:

1 lb. elbow macaroni

2 C. whole milk

6 T. salted butter

½ C. heavy cream

1 lb. chicken breast cut in small cubes

Salt and pepper to taste

2 cloves minced garlic

½ C. chicken stock

1 C. shredded white cheddar

1 C. fontina or provolone cheese

2 t. cornstarch

8 oz. processed cheese (Velveeta or queso blanco, cubed)

3 C. baby spinach

1 ½ C. halved cherry tomatoes

¼ C. chopped parsley (optional)

Cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.

Heat half of the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook until chicken is browned on all sides and cooked through (about 4 min.). Add garlic, cook briefly. Add chicken stock and scrape brown bits. Add milk, cream and rest of butter (3T.). Stir and cook until sauce is warm and bubbly.

Toss together cheddar, fontina and cornstarch. Add cheese to the pan and stir until melted. Add processed cheese. Simmer until it thickens, then add macaroni, spinach and tomatoes. Stir well to combine and to wilt spinach. Season more if needed. Add parsley if using.

Serve and enjoy!

# **LENT PREVIEW**

# SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

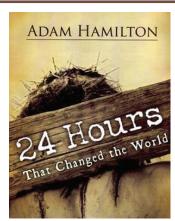
# Ash Wednesday - March 2

Ash Wednesday signifies the beginning of Lent and a time of reflection and repentance from sin.

# Lent - March 2 - April 16

Stay tuned for more special opportunities to connect with God during the Lenten season. We will again publish a Holy Week Devotional Guide and have available the interactive prayer experience in the West Hills prayer garden. More information to follow.

# **Lenten Discipleship Class** on Sunday Mornings!



You're invited to a Lenten study on the book "24 Hours That Changed the World" by Adam Hamilton. Join the discussion and examination of the last 24 hours of Jesus' life as we journey through the Lenten season.

The book states, "No single event in human history has received more attention than the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In this book, Hamilton will help you experience and understand the significance of Jesus' suffering and death like never before. He retraces the day that changed human history in his usual straightforward yet easy, conversational style that speaks to both longtime Christians and those who are simply curious about the story of Christ's crucifixion."

This discussion will be facilitated by Karen Jarvis, at 9:00 a.m. in the chapel beginning Sunday, March 6.

# by Maralee Gifford

# Astronomy and the Bible

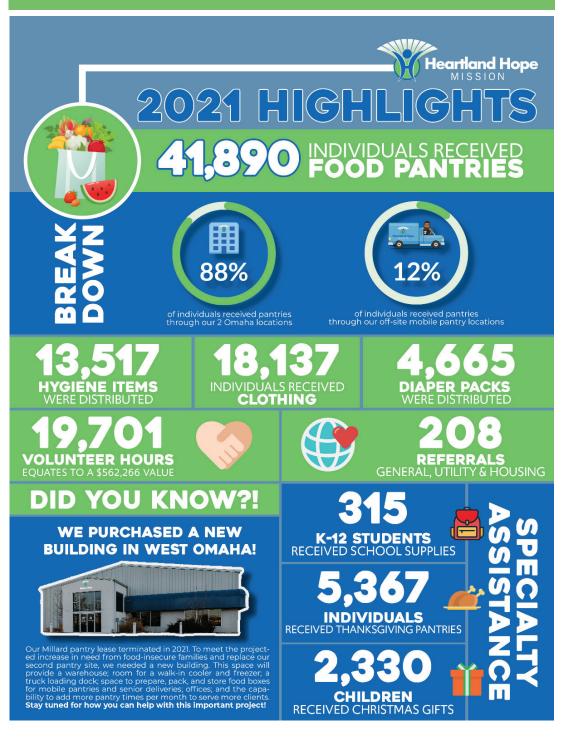


God created the "lights" in the heavens "for signs, and for seasons and for days and years." (Genesis 1:14). Through the marvels of astronomy, we now understand that a year is the time required for the earth to travel once around the sun. The seasons are caused by the changing position of the earth in relation to the sun - "astronomers can tell exactly from the earth's motion around the sun when one season ends, and the next one begins" (Worldbook Multimedia Encyclopedia).

We also now understand that a "month is the time of one revolution of the moon around the earth with respect to the sun" (Encyclopedia Britannica). How could Moses (the accepted author of Genesis) have known 3.500 years ago that the "lights" of the sun and moon were the actual determining factors of the year's length, unless the words were inspired by God?

Comfort, R 2001 Scientific Facts in the Bible: 100 Reasons to Believe the Bible Is Supernatural in Origin, Bridge-Logos **Publishers** 

# YOU HELPED US ACHIEVE ALL OF THIS



Thank you West Hills for your ongoing support!



3015 S 82 Avenue Omaha, Nebraska 68124 402-391-8788 whcomaha.org

# RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



### **FEBRUARY**

1-Linda Lavely
Kayla Wohlgemuth
2-Sheryl Overby
3-Daryl Greger
4-Suzanne Kuhn
6-Steve Dostal
7-Becky Anders
Calvin O'Hare
8-Grace Nodes
11-Ranee Yetts
Terry Bloes

13-Blane Langfelt
16-Carol Isaac
17-Bridget Backer
18-Wilma Hoeven
Sherry Dickey
20-Susan Bailey
Dallas Grafton
Jerry Allen
21-Angie Arner
22-Ben Nodes
23-Kora Kopperud
Marcia O'Donovan

Cathy Voshell
25-Bob Drake
Jackie Harned
Colton Stoffel
Amee Thedens
26-Zy Dozier
27-Dick Frandeen
Ruby Sauer
28-Carl Brady

# **MARCH**

1-Dwight Rickard 5-Jan Richardson 6-Cammy Bridgman 7-Rick Wollen 8-Jane Loeck John Good Sr. 9-Johnny Dunn 10-Tim Briggs

The complete list of March birthdays will be in the March newsletter.