

THE WINDOW

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

January 2021

PERSPECTIVE by Andy Hamer, Pastor

As 2020 wound to a close, Theresa and I took some time out for our annual Christmas date. In lieu of gifts, we usually try to find a meaningful experience to enjoy while we consider the past year of our lives together. This year's date couldn't involve restaurants or theaters, so we decided to head to the hills east of town in order to see the convergence of Jupiter and Saturn. I was struck by a thought as we stood on the windy bluffs that night staring at the light shining on two distant planets. From our perspective the planets were basically touching, but what about things from Jupiter's perspective? The two planets were actually separated by 456 million miles of cold, dark space. What a difference perspective makes.



Imagine, for example, what it would be like if you and I were dropped into 2021 without having experienced 2020. Imagine someone trying to explain to us what is going on and why. To say that we would be overwhelmed would be an understatement. We did experience 2020, and our outlook is different because of it. We enter 2021 in the midst of historic shifts and heartbreaking

losses. Even the first week of 2021 was filled with unprecedented political upheaval. Yet, experience has taught us what we need in these times. We need information from sources that are the most accurate and least biased. We need to rely on community in order to share grief, encourage one another, and creatively adapt. We need to remember those in the margins who are often hit hardest. We need to support those who dedicate their lives to the service of others. Moreover we have found that all of this is encouraged by and made possible through our faith in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Scriptures.

I don't want to gloss over the painful images of a riot in our Nation's Capital or the deadliest week of the pandemic thus far. Yet even in the most troubling of circumstances, when we feel separated from all that is good, there is another perspective waiting for us. Even when miles of cold darkness seem to separate us from God, the heavenly perspective is different. When God looks out to us, he sees Christ standing so close to us that our lights merge together in the darkness. In Christ we are forgiven; we are loved. Christ's light shines on our grief and pain. Christ illuminates our purpose in this time – a purpose that will demonstrate the reality of God's light in the darkness. We are called to care for one another and to look out for the underprivileged and marginalized. We are to be agents of peace, truth, and love. Regardless of what 2021 throws at us, we will keep our eyes open for the comfort and guidance of Christ's light shining around us.

CAREGIVING MINISTRIES by Karen Lofgren-Anderson, Elder of Caregiving

2020 became a year where our four Caregiving Ministry areas were stretched in ways we did not anticipate at the start of the year. We began with one plan, not knowing at the time that God had other plans in store for us. We were resilient and did much brainstorming throughout the year. We identified what was working well and what needed improvement. Together we identified which areas we wanted to continue doing and which one-two areas we wanted to focus on improving. I am proud of our deacons and what they have accomplished with God's help in 2020.

Traditional Care	Covid Safe Care
Annual chili and caroling event to deliver stockings and Christmas cheer to our homebound members	Stocking delivery to the front doors of our homebound members with minimal/no contact.
Face-to-face personal delivery and serving of communion to our homebound members.	Online communion during our worship service.
Face-to-face visit with members in the hospital.	Mailing cards with well wishes.
Focused care related workshops.	No care related workshops.
Reaching out to care receivers face-to-face, phone calls, cards, letters, text messages, and emails.	Reaching out to care receivers through phone calls, cards, letters, text messages, and emails.
Small groups meeting face-to-face.	Small groups meeting through video calls.

January marks the time when our deacons set their 2021 goals and begin planning. We will again reflect upon what went well in 2020 and what we can improve upon. We will continue to strive to provide Christ-centered care to our West Hills members in each of our ministry areas: Caregiving Ambassadors, Practical Needs, Small Groups, and Stephen Ministry.



Ephesians 6:10-14: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, relying on his mighty strength. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the devil's strategies. For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm. For this reason, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to take a stand whenever evil comes. And when you have done everything you could, you will be able to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having fastened the belt of truth around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness. "



January 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. Even though life is different now, and we're connecting in new and different ways, here are notable dates this month in the life of our church.

Sundays in January - Live streaming and in-person worship service @ 10 a.m. For those who won't be joining in-person, you can go to the website to connect by live stream! whcomaha.org/live

First Week of January for the Youth - Confirmation classes resume on January 3 @ 11:30 a.m. and youth group resumes on January 6 @ 6:30 p.m. Contact Luke Burns for more information: luke@whcomaha.org

January 4 - Young adult Bible study begins on the book of Amos @ 1:00 p.m. on Zoom. Contact Luke Burns for more information: luke@whcomaha.org

January 5 - Men's Bible study resumes on Tuesdays @ 6:30 a.m. on Zoom. The men study the sermon scripture for the following Sunday. Contact Greg Schuchmann for more information: gkschuch@gmail.com

January 10 - Ordination service of Dr. Carolyn Grice at 2:00 p.m. The service will be available by live stream and in-person. See "Events" on the website for more information: whcomaha.org

January 20 - Women's Wednesday Bible study @ 9:15 a.m. on Zoom. New study begins on "Jesus in Me: Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion" by Anne Graham Lotz. Contact Jane Loeck for more information: jaloeck@cox.net

January 31 - Annual Congregational Meeting @ 6:30 p.m. See "Events" on the website for more information: whcomaha.org

SAVE THE DATE for FAB FEB FUN! February 6 @ 6:00 p.m. on Zoom. More details to follow.



READY TO LISTEN by Bill Spiecker, Deacon of Stephen Ministry

As I think back about the year we have had and reread Gloria Zinn's letter in the December newsletter, I think West Hills has really come out of the pandemic quite well. We sure have scrubbed and cleaned the areas in the church and put up decorations for Christmas for everyone to see and enjoy (online). The members have supported each other and continue to reach out to make sure we all are OK!! It sure is nice to be a member of a church family that supports all the families during a crisis, pain, or hard times. Do you know that we have a program at West Hills that does reach out to individuals during these times? It is a very special opportunity for anyone that could use a person to listen to them or comfort them or just be there for them and meet with them whenever they are available. The ministry is called Stephen Ministry and we have many trained Stephen Ministers at our church who are ready to be there for someone who is in need of support and/or a listening. A Stephen Minister is always available with just a short call to the church or to one of the Stephen Minister Deacons, who are listed below.

You might wonder what a Stephen Minister really does and why do you might need a Stephen Minister! Well, we all are very proud people and we all say we do not need any help because we can do it on our own. But remember, God is there for you and loves you very much. He reaches out to you daily but we do not always reach out to him daily or ask him for his help!! When meeting with a Stephen Minister, you will enjoy a bond with another person to share your inner most feelings and thoughts. This will start a close relationship with each other and with the Lord. Jesus will help you see the path he has in mind for you as you talk things out and pray with your Stephen Minister. We need this special time with the Lord to feel his presence and closeness so he can help and guide you through whatever is on your mind.



As so many people have mentioned in their letters and in their words, we all have gone through a very difficult time having to “stay at home” and “social distance” with people which is really not our style nor what we really want to do. Now, as the new year (2021) starts and with high hopes that this vaccine will curb the virus, perhaps we all can get our lives back to “normal” soon. Remember that when you are in need of someone to talk to or someone that will listen and be there for you, please consider this very special ministry that is offered to you at the church.



We all have a lot to be thankful for that we have come through a very tough time and we will look back and remember what it was like to be “shut-in” your home with fear and desire to go out and be in public with friends or relatives. Some of these people might have served as your unofficial Stephen Ministers. But with Covid restrictions, suddenly you need someone to talk with to get things off your chest. This is the time to call and set up a time to meet with a friendly person who has been trained to listen, take time for you, be there for you, comfort you, plus enjoy seeing and meeting with you! During Covid, a Stephen Minister may not meet with you directly but can talk to you about anything over the telephone, if that is more comfortable. Call now and we will match you up with a Stephen Minister to meet with to get things off of your chest. Here are the Stephen Minister Deacons. They have the list of Stephen Ministers to go over to match you up with someone to meet with or talk over the phone with. There is always a good time to call one of us.

Bill Spiecker #402-677-4437
bill.spiecker@gmail.com

Cathy Voshell #402-301-9434
rcvcav85@gmail.com

Laura Meyers #402-490-0974
meyersla@cox.net

NEW SERMON SERIES



The next sermon series, **First Steps**, is based on Jesus' first steps into ministry.

January 10 - With the Father - Luke 2:41-52

January 17 - Marked by Humility - Matthew 3:13-17

January 24 - Fasting and Temptation - Luke 4:1-4

January 31 - Authority and Power - Luke 4:5-14

February 7 - Rejection - Luke 4:16-30

February 14 - Strategic Ministry - Mark 1:14-28

February 17 - Ash Wednesday

SPIRITUAL CORRESPONDENCE

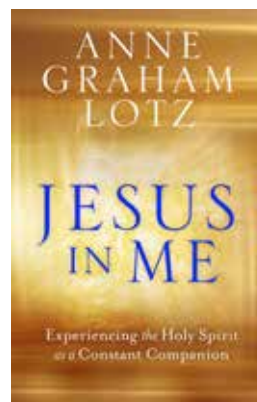
by Jana Prescott



How is God these days to you and me? I have come to the point, definitely with God's grace, to live my life constantly trying to remember that no matter what is happening physically all over this world (and I do mean this whole wide

world), God is still with everyone that holds Him above all that is going on any place we could see, read, or hear about. God is holding our hearts no matter where we are, which for 99.9 percent of us is at home. You know, there are so many places I want to go, with my wheelchair being my traveling companion. I'm sure you all want to go places too. But if we all could realize that even though we are feeling stuck, we really aren't. We may feel stuck physically, but God is in each and every one of our hearts, keeping us alive; keeping us steady; keeping our minds and our hearts tuned to an adventure that is just around the corner!

NEW WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY



Join us starting on Wednesday, January 20, for a video study and discussion group based on "**Jesus in Me: Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion**," by Anne Graham Lotz.

We will meet from 9:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. via Zoom, and the group will run for at least eight weeks. Come discover how to better love and rely on the person of the Holy Spirit and embrace how much He loves you.

There is a study guide and an optional reading book to accompany this class. Open to all women.

To register, please email jaloeck@cox.net

THREE WORDS FOR KIDS

Did you know that each week on the pre-serviceslideshowandintheDetailssectionoftheonlineworship,therearethreespecial words for you to listen for during worship. The words can come at any time during worship,sokeepyourears tunedforthem. You might even want to count how many times you hear them!

Ask your parents to send an email to jessica@whcomaha.orgifyouhearallthree words!

THE PRAYER WARRIORS OF WEST HILLS CHURCH by Gloria Zinn

For many of you who are reading this article you can identify with the title, for there are over 65 dedicated prayer warriors at our church. A prayer warrior is someone who has volunteered to actively pray for someone who is requesting a prayer for a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a co-worker, or themselves...whom the prayer is for doesn't matter.



Jesus was the greatest example of a prayer warrior and by studying his life on earth we can learn how to pray, and that no matter what the prayer request may be God's will, will be done. The prayer warrior understands that it may be heartbreaking for someone when a prayer is answered in a way one is not anticipating, but an unoffered prayer can be an even larger heartbreak. Granted, God knows the plans He has made for our lives, but He also wants us to continue praying for one another, no matter what the outcome. In Galatians 6:2 we are told: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." We are limited, unlike God, to see the whole picture, so we must trust in Him and His request that we continue to pray for one another.

That beautiful Shirley Nelson, who recently went to live with Christ, started the prayer chain at West Hills many, many years ago. She believed so strongly in prayer, no matter what the outcome, that even when she experienced some heavy tragedies in her life she never stopped. She was fond of saying that prayer takes "time, effort and practice." Some people may shy away from becoming a member of the West Hills prayer warriors because they feel their prayers would be inadequate or in their experience God "hasn't answered any of my prayers the way I thought He would, so why should I pray for someone I don't even know?" Shirley said, "It is the Holy

Spirit's job to intervene and as followers we must believe that God always hears us, but doesn't always answer as we would like him to." Prayer warriors understand that, and that knowledge does not discourage them from continuing with their commitment as a prayer warrior. Their trust is firmly planted in God's ever faithful word.

In 2017, Carolyn Collins responded to Shirley Nelson's continued request in the church bulletin for help with all the prayer requests she had been receiving. Shirley continued to do as much as she could in answering the many prayer requests until she became too ill and asked Carolyn to take over. Carolyn said, "No one could replace Shirley; when she prayed for you, you knew you were prayed for!" Through the prayer requests Carolyn receives every week, she emails those requests to the West Hills prayer warriors, sometimes two or three a day, with specific information concerning the prayer request, and often some suggestions or guidance for a warrior's prayer for that person.

Carolyn stated that since the Covid epidemic the prayer chain has been a way to keep people involved with one another, as it has taken the place of the joys and concerns we have shared for years during our church services before being quarantined. She shared, "I've always felt that West Hills was a praying church and by sharing our joys and concerns on the prayer chain it keeps us connected." Carolyn also reported since Covid the requests for prayers have increased. The first two weeks of December, for example, fourteen prayer requests were sent to Carolyn. In Philippians we read, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." This time has been very difficult in our beautiful world and our concerns are real, yet we need not carry them alone. Whether they be of a personal or global concern, one can find peace in knowing there are a very faithful group of men and women who are praying for you, no matter what your prayer request may be.

If you want to request a prayer or become a prayer warrior for West Hills Church, you can send an email to Carolyn Collins at: carolyn4nu@aol.com or you can call her at: **402-331-7481**. To join the many others who are prayer warriors would be a great way to start a new year!

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER *Session notes*



Egg Casserole

Here is a recipe for an egg casserole that can be used for breakfast, dinner or brunch. Versatile and yummy!!

1 lb. bacon, ham or sausage
1 medium onion, chopped
6 eggs, beaten
4 cups frozen shredded hash browns (thawed)
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
1 ½ cups small curd cottage cheese
1 1/3 shredded Swiss cheese

Mix all together. (Can be made night before). Put in 9 x 13 pan and bake 35-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

suggested by Maralee Gifford

- Carolyn Grice will make a presentation to Session during the January Meeting regarding becoming a Matthew 25 Church.
- Carolyn Grice's Ordination Service will be held on Sunday, January 10, 2021, at 2:00 pm at West Hills Church.
- The 2021 budget has a shortfall of \$100,000.
- Session will complete the final review of the 2021 budget and approve during the January meeting.
- The Personnel Committee submitted changes to the Holiday Leave Policy.
- The West Hills Church Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on January 31, 2021.

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

The 2020 annual report will be available electronically and in hard copy on Sunday, January 24, 2021

The West Hills Church Annual Congregational Meeting will be on Sunday, January 31, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM CAMEROON

**From Dorothy Tanwani of Aid International
- Christian Women Of Vision**

It is always a pleasure to exchange hearty words of love and peace with you during this season of joy and happiness! We are overjoyed and full of gratitude to God for enabling us carry on from the beginning of the year right up to this point. By the grace of God, we were able - in the course of the year - to reach out to the vulnerable widows, orphans, people living with HIV, survivors of gender based violence, and internally displaced people, by improving their livelihood through providing them with nutritional support, school fee, foot bills for medical health support, carry out trainings on income generating activities (IGA), etc. Many thanks to our partners for moral, material and financial support.

But all these did not go without hitches. The prevalent socio-political and economic crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Region of Cameroon, where we are based, intensified in the course of the year, giving room for frequent lock downs that hindered our work, and even led to the suspension of some of our planned activities like workshops. Also, education in this region has not been very effective due to kidnaps and arbitrary killings. Thus, most of the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in our care decided to study in other regions away from Bamenda. Due to the crisis too, some of our volunteers were abducted and huge sums of money demanded for their ransom

Another situation that greatly strained our work this year was the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the early days of the virus, we could hardly meet with our beneficiaries, and whenever we did, the meeting or workshop had to be split into session taken on separate days in order to comply with the measures instituted by the WHO and our government to curb the spread of the virus. This kept us safe but was more costly and time consuming.

Nevertheless, we are grateful to God that despite all these disturbing situations, we are still alive and healthy and able to share in the joy of Christmas. We hope that the light of Christmas will brighten your hearts and ours, and lead us in the way of rebirth and everlasting salvation.

Please accept warm seasonal greetings from Al-ChrisWOV beneficiaries, volunteers, and staff.

Merry Christmas!!! And Happy New Year.

*The Lord says there is hope for the future,
Jeremiah 31:17*



THANK YOU WEST HILLS for your generosity to **God's Gift Shop in 2020**. Through your kindness, eleven families (20 children) from Westgate School received Christmas gifts from our congregation. Internationally, these three mission partners received an extra measure of holiday giving beyond the monthly support West Hills provides: Christian Women of Vision (ChrisWOV) - \$550, For His Children - \$180 and Pastor Rafael - \$180. Thank you for blessing all mission partners throughout the year locally and abroad.

MOVIE SUGGESTION



"A Question of Faith" centers on three families in crisis who find themselves questioning both God and their faith.

The three families include: Pastor David, a loving husband and father, Kate, a faithful single parent, and John, the owner of a failing construction company.

The individual worlds of these families start to merge as they deal with their conflict and they find themselves being drawn closer together. Critic Kam Williams of the Baret News calls, "(A Question of Faith) A very moving tale of redemption which not only reveals God's Grace but makes a case for cross cultural tolerance that's sorely needed in these divided times."

This 104-minute DVD stars: T.C. Stallings (Courageous, War Room), Richard T. Jones (Concussion, Criminal Minds), C. Thomas Howell, (Woodlawn).

The movie is available to rent on Amazon Prime for \$4.00

suggested by Debbie Chadwick

BOOK REVIEW

"Imagine spending five years seeing countless doctors, undergoing tests, and accumulating massive medical bills but still no diagnosis. Then a miracle, in a remote wilderness area gave you the name to your condition."

This is the true story of author, Gwen Marie Johnson (A.K.A.: A.B. LIEVER).

In her journey, Johnson experienced: Divine intervention, God speaking to her through other people, and unbearable pain.

Then finding herself in a "new place" (heaven) although only a visit, she received a powerful message and her questions are answered.

This book recounts Johnson's story, her near death experience, prayers, and introduces her "gratitude journal."

Her message? Miracles do happen!

The author, a friend of this congregation's Wendi Meyer, graduated with distinction on a Regent's Scholarship from the University of Nebraska's College of Dentistry with a bachelor of science in dental hygiene.

suggested by Debbie Chadwick



Save the Date!! February 19-21

Looking for a way to escape the "insanity" and spend some quiet time with Jesus? Put this date on your calendar. We have a tentative weekend scheduled for St. Benedict's Monastery for our women's silent retreat. We will of course take appropriate precautions as required by St. Ben's in accordance with state and local regulations.

The winter edition of
"These Days" has arrived.

If you'd like the devotional
guide sent to your home,
call the church office at
402-391-8788 or email us at
info@whcomaha.org

BIBLE QUIZ

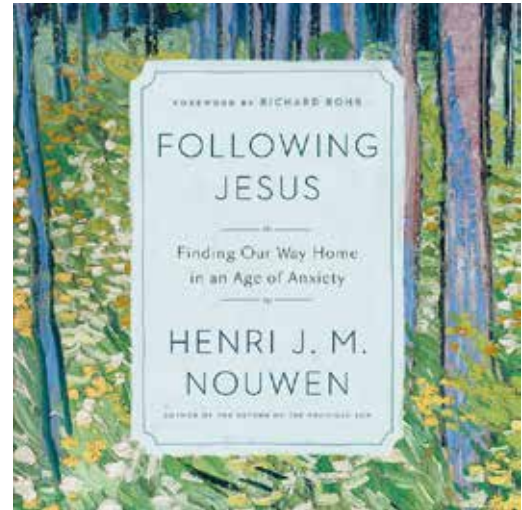
NEW YEAR - NEW STUDY

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE BIBLE?

1. In which book of the Bible can I find the story about David killing the giant, Goliath?
A) Corinthians B) Genesis C) 1 Kings D) 1 Samuel
2. What former prostitute can be found in the genealogy of Jesus? A) Delilah B) Rehab
C) Jezebel D) Gomer
3. In which book in the Bible can I find the 7 "I am" statements? A) Luke B) Exodus C) John
D) Mark
4. Joseph received a message in a dream after Jesus was born to take his family to:
A) Jerusalem B) Hebron C) Rome D) Egypt
5. Who disguised herself as a prostitute, slept with her father-in-law and bore him twin sons, one who became an ancestor of Jesus?
A) Esther B) Tamar C) Ruth D) Miriam
6. Why did the Israelites, who were once free living in Egypt, become slaves? Because the Pharaoh feared them due to their growing numbers that they: A) Would inter-marry with the Egyptians B) Would turn them away from the Egyptian gods to the Israelite God C) Would rise up and defeat the Egyptians D) Would leave Egypt and cause financial hardship in Egypt
7. Where in the Bible can I find the 10 Commandments Moses gave to the Israelites?
A) Genesis B) Deuteronomy C) Numbers D) Exodus
8. Who named Jesus? A) Joseph B) Zechariah
C) An Angel D) Anna, the Prophetess
9. Which prophet prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem 700 years before his birth? A) Micah B) Isaiah C) Samuel D) Obadiah
10. What words complete this Psalm? O give _____ to the Lord, for He is _____; for His steadfast love _____.
11. After Moses died, who became the leader of the Israelites going into the Promised Land?
A) Ahab B) Joshua C) Nehemiah D) Caleb
12. **Who was the only man in the Bible to be referred to as being naturally bald? A) Samson
B) Jacob C) Elisha D) Esau

**Bible Trivia by Timothy Parker

(answers on the back page)



Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety by Henri J.M. Nouwen

(A Six-Session Zoom Conversation)

During the Lenten season, be reminded once again what it means to follow Jesus, even in a time when anxiety abounds. One of the benefits in participating in a group like this is connecting with others and finding encouragement as we are on the journey together of becoming more Christ-like.

Listed below are the six-sessions:

- The Invitation: "Come and See"
- The Call: "Come Follow Me"
- The Challenge: "Love Your Enemies"
- The Cost: Take Up Your Cross"
- The Reward: "My Joy Will Be Yours"
- The Promise: "I Will Be with You Always"

This discussion group is meeting on Thursdays, February 11 - March 18, 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

Your tour guide for this group is Kevin Gibson. If you'd like to participate in the conversation, please contact him at kevin@whcomaha.org, or call/text at 816.517.8270.

We put an exclamation mark on the Season of Advent with our Christmas Eve service. The embellishments certainly added to the worship environment, along with having live music, including the addition of a cello. Below are some photos of what the setting looked like for this service.



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES THE PATH TO TRANSFORMATION

Below are some questions that you could use to help guide you in the year ahead to become more Christ-like. The questions were created by Rich Villodas, Pastor of New Life Fellowship, Elmhurst, New York.

1. What are the spiritual disciplines you need to cultivate to keep you connected to God?
2. What are the spiritual practices of self-care you need to attend to your body and nurture your soul?
3. What core relationships do you need to support you on your journey?
4. What are the gifts, passions, and burdens within you that God wants you to express for the blessing of others?



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



JANUARY

2-Verne DeHaven
3-Nancy Chesire
4-Laura Meyers
5-Greg Kuhn
6-Rick Westcott
Braxton Barko
8-Liz Pittack
11-Laura Loewens
13-Tom Thompson
Steve Burgess

14-Grant Thomas
16-Jenny Anderson
19-Sue Krahmer
Olivia Willie
20-Rosa Norman
23-Robyn Curran
24-Trink Traudt
25-Linda Fouts
26-Darlene Burham
27-Rorric Barnes
28-Jim Love

30-Boyd Dingman
Jill Nelson
Lisa King
Trent Zimmerman
31-Mike Brigman

FEBRUARY

1-Linda Lavelly
Kayla Wohlgemuth
2-Sheryl Overby
3-Daryl Greger
4-Suzanne Kuhn

5-Katie Northouse
Dreya Aspegren
Brecken Aspegren
6-Steve Dostal
Brett Curran
7-Dee Buckley
Becky Anders
Calvin O'Hare
8-Ray Huck
Grace Nodes