

February 2026

ECHO ECHO

Newsletter of the Washington Church of the New Jerusalem

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## From the Pastor

Washington New Church Echo, February 2026

The storm was two thousand miles wide, which is the kind of number that makes you picture a satellite photo and a deep-voiced narrator saying, “Nature... is displeased.” But here’s the thing about weather: it can span half a continent and still become extremely

personal in the last twelve feet between your front door and the part of your driveway where your car would theoretically like to exist.

On the news, it was an event. On my property, it is now a permanent installation.

Around here, I have come to believe, the official snow-removal strategy is called *Hope*. Specifically: Hope that the temperature will pop above freezing within a day or two, and the sun will do the heavy lifting while we all go back to pretending we are competent adults who live in a modern society.

This week, Hope filed a leave request. It has been bitterly cold since the snow fell. Oh, it got almost above freezing briefly at the end of the storm, but that just means the “snow” quickly graduated into *layers*. Snow first. Then sleet. Then freezing rain. And since then, no sign of temps above thirty-two. If you live in a sane climate, you may hear “freezing rain” and imagine delicate icicles and the kind of sparkling beauty that makes people take photos. In my driveway it has produced something that appears to be a low-budget glacier, shipped in flat-pack form and assembled by Satan.

And as with all modern disasters, the true crisis is not the weather. It is *supply chains*.

I have not been able to buy ice melt salt since three days *before* the snow fell. You might be thinking, “Surely you could find some now.” Friend, it is now four days after, and the shelves are still as bare as the expression on my face when I realized I’d be learning new uses for medieval tools.

Salt, in our region, might become the new currency. Money is fine for small things like groceries and gasoline, but when it comes to the real essentials—traction, walkability, a sense of control over one’s own life—your flimsy paper dollars cannot compete with a blue bag labeled MELT.

I have pictured myself approaching a neighbor like a character in a post-apocalyptic movie.

“Psst. Hey. You got any... salt?”

He would glance both ways, then open his coat to reveal a box of kosher and three bags of pink Himalayan. My wife seriously wondered if maybe we should use the Epsom salt bath crystals we have in our bathroom. Cause nobody I know has big bags of proper ice melt. Those are for oligarchs and people who somehow planned ahead without being mocked as “panicked shoppers.”

I am forced to admit I mocked the panicked shopping. Especially at Trader Joe’s. I saw the carts piled high with emergency provisions like it was the last helicopter out of Saigon, and I laughed because I am wise and rational.

But it turns out that a week’s supply of Pirate Booty was indeed an appropriate purchase.

Not for nutrition, obviously. Pirate Booty is not food. Pirate Booty is a morale system. Pirate Booty is the crunchy reassurance that you are still technically alive and not just an ice-bound mammal gnawing on chair legs while the driveway evolves into a new geological era.

At a certain point I stopped thinking of the driveway as something to clear and started thinking of it as “our ice mine”. We went out in shifts. Actual shifts. Like our home had been converted into an ice mining company, except without the benefit of hard hats, paychecks, or that jaunty whistling you hear in old movies when men go off to work at a mine.

The snow shovel was the first thing to lose its job. Then the garden spade got blunted and stopped being useful. We actually escalated to using a crowbar and a pick. Nothing makes you feel more like a pioneer than standing in your suburban driveway attacking the ground with a tool that looks like it should come with a warning about black lung and cave-ins.



Somewhere in the middle of this, I heard a rumor that someone in our congregation had tried a flamethrower.

Now. I want to be clear. I do not *know* that this happened. I heard it the way you hear that someone saw Bigfoot behind Walmart. But I

choose to believe it happened because it is spiritually important that it happened.

The story is that the flamethrower couldn't be kept lit.

Which makes perfect sense, I suppose. Or at least narrative sense, if you believe the world is out to get all of us now.

And even with heavy duty tools, you chip and chip and chip, and what you get for your labor is a small square of exposed driveway the size of a placemat. The ice does not "come up" so much as it grudgingly acknowledges that you are there. It's like trying to evict a glacier that has a law degree.

Meanwhile, on the big-picture scale, officials are still talking about plowing strategies and priorities and "main routes." In other words: *roads that are not my driveway*. The streets in parts of DC are still unplowed, which adds a delightful civic flavor to the whole thing. Like, sure, we are about to send actual human beings out to the actual moon again (look it up), but we cannot reliably remove frozen water from paved surfaces in the nation's capital.

I have also lost track of what day it is.

At first this might seem concerning, like the beginning of a mental break of some sort. But it turns out it can be... fine? When everything outside is white and gray and frozen solid, the weekdays lose their authority. Tuesday stops bossing you around. Wednesday becomes a rumor. You exist in a simpler calendar consisting of only three times:

1. Before Ice
2. Ice
3. After Ice (mythical)

Now there are early forecasts predicting another big snow this coming weekend. It's too early to tell if it will hit us. Meteorologists, at this point, are basically celebrity fortune-tellers with "European Models," waving their hands and saying "we shall see" about another "thumping" of snow.

My only hope is that either the snow doesn't come or salt supplies come in. Or maybe I'll just build an ice wall and wait for dragons to come free us.

In all seriousness, though, I hope you are warm, safe, and not too worn out from chipping away at your own personal ice mine.

\* \* \*

Okay. I think humor is important, especially when things become difficult. For me, humor isn't denial; it's a pressure valve. But I also have something serious to say about world events, and it's not very funny, nor is it entirely happy. If you only have the emotional bandwidth today for something light, feel free to stop reading here. You are not obligated to wrestle with all the world's ills all of the time.

\* \* \*

So. Here's my serious note:

There's a lot going on right now. As you well know. Americans are at each other's throats in some places, people are getting killed, people are being targeted in various ways, and it's ugly. The quality of rhetoric has plummeted to new lows, and not everyone can even agree on what might otherwise seem to be fundamental facts, let alone on how to interpret and respond to events.

In the broader world, we have just seen a government murder maybe thousands of their own citizens in a short span of time. An expansionist war rages on in Europe, and some fear it will broaden even further. Tensions are rising in Asia, as well.

I might be tempted to throw my hands up and declare humanity a mistake. But I don't, of course, because, in the Lord's providence, there is no evil allowed into the world without there being some good that rises up as well, whether to confront it, to bring succor to its victims, or to build up in one place while things fall down in another. And the world is full of good deeds, beautiful sights, and amazing wonders that stand completely independent of the works of hell. The Lord God Jesus Christ rules the heavens and the earth, and His rule will never end. So what to do?

Read the Word. Pray. Gather with your neighbors and worship. Look in your own heart and tear out anything you see that is not loving and wise. Find ways of seeking and serving the good that is somewhere within every other person ever born. Change your habits so you do less harm and from there more good. Love.

Don't be shocked that there's evil in the world, and don't ever think you know for certain that you're not a contributor to its work. Do your best and trust in the Lord.

Like I said, stay warm, get safe, and I hope you find rest from your labor when you need it.

*"I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)*

Rev. Glenn "Mac" Frazier, Pastor

### ***Future WNC Office Management***

The board and pastors are slowly admitting that Bonnie has not agreed to cover WNC's front office for the rest of time, and so we're beginning to think about the next steps to prepare for an eventual transition. No retirement has been announced. Also, this is not a formal job posting. Rather, we are in ongoing conversation with Bonnie about eventual transition with an eye to making that smooth and successful. Mac and I would also like to be in conversation with anyone who might have an interest in supporting some of the tasks that Bonnie has covered over the years. Your interest might be in full-or-part-time positions. It might be in paid or volunteer roles. You might be drawn to specific parts of the function and have no interest in other parts. If you have any of these interests, we would love to hear from you to keep these vital functions well served. Please contact Mac, Brian, or Bonnie.

### ***From the Board of Trustees***

The Board of Trustees held a joint meeting with the School Board on December 2, 2025, and a regular monthly meeting on January 13, 2026. A primary topic of discussion at both meetings was the

process and search for a replacement for Rev. Brian Smith, and a transition plan. Financial reports show that we are on track for contributions and tuition payments but are still forecasting a deficit for this year. The board approved some clarifying edits to the Scholarship fund documents. School tuition and staffing were covered, and there was significant discussion on strategies to get us onto more solid financial footing in the coming years, including marketing and fundraising. Several new students have joined the school during this year, so there is anecdotal evidence that the new marketing campaign is bearing fruit. The Treasurer has developed a draft budget for the next fiscal year and is awaiting final staffing decisions for our school and salary/benefit decisions from the General Church before finalizing. Due to the recent focus on staffing and backfilling for Brian, the Board agreed with Rev. Mac Frazier that we will not hold a Winter Society meeting this year but will instead focus on preparing for the Annual Society meeting in May. The next Board meeting will be on Tuesday, February 10.

## From the Theta Alpha Guild



**Please email me to Pre-Order: [bonnie.cowley@washnew-](mailto:bonnie.cowley@washnew-)**

## Acton Park News:

Nature Trail Reroute. Acton Park will be rerouting parts of the nature trail away from a perennially wet and eroded section originally placed in the floodplain. Engineering flags will mark the proposed route that will run from the picnic area across the bridge WNCs students are building. Contact **David Radcliffe** if you would like more information or would like to offer recommendations or changes to the proposed route. He'd be happy to walk it with you if you'd like.



**To sign up to compete** – contact [brian.smith@washnew-church.org](mailto:brian.smith@washnew-church.org) by February 21<sup>st</sup> – All welcome to watch, enjoy refreshments, and cheer on your favorite players.

## 2026 Feb Echo News Notes

### News? Why Not?

How are you doing with your New Year's Resolutions? If you have lapsed, welcome to the club. If you are still going strong, please keep it a secret, for as Mark Twain is said to have observed, "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example."



## Weather:

How can we write these Notes without acknowledging that mother nature has brought us to a standstill once again? The record-breaking snow at the end of January, followed by an unwelcome layer of ice, has closed down our part of the world for an indeterminate length of time, and as we sit here by the window we can observe the north wind dragging away whatever heat was left in the atmosphere, leaving us with negative feelings of the wind chill variety.



*Photo by AP neighbor, Heather Brown.*

Some of us found that sitting by the window also produced some positive feelings by revealing that community and neighborliness is still in fashion. Many Acton Park neighbors could be seen walking around with shovels over their shoulders to help with a “shovel out”, which,

by the way, was made possible by **Aaron and Kevin Smith** who cleared Chantilly Lane and the church parking lot so people could actually walk around. They did the hard work of clearing icy snow piles such as those that had been deposited on our driveways by flying snowplows. Thank you, friends.

## Acton Park:

We are informed by the company that is contracted to install a solar farm on Acton Park property that they currently plan to begin construction “in a few weeks”. If you have ever wondered just how long a “few” weeks are, you will “soon” find out. It is interesting to note that the contract for this project was signed in December 2019, which should give you some idea of how time flies here.

## Visitors:

It was nice to see (and hear on Sunday) former Washington Society Pastor **Rev. Jim Cooper** in early January, and to visit with Jim

and wife **Karen** for a while. It seems our 20+ degree weather was considered “the warm south” to those denizens of the north country, AKA Toronto. (We would have been OK if they had kept the cold North winds to themselves.)

We also welcomed **Sean Connelly**, President of the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, who followed our winter banquet with a presentation on the state of the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Sean described the agonizing but necessary steps the College has been taking, and will continue to take, to recover from severe financial difficulties. Many small colleges are undergoing similar travails, but not all have survived. He described BAC’s renewed emphasis on academics and new initiatives such as the Ethical Foundations Honors Program and expressed his confidence that the College’s 150-year role in the life and growth of the General Church will continue.

### **Condolences:**

We are sorry to report that **Beverly Brown Ball** (Steve Ball’s mom) passed into the Spiritual World at the age of 89 at her residence outside Charlottesville, Virginia, on the morning of Friday, January 23, 2026. She is survived by her brother and her two children (Steve and Val), five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. She always enjoyed visiting the Washington Society, worshiping with us, and catching up with her many friends here. Our condolences to **Steve and Anne Ball** and their family.

Also, we were sad to hear of the passing of **Robert Caldwell** on the day after Christmas. Bob attended the ANC high school and later served as a Lt. Col. in the US Air Force, where he was a fighter pilot. He worked at a law firm in New York for many years, and after he retired, **Bob and wife Kay (Kintner)** moved to Virginia. Bob was 85.

### **Congratulations:**

To **John and Becca Kunkle** (and grandparents **Bill and Sharon Kunkle**) on the birth of **Tristan Joseph Kunkle**, born December 31 at 8:53pm -7 lbs., 20.25 inches. Mom and baby are doing well.

## More of Same:

**Dedication:** After a year and a half of living in temporary housing, **Erin Stillman** has re-occupied her renovated home, which was dedicated with much singing and food on Saturday Jan. 24th. The contractor, his foreman and their families and her family attended. Erin observed that it is great to be back to serving the uses that she and Barry love so much. Erin also had a wonderful

group of friends join her to get snowed in by our recent storm so that they could spend the next four days digging her out. She said that she loves this congregation; that even though we might not be perfect, we do know how to serve with love and gladness.



*Sledding on Erin's hill*

## They're Back:

School has resumed, and the building resonates with ...well, noise. But that is a good sound, for it is a sign of our future, which apparently includes the close examination of pig hearts. A more tasteful selection of classrooms would lead to peanut butter fudge, though, so not all is lost.

## Other good News:

Bowie Food Pantry Donations are still in vogue. David Radcliffe makes a weekly Monday morning run with donations to the Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry. If you have items you would like to contribute, contact David to arrange a pickup or handoff.

## Thought For Today, courtesy of Ogden Nash:

Sometimes with secret pride I sigh  
To think how tolerant am I;  
Then wonder which is mine;  
Tolerance, or a rubber spine?



*Rescheduled!*

*"The dessert and Hors  
d'oeuvre Contest"*

Sat *March 7<sup>th</sup>* @ 7pm

@ Brent & Amanda's

All welcome - college age on up - *details* ↓ ↓ ↓

*Do I need to bring anything?* Yes – 2 choices: Bring a snack (chips, crackers etc. to share) or enter the contest by bringing your signature hors d'oeuvre or dessert for all to share, and to be judged by all.

*Are there prizes?* Maybe, mostly bragging rights!

### *February Anniversaries*

*"It is instinctive in a wife's love to unite her husband's will to her own, for in this way a wife becomes one who belongs to her husband, and the husband one who belongs to his wife. Thus, the two become one person."*

*Emanuel Swedenborg, CL 196*

*Feb 12<sup>th</sup> ~ John & Mary Ellen Kern ~ 49 yrs.*