

The U N I T E R

*First United Church is a place where
God's love, our faith, and real life intersect.*



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July 2024

- 4 – *HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!*
- 7 – Worship
- 8 – **Youth & Family**
- Program planning meeting**
- 9 – Ad Council reports due
- 14 – Worship
- 16 - Ad Council
- 18 - Volunteer at Food Shelf
- LIFE LINE SCREENING
- 21 – Worship
- 28 – Worship
- *August Uniter deadline*
- 30 – PPR

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Carla Brenner and her family would like to express their sincere thanks and gratitude to you for praying for Carla for seven and a half years:

Carla’s cancer is in remission!

From the Open and Affirming Coalition to their members – including First United Church:

Welcome the newest ONA church in the Minnesota Conference!
Dear ONA family:

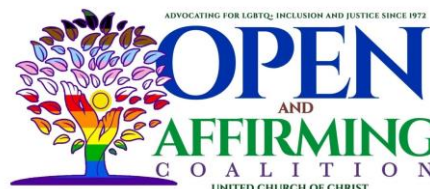
Please join us in welcoming First United Church in Little Falls as a newly-certified Open and Affirming congregation!

As ONA church #1,885, First United Church is now part of the largest and fastest-growing LGBTQ-affirming church movement in the world! We’re proud of the congregation and grateful to the church’s leadership for the hard work that led to this milestone in their history.

Please join the entire Open and Affirming movement in celebrating First United Church, and join us in prayer that their ONA covenant will be a blessing to their LGBTQ+ neighbors.

Blessings,

The Rev. Dr. Katrina Roseboro-Marsh
Open and Affirming Executive Director
Pronouns: she/her



Please hold the following in your prayers:

**LaVonne Adams, Lesli and David Barsody’s Son-in-Law Zach,
Marty Cole, Pete Hall, Cathy Hartle & Doug Larsen, Steve Johnson,
Kenneth Lowe and Family, Andrea Lauer’s Grandson Chad,
Mary Jean Stobb, Cindy West, Jerry Wiczek,
Julie Witucki’s Nephew Auggie, Les & Maxine Wolff**



Opportunities for Service:

BE the church! Sign-up sheets on the oak table in the back of the sanctuary for:



Hospitality – Be in charge of a specific coffee hour. If you have not done this before, please don’t hesitate to contact the office.

Greeters: Welcome all to Sunday Worship.

The Worship Team and church office are asking for a volunteer to coordinate scheduling Sunday scripture readers. This can be done from home and it’s a great way to connect with fellow church members! If you are interested in doing this, please contact the church office.



THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!



All are invited to join us by logging on via Zoom to join our weekly worship services.

If you would like to view our past services, recordings of each service are uploaded on our YouTube channel. Please contact the office at firstuniteldf@gmail.com if you would like to receive weekly Zoom log on details via email and/or link to our YouTube channel. You can log on to our 9:30 Worship Service via Zoom by clicking the dated button on our church home page www.firstuniteldf.org

If you do not have a computer, you are welcome to join our services via phone.
Contact the church office if you have any questions.

Weekly Receipts – June 2024

Date	Amt. Budgeted	Amt. Received
6/2/24	\$3,288.00	\$2,057.00
6/9/24	3,288.00	987.00
6/16/24	3,288.00	3,044.00
6/23/24	3,288.00	2,835.00
6/30/24	3,288.00	920.00



MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

My Friends in Christ,

One of my favorite historical people is George Washington. And while no one is perfect; especially those who were a part of a culture that owned slaves or was dominated by patriarchy, our first President was a person of conviction, devotion to ideals of freedom, and had an ability to see well into our future. His “Farewell Remarks” ought, in my humble opinion, be required reading of any citizen. But in favor of brevity, I want to share one of my other favorite writings titled: “To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport by George Washington.” ([From George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport ... \(archives.gov\)](#)) I’ve included the link, but here is the text where President Washington said:

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and a happy people.

*The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. **All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.***

*It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. **May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.***

The bold is my doing to highlight this July. George Washington in writing to this Jewish congregation, is reminding us that we should be tolerant, we should not cow to bigotry, we must offer every class of people inalienable rights, not just those who look like us or live like us or worship like us. We should support our United States of America that offers us the opportunity to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, non-believing, or whatever other choice or religion we can think of. And although we, friends, follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

we must allow for others to find their “fig tree” or “vine” and only offer them the light of our one God through whom we were all created.

I share this message this July, yes because we celebrate our independence this month, but also because we need to remember that these United States we so patriotically call our own represent a freedom and a choice to allow freedoms. It represents the best of us in terms of our collective moral obligations and the idea that a multitude of peoples could come together under one umbrella for the betterment of all; the worst of us when our individuality divides us and our bigotries and fears impact the freedoms of others.

You may think it weird that a Christian pastor would include a letter from a founder of a country based on religious freedom and separation of church and state. But I tell you it is exactly this separation that makes our Christianity even more vibrant and our country even more free. The very worst thing for the love which Christ calls us to share with our world would be for it to be tied to a particular government. And the very worst thing for our freedoms would be to take one religious system and make its tenets the test of citizenship or patriotism; yes, even Christianity!

And so, this July: May we, the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of all God’s creatures; may everyone sit in safety under their own pine and oak tree, and may nothing bring them fear. May our God of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths. May God make us all, in all the places God has called us, productive and happy, according to God’s will.

Happy 4th of July, happy month of July, and may God Bless us all, Amen!

Pastor Tony

MESSAGE FROM OUR LAY LEADER

Jean Carlos, Pastor at New City Church in Minneapolis, spoke about using social media to grow the church at the Minnesota Annual Conference. Pastor Carlos stated many churches do post on Facebook but unfortunately this not often used by the younger people.

Posting on Instagram and TikTok would give us better coverage of those in their twenties or thirties. We do post church worship services on You tube which reaches out to these age groups.

When we plan activities, we need to find ways to invite the younger generations. We also need to ask in what they are interested. What music do they want to have in church? We are challenged to think younger to grow our church.

What ideas do you have that we can explore?
I look forward to hearing your ideas!

Carol Ann Hoffman
Lay Leader

MESSAGE FROM OUR YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Faith Formation for All Ages

Summer is moving along quickly and before we know it, Rally Sunday will be here for the kick-off of the new Sunday School year. I have been busy imagining all the activities we can incorporate into our Faith Formation Programs. On July 8th at 6:00PM, we will be holding our first Youth and Family Program planning meeting. This is a collaborative effort, and we encourage everyone to attend. We will have a potluck dinner and discuss the list of proposed activities and schedules for the rest of 2024. Most of the activities we plan will be intergenerational as Faith Formation is for all ages and takes input and support from all ages.

As they say, many hands make light work. With that idea in mind, I have created a list of volunteer roles (*broken up into small activities so that they can even be done with the busiest of schedules*). I am **looking for at least two volunteers for each role** so that everyone has a backup/partner. I know some of you have already been in these roles in the past, so if you are interested in continuing to volunteer in that role or maybe trying something new, please let me know so that we can continue to count on your support. If you are interested in any of the volunteer opportunities or have questions, please reach out to me at 763-237-4376 or felser2@gmail.com

2024-2025 Faith Formation Team Roles

Sunday School Teacher

Join us as a Sunday School Teacher, a role that offers a unique opportunity to connect with the youth, understand their perspectives, and build lasting relationships that can shape their faith journey. You will facilitate planned activities and conversations with the youth during the last 10 minutes of church and the first 10 minutes of fellowship. All activity/craft materials and setup will be provided before each Sunday, as will all conversation prompts and talking points.

Christmas Program Coordinator

Are you a thespian at heart? Help us celebrate the Christmas season each year by planning the Christmas Program performed by our youth with wider congregation support. During the months of November and December, you will get to choose the program, run practice with the youth, and orchestrate the event at the end of the season.

Game/Activities Coordinator

Do you like to bring the FUN to events and parties? Join us as the Games/Activities Coordinator for youth events and help bring smiles and laughter to the faces of our youth. You will get to plan, set up, and oversee games and outdoor activities to be done at our monthly youth group events. You can partner with the youth and other faith formation team members to generate ideas and assign jobs needed for each activity. It will be all fun and games in this role!

Food Coordinator

If you love a good potluck, then join us as the Food Coordinator for our youth events. You will get to create the potluck sign-ups and invite folks to bring items to share. On special occasions, you will also gather headcounts for attendees and plan catered food.

Scheduler/Communications Coordinator

If you like a behind-the-scenes job and are great at keeping folks up to speed on upcoming activities, this role is for you! You will maintain a calendar of activities for upcoming youth events and communicate them to the congregation regularly. Calendar activities will include local Church events, like youth group activities and service projects, as well as MN conference-wide events like youth camps. Communication of events will include announcements at worship, email reminders, Uniter articles/announcements, postcards/table tents at fellowship, etc. Please share your first-rate organization skills with us!

Mission Trip & Service Project Coordinator

Are you passionate about bringing God's love out to the wider community? Then this is a great way to help support the Youth and Family Ministry. You will get to partner closely with the Youth & Family Program Coordinator to do things like identify partner organizations and locations for mission trips, communicate with church members who want to participate in the projects or trips, help coordinate travel or carpooling, and help promote the trip and fundraising activities. Best of all, you will also get to help share stories from the projects and trips with the wider congregation.

Youth Camp Coordinator

No, you do not have to plan an entire youth camp...As the Youth Camp Coordinator, we need your help to promote the Spring, Summer, and Fall youth camps offered by the wider MN Conference within our congregation. You will also help plan the carpooling to and from camp so as many youths as possible can attend and build new relationships with youth across the wider church.

Youth Mentors

Join a group of individuals across the congregation as a Youth Mentor, a role that offers a unique opportunity to connect with the youth by sharing your perspective and wisdom, as well as engaging them in conversation that will build lasting relationships and shape each other's faith journeys. You will meet with your mentee about once a month, facilitating a conversation around themed topics. You will be provided prompting questions and a devotion that you can choose to use, or you can feel free to make your own. These meetings can be at Church or as activities outside of Church that you and your mentee enjoy together.

Blessings,

Shelley Lindenfelser, Youth and Family Program Coordinator

HAITI PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

In mid-June, we received the good news that our Haiti Partners had 4 very successful days of medical and dental clinics - 2 each in Yvon and Sobier. So many people were helped! But there also was the news that Yvon is experiencing a refugee-type situation as people are fleeing gang violence in and around Port-au-Prince to the countryside.

Here is what our partner Wesnet wrote:

“The political situation in the country is degenerating every day with heavily armed bandits. A good number of people escaped the gang attacks and have taken refuge in the surroundings of Yvon. They are experiencing a situation of all kinds of poverty and accompanied by children without clothing, food and other basic needs.”

Wesnet also announced that on Sunday, June 23rd, they would have a fundraiser at the church in Yvon to be able to give them a food kit. He said our community healthcare workers had identified 12 families and 7 people who live alone as refugees. (This is one of the many benefits of having trained the healthcare workers: they have eyes in the community to identify needs!) We asked whether Wesnet expects that more people will arrive in Yvon as refugees and he said yes, as the gang situation gets worse from time to time.

When we asked how much money they needed to assist those there already he said 229,800 gourdes. Their fundraiser on June 23rd yielded 12,000 gourdes and they estimated the food costs would 217,800 gourdes or \$1,650.00 USD. This money would supply the refugees with rice, oil, black beans, sugar, and "other needs."

So we were honored to step alongside them and give that amount to the fundraiser so they can assist those individuals. Our partners in Haiti are very appreciative, as you can imagine.

Our Fifth Sunday offering on June 30th at First United Church brought in **\$683.04!** What a beautiful noise we made together, and we know it will be needed soon.

Thank you all so much for your kind generosity! The ministries we are a part of through our Haiti Partnership are making a decided difference in the lives of so many people. Your change is changing lives!

FIRST UNITED CHURCH

Administrative Council Meeting – June 18, 2024

The June 18, 2024, meeting was called to order by Lay Leader Carol Ann Hoffman at 7:00 pm.

Present were:

Pastor Tony Romaine
Carol Ann Hoffman, Lay Leader
Deanna Anderson, Assistant Lay Leader
Al Libke, Recording Secretary
Dianne Spillum, Financial Secretary
Edith Lowe – Member at Large
Nancy B Flolid – Food Shelf Representative, Mission and Ministry

Jan O'Quinn – PPR Committee
Renae Oothoudt – Worship
Andrea Lauer – Member at Large
Diana Poehler – Memorial Fund Secretary

Pastor Romaine read selected portions of Job, chapters 40, 41, and 42.

Agenda: Andrea Lauer moved to approve the agenda; 2nd by Dianne Spillum. Passed.

Minutes Renae Oothoudt moved to approve the revised minutes of the May 15, 2024, meeting; second by Diana Poehler. Passed

Financial Report. Andrea Lauer moved to accept the May 2024 financial reports. Seconded by Nancy Flolid and passed.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Romaine reported that:

1 – Carol Ann attended both the UMC and UCC annual meetings in June and Pastor attended the UCC annual meeting.

2 - Pastor will be on vacation June 28 to July 5, 2024. Shelley Lindenfelser will lead the June 30 service.

3 – First United Church of Little Falls MN is now listed in the Open and Affirming National Database.

Committee Reports:

A written report was submitted by the PPR Committee. PPR voted to approve a new Scope of Work for our pastor and forwarded it to the AD Council for approval.

Pastor Romaine reported that the kitchen roof has been leaking and we will follow up with the contractor.

Unfinished Business: A discussion was held regarding the 50th anniversary of our church, planned for September 15, 2024. Pastor expects a large crowd (up to 200) at the celebration, including the meal. We need to check with local caterers so that all parishioners will be free to socialize and enjoy the celebration events.

New Business.

Lay Leader Carol Ann reviewed her thoughts on how we can let the community know that they will be welcome in our church, that includes all people. We will work on this during the next 12 months.

The new Administrative Council roster was reviewed with some changes to be made. Diana Poehler will update the changes and forward the revised roster.

Pastor Romaine presented a new Scope of Work for his full-time position. Andrea Lauer moved to approve the new scope of work, 2nd by Renae Oothoudt. The motion passed.

Article VI for the First United By-laws was reviewed and discussed. Dianne Spillum moved to approve the revision, 2nd by Deanna Anderson. The motion passed.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 8:25 pm

Next AD Council meeting will be Tuesday July 16, 2024, at 7:00 pm.

Al Libke – Recording Secretary