

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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March 2025

- 2 – Communion Sunday
Worship & Sunday School
 - 4 – Bible Study x 2
 - 5 – **Ash Wednesday Service** -
- Coffee & Conversation
(Zoom)
 - 7 – *World Day of Prayer*
 - 8 – **Chili Cook-off Dinner**
 - 9 – **DAYLIGHT SAVINGS**
- Worship & Sunday School
- **Fairy Gardens**
 - 11 – Bible Study x 2
- Finance Team
- Ad Council reports due
 - 12 – Coffee & Conversation
-Lenten Devotional & Potluck
 - 16 – Worship & Sunday School
 - 17 – **HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S
DAY!**
 - 18 - Bible Study x 2
- **Ad Council**
 - 19 – Coffee & Conversation
-Lenten Devotional & Potluck
 - 20 - Volunteer at Food Shelf
 - 23 – Worship & Sunday School
**- Spiritual Practice Chair
Yoga**
 - 25 – Bible Study x 2
 - 26 – Coffee & Conversation
-Lenten Devotional & Potluck
 - 30 – Worship & Sunday School
**Le(n)t's Talk Mental Health
Series**
- April Uniter deadline*

Team leaders: While last year is still fresh in your mind, this is your friendly reminder to get your 2024 annual report ready and turned in!

Lenten Devotional & Potluck Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. during Lent



Please join us as we come together and have a simple meal and join in community during Lent. Every Wednesday night during Lent at 6:00 p.m. we will be having a short devotional time together followed by a potluck supper in the Fireside Room.

If you want to join in but are not able to bring anything, please still bring yourself, we always have more than enough, and your presence is a blessing.

Don't forget to

Set your clocks an hour ahead in the evening on Saturday, March 8th as daylight savings begins on Sunday, March 9th.



Please hold the following in your prayers:

**Joanie Bellig Family, June Bernal (no options left for cancer treatment),
Ernie Christiansen, Ardy Coenen's Son-in-Law Steve Family,
Margaret Flolid Family, Paula Gehrke's brother Charles' Family,
Ren and Ida Mae Holland, Andrea Lauer, Mike Lindenfelser,
Jeanne McLeod Family, Gene Meyer (brain aneurysm surgery),
Pastor Tony's Cousin Kara's son Alex (complications from RSV),
Muriel Poehler, Barb Behren's Great-Nephew Lysandre Schmidt
Julie Witucki's Niece Hannah**

Donations to the Memorial Fund

Mary Jean Stobb
Heather Quammen
Dianne Spillum
Mary Bindewald
Jeannine Hyde
Lynn McCarthy

in Memory of

Ruth Hlad
Clifford & Imogene Beebe
Margaret Flolid
Joanie Bellig

If you wish to contribute to the **Easter Flower Fund** to enhance our sanctuary atmosphere for the Easter Service, please complete the form below and place it with your donation marked "Easter Flowers" in the offering plate or in the church office. Thank you for your support!

Name _____ Donation \$ _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____



You may also contribute to the Easter Flower Fund by visiting www.firstunitedlf.org, clicking on 'Give' and selecting Easter Flower Fund.

Weekly Receipts –February 2025

Date	Amt. Budgeted	Amt. Received
2/2/25	\$2,808.00	\$1,366.00
2/9/25	2,808.00	18,172.00
2/16/25	2,808.00	2,185.00
2/23/25	2,808.00	1,790.00

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

My Dear, Dear Friends,

I shared a poem called “For a New Beginning,” by John O’Donohue on Transfiguration Sunday. Originally, I was going to use it here and guide us through a sort of *Lectio Divina*, but I think I want to engage us in a different way; one without the interference of words, one that will allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through us if we are truly open to receiving. So, just three simple instructions before we read this poem:

1. Pray to God that God’s will be your will.
2. Pray for Jesus’s love to shepherd your way
3. Slow down, stop, wait, and truly listen for the Holy Spirit’s presence.

For a New Beginning - John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

I hope this reflection allows us an opportunity to sense all the new beginnings God is calling us to this Lent. My prayer is that we can completely trust in God, that we can release the earthly tethers which tie us down, that we do not let anything prevent us from sharing the love of Our Savior, and that we can slow down to embrace the Holy Spirit's call to peace. Indeed, let us not fade away into the "gray promises of sameness," but may we "unfurl ourselves into the grace of beginning," by the grace of Our Savior, Amen

God Bless,

Pastor Tony

MESSAGE FROM OUR LAY LEADER

Hopefully we are through with our cold weather. I am looking forward to spring so I can enjoy the windows open.

All of our teams are working on writing their Standard Operating Procedures. This is being done so everyone has a clear understanding of what the team function is. The hope is if someone knows what a team is doing he/she may want to join a particular team.

A church can only function because many hands are doing the work. Can you imagine how much it would cost to have a caterer come in each Sunday to prepare fellowship? What about the cost of a decorator to change the paraments in the Sanctuary? Volunteers doing the work allows the church to remain solvent and to do the work of God.

Continue to discern if there is a place for you on one of our teams.

Carol Ann Hoffman

Lay Leader

MESSAGE FROM OUR YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Walking Through Lent Together

Dear Church Family,

Lent is a season of reflection, renewal, and preparation. It is a time when we intentionally turn our hearts toward God, seeking to deepen our faith through prayer, service, and spiritual practices. Whether you are observing Lent for the first time or have practiced it for years, this season invites us all to slow down, listen, and grow in our faith together.

Lent is not just about giving something up—it’s about making space for God in our daily lives. Here are some meaningful ways families and individuals can embrace the season:

Scripture & Reflection

Each week, choose a Bible passage to read together and discuss. A great place to start is Luke 10:27, which reminds us: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”* How might this verse guide your family’s Lenten journey?

Simplify & Share

Consider choosing one meal a week to eat more simply—perhaps a meal of rice and beans or soup and bread. Use the money you save to donate to a local food pantry or mission project. This practice helps us remember those who go without and reminds us of Jesus’ call to care for the hungry.

Lenten Candle Time

Each night, light a candle and take a few quiet moments to pray as a family. Reflect on where you saw God’s presence that day. If you have young children, invite them to share something they are grateful for.

Giving Instead of Giving Up

Instead of giving up something for Lent, consider giving something each day—whether it’s a donation to a cause, an encouraging word, or time spent serving others. Keep a “Lenten Giving Jar” and collect spare change to support a mission at the end of the season.

Finding God in the Ordinary

Lent doesn’t have to be complicated. God meets us in the small moments—while washing dishes, during a morning walk, in the laughter of our children. This season is an invitation to slow down, pay attention, and allow God’s presence to shape our hearts.

As we move through these 40 days, may we open our lives to God’s love in new ways. May this season be one of transformation, grace, and deepening faith.

With gratitude,

Shelley Lindenfelser - Youth & Family Program Coordinator

UCWA – United Church Women’s Association - Happenings

You are welcome to bring used, clean egg cartons to help the Morrison County Food Shelf! Please leave egg cartons on top of the coat rack, by the sign by the southwest entrance at church.

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UCWA – United Church Women’s Association – Spring Rummage & Recycling Sale dates:

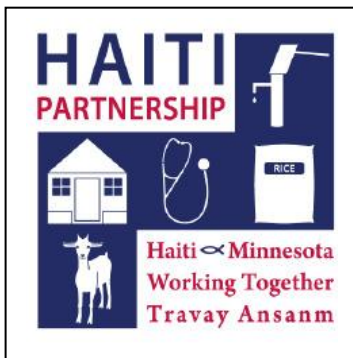
**Set-up – Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>**

**SALE – Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> & Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**

You are welcome and encouraged to bring your new and gently used items to donate to the sale *by appointment* starting on April 1<sup>st</sup>. More details to come!

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### **Save Your Coins Noisy Offering Haiti Partnership**



The Haiti Partnership is grateful for your continued support of our mission. Even though we are unable to travel, we continue to support our friends and partners with our gifts of money to continue the work. We have been blessed with OPB2M, a group of Haitians working in conjunction with the partnership, to carry out projects such as food relief, medical/dental clinics, access to clean water and housing. We support this work through donations, including our Noisy Offerings. The next Noisy Offering is **Sunday, March 30, 2025**. Thank you to all of you for your support of the Haiti Partnership and its mission!

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**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.

**THANK YOU to each of you that have signed up!**

**From The OPEN and AFFIRMING COALITION of the United Church of Christ  
submitted to the Uniter newsletter by Debra Bultnick**

The recent decision by the Trump administration to restrict access to life-saving PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) medication for LGBTQ+ people, sex workers, and other high-risk groups through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is an...act of cruelty. PrEP is a highly effective medication that prevents HIV transmission. When taken consistently, PrEP reduces the risk of contracting HIV by up to 99%, making it one of the most important tools in the fight against the global HIV/AIDS epidemic.

This policy...betrays our shared call to care for God's beloved children, especially the marginalized and oppressed. As people of faith committed to justice and inclusion, we must call this policy an extension of the same hateful rhetoric that demonizes LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. and beyond. It is a direct attack on the dignity and worth of God's beloved children.

**What Can Churches and Individuals Do?**

As Open and Affirming churches and justice-seeking people of faith, we must respond with action, not just words. Here are concrete ways we can push back against this harmful policy:

1. Advocate for Policy Change – Contact elected officials and demand that they restore PEPFAR's full funding and PrEP access for all high-risk groups. Urge Congress to push back against these unjust restrictions.
2. Support Organizations Fighting HIV/AIDS – Donate to and partner with organizations providing PrEP, treatment, and education, such as the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, AVAC (AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition), and local LGBTQ+ health centers.
3. Educate Your Community – Host forums, webinars, or discussions in your church or community to educate people about HIV prevention, the impact of these policies, and what we can do to help.
4. Provide Safe Spaces for LGBTQ+ People – Ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals in your congregation and community know they are welcomed, affirmed, loved, and supported. This includes offering tangible resources, such as health referrals, support groups, and affirming theology.
5. Raise Awareness Through Social Media – Use your platform to amplify the voices of those impacted by this decision and to call for justice. Share stories, petitions, and updates to keep people informed and engaged.
6. Push for Expanded Domestic PrEP Access – Support local and national efforts to ensure PrEP remains widely available and affordable in the U.S. Push back against religious exemptions that allow healthcare discrimination.
7. Pray and Preach for Justice – Include prayers for those affected by these policies in your worship services. Preach boldly about the call to resist injustice and care for the most vulnerable.

As followers of Christ, we cannot remain silent while our siblings around the world suffer. God's love is for all people—unconditionally, unapologetically, and without restrictions. May we be the hands and feet of that love in this critical moment.

**FIRST UNITED CHURCH**  
**Administrative Council Meeting – February 18, 2025**

Lay Leader Carol Ann Hoffman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present were:

|                                                    |                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Pastor Tony Romaine                                | Jill Griffith – McRaith – Member at Large  |
| Carol Ann Hoffman, Lay Leader                      | Edith Lowe – Member at Large               |
| Al Libke, Recording Secretary                      | Diana Poehler – Memorial Fund Secretary    |
| Jan O’Quinn - PPR                                  | Deanna Anderson – Assistant Lay Leader     |
| Andrea Lauer – Member at Large                     | David Hlad – Building, Grounds & Equipment |
| Nancy B Flolid – Food Shelf and Mission & Ministry |                                            |

Opening devotion - Pastor Romaine read from the opening text of the United Methodist Hymnal.

Agenda: Andrea Lauer moved to approve the agenda with the addition of the Lay Leader’s SOP added; second by Nancy Flolid. Passed.

Minutes Edith Lowe moved to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2025 meeting; second by Jan O’Quinn. Passed

Pastor’s Report: Pastor Romaine reported that the January 21, 2025, reception of Mike and Laurie Beuning at our church was well attended and lots of fun. The wedding is scheduled for February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Financial Report. Al Libke moved to approve the written Financial Report for January 2025. Seconded by Jill Griffith-McRaith and it passed.

Committee Reports: Written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Lay Leader was received from Carol Ann Hoffman. Deanna Anderson moved that we approve the SOP; seconded by Jill Griffith-McRaith and it passed.

New Business:

Carol Ann Hoffman encouraged all PPR committee members attend the training from the MN Annual Conference.

Jill Griffith-McRaith moved that we authorize painting the back wall between the women’s toilet and the kitchen. It was seconded by Diana Poehler, and it passed.

Nancy Flolid moved that we adjourn the meeting; second by Jan O’Quinn and passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 pm.

The next AD Council meeting will be 7:00 pm on March 18, 2025, via ZOOM.

Al Libke – Recording Secretary