

# The U N I T E R

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



## UNITER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Palm Sunday Pop-up Choir! . . . . .	2
Prayer list . . . . .	2
Easter Flower order form . . . . .	2
March Weekly Receipts . . . . .	2
Message from our Pastor. . . . .	3-4
Message from our Lay Leader . . . . .	4
Message from our Youth & Family Prog.Coord .	5-6
UCWA Happenings & SPRING SALE . . . . .	6
March Ad Council meeting minutes. . . . .	7-8
Haiti Partnership update . . . . .	8-9
Spiritual Practice Chair yoga instructions. . . .	10-13
Calendar . . . . .	14

Phone: (320) 632-5468  
firstunitedlf@gmail.com

### April 2025

- 1 – Bible Study x 2
- 2 – Coffee & Conversation
- Lenten Devotional & Potluck**
- 6 – Communion Sunday  
Worship & Sunday School
- Potato Bar Brunch Fundraiser**
- 8 – Bible Study x 2
  - Finance Team
  - Ad Council reports due
- 9 – Coffee & Conversation
  - UCWA
- Lenten Devotional & Potluck**
- 13 – **Palm Sunday Worship &**  
Sunday School
  - **Trash Art for Earth Day**
- 15 – No Bible Study
  - **Ad Council**
- 16 – Coffee & Conversation
- 17 – Volunteer at Food Shelf
- **Maundy Thursday Holy Communion Service**
- 18 – **Good Friday Service**
- 20 – **Easter Sunday Worship**  
& Sunday School
- 21 – *OFFICE CLOSED*
- 22 - Bible Study x 2
- 23 – Coffee & Conversation
- 27 – Worship & Sunday School
- May Uniter deadline**
- HAPPY 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**
- BEV SAVAGE!**
- 29 – Bible Study x 2
- 30 – Coffee & Conversation

## Lenten Devotional & Potluck

Wednesdays April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

### Holy Week Services



#### **Palm Sunday Worship**

April 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

#### **Maundy Thursday**

April 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.



#### **Good Friday**

April 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.



#### **Easter Sunday Worship**

April 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.



**Please note:** Any links you will need for all current online services via Zoom are always available on the home page of our web site: [www.firstunitedlf.org](http://www.firstunitedlf.org)



You – yes, you! - are invited to join our ‘**Pop-up Palm Sunday Choir!**’ We will be practicing in the chapel on Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. sharp. ALL are welcome to join us. Remember: All God’s children can sing!

**Please hold the following in your prayers:**

**LaVonne Adam’s Son-in-Law Family, Deanna Anderson’s Son,  
Joanie Bellig Family, Laurie Beuning (Podtburg)’s client,  
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, Lisa Hagel Family,  
Ren and Ida Mae Holland, Jerry Knafla, Andrea Lauer,  
Andrea Lauer’s friend David (needs liver transplant),  
Mike Lindenfesler, Edith Lowe’s grandson Cadenn Happke (depression),  
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,  
Dianne Spillum’s Granddaughter**

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](http://www.firstunitedlf.org), clicking on ‘Give’ and selecting Easter Flower Fund.*

**Team leaders: Your report for 2024 Annual report is due by Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Weekly Receipts – March 2025**



Date	Amt. Budgeted	Amt. Received
3/2/25	\$2,808.00	\$1,953.00
3/9/25	2,808.00	5,105.00
3/16/25	2,808.00	2,741.00
3/23/25	2,808.00	6,683.00
3/30/25	2,808.00	1,398.00

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Friends,

We have been on quite a journey together through this Lenten season on our way to Easter. Hopefully you have felt a depth and connection come to your faith life that has brought you closer in your walk with Jesus. In this spirit, I do not want to get overly complicated or theologically dense with reflection, I just want us to sit with one another and with Jesus and remember just what He did for you and me.

- Jesus calls us from all the places we are and invites us to put aside the cares and worries of the world, asking us to be like children whose eyes are not tarnished by the blinding light of all things frivolous, whose hearts are open to new and exciting things, whose minds are sponges ready to sop up what He has come to offer.
- Jesus tells us what should be our center, our core, our litmus test for everything we do in Matthew 22:36-40, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
- Jesus invites us to be a different kind of people, those outside of the status quo of our world, and He does so by demonstrating how we should live. Jesus dines with sinners and tax collectors, Jesus heals the marginalized and the poor, Jesus journeys to foreign countries and heals foreigners, destitute, lepers, downcast, downtrodden. Jesus offers salvation to all God’s children, not just the “chosen,” not just those who can afford it, not just the elite; all God’s sheep, the ninety-nine and the one.
- Then, because there is nothing we can ever do to completely atone for the sins we have done, and continue to do, Jesus dies upon a cross for our souls. Not to make us feel better, not to clear our conscience, but to bring us from death to life. And in so doing, Jesus calls us to die to the things which bring death and to live into the Way that offers us life. In so doing, Jesus frees us from the chains of our sin and calls us into a new life with Him.
- But, as if this was not enough already, Jesus then does the most miraculous, awe-inspiring, amazing thing we have ever known...He conquers death and is resurrected to further show us that when we die with Him, we do not truly die but gain eternal life with our Savior! Hallelujah, Amen!

Yes friends, our Savior lives, so that we may live as well. Each day a gift, an opportunity for us to come as the children we are; each day an opportunity to abandon judgment and grudges and live into the life Christ calls us to; each day a choice to die to our sins and the ways of this world, and be resurrected in the love that is beyond anything imaginable. So let us not complicate this with traditions, opinions, denominations, politics, personal feelings, or whatever else we want to add “yeah, but” to. Instead, let us hear Jesus, learn from Jesus, center on Jesus, and love like Jesus.

Happy Lent! Happy Easter! May God’s love center you, may Christ’s peace fill your hands and hearts, and may the Holy Spirit breathe in and through all your days, this April and always, Amen!

God Bless,

Pastor Tony

---



*Sledding! – February 23<sup>rd</sup>*

---

### **MESSAGE FROM OUR LAY LEADER**

There are changes coming to the distribution of the Noisy Offering funds. At the March 18th meeting of the Ad Council it was decided to distribute the funds to more charities.

The reason for the change is our church has not been contributing to either conferences disaster funds. Each conference uses its funds to go to areas which have had a tornado, flood or wild fire. Any disaster that occurs within our country. In the month of March, a special offering is taken throughout each conference for disaster relief.

Our collection in March will go to Haiti Partnership. The Ad Council will determine at their May meeting where the June collection will be given.

Carol Ann Hoffman

Lay Leader

# FIRST UNITED CHURCH – YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES

## Easter Joy & Growing Together - April Newsletter 2025

Dear Church Family,

**“Christ is Risen!”**

As we celebrate the Easter season, we are reminded of God’s promise of new life, transformation, and hope. This season isn’t just a single day—it’s a whole celebration of love breaking through! It’s also a time to reflect on how we grow together across generations as a church family.

### Easter at Home: Building Meaningful Traditions

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, teen, or child, Easter invites us to find joy in community, tradition, and shared faith. Here are a few simple ways to keep Easter alive at home:

- 🌸 **Resurrection Walks** – Take a walk and look for signs of new life: blooming flowers, singing birds, warming sunshine. Talk about where you see God in nature.
- 📖 **Read Scripture Together** – Explore Luke 24 and wonder together: What surprised you? What questions do you have?
- 🕊️ **Pass the Peace** – Start a morning or bedtime ritual with “The peace of Christ be with you.”
- 🍪 **Make Empty Tomb Rolls** – Wrap marshmallows in crescent roll dough and bake. As the marshmallow “disappears,” talk about the empty tomb!
- 💬 **Share Gratitude** – Ask each family member: “Where did you see God’s love today?”

### Celebrating Our Community!

We’ve had a joyful and busy spring so far, and I want to thank you for your full hearts and generous spirits.

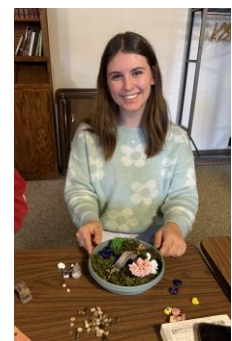
#### 🔥 **First Annual Chili Cook-Off - a Spicy Success!**

A huge thank you to all our chefs, tasters, voters, and donors! This event raised much-needed funds for our Mission Trip and was a great night of fun and fellowship.



#### 🌱 **Fairy Garden Workshop**

Fairy Garden Building Day brought creativity and connection across generations. We loved seeing grandparents, kids, parents, and friends designing magical garden spaces together—it was truly a beautiful way to celebrate spring and community.









## **Gratitude for Your Generosity**

Thanks to your support, our youth and adult team is preparing for the **Intergenerational Service-Learning Trip to Bentonville, Arkansas**, this summer. From prayers to financial gifts, your involvement makes this transformative experience possible.

### **Ways You Can Still Help:**

-  Donate toward travel or program costs
-  Sponsor a group meal or snack
-  Provide gift cards or supplies
-  Keep the team in your prayers

### **Save the Date! Yard Clean-Up Fundraiser – Friday, May 24**

Need help with spring yard work? Hire our youth for raking, weeding, and more! Proceeds support the Mission Trip. Details coming soon.

As we walk through Eastertide together, may we continue to grow in faith, compassion, and joy—one story, one act of kindness, one generation at a time.

**With Easter Hope,**  
**Shelley Lindenfelser**  
Youth & Family Program Coordinator

---

### **UCWA – United Church Women’s Association – Happenings**

The UCWA will meet on Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

All ladies of First United Church are welcome to attend!

#### **UCWA Spring Rummage & Repurposing Sale**

Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> ~ Set boxes out after worship

Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> ~ Set up.... 9am - ?

Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> ~ SALE....9 am - 5pm

Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> ~ SALE, \$5/bag....9 am - 2 pm



You are invited to donate new or gently used items for the sale, including clothing, household items, books, knick-knacks, etc. Please make an appointment to drop off items for the sale. If you have any questions, **please contact Nancy F.** Needed: Paper grocery bags.

Please have your items brought to church by Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at noon.

Proceeds from the sale will be given to local charities.

**All help on any or all days is *greatly* appreciated!**

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

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

Present were:

Pastor Tony Romaine	Dianne Spillum – Financial Secretary
Carol Ann Hoffman, Lay Leader	Renae Oothoudt – Worship Team
Al Libke, Recording Secretary	Edith Lowe – Member at Large
Andrea Lauer – Member at Large	Garry Bultnick – Member at Large
Deanna Anderson – Assistant Lay Leader	Rosie Brower - Treasurer
Nancy B Flolid – Food Shelf and Mission & Ministry	Jan O’Quinn – PPR

Opening devotion - Pastor Romaine read from Luke 19 verses 1 – 10 and comments related to it.

Agenda: Pastor Romaine wanted to add a new item – Directories. Andrea Lauer moved to approve the agenda with the addition of the new item Directories; second by Dianne Spillum. Passed.

Minutes: Dianne Spillum moved to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2025, meeting, second by Rosie Brower. Passed

Financial Report: Al Libke moved to approve the written Financial Report for February 2025. Seconded by Deanna Anderson and it passed.

Pastor’s Report: Pastor Romaine reported on 1st United activities during Lent and his activities in the community, one of these is on the board for “Cooking for Our Neighbors.” Council members asked about this project and Pastor reviewed the goals and activities relating to cooking for community persons.

Committee Reports: Written minutes were received from the Finance and Worship teams’ meetings. Andrea Lauer moved to approve the two minutes; Garry Bultnick 2nd. Passed.

Unfinished Business:

Written Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Finance team, Building, Grounds, and Equipment team, Pastor, Parish Relations team, Nominating team, and Care and Nurturing team were received.

Dianne Spillum moved to approve the SOPs; seconded by Nancy Barenthin and it passed.

New Business:

Carol Ann Hoffman questioned why the Haiti Partnership has a noisy offering on months with 5 Sundays, but other groups did not have similar offerings. Nancy Barenthin moved to spread out special offerings up to ten per year; seconded by Andrea Lauer. After discussion, the vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Pastor Romaine reported that a company has offered to create a First United Church directory that would include photos of church members. There would be no charge to the church, but they would charge for members' photos. The company offered to make a presentation to the AD Council. A consensus was to accept the offer for presentation.

Andrea Lauer moved that we adjourn the meeting; second by Deanna Anderson and it passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.  
We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

The next AD Council meeting will be 7:00 pm on April 15, 2025 in the Fireside Room. .

Al Libke – Recording Secretary

---

## Haiti Partnership



On March 25, 2025, the Miami Herald reported that Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, was inminent danger of falling to the gangs that have terrorized the country for several years. report:

“In the past month, a record 60,000-plus people have been forced to flee their homes — many finding refuge in soiled makeshift camps with no latrines or potable water, and where rapes are a frequent occurrence. The new displacements have added to the more than 1 million people who had already fled their homes, according to United Nations figures.

Making matters worse, nine in ten Haitians go all day without eating in what has been described as one of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The gangs have resumed kidnappings, while burning hospitals and destroying schools.”

Despite the desperate situation in and around the capital, the Haiti Partnership continues to work with our Haitian partners to make a difference in the lives of our sisters and brothers in Yvon and Sobier. In late February, we sent \$16,140 to our partners for three projects: expansion of the goat project, food for the elderly and disabled, and the mobile medical and dental clinics planned for June. While a portion of these funds came from a grant from the Minnesota Annual Conference of the UMC, much of these funds are raised locally though product sales at the Shoppes of Little Falls and your generous donations to our 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Noisy Offerings. The offering we collected on Sunday, March 30, raised \$421.89 for future work together.



A little more about the projects that we recently funded. The goat project began several years ago as a way for local farmers to financially support the monthly nurse clinics. Farmers in Yvon receive education in animal husbandry along with goats to raise. Female goats typically have two kids annually. The farmer keeps one of the kids, thereby helping their family financially.





The other kid is sold and the money helps pay for the nurse clinics. Expansion of the goat project increases the number of families benefitting from additional income as well as more revenue to support the monthly clinics. With only 27% of hospitals functioning across Haiti, the quarterly mobile medical and dental clinics supported by the Haiti Partnership are increasingly important. The mobile clinics bring a physician and dentist to the communities of Yvon and Sobier. These clinics are a critical complement to the monthly nurse clinics which help maintain health in these communities.

The work of the Haiti Partnership is only possible because of the support of people like you. Our Haitian partners send their heartfelt thanks and their prayers for their American friends.

To read more of the article from the Miami Herald go to:

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article302671734.html#storylink=cpy>



Chair yoga instructions from Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> Spiritual Practice Chair Yoga:

## Centering Prayer

*When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. - Matthew 6:6*

It has been said that "The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separate from God." In Centering Prayer, we are consenting to something that has always been available to us. It requires nothing more than showing up with willingness and an open mind.

### Guidelines to Centering Prayer

#### **1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.**

This word expresses our intention to consent to God's presence and action within. It is called a "sacred word," not because of its meaning, but because of the intention it symbolizes for us, the intention to consent. It is used during our prayer period as a prompt to return to our Higher Power when we become engaged with our thoughts.

(Examples: God, Love, Peace, Jesus, Open, Listen, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Trust, Now, Yes.)

Having chosen a word, we do not change it during the prayer period.

#### **2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce your sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.**

Introduce the sacred word inwardly, as gently as laying a feather on a pillow.

#### **3. When you realize you have become engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to your word.**

"Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception, including feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, commentaries, and even spiritual experiences. Thoughts are an inevitable, integral and normal part of Centering Prayer. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.

#### **4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.**

The additional two minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life. After about two minutes, I will slowly recite a prayer before we return to the group.

**5. (Optional):** Trust in your prayer and trust in God. We can have confidence that our time in centering prayer delights God whether we have been perfectly still or bombarded by thoughts. To believe otherwise is a temptation and not from God.

## Centering Prayer

### Script for Leading Centering Prayer

“I’m going to recite an Opening prayer, followed by three gongs. We’ll observe the silence for (10, 20, 25) minutes, at the end of which you’ll hear three more gongs. We’ll then sit quietly with eyes closed for a minute or two, and I’ll close us with a prayer.

“So now sit comfortably in your chair, let your eyes close, take a breath and settle briefly, and call to mind your sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God’s love and action within.”

- **Opening Reading/Prayer** [feel free to substitute short prayers of your choosing]:

Silence is the best preparation there is  
for opening to God’s presence;  
and God’s love,  
since it is so pervasive,  
just comes in and fills every empty space.

[or]

Open your heart to the God of your understanding,  
and let yourself receive the one  
who is opening to you so deeply.

[or]

In repentance and rest is your salvation,  
In quietness and trust is your strength... (Isaiah 30:15)

- **Three bells**
- **Time of Silence**
- **Three bells**
- **Closing Reading/Prayer** (feel free to customize or to offer a prayer of your choice)

For all that has been ... thanks.  
For all that is ... yes.  
For all that will be ... amen.  
For all shall be well,  
and all shall be well,  
and all manner of things shall be well.

---

*To learn more or join the weekly Zoom prayer sessions, check out*  
[www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org)

# Lifeline

---

## 12 Chair Yoga poses for older adults

Making yoga accessible for everyone

Seniors with limited mobility can practice “chair” yoga, either from a seated position or standing behind the chair for support. Chair yoga was also shown in one study to reduce seniors’ fear of falling as well as to decrease their reliance on assistive devices for mobility.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Ujjayi Breathing

A great starter pose. Sit up tall at the edge of your seat and place your hands on your waist. Take a deep breath in through the nose, expanding through your sides and abdomen, then exhale slowly.

Repeat for 10 breaths.



### 2. Cat/Cow

This exercise helps to relieve back and neck tension. Inhale and arch your back to look up at the ceiling. Exhale, pulling your abdominals in and rounding your back as you bend forward.

Repeat this 5 times.



### 3. Circles

To release and relax the hip muscles, circle your hips clockwise 5 times while seated without moving your upper body, then counterclockwise 5 times.



### 4. Sun Salutation Arms

Lengthens the spine, releases tension in the shoulders and neck. Sitting tall, breathe in and lift your arms up, pressing your palms overhead. On an exhale, float the arms back down to your sides.

Repeat 5 times.



### 5. Sun Salutations with Twists

Repeat the previous exercise, adding a twist as you exhale.

Repeat 5 times on each side, holding the last twist for 5 seconds.



### 6. High Altar Side Leans

Stretches spine and shoulders. Lift your arms and interlace your fingers in front of you. Turn your palms to the ceiling as you straighten your arms above your head.

Lean to the right for 3 breaths, then to the left for 3 more.



# Centering Prayer

## Yoga Stretches - Continued

**NOTE:** Always consult with your healthcare professional before using the poses in this booklet.

The exercises in this booklet do not substitute for an exercise program provided by your health practitioner.

Stop if you experience any pain or discomfort while performing the poses in this booklet.

### 7. Eagle Arms

Banishes shoulder aches. Stretch your arms out to each side, bring one arm under the other at shoulder height and bend your arms at the elbows with palms together.

Hold for 5 breaths, unwind and repeat with opposite arms.



### 8. Assisted Neck Stretches

The neck is a major stress area. Take your right arm and drape it over your head until your palm reaches your left ear. Let your head fall to your right shoulder, and hold for 5 breaths.

Repeat on the opposite side.



### 9. Ankle to Knee

The hip area is also a stress spot. To loosen things up, sit up straight, bend your right knee and place your right ankle over your left knee. For a deeper stretch, lean forward.

Hold for 5 breaths, then repeat on the opposite side.



### 10. Goddess with a Twist

Another great hip stretch. Open legs wide and point toes out. Place your right arm inside your right leg, reaching for the floor. Lift your left arm toward the ceiling and look up to the palm.

Hold for 5 breaths, then repeat on the opposite side.



### 11. Warrior 2

This gives you a full-body stretch. Sit tall at the edge of your seat. Bend your right knee to the side and stretch your left leg out behind you as you press your outer heel down.

Hold for 5 breaths, then repeat on the opposite side.



### 12. Forward Fold

To finish, let blood flow to the brain. Sit tall and straight, then fold down over your legs, letting your head, neck and body hang limp.

Hold for as long as you want before rolling back up to a sitting position.



1. Galantino M., et al., "Safety and feasibility of modified chair-yoga on functional outcome among elderly at risk for falls." *Int J Yoga*. 2012 Jul;3(2):146-50. doi: 10.4103/0973-6131.98242. PMID: