



# FIRST UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH

**JANUARY 2024**  
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Hours: M-TH, 9AM-3PM  
FRIDAY, 9AM-1PM  
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## ***Pastor's Pause January 2024***

**Stages of Grieving**  
by Josemaria Bahena

The roads to Zion mourn,  
for no one comes to her  
appointed festivals.  
All her gateways are desolate,  
her priests groan,  
her young women grieve,  
and she is in bitter anguish. --  
Lamentations 1:4

Researchers have come to identify  
that there are five stages of grief: deni-  
al, anger, bargaining, depression, and  
acceptance.

As we attempt to navigate a seemingly  
never-ending pandemic and find a way  
to rejuvenate our aging congregations,  
I believe many of us in the church are  
experiencing several if not all of these  
stages. Change is the one guarantee in  
life. Yet, how do we address this grief  
AND change at the same time?

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*,  
“Comfort is the one thing you cannot  
get by looking for it. If you look for  
truth, you may find comfort in the  
end. If you look for comfort, you will  
not get either comfort or truth — only  
soft soap and wishful thinking to  
begin with and, in the end, despair.”  
So, as we search for something to grab  
hold of in the midst of grief that will  
bring comfort, or as we search for

words to say to someone else who is grieving, we want to make sure that what we're  
grabbing hold of, or offering to someone else to hold onto, is profoundly, fully, and  
eternally true.

Continued on next page...

I've been asking myself, what are those profoundly and eternally true things we can grab hold of in the midst of grief and change that will serve as an anchor for the soul, when the winds and waves of grief are coming over the bow and threatening to take us down for good? I think the answer is essentially one thing that has many iterations or implications, which is: "I can trust God with this."

This phrase brings peace in the midst of grief's chaotic thoughts and emotions. It means:

- I can trust God with the unknowns about my/our future.
- I can trust God with my unanswered questions until faith becomes sight.
- I can trust God to heal the hurt.
- I can trust God to supply sufficient grace and divine power for facing whatever comes.
- I can trust God to cause this to work together for my good and for the good of others impacted by this, to conform us more closely to the image of Christ.

Similarly, the psalmist poured out their complaint to God, but they also intentionally spoke to their own soul in both a questioning and instructive tone:

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God. - Psalm 42:5*

Rather than listening to their own desperate thoughts, they spoke truth to their thoughts. Rather than trusting their feelings, they challenged them. Rather than talking about the truth of the gospel as something out there for other people, they applied it to themselves personally. Praying to God, they preached hope to themselves.

Let us cling to that same hope as the psalmist and lean into the unknowns, lean into God. Believe in the deep love of our savior Jesus the Christ that can and will bring new life!

*PRAYER: Creator God, may the sweet light of change shine in the darkness,  
May the first breath of each morning begin life again. May the memories unfold as  
prayers for life and may the love of our Savior Jesus continue to guide and comfort  
us. Amen.*



## MISSIONS & MARTHA GROUP



Thanks to all of you who contributed during Advent in so many ways. We hope you took part in using the Advent Calendar and followed through on some scripture readings, good deeds and food/money contributions to **Valley Oureach**. As you can see by the picture many pounds of food will soon be delivered to the Food Shelf.

Have a Blessed year ahead and always remember to share joy.

Martha Group & Missions

## WOMEN'S CIRCLE FYI...

A Women's Circle Party

Our January meeting is to be a party. It will be held at the Lake Elmo Inn on Thursday, January 11th at 12:00. Be sure to check your email for the details on our gathering. An RSVP is needed so we hope to see you all there.

Ann and Vicki

## MUSIC NEWS AT FUMC!



Thank you to all the music personnel who assisted with the Christmas Eve service! Our version of "Joy to the World" went so well thanks to all your hard work. Everyone in attendance enjoyed the special celebration of Christ's birth.

A special "thank you" to Kathy Hartman who is signing off as the FUMC organist after so many years of wonderful service to our church. She will remain as hand-bell choir director until June when our bell choir - River Town Ringers - will attend the annual national bell choir convention. We are very excited to be attending again after the Covid shut-downs and are grateful to Kathy for remaining as our director for the event.

We would also like to welcome our new FUMC organist, Ruthann Ritchie. Ruthann is a harpist, organist and pianist who holds degrees in music from the University of Evansville (Indiana), the University of Colorado (Boulder) and Augsburg College (Minneapolis). Also a trained choral director and music therapist, Ruthann is currently employed as music therapist at United Hospital in St. Paul. Ruthann has a deep background in music performance and therapy. She has served at Cross Lutheran Church in Minneapolis; The Episcopal Church of Good Shepherd in Federal Way, WA; the Psychiatric Hospital, WA; and the Hospice and Cancer Centers at North Memorial Hospital, Robbinsdale. At the University of Limerick, Ireland, Ruthann gave a workshop on "Music Therapy with Alzheimer's Patients." At Queen's University, Belfast, she presented a session on "Music Therapy in Hospice." Ruthann has also lived in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where she was the featured harpist with the American Community Chorale. At her home parish, Ruthann was instrumental in developing a Celtic Even-song using the Iona Abbey Songbook.

## CARING MINISTRIES TEAM



We are all care givers and we would appreciate your help. The Caring Ministries team provides meals, soups, visitations, and greeting cards to homebound folks. A Grief Ministry and Home Communion. WE invite you to join us in one of these ministries utilizing one of your many gifts. Meetings are not necessary. If you are interested, please contact one of the team members: Chris Nelson, Vicki Anderson, Jeff Levy, or Linda Ash.

## THANK YOU!

To our wonderful FUMC family:

Thank you all for your kind words, reception, and generous gifts on Sunday, December 17th. Your support has meant so much to me over these past 40-some years! Greg and I look forward to more freedom to do some traveling, but also to see what our service to First United will look like in the future.

**With much gratitude,**

**Kathy Hartman**



## ACT OF KINDNESS AND THOUGHTFULNESS AWARD Announcing JANUARY Winner...

### LINNEA SHINN



Linnea Shinn – Always with a Smile and a Willing Heart

This month's positivity award goes to Linnea Shinn. Whether it's rehearsing with the Rivertown Ringers on Wednesdays or helping with coffee after Sunday services, Linnea Shinn shows her gentle, giving spirit wherever help is needed. When Linnea's daughter attended Sunny Hill Preschool as a four-year-old, Rachel told her mom she wanted it to be her church, too. Linnea got involved as a Sunny Hill mom. Soon she was volunteering in a variety of roles but has found her heart's home on the Mission Committee which she currently chairs. Linnea's passion for mission began as a

volunteer-in-mission in Latin America where "missions" came to mean much more than a place on a map or a person in a ministry somewhere.

Linnea worked at Linden Nursing Home as an aide for many years. With her personality and skills, we know she brought love and happiness to those she served. After her retirement she started driving a school bus for District 834, so has worked with the young and the old and sets an example of love with whoever she meets.

For those who are on Facebook with Linnea, you are often treated to beautiful early morning photographs in the Stillwater area.

With love,

The Staff Parish Relations Committee

# JANUARY HIGHLIGHTS FROM A FEW YEARS AGO BY PATSY

30 years ago, 148 people received communion on January 9, 1994, 112 at the 9:00 service and 36 at the 10:30 service. The January UMW meeting was canceled due to the weather. On January 30 the youth sold Super Bowl Subs for eating while watching the Dallas Cowboys defeat the Buffalo Bills.

The 1999 Annual Report reads: "In January, 1999, we received our new 3 octave set of Schulmerich English handbells, which were purchased through some very generous donations." The 2004 Annual Report includes a Time Line of Church History Anniversaries - 1854 - 2004, **now updated for 2024**. 170 years since the dedication of the first church for Methodists in Stillwater. 1869 - 155 years since the second church was built on Third Street. 1874 - 150 years since the pump organ was purchased. 1904 - 120 years since new pews were installed. 1929 - 95 years since the Diamond Jubilee Celebrating 75 years. 1944 - 80 years since the 90th anniversary, also 70 years since the merger of First Methodist and the Swedish Methodist churches. 1954 - 70 years since the 100th anniversary of the first building. 1964 - 60 years since our bell choir played for Annual Conference. 1979 - 45 years since the 125th anniversary and 45 years since the pastoral exchange with Reverend Arthur Jolley from Wales. 1984 - 40 years since the Sanctuary stained-glass project was completed., also 40 years since the pump organ was returned to the church. 1994 - 30 years since the dedication of the elevator - a gift from the Peterson family. 1999- 25 years since the dedication of the church addition. (Apparently 2024 is the year for our church to do something significant so that 2024 will be included in timelines of the future!)

## SCRIP IS STILL AVAILABLE!

The Scrip Order Schedule is now posted on the church website homepage under Announcements. The next order is scheduled for January 7. Orders can be placed after Sunday worship services, Wednesday dinners, or anytime by email to the church office at [fumcstillwater@gmail.com](mailto:fumcstillwater@gmail.com). Order blanks are available at the church Information Center. Payment for email orders can be dropped off at the church during office hours. The Scrip Program generated \$1,205.33 in 2023, and a total of \$22,482 for the church since program inception in 2013.



## UMM

Join the United Methodist Men for a monthly devotion, breakfast, discussion, and fellowship. The meeting on January 13 will be at the Lowell Inn at 8 a.m. Contact the church office at [fumcstillwater@gmail.com](mailto:fumcstillwater@gmail.com) to join the UMM mailing list.

## WEDNESDAY DINNERS

Wednesday Suppers resume on January 10 with Mary Harcey as head cook. Men, your meal with Adam Frederick is a week late this month on January 17. Once again, the final Wednesday, January 31, will be a potluck, so plan on bringing a dish to share.

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

### January activities



\*The Event on January 20, 2024 from 1-7. This is sponsored by the Minnesota Annual Conference and is for youth grades 7-12 and interested adults.

\*A January service project is to be determined.

## A MESSAGE FROM STAFF PARISH RELATIONS

Happy New Year to our First United church family! 2023 has been an especially challenging year for the Staff Parish Relations Committee. There have been some difficult decisions made in 2023. These decisions were made in the interest of the health of our congregation & our staff.

SPRC is a committee of church volunteers who are the Human Resources Department of our church. Therefore, many of our discussions are confidential. We will share with our congregation as many details as we are able. It is human nature to fill in any "gaps" of information with false narratives. Please don't let these rumors fester! Come to a SPRC member and we can confirm if the story is a rumor, even if we can't give the confidential details.

Blessings to you all for a happy & healthy 2024!

Sue Niethammer, SPRC Co-Chair

## BRIDGE GROUP

The Bridge Group will meet January 5 at noon in the Fellowship Hall. Beginners are welcome! Contact the church office at [fumcstillwater@gmail.com](mailto:fumcstillwater@gmail.com) to join the Bridge Group mailing list.



## JANUARY

Jan. 2 Anita Carter, Mary Harcey; Jan. 4 Ellen Campbell, Alan Schakel Jan. 7 Jacki Butterfield, Jenny Heaton, Sabrina Myrah; Jan. 11 Myrtle Potter; Jan. 12 Joe Hibberd; Jan. 17 Jackson Wright; Jan. 24 Lorraine Weber; Jan. 26 Allison Hibberd, Ernie Jones; Jan. 30 Alan Salmela.

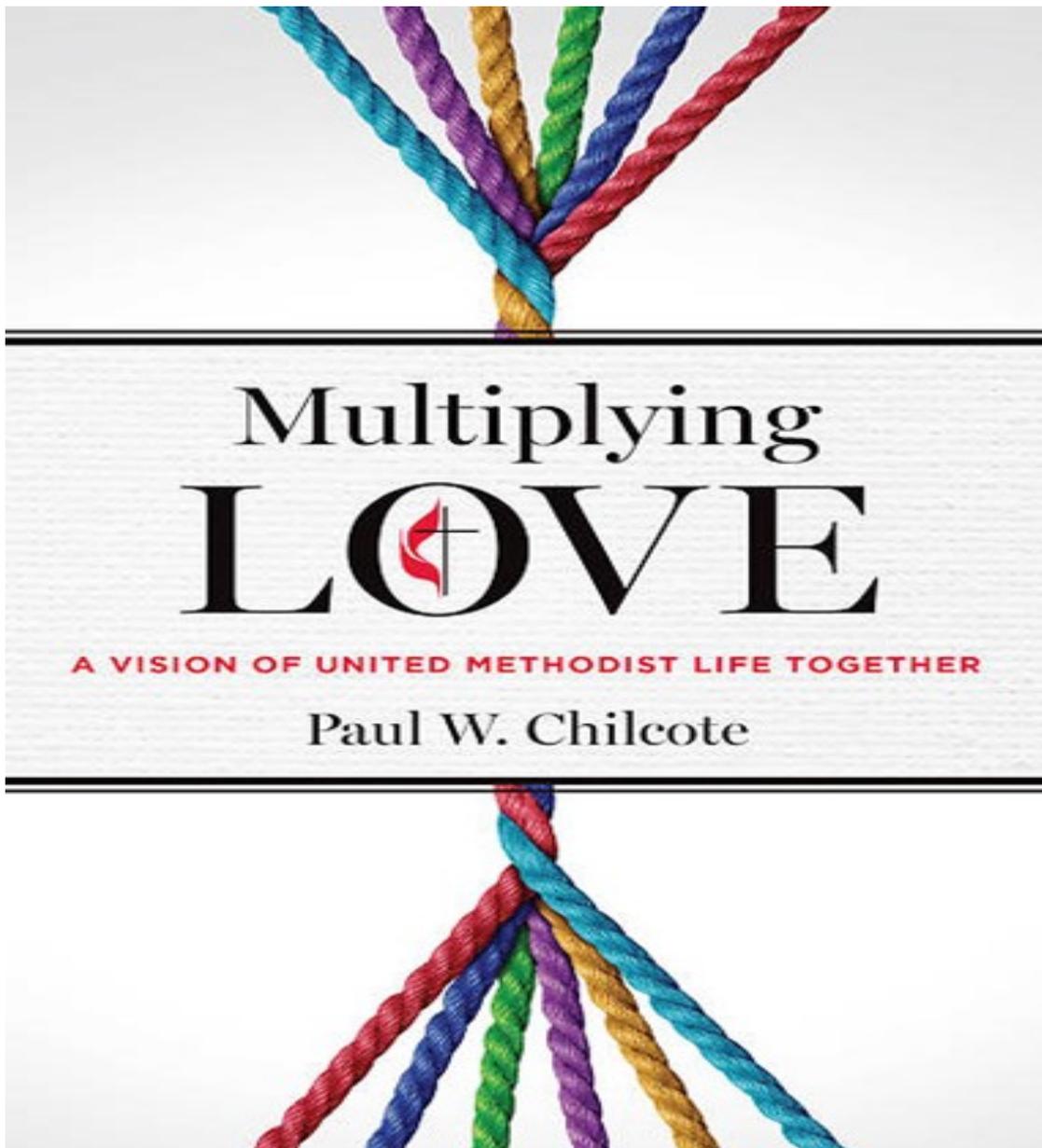


## 2024 Lenten Study

It's hard to believe that Lent is so close at hand, but February 14 is Ash Wednesday this year with Easter landing on March 31. Therefore, we will be continuing our Adult Study Forum beginning Sunday, Feb. 11 following worship. Books will be available in the office after Jan. 21.

A 15\$ donation is suggested.

*“Our world needs love during these desperate days of radical polarization and division. Our United Methodist churches yearn to embrace love more completely because God first loved us. Our “faith” (including doctrine) is important; Christian “hope” (including renewal) is important; “love” of God and neighbor is more important. **Multiplying Love** underscores what matters most and stands in contrast to divisive misreading of essential Methodist teachings. Dr. Chilcote helps us embrace anew the Wesleyan vision of love of Jesus as central to what we believe and how we live.”*



## Reconciling Task Force

We held the Straw Poll at the Charge Conference on November 26 and allowed email votes until Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. 60 votes were cast (42 at the Charge Conference and 18 via email or phone). The outcome was 54 in favor of the statement and 6 against.

The majority of comments the committee received were expressions of support: “God loves everyone”, “This issue is important to me”, “This affects me and my family”, “This is overdue”, “I’m glad we are doing this”, “It’s the right thing”, and several times “God is love”!

There were comments thanking the committee for their work and encouraging the committee to continue interviewing and meeting with people. We will continue to do that.

Concerns that were brought up were that people will leave the church. That is a concern, but as we know from this past year, people leave the church for many reasons. People are also attracted to the church for many reasons. For our younger members and their contemporaries, supporting the LGBTQ+ community is very important and a justice issue. It’s a way to bring our church and it’s message of love to a wider audience.

Another concern shared was that becoming Reconciling will open our doors to gay marriages and ordaining practicing gay pastors. This is actually something that will be part of our whole world-wide church conversation at the General Conference happening in May, 2024. Churches are able to decide for themselves if they want to be open to performing gay marriages. And the UMC is able to ordain non-practicing gay pastors, again, without all churches being Reconciling. Voting to become Reconciling won’t change those rules at this time. With the strong support from the Straw Poll, the Reconciling Committee will be bringing a recommendation to the First UMC Administrative Council in January that the church have a vote very soon to adopt this statement. And then the conversation will switch to next steps.

Thanks, everyone, for all of your conversations with us through the year!

Cynthia Frederick, Chair

