

The Key Newsletter

July 2026

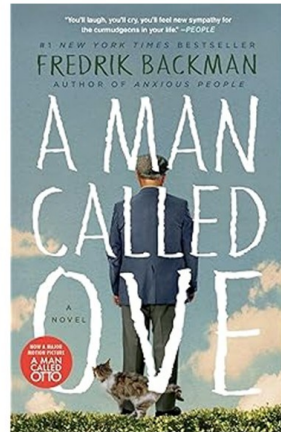
Volume 13 - Issue 07

Fireside Book Club!

July 28 / 7:00p.m.

Fireside Room

Please come with the book read and be ready to discuss this heartwarming book of a neighborhood shaken up by love.



Sunday Worship

Adrian UMC
9:00 a.m. Sunday Worship

First UMC
10:30 a.m. Sunday Worship

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Hello! Welcome to the Family Light Update - where we shed some light on the Family Life Ministry of First United Methodist Church!



We've passed Midsummer now, which always seems to come too early. But there's plenty of summer left, so that's good. I hope you're all enjoying our lovely weather and getting outside for some fresh air!

I want to thank everyone who helped out with our Community Kids' Camp! We had about 85 kids! We're so thankful for the prayers and the food and the serving that many of you provided. I know that the kids who came had a blast and learned about - and experienced - God in new ways. With our fun "Create!" theme, they learned that we are Created by God, Created for God, Created for Each Other and Created for the World! We also really enjoyed the adult class and hope that we can do that again in the future.

Ladies by the Lake will meet on July 21st at Centennial Park near the Beach Nook. We really enjoyed our time there in June and are excited to meet there again! Please note that we will meet at 6:30p.m. this time.

The **Fireside Book Club** meets on Tuesday, July 28th at 7:00p.m. in the Fireside Room. We are reading ***A Man Called Ove*** by Fredrik Backman. Please come with the book read and be ready to discuss this heartwarming story of a neighborhood shaken up by love. This is a great summer read!

One more event for the women of our church to add to their calendars is **RESURFACE**, coming on Saturday, October 24th. We are praying that this day-long conference will renew your mind, body and soul. **Please watch for more information and for ways that you can help make this event happen.** Tell your friends and plan on attending this meaningful day.

Serving Him Together,
Gretchen

"Worship the Lord with gladness..." - Psalm 100:2a

Mission Haiti Trip

Our 2025 Christmas offering raised over \$11,000 to support Elder Care within the Mission Haiti project. As part of this giving, we wanted to build stronger relationships. This includes our kids making shirts for them, some members sending notes, and opportunities for us to visit the projects in Mission Haiti

We have an opportunity to take several adults to Mission Haiti with Pastor John during the second week of November for about four days. The trip cost is \$2,500, which includes round-trip airfare from Sioux Falls, an overnight hotel stay in Miami, and transportation in Haiti and all meals in Haiti. This is a golden opportunity for us to love our neighbors.

If you would like to go, please contact Pastor John. This trip will focus more on building relationships than on construction. We will visit all the Mission Haiti sites and spend significant time at the house where the elders we support are staying.



MISSION-HAITI

LOVE JESUS. LOVE OTHERS. MAKE DISCIPLES.

Sunday Morning Coffee Fellowship

Come to the Fellowship Hall on Sunday morning before church to enjoy a cup of coffee or juice and a roll, and visiting with other members and friends of the church. It all begins at 9:45 a.m.!

Women's Coffee

The women's weekly coffee group meets every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. at HyVee in the Starbucks serving area. All women are invited to come and join this fabulous group!

Men's Breakfast Group

The Men's Breakfast group meets every Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. at the Blue Line Cafe. The men discuss shared concerns, solve the problems of the world, and make sure the rain gauges are up to speed. All guys are welcome to join us each week!



Monday, August 17th

We will be serving the evening meal at The Banquet on Monday, August 17th. Watch for further details.

Operation Christmas Child Update:



We can no longer accept pill bottles to use for our sewing and bead kits. Some countries receiving the boxes are not accepting the pill bottles due to potential drug residue in the bottles.



Food Shelf Donations

Your donations for the local food shelves of non-perishable food items are accepted throughout the year, please place your items in the wagon located in the narthex. Please be aware of the "best by" or "use by" dates on the items that you are donating. Items are taken alternately to the two food shelves.

Blankets Needed

During the long cold snap in January, we discovered students who struggled with warmth. In our community, there are homes with multiple families living in them. The kids often share a bed and blankets. When one person turns, someone is without a blanket. To save expenses, many of these homes have the heat set relatively low and the house is drafty. Older kids often prioritize the health of their younger siblings and will give them the blankets. The blanket supply at the Middle School has dwindled down to nothing. If you would like to donate warm, used blankets of any size, please put them in the box in the hallway by the kitchen.

Thank you!
Missions Committee

Operation Christmas Child-2026

In 2026, we will once again be participating in Operation Christmas Child.

Please note that we will begin collecting donated items in

August, continuing through October. The shoeboxes will then be packed on November 8 during Sunday School.

If you would like a list of the items needed for the shoeboxes, copies are available in the Narthex.

If you have any questions, please contact Pam Soderholm.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of this meaningful project.



Ladies by the Lake!

Join us at the Lake on July 21st at 6:30p.m.! (Please note this earlier time.)

Find us at a picnic table at Centennial Park near the Beach Nook - grab yourself some ice cream or bring your own snack and drink.

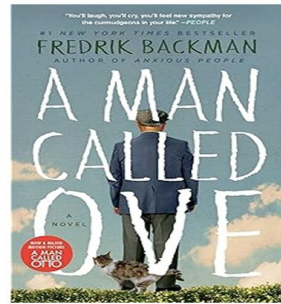
(Watch for a church email by 5:00p.m.
In case the weather doesn't cooperate.)

Fireside Book Club!

July 28 / 7:00p.m.

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RENEWING YOUR MIND, BODY & SOUL

Resurface

A Women's Conference

Saturday, October 24, 2026

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

First Methodist Church, Worthington



Saturday Book Study with Bishop—Via Zoom

You're invited to participate in a 2026 Summer Book Study led by Bishop Lanette. In this area-wide study, United Methodists across the Dakotas and Minnesota are invited to read "Building Beloved Community: The Courage to Love in the Face of Tyranny" by The United Methodist Council of Bishops. This book offers a prophetic roadmap for these turbulent times where we see polarization dividing communities and people of faith confronted with an urgent question: "What does faithful discipleship look like when beloved community is under attack?" Through biblical reflection, global perspectives, and practical strategies, participants will discern faithful responses to local challenges while connecting to the worldwide struggle for justice and peace.

All are welcome! Mark your calendar and encourage others to join you.

[Order your book or e-book now!](#)

Discussions will be held via Zoom on the fourth Saturday morning in June, July, August and September, from 9-10:30 a.m. Central Time, centering largely on the discussion questions found at the end of each chapter. The schedule is:

- June 27, 2026, 9-10:30 a.m. Central—Part 1: Deceptive Detours (with Preface & Introduction)
- July 25, 2026, 9-10:30 a.m. Central—Part 2: Empowered by Grace
- August 22, 2026, 9-10:30 a.m. Central—Part 3: Staying Alert
- September 26, 2026, 9-10:30 a.m. Central—Part 4: Seeds of Change

You must [register](#) in order to receive the Zoom link to each gathering. The Zoom link will be provided to those who have registered as the first discussion draws near.

Sound/Media Help is Needed

We are in need of more people to help with the Sound/Media system on Sunday mornings. If you would be interested in helping please contact the church office or Pastor John.

Ladies Making Father's Day Gifts



Community Kids' Camp





Letter from the Bishop

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

As our nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we are invited to reflect on liberty, belonging, and our shared responsibilities.

I believe anniversaries invite more than celebration—though celebration is warranted. Anniversaries also invite gratitude, truth-telling, and discernment. They ask us to remember where we have come from, honestly assess where we are, and consider what kind of future we hope to build together.

Writing to God's people in exile, the prophet Jeremiah offered this instruction:

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you ... for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7)

The Hebrew word translated as "welfare" is *shalom*: peace, wholeness, flourishing, justice, and well-being.

These words were spoken not to citizens, but to exiles. Their commitment to the common good flowed not from status or power, but from their identity as God's people.

That vision speaks powerfully into our own moment.

Some of us trace our family stories to the First Nations peoples who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial. Some descend from those who crossed oceans seeking opportunity and refuge. Some are descendants of those brought





here against their will. Some arrived recently. Some are citizens. Some are permanent residents. Some are still seeking a place to call home.

Yet all of us are neighbors, and all of us are bound together in one another's flourishing.

As we tell the story of our nation, we must also tell it truthfully. We remember Indigenous communities who experienced the loss of land, language, and culture; African men, women, and children who were enslaved while others proclaimed freedom; and generations of immigrants and laborers who endured hardship in pursuit of belonging.

These stories do not diminish our nation. They deepen our understanding of it. The Christian faith teaches that healing begins with truth.

Confession is not the opposite of hope; it is often the doorway to hope.

The Apostle Paul reminds us: "Our citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians 3:20)

Christians live with a kind of dual citizenship. We belong to the communities and nations in which we live, yet our deepest identity is found in the Kingdom of God. That citizenship shapes every other loyalty and reminds us that no earthly power can claim the devotion that belongs to God alone.

In every generation, Christians face the temptation to confuse love of country with devotion to God. The Church serves the nation best not when it becomes the chaplain of power, but when it remains faithful to Jesus Christ.

In the Wesleyan tradition, freedom is not merely freedom *from* something. It is freedom *for* something: loving God, loving neighbor, pursuing mercy and justice, and participating in God's healing work in the world.





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Jesus expressed this calling simply:

"You are the salt of the earth."

"You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14)

Which brings us to another enduring symbol: the torch of the Statue of Liberty.

A torch provides light. It helps people find their way.

The Statue of Liberty lifts her light toward the horizon. The Church carries another light: the light of Christ.

As we approach this anniversary, may we resist both cynicism and nostalgia. May we seek the *shalom* of the places where God has planted us. May we welcome the stranger, pursue justice, build peace, and love our neighbors.

Every generation receives the torch of liberty.

The question is how we will carry it.

May we carry it with humility, courage, compassion, and hope.

Whether citizen or newcomer, native-born or newly arrived, may we seek together the flourishing of our communities and all God's children.

Bishop Lanette Plambeck

Resident Bishop

Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area





*Here are the highlights from
the First UMC Council meeting held
on Thursday, June 25, 2026*

CELEBRATIONS:

- 80+ kids were at Community Kids Camp, with 165 meals served on the busiest night. We had a great group of volunteers for the meal we were responsible for. Each church only had to pay a little over \$100 after donations/registration fees.
- Women have started to register for the conference next fall. Gretchen has gathered a good committee, and sub-committees are already involved. However, anyone interested is welcome to help out as this will be a big undertaking for our church.
- Missions: \$239.80 was collected through the noisy offering in early June. This goes toward the conference missions.

CHALLENGES:

- Community Kids Camp will be back at FUMC next June. FUMC only had one volunteer this year for camp - thank you, Anita! We will need a LOT of volunteers in order to host, and the last time we hosted, we could have used more people.
- Trimming bushes and trees around church: No volunteer has stepped forward yet and finances prevent us from hiring a professional for the larger jobs. If anyone has the equipment needed to do some tree (near the corner sign) and large bush trimming, please contact Jim Nickel.
- Parsonage roof needs some shingles replaced, which will be addressed by the Trustees. However, the entire roof will need reshingled in the next year.

CURRENT FOCUS:

- Fallen electrical line at the front of the Sanctuary has been repaired. Thank you to Jim for addressing this need.
- First and Adrian churches will serve at the Banquet on Aug. 17. We will be trying to collect \$500-700 to pay for the meal. We had 20 volunteers last year, which seemed a little short. So we welcome everyone who wants to help. It is always a spiritually rewarding mission!

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CUTTING EDGE ISSUES:

1. **Finance Report:** We are behind on the February-May apportionments. This is double where we were last year (\$4000+ behind on apportionments at this time last year; \$9000+ currently). A full financial report is available outside the church office for those interested.
 - a. A question was raised about whether church members are aware of our financial situation. Options include Pastor John writing a letter for the newsletter (emailed); those without emails will receive a mailed letter. Message from the pulpit.
 - b. Ellen: Would like to include a quarterly statement with any emails/mailings.
 - c. Was council consensus to initiate email/ mailing and have Ellen address the congregation on July 19?
2. Pastor Angel has gone on family medical leave and CETA services have been paused. The conference is looking into options.
3. Photo Directory App: The Instant Church Directory app has been discontinued and information is being rolled into the Realm Connect app. Pastor John sent an email to the congregation with instructions regarding this app on June 25.
4. Fireside room update: We are still waiting for an evaluation as the contractor was dealing with medical issues.
5. Fellowship Hall Projector: Only one projector is currently working and we must have two functioning for the Women's Conference. The preference would be to update both at the same time, but financially may need to just replace the one as they cost \$1600 each.
6. Family Life will meet in July to begin discussing what Sunday School and Youth Group might look like next fall. Sunday School will be restructured in some manner, and over half of the youth group graduated this spring.

Next meeting: 23Jul2026

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Shirbroun, FUMC Covenant Council Recording Secretary

May 2026 Financial Update

May Income \$18,785.00

As of May 2026, income year-to-date: \$117,000

As of May 2025, income year-to-date: \$132,000

May Expenses: \$ 22,892.00, for a shortfall of \$ 4,100 for the month of \$-4100.

YTD Expenses: \$ 144,694.00 for a negative YTD of \$7957.00

All bills are paid, but we are months behind on our Annual Conference appointments. Please note that we can pay the amounts at any time this year. Our hope is that the giving will increase to help us cover that.

Detailed copies of the financials are available outside of the church office.

Photo Directory

If you remember, about 18 months ago, the church upgraded our database to a system called Relam. This was done to eliminate differences across our several databases and bring all of our information into one place.

One of the benefits of the new system is access to an online photo directory that will ensure accurate information updates and provide cost savings by eliminating the need for the current online directory app, Instant Directory.

We are putting the final touches on the new photo directory app and configuring it so our members can access the information in the new app. We are hoping to have this done in the next week or so.

Below are some steps you can take to be ready for the new online photo directory.

- 1) Download the Realm Connect app from your Apple or Google App Store.
- 2) Sign in to the app using the email address you currently use for church emails.
- 3) If you have an updated photo you would like included in the directory, please send the photo to Pastor John at jdmitchem@me.com or drop a copy off at the office.

If you have any trouble signing in to the app, please let Pastor John know, and he will be more than willing to help you with the new app. If you need or like a printed out copy of the current directory, please see Pastor John on Sunday for a copy, drop a note to jdmitchem@me.com, and he can send you an electronic version at any time.

Happy Birthday!

1	Ariana Lopez	8	Ky Ruppert	21	Brody Bonsma
3	Jean Doeden	9	Jeffery Ludes	22	Jolene Kuhl
	Don Erlandson	12	LaDee Grant		Deb Steinle
	Ray Hokeness		Elaine Mess	23	Skeeter Doeden
4	Marcus Maras		Kim Ruppert		Ty Klingenberg
	Mary Monthei	16	Lola Davis		Sarah Nickel
6	Riley Nickel	18	Raeya Hietbrink	29	Gary Hibma
	James Ruppert		Peyton Nickel	30	Callahan Bui
7	David Hokeness	19	Judy Mitchell		

Happy Anniversary!

15	Christopher & Clarisse Hill	28	John & Pam Soderholm
19	Dr. Mark Ludes & Dr. Lisa Gerdes	29	Eldon & Susan Bents

First United Methodist Church Staff

Pastor:	Rev. John Mitchem
Administrative Assistant:	Lori Nienkerk
Family Life:	Gretchen O'Donnell
Youth Leader:	Lisa Gerdes
Bell Choir Director:	Brenda DeSmith
Finance Manager:	Jenna Ahlers
Custodians:	Sarah & Chad Nickel

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Live Streaming!

Each Sunday we live streaming our worship services from First UMC. If you are going to be out of town, you can catch the live broadcast on our church app (download to your device) or any one of four different online locations:

The Boxcast TV Channel

<https://boxcast.tv/channel/qikol6fqes2qwhperl2l>

First UMC YouTube Channel

Go to YouTube: First United Methodist Church Worthington

First UMC FaceBook

Go to FaceBook: Worthington: First United Methodist Church

First UMC Website

<http://firstumcworthington.com/>

Worship services for First UMC are scheduled to be broadcast on the public access Channel 3 in Worthington. The broadcast times are Sunday at 6:30 am, Monday at 3:00 p.m. and Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. for the current week. Worship services for Adrian UMC can be found on the church's YouTube Channel.

Greeters, Live Stream and Media Tech

We can use one or two more pairs of persons to help with our live stream media on Sundays. Please contact Pastor John if you are interested. Here are the persons who are scheduled to help with the greeting, sound, media, and live stream services:

First UMC		Sound/Video	Media Shout
Sunday	July 5	Deb Steinle	John Steinle
Sunday	July 12	Kari Meyer	Claire Meyer
Sunday	July 19	Rick Dalrymple	
Sunday	July 26	Deb Steinle	John Steinle

First UMC		Greeting Team
Sunday	July 5	James & Amy Stefferud
Sunday	July 12	John & Deb Steinle
Sunday	July 19	Steffen & Ida VanWesten
Sunday	July 26	Sharon Algood & Leola Weets

Prayers for health concerns:

Rod Behrends	Ron Husenga
Chris Nelson	Lourdes Franco
Logan Waldner	Virgle Buck
Kristin (Dalrymple) Amundson	
Julie (Ginny Tate's sister)	Margaret Loger
Carol Oberloh	Dorothy Sietsema
Rylie Olson's grandpa	



Those dealing with cancer:

Christopher Brown	Shellie Williams	Mike Miller
Marion Reitsma (friend of Jolene Kuhl)	Stacey White	
Jeff Wachell (friend of Deb Steinle)	Nicole Bonsma	

Those recovering/dealing with health issues:

Nancy Hyink	Bill Carlberg	Larry Doeden
Emma Schnyders	Pat Huisenga	Corky Tate
Ariana Lopez	Aiden Remme	Dianne Dalrymple
Steve Johnson		

For those dealing with grief and loss...

Giving thanks & praying for:

Our Bishop and District Superintendent...
Our teachers, administrators, students...
Front line health care workers...
Law enforcement & emergency workers...
Service women & men and their families...Galen & Sherry Benton's granddaughter

If you have a loved one you would like to have added to the Prayer Corner list, or if any name needs to be removed from this list, please contact the church office: 507.372.2939 methodistoffice@gmail.com

Prayer Chain

Please send requests to our email Church Office
methodistoffice@gmail.com
or (507) 372-2939

Care Centers

First UMC:

The Shores

LaDee Grant

Sibley Specialty Care Center

Norma Swenson

Adrian UMC:

Mary Jane Brown Ctr (Luverne)

Mary Prins

Adrian Country Living Cottage

Margaret Loger