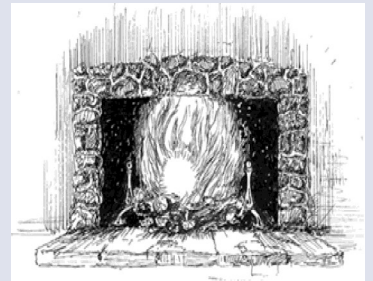


The Spark



Looking Forward in Faith

With all the great things happening here at First Union Church, we also have to look at the coming change of seasons. Soon, the warmth of summer will give way to the cooler days of autumn. The leaves change color and eventually fall from the branches of those trees. Soon after that, the snow comes. It brings a beauty all its own, while also reminding us that there is a season to everything. The passage from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 speaks to us about this very issue. It reminds us that there is a season for all things:

- 1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.
- 2 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.
- 3 A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.
- 4 A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.
- 5 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
- 6 A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away.
- 7 A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
- 8 A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

Recently, First Union Church has faced the passing of some longtime servants of Christ. As we pray for their families, we also celebrate for them because they are in the presence of the Lord. The Bible reminds us of this when it tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). But even that state awaits a future fulfillment when they will receive their eternal, resurrected bodies. This will happen when Christ returns and prepares to set up His Kingdom here on what will be a new earth (Revelation 21). Only God knows the timeline of these things, and because of the style of writing, there are some differences about what the book means. We should, however, have no differences between us in that God is just, God is faithful, and He sent his only begotten Son as a fulfillment of his promise from back in Genesis chapter 3. Just as we trust Him for eternity, let us trust Him for every moment between now and that time.

As we walk through the coming change of seasons, I'd like to remind us to enjoy every moment and give thanks for God's blessings. Terri and I love you all and we look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning.

Pastor Jim Huber

**September
2024**

**First
Union
Church**

- **Pastor's Page**
- **Matter of Prayer**
- **How about You?**
- **Just off the Highway**
- **The Recipe Box**
- **Pictures**
- **Board Highlights**
- **Wisps from Willow**



A Matter of Prayer

Thoughts on Prayer: *Got Questions Ministries*

For the Christian, praying is supposed to be like breathing, easier to do than to not do. We pray for a variety of reasons. For one thing, prayer is a form of serving God (Luke 2:36-38) and obeying Him. We pray because God commands us to pray (Philippians 4:6-7). Prayer is exemplified for us by Christ and the early church (Mark 1:35; Acts 1: 14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 6:4; 13:1-3). If Jesus thought it was worthwhile to pray, we should also.

Another reason to pray is that God intends prayer to be the means of obtaining His solutions in a number of situations. We pray in preparation for making major decisions (Luke 6:12-13); overcoming demonic barriers (Matthew 17:14-21); gathering workers for the spiritual harvest (Luke 10:2); gaining strength to overcome temptation (Matthew 26:41); and obtaining the means of strengthening others spiritually (Ephesians 6:18-19). Therefore, may God often find us before His throne, for we have a High Priest in heaven who can identify with all that we go through (Hebrews 4:15-16). We have His promise that the fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much (James 5:16-18). May God glorify His name in our lives as we believe in Him enough to come to Him often in prayer.

Fred Renaud passed away recently. His service was Friday, September 13 at the church.

We have been praying regularly for the following:

School has begun and we pray for safety for our kids and their teachers and the staff.

Cedar Cove has lost some residents lately. This is hard on the rest of the residents, staff, and family. Please pray for Cedar Cove residents, staff, doctors, nurses, and volunteers.

An important fall is coming up with the election of a new president, cabinet, et cetera. As Pastor Huber says, "Keep a level head."

Please continue to pray for the following people:

Dave St Onge's sister Jeanne, who is recovering from heart surgery.

Patty Carr, who is recovering from a cat bite

Jack Hays, who has several health issues

Tom Moore, who is building up strength following heart-valve replacement

Dick Carr, who needs volunteers to drive him to and from dialysis treatments in Petoskey

Tom Kenny, who is doing better after an accident

Lynn Forrester, who hopefully will be having back surgery soon

Madge Berryhill, who has a very painful back, and needs prayer for relief

Gene Schrader-Nutter went to be with the Lord whom she dearly loved last month. Her accomplishments were many and her obituary is on the *Family Life Funeral Home* website and other local newspapers. She will be greatly missed. Her memorial service was on Saturday, September 14 at the church.

Robert W. Smith passed away last month. He was a leader in our church for many years, ran a real estate business, and owned Waterlawn Cottages, a beautiful resort on Cedarville Bay. His obituary is online.

Stella Pendery passed away Last month after bravely battling cancer. She was able to stay at home to the end in Cedarville which was her wish.

Kim Dunn's brother, Mike Conn, passed away on August 5 at Evergreen Living Center in St. Ignace. Her other brother, **Rick Conn**, died on June 3. There were no services, at their request.

Dana Lofdahl recently passed away in Pickford. He was the youngest child of **Pat & Lawrence Lofdahl** of Cedarville, longtime members of First Union Church and very active in the church. **Dana** leaves behind his wife, **Kim**, adult children **Brooke and Tyler**, and his grandchildren.

If I die tomorrow, I'll be with the Lord.
If I live tomorrow, the Lord will be with me.

Either way, I belong to Him.

**And I can never thank Him enough
for staying by my side
through thick and thin.
Amen.**

How About You? Mike Davis

Well, as you probably know by now, we had a wedding in our family last month. As I was enjoying my morning coffee and thinking about the upcoming event, I was watching the many different birds on our bird feeder. What amazes me is how many of them mate for life, like the Cardinal, Chickadee, Blue Jay, and Finch, just to name a few.

What is the secret in their long-lasting relationships, and can we learn something from them to help our own relationships last for life?

Most of it has to do with survival. They depend on their community groups for food, safety, and healthy offspring. They work hard to provide for each other and realize their unique features (such as colors) in order to raise their young. Often the colors on the male are brighter to ward off predators from the female and their young.



Long-lasting marriages follow similar lines, although with we humans, the “pretty” goes to the girls on that note.

How about You? I follow a saying that I learned a long time ago. I think it is in the book of Hesitations: “Lasting relationships are based on what you are willing to overlook.” It works for me!

Just Off the Highway...

Next month, I am on my way to Buffalo, New York. I am not sure what I am going to see, as I have never been there before. More specifically, my destination is Lockport, New York.

My sister is turning 70 this year, and my other sister, brother, and I are all meeting there to surprise her. Her son, my nephew, is hosting the small event and promises it will be a fun time. If any of you know the area and can recommend seeing something I shouldn't miss, please let me know. Next month I will share some of my experiences, so stay tuned!



The Recipe Box Sue Rye



SEPTEMBER

Hi, Everyone! It's a beautiful fall day outside; cool, crisp, a little windy (which I like), and altogether a bright, sunny day. Enjoy it while you can. The snow will be here soon enough!

The secret to the best mashed potatoes is...

Butter, S&P, warm milk~~
potatoes mashed through a ricer
with evaporated milk & seasonings~~
sour cream~~butter~~
heavy cream/butter~~
cream cheese/butter~~

Half & Half and sour cream~~cream cheese
and dry ranch dressing, milk & butter~~

NO milk. Just add 1 egg
for creamy mashed~~
sour cream, S&P, butter,
parmesan cheese~~

**My favorite is the one with the ranch
dressing. Use a 1-2 Tbsp for a large pan of
mashed potatoes with lots of butter
and cream cheese & milk.**

Bev Crenshaw's Chocolate Pie

1-1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/4 cup corn starch
1/4 t salt
3 cups whole milk
4 egg yolks
6-1/2oz. Bittersweet chocolate,
finely chopped
2 t vanilla
2 T butter
1 pie crust baked and cooled or
a graham cracker or cookie crust.

Instructions:

In a medium saucepan, stir or whisk together the sugar, cornstarch & salt. Pour in the milk & egg yolks, whisking to combine. Stir over medium heat until mixture just barely comes to a boil and becomes thick, about 6-8 minutes (maybe more, maybe less). The second it starts to bubble and thicken like pudding, remove from the heat. Add the chocolate, vanilla, and butter, and stir until everything is combined.

Pour into pie shell, refrigerate, and serve with whipped cream

Frosty Strawberry Dessert

1 cup flour
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup nuts, finely chopped
1/2 cup butter, melted
3 egg whites
2/3 cups sugar
10 oz. pkg frozen strawberries with juice
1 t vanilla
8 oz. Cool Whip

Combine first 4 ingredients, spread in a 9x13 pan and bake at 350-degrees for about 20 minutes until it forms golden crumbs. Stir occasionally. Reserve 1/3 of crumbs for the topping. Spread the rest across pan evenly. Cool. Combine egg whites, sugar, and berries with juice in large bowl. Beat with mixer until stiff peaks form. Add in whipped topping. Spoon berry mixture over crumbs, sprinkle reserved crumbs on top, and freeze for 6 hours.

Keep frozen until ready to serve.

***Use 3 of the 4 whites from the chocolate pie recipe to make the strawberry dessert ***

-Sue Rye

Board Highlights~2024 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was called to order at 11:56 a.m. and was opened by **Mike Bolcer**, Board President, who also gave the opening prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance: 60 attendees, several of whom were non-members

Minutes of the Annual Meeting from August 27, 2023 were reviewed. Motion to approve the Minutes as presented was made by **June Davis**, seconded by **Mike Miller**. Approved.

Mike Bolcer touched on the extensive projects that the deacons completed this past year and extended special thanks to **Rick Wilson**.

A motion to accept all Committee Reports as written was made by **Greg Wagner**, seconded by Linda Jack. A vote to accept reports as submitted passed by show of hands unanimously.

Treasurer's Report:

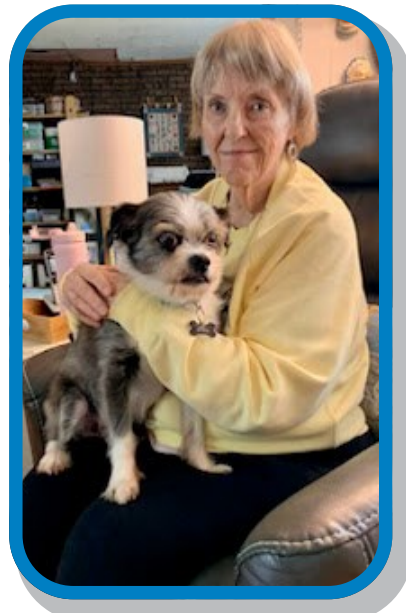
Rick Wilson explained that the proposed budget for 2025 is in 12 equal parts, with Evangelism, Christian Education, Missions, and Benevolence/Memorial funds at the top for intentional recognition of priority. He noted we are \$51,194 ahead this year and that budgeting requires faith in the congregation to give as able. The minisplits were the largest investment made this past year, and we've already realized a significant pay-back. The three units in the Sanctuary reduced annual heating costs this past winter by approximately \$3,000. Cloverland Electric assists with a \$2,000 rebate per installed unit. The second Cloverland Electric meter was removed from the church building. \$492.36 per year was being spent for nothing. **Rick** suggested members consider remembering First Union Church when doing their Estate Planning. **Gerry VandeVusse** asked how we are heating the Manse. **Rick** responded that minisplits have been installed there, too, and are operational. Thanks was expressed to **Rick**. **Linda Jack** made the motion to approve the 2025 budget, second by **Kim Dunn**. Vote by show of hands passed unanimously.

Nominations for two elders were **Rick Wilson** and **Mike Jellison**. Nominations for two deacons were **George Huff** and **Del Jacob**. **Vickie Buehler** made the motion to approve the nominees, seconded by **Christy Cloud-O'Hare**. Vote to approve by show of hands passed unanimously. Recognition was given to outgoing elders **Wayne Brood** and **Dave St. Onge** and outgoing deacons **Rick Wilson** and **Stan Jack** for their service on the Church Board.

The meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m. with prayer by **Pastor Jim**.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Dunn, Church Secretary

Me and My Dog



Sue Rye and her dog
"Spike" aka "Spike,
the Wonder Dog"
(renamed by
Carole Jacob)

“Wisps from Willow” Greg Wagner



Take your kids to church. Make the effort. Wake them up early. Fool with the belts and buckles and the fancy hair bows.

Endure the sleepy, grumpy faces and the misplaced shoes. Run around like a mad woman gathering everybody's everything and trying to get out the door on time. Hop to the car with a shoe in each hand. Give those babies a pop-tart and some milk and let 'em eat it in the car. If it's raining, get wet. If it's cold, get a jacket. If you're tired, go tired. But take those babies to church. You know why?

Because Jesus is there.

He's there. And He'll meet them there. And you too, Mama.

He'll be there in the sweet smile of their Sunday School teacher as she greets them into their room. He'll be there in the goldfish and the apple juice and the filling of their little bellies and hearts. He'll be there in the hug from a sweet friend and the encouraging smile that assures you that they "just barely made it" too. He'll be there in the sacred words read from the Bible speaking truth to their little impressionable hearts. He'll be there in the worship and the raised hands and the watery eyes and whispers of praise.

So take them. Carry all of their Bibles, drawings, and toilet paper tube creations. Sit by them in worship. Open your Bible and open theirs. Show them how to find the Scripture the pastor is preaching from. Show them how to worship. Explain to them why He's worthy of worship. Let them see you laugh and cry and praise and study. Forgive their wiggles and paper rustles and know that they're listening even when it seems like they aren't. Ask them questions and answer the ones they ask you. Introduce them to Jesus. Tell them of His greatness, His power,

His faithfulness. Tell them with your words and show them with your life. Tell them what He's done for you and how you've been changed by His grace and forgiveness and goodness and love. Tell them how they can be, too. Point them to Jesus. Over and over and over again.

Take your kids to church. They'll love it there. It's the only place where they can go and just be themselves. They don't have to "be" good enough or smart enough or athletic enough. They don't have to perform for approval or achievement. They just get to go and hear how much God loves them. Just because they're them. Just because He created them, they're valued. Wanted. Their worth isn't based on the grades they make or their ability to throw a curveball. It's not dependent on their performance or skill level. And they need a little more of that, don't you think? A little more grace and a little less pressure. A little more love and a few less demands.

Take them to church. Before you take them to the ball field or the gym. Before you take them on vacation or to grandma's or to the backyard to play. Take them to church. Let them know it's a priority. Show them it has eternal value. Let them see you set aside schedules and extra curricular activities and work and busyness to be present with the Lord in His house. I promise you won't regret it. I promise you it won't return back void.

Take them to church.

**While it looks like
things are out of
control, behind the
scenes, there is
God, who has not
surrendered
His authority.**

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