

The Spark



God is with us in all seasons for all reasons

After an especially harsh winter, we finally appear to be approaching springtime. Terri and I have observed that this winter reminded us much more of a Gaylord-level winter than our previous three winters here. In some ways, there is a theological parallel to this, because the Bible does tell us that the "seasons of life" will vary.

We may live through periods of time in which difficulties are few and the high points come fairly easily. However, we also know there are seasons of life in which it almost feels as though the bottom has dropped out and we are hanging on by our fingernails. We can find peace in knowing that God understands, because he personally experienced it during those 33 years when he was here in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus knew what it felt like to be hungry, to be cold, and even to be tempted. He understood how it felt to be betrayed. Because of this, we can have great confidence that God is not a distant, uncaring God, but is a very loving and present God. He is holy and righteous. He is loving and merciful and extends grace to all who place their faith in his only begotten Son. These are central doctrines of the Christian faith. As we walk through times of difficulty, let us encourage one another to remember

these truths.

Let me close by pointing out how the old English translations differentiate between two words. One of these words, "alway", is not used anymore and has been combined with the more commonly used term, "always". The first of the two refers to "at all times", and the second of the two means "in all ways". They remind us that through his Holy Spirit, God is with us **at all times** and **in all ways**, both in our seasons of great joy and in our times of great difficulty.

Remember to pray for one another and to give thanks for the many blessings in our daily lives. Look around you and watch for those blessings, because even during our most difficult times, they are still there, just as God is still with us and will be until that day when Christ returns or he calls us into his presence, whichever comes first.

God bless you all and thank you for the privilege of serving you here at First Union Church.

Pastor Jim Huber

**April-June
2026**

**First
Union
Church**

- **God is with us**
- **Ladies' Association News**
- **It Takes a Village**
- **Surrendering Control**
- **Treasurer's Report**



Spring is almost here, and it couldn't come soon enough for those of us who live here year-round. It certainly has been a long winter, especially with the big blizzard we had recently. We are more than ready for warmer weather and the activities it brings, along with the return of our "snowbird" friends.

Claudia Brood's *Cooking with Confidence* classes have been a big hit this winter, and were well-attended. In January, George Huff taught bread-making. No treats went home to waiting family members that day, as George had made butter and brought homemade jelly to the class, too! Claudia taught February's class, and we learned how to make her Fabulous Cinnamon Rolls and Bagels. The March class featured the art of working with sourdough, taught by Grace Minarik. Grace had a few different starters for attendees to choose from, one of which was her Grandma Dunn's! April's class has been canceled. A class in May is yet to be determined. Thank You, Claudia Brood! We appreciate her time and talents in teaching us to better understand kitchen basics and creative cooking.

Our Soup and Sandwich Luncheons have also been well-attended this past winter. The March luncheon was postponed until April 16 due to the blizzard. Volunteers are always needed to prepare the variety of sandwiches and delicious soups provided at the luncheon. Please contact me if you would like to help in the kitchen or make any sandwich spreads or soups.

The *Daughters of the King* Spring Banquet is scheduled for Saturday, May 2 in the Fellowship Hall. This event would typically be called a Mother-Daughter Banquet, but we would like *all* ladies or girls to feel welcome. We will enjoy dinner, a guest speaker, music and singing. It is a wonderful opportunity for women of all ages to gather together for fellowship. Bring a sister, mother, daughter, or friend, anyone who is a Daughter of the King. If you plan to attend, please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside of the Murray Library by the entrance from the parking lot.

The next Ladies' Association meeting will be held sometime in May. We will be seeking volunteers for a variety of chores, such as the planting and maintenance of the planters at our entrances, some weeding, Coffee Hour helpers, and more. Please watch your Sunday bulletin for future dates and announcements.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. -1 Peter 4:10

IT TAKES A VILLAGE!

Christy Coud-O'Hare

Our youth ministry is growing and our programs would not be possible without the help of our fabulous, spectacular, out-of-this world volunteers. I cannot think of enough adjectives to describe how wonderful our volunteer group is, and we are looking for more individuals to join us. If you are interested in volunteering and having fun while touching the lives of our youth, please text or call Christy at 906-748-0364.

Volunteer opportunities include but are not limited to:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| *Children's Sunday school | *Nursery |
| *Anchor Club | *Youth Group |
| *Children's Message | *Anchor Club |
| *Vacation Bible School | *Junior Church |

Mark your calendars for VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Monday-Thursday, July 6-9, 2026

Surrendering Control: A Youth Group Trip to Lake Ann

As experienced by MaKayla Harvey

There I was, standing in the crowd, with tears streaming down my face. I desperately wanted to hide my emotions from anyone who might see, but at the same time, I felt so free.

Our First Union youth group recently participated in a youth retreat weekend at Lake Ann Camp. From the moment the church van pulled into the camp, I knew something was going to change; I just didn't know in what way.

The whole weekend was a blast! We stayed busy with so many activities. In the ARC (Arcade and Recreation Center), there was a gym with 25-square, gaga ball, basketball, basketball connect four, and an original "soccer meets gaga ball" game. They even had a coffee and gift shop with cool camp merch, specialty coffees, and ice cream.

Lake Ann encouraged us to take time with God each day. From "God and I" time in the morning to the evening sessions and youth group connection time, we were surrounded by intentional moments to grow closer to Him. I had great conversations with my youth group and learned more about them.

In our sessions, we studied Romans 8. I learned that there is no condemnation in Christ, and that everything I have done was wiped clean when I put my trust in God. I realized that full forgiveness and adoption into His family has been given to me.

Another truth I learned was how God works all things for good. Don't get me wrong, I knew it already, but as I was sitting there, that truth jumped off the page and straight into my heart. I had been dealing with some hardships, and in that moment, I realized I had been trying to figure it all out myself, trying to control the situation with my own ability. I was trusting my own strength instead of leaning on God.

As we stood for worship, I finally poured out my praise. The more I did, the freer I felt. I felt weaker in myself, but I wasn't ashamed. The longer the song progressed, the more my trust in Him grew. Letting go of the need to control things I couldn't was an amazing feeling.

The trip to Lake Ann was an incredible experience. I am so grateful I got to share it with my youth group.

All ages enjoy learning and growing together



Come one, come all!



Treasurer's Report Rick Wilson

First Union Church maintains a good financial position as of the close of March, the seventh month of our 12-month 2026 budget. The church has no debt. Our assets include real estate and financial accounts. The financial accounts offer two important advantages – monthly yield income of \$1,100 at present, and financial reserves to pay for unexpected expenses. Also, financial reserves are important to help cover church expenses should there be changes in the economy.

Following are highlights of the four main categories of the church budget:

General Budget Revenue:

Deficit trend continues. At the close of March we are <\$12,325> behind the 7/12 target. In percentage, that is 8.2% less than target giving. There is no specific explanation for the giving deficit, but it is important for us to be aware of it. Experience indicates the return of summer residents can boost giving.

General Budget Expenses:

Favorable trend on the expense side. Positive variance has increased further. Note there is an exception with spending. To no one's surprise, snowplowing through March exceeded the budget plan by two times. Last winter is recorded as "memorable". Note, also, that the positive expense total closely balances the negative giving total. Thus, we have not had to pull from savings – yet.

Missions Monthly Giving:

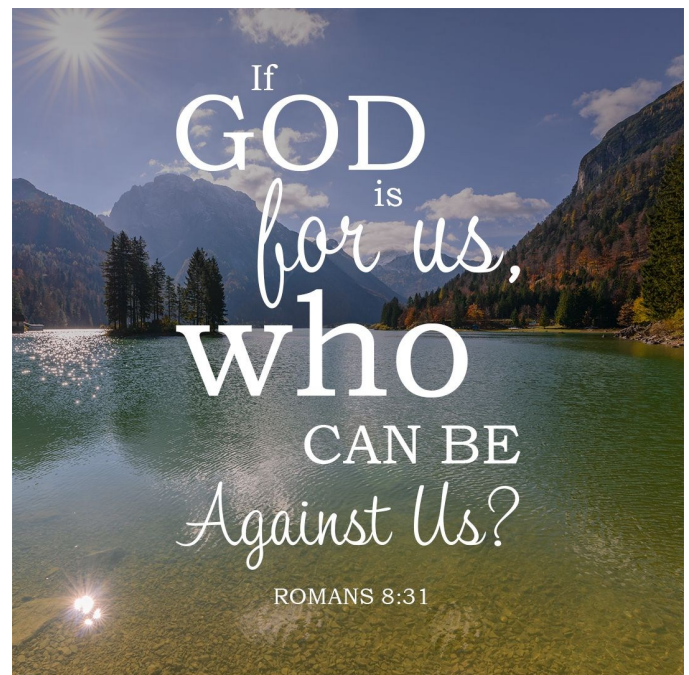
This is running at a continuing deficit. There is no positive trend to see. Cumulative giving at the end of March was <31.2%> less than the budgeted share. Unless Missions giving increases, an infusion from church savings will be necessary. The church has a separate Missions savings account to help with a deficit.

Missions Expense Account:

All missions expense accounts are active and

on target at standard monthly budgeted rates. March ended over-budget by a cumulative \$2,300, related to one-time expenditures that will balance out as the budget year progresses.

Finally, many of you are aware of the upcoming electrical rate increases Cloverland Electric Cooperative has announced for the next three years. As church treasurer, I have to pay close attention to electrical costs. Although we have greatly reduced electrical consumption with mini-split heating, electrical remains a major budget item for our church. I have created a cost analysis that calculates what will happen to commercial [church] and residential rates over the 3-year period. I have this available if you are interested in understanding the core of Cloverland's rate increase strategy. There is more to it than a simple kilowatt rate increase.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Cedar Post Thrift Store & Food Pantry is seeking volunteers. If you are interested, please contact Sue Siddel at 906-484-9512.

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