

The Spark



The Season of Refreshment

Summer 2026 edition

After a long and unusually harsh winter, some of us may have wondered if summer would ever arrive in the Les Cheneaux area. Of course, it finally has, and it reminds us of how blessed we are to live in this beautiful location, where the scenery is gorgeous, the temperatures are comfortable, and as the summer residents return, our schedules are busy and fulfilling.

There are parallels to this in terms of our spiritual growth. Our faith goes through periods in which it seems cold and gray. Even though we know better, we wonder whether the spring of our faith will return when we go through our “winters of discontent”. All of us experience this, including pastors. I might add *especially* pastors, because we carry the weight of the role in which we’ve been placed. That being said, it is and always has been a true privilege to fill that role on behalf of the families of First Union Church.

Enjoying the summer here is like giving thanks for the seasons in life in which we are happy and unburdened. We know that there will be times in the future when we won’t feel the same way, but we also know that we have been given God’s promise that “He is with us always, even unto the end of the age”. Until that day comes, we carry on. As the old saying goes, “We keep on keeping on,” and we do so

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because our trust is in Christ, our rock and our salvation.

Enjoy the beauty of this time of year and give thanks for all of God’s blessings. Above all, please pray for provision for those you know who are in need, and for their counterparts around the world, where the needs are far greater than we can imagine. Pray for their provision, pray for their salvation, and give thanks for God’s love for us.

May God be with you until we meet again.



Pastor James Huber

Rainforest Falls-VBS 2026

Christy Cloud-O'Hare

This year's Vacation Bible School took children on an unforgettable, creature-filled adventure to **Rainforest Falls**! Throughout the week, up to 57 young explorers discovered timeless truths about God through engaging Bible lessons, exciting games, creative crafts, uplifting music, and meaningful fellowship.

Each day focused on a different aspect of God's character, helping children learn that God is the Creator of all things, that He is all-knowing, is our Refuge and Safe Place, He is Love, and He is also Forever Faithful. As they journeyed through the rainforest, they grew in their faith, built new friendships, and created lasting memories.

We are grateful to all of our dedicated volunteers, teachers, contributors, and families who made this week such a wonderful success. Thank you for helping make Vacation Bible School a joyful and meaningful experience for every child. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for another exciting adventure!



Setting next to my daughter Laura's hospital bed, I visited quietly with her while praying for her healing and for wisdom for her doctors. It was the morning of Sunday, July 5. I was not in church attending worship as is my custom. I was in a small clinic in rural Nebraska, advocating for my daughter.

Just four days earlier, Laura became ill with a kidney stone. Unbeknownst to me, her husband, Bret, had taken her to the ER in the wee hours of the morning. At about 6:30 a.m., he met me at the top of the stairs to explain what was happening. I was preparing to fly back to Michigan. My bag was packed and my bed was stripped. Incidentally, at about the same time, I began receiving messages from Delta on my phone. My flight was delayed and would I like to change my flight?

Jehovah Jireh: my provider. Here is where God met me in my need! I rebooked my flight for a few days later and told Bret that I could stay at the house and care for his sleeping daughters and he could go back to the hospital to be with Laura.

Because she didn't bounce back immediately and because I have an understanding husband,



I was able to expand my planned one-week trip to about two-and-a-half weeks.

With joy and concern, I found ways to support my daughter and her husband. I was able to spend more time with my three granddaughters and help with simple tasks like preparing meals, doing laundry and feeding animals. Of course, other people in their family and faith community reached out to help. And you, my church family, covered us in prayer.

What has touched my heart most profoundly is the way in which this experience has helped to answer my many prayers for purpose and a growing relationship with Laura and her family. My daughter married a corn farmer in Nebraska some 15 years ago. There have been many occasions when I have mourned the loss of time spent with her. But God is good. He has provided for me and for my daughter's family in countless ways.

You can find the retelling of Abraham's testing from God concerning his son Isaac in Genesis 22. The recounting of Abraham's life gives us many opportunities to see the following saying in action: *Obedience brings blessings.*

Ladies' Association Update

Sherri Huff

The busyness of summer is upon us again as we are all taking advantage of the warmer temperatures to spend time with family and friends. Many of our usual activities are on break until fall, as a result.

Claudia Brood's always popular Cooking with Confidence classes will resume in September or October. I look forward to hearing what she has planned for future classes! Please watch the Sunday morning bulletin for announcements and more information.

Ladies Fellowship and Craft days will be resuming in the fall. The dates are yet to be determined.

A few ladies did get together to plant the large barrels at the north entrance. The planters and the geraniums in front of the church look beautiful as they fill in with summer growth. A big "thank you" to Lorie Thompson for generously giving of her time to water all the planters.

This past spring's *Daughters of the King* banquet was a huge success. It was a blessing to have 75 women and girls in attendance; one of our largest groups so far! The wonderful meal was prepared by our own Daniel Peterson, his wife Solana, and my husband, George. The men of the Tuesday morning Bible Study helped to serve and clean up after the meal. It was so nice for all the women to have the whole evening off. After dinner we had special music, an object lesson for the girls and one for the women. My heartfelt thanks to those who helped make the evening a success. There were men who set up the hall and women who decorated. Kathy Reno greeted guests, and

Brittany Hutchinson played the piano, while Cindy Maggard, Marcia Perkins, Kim Dunn, Grace Minarik, Eliana Gulder, and Kelila Bayless sang. Ron Gulder worked behind the scenes managing the sound system. We are truly blessed to have so many people in our church family who were willing to help make this a very special evening of fellowship for all the women who attended.

Looking ahead, our Annual Church picnic is scheduled for Sunday, August 23 and will follow our Annual Meeting. The picnic is a great opportunity for fellowship and good food. This is a potluck meal that will be held at the Heritage Park, weather permitting. There will be a sign-up sheet on the entryway bulletin board for those who are planning to attend and plan to bring a dish to pass. More details will be in the bulletin as the date approaches.

Psalm 29:11 The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.



Daniel Peterson, Gary Maggard, Rick Wilson, and Terry Moore setting up the buffet for the Daughters of the King Banquet

Treasurer's Report

Rick Wilson

At the end of June, we had completed 10 months, or 83%, of the 2026 church Budget. In a short month's time, a new budget for the 2027 fiscal year will be developed and presented to the congregation at the August 23 Annual Meeting. The Budget Status at the conclusion of June 2026 follows:

General Budget Giving. Actual vs Budgeted 10-month cumulative moved from a deficit of 5% or \$9,762 at the end of May to a deficit of 3.6% or \$7,745 at the end of June. This means giving is below where we would like it to be. Countering that, there is a favorable element on the spending side, as you will read below.

Missions monthly giving is running a continuing deficit. Being blunt, there is no positive trend to see. After June we are at a deficit of \$10,362, or 30% below the 10-month target. We have been hovering at a 30% shortfall against budgeted revenue for five months. Without additional Missions giving, our obligations will require infusion from Missions savings. Please note that Missions savings is a temporary account to absorb up and down fluctuations of actual giving.

General Budget Expenses have a welcome positive surplus. This means a favorable trend of less spending than budgeted. Cumulative spending at the end of June increased the surplus from 9.3% at the end of May to 16.6%, or \$35,705. Note there will be a major expense in the near term, when the Manse basement flooding correction work is completed totaling about \$12,500. In total, spending is well under control. The positive expense total is helping to offset the negative giving total. Thus, we have not had to take from savings to support church operations.

All missions expense accounts are active and on target at standard monthly support rates. We were 5.8% over budget at the end of June. This is explained by a couple of one-time expenses for materials and supply purchases, such as Mary-Martha Circle quilts. Missions expenses are under control and tracking the support commitments our church has made.

We pray God will continue to smile upon our church and congregation. With your support, our church has a large impact on the Les Cheneaux community.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Wilson, Elder/Treasurer

More photos from the Daughters of the King Banquet



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Creating intentional followers of Jesus Christ