

AUGUST 2024



UCPC Community Care Line

"We invite all to faith in Jesus Christ and growth in Discipleship through Word, Prayer, and Service."



Diana Solie 8/5
Curtis McNeill 8/20
Ruth Knapman 8/24
Larry Peterson 8/25
Doreen McNeill 8/31

Flora and Milt 8/21
Carol and Hans 8/24
Kathy and David D. 8/25

If your Birthday or Anniversary is missing, incorrect, or if you do not wish to have it posted in the Newsletter please contact the UCPC Office.



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1. Pastor's Note, Birthdays and anniversaries
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3. Calendar
4. Upcoming events; Building and Grounds
5. Shout out; Volunteer opportunity
6. Thank you from Will
7. Contacts page

A Note from the Pastor

This past month I finally sat down and read "Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive" by Thom S. Rainer. This book has been on my shelf and my "to read" list for literal years. I've just been too in denial and scared to read it. In denial because I didn't believe it could contain anything that would apply to any church I was at. Scared because what if my denial wasn't right? What if the church I was at, was heading towards death? But I'm so glad I worked up the courage to read it. Despite my critiques of it (particularly how it ends), I encourage you to read it as well. It's a short book with great questions for thought or discussion at the end of each VERY short chapter.

After examining and interviewing congregations that closed, the author observed a common theme among them: they stopped focusing on the community and ministry needs around them and shored up their resources to take care of themselves. Their focus shifted from outward-oriented to internally-oriented. Usually it wasn't an overnight switch; rather, it happened over the course of years – if not decades – such that no one inside the church could see the trend for what it really was. I can't stop thinking about this. How easy it is for small decisions here and there to start snowballing such that we drift way from our true purpose and mission which is to be outside our "four" walls, spending every penny we can on the people and needs in our community.

As I've been reflecting on this dichotomy of outward- vs. inward-focused church ministries, I've been drawn to reexamine the concept of "F.R.O.G.". Perhaps you've heard of this acronym. F.R.O.G. stands for "Fully Relying On God" (or "Fully Rely On God"). On the surface, I love it. "FROGing" is exactly what I want to be doing, and I'm sure you feel that pull too. As Christians, that's our call after all! We are called to FROG – to fully rely on God. We pray, we lift things up to God, we ask for God's help with stuff, we thank God for the ways God has provided, and on and on. Often I feel like I *am* FROGing and so is the Church.

I was reminded of our call to FROG when we heard an imperative from Jesus during worship this past month in Mark 6:

⁷[Jesus] called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸[Jesus] **ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.**

Jesus is asking the disciples to FROG on a level I have never tried. He is basically commanding them to become homeless and trust that God will provide shelter, clothing, food, safety, etc. as they have need of it. How many of us can say that we operate the same way? Of course the world has changed since then and life expectancies are longer, etc. so a lot of our realities, and therefore absolute necessities, have changed. But still, we have homes (and maybe also second homes or cabins), 401(k)s, cars, boats, RVs, checking & savings accounts, hedge-funds, land, stocks & bonds, IRAs, and so much more. And when we add all that up, it ends up meaning that most of us are not actually FULLY relying on God, but rather, only partially relying on God. We have stockpiled wealth for ourselves and our church(es) in case of hard times, emergencies, or for when/if we are no longer able to work. I'm not saying these aren't necessary things in today's world, but it does make truly being able to FROG, more difficult.

If a church has shifted from outward-focused ministry to an inward-focused life, one symptom is that budget lines that once funded ministries happening outside the church's walls have now been cut in order to preserve "the essentials" like the building/ utilities and the pastor's salary or to build up a rainy day fund. Again, don't hear me saying

that buildings, pastors, and rainy day funds aren't great things, but if they become ends instead of means, what happened to God? Are we so worried about safety and security we're unwilling to trust that God works through us? And *that* is what makes truly FROGing so difficult in today's day and age. It's sneaky and easy to slide off course of truly and fully relying on God because we can *think* that we are, even when we are not.

What this means is we have to be intentional, aware, and diligent. We have to keep track of decisions and pay attention to what is lost as well as gained. Fully Relying On God takes work. Hard work. But it IS possible. It requires being willing to go against society and against our own gut. It requires us to shift our mindset and internal cultural values. It requires us to lean into uncertainty and scarcity and trust that God will provide, multiplying a few loaves and fishes such that there ends up being an abundance left over. When we are able to see scarcity and uncertainty as an opportunity for God to work a miracle, rather than when we need to batten down the hatches and panic, *that* is when we start to get into what it means and feels like to FROG. It's scary. It's hard. But it *is* possible.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Erika



Women's Bible Study

August 12 and 26, at 2:30PM, in the Narthex,

Studying

Sermon on the Mount by John Stott



Fairbanks Golden Heart Rotary Golf Tournament

Benefitting The Door

7AM registration,

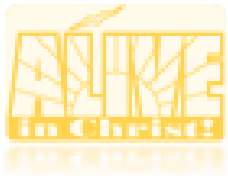
August 10

Info at vmtherrien@gmail.com



*Wondering where the
Session Minutes are?*

There was no Session meeting in July! Committee reports were sent to the Clerk (Hi Doreen!) - contact me at admin@ucpefairbanks.org if you would like to read them and I'll get them sent to you!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 9:30am - 10:15am Adult Bible Study (FH) 10:30am - 11:30am Worship Service (S) 2:00pm - 4:00pm Grace Church (S) 6:00pm - 7:00pm 12 Step (MR)	29 4:00pm - 6:00pm Laurie Long (HS)	30 6:30am - 7:30am Men's Bible Study (N) 6:30pm - 8:00pm Boy Scouts (CE) 6:30pm - 9:00pm Great Land Sounds (MR) 8:00pm - 10:00pm 12 Step AA (L)	31 4:00pm - 6:00pm Laurie Long (HS) 6:00pm - 7:00pm Girl Scouts (L) 6:00pm - 9:00pm Red Hackle Pipe Band (CE)	1 5:30pm - 6:30pm 12 Step (HS) 5:30pm - 7:00pm Deacons Meeting (CR) 6:00pm - 9:30pm Grace Church (MR & FH Classrooms) 6:30pm - 9:00pm Sweet Adelines (CE Basement)	2 2:00pm - 4:00pm Four Winds (MR) 6:30pm - 9:30pm Grace Church (MR) 8:00pm - 10:00pm 12 Step NA (L)	3 1:00pm - 4:00pm D & D (FH Classroom)
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Coming Events

August 11:

Backpack/Back-to-School Blessing



Early September:

Choir rehearsals resume

TBA—September
Adult Bible Study
will be starting again



Building and Grounds Update

All eight windows have been installed and interior finishes have been completed. Final touches should be done very soon. Shelli and Dave Swanson volunteered to paint the exterior and did a great job. The contractor has been working on the concrete repair for the handicap ramp handrail. The final summer project will be to replace the exit door on the stairwell. The door had to be re-ordered because the door we received was a non insulated door. The contractor will also be building a fixed awning over the new door to protect it from the elements. If you can make a donation to any of these projects it would be greatly appreciated



It won't be long until the snow flies and we are asking for shoveling volunteers...but you still have a few weeks if you want to help with lawn mowing!

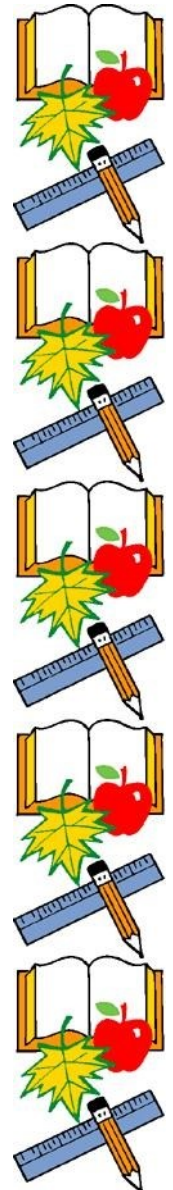
Please sign up for lawn mowing if you are able. The sign up sheet is on the Garage Guys table in the narthex. Thanks for volunteering!!



PLEASE NOTE!

**Pastor Erika will be out of town
August 23-26!!**

**Shout Out to Shelli and Dave
Swanson for painting the
outside of the C.E. Building
around the new windows!**



Blessings and Peace to you all!

I would like to take some time to say thank you to University Community Presbyterian Church, its congregation and leaders for welcoming me into your hearts and this special place of worship. I came to here nearly 3 years ago and have been very blessed to be among you. It has been an honor and a journey in my faith to serve this church and get know you. Many of you have touched my life in many ways. Thank you for your unique lights and your gifts of mentorship, companionship, friendship and love.



UCPC is a wonderful and special place. I attended my first service with this church, sitting near the back and observing the service, and felt my spirit open. I came back the following Sunday and discovered how very warm and genuinely kind the congregation was, feeling acceptance, love and support. I knew I wanted to stay and to continue to listen to Jesus' words and engage this spiritual space of love and kindness. I was raised in the Episcopal church in my home state of New York, and since that time to now my journey has taken a bright path forward. I became a member of UCPC and joined the Presbyterian denomination in full faith and trust in God. I have been honored to be asked to serve as a liturgist, act in skits and help with church missions such as Loving Families. I have a special memory of being able to create candles of remembrance for loved ones who passed. It was a powerful and humble service full of love, honoring all those we dearly love and have lost. My journey with UCPC and my walk in faith grew even more with an invitation to join the nominating committee and then I was blessed to join in serving as a deacon! I found a real home in the team of deacons at UCPC and was further honored and blessed to have been elected president of the deacons this past January. The deacons are a humble group that lead from the heart and help many in our church and beyond who have requests and needs for prayers, supporting them in difficult times, grief, sickness and transitions in life. I serve alongside a fantastic group of deacons who have special gifts, kind and loving hearts and the ability to show up and help, no matter the need. We love, we laugh, we cry, we do devotions together and we always, always pray for you! It is a great and high honor to serve you with them. I will deeply miss being a part of this most important and loving team.

To the pastors I have been able to get to know and serve with, I would like to say thank you for your leadership, your support, your mentoring and guidance as I walked my journey of faith at UCPC. I am grateful to you for your prayers and for your love. Thank you for your smiles, your prayers and inclusiveness. I will miss you very much.

To the session members and church leadership, I want to say how much it has meant to me to help this church and to be lifted up to share my gifts with all of you. I cannot express how touched I am for that and for the unfailing faith you have shown to me and have in me. I am grateful and humbled. UCPC is lucky to have you all.

Finally, I want to say again, how very special it has been getting to know you all. I will keep you all always in my prayers as I move out of state to settle in Ft. Collins, Colorado. I will be back from time to time as I still have some family here in Fairbanks, which means I will visit you in the coming months and years when I am in town. I look forward to seeing my church family and the joys of catching up! You will never ever be forgotten and will always, always be with me in my heart and prayers. I am blessed with your love, friendships and prayers.

May God always shine on you and be your bright light to guide all your paths. You are loved greatly and never alone.

In Christ,

Will

University Community Presbyterian Church



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Phone: (907) 479-6728

Office Hours

9:00AM to 2:00PM, Monday - Thursday

Pastor Erika is in the office Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10AM-2PM



Contacts

Supply Pastor . Rev. Erika Bergh 1-(907)-717-5015 Email: rev.erikabergh@gmail.com

Admin Assistant: Melissa Bierer (907) 479-6728 Email: admin@ucpcfairbanks.org

Session Elders and Committee Leaders

Doreen McNeill ('24)	388-0544
Joe Krizek ('24)	460-4294
Pat Babcock ('25)	978-7187
Matthew Bierer ('25)	474-0106
Jim Durst ('26)	590-9024
Paula Long ('26)	687-7444
Roger Smith ('26)	322-2595

Board of Deacons

Will Haight ('25) President for 2 more weeks.	978-9679	:-)
Carol Nielsen ('25)	388-8154	
Sarah Lanstra ('25)	378-3929	
Melissa Bierer ('24)	474-0106	
Janet Johnson ('24)	687-7148	
Judy Fowler-Morris ('26)	388-5629	
President after Will leaves.		
MariJo Larson ('26)	322-9425	

Worship Service Leaders

Matthew Bierer	Video Manager
Kathy Dohner	Organist/Pianist
Curtis McNeill	Sound Manager
Theresa Reed	Choir Director

