

April 2024

Volume 58 Number 4

# THE SHINING LIGHT



*The Voice of the Congregation*

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC  
*of Grand Marais*

# First Congregational United Church of Christ

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Moderator: Tom Yuhasey    Treasurer: Kevin LeVair  
Board Members: Stephen Aldrich, Francie Beaster,  
Jenny Delfs, Bruce Tyler, Carol Winter



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## Mission Statement



First Congregational United Church of Christ is an open, inclusive church that exists to worship God and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. We welcome all people of goodwill who seek to share the love of God and honor the diversity of creation in a spirit of tolerance and flexibility. As a Just Peace Church, we invite all who seek the reign of God to join us in reaching out in healing ministry, working for justice, witnessing for peace and striving to overcome all forms of oppression. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Communion.

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*Contributions to the newsletter are encouraged! Please submit writing of no more than 500 words, poetry, or artwork to the office. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity.*

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# Prayer of the Month

By St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be

understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in

pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

Amen.

## Worship in April

**April 7, 2nd Sunday of Easter/Holy Laughter** – On this Second Sunday of Easter, we hear the story from the Book of Acts how Jesus spent a little more time before ascending into heaven and telling the disciples they are to be his witnesses. This is to be a time of Joy and laughter. This Sunday we will try to bring them into our worship with humor and silliness that witnesses to God's love and joy that they have in our world and in us, human beings, even when, especially when we don't always get it right.

**April 14th, 3rd Sunday of Easter** – Retired Judge Stephen Aldrich will be taking the helm this Sunday as Pastor Enno is in the Twin Cities for continuing education. Steve will be working to start a conversation about Extravagant Welcome and how our church can invite and welcome new people into our congregation.

**April 21st, 4th Sunday of Easter/Earth Day** – The day after the Earth Day Fair and the day after Earth Day, we will be centered on Psalm 98 that calls the whole world to join in worship and make a joyful noise. We will be having communion on this Sunday as Pastor Enno is gone the week before.

**April 28th, 5th Sunday of Easter** – Healing miracles just didn't happen in the gospels and only by Jesus. This Sunday we will hear a story of Peter who is able to help a man walk again. We will continue exploring healing in this service and have a time of healing and laying on of hands.



# Board Member Message

## Loosen the Threads

Happy Spring! Looking at the belated snow coming down outside, I am happily anticipating the moisture it will bring to our parched woods, to our gardens. Anticipating new growth in the coming months. Spring is my favorite wait and see, pay attention, and be amazed season. All is possible.

The beautiful text from last Sunday's choir anthem, Lydia's Song, has stuck with me this week. Such lovely imagery for a fiber arts lover. Authors: Kathy Wonson Eddy and Robert Merrill Eddy.

It seems like a perfect mind set to take as we go into this creative season of new beginnings.

Open my heart God. Loosen the threads.  
Unfold my life, and weave within.  
Oh, take my tears and rejoicing and  
spin their tangle in thread.  
Entwine their colors with your brightness.  
Create through me a fabric of love.

In March, the Board of Directors set three mutual ministry goals for 2024. These goals can best succeed with participation and joyous creativity from everyone in congregation.

1. Work with the congregation on revising/updating the Church's mission statement. (Continuing work from 2023). Our current mission statement is strong but lengthy/wordy. It is over a decade old and may no longer as precisely define us as it once did. Our mission statement should reflect who we are and what we wish to be. It needs to be a living document. Short enough to be easily shared and celebrated.

Memorable enough to be used as a benchmark as decisions are made. We are a diverse congregation but, as we discovered in our conversations about the mission statement last year, there is much we agree on. How can we untangle this, entwine our colors, and create a fabric of love?

2. Work on building community and connections in the congregation.

Building community means getting to know each other and our stories better. Some of this happens at worship on Sunday but it also grows through sharing meals, working together on committees, weeding gardens, singing songs, conversations... We have many important decisions to make together in the next year. All of us have tears and rejoicing to bring to the table. All of us are seeking brightness to entwine in our lives. How can we do this best?

3. Find new ways to offer extravagant welcome to all. Our church talks about everyone being welcome here. We hope to find more ways to express that welcome more overtly to the larger community. How can we better show our open door, open hearts? If you have any thoughts or ideas, Board members are anxious to hear them.

## When I am Among the Trees

Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,  
especially the willows and the honey locust,  
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,  
they give off such hints of gladness.  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,  
in which I have goodness, and discernment,  
and never hurry through the world  
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves  
and call out, "Stay awhile."  
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,  
"and you too have come  
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled  
with light, and to shine."

*-Jenny Delfs*



# Pastor's Column



Gamaliel, a Pharisee in the council of elders of Israel, spoke truth in the Book of Acts. In chapter 5, the apostles were arrested, and the council was ready to pass judgment and possibly condemn them to death.

Gamaliel ordered the prisoners to be removed and shared with them the stories of others who were revolutionaries and supposed prophets. How when the leaders were struck down, the crowds and followers dissipated. In the case of Jesus, he was crucified, and his following seemed to be growing, not shrinking.

So, he advised his fellow councilmen, that if they condemned the apostles, they might find themselves working against God. And, if the apostles truly weren't sent from God, it would eventually fall apart.

Whether or not we believe in a physical resurrection on Easter so long ago, or a continuing of the spiritual teachings and movement despite Jesus death. Though through the 2 millennia many churches and people have strayed from the way of Jesus, it still captivates and draws out our love and humanity. Christianity in our country appears to be dying, as more people now don't associate with a church than those who claim to. However, our churches (in general) have been more focused on programs, worship numbers, and buildings, as well as, the personal love of Jesus given to me, than the call to take up our crosses and follow Jesus. We have chosen comfort over sacrifice as a general rule. (We also have to mention power from our Christian nationalistic patriarchy that pervades our country and faith!)

· There are some signs that this decline is slowing and bottoming out. Those churches that are left are beginning to look toward the future not with apprehension, but with the Spirit and a sense of call. I believe this church has a call that will carry us into the future toward a Just Peace and Open & Affirming gathering who want to heal God's planet. Part of this is making sure we have an accessible and solid building, but our goal and way is to love God with everything, love our neighbor, and love ourselves.

In this season of Easter, may we celebrate and find joy in our worship as we laugh, learn about extravagant welcome, honor the Earth, grow in healing, and confirm the next generation of Christian siblings. May the spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, and God who is love lead us into a future that abounds in harmony and steadfast love.

**Peace**

*Pastor Enno*



Washing Hands at the Maundy Thursday Meal



## Our Whole Lives

Guiding relationships, health and behavior in the context of faith.

Our Whole Lives, together with [Sexuality and Our Faith](#), helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their relationships, health and behavior in the context of their faith. It equips participants with accurate, age appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. It provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills and understand the social, emotional and spiritual aspects of sexuality.

### LEARN MORE

#### Frequently Asked Questions

Pastor Enno, Kristin Wharton, and Neil Pederson will be going to the Twin Cities April 12-14 to take facilitator training in which they hope to offer it to our youth next Fall.

**Youth Drag Brunch**  
**&**  
**Variety Show**  
April 27th  
**Community Center**  
10:00 - 11:30pm  
**Brunch**  
11:30 - 1:00pm  
**Variety Show**  
*French toast, fruit & beverages served.  
Pay what you can, no one turned away for lack of funds.*  
**All are welcome!**  
Sponsored by -  
Grand Marais  
Playhouse  
Designed by

#### [Tai Chi - Thursdays at 10 am](#)



Join us at the church on  
Thursday mornings,  
10:00 am, to practice  
Tai Chi.

## Cook County Middle East Peace Advocates

### *Position statement:*

On October 7, 2024, Hamas militants attacked Israel from the Gaza territory. Over 1,400 Israelis were killed, and 240 Israeli citizens and soldiers were captured and taken into Gaza where they have been held hostage. The government of Israel responded with a military attack into Gaza that has brought the death of over 30,000 Palestinian residents of Gaza. These actions have brought long standing issues of peace and justice for Palestine and Israel into public notice again. This includes issues that involve United States foreign policy and aid, both military and financial.

The devastation continues. There is fear and suffering, uncertainty and waiting, in both Palestine and Israel. All sides are caught up in this conflict and calamity, not just the residents there, but people worldwide.

Cook County Middle East Peace Advocates brings together folks in our area who are concerned, folks here who have family there and are impacted because of identity with those in conflict, folks who want to help those who are suffering, folks who want to prevent more deaths, folks who want to help build a Middle East where the residents of Palestine and Israel can all live lives free and secure.

We know there are many sides to these issues. There is a long, complex history of the region and of the people who live there now. We will do our best to hold each other, and all people, with compassion and care as we struggle to name the actions and issues that promote further violence and division. We cannot stand by uninvolved as our fellow humans suffer.

CCMEPA is currently working on bringing in speakers for community forums to learn about the sides and issues. You can see what we are up to on [Facebook](#). We also encourage everyone to continue to contribute as they are able to help the refugees.

HAPPY  
EASTER

### Food Shelf

Mondays 3-5 PM

&

the First Wednesday  
of the Month  
4:30- 6:30 PM

Downstairs



## Building for the Future

Building and Grounds News

Save the Date: Spring Clean-up and Workday, May 18, 10 am to 2 p.m.

Jeff Kern informs us that the heating system has been repaired and seems to be working correctly. Thanks for all his work on this. Our new custodian, Rory Island, is doing a great job keeping the building cleaned and stocked. Do notice the handsome signs Hunter had made for the daycare, both on the outside deck and on the inside door. Plans are in the works to have the playground upgraded with wood chips or other soft material around the equipment. Completion expected sometime in spring once the ground is thawed and dry.

Architect Meetings

Save the date: Thursday, April 25, Final in-person presentation by the Architectural firm. Time and arrangements are still to be determined.

Building and Grounds has had two virtual meetings with the architect since the in-person meeting in February. Discussions have included upgrading the heating and electrical systems, accessibility options, energy efficiency, and needed code updates. Our continued concern is planning for the must-do improvements as well as for making the building safe, welcoming, and sound for the next 50 years or more within a budget we can live with. The next virtual meeting is on April 11 at 11 a.m.



3RD ANNUAL  
Cook County  
Earth Day  
Fair

SPONSORED BY

SATURDAY  
APRIL 20, 2024  
11 AM - 3:30 PM  
COOK COUNTY ISD  
166 SCHOOL  
SPEAKER SERIES,  
INTERACTIVE BOOTHS,  
GAMES, VENDING LOCAL  
FOOD + GOODS

[www.cookcountylenergy.org/earth-day-fair](http://www.cookcountylenergy.org/earth-day-fair)

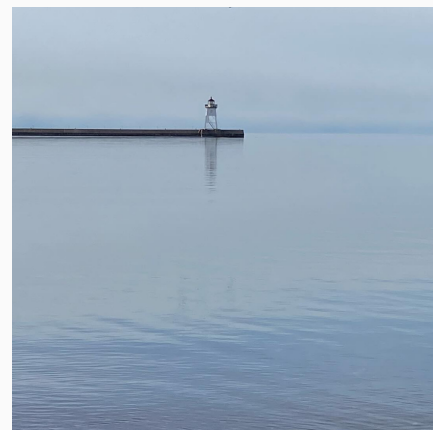
COOK COUNTY LOCAL ENERGY PROJECT

VISIT COOK COUNTY MINNESOTA  
Naturally Unforgettable

COOK COUNTY CO-OP

The poster features a background image of a mushroom on a mossy log. It includes a QR code in the top right corner and several logos for sponsors and partners.

## Harbor watch, Fridays at 8 am at Java Moose



*Harbor Watch: I am lead by still waters  
and my soul is restored.*





## Covenant

*by Chris Bohnhoff, member of Plymouth Congregational Church*

Covenant defines UCC polity and culture. As a way of being church, the way that we center covenant says that the quality of our relationships, with each other and with God, is more important than dogma and hierarchy. In covenanted relationships, each person agrees to hold the other in care and to hold them accountable to standards of right action in the eyes of God. It's the very center of our life together as the United Church of Christ.

At a meeting of the Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee last summer, our Crossroads partners shared the themes that emerged from their one-on-one interviews with clergy of color in the Conference. By this time we had learned about systemic racism and how it subtly (or not so subtly) reinforces white folks' position at the center of our Conference's culture and pushes people of color to the margins.

Because we had been looking in history's mirror for months, it wasn't surprising to hear about the microaggressions clergy of color regularly face, or the isolation and lack of support that they feel. But hearing in their own words how the inertia of hundreds of years of white supremacy culture landed on our colleagues -- the leaders called by our congregations to lead them in Christ -- brought us to a collective grief that we continue to sit with.

But the raw, truth-telling words we heard in that August meeting made it plain how far we are from our covenantal aspirations. And following the modeling provided by our clergy of color, one by one, we on the committee reflected on our own sense of being in covenant. And one by one we told stories of disconnection from our Conference. I, for example, talked about my process as a Member In Discernment. As a cis straight white middle-aged man serving on the Board of Directors and feeling just about as known as a seminarian can reasonably expect to feel, even I have sometimes felt alone in this ordination process. I experience that the system is set up not to be in deeper relationship, but that expects a candidate to pull themselves up by their spiritual bootstraps and find their way. This is a tall task even for a person with privilege, but every day I witness my seminary classmates, many of whom are queer and/or of color, and I know that their isolation is much greater than mine. I know how it causes them to question themselves and whether the UCC can be their home. I also know the size of our loss if they do leave because the UCC isn't living up to its side of the covenant.

Continued on next page.

Our clergy of color's reflections are a symptom of a larger challenge: how can we more fully live into our covenant with everyone in our Conference? How can the radical belonging named in the UCC's founding documents continue to move from an aspiration to a reality? This is the work. And by attending to covenant with those on our margins, maybe all who feel isolated, no matter their social location, will benefit.

Note:

At the March 2 Minnesota Conference UCC Board of Directors meeting, a proposal for a new Committee to Dismantle White Supremacy was accepted and moved forward for Conference vote at the Annual Meeting in June. The Adhoc Anti-Racism Committee will be working in concert with the Conference Nominating Committee to put forward a slate of nominees for the new Committee to Dismantle White Supremacy, if this resolution passes. If you feel interested in serving on the committee as described here, please [contact Jane McBride](#).

[READ MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGE](#)

EVENTS:	FREE ADMISSION	WHERE:	WHEN:
<u>FILM SHOWING OF 2040</u>		NORTH HOUSE FOLK SCHOOL, BLUE BUILDING	APRIL 4, 7PM
<u>SPRUCE BUDWORM IN MINNESOTA'S FORESTS: 2024 UPDATE *</u>		COOK COUNTY HIGHER ED/ ZOOM	APRIL 15, 11 AM
<u>FILM SHOWING OF SOVEREIGN SOIL</u>		NORTH HOUSE FOLK SCHOOL, BLUE BUILDING	APRIL 16, 7 PM
<u>NATURALIST BOOK GROUP: NO ONE IS TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE *</u>		COOK COUNTY HIGHER ED / ZOOM	APRIL 18, 6:30 PM
<u>COOK COUNTY EARTH DAY FAIR</u>		COOK COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL ISD 166	APRIL 20, 11- 3:30 PM
<u>COOK COUNTY COMMUNITY READ- POTLUCK &amp; DISCUSSION: THE ROCKS WILL ECHO OUR SORROW: THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT OF THE NORTHERN SÁMI*</u>		COOK COUNTY HIGHER ED/ ZOOM	APRIL 25, 5:30 PM
<u>LUNCH &amp; LEARN: ENJOYING THE GREAT OUTDOORS AS WE AGE*</u>		COOK COUNTY HIGHER ED/ ZOOM	APRIL 27, 12 PM

\*ONLINE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

## United Church of Christ

A call for peace: Amid Holy Week, UCC Officers pen pastoral letter on Palestine by [Karen Georgia Thompson](#), [Shari Prestemon](#) | published on Mar 26, 2024

A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.

*Matthew 2:18*

Dear Siblings in Christ,

With the celebration of Jesus' grand entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and with shouts of "Hosanna" still fresh in our minds, we are reminded not to pass too quickly from the celebration of Palm Sunday to the celebration of Easter Sunday and the empty tomb. To be hurried in our festivities will cause us to miss the moments with Jesus that are both painful and profound. This Holy Week, as we make the journey from celebration to the pain of the cross and the glory of the resurrection, we are confronted with the pain of war and conflict in our world and are asked to not look away.

Our world is afflicted by more than 160 crises today. To ignore them is akin to rushing from waving palm branches straight to the empty tomb, missing the pain, suffering, and tragedy of the cross. This we cannot do. We are especially grieved and angered by events in the Middle East. Long-simmering violence escalated on Oct. 7, 2023, as Hamas militants brazenly attacked Israeli civilians, killing nearly 1,200 people, and taking almost 250 persons hostage.

Since then, over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and many more injured due to Israeli military response, most of whom are women and children. Three-quarters of the Palestinian population of Gaza are displaced from their homes and remain desperate for basic human necessities. In these days, while Muslims around the world are observing the holy month of Ramadan by fasting, Palestinians in Gaza — almost all of whom are Muslim — are suffering from starvation bordering on famine.

Meanwhile, the intense Israeli air and land assault on Gaza continues.

In 2021, the United Church of Christ's General Synod adopted a resolution affirming "that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all." It also declared that "the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains ... a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel."

The violence, mass displacement, and starvation inflicted in Palestine today is nothing short of sin and a matter of moral and theological urgency. It is imperative that we speak clearly on injustice when we witness it, especially when our government is complicit in enabling and empowering the perpetuation of this colonial paradigm. We have consistently done so since early October, and persistently for decades in solidarity and accompaniment of our partners in the region through presence and public witness.

Continued on next page.



We also acknowledge that we have witnessed a stark increase of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim attitudes and actions in these past months within our communities across this country. Our Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-American siblings — as well as others who are perceived as such — have become victims, again, of bigotry and violent acts. We lament and denounce all such expressions of hatred as we stand with our neighbors against violence and dehumanization.

They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

*Jeremiah 6:14*

Our voices join with those of millions around the world calling for a permanent cease-fire. A cease-fire is an essential, yet minimal, requirement for peace. An immediate and permanent cease-fire must be accompanied by the unfettered and urgent delivery of humanitarian aid and medical supplies, protection of the population, with the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees. This is a part of the peace we seek for the world and for Gaza, the restoration of dignity, wholeness and flourishing beyond the woundedness and violence of these past weeks and years.

As we move through Holy Week, we remember that before the glory of the Resurrection was the agony of desertion, betrayal, and the cross. As people of faith, we also clearly see the pain and injustice too many are experiencing in the Middle East and around the world today. As Christ’s Church, we are invited to confront the suffering, respond to it with deep love and advocacy, and actively hope for a day of new life and rejoicing. May this be our path and our discipleship, this Holy Week and always.

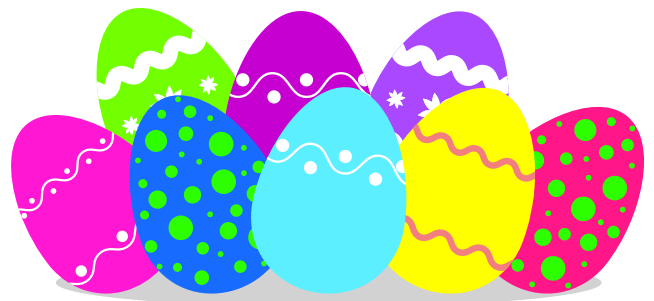
Yours in Christ’s love,

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President

Rev. Shari Prestemon, Acting Associate General Minister



## Pictures from Winter Pride Celebration



## Board of Directors Meeting Approved Minutes for March 17, 2024

### WE ATTEND TO IMMEDIATE Business

- I. Acknowledgement of February Minutes being approved.
- II. Proposed March agenda review, additions, and approval
- III. Financial Report
- IV. Newsletter articles due March 27th
- V. Date for April board meeting -April 16

### WE ATTEND TO OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

#### VI. Pastor Report

VII. Mutual Minis -Volunteers to present the News of God's Work in the Community  
-BOD Continuing Work on Setting three Mutual Ministry Goals for current year. Mutual Ministry Goals is about what undertakings the minister and board of directors work on together. These are beyond the normal routines and responsibilities of the ministry of the church that should focus on and improve a particular area(s) of our church's long-term ministry

-Proposed goals for this year being considered based on last BOD meeting:

(a)Continue to develop a Purpose and Mission Statement that is current and relevant. Seek input from congregation to find language acceptable to whole group (or at least 2/3 of those present at winter meeting.)

(b) In the area of Community Building – To continue with potluck meals, work on tasks when needed, storytelling. Note: This activity is ongoing as evidenced by the farewell luncheon given for Neil on his last day. Open to suggestions for continued projects and events (see chain E-mail for proposals being put forth)

(c) Highlight Church Outreach/Fellowship/Evangelism efforts by providing Sunday announcements & News of the Community. Also making the church a welcoming place as well as actively seeking new worshipers once our true mission is expressed in an updated mission statement. Further outreach strategies to be formulated when it is determined that certain spiritual needs within the "community" are not being met.

XIV: Report from Architect on Building Project Bruce to do a summary of the recent Building and Grounds meeting with the architect

Note: Board has meeting with architect via Microsoft Teams on Thursday

XV: Formation of Capital Campaign Exploration Committee- Search for members has begun, five persons have committed at this time. Tasks include securing commitments from donors, foundation support, government support and rebates, establish costs of priority items.

XVI: Confirm BOD plans for Sunday service in pastors' absence on April 14





Jeff and Jessi fixing the leaky corner. This time it will hold.

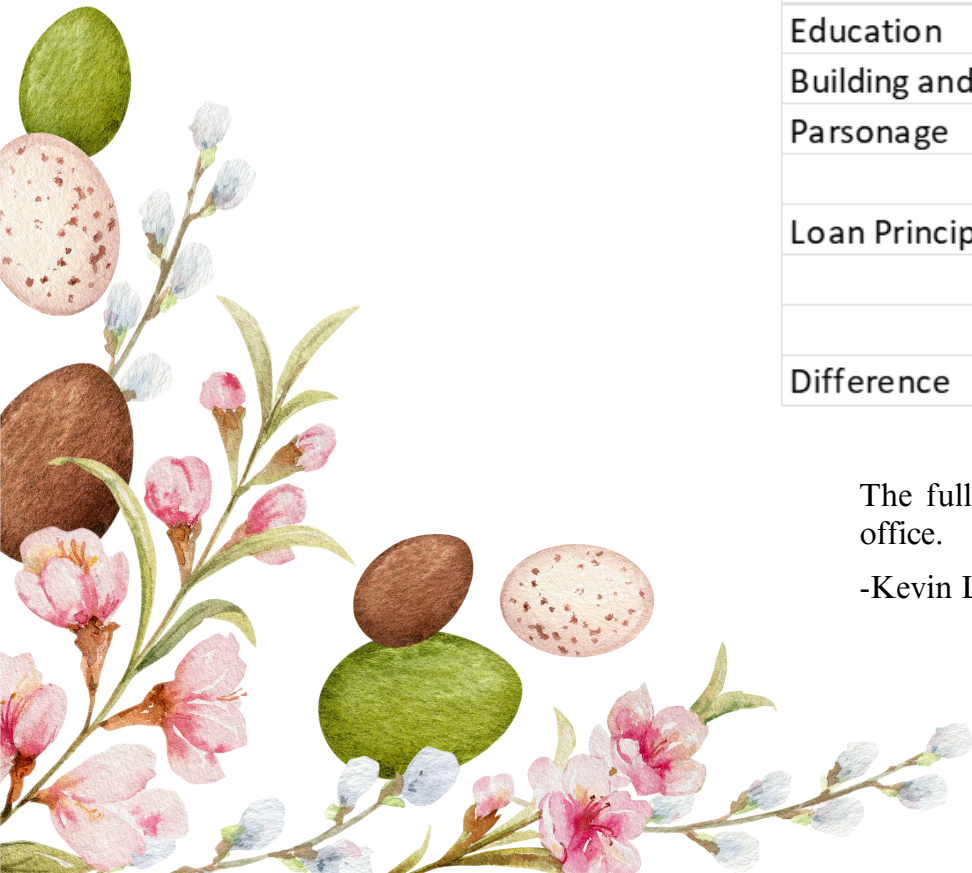
## Treasurer's Report

The February 2024 (latest fully available information) Financial Report shows a total income of \$10,347.33 and expenses of \$11,048.68. This means the Church's income was less than its expenses by \$701.35.

Income for February 2024	
Pledged Donations	\$ 8,723.31
Non-Pledged Donations	\$ 450.00
Loose Plate Offering	\$ 179.00
Building Use	\$ 990.00
Interest Income	\$ 5.02
	\$ 10,347.33
Expenses for February 2024	
Pastor	\$ 5,007.51
Staff	\$ 1,083.03
Business	\$ 1,300.20
Worship	\$ 736.00
Education	\$ 29.25
Building and Grounds	\$ 1,837.43
Parsonage	\$ 830.18
	\$ -
Loan Principle	\$ 225.08
	\$ 11,048.68
Difference	\$ (701.35)

The full report is available in the Church office.

-Kevin LeVoir



# sacred re-imagining

2024 Annual Meeting

Friday, June 7 – Saturday, June 8

College of St. Benedict

Registration Now Open

If you are new to CampDoc, you will need to create your account and fill out information forms to register. If you are a small church and are wanting the small church discount, please email [info@uccmn.org](mailto:info@uccmn.org).



Keynote Speaker

Tabitha Montgomery with Flourish Placemaking Collective, an organization committed to the good and needed work of placemaking—of reimagining and repurposing space in our neighborhoods and how we inhabit them for the flourishing of us all.



Worship and Music

Led by The Many, an uncommon, intentionally diverse collective making music for people to sing together about peace and justice and a world where all belong!

