

November 2023

# THE SHINING LIGHT

Newsletter of the First Congregational United Church  
of Christ, Grand Marais, Minnesota

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## Prayer for the Month of November

BY REV. ENNO LIMVERE

God of fallen leaves and singing birds, we gather together to ask for your blessing. We, as your church, thank you for the bounty of the earth as it is harvested. We thank you for all who come to worship, for all who lead and work in our church and community, and for all who come to seek you. Be with us and lead us as we seek your vision for our church and your world. In Jesus' name we pray, who with you and the Holy Spirit bind us in love and grace. Amen.



**Our Love  
Changes  
Lives**

## This issue:

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Prayer of the Month.....  | Page 1     |
| Worship Schedule.....     | Page 2     |
| Board Member Message....  | Page 3     |
| Pastor's Column.....      | Page 4     |
| Board Minutes.....        | Page 5-6   |
| Treasurer's Report.....   | Page 7     |
| News & Events.....        | Pages 7-19 |
| Seasons of our Lives..... | Page 19    |
| Calendar.....             | Page 20    |







Photo by Chris Lawton on Unsplash

## Worship in November

### **November 5th, 23rd Sunday after Pentecost.**

As we continue to dig into the Narrative Lectionary, we begin this month in 1 Kings where the prophet Elijah goes head-to-head with the prophets of Ba'al, the god of Tyre. Most people have forgotten the God of Israel and the covenant, so Elijah challenges them to a show of action. They were to set up two altars with sacrifices and see which God answered their prophets, the 400 of Ba'al or Elijah.

### **November 12th, 24th Sunday after Pentecost.**

We listen to the prophet Hosea, who is in the Northern Kingdom warning them about the coming invasion of Assyria and calling them to return to God and God's covenant that can protect them from the coming invasion. Hosea continually critiques their political and religious institutions but shows the heart of God in the passage we read today.

### **November 19th, 25th Sunday after Pentecost.**

Our illustrious moderator of the board of directors, will be taking the pulpit as Pastor Enno is on vacation. Tom Yuhasey promises to do his best to share some good news and leave us laughing.

### **November 23, Thanksgiving Meal.**

We will gather together, in person to share a Thanksgiving meal. Pickup meals available upon request (due November 16). Volunteers needed!

### **November 26th, Reign of Christ Sunday.**

We go back into the historical books of the Hebrew Testament into 2 Kings and look at the reign of King Josiah who heeds the prophets and leads Israel back into a covenant with God. In his zeal to repair the Temple, they find the Torah and gather all the people to hear the words of Moses and God.



## A Message from your Board Member

by Francie Beaster

Paz, Mir, Fred, Paix, Frieden, Shalom

"In Europe and America there's a growing feeling of hysteria....." So goes the opening of a song by Sting from the late 80s.

At that time my husband, Jim and I felt the threat of nuclear war was the most dire problem we faced so we joined a peace activists group called Beyond War. Also our UCC church in Everett, Washington got involved in hosting a peace delegation from the USSR. We were privileged to have Bahktiar stay a night with us in our home. He joked with our children over breakfast, "Tell your teachers that you had a Soviet stay in your house!" Turned out he was married to the daughter of a famous Soviet composer, Dimitri Kabelevsky. A personal connection was made with the "enemy."

Then in 1990 I had the opportunity to go with our own peace delegation to the Soviet Union, reuniting with Bahktiar and meeting Olga, Natasha, Ludmilla, Oleg, George and scores of other quite ordinary citizens all just yearning for peace even if our leaders didn't seem

much interested. Eisenhower once said "I like to believe that people, in the long run, are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."

So it was heart breaking when the Russians invaded Ukraine in 2022. What had become of all my friends? Were our efforts futile? Being in the UCC has nurtured us to try to be peacemakers. And now again we are subjected to the "growing feeling of hysteria" with the horrors in Israel and Gaza.

I hear that pure, plaintive, and pleading voice of Sting singing "We share the same biology, regardless of theology. But what might save us, me and you is if the (Russians) love their children too." This sentiment gives me hope, but instead of saying "We stand with this side or that" how about "We stand with the children, whom we love."

Respectfully submitted, Francie Beaster







## Pastor's Column

by Enno Limvere

“People are waking up. People are waking up. People are waking up to the truth of their manipulation under toxic systems. People are waking up to heal. People are waking up to rest. We will no longer be a martyr for grind culture. Grind culture is a collaboration between white supremacy and capitalism. It views our divine bodies as machines. Our worth is not connected to how much we produce.” (“Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto, pg. 12, Tricia Hersey).

During my worst years of my journey with fibromyalgia, I wasn't able to rest. If I napped in the afternoon, even 5 minutes, I would have insomnia that would keep me up until 4:00 in the morning, sometimes 5:00, 6:00, or 7:00. My body was in constant pain so I would have to find something to distract me. Reading, at the time, often brought tension headaches, so basically it was movies and long series that I would binge. Many studies show that watching the screen isn't good for you: it is not rest. But to do something else, anything else, was limited for me while laying on the couch to playing computer games (playing instruments and singing were too much, also limited to an hour or two a week if I was lucky) . I can now take naps and only sometimes I am kept awake until 1:00 or 2:00 (rarely later).

Being around people on Sunday morning or Wednesday night (in my last church we had 30-40 youth each week) made me forget my pain, but if I overdid it, it would sock me down for the next couple days.

I have a lot of habits to undo. My pain is less and I am able to do more, but I can still overdo it and get knocked down, though hardly for days anymore. I can read more without having to worry about headaches. I can go outside and sit under a tree, and even traverse over for a short hike to Cascade Falls on Mondays to listen. I am also learning that I don't have to do everything, say “no,” and ask for help. So I can turn off the TV more and just relax. My operating mode was whatever caused me less pain was what I was going to do. Now, I am discovering what brings me joy even within my limitations.

Taking the Sabbath, being still and knowing God, and having the good shepherd leading us beside still waters is part of this world and God's kingdom. Jesus took naps. Jesus said no. Jesus often didn't hurry. May we follow this example.

Peace

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES,  
OCT. 2023

Attending: Pastor Enno Limvere, Tom Yuhasey, Kevin LeVoir, Jenny Delfs, Bruce R Tyler, Steve Aldrich, Francie Beaster, Carol Winter

I. Call to Order by Tom at 5:01pm

II. Who is taking the minutes this month-Bruce and Carol duked it out and Carol prevailed

III. Mission Statement reading-done splendidly by Tom

III. Joys and Concerns were shared

V. Question Pastor Enno: What is our biggest fear about the war in Israel/Palestine?

VI. Communication agreement was read with aplomb by Steve

-LISTEN generously

-SPEAK respectfully

-CELEBRATE each other's gifts and perspectives

-CHOOSE the good of the whole church

-STRIVE to be optimistic and hopeful

WE ATTEND TO IMMEDIATE AND URGENT BUSINESS/HOUSEKEEPING

VII. Acknowledgement of September minutes being approved. This was done.

VIII. Proposed October agenda review, additions, and approval. Motion to approved by Steve, second by Kevin. Motion carries.

IX. Financial Report Kevin

Highlights include the following: In September we spent more than \$3K above what was received. So far giving for October is strong and the projected year-end looks ok. Kevin had to do annual filing for non-profit status. We continue to receive the dividends from the endowment on a quarterly basis: over \$3K thus far for 2023. These dividends are included in the budget; they are not reinvested.

Many thanks to Kevin for doing piles of work.

Motion by Carol second by Francie to accept financial report. Motion passed. X. Newsletter articles due October 26. Francie will do this one. Thank you!

XI. Date for November board meeting - Set for 11/14 at 5pm

WE ATTEND TO OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

XII. Pastor Report: A written report was provided. Highlights discussed included: Pastor Enno attended a clergy cluster group - many are facing challenges and appreciated hearing good news about this congregation. When to have service on Sunday, 12/24? How to support young people in the community, especially those moving to town and trying to get established here. There are a number of new pastors in town so they are being introduced to community agencies.

XIII. Mutual Ministry Goals

a.BOD to do the service on November 19.Tom to give stewardship message. Others can do other parts of the service.

b. Community Building- Thanksgiving Dinner plans progressing- This was discussed at length. Bruce and Jenny will notify other pastors. Past practices and proposed menu reviewed. There will be some take-out and local delivery available. The Thanksgiving Dinner fund currently has \$1254.76.

c.Outreach/Fellowship-Sunday announcements & News of the Community Schedule 10/22 Steve, 10/29 Bruce, 11/5 Carol, 11/12 Steve,11/19 Bruce.

Pastor evaluation is due. This will be scheduled for 11/1 from 6-8pm. We will address three questions: What do we need more of from Pastor Enno? Less? Continue same? Compensation be addressed at this time.

Nursery Preparations- South room facility final preparations are being completed. The renter will take possession of the South Room on 11/1. Rent will start at that time. The church will start paying taxes on the space at this time, also. We have given the Fire Marshall permission to inspect. If further modifications to the room are required they will be the renter's responsibility. Many thanks to Pastor Enno, Tom, Kevin, Buildings & Grounds Committee for the large effort they have put in to bring this project forward.

Building security system functioning. One additional camera being installed and another repositioned. Some tweaks are being made to the system.

Search for new janitor to replace Amber continues. Interview of a prospective replacement pending.

#### COMMITTEE BUSINESS

XIV Church Life brief reports/updates

- a. Pastoral Relations continues to meet
- b. Finance Committee - weekly updates to congregation re actual/budget and soon will be working on 2024 budget
- c. Stewardship Committee - Meeting Friday, 10/20 at 10 am for Pledge Drive Plans. "Time and Talent" project- Enno saves the day - last minute tweaks? They will be passed out in January and also mailed to people who don't get them in person. Thanks to Pastor Enno for getting this going.
- d. Children and Youth life/faith formation - Sunday School-on hold
- e. Memorial Committee - no further discussion this month
- f. Building and Grounds Team - Enno locates possible plumbing and heating help from North Shore Plumbing .Parsonage and church repairs are progressing. Will present

recommendations regarding hiring ATSR to do a comprehensive assessment of the facility at the potluck on 10/22.

g. Outreach - WOW, Food Shelf-ongoing

Rooted and Rising - Projects' status as we move into Fall reported by Bruce. The group has started work to rehab the rain garden by the log house at the community center

h. Worship Committee - meeting monthly

i. Standing Grievance Committee: Delfs, Mattice, Bennett - have not been needed

j. Food Team will be in charge of the potluck scheduled for 10/22 following worship.

XVWE END TOGETHER: Motion by Steve, second by Bruce to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Winter



*A T-rex visits the parsonage on Halloween*



# Treasurer's Report for November 2023 Newsletter



The September 2023 (latest fully available information) Financial Report shows a total income of \$6,566.03 and expenses of \$9761.56 (See Detail Below). This means the Church's Expenses were more than Income by \$3,195.53.

## Updated Security for Our Church Building

| <b>Income for September 2023</b>                    |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>Pledged Donations</b>                            | <b>\$ 5,419.32</b>   |
| <b>Non-Pledged Donations</b>                        | <b>\$ 675.00</b>     |
| <b>Loose Plate Offering</b>                         | <b>\$ 185.00</b>     |
| <b>Building Use</b>                                 | <b>\$ 38.00</b>      |
| <b>Youth Fund</b>                                   | <b>\$ 87.00</b>      |
| <b>Special Gift for Purchase of Security System</b> | <b>\$ 160.00</b>     |
|   | <b>\$ -</b>          |
|   | <b>\$ -</b>          |
| <b>Interest Income</b>                              | <b>\$ 1.71</b>       |
|   | <b>\$ 6,566.03</b>   |
| <b>Expenses for September 2023</b>                  |                      |
| <b>Pastor</b>                                       | <b>\$ 4,860.51</b>   |
| <b>Staff</b>  | <b>\$ 865.50</b>     |
| <b>Business</b>                                     | <b>\$ 795.12</b>     |
| <b>Worship</b>                                      | <b>\$ 300.00</b>     |
| <b>Education</b>                                    | <b>\$ 206.80</b>     |
| <b>Building and Grounds</b>                         | <b>\$ 1,249.77</b>   |
| <b>Parsonage</b>                                    | <b>\$ 163.12</b>     |
| <b>UCC Contributions (OCWM etc)</b>                 | <b>\$ 1,087.50</b>   |
| <b>Loan Principle</b>                               | <b>\$ 233.24</b>     |
|   | <b>\$ 9,761.56</b>   |
| <b>Difference</b>                                   | <b>\$ (3,195.53)</b> |

We now have the security cameras set up in our church to cover all entrances and our offices. Pastor Enno and Tom Yuhasey (our moderator) will be monitoring the notices we receive when the cameras are triggered. We will not be looking at every single person or group coming in, but we will regularly check and if some damage or violence is done, then we will have a record of who entered our property. We hope this will serve as a good deterrent for anyone thinking of doing harm.

**LOCK BOX:** Upon Sheriff's Deputy Michael Running suggestion helping to secure our building and who can access it, Pastor Enno will be changing the code on November 10th. There will be posters on the doors notifying all of this upcoming change and to contact him for the new code. This will be changed every 3-4 months. To receive the new code, text Pastor Enno and tell him your name, your organization, and when you are going to be using the building.

The full report is available in the Church office.

-Kevin LeVoir



## 49TH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER PREPARATIONS

**Find Sign-up sheets** for food donations, turkey roasting, and cleaning, AND helping on Wednesday and Thanksgiving Day **on the easel in the narthex**. Please lend a hand.

**Kitchen Cleaning: Saturday, November 11, 9 a.m. to noon.**

Please join in a deep cleaning of the kitchen and dishwashing areas so we can be proud to serve the community from our kitchen. Many hands make light work.

The Dinner Committee is hard at work planning for our return to a sit-down, family-style Community dinner. Last Saturday Jen Delfs, Jeff Kern, and Bruce Tyler counted dishes, silverware, takeout containers, serving pieces, tablecloths and napkins to get ready for the dinner. We have enough of everything for this year.

What we need is all hands on deck to prep and serve this event. Invite your friends to help.

**Sign up or email Jen or Bruce to find your spot.**

Limited takeout and delivery meals will be available, **by reservation only** due by November 16.

Call Helen Carter to reserve at (218) 235-3954. If no answer, leave your contact information for her to return your call.

-Bruce Tyler





## Dear Faithful Giver,

Each year our church calls upon all who love and support our mission to share a portion of the wealth the Lord has provided us. It is time for us to joyously reflect upon the way our generosity is changing lives.

## Tai Chi and Other Offerings

Tai Chi is a proven exercise to help anyone improve balance and reduce falls. This and other activities help our church and community remain healthy and whole.

## Workers on Wheels

Our church offers foreign and guest workers a bike for a small deposit to help them get around our community while they are with us.



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# ROOTED AND RISING CLIMATE ACTION GROUP

The Rooted and Rising Climate Action Group has finished its work for the season.

The two rain gardens by the Library are doing well and have mostly been put to bed for the year.

Thank you to everyone who lent a hand over the summer to weed the one garden and rehabilitate the garden by the Gunflint Trail sign.

For next year we plan to work on the rain garden beside the Log Cabin (4H) building by the Community Center. This garden has a wide variety of native and pollinator-friendly plants. The challenge there is to open up inlets from the parking lot and to dig out the weeds that threaten to choke out the desirable plants. We will resume work there after the Spring thaw and also spend some time on the in-town gardens.

Stay tuned for a possible book study in Late Winter-Early Spring. If you have suggestions, please forward them to Bruce Tyler or Suzanne Weber.



## Transgender Day of Remembrance

For generations, the transgender population has suffered various forms of abuse (and even death) for challenging the views, notions, and stereotypes around “male” and “female” identity. Every year we set aside November 20 as a Transgender Day of Remembrance. This holiday is meant to honor, commemorate, and memorialize those who face discrimination and stigma (often on a daily basis) across the nation. This holiday is also meant to advocate for transgender people’s rights as well as focus on the persistent struggles they face in their everyday lives, and how others can share their love, support, and hope.

We will have a Transgender Day of Remembrance Service here at the church **on November 20th, Monday, at 6:00 pm.**





**On Mondays at 11:00 a.m.- 11:45 a.m.**  
 at the First Congregational Church  
 Fellowship Hall, 300 West Second  
 Street, Grand Marais, November 6 -  
 December 18, 2023.

Please join Group Leaders Barb Bottger and Nancy Larson as they co-host a Spring Forest Qigong Practice Group. Qigong (pronounced “chee-GONG”) is a Chinese energy healing or energy balancing technique that has been practiced over 7000 years. Qigong principles form the basis of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The concept is that all Qi is intended to flow smoothly and continuously; to be in harmony and in balance with the universe. Qigong is a practice of balancing energy and cultivating energy, so qi flows smoothly in the body; and you feel good in body, mind and spirit.

Spring Forest Qigong (SFQ) is designed to be very simple to learn and practice, yet very powerful in its benefits. SFQ is a practice of breathing, focusing your mind, doing very simple body movements, and meditating. SFQ can be done standing, sitting or lying down

is your preference. Chairs are available at the church. Entry to the lower level of the church to the Fellowship hall is on Third Avenue across from the Art Colony.

Please be prepared to read and sign a waiver. Donations are welcome and optional.

Please feel welcome to join this Spring Forest Qigong Practice Group on Mondays from 11- 11:45 a.m. at the First Congregational Church in Grand Marais, starting November 6th.

Helping you increase your energy, and improve your physical, mental and spiritual health.



## Cook County Age-Friendly Initiative is HERE!

Greetings First Congregational United Church of Christ,

Hoping that you all are doing well I am reaching out because, we are thrilled to announce the initiation of the Cook County Age-Friendly Initiative, which aims to enhance the quality of life and establish Cook County as an Age-Friendly Community by gathering insights across various domains. Our focus areas include:

*Continued on next page.*

1. Housing, Outdoor Spaces, and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Community Support and Health Services
4. Community Information and Resources
5. Social Participation and Inclusion
6. Work and Civic Engagement
7. Safety, Basic Needs, and Affordable Aging
8. Emergency Preparedness and Community Satisfaction

We have developed an Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Survey and organized community forums across the county to delve into deeper discussions and share insights on specific matters. Both in-person and virtual participation via Zoom are available. See the Community Forum Schedule below.

| <b>Community Forum Details: Location</b>                  | <b>Date</b>                  | <b>Time</b>            |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Lutsen Townhall</b>                                    | <b>Tuesday, October 17</b>   | <b>4:00 - 5:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>Birch Grove Community Center</b>                       | <b>Wednesday, October 18</b> | <b>4:00 - 5:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>Grand Marais Library</b>                               | <b>Thursday, November 2</b>  | <b>4:00 - 5:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>Hovland Townhall</b>                                   | <b>Wednesday, November 1</b> | <b>4:00 - 5:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>Gunflint Mid-Trail: Schaap Community Center</b>        | <b>Wednesday, October 25</b> | <b>3:30 -5:00 PM</b>   |
| <b>Gunflint Trails End: Seagull Lake Community Center</b> | <b>Thursday, November 9</b>  | <b>3:30 -5:00 PM</b>   |
| <b>Grand Portage Community Center</b>                     | <b>Tuesday, October 24</b>   | <b>4:30 - 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>Zoom®</b>  | <b>November, 10</b>          | <b>12:00 - 1:30 PM</b> |

Following our surveys and forums, we will develop an action plan to ensure our goals align with the vision of maintaining Cook County as a connected, supportive, and integral community for all residents. Our aim is to join the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Network of Age-Friendly



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States and Communities. This program enhances livability for people of all ages, with a particular focus on older adults. The support of our county commissioners is pivotal in this endeavor, as their formal expression of commitment to the community is crucial for securing designation from AARP. Once designated, the community will pledge to foster an environment that promotes healthy aging, reduces inequities, and ensures older individuals can age securely, continue personal development, and contribute to their communities while maintaining autonomy and health.

To encourage community involvement in upcoming forums and surveys, a raffle has been organized. Participants have a chance to win a \$50 grocery store gift card by either completing the survey or joining the forums – and engaging in both activities doubles the chance to win! The winner will be announced during the final Zoom forum session on November 10th.

We encourage you to consider participating in this survey and spreading the word about this initiative to assist us in making Cook County, Minnesota, a better place for all age groups.

Access and complete the survey: : [Age Friendly Minnesota Needs Assessment Survey \(alchemer.com\)](https://www.alchemer.com). Paper copies are also available at Cook County Public Health and Human Services, Grand Marais Library, Sawtooth Mountain Clinic, and the HUB in Grand Marais.

Register for one of the community forums here. [States and Communities. This program enhances livability for people of all ages](#)

Contact Us:

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

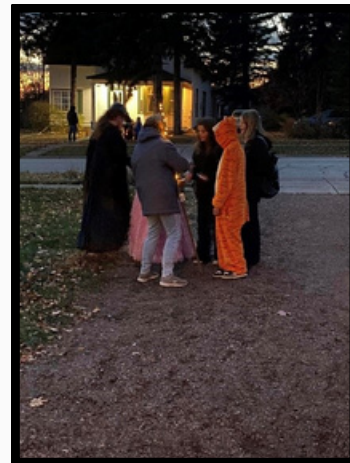
Andrea Tofte  
[andrea.tofte@co.cook.mn.us](mailto:andrea.tofte@co.cook.mn.us)

or Julie Wilson  
[julie@carepartnersofcookcounty.org](mailto:julie@carepartnersofcookcounty.org).

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Warm regards,

Andrea

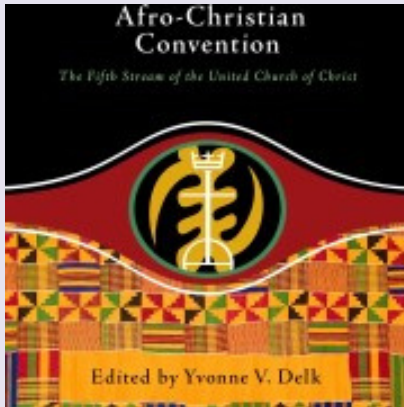


*Top: Trick-or-treaters gather together in the cold at the parsonage. Bottom: a young trick-or-treater collecting sweets.*





## Minnesota Conference News



### Three Churches Join to Study Newly Acknowledged Fifth Stream of the UCC

October 12, 2023

“I grieve that, now having celebrated our 66th anniversary, three generations of United Church of Christ children have gone through confirmation being told that there were only four streams present at our birthing. There were always five.”

— Former General Minister and President the Rev. John Dorhauer

This past summer, during the plenary session at the UCC’s General Synod, Rev. John Dorhauer apologized for the denomination’s failure to acknowledge the Afro-Christian Convention as its “fifth stream.”

In fall 2022, the UCC’s Historical Council had officially named the Afro-Christian Convention as one of the five major traditions that formed the Church, joining the already acknowledged Congregational, Christian, Evangelical and Reformed traditions.

Rev. Danielle Bartz, senior pastor at First Congregational Church of Winona, learned about this newly acknowledged fifth stream from her colleague Jerry Locula, licensed minister for racial justice at Peace UCC in Rochester. For her, this was a momentous announcement — one she wanted more people to understand. “This reshapes the history of the UCC and acknowledges that our denomination flows directly from Africa,” she says.

Bartz and Locula reached out to The Congregational Church in Rochester and the three churches decided to host a five-week discussion series and book study on the “fifth stream,” using the book Afro-Christian Convention, edited by the renowned UCC elder Yvonne V. Delk.

In an interview with the UCC News, Delk said, “It’s not sufficient to see the Afro-Christian story as a hidden history or as a footnote. It has to be a headlight, empowering the United Church of Christ to live out its identity and its mission in new ways.”

The response to the five-week series, being held on Zoom, has been exciting, Bartz says. Approximately 30 people from the three congregations are participating. One session featured Brenda Billips Square, the archivist of the UCC. “She was fabulous,” says Bartz. “She talked about the records she has discovered related to this fifth stream. We were mesmerized by her and her commitment to understanding and passing on this history. This whole series is helping us recognize that who we think we are is actually much broader. We hope other churches in the Minnesota Conference will be inspired to learn more about this important recognition.”

[View the study guide](#) the three churches are using.

*To learn more about the discussion series, contact Rev. Danielle Bartz.*





# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## **‘A new thing’: Thompson’s historic installation surrounded by multiple traditions, interfaith partners and joyful noise**

by **Maic D’Agostino** | published on Oct 24, 2023

**“God is doing a new thing. God is making all things new.”**

If anyone doubted that this was a historic occasion, the Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley made sure they knew. The theme of newness, as part of God’s promise, was woven throughout Hyde Riley’s sermon during the Friday, Oct. 20 installation of the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson as the United Church of Christ’s 10th General Minister and President.

The jubilant celebration — featuring a diversity of religious practices, a wide assembly of interfaith dignitaries and powerful, praise-filled performances — was held at Lakewood Congregational Church in Lakewood, Ohio, just a few miles west of the UCC’s headquarters in downtown Cleveland.

Thompson became the first woman to lead the UCC after she was elected by the denomination’s 34th General Synod on July 3 in Indianapolis. And, as former UCC General Minister and President the Rev. Geoffrey Black noted during the installation, she is also the first woman of African descent and the first immigrant to become head of the UCC.

**Hyde Riley echoed this in her sermon.**

“It is good news not only for the

United Church of Christ but for you, Karen Georgia, a former stranger in the land, now to become the first Black woman, the first woman, a descendant of formerly enslaved people, to lead this church,” she said. “As we would say in Jamaica, ‘Waat a ting!’”



*From left, Bishop Andrea Vassell, Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley and Rev. Joanna D’Agostino participate in the ceremony. Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

### **History-making women**

Hyde Riley was a fitting choice to preach. She and Thompson are linked in several ways. Thompson is a Jamaican-born immigrant, while Hyde Riley is General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union. Both serve on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. And, most relevantly to this occasion, both Thompson and Hyde Riley were appointed this year as the first women to lead their respective denominations. “This is a historic moment in the United Church of Christ,” Hyde Riley

said. “Keen students of history may take note that this service was held at a time when the question penned by that iconic crooner, Lou Rawls — ‘What’s the matter with the world? Has the world gone mad?’ — has taken on painful and heart-wrenching proportions. ... A world where food insecurity, child malnutrition, poverty, patriarchy, climate catastrophe and ongoing imperialism are but some of the life-suffocating and justice-denying demons that threaten human flourishing.

“Yet, history will have to record that the leaders of this community of believers did not cower or become paralyzed by the bleak clouds and depressingly bad news, but drew inspiration and hope from one of God’s special resources to the church: the Scriptures.”

UCC Conference Ministers and many other clergy were present for the installation service. Photo by Angelica Martinez.

### **New liberation**

As with this summer’s General Synod, the installation centered around two biblical texts, and two verses in particular: Isaiah 43:19 — “I am doing a new thing” — and Revelation 21:5 — “I am making all things new.”

The passages from Isaiah and Revelation were read, respectively, by Giovan Watson, Thompson’s grandson, and Bishop Andrea Vassell of TFAM Global, the convener of the installation’s planning committee.

Hyde Riley placed the context of the Isaiah chapter, written amid the Babylonian exile, against the backdrop of a groundbreaking moment for the UCC.



*Among those who spoke during the installation were Bishop Andrea Vassell (left) and Rev. Geoffrey Black. Photos by Angelica Martinez.*

Thompson and all that her election represents goes against “oppressors and gatekeepers” trying to maintain the status quo, Hyde Riley asserted. Liberation of the people, though, will win out.

“So, let it be known that this is the case for all forces and powers that presume and presuppose that they are in charge and seek to frustrate God’s purpose,” she said.

Black, in introducing Hyde Riley, had noted that she and the Jamaica Baptist Union were “really firmly grounded in the tradition of liberation and justice-seeking,” having come from people who were formerly enslaved and sought abolition.

Hyde Riley made her focus on liberation crystal clear, both for the people in Isaiah’s time and for the future of the church.

*Continued on next page.*





*Rev. Paul Sherry, former UCC President, speaks during the installation of Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson. Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

“Liberation is an essential aspect of the vindication of God’s promise,” she said.

### **Multiple traditions**

In addition to Black, another predecessor of Thompson’s was present. The Rev. Paul Sherry, who was President of the UCC from 1989-1999, remarked that Thompson “will be, indeed she already is, an outstanding leader of the church and an outstanding General Minister and President.” He added that she “reflects the very best that is our beloved United Church of Christ.”

In calling the church to mutually support Thompson, Sherry asserted, “She is the leader we need in these days of great challenge.”



*Attendees stand, clap and sing along with the music. Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

Many other UCC leaders participated in the event. But perhaps even more noteworthy was the presence and uplifting of other traditions, practices and peoples. After a welcome from Vassell, the Rev. Joanna D’Agostino, senior pastor of the hosting Lakewood Congregational Church, made a land acknowledgment, recalling “the streams of history in the United Church of Christ which were theologically complicit in the ideologies of colonization.”

Colonialism, too, was addressed in other ways. The Rev. Shernell Edney Stillely, Associate Conference Minister for the Illinois Conference, spoke about the practice of honoring and welcoming ancestors through libation alongside traditional African drummer Papa Assane M’Baye. She recalled in particular Thompson’s parents, noting, “In libation, it is customary to call the name of an ancestor and to then say, ‘Ashe.’”

She then led the congregation in responding “ashe” to a litany while pouring out water as the libation.

Later, Ọyasùúrù Ifáwárinwa, a priest of the Ifá/Orisha tradition — a Yoruba religion — offered a chant and blessing on Thompson.



*Rev. Shernell Edney Stillely, right, speaks about the practice of libation while traditional African drummer Papa Assane M’Baye listens. Photo by Angelica Martinez*

## ‘We are the church’

Words and songs of praise also flowed freely throughout. Vocalist C. Anthony Bryant led rousing choruses that saw many standing, singing and raising their hands in glory to God.

The service culminated in the ceremonial installation itself, during which Thompson knelt while the many ordained clergy present laid their hands on her in blessing.

The Rev. Yvonne Delk — the first African American woman ordained in the UCC and the first woman ever nominated to lead the denomination — gave a passionate prayer of installation in which she called on the “God of apostles and evangelists and preachers and teachers” to help guide Thompson.



*Rev. Yvonne Delk speaks before offering the prayer of installation. Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

“You have called her to us in the fierce urgency of now, as the threats to life are surrounding all around us,” Delk prayed. “And we, the United Church of Christ — well, we are still struggling to become your beloved community. We are still trying to accept the cost and joy of being your disciples. So you’ve called her to us for just such a time as this. ... You’ve called her to this moment, and we know that you’ve already gone before her, to prepare a place for her as she leads us as pastor and prophet and priest and poet.”

Thompson herself, in giving the benediction, thanked everyone attending in-person and online for their presence.

“We are the church, the church of Jesus Christ, in all its manifestations,” she said. “We are the blessings of the spirit. Look around you. We are but a fraction of what it means to be the people of God.”



*Clergy lay their hands in blessing on Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, including, from left, Revs. Traci Blackmon, Darrell Goodwin, David Ackerman, Tyler Connoley and Doug Wooten. Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

## Many participants

Others who participated in the ceremony included:

Others who participated in the ceremony included:

- The Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister for Justice and Local Church Ministries;
- Peter Maraki, UCC Transitional Executive for Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive for Global Ministries;
- The Rev. Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister of the UCC Minnesota Conference and soon-to-be Acting Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries;
- ‘The Rev. Kent Siladi, director of philanthropy for the UCC;

- Bishop Yvette Flunder, presiding prelate of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries;
- The Rev. Noah Brewer Wallin, who chaired the UCC Board search committee that recommended Thompson as the candidate for GMP;
- Julia Gaughan, chair of the UCC Board;
- The Rev. David Long-Higgins, Conference Minister of the Heartland Conference;
- The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, Association Minister of the Living Water Association;
- The Rev. Steven Gower, pastor of Olmsted Community Church in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, where Thompson holds her membership;
- The Rev. Mindy Quellhorst, senior pastor of Dover Congregational UCC in Westlake, Ohio;
- Patrick Watson, Thompson's son;
- Andrene Sergeant, Thompson's sister;
- The Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- The Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary of The United Church of Canada;
- The Rev. Tara Curlewis of the Uniting Church of Australia;
- The Rev. Phil Tanis of the World Communion of Reformed Churches;
- Bishop Jeffrey Leath, past president of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Council of Bishops;
- Bishop Laura Barbins, bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- Dianna Wright, director of ecumenical and interreligious relations for the Presbyterian Church (USA).



*Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson speaks with Rev. Terri Hord Owens, her counterpart at the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Photo by Angelica Martinez.*

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## SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3)

11/2 Jonathan Steckelberg

11/3 Julie Berglund

11/4 Ivy Church

11/6 Allan Berglund

11/7 Myrna Aldrich

11/8 Jacob Allman

11/8 Nancy Backlund

11/12 Wendy Ford

11/14 Bob Lohn

11/15 Bianca Zimmer

11/15 Twyla Pedersen

11/16 Steven Larsen

11/17 Dick Bockovich

11/18 Julia Larsen

11/19 Chris Silence

11/20 Sally Suck

11/22 Beth Kidd

11/22 Tristen Bockovich

11/24 Stanley Hedstrom





| SUNDAY  | MONDAY   | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY  | THURSDAY  | FRIDAY  | SATURDAY   |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| 29<br>9:30 AM - Pick up Choir<br>10:30 AM - Worship<br>2:30 PM - Orchestra<br>Practice for Borealis at<br>Bethlehem<br>4:00 - Choir Practice for<br>Borealis at Bethlehem | 30<br>11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi<br>Gong<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano<br>3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf<br>7:00 PM - AI-Anon<br>Pastor Enno's Day Off   | 31<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM -<br>Piano Lessons  | 1<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>4:30-6:30 PM - Food<br>Shelf<br>6:00 PM - Sing-a-Long<br>6:00 PM - Confirmation<br>6:00 PM - Board of<br>Directors<br>All Saints Day | 2<br>10:00 AM - Tai Chi<br>12:00 AM - Women's AA<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons   | 3<br>7:00 AM - AA<br>8:00 AM - Harbor Watch<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>7:30 PM - AA  | 4<br>10:00 AM- 2:00 PM<br>- Piano Lessons<br>10:30 AM - Surely<br>Discipleship Group |
| 5<br>9:30 AM - Pick up Choir<br>10:30 AM - Worship<br>2:30 PM - Orchestra<br>Practice for Borealis at<br>Bethlehem<br>4:00 - Choir Practice for<br>Borealis at Bethlehem  | 6<br>11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi<br>Gong<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano<br>3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf<br>7:00 PM - AI-Anon<br>Pastor Enno's Day Off  | 7<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM -<br>Piano Lessons   | 8<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>6:00 PM - Sing-a-Long<br>6:00 PM - Pizza and<br>Social Justice   | 9<br>10:00 AM - Tai Chi<br>12:00 AM - Women's AA<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons   | 10<br>7:00 AM - AA<br>8:00 AM - Harbor Watch<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>7:30 PM - AA<br>Veteran's Day<br>(observed)<br>-----Pastor Enno on Vacation----- | 11<br>10:00 AM- 2:00 PM<br>- Piano Lessons<br>Veteran's Day                          |
| 12<br>9:30 AM - Pick up Choir<br>10:30 AM - Worship<br>2:30 PM - Orchestra<br>Practice for Borealis at<br>Bethlehem<br>4:00 - Choir Practice for<br>Borealis at Bethlehem | 13<br>11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi<br>Gong<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf<br>7:00 PM - AI-Anon<br>Pastor Enno's Day Off  | 14<br>9:30 AM - Sheriff<br>Chaplains Meeting<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM -<br>Piano Lessons<br>5:00 PM - Board of<br>Directors | 15<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>6:00 PM - Sing-a-Long<br>6:00 PM - Confirmation   | 16<br>10:00 AM - Tai Chi<br>12:00 AM - Women's AA<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons  | 17<br>7:00 AM - AA<br>8:00 AM - Harbor Watch<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>7:30 PM - AA<br>-----Pastor Enno on Vacation-----                                | 18<br>10:00 AM- 2:00 PM<br>- Piano Lessons   |
| 19<br>9:30 AM - Pick up Choir<br>10:30 AM - Worship<br>2:30 PM - Orchestra<br>Practice for Borealis at<br>Bethlehem<br>4:00 - Choir Practice for<br>Borealis at Bethlehem | 20<br>11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi<br>Gong<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf<br>6:00 PM - Transgender Day of<br>Remembrance Service<br>7:00 PM - AI-Anon<br>Pastor Enno's Day Off | 21<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM -<br>Piano Lessons<br>4:00 PM Pastor<br>Relations Committee                                     | 22<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>6:00 PM - Confirmation  | 23<br>12:00 PM - Thanksgiving<br>deliveries to homebound<br>congregants<br>1:00 PM - Thanksgiving<br>Meal<br>THANKSGIVING DAY | 24<br>7:00 AM - AA<br>8:00 AM - Harbor Watch<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>7:30 PM - AA<br>-----Pastor Enno on Vacation-----                                | 25<br>10:00 AM- 2:00 PM<br>- Piano Lessons   |
| 26<br>9:30 AM - Pick up Choir<br>10:30 AM - Worship<br>2:30 PM - Orchestra<br>Practice for Borealis at<br>Bethlehem<br>4:00 - Choir Practice for<br>Borealis at Bethlehem | 27<br>11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qi<br>Gong<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf<br>7:00 PM - AI-Anon<br>Pastor Enno's Day Off  | 28<br>2:00 - 6:00 PM -<br>Piano Lessons  | 29<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>6:00 PM - Confirmation  | 30<br>10:00 AM - Tai Chi<br>12:00 AM - Women's AA<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons  | 1<br>7:00 AM - AA<br>8:00 AM - Harbor Watch<br>2:00-6:00 PM - Piano<br>Lessons<br>7:30 PM - AA  | 2  |