

Complex world. Thoughtful church.



In 2023, more than 47 million people in the United States experienced food insecurity,

including 1 in 10 children. Nutrition assistance programs like SNAP and WIC help families weather short-term hardship, support mothers and babies, and protect the health and development of future generations.



YOU CAN HELP

Join Bread for the World's **Offering of Letters** to urge your members of Congress to make ending hunger a top priority

Join us on March 15th to write Bread for the World letters.
See page 6 for more details.

Thoughts From Pastor Amanda Simons

Pastor Maria and I invited you to journey with us this Lenten season by being *All In* to receive God's love and to reciprocate it to others, yourself, and in relationship with God. We asked you to commit weekly to Three Practices:

- 1) an act of self-care (love of self)
- 2) an act of prayer (love of God)
- 3) an act of justice (love of neighbor)

As we asked you to commit to these faith practices, we also have committed to them and are serving as accountability partners for each other. At the beginning of Lent, Pastor Maria and I covenanted to block off time in our workday schedules for theological study for preaching and for prayer with God.

Last week, I found myself in our sanctuary, gazing at the altar and the stained-glass windows with the sunlight drenching in through them, praying aloud to God all my worries and burdens. And then, after all my heartfelt words tumbled out, I sat down and listened in silence. As time went by, as thoughts intruded and departed, I wondered what God might be saying to me.

As I gathered with my spiritual director this week, she asked me how it felt to sit in silence and listen, and then she asked me what I heard God say. I realized as I reflected with her that I heard quite a bit that has left me with hope and pondering.

Every week I am committing to some act of self-care, prayer, and justice. With this intentionality, I find myself reflecting more on the growing trust I am experiencing in God's providence and mercy. I wonder: What are you learning this Lent through these three practices? How are you growing in relationship with God, self, and neighbor? Please share! I love hearing from you.

In gratitude, Pastor Amanda Simons



**When you give \$100 or more,
I'll match it (up to a total of
\$500,000) — and you'll receive
your choice of a thank-you gift!**



Follow this link to Donate:

https://give.bread.org/page/87677/donate/1?ea.tracking.id=25A4L01Z&utm_campaign=25A4

On The Palm Sunday Path

Throughout the past few months here in Minnesota, we have seen the horror and destruction of authoritarianism in our country up close and personal. Our neighbors have been in hiding and many of us have been literally putting our bodies in harm's way to act in solidarity with our targeted neighbors as our faith calls us to do. What we've been through - and are still going through in Minnesota - is just one aspect of the ways in which the politics of fear, hate, and greed is causing division, violating our values, and tearing apart our democracy. Many are losing life-saving resources like food, healthcare, and housing due to the greed motivating those in power. As Christians, we know that every person is beloved, regardless of where they were born, and deserves the dignity of welcome, food, safe housing, and care when they are sick.

On Palm Sunday, people of faith - anchored by the Black Church Collective of ISAIAH - will gather for a march and rally at the Capitol to proclaim that we believe every person deserves a safe place to live, to afford food for their family, and to access healthcare for themselves or their loved ones when they are sick. As the Palm Sunday Path planning document shared with Pastors explains, "When Jesus entered into Jerusalem at the beginning of Passover, on a donkey, it was a symbol of a just, humble leader that honors the dignity and needs of the children of God: one that heals the sick, feeds the hungry, honors and welcomes the stranger. Historians tell us Roman authorities entered Jerusalem at the same time to show the power of the Roman empire and to control this freedom festival. Jesus provoked and drew a contrast." This is what we will seek to do as well. There will be marching, singing, prayer, and an opportunity to show up in solidarity with the black church leaders in Minnesota as people of faith in the public sphere with our values loud and clear. This is our March on Washington Moment, our Confessing Church moment.

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

PALM SUNDAY FAITH ACTION

RECLAIMING CHRISTIANITY IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

MARCH 29 JOIN THOUSANDS OF CHRISTIANS ON PALM SUNDAY TO CELEBRATE THE CALL OF OUR FAITH TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS: HEALING THE SICK, FEEDING THE HUNGRY, AND WELCOMING THE STRANGER.

2:00PM PROCESSION LAUNCHING FROM SEVERAL CHURCHES AT UNIVERSITY AND DALE

2:30PM WORSHIP AND PROGRAM AT MINNESOTA CAPITOL MALL

SCAN CODE TO REGISTER.
VISIT [PALMSUNDAY2026.COM](https://palmsunday2026.com) TO LEARN MORE.

Our participation on Palm Sunday is not an action that is happening in isolation, but as a part of a larger, coordinated effort across the nation and amongst many constituencies. While Christians around the country are preparing for their own Palm Sunday at their state capitols, the Muslim Coalition of ISAIAH in Minnesota is planning a Super Eid event and the labor unions are planning a big May Day Event. And finally, this will all culminate on July 3rd in Philadelphia there will be a big national rally where we will tell our nation that there is another way and that way is Love.

We hope you'll join us on Palm Sunday, March 29th for a march at rally at 2pm. More details about opportunities for traveling to the capitol together and ways to connect as a community will be forthcoming. Contact Pastor Maria or one of the ISAIAH Core Team members if you have further questions.

Peace & Solidarity,
Pastor Maria

2026 Lent Message from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

Dear church leaders, dear sisters and brothers in Christ, Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from the LWF Communion Office in Geneva.

Today, on Ash Wednesday, we enter the season of Lent — the annual journey toward Good Friday and Easter, which together stand at the heart of our Christian faith. We do so in a time marked by deep uncertainties and developments that trouble us.

Our faith reminds us that all human beings share equal dignity, created in the image of God, and that for the sake of all, God became human in Jesus Christ. Yet we hear voices among political leaders suggesting that some people possess less dignity than others, on the basis of status, ethnicity, or gender. History has taught us painful lessons about where such thinking leads: to the dehumanization of entire groups, to immense suffering, and even to the loss of countless lives.

In today's world, when the pursuit of maximum profit so often shapes decisions and priorities, people are reduced to means rather than recognized as persons. Their dignity is set aside.

As Christians, we must not be indifferent when human dignity is ignored or wounded. In such moments, our vocation is to bear witness — gently yet firmly — to the God-given dignity of every human being.

The Lenten season also invites us to reflect on our own lives and communities. We proclaim that in the new creation in Christ “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). How fully have we lived into this promise? In what ways have we made this new creation visible, in our relationships, our structures? Are boundaries still maintained against those from different ethnic groups, those who lack the “appropriate” social status, or happen to be women instead of men? Jesus himself crossed the dividing lines of his time with compassion and courage. Following him, we are called to honor one another's gifts and enable everyone to live into their calling. We are called to embody respectful and loving relationships that bear witness to our world: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

We see today how the multilateral system is being seriously questioned, and how the durability of international institutions can no longer be assumed. Without respect for international law, power becomes the only measure of right. Yet Jesus Christ did not teach the rule of power. He spoke of righteousness. In the Beatitudes, those who long for righteousness are twice called “blessed” (Matthew 5:6.10). We cannot avoid the question how churches can support more just and righteous structures — also in society. As the LWF study document *The Church in the Public Space* (2016) reminds us: “The church promotes the rule of law and good governance as highly important structural conditions for enabling justice and peace in society” (p. 34).

In this spirit, I invite you — the member churches of our global Lutheran communion — to continue offering a living witness that stands in contrast to the increasingly inward-looking tendencies we observe in many countries. Churches in communion are bound by strong ties that are held together by common faith in Jesus Christ. Together, and with other Christian bodies, we can show how global cooperation is still possible, that mutual respect is still possible, that unity in reconciled diversity is still possible — even amid the challenges of our time.

During a time when false witness and fake news are widely spread, it is timely to recall Martin Luther's explanation of the 8th commandment, You are not to bear false witness against your neighbor: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.” (Small Catechism, Book of Concord, p. 353)

What many long for these days is peace and hope. Peace in the world and in our churches, in families and in the workplace — peace that endures against the powers that sow fear and division, hatred and suspicion. Peace understood as the fullness of shalom: not merely the absence of conflict, but transformative peace, as reconciliation lived in the interplay of love, justice, and truth. And hope that sustains us through difficult times and opens new horizons. Hope that is more than optimism, trusting that even small steps may, like the mustard seed, grow and change the world for the better. We are not left alone. Jesus Christ has promised to be with us to the end of the age, grounding our hope and strengthening our resilience.

I pray that this Lenten season may be a time of prayer, discernment, and renewal of the mind, collectively and individually. It is more urgent than ever to preach the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ in opposition to misleading theologies built on fear, meritocracy and prosperity. May it also be a season that invites us not only to ask what we should refrain from, but to consider what requires deeper attention in our lives.

In this spirit, I warmly invite you to follow LWF's Lenten reflections this year, which center on the invitation to draw closer to God, to ourselves, to our neighbors, to creation, and to justice. These reflections lead us to the cross, where we encounter God, who comes near to us in Jesus Christ, and carries us from there to victory over death and evil, principalities and powers.

You can follow the reflections on the LWF's website <https://lutheranworld.org/>, and on LWF social media platforms where a daily reflection will be shared through Lent.

May God bless you in your ministry so that you may be a blessing to many others.

Yours in Christ, Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt LWF General Secretary

Worship & Music

Sunday, March 1 at 10:30am - Music led by Hope Choir
Wednesday, March 4 at 6:30pm - Holden Evening Prayer
Sunday, March 8 at 10:30am - Handbell ensemble plays
Wednesday, March 11 at 6:30pm - Holden Evening Prayer
Sunday, March 15 at 10:30am - music led by Hope Choir
Wednesday, March 18 at 6:30pm - Holden Evening Prayer
Sunday, March 22 at 10:30am - music led by Hope Choir
Wednesday, March 25 at 6:30pm - Holden Evening Prayer
Sunday, March 29 at 10:30am - Palm Sunday Worship, music led by Hope Choir
Wednesday, April 1 - No service
Thursday, April 2 at 7:00pm - Maundy Thursday worship, music led by Hope Choir
Friday, April 3 at 7:00pm - Good Friday worship, music led by Hope Choir
Saturday, April 4 at 7:00pm - Easter Vigil worship
Sunday, April 5 at 10:30am - Easter worship, music led by Hope Choir and brass

Paul Stever, Minister of Worship & Music

Children's Ministry Dates

We're excited to continue with our experiment with Family Faith Formation gatherings. These gatherings are open to all parents with children ages birth - 4th grade and will take place after the fellowship meal. We'll have time together and time for parents and children to learn apart. Thank you to Ann Agrimson and Tim Gustafson for leading our time with children! Mark your calendars for the following dates:

- March 15th - 12:30pm – 2:00pm
- April 19th - 12:30pm – 2:00pm
- May 17th - 12:30pm – 2:00pm

Holy Week for Families

March 29th - April 4th, we will enter into the most holy time of the year for Christians around the world, ending with Easter Sunday on April 5th. These Holy Week services tell an important story, but one that can be tricky for parents to enter into with young children. Families with Children are invited to share a meal together and enter into these stories together in an age-appropriate manner on Wednesday, April 1st. We'll gather at Hope around 5pm and plan to be done by 6:30 or 7pm. You're welcome to come when you can and leave when you must in order to accommodate your family's schedule. The content of this time will be geared towards younger children, with the opportunities for older children to also participate or to help our younger children if they'd like. Please let Pastor Maria (mariaa@ulch.org) know if you plan to attend so that we can coordinate enough food for everyone.

Beacon is joining the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

to sponsor and participate in Homeless Day on the Hill, an annual event that takes place at the Capital in St. Paul, bringing together groups working on housing and homelessness. This year's event on Wednesday March 11 begins at 9:00 a.m. There will be a morning program and legislative lobby visits for registered participants.

Speak with or email Donna Neste d_nestea@yahoo.com if you would like to join her for this event.



Wild Church Gathering

No Wild Church this month. Find some time to connect with our creation kin in your own neighborhood!



Hope Birthdays

Let's celebrate! The birthday list below is of Hope's members who are 80 years and older, in addition to some who may be homebound, living in assisted living or a care center. Their contact information is in the ULCH directory. A phone call, card, or note from folks in our community is always appreciated!



March Birthdays

March 17th – Jo Shroeder – 80!

April Birthdays

April 7th – Leonard Hrcir

April 8th – James Solem

April 18th – Elaine Reed

April 29th – Jean Albrecht

April 29th – Janet Munson



Bread for the World Offering of Letters

Hope's annual event in support of legislation to fund federal anti-hunger programs here and abroad, will be set up in Heritage Hall during the Congregational Meal on Sunday, March 15th and we will have everything you need to write or sign and send a letter to your two Senators and your Representative. Everyone is welcome to join us in this letter-writing activity after you finish breaking bread with your family and friends. [Click here](#) for more information on the Bread for the World website.

As most of you know, these programs were severally cut in the DOGE actions last year, causing the death of hundreds of thousands, (mostly children) globally. This year's fiscal budget has been restored by billions of dollars but has not been funded to its fullest capacity. Our letters will be focused on strengthening the hunger programs for our nation's anti-hunger programs, the Child Tax Credit and the global hunger programs that were severally cut last year. We will also be urging our federal lawmakers to pass a comprehensive farm bill.

[Click here](#) for the current Bread for the World report.

Young Adult Ministry - Gather Twin Cities



Gather is a ministry for young adults in the Twin Cities; a place for those who are hungry for community and connection with other young adults in the metro area. Setting the table for connection and rest through worship, meals, and monthly events. A place for you to deepen in faith as you discover your identity, uncover your vocation and develop as leaders who do justice in the world. Gather is LGBTQI+ affirming and eagerly invites siblings of any sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression into full leadership and participation. Follow our Facebook and Instagram pages for more information @gathertwincities.

March 15th – A pint sized gathering

Building Beloved Community Day Camp - June 15-19

Registration is now open for Building Beloved Community day camp. It will be held at Diamond Lake Lutheran Church again the week of June 15 - 19.

Especially in these hard and violent days, it is important that we can help our children and youth gain skills to resist evil, hold fast to what is good, and build community rooted in faith, active nonviolence and love.

Here's the website with more information and a link to registration: <https://www.smplsdaycamp.org/>

We also need plenty of adult and high school volunteers to help make day camp a success. Please prayerfully consider if you might be able to help build beloved community in this way! Contact Pastor Maria with any questions.

Sunday Adult Forums

The forum schedule for March is filled with reflection as well as opportunity for action. They will be held in Heritage Hall starting at 9:30 a.m.

March 1: American Protestants' Response to the Rise of Fascism in the 1930s, presented by Bo Peery, a member of ULCH. Bo will give a brief talk based on his PhD dissertation and leave time for what we hope to be a lively discussion about Christian resistance.

March 8: Civil Rights Tour, presented by Rev. Joanne Sorenson. Our own ULCH member, Diane Greve traveled to Alabama with Reverend Sorenson a couple of years ago and she will be involved in this presentation as well. This is about a unique historical pilgrimage that could be an opportunity for us as a congregation in the future.

March 15: Bread for the World, presented by Donna Neste. Donna has been a member of Bread for the World for over 40 years. She was a BFW board member from 2012 through 2017. Hope participates in Bread for the World's annual Offering of Letters. Worship that Sunday will be centered around this activity sponsored by Hope in the World, with an opportunity to write/sign letters during or after the congregational meal following the service. Everything needed for this act of justice will be provided.

March 22: Stories of Hope. Presenters are Jacob Lanthier and Marty Lewis-Hunstiger. This is a great way to learn more about our Hope congregational family in a deeper way. Also, it's an opportunity for an established member to share new pathways that their faith journey has taken them as they mature.

March 29: Palm Sunday. No forum. We will gather as a congregation for our traditional procession into worship.

Community Building Conversations with the ISAIAH Core Team

ISAIAH believes that stronger communities lift the economic, political, and spiritual power of everyone who lives there. One community building strategy is to encourage each ISAIAH institution to conduct one-on-one conversations between its members. You might ask, "What is the purpose of a one-on-one conversation?" ISAIAH identifies three goals; (1) Build a real relationship with the other person — they should leave feeling seen and heard. (2) Glimpse the other person's background, values, and life experiences. (3) Understand what the other person cares about so that you can connect them to the larger community (at Hope and beyond).

During Lent, the ISAIAH Core Team here at Hope would like to invite you (yes, you!) to an individual conversation with one of us. These usually last about 45 minutes. You may receive a phone call from someone from the ISAIAH Core Team to schedule a one-on-one conversation. If you would like to be contacted, please reach out to John Beane (pilgrim.beane@gmail.com). We're looking forward to getting to know you better!

President's Report

It's been years since I started something new. Years.

I've spent decades living in the same Roseville rambler and working with the same employer. Of course, there's been a *few* changes – there's a new driveway and a remodeled bathroom at the house; a couple of new roles and a promotion at work. But ultimately things have remained pretty steady in my life.

Mind you, this isn't exactly a matter of complacency. I've examined other jobs, even had an offer here and there. We've been to plenty of open houses over the past couple of years too. Yet when it all boils down, the pieces never quite align – timing, location, environment, or pocketbook – something is always askew. And while it's been disappointing at times, I strive to remind myself of the lesson I've seen play out again and again in my years on this planet: when it's meant to be, it will all just fall into place. God's hand is in it. And so it is, as I assume this new role as your congregational president.

It wasn't exactly a clear path. Just over two years ago, Karen Westwood and Esther Dant began approaching me to consider the position of vice president, and later president. Of course, there were plenty of excuses – I am working full time, I'm not a theologian, I'm not a church historian, I don't know everyone in the congregation and there must be someone *much better* suited than I for this job. And yet, here I am.

Accepting the role of vice president was one of the last things Esther asked of me. And, in briefly reflecting on this quandary with Bishop Jen Nagel after Esther's funeral service, she offered me three words of advice: "Just say yes." Those words echoed in my soul and somehow all the pieces fell into place. After all, so many have said yes to God for much more difficult things. I wasn't being asked to build an arc or bear or sacrifice a child. Convening meetings, listening, and collaborating with others to make thoughtful decisions for Hope's future? That, yes, *that* I could do.

Thus, it is with humility and faith, and in partnership with all of you, that I assume the role of congregational president for the coming year. I also begin with a fair amount of excitement for the possibilities ahead. With our new pastor, new financial administrator and newly- elected treasurer, we will embark on an external audit and work to ensure that the church's financial practices are clear and aligned with Synod recommendations and thereby establishing a sound foundation for years to come. I'm also committed to maintaining and supporting our long-term tenant, PEASE Academy, which includes security upgrades to enhance safety for their students and staff. Our Security Task Force is also working to review and improve our overall building security. Of course, I'm particularly stoked to fire up the bread oven in early 2027 for a mortgage-burning party. (It's possible I'll be past president by then!)

Meanwhile, if you have question, concerns, ideas or matters for the Board, you can contact me by email at president@ulch.org

Thank you for your support and confidence. Onward!

Kelly Brooks Congregational President

Treasurer's Report

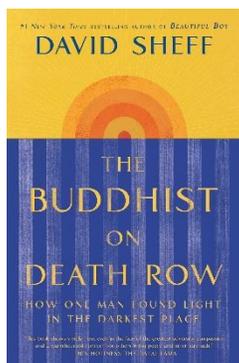
The 2026 Lead with Love pledge campaign is off to a strong start as of January's financial statements. The books reconciled perfectly, and according to the budget to actual report, January had an approximate \$10,000 surplus. It is common for pledging to be high in the beginning and end of a year, so this will likely "smooth out," so to speak, over the coming months.

February is seeing higher expense activity in specific funds as major projects approved by the board start to take shape, including the upgraded audio system, library shelving, and projector equipment. The Financial Administrator will continue to pay close attention to cash flow, but for now our cash position remains strong.

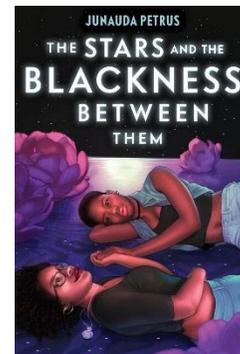
Mark Nelson, Treasurer

Hope Book Club

Sunday, March 8th, 2025, 7pm on Zoom



March 8th *The Buddhist on Death Row*, by David Sheff. “How One Man Found Light in the Darkest Place. ‘This book shows vividly how, even in the face of the greatest adversity, compassion and a warm-hearted concern for others bring peace and inner strength.’ -His Holiness the Dalai Lama”. [The Buddhist on Death Row — DAVID SHEFF](#)



April 12th *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*, Junauda Petrus. Minneapolis 2025 Poet Laureate. “Told in two distinct and irresistible voices, Junauda Petrus’s bold and lyrical debut is the story of two black girls from very different backgrounds finding love and happiness in a world that seems determined to deny them both.” [The Stars And The Blackness Between Them — Junauda Petrus](#)

Please contact Sonja Peterson for the Zoom link and/or with book suggestions at dunn.pete.law@gmail.com

“Books open your mind, broaden your mind, and strengthen you as nothing else can.” - William Feather

University Lutheran Church of Hope is a welcoming Christian community of faith centered in God’s grace and called to demonstrate God’s love for all the world.
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