

# First Family

*We welcome all people... are guided by the teachings  
and unconditional love of Jesus... are inspired  
to participate as faithful disciples of Christ.*

**December 2023**

**First United  
Methodist Church**

230 E. Skyline Parkway  
Duluth, MN 55811  
[www.fumcduluth.com](http://www.fumcduluth.com)

*Photo by Valeria Boltneva: Pexels.com*



## Our First Family

**Congratulations** to Crystal Hintzman! Crystal was named Instructional Leader of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. Crystal received her award at the WASCSD Annual Fall Conference on October 19.

### Thank You!

Thank you for your generous giving of time, talents, gifts, service, and witness in 2023. If you wish to check on the status of your financial giving, feel free to call the church office, 218-727-5021, or email [admin@fumcduluth.com](mailto:admin@fumcduluth.com) to check with Sandy Smith, our Director of Operations.

Thanks also to everyone who has made estimate-of-giving pledges for 2024 and turned in your participation survey. If you have yet to do that, we have additional estimate-of-giving cards and surveys at the church. You can also call or email us—we would be happy to get them to you. You may also make an estimate-of-giving online at [onrealm.org/FirstUMCMN/-/form/pledge/2024pledgedgiving](https://onrealm.org/FirstUMCMN/-/form/pledge/2024pledgedgiving).

Thank you for the wonderful ways you share the love of God. We are blessed to be a part of FUMC. Our community and world are better because we are here.

## On the Journey With You

We are in the season of Advent, the time of waiting and preparing. We spend this time preparing our minds and hearts for the coming of Christ into our world. This season gives us special opportunity to remember how Jesus lived his life—including all people—bringing justice where there was injustice—taking care of all God’s creation—being in right relationship with others and with God—seeing with delight and appreciation all that God has done and is doing. And we, too, seek to live in that way so that, like Jesus, we may bring light to places of darkness, to be light in the world. I look forward to journeying with you through Advent and celebrating Christmas together.

We have recently completed a sermon series called *5G Faith*, focusing on five great stories of our faith. These stories give a great overview of who God is and what it means to follow Jesus. We reflected on the story of the great intertwining commandments: loving God and neighbor; on the great proclamation focusing on how the Spirit of God is upon us as we bring good news to the poor, and freedom, liberty, and justice for all; on the great commitment—how we are called to both take up and put down our crosses as we follow Jesus; on the great requirement—how we are to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; and we concluded with the great commission—how we are created to act on our faith.

There is a sixth Great Story that has captured my attention lately; "The Great Prayer" found in John 17:20-23 *The Message*, "I'm praying not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me because of them and their witness about me. The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind. Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so they might be one heart and mind with us. Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me. The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they'll be as unified and together as we are—I in them and you in me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness,

## First Family

### First United Methodist Church

230 E. Skyline Parkway, Duluth, MN 55811  
218-727-5021, [Info@fumcduluth.com](mailto:Info@fumcduluth.com)

Pastor: [Jeanine Alexander](#)

Editor: [Bill Alexander](#)

Next First Family deadline: **December 13**

Submit to [connect@fumcduluth.com](mailto:connect@fumcduluth.com)



[fumcduluth.com](https://fumcduluth.com)

and give the godless world evidence that you've sent me and loved them in the same way you've loved me."

The people for whom Jesus prayed this prayer were going through challenging, disconcerting times. We too are living in challenging, disconcerting times. The poor are getting poorer and the rich, richer than ever—there are more people, especially black male people, in prison; there is the horrendous, deadly, and vicious conflict in Israel and Palestine; and don't forget what is happening in Ukraine. There is rampant gun violence and mass shooting after mass shooting. Our democracy is under a real and present threat—there is political and relational polarization and division, and there is long-COVID and cancers, to say nothing about what is going to happen because of the climate change we are experiencing.

Jesus prays that his followers will all be one and that the world will know God's love through our love. My prayer for our church and our people in 2024 is that we will be unified, even in the midst of our differences. May we be good news for the poor and liberty for the oppressed. May we be the love, mercy, and justice of God lived out in our words, our energies, our actions, our lives.

God, thank you for this year—for all we have learned—for all we have loved and lost. Thank you for all the ways this past year has brought us closer to one another and you. Help us to enter the new year, our eyes fixed on you and your ways, so that together we might better see each other and both find and offer hope and healing to each other and to the world. Amen.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. You are loved!

~Pastor Jeanine

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## Worship in December

**December 3** – The 2nd Sunday in Advent

**December 10** – The 3rd Sunday in Advent – Lessons in Carols with the Sanctuary Choir, Strikepoint, and more.

**December 17** – The 4th Sunday in Advent – Our annual Children's Christmas Pageant – "Christmas Around the World."

**December 24** – Christmas Eve Worship Services will both be in person and livestreamed.

**10am Service** – Music will be led by Tapestry and Velda Graham Bell

**10pm Candlelight Service** – Music will be led by the Sanctuary Choir, Extollers (our reunion bell choir), and Velda Graham Bell

**December 31** – 10am worship, in-person and recorded worship on YouTube. We will prayerfully prepare for the New Year.

## Sending Steve and Tina Farrell With Prayers and Thanks



### End-of-the-Year Giving:

*For your contributions to be included in your 2023 IRS giving, they must be in the office and/or postmarked by December 31, 2023.*

# Mission Update

The next mission team meeting is Monday, January 22 at 6pm on Zoom. Everyone interested in mission is welcome to attend. Join Zoom Meeting

[us02web.zoom.us/j/915188407](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/915188407) Meeting ID: 915 188 407

## Current Areas of Focus:

### CHUM

As part of the 50th anniversary, executive director John Cole will be preaching on January 14. We will take a special offering for CHUM.

On November 1 CHUM opened the Warming Center again for the season. On the very first night, they had 52 guests, and are expecting that number will only continue to rise. Last year there were 637 guests staying at the Warming Center, a 58% rise compared to the prior year. FUMC gave a financial gift of \$450 to purchase mats for those guests.

Every year the College of St. Scholastica's Music Program hosts their "O Holy Night" concert. During the concert they pause and call for a donation to CHUM! This group is incredibly talented, and tickets are highly sought after. Get your tickets today and support CHUM on December 1-2!

Please continue to bring food and financial donations for the CHUM Food Shelf to church.

### Stepping On Up

This strategic, compassionate response to chronic homelessness in our region involves many service agencies and local churches. More updates later.

### Union Gospel Mission (UGM)

Our own Karen Alseth is chair of the board and Jana Picotte is the development coordinator.

We will be helping with lunch on the first Monday of each month, 11:30-1:30pm.

We provided a gift of \$270 to provide tablecloths for the center.

**Harbor House** – In a recent Sunday morning Faith Forum, where Krystal Brandstatter, the Executive Director of Harbor House Crisis Shelter, told of the new house they purchased with special grants and how it will offer more housing opportunities. The mission team is connecting with them to see how FUMC can help.

**Ruby's Pantry** happens at our church on the third Thursday of every month. It is a joint effort with other churches and community members. For \$25 people get a large amount (and wide array) of foods to stretch their budget. Pass the word about this great opportunity. Our congregation will be providing additional volunteers every December. Please sign up to help from 4-7pm on December 21.

### MN Reconciling Ministries Support and National Reconciling Ministries Support

Both of these organizations do hands-on work and legislative action to make the United Methodist church fully inclusive to the LGBTQIa+ community. So far this year, so far, our congregation has given a gift of \$1,000 to the national organization and \$400 to the MN organization.

### Ukraine Care and Israel and Gaza Care

We will be making special gifts through UMCOR (The United Methodist Committee on Relief) as part of our Advent/Christmas Offering.

### Methodist Hospital in the Philippines and St. Scholastica Mission Trip

Gina Diaz reports that she took home a total of 12 boxes containing masks and hair bouffant caps from an anonymous donor. Josefino Diaz and Gina shipped six boxes, drove to Chicago for shipment to the Philippines two weeks ago, and shipped an additional six boxes in October. This will be a great help for Mary Johnston Hospital.

**MLK Events** – We are hoping to host the MLK Breakfast again this year.



**Terri Lynn Fundraiser**

The Terri Lynn Fundraiser online store is open in December. Look for the gourmet candies and nuts that you love, and love to give away! Funds raised go toward our youth mission trip.

[coppertopduluth.terrilynn.com](https://coppertopduluth.terrilynn.com)



## Faith Forum Winter Sessions 2023

Faith Forum is a weekly gathering of people seeking to learn more about their faith. Everyone is welcome to any or all sessions on Sunday mornings from 9–9:45 in the Fireside Lounge.

**December 3:** Maggy Emery from Protect Minnesota on gun violence prevention in Minnesota.

**December 10:** Take a fresh look at poet Emily Dickinson on her 193rd birthday. Writer and spiritual retreat leader Lezlie Oachs shows us how Emily dealt with grief, pain, and the occasional tiff with God. This is NOT the Emily you learned about in high school.

### Looking ahead to 2024

**January 7:** "Choosing Compassion in a Climate Changing World" with guest speaker Tone Lanzillo.

**January 14:** UMD Library Director Matt Rosendahl will speak about libraries, their role in American society, and the recent attempts in many communities to restrict access to books.

**January 21:** TBD

**January 28:** Create all you can while you can. FUMC members Debbie and Tom King will lead us in a session on creativity: the process of writing text and music.

# Volunteer at Union Gospel Mission!

by Jana Picotte, Development Coordinator



FUMC has taken on serving lunch at The Mission once a month! This is a great opportunity to serve our community and help provide food, shelter, and hope for our neighbors in need. The volunteer shift goes from 11:30am-1:30pm on the second Monday of every month. Up to six people can help serve a warm meal to guests at UGM. Sign-up sheets can be found on the table in the Narthex—invite your friends and family! Volunteers of all shapes, sizes, and capacities are more than welcome. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Jana Picotte at [jana@duluth-ugm.org](mailto:jana@duluth-ugm.org) (218) 722-1196.

The Mission's meal program is in great need of canned vegetables. Canned vegetables are used for sides almost every day down at UGM. If you think about it while out shopping this holiday season, grab a couple extra big cans for UGM! If you feel called to do more—Sam's Club lets you order six-packs of #10 cans and have them delivered right to The Mission.

Thank you, my beloved Coppertop family!  
~Jana P



## Sign Up For This Year's "Extollers"

If you are currently involved in our handbell program, or have EVER been a member of one of our handbell ensembles, you are invited to be a part of Extollers, our Christmas reunion massed handbell choir.

There will a single rehearsal on **Saturday, December 23 from 9:30–11:00am**. The group will then play for the 10:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight service on **December 24**.

Contact Bill Alexander at 218-340-4100 or [bill@strikepoint.com](mailto:bill@strikepoint.com)



# From Our Faith Community Nurse

by Linda Wiig

## Do you know the warning signs of a stroke?



Despite the danger that it poses, many people are unfamiliar with the warning signs of stroke. Common symptoms appear without warning and should not be ignored. Even if the symptoms turn out to be unrelated to a stroke, it's still wise to seek medical attention. The risk of damage caused by not getting treatment is too great.

Some symptoms of stroke can include sudden weakness, sudden headache, sudden blurred vision, and sudden loss of balance.

The National Stroke Association uses the acronym "FAST" to help people remember how to identify the signs of stroke: **F**ace, **A**rms, **S**peech, and **T**ime.

- Check the **F**ace to see if one side droops.
- Hold out the **A**rms to see if one of them drifts downward.
- Talk to the person and listen for slurred or strange sounding **S**peech.
- If you notice any of these signs, call for help immediately (**T**ime) or transport to the hospital if help is delayed.

There are two types of stroke, ischemic and hemorrhagic. Ischemic strokes are caused by a clot (thrombosis). It is this kind where it's very important to get to the emergency department fast, as a drug called tPA can be administered or a thrombectomy could be performed. This type of intervention has greatly improved the outcome of this type of stroke. This type of treatment is heralded as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements for the U.S. in the last 50 years.

Please be aware of these stroke signs. Transient ischemic attacks (sometimes called "mini-strokes") can mimic these symptoms, so it is important to seek medical help to determine whether a stroke has occurred.

Preventive measures are quitting smoking, lifestyle changes, and medications to control high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and atrial fibrillation.

## Strikepoint in Concert

We hope you will be able to attend at least one of Strikepoint's performances this Christmas season.

First up is their own concert, "A Bell Noël" at FUMC on December 9 at 7pm. This fundraising concert will also feature a few friends of Strikepoint.

The second set of concerts are with the Arrowhead Chorale. This continuing collaboration of the two groups will be on December 15 at 7:30pm and 16 at 3pm at First Lutheran in Duluth.

Celebrate the holidays with

# STRIKEPOINT

**A Bell Noël: a holiday fundraising concert**

Saturday, December 9 • 7pm

First United Methodist Church, 230 E. Skyline Pkwy, Duluth

Tickets: \$25 for adults; \$10 for students and children

**Gloria! Holiday Traditions & Jubilations**

with the Arrowhead Chorale

Friday, December 15 • 7:30pm and Saturday, December 16 • 3pm

First Lutheran Church, 1100 E. Superior St., Duluth

Tickets: \$30 in advance for adults (\$35 at door); \$10 for students under 17 with ID

Artistic Director Bill Alexander • [bill@strikepoint.com](mailto:bill@strikepoint.com) • Duluth, Minnesota

# Children's News

## Sunday School and Christmas Pageant (Nursery–5th grade)

On Sundays, December 3 and 10, Sunday School will be at 10am where children will be rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant.

There is no Sunday School on **December 24 and 31**. Activity bags and nursery are available.

On Saturday, December 16 from 10:30–noon, there will be the Christmas Pageant Rehearsal along with doughnuts. Come, even if this is the only rehearsal you attend. Grandkids, friends... all are welcome.

### Children's Christmas Pageant – "Christmas Around the World." December 17 at 10am

Rehearsals are Sunday mornings during Sunday School AND every Wednesday evening at 5pm (for kids 2nd grade and younger) and 5:40pm (3rd grade and older). There will be a final dress rehearsal Saturday December 16 from 10:30-noon. You can come to any or all rehearsals and still participate in the pageant. Please contact director Beth Brophy with any questions: [musickids@fumcduluth.com](mailto:musickids@fumcduluth.com).

## Calendar

### Wednesday, December 6

- 5-5:30pm – Jam Jr. Music and Bible learning (nursery–2nd grade) in the Chapel
- 5-5:40pm – Ringtones (3rd -5th grade) in the Bell Room
- 5:40–6:05pm – Jam, singing and drumming (3rd-5th grade)
- 5:30–6pm – Supervised playtime for 2nd grade and under
- 6–6:30pm – Dinner

*Nursery care is available from 5–8pm*

### Wednesday, December 13

- 5-5:30pm – Jam Jr. Music and Bible learning (nursery–2nd grade) in the Chapel
- 5-5:40pm – Ringtones (3rd -5th grade) in the Bell Room
- 5:40–6:05pm – Jam, singing and drumming (3rd-5th grade)
- 5:30–6pm – Supervised playtime for 2nd grade and under
- 6–6:30pm – Dinner (salad, fruit, veggie bar, bread, peanut butter, and noodles)

- 6:30-7:30 – Tweens Group Christmas Party (3rd-5th grades) Lakeview Social Hall

*Nursery care is available from 5–8pm*

### Wednesdays December 20 and 27

*No group activities or events  
Christmas Break*

**See the special invitation  
on page 10 from Velda  
Graham Bell.**



## Youth Calendar (6–12)

### Wednesday, December 6

- 6:30pm – Confirmation Class – Come anytime between 6–6:30pm for supper. Youth who are not in confirmation may hang out in the Youth Room.
- 7:45–8:45pm – Class Ring – Bell Room

### Sunday, December 10

- 11:30am – Youth Christmas Party  
We will go to Pub 310 in Canal Park for lunch, games, and tons of fun. \$10 to go toward the cost of food, etc. The church will pay the rest.

### Wednesday, December 13

- 6:00–6:30pm – Supper. Come anytime.
- 6:30–7:30pm – Help with the Tweens Christmas Party.
- 7:45–8:45pm – Class Ring – Bell Room

### Thursday, December 21

- 4:00–7:00pm – Volunteer at Ruby's Pantry – Pizza  
Let Pastor Jeanine know if you are coming (and if you need to be late). We will organize food, pack it, and put it in cars.
- 7–7:15pm – Pizza service  
*This is a GREAT way to serve for the holidays!*

### Wednesdays, December 20 and 27

*No group activities or events – Christmas Break*

Friends are always welcome. Please bring a money contribution toward Wednesday-night dinners.

Text Pastor Jeanine with any questions, 763-443-0570.



**See the special invitation on page 10  
from Velda Graham Bell.**

## From the Welcome Desk

*by Mary Giese, Director of Welcoming and Hospitality*

Hello friends! A young couple recently attended our Sunday church service and in visiting with them I was asked, "What is the difference between Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists?" My response was probably not what they were looking for, and I responded with what I was told and taught by my Dad throughout his many years of ministry. Every newsletter, every Sunday bulletin, every communication included "We are the church with a welcome for everybody, always." I will leave the theology to others to share.

Have you ever felt like a stranger somewhere? As we begin the Advent Season and await the baby Jesus, there is a gift we can share with others: the gift of a warm welcome to our church.

When you see someone you don't know at church, introduce yourself and perhaps start a conversation—you may find a connection. Invite them to coffee time after church. Invite them to sit with you, and introduce them to others. Someone told me they didn't know what to say—it's as easy as, "Hi! My name is..."

This Advent Season is the perfect time to invite neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family to come and be our guest at church, for all events. We welcome everyone to participate in whatever way they choose.

Another gift you could give would be your gift of time. Greeters at the entry doors, the Sanctuary, or entrance tables; meeting guests at the Welcome Desk; and hosting the coffee time are all great ways to welcome guests and members alike. Please share your name and contact information with the office, and you will be warmly welcomed and thanked for your participation.

Our church mission statement says it all: "We welcome all people... are guided by the teachings and unconditional love of Jesus... are inspired to participate as faithful disciples of Christ."

May this Christmas bring you blessings beyond measure.



# Advent/Christmas Mission Project

This year we are inviting the congregation to give both locally and to the larger world community—and to give **MONEY, ITEMS, and TIME**. Here are our focus areas for Advent/Christmas this year:

**MONEY**  
Financial Gifts will be split  $\frac{1}{2}$  for the ministry and mission of our congregation and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to offer help to Ukraine and Israel/Gaza through UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). Please make checks payable to FUMC and/or note on envelope: Christmas Giving.

**ITEMS**  
Join our children in donating warm socks for all ages which we will share with CHUM, Union Gospel Mission and Harbor House. Please bring your donations to church.

Union Gospel Mission is having a Toy Drive on December 15. By December 10, you may donate toys and gift cards for this endeavor. Please bring your donations to church.

**TIME**  
Sign up to work at Ruby's Pantry on Thursday, December 21 from 4–7pm.  
Sign up to serve a meal at Union Gospel Mission on Monday, December 11 11:30am–1:30pm.

# Music Notes

by Director of Music Ministries Velda Graham Bell

## Enjoy Holiday Music with FUMC Musicians

**Saturday, December 9** – 7pm, Strikepoint concert "A Bell Noël." Ring in the holidays with our premiere bell ensemble, joined by some of their musical friends. Tickets available at the door, \$25 for Adults, \$10 for students and children.

**Sunday, December 10** – 10am worship service – "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols"

*This very special service tells the story of Christ's birth through Scripture readings and music offered by First UMC's Sanctuary Choir and Strikepoint, as well as a variety of vocal and instrumental solos and ensembles.*

**Sunday, December 10** – 7pm, Twin Ports Wind Orchestra's "Holiday Concert"

*Please join the Twin Ports Wind Orchestra Brass for a concert of inspiring seasonal favorites, warmth, and good cheer. Held in our Sanctuary and conducted by First UMC's Dr. Mark Whitlock, the TPWO brass section will perform a variety of your favorite Christmas music. Free-will donations accepted.*

**Friday, December 15** – 7:30pm and **Saturday, December 16** – 3pm – "Gloria!"

*The Arrowhead Chorale presents new and traditional settings of the Gloria, with carol settings old and new featuring works of Mozart, Wilberg, and John Rutter's breathtaking Gloria. Held at First Lutheran Church (1100 E. Superior St., Duluth), the Chorale will collaborate again with our Strikepoint Handbell Ensemble to present the glorious sounds of Christmas. In addition, Velda Graham Bell will be playing organ and Derek Bromme trombone. Tickets are \$30 for adults (\$35 at the door) and \$10 for students; available online at [arrowheadchorale.com/performances.php](http://arrowheadchorale.com/performances.php) or at the door.*

## Does Your Child Play an Instrument?

Maybe they have been taking piano lessons and are working on Christmas music during their lessons. Maybe they have learned to play an instrument in school. If so, we invite them to share a Christmas piece with the congregation during the prelude time on Sunday, December 17, the day of the Children's Pageant. Please contact Velda Bell, [music@fumcduluth.com](mailto:music@fumcduluth.com), or Beth Brophy, [musickids@fumcduluth.com](mailto:musickids@fumcduluth.com), if you are interested or have questions.



## Children's Christmas Pageant

The Children's Christmas Pageant, "Christmas Around the World," will be presented during worship on **Sunday, December 17**.

All children preschool age and up are invited to share their beautiful musical talents to tell the Christmas story on a journey to Bethlehem.



Rehearsals will be every Sunday morning AND every Wednesday evening at 5pm for kids 2nd grade and younger, and Wednesday at 5:40pm for grade 3 and older. There will be a final dress rehearsal Saturday December 16, from 10:30-12:00.

Children may come to any or all rehearsals and still participate. Please contact director Beth Brophy with any questions: [musickids@fumcduluth.com](mailto:musickids@fumcduluth.com).



First United Methodist Church  
230 E Skyline Parkway Duluth, MN

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## CHRISTMAS AT THE COPPERTOP

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## FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Sunday, December 10, 2023  
10:00 am worship service

Discover the beauty of this traditional service of nine lessons and carols during the morning worship service at First United Methodist Church. The story of Christ's birth will be told through scripture readings and music offered by First United Methodist's Sanctuary Choir and Strikepoint, as well as a variety of vocal and instrumental solos and ensembles.



**STRIKEPOINT**  
*& Friends*

present

*A Bell Noël*

*a holiday fundraising concert*

*Saturday, December 9 at 7pm*

*First United Methodist Church*

*230 E. Skyline Parkway 🌲 Duluth, MN*

*Tickets available at door  
Adults \$25; Students and children, \$10*

# Justice Ministries

Submitted by Sarah Maddy

## Shelter Next Projects Move Forward in Underutilized Portions of Two Duluth Churches



Peace Church is working towards a rental agreement with CHUM and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, partner organizations of Stepping On Up. Stepping On Up will convert the former daycare wing into shelter housing for 12 homeless young adults aged 18-24. Lutheran Social Service will provide supportive programming and 24/7 staff for the residents.

Peace Church will not only be landlords in this agreement, but also good neighbors, sharing kindness and simple acts of hospitality—living out a vision of "building the beloved community." This proposal was brought to the coordinating council, and the congregation overwhelmingly voted yes to move forward with this lease. The plan calls for construction to start in late fall.

In addition Our Savior's Lutheran Church is creating supportive shelter in their building to give people a second chance after incarceration.

## 2020 General Conference... in 2024

General Conference is comprised of United Methodist clergy and lay leaders who are elected from annual, missionary, and provisional conferences around the world. This representative body is the only one that can set official policy and speak for the denomination. General Conference gathers for a 10-day meeting every four years. The 2020 General Conference was postponed, not once, but three times. The global pandemic, as well as extended waits for visas, eventually pushed the gathering to April 23–May 3, 2024. The name remains "2020 General Conference."



Legislation submitted for consideration in 2020 still stands, but there was an opportunity to submit new proposals as well. [umc.org/en/content/2020-general-conference-in-2024](https://umc.org/en/content/2020-general-conference-in-2024)

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## Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) Prepares for Long-Awaited General Conference



UM News reports that RMN is advocating for changes to the United Methodist constitution and Book of Discipline pertaining to:

- Regionalization of the worldwide church
- Revised Social Principles
- Removal of the restrictive language related to homosexuality

Adopting new Social Principles and ending the restrictions only require majority votes at General Conference. However regionalization (an effort to put the denomination's different geographical regions on equal footing) requires amending the United Methodist constitution. For ratification amendments must first receive at least a two-thirds vote at General Conference and then at least two-thirds of the total votes from annual conferences' regional bodies consisting of voters from multiple congregations. That means work will continue for passage even after General Conference adjourns.

The regionalization legislation makes no mention of homosexuality. Its main goal is to decentralize the church so the U.S. is no longer dominant, and to move toward the decolonization of the global denomination.

—continued on next page

Under the plan the U.S. and the seven current central conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines would each become United Methodist regional conferences with the same duties and powers to pass legislation for greater missional impact in their respective regions.

“It prevents a regional conference from having other regional conferences impose their policies and administrative practices,” said the Rev. Israel I. Alvaran, a RMN organizer and Philippines native. “So if we decolonize, then we’re not colonizing each other in how best we can preach the Gospel and live into the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

More at: [umnews.org/en/news/lgbtq-advocates-plan-for-new-day-in-church](http://umnews.org/en/news/lgbtq-advocates-plan-for-new-day-in-church)

## Compassion Is the Way of Christ

### *Supportive services lead to hope and healing*

“Don’t just survive, thrive. Find your path of purpose.”



Ray Charles Lay has his own version of the blues. Although he shares a name with the famous singer, All of Us Participant Ambassador Ray Lay tunes in to his own soul, openly sharing lessons from a life marked by trauma—incarcerated at age 14,

later serving in the military, then homeless. The honorably discharged and disabled U.S. Marine emphasizes his long road to recovery, focusing on helping others with mental health issues and working toward a future where mental illness is better understood.

Ray’s struggles with mental illness, which began after a near fatal car accident at age five, led him to a juvenile detention center, incarceration, and homelessness. After he learned of his diagnosis with schizophrenia, Ray began to get treatment and started the long road to recovery.

### **“Instead of being bitter, let’s strive to get better.”**

Ray serves as a Participant Ambassador for the All of Us Research Program to promote a better understanding of mental illness. His service has given him a strong sense of purpose and awareness about the value of sharing his personal experiences to help those around him.

### **Childhood trauma**

Ray was born in Mississippi in 1955, the youngest of

four boys. His family moved to Indiana when he was four years old. His father, an African American World War II veteran, wanted to leave the South’s Jim Crow laws, which enforced racial segregation. His father got a job as a mechanic in Gary, Indiana, but was relegated to an overnight shift.

For Ray the struggle with mental illness started young, though he didn’t know the diagnosis of schizophrenia until adulthood. He traces his troubles to a near-fatal car accident when he was five years old. His father was driving back to Mississippi with him and his mother. Ray was in the back seat when the car collided with a bus on the highway near the small town of Hayti, Missouri. The impact sent Ray hurtling through the windshield, onto the highway, unconscious, surrounded by glass. Although everyone survived, Ray was in a coma for several weeks. His symptoms intensified.

“I still bear the scars,” Ray said. “My life went from bad to worse to violent. I was hearing voices. They weren’t good.”

### **“Spare the rod, spoil the child.”**

Ray started acting out at school, on the playground, and at home, becoming aggressive and disoriented. His parents sent him to a psychiatrist and disciplined him. When he was eight, they sent him to the Indiana Boys School, a state-run juvenile detention center that had a history of violence, abuse, and escapes, where he stayed for a year. At age 14 Ray stole a car, got his hands on a gun, and shot and killed a 20-year-old man who he said had bullied and attacked him. After a court-appointed attorney reviewed his background, Ray was found incompetent to stand trial by reason of insanity. He was committed to two years at Beatty Memorial Hospital, a state-run maximum-security mental health facility.

Soon after his release from the hospital at age 18, Ray noticed a U.S. Marine handing out information and asked whether he could join. Within months Ray was stationed in San Diego, California, before being sent to the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. Through his military service, he was able to obtain his high school diploma and begin college preparatory classes.

### **Twenty-five years homeless**

Ray’s service abruptly ended in 1978, less than two years later, after he had a psychotic episode while serving in Japan. He returned to Gary feeling

devastated and defeated. He took to the streets, becoming homeless while misusing drugs and alcohol. Finally, in 2003, at age 48, Ray took the advice of family and friends and visited a VA hospital. It was there that Ray first learned about his diagnosis. A social worker asked whether he was being treated for schizophrenia. "What's that?" Ray said. It was the beginning of his understanding of his diagnosis and mental health history.

### **Shift toward harm reduction and compassionate, respectful treatment builds hope and healing**

Reading his military files and hospital history allowed Ray to learn about his mental health history, accept his diagnosis, and change his behavior, becoming sober and stopping illegal drug use.

"I am a man of hope," Ray said, "and I believe my iota of hope needs to spread to others so that they can see recovery is possible. It is real and worth pursuing."

Now, at age 68, Ray owns his own home and business in Indianapolis, aiming to help his community. He trains correctional officers, police officers, and first responders, openly detailing his experiences and offering de-escalation techniques. Ray is a Department of Veterans Affairs peer support specialist, a certified recovery specialist, and a member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness Board of Directors.

All of Us is creating a research community of one million people who will share their unique health data. This resource will allow researchers to conduct thousands of studies on health and disease.

Ray believes his participation in All of Us will help advance mental health discoveries. Ask your health care provider how you can help build the All of Us research database to improve health care for everyone. Learn more at:

[allofus.nih.gov/about/program-overview](http://allofus.nih.gov/about/program-overview).



### **The Great CHUM Cookie Bake-off!**

Bring the kids on December 9 to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, along with your favorite recipes, to bake up fresh cookies to share with folks who don't have a

home where they can gather in the kitchen during the holiday season. Cookies will go to residents of the St. Francis Apartments and the guests at the Warming Center. Click here to sign up for this Second Saturday event: [chumduluth.org/secondsaturdays](http://chumduluth.org/secondsaturdays) or call Pat Benson, 218-206-5349.

Second Saturdays are monthly, multi-generational opportunities to serve our community. Through member congregations and other volunteers, we respond to the highest need we see and organize accordingly. If you're looking for joyful, hands-on volunteer activities, check out Second Saturdays.

### **Homeless Memorial Vigil**

Each year CHUM holds a local vigil for people with experience of homelessness, or their advocates who have died. Please note the date change, **December 19 at 5:30 pm on the steps of Duluth City Hall**. The vigil is no longer on Christmas Eve but has been rescheduled so more people are able to join us.

To date this year, Deb Holman reports that 53 people with lived experience of homelessness have died. At the same time, the current statewide list (not including Duluth) numbers 80 people. Deb reports that most of the local deaths are due to overdose. She suggested that we need a facility like San Marco, dedicated to persons experiencing substance use disorders.

The Street Outreach Program serves people sleeping in places unfit for human habitation. It is estimated that the majority of people who used the Warming Center last winter were routinely sleeping outside. Often their only connection with the resources our city provides is through CHUM Street Outreach Worker Deb Holman.

We need your support to continue our work in keeping people alive, helping them connect to resources in the community, and assisting them in finding housing.

There are many ways to bring hope to God's people in our midst. Donations of warmth, clothing, and tents, or a gift of volunteer time at the Warming Center, help keep folks living outside alive. And a gift of money helps support all of our street outreach programs.

Give today with church offerings of cash or check, or go to: [chumduluth.org/waystogive](http://chumduluth.org/waystogive).



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