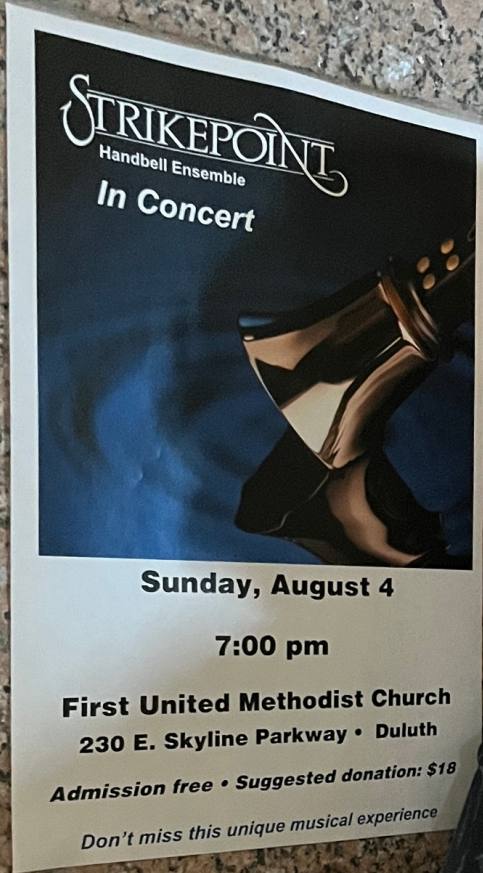


# First Family

September 2024

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



**STRIKEPOINT**  
Handbell Ensemble  
*In Concert*

**Sunday, August 4**  
**7:00 pm**

**First United Methodist Church**  
230 E. Skyline Parkway • Duluth

**Admission free • Suggested donation: \$18**

*Don't miss this unique musical experience*



**First United  
Methodist Church**

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

After 40 years, Bill Alexander  
adjusts his role with Strikepoint



## Our First Family

### Thank you from Strikepoint

Earlier this month Strikepoint performed a concert at FUMC in advance of our tour to Japan and our participation in the International Handbell Symposium in Hamamatsu. It was close to a full house containing people from a wide spectrum of our community. When asked, "How many of you are handbell people?," there were an astonishing number of hands raised. There were many people from Duluth and Superior, a surprising number who drove a long way to attend, a huge representation of our church family, and there were eight former Strikepoint members in attendance, all there in support of these 11 handbell musicians. What a humbling experience!

Please know how much this show of support and love meant to all of us. Your support—physically, emotionally, and financially—made all of this possible. AND, there was enough money donated to get us all the way home!

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts,

~Bill Alexander and Strikepoint



## From Our Deacon



### Reflections on Renewal Leave

by Rev. MaryAnne Korsch

Friends, as I write this September *First Family* column, it is late August and we are coming to the end of Pastor Jeanine's leave. By the time this issue is in your mailbox, she will have resumed her daily duties as Lead Pastor, and I will be back to my previous role, which we lovingly refer to as "Other Duties As Assigned." (That is to say, I don't really have an official role at the church, but am happy to serve in my clergy capacity where needed.)

It's been a real joy to serve among you in a new way these past several months, and it seems fitting now to offer a few reflections on the summer and what I have learned in this time.

We are blessed with an amazing, competent, and compassionate church staff. Pastor Jeanine and the Staff Parish Relations Committee were diligent to see that we were fully staffed this spring, which made a big difference in ensuring that our summer church activities went well. Throughout the summer our office has functioned smoothly, our children have been well cared for, our building and grounds have been beautiful, those with physical or emotional health needs have received care, and special events have provided a great deal of fun and fellowship. I am eternally grateful to our church staff for a summer of excellence, and I deeply appreciate the work Jeanine and the SPRC did to be sure we had the right people in the right places to make it all happen.

I've had leadership roles in other organizations, and my prediction was that leading a church would be similar in many ways. Well, yes and no. I found church leadership to be all-consuming in a way that was new to me. Many days found me weighing priorities to

## First Family

### First United Methodist Church

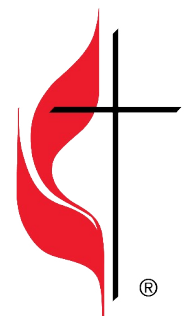
230 E. Skyline Parkway, Duluth, MN 55811  
218-727-5021, [Info@fumcduluth.com](mailto:Info@fumcduluth.com)

Pastor: [Jeanine Alexander](#)

Editor: [Bill Alexander](#)

Next First Family deadline: **September 18**

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



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

determine where would be the best place to invest my energy: between visiting with people; creating and modifying meeting agendas; generating content for weekly emails, devotions, and sermons; connecting with other congregations for shared activities; and maintaining a spiritual practice that is life-giving and inspiring, it was often challenging to meet the wide variety of demands that this job requires. Some days I had a really hard time managing my energy, quite honestly! And all of this was in the summer, when some of our “normal” church activities were lighter than usual. I now understand in an entirely new way why a renewal leave is necessary for a pastor’s well-being.

We do have some upcoming challenges. While our financial picture is currently stable, it will be important to creatively balance future needs with the reality of cash flow. We are just beginning a discussion about how to live into our value of radical hospitality, while simultaneously ensuring that our people and our building are safe spaces. Rather than “do more with less,” we are keeping in mind that it may very well be better to do less, but do it with exceedingly high quality. Keeping the mission of the church relevant in divisive times remains central in our church-wide conversations.

The best part of the job, by far, is the people—people like YOU, who encourage, participate, volunteer, care deeply—and knowing our church family in a new way has been a great blessing to me. Being part of your lives is an amazing gift. This came to light especially on the Sundays when we shared in Holy Communion—seeing each person come forward, eager for the blessing of the “God-with-us” experience that resides in the bread and cup—knowing that we all hunger and thirst for God’s dream for the world and the part we play in bringing that dream to reality... it is holy and sacred ground.

At a recent staff meeting, we were discussing Scripture verses we have found especially meaningful over our lifetimes. One verse which has served as a touchstone for me comes from Philippians 1, verse 6: “*The one who started a good work in you will be faithful to complete it.*” This is an assurance I have claimed time and time again, in countless circumstances over many years. God is up to something in each one of us, and God is faithful. Friends, we are on a road together, traveling through challenging terrain, and we need both the Spirit’s guidance and each other’s company to make the journey. May we continue, with God’s help, to taste and see God’s goodness, and to bring it into every part of our lives.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

## Worship Schedule in September

**There are three ways to participate in worship:**

- 10am, live in our Sanctuary on Sundays. (We hope you choose this one when you can—there is something wonderful about being in person with others.)
- 10am livestreamed service on Sundays as worship is taking place
- Anytime afterwards on our [YouTube channel](#).

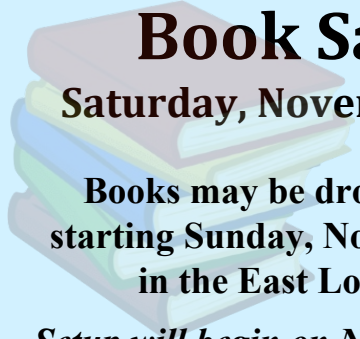
**September 1—Holy Communion, PRIDE, and a Spiritual Survival Kit:** What do we really need to live a life of faith?

**September 8—Fall Kickoff Sunday:** Join us as we begin our fall season in earnest. How do we know when Jesus is knocking at our door?

**September 15—Who Is This Man?** Jesus saves us, but not like the Lone Ranger, and not like a superhero.

**September 22—The Jesus Way #1:** Who is our neighbor? And how can we be a good neighbor to all, especially those who are different than we are?

**September 29—The Jesus Way #2: Seeing and Being the Image of God.** What does it mean to be created in God’s image?



### Book Sale

**Saturday, November 16**

**Books may be dropped off starting Sunday, November 10 in the East Lounge.**

***Setup will begin on November 14.***

Please email [anitazager@gmail.com](mailto:anitazager@gmail.com) or let Jean Walsh know if you can help.

## From Our Faith Community Nurse



Here it is, September already! I can't believe it. I'm sure many of you cannot believe it either. September brings us to the season of autumn, and we can already see some of our early maples beginning to change. We have also experienced cool days and evenings, another Blue Moon, and the beginning of another school year. With school beginning, family transitions begin anew. Change in routines, students going

to new schools, little ones going off to kindergarten, teachers going to new schools or adding more classes to teach, childcare issues, more activities, and those who experience empty nests all impact everyone's ability to adjust.

How can we make adjustment easier? Smiling and humor can reduce stress. Laughter for 20 seconds can increase your heart rate, and then it goes lower than it was before you laughed. This is true for your blood pressure and respiratory rate as well. When experienced in tandem, your stress is released.

Humor can also help to increase your tolerance for pain. Studies have shown this to be true, but the reason is still not understood. Laughter can relax muscles and provide some relief. Humor also decreases anxiety—and when you are less anxious, you think more clearly and can actually remember more.

We know that life is full of setbacks, big and little problems, and laughter can smooth the way to a better mood. Research has also shown that laughter can give your brain a rest. During laughter the electrical activity of your brain is the same as when you are in a state of deep relaxation or meditation.

I'd like to share a prayer by Leslie Weatherhead (1883-1975) which may help to heal emotions or burdens you may be experiencing.

My mind is happy today in the thought that I am God's child in God's world to do God's work within God's will. This is to be a day of joy and optimism and courage. From all negative thoughts my mind resolutely turns away.

The Spirit of God is working in my body to bring health and in my mind to bring serenity, and I am one with that Spirit. I am not apart from, or disapproved of, or turned away by, God. No impostor-fears shall let me think I am. I affirm the reality of health and peace and love within me because God dwells therein.

In reminding yourself of joy and optimism, remember that the word *enthusiasm* in Greek means "God in us."

Blessings, *Linda Wiig*

## Fall Faith Forum

Looking for an opportunity to challenge and grow your faith? Join curious and searching folks in the Fireside Lounge most Sundays from 9–9:45am. We explore and share a wide variety of questions and ideas. Here are some past topics: How and why to resist Amazon; the changing role of seminaries; challenges to public and university libraries; a "walking tour" of the church organ; demo and history of our handbell program; church members sharing their personal faith journeys.

This year we start off on **September 22** exploring a sense of place. Minnesota Naturalist Sue Henke shares a presentation on the fascinating geology of our region. Bring a favorite locally-found rock.

On **September 29** we will watch the beginning of an uplifting documentary called *Common Ground*. There was a community showing of this 2023 film last spring at St. Scholastica. It shows a pathway to transform our unhealthy industrial agriculture food system into an ecological way of growing food that can restore our health, our communities, and our climate.

All are welcome; come late or leave early. We know Sunday mornings are busy.

## Sustainability Committee

Students have returned to our local university campuses, school kids are back, hard at their studies, and there is even sometimes a nip of fall in the air. These are all signs that fall activities—including the regular

meetings of our Sustainability Committee—are resuming at FUMC! The first meeting of the season will occur on Sunday, September 15, about 15 minutes after the service ends. If you're already part of the group, welcome back! If you're NOT but would like to join us, please consider this your invitation! We'll let people know where we're meeting in upcoming bulletins.

For those of you who haven't been around much this summer, you may notice that our lights seem brighter than before. That's because members of the Sustainability Committee and our friends and relatives have been diligently cleaning the lighting covers. This task is almost wrapped up. In addition, we've begun the changeover to LEDs, and that will continue into the fall. This is making a DRAMATIC improvement in both our power consumption AND the brightness of the rooms! (In fact, I've been joking with Bill that maybe we SHOULD'N'T change the bell room lightbulbs, because the extra brightness will eliminate ONE MORE excuse for my mistakes playing bells!) If you see Alex Flinner and Kelsey Hanson around, please thank them for spearheading this important project. We couldn't have done it without them!

On behalf of the Sustainability Committee,  
~Geoff Bell

## Good News From CHUM

On July 29 Duluth city councilors voted 8-1 to commit an additional \$500,000 to Stepping On Up!

Local homelessness facts compiled by CHUM are getting the attention of decision makers in Duluth:

- 32.2% of Duluthians are spending 50% of their income on housing, and 50.5% of renters are cost-

burdened by spending 30-50% of their income on housing. (Census and the American Community Survey)

- Duluth needs 3,500 additional units in affordable multi-family housing. ([Maxfield Research](#))
- Housing units being constructed are primarily at market-rate prices and therefore cater mostly to professionals who have found above median-income employment in our city. ([chumduluth.org/post/leading-the-charge-on-affordable-housing-and-economic-development](#))
- A 250-square-foot studio in Duluth which rented for \$425 in 2017 is now going for \$950 in 2024. (Sumair Sheikh, executive director of LISC, Local Initiatives Support Corp)
- St. Louis County reports a 41% rise in overall homelessness and a 157% rise in chronic homelessness in the ten years from 2013–2023.
- At CHUM 41% of those on the wait list for subsidized housing have been there for more than two years.
- Over 1,000 people are experiencing homelessness in Duluth at any point.

At the CHUM Shelter, there are 80 beds, but they see over 100 guests on average each night. The Warming Center averages over 70 people per night in the winter, with official sleeping capacity for 50. Other shelters are similarly at or beyond capacity. There is not enough room, and there are too many people who need access to better services. This pushes them to sleep in places not suitable for human habitation, which is often public property.

The camping ban ordinance has been amended to reduce impact on people with nowhere to sleep. In July a proposed ordinance would have made camping or sleeping on public property a misdemeanor offense, with up to 90 days in jail and a \$1000 fine,

—CHUM, continues on page 6

## Save the Date for this Fall's Roast Beef Dinner



First United Methodist  
THE COPPERTOP CHURCH DULUTH, MN

230 E. Skyline Parkway  
Duluth, MN 55811  
218-727-5021

**FALL ROAST BEEF DINNER • THURSDAY, OCT. 3 • 4:30-6:30PM**

**Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, coleslaw, dinner roll, and a homemade apple dessert!**

**\$15**  
PER MEAL

**DRIVE-THROUGH PICKUP ONLY**



# EarthKeeper

by Naomi Yaeger, *EarthKeeper*

In August, my daughter, Rebecca, and I took a road trip to a garden party at the South Kawishiwi River Campground Pavilion in Ely, Minnesota. As a member of Save the Boundary Waters, I was thrilled to attend. We enjoyed delicious food from the Tower Café and amazing desserts from Crystal Schlueter of the *Ely Echo*.

At the event, we learned that the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is this year. It was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964. This landmark legislation took years of discussions and 88 drafts before it was finally enacted. It serves as a reminder not to get discouraged when working on sustainable practices.

The U.S. has 54 designated wilderness areas, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which many of you in Duluth might be familiar with. Protecting these areas is crucial for our health and the environment. Here's why:

- They protect watersheds that provide clean drinking water.
- They filter and purify the air we breathe.
- They offer habitats for many cherished animal species.
- They support recreational activities like hiking, fishing, and camping.

Wilderness designations also guard against the negative impacts of overdevelopment, such as:

- Logging
- Mining
- Oil and gas drilling
- Road building
- Off-road vehicle use
- Industrial development

Preserving these wild spaces ensures they remain intact for future generations. Even if you've never visited a wilderness area or don't enjoy camping or hiking, these places still benefit you by keeping our air and water clean.

There are many ways to get involved with nature. Consider supporting organizations like the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, The National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters, and others.



My grandparents signed me up for *Ranger Rick Magazine* when I was a child, which sparked my love for nature and magazine journalism. You never know how your actions might inspire a child.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, Save The



Boundary Waters is hosting three events in Minnesota. On September 28, join them at the Como Park Pavilion or the Historic State Theater in Ely for Beaver Tales: Stories from the Wilderness. Also, if you are a runner, don't miss the marathon on October 6. For more details, visit [Save the Boundary Waters events, save.theboundarywaters.org/our-events](http://save.theboundarywaters.org/our-events).

Naomi is a commissioned EarthKeeper with the United Methodist Church. Contact her at [sun\\_dog\\_press@yahoo.com](mailto:sun_dog_press@yahoo.com) or 218- 591-5277.

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—CHUM, *continued from page 5*

and opening the door to charging people with a crime for sleeping in their vehicle. Community involvement by advocates, including CHUM supporters and delegates, led to council amendments removing the risk of criminal penalty and reducing the fine to \$200 or less if people refuse to relocate after being warned by police officers and offered information about shelter and drop-in services. [chumduluth.org/post/duluth-public-safety-ordinances-faq](http://chumduluth.org/post/duluth-public-safety-ordinances-faq)

For more information on how you can influence housing in Duluth, visit [chumduluth.org/advocacy](http://chumduluth.org/advocacy) and click on the "Advocate for Better Housing Today" button.

# Children and Youth

## Children Nursery–5th grade

**Sunday, September 8** – Kickoff Sunday  
(Sunday school every Sunday)

- Worship at 10am – Blessing in worship for the school year
- Doughnuts following worship
- Sunday School begins (Children will leave for Sunday School following the Children’s Message)

**Wednesday, September 11** – Kickoff Wednesday

- 5:30-6:45pm – Dinner anytime – Free Smashburgers at the food truck
- 5:00-5:30pm – JAM Jr. Music (nursery through 2nd grade) including Bible lesson – Chapel
- 5:00-5:40pm – Ringtones (3rd-5th grade) Bell Room
- 5:40-6:05pm – JAM Music (3rd-5th grader) singing and drumming – Chapel
- 5:30-6:00pm – Supervised play time (2nd grade and under)
- 6:45pm – Meeting with parents, children, and youth with Jeanine and Larry talking about the expectations of the year and getting parent/participant feedback.

*Nursery care available 5:00-8:00pm*

**Wednesday, September 18**

- 5:00-5:30pm – JAM Jr. Music (nursery through 2nd grade) including Bible lesson – Chapel
- 5:00-5:40pm – Ringtones (3rd-5th grade) Bell Room
- 5:40-6:05pm – JAM Music (3rd-5th grader) singing and drumming – Chapel
- 5:30-6:00pm – Supervised play time (2nd grade and under)
- 6:00-6:30pm – Dinner
- 6:45-7:30pm – Youth Group (6th-12th grade)

*Nursery care available 5:00-8:00pm*

**Wednesday, September 25**

- 5:00-5:30pm – JAM Jr. Music (nursery through 2nd grade) including Bible lesson – Chapel
- 5:00-5:40pm – Ringtones (3rd–5th grade) Bell Room
- 5:40-6:05pm – JAM Music: 3rd-5th grader – singing and drumming – Chapel

- 5:30-6:00pm – Supervised play time (2nd grade and under)
  - 6:00-6:30pm – Dinner
  - 6:45-7:30pm – Youth Group (6th-12th grade)
  - 6:45-7:30pm – Tweens (3rd-5th grade)
- Nursery care available 5:00-8:00pm*

**Friends are always welcome—Text Larry with any questions (218-260-9577)**

## Youth 6th–12th Grade

**Sunday, September 8** – Kickoff Sunday

- Doughnuts following worship
- Confirmation students do worship reflection—sign up to help with nursery or Sunday school/children’s activities
- The sermon will have a focus on YOU

**Wednesday, September 11** – Kickoff Wednesday

- 5:30-6:45pm – Dinner anytime – Free Smashburgers at the food truck. Come after your sports practices, eat, and connect!
- Hang out in the youth room and re-connect
- 6:45pm – Meeting with parents, children, and youth with Jeanine and Larry talking about the expectations of the year and getting parent/participant feedback.
- 7:45-8:45pm – Class Ring (please talk with [Bill Alexander](#) if interested) Bell Room

**Wednesday, September 18**

- 6:00-6:30pm – Dinner
- 6:45-7:30pm – Youth Group (6th-12th grade)
- 7:45-8:45pm – Class Ring (6th-12th grade)

**Wednesday, September 25**

- 6:00-6:30pm – Dinner
- 6:45-7:30pm – Unstructured hangout time
- 7:45-8:45pm – Class Ring (6th-12th grade) Bell Room

*Nursery care available 5:00-8:00pm*

**Friends are always welcome—Text Pastor Jeanine with any questions (763-443-0570)**

**NOTE:** The first CONFIRMATION CLASS of the year will be Wednesday, October 2 from 6:45-7:30pm. Please plan on attending if you are in this 2nd year confirmation class—or, if you are not in it and want to be, please talk with [Pastor Jeanine](#).

# Registration For Children's Activities

In an effort to be able to offer the best children's programming possible, we are asking to have you fill out the form below and get it to the church office as soon as is practical. You can mail, email, or deliver the form.

## Registration for 2024-25 First United Methodist Church Activities

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Text? Y  N  Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Text? Y  N  Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Text? Y  N  Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional emergency contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Text? Y  N  Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

My child has these allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

My child is related / connected to other FUMC members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other things the church should know about my child: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My child  may  may not appear in photos, videos or livestreams.

I give permission for my child to participate in programming and activities at First United Methodist Church.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Music... Music... Music

**Church Music Groups** will resume rehearsals soon. New members are always welcome! Our Music Director/Organist, Velda Bell, can provide introductions to any of these groups and would love to put you in touch with the directors. She can be contacted at 218-393-4006 or [music@fumcduluth.com](mailto:music@fumcduluth.com).

### Starting Rehearsal Dates

#### Wednesday, August 28

- **Sanctuary Choir** began their season with a potluck, followed by a short rehearsal. Contact [Derek Bromme](#) for additional details. Regular rehearsal time is Wednesdays at 5:10pm.

#### Wednesday, September 4

- **Tapestry** (worship band) resumes their fall season. Regular rehearsal time is Wednesdays at 6:30pm. Contact [Corey or Leah Hulst](#) for more information.

#### Wednesday, September 11

- **All handbell groups** begin rehearsals. *Ringtones* (grades 3-5) meets on Wednesdays at 5pm. *Class Ring* (grades 6-12) meets on Wednesdays at 7:45pm. *Cast in Bronze* (adults) meets on Wednesdays at 6:30pm. Contact [Bill Alexander](#) for more details.
- **JAM & the Peanut Butter Band and JAM Junior** resume rehearsals. *JAM & the Peanut Butter Band* is a singing/drumming group for 3rd-5th graders that meets on Wednesdays at 5:40pm. *JAM Junior* meets on Wednesdays at 5pm and is a “fun-with-music” group designed for 2nd graders and younger. Contact Beth Brophy for more details.
- **Wednesday evening dinners** also return on Wednesday, September 11. Join us for complimentary Room at the Table Smashburgers that evening, starting at 6pm.

## Pipe Organ Rededication

We are very fortunate to have an outstanding pipe organ that graces our worship services in many ways. It beautifully leads and supports our hymn singing, accompanies our choir as well as instrumental and vocal soloists, and provides beautiful solo music ranging from peaceful preludes

to powerful postludes. In short, our pipe organ uplifts our souls.

Over the past several years, our pipe organ has been undergoing a refurbishment which has included various repairs, the addition of new pipes (including a new rank of façade pipes attached to the back wall of the balcony), and the revoicing of several existing pipe ranks. All this adds up to an organ that sounds even better than before and is ready for many more years of music-making.

To celebrate the end of the organ project, we have planned several special events. Mark your calendars now.

The morning worship service on Sunday, November 3 will include a time to “rededicate” our organ, acknowledging the individuals who have helped make this refurbishment possible. The service will of course feature the organ, along with our choir, Tapestry, and Strikepoint.



Concert organist Dr. Isabelle Demers will play a celebratory concert on Sunday, November 3 at 3pm. Dr. Demers is Associate Professor of Organ at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, and one of the premier concert organists in North America.

She has played organ recitals around the globe, including such places as St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in London, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing. You don’t want to miss this concert!



Theater organist R. Jelani Eddington will accompany a silent film in our Sanctuary on Friday, March 7 at 7pm. Mr. Eddington is an award-winning organist who has performed around the world. At age 13 he won the American Theatre Organ Society’s

Young Theatre Organist Competition and remains the youngest competitor ever to win this title. He will accompany the classic silent film comedy, *Safety Last*. This will be a fun event for the entire family!

# Strikepoint Returns From Japan and a Page Turns

by Bill Alexander

In 1986 an ambitious (and probably naive) two-year-old handbell ensemble from Duluth's First United Methodist Church decided that it would be a good idea that their very first concert tour should be to Japan and the 2nd International Handbell Symposium. After all, they had already attended a regional handbell festival and, the next year, a national festival. An international event was the next logical decision... right? Well, after 40 years of touring and everything in between, it's safe to say



Strikepoint, Japan, 1986

that it was not only a positive direction and experience for the fledgling ensemble, Strikepoint, but life-changing.

More than a year ago, I began the process of planning a return to Japan and participation in the 21st International Handbell Symposium. I offered the idea to the group, explaining what a wonderful experience it would be, the lifelong friends they would meet, the concept of playing with 700 other handbell musicians from all around the world (with most unable to understand English) but still being able to communicate through music, and that it was going to forever change them.

I wouldn't say that there was a spontaneous ovation in response to the idea. I was a bit disappointed, but there was enough excitement from the couple of people who had experienced a symposium and from those who had previously been to Japan that the proposal began to take root. Once we figured out that we would be able to afford to go, and how much time off we would have to secure, the excitement exploded. We were going to Japan!

Within a month we had contacted the Handbell Musicians of America (HMA) to let them know of our intentions and to gather information on what sort of tour they may be putting together. Seemingly, they had no information at all and were waiting for the Handbell Ringers of Japan (HRJ) to send them details. We had (poorly) translated materials from HRJ, but enough to keep planning. By the time HMA had a tour put together, all the deadlines were about to crash into each other. Hurry up and wait... now page 10

commit to everything right away! The tour from HMA was stupid expensive and was going to last longer than the time we could allot.

We made the decision to go with a different company where a couple of us knew the regional representative. She did a very nice job setting up a tour for us that was also far beyond our financial abilities. With quite a bit of wrangling, we ended up with a trip we could afford and would give us everything we needed. The planning work and negotiating certainly didn't end there, but we had a plan.

Arriving in Japan was everything I had hoped for. Strikepoint had cameras out and were seemingly giddy (along with exhausted) to have to make adjustments to little things, like walking on the left side of the airport concourses and moving walkways. Thanks to Charley Korsch, we each had just under \$5 in Japanese yen coins. Talk about set for an adventure!

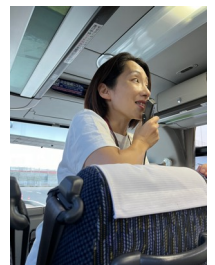


Most of our equipment arrived undamaged but a couple of cases will need some repair... later. It was hot, it was muggy, it was Japan, it was fabulous!

The first three days were spent with our tour guide, Ayako, exploring Tokyo with its shopping, its enormity, and so many Japanese food delicacies. Personally, I still miss having my morning curry... every day of the tour. Although I've had enough eel for the foreseeable future.

An extremely fast trip to Hamamatsu on the *Shinkansen* (Bullet Train) brought us within walking distance of our hotel and the Symposium, although it was still in the upper 90s and extremely humid. Traveling with only a carry-on for luggage has its advantages. All of the bell equipment traveled earlier by truck and was waiting for us.

Within minutes people I knew, including many of our conductors,





were coming to greet us. It felt so good to see so many of them again. Nancy Eaton and Sue Marquardt, who had been to that first Japan Symposium and other handbell events, were also surrounded by old friends.

The first evening was spent at the opening ceremony, with

flags, delegates, and an opening bell (actually eight opening bells rung as a chord by the country delegates). There was also a powerful performance by a traditional Japanese taiko drumming group, followed by dinner from about 15 food trucks lining the end of the event center.



Throughout the evening we had a traditional gift exchange and opportunities to meet as many other handbell musicians as we could connect with before they locked all of the handbell sets up for the night. For the exchange Strikepoint brought an eclectic collection of gifts to share—



about 700 Minnesota/Lake Superior pebbles made into pins, with a card explaining their origin, stating, "A little piece of our home for you! Made with love in Duluth, MN." We also had

Strikepoint kazoos and a newly-designed Strikepoint lapel pin. The comments I heard from the group mostly had to do with, "Yes, we gave out a lot of stuff, but I was surprised by how much we received!"

One of the most memorable experiences was having Strikepoint selected to represent the United States in the International Concert, a separate concert held in a beautiful concert hall. Only one group per country was chosen to play. The piece we chose to perform was "Strollin' Along" by internationally-known handbell composer Hart Morris. It was also the piece that Strikepoint and my family had commissioned from Hart in memory of my wife, Cindy, our other Strikepoint co-founder.

The final concert was truly amazing. Each of the nine musical selections came from a different country, was played by all 700 of us at the same time, and was conducted by a different director



from each of those countries. There was always at least one interpreter helping us through the rehearsal process.

Then there was the closing banquet and ceremony. This was held at a very nice hotel with a dining area large enough to feed over 700 people. It was a fitting end to an incredible event and tour.

Throughout the trip we experienced heat, humidity, an earthquake alert from EVERYONE'S phone—while we were all in an elevator!—trains, long flights, great (and sometimes unusual) food, temples, shrines, shopping, wonderful people, and exceptional music from exceptional musicians.



For me the highlight was, and will always be, traveling, performing, and being a part of Strikepoint. Each version of them, 1984 to

2024, has helped define who I am, and also influenced countless handbell groups around the world.

Those of you who know me well understand that it is not in my nature to voluntarily talk or write about myself or to want to be featured in any way. You would rarely see anything in this newsletter that you knew was written by me, even though I get to be the one who creates *First Family*. My close friends understand that I'm an introvert in an extrovert position. I know what you're thinking: "But Bill, you stand in front of all those people; we would never have guessed." This is all very hard for me.



When I first proposed the Japan tour early last year, I was unaware that it was to represent the bookends to my Strikepoint life, and what was to become my final adventure with Strikepoint.

What began as a simple experiment with Cindy and

eight other handbell friends in 1984 became more than just a respected, influential, and admired handbell ensemble from Duluth: for me, it became who I am. Not a day has gone by without Strikepoint being at least some part of it. I'm now finding it emotionally difficult to sever my connection.

I am grateful that we have Derek Bromme in our church and in Strikepoint. Derek is one of my former Marshall Band students, and I have known him for much longer than I care to think about. He has expressed many times to many people how important this ensemble is to him and that he recognizes how different it is than all the other musical things he does (and loves). He sees the magic that somehow becomes Strikepoint.

I will be stepping down as Strikepoint's director as of September 1, and I feel so relieved that Derek will become the director that Strikepoint needs and deserves. It's been fun to see the excitement he shows selecting music and making plans for the future. He's also really good at keeping secrets until the time is right. Thank you, Derek!



I found that it was going to be impossible for me to just walk away from everything. I'm already a mess. I will still be the Director of Handbells, directing the other three groups (Ringtones, Class Ring, and Cast in Bronze), and coordinating with Derek and Strikepoint. There will still be Extollers every Christmas, I will continue conducting handbell festivals and workshops around the country, and I will remain as FUMC's Director of Communications, producing *First Family*, the website, our Facebook page, and other duties as assigned.

I want to thank all of you for the support you have given to Strikepoint and to me. I have been humbled, year after year.

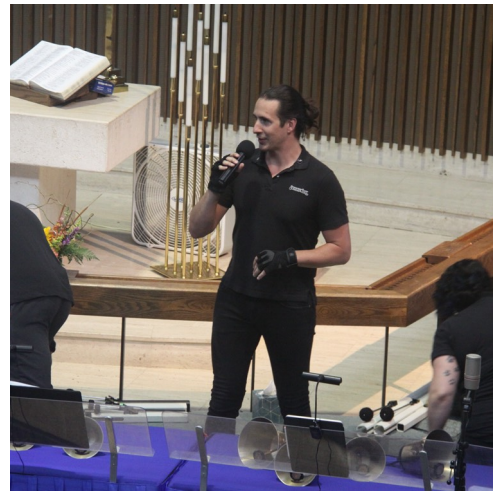
Whenever anyone left Strikepoint, I always reminded them that according to the fine print on their contract, they could never really leave and that they would always be a part of Strikepoint. I'm counting on that holding true for me as well.

~Bill



## The FUMC August Photo Album







**Children's and Youth Music on Wednesdays at the Coppertop**

**JAM Junior** — music group for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade & younger 5:00-5:30 in the Chapel  
**JAM and the Peanut Butter Band** — singing/drumming group for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders 5:40-6:05 in the Chapel

Director: Beth Brophy  
musickids@fumcduluth.com or 218-727-5021 (church office)

**Rehearsals begin on Kick-Off Wednesday, Sept. 11. Free smashburgers will be served for everyone starting at 6:00!**

**Ringtones** — handbell ensemble for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders 5:00-5:40 in the Bell Room



**Class Ring** — handbell ensemble for high schoolers 7:45-8:45 in the Bell Room

Director: Bill Alexander  
bill@strikepoint.com or 218-340-4100

**RSVP by Tuesday, September 17** (so there's sure to be enough food!). Sign up in the office, call the office (218-727-5021) or email Pastor Jeanine (pastor@fumcduluth.com). Let us know if you need a ride!

*Be our Guest!  
Seniors' Lunch  
and Fellowship  
Tues., Sept. 24 • 11am  
Lakeview Social Hall*

**For seniors**  
65 and older,  
or anyone who  
considers themselves  
a senior!

Enjoy a light meal and conversation together.

# 2024 Fall Roast Beef Dinner

Thursday, October 3

4:30–6:30pm

## Sign Up to Volunteer:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4CA8A82CA4FFC61-50318582-fall>

or call the church office at 218-727-5021,

or sign up at the Roast Beef Dinner table in the Narthex

Sunday mornings in September

- The dinner will be 100% drive-through.
- We will not be making chocolate chip cookies or cutting apples (apples will come pre-sliced from our supplier).
- Tickets will be available for sale in advance in the church office and on Sunday mornings.

## Opportunities to Help

**Wednesday, October 2, 9am–noon, or noon–3pm**

– **Apple Dessert Day**

- Bake apple dessert
- Put foil in to-go containers

**Thursday, October 3, all day – Dinner Day**

- 7:30–10:30am – trim beef, prepare coleslaw, wash dishes
- 10:30–4pm – wash dishes, put rolls in bags, prepare drive-through outside, help where needed
- 1–4pm – cut apple dessert and put in to-go containers
- 2–6:30pm – meat cutter, potato maker, gravy maker, corn maker, dishwashers

- 3:30–5:30pm – deliver meals
- 3:30–5:30pm – serving line crew (1st shift)
- 5:30–7:30pm – serving line crew (2nd shift) and cleanup
- 3:30–6:30pm – directing traffic
- 3:45–6:30pm – drive-through order takers, car delivery volunteers, youth runners
- 4–6:30pm – dishwashers
- 6:30–8:30pm – dishwashers
- 6:30–8:30pm – cleanup crews (kitchen; drive-through serving area, inside and outside), volunteer room, roast beef dinner closet organization

*If you show up at different times, we welcome you and will find a job for you!*

## Other ways to help

- Post fliers around your work and neighborhood (available at church office).
- Facebook, email, word-of-mouth—invite friends to dinner via direct invitation and social media.
- Prayers—pray for a God-filled and successful event.

## This is a fundraiser

- Please purchase a meal before or after your shift. (Youth will enjoy dinner compliments of FUMC)
  - We have something for everyone—ALL ages can participate!
- All volunteers: Please park on the west (day-care) side of the building.

## Thank you!

For additional information contact Cindy Hedlund at 218-348-2634 (text or call), email at [schedlund@gmail.com](mailto:schedlund@gmail.com), or contact the church office at 218-727-5021.



## First United Methodist Church

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