



# DECORAH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MAY 2026

## The Tower

### Welcome to May!

I was reading through the Upper Room a couple of days ago and a story really caught my attention. This particular story was about a woman who was reminiscing about learning how to swim when she was a child. She recalled the first time her father had her jump off the low diving board into the deep end. He was there to catch when she finally jumped and helped her get to the ladder to get out of the pool. It brought back memories from my childhood.



*Continued on next page*



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As far back as I can remember, I have loved to swim. And though I don't do it as much anymore, I love the water. I started swimming lessons when I was just three months old. You see, my mom was afraid of the water. A bad experience in the deep end with an inattentive lifeguard and some friends led to a lifelong fear which she insisted her child would not have. I spent summers growing up at the community pool where I reached the limit of what they could teach me because I was not old enough for lifeguard lessons and my hair turned from blond to green by the time the school year started each fall.

This, however, does not mean that there is no fear on my part when it comes to swimming. There are so many different types of water that we encounter in our life. There are the calm waters of a pool or a water park. There is the smooth surface water that hides turbulent water currents beneath the surface of a lake, ocean, or river.

Then there are the violent waters we might encounter if we were on a boat in the ocean or on the coast as a tsunami is coming at us. These are not just conditions we can find in the water, but among the life events we encounter as well.

My mind kept going back to the woman's story of how her dad was there to catch her and lead her to safety. God is our lifeguard - the one in the water that is encouraging us to do what we know we can and the one there catching us when things aren't quite what we planned. Perhaps it is through those times of fun swimming in a calm pool as well as those dangerous currents or waves that want to sweep us away, that God is there with us to help us through whatever we are encountering.

Rev. Cat Stokes



# from the music corner

As we near the end of choir season, we look back with fondness. Emily Johnson has talked about joining the choir for several years, waiting for last kid to go to college, and it happened this year! We are grateful for Emily's voice and presence. Our accompanist Tara Rajanesan has been with us for a year and half. Her quiet demeanor, intelligence, and deeply expressive playing on the piano and the organ has completely won our hearts. Tara will graduate from Luther College on May 24 th , and will fly back to her home country of India three days after graduation. We will always remember and treasure our time with Tara.

Looking ahead to summer months, our usual music director for summer month is Sally Stromseth. But this year, Sally will be on family duty to help with her brother-in-law recover after a major surgery. We wish all goes well with the recovery! Syd Stephenson from choir will step in to fill the role of organizing special music offerings for Sunday worship service this summer. I encourage everyone to participate, and let Syd know, so she can arrange the details and dates.

Tara will play her last Sunday worship service on May 17 th . We will celebrate with Tara and say farewell. I am unfortunately tasked to find our next church accompanist by Deb Tekippe. It is a "Mission Impossible". But life goes on, we will manage as best as we can. Connor Sandman, a Luther student pianist, who played for us on April 19th , would like to share the duties with Hugh Spann, another Luther student pianist. We look forward to that collaboration.



I will be traveling to China, Korea, and Canada this summer, with some exciting piano performance opportunities, and family visits. We are still looking for a pianist to play for services during summer months. Cerrisa, Syd, and I are working on a plan together.

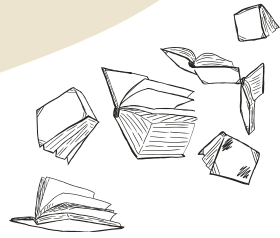
Choir rehearsal will resume on Wednesdays at 7:30pm starting September 2 nd , interested in joining a fun group of people? Hope you all are enjoying the beauty of the spring season in Decorah.

Du

# BOOK STUDY

2026

From Pastor Cat



## MEETING DATES

**May 3 and 17** – chapter 13 and chapter 14 (one chapter each week)

I am continuing on in a climate change cohort, and I am still taking you along with me. This year, our church is on a journey to look at climate change through a lens of faith and what we can do to affect change and provide care for all of creation. Our book/Bible study this year started in November, and we will be meeting after coffee twice a month to look at responses that people from various backgrounds have looked at. The question?:

*Do we have a moral obligation to take action to protect the future of a planet in peril?*

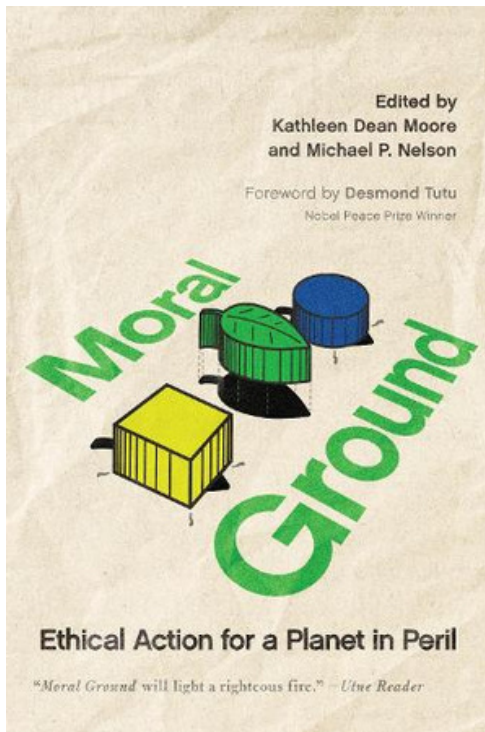
Each meeting we will look at various responses from a variety of people and hopefully through our discussion come to our own answer to this question. There are also suggestions on how to take action at the end of each chapter. The books are available on Amazon in various formats and range in price from \$8.99 (paperback, 2011) to \$12.05 (hardcover).

**You can also request a copy at Decorah's own Dragonfly Books.**

As of the writing of this article you can get a kindle version for \$9.99.

The book is entitled:

***Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril***, edited by Kathleen Moore and Michael Nelson.





## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

# Home Visits

### **A message from Pastor Cat:**

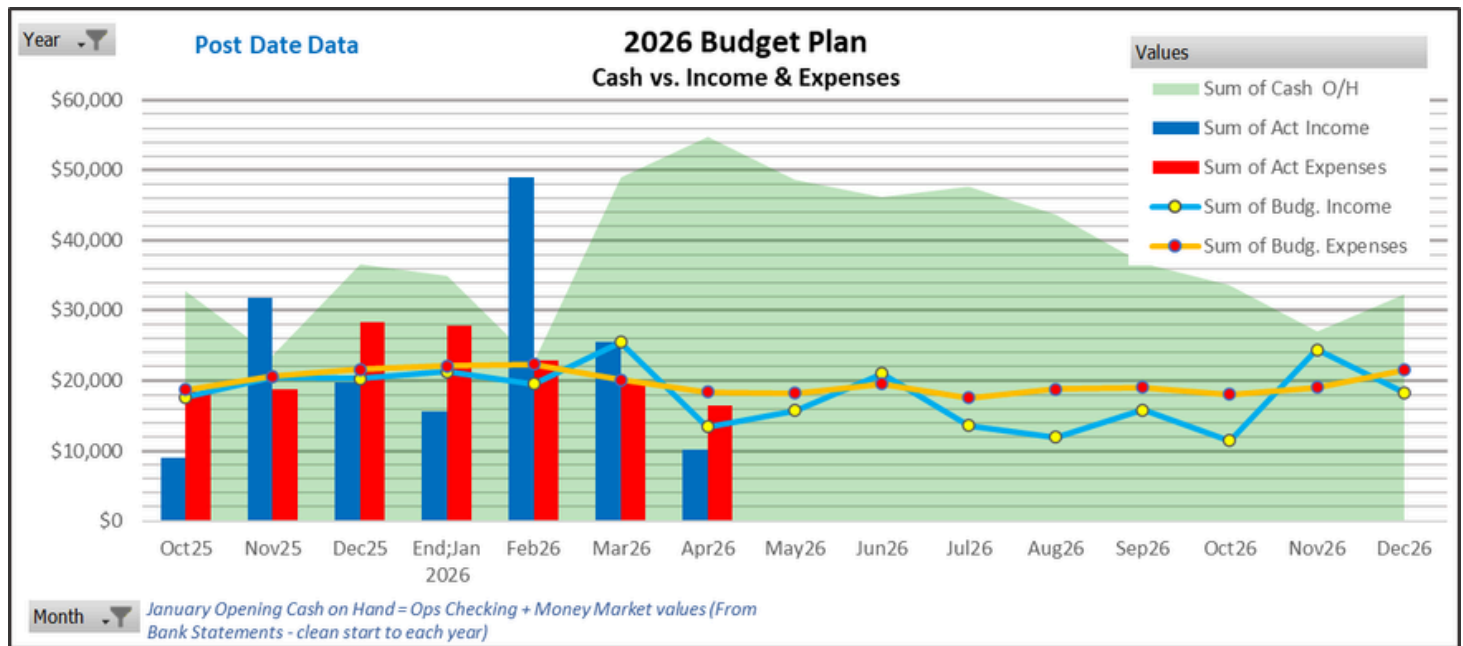
As you might recall, in 2025, it was my turn through the Annual conference to complete my Safe Gatherings training and background check. While going through the training,

I discovered that I am supposed to have another person go with me on visits so there are always two adults doing visits to provide a safe environment for all involved. With that in mind, and with guidance from our District Superintendent, I am creating a list of volunteers who are able to join me on visits to our homebound members. I break up the visits into two days a month. Ideally, we would have enough people signing up and being willing to join me so that the volunteers would go on visits two to three times a year and not have it be a large commitment on time. I have visits scheduled for **Thursdays** mostly on our calendar, but this is not set in stone, and I am flexible on days and times for visits.

I could work within your schedule. I currently have a few volunteers but am always looking for more.

# Treasurer's Corner

We pretty much have all the income in for April at this point, and the expenses should be fairly close as well (just a couple of payroll items are still outstanding).



## The key highlights:

- April income will end short of plan by just over \$3K. We currently have brought in \$10.2K vs. our plan of \$13.4K.
- Thankfully, expenses are tracking a bit lower than plan at \$16.4K vs. a plan of \$18.3K.
  - April apportionment obligations were fully met without requiring support from the Trustees.
- Our operational checking account has \$9.3K available as of 4/27 (afternoon, including pending activity).
- Our operational money market account has \$38.1K available as of 4/27.
  - I did need to move \$5K from MMkt to Ops checking earlier this month.
- Benevolent activity for April will again be a "slow" month for us, with only Food Pantry activity, mostly driven by the proceeds from the Youth pancake breakfast and some peanut butter purchases for the Backpack program.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding our operational financial status for the church.

Peace and love,

Steve Rarick, Treasurer  
(847) 830-9891 mobile

# UW FAITH NOTES

## Monthly Meeting Wednesday, May 6th

- 12:30 p.m. – Exec Committee
- 1 p.m.– Coffee & General Meeting

Hostess – Nancy R. & friends  
Program – Norma B.

**Quilters** will meet Tuesday mornings at 9:00. Everyone welcome!

**Mat Weaving** 10 a.m. – Noon  
Wednesdays, May 6th & 20th

**May Friendship Day – Friday, May 1st**  
Program and hosted by Church Women United, 1:30 p.m. at St. Ben's.

Thank you to everyone that helped in our April spring kitchen clean-up. It was a great success, many hands make light work! And more fun too!

**Rhubarb Sunday May 31st**  
during coffee Time  
UW Faith fundraiser – we'll have assorted rhubarb treats for sale. There will probably be pies, cookies, sauce, jam, cakes – and some treats for coffee too! Some of the money raised will go toward the quilting fund & TBD.

## FROM CERRISA IN THE FRONT OFFICE:

Thank you to the church for recognizing me with a beautiful bouquet of flowers for Administrative Professionals Day in April. The flowers were a delightful burst of sunshine & I appreciated them very much.

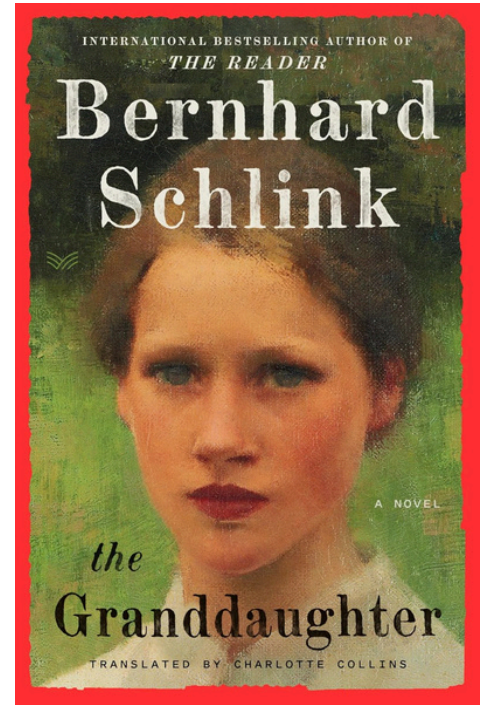
# FOOD PANTRY UPDATE



Please look on the office bulletin board and the basement bulletin board to see a copy of our latest Spring Newsletter. Ask Nancy Ruen if you have any questions about what is happening at the pantry or if you want to know how you can be more involved! Thanks for all of you for your continued support of our food-insecure neighbors

-Nancy





## BOOK CLUB

From Jane:

Our book club will be gathering on Thursday, May 21st at 1:30 pm at Sweet Young's home located at 807 Maple Avenue.

We will be discussing *The Granddaughter* by Schlink/Collins. If you would like to join the group please contact Jane Hardy at 563-382-5316 or email [jhardy3333@aol.com](mailto:jhardy3333@aol.com).

## *Birthdays*

- 1st:** Shawn Young
- 3rd:** Cheryl Craft
- 4th:** Samuel Johnson
- 4th:** Nancy Lerdall
- 7th:** Lori Rissman
- 13th:** Jim Eckblad
- 20th:** Nancy Ruen
- 25th:** Mary Brill
- 25th:** Gary Crawford
- 28th:** Stephen Luse
- 31st:** Kennedy Folkedahl



# Thank you to our May liturgists & coffee servers

*This Month's Flower Chair: Ann Duder*



## COFFEE SERVERS

**May 3rd:**

Sally & Don Stromseth

**May 10th:**

Rissman Family

**May 17th:**

Jane & Ken Vande Berg

**May 24th:**

Fairgrounds service at fairgrounds

**May 31st:**

UWF Rhubarb Sunday

## LITURGISTS

**May 3rd:**

Diane Rarick

**May 10th:**

Nancy Ruen

**May 17th:**

Syd Stephenson

**May 24th:**

Don Stromseth (if needed)

**May 31st:**

Mark Landas



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## **Church Women's United Friendship Day:**

Fri., May 1st, 1:30 p.m.

St. Benedict's Church Fellowship Hall

## **Presentation: History of Historic 1909 Hinner Pipe Organ**

Sun., May 3<sup>rd</sup>,  
1 p.m., with music at 3 p.m.

*Glenwood Lutheran Church,  
(1197 Old Stage Rd.)*

*See poster in front office area for more information*

## **Decorah Chorale 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Concert: Illuminate**

Sun., May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7 p.m.

*Decorah High School  
(Reception to follow)*

## **Outstanding Evening: Tenor & Bass Voices Sing**

Sun., May 10<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m.

Decorah Lutheran Church,  
Free-will donation benefits  
Decorah Food Pantry

*See poster near front office for more information*

## *DFUMC After Coffee Time Spring Speaker*

### **June 14th - Ken Vande Berg**

Topic: Habitat for Humanity

## **Plantapalooza**

Sat., May 16th

9 a.m. - 4 p.m. or sellout

*The Highlands  
(607 Highland Dr.)*

## **Pies & Purses!**

Sat., May 16th, 9 a.m. - noon

*Robey Memorial Library  
(401 First Ave NW, Waukon)*

## **Rhubarb Sunday**

Sun. May 31<sup>st</sup>, During Coffee

## **Annual Friendship Luncheon**

Wed., June 3rd at noon,

Program at 1 p.m.

*Please bring a salad or dessert to share and bring a friend also!*

**The Post-Service  
Braille  
Presentation**

with Michelle Amdahl has been rescheduled for **Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>** due to a previous weather-related service cancellation.

PAUCEK AND  
LAGE



2026

# youth pancake breakfast





**JOIN US**

# Annual Friendship Luncheon

**Wednesday, June 3rd** at noon  
Program at 1 p.m.



## **PRESENTATION:**

Lindsey Row-Heyveld will share a program about the ***“Flowers of Phelps”***.

Several friends saw her presentation last year & recommended it for us.

It includes a slide show of Phelps Cemetery unique monuments. Lindsey is excited to share with our group!

