

Tower Notes

April 2020

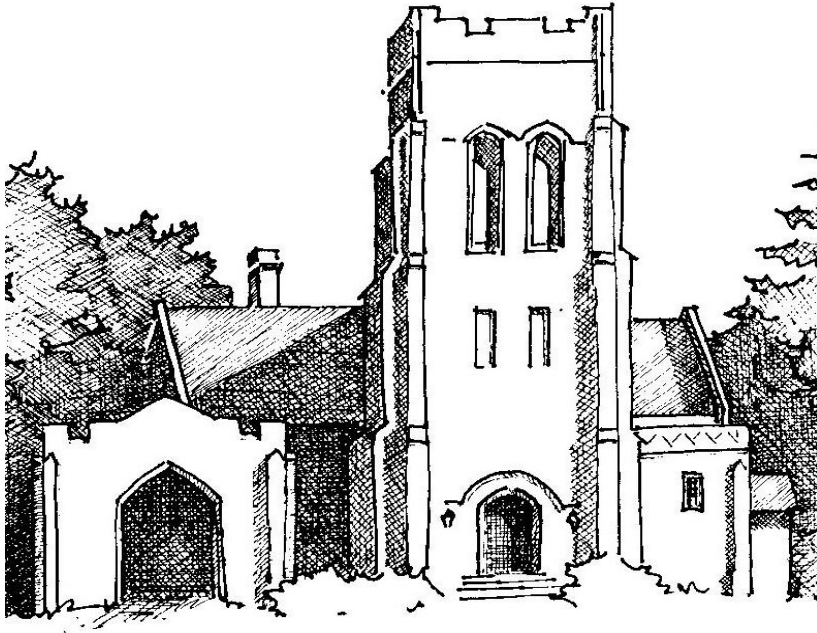
**United Protestant Church
(UCC)**

in Morgan Park
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Pastor

Rev. Paul VanAntwerp
218-349-0143
pastor@unitedprotestantchurch.org



**Worship Schedule: Sunday at 10:30 AM
YOU ARE INVITED TO WORSHIP WITH US EVERY WEEK**

**Formal Worship Services are cancelled
until further notice.**

Pastor Paul is posting weekly sermons on YouTube.

**Sermons are also available by email,
or, if you would like a copy mailed to you
please contact the church office**

218-626-2570

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Pastor's Commentary

Recently, I had a good conversation with a friend about "delight" in life. It's a word we don't often use anymore - a word that feels soft and pithy, perhaps, but a word that, as I think about it in the context of this time and space we live in, can truly save us.

I was walking with my daughter, now seven years old. She's crouched down on the edge of the trail staring at a patch of moss in the sun. "It looks like palm trees," she says, and it did. It reminded me of flying over the islands in Indonesia, enroute to visit missionary friends in East Timor. What an amazing experience.

...But do I remember delight? Not really. At that time of my life and the busy day-to-day, and discontent with my employment and the gradual decline of my marriage, I had set delight firmly on the beach while I played the game with rigor and structure. I had goals, back then, and the only way I knew to achieve them was to work hard with a growling determination. "Whatever it takes!" "By hook or by crook!" "Give it everything you got!"

For what? Those goals seem so foolish now. More to the point, those goals seem fake. What success is there if I am not at peace, and happy with my life?

I think of the shared story of this season...from Palm Sunday to Good Friday to Easter. I'm fond of saying that to truly appreciate the (ok, I'll say it) "delight" of Resurrection, we need first to have walked through the dark shadows of Good Friday. Pastor Liz from Our Savior's (West Duluth) put it well in a recent commentary: "we don't skip from triumph on Palm Sunday to triumph on Easter Sunday. There are long frightening days between."

So I'll say it: go ahead and be nervous about where all of this is going, be anxious about the safety of yourself and your loved ones, and go ahead and name and claim the grumbling low-down feeling of self-isolation and social distancing. It stinks to second-guess all of our freewheeling freedoms. It stinks to not cluster and chat in our everyday causal fellowship. It stinks to have Holy Week over screens and telephones.

But I'm fairly certain that all of this is going to last for a good while, so eventually we'll learn that all those fears and anxieties and cabin-fever grumbles aren't going to guide us toward the people we want to be...the people God wants us to be.

That's where delight comes in. My daughter, in that moment, crouched in the woods over a patch of moss, was full of delight. All of the knowledge and industry and worry or fret that I have will never produce any product even remotely as holy and wonderful as that moment of delight in my daughter. Can we come to God that way?

We are in the "long frightening days between" right now, but when our skies clear and our uncertainty settles, let's remember that Easter is not intellectual activity, not a theory to posit or an ideology to justify. Nor is Easter a routine holiday of habit where we go through the motions as we have all years before. Easter is the source, the well-spring of all that we are. Resurrection is not a theological exercise...it is a way of life. All the hard work or worry in the world cannot help us reach that destination. We need only let God fill our souls with delight.

Keep in touch,
Pastor Paul

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## Message from the Moderator

Hello to All,

This has been a pretty weird time and I'm sure it won't get better for a while. No social contact is very hard for me, but my kids are quite determined that I stay at home. I'm sure it's not any easier for the rest of you either.

I hope that all of you have had the chance to watch Pastor Paul's sermons on YouTube. The first one was a little rough to watch but the problems have been taken care of and this past week's was very good. I'm so happy that we're able to bring church into our homes. Also, don't forget that just because we can't be at church and give our plate offering, our offerings are still needed. Our bills don't stop so please remember to send the money in or, as I'm doing, drop your envelope in the mail box by the church's back door. It's secure and can't be opened except by key.

We will not be having Council during the month of April, but if anything urgent comes up, please let me know. It also looks like the spaghetti dinner, set for the end of April, will have to be postponed. I've just heard that the President had extended the stay at home order into the end of April.

Stay safe, folks, and stay at home.  
Karen Robnik, Moderator

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Messages

John & Doris Toman: *Doing fine. Hello to everyone.*

Doris Mattson: *My best wishes to all of you. Keep the faith and carry on.*

Sheldean Ion: *Hello from Ions. Miss you all and hope you are well. We started out on a car trip to Arizona and turned at the Iowa border. We belong here in our own home at this crazy time.....Everyone stay safe and healthy.*

Zach Geissler: *Everything is going well on my end. I'm praying that everything is going well on your end!*

Dick & Sue Linde: *Miss you! Stay safe, and get out for a walk! Dick says "one more week before he goes crazy."*

Fastlands: *We are doing ok. Mike has been busy collecting and boiling sap....Elle is here with us and Lydia is still in Cities....Who would have thought we would be in such unprecedented times?*

AROUND UPC

Remember in Prayer: Joys and Concerns

*Cathy Dale & family - Cathy's sister-in-law Kathy was hit by a vehicle and killed while walking with her husband Tom (Cathy's brother).

*Remember those who are unable to be with us.

*If you would like prayer for yourself, family or friends, you may contact Sue Linde, 626-1272, and she will begin the prayer chain.

Thank You

**Thank you to members and friends for your generous donations during this time of great uncertainty.

**UCC Cornerstone Fund (our mortgage carrier) has offered a 60-day payment deferment on all loans, beginning automatically April 1, 2020.

Bakeless Bake Sale

Women's Fellowship is collecting donations for the Bakeless Bake Sale. Donations are used for such things as the church fuel fund, Union Gospel Mission, CHUM, Salvation Army, Bethany Crisis Shelter. Collection will continue to June 1. Make checks payable to Women's Fellowship and return to Char Marich or Doris Toman, or simply drop your envelope in the collection plate. Your support is appreciated.

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Easter Memorials 2020-change of plans

Due to the current challenges with the coronavirus, we will not be decorating our Easter Cross with memorial Easter Lilies or sharing line memorials in the bulletin. Marna is proposing that we use the money already collected to plant the small garden just outside the front doors of the church. We can plan to do this in May or June or whenever the public health officials deem it safe for us to gather. We will list the memorials in the Sunday bulletin and have a small sign by the garden. If you have already given Marna money for Easter memorials, please let her know if she can use those funds for a memorial garden (call her at 384-9872 or email at mnmfast@gmail.com). If anyone else would like to donate towards the memorial garden, there is now time, just let Marna know. While in the past we asked for \$5 for a line only memorial and \$ 10 for a plant memorial, at this time any amount of money that you can donate will be accepted for the flowers for the memorial garden. Somehow we will make it work! Call Marna if you have any questions. Thanks and stay extra healthy until we gather again at UP!

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APRIL FOOLS

I played a little prank on the Morgan Park Facebook Community this April Fools Day. I used a computer program that showed what the church would look like if it was painted bright pink. It's impossible to share that picture with you here in black & white, but here's what I wrote beneath the photo to further the ruse (note: a reminder that all of this was written in jest).

Great news! The grant was accepted! We'll begin priming as soon as the frost ends! (Thank you for all your hard work.)

For those unfamiliar with our painting grant, studies show that bright, pastel colors are conducive to a welcoming, invitational atmosphere, and that pastel pinks prompt a balance of empathy

and personal strength (one only need refer to the resurgent popularity of "The Golden Girls" to appreciate the influence of pastel colors on the psyche).

It is also biblically supported: In his second letter to the church in Galatia (2nd Galatians 1:23) Paul writes: "I thank the disciples for their witness unto you, for by grace they have altered the hues of the church from mortar and stone unto softer tones..." Celebrating our new "look," Pastor Paul

Of course, this was all nonsense (and duly noted, there is no second book of Galatians), but the responses from the community were quite interesting. See, for many, my joke was successful. A number of people - many of whom I had never met - had very strong opinions about our church's external appearance. This made me wonder: do most of them have any idea what happens inside? Do they know what other benefits we provide for this community? Do they know what we are gradually becoming as we grow? Or are we just "that neat-looking church on the edge of town"? For all of this, I thought to add these closing comments:

Well that was fun! (Or I'm sick and twisted). But seriously, it makes me think about how many churches have become little more than architectural curio around towns...or bygone relics. I look toward the examples of where they've become community centers and relevant cultural institutions...Places of feeding and nurture and art and music, places for community meetings and small group connection. These buildings are, and should be, places of peace and sanctuary, yes, but also of community and creativity and connection... (you know...something more than enlarged lawn ornaments for neighborhood curb appeal.) The walls are quiet now, in this time of isolation, but how many times in, say, this past year, that place has been bustling with laughter, shared meals, song! (...all forms of worship and grace). Here's hoping that when we can get back to gathering, we continue to thrive, and like every soulful place, and every soul, we matter so much more than external appearance. A church with its doors locked is like a car without wheels...just doesn't work!




Friends, all of this (although a bit silly) is a good reminder of all the great things that we have been doing. Our worship has been full of spirit. Our choir sings with a smile. Our fellowship resounds with kindness and laughter. We've shared wonderful meals on Wednesdays and we've gathered in friendship to bake cookies and doughnuts. We've made significant strides in organizing and preserving our historical documents. We've opened our building for those in need of a place to share, heal and grow. And while the "walk-in's" have certainly stopped during this time, the phone calls from strangers continue, reaching out for a hand, or an interest in who we are and what we do. Let's also add, to the above list, our larger events and celebrations, which we will certainly reschedule! We are, indeed, more than an "enlarged lawn ornament" or a "bygone relic" for this neighborhood. We are growing in spirit and ministry.

Sure, the present situation of isolation and social distancing will slow us down, for indeed the greatest grace of our church is the gathering of people together in His name, but we'll be back with renewed energy and spirit, eager to connect and create and share our stories and pray and sing and love together. Hang in there, friends!

Pastor Paul

UNITED PROTESTANT CHURCH

April 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Office 10-2	2	3 Office 10-2	4
5 Palm Sunday 	6	7	8 Office 10-2	9 Maundy Thursday	10 Office 10-2 Good Friday	11 
12 Easter 	13	14	15 Office 10-2	16	17 Office 10-2	18
19	20	21	22 Office 10-2	23	24 Office 10-2	25 Ruby's Pantry 11:00 am
26	27	28	29 Office 10-2	30	May 1 Office 10-2	2
3	4	5	6 Office 10-2	7	8 Office 10-2	9
10 Mother's Day	11	12	13 Office 10-2	14	15 Office 10-2	16

ALL MEETINGS, GATHERINGS & EVENTS ARE SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Coming Up in April

- April 1 *Women's Fellowship, 1:30 pm, Fellowship Hall
- April 5 *Palm Sunday
- *Communion, Fuel Fund, Food Shelf
- April 9 *Maundy Thursday Gathering, 6 pm
- April 10 *Good Friday
- April 12 *Easter - breakfast 9:00 am, Fellowship Hall
- April 14 *Council Meeting 7:00 pm, Trustees & Diaconate 6:00 pm
- April 19 *Second Offering - Fuel Fund
- April 25 *Ruby's Pantry at Mission Creek Church, 11 am-12:30 pm
- April 26 *Olive Garden Spaghetti Dinner, 12 Noon

Looking Ahead to May

- May 3 *Communion, Fuel Fund, Food Shelf
- May 6 *Women's Fellowship, 1:30 pm, Fellowship Hall
- May 10 *Mother's Day
- May 12 *Council Meeting, 7:00 pm, Trustees & Diaconate 6:00 pm
- May 17 *Second Offering - Fuel Fund
- May 23 *Ruby's Pantry at Mission Creek Church, 11 am-12:30 pm
- May 31 *Morgan Park Walk/Run, 4:30 pm

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**Monday, 6:00 pm: Bible Study** Join Pastor Paul for a first look at the Lectionary texts for the following Sunday. This is a time for questions and conversation in our lives of faith - and your participation greatly assists in creating a meaningful sermon on Sunday.

**Wednesday (2nd & 4th) 6:00 pm: Choir Practice** Choir performs the following Sunday. Everyone who likes to sing is welcome to join in. Let Karen Robnik or Pastor Paul know if you have a favorite piece of music you would like to hear.

**Wednesday, 5-7 pm: Grill's On!** Bring something for the grill or a side dish, a friend or neighbor, and enjoy the fellowship.

**Weekly Email Update** Each Friday, UP Church sends out a church-wide email including reminders of upcoming events and a note from Pastor Paul. Interested in receiving this? Send a note to the office. Also, paper copies of the updates available on Sunday mornings in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall.

Church Contact List: Let us know if you have a new home address, phone number or email address, so we have up-to-date information for the directory. Also, if you have any additions,



## April Birthdays

- |                      |                  |                    |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 5 Kari Rengo         | 3 Russ Francisco | 10 Jim Blevins     |
| 12 Charlotte Caywood | 16 Jennifer Lowe | 22 Karter Rengo    |
| 23 Abbie Huberty     | 25 Larry Moline  | 26 Claudia Nickila |
| 29 Elle Fasteland    |                  |                    |

## April Anniversaries

None

Learn more at [facebook.com/unitedprotestantchurch](https://facebook.com/unitedprotestantchurch)

## **United Protestant Church UCC**

830 88th Avenue W.  
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### ***United Protestant Church Vision Statement***

*The United Protestant Church aspires to be a vibrant Christian congregation that is sustainable and welcoming to all, putting its faith into practice through its outreach activities. The church strives to be the center of the community's mind, body and spirit through its ministries and the programs it offers.*

*April 2020*

*100 Years  
1917 - 2017*

*In stressful times, seek God.  
In painful times, praise God.  
In terrible times, trust God.  
And at all times.....thank God.*

Ann Voskamp, writer

