

January 2024

Volume 58 Number 1

# THE SHINING LIGHT



*The Voice of the Congregation*

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC  
*of Grand Marais*

# First Congregational United Church of Christ

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Moderator: Tom Yuhasey    Treasurer: Kevin LeVair  
Board Members: Stephen Aldrich, Francie Beaster,  
Jenny Delfs, Bruce Tyler, Carol Winter



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## Mission Statement



First Congregational United Church of Christ is an open, inclusive church that exists to worship God and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. We welcome all people of goodwill who seek to share the love of God and honor the diversity of creation in a spirit of tolerance and flexibility. As a Just Peace Church, we invite all who seek the reign of God to join us in reaching out in healing ministry, working for justice, witnessing for peace and striving to overcome all forms of oppression. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Communion.

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*Contributions to the newsletter are encouraged! Please submit writing of no more than 500 words, poetry, or artwork to the office. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity.*

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## Prayer of the Month

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Creator, I Love You.  
Christ, I Love You.  
Holy Spirit, I Love You.  
Amen

## Worship in January

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**January 7th, [1st Sunday after Epiphany.](#)** Jesus is beginning his ministry and word is quickly spreading about his teachings and his healings. In today's story, we have a group of people who literally go above and beyond what is expected to bring their friend to Jesus so that he can walk again. Jesus also takes it up a notch and proclaims this man forgiven, to which the religious leaders respond that it is not possible.

**January 14th, [2nd Sunday after Epiphany.](#)** This is the first parable that Jesus tells in the Gospels and his ministry. It's a story about planting seeds and, depending on the soil/hearer/person/community, how they flourish or die. How many seeds are we sowing, and in what kind of soil is our church to grow the seeds of love?



**January 19th, [Friday night service.](#)** Many of our younger families, and others, have talked about how Sunday is the only day for them to relax, especially when they live far from Grand Marais. We will be trying a supper and worship on this evening starting at 5:30 pm. More details will be forthcoming.

**January 21st, [3rd Sunday after Epiphany.](#)** Jesus in his travels goes across the Sea of Galilee to preach and heal to the Gentile (non-Jewish) people. He finds a man possessed, who is shackled and kept away from everybody else. He returns this man to himself healthy and whole. The people who are used to blaming him for all that is wrong, now have a hard time accepting that he can change.

**January 28th, [4th Sunday after Epiphany.](#)** This is a story of healing that involves a woman who has been ill for 12 years, and a young girl who is 12 years old who is at the point of death. The story also is about how the world then dealt with illness and death.





## *A Moderator Message*

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So it's a new year - but I don't feel all that new. Just look at what last year did to me, I've aged a bit. It seems to get more pronounced around Christmas.

I hope last year wasn't too hard on you and yours and you were able to revitalize yourselves during the holiday season by being with the ones you love.

We went down to the Cities to be with our boys. Jodi had our house decorated with more lights and ornaments than ever. We were content, but neither of the kids would have been able to make the trip up here to enjoy it with us.

So off we went, and I'm sure you know exactly what I'm talking about, you piece together what's left of you and hit the road for a chance to gather together at this special time and make some new memories.

Now in January we begin to filter back to the far North, thankful for the journey we were on and filled with experiences we shared along the way. There may be some feelings of guilt as your heart tells you there were other places



-by yours truly

and faces you should have connected with also, but you did the best you could.

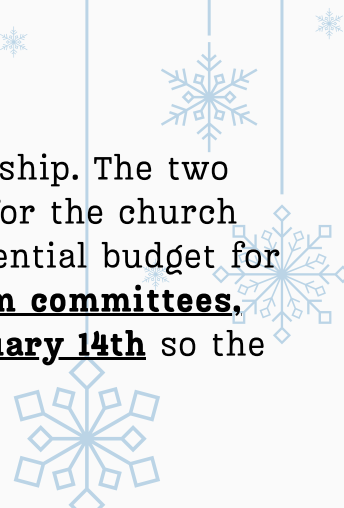
As we meet for worship this month I ask you all to spend a moment wondering of the journeys your fellow worshipers have been on. They are a marvelous bunch and though somewhat weary from their travels, if you were to ask about it, they probably will be glad to share a story or two.

In the end it is a wonderful way to learn something new about that person you see waving their peace sign at you during the service. - tom

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## WINTER ANNUAL MEETING

The Winter Meeting is set on January 28th to begin after worship. The two big pieces of business will be approving the budget for 2024 for the church and creating a capital campaign committee to explore our potential budget for building improvements for the next 50 years. **All reports from committees, leaders, and any groups should be sent to the office on January 14th** so the report can be handed out on the 21st for everyone to read.



# Pastor's Column

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Declaring one group good, means another group is bad. If there is one good religion, it means another (or all other) groups are bad. One good nation means there are bad nations. This division and black & white

scenario has been in our world for a long, long time, going back to the mythical Cain and Able.

This scenario is playing out in our country today, with the identity politics that the actions of one leader isn't as important as what they are accusing the other side of doing. A former President with 91 felony charges is accusing the current President of being a threat to the democracy of this country.

This is being played out on the international scene, between Israel and Palestine, that has given Israel's 'right to defend itself' a blank check to do whatever they want to whomever they want. In some of our states, there are laws against boycotting Israeli products or protesting Israeli government policies, which could mean you lose grants, funding, or healthcare for speaking your mind.

This is not "Biblical" as some want to tout. God, when dealing with the Hebrew people and the Kings of Israel, clearly said over and over again, if you follow in the covenant and carry out the statutes, which are based upon loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then you will have God's blessing. If you harm each other, steal from each other, bear false witness against each other, and do not carry out justice for the poor, the widow, and the orphan, you will also reject God. (paraphrasing the prophets)

We cannot love God and our neighbor and be complicit or silent when there is justice denied for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the stranger, not even when it is happening to our

enemy (whomever and however we want to define "them").

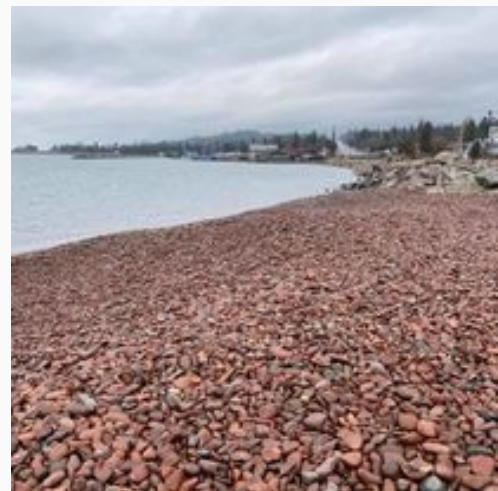
We must shed light and bring resistance to the anti-democratic forces in our country. We must continue to shine a light on the UN-declared war crimes happening in Palestine with calls for an immediate cease-fire and a just peace settlement that allows the state of Palestine and Palestinians to have land, freedom, and a secured future and Israel as well.

In this New Year, we can set a course for a better future for all, not just the powerful.

Peace

*Pastor Erna*

Harbor watch, Fridays at  
8 am  
at Java Moose



*Whether is it still, waving, or bashing the shore; whether the weather is sunny, cloudy, or snowy; whether it is ice cold, covered with ice, or a warm 62; it is still the harbor. Whether you are doing well, ok, or failing, you are still a child, a beloved child of God.*

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## A Message from the Stewardship Committee

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Oh my goodness, How time has flown.  
Our Stewardship campaign for this year is coming to an end



While wishing you a happy 2024 we want to let you know it is not too late to make a pledge for this year.

For those wishing to support the church last minute giving is not discouraged.

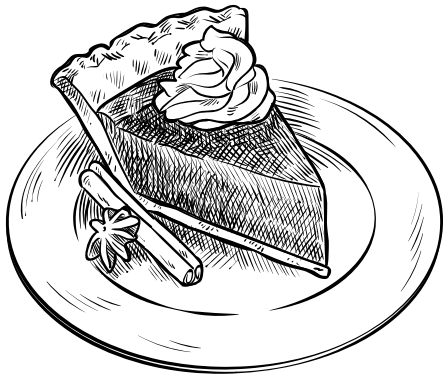


The First Congregational United Church welcomes your giving and is thankful for it.

Your Stewardship Committee







*By popular demand!*

**Bruce's  
Pumpkin Pie Filling  
Recipe**

*As featured at  
this Year's  
Thanksgiving  
Meal!*

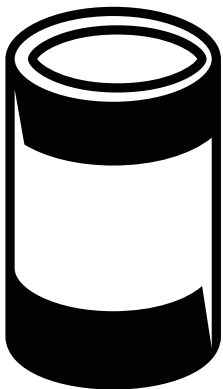
**The Carnation Pumpkin Pie Recipe for 1 9-inch pie.**

(Makes about 1 qt filling.)

- 1-15 oz can solid pack pumpkin
- $\frac{3}{4}$  c. light brown sugar, packed (sub dark brown sugar, for richer flavor)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon, ground
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. ginger, ground
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cloves, ground
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. nutmeg, ground
  
- 1-12 oz can evaporated milk
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Empty pumpkin into large mixing bowl. Add sugar, salt and spices. Mix well until there are no lumps.
3. Slowly mix in evaporated milk.
4. Beat eggs lightly in a separate. Bowl; stir into pumpkin mixture. Pour into pie shell.
5. Bake for 15 minutes at 425°.
6. Reduce heat to 350 deg. Continue baking for about 40 minutes, until filling is slightly puffed or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.
7. To prevent cracking, pros avoid the knife test and bake until filling still quivers slightly in center when gently shaken. Filling will continue to cook and set as pie cools.

*Fits on a 3 x 5 inch recipe card*



**Food Shelf**  
Mondays 3-5 PM  
&  
the First Wednesday  
of the Month  
3:00- 5:00 PM  
Downstairs

**Tai Chi - Thursdays at 10 am**

Join us at the church on  
Thursday mornings,  
10:00 am, to practice  
Tai Chi.





## Damascus Project Receives \$500,000 Grant

December 6, 2023



### Who will lead us? And where are we going?

Those questions aren't new to our congregations, though the pandemic made the answers even more elusive as churches changed course on the fly. New circumstances demanded that leaders tap veins of creativity, flexibility and inspiration that even they didn't know they had.

Fortunately, we confronted these questions with a great resource: the Damascus Project, which builds the leadership capacity of lay people and pastors through online education. The project is the collaborative educational ministry of the UCC's Minnesota and Wisconsin Conferences.

Now, the Damascus Project is poised to take a giant step forward, thanks to a \$500,000 grant from Lilly Endowment through its Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the national initiative is to encourage the flourishing of congregations by helping them deepen their relationships with God, enhance their connections with each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world.

Over a five-year period, the UCC's Minnesota and Wisconsin Conferences will support the development of two Damascus learning tracks: Thriving Congregations and Living Faith.

"We received this news just days before Thanksgiving, so the week was filled with extra gratitude for the generosity of Lilly Endowment, and the opportunity to expand the reach of the Damascus Project," said the Rev. Dr. Stephanie Perdew, director of the Damascus Project and author of the grant proposal. "We will be happily busy in 2024 as we create new courses, and invite laity, clergy, and young people to learn with us toward the thriving of their congregations and our witness in the world."

Thriving Congregations courses will be geared toward lay leaders and clergy who can learn together about good congregational governance, healthy communication, and community missional assessment. The Living Faith learning track will offer a two-year online Confirmation curriculum that draws young people from small congregations into sizable learning cohorts.

"I couldn't be more excited about this extraordinary grant," said the Rev. Shari Prestemon, Minnesota Conference Minister. "I've always believed the Damascus Project is key to equipping a healthy and vibrant future for congregations and individual members in our two Conferences, and this grant offers an amazing opportunity to realize its full potential. It's incredible news!"

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DAMASCUS PROJECT](#)



# Christmas Fund: A 'nest egg for future generations' of UCC leaders

by [Maic D'Agostino](#) | published on Dec 19, 2023



For more than a century, annual donations to the [Christmas Fund](#) have supported United Church of Christ clergy and lay employees.

Advocates of the fund are asking for gifts to help that continue for another 100 years.

“Most Americans live paycheck to paycheck; UCC clergy and lay staff are no exception,” said the Rev. Paul Ramsey, philanthropy officer for the [Pension Boards](#), which manages the Christmas Fund. “Those who donate are providing a nest egg for future generations to support those who have answered the call.”

## ‘Love requires deeds’

In 2022, more than \$2 million in Christmas Fund grants were distributed through “thank you” gifts, pension and health supplements, ministerial assistance, emergency grants and more — much of it supporting lower-income retirees.

In 2022, more than \$1 million were distributed to support UCC pensions — along with another \$1 million more in gifts, grants and supplements — thanks to generous donations to the Christmas Fund.

In a [video appeal](#), the Rev. John Henry Scott III read through letters of gratitude from recipients of Christmas Fund gifts and asked for continued support for those in need.

“Now it’s time for you — that’s right, you — to bring the abundant life, the fullness of Christ, through your generous donations, through your generous gifts,” said Scott, who is the founding pastor of Jesus Stands for Love and Justice Ministries, Inc., and a member of [Dunbar UCC in Hamden, Conn.](#) “As the Gospel proclaims through Christ’s fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.”

Recalling words from his father, Scott reflected on the example of love in action that comes through generous donations to the Christmas Fund.

“My late dad, he was a pastor, an educator, an army chaplain. He was fond of saying, ‘Love without works is dead. Love requires deeds,’” Scott said. “How true.”

## Justice and equity

Besides its significant support for retired pastors, the Christmas Fund gifts can also help balance out disparities in compensation that unfortunately still persist among underrepresented groups.

Ramsey noted that a higher percentage of clergy of color, queer clergy and women clergy often need extra support because of having lower salaries on average. “I believe it is a justice and equity issue,” he said.

Learn more and donate [here](#).

**'Commemorating' Christmas  
Amid Crisis in Gaza: UCC General  
Minister & President Shares  
Message**

“In this season of Advent, of hope and preparation, we recognize that not all is well in the world. There is war and strife among us.”

—Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson

Watch Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson’s Video Message: [HERE](#)

While many around the world prepare to celebrate Christmas, the United Church of Christ's General Minister and President is reminding the church that some do not have that luxury this year — particularly those in Gaza, Palestine.

Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, along her leadership counterparts with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Canada — the Rev. Terri Hord Owens and the Rev. Carmen Lansdowne, respectively — signed a letter delivered Dec. 18 to President Biden, urging the U.S. government to “show moral courage” and help bring an immediate end to the crisis.

As violence in Gaza continues, despite increasing calls for a ceasefire, Thompson explained that the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have asked their churches to forego any “unnecessary festive activities” during the holidays.

“Churches in the Middle East will commemorate — not celebrate — Christmas this year,” she said.

In solidarity, Thompson is asking those within and across the UCC to remember the plight of the people of Gaza as they tell the story of Christmas once again.

“As we approach the manger and Christmas this year, let us remember our Palestinian siblings and all who live with war and violence, and consider how we welcome the prince of Peace into our homes and hearts with hope and anticipation,” Thompson said. “And remember the humble and harsh circumstances into which Jesus was born.”

***Board Minutes - Dec. 12, 2023***

Present: Pastor Enno Limvere, Tom Yuhasey, Kevin LeVoir, Francie Beaster, Bruce Tyler, Steve Aldrich, Carol, Winter

Unable to attend: Jen Delfs

**AGENDA -WE BEGIN TOGETHER**

I. Call to Order at 5:07 by TY

II. Who is taking the minutes this month? CW

III. Mission Statement reading volunteer: TY

IV. Joys and Concerns were shared

V. Question Pastor Enno: A favorite Christmas memory

VI. Communication agreement volunteer: TY

- LISTEN generously

- SPEAK respectfully

- CELEBRATE each other’s gifts and perspectives

- CHOOSE the good of the whole church

- STRIVE to be optimistic and hopeful

**WE ATTEND TO IMMEDIATE AND URGENT BUSINESS/HOUSEKEEPING**

VII. Acknowledgement of November minutes being approved. This was done on line previously.

VIII. Proposed December agenda review, additions, and approval: the agenda as amended by TY was approved unanimously. Motion by CW, second KL.

IX. Financial Report presented by KL. Highlights include: There was a \$4600 deficit in November with spending outpacing income. \$1254 was given for Thanksgiving meal. Expenses for the meal were \$868. Approximately \$500 will be kept in reserve as seed money for next year. Extra can be donated for food for those in need. Report was accepted unanimously. Motion by BT, second by SA.

**2024 Proposed Budget Discussion**

Proposed budget for 2024 was presented by KL. It is a balanced budget, but some areas are largely unknowns, such as what performance of the endowment will be. There will be a listening session for interested parties prior to the January congregational meeting. An information board will be created to update congregation on progress of stewardship drive.

X. Newsletter articles due December 30th - Tom will write for January. Thank you, Tom!

XI. Date for January board meeting will be 1/16/24. Moved by SA, second by FB. Annual congregational meeting will be 1/28/24. Committee reports will be due by 1/14/24.

# Board Minutes, cont'd

## WE ATTEND TO OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

### XII. Pastor Report. Highlights include:

- Childcare is set to open in January.
- Christmas events are up on posters and include the pageant, Blue Christmas service, caroling and evening service 12/24.
- Pastor Enno is contemplating the addition of an occasional evening service.
- Recent ministerial association meeting had eight pastors present. They heard a presentation from school superintendent about the meals program and about truancy.
- Work is being done on gathering resources for publicity into one area.
- Cookie sale as a fundraiser for PASJ 12/17 after services.
- Time & talent forms will go out after annual meeting.
- Still looking for a custodian and financial secretary.

XIII. (a) Mutual Ministry Goals- looking for next endeavor; (b) Community Building – Thanksgiving Dinner overview, what’s next? We already have a significant supply of gift cards to grocery stores. It was suggested that at least \$400 go to school social worker now.

(c) Outreach/Fellowship- Sunday announcements & News of the Community Schedule 12/17 Bruce, 12/24 not needed, 12/31 Jenny (if available), 1/7 Carol, 1/14 Steve

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### XIV Church Life brief reports/updates

- Pastoral Relations
- Finance Committee – weekly updates to congregation re actual/ budget
- Stewardship Committee – Pledge Drive additional mailings completed. Looking forward- do we have suggestions where to go from here? Follow-up letter to previous pledgers we’ve not yet heard from is in the works.
- Children and Youth life/faith formation – Sunday School-on hold
- Memorial Committee -
- Building and Grounds Team – Plumbing and heating situation under control at present. Many thanks to Jeff Kern. Bruce exploring future solar panel possibilities
- Outreach – WOW, collaborations with

Arrowhead Indivisible, Climate meeting, Food Shelf-

Rooted and Rising –

- Worship Committee – meeting monthly –
- Standing Grievance Committee: Delfs, Mattice, Bennett – have not been needed
- Food Team

The meeting was closed in due form at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Winter

## Treasurer's Report

The November 2023 (latest fully available information) Financial Report shows a total income of \$10,299.32 and expenses of \$14,937.39 (See Detail Below). This means the Church’s income was less than its expenses by \$4,638.07.

Income for November 2023	
Pledged Donations	\$ 6,682.89
Non-Pledged Donations	\$ 575.00
Loose Plate Offering	\$ 260.11
Building Use	\$ 270.00
Income from Outside Sources	\$ -
Architect Fund	\$ 2,400.00
	\$ -
Memorial Donations	\$ 110.00
Interest Income	\$ 1.32
	\$10,299.32
Expenses for November 2023	
Pastor	\$ 9,721.02
Staff	\$ 1,953.04
Business	\$ 1,129.94
Worship	\$ 300.00
Education	\$ -
Building and Grounds	\$ 1,312.86
Parsonage	\$ 235.63
Thanksgiving Dinner	\$ 62.77
Loan Principle	\$ 222.13
	\$14,937.39
Difference	\$ (4,638.07)

The full report is available in the Church office.

-Kevin LeVoir





First Congregational  
United Church of Christ

JANUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	01 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf Pastor Enno's Day Off	02 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	03 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 6:00 PM - Confirmation	04 10:00 AM - Tai Chi 11:00 AM - Building and Grounds Committee 12:00 AM - Women's AA 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	05 7:00 AM - AA 8:00 AM - Harbor Watch 9:00 AM - Pride Lessons 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano 7:30 PM - AA	06 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM - 7th Day Adventist 10:00 AM -2:00 PM - Piano Lessons
07	08 11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qigong 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf Pastor Enno's Day Off	09 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	10 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 5:30 PM - Pizza and Social Justice	11 10:00 AM - Tai Chi 12:00 AM - Women's AA 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 5:00 -7:00 pm - Care Partner Board Meeting	12 7:00 AM - AA 8:00 AM - Harbor Watch 9:00 AM - Pride Lessons 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano 7:30 PM - AA	13 10:00 AM -2:00 PM - Piano Lessons
14	15 11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qigong 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf Pastor Enno's Day Off	16 12:00 pm - clergy cluster 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 5:00 PM - Board of directors	17 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 5:00 PM - Worship Committee 6:00 PM - Confirmation	18 10:00 AM - Tai Chi 12:00 AM - Women's AA 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	19 7:00 AM - AA 8:00 AM - Harbor Watch 9:00 AM - Pride Lessons 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano 7:30 PM - AA	20 10:00 AM -2:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 10:00 PM AA
21	22 11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qigong 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf Pastor Enno's Day Off	23 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	24 1:00-4:00 PM - DFL Lessons 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 6:00 PM - Confirmation	25 10:00 AM - Tai Chi 12:00 AM - Women's AA 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 5:00 PM - Library Board of trustees	26 7:00 AM - AA 8:00 AM - Harbor Watch 9:00 AM - Pride Lessons 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano 7:30 PM - AA	27 10:00 AM -2:00 PM - Piano Lessons
28	29 11:00 AM - Spring Forest Qigong 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Food Shelf Pastor Enno's Day Off	30 2:00 - 6:00 PM - Piano Lessons	31 2:00-6:00 PM - Piano Lessons 6:00 PM - Confirmation	01	02	03