

United in Faith Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

July

| 2026

| www.unitedinfaith.org

A Word from Pastor Sharei

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all finding ways to beat the heat! Whether you are hunting for the absolute best shade tree in town or hiding out in the glorious air conditioning, I pray you are finding some genuine moments of rest during these long, sun-drenched days.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of this country, our calendars naturally point us toward backyard barbecues. But it's also a really good time for some deeper reflection. Honest love for our country means acknowledging the full scope of American history—the parts that make us proud, as well as the parts that make us squirm a little. Loving our neighbors requires us to hold space for those complexities, honor the hard truths, and keep working together to build a more just future for everyone.

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Speaking of caring for our neighbors, I need to send a massive thank you to everyone who sent well wishes or encouraged me to cancel a meeting while I was recently under the weather. I stubbornly tried to "power through" it at first. Let's just say God has a funny way of reminding us that we aren't invincible, and that sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is slow down and actually let people care for us! Please keep those in our community who are currently unwell or having a tough season in your daily prayers.

We also have some exciting news from our recent Synod Assembly with the election of our new bishop, Bishop-elect Erik Christensen. What struck me most, though, was that no matter which of the top three candidates had been elected, history would have been made. Our synod is genuinely ready to imagine leadership differently and that was a moment of joy for me.

At the same time, I lament that we are still having these kinds of "firsts" in the church. I long for the day when diverse leadership is so completely normal that it's no longer remarkable. But milestones matter. They show us how far we've traveled and point the way forward.

Stay cool, stay hopeful, and peace be with you.
Pastor Sharei

St. Cyprian's Non-food Monthly Donations: July 2026 — Pet Food

The Justice Ministry encourages UIF members to donate a highlighted item each month. The food pantry only has funding for food items and clients still need to stretch their dollars to cover both food and all those daily necessities. This month we are asking for PET FOOD. This is one of the top three items requested by food pantry clients.



A donation box is available as you come in the back door, just at the end of the ramp.

Thank you to all who contributed hygiene products in June!

All our lives Christians are encouraged to be more like Christ, living our lives to improve the situations of others. If people are hungry, we should help feed them. If they are thirsty, we should provide them with drink. If we find they are without adequate clothing, we should step up and help clothe them.

Volunteers at St. Cyprian's can't avoid being good Christians. Everything they do helps to improve the world. On Mondays and Thursdays these dedicated individuals get to the pantry as early as

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7 am and begin preparing the food distribution area. By 9 am they are welcoming clients and helping all to make choices that will appeal to their family's taste buds and help to stretch their food budget. They keep up the frenetic pace until all clients are served. Then they break down the distribution area, ensuring all food is stored so it won't spoil and it meets sanitation standards.

There are days when you are filled with joy because the attitude of gratitude has filled the air and your heart. There are other days when you think to yourself, "they say He doesn't give you more than you can handle but seriously....." At these times we are blessed with the love and support of other volunteers, and we gather strength from each other. People have come to volunteer to fulfill court ordered community service and we're never surprised when they keep helping long past the hours needed.

The spirit of giving is not limited to those who physically aid the needy. Our list of donors grows and grows. Some people give from the bounty of their garden, some from the bounty of their wallets. Some share once and others never stop!! We offer thanks over and over for without our donors our circle of giving would grind to a halt. Thank you United in Faith for "holding our pantry in the palm of your hands." May you be blessed as you have blessed us.

~ Ann Baikie

Voting as Faith Practice

Last month, we looked at how changes to voting rights laws are impacting us right here in Illinois. We reflected on the ELCA's teaching that civic engagement is a vital aspect of our discipleship. But to engage faithfully, it helps to understand the hidden mechanics that shape our elections. One of the biggest roadblocks to a fair vote is a process called gerrymandering.

Every ten years, states redraw their voting district maps to ensure populations are balanced.

Gerrymandering happens when the political party in power draws those lines like a game of Tetris, carving out custom shapes that intentionally favor their own candidates. Instead of voters choosing their politicians, gerrymandering allows politicians to choose their voters. This is done by "packing" opposing voters into a single district to contain their influence, or "cracking" a community across several districts to dilute their

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SIGN UP!

Invitation to lead in worship

We are in need of greeters / ushers, readers & communion assistants. If you are feeling called to lead in worship, a sign up sheet is on the table

in the fellowship hall. If you would like more info before signing up, please talk to Pastor Sharei.

collective voice. As we noted last month, when maps weaken the voting strength of communities of color, it creates a real barrier to fair representation. It breeds deep public cynicism, making everyday citizens feel like their votes don't actually matter.

So, why does our faith call us to care? Because at its core, gerrymandering is a system designed to silence people's voices, particularly those in marginalized communities. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our neighbors and work "for fair and compassionate governance."

Caring about fair maps isn't a partisan issue; it's a matter of human dignity. Let us continue to stay informed and seek the common good with courage and care.

Book Club



The book Club will meet next on Saturday, July 18 at 10:00 am.

The decided upon book is Mother God, by Teresa Kim Pecinovsky. It is a children's book. Something light for the summer.

"With lyrical, rhyming text and exquisite illustrations, Mother God introduces readers to a dozen images of God inspired by feminine descriptions from Scripture." - Beaming Books

July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00am Coffee Hour	29 9:00am Food Pantry	30	1	2	3 6:30pm AA	4 9:30am AI-Anon 4:00pm Survivors of Incest- https://siawso.org
5 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00am Coffee Hour	6	7	8	9	10 6:30pm AA	11 9:30am AI-Anon 4:00pm Survivors of Incest- https://siawso.org
12 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00am Coffee Hour	13	14 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group	15	16	17 6:30pm AA	18 9:30am AI-Anon 4:00pm Survivors of Incest- https://siawso.org
19 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00am Coffee Hour	20	21 7:00pm Church Council Meeting	22	23	24 6:30pm AA	25 9:30am AI-Anon 4:00pm Survivors of Incest- https://siawso.org
26 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00am Coffee Hour	27	28 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group	29	30	31 6:30pm AA	1 9:30am AI-Anon 4:00pm Survivors of Incest- https://siawso.org



TO BE GOD'S HANDS, FEET
AND VOICE IN THE WORLD.

July celebrations

Birthdays

Sharei G. July 2
Gayle G. July 8
Adrienne C. July 9
Conrad Q. July 12
Colleen H. July 19
Dawn K. July 30

Anniversaries

Margaret Y. July 2
Mary Ann H. July 8
Diane D. July 29



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