



2023 Annual Report



No matter who, no matter what, *you're welcome here.*

It's our mission to "share faith in Christ with others by bringing people from many backgrounds together in a spirit of openness and understanding, encouraging learning and fellowship, and living faith through service."



Bismarck UCC & Ministry on the Margins volunteers serving the Buffalo Supper together.
Cover photo: UCC Quilt reveal at the annual meeting in January 2023.

Living our Vision

The Bismarck–Mandan United Church of Christ is a thriving church transforming our lives and community:



- where all are unconditionally welcomed, affirmed, accepted, and loved;
- where the good in every person is recognized and their talents are encouraged to be shared;
- where children, youth, and adults learn that God is love and all are welcome to freely explore spirituality in a safe and nurturing environment;
- where we can bring our personal needs and struggles and count on support from our church family – which is the loving family we all deserve;
- where powerful messages inspire and challenge us to be caring and compassionate to all– in our church, community, and world, seeking opportunities to put our faith into action with courage to go beyond what we think we can do;
- where we embrace the still-speaking God and live our faith in today's world.

Bismarck
United Church of Christ
1200 E Highland Acres Rd
Bismarck, ND 58501

701-223-2915
office@uccbismarck.org

Find us on Facebook,
Instagram, and YouTube

Office Hours
Monday – Friday
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Worship Schedule
Sunday at 10 AM

Livestream at
[www.uccbismarck.org/
worship](http://www.uccbismarck.org/worship)

Support the Ministry
www.uccbismarck.org/donate

Emergency Pastoral Care
701-347-1235

"We have a good
bunch here!"

– Myrna Dethloff

A note from our Pastor



**"Hear, O Israel: The LORD your God, the LORD is one.
Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with
all your soul and with all your strength." Deut. 6:4-5**

The Hebrew goes even deeper than the English and paraphrased says, "Love God with your emotions and intellect, your body and soul, and all your strength, and if this list missed something, love God with that too." I believe this is what Bismarck United Church of Christ strove to do in 2023. We added new activities like the Buffalo Supper, Paint Parties, Heritage Center tour, Christmas Fair, and others, not because we wanted to be busy, but because we were seeking more opportunities to love one another. This was the year when our hearts wanted to laugh together, hold one another in times of grief, sit and share story after story, serve side-by-side, and let the whole neighborhood and city know God's love.

Some of the motivation behind this year was facing the residual grief built up during the COVID-19 shutdowns and continuing to reclaim new life. However, I think most of the spiritual motivation behind this year was grounded in the past experiences of our members receiving love from this community and wanting to share that love in each of our unique ways with everyone we could. There have been hardships this past year: we need a new roof, we said our final goodbyes to some long-time members, the Afterschool Place closed due to staffing shortages, and expenses increased. But we have also seen God's blessings in many ways: we welcomed new members and friends, celebrated baptisms and confirmations, received generous donations and grants, received the "Certificate of Safe Space" award from Dakota Outright, expanded our partnerships with other churches and organizations, and celebrated our 69th birthday. Most importantly, I have witnessed huge growth in the faith and love of so many of you.

As we look forward to 2024, we'll continue to carry our grounding in God's love as we tell our stories and invite others into this incredible community of faith. Thank you for being light, salt, and love in the Bismarck-Mandan area!

Peace and blessings,

Rev. Gretchen Deeg



"Certificate of Safe Space" awarded "in recognition of extraordinary efforts displayed to make this a safe space that is welcoming, supportive, and affirming for all people in our community."



New Highlights in 2023



Spring Highlight

We held our first ever guided paint party two weeks before Easter and called it "Brush Strokes for All Folks." It was such a success that we invited the neighborhood to a December party.



Summer Highlight

We hosted a table with prayer beads and giveaway items at this year's first *indoor* Pride festival. We've been regulars at Pride in the Park, but we were glad to be out of the 100 degree weather.



Autumn Highlight

The Buffalo Supper returned in October. 130 meals were served at Bismarck UCC and another 100 meals at Ministry on the Margins over the next two nights! \$4,876.36 was raised.



Winter Highlight

We had so much snow in the first half of 2023 that we all made guesses on when the snow would melt and the winner got a snowball we saved in the freezer (plus a more lasting gift too).

A note from our Moderator



As we wind down 2023, I have been reflecting on what a great year it has been for the Bismarck/Mandan United Church of Christ! This year was filled with increasing church attendance, the re-establishment of many church activities, and growth in community outreach. Below I highlight just a few of the great things that took place this year.

A major focus for church council over this past year was to re-establish a community partner to fill the hole left by Charles Hall Youth Services. Two organizations seemed to naturally fall into place through this process, Ministry on the Margins and CATCH. Our partnership with Ministry on the Margins led to one of the most exciting events to make a re-appearance this year, the Buffalo Supper. The Stewardship Committee did an outstanding job of planning and carrying out this event. Being able to partner with Ministry on the Margins not only with a financial donation from the proceeds but also through the food itself was a powerful experience for many. As a church we look forward to a continued partnership with them.

Another exciting community partnership that happened in 2023 was Bismarck/Mandan UCC officially becoming a member of CATCH (Communities Acting Together for Change and Hope). CATCH has a mission to bring refugees to rural North Dakota to be settled, which can help address the workforce shortages that many communities are experiencing. This is exciting work that we look forward to continuing to be a part of.

I would like to take time to thank Pastor Gretchen for her continued leadership and service to our congregation. I would also like to thank all of our Committee Chairs and Clerk for making council a productive and positive group. Being moderator has allowed me to get to know congregation members in a deep and meaningful way. I feel lucky to be a part of this church and the talented people that call it home.

Finally, as many of you know we continue to struggle with a deficit budget and the ever-increasing costs to operate. As I noted above, this congregation does vital work in our community as well as providing a church home to many. If we want to continue to be able to have the impact, we do and to grow, we must meet our budget deficit head on. Over the next year we will be asking church committee and congregation members to come up with creative fundraising ideas, prayerfully consider their monthly tithing, explore expanded use of the church building and anything else that will help to get us back to where we need to be. I truly believe that this church can meet that challenge, but it will take us all. God bless,

Carly Retterath

Photo of Carly serving as a delegate alongside Marcia Patrie, Bill Patrie, Hannah Vanorny, Ken Trana, and Frank Picard at the Northern Plains Conference UCC Annual Meeting in Garrison.

2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

Moderator Carly Retterath called the meeting to order. The Clerk confirmed there was a quorum. The moderator opened the meeting with a prayer. Bill Patrie moved to approve the minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting, seconded by Wanda Benson.

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

We watched a video Pastor Deeg put together presenting our church year in pictures and song.

- Our in-person worship attendance increased and our online worship views increased by 6%
- Our summer programming was very successful this year.
 - A pool party was held at the Mandigo residence in July
 - We teamed up with Lutheran Church of the Cross for Vacation Bible School
 - The Highland Acres Block Party we held partnering with Lutheran Church of the Cross was again well received
- Autum Eisenbraun was hired as the church's Administrative Assistant
- We partnered with the Afterschool Place which is going well and is a great outreach
- Our Sunday school numbers are the highest they have been since COVID began
- The Confirmands shared their favorite parts of the past year. Addison Weil: building relationships; Aston Rudy: Christmas caroling; Jet Roth: Christmas caroling; Ella Kraft and Sofia Augustadt: volunteer work.
- Volunteers of the Year Awards were presented to Harold Karch and Lonna Augustadt.

Trustee Dave Archer reviewed our budget. Frank Picard moved that we accept the budget as presented, seconded by Bill Patrie. Budget approved.

The nominations for officers and committee members were accepted and nominees installed.

Pamela Clark Stein, representing Stewardship and Missions, met with Threads of Love group earlier in the year and proposed the idea of creating a church quilt. They were very receptive to the idea and sewed a beautiful quilt that was revealed at the meeting.

Stewardship also started a tradition of "The Giving Plate" for the congregation. The purpose of the plate is to pass it on to members of the congregation to brighten their day. The plate should be passed with a gift of food and a card that lets them know you are thinking of them and holding them in prayer. There is a Tree of Life journal that is to be used to document the recipients and track how far it has been passed on during the year. The plate is complete with a plate carrier sewn by Camille Grothier with apples on it representative of the Johnnie Appleseed Prayer. The first recipient of the plate is Teri and Kevin Nitschke.

Pastor Deeg closed the meeting in prayer for our church and congregation in the new year. The meeting was adjourned by our Moderator, Carly Retterath.

Respectfully submitted: Lonna Augustadt, Clerk



Photo: Thank you to Evan and Tove Mandigo for hosting the Bismarck UCC Pool Party!

Our Members

Membership 1-1-23 = 414 Membership 12-31-23 = 384

New Members – 6

11/19/2023 – Mary Blumhagen
11/19/2023 – Tamara Waters-Wheeler
11/19/2023 – Mike & Kathy Rudolph
12/24/2023 – Jody Miller
12/24/2023 – Jordan VanBerkum

Confirmations – 4

5/21/2023 – Ashton Rudy
5/21/2023 – Sofia Augustadt
5/21/2023 – Addison Weil
5/21/2023 – Jett Roth

Baptisms – 5

4/23/2023 – Makenna Opal Lapp (child of Josh and Laci Lapp)
6/25/2023 – Selena Nevaeh Mills (child of Thomas & Desi Mills)
7/23/2023 – Wilhelm Eisenbraun
7/23/2023 – Opal Marie Eisenbraun
10/29/2023 – Raelynn Roehr

Deaths – 5

4/23/2023 – Janice Johnson
5/5/2023 – Joan Durow
9/29/2023 – Marvin Erhardt
10/26/2023 – Irene Wise
11/21/2023 – Richard Lang

Non-Member Funerals – 1

1/13/2023 – Rebecca (Becky) Miller Thomason

Marriages – 2

8/12/2023 – Nolan Kleinjan & Amanda Reimer
9/15/2023 – Kiana Maxon & Kylie Fred

Removals – 30

Updated membership records

Transferred Out – 1

"Joining Bismarck UCC was like rejoining our church family again as we were able to reunite with many friends."

– Mike & Kathy Rudolph



Confirmation!



VanBerkum Family



Mary Blumhagen



Marv Erhardt



Wil & Opal's Baptism

By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's love.

Inspiring Worship



64

Average in-person worship attendance. Increase from an average of 54 in 2022 and 44 in 2021.

44

Average online worship attendance (number of views)

78

Number of worship services led by our congregation.

Highlights

Details

Outcome

Ashes Before the Snow & Lent

Lent began with snow, but it didn't stop us from deepening our faith.

- Explored "Honest Questions for a Deeper Faith."
- Served weekly soup suppers.
- Only cancelled one weekday service due to snow.

Confirmation

On May 21, our youth proclaimed "I choose to follow God's voice."

- Entirely youth-designed worship.
- 4 confirmed their faith.
- 2 affirmed their continuing faith journey.

Ecumenical Worship

We welcomed 2 new churches into our community worship offerings. 6 churches in total.

- Worshiped twice in the style of Taizé with St. George's Episcopal.
- Thanksgiving Eve highlighted Great Plains Food Bank and Native American heritage.
- Easter Vigil began around a fire.

Accepting and Loving One Another

It's a joy to grow alongside our youth!

Among many adventures, this year brought:

- Youth Trip to Washington DC
- Trick or Trick So Others Can Eat
- Intergenerational Christmas Pageant
- Volunteering at Papa's Pumpkin Patch



Having Fun Loving
Cookie decorating was a big part of our Advent Party. Cookies were delivered to those who don't get out as much anymore. Being the church to one another is the ministry of all of us.



Membership Update

Thank you to everyone who helped our Deacons update our membership records! Helen Lindgren and Wanda Benson won our membership update prizes. Coming in 2024: an updated photo directory.



45

Average number of people at fellowship time after worship

We are Family

We like to visit over food! Eggbakes, pancakes, soups, cookies, and more bring us together regularly. This year included HOMEMADE icecream.

"One of my favorite things about our Deacon meetings is discussing our monthly 'thank you' and 'thinking of you' cards. I think this practice speaks to the strong spirit of support for one another that flows throughout our church community and beyond. Many thanks to our letter writers, Carrie Mandigo and Sandra Domagala, for penning these cards of love!"

- Hannah Vanorny

Nurturing Spiritual Growth

**"As we serve others
we are working on ourselves;
every act, every word,
every gesture of genuine compassion
naturally nourishes our own hearts as well."**

– Wayne Muller

We believe God is still-speaking and that means God is never done with the world or with us. Our faith continues to grow with every worship service, every Bible Study, every service project, and every faith-filled interaction in our lives. In 2023, we intentionally grew our faith through weekly studies and service opportunities.

- **Monday Bible Study** studied key Hebrew words and major themes in the Bible.
- **Friday Bible Study** meet weekly to discuss and debate the lectionary readings used in worship.
- **Sunday School** enhanced the weekly Bible readings with arts, crafts, and service projects for our pre-K to 6th grade students.
- **Confirmation and Youth Group** combined into one as our youth of all ages switched from meeting 2 times per month to weekly.
- **HayCreek Ministry** offered monthly services for the residents at HayCreek Lodge and the act of leading worship deepened the faith of our volunteer leaders.
- **Choir** grew their own faith and the faith of our congregation through the gifts of music and an incredibly supportive community.
- **State Archives Tour** was a new addition to our faith life this year as we explored the history of the UCC in the ND State Archives!



God is the potter and we are the clay.

Choir party at Jane Thomson's house.

Creating Space for Transformation

2023 brought unexpected surprises, both joyful and frustrating. We began the year celebrating our continued relationship with the Afterschool Place, a program for elementary-aged students. However, in September we received the sad news that the program was needing to close due to a lack of staffing.

Determined to ensure our building continued to serve the wider community every day of the week, we invited Communities Acting Together for Change and Hope (CATCH) to rent office space during the week. CATCH supports refugee resettlement in rural communities and began as a dream of the Northern Plains Conference UCC. Bismarck UCC joined CATCH as their first member organization in 2023! We also provided space for Narcotics Anonymous, Book Clubs, Game Nights, ND 4 Ukraine, Birthday parties, family reunions, and other groups who matched our church's mission and vision. We hope to continue to increase our building usage in 2024.

We made upgrades to our outdoor sacred space with the addition of park benches and painted the cross and handrails. Thanks to donors and a grant from Bismarck Eagles, we installed soffit outlets in the back of the church, so we are better prepared for challenging winter conditions.

The weather provided nearly endless challenges to us in 2023. A near record amount of ice jam causing snow in early 2023 and spring/summer hailstorms caused significant damage to our church roof. The cost to replace the entire roof and associated damage is estimated at \$72,000. Finding out that our insurance company will cover almost the entire cost was a Christmas miracle!

Our final challenge was the budget itself. In October, it appeared that we would be ending the year with a \$18,000 deficit. Thanks to our incredible church community we entered 2024 with a \$5,864 surplus! Together, we moved mountains in 2023!

Thank you to all of our donors and volunteers who turned a challenging year into a celebration. Your support is sustaining space for transformation!

From top: Ice in the back of the building, Sunrise over our parking lot, Max Robinson's drawing of our sanctuary, Vacation Bible School on our church lawn.

Serving Our Neighbors

"The Buffalo Supper was a shining example of how this church community bands together to love and serve one another and the wider community."

– Amber Augustadt



- Co-sponsored Bismarck's MLK celebration.
- Served ~300 people at "The Banquet" twice.
- Hosted a rural ministry gathering for rural UCC churches.
- Enhanced interfaith relationships through Bismarck Interfaith potlucks.
- Our youth repainted the clinic at Ministry on the Margins.
- Welcomed neighbors at two "Brush Strokes for All Folks" paint parties.
- Gathered central and southwestern UCC churches for a summer potluck.
- Our youth prepared the material for sleeping mats for people experiencing homelessness.
- Shared God's love at the Capital Pride Festival.
- Offered a summer Bible Study at Edgewood Retirement Community.
- Packed every table at the Highland Acres Block Party.
- Led monthly worship services at HayCreek Lodge Retirement Community and sang Christmas carols to the residents.
- Helped to feed over 1,000 families per week through Jack's Food Pantry and Adopt-a-Block.
- Our youth Tricked or Treated So Others Can Eat and collected food donations from the neighborhood.
- Volunteered two days at Papa's Pumpkin Patch.
- Brought back the Buffalo Supper and donated \$2,438.18 and 100 meals to Ministry on the Margins.
- Sponsored two families at Christmas time through the Giving Tree and Deacon's Fund.
- Began sponsoring two refugee families from Ukraine.

Top, L to R: Serving the Banquet, Giving Tree, UCC and Girl Scouts going Christmas caroling, Jim & Jane Morgan delivering food, Ella Kraft painting at Ministry at the Margins.

Pass Through/Benevolence Funds 2023

Our Church's Wider Mission	\$3,157
East Timor Educational Foundation	\$525
The Christmas Fund	\$1,465
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$971
Neighbors in Need	\$974
Strengthen the Church	\$492
Ministry on the Margins	\$2,438
Metigoshi Ministries (in-kind quilt donation)	\$6,575
Total	<u>\$16,596</u>

*Thank you
to all our
donors!*



Funds for Ministry

\$170,893

Donations

\$12,340

Sunday Sponsorships

\$199,306

Total Income

Photos: Our East Timor partnership school, One of many donated quilts, Teens preparing plastic bags to be made into sleeping mats.

Thank you to our 2024 Ministry Leaders



Moderator
Carly Retterath



Co-Treasurer
James Mandigo



Co-Treasurer & Clerk
Kirby Kruger



Financial Secretary
Lesa Crowley



Pastor
Rev. Gretchen Deeg



Administrative Assistant
Autum Eisenbraun



Choir Director
Craig DeVos



Organist
Joann Otterness

Assistant Choir Director: Amber Augustadt
Regular Guest Musicians: Jeanne Kolberg & Darcy Avery
Church Custodians: Mary Rader & Jim Knutz
Accounting Services: Wanda Benson

"This is my favorite
place I have ever
worked."

- Autum Eisenbraun



Thank you to our church artisans who handcrafted
gifts for our first annual Christmas Craft Fair!

Thank you to our 2024 Ministry Leaders

Council

*Carly Retterath
Kirby Kruger
Dana Schaar Jahner
Betty Picard
Amber Augustadt
Dawn Archer
Dave Augustadt

Trustees

Harold Karch 1-24
Evan Mandigo 1-24
Ken Trana 1-25
Jerry Reinisch 1-25
Chris Lennon 2-26
*Dana Schaar Jahner 1-26
Mike Stein 2-27
----- 1-27

Deacons

*Betty Picard 1-24
Mary Beth Rush 1-24
Hannah Vanorny 1-25
Katie Patrie 1-25
Carrie Mandigo 1-26
David Archer 1-26
Lonna Augustadt 1-26

Christian Education

*Autum Eisenbraun 2-24
Dave Baber 2-24
Paulette Whitmore 1-25
Katie Patrie 1-25
Dawn Archer 2-26
Tamara Waters-Wheeler 1-26

Music

Katie Patrie 2-24
Gail Erickson 2-24
Wanda Benson 2-26
*Dave Augustadt 2-26
----- 1-25

Stewardship and Mission

*Amber Augustadt 2-24
Laurie Reinisch 1-24
Frank Picard 1-24
Kyle Eisenbraun 1-25
Raelynn Roeher 1-25
Lance Schriener 2-26
Leilani Roeher 1-26

Service & Fellowship

*Marcia Patrie
Darcy Avery
Cecilia Tolstedt
JoAnn & Kirby Kruger
Lonna Augustadt
Betty & Frank Picard
Paulette Whitmore
Lesla Crowley
Laurie Reinisch
Cary Retterath
Tamara Waters-Wheeler
Ken Trana & Dale Carmen
Mary Blumhagen
Dawn Archer
UCC Youth Group

Liturgical Arts

*Cecilia Tolstedt 26
Betty Dacar 26
Lonna Augustadt 25
Paulette Whitmore 25
Betty Picard 25
Pat Grossman 26
Carol Baber 27

Personnel Parish Relations

Ken Trana
Wanda Benson
Kirby Kruger

HayCreek Lodge Ministry

*Darcy Avery
Marcia Lerberg
Dale Carmen
Ken Trana
Frank Picard
Hannah Vanorny

**"Being active on a
committee has
been wonderful. We
laugh and work. It is
such a blessing."**

- Betty Picard