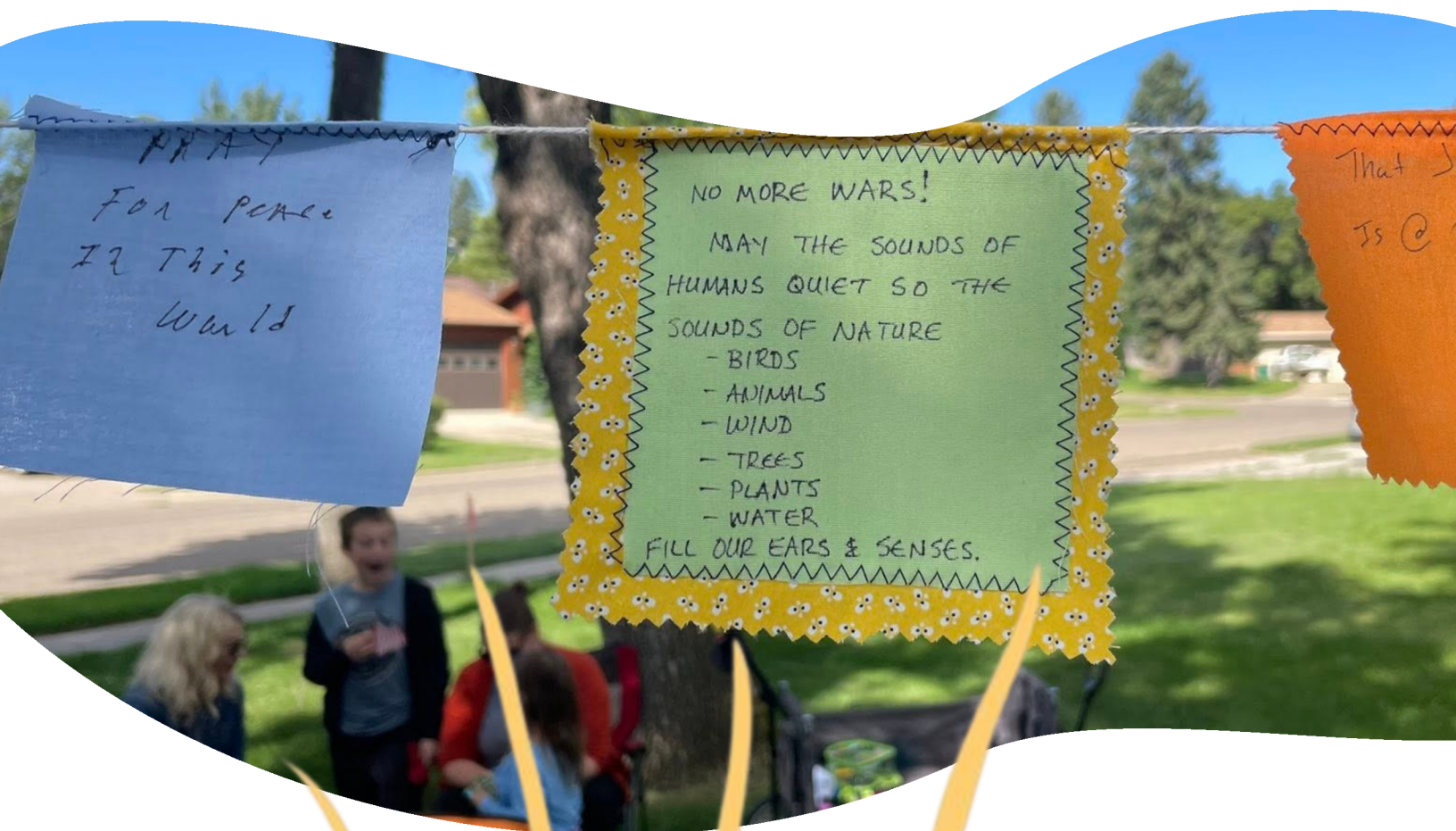


Bismarck-Mandan Area United Church of Christ

2025 Annual Report



Shine On!

SHARE GOD'S LIGHT

OUR MISSION

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.



OUR VISION

Be 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.



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

Pastor's Note



As I look back on 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the ways this congregation lived the Gospel with courage, tenderness, and joy. This was a year of compassion in motion — a year when you showed up for one another, for our neighbors, and for strangers who quickly became family.

Our theme, “Go and Do the Same,” became more than a stewardship message. You lived it in the meals served at The Banquet, the backpacks packed for individuals reentering the community, the coats and Christmas gifts donated to families in need, and the food collected for hungry families. You lived it in the welcome extended to Ukrainian families seeking safety. You lived it in the ways you prayed, volunteered, gave, and encouraged one another through seasons of joy and seasons of strain.

This year also brought honest challenges. Rising costs stretched our budget. The weight of national and global conflict touched many hearts. And yet, even in these realities, I witnessed resilience, creativity, and a deep commitment to being a church where all are welcomed, affirmed, accepted, and loved.

Our ministries flourished in meaningful ways. Children and youth deepened in service and community, including a summer trip to Montana. Adults engaged in spiritual formation and a stress management series. We partnered with Lutheran Church of the Cross for Vacation Bible School and the Block Party, where more than 120 neighbors gathered for connection and joy. And throughout the year, worship grounded us — from youth-led Lenten services to the beauty of Christmas Eve candlelight.

Hope is not wishful thinking; it is a practice. And this congregation practices hope beautifully. I saw it in the children running forward for Time with Children, in the choir's harmonies, in the hands partaking in communion, and in the quiet acts of care that never make it into a newsletter but change lives all the same.

As we enter 2026, we carry both gratitude and responsibility. We are called to deepen our welcome, practice God's love, support our neighbors, and continue advocating for compassion in our community and beyond. We will need creativity, courage, and one another — and we will need God's grace, which is abundant.

Thank you for your trust, your partnership, your humor, your honesty, and your unwavering commitment to being a church where love is not only spoken but lived. It is a blessing to serve as your pastor.

Rev. Gretchen Deeg

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
During Lent: Wed. at 6:30 PM

Livestream at
www.uccbismarck.org/worship

Support the Ministry
www.uccbismarck.org/donate

Emergency Pastoral Care
701-347-1235



New highlights in 2025



Spring Highlight

We broke the mold for sabbaticals and celebrated lay leadership month during the Easter season while Pastor Gretchen took one third of a sabbatical. Over 30 members took part in leading incredible worship services that month!



Summer Highlight

In July, UCC members from across the country gathered for General Synod in Kansas City. Bismarck UCC had **five(!)** members attend. Pictured were our Northern Plains Conference delegates.



Autumn Highlight

Our fall Buffalo Supper transformed into our first ever German Supper! The homemade elk fleischkuele was a huge success and helped us raise more funds for Ministry on the Margins & the UCC.



Winter Highlight

In December, we *lit* up the church with our best (or ugliest) Christmas sweaters and an impromptu Christmas pageant all about the light of Christ.

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I'm making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Isaiah 43:19

A note from our Moderator



As we look back on 2025, our hearts are overflowing with gratitude and excitement for the dynamic growth our congregation has experienced. This year, the Bismarck United Church of Christ witnessed a remarkable increase in attendance and was blessed to welcome many new faces into our church family. Each Sunday and throughout the week, our pews and halls were filled with both familiar friends and new members, enriching our worship and strengthening our community.

Our calendar was filled with vibrant events that brought us together in faith and fellowship. The annual Block Party once again drew our neighbors for an afternoon of fun and connection. The Bowling Tournament provided friendly competition and laughter, while the German Supper delighted us with delicious food and warm camaraderie. These gatherings, among many others, created lasting memories and deepened the bonds within our congregation and the wider community.

In May, we celebrated Lay Leadership Month—a truly uplifting experience for our congregation. It was such a blessing to witness the many talents and hear the heartfelt wisdom shared by members of our church family. This special time reminded us all that our church is truly bigger than any one person, and we are excited to continue this tradition in 2026, inviting even more voices to participate in shaping our spiritual journey together.

Financially, 2025 has continued to show stability and progress. Our ongoing stewardship and generosity have positioned us well, enabling us to support our ministries and maintain a strong foundation for the future.

As we look ahead, the council remains dedicated to thoughtfully organizing our committees and projects for even greater effectiveness. We recognize the importance of balancing action with reflection, ensuring our efforts remain aligned with our mission and values. Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to serve as your moderator. I am truly honored to be part of this loving and ever-growing church family. Together, we will continue to nurture our faith, welcome new friends, and serve our community with open hearts.

Blessings, *Carly Retterath*

Our Members

Membership 1-1-25 = 387 Membership 12-31-25 = 392

New Members – 11

2/23/2025 – Bonnie Frederick
2/23/2025 – Darla Schafer
2/23/2025 – Amanda Wilson
2/23/2025 – Jim & Jane Morgan
2/23/2025 – Monica, Rowan & Carlee Klein
12/7/2025 – Annie & Chelsea Gagner
12/7/2025 – Lynn Bryntesen

Confirmations – 0

Baptisms – 2

8/3/2025 – Bryson Crannell
9/21/2025 – Adeline Jean Mark

Deaths – 5

3/21/2025 – Marvin Schulz
4/26/2025 – Eugene Weekes
6/13/2025 – Judi Allen
12/7/2025 – Phyllis Schneider
12/11/2025 – Wade Schemmel

Non-Member Funerals – 2

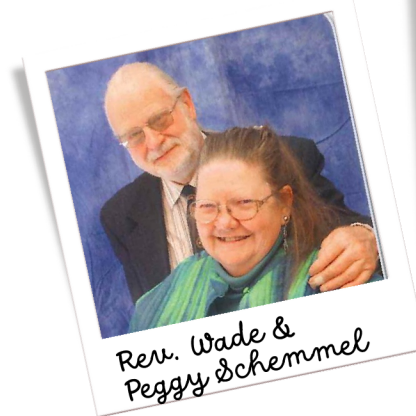
1/7/2025 – Irene Roth
2/8/2025 – Beryl Dinkins

Marriages – 1

6/7/2025 – Cole & Kaylyn Koppinger

Removals/Transferred Out – 4

Daniel & Tammie Schumacher
Adler & Zander Scheer



"Bismarck UCC is the **BEST** family ever."

– Lonna Augustadt

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly!"

1 Peter 4:8

Inspiring Worship



69

Average in-person worship attendance. Increase from an average of 67 in 2024 and 64 in 2023.

54

Average online worship attendance (number of views). 44 in 2024. Total YouTube subscribers 163.

117

Highest attendance Sunday was Easter Sunday, Apr. 20.

Focus

Details

Outcome

Celebrating Lay Leaders

5 Sundays of celebration during the Easter Season with creative worship services entirely planned and led by lay leaders.

- Inspiring messages given by church members energized the church for creative ministry.
- Our capacity for ministry increased as new leaders grew in confidence and skill.

Hearing Wisdom from Children & Youth

Children and youth read scripture, lit candles, collected the offering, played music, and shared wisdom in worship.

- Teens grew in confidence and faith as they led interactive mid-week worship during Lent.
- Children are excited to share their spiritual insights and learn to trust in the love of God shown through community.

Care & Unity

Worship called us to deepen our connections, serve God, and offer care.

- Our first Ecumenical Longest-Night Service created space for support.
- Connected, we are better equipped to serve in love.

Photo: Ireland, Shaylee, and Hannah leading music at our mid-week Lent services.

Accepting and Loving One Another



At Bismarck UCC, acceptance and love aren't just values we talk about — they're experiences people name again and again.



When new members joined this year, they told us things like, *"The moment we sang the 'No Matter Who' song, we knew we were in the right place,"* and *"I have been accepted so warmly — this church feels like family to me."* One member shared that after searching for a church where she could be fully herself, she finally found a home here. Another said simply, *"I enjoy this church and how kind everyone is to one another."*



This year, that kindness showed up in countless ways. Our Called to Care team of eight offered prayer, presence, and companionship to members and friends and our Deacons offered words of love in regular cards. As a congregation, we held one another through diagnoses, surgeries, and seasons of uncertainty. We welcomed old friends who returned for visits and embraced new friends who found their way into our community. On Mental Health Sunday, we named aloud the truth that caring for our minds and spirits is holy work, creating space for honesty, healing, and hope.

In the coming year, may we continue to be a community where every person — no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey — is welcomed, affirmed, accepted, and loved.

Pictured bottom left to top right: Game Nights, Youth Lock-In, Bill & Maggie at German Supper, Darcy & Jane after choir, Rowen & Ireland serving the Banquet
Marciana & Lilyana at Vacation Bible School



Nurturing Spiritual Growth

Daily

- Our prayer list reminds us to hold one another in **prayer** every day.

Weekly

- We ground ourselves in scripture and are present to one another in our **Sunday Worship**.
- **Sunday School** nurtures kids through grade 5 with hands on learning.
- Our youth practice incorporating faith into their daily lives and grow in confidence as leaders during **Wednesday Youth Group/Confirmation**.
- Adults dive into the scriptures on Thursday evenings and Friday mornings for **Bible Study**.
- As our **Choir** and the Psalms remind us, "Sing to the Lord!"

Monthly

- All are invited to gather around the **Communion** table to be fed in this sacred meal.
- Our ordained and lay leaders offer worship at **HayCreek** Retirement Community or **Edgewood** Village at least once a month.
- **Called to Care Team** visits members desiring one-to-one connections.

Yearly

- The entire neighborhood is invited to grow in faith and friendship every year at our **Vacation Bible School, Block Party, and Ecumenical Worship**.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another."

Hebrews 10:24-25

Creating Space for Transformation



On behalf of Trustees, thank you to everyone for your support of Bismarck United Church of Christ in 2025, from volunteering on cleanup days to providing financial support and sharing your time and talents.

After an especially busy 2024 with church building upgrades and repairs, 2025 required fewer draws on our Building Fund. We resealed and restriped the parking lot through a local contractor but were able to complete most other building updates with volunteer efforts. Trustees spent time this past year updating our maintenance records and creating a manual with details about building operations. This will help us stay on top of building issues and ensure our space is safe and welcoming for everyone.

We began the transition to new, integrated membership and financial software that should provide operational efficiencies while reducing costs. We appreciate the work of everyone who is part of this process and the extra effort to complete the transition.

Regarding church financials, the good news is we ended 2025 with a surplus, the third year in a row we have accomplished this as an organization. Most of the surplus was an increase in dedicated funds, such as contributions to the UCY Fund, Deacons Fund, and Building Fund. These restricted dollars support our youth, our community, and our church building, helping us to meet these important needs going forward. As we look ahead to 2026, expenses are increasing for our church as they are for families and businesses, and we are budgeting a small deficit for next year.

Thank you for your contributions to Bismarck United Church of Christ. Your investment in our shared vision enables us to maintain our physical space, compensate our dedicated staff, and fund our mission work to support each other and our community.

Dana Schaar Jahner
Trustees chair

Thank you to donors and volunteers

Pictured: Brenda, Dale, and Jodi assisting with clean up days at church. Repair of church sign in January.

Serving Our Neighbors



Our spring paint party drew a wide diversity of age and experience. Nina Loeks of Art from the Heart helped us to release our inner Bob Ross and create a wonderful array of Easter Bunnies and one rainbow! Our Second Annual Bowling Tournament, held in September, also had a wide variety of levels of expertise in the art of bowling. No matter your bowling ability, a good time was had by all participants.

Two meals were sponsored and served at the Dream Center during the year. The Youth Group helped with serving the fall meal and they want to be of service in this way again! Fellowship was enjoyed during the food preparation and serving of the meals. We also support the Food Pantry at the Dream Center with food donations.

We added a twist to our fall meal by hosting a German Supper. We gathered to learn how to make fleischkuekle, on a large scale! Family recipes were shared for the food prepared as well as many memories shared about German meals prepared with our families. There was a good attendance at the meal and good conversation at the tables as we shared a meal. We discovered that many of us shouldn't refer to ourselves as Germans from Russia but as Ukrainians! Our extra food from the supper was shared with Ministry on the Margins as well as half of the proceeds from the German Supper.

Our Stewardship Drive theme of Go and Do the Same was selected to tie in with the lectionary leading up to Consecration Sunday. The sharing of stories of the community outreach of our church fits easily with the Go and Do the Same message. We continue to support the East Timor Education Fund and the 5-for-5 offerings of the national UCC of Our Church's Wider Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and the Christmas Fund.

In 2026, we welcome you to look for ways that you can be involved in the outreach of service and stewardship our church family provides.

Respectfully submitted,

Darla Schaper
Stewardship & Mission chair

Pictured: Bowling Tournament, Serving the Banquet, and Spring Paint Party

Bismarck UCC Annual Meeting Agenda

2025 in Review

Welcome & Introductions
Call to Order & Establishing a Quorum
Opening Prayer
Minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting
Highlights from 2025
Pastor's Report
New Business – 2026 Budget, Bylaws, Nominations
Installation of officers and committee members
Prayers for Ministry in 2026
Adjournment

Thank you to our 2026 Ministry Leaders



Pastor
Rev. Gretchen Deeg



Moderator
Carly Retterath



Administrative Assistant
Autum Eisenbraun



Choir Director
Craig DeVos



Accompanists: Boram Chern, Jeanne Kolberg, Connie Sjostrom, Darcy Avery
Financial Secretary: Gayle Klopp
Co-Treasurers: James Mandigo & Kirby Kruger
Custodians: Mary Rader & Jim Kuntz
Accounting Services: Wanda Benson



"For the body does not consist of one member, but of many."
1 Corinthians 12:14

"It's a Doozy!" Groundhog Day 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

Held on 02 February 2025.

Moderation Carly Retterath called the meeting to order. A quorum was established by the clerk. Carly led us in an opening prayer. Minutes were reviewed and a motion and a second were made to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved by a voice vote.

Carly provided us with the Moderator's report. Notable events included: Regional Youth Event, Buffalo Supper, Block Party, The first annual bowling tournament, Splash pad party. Changes have been made to the church's sabbatical policy for the pastor. The new policy will allow for one month per year over a three-year period for sabbatical. Carly expressed her gratitude and extended a sincere thank you to all who serve on standing and special events committees and all others who volunteer for the church.

Pastor Gretchen Deeg provided her report. She thanked those who dressed for the Groundhog Day theme for the meeting and it appears the consensus is more winter, with a plethora of conversation among meeting attendees. There was a learning opportunity entitled Skills for Bridging the Gap – crossing cultural divides that was offered. It was an ecumenical event with several different congregations from different denominations participating. The Youth Event was held at Rock Island with 16 kids from the Northern Plains Conference in attendance. The NPC had the second largest contingency at the event. The church continues to face challenges finding accompanists and the search will continue. If anybody knows of people who may be interested, they should let Pastor Gretchen or a member of the Music Committee know. Pastor Gretchen thanked Craig DeVos for his commitment to the church's music ministry and as our choir director. Pastor Gretchen also thanked those who serve on committees and special groups. The printed annual report evolved to include more pictures and more concise reports. A color version is available online at the church's website. Hannah Vanorny and Pastor Gretchen are delegates to the 2025 UCC General Synod. Pastor Gretchen is serving as the current chair of the conference. Our conference minister, the Rev. Deborah Blood, will be retiring this year. The conference is searching for a permanent conference minister.

Dana Jahner, chair of the Board of Trustees, presented the financial report and the proposed 2025 church budget. We came out of 2024 with a budget surplus, largely due to a generous, one-time gift to the church. The building fund was heavily utilized this year: Updates to the fire suppression system, A new furnace, Paid off special assessments. Dana reported that in-kind time and space was estimated to be at \$144,000. A 2% increase in staff salary is being proposed for 2025. Adjustments were made for compensation for accompanists serving the church. Insurance premiums have increased. The parking lot is in need of work in 2025. The building fund is nearly depleted and we will need to work on increasing that fund. A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2025 budget. The budget was approved by a voice vote.

Monica Klein and Darla Schafer were mentioned as nominees for committees. Their names were not listed in the annual report. The Called to Care Ministry was recognized, but not mentioned in the annual report. Pastor Gretchen installed the new officers and committee members.

Pastor Gretchen led us in a prayer of the church and a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Kirby Kruger, Clerk



Thank you to our 2026 Ministry Leaders

Council

*Carly Retterath, Moderator
Kirby Kruger, Clerk
Dana Schaar Jahner, Trustees
Lonna Augustadt, Deacons
Tamara Waters-Wheeler, CE
Dave Augustadt, Music
John Dynes, Stewardship

Trustees

Gayla Sherman (26.0)
*Dana Schaar Jahner (26.1)
Mike Stein (27.2)
Jordan VanBerkum (27.1)
Michael Rush (28.1)
Jim Morgan (28.1)
Ken Trana (29.2)
Jerry Reinisch (29.2)

Deacons

Carrie Mandigo (26.1)
Chelsea Gagner (26.1)
*Lonna Augustadt (26.1)
Mary Beth Rush (27.2)
Baily VanBerkum (27.1)
Katie Patrie (28.2)
Mary Blumhagen (28.1)

Christian Education

----- (26.0)
*Tamara Waters-Wheeler (26.1)
Hannah Vanorny (27.1)
Amber Augustadt (27.1)
Katie Patrie (28.2)
Addison Weil (28.1 – shared)
Ireland Williams (28.1 – shared)

Legend: * chair/coordinator
(Final year. Term #)

Stewardship and Mission

----- (26.0)
Rachel Patrie (26.0)
*Darla Schafer (27.1)
Laurie Reinisch (27.2)
John Dynes (27.1)
Kyle Eisenbraun (28.2)
Bill & Maggie Demaree (28.1)

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
Kathy Rudolph
Baily VanBerkum
UCC Youth Group

Liturgical Arts

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

Personnel Parish Relations

Ken Trana
Wanda Benson
Kirby Kruger

HayCreek Lodge Ministry

*Darcy Avery
Dale Carmen
Darla Schafer
Ken Trana
Frank Picard
Hannah Vanorny
Jeanne Kolberg – pianist

Called to Care

Darcy Avery
Pamela Clark-Stein
Hannah Vanorny
Lonna Augustadt
Mary Beth Rush
Darla Schafer
Jane Morgan
Faith Schwartz

*"I pledge my commitment to continue to go
to church – to pray, love, & share – sharing in
God's love."*

– Pledge on Consecration Sunday 2025

Are you ready to do incredible ministry and make great friends?