

June 2025

Issue 130

Volume 2

Sharing Good News

St. Paul's UCC Delano, Minnesota



Birthdays

06/03 Alex Carter

06/09 Peter Lucht

06/25 Mike Galvin



Dates to be Noted

06/01 Social Justice Sunday
(see Page 3)

06/01 Communion

06/08 Strengthen our Church

06/14 Flag Day (see note below)

06/15 Council Meeting
(following fellowship)

06/15 Father's Day

Flag Day/Day of Defiance Protests
The organization "Indivisible"
is calling for a nation-wide
protest of current administration
policies on Saturday June 14th.
People in our area can meet at
Tom Emmer's Otsego office
located 9201 Quaday Avenue
Suite 206.

Fellowship Hosts

06/01 Leck

06/08 Conrard

06/15 Holm

06/22 Stewart

06/29 Brazelton



Pastor's Note: June 2025



"I am the way, the truth, and the life." – John 14:6

"You will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." – John 8:32

Recently, I ran across an online article, "When did you first realize you were in a cult?"

Cults have been of interest to me for a long time, in part because my wife was briefly part of one. There was a lot of conversation about cults in the 1970's and 1980's, the main question being, "What makes a group a cult?" The most commonly offered definition is it is a group (1) the founder of which is still living, (2) this leader wields absolute authority and cannot be questioned, (3) which insists that it and it alone has the real "truth", (4) demands absolute allegiance, and (5) warns of dire consequences for anyone who disobeys or leaves the group (spiritual or physical).

Still some people objected that a "cult" was simply a religion you don't belong to, and there was no real difference between a cult and a religion. Does that mean the followers of Jesus were a "cult"? What about cult-like behavior in groups that aren't technically religions (for example, Scientology is often accused of being a cult).

I think there is a difference between a "cult" and a religion. It comes down to one's frame of reference. A "frame of reference" is how one determines what is "true" or not. Most of us operate with multiple frames of reference, hence multiple understandings of "truth". There is scientific truth, historical truth, poetic truth, ethical truth, economic truth, religious truth, and so on. We are able to shift our frames of reference depending on what kind of truth one is dealing with. We also recognize two crucial things: (1) different frames of reference sometimes yield different answers, and (2) we know our understanding of what is "true" is limited.

In a cult, there is one and only one frame of reference: that is the absolute truth as defined by the cult. This truth is known completely by the leader, who has the power to define what is true for all members of the cult. The leader also demands absolute obedience. Questioning this absolute truth is considered not only incorrect but morally wrong! Questioning itself is unacceptable. And one's status in the group is determined by how closely one applies this one absolute truth to one's life and to reality in general. Everything outside the cult is by definition wrong, "deluded", or actually evil. So leaving the cult means one is surrendering to the forces of evil.

Is Christianity a cult then? Some forms of it certainly can be! But the difference lies in how we understand our relationship to truth. While Christianity certainly claims to be absolute truth, we do not claim to have complete knowledge of this truth. Only God has such knowledge; we do not and cannot!

Hence, our religious leaders do not claim to be the sole authorities in our lives. As a pastor, I point to God's truth but I do not know all of it nor can I embody it. Even in our faith, we cannot absolutize our religious frame of reference. We recognize our religious frame of reference is not absolute in itself. The truth is so vast and so complex, we can never grasp it all.

I think this is, in part, why Christians see truth embodied in the person of Jesus. Who can define any whole person in a bunch of concepts, let alone a person who was both human and God? This should keep us humble about any of our claims to have "the truth" or the definitive "frame of reference".

It deeply troubles me, then, to see cult-like behavior not only in religious and quasi-religious groups, but in *politics*! We have become so polarized that we are letting our political parties claim to define absolute truth for our nation. Media and politicians demand we use only their frames of reference and give them complete allegiance. Ministers declare particular candidates as "anointed by God." There seems to be no awareness of human limits or humility on either end of the political spectrum. Political partisans are beginning to think and act like cult-members.

Our politics is, frankly, sliding into a virtual 'idolatry'. This makes it all the more important to remember that *no human being can completely grasp absolute truth or claim absolute allegiance. No political leader is alone God's spokesperson.* We find out truth in God and remember our limits and the need to be open to multiple frames of reference. As a Puritan divine reminded the Pilgrims as they set sail, "There is yet more truth and light to break forth from God's Holy Word."

God's Peace,

Pastor Kent

Social Justice Memorial Garden

For five years the people of St. Paul's UCC Church have nurtured our Peace Garden and Social Justice Memorial. This year on June 1st we renewed our commitment to social justice by hanging windsocks with many colorful ribbons to adorn our garden. On the ribbons we pinned a card with our name on it and with a saying that reflected our personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions about the memorial. Following a shortened worship service with communion, everyone moved outside to the garden. Pastor Kent opened and closed the ceremony with his message and prayers. As part of the ceremony, people read aloud their message and then pinned them on the windsock ribbons. Cliff installed new Ukraine flags and hung poles for the windsocks, Dave prepared the grounds, Deanna prepared the music, Charlie designed and produced the posters with our theme—Peace and Justice for our world, country, and community. He also prepared the lyrics for the two hymns. Lani, Judy, Karen, and Gretchen read speeches; three were excerpts from Martin Luther King's 1963 "I Have a Dream Speech." Gretchen's final speech addressed our community goal of adding low-income housing to our city to meet the needs of our young families, single income families, and our work force. The ceremony reminded us of our goal to strive for justice by caring, loving, and serving our fellow human beings. A video of our Social Justice ceremony is available to watch on YouTube. Our YouTube channel is: @stpauluccchurchdelano4122. Also found by going to our website: www.delanoucc.org and pick "YouTube Sermons" tab.



St Paul's UCC Council Minutes May 18, 2025

Attendance: Lani Brown Worley, Jim Holm, Judy Crosby , Meg Conrard, Mike Hagerty, Pastor Kent and Larry Olson

Mike called meeting to order 10:40.

1. Larry Olson, OUR FINNCIAL ADVISOR, gave an annual report.
2. Grethen explained about low-income housing speech for June 1st . Can we invite others to our memorial on June 1? Yes. Can we put notice in newspaper? Yes, we will.
3. Approve minutes of April 13. Motion: Judy Second Meg. Passed.
4. Reviewed our financial statements. Paid our organ bill. Bill coming for gutter repairs. Our deductible on our insurance will increase. DMV is displaying our ad along with many other businesses in scroll. Renew a bond that is coming due, move \$21,000 to new account. Motion to approve: Judy, Second Meg. Pass.
5. Pastor report: mileage and visits with communion same as last month. Needs June 12-17 off. Be in office 19th. Lani and Meg and Judy will cover the service.
6. Old Business: Seder dinner was a success, and we encourage dinners about other cultures.

Hutchinson meeting to explore concept joining multiple churches with one pastor through expensive technology. Not an acceptable solution. We will proceed with our search committee.

Annual UCC Conference – Gretchen and Lani volunteered to go as our 2 delegates.

7. Estates of Delano – on hold.

New Business:

1. Refugee Support (Know your rights) – Little red cards with outline how to behave If approached by ICE or police.
2. Pride Festival Monticello July 26. We will have a booth, water, pens, and bookmarks. Ellison Park 11-4. May take our new sign.
3. Teamwork Africa – Jim and Shayla will attend. June 6th.
4. People are encouraged to Tell Your Story sponsored by Democrats. Stories of effects of mandates written and sent to our 2 state senators. They asked for them.
5. Justice Memorial Day plans reviewed. We will hold a service after church on June 1 st in our Peace Garden. Lani and Deanna have arranged for music, 2 windsocks for our prayers and sayings, four speeches are planned by members. The Worship Committee planned the event.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:08.

**TEAMWORK
AFRICA**

Educate Empower Encourage

2025 Teamwork Africa Celebration

I wanted to personally invite you to our **Teamwork Africa Celebration!** Join us on **Friday, June 6th** at 6 pm for an evening of powerful stories at **Bethesda Lutheran Church.**

We will celebrate the incredible power of teamwork in Liberia. Hear inspiring stories of what Teamwork Africa is doing to support children and youth in Liberia and enjoy delicious desserts with us. Small zipper pouches sewn by our Starfish Kids and other Liberian-made bags will be available for sale.

Bring your friends and neighbors for a memorable evening filled with joy. Don't miss out on this opportunity to be a part of something truly special.

RSVP to secure your spot at this meaningful event.

To RSVP online, scan the QR code




Looking forward to celebrating with you!
God is always good.
Peggy Halvorsen
Executive Director



For Your Information

Strengthen Our Church Offering is June 8th: This is our annual offering to support specialized UCC ministries great and small, for chaplaincies to outdoor worshipping communities to the MESA team (Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization). Envelopes are available on the piano in the sanctuary.

Gospel of Grace Book Study: Please read Chapters through 4 for the gathering Tuesday, June 3, 1:30—3:00 pm. Additional books are still available for those who would like to join. Cost is \$22.00 per book.

Financial Report for May 1—May 31, 2025

Income/Offerings: \$3,338
Expenses: \$5,901
Net Income/Loss: (\$2,563)



Sharing Good News

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June 2025



Church Phone: (763) 972-6689

Pastor Phone: (507)-458-0757

Interim Rev. Kent Meyer's Hours:

Tuesday 11:00 pm—7:00 pm

All are welcome at our in-person services, Sundays at 9:15 AM . Sunday sermons are available via our YouTube channel on our website.

www.delanoucc.org



Email: delanoucc@gmail.com
