



## **Grit, perseverance and love of learning showcased in Upward Bound** By Claire and B.J. Stokes

We love our careers as teachers within the River Falls School District, but we also look forward just as much to teaching students in the Upward Bound program every summer.

Upward Bound UWRF celebrated its 20th year of offering high school students a pre-college experience, and we were privileged to be involved again this year as summer instructors for the program.

Upward Bound is a long-standing federal grant program aimed at helping students who will be first-generation college students, or those who qualify for some other financial reason, to experience what it is like to live on a college campus, manage time independently, attend classes and learn to grow outside of their comfort zones.

During the school year these students, who attend St. Paul Public Schools, also are required to maintain good academic standing, attend workshops and meet with a mentor. With these safety nets and support systems, Upward Bound has had great success in getting these wonderful students placed in highly competitive colleges and universities all across the nation.

This summer we instructed a humanities course focusing on film and answering the larger question, "How does film communicate the human experience?" Students learned about elements of film, conducted critical analysis of full, feature-length films, and studied Latin and Greek root words.

These students' stories, their experiences and their demonstration of grit, perseverance and love of learning consistently amazed us. And, the students ended the course by showcasing their own self-written and directed films at our first Upward Bound film festival, as pictured here.

To learn more about Upward Bound, go to <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html>.



## PASTOR'S CORNER

### Resurrection people in Ordinary Time



Easter and Pentecost are well behind us, and now we sit in the nondescript period of Ordinary Time on the liturgical calendar. Still, I've had a few experiences of late that keep reminding me of resurrection – the reality that not everything that seems dead, is.

The first gentle prompt came while walking through the backyard-turned-prairie at the home of Paul and Claire Spilseth during the recent tour and picnic they held. The purpose of the gathering was to showcase a fully mature prairie so individuals could see what People's Church is working to achieve via our prairie project at People's Park.

A fairly urban girl with little deep knowledge of the outdoors and how eco-systems work, I was like a sponge soaking up all the information being shared as we walked around Claire and Paul's yard. Then the revelation came.

Paul said on a regular basis he sets fire to the yard and burns it all away. I'd heard of this practice before, but it didn't truly dawn on me until that very moment what actually takes place through that fiery procedure.

He used the language of a horticultural expert to explain the process, and I translated it as this: By singeing the land, the desired plants are empowered to grow and thrive. Through ground that appears to be dead, life springs forth with vigor, and weeds that choke take the fallback position.

How absolutely wonderful! Resurrection at its finest.

My other recent ah-ha moment came in the copier room attached to my office at the church. Kimberly and I salvaged a plant that had brown, crackly leaves and re-housed it in the copier room. It looked pitiful, and quite frankly I was all set to throw it away.

Kimberly suggested otherwise, and I watched as she took scissors to each stalk, cutting them back to nubs. I had doubts, but said OK in my head. We went about our business and the work of the church.

Then one day I noticed small shoots springing forth from the stalks. They were green, healthy, alive. I smiled at the new growth and wondered how I ever doubted. Resurrection, once again, at its finest. *Cont. on next page*





**Birthdays and Anniversaries are back by popular demand!**

**July Birthdays**

- 4 Dawn Fetter
- 6 Matt Wulff
- 10 Pastor Toya
- 11 Tom Dusbabek
- 11 Cheri Schwartz
- 28 Tony Graf



**August Birthdays**

- 1 Anne Knutson
- 4 John Siegel
- 8 Kristine Strasburg
- 9 Elaine Santore
- 13 Bob Schwartz
- 14 Jessy Hinze
- 16 Gregg Ellingson
- 21 Gloria Phillips
- 24 Mark Stephan
- 25 Karri Bjork
- 26 Barb Hilliard
- 30 Alex Favilla

**July Anniversaries**

- 17 Jessica & Matthew Buck
- 30 Matt & Emily Wulff

**August Anniversaries**

- 2 Eric & Keely Vandre
- 9 Claire & Mike Bjork
- 19 Dale & Jennifer Shaller
- 27 Rolf Dittmann & Jill Greenhalgh
- 28 Bob & Cheri Schwartz

*Cont. from previous page*

My friends, that's the Good News for us as Resurrection People. Hope still abounds in the bleak spaces and situations that seem to be overtaken by "death." And sometimes the newness that springs forth from that darkness, from the tomb, is much more vibrant and life-affirming than what was before.

*"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19*

Let that knowledge sink into your mind and envelope your spirit as you journey through your own versions of life in this Ordinary Time. And let each of us be willing and ready to share that message with others we encounter along the way.

Peace,  
Pastor Toya



### Grant helps fund music of hope

Building on People’s Congregational Church’s commitment to music and the arts, and thanks to a grant from The John Richard Memorial Endowment, PCC will host a program centered on music as a catalyst for hope.



Plans for the event are still underway, but dates are being explored in October and November for the inspirational experience. An invitation also is being extended to the Twin Cities-based SeVy Gospel Quartet, which has previously performed at People’s Church, as well as to an artist or group based in the St. Croix Valley.

Bravo to Kathy Iverson for taking the lead on writing the arts grant made available



through the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC). The endowment was established in 2006 to honor John Richard’s lifelong love of music and theater. It awards up to \$500 to NACCC active member churches of 200 members or less that are planning a fine or performing arts event in their church.

People’s Church was chosen as a 2019 recipient of The John Richard Memorial Endowment earlier this summer and awarded \$400 for our upcoming program. Stay tuned to the Mid-week newsletter for details as they unfold.

### New faces to the Pastoral Relations Committee

The People’s Church Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) – the body tasked with supporting and maintaining a healthy relationship between the pastor and the members of the congregation – has new members in this new season of pastoral leadership.

Kudos to Rolf Dittmann, Bob Iverson, Sharri Kinkead, Betsy Stokes and Keely Vandre for graciously agreeing to serve. Please reach out to them should a concern arise that can’t be resolved through one-on-one engagement with Pastor Toya. They also will meet quarterly with her to provide facilitation for any issues she might need assistance with.

Thanks also to the out-going members of the PRC who were faithfully serving when Pastor Linda retired. They are Mary Binger, Carol Dusbabek, Peter Favilla and Dale Shaller.



## LEADERSHIP NEWS

### **The work of the church**

Worship, fellowship and service in the world are central to the life of People's Congregational Church, but church governance is the glue that holds it all together.

People's Church is organized under a congregationalist form of church governance or polity. That means all the decisions that guide the church rest with the local, independent congregation and its members.

Typically each church that functions under a congregationalist structure has its own way of ensuring things run smoothly, and at People's Church a Leadership Team of individuals serving for an elected term help do that.

The People's Church Leadership Team will have several term vacancies starting in January 2020. If you are interested in serving a term or want to know more about what the Leadership Team does, give current Moderator BJ Stokes a call at 651-238-2360. You also may talk to him at church.

Among the recent business of the Leadership Team has been updating and revising the bylaws of the church. That process is nearing its end, and the membership is now being asked to vote on the final version of the bylaws at the congregational meeting set for Sunday, Sept. 15 following worship. Please attend if you are able, and reach out to Sue Favilla if you have questions.

In other Leadership news:

- The Finance Committee of the Leadership Team wants to make sure everyone is aware of the investment and restricted funds policies recently adopted regarding designated funds. The investment guidelines can be viewed [here](#), and the restricted funds policy can be viewed [here](#). See Kimberly for printed copies.
- Pastor Toya, who sits as a non-voting member of the Leadership Team, represented the church at the June annual meeting of National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, of which PCC has been an long-standing member. As a first-timer she spent much of her time listening and observing the organization to discover the points of intersection between its work and the mission and values of People's Church. She encourages PCC members to do the same via the NACCC annual report (posted on the church bulletin board) and the website ([www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org).) Likewise, she invites PCC to explore additional organizations supporting congregationalism that also might line up with the values of People's Church, including the United Church of Christ ([www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)) and the Alliance of Baptists ([www.allianceofbaptists.org](http://www.allianceofbaptists.org)).
- The Leadership Team continues to examine security at People's Church, recognizing that the goal is always to create and maintain a welcoming space where all feel safe. The addition of two ushers to greet worshippers on Sundays has been a great step, and other measures are being explored.

## PEOPLE'S CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Church & Office 309 Third St. N., Bayport, Minnesota 55003

*A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES*

SENIOR PASTOR	Rev. Toya Richards, M. Div.
OFFICE MINISTRY COORDINATOR	Kimberly Jackson
WORSHIP ACCOMPANIST & CHOIR DIRECTOR	Sharon Neuenfeldt
MODERATOR	B.J. Stokes
VICE-MODERATOR	Paula Richey
TREASURER	Bill Stokes
CLERK	Sue Favilla/Mary Binger

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Tuesday - Thursdays

TELEPHONE NUMBER (Office) 651-439-5667

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WEBSITE: [www.peoplescongregational.org](http://www.peoplescongregational.org)

 @PCCBayport

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

### Summer Sunday Schedule

9:30 a.m. Worship  
10:30 a.m. Fellowship

### Outdoor Service

Alternate Sundays beginning  
June 9 - Sept. 1



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Bayport MN 55003

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