

NEWSLETTER

BUILD. SERVE. STAND.



JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
Sundays at 10am



SHORELINES
October - December 2026

PASTORAL UPDATE



It has been good to be back with all of you following my sabbatical—to see familiar faces, hear what has happened while I was away, and step back into the work of ministry together. I returned feeling grateful for this community and also very aware of what an extraordinary gift the past twenty weeks were for me and my family.

One of the unexpected gifts of sabbatical was realizing that I hadn't actually been given more hours in a day—I was simply able to receive those hours differently. For over four months, time felt less like something to manage and more like something to treasure. There was room, day after day, for the things that renew me: reading more than I ever have, running and walking and trying new gym classes, lingering over coffee and meals, taking little outings, and spending unhurried time with people I love. I discovered how different life feels when the things that restore us aren't occasional rewards for getting everything else done, but part of the rhythm of our days.

There were bigger adventures, too. I traveled to Oregon and New York for experiences centered around storytelling, and our family spent several weeks traveling together in Europe. Europe was incredible for all six of us. We encountered different languages and foods, navigated unfamiliar cities and train stations, walked many, many miles, depended on one another differently, and regularly found ourselves outside our routines and comfort zones. Our world got a little bigger, and we found a lot of delight along the way.

Of course, coming home meant returning to more commitments and far fewer wide-open days. I can't recreate sabbatical life, but I'm figuring out how to carry some of its gifts with me. Can I keep making room to read? Walk somewhere instead of always driving? Linger over coffee rather than rushing to the next thing? Notice something beautiful, follow my curiosity, or choose delight even when the calendar is full?

Perhaps the real spiritual work of sabbatical begins after sabbatical. Scripture gives us Sabbath not simply as a break from real life, but as a different way of understanding what makes a life good and whole. I learned how much practices like movement, reading, exploring, lingering, connecting, and noticing help me feel grounded and alive. The challenge is making room for them in a more scheduled day.

And I wonder what that invitation looks like for all of us: What makes you feel most alive, grounded, and connected to God and to other people? How much room does it have in your actual life? What would it look like to make just a little more space for it? Perhaps part of Sabbath is learning to recognize what restores us—and then making room for it, even in the midst of full and busy lives.

BROOKE HEERWALD STEINER
LEAD PASTOR

brooke@excelsiorumc.org
office: 952.474.5471 x103

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FALL CALENDAR

Sundays:

10am - Worship & Sunday School for ages 4 through 5th grade

Communion on October 4, November 1, and December 6

Children's Interactive Services on October 4 and November 22 (No Sunday School)

Christmas Pageant: December 22

Special Events & Services

Gratitude Festival: November 18

Red Cross Blood Drive: December 1

Ministry

ICA Food Distribution: October 14 & 28, November 11 & 25, December 9 & 23

Environmental & Social Justice Meetings: October 8, November 12, December 10

Music

Joyful Noise: Wednesdays at 6pm

Four Plus More: Wednesdays at 6:45pm

EUMC Choir: Wednesdays at 7:30pm

EUMC Youth Choir (age 4-17): Sundays at 11am

See Page 8 for more information on groups!

Holiday Schedule

The church office will be closed on November 25, November 26, December 28, and January 4. The office will also close early, at 12pm, on December 24, and December 31.

Dates and events are subject to change. Be sure to check the most up-to-date calendar on our website:

<https://excelsiorumc.org/calendar>



CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES



Children & Youth Summer Recap

EUMC children, youth, and their families had fun and fellowship this summer! Here are a few highlights:

- Pizza at the Park Kickoff to Summer
- Big Stone Mini Golf and Sculpture Garden
- Water Day
- Middle School Summer Festival Camp
- High School Service-Learning Trip to Chicago
- Vacation Bible School
- Youth Led Worship Service

Superheroes VBS

We had 41 kids attend Superheroes VBS, plus an additional 10 youth and a dozen adults who served as volunteers. Thank you to everyone who participated to make VBS a success!

New Sunday School Format

As our Sunday School program continues to grow, we are excited to introduce a new structure beginning this fall. By dividing our elementary-aged children into two age-appropriate groups, we can better meet children where they are developmentally, build stronger relationships, and create learning experiences that are engaging and meaningful for every age. Supporting two Sunday School classrooms will require four volunteers each Sunday, which will include a volunteer Lead Teacher & Classroom Helper in each room. Please reach out to Kallie if you are interested in getting involved to support this growing ministry.



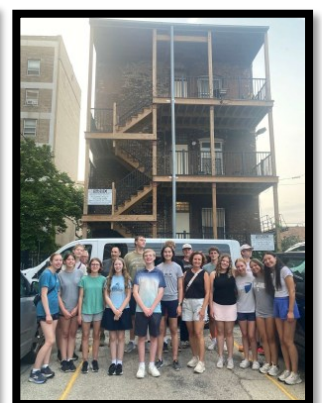


Youth Update

“We Are One” was the sermon series in August that perfectly captured our Youth Sunday on August 16 where we shared our summer highlights.

Middle School Summer Festival Camp at Gustavus was four days of ecumenical togetherness. Youth and leaders from several different churches came together to celebrate what we have in common. Camp is a special place of music, all kinds of fun and games, and meaningful conversations. With the lead of our fantastic speaker, Rebecca, we explored who Jesus was and how he lived. We learned we are created for community and walking out our faith together.

We teamed up with youth and leaders from Immanuel Lutheran Church for our Chicago high school service-learning trip. We served meals each day at a local church, cleaned up the streets in the neighborhood, and helped with the homeless shelter of the Jesus People. As a group, we participated in morning devotions, songs, and team building activities. We had great joy exploring the city, the beach at Lake Michigan, Millenium Park, Navy Pier, a water taxi ride to Chinatown for dinner, and even fit in a White Sox vs Yankees game. We grew in faith together and created some wonderful memories!





LEADERSHIP UPDATE

The Leadership Team is thankful for all the ways our community, and especially our staff, stepped up to make this summer a success. Ministries thrived across our multigenerational community. In worship, we were blessed by multiple guest preachers, a thoughtful lay sermon series, and inspiring music shared by our many talented musicians.

The Trustees also moved the planned parking lot resurfacing project forward, affirming our commitment to providing a safe and welcoming environment for everyone who visits our building. Completed on budget, the project was made possible by the continued generosity of this community. We have heard many positive comments about the continuity with the improvements made in partnership with So-Hi Community Park to care for and enhance our grounds.

As fall begins, we look forward to welcoming Pastor Brooke back from her time of renewal while kicking off a new season of programming. The Leadership Team also extends its sincere thanks to Pastor Terry for her leadership, support, and partnership with our staff during Brooke's absence.

Your Leadership Team

Leadership Chair
Julie Newell

Communications
Kaitlin Holm

Finance
Kurt Jewell, Gabe Wiebenga

Ministry Team Liaisons
Jennifer Brady-Johnson,
Beth Firkins

Staff Parish
Phil Pulitzer, Bill Lester

Trustees
Lynn Hughes, Jesse Nelson

CHURCH CENTER UPDATE

We are in the process of changing to a new church management system called Planning Center. Our previous system has become obsolete and no longer meets the needs of our congregation. The accompanying mobile app, Church Center, will provide a convenient, connected place for members and friends to participate in the life of EUMC.



Church Center

One of the first features we will introduce is a new online directory. In the coming weeks, members will begin receiving individual invitations to participate. Unlike a traditional printed directory, participation is optional. Each person can choose whether to be included and which personal or household information to share. We recognize that this will be a significant change, particularly for members who are less comfortable with technology, and we will provide instructions and personal support throughout the process.

As our use of Church Center grows, we will explore additional features to support ministry groups, event registrations, attendance, and check-ins. Church Center will also eventually provide members with access to their contribution history and giving statements.

We are excited about the opportunities Church Center will provide and ask for your patience, feedback, and support as we introduce its features gradually and learn together how it can best serve our congregation.



EXCITING PROGRESS AT SO-HI COMMUNITY PARK

The new basketball courts at So-Hi Community Park are officially complete—and they are already giving neighborhood youth and families a new place to play, move and gather together. A family-friendly community celebration will mark this exciting milestone in the spring!

While the completed courts are a major step forward, our work is not finished. We continue to raise funds for the park's next improvements, including a shade structure, gardens and landscaping, benches, soccer nets, game tables and other amenities that will help make So-Hi a welcoming community gathering place for all ages.

Thank you to everyone who has supported So-Hi Community Park through donations, volunteering, encouragement and advocacy. The park continues to grow because our community believes in creating a place where everyone belongs.



Adult Groups at EUMC

Are you looking to get more connected with other adults at EUMC? Below is a list of our current adult groups that meet weekly, monthly or a couple times a year. Please see EUMC website for most updated information. All groups meet at EUMC unless noted.

Men's Bible Study

Monday, 7:30-9am, weekly

A group of men who meet for book discussions and to support each other. Join us for donuts and discussion. Contact Lynn Hughes.

Pastor's Bible Study

Monday, 9:30-10:30am, weekly

Pastor Brooke leads a discussion of the upcoming week's scripture. No preparation required- just come! Contact Pastor Brooke.

Brown Bag Discussion Group

Monday, 11am-noon, weekly

A women's group who meet to discuss books and current events. Contact Kay Thompson.

Movement Ministry

Tuesday, 1pm, weekly

Join a group of adults for a walk inside the church, praying for those in our church family and faith community. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes and bring your water bottle. Contact Tiffany Frazier.

Stretched & Balanced

Tuesday, 1:30pm, weekly

A gentle exercise class. We use chairs for seated exercises, if desired. There is no charge, but attendees are encouraged to bring donations for our Little Free Pantry each week. Contact Tiffany Frazier.

Men's Support Group

Saturday, 8-10am, weekly

A group of men who meet to share updates on their lives and support one another. Contact Jeffrey Johnson.

Sarah/Lydia Circle

2nd Thursday, 1 pm, monthly

A women's group who meet for connection, service and learning. Contact Joyceln Hughes.

Contemplative Practices Group

3rd Sunday, 11:15am-1pm, monthly

Each month focuses on a new contemplative prayer practice. Contact Pastor Brooke.

Prime Timers

Adults (primarily age 60 and up), meet for fellowship, prayer, and various social events, including a weekend get-away, throughout the year. Contact Kristie Lester or Susan Dragsten.

SERVE OTHERS.

OUTREACH MINISTRY UPDATES

The Outreach Team has had a busy summer, responding to a growing need in our community. The Little Free Pantry is used more frequently while students are home from school, and we're grateful for the generous donations that allow us to restock it daily with shelf-stable food and hygiene items. The twice-monthly ICA events are also serving more families—our most recent event provided food assistance to a record 57 families in just three hours! Thank you for continuing to support these ministries and help ensure our neighbors have access to the food and essentials they need.

The Backpack Giveaway on August 12 was a wonderful community event! We provided 107 backpacks filled with school supplies to excited students and grateful parents. We had supplies for preschoolers, incoming college students, and even several students attending school in the U.S. for the first time. A local Hennepin County librarian was also on hand to share free books with families, while a teacher from the Minnetonka ECFE program provided information about their free classes. 25 refurbished bikes were also distributed by the Excelsior Lions Club and His House. It was truly a community event in the best sense of the word. Thanks to generous donations from our congregation and UMW—more than \$1,700—we were able to purchase supplies and many of the backpacks. Congregation members also donated more than 60 backpacks. Thank you for making this one of the true highlights of our summer!

This December, we will once again sponsor our annual Reverse Advent event. Watch for collection boxes and a shopping list beginning in mid-November. The 24 food and hygiene items collected through this drive help keep our Little Free Pantry stocked for many months. Thank you for helping us continue to care for our neighbors in need!



SIMPSON SHELTER UPDATES

EUMC continues to serve suppers and periodic lunches at Simpson Homeless shelter in Uptown Minneapolis. The new shelter building includes 42 supported apartments and an on-site health clinic in addition to the 72 bed extended stay shelter.

EUMC's upcoming serving schedule is: Supper: Tues, Oct 20; Mon, Nov. 16; and Tues, Dec 15. Lunch: Tues, Oct 6. To be added to our email list to help with this ministry, send your contact info to Elizabeth at the church office OR talk to one of the coordinators: Jill Jewell, Jane Pole, Jim Gagnon, and Carrie Tietz. You can also support our ministry financially through a donation to our church specifying "Simpson."



STAND TOGETHER.

SAFETY TEAM UPDATE

Minnesota just marked the one year anniversary of the Annunciation School Shooting. This tragedy in our own backyard sadly reminded us that these types of things can happen here. While statistically unlikely, we recognized the need to prepare for risks.

In response, our church community took action. EUMC started the process of reviewing and updating its safety plans and processes. In the past year we have switched from an informal security stance to a formal safety posture.

EUMC's Leadership Team now formally sponsors a Safety Team and has developed a Safety Plan and written guidance on church service safety, medical emergencies, and weather events. Additional guidelines addressing child and parishioner safety, fires and structural collapse, and property crimes are under development. The work is ongoing and we welcome your help.

The EUMC Safety Team strives to operate discretely, in the background. The team is not uniformed and does not carry any weapons. Its focus is safety. To focus just on security would be to overlook the greatest risks to our guests, everyday risks such as tripping hazards, first aid equipment, fire prevention, and bad weather.

You probably won't even recognize who is covering safety duties on Sunday mornings. While keeping a watchful eye for trouble, the day's safety representative may be escorting guests to the front door, holding doors, or just saying good morning. But know that on Sunday mornings, as you worship behind the closed sanctuary doors, that the Safety Team is keeping an eye on the foyer, parking lot, and your belongings.

The Safety Team could benefit from additional team members. The only requirements are being a church member and being able to pass a criminal background check. The team meets quarterly and each member currently provides safety coverage for one Sunday every couple of months. Interested members should contact EUMC's Safety Coordinator Jim Stromberg (safety@excelsiorumc.org) or the church office.

PREPARING FOR THE 2026 ELECTION



Minnesota's General Election is Tuesday, November 3, 2026. Absentee voting begins September 18, and early in-person voting begins October 16.

Election Day is November 3. If you are already registered to vote, you can visit mnvotes.gov to find your polling place, view a sample ballot, and see the candidates and questions that will appear on your ballot. Your ballot may include federal, state, judicial, county, city, school board, township, and local races or questions, depending on where you live.

Take some time to review your sample ballot and learn about the candidates and issues before Election Day. [VOTE411.org](https://vote411.org) provides additional nonpartisan voter information, and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota offers general election information and candidate forums.

FINANCE REPORT

Before we fully transition into new seasons outside, let's take a quick look back to summer at EUMC. There were noticeable changes around the church grounds... a resurfaced parking lot, a new lighted basketball court, landscaping around the SOHI Community Park. Each of these things help the church live into the "All Are Welcome Here" statement we so proudly state with our colored doors.

In addition to the visible changes, the financial position of EUMC continues to thrive. EUMC finished summer (a typically slower time for giving) ahead of last year. Overall giving year to date is up from last year as well, in line with this amazing congregation's commitments. This enables not only the big projects but provides flexibility to address lesser seen needs as well.

All of this is only possible through your generosity and the great relationship with the SOHI Community Park Team.

Thank you, and I hope your summer was as exciting as it was around EUMC!

-Kurt Jewell & Gabe Wiebenga



PURPOSE

Loving Beyond Ourselves

VISION

To be known as a nurturing, inclusive and courageous Christian community.

MISSION

Sharing God's love by building community, serving others, and standing for justice.

CONTACT US

Excelsiorumc.org
881 Third Ave, Excelsior, MN 55331

STAFF

REV. BROOKE HEERWALD STEINER

Lead Pastor

952.474.5471 Ext. 1 | Brooke@excelsiorumc.org

JEANNIE SHUBITZ

Music Director

Jeannie@excelsiorumc.org

SARAH HEYD

Youth Ministries Director

952.474.5471 Ext. 2 | Sarah@excelsiorumc.org

KALLIE STROH

Children's Ministries Director

952.474.5471 Ext. 4 | Kallie@excelsiorumc.org

ELIZABETH GUILLAUME

Office Administrator

952.474.5471 Ext. 3 | Office@excelsiorumc.org

BEVERLY ECKHARDT

Treasurer

952.474.5471 Ext. 5 | Bev@excelsiorumc.org

BLAIR PRAX

Facilities Manager

Blair@excelsiorumc.org

JEFFERY FAWBUSH

Instrumentalist & Songwriter

JAMES LeVOIR

A/V Coordinator

ALYSSA SMITH

Nursery Childcare

DIANE BAYSINGER

Nursery Childcare



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