



The Flame

**Byron United Methodist Church
Byron, MN**

SEPTEMBER 2025

FROM THE PASTOR:

What does one say in response to great wickedness – the kind of evil that we saw unfold this past week at the Annunciation Church and School in Minneapolis? Two children were murdered. Many others were wounded physically by bullets and mentally by the trauma of what they experienced. It was a diabolical act by a demon-afflicted person who gave themselves up to hatred. It was a fiendish display that exposed – once again – the terrible corruption of a society that has lost its way and a nation that is tragically addicted to bloodlust and violence. And it happened in the sanctuary of the Lord as they worshipped and prayed.

My heart aches for the children and their families, and I am angry about the brokenness of our world. It is tempting to throw up our hands in despair, to be drawn into the divisiveness and bitterness of the aftermath, or even to give up on the God who didn't prevent the massacre of the innocents.

Friends, do not give in and do not give up.

The vows we take in our baptism and affirmation of faith as United Methodists start with this question:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

Wickedness and evil attacked a place of worship and prayer. In response, I believe that worship and prayer must be our first acts of renunciation and rejection towards wickedness and evil right now. Psalm 111 opens with,

*Praise the Lord!
I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

Even after what happened in that congregation, are you able to gather with our congregation to give thanks to the Lord?

Even if you can't do so wholeheartedly, can you come anyway, for the sake of renouncing the spiritual forces of wickedness and rejecting the evil powers of this world that don't want you to praise the Lord?

Friends, do not give in and do not give up.

The second question in our baptismal vows is:

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

We might ask God, "Why didn't You stop this?" It's a fair question. God might also ask of us, "Why didn't *you* stop this?" Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we have accepted freedom and power from God to resist evil, injustice, and oppression. We are not supposed to run away from evil, ignore injustice, or accept oppression. We are called to resist these things in whatever forms they present themselves. Finger-pointing isn't enough. Getting pulled into the distractions of the culture wars won't accomplish anything.

So, after we have prayed, after we have worshipped, what will we do to respond to this evil act of violence and repair the harm that has been done? What will we do to fix the injustice being done to our children who go to school in fear that their campus might be the next target? How will we lift others above the oppressive burden of despair and offer them real hope that things can be better?

Friends, do not give in and do not give up.

In Christ,

Pastor Andy Petter

¹ Note that Jesus offers a word of caution here in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income," which was a brag about his own righteousness cloaked in prayer. The tax collector admitted his sin and begged for mercy. Even as we renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness and reject the evil powers of this world, we should not forget to repent of our own sins that feed those very forces and powers in this world.

SUNDAY SCHOOL 2025-2026: Sunday School start date is Sept. 7. We have classes for pre-K to 1st grade, 2nd to 3rd grade, 4th to 6th grade, and youth. All are welcome! If you have any questions or would be interested in helping with Sunday school, please speak with Kelly VanDeWalker.

READY, SET, WORSHIP! and LIFT: Ready, Set, Worship! starts again on Sunday, September 14th. Note that we are moving this service to the second Sunday of the month. Also, we are starting a new program to follow RSW! called LIFT (Living in Faith Together) that will replace the regular Sunday school and coffee fellowship. As with RSW!, LIFT will be for people of all ages. Lunch will be included as part of LIFT as we play together, pray together, study God's word together, and eat together as a church family.



VBS 2025 SUMMARY: Thank you to everyone who made our Camp Firelight Vacation Bible School a great success! We had 34 children attend at least one day with an average attendance of 27. They learned to trust God to help them, guide them, and work with them, even when they are afraid. For the mission project, 64 UMCOR school kits were collected and assembled for delivery to Midwest Mission. Your donations for the mission were a huge help and the school kits will do good for the kids who need them.

A special thank you to Marlene Abel, Erin Cutting, Josephina Cutting, Karen Cutting, Jessica Falk, Alex Fritze, Luke Fritze, Dee Dee Hart, Rebeca Holtegaard, Judy Luttmers, Chris Miller, Stacey Pappas, Ann Riggs, Holly Rolandson, Kelly VanDeWalker, Derek Weis, Emaleigh Weis, Sara Weis, Kathleen Williams, and Hunter Zelinski for their work as leaders and helpers, as well as to the Pine Island United Methodist Church for lending us the Camp Firelight curriculum and supplies.

CHOIR ANNOUNCEMENT: The Grace Notes Choir will resume weekly rehearsals on Wednesday, September 10th, at 6:30 pm. We are glad to be welcoming Joe Kelley back as the choir director! If you would like to sing with us, feel free to show up for rehearsal. Please contact Pastor Andy with any questions.



NEW MEMBERS: We were pleased to have Marlene Abel and Sara Weis join our congregation as members on Sunday, August 17th. It was a special occasion for all present to reaffirm our faith in the Triune God and to re-establish our commitments in faith to one another. Thanks be to God!

GRIEF GROUP: Our next grief group meeting at Byron UMC is **Wed., Sept. 10th, from 10-11 a.m.** The group offers opportunities to talk about things that cannot be discussed in other settings and to find others who can relate to their situation. The scope of the group is helping others find comfort, healing and relationships through conversations and fellowship with others. For more information, please contact Pastor Andy or Marlene Abel.

FINANCE SUMMARY: The following is a summary of the General Fund ending Aug. 31, 2025.

beginning balance August 1, 2025:	\$ 10,731.92
plus August income:	\$ 11,315.00
less August expenses:	\$ 13,172.55
less transfer to savings:	\$ 1,000.00
ending balance August 31, 2025:	\$ 7,874.37

CREATION CARE TIPS: What's the deal with GMOs? GMO or genetically modified organism is a plant, animal, microorganism or other organism whose genetic makeup has been modified in a laboratory using genetic engineering or transgenic technology. This creates combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and virus genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods. Corn, soybeans, and others are currently in production in the US. You can find others listed at **NonGMOProject.org** and should be labeled bioengineered (BE). Some food products are exempt from carrying the label so it's up to the consumer to use the QR code to investigate.

Should I avoid GMO foods? GMO foods are modified and grown to be resistant to synthetic pesticides and herbicides, which can lead to overuse. The herbicide RoundUp's usage rose 1500% between 1995 and 2015. It is now thought to be a carcinogen because of people developing cancer after using it. It is biologically persistent and chronic. As weeds become resistant to glyphosate, even more toxic pesticides are used. One in three Americans have detectable levels of the herbicide 2,4-D-a 23% rise since 2001. This chemical is an ingredient in the bioweapon Agent Orange.

The production of GMO foods requires mono-cropping - growing the same crop year after year. This depletes the soil and leads to use of nitrogen fertilizers made from fossil fuels. Besides health risks to workers and consumers from pesticides, it has led to pollinator decline, creation of chemical-resistant superweeds and pests, disruption of local ecosystems, and cross pollination with organically grown plants.

You can avoid GMOs by looking for products with Non-GMO Project Verified label. To avoid pesticides, look for the USDA Organic label. Tell food companies you don't want GMOs or pesticides in their products, (Learn to write a letter to a company at **greenamerica.org/companyletter**)

Crittenton, Anya. *What's Up With GMOS?* Green American Spring 2022

Article submitted by Cathy Huntoon

THANK YOU: Thank you to Marty Nelson for all his mowing during the hottest months this summer, and also to Adam Falk for filling in for Marty. Thank you to Paul Riggs for his painting project of church side doors, and to both Paul and Ann Riggs for their help in cleaning while the custodian was on vacation. – Trustee's

TRUSTEE'S SEEKING VOLUNTEERS: The Trustees are always seeking volunteers for any variety of jobs, anywhere from mowing the lawn, maintaining the flower bed, or any inside special cleaning or upkeep that either you see needing to be done and are willing to do. Use your time and talent to help keep your church in good shape. Contact Roger Vick with any questions or ideas.

PRAYERS FOR ONE ANOTHER:

For those who need healing: God of compassion, source of life and health, strengthen, restore, and relieve those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, especially now: Ruth Wescott (cousin of Janet Sinning), Julie McCoy, Sandy Fitzpatrick (niece of Karin Byers), Suzy Anderson, Karin Byers, Loren Walters, Donna Walters, Claire Field, Nancy Kelly, Doris Frey, Treaver Bleichner (grandson of Julene Bleichner), Dick Hart (brother of Judy Luttmers), David Larsen, Calvin Bell, Vicki McIntosh, Paige Reder, Sara (granddaughter of Anita Carlson), Max Smith (son of Barb Smith), Wayne Petersen (friend of Julene Bleichner), Debbie Webb, so that they may receive healing and help in You.

For those who have died: Eternal God, by Your steadfast love, open Your arms of mercy to those who have died, especially now: Jim Miller (brother of Suzy Anderson); Kirsten Hart (mother of Aubree, Gauge and Hunter); Patricia Klingsporn, Debbie Schwartz (sister of Kathy Nerlien); Dan McCollough, Russ Wright, Anita Nelsen, Rev. Deanna Woodward (daughter of the late Ken and Lennis Sigrist), Greg Rud, Dawn Bidwell, Jean Franklin (mother of Rev. Sharon Nelson), Loyola Shappell, William 'Dirk' Dehn, Ron Fogelson; that they may find their place with You.

For those who mourn: Gracious God, whose Son knew our sorrows, our tears, and our death, look with compassion on those who grieve, especially now: the family of Jim Miller; the family of Kirsten Hart; the family of Patricia Klingsporn; the family of Debbie Schwartz; the family of Dan McCollough; the family of Russ Wright; the family of Anita Nelsen; the family of Rev. Deanna Woodward; the family of Greg Rud; the family of Dawn Bidwell; the family of Jean Franklin; the family of Loyola Shappell; the family of William 'Dirk' Dehn; the family of Ron Fogelson; and all their friends who mourn with them, so that they may be comforted by Your sure presence and filled with hope in Your goodness.

For the homebound, those in care facilities, and their caregivers: God of all seasons of life, bring comfort to those who are vulnerable, tired, or weak, especially now: Suzy Anderson, David Larsen, Nancy Kelly, Bette Josephson, Calvin Bell, Loren Walters, Donna Walters, Alan Bourquin, Debbie Byers, John Lloyd, Carol Ramthun, Barb Smith; so that they may be blessed and at peace each day. Inspire and encourage those who care for them, so that their work may be filled with grace and their love may be multiplied.

For those who celebrate: God of blessing, we praise You for the joy we have received and the gift we have in one another. We lift up special thanks for those who celebrate milestones in life – birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, the birth of a child, graduations, promotions, and new jobs – and we ask Your continued blessing upon them, now and always.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you or someone you know would like to be included in these prayers, please contact Pastor Andy directly at 210-288-9477 or Andrew.L.Petter@gmail.com.

BEARPACK PROGRAM: Byron UMC continues its pledge to give \$200 monthly (Sept. – May) toward the BearPack Program with Byron Schools. This program helps those families with children in need in our schools. *All donations at coffee fellowship time go toward this fund.* Please consider supporting this great need in our community by giving generously to the cookie jar each week!

WOMEN'S SHELTER AND SUPPORT CENTER: Byron UMC's ongoing mission is support for the Womens' Shelter and Support Center. They also shelter men and their families (pets are welcome too) that need to get out of an abusive situation as well. Once they have a safe place to live they need to set up house and we can help by donating items to the shelter for them. There is a receptacle in the narthex for your donations. You aren't obligated to donate expensive items or donate at all. Help if you can. Here is a list of needed items:

School supplies: Scissors, Folders plastic (Red, Blue, Yellow and Green), Crayons, Colored pencils, Highlighters, Markers, Pencils (sharpened preferred), Erasers, Glue (bottles and sticks).

Gift Cards - Visa, Target, Walmart, Hy-Vee, Kwik Trip (Gas, Food, Supplies, Car Repairs, etc.)

Kids Activities gift cards i.e. Movie passes, Bowling, Bounce House, Dairy Queen, McDonalds, Pizza places, Arcade, etc.

Adult color/activity books & colored pencils

Non-Perishable Food / Snacks (individual packets, i.e. Potato chips, granola bars, fruit bars, pretzel bits, raisins, fruit packets, animal crackers, and microwave popcorn

Baby wipes, Pull-ups (size 3-4T, 5-6T).

Paper products (toilet paper, napkins, tissues); **Cleaning Supplies** (dish soap, toilet bowl cleaner, disinfectant spray)

Eco-friendly plates, bowls (microwaveable) **cutlery.**

Kitchen Utensils (spatulas, whisks, wooden spoons, measuring cups/spoons, peelers, graters, cutting boards, knife sets, ladles, can openers, kitchen scissors, baking sheets, pot holders)

New Pots & Pans, Small Appliances (Coffee pots, mixers, can openers, etc.)

New Pillows, New Bath Towels, New Twin Sheet sets, Women's PJ's - all sizes

New Laptops & Tablets, New Tracfone

Shampoo and conditioner (full-sized)

If you have something you think they could use not on the list, please contact Janet Sinning at jsinning@charter.net or 507-251-1657.

ONLINE GIVING: Offerings can be made using electronic fund transfers from your bank account or by credit/debit card and have the option to be set as a recurring gift. Please go to <https://byronmn.umcchurches.org/giving> which takes you to the giving page or scan this QR code with your smartphone. Once there, follow the instructions for registration.



USE FULL CHURCH ADDRESS FOR MAILING: When sending mail to the church, please be sure to include the P.O. Box 146 in the address. The post office has been returning mail to senders when the PO Box # is not included. Please use 503 1st Ave. NW, PO Box 146, Byron, MN 55920.

CHURCH CONTACTS:

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