



Winter  
2025



LUF NEWSLETTER

## LUF's Empty Bowls Fundraiser donates \$28,000 to Shelter House and The Thunder Bay Food Bank



Pyteke Blaauw (pictured in each photo), presents cheques to Allison Hill, Board Chair of the Thunder Bay Food Bank and



to Champagne Thomson, Development Manager of Shelter House Thunder Bay.



This Cheque Presentation and Sponsor Appreciation event was held at Roots Community Food Centre on February 10, 2025.

Also pictured are the three people who started this local fundraiser in 2000, Pyteke with potters, Alan Moon (left), and Fritz Lehmberg (right).

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# Sunday Service Highlights

Our First Sunday Service gathering was held on September 8, 2024; although the purchase of 1502 Moundale Ave wasn't completed until September 9, 2024. After several months of waiting, Dianne Potts couldn't help but photograph the long awaited moment from the piano bench.



The December 8th service was hosted by Lay Chaplains, and officially welcomed those who joined membership in 2024: Pictured below right are (L-R) Bob Guy, Mona Chiasson, Frank Denson, and Raija Warkentin with New Lay Chaplain Phyllis Danu, and outgoing Lay Chaplain Heather Morrison, who will continue as Lay Chaplain Emeritus, in the background. Pictured below right are the four new members with Lay Chaplains Heidi Wahl, Phyllis Danu, Brenda Diebel, Heather Morrison, and chair of the Lay Chaplaincy Committee, Jean Armstrong. The Lay Chaplains take great pride in providing meaningful weddings, memorials, and ceremonies of significance throughout Thunder Bay and area.



A service featuring the transition of the building from the congregation of St. Volodymyr's Ukrainian Orthodox Church to Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship was held whereby Sonia Prodanyk, life-long member of St. Volodymyr's spoke of the history of the building and of the Ukrainian community throughout the Thunder Bay area. This day also featured Ukrainian music provided by the Lastivka Bandura Capella.

## Empty Bowls and Social Action



Leading up to United Nations World Food Day, potters in the community made and donated 500 bowls, and restaurants prepared and donated soups, bread, desserts, and coffee for the 25th Empty Bowls Fundraising event.

The event had been held at the Moose Hall for several years, but this year, complications resulted in a last minute switch to Confederation College. A Take Out was held at lunch time, for 152 people, followed by a sit-down dinner for 343 in the evening, A 50/50 draw and raffle baskets helped boost the fundraising effort. Each ticket holder enjoyed a simple soup meal, and took home a handmade pottery bowl, as a reminder of those who struggle with food security, and have nothing but an empty bowl. Gratitude is extended to Robin Cooper, Chair of the Empty Bowls planning committee, for coordinating such a successful event!



### More Social Action:

- Volunteers from the LUF congregation continue to provide a monthly meal at Shelter House
- LUF hosted Amnesty International's Write for Rights Campaign on December 8th (close to United Nations Human Rights day).
- Throughout the year, we have had intermittent fundraising for our chosen 2024 Global and Local charities: LifeWater Canada, and the Elizabeth Fry Society. The Lakehead Unitarian youth and friends dedicated special efforts, collecting gifts for recipients at Elizabeth Fry Society, at Christmastime. Our 2025 Global and Local Charities have been democratically selected: Canada-Ukraine Foundation and the DEK Foundation



## Culture Days Plein Air Event

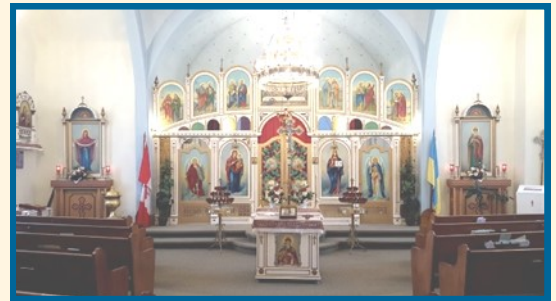


On September 21, 2024, Irene Warmenhoven organized a Plein Air art event as a part of Thunder Bay's Culture Days. Irene was raised Ukrainian Catholic, and has studied Iconography. There were seven artists who set up outdoors at different angles to create their artistic impressions of the gold-domed church, (prior to the removal of the small domes) Below is one artist posing for the camera while displaying his work.



# New Year, New Home, New Challenges, New Hope

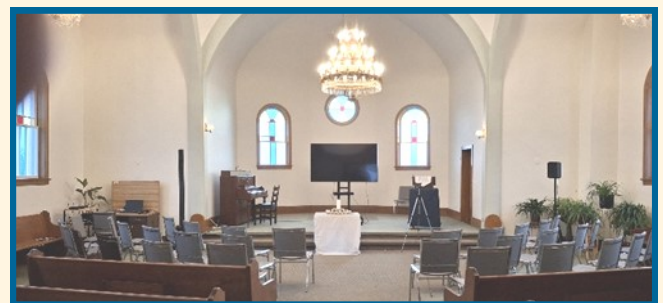
In our 2024 Summer-Fall newsletter, our president Sandra McIver posed the question, “What will our sacred space look like? What makes you feel you are in a sacred space? As we begin to settle into our new home, what kind of tasks are you willing and able to do?” Welcome to 2025. As we engage with this new year, answers to that question have begun to emerge.



Over the past four plus months, Unitarian Place has begun to be transformed from St. Volodymyr Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the spiritual home of Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship.

One of the first changes saw the roof re-shingled, and removal of the small domes and Orthodox crosses. Next came the painting of the main hall/sanctuary and creating a sacred space for our community. As the fall progressed, so did the visual and audio quality of our Sunday services. From after-service coffee and conversation to a highly successful potluck supper, social aspects of community grew apace. In December a children/youth evening and sleepover followed by a youth led Sunday service were a resounding triumph.

Gratitude for all of this accomplishment is owed to the commitment and efforts of many members and friends of this community. There are too many names to thank here, but you know who you are. I do want to give special thanks to executive Board members Sandra McIver, Dianne Potts, Fred Maycock, and Pyteke Blaauw for all of their efforts.



Moving deeper into 2025, and as we grow into our new home, we have the opportunity to find new ways to continue, and to enhance, our mission of working toward an inclusive, just, compassionate, and sustainable society. Continued on next page ....

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I think that given the current state of affairs globally our beloved community can and needs to be, a source of support, joy, and hope. As individuals we can become overwhelmed with negativity, and we need to be able to counter that with support and sharing in community. We are a small group, and we cannot on our own solve the world's problems. But we can work on our own health and happiness and become a source of loving kindness, compassion, and justice-seeking for ourselves and for our broader community of Thunder Bay.

Here is my wish and hope for engaging the new year. May we all find joy in our hearts, song on our lips, dance in our feet, and comfort in our community. I invite us all to take stock of our individual and collective resources, to continue to build this beloved community, with loving kindness, compassion, active joy, equanimity, forgiveness. May we be always willing to acknowledge our imperfectness, to strive to be our best selves, to help grow a just and compassionate community, to be a beacon of light and hope for the wider world.

- David Belrose

## The Volunteer Work Behind The Scenes



Robert Van Wyck, Jay Minor, Fred Maycock, and Barry Wolframe picked up the LUF sign to bring it back to Unitarian place, after over three years in storage at Barry's property. The sign is ensconced by the main door for now. Come Spring we will decide on its final location and build a base on which it can be permanently fastened.

Fred Maycock is pictured (below left) making modifications to the stage, and preparing for carpeting, with assistance from Bob Guy and Rob Van Wyck.



Many cleaning projects have been tackled by Irene Semenuk, and crews of volunteer cleaners and organizers, where there have been too many participants to list!

The basement has been getting a deep clean with frequent volunteer gatherings. Pictured at right are Brenda Diebel, and "volunteer cleaning crew" organizer, Pyteke Blaauw.



## Family Friendly Gatherings

We like to socialize, and the congregation filled the basement for our “Fall Fling Pot Luck” dinner, held on November 23, 2024. There were roughly 70 people present, including children. After dinner, groups of mixed ages participated in a Quest, seeking



out answers to questions while getting to know where things are in the new building.

The Social Team has more plans in store:

A “Musical Open House” planned for Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 4:00 pm, to provide an opportunity for the larger community to meet the congregation in a way that is less “church-y”. This concert will feature folk and contemporary music performed by LUF members and friends. A Community BBQ is being planned for June as well.

Oh, the weather outside was frightful, on December 7 - the day that the tree harvesting event was planned for children and youth. Nonetheless, a few stalwart people ventured out in the freezing rain and had some great winter fun. Pictured gathered around the fire at right are (L-R) Lemuel, Ramona, Khanesha, Emily, Barack, “Oma Pyteke” and Mark.



On Saturday, December 14th, 2024, 17 children and youth attended the LUF Youth & Family Kickoff Party. This is the first of several events in the year-long strategy to re-engage Unitarian Universalist youth and families in our faith community. Many youth in attendance are long-time members or friends of LUF and cast a wide net to engage their friends in the activities. The night started at 4:30 pm, with Willa Kargbo assisting and supervising.

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.... Continued from previous page As the youth began to enter the building, Brenda Diebel, and her friend Wendy set up a beautiful Christmas craft, which everyone enjoyed.



Emily set up some Christmas "minute to win it" games where the youth challenged each other to collect marshmallows with paper cups on their hands, stack the tallest marshmallow snowman, or blow an ornament into a paper cup. Pizza was enjoyed at 6 pm, along with many soft drinks and snacks provided by congregation members. Several members stopped by throughout the evening with donations for the "Christmas in a Shoebox" campaign for Elizabeth Fry Society NWO recipients.



Sandra McIver led the youth in organizing and wrapping all donations, which they performed with enthusiasm and creativity. Some artistically inclined kids hand-decorated the wrapping paper, adding a personal touch to each gift. An artificial tree was set up and decorated in the hall. Upstairs, wrapped gifts were placed under the youth-decorated real tree collected at the LUF family tree cutting the weekend before. The sanctuary was filled with dancing and glow sticks, all organized and led by the youth. Then, they switched to karaoke to share their favourite songs and express their talents.

At 9 pm, a chalice was lit. Ramona Lauzon led 15 youths sleeping over through the process of creating a community covenant, which helped to guide the expectations of how to treat one another, the building, and personal belongings while they shared the space. The night wound down at 11 pm when the sanctuary became a place for sleep and the hall for those still very awake. Emily Lauzon and Linzee Martin supervised the night shift. In the morning, participants were greeted by a hot breakfast of pancakes, bacon, and fruit from Pyteke Blaauw, Brenda Gillespie, and Mark Blaauw. The youth carefully cleaned up the sanctuary, moving everything to the balcony, a space they now claim as their own. Overall, it was a fantastic event, with the youth playing a significant role in its success and with meaningful support from the congregation. *-Emily Lauzon*



Note: The next family event will be the afternoon of Sunday, March 2nd at Gammondale Farm.

# LUF CONTACTS



## OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

President:	Sandra McIver	luf.president@gmail.com
Vice President:	Dianne Potts	807-475-4450
Secretary:	Pyteke Blaauw	807-629-2279
Treasurer:		
Past President:	David Belrose	807-623-3347
At Large:	Brenda Gillespie	807-983-2758
	Fred Maycock	416-627-9666
	Irene Semenuk	807-475-5786

## AFFILIATES AND ASSOCIATES

Canadian Unitarian Council (cuc.ca)  
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (cusj.org)  
Unitarian Universalist Association (uaa.org)

## STAFF AND APPOINTED OFFICERS

Administrator / Bookkeeper	Angela Bach	807-344-5980 (Office)	lufship@tbaytel.net
Religious Exploration Coordinator			lufchildren@gmail.com
Lay Chaplains	Brenda Diebel	807-630-6276	
	Heidi Wahl	807-622-1699	
	Phyllis Danu	807-622-7658	
Endowment Fund Trustees	Greg Brumpton		
	Susan Woods		
	Margaret Wanlin		

## LAKEHEAD UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

1502 Mountdale Ave  
Thunder Bay, ON P7E 3A5  
Phone: (807) 344-5980

**LUF Email Address : [lufship@tbaytel.net](mailto:lufship@tbaytel.net)**

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Website: [www.luf.ca](http://www.luf.ca)

*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors of the articles.*

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND CONTACT PEOPLE

Bylaw & Policy	David Belrose
Finance	Brenda Diebel
Lay Chaplaincy	Jean Armstrong
Newsletter	Angela Bach
Nominating	David Belrose
Sunday Services	Brenda Diebel

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