

# Inspire

February 2019

Stories Worth Sharing



Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church  
511 Groveland Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403  
[www.haumc.org](http://www.haumc.org) | 612-871-5303

# 5 CORE Practices of a Fruitful Congregation



## Our Mission

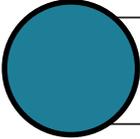
To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

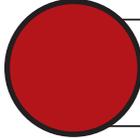
## Our Vision

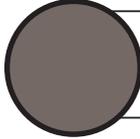
We will grow in our love of God and neighbor, reach new people and heal a broken world.

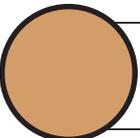
## Our Strategy

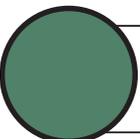
We are committed to the five practices of a fruitful congregation.

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**Radical Hospitality...** encourages Christians to offer the absolute utmost of themselves, their abilities, and their creativity to welcome others into the faith.
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**Passionate Worship...** explores how the ingredient of passion can transform a worship service and offers insights and ideas on how to have worship that deeply touches souls and changes lives.
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**Intentional Faith Development...** shows how high quality learning experiences for all ages mature the spirituality and faith of congregational participants.
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**Risk-Taking Mission and Service...** reminds us that by reaching out and taking risks, churches become the resources God uses to change lives and transform the world.
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**Extravagant Generosity...** shows how generosity enlarges the soul, realigns priorities, connects people to Jesus, and strengthens congregations to fulfill Christ's ministries.

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on the Cover:

On February 17, join us for a Unity Celebration & Shared Worship Service with Brooklyn UMC.

# A Letter from Pastor Judy



Dear Hennepin Friends,

As we wrap up our series, “Building Bridges: Dismantling Racism,” I want to thank all of our volunteers who helped make our Jim Wallis event, *Race, Religion and Response* a success. I have been getting reports from our small group leaders that the additional conversation groups set up especially for guests who attended *Race, Religion and Response* have led to lively and deep conversations. One woman I talked with who is in a LYFE group said, “I am learning so much.”

I am so pleased that the Hennepin congregation has been willing to have these conversations about racism and white privilege. There are many congregations who would find the topic too scary or difficult. I am convinced that if we truly desire to love our neighbors, we must be willing to listen to one another and have these difficult and even painful conversations so that we can dismantle the systemic racism that continues to permeate our community and our country.

What has also become clear to me, especially during recent news cycles, is that racism is not a partisan issue

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—Pastor Judy

and racism is not limited to a particular geographical area. We must continue to work on our own racism and privilege first by acknowledging it with honesty and humility, and then by working at dismantling it whenever and wherever we can. We know that racism and white privilege cannot be dismantled in just six weeks. I will continue to send information to you about ways we can be partners with those who are passionately working to end racism. I hope we can become leaders in the movement to end racism.

This Spring, I will be offering another opportunity to gather to discuss and encourage each other in this effort. Vital Conversations on Racism will meet for six weeks after Easter and it will be open to you and your neighbors. Using videos and study guides prepared by the United Methodist Church’s General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), these discussion sessions will help us to navigate the deep divides our community faces regarding ideology, race, culture, and ethnicity. Please let me know if you are interested in joining these groups.

Anti-racism efforts begin in our hearts and minds, as individuals, as communities, and as families. Our Parenting for LYFE group this month focuses on teaching empathy to children as a key to preventing bullying, racism and other forms of prejudice. Empathy is an expression of love and true fellowship...and we’ll have another chance to celebrate love at the Hennepin Singers concert, “Love is Love is Love is Love,” on February 16. Whether you attend with your sweetheart, your grandchild, your neighbor, or your friends, we know you will enjoy this evening of joyful music and sumptuous

desserts. Everyone is invited--you can get your tickets at [haumc.org/register](http://haumc.org/register).

In a few days, I will be headed to St. Louis as a delegate to the Special Session of the General Conference, where delegates from all over the world will pray and plan for the United Methodist Church’s Way Forward. Before we go, on Sunday, February 17, we’ll celebrate unity and share our worship service with Brooklyn UMC. Our whole community will bless the delegates and pray for the church. Members of the Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus, as well as the Sanctuary Choirs of both congregations, will inspire us with song. It will really be something! After we return from St. Louis, at the worship service on March 3, I’ll share with you the details of what has been decided by the General Conference, and what it means for Hennepin and for our church worldwide.

The most beautiful picture of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven is found in Revelations 3, where all the nations gather, singing and worshipping God. Wouldn’t it be beautiful if Hennepin Avenue United Methodist reflected this multi-racial, multicultural, multi-generational vision? I am working and praying for that day when God’s will will be done.

In mission with you,

Pastor Judy

# The Way Forward: Making Decisions at Special Session

by Rev. Judy Zabel



In just a few weeks, the Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, to receive and act on a report from the Commission on a Way Forward.

You may remember from our conversations with Bishop Ough last year that the 32-member Commission was appointed by the Council of Bishops to examine paragraphs in The Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality, and to explore options to strengthen the unity of the church. The Commission submitted its report last fall, and the delegates of the Special Session will receive and act on it in just a few weeks, on February 23-26.

According to the Commission's report, their mission has been to "bring together persons deeply committed to the future(s) of The United Methodist Church, with an openness to developing new relationships with each other and exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination ... The matters of human sexuality and unity are the presenting issues

for a deeper conversation that surfaces different ways of interpreting Scripture and theological tradition. The work is meant to inform deliberation across the whole church and to help the Council of Bishops in their service to the next General Conference in finding a way forward."

Their vision has been to "design a way for being church that maximizes the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible."

Many of the central debates about human sexuality as it is understood in the United Methodist Church revolve around the role of doctrine, and differing definitions and values of marriage. According to the Commission's report, "Traditionalists value marriage between one man and one woman, and sexual activity within this relationship. Traditionalists also seek greater accountability at every level of the church. Contextualists want to translate the gospel into the varied settings in which God places us. They see this as a missiological calling, and believe that the work of the church can be adapted in a global church. Progressives value full inclusion of all persons in the life of the church, at every level, and this includes the LGBTQ community. They also believe that the church can celebrate same-gender marriages."

To seek a way forward for a global church with diverse social and cultural contexts has been difficult and holy work. The Commission proposed in its report three possible plans for the future of the United Methodist Church:

[The One Church Plan, which is endorsed by the Council of Bishops,](#)  
[The Connectional Conference Plan, and](#)  
[The Traditionalist Plan.](#)

# Radical Hospitality

**Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”  
(Matthew 22:35-40)**

As many of you know, currently the United Methodist Church officially prohibits openly gay people from being ordained or serving as active clergy in the church, and prohibits UMC clergy from blessing same-sex unions or performing weddings for gay couples.

The Traditionalist Plan would keep the current restrictions and seek to strengthen enforcement of them. The Connectional Conference Plan would amend the denomination’s constitution to reorganize it based on views around LGBTQ ministry—a plan that would allow for like-minded conferences to align with one another and distance themselves from conferences with opposing views. The One Church Plan would give annual conferences, congregations and clergy flexibility to make decisions based on individual and communal convictions, and would allow but not require United Methodist clergy to perform same-gender weddings where legal, and allow but not require annual conferences to ordain LGBTQ pastors.

It is my deep conviction that the right plan for our church is the One Church Plan. At Hennepin, we have been committed to the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer people for many years. As a Reconciling congregation, we recognize that historically the church has denied the full humanity of LGBTQ people, excluding them from full participation in the church, and teaching that they are less truly made in God’s image than straight people. I believe this is sin, and as a community we must pray for a fresh wind of the Spirit to change hearts, actions, teachings, and attitudes that would exclude children of God, made in God’s image.

Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:35-40)

While we may continue to disagree about matters of human sexuality, we are called to love one another and welcome all people. The One Church Plan would allow us to truly welcome all people and move forward as a church that is itself transforming as it transforms the lives of others.

## **A PRAYER FOR UNITY**

**Good and gracious God, thank you for your abundant love for all of your children. With our Methodist movement founder, John Wesley, we rejoice that “Best of all, you are with us.” We are grateful that you hear our prayers as we discern The Way Forward. Bless our sisters and brothers who serve our community at the Special Session of the General Conference. Fill them with grace and love. Strengthen us, your church.**

**We confess we have allowed fear and distrust to put distance between us in the Body of Christ. Forgive us. Thank you for your perfect love, which casts out all fear. God of peace and wisdom, may we walk with you and our sisters and brothers in trust and unity with a harmonic song of praise for you.**

**Your Holy Spirit is present and calling to us all now. May our sisters and brothers who attend the Special Session, and all of us who dare to listen and respond, please and honor you. We pray to you in the name of Jesus, the one who loves us now and forever, Amen.**

# Risk-Taking

## Mission & Service

### ...Open the doors and see all the people!

The Dignity Center has open doors, and welcomes many people! Over the years The Dignity Center has evolved from a “hot cup of coffee and a listening ear” service to a program committed to ending—not just managing—homelessness. Ending homelessness is complicated. It takes people connecting people with community programs and resources, it takes advocacy for systemic change, it takes people working together to raise the funds necessary to not simply provide emergency assistance, but to build each person’s capacity to be a thriving member of the community.

Fundraising for organizations that serve homeless people has changed significantly in the past few years. Many big donor organizations, such as The United Way and Target Corporation, are moving away from funding “basic needs” programs toward other models of philanthropy, which means it is risky to run a program that focuses on providing basic needs alone, no matter how essential support for those basic needs is. This is part of why The Dignity Center provides for some basic needs (a hot home-cooked meal, winter wear, and toiletries) as part of a stability and training program. People who are ready to make the necessary changes to overcome their challenges to stability find support for other kinds of “basic needs:” encouragement, access to information, and a community of support.

What does it take to be ready to make these changes? It takes courage, and hope, and perseverance. To participate in the services of The Dignity Center, a person has to take some big risks—it is a risk to trust others with your story, it is a risk to ask for and follow other people’s guidance and support, it is a risk to admit you need to change and to ask for help. As people navigate systems that seem stacked against them, they need to have hope that progress is possible one step and a time. When they encounter frustrations and setbacks, they need the support of a community to help them keep going.

The more people can contribute to that community of support, the better! So we are excited to share that The Dignity Center has developed a staff team to do just that. We welcome new team members Becky Boland and Todd Lohre. Todd is our

by Mary Martin, Director of Outreach Ministries



Operations Manager, and he will ensure day-to-day activities at The Dignity Center run smoothly. Becky is our new Interim Director of Development, and she will focus on finding new and robust funding sources for The Dignity Center. John Cole will focus on increasing the visibility of The Dignity Center and its role in ending homelessness, and developing our community partnerships throughout the Twin Cities.

Running any nonprofit, including The Dignity Center, involves risk. It is a risk to ask others for donations; it is a risk to ask other faith communities to become part of the network of supporters, it is a risk to ask people to volunteer and to rely on their generosity in order to operate—but that’s what we do! We have faith! These are risks that Becky, John, Todd and I know how to take, and how to make successful on behalf of The Dignity Center and our participants.

We are excited for the new possibilities to grow in our love of God and neighbor, to reach new people and to heal a broken world. Our doors are open!

# Hennepin's 2019 Operating Budget

by Brian Seim, Director of Finance and Administration

At the Leadership Retreat on January 26, 2019, the Finance Committee presented a plan for a balanced 2019 operating budget, as they were asked to do.

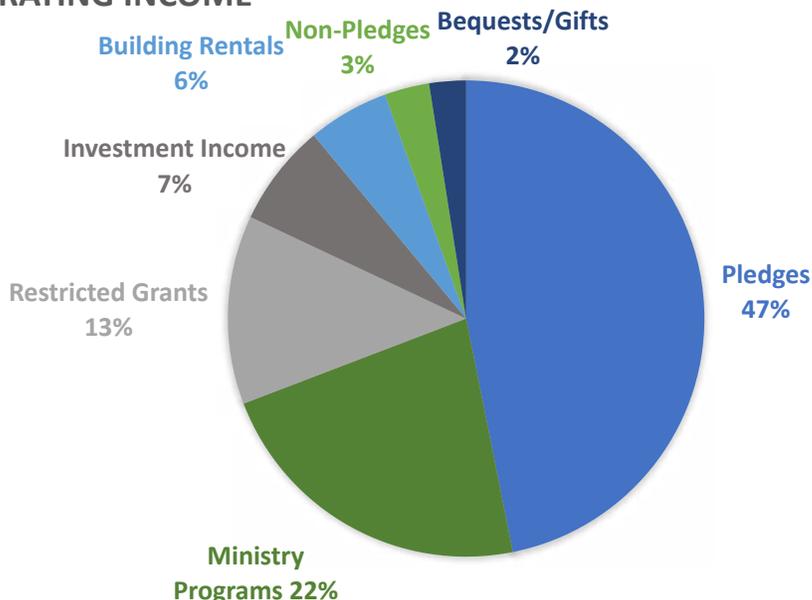
Because pledges for 2019 fell short in covering our proposed budget for 2019, budget cuts were necessary to balance the operating budget. These cuts were built into the budget presented to the Strategic Council.

However, these budget cuts would have reduced our ability to continue positive momentum in achieving our mission.

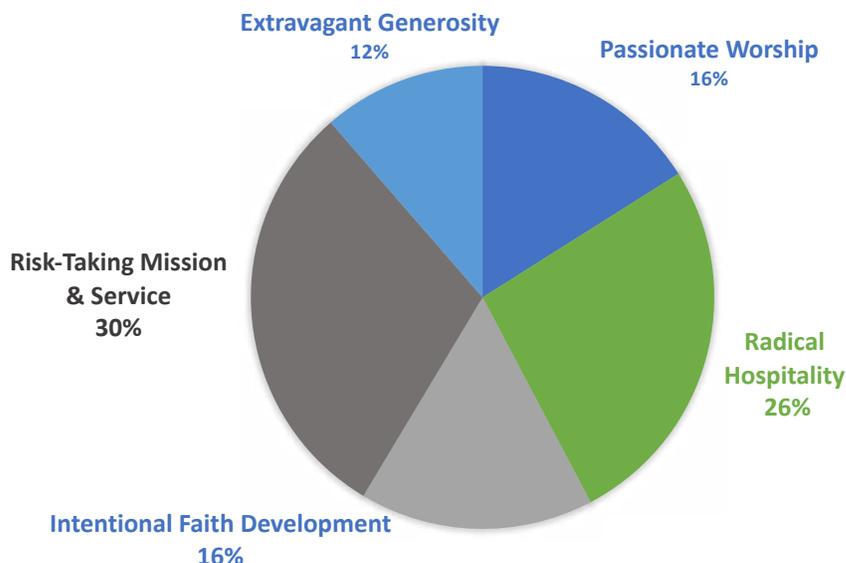
Therefore, our Strategic Council decided to restore the proposed cuts by funding them with operating budget surplus from 2017 and 2018.

Any additional pledges made during 2019 will decrease the draw on our operating budget surplus.

## OPERATING INCOME



## OPERATING EXPENSES



# Extravagant Generosity

# Living a faith-filled life means living an anti-racism life.

by Rev. Nate Melcher, Associate Pastor of Faith Development

**“Every parent to a child of color is afraid for their kids.” – Rev. Jim Wallis**

**“[Being] an ally is not being a savior. We need to work together.”  
– Dr. Rev. Curtiss DeYoung**

**“Don’t complain. Activate.”  
– Anika Bowie**

These are just a sample of the many powerful ideas continuing to resonate in my heart following the “Race, Religion, and Response: An Evening with Jim Wallis” gathering at Hennepin on January 12. As a congregation, we are reading and discussing Jim’s book, *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*, and the startling title is designed to prepare us to confront truths and fortify us for next steps. Having Jim be our in-person guest helped us with this, too. Our goal in bringing Jim to our church was to create an opportunity for the audience to go deeper than just acknowledging “racism is bad,” and to instead confront the ways that racism is built into our institutions, our culture, our history—and to invite us to see it for the sin it truly is. By engaging directly the spiritual damage done by our nation’s legacy of white supremacy, the event was a first step in empowering us to pursue faith-filled, anti-racism living. Jim’s keynote, our local panelists, and our many action tables raised this call.



Confronting our sins and admitting responsibility for our role in injustice takes real vulnerability. I confess, confronting the racism we witness or even participate in, and especially accepting that implicit bias affects everyone one of us, can be a raw, painful experience for people, myself included. I appreciated what Sondra Samuels, panelist and CEO of the Northside Achievement Zone, had to say about this: “To be an ally, be willing to be vulnerable and to make mistakes, but come back and do it again. . . .Our eyes are open and more people are waking up. We now get to decide who we are.”

For some people, this waking up to racism in all its forms starts within ourselves and our church. “As we examine and confront our own white privilege, we can begin with new awareness to change ourselves, our church, and our society,” said Dennis Behl, event task force member. Partnership with activist leaders in the greater Hennepin community was an important element of the event. For example, organizations like NAACP Minneapolis registered ten new members at their action table, and the YWCA, who has several anti-racism events on the calendar for 2019, is reaching out to partner with Hennepin to expand their efforts to even more people.

# Intentional Faith Development

“The panel was excellent in representing their constituencies and being supportive of each other,” said Karen Bruback, a member of the Adult Team who also served on the event task force. “In our LYFE Group, we especially liked hearing from Jaylani Hussein.” Hussein, a Somali-born Muslim and executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, challenged the crowd with stark honesty: he does not expect most of us to do the work. So we must each decide: shall I be one of the few? With his challenge – an altar call, essentially! – I am reminded of the challenge Jesus offers in the sermon on the mount, that “The gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Jesus knows the cost of following him and the abundant blessing that comes from it!

Our church can have this blessing. “If we are truly going to be a congregation that welcomes everyone as being made equal in the eyes of God, we need to address the implicit bias we all carry,” says task force member Becky Boland. “Hosting [this event] begins a much-needed intentional conversation to become such a welcoming church.”

Boland knows the work to dismantle racism takes place both on a personal and an institutional level. She said, “I had always been taught and known racism was wrong. But until I read Jim’s book and heard him speak, I hadn’t I understood the link between our racism, our faith, and the need to aggressively dismantle racism from a faith perspective. Until we as Christians address race, we will not be whole as a people.”

This link between racism and faith is important. It may very well be the key for white Christians to have empathy for fellow Christians of color. For example, panelist Anika Bowie of NAACP Minneapolis reminded the crowd, “Jesus was mocked, hated, disrupted. That is the black experience.” Linking the suffering of Jesus with the oppressive black experience in America

is challenging yet not new. That is a sentiment straight out of the writing one of my favorite theologians, James Cone, often considered one of the “founding fathers” of modern black theology – a model of Christianity steeped in liberation and restorative justice. He writes of a brutal metaphor we cannot escape in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*: “Until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a ‘re-crucified’ black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy.”

Like any great event, the experience of the moment is amazing, yet the resonance, the lingering aftershock that keeps at you like waves lapping a beach—this is what massages our hearts so it beats with God’s heartbeat. With profound hope as we each take our Spirit-filled next steps, I offer this reminder of the refrain that peppered my sermon in our anti-racism worship series: it may not be easy to hear we participate in sin, it may not be comfortable to confess our role in sin, but the hard work of repentance and reconciliation is always worth it!



Photos by Adele Dahm

# Passionate Worship

## Art Makes the Entryway in Sacred Journey

by Rev. Frenchye Magee, Associate Pastor of Congregational Care & Invitational Discipleship

It's Sunday morning in Sacred Journey, and in preparation for the morning message, the lights in the Art Gallery dim and the brightly-lit space changes in ambiance. The sound of music and the chatter of worshippers sharing The Peace and greeting each other gradually subside. After a few seconds, the welcome slide with the distinctive new Hennepin Avenue UMC logo gives way to a blank screen.

Then, the elegant profile of the legendary performer Nina Simone fills the space. The footage is black and white, obviously vintage. Yet, when she speaks in her distinctive inflection, her words and the sentiment behind them are deeply contemporary, so fresh, they could have been spoken yesterday.

*“...[A]t this crucial time in our lives when everything is so desperate, when every day is a matter of survival, you can't help but be involved....You don't have a choice... How can you be an artist and not reflect the times....? That to me is the definition of an artist.”*

Simone's voice fades into a performance by the choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones, who leads a collaborative performance called “The Dancer, the Singer, the Cellist.” For six minutes, the work of the people in worship is to be absorbed in watching the dance, a

collaborative artistic conversation, a “moment of creative magic” that Jones creates with his partners on stage, Joshua Roman and Somi. This work is an expression of joy and struggle that mirrors Simone's declaration of artistic purpose. When the performance ends, the room is silent...and prayers begin.

This was the introduction, the entryway, to the worship series on Jim Wallis' book, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Supremacy and the Bridge to a New America* on January 13: not a message of preaching, but the words and work of artists. For the next several weeks, the questions and issues of identity, work, creativity, and healing were at the core of the Sunday experience, alongside the sharpness of confronting racism, the idolatry of whiteness, and the institutions of white privilege highlighted in Wallis' book.

Worship and great artistic performances are two experiences that can call our humanity to the fore and give us a glimpse of the transcendent, the divine. In Sacred Journey, where worship often integrates movement, ambient sound, images, and space, to use the words and work of artists was the perfect choice. Bringing the performances into the morning message invoked the power of God's presence and the power of the human choice to live in grace and beauty, even in the face of desperate circumstances.

Without preaching, Simone and Jones delivered a powerful commentary on Jim Wallis' words and helped set the tone for the rest of the series: worshipful, open, respectful, impactful, without falling into the trap of pandering or polemic.

As the series continued, other speakers would share messages about the pernicious presence of racism across the spectrum of redemptive work: the criminal justice system, the fight to end homelessness, and the immigration process. Rev. Bill Mate, a retired Methodist elder who has found a spiritual home in Sacred Journey spoke from personal knowledge of the work and joy of building bridges for change.

On February 17, to complete the worship series, a community conversation will give everyone who attends an opportunity to share where they have experienced the presence of God each week and how they hoped to be different. Once again, the work of Bill T. Jones anchor the experience. In a nod to Black History Month and Presidents' Day, an excerpt from his work, “Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray” drawn from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, will draw the community into the juxtapositions of our dreams, our prayer, our work and our hope for the future.

These weeks together have been a reminder that although the sickness of racism consumes humans and delivers suffering in exchange, the craft of the artist can transform human suffering and return it to us as beauty. Ultimately, though, the series has been a reminder that it is the work of the church as the gathered people of God to envision new forms of healing and hope, to work for justice, to speak truth to power, and most of all to offer and embody the creative, transformative power of God's grace in the world in worship and in everyday faith.



View the performance of *The Dancer, The Singer, The Cellist* on Youtube.

Watch video recordings of past Sacred Journey and Traditional Worship services on our Youtube Channel: visit [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search "Hennepin Avenue UMC."



Violin  
Banjo

# Love is Love is Love is Love

*Dessert & Concert with the  
Hennepin Singers*

Saturday, February 16,  
7pm in the Art Gallery



A love-themed musical celebration featuring a choral concert by the Hennepin Singers under the direction of Shari Speer, and accompanied by a sumptuous catered dessert buffet. Bring your valentine, or anyone who fills your life with love!

\$25 per person, available at [haumc.org/register](http://haumc.org/register).



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