



NORMANDY PARK UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

THE TOWLINE

NPUCC's Monthly Newsletter

August 2026

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Tuesday - Thursday

9:00 am—1:00 pm

Dear NPUCC Friends,

*This month I thought I would share a longer article on Kindness from the Greater Good Magazine. Our Kindland friends who have prompted our **Summer of Kindness** have asked us to share it far and wide!*

Are Our Fellow Americans Kinder Than We Think?

A new Gallup poll suggests that kindness is common, though younger Americans see and offer kindness less often than older Americans.

BY **JILL SUTTIE** | JULY 27, 2026

Is kindness a lost virtue in the United States? One might wonder, given the highly publicized social and political tensions we face as a nation. News reports of incivility and violence, as well as invective seen daily on our social media feeds, might make us think twice about counting on others in our communities to be kind people or to help us out in a pinch.

A **new Gallup Poll** conducted in the United States paints a different picture of the state of kindness. Researchers surveyed over 2,000 American adults asking them to report on their everyday experiences—how often they'd witnessed kindness or received kindness from someone else—as well as how comfortable they were to initiate kindness toward a stranger. By asking individuals about their personal experiences (as opposed to their general impressions based on the current zeitgeist), the researchers found that kindness in the U.S. is more alive and well than we might expect.

"Kindness is swirling all around us, but the perception by ordinary people is that it's not," says Stuart Muszynski, president and chief executive officer of the **Values-in-Action Foundation** and co-designer of the poll. "There's a kindness perception gap."

The good news about kindness

Muszynski and his colleagues found that a majority of Americans reported seeing kindness regularly in their everyday lives. Sixty percent said that they'd seen people acting in kind, respectful ways often or very often, while 65% said they've been the recipients of kind acts from someone in their community within the last seven days.

Also, 73% said that they viewed other Americans as generally very kind or somewhat kind—a figure that belies our worries to the contrary.

“What shows up in the media every day is a very unkind America,” says Muszynski. “At the grassroots level, people see kindness every day. It’s around us all the time.”

An even higher percentage of those polled, 90%, said they would be very comfortable or somewhat comfortable initiating a kind act toward a stranger—a heartwarming finding. Muszynski points out that this reflects the fact that people who witness kindness are more **willing to pay it forward**.

“If you see kindness, you do kindness,” says Muszynski. “It’s a natural empathy reaction.”

Experiences of kindness may vary with age

Despite the good news, Muszynski noted some nuances around the findings. For example, younger adults were less likely to witness kindness or be the recipients of kind acts, giving them a less favorable outlook on the state of kindness in our country.

Young adults also felt less comfortable than older adults offering kindness to someone they don’t know. Only 35% of 18 to 29 year olds said they were very comfortable initiating a kind act toward a stranger—significantly less than the 49% of 30 to 49 year olds and the 64% of adults 65 and older that said the same.

“An individual is much more likely to see kindness, report kindness, and do kindness, and then that drops for individuals in the 18- to 29-year-old bracket,” says Muszynski. “That was really, really surprising to us as well as to Gallup.”

Muszynski speculates that this may be due to how distressed younger generations are. He notes that this age group has lived through the 2008 recession, increased political polarization, the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating climate change, and the rise of social media culture. These all could have added to their sense of isolation or feeling the need to look out for themselves first, making it more difficult for kindness to flourish.

“If you’re growing up with an individual as well as collective perception that there’s not kindness around you, you’re not necessarily going to feel comfortable [offering] kindness,” he says.

It could also be that younger adults are generally unhappier than their elders, for developmental reasons. Studies suggest that **younger adults experience less positive and more negative emotion** than older adults—in part due to older people benefitting from better emotion regulation skills. A **poorer mood or outlook could have an impact on their kind behavior**, as happier people

tend to be kinder.

A **recent Pew Research poll** found that younger adults report greater mental health challenges than older adults, too, which means they will likely have less energy or emotional bandwidth to reach out to others in need.

Muszynski fears that because young people are more plugged in to the negative messages in social media, it could lead them to expect less kindness in the world. He points to research by Stanford University psychologist Jamil Zaki that found **students had overly pessimistic views of how empathic and friendly other students were**, based on false beliefs rather than fact. Once Zaki and his colleagues created a campaign to alert students to the fallacy of that narrative, students were much more open to engaging with one another.

“It’s really about social norms and the influence that social norms have in any kind of ecosystem,” says Muszynski.

How real is the kindness age gap?

Of course, one Gallup survey doesn’t paint the full picture on American kindness. Additional research adds context.

A **recent meta-analysis** pooling together findings from several studies around the world found that, overall, older adults tended to be kinder than younger adults—like the Gallup Poll. However, the difference between groups depended on the type of kindness offered. Older adults tended to be more open to sharing money or resources than younger adults; when it came to assisting someone or comforting them, the age differences were much smaller or unclear.

“What shows up in the media every day is a very unkind America. . . . At the grassroots level, people see kindness every day”

—Stuart Muszynski

“Older adults may be more generous in some ways, but they are not necessarily more prosocial in every kind of situation,” says David Shum, coauthor of the study and a neuropsychologist at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Shum and his colleagues also found that a person’s financial situation affected kind behavior. The differences in prosociality based on age were much stronger when an older person had a high level of income than when they didn’t. This suggests that a person’s socioeconomic status could play a role in kindness, too, and that the age difference effect may reflect a difference in means.

“If younger adults have fewer resources, they may appear less prosocial in some situations, even if they still care about others,” says Shum.

Complicating the picture, other research raises questions about whether age and other demographics are actual factors in kindness—and, if so, why.

For example, **one study in Germany** found that younger adults were actually *more* prosocial than older adults overall, though the type of kindness mattered, too. As people aged, their willingness to

engage in genuine kindness (benevolence) or norm-based kindness (reciprocity or helping to promote fairness) decreased, perhaps because they had fewer resources. The opposite finding from the Gallup poll could be due to the study's different time, place, and culture, as well as how kindness was measured (experimentally, in addition to self-report).

Muszynski believes economic stress could keep people from being more kind if they are focused more on survival. But economic factors couldn't completely account for the age differences he found in the Gallup poll. While the poll did find that less educated and poorer people were more uncomfortable helping a stranger than those with more education and income, younger adults *within* those groups were still less comfortable reaching out to others than older people within those same groups.

We can all learn to be kinder

Regardless of the research on an actual age difference in kindness in the United States, everyone, old and young, could be nudged toward acting kinder. After all, kindness is a universal value, vital to the health of individuals as well as our nation. And **it's often contagious**.

Fortunately, small, individual acts of kindness are pretty much the norm, not only in the United States but around the world. As the authors of an **international study on kind behavior** found, "requests for assistance are very frequent and mostly successful; and when people decline to give help, they normally give a reason." Though cultural variations impact how this looks, kindness generally begets more kindness—just as Muszynski's results suggest.

So, how to encourage more kindness to spread? It may be important to remind people that we **tend to underestimate the value of our kindness** toward others, thinking it won't matter that much, when it does. Sometimes we have to just overcome our reluctance to step out of our comfort zone in order to initiate kindness toward a stranger and to see how nice it can be. For tips on how to do that in your everyday life, *Greater Good* offers several **research-based kindness practices** for any age group.

To Muszynski, part of the solution lies in making ongoing, everyday kindnesses easier to notice. Sometimes, people don't label everyday actions as kind acts, he says; we don't recognize that the nurse caring for us is being kind (not just doing their job) or that listening to a grieving friend is an act of kindness. He hopes to encourage more kind acts through a **public kindness challenge** that he and his team developed.

"I believe that the solution is to change the paradigm, change the dialogue, change the ability for people to see and understand kindness," says Muszynski.

Wherever and whoever you are, it never hurts to practice kindness in your own life. We all have the opportunity to build a culture of kindness, making for a more perfect and compassionate union.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rev. Amy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

August Calendar of Events

ONLINE: *invitations/directions for accessing these events will be shared via email:*

- Sunday Worship Services: 10 am
- Church Council meeting: *In-Person this month!*

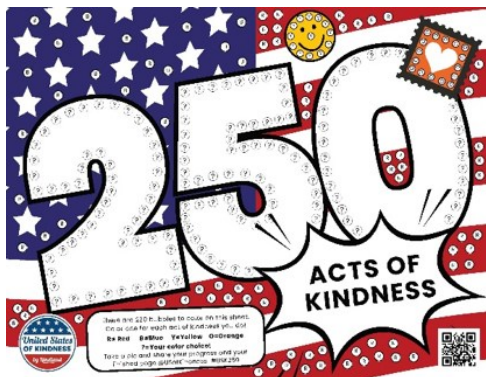
IN-PERSON:

- Sunday Worship Services: 10 am, Sanctuary
- Communion Sunday: August 2, 10 am
- Lunch Bunch Potluck: Wednesday, August 5, 11:30 am, Lynn's Deck
- Better Ways to Read the Bible and Potluck: Thursdays, August 6 & 13, 6 pm
- 65th Anniversary All Church Picnic & Potluck: Sunday, August 9, After Worship, Fellowship Hall
- Church Council Meeting: Tuesday, August 11, 6 pm, Vicki's Deck
- Des Moines Area Food Bank Volunteering: Wednesday, August 19, 6:15 pm
- Guest Preacher - Rev Shellenberger: Sunday, August 16
- Choir BBQ and Potluck: Saturday, August 22, Noon, Lynn's Deck
- Guest Speaker - Gwen Benedict : Sunday, August 23
- Enneagram: Wednesday, August 26, 1 pm, Fireside Room

RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS (*Fellowship Hall*):

- Mondays: Yoga Recovery Group 6:30 pm, sharing then yoga
- Tuesdays: Normandy Park Perspective - Alanon 7 pm
- Saturday Big Book Step Study - AA, 10 am

We encourage you to wear a mask if you have a cold or cough. If you have symptoms or do not feel well, please stay home and join us on Zoom. Masks are available at church if needed. Thank You!



250 ACTS OF KINDNESS

Be sure to track your acts of kindness by coloring in a circle on the poster in the narthex and by also filling out a slip of paper and putting it in the provided neon green box.

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

If you have a report that belongs in the church's Annual Report, please send it to Robbie in the Church Office no later than Thursday, August 13. *The Annual Meeting will be held during worship on Sunday, September 13.*

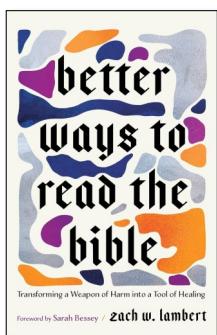
LUNCH BUNCH - WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5



This month, Lynn is hosting a potluck out on her deck at 11:30 am.

BETTER WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE - THURSDAYS, AUGUST 6 & 13

What lens are you reading the Bible with? This month we will finish learning about/discussing this very question as we enjoy delightful potlucks. You are welcome to join in even if you haven't been reading the book or attended yet.



CELEBRATING OUR 65TH ANNIVERSARY ALL-CHURCH PICNIC & POTLUCK – SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

Come celebrate summer, NPUCC's 65th anniversary, and our good cooks at our All Church Picnic on August 9, right after church.

Council will provide hot dogs, hamburgers, vegan options - cold drinks - ice cream bars and cake.

Potluck items: please bring side dishes (salads, beans, veggies, etc.).



VOLUNTEERING – WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

You are invited to volunteer at the food bank located in the downstairs of the Des Moines United Methodist Church at 6:15 pm.

Food Bank Sunday is August 30th!

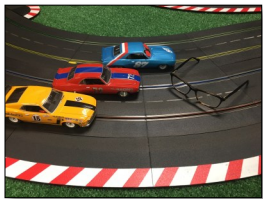
We'll be collecting kid-friendly foods (juice boxes, fruit snacks, etc.). Monetary donations will also be accepted.



STOP BY THE MASTER GARDENER BOOTH – TUESDAYS, AUGUST 18 & 25

Bring your flower, plant, or even tree leaf to have a Master Gardener identify for you why it is sickly to the Renton Farmer's Market. Our answers are research-based and focused on environmentally friendly and sustainable gardening practices. I will be there these Tuesdays from 3 - 7 pm as an intern volunteering alongside a veteran. ~Lynn

MISSION MILE – FRIDAY, AUGUST 21



Come and join Bob in racing slot cars in the Fellowship Hall from 5 – 10 pm. Fun is had by all!

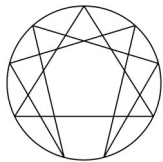
CHOIR BBQ – SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

Interested in joining the choir?
Come to the choir BBQ and potluck which will take place at noon on Lynn's deck.



ENNEAGRAM – WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

Our study of the enneagram and contemplation will continue at 1 pm on



Wednesday, August 26, in the Fireside Room with reading and discussing from Letting Go, Finding You: Uncover Your Truest

Self through the Enneagram and Contemplation by Hunter Mobley.

NPUCC FICTION READERS GROUP

We met on July 29 from Noon to 1pm and had such a good discussion about what it means to BE kind. We talked about the mandate to love God and neighbor and how acts of kindness can be considered the Holy Spirit at work! The library has informed JenW that the book club kits for Theo of Golden are booked out six months. So, no luck there. The book is \$14.98 on Amazon new. Let JenW know if you want to purchase a copy. Our next meet up will be on August 12 at Noon. Bring a lunch or snack. Text/call JenW or Jill T with any questions.

SEPTEMBER 25-28

Pride Camp 2026



WHAT TO KNOW September 25-28

Cabins - Lodge - Primitive Sites Available
Register now to reserve your spot!
Meals provided. 18+ only. More info in registration.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

For more
information and
to register
please scan:



Community Activities:

soundbathing/meditation/yoga
hiking/canoeing/yardgames
arts&crafts/poetry and writing workshops

Proudly brought to you by:



Normandy Park UCC invites you to a Sound Bath.

August 29, 11 AM - 12:30 PM



Gwendolyn Benedict and Lita Artis are offering a meditative Sound Bath to the community, to be held at Normandy Park Congregational Church (19247 1st Ave. S.).

Gwendolyn and Lita have been holding Sound Baths throughout the greater Burien area. Whether you have never attended a Sound Bath before, or have attended many, you are



From Gwendolyn:

For the Sound Bath itself, you may either sit and or lie down. Chairs will be available. If you decide to lie down, you can bring a yoga mat, pillow, blanket, eye mask - whatever makes you comfortable.

The resonances of the tones promote deep relaxation, calm the nervous system, and release stress.

All you have to do is come and let the sound wash over you.

It is like a concert for the soul.



Any gratitude or donation is appreciated. Suggested donation is \$25.00.

THE GIVING GARDEN UPDATE~

Be sure to swing around the back of the church and the Giving Garden... you'll see green tomatoes and some cukes already two inches in length! At our work party on Saturday, July 11, Craig and Lynn did some housekeeping and planting. Because both our radishes and spinach bolted, we replanted them and put in another line of lettuce and they are all coming up. We have our first zucchini growing! If you'd like to be put on our volunteer list, please contact Lynn.



DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LADYBUG AND AN ASIAN LADY BEETLE?

Ladybugs (*native*) and Asian lady beetles (*invasive*) are both members of the ladybird family, but native ladybugs are harmless garden helpers that stay outside, while Asian lady beetles tend to aggressively invade homes in the fall, bite humans, and secrete a foul-smelling, staining yellow fluid.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE AUDUBON SEAL AT THE GROCERY STORE?

Audubon Certified Bird-Friendly Beef is now available in stores across Washington, making it easier than ever to support bird conservation through everyday purchases. If you've spotted the Audubon seal in the meat department and wondered what it means, here's the short answer: the beef comes from ranches that meet standards designed to support healthy grasslands, wildlife habitat, and birds. That matters because grassland birds are among the fastest-declining bird groups in North America.

Audubon's Conservation Ranching program works with ranchers to develop science-based habitat management plans that support birds while maintaining productive working lands. In Washington, that work is expanding into the Columbia Plateau, where ranches and rangelands provide important habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Learn about the certification and find Bird-Friendly Beef near you by clicking [HERE](#).



August Birthdays

Joan Held	8/11
Stacie Latimer	8/18
Pearl Riba	8/18
John Held	8/21
Connie Clark	8/23
Jill Nedved	8/28

August Anniversaries

Jana & Mike Cook	8/1
Susan & Ruben Sasis	8/6
Belinda & Derek Allender	8/16

***If you don't see your August birthday or anniversary
on this list and would like to be included,
please contact the church office at
office@npucc.org or 206-824-1770***