



The United Church of Canada Call reflects the core of our purpose, sharing who we seek to be in “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

Deep Spirituality
Bold Discipleship
Daring Justice

The United Church of Canada vision reflects what the church aspires to be over a 5- to 10-year span.

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.

- from <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/our-call-and-vision>



Welcome to Summer!

For this year's newsletter issues, we're using the words of the United Church of Canada Call as our themes: **Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice**. You can see more about the call and the associated vision statement (both adopted by General Council in October 2021) above.

We're skipping around in the list a bit, as we felt Bold Discipleship might be a better theme to address in the fall, so this issue's theme is Daring Justice. May we at St Paul's, both individually and as a congregation, look for opportunities to advance just causes in our community and the world.

- Scott Maitland, for the Editorial Team



Summer Office Hours: Tuesday–Thursday 9-noon and 1-3
Occasional Fridays 9-noon unless otherwise stated.

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Please send comments, ideas, or articles for inclusion in the next newsletter to communications@stpaulsuc.ca

Submission deadline is August 2nd
The theme for the Fall issue is **Bold Discipleship**.

Words from Gord – from Pastoral Ponderings

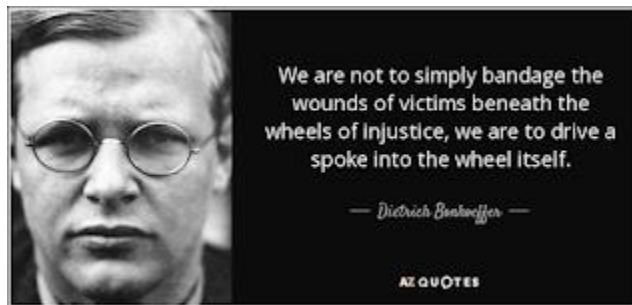
Reverend Gord is on Sabbatical Leave from May 8-September 8, taking time to rest, time to do some study about how to be a hybrid (online and in-person) church, and time to explore non-work ways to be in the world. The following thoughts and images are excerpted from the [March 9th entry](#) of his blog, *Pastoral Ponderings*, on the topic of **Daring Justice**.

One of the oldest answers to the question "what does it mean to be a Christian?" is that it is to try to be like Christ. Not just to follow his way but to be like him, to share his passion for God's Reign, to share his concern for the people out at the margins.

Jesus, in a fit of passionate outrage, flipped over tables and drove people out of the Temple.

What might lead us to be as intentionally disruptive? What would be our equivalent to flipping over the tables in the Temple?

The third word pair in the Call to the United Church put out by the General Council a few years back is *Daring Justice*. To be daring is to take risks. To be daring is to challenge the status quo. To be daring is to suggest a whole new way of seeing/being in the world.

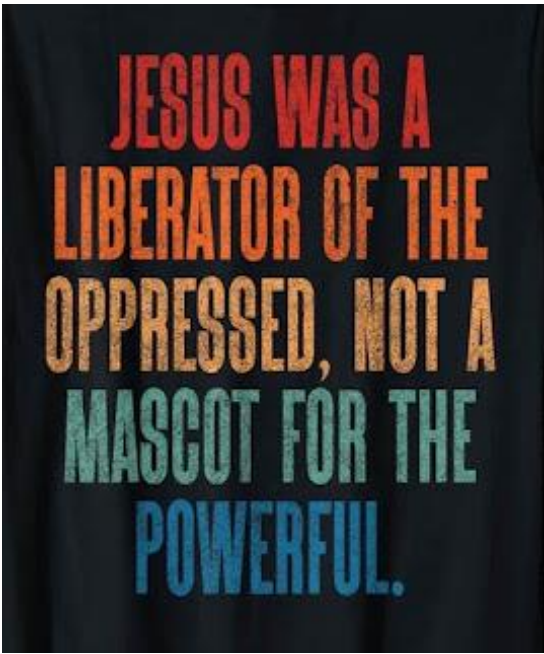


How do we take risks to break the wheels of injustice? It is easier to bandage the wounds and make sincere calls for change. How do we slide a pipe into the wheels (throw a spanner in the works?) so that there aren't people waiting to be bandaged?

Years ago I heard a speaker share a different version of that idea. It was noted that the church is good at pulling bodies from the river to keep folk from being washed away. Sometimes we even build grand structure to help catch them as they float by. But what we really need to do is go upstream and stop them from being thrown in.

Scripture is fairly clear that justice is one of God's primary concerns. In Torah we find many laws/rules/regulations designed to make a more just society, one where all are allowed to thrive. In the prophets there are a couple of primary complaints made against the people and their leadership. One is that they have wandered astray, falling into idolatry and neglecting to follow the way God placed in front of them. The other (which is often related to the first) is that they have failed to act justly toward each other. Then in the Gospels Jesus fairly regularly chooses justice (maybe in his teachings, maybe in his healings, maybe in his actions) over the Law. He goes so far as to point out that Sabbath in particular is made for people not the reverse, so justice and health for the people take precedence over the law.

We live in a world that is filled with examples of injustice. Whole groups of people are pushed to the margins, are blamed for all that is wrong with the province/country/economy, are targeted for violence, are used as scapegoats. Individuals and groups are deprived of what is needed to live, to grow, to thrive. Systems seem to favour the haves over the have-nots.



What can we do? How can we break the cycles?

We are called to dare to challenge the systems of injustice, even (or perhaps especially) when we ourselves benefit from those systems. That sounds risky.

We are called to flip over the tables and barriers that get in the way. Sometimes we have helped to build or maintain those barriers. Sometimes we put a target on our backs when start to lift the edge. It is easy to talk about it over coffee, or hear a sermon at church, or write a letter to a politician. Can we take the risk of taking to the streets, of acting out our prayers for justice?

In this post are quotes from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. They are but two examples of people who chose to take that risk, who chose to let the target appear on them. They both spoke out against injustice and evil. They both paid a heavy price.

And now, because I have another picture, I see another piece of our call to daring justice. We live in a world, a culture, of personal freedom. Surely freedom (or FREEDOM!!! as some might say it) can't get in the way of justice can it?

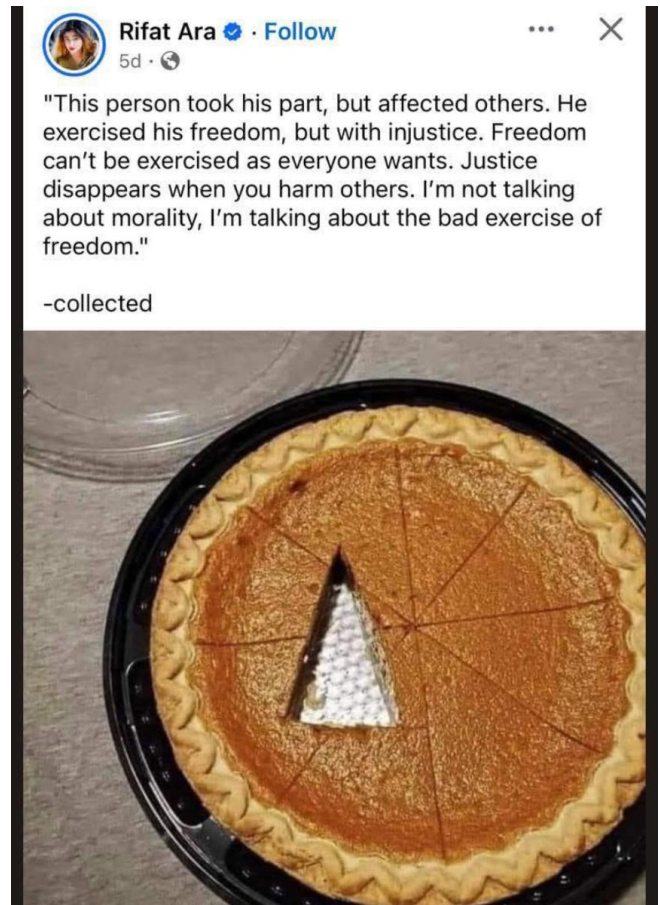
Freedom is vital to a healthy society. But it needs to be limited, responsible freedom. 6 years ago the world shut down. 6 years ago we entered debates about mask mandates and vaccines and freedom. As the picture shows us, freedom used irresponsibly or without consideration for others does indeed get in the way for justice.

Maybe one of the ways we practice *Daring Justice* is to give up some of our 'freedom'. Perhaps the path to justice involves what is good for the community and not just what is good for me. Perhaps one of the tables that needs flipping is this belief that the individual is king? In fact I am almost certain this is the case.

What other tables do you think need to be flipped? Where are we called to take risks as God creates a just world around us?

--Gord

If you would like to see how Gord's thoughts on these questions developed over the following week, his sermon "Dare to Flip the Tables" is featured in the [March 15th worship service](#), available on our YouTube channel.



The United Canada's new call and vision is: "deep spirituality, bold discipleship, daring justice". In this issue, our theme is: "Daring Justice". The United Church's "new" Creed (1968, see Voices United Page 918), also calls us to: "seek justice and resist evil". Clearly, social justice has been a historic and ongoing focus for our local and national church's vision.

When I googled "seek justice and resist evil" for scriptural references, I found the following two familiar verses:

Micah 6:8, which I have sung in choir anthems and recited since my teens: "What does the lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. "

And Matthew 5:39, which is another oft recited verse from the sermon on the mount, about turning the other cheek. "But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also".



Jesus encouraging creative acts of resistance to those in power, made sense in a small, backwater country subjugated under Rome's Imperial heel. His teaching became the framework not just for the early Christian church, but also for modern non-violent resistance movements such as Ghandi's in India, Martin Luther King in the 1960s southern USA, and the current protests happening in the United States, opposing ICE detention tactics and incarceration centres.

Thinking about "daring justice", has made me think about the "decision". Forty years post the 1988 General Council decision, St Paul's has emerged as a more diverse and affirming congregation, but looking back, to that summer, there was much division over whether openly gay and lesbian persons should be considered as candidates to become ministers in this United Church of ours. "Don't ask, don't tell" was church-code for requiring 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to hide their sexual orientation and gender identity, or risk being asked to leave some churches.

General Council's lay and clergy delegates, after much discussion, personal sharing and considered thought, felt moved by the Spirit, and voted to allow openly gay and lesbian persons to apply to become candidates for the ministry in the United Church. There was great upheaval across the church, but in spite of all that upheaval, I am truly grateful for that brave decision to move towards daring justice. I repeat: 40 years post 1988 General Council, St Paul's has emerged as a more diverse and affirming congregation, committed to social justice.

Past Moderator Dr. Carmen Lansdowne proposed 5 questions that tell the truth about where we're all headed (as congregations)

Her first question is: 1. **If our St Paul's congregation closed tomorrow, what would the Grande Prairie community actually lose?** (Not what any church closing would mean. Not the abstract loss of sacred space or communal gathering. What would this congregation's absence leave undone, unmissed, unfilled?)

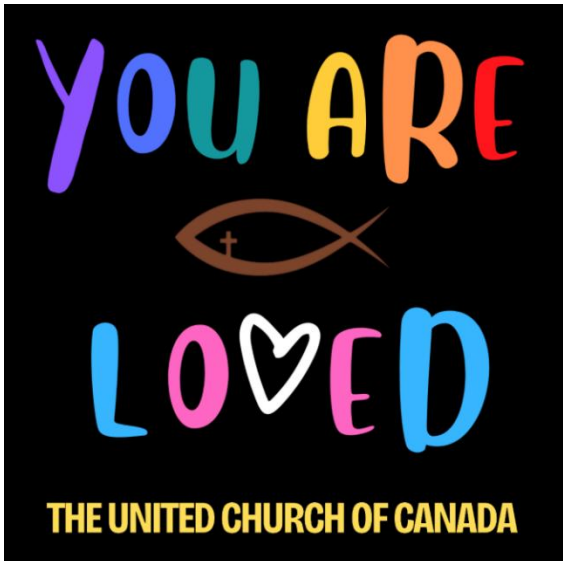
Here is my short list of what I think would be lost in Grande Prairie if St Paul's closed:

- Our advocacy for thoughtful consideration of the impact of policies and legislation on the vulnerable persons in our community.
- being visible in support for and being an affirming church where 2SLGBTQIA+ people and families are welcome to be fully engaged.
- championing and including immigrants and newcomers to Grande Prairie in our church life and work.

Ruminations on "Daring Justice" (continued)

-building our partnership with the GP & Area Friendship Centre by: participating and helping with parades, powwows, memorial walks and events. Our "we are all treaty people" t-shirts and banners help to make our support visible.

-the voice of social justice rooted in progressive Christian theology.



Social Justice has always been at St Paul's core. Here are a few examples: we have chosen to remain a downtown church and partner with various outreach programs, we had a hand in the friendship centre's beginnings, we provided housing for the initiation of GPPSD's pregnant teen school program, we temporarily housed Awasis daycare, we were the first to host AA in northern Alberta and we have continued our support for many decades.

In our vision words, we want people to **first** feel they "belong". We will nurture the rest over time: "**The People of St Paul's belong... believe... love... listen... lead**".

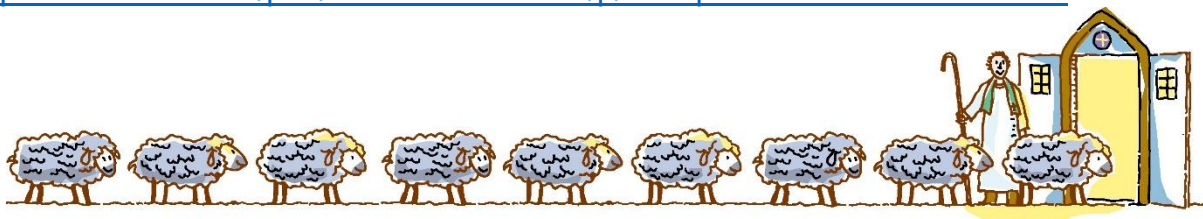
I encourage you to consider how all of us at St Paul's can continue to work toward being **daring** in our work to foster **justice** in our community and this oft broken world.

Together we can plant seeds of understanding and justice.

Dr. Carmen Lansdowne's other 4 questions are also worthy of thought and discussion:

2. Who is already at our door that we haven't fully said yes to yet? (Vision lives at the edge between where you are and where you're being called. This question surfaces your congregation's honest awareness of who they already see — and what saying yes to those people would actually cost or require.)
3. What do we do together that we couldn't explain without mentioning Jesus? (This is the question that distinguishes a congregation from a community organization. It is not meant to be reductive — community organizations do vital work, and partnerships with them are part of faithful ministry. But a congregation is not a community organization. It is a gathered people constituted by a particular story, sustained by particular practices, oriented toward a particular hope.)
4. Two hundred years from now, what would you want the congregation that exists then to say this community made possible? (What are you building toward. What are you planting that you won't harvest?)
5. What is the one thing we are willing to be less good at, so we can be excellent at what we're called to? (Vision requires not doing everything. This is a difficult truth for congregations, which are often communities of genuine, wide-ranging care — people who don't want to let anything slip, who feel the weight of every unmet need in their building and their neighbourhood. But a vision statement that is only a wish list is not a vision. It is a refusal to choose. And the refusal to choose is itself a choice — usually the choice to remain scattered, spread thin, and increasingly exhausted.)

<https://open.substack.com/pub/carmenlansdowne/p/five-questions-that-tell-the-truth>



Around St Paul's

Fun times in Kids Corner:



Easter service



Laurie and Leslie-Ann offering one of many duets this spring.



The Senior Bell Choir receives high praise from the music festival adjudicator.



Around St Paul's

Left: The twins' birthday.



Well worth the 2,000 km round trip in a staff-stuffed Corolla, to lovely St Paul's United Church in Grande Prairie AB. This was a grand time with 60 friends from all over Northern Spirit Regional Council, but especially the north. We missed the Fort McMurray crew and pastoral relations minister Adam Hall, who were defeated by an intense snowstorm.

A day of worship, planning for the future, much conversation, prayers on the banana phone, workshops, a lovely social time at a member's home, worship, and lunch. This was the first such day- more are coming. Thank you to the good people of the North for starting us off so well.



Right: A visitor's response to the Region-Connect conference held at St Paul's on April 25 & 26.



The Bells of St Paul's & Quintessential Winds in concert, May 23.



St Paul's Congregational 2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach – Submitted by Susan Thompson

Globally, June is PRIDE MONTH. This is an opportunity to celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex) communities. Here in the Grande Prairie area, there is a very active SLGBTQIA+ community. In the month of June, there are several events planned that encompass several age groups. The ally community is invited to take part and to volunteer at many of the events.



International Day Against Transphobia & Homophobia event: Susan attended to represent St Paul's and the SJAM Team.

Sources: grandeprairiepridesociety.com / St Paul's SJAM / Wikipedia.org

Susan K Thomson

As an Affirming congregation, since June 2023, the St Paul's congregation has been PUBLIC, INTENTIONAL and EXPLICIT with its support for the human rights of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This congregation takes the various opportunities throughout the year to continually demonstrate their ongoing support for the human rights of each individual.

At this time, PRIDE is gearing up to host a variety of community events throughout the month of June here in Grande Prairie. You may consider attending the Pride Family Carnival, it always proves to be very entertaining for the whole family.

June 20, 2026,
PRIDE Family Carnival

Bonnetts Energy Centre

9 AM Free pancake breakfast

10 AM Carnival starts – games, rides, bouncy castles, community alley, face painting!

June 25, 2026,
PRIDE vs Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story – film screening.

Grande Prairie Live Theatre, 7 PM doors open, 7:30 PM film screening begins.

A documentary film, a true case that happened here in Alberta.

In 1986, at its 31st General Council, The United Church of Canada responded to the request of Indigenous Peoples that it apologize to them for its part in colonization.

The 1986 Apology

“We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were.”

The church marked the 30th Anniversary of the Apology in August 2016, and we continue to live into our promise to “Affirming Other Spiritual Paths.” We continue to “walk together...in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God’s creation healed.”

The 1998 Apology

“We pray that you will hear the sincerity of our words today and that you will witness the living out of our apology in our actions in the future.”

Here we are, in 2026, 30 years since the first apology. St Paul’s United Church is one congregation, that publicly looks to work together and walk with our Indigenous community by sharing in their celebrations and their grief. In the month of May, this is particularly an opportunity to take part in “Red Dress Day,” “the MMIR Walk,” and the “Moose Hide Campaign.” These are each opportunities to seek redress for the legacy of violence that has been shown to be connected to the days of Residential Schools.

In January, we were blessed to have two “Kokum’s” come visit with us during Mission and Service. It took a great deal of bravery, on their part, to explain the many challenges they are facing daily with their grandchildren. They work daily on breaking the cycle of destruction that is known as intergeneration trauma. The intergeneration trauma that is a direct result of the Residential School system. Residential Schools have now been identified as an attempt at genocide.

“Red Dress Day” and the “Moose Hide Campaign” are each grassroots, Indigenous campaigns, aimed at opening public conversations with regard to the history of violence that continues to be ignored and is ongoing. We, here at St Paul’s, have in recent years been making renewed efforts to be involved in living into the recommendation’s outlined in the Truth and Reconcile Report.

June brings us to a time of Indigenous Cultural Celebration. June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is an opportunity to honour the heritage, cultures, and the contributions of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This day was chosen because it is the summer solstice, a time of deep spiritual meaning and has cultural significance. In recent years there has been a renewed interest and growth in the Grande Prairie Traditional Pow Wow. St Paul’s congregation has been privileged to be asked to assist at this very special event.

The St Paul’s congregation is privileged to be invited to walk side by side with our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

“WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE!”

Sources: canadianencyclopedia.ca / moosehidecampaign.ca / northwestaic.com / grande-prairie-pow-wow / united-church.ca /

Susan K Thomson

**We are
ALL
Treaty
People**



Coming Events

Explore upcoming events at St. Paul's United Church and in the Grande Prairie community.

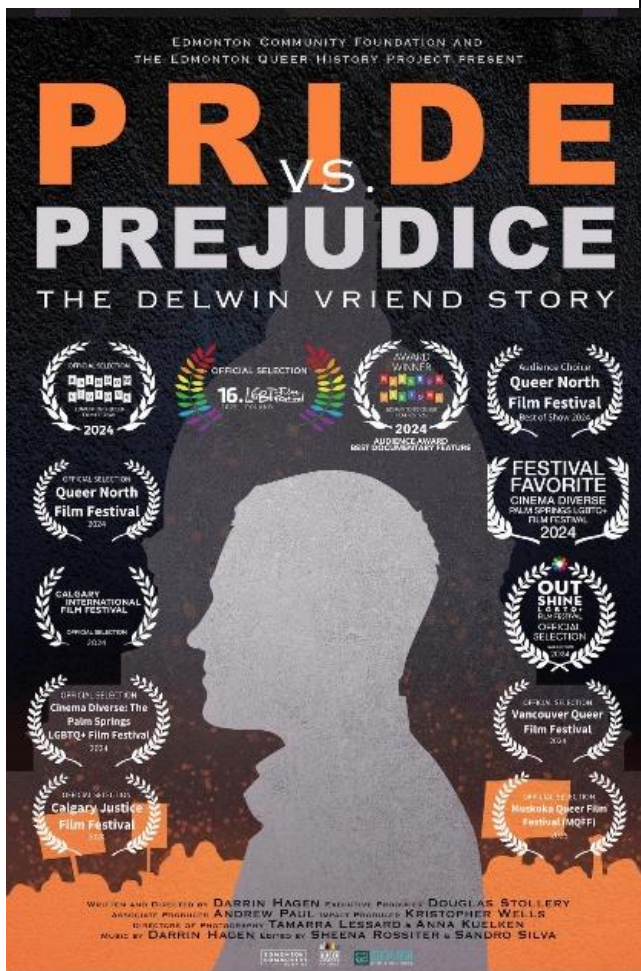
June is Pride Month, and the Grande Prairie Pride Society has several events planned at Bonnetts Energy Centre.

June 12th at 7 PM is the **Rainbow Bright Teen Dance** for ages 13-17, with free admission.

June 13th at is their 18+ event, **Party in White** at 8 PM, with a VIP Dinner at 6.

June 20th at 10 AM is the **Family Carnival** with pancake breakfast at 9. As usual, St Paul's will have a booth at the Carnival – **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!** If you'd like to help, please speak to Karen Scott, Susan Thomson, or call Carla @ 780-532-2415.

June 25th at 7:30 PM at Grande Prairie Live Theatre, there will be a screening of **PRIDE vs Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story**, a documentary film featuring a true case that happened here in Alberta.



Wednesday **July 1st**, the Canada Day parade, “**Canada In Full Colour**”, begins at 2 PM, and will proceed past St. Paul's. If you'd like to help hand out freezies to our neighbours watching the parade, or have one yourself, please stop by!



Weekly Events:

Sunday, 10 am – Worship in the Sanctuary
Thursday, 6 pm – Tai Chi – East Basement



Wednesday to Saturday, 5 to 11 pm –
Card's Board Game Café is open – West
Basement



SPRING CLEANING?



Clothing FUNDrive

ADVANCE NOTICE!!!

For our Clothing drive fundraiser, in conjunction with our Garage Sale in mid August, we will be accepting bagged donations of:



**Clean Clothes-Coats-Hats
Scarves-Shoes-Boots-Belts**

**As you PURGE YOUR CLOSETS, please bag items and save them to donate to St. Paul's Garage Sale to support this simple fundraising initiative!
Drop off with Garage Sale items on Monday, Aug 17th.**



St Paul's United Church Community

@ D Company Armouries
9005 101 Street

North of Swanavon School



COLLECT, SORT, BOX and LABEL Items

DROP OFF Monday August 17 2-8 pm

To Pre-Arrange PICK-UP of large items
call Carla at 780-532-2415 by **August 12 at noon**

Help with SORTING and PRICING

Tuesday, August 18th: 9 am – 8 pm

Wednesday, August 19th: 9 am – 8 pm

Thursday, August 20th: 9 am – 5 pm

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Sign up at <http://volunteersignup.org/HWQ3J>

Come SHOP for BARGAINS

Thursday, August 20th: 5 – 8 pm

Friday, August 21st: 10 am – 8 pm

Saturday, August 22nd: 10 am – 1 pm



**REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE**

**For more information, call
780-532-2415**