



Friendship News

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Brainerd
An Open and Affirming Church

The church office hours are 8am-12pm, Monday – Friday.

Our Pastor, Leslie Moughty is also available at other times by appointment.

Office phone 218-829-2528

E-mail firstcong@brainerd.net

Website uccbrainerd.org

uccbrainerd.org

February 2017

**No matter who you are,
or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here.**

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February Birthdays

2/7	Annie Grabowski	2/11	Roger Maas	2/24	Colleen LeBlanc
2/10	Roger Best	2/18	Ann Turnbull	2/28	Ken Moughty
2/11	Dorothy Blau	2/23	Barbara Watson	2/29	Grace Johnson

Pastor's Pen

As I write this month's pastor's pen, my heart is heavy with the actions taken by our president in his first few days in office. I hesitated to write about this in our church newsletter as I know that some people want church to be a place that is safe from politics. I also know that our congregation is politically diverse. But I also know that ours is a congregation that seeks justice and desires to truly love our neighbor as ourselves and to do those things requires some political engagement. I had planned on writing about my experiences in Arizona with the Next Generation Leadership Initiative and learning about Family Systems Theory. But the changes that are taking place are too dramatic and too important to ignore.

I am not going to write about how you should respond to the erosion of the first amendment through censorship of the EPA, the USDA, and the National Parks Service. I am not going to give you tips for calling your representatives to express your outrage that the work of the EPA has effectively been halted and that scientists are scrambling to privately save climate data due to the very justified fear that the new administration will destroy it. I am not going to tell you how you should feel about the construction of a multi-billion-dollar wall on our southern border or closing our country to people from predominantly Muslim countries or the resurrection of the Keystone XL pipeline and the movement forward of the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. I am not going to get on my soapbox and issue a rallying cry to take to the streets in protest. I am not going to do those things, not because I don't have an opinion about them or because I don't think the church has a role in these efforts, but because you know all of these things. Plus, I need to save something for my sermons!

There is an angle of this political climate that I think doesn't get discussed enough and that is what I want to focus on in this newsletter. I encourage you to recognize that these events (and those which are sure to come) will continue to raise the anxiety and fear in our country and around the world. It should not come as a surprise that in times of high anxiety, the stress and fear can affect our behavior and our emotional states, not only around the issues causing our anxiety, but in every aspect of our lives. We have a tendency to become more polarized in our thinking. Our responses to conflict become less nuanced, more automatic, and intense. We experience a reduced capacity for imagination and playfulness. Our ability to be patient decreases. We look for someone else to blame and are reluctant to see our own contribution to problems.

In his book on *Bowen Family Systems Theory*, Mike Kerr states "The main problem is not differences in points of view; it is the emotional reaction to those differences. When people can listen without reacting emotionally, communication is wide open and differences are an asset, not a liability". (I worked some family systems information into this article after all!) While his writing was geared for individuals and families in conflict, it applies to wider societal conflicts as well. We must not let our fears and anxieties take over. This is not to say that we sit idly by and do nothing. But let us resist the temptation to see people who disagree with us as enemies. Let us resist allowing anxiety to permeate our relationships with our friends, family, and our church siblings. Let us resist placing blame and instead focus on building relationships. Most importantly, I encourage us to seek a deepening of our faith. Let us balance our exposure to the news with some exposure to the "good news." Let us find our footing in the teachings of Christ and the words of the prophets. Let us not forget that we are not alone. May we continue to pray unceasingly and to listen for God's still-speaking voice calling us to seek justice, love kindness and to walk humbly.

With Peace,

Pastor Jestic

Moderator's Notes/Visioning Update

Service to Our Intentional Community

Dan Hegstad – Council Moderator

My first experience on a church committee wasn't great. Not bad, but pretty much what some people expect. Slow, plodding discussion followed by more of the same. That's not the way I work. I like to get things done. A few months into my service I realized that the meeting was social time for the committee chair.

There's a reason why people don't want to serve on committees and that story is a prime example. Committee = Commitment. Yuk. But if you think that is how things run in our various committees here at First Congo, you are quite wrong. I know. I've served on several and, as Council Moderator, I try to visit at least part of the committee meetings each month. I see groups that have fun, and they get things done. They have solid agendas which they follow; minutes that are functional and up to date. They get things done. Really. Committees that accomplish stuff. What a concept!

As Council Moderator, I try to move our Council meetings along as much as is reasonable. Everybody needs to be heard, but there's a point at which we have to make final points and move on. It's a balancing act. We set up a system where the various committee reports are reviewed via email before the Council meetings and at the Council meeting the committees only report on necessary highlights or on items which require council action. The meetings move faster and we get stuff done!

This is on my mind this month because now is the time of year when we start to look for folks to serve on committees and other volunteer positions. The committees have term limits and new members will start in June.

Another reason to not volunteer is because once you say yes to one thing you are saying yes to everything, right? That's not how it works here. You can do as much as you want. But just because you're asked to serve doesn't mean you have to. My feeling is that I'm not going to say no for you. Your part is to consider how much service is enough and then say no when you've reached that point. Getting to overload and burnout is no good for anybody, but it's your responsibility to manage it. If you need to cut back, do it. Our church respects you, your time and your decision.

I've always said, you don't have to do everything, but everyone should do something. Of course, there are times in our lives when just getting up and putting one foot forward is all we can manage. If you're there, we're here to support you. On the other hand, we are an intentional community and we all have some obligation to contribute when we can.

When my term as Moderator is up, I intend to work on publicity and marketing. I don't think that is part of a committee, but it's work that needs doing and it's what I can do. I'm also going to work on updating our by-laws. Doesn't that sound like fun? No? Well, it needs doing.

So, where and how can you serve?

Calling all “kids” (age 0-100)!

The Christian Ed committee along with Mary Harder and Lois McBroom invite you to fun afternoon of snow tubing or relaxing by a fire at Camp Confidence on Sunday, February 5th from 1-3 pm. We will provide pizza, hot cocoa and treats. Please join us for a chance to embrace our Minnesota winter with our church friends.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 31, in Fellowship Hall at church. Lunch Bunch is an open group for anyone who enjoys eating and visiting. Bring a dish to share, and join us at church at noon on the 31st. We can celebrate the last day of January!!

New Pathways Week at First Congregational

Sunday, February 26, 2017 – Sunday, March 5, 2017

If you wish to volunteer, you may contact:

Staying overnight: Sue Hadland - 829-2381 - dghrose@charter.net
Kathi Hefti - 839-1578 - hefti3@gmail.com
Dinners: Sharon Carlson - 828-1581 - sharoncarlson62@charter.net
Set up and take down: (2 Sundays) Deb Griffith - 828-4841 - debrange@brainerd.net
Transportation: Scott Gutierrez - 838-7066 - sljtgutierrez@gmail.com
Activities: Deb Griffith – 828-4841 – debrange@brainerd.net

OR, there will also be a white board located in the church sanctuary lobby each Sunday starting on January 29th for sign up, or you may go to www.supergenious.com online, set up an account and pick the dates you are available. We hope you will consider joining us!!! Thank you from The New Pathways Team!!!

Food Shelf Offering – January

Each month we bring groceries and financial donations to help feed hungry neighbors in our community. The Salvation Army Food Shelf serves 400 families each month. In January we received 40 pounds of food and \$135. Our next offering will be February 26. **Thank you for helping to feed our hungry neighbors!**

HUGS

February 5

Hosts: Georgia Harris & Jan Morton

Ushers: Roger Best, Greg Johnson
Ken Nelson & Gary Whiteman

Greeter:

Counters: Jeff Behr & Jerry Kuehn

February 12

Host: Maria Bertram

Ushers/Greeters: Mary Harder,
Lois McBroom, Itty & Preston Newgord

Counter: Deb Griffith

February 19

Hosts: Deb Griffith & Jan Morton

Ushers/Greeters: Marina Grabowski, Dan Hegstad,
Claire Steen & Barb Stokke

Counters: Coleen Carder & Vi Heiser

February 26

Hosts: Erik Lukanen & Tracy Lyons

Ushers/Greeters: Ellie Burkett, Sharon Carlson,
Joey Halvorson & Ann Turnbull

Counters: Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

January 18, 2017 Church Council Minutes

Moderator – Dan Hegstad

Assistant Moderator – Claire Steen

Clerk – Barb Stokke

Treasurer – Open

Christian Ministry – Ann Turnbull

Trustees – Coleen Carder

Christian Education – Marina Grabowski

Stewardship – Judy Whiteman

Council at Large –Mike North and Bonnie Crum

Present: Dan Hegstad, Claire Steen, Barb Stokke, Ann Turnbull, Coleen Carder, Marina Grabowski, Judy Whiteman, Bonnie Crum, and Rev. Leslie Moughty.

Dan Hegstad called the meeting to order and shared “Nothing in the Nature lives for itself.” Marina will provide February’s Food for Thought.

CLERK’S REPORT – Minutes of the December budget meeting were distributed for Council review.

TREASURER’S REPORT – No report

PASTOR’S REPORT – Highlights: Conducted Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services; made 10 pastoral care consultations - four hospital visits, an out-of-town visit with a member’s family, one office visit and four phone calls; held Adult Forum “Faith Worlds;” and attended Next Generation Leadership Initiative Core Class. Rev. Leslie thanks everyone, especially Joey, Ann, and Jerry, who provided worship leadership for two Sundays in December. Upcoming focuses include a visioning retreat presentation, a new member class session, pastoral job description work, and Lenten services.

STEWARDSHIP – Stewardship continues to work on ways to help our church family share their time and interest and meet the needs of the church. Planning also continues on next fall’s presentations on planned giving and end of life concerns.

TRUSTEES’ REPORT – Trustees reported spending 96% of last year’s budget; moving pews to provide better access and more comfortable seating in the sanctuary; and they announced the arrival of four different stackable chairs that need to be tested.

Trustees’ upcoming work includes scheduling the installation of wiring for the coffee pot; finishing plans for delivery of the dishwasher; contacting the snow removal company, asking them to move the snow away from, not towards the rain garden; reviewing needs for lock changes; installing a new screen door on the parsonage; and completing the semiannual parsonage review.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – Christian Ed announced they will host the Soup Kitchen this Friday and a Sledding Day for all ages Sunday, February 5, at Camp Confidence from 1-3 p.m. Other possible events include holding a March fundraiser for camp scholarships and applying for a MN Conference UCC Ashley Grant, a micro-grant that supports faith formation. CE reviewed the hat and mitten collection and suggested that before the church collects charitable contributions, the recipients of the contribution and the persons responsible for the delivery be determined.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – Christian Ministry reported an enthusiastic response to the January 1 Breakfast and Taize Service and the service led by Jerry Kuehn; suggested that the de-greening of the church would work better if someone was in charge and could do advance work; inquired about the protocol of reimbursing member and non-member supply pastor; decided to not host the Food Share concert, and requested again that the music committee be an autonomous committee, not a sub-committee of Christian Ministry and that the music committee be in charge of their own budget.

OLD BUSINESS – Safe Church Policy, By-Laws Task Force, Justice Committee and Fundraising remain on the Council’s future agendas.

NEW BUSINESS – Dan reported that The Twelfth Night Concert collection of \$541.00 was donated to the Brainerd High School Choir. Ann reviewed the work involved in hosting the Sounds of Hope concert last summer and explained the need to have more people involved if we host this again. Council discussed the need to fill Council and committee openings at the end of this term.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at 7:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stokke, Clerk of Council

Minutes of the 145th Annual Congregational Budget Meeting

December 4, 2016

Moderator Dan Hegstad called the meeting to order, and the 2014 and the 2015 Budget Meeting minutes were read and approved.

Moderator Hegstad introduced the 2017 budget that had been emailed to members of the congregation and were also distributed prior to the meeting. The proposed budget for 2017 totaled \$170,830, with a shortfall of \$21,319. Moderator Hegstad gave a brief history of the 2017 budget planning and the work involved to reduce the proposed deficit from over \$30,000 to just over \$20,000. He reminded the congregation that a budget is a plan that shows the way the church plans to spend its funds and that the one proposed is a real-world budget, but one with a deficit.

At this time, the meeting was opened to questions and discussion of ways to decrease expenditures.

Judy Whiteman, a member of the stewardship committee, explained that although electronic giving is easy and gives the church a predictable monthly income, there are per-transaction fees incurred. Contributions could be raised to cover the fees.

Nancy Gould, a trustee and member of the music committee, recommended that the music tunings and repair budget include funding for two yearly tunings of the organ and piano, necessary for their proper maintenance. This recommendation was also made by both church organists and a piano tuner.

Treasurer Mike Schrader clarified the reduction in the youth budget, explaining that \$2000 remains in the youth budget due to their successful 2016 fundraising, thereby reducing the amount needed in 2017 budget. He also explained that the difference in the Rev. Leslie's health insurance costs was due to an age-based adjustment in the insurance rate schedule.

The telephone item in the trustees' budget was questioned. Mary Reardon explained that a church listed under churches in the yellow pages is charged for that listing just as a business is charged. If the church is not listed in the yellow pages, it would be difficult to find in the white pages since people would not know the church's name.

Jerry Kuehn called the question, and Moderator Hegstad asked for a motion. Karen Ogdahl moved to approve the 2017 budget, and Beth Schrader seconded the motion.

Coleen Carder asked about the increase in the music budget. Another motion was called for, but Ann Turnbull explained the need for a withdrawal of the previous motion before action could continue. Karen Ogdahl and Beth Schrader withdrew their motions to approve the proposed budget.

At this time Jan Kurtz pledged, in memory of her brother - a musician, to donate the money necessary for a second tuning of the organ and piano in 2017.

Mike North made a motion to approve the 2017 budget. Ann Turnbull seconded the motion, clarifying that it includes a music budget increase necessary for two tunings of the organ and piano. The congregation voted to accept the budget.

Gary Whiteman made a motion to adjourn; Jerry Kuehn seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned, and coffee and cookies were served in the fellowship hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Barb Stokke, Clerk of Council

Church Family “Photo” Album Display

Once upon a time, Rev. Deb Celley presented me with two boxes of vintage church photos and data. I took the first box, scanned all the photos and documents, put together a Power Point that was presented at an Adult Forum while Deb was still here and saved all to a flash drive, which is copied to church computer and on file. Last September, this came to light in a Christian Ministry meeting.

Jumping to February 2017, we have a tri-fold photo wall in the basement, purchased for display of our church family, vintage and current. The original displays included members still here, dating back to the 1970-80's, a 'can you guess who they are' blast from the past. The plan is to update it monthly and here is your piece of the project.

We are asking for you to bring in photos, vintage church activities or present family gatherings that can be posted for a month, before being returned. Please identify people and date, to the best of your knowledge. There will be a box in the office for your deposits and returns. I, Jan Kurtz, will arrange the displays, including identification . . . maybe not the first Sunday, just to see how good you can guess!

We hope this will be a way to honor those who did our church work before, continuing their stories, as well as give us updates on our extended family, you all. Oh, and a few smiles and fun would be good.

Jan Kurtz rmjkurtz@brainerd.net 829-1192

Church Financials

Financial Results – General Fund Year to Date Results as of 12/31/16	2016 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 12/31/16	% of Budget
Income:			
From Giving Units	\$ 150,481	\$ 149,914	99.62%
Other Giving	\$ 5,500	\$ 30,795	559.91%
Total Income	\$ 155,981	\$ 180,709	115.85%
Expenses:			
Council	\$ 97,324	\$ 107,991	110.96%
Christian Ministry	\$ 13,150	\$ 12,853	97.74%
Christian Education	\$ 2,950	\$ 712	24.13%
Stewardship	\$ 570	\$ 690	121.06%
Trustees	\$ 60,170	\$ 58,210	96.74%
Total Expenses	\$ 174,164	\$ 180,456	103.61%
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (18,183)	\$ 253	

Church Calendar – February 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	2	3 10:30 Book Group	4
5 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Painting the Stars 1:00 Tubing @ Camp Confidence	6	7	8 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Clergy Cluster	9 5:30 Committee Meetings	10 10:30 Book Group	11
12 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Painting the Stars	13	14 Valentine's Day	15 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council Meeting	16	17 10:30 Book Group	18
19 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School	20	21	22 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	23 5:30 PPRC	24 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	25
26 10:00 Worship & Food Shelf Offering 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Painting the Stars New Pathways Host Week NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	27 New Pathways Host Week	28 New Pathways Host Week				