



Friendship News, February 2019

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

Church office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8am-11:30am
 Wednesdays and Fridays 8am – 12:00pm
Pastor Leslie's drop-in hours: Weds 2-4pm Thurs 10am-12:00pm
 Other times by appointment

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Pastor's E-mail: pastorleslieucc@gmail.com

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

Pastor's Pen

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."
- Colossians 3:14

Dear Church,

Christmas had barely arrived when red hearts began to take the place of Christmas trees in stores and on websites. In the United States, February is often considered the month of love. Since we focus so much on love in February, I thought I'd jump on the bandwagon and focus on it here in my newsletter article, too. However, the love that is described in this scripture from Paul's letter to the Colossians is not the frilly, romantic, smoochy kind that we celebrate on the 14th. Instead, it is Agape love - the highest form of love that is selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial. That is the love God has for each of us, and it is the love that Jesus is referring to when he calls us to love our neighbors.

"Clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience...Above all, clothe yourselves with love." What a beautiful metaphor. The clothes we wear are often one of the first things that people notice about us. When you walk past a stranger, you won't learn much about them by simply looking at them, but you can plainly see what they are wearing. Imagine what it would be like to wear love like that. Imagine how your life might change if even strangers walking by you might be able to see the selfless, unconditional, sacrificial love inside you just as plainly as they can see the clothes you wear.

God's love is contagious and nearly impossible to contain. We've seen how God's love is multiplied, not diminished, when shared with others. And so, during this very divisive, hectic, and uncertain time in the life of our country, a time when you may be having disagreements

with your family or co-workers, a time when you may be worried or anxious, a time when you may be at a loss for what to say or do, I would say that clothing ourselves with love is a great place to start.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't speak out against intolerance or injustice. Sometimes love means challenging ourselves and our society to be better and do better. But it does mean that no matter what we do or don't do and whatever we say or leave unsaid, we must first ask ourselves if we are coming from a place of love. If the answer is no, then we need to back to the closet and put on love. It's the one piece of clothing that always fits, goes with everything, and never goes out of style.

Beloved, you are loved unconditionally by the God who created you, you are loved by your imperfect, yet passionate, pastor, and you are loved by this wild and wonderful church family. I have both witnessed and received the abundance of love that First Congregational UCC has to offer. May we wear that love everywhere we go and share it with everyone we encounter.

With Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Leslie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "With Peace,".

“He lived life to the fullest.” Remembering Corey Borg-Massanari

A few weeks ago, Bobbie Gorrion, our church's administrative assistant, received the heartbreaking news that her son Corey had been caught in an avalanche while skiing in Taos, New Mexico. A few days later, Corey's life on this earth came to end and his status as an organ donor gave new life to 11 recipients. On Saturday February 2 we gathered at Corey's church, Immaculate Heart Catholic Church in Crosslake, for a beautiful service that celebrated Corey's passion for life.

As you can imagine, this is a difficult time for Bobbie and her family. Church leadership wants to make sure she can take time to grieve, be with her family, and attend to all the unexpected details that arise in a situation like this. Her return to work will be gradual and the timing of such is still developing. I want to express deep gratitude to Lisa Wigand who is stepping in to handle some of the bookkeeping. Thank you also to Bonnie Crum and Gale Landem for working in the office. We appreciate your patience and understanding as volunteers and Pastor Leslie take on some of the tasks that Bobbie typically handles.

If you would like to donate to help cover the expenses incurred by Corey's family, Bobbie's sister set up a Go Fund Me page here: <https://www.gofundme.com/6qwzk9s>.

Please continue to hold Bobbie and the entire Borg-Massanari family in your prayers in the weeks and months to come.

A Pastoral Letter from UCC President and General Minister, Rev. John Dorhauer
“That They May All Be One”

January 28, 2019

Dear Partners in Christ:

The vision of a body united –in purpose, in mission, in vision – is one that inspired the birth of our denomination. All of our spiritual impulses reverberate in an effort to call us into a more perfect union. Throughout our shared history as a people of faith and as a part of the Body of Christ, we have challenged ourselves to widen the circle of inclusion. Widening the circle has always come with growth pains as we shed old skins and welcome those whom we had previously thought unwelcome. And, with each new articulation of a more fully expressed Body of Christ we have realized new joy. Through it all we remain focused on the call to be one and committed to meeting the challenges inherent in that call.

We are now living in and through a season when the threats to unity are legion. Talk of walls that mark refugees as threats, labels like ‘terrorist’ that attach too easily to Muslims, overt racial bias that normalizes fear and hatred, a pandemic of abuse to women with the trigger reflex to forgive the men who author that abuse have turned America into a land many of us no longer recognize and that too many of us are finding harder and harder to reconcile with our faith.

Now more than ever, the Holy Spirit of the Living God and the Risen Christ is seeking to partner with anyone committed to unifying the human community. The gospel mandate to love our neighbor as we love ourselves resonates deep within us. It calls for the better angels among and within us to always resist impulses to hate, to condemn, to vilify, or to castigate. In such a time as this, the United Church of Christ’s call to fulfill the prayer of Jesus, that they may all be one, stands as an urgent mandate to disciples who envision a just world for all.

United with you in God’s service,



The Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President



Read the Book of Matthew with Us!

Each Sunday through Easter, our scriptures will be following the Gospel of Matthew. You are invited to read between Sundays on this suggested schedule, and by April 28 you will have read the entire book of Matthew! In January we read through Matthew 5:48.

Jan. 28 - Feb. 3: Read Matthew 6:1-34

Feb. 4 – Feb 10: Read Matthew 7:1-8:34

Feb. 11 – Feb 17: Read Matthew 9:1-13:43

Feb 18 – Feb 24: Read Matthew 13:44 -14:36

~ Opportunities to Know and Share God's Love ~

Real Talk: Sexuality and Our Faith for 9-12 grades

In partnership with our sister congregations in New York Mills and Wadena, we will be offering a series of workshops on Sundays after church called "Real Talk: Sexuality and Faith". Starting on February 17, we will meet at the UCC church in Staples once a month from 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm for lunch and a workshop on the topic of sexuality and faith. These workshops will be using the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum as its basis. I (Pastor Leslie) will be attending and helping to lead these sessions, so I will be able to provide transportation for up to 4 participants. This is the sexuality education you wish you had as a young person. Participants do not have to belong to the church so encourage the parents of your teen's friends to come as well. Please email me for the Info Packet and permission slip – pastorleslieucc@gmail.com

Eco Faith Summit in Brainerd



We don't need to tell you that our earth is in a growing crisis that is already endangering human beings, as well as plant and animal life, and the soil and water that sustains life itself. Climate change and ecosystem degradation is accelerating. We know that we are called to be stewards of God's wondrous, intricately interdependent creation. The question is not whether to be those stewards, but how? How do we integrate what is actually integral to the very Gospel for the healing of God's world?

The Lutheran NE MN Synod EcoFaith Network is hosting NE MN Synod's 2019 EcoFaith Summit: Creation, Church, and You: Earth-keeping Practically Speaking. The Summit is taking place on Saturday, March 30, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Brainerd. Its purpose is to encourage and equip every congregation with refreshing perspectives and practical strategies for making earth stewardship integral within the ministries you already have: worship, education, congregational life, building and grounds, and community engagement. For more information click here.

We, the UCC congregation, Brainerd, is invited to attend. I plan on going. If you'd like to join me, please let me know. Peace, Ellie Burkett (prairiesmoke747@gmail.com)

New Pathways

Our next New Pathways host week is coming up Feb 24- Mar 3rd. This a great time to put our faith into action, to share God's love, and help some members of our community get back on their feet. As of January 11th, there were 2 families in the program, total of 6 people with 4 being children under 6 years old. Here is the link to sign up: <https://tinyurl.com/pathwaysfeb>



How W.I.S.E. Are You about Mental Health?

Can you spot the myths from the facts? Test your knowledge of mental health by taking this online 10-question quiz from CDC: www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/quiz

HUGS

February 3

Hosts: Marcia Ferris & Dan Hegstad
Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman
Counters: Jeff Behr & Gale Landem

February 10

Hosts: Maria Bertram
Ushers/Greeters: Mary Harder, Lois McBroom & Austin Newgord
Counters: Deb Griffith & Georgia Harris

February 17

Hosts: Marina Grabowski & Deb Griffith
Ushers: Kathy Ogden & Cheri Maxwell
Greeters: Claire Steen & Barb Stokke
Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

February 24

Hosts: Ann Turnbull & Eleanor Burkett
Ushers/Greeters: Sharon Carlson, Joey Halvorson, Jolene Hojem, Karen Ogdahl
Counter: Nancy Gould & Judy Whiteman

If you are interested in being a fellowship host, an usher, or a greeter, please contact Jan Morton.

Council Minutes – First Congregational UCC, Brainerd, Minnesota December 19, 2018

Moderator – Mike North Asst. Moderator – Tracy Lyons Clerk – Barb Stokke Treasurer – vacant
Pastor – Leslie Moughty Trustees – Deb Griffith Stewardship – Judy Whiteman
Christian Ministry – Karen Ford Christian Education – Lowell Johnson /Jolene Hojem
Council at Large – Bob Jones, Gary Whiteman, Claire Steen

Mike North called the meeting to order. Present were Mike North, Barb Stokke, Tracy Lyons, Judy Whiteman, Lowell Johnson, Gary Whiteman, and Rev. Leslie Moughty. Mike N. shared Food for Thought; Leslie will share it next month.

Council Minutes – previously approved.

CLERK'S REPORT – Millie Gjertson, a longstanding member of First Congregational, passed away November 24, 2018.

PASTOR'S REPORT – Highlights: Held two confirmation classes, a Blue Christmas Service (12/15), and a Transgender Day of Remembrance; met with the By-laws committee; held memorial and interment services for Millie Gjertson; worked with Executive Committee to finalized 2019 budget proposal; participated in greening the church; and assisted with Christmas Play rehearsal. *Community engagement: Wrote Dispatch Clergy View article published December 16; participated in Thanksgiving Eve ecumenical service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church; attended WeAre Annual Board Meeting; working on event with WeARE in partnership with Lord of Life. *Pastoral Care Contacts: Made 2 home visits, 3 hospital visits, 3 offsite visits, and 3 office visits. *Concerns, Observations, and other Updates: Need a treasurer as Deb Lundberg has stepped down from that position; need two to three more people on the Christian Education committee and two mentors to work with two new confirmands; Work continues on the Safe Church Policy and the By laws. *On the radar: Christmas Eve service at 4:00 p.m.; office closed December 25 and 26; and Bobbie out of the office December 24-28. *Out-of-office dates: December 31-January 13 for Next Generation Leadership Initiative Core Class in Arizona and vacation.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Council learned that Deb Lundgren has stepped down as treasurer. Council thanks Deb for the time she has given and the work she has accomplished; Council looks forward to working with her again.

TRUSTEES' REPORT – Work continues on the renovation of the lower level men's bathroom, making it handicap accessible. Trustees also reviewed preliminary bids on furnaces. Solar panels are also being researched. Trustees designated the former counseling office as a place for mothers to nurse their babies; Leslie donated the rocking chair from her office.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT – The Time and Talent surveys have been tallied by Mable and will be distributed after Christmas.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY REPORT – Although the number of people attending the monthly Taizé service is small, CM feels they benefit from the service and recommends that the Taizé service be continued. CM has been planning the January 6 service, which will be a blend of a regular service and Taizé; the un-greening of the church at 10 a.m. January 7; and the January 13 service with guest preacher Lorie Alford, Pilgrim Point camp director.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT – CE has been preparing the Christmas play "How the Grinch Found Christ in Christmas" presented by our children and youth during the service December 16. Next events on the schedule are Ice skating and tubing. Leslie explained that the nursery staff's salary is part of the CE's budget because all contract employees' expenses are found in the budgets of their representative committees. CE is in need of two additional members.

MEMBERS AT LARGE – At Large members will be working to fill the treasurer position and the positions on the CE committee.

OLD BUSINESS:

2019 Budget: Council passed a motion made by Gary and seconded by Lowell to hold a mid-year budget meeting in early June.

Council also recommends that the following changes be made to budget reports: starting balances be included in the Designated Funds report, income is labeled accurately, and expenses appear only once in the appropriate account. Leslie noted that the Designated Funds report in the December newsletter shows only the income and expenses but not the starting balances, making it appear as though we have overspent by \$27,000. In reality, we are actually ahead; the designated funds are fine, but the reporting is confusing.

WISE Program: The WISE meeting scheduled for December 16 was postponed but will be rescheduled. A question of funding was raised since no money for the program was budgeted. Expenses could possibly be taken out of office budget and/or Leslie's professional expenses. A request was made to purchase copies of *Blessed Are the Crazy* at \$16 a piece. A recommendation was made to purchase half of the books and borrow the rest. Another question raised was how does the entire congregation become informed about this program. Possibilities brainstormed by Council include dedicating one or two worship services and adult forums to mental health; presenting Mental Health moments in worship; holding book discussions, movie discussion, and in-home small group meetings led by task force members; talking to other churches and group involved in mental health fitness; informing the congregation of Crow Wing Energized Mental Fitness events.

NEW BUSINESS:

In February, the Executive committee, Leslie, and Bobbie will meet to discuss vacation time and ideas for staffing the office and completing necessary tasks during vacations.

Next Council Meeting: January 16, 2019, 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Stokke, Clerk of Council

Council Minutes – First Congregational UCC, Brainerd, Minnesota

January 16, 2018

Present: Mike North, Karen Ford, Deb Griffith, Gary Whiteman, Judy Whiteman, Tracy Lyons, Rev. Leslie Moughty, guests Colleen Carter, Cassie Lyons,

Mike North called the meeting to order. Pastor Leslie read from the book Embers as the food for thought. Tracy will have the next food for thought.

Colleen gave a presentation concerning Millie's bequest of her gifts. First was a review of her past contributions to the church and the community. Next was the trust allotment for these organizations - UCC, Senior Center, Northland Arboretum, Brainerd Library. The exact amounts will be determined after the stocks have been sold. A project that Millie wanted to fund at Woodland Care Center has not been accomplished but was dear to her heart and has not been funded. Tracy moved that UCC agree to contribute to the Woodland garden project from Millie's bequest to UCC. The specific amount should be known in February. Karen seconded the motion and the motion passed.

CLERK'S REPORT - No report

PASTOR'S REPORT - Two of the four weeks Pastor Leslie was out of the office at NGLI Leadership Class and Vacation. HIGHLIGHTS: Prepared and led Christmas Eve Service, and finalized services for the following 3 Sundays; Bylaw committee met in Dec.; noted learnings from NGLI including ideas about building relationships within teams. ON THE RADAR: Installation of Rev. Tony Romaine on January 23 at 9:30 at the Little Falls United Church; Annual Meeting June 7 and 8 at St. Benedict's College, the theme being One Body Many Members Created for Connection.

TREASURER'S REPORT - The end of the year balance sheet needs some changes and needs to have the date of printing added. The ending balance was a deficit of \$3,000.

TRUSTEES' REPORT - There was no meeting. There have been some theft concerns. A purse was taken from a car in the parking lot and that included keys to the church. In the coatroom by the office, gloves and a wallet were taken from pockets during a service. The review of the security camera only showed a male leaving the building. Deb will check with the insurance company about changing locks. She will also make a sign about being on camera.

STEWARDSHIP - There is a list of Fall 2018 Time and Talent Pledges that will be given out. Also a signup sheet will be put up to encourage more signers. The Christmas Fund offering on Dec 23 was \$481 and the 4th Sunday offering added \$380 for a total of \$861.

MINISTRY - The committee was busy conducting 2 Sunday services and the monthly Taizé service.

CHRISTIAN ED - No report

MEMBERS AT LARGE -No report

OLD BUSINESS - The office computer crashed and could not be repaired because of age.

Mike sent an email to the council members and moved that a new computer be purchased.

Bob Jones seconded the motion. The members returned yes and motion passed. Barb went with Bobbie to make the purchase at Best Buy.

NEW BUSINESS - Adult form on January 27 topic is Mobil Crisis Unit (Rescheduled)

NEXT MEETING - February 20 with Tracy as leader. Deb moved to adjourn.

Judy Whiteman, Acting Clerk

