



Friendship News, March 2019

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

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

Office phone 218-829-2528 Website: www.uccbainerd.org

Office E-mail uccbrainerd@gmail.com 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

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

—Matthew 18:1-3

What are you giving up for Lent? Even though my church attendance as a kid was sporadic at best, this practice of sacrificing something during the Lenten season was expected among my circle of friends and to a lesser degree in my family. I usually made some sort of half-hearted effort to give up something like candy or pop, but I never really understood the purpose other than to try to be healthier. But I couldn't make the connection between not eating chocolate and being a good Christian. Did Jesus really care if I ate a few Cadbury Eggs before Easter?

The season of Lent, the six weeks leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection, may be one of the most misunderstood seasons in the church year. I have heard people refer to Lent as the time of year when we are supposed to feel bad about ourselves and how sinful we are. I believe that misses the point. Yes, Lent is typically about repentance, but the word repentance has gotten a bad rap in progressive Christianity.

The root meaning of the word repentance is to turn around. To repent is to make a turn, to change one's way of thinking or being. When we approach Lent with this framework, the season can hold deeply meaningful possibilities. How might you turn away from distractions and turn your attention toward God? How might you turn away from actions or situations that are hurtful and turn toward compassion and love? To repent we must first acknowledge that we have done something or have acted in ways that do not align with God's vision of shalom on

earth. The purpose of this acknowledgement isn't to make us feel bad about ourselves. But in order to do better we have to admit where we have messed up in the first place. Then we can make a conscious effort to re-align our attention and our actions to God's hopes for us. It is important for us to do this not only at a personal level but also at a societal level. We as a country have much to repent. Systemic racism, prejudice and violence of all kinds, our idolization of guns, that fact that we allow human beings to go hungry or to sleep on sidewalks.

The theme for our worship series during Lent is "Are You Kidding?" Jesus states that unless you become like a child you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. In this series, we'll look at Jesus' parables through the eyes of children, discovering a surprising wisdom in them that adults frequently miss ... until they become like children. So, let us repent of our desire to be the greatest, and let us turn with humility to letting God be God.

With Peace,



Weekly Lenten Gatherings

Our "midweek" Lenten Gatherings are going to look a little different this year. Due to weekly Confirmation Classes on Wednesdays, our Lenten Gatherings will take place on Friday evening. We will be sharing the journey with our kindred at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Join us from 5:30pm – 7:00pm for a light soup supper and a time of re-centering. After a busy week, take this time for yourself to return your awareness to God's presence.

We will be meeting at **St. Paul's Episcopal Church** starting on **Friday March 15 at 5:30.**

Address: 408 N 7th St. in Brainerd (on the East side of Gregory Park)

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.

Feb 24 – March 2: Read Matthew 15:1-17:13

March 3 – 9: Read Matthew 17:14 - 18:35

March 10 – 16: Read Matthew 19:1-20:16

March 17 - 23: Read Matthew 20:17 - 22:45

March 24 – 30: Read Matthew 23:1-25:13

March 31 – April 6 Read Matthew 25:14-46

April 7 – 13: Re-read Matthew 21:1-7

Reading through Holy Week: During the week between Palm Sunday and Easter, consider reading these short passages, in this order, as we journey with Jesus from his Triumphal entry to Jerusalem to the cross at Golgatha, and ultimately, resurrection on Easter morning:

Monday April 17: Matthew 26:1-5

Tuesday April 16: Matthew 26:6-13

Wednesday April 17: Matthew 26:14-16

Thursday April 18: Matthew 26:17-75

Friday April 19: Matthew 27:1-61

Saturday April 20: Matthew 27:62-66

Sunday: April 21: Matthew 28:1-10

~ Opportunities to Know and Share God's Love ~

W.I.S.E. Adult Forums During Lent will offer an opportunity to learn about and engage in conversation with topics of mental health.

March 10 - Movie and discussion. The series kicks off with a screening of the movie "As Good as It Gets." We will gather at 11:30 and begin the movie at 11:45am. Discussion following the movie should wrap up around 2:30pm. A light lunch and movie snacks will be provided. (Movie is rated PG-13).

March 17 - We will watch Part I of two videos from the 2018 W.I.S.E. Congregations Conference on the topic of "Companionship." This is described as "a ministry of presence, responding to isolation and suffering, and supportive of healing and recovery."

March 24 - Part 2 of the Companionship video followed by discussion.

March 31 - Do you worry about what to do if someone is having a mental health crisis? Sharon Richardson, LPCC, and Angela Marie, Mental Health Practitioner, will educate us about the Mobile Crisis Organization.

Say NO to Conversion Therapy! Tuesday March 12

The Mental Health Protections Act will have its second committee hearing on Tuesday, March 12th in Commerce. There will be a rally at 1:15 in the State Office Building and then pack the committee room. RSVP here: www.outfront.org/conversion-therapy-hearing-2
Come out to the hearing and let's #ProtectLove! At the last hearing, more than 100 people showed up to support LGBTQ people. Let's keep the momentum going and tell legislators to support the Mental Health Protections Act.

Learn more about the bill here: www.house.leg.state.mn.us/sessiondaily/Story/13601

>> If you would like to carpool, we will meet at the church at 10:00AM <<

If you are unable to attend the hearing, please contact your representatives in the Minnesota House and Senate and ask them to support House File 12 or Senate File 83.

This website will help you find the contact information: www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/faq/faq?id=47

You can also use this online form through OutFront to send a message to the committee:

www.outfront.org/emailcommercecommittee

Honorable Joshua Heintzeman
Minnesota House of Representatives
353 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Honorable Carrie Ruud
Minnesota State Senate
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3233
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Honorable John Poston
Minnesota House of Representatives
317 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Honorable Paul Gazelka
Minnesota State Senate
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3113
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Early registration is now open for the 2019 Annual Meeting of the UCC Minnesota Conference and YOU are invited!

Save money by registering by April 30th! Early registration is \$80, after April 30 it will be \$110, late registration after May 31 is \$135! The Annual Meeting is Friday, June 7 and Saturday, June 8. (No activities on Sunday this year.)

Register and keep up-to-date with what is happening at Annual Meeting by visiting <http://uccmn.org/events/am>.

Keynote Speaker on Saturday will be the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the UCC and he will address our Annual Meeting theme "Created for Connection:

One Body, Many Members." How are we growing our connections within the Church and outside the Church? How are we healing and bridging divides within our own communities? How does or could our collective membership in the United Church of Christ facilitate those connections? Housing is available for those that want to arrive on Thursday evening and those that don't want to drive home in the evening can stay on Saturday evening as well, and of course there will be housing available for everyone on Friday evening. Meals will be available at the College of St. Benedict for lunch and dinner on Friday, and Saturday there is breakfast, lunch, and a dinner banquet. There is an \$80 discount available for youth delegate registration. Call the Conference office (612-871-0359) before you register to get the discount codes.

Annual Meeting 2019



**Created for Connection:
One Body, Many Members**

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)

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



Date: March 1, 2019

Dear Church Partners,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying (hopefully) the snow.

As you may already know, we have been having issues with the landlord of our Brainerd day center. Our restrooms have been blocked for several weeks and we are unable to adequately provide services to our families at that location. Since we have not made any progress towards gaining access to the restrooms, New Pathways' Board of Directors has decided to suspend operations at that location. This means the Brainerd area churches will not be asked to host any families in the foreseeable future. Any families from the 5 counties supported by the Brainerd day center (Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, Todd, Morrison) will be served by the Cambridge location if there is available capacity.

Any donations from the Brainerd Lakes area will continue to be applied to that program. Any income above and beyond expenses will be saved in a fund specifically for services in the Brainerd area. We would greatly appreciate the continued support of local donors, especially now as we look for a new home.

Our Brainerd Case Manager, Geneva, is still employed by us. We have had an open position in Cambridge, and Geneva has been filling that spot, in addition to responding to any inquiries in the Brainerd area. Geneva will continue working for us until the new case manager is fully trained. I am so thankful for her continued dedication during this challenging time and really appreciate everything our host coordinators have done to support her!

We are still committed to serving families locally in Brainerd and are taking some time now to assess the need and how we can best support those experiencing homelessness in the area. As enthusiastic supporters of our program, I am sure you would like to know more about the specific steps we will be taking, but we ask that you give us some much-needed time to develop a plan. We want to make sure the next steps we take are well thought out and put us in a position for long term stability in the Brainerd Lakes area.

As always, feel free to call me if you have questions. We will keep you informed of developments on a regular basis as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Pamela Streed
Executive Director

HUGS

March 3

Hosts: Eileen Kurpiers and Jan Morton

Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Austin Newgord &
Gary Whiteman

Counters: Jeff Behr & Gale Landem

March 10

Hosts: Karen Ford & Tom Nelson

Ushers/Greeters: Maria Bertram, Itty Newgord,
Jack & Kay Kraywinkle

Counters: Deb Griffith & Georgia Harris

March 31

Hosts: Sue Hadland & Lisa Wigand

Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman

Greeter: Jan Morton

Counters: Cynthia Janes & TBD

March 17

Hosts: Cynthia Janes & Charlotte Goedsche

Ushers: Becky & Brian Twamley

Greeters: Deb Griffith & Marina Grabowski

Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

March 24

Hosts: Sharon Carlson & Tracy Lyons

Ushers: Ann Tumbull & Ellie Burkett

Greeters/Ushers: Jolene Hojem, Karen Ogdahl

Counters: Nancy Gould & Judy Whiteman

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

Liturgists

What is a liturgist? An awesome volunteer who reads aloud portions of the worship service including the Call to Worship and the Scripture. The only requirements for serving as a liturgist are being able to read aloud comfortably, arriving to church 10-15 minutes early, ability to speak clearly into a microphone, and the willingness to accept gratitude from the pastor and other church members. If you are interested in being a liturgist, please contact Barb Stokke.

March 3: Dan Hegstad

March 6: Jan Morton

March 10: Jerry Kuehn

March 17: Dave Crum

March 24: Barb Colgan

March 31: Pat Scott

Council – First Congregational UCC, Brainerd, Minnesota
February 20, 2019

Due to dangerous weather conditions, the church council meeting was cancelled. Next meeting is March 20 at 7:00 pm.

Church Calendar **March** 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Office Closed on Mondays	Office Open 8:00 – 11:30	Office Open 8:00 – 12:00 Pastor Drop-In Hours 2:00 – 4:00	Office Open 8:00 – 12:00 Pastor Drop-In Hours 10:00 – 12:00	Office Open 8:00 – 12:00 10:30 Book Group	2
3 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School	4	5	6 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 5:30 Ash Wednesday	7	8 10:30 Book Group	9
10 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 W.I.S.E. Movie	11	12	13 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation	14 Committee Mtgs – Times Vary	15 10:30 Book Group 5:30 Lenten Meditation at St. Paul's	16
17 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum 11:50 Youth Depart for Real Talk	18	19	20 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation 7:00 Council	21 6:00 Taizé Service	22 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen 5:30 Lenten Meditation at St. Paul's	23
Special Offering 24 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School *Newsletter Deadline*	25	26	27 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation	28	29 10:30 Book Group 5:30 Lenten Meditation at St. Paul's	30
31 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum						