

and click confirm. 1 to 1 conversations can only be scheduled up to 4 months out to minimize the need for rescheduling. Online scheduling not your thing? Don't worry! Just give me a call, email, or text and we can schedule it the old-fashioned way!

This doesn't mean I will not be in the office. At minimum, I am usually at church on Wednesday mornings for Prayer Circle, as well as Thursday mornings and Friday mornings in the office. I am frequently at the church at other times as well and will of course be happy to make an appointment for other meetings that are not 1 to 1 conversations. As always, if you have a pastoral emergency such as a hospitalization, a mental health challenge, or a death of a loved one, please call me on my cell phone. Don't hesitate to ask any questions you might have about this process. I am excited about this opportunity to connect with more of you in an intentional way. I hope you will sign up soon!

Pastor's Pen

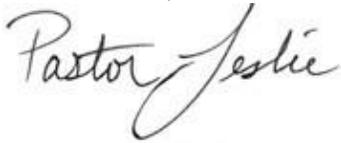
Easter is later in the year than usual this year. The timing of the holiday was decided in the year 325 CE by the Council of Nicaea. At this council, it was decided that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first Full Moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox. In our secular world, holidays are typically determined by dates. Independence day is always July 4. Valentine's day is always February 14. Even holidays with changing dates are still tied to the calendar, such as Labor Day falling on the first Monday of September. But Easter and the holidays that are connected to it, is different. This year, Easter is April 21. It seems appropriate that this holiday that is scheduled by the relationship between Earth and the moon, a holiday that celebrates hope when all seemed hopeless, new life coming rising from the dead, a new reality that challenges old assumptions, that this celebration of the resurrection, would lead us into Earth Day. We are facing a global climate crisis that threatens to end life as we know it on this planet. I thought I would share with you these words of Sammy Conde, a young adult member of the UCC from Florida who authored this contribution to the UCC Lent Devotional:

“As the world continues to face the devastating effects of global climate change, it is hard for me not to think of the treatment of creation when reading this familiar text. God has asked us to care for creation throughout our faith tradition, and yet young folks and creation cry out as they are facing consequences of decisions made by so many people with vested interest in continuing to hurt creation. It is hard not to think of those invested in activities that cause pollution, cause natural disasters like red tide bloom, and decrease biodiversity are encamped against our future and that of creation. It feels like those in positions of authority and power are not listening, because many of them are not. It is easy to feel greatly burdened and overwhelmed by this and yet we are not alone in this pain. Yet, we are reminded by Psalm 27 that we aren't alone. It reminds us that God asks us to care for creation when God asks so of Adam and Eve in the creation story. It reminds us that even when we feel like the world is turning against creation and people make claims that contradict the gifts we have been given to better understand care of creation through science, that it is through God we can find hope and motivation to act. God is still with us and God is still speaking, even when it seems all hope is fading.

Prayer: God, thank you for sharing this song of confidence and hope and letting us look toward you even when the world seems to be against us. Remind us of your goodness and how it will come if we believe and work to bring heaven here on earth. Amen.”

The full “Stepping Out” devotional which features the voices of youth and young adults, can be downloaded at www.uccresources.com/products/young-voices-stepping-out-of-the-wilderness

With Peace,



Weekly Lenten Gatherings

Our “midweek” Lenten Gatherings are happening every Friday evening through April 12. We are 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 centering prayer. 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**.

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

Holy Week Services

We hope you will join us for one or both of the following services during Holy Week. Both services will be held at First Congregational UCC and our St. Paul’s kindred will be joining us.

April 18, 6:00pm: Maundy Thursday service with optional foot washing and communion.

April 19, 12:00pm: Good Friday service

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!

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

April 7 – 13: Re-read Matthew 21:1-7

April 14 – 20 See Holy Week Schedule Below

April 21 – 27: Read Matthew 28:11-20

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 Golgotha, and ultimately, resurrection on Easter morning:

Monday April 15: 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! LGBTQ Lobby Day on April 25

The House version of the Conversion Therapy Ban (HF 12) made it out of committee and is headed for a vote of the House. Join hundreds of LGBTQ people and allies to fight for our rights by showing our force at the Minnesota State Capitol. This year, the top priority is banning the harmful practice of conversion "therapy" in Minnesota. OutFront's Lobby Day will be critical to help advance this life-saving legislation.

Thursday, April 25, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

>> If you would like to carpool, we will meet at the church at 6:00 AM <<

Learn more and RSVP: outfront.org/lobby-day

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

If you are unable to attend, 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

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**

Spring Conference Youth Event, Beloved Community: Youth Supporting Youth

Registration Deadline is April 14

Starts: Friday, April 26, 6:30pm
Ends: Sunday, April 28, 11:30am
Cost: \$75 (Scholarships available)
Where: Luther Crest Camp
8231 County Road 11 NE, Alexandria, MN
Ages: Grades 6-12



Youth oftentimes are the first point of contact when a friend is experiencing a crisis, whether they know how to help or not. This CYE we will explore how, as progressive Christians, to have healthy boundaries with compassion when friends are hurting.

Rev. Kevin Brown, Associate Conference Minister for Faith Formation, and Lori Alford, MA, Pilgrim Point Camp Program Director, will help youth build a toolbox of appropriate responses when friends are experiencing mental health crises, family difficulties, drug or alcohol use or abuse, and physical or sexual assaults. Knowing these responses empowers youth to support the beloved community.

Register Now! uccmn.org/calendar/spring-2019-conference-youth-event

Important Update About Pilgrim Point Camp

Excerpt: After much discussion and prayer, the Board voted unanimously to sell the Pilgrim Point Camp property. It also voted unanimously to use the proceeds of the sale of Pilgrim Point Camp to support a new model of outdoor ministries and other missional priorities and core values of the Conference. To read the full letter, go to <https://tinyurl.com/pilpoint> or request a printed copy from the church office.

April Birthdays

April 1	Izzy Armstrong	April 24	Coleen Carder
April 4	Krystal Graf	April 24	Don Utzman
April 13	Has Stadem	April 24	JoAnne Nelson
April 14	Bonnie Crum	April 24	Austin Newgord
April 14	Dan Hegstad	April 26	Mitch Crum
April 15	Joey Halvorson	April 27	Lori Howe
April 23	Emma Ferrie	April 28	Cheri Maxwell

HUGS

April 7

Hosts: Mark & Becky Stadem
Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Greg Johnson
Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman
Counters: Jeff Behr & Gale Landem

April 14

Hosts: Jack & Kay Kraywinkle
Ushers/Greeters: Maria Bertram, Mary Harder,
Austin & Itty Newgord
Counters: Deb Griffith & Georgia Harris

April 21

Hosts: Cheri Maxwell & Kathy Ogden
Ushers: Claire Steen & Barb Stokke
Greeters: Austin & Itty Newgord
Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

April 28

Hosts: Joey Halvorson & Karen Ogdahl
Ushers/Greeters: Ellie Burkett, Jean Schaeffer
Sharon Carlson & Ann Turnbull
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.

April 7: Sharon Carlson

April 14: Joe Stattine

~ Community Events ~

Chalberg Theatre/CLC: Adapted from the acclaimed novel **Neither Wolf Nor Dog** by Kent Nerburn the story follows a white author who gets drawn into the heart of contemporary Native American life in the sparse lands of the Dakota's by a 95 year old Lakota elder and his side-kick. Running time of this film is 110 minutes. Tuesday, April 16 at 6:30pm. Tickets: \$5 – CLC Theatre Box Office: Phone: 218-855-8199, Business Hours: Tuesday-Friday 10am-2pm and one hour before performances.

Heartland Symphony Orchestra Presents *Extraordinary Music...Extraordinary People...Here in the Heartland*. Tickets: Adults \$12, Seniors \$10, Youth K-12 Free. Tickets may be purchased at the door or by calling 1-800-826-1997 or online at www.HeartlandSymphony.com.

Little Falls, April 6 at 7:30 pm, Charles D. Martin Auditorium, Little Falls High School.

Brainerd, April 7 at 2:30 pm, Tornstrom Auditorium.

ACES: People who experience childhood trauma don't "just get over it." Whether you experienced childhood trauma or not, you can help! Learn more at the free presentation. Monday, April 8, 5:30-8:00pm. Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 418 8th Ave NE, Brainerd. Free Dinner & Childcare: register at http://bit.ly/ADCEs101_BLC_4.

Confidence Learning Center 2019 19th Annual Diamond in the Rough Spring Clean-up and Projects Days – 9:00am-3:00pm each day. *Lunch is provided for all* Individuals helping the full day will be AWARDED a volunteer t-shirt*

April 25, 26, 27 Individuals, Schools, Corporate, Service Organizations, Church Groups

May 1, 2 Individuals, Schools, Corporate, Service Organizations, Church Groups

May 4 MN State Jaycee Project weekend, Adult Groups, and Individuals

For more information, RSVP or to reserve a project for your team or to join a team contact: Mary Harder 218-828-2344 or mary@confidencelearningcenter.org.

COUNCIL MINUTES
MARCH 20, 2019

Present: Mike North, Lowell Johnson, Gary Whiteman, Deb Griffith, Judy Whiteman, Cassie ?, Tracey Lyons, Bob Jones (Skype) and Rev. Leslie Moughty

Mike North called the meeting to order and shared his food for thought. Tracey will share in April. Council minutes were previously approved.

CLERK'S REPORT: A memorial was held for Corey Borg-Massanai on January 21, 2019.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Highlights were: Pilgrim Point update. The state committee studied 2 directions for the camp - one to reinvest or to sell the property. With sadden hearts the decision was to sell. There will be summer programing using other properties.

^Park Methodist will receive new pastors in June.

^The By-law committee has one section of the by-laws about ready to present to the council at the next meeting for approval. If approved the section will come before the annual meeting for a vote.

^Bobbie is increasing her work schedule so that she is in the office on Wednesday and Friday and work some time from home.

TREASURER: The finance report will be coming soon. Giving is down as was the attendance which could be due to the weather conditions.

TRUSTEES: The boiler had a tune up last week. The recommendation is to replace at least one furnace before the next heating season.

^A new AED is in place. St. Joseph Medical Center provided the unit at no cost and will provide a training session on May 5 on proper use.

^The insurance company is asking what the church is doing about safety concerning active shooters, etc. Deb will send out the former information that she has on safe church policies.

STEWARDSHIP: A luncheon will be given on April 7 to honor the volunteers during Volunteer Month. The giving to the Denomination Offerings has been very good.

MINISTRY: There is a Taize service on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

^The cooking group is planning a Mexican luncheon fund raiser for May 4.

CHRISTIAN ED: The workshop rotation model seems to be working well.

MEMBERS AT LARGE: This is the time to find replacements for committee members that have served their terms. Mike North and Tracey Lyons will continue in their positions for another year. The annual meeting is set for May 19. Annual reports are due by the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: The WISE program is getting underway. However, the schedule is being moved ahead one week due to the weather cancellation. May is mental health month.

NEW BUSINESS: The UCC Annual Conference will be June 7 and 8 at St. Ben's. There is a call for resolutions. Ideas are welcome. Mike moved that Alvin Velsvaag be invited to attend with the 2 delegates, Mike North and Tracey Lyons. Gary seconded and motion passed.

^ The April 4th Sunday offering will be for the Honor the Earth program.

The meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be April 17 at 7:00.

Judy Whiteman, Substitute Recorder

Church Calendar April 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Office Closed on Mondays	Office Closed on Tuesdays	Office Open 8:00 am – 3:00 pm	Office Open 8:00 am – 11:00 am	Office Open 8:00 am – 3:00 pm	
	1	2	3 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation	4 11:30 Clergy Cluster	5 10:30 Book Group 5:30 Lenten Meditation	6
Communion 7 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Volunteer Breakfast 11:15 Sunday School	8	9	10 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation	11 Committee Mtgs – Times Vary	12 10:30 Book Group 5:30 Lenten Meditation	13
14 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School	15	16	17 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council	18 6:00 Maundy Thursday Service	19 10:30 Book Group 12:00 Good Friday Service	20
Easter 21 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	22	23	24 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	25	26 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	27
Special Offering 28 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School **Newsletter Deadline**	29	30				