

morning. Maybe they look like you. According to the National Institute of Mental Health approximately 1 in 5 adults live with a mental illness.

For the last few months our church has been on a journey to become W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) about mental health. We learned about behavioral health tools, we watched training videos about Companionship, we participated in a story circle, we learned about the Mobile Crisis line and received training in a suicide prevention process called QPR or “Question, Persuade, Refer.” If you have not had the chance to attend a WISE event, there will more opportunities in the future. Everyone is also encouraged to visit the WISE resource station next to the nametag cabinet by the sanctuary. (If you missed one of the videos, you can go to <https://tinyurl.com/mhnwise> and watch them on YouTube.)

There are two key points about the WISE process that I want to highlight in this newsletter. First, becoming a WISE congregation will hopefully make our welcome even wider than it already is. This might lead to more people who live with a mental illness attending our church and it may not. But we must remember that there are already people in our congregation who live with mental illness or a mental health challenge – including your pastor. This process is not primarily about “getting ready” for an influx of new people with mental illnesses. It is about decreasing stigma and learning how to be WISE with the people who are part of our church right now.

Second, being WISE doesn’t mean we will be equipped to treat or fix people with a mental illness any more than we would be expected to treat or fix someone with a broken bone. Our goal is to become more welcoming of those living with mental health challenges, to expand our inclusion of those who are living with mental health challenges, to be supportive of all who are affected by mental health conditions, and to engage in ways to live our commitment to be WISE about mental health.

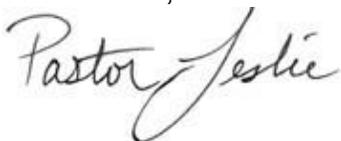
May is Mental Health Awareness Month and we have two fantastic opportunities for participating in the WISE process this month:

Tuesday May 7 at 5:30pm - please join us at the church for “Supportive Community” an event to reduce stigma around mental health. The feature of the event is a presentation by the Make It OK campaign.

Sunday May 19 at 10:00am – The UCC encourages congregations to participate in “Mental Health Sunday” on the 3rd Sunday of May. If you are interested in being a worship leader on this day, please let me know. I am looking for people who are willing to name that they live with or have experienced a mental health challenge. Worship leaders will lead different parts of the service such as blessing the offering, saying the benediction, reading a litany or a prayer, etc.

Lastly, if you are experiencing difficulty with your mental health, please don’t hesitate to reach out for help. If you are in crisis, either call the Mobile Crisis Line at 218-828-4357 or call 9-1-1. Mobile Crisis is also available to simply talk or to make referrals. You can also reach out to your physician or make an appointment with a mental health provider. And of course, I am here to be a supportive, listening ear as well as to help connect you to resources in the community. Don’t let fear or stigma get in the way of your mental wellness. God desires for each of us to experience wholeness and abundant life.

With Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Jessie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Pastor Jessie".

Have you scheduled a 1 to 1 Conversation yet?

I am looking forward to having a “1 to 1 Conversations” with each and every one of you! There is no agenda for these conversations other than for me to get to know you a little better and to learn a little about your journey through life.

How do you schedule a 1 to 1 conversation?

It's easy to schedule online at <http://calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1> where you can choose the day and time that fits your schedule. You choose the location too. Meeting at church is great, but you can also have us meet at your favorite coffee shop, at a local park, or even your place of work. You will see certain days are in blue which are the days I am available. When you click on a day, you will see a list of available times. Click the one you want and click confirm. 1 to 1 conversations can only be scheduled up to 4 months in advance 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!

New Members!

We affirmed and welcomed six new members to the church on Easter Sunday. Who are they?

Tim Anderson - I was born at Swedish hospital in Minneapolis and I'm now 60 this year. I grew up in Northeast Minneapolis. I'm the youngest brother of 4 boys and I have 2 sisters. My mom still lives NE in the house we grew up in. My family spent many weekends in the summer tent camping and fishing in northern MN then my parents bought a mobile home on Spirit Lake by Aitkin. My dad liked road trips, so we got to see a lot of highways through the US and MN – my parents, 6 kids, the dog all packed in one car with all the camping gear. I attended and was confirmed through Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran church (ELCA) in MPLS. Since being confirmed, I have spent some time investigating other religions and philosophies. Since meeting Ryan a little over 2 years ago, he brought up finding a church to try attending. I said sure. Currently I work for the state of Minnesota in St Paul as Business Analyst for MN-IT on METS (Minnesota Eligibility Technology System). I'm grateful my job allows me to spend half my week at the lake. In my spare time I like to meet up with friends and family, read, watch TV, being at the lake, planting trees and plants but keeping it wild with as little maintenance needed as possible.

Ryan Kelly - I was born and raised in the lakes area. I grew up on a small lake near Backus and graduated from Pine River-Backus in 1994. My parents were also teachers in Pine River-Backus. I attended and was confirmed at First Lutheran ELCA church. I graduated from Bemidji State University in 1999 with a visual arts degree. However, life took me in another direction. I currently work with my brother doing drywall taping/texturing/painting. Over the years we have built a successful business with a good reputation. While it's not my passion, I am proud of the work we do and enjoy the flexibility. I was married for 16 years, during which time I lived in Brainerd. I have two daughters, 19 and 15, and a 12-year-old son. Tim and I have been together for two and a half years. We are so grateful to have found our faith home

at UCC. It has truly enriched our lives. We enjoy spending time with the friends we have made, watching movies, eating out, traveling and cooking together (when we aren't eating out). We are typically only together on the weekends so just being together is a treat!

Rob Andrews-Mendoza - I have been chasing God all my life. In my experiences I have learned to listen and watch others around me. I have learned God can show up in others just as well as inside oneself. I wanted to join this church because it's the first church I have tried to be part of (and I've tried a few) where I felt safe, genuinely welcomed, and honored for who I am. Exactly as I am. Even when I can't always see me, I feel the people of this church do...and remind me we're in this thing called life together. Besides, where else in the middle of Minnesota, am I going to get a liberal sermon each week that boldly weaves the issues of the day with our ongoing conversation about who we are, and who we want to be, in God and in community. Javi and I have felt nothing but support and love from this congregation and you all have had more of an impact on us than you will ever know. These are the loving reasons I chose to join this church."

Paige Gustafson - I am very excited to be joining the church! I am in 9th grade and I enjoy going to school, spending time with friends and family, reading, traveling, and playing golf. I was baptized at this church and it has always been a meaningful and welcoming place for me. I've always enjoyed coming here and it has always been an important place for me for a long time. I'm very excited to be joining this wonderful church!

Kamery Hahn - I am in tenth grade and am active in theatre, choir, student council, and I play piano and guitar. I want to join the church because I like it and what it stands for.

Austin Newgord – Austin is a junior at Brainerd High School and has been part of First Congregational for his entire life. He is on the BHS wrestling team and sings in the school choir.

Javier Andrews-Mendoza, Max Ferrie, and Michael Kuehn will be affirmed during the worship service on May 5. Look for their bios in the June Newsletter.

Moderator's Message

You may remember that in July, the Council of First Congregational UCC agreed unanimously to explore with the Congregation the possibility of becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation. W.I.S.E. stands for Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged with people with mental health issues.

Did you know that 1 out of 4 people are affected by mental health issues every year, whether directly, or indirectly as a family member or loved one? W.I.S.E. is part of the greater UCC Mental Health Network which is in ecclesiastical covenant with the UCC Collegium.

A W.I.S.E. congregation is encouraged to do several things: educate its members and others in the community about mental health issues, know when and how to refer people for professional help, show love and concern to those in need of support, show people they have value and dignity, advocate community leaders for greater resources, etc.

There are 10 steps in becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation, in no particular order: consult with your pastor, form a W.I.S.E. team, connect with the UCC mental health Network, develop a plan to becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation, draft a W.I.S.E. covenant, involve the congregation's leadership, vote, certify and celebrate being W.I.S.E., publicize, and turn to the future.

So far, we have Pastor support, Executive Council support, have formed a W.I.S.E. team under the leadership of Pat Scott and Alvin Velsvaag, set up a brochure rack with information,

and we have hosted a couple of church/community workshops lead by Rev. Dr. Rachel Keefe, Pastor of Living Table UCC in Minneapolis. Adult forums have started, and there will be more adult forums and other opportunities to learn more about mental health and mental illness and becoming a W.I.S.E. congregation.

There is often confusion about different terminology around this topic. The terms “mental health” and “mental illness” are often thought of as being two ends of a spectrum or are used interchangeably. But that’s not the case. When we talk about mental health, we’re talking about our mental well-being: our emotions, our thoughts and feelings, our ability to solve problems and overcome difficulties, our social connections, and our understanding of the world around us. A mental illness is an illness that affects the way people think, feel, behave, or interact with others. There are many different mental illnesses, and they have different symptoms that impact peoples’ lives in different ways. Just as it’s possible to have poor mental health but no mental illness, it’s entirely possible to have good mental health even with a diagnosis of a mental illness. That’s because mental illnesses (like other health problems) are often occasional, meaning there are times of ill health and times of better or good health.

It is my hope that the congregation will continue to support and participate in this process and that in the next year or so we will be ready to officially become a W.I.S.E. congregation. Read more about the W.I.S.E. process and the UCC’s Mental Health Network at mhn-ucc.org.

Sincerely,
Michael R. North

Sunday, May 5, AED Training

The trustees applied to Essentia Health and were awarded a new AED (Automated External Defibrillator) at zero cost. Collette Larson, Take Heart Program Coordinator, St Joseph's Hospital, is scheduled to present a 45-minute training on how to use the AED at 11:30 am, in the adult forum on the second floor. The training is open to any parishioner and group meeting at the church. Collette guarantees that learning to use the AED is not hard and can be done by listening to the AED's instructions. If you are unable to attend, there will be a DVD available for viewing. If you have any questions, please contact Deb at debrange@brainerd.net.

Church Grounds Clean-up

Please join us on Tuesday, May 13th from 4-6:00 pm for the spring church grounds clean-up. Many hands make light work!!

~ Opportunities to Know and Share God’s Love ~

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY EVENT TO REDUCE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

Tuesday, May 7 at 5:30 PM at First Congregational

The most recent Crow Wing County Community Health Survey found that more than 1 in 4 adults in Crow Wing County experience mental illness. Most will wait an average of ten years before seeking treatment, largely due to the stigma. By talking about mental illnesses and what we can do to Make It Ok we change hearts and minds about the misconceptions about mental illnesses. The Make It OK campaign is designed to encourage people to talk more openly about mental illnesses and ask for help.

The public is invited to a Make It OK presentation to learn more about reducing stigma. When we start talking, we realize that mental illnesses are more common and relatable than we think. And more importantly, people experiencing mental illnesses will be treated with respect, acceptance and be more apt to get the care they need. Event is open to the public.

5:30 - 5:35 Welcome
5:35 - 5:45 What is WISE (Welcoming Inclusive Supportive Engaging)
5:45 - 6:35 Make it OK
6:35 - 6:45 Gratitude
6:45 - 7:00 Music, Movement and any last questions

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

The Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the UCC will take place 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>.

Cost to attend is \$110, late registration after May 31 is \$135!

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.

The Difference Support Makes in Developing Resilience – Suicide and Male Depression

This workshop will explore aspects of suicide and mental health related issues as associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and explore the resilience possible through peer support and family involvement. The conversation will also address the work of Face It Foundation on working with male depression. Choose from the two time and location options:

BRAINERD May 16, 2019, 1:30 -3:30 p.m. Crow Wing County Land Services Building Lower level, rooms 1 and 2 322 Laurel St. For more information about the afternoon session contact Lowell Johnson, johnsonlowells@gmail.com, 218-828-6233.

CROSSLAKE May 16, 2019, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Crosslake Presbyterian Church 14444 Daggett Pine Rd. For more information about the morning session, contact Tony Oltmann at Pastor@crosslakepres.org, 218-692-4749.

Both workshops are free, but please pre-register online: www.crowwingenergized.org/events
Sponsored by the ACEs Resiliency Coalition (ARC)

Paul Douglas: “Tracking Changes in Weather and Climate in the Brainerd Lakes Area” Rosenmeier Forum on May 4th at 7:00 PM at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa

Meteorologist Paul Douglas describes the changes in weather and climate he has witnessed over the last few decades, and how global warming is already impacting some of the weather patterns in the Brainerd Lakes area. Douglas presents the state of the science, the impact on our lakes and quality of life, and steps we can take to not only adapt, but mitigate the effects of a warmer, more volatile climate.

Douglas is the co-author of *“Caring for Creation: An Evangelical’s Guide to Climate Change*

and a Healthy Environment" (co-authored with Mitch Hescoc in 2016).

May Birthdays

May 3	Ellen Pishko	May 22	Jan Morton
May 5	Lance James	May 22	Shon Boman
May 9	Sue Hadland	May 23	Max Ferrie
May 10	Emily Jones	May 24	Jean Widmark
May 14	Kai Lukanen	May 26	Preston Newgord
May 15	Scott Ferrie	May 29	Tony Newgord
May 16	Laura Raedeke	May 30	Charlotte Goedsche
May 16	Morgan Twamley	May 30	Kathy Ogden
May 17	Carla Benjamin	May 31	Grace Forbord
May 17	Heidi Hahn		

HUGS

May 5

Hosts: Georgia Harris & Jan Morton
Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Greg Johnson
Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman
Counters: Jeff Behr & Gale Landem

May 12

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

May 19

Hosts: Shirley Barten & Deb Lundberg
Ushers: Marina Grabowski & Deb Griffith
Greeters: Austin & Itty Newgord
Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

May 26

Hosts: Joey Halvorson & Tracy Lyons
Ushers/Greeters: Ellie Burkett, Sharon Carlson
Karen Ogdahl & Jean Schaeffer
Counters: Nancy Gould & Judy Whiteman

If you are interested in being a fellowship host, usher, or 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.

May 5: Confirmation Class

May 19: Lois McBroom

May 12: Georgia Harris

May 26: Maria Bertram

~ Community Events ~

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*

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.

Church Calendar May 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 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Confirmation	2 11:30 Clergy Cluster	3 10:30 Book Group	4 5:00 Cooking Group Fundraiser
Communion 5	6	7	8 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	9 Committee Mtgs – Times Vary	10 10:30 Book Group	11
8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 12:00 AED Training						
Mother's Day 12	13 4:00 Church Grounds Clean-up	14	15 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council	16 6:00 Taizé Service	17 10:30 Book Group	18
19 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Annual Meeting 11:15 Sunday School	20	21	22 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	23	24 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	25
Special Offering 26 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship **Newsletter Deadline**	27 Memorial Day	28	29 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	30	31 10:30 Book Group	