



Friendship News

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

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

The Pastor is also available at other times by appointment.

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uccbrainerd.org

October 2015

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

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Pastor's Pen

"Why do we give money to the church?" a child asks her mother, who is filling Sunday's offering envelope. How will the mother answer her daughter's question? How do we answer this question for our children? How does the preacher answer this question for us? Do we say that we give to help pay the church's bills? Do we say that we give because of all the good things the church does—teaching children, standing for the best things in the community, fostering happiness and human welfare, providing help and friendship, and caring for people in need? How about answering by reciting a Bible verse or telling a Bible story? What verse would we choose? What story would we tell?

This is how Craig Satterlee begins his Alban Institute article entitled "Why Do We Give?" which I found myself rereading over and over again as I prepared to write this month's Pastor's Pen. October is Stewardship month at First Congregational UCC – that season when we pay attention to what we give to the church, especially our money, and prayerfully and thoughtfully discern what we will pledge to give in the next calendar year. Talking about money is usually uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable with friends, it's especially uncomfortable at church, and it can be really uncomfortable as the pastor of a church! And yet, I feel called to pastor to every part of our life together. Money is a big part of our lives because that is just the reality of being a human being in 21st century America.

So why do we give to the church? I invite you to give yourself some space to truly think about this question before filling out your pledge cards this month. There is no right answer to this question but I think it is important for each of us to have an understanding of our own answer. Would you even be willing to share your answer with me or with someone at church? Hearing each other's reasons for giving to the church can be a powerful and transformative experience. I would love to share a small part of my answer with all of you right now.

Attending and becoming active in the church has literally changed my life and not only because I ended up becoming a pastor. Being part of a church drew me back into a meaningful relationship with God and into a deeper relationship with other human beings. It changed the way I perceive and respond to the world. Additionally, it is challenging to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus' teachings are as radical today as they were 2000 years ago, and I need a community of faith to walk with me as we seek to interpret and follow his teachings together. I give to the church because that community of faith matters to me and I want it to continue for generations to come.

I give to the church because I value an inclusive and loving voice in a society that too often excludes and demeans. I value the message of Jesus to welcome all to the table. I have seen the positive impact the church has had on individuals and institutions. I have witnessed tears when someone at last believes that God really does love them for exactly who they are, that each and every single one of us is a beloved child of God, created with a divine spark. I want everyone to experience the unconditional and unbounded love of God, and the church is an important piece of that experience for many people.

We all have different capacities to give financially, just as we all have different capacities to give of our time and our talents. Each person and household must give what is right for them. I hope this stewardship time will be a meaningful time for you as you ponder the question "why do I give to the church?" Our theme for the stewardship season is "Attitude of Gratitude." My hope is that you will not only give out of a sense of gratitude, but that in discerning why you give and how much, your sense of gratitude may be deepened.

With Many Blessings,
Pastor Leslie

Youth Activities

October:

Pilgrim Point Camp - Conference High School Youth Event – October 16-18.

Children's Sabbath is October 18 – the children and youth will help in leading worship. More details to follow.

Family Fun Day will be Friday, October 23 – the youth group will be helping at the Soup Kitchen.

November:

Family Fun Day will be Sunday, November 15 – the youth will be visiting nursing homes.

HUGS

October 4

Hosts: Mark & Becky Stadem

Ushers: Roger Best, Ellie Burkett, Greg Johnson & Gary Whiteman

Greeters: Bobbie Borg & Karlee Micek

Counters: Jeff Behr & Jerry Kuehn

October 11

Hosts: Maria Bertram & Marina Grabowski

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

Counters: Deb Griffith & Judy Whiteman

October 18

Hosts: Marcia Mans & Barb Stokke

Ushers: Dan Hegstad & Cynthia Janes

Greeters: Deb Griffith & Charlotte Goedsche

Counters: Nancy Gould & Vi Heiser

October 25

Hosts: Sharon Carlson & Joey Halvorson

Ushers/Greeters: Ann Turnbull

Counters: Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

October Birthdays

10/7	Bob Jones	10/20	Donna Springstead
10/8	Tom Highum	10/20	Louis Grabowski
10/9	Glenn Trtanj	10/22	Faye Echternacht
10/11	Fred Fisher	10/25	Kamery Hauan-Hahn
10/11	Eileen Kurpiers	10/28	Elissa Hartwig
10/11	Matt Erickson	10/30	Elizabeth Paulson
10/15	James Newgord	10/31	Luann Rice
10/15	Andrea Bertram	10/31	Paxie Imsdahl
10/16	Melissa Bible	10/31	Mark Erickson

If I have missed your birthday, please let me know so that I can update my information.

Adult Forum

Sunday, October 18th: We will be continuing the discussion of “Transforming Christian Theology,” Philip, Clayton, chapters 10 and 11. Again, please give some serious consideration to the last paragraph, bottom, page 74. Enjoy your reading and thinking!

Sunday, October 25th: Adult Forum will be an intergenerational/ interactive opportunity to learn about Mexico’s Día de los Muertos, led by Pastor Leslie and Jan Kurtz. Our church has celebrated All Saint’s Day via this multicultural lens for several years, but for some of you, it is a new concept! Mexico’s traditions have evolved through the Aztec and Catholic blending, producing a fascinating opportunity to celebrate life and our ancestors, as opposed to our cultural silence and discomfort. Join us for a brief overview followed by preparation for November 1st celebration by making paper flowers, decorating sugar skulls or beginning your memory boxes. All supplies will be provided except shoe boxes and wrapping paper. Please bring an extra box or paper to share.

Sunday, November 1st: Día de los Muertos and Communion Sunday

Día de los Muertos/ All Saint’s Day is a time to remember our loved ones, taking the opportunity to speak their names and share their stories. You are invited to bring photographs of family, friends or pets for our ‘All Saints’ table in the front of the Sanctuary. If you participated in the October 25th Adult Forum Mexican craft time, bring your memory boxes, sugar skull or flowers to decorate the family altar. This time of communion unites us with all times and all people that went before. Through creating new rituals of remembrance, we honor those before us and reflect on how we would wish to be remembered. This service creates a space to recall, to laugh, to cry and to tell the living how important they are in our lives now.

New Email Address

Jan Morton’s new email address is jan56401@gmail.com.

The Chapel Columbarium

Many of you are aware of our Memorial Garden that was established on the south lawn of our church grounds. It includes garden plantings and a peaceful water feature, a place for quiet reflection and prayer that has been enjoyed by our members and the surrounding neighborhood. At the time this garden was installed, there were plans to establish an indoor columbarium in the chapel adjoining our sanctuary. Moneys have now been donated to begin that process. It became necessary to abate the asbestos that was in the walls and ceiling of the chapel and that was done when we abated Fellowship Hall. Additional funds are now needed to complete the project.

Please take time to look at the chapel area and ask the Columbarium committee what plans are being made to finish the area. If you would like to consider having your remains placed in this Columbarium, please notify the committee or the church office of that intention and someone can give you the information needed to help with that decision. It is not necessary for you to be a member of this church to have your remains placed in either the Memorial Garden or the Indoor Columbarium.

Columbarium Committee: Sue Hadland, Karen Ogdahl, Carol Phelps, Jeff Behr

Fellowship Hall Renovation Update

The floor in fellowship hall is covered with plastic right now, which is VERY slippery. We ask that you please do not try to walk on it.

Food Shelf Offering – September 27

Each month we bring offerings of groceries, necessities and financial donations to help feed hungry neighbors in our community. The Salvation Army Food Shelf serves 400 families each month. On September 27, we received \$45 and 40 pounds of food. Our next offering will be Sunday, October 25. **Thank you for helping to feed our hungry neighbors!**

Soup Kitchen

You are cordially invited to a simple meal of soup and bread, donated by local restaurants. In exchange for a \$20 donation, you may keep a bowl as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world.

The Crossing Arts Alliance is sponsoring an Empty Bowls Event to benefit the **Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen** in Brainerd, Saturday, **October 24** from **11am to 2pm** at **Franklin Arts Center lower gym**, 1001 Kingwood St, Brainerd, MN.
\$20 donation

The Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen in Brainerd is open from 5:30 - 6 pm Monday through Saturday every week and serves an average of 65 people per day. It is run by volunteers and has been doing this good work since 1987.



Pastor/Parish Relations Committee

I am Ann Turnbull, a member of the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) and an at-large member of our church council.

The PPRC is a committee that has existed in this church organizationally but has not been understood or utilized effectively in the recent past. With the hiring of Pastor Leslie, the PPRC committed to make its functions better understood and to be more active and effective within our congregation.

The purposes of the PPRC are:

- **To build up our congregation by helping to educate ourselves and others in the congregation about the two-way relationship of pastor and parish**
- **To provide a regular channel for feedback and communication**
- **To provide consistent and focused support for the Pastor**
- **To cultivate an open, affirmative and creative relationship between pastor & congregation**

Each of us, based on our life experience, have different ideas of what a pastor should be and do. It is the PPRC's job to facilitate the understanding of what our pastor's job is and to help our pastor understand our culture and the needs of our congregation. We know that a pastor cannot be everything to everybody. I have shared with some of you in personal conversations, that I enjoy doing ministry within this church but that I have found that I want to do things that feed me and give meaning to my life not the things that no one else will do! We are all different. Some of us are worker bees, give us a job and we'll get it done! Others are good organizers, researchers or are passionate about addressing particular needs in the community. Just as each one of us has a different set of attributes and skills, it is our job as a congregation, in our shared ministry with our pastor, to find ways that each of us can minister utilizing her/his passions and skills so that all the work of the church gets done. The PPRC has committed to meet monthly with Pastor Leslie during her first year and we will decide together how often we need to meet after that.

One of the things we have been discussing recently is healthy communication. The PPRC decided, at our last meeting, that we will attempt to model and encourage others to practice healthy communication with our pastor and in all our relationships with each other... When I have an issue with "Jack" about something he said, did or didn't do, I will go directly to "Jack" to discuss and work it out. If "Jack" is not receptive, I will ask someone to come with me to talk to "Jack". I will not ask another person to talk to "Jack" for me or discuss the problem with other people instead of "Jack". This type of behavior encourages rumors and is not fair to "Jack", who has no chance to address the issue with me. In this church, we say we support and care about each other. Going directly to a person we have a beef with is a way to live that out.

The members of the PPRC are David Crum, Phil Kuehn, Lois McBroom and Ann Turnbull. Feel free to approach any of us or Pastor Leslie, if you have any questions!

Announcement at Church on Sunday, September 27th

by Ann Turnbull

(This is not verbatim, as Ann didn't have a prepared statement on Sunday.)

You may have heard that the Church Council has had some discussions regarding how to respond to the request of a registered sex offender to attend our church. We have a sign at our doors that says we welcome everyone. Does that include registered sex offenders? This is a complex situation and I want to assure all of you that some in the congregation are working to educate ourselves to discern what our next steps should be. We are very aware that we likely have survivors of sexual abuse in our congregation and we also want to ensure that our children are safe. It is also known that the majority of sexual abuse goes unreported so it is possible we have sexual abusers in our congregation now that we are unaware of. It is necessary for our congregation to adopt a "Safe Church Policy." This policy will help ensure the basic safety of everyone who attends our worship services and other church activities. The Safe Church Policy is a first step in providing a framework in which the welcome of sex offenders could possibly be added.

Leadership of our church is shared between the pastor and the laity. When we have an issue to be explored, a task force of lay people is formed. As we did when exploring whether or not to welcome and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender folks, there is a need for education, planning and obtaining resources in order to move forward. The task force's first job is to create and present a "safe church policy" to the Council. If the Council approves the policy, the information is shared with the congregation with opportunities for comment and suggestions.

It is the intent of our leadership at First Congregational United Church of Christ that our church processes are always open and transparent to the congregation. In the case of welcoming sex offenders, there is much work to be done before we can extend a "Radical Welcome." It is strongly recommended that we engage the services of a professional consultant or coach. A decision to create a Radical Welcome policy would not be made without a vote of the congregation, after opportunities for education and the sharing of concerns and opinions in a safe place. The work involved for such a task force is huge and we do not know yet if our church has the resources to do this work. Rest assured that nothing will happen without everyone knowing and having the opportunity to explore and participate in discerning if God is calling our congregation to offer a radical welcome to registered sexual offenders.

If you want to participate on this task force or have any questions about the process at this time, please contact Pastor Leslie.

Church Council Minutes

September 16, 2015

Moderator – Phil Kuehn	Assistant Moderator – Dan Hegstad
Clerk – Karen Ogdahl	Treasurer – Lisa Wigand
Christian Ministry – Joey Halvorson	Trustees – Coleen Carder
Christian Education – Marina Grabowski	Stewardship – Marcia Mans
Council at Large – Ann Turnbull, Nicole Grabowski, Bonnie Crum	

Present: Coleen Carder, Joey Halvorson, Marina Grabowski, Nicole Grabowski, Karen Ogdahl, Phil Kuehn, Dan Hegstad, Ann Turnbull, Marcia Mans, Pat Scott

The meeting opened with Joey Halvorson sharing a reading on love.

The August minutes had been approved earlier via email.

CLERK'S REPORT – Wedding: Kathy Ogden and Cheri Maxwell, August 29, 2015

TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer's report shows that giving is ahead of budget. Many thanks to our generous givers.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Leslie is attending a worship design conference but furnished a written report. Highlights: Leslie's installation as pastor; one wedding, another coming up in October; hired Diane Hauan as choir director; attended church and community events; participated in a video conference with the Ministerial Excellence Group; began a five-part sermon series on Trend-lines; confirmation classes will begin in October.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Stewardship will hold the annual pledge drive in October. The theme is Attitude of Gratitude. Pledges will be turned in on October 25. The Neighbors in Need offering will be received on October 11.

TRUSTEES' REPORT

Remodeling of the fellowship hall begins on September 21. During the remodeling there will be no access to the basement. Sunday coffee will be in the main floor hallway. Mary Reardon donated a long table for the second-floor conference room. Trustees are continuing to work on a building use policy.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

On September 20 CE will host a tie-dye party after Sunday School. State youth retreats are scheduled for October. The youth will serve at the soup kitchen on Oct. 23. CE is having discussions about sending youth to the national youth event next summer. Cost for the conference is \$549 per person. This does not include transportation and some meals. There will need to be some fundraising.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Upcoming events: Animal Blessing on September 27, World Communion Sunday and the Crop Walk on October 4 and Children's Sunday on October 18.

NEW BUSINESS

Council read a letter from Leslie about developing a Safe Church Policy. Council will find people to make up a small task force to work on this.

The Leadership Retreat was canceled due to low registration.

During the October 8 committee meetings, committees will create budgets for 2016.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. The next meeting will be October 21 at 7:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Ogdahl, Clerk of Council

Church Financials

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd
 Financial Results - General Fund
 Year to Date Results as of 8/31/2015

	2015 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 8/31/15	% of Budget
<u>Income:</u>			
From Giving Units	\$ 143,220	\$ 109,110	76.18%
Other Giving	\$ 11,510	\$ 20,342	176.73%
Total Income	<u>\$ 154,730</u>	<u>\$ 129,452</u>	83.66%
<u>Expenses:</u>			
Council	\$ 103,318	\$ 82,352	79.71%
Christian Ministry	\$ 10,400	\$ 8,545	82.16%
Christian Education	\$ 1,450	\$ 2,453	169.17%
Stewardship	\$ 300	\$ 461	153.67%
Trustees	\$ 60,816	\$ 30,475	50.11%
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 176,284</u>	<u>\$ 124,286</u>	70.50%
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	<u>\$ (21,554)</u>	<u>\$ 5,166</u>	

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Energy Assistance Program



Lutheran Social Service wants residents of Crow Wing County to know that applications for the 2015/2016 Energy Assistance Program are now available in our office. The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps pay home heating and electric costs for income-qualified households. EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Heat and electric grants are available for renters or homeowners and are based on household size, income, fuel type, and energy usage. Income guidelines are at or below 50% of the state median income. Assets are not counted.

Homeowners may also be eligible for emergency furnace repair or replacement.

Our office is located at 716 E St, Brainerd, MN 56401. Our phone number is 218-829-5000. Please call us to have an application mailed to you, or you can stop by our office between 8:00 and 4:30 and pick one up. The application will also be available soon at www.lssmn.org. If you do not live in Crow Wing County, call 1-800-657-3710 to find out where to apply in your county.

Coats for Kids

COATS, HATS, SCARVES, MITTENS, BOOTS, SNOWPANTS!

Have extras? Kinship Partners needs them for our annual coat drive! Donations are welcome at both the Brainerd and Crosby Crystal Cleaners and can be dropped off at any time. We also have a donation box outside the church office. We ask that donations are clean and in good condition. We also ask that zippers are in working condition as we cannot replace them. We accept coats in all sizes.

Distribution will be Saturday only: October 31 2015, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm at the Westgate Mall

For more information call 218-454-8011 or email fun@kinshippartners.org.



Church Calendar – October 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 11:30 Clergy Cluster	2 10:30 Book Group *Conference Middle School Youth Event	3 *Conference Middle School Youth Event
4 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Living the Question *CROP Walk*	5	6	7 9:30 Prayer Circle @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	8 5:30 Committee Meetings	9 10:30 Book Group	10
11 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	12	13	14 9:30 Prayer Circle @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	15	16 10:30 Book Group *Conference High School Youth Event	17 *Conference High School Youth Event
18 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Living the Question	19	20	21 9:30 Prayer Circle @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council Meeting	22 5:30 PPRC	23 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	24
25 10:00 Worship/Food Shelf Offering 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum Newsletter Deadline	26	27	28 9:30 Prayer Circle @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	29	30 10:30 Book Group	31

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**Administrative Assist.
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