



Friendship News

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

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

Our Pastor, Leslie Moughty's drop-in hours are Wednesday's 2-4pm and Thursday's 10am-12:00pm. Other times available by appointment.

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uccbrainerd.org

November 2017

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

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Lakes Area Music Festival

The Lakes Area Music Festival kicks off it's 2017/18 Winter Series with a concert titled Serious and Silly Songs, Sunday, November 5 at 2 pm at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Nisswa (5064 County Road 13). From biblical solemnity to vaudevillian nonsense, LAMF Artistic Directors John Taylor Ward (baritone) and Scott Lykins (piano) will explore the outer edges of song. Classic cabaret songs and absurd art songs will sit side-by-side with Johannes Brahms' Four Serious Songs and Modest Mussorgsky's Songs and Dances of Death. You'll laugh; you'll cry... maybe at the same time! No tickets required; this concert is provided without charge, with donations encouraged.

Pastor's Pen

#Metoo #Churchestoo

Those of you who are active on Facebook and/or Twitter likely saw your newsfeeds filled with posts containing the words #metoo a few weeks ago. Posting the words "Me too" as in, Yes, me too. I too have been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted, came as a response to the growing list of women who were coming forward as accusers against film producer Harvey Weinstein. Some posts were simply the two words "Me too" and some shared stories of harassment and assault. But the "Me Too" movement started a decade earlier when activist Tarana Burke discovered how powerful it can be for survivors of sexual violence to know they are not alone. The posts on social media made it clear that we are not alone as over 5 million people posted #metoo.

The UCC's Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum affirms that we are all sexual beings and that our sexuality is a "good part of the human experience." The OWL curriculum also notes that "sexuality in our society is damaged by violence, exploitation, alienation, dishonesty, abuse of power, and the treatment of persons as objects."

Sexual violence is not something that happens "out there." According to the National Sexual Violence Resource center, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men will be raped at some point in their lives and 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old. (<https://www.nsvrc.org>) We know that members of our church family are included in these numbers. We know too that God hears their stories and holds them in Her heart. If you are reading this and these numbers include you, I want you to hear it from your Pastor that being on the receiving end of sexual assault or harassment is never your fault and you did nothing to deserve it.

We must also remember that our communities of faith are not places that are exempt from the perpetration of sexual violence. "Churches, too" are places where people of all genders and ages are sexually harassed and assaulted both by clergy and by fellow parishioners. This fact might surprise some of you, while others of you have likely experienced unwanted comments or touch in a church setting. I am aware of too many stories from my clergy sisters who have been sexually assaulted or harassed at work - sometimes by clergy colleagues, sometimes by parishioners. I also know people who have been abused by pastors or other parishioners. The Church is, sadly, not always safe for everyone.

There are things we can all continue to do to help ensure our particular congregation is a place where people are respected and honored as God's beloved children. We can pay attention to one another's body language and listen to each other's words when spending time together. We can be mindful of the words we speak and the ways we interact with one another. We can provide a supportive ear when others might need to share that they have experienced abuse here or elsewhere. If we hear or see something inappropriate, we can speak up in love let the person know that what they are doing or saying is unacceptable.

We can also exercise special care with children and young people, making sure we do everything possible to help them learn that they are in charge of their bodies. We can help them learn that consent is important. I do my best to always ask young people in the line after church if they would like a hug, handshake, or high five. It is important to never assume a child wants to be hugged or that we as adults have the right to hug kids just because they are so darn cute! By asking permission we help them understand that they have the right to say no to being touched AND we model for them that it is important to respect other people's boundaries.

I am thankful for all the ways I have seen the people of this congregation treat one another with dignity and respect. If you ever feel uneasy about something that you or someone else experiences in our

congregation please come speak to me or another trusted leader in the congregation. Let us continue to work together to ensure that First Congregational is a place where all people feel safe in their own bodies and know they are respected as those made in God's image.

With many blessings,



Special thanks to the Rev. Caela Simmons Wood, Pastor at First Congregational UCC in Manhattan, Kansas, whose writing informed much of this article.

Moderator's Notes

On Sunday October 9th, Mark Utzinger shared a sermon that his father had given over thirty years ago titled "Why?" Although this sermon was from a different decade, it still holds relevance for today. Since the horrific events of the Las Vegas shooting, I have also been asking "why" many times a day.

President Trump described the act as one "of pure evil." Last week in the Brainerd Daily Dispatch, Cal Thomas wrote an editorial "Defining Evil". Although I seldom agree with his ideas, he had some valid points. Thomas says one definition of "evil" sounds so inadequate in today's culture: morally wrong or bad; immoral; wicked: evil deeds, an evil life." It struck me that I have never considered a person or a life evil. While I do believe that people can commit evil acts, I do not believe that people are evil. As a mother, I would be devastated to hear one of my children described as evil.

Cal Thomas goes on to say that on the nightly news, there are graphic scenes showing spattered blood and bodies strewn about. I know that often I do not have the news on when my grandchildren are present. There are too many questions by them that are too difficult for me to answer. Thomas asks if we have become desensitized to the value of human life? He asks if we have "become inured to the shift in morality and fallen victim to the zeitgeist, "the spirit of the age." I prefer to say no, we have not. It is my belief that most of us believe and teach "right from wrong." We value the worth of the individual, our families, and our communities.

Bishop Thomas M. Aitken, Bishop of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod/Evangelical Lutheran Church in America says that he "was overwhelmed with heartsickness for the beautiful people made in God's image were killed ruthlessly – once again in this country – by gun violence". He was " moved to the depths of his soul by the powerful acts of love, grace and courage by those who worked to save lives, acted selflessly, and modeled for us the opposite of killing others by putting their own lives on the line to save others. At it's core, this shooting spree reminds us that until our policies, convictions and legislation reflect the deeper spirituality of cherishing people as precious, and standing up for the innate dignity of every person, we will fall into the same darkness. God help us to use our brains and our hearts".

So I am back to the question "why?" Why do we sell military-style guns to civilians? Why is mental health help so lacking in our country? Why do we still not make any changes in the gun control laws? Why didn't the gun control laws change after Sandy Hook when children were killed in their school? Why do experts believe that it still won't change now? Why God?

Claire Steen
Church Moderator

Día de Muertos



On Sunday, November 5th, we will be observing "All Saint's Day" following the Mexican traditions from Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead. In the Mexican culture, November 1st and 2nd are days for remembering their 'dearly departed' through arranging family altars, preparing special foods, sprucing up the cemeteries and naming the names of the dead, to keep their memory alive.

To help us remember our church family and our own family members, please participate by bringing in a photo or item that reminds you of the person you wish to commemorate. Examples of items might be a football, for a football fanatic; a Hershey bar for a chocolate lover; a favorite book or an actual possession left to you by the person. Photos and items will be placed on a table/altar during the church service.

At Fellowship Hour, you are encouraged to share stories about the people pictured or the item brought in. We will be served Pan de los Muertos (Bread of the Dead), a sweet, coffee cake found all over Mexico at this time of year. Note the decorations portray a celebration of life, joy and humor. Through foods, candles, flowers and family altars, the Mexican rituals bring healing to grief, peace through acceptance and joy in the memories. Maybe you will adopt a new ritual of remembrance into your traditions.

If you have photos that could be used in our tri-fold photo wall of past church members, please contact Jan Kurtz at 218.829.1192.

November Birthdays

11/1	Chris Kelly	11/10	Jackie Froemming	11/20	Jan Kurtz
11/4	Eleanor Burkett	11/13	Becky Stadem	11/21	Itty Newgord
11/9	Dale Hadland				

HUGS

November 5

Hosts: Mark & Becky Stadem

Ushers/Greeters: Roger Best, Greg Johnson, Ken Nelson & Gary Whiteman

Counters: Jeff Behr & Jerry Kuehn

November 12

Hosts: Maria Bertram & Marina Grabowski,

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

Counters: Deb Griffith & Judy Whiteman

November 19

Hosts: Claire Steen & Barb Stokke

Ushers: Cheri Maxwell & Kathy Ogden

Greeters: Deb Griffith & Dan Hegstad

Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

November 26

Hosts: Jean Gustafson & Ann Turnbull

Ushers/Greeters: Ellie Burkett, Joey Halvorson, Jolene Hojem & Tracy Lyons

Counters: Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

Adult Forum – November 5

On Sunday, November 5, Nare Galystan, a teenage exchange student from Armenia, will provide a presentation about the culture of Armenia, complete with a traditional costume.

Food Shelf Offering – October

In October, we donated 33 lbs of food and \$245! Our next offering will be November 26. **Thank you!**

Pineywoods Folkdancers

The new Pineywoods Folkdancers will be dancing at 7:00-8:30 pm, Wednesday, November 22 at the Franklin Arts Center yoga room (228). No partner or experience necessary. We do request a \$5 donation for expenses.

Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen

Dear Friends of Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen:

It's hard to get our heads and hearts around the needs in our world these days. So many hurting people...so many worthy causes. We get overwhelmed and often feel that making a real difference is beyond us. But it's not true. We **can** make a difference!

Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen needs your help. It's been a challenging year financially and our accounts are at their lowest point ever. Over the last 2 months we have been faced with cash flow deficits totaling over \$8,000. In the light of these circumstances we are asking you to do what you can to help us meet our goal. We need to raise **\$20,000 by Thanksgiving Day**.

We're not discouraged. We're actually excited to see how God will use you, our faithful friends, to come to the rescue once again and help us keep the doors open! Gifts of any amount are appreciated and will help us continue feeding hungry souls.

As a frequent guest was once heard to say "It's about more than just coming to a nice, warm place for a hot meal. Here, I find the love of God". Right on!

Ever since its founding at St. Francis Church in 1987 Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen has been about one thing. Feeding the hungry of our community as an expression of the love of Christ. Let's keep it going! Please say "Yes!" to feeding the hungry by sending in your contribution today or by visiting our website and making an online donation!

Sincerely,

Bob Evans, Ann Bergin, Glen Gustafson, Greg Meyer

Provide a Meal This Thanksgiving

As in years past, Bridges of Hope expects to serve 200 families through the Thanksgiving Basket Program. We are seeking sponsors to provide the ingredients for a Thanksgiving meal for different size families, ranging from single-parent families with one child to large families with up to eight members. To sign up or if you have additional questions, contact Janelle at janelle@bridgesofhopemn.org or 218-825-7682. Thank you for helping others in our community this Thanksgiving. We are so grateful for your support!

Church Council Minutes

October 15, 2017

Moderator – Claire Steen

Assistant Moderator – Mike North

Clerk – Barb Stokke

Treasurer – Deb Lundberg

Christian Ministry – Karen Ford

Trustees – Deb Griffith

Christian Education – Barb McColgan

Stewardship – Judy Whiteman

Council at Large – Bonnie Crum, Bob Jones, Gary Whiteman

Present: Claire Steen, Mike North, Barb Stokke, Karen Ford, Barb McColgan, Deb Griffith, Bonnie Crum, Rev. Leslie Moughty, and Sue North

Claire Steen called the meeting to order. Mike North shared Ezekiel 34:18-19, a message to care for the earth. Claire will provide November's Food for Thought.

CLERK'S REPORT – On October 8, 2017, Sam Dorothy Dale Menk was baptized. Parents are Trisha Halonen and Dale Menk.

Bob and Carol Spears have moved to Northfield, Minnesota, and have removed their memberships October 1, 2017

PASTOR'S REPORT – Leslie expressed her gratitude for patience while she was ill; she is looking forward to more productive days ahead and preparing for Advent and Christmas. **Highlights:** attended MN UCC Clergy Convocation, led an Adult Forum, helped create the Administrative Assist Review, interviewed the new organist, and officiated at a baptism. **Community Engagements:** participated in the CROP Walk and volunteered with New Pathways. **Pastoral Care Contacts:** an extended at-church visit, two office visits and two phone calls. **On the Radar:** October 24: Clergy Boundary Training (required) in Robbinsdale; next month Council re-signs the NGLI Covenant of Shared Responsibility; November 21: Ecumenical Thanksgiving service 7:00 pm at Park United Methodist Church; and November 18: White Privilege Curriculum Training in Minneapolis. The office will be closed November 23-24 for Thanksgiving. Leslie will be out of the office November 22, December 25-31 and January 1-10 (NGLI Continuing Education).

TREASURER'S REPORT – Council reviewed the third quarter financials and the time-line for preparing the 2018 budget. Treasurer Deb Lundberg has met with committees and Administrative Assistant Bobbie Borg to determine expenditures for the 2018 budget.

TRUSTEES' REPORT – In August, the Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company completed a survey of the church and parsonage and found needs to address to reduce liability risks. The Trustees reviewed some of the recommendations by the insurance company. The most costly recommendation is the repair of three bowing stained glass windows. Some minor repairs include adding a receptacle in the garage; installing GFI receptacles, and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; re-keying entrance doors or installing keypads; securing TVs and bookcases; covering a junction box. Trustees also informed Council of two future projects: replacing the boiler and remodeling the downstairs bathroom, making it accessible to all. Deb G will provide Council with a schedule of anticipated expenditures.

STEWARDSHIP – The October pledge drive is underway. Pledge envelopes were distributed, and part 1 of the YMCA theme – You May Camp Anytime - was presented October 21. Part 2 and 3 will take place October 22 and 29.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – CM reviewed three upcoming services: Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) November 5; Transgender Remembrance Day on November 20; and Taizé Midweek Service.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – CE will again pass out treats on Halloween. Donations of candy are appreciated. The next event on CE's calendar is the December 10 Christmas program followed by a congregation potluck dinner on December 10. Council discussed gifts for our New Pathways guests. Suggestions included Make-and-Take activities and family portraits. Council also discussed the need for a paid nursery supervisor.

OLD BUSINESS –

1. Pastor Evaluation – Work continues on the pastor evaluation. Council recommends the evaluation aligns with the pastor job description.

2. Bylaws Task Force – Work is in progress. The revised bylaws will be presented to the Congregation when completed.
3. Safe Church Policy – Discussion is ongoing.
4. Food Train – Council determined one or two people, rather than a committee, could set up a food train, an online calendar where participants choose a date to provide a meal for an ill or injured person. If you are interested in coordinating food trains, members familiar with the program can help you. Council recommends guidelines for food trains be established.
5. Justice and Peace Committee – Tabled
6. Donations for Specific Projects – List of Priorities – Bonnie Crum volunteered to keep track of small projects needs and priorities.

NEW BUSINESS –

1. Budget Timing: Pledges are due October 29, committee budgets November 12, and the Annual Budget Meeting will take place December 17.
2. New Pathways: We host New Pathways December 24 - January 31. Deb proposed that we extend our time to include December 17 – 24, a week not covered by area churches, with the stipulation that IHN schedules people **from outside our church** to provide meals, evening activities, and overnight hosts. Mike North made a motion that UCC provides space for New Pathways families December 17-23 if IHN provides personal to provide meals, activities, and overnight staff. Karen Ford seconded the motion. The motion passed.
3. Mission Statement – Vision Focused – Tabled until January

The meeting was adjourned. The next Council meeting will be November 15 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Stokke, Clerk of Council

Church Financials

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd				
Financial Results - General Fund				
Year to Date Results as of 9/30/2017				
	2017 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 9/30/17	% of Budget	Actuals Through 9/30/16
Income:				
From Giving Units	\$ 117,365	\$ 122,145	104.07%	\$ 119,537
Other Giving	\$ 32,146	\$ 11,273	35.07%	\$ 12,464
Total Income	\$ 149,511	\$ 133,417	89.24%	\$ 132,001
Expenses:				
Council	\$ 102,901	\$ 88,261	85.77%	\$ 79,196
Christian Ministry	\$ 3,120	\$ 3,439	110.22%	\$ 3,306
Music Committee	\$ 12,220	\$ 5,758	47.12%	\$ 5,329
Christian Education	\$ 650	\$ 260	40.02%	\$ 644
Stewardship	\$ 600	\$ 540	90.02%	\$ 476
Trustees	\$ 55,110	\$ 35,851	65.05%	\$ 37,694
Total Expenses	\$ 174,601	\$ 134,109	76.81%	\$ 126,645
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (25,090)	\$ (692)		\$ 5,355

Church Calendar – November 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	2	3 10:30 Book Group	4
5 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship & Communion 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	6	7	8 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 1:00 Executive Committee Meeting	9 5:30 Committee Meetings	10 10:30 Book Group 11:30 Clergy Cluster	11
12 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	13	14	15 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council Meeting	16	17 10:30 Book Group	18
19 8:30 Choir Practice 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	20	21 7:00 Thanksgiving Service @ Park United Methodist Church	22 No Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	23 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed	24 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen Office Closed	25
26 10:00 Worship & Food Shelf Offering 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum Newsletter Deadline	27	28	29 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group & Sawmill Inn	30		