



# 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.

Office phone 829-2528, Pastor's residence 454-0453, E-mail  
[firstcong@brainerd.net](mailto:firstcong@brainerd.net).

[uccbrainerd.org](http://uccbrainerd.org)

December 2014

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

<i>Announcements</i> .....	2
<b>Search Committee Report</b> .....	2
<b>AN APPRECIATION OF ADVENT</b> .....	3
<b>GREENING OF THE CHURCH</b> .....	3
<b>Holiday Open House</b> .....	3
<b>Special Worship Services for this Holy Season</b> .....	3
<b>Turkey Potluck Dinner</b> .....	3
<b>Christmas Cookies Baking Party</b> .....	4
<b>Christmas Cookies Bake Sale</b> .....	4
<b>CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING</b> .....	4
<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</b> .....	4
<b>A Christmas Season Service of Stories and Poems</b> .....	4
<b>CROP HUNGER WALK RESULTS</b> .....	5
<b>Planning Ahead</b> .....	5
<b>THANK YOU!</b> .....	5
<i>THE PASTOR'S PEN</i> .....	5
<i>Moderator's Musings</i> .....	6
<i>Christian Ministry Department</i> .....	7
<b>H.U.G.S.</b> .....	7
<b>Adult Forum Schedule for December</b> .....	8
<b>Soup Kitchen – December 26</b> .....	8
<b>Food Shelf Offering – December 28</b> .....	8
<i>All in the Church Family</i> .....	8
<b>New Addresses</b> .....	8
<b>A CaringBridge Site for Paul Mans.</b> .....	8
<b>In Our Prayers</b> .....	8
<b>December Birthdays</b> .....	9
<i>Church Council Minutes</i> .....	9
<i>Church Financials</i> .....	10
<i>CHURCH CALENDAR — December 2014</i> .....	11

***O God, light a candle in my heart  
and sweep the darkness from your dwelling space. Amen.***

*Marian Wright Edelman (b. 1939)*

## Announcements

### Search Committee Report

Several months ago, the members of this church entrusted the Search Committee with the responsibility of prayerfully selecting a candidate for your approval. We gathered input from many of you as we assembled our Local Church Profile. We carefully reviewed the UCC Ministerial Profiles of 12 candidates. We interviewed three candidates and invited our top candidate and her husband to spend a few days with us in Brainerd, during which we had an opportunity to witness her preaching at Union UCC in Hackensack. Through prayer and thoughtful discussion, we unanimously selected Leslie Moughty (pronounced Moody) as our candidate for the ministry of our church.

Leslie grew up in Arizona, and after an eight-year career in corporate retail, she began to feel the call to ministry. She graduated from Pacific School of Religion and is currently serving as Director of Children, Youth and Families at Northshore United Church of Christ in Woodinville, Washington. She is approved for ordination.

Leslie will bring many gifts to our church. We found her to be wise and mature, a strong worship leader and a creative thinker. She possesses a ready laugh, a compassionate spirit and a talent for interacting with all ages. The members of our committee have enjoyed our time with Leslie, and we look forward to talking with you about our joyful interactions with her.

January 3-4, 2015, will be an important time for our church, so mark your calendars. That is the “candidating weekend” when you will have the opportunity to meet and visit with Leslie. On Sunday she will conduct the morning worship. Immediately following the worship, we will hold a congregational meeting to hear a detailed report from the Search Committee, discuss the terms of the Call Agreement and vote on the recommendation to call Leslie as our new pastor. Assuming a positive vote, it is our hope that she will start with us in February.

We believe that God has led us to this exciting moment in our history, and we look forward to growing together as a faith community. Thank you for the privilege of being part of this process.

#### The Members of the Search Committee

Doris Anderson	Lois McBroom
David Crum	Preston Newgord
Emma Ferrie	Karen Ogdahl
Karen Ford	Erik Steen
Sue Hadland	Ann Turnbull
Phil Kuehn	

## **AN APPRECIATION OF ADVENT**

**“Celebrating Advent means learning how to wait.  
Waiting is an art which our impatient age has forgotten.”**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Church calendar begins with the season of Advent, the four weeks prior to Christmas. This year Advent begins on November 30. Advent is a season of preparation, waiting, and expectancy. Sometimes it can be very difficult to let Advent live as a time of preparation when the commercial culture surrounding us has been telling us for weeks that Christmas is already here. When we are able to experience Advent for what it is—a time of preparing ourselves spiritually—our understanding and experience of Christmas can be so much richer. The scriptures and hymns of Advent invite us to think about what it means for God to come into our world and into our lives. May God guide us as we move through Advent, making ready to have our lives, our church and our world changed and made new.

## **GREENING OF THE CHURCH**

### **A Celebration of the Season**

**Saturday, December 6 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

All ages are invited to beautify our church for Advent and Christmas! We'll decorate the church with garlands, greens and a tree and then share a simple meal together. Don't miss the fun as we “green the church” and celebrate the beauty of this season!

## **Holiday Open House**

Sunday, December 7, from 2-4 p.m.

at the Parsonage (411 Juniper Street)

Please join Pastor Linda and Randy Crowe for food, fellowship, and a celebration of this season!

## **Special Worship Services for this Holy Season**

### ***A Christmas Pageant***

**Sunday December 14 at 10 a.m.**

Children and young people of our congregation have contributed ideas and insights and Jill Carlson has crafted a Christmas Pageant just for our church family! Don't miss the world premiere of a wonderful pageant!

## **Turkey Potluck Dinner**

**Sunday, December 14 after Worship**

Don't miss the Turkey Potluck Dinner after worship on the third Sunday of Advent! Each church committee will provide a cooked turkey. Everyone else is invited to bring something to share: a side dish, salad, bread or dessert. You are welcome to bring friends, families and neighbors to this festive celebration! Volunteers are needed to help with serving and clean-up.

## **Christmas Cookies Baking Party for Kids on Saturday December 20**

Bring your aprons, kids! You're invited to come and make Christmas cookies in the church kitchen on Saturday, December 20 at 10:30 a.m. Our cooky-baking talents will help us buy Christmas gifts for kids in need.

## **Christmas Cookies Bake Sale Sunday December 21**

Buy delicious fresh-baked Christmas goodies from the kids of our congregation during Fellowship Time on the 21st! Proceeds from the bake sale will provide Christmas gifts for needy young people in this community. Thank you for helping!

## **“A LIGHT IS DRAWING NEAR” CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21**

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund provides an opportunity to recognize and honor those who have served and continue to serve in lay and authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ.

One of the unique aspects of the Christmas Fund is that the funds provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC clergy and lay church employees—the funds do not support programs or institutions, but people.

For 112 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a way in which we, as members of the United Church of Christ and the predecessor denominations from which our Church was born, share the light and love of Jesus Christ to those who have faithfully and selflessly served, and who now find themselves facing unforeseen financial crisis.

We will receive and bless the 2014 Christmas Fund offering on Sunday, December 21.

## **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Wednesday December 24 at 5 p.m.**

**This joyful Christmas Eve celebration for all ages includes carols, candles, prayers, and poetry of the season. This beloved service should not be missed!**

## **A Christmas Season Service of Stories and Poems Sunday December 28 at 10 a.m.**

Favorite Christmas literature will be shared during worship on the Sunday after Christmas. Do you have a special story or poem that has touched you deeply or helped you to see Christmas in a new way? Do you have a treasured children's story that has become part of your holiday traditions? If you have a piece that you'd be willing to share, please contact Pastor Linda ([revlindacrowe@gmail.com](mailto:revlindacrowe@gmail.com)) by December 14. You

are invited to read the story or poem yourself, but readers can be found if needed. Don't miss this special service of seasonal stories!

## **CROP HUNGER WALK RESULTS**

Approximately seventy-five participants from five area churches walked together on October 12 to make an impact on hunger locally and globally. Twenty enthusiastic walkers made up the Crop Walk team from this congregation. We raised more money for hunger relief than any other church! Financial totals for the Brainerd area Crop Walk are as follows: First Congregational UCC, \$1637.95; First Lutheran Church, \$1338; Bethlehem Lutheran Church, \$1267; Trinity Lutheran Church, \$435.05; Lord of Life Lutheran Church, \$70. The total amount raised: \$4748. Many thanks and blessings to all the walkers!

## **Planning Ahead**

**The Twelfth Night of Christmas Concert will be January 4, 2015**

## **THANK YOU!**

Thank you to Jan Kurtz for purchasing 3 music stands for the Bell Choir. They were given as a memorial to her brother, Steve Kurtz.

*May hope in Christ free us for service,  
May peace in God free us to share,  
May joy in the Spirit free us for action,  
May holy love free us to care! Amen.*

Lois Mangan, 2001

## **THE PASTOR'S PEN**

**Rev. Linda K. Crowe, Interim Pastor**

Randy and I really like to celebrate Thanksgiving before we begin to get ready for Christmas. We don't like to rush through the Thanksgiving season, so our outdoor Christmas lights are usually put in place sometime in the middle of December, most often on a miserably cold day.

This year, because our daughter Amy was coming for a visit, the outdoor Christmas lights went up early. Randy had the lights in place early in November, much sooner than usual. When Amy was here last weekend, she was delighted to see how beautiful those lights on the parsonage porch looked, shining in the darkness of a cold Minnesota winter night.

In this season and at this latitude, the days are short and the nights are long. Light is important and essential in this season. Christmas lights, shining and sparkling in the darkness, can lift our spirits when winter feels so dreary. The Christmas lights help to make winter bearable. No one in this region gives you a bad time if the outdoor Christmas lights remain in place until the last of the snow is gone from the yard. We all seem to recognize those lights are necessary for our mental well-being.

Light is an important element of our celebrations of Advent and Christmas. Our church family incorporates a candle-lighting ceremony in our worship services during each of the Advent Sundays and on Christmas Eve. Four candles on the Advent wreath represent hope, peace, joy and love. The central candle

on the wreath represents Jesus Christ. That candle is lit during our Christmas Eve worship service as we hear a passage from John's Gospel that includes these words: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)

At the end of the Christmas Eve service, the flame from the Christ candle is passed from one person to another, until all of us are holding lighted candles. The sanctuary—and our shining faces—are so lovely in the candlelight! Then we hear the words of a Gaelic Christmas blessing: "May the blessing of light be upon you forever—light within and light without. May all the paths you walk be lighted with peace."

In this season of darkness, I am holding you in prayer. I pray that the light of candles will serve as a beautiful reminder that God goes with us, in and through the darkness. I pray that the outdoor Christmas lights will serve as a powerful reminder that we are called to share the light of Christ, in every way we possibly can.

May the light of Christ shine in and through you, now and always. Peace, Pastor Linda.

**O God of the last and the least and the homeless,  
God of the rejected and betrayed,  
grant in this season that we may learn the ways of justice  
and live together, with kindness, as your people.  
As you watched our souls' shaping,  
look upon us now with love  
as we wait for the coming of the Christ child.  
Our hope is in you. Amen.**

Nancy Wyse, 2001

**Pastor Linda will be on vacation in Spokane from December 25-January 2. While she is away, David Crum will be on call for pastoral responsibilities. Please contact David regarding any pastoral care needs or pastoral responsibilities. David may be reached at 218-330-3168.**

## **Moderator's Musings**

### **By Ann Turnbull**

I find myself emotionally conflicted, as you also may be. I excitedly look forward to Leslie Moughty coming to candidate here in Brainerd on January 4th and at the same time experience the sadness of Linda and Randy Crowe's upcoming departure.

We knew when Linda came that her ministry here would be of limited length and it was part of the interim agreement that Linda could not be considered a candidate for pastor but that doesn't seem to help. Linda has been a perfect fit for our church during this time of transition as we have taken the time to discover who we are as a family of faith in this time and place, and what type of leadership we want as we continue our journey together. Linda has loved us, helped us during Pastor Deb's illness and death, celebrated the passage of marriage equality in Minnesota and enthusiastically celebrated the many resulting marriages. She reminds us often that we are beloved children of God, and has set a beautiful example of living a life of joy and gratitude among us. Although I tease her about wanting to have a blessing for everything, I find myself being increasingly aware of the many blessings in my life and rejoice in the blessing Linda and Randy have been to our congregation!

During the coming time we will celebrate Advent and Christmas. After Linda and Randy return from Christmas, celebrated with their family, in Spokane Valley, we will celebrate their ministry among us as they prepare to move back home. The Search Committee and Council will work together to coordinate this time when Linda and Randy leave and Leslie and Ken arrive. Both families have needs we seek to accommodate and coordinate so this goes smoothly.

The search committee was unanimous in extending an invitation to Leslie to be our next pastor and thrilled that she said yes. She will be a good leader for this church where everyone is free to discover her/his passion for ministry and invite others to join in. Leslie is warm and easy to relate to, she is a good listener, asks good questions, has creative ideas and loves to plan and conduct worship. She has 8 years of experience in retail management previous to attending seminary. We were attracted by her many skills, warm personality and her understanding of God. The experience of welcoming Leslie will be new to our congregation in that ours will be her first church. The search committee is excited that our church can help her grow into the job, being encouraging, supportive and accepting as she experiences the steep learning curve of learning to balance all the demands of the pastorate.

The Pastor Parish Relations Committee will work closely with Leslie to ensure that she is well supported and that pastor - congregation expectations and communications are healthy and clear. That committee is comprised of myself, Phil Kuehn, David Crum and Lois McBroom (Lois to be approved by council on Dec 11th).

This time of transition is challenging but we have much to be thankful for. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Love and peace,  
Ann

## **Christian Ministry Department**

### **H.U.G.S.**

#### **December 7**

**Host:** Jan Morton & Doris Anderson

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

**Counters:** Jeff Behr & Marcia Ferris

#### **December 14**

**Host:** Maria Bertram

**Greeter:** Itty Newgord

**Ushers:** Lance James, Mary Harder, Caroline Bender & Jennifer North

**Counters:** Deb Griffith & Marcia Mans

#### **December 21**

**Hosts:** Marcia Mans & Barb Stokke

**Greeters/Ushers:** Pat Scott, Dan Hegstad, Deb Griffith & Claire Steen

**Counters:** Coleen Carder & Vi Heiser

#### **December 28**

**Hosts:** Ellie Burkett & Joey Halvorson

**Greeters/Ushers:** Sharon Carlson, Ann Turnbull & Karen Ogdahl

**Counters:** Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

## Adult Forum Schedule for December

12/07 – “Living the Questions” with David Crum  
 12/14 – “Faith Talk” with Ellie Burkett  
 12/21 – “Living the Questions” with David Crum  
 12/28 – Fellowship

## Soup Kitchen – December 26

Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve an evening meal at the Soup Kitchen on December 26. Sharing food and fellowship is an important ministry to neighbors in our community. If you can help, please sign up on the red notebook placed in the church entry, or call the church office and we'll put your name on the list.

## Food Shelf Offering – December 28

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 Sunday, November 30, we collected 171 lbs of food and \$212.11. Our next offering will be on Sunday, December 28.

The following commodities are always needed and appreciated: canned beans (kidney, pinto, garbanzo, baked); chili, canned pasta meals, stews, soups; tuna, canned chicken, peanut butter; ramen noodles, pastas, macaroni and cheese; paper towels, toilet paper, disposable diapers, soap and shampoo. **Again, thank you for helping to feed our hungry neighbors!**

## All in the Church Family

### New Addresses

Here is a listing of all the people from our church who have recently moved:

Mona Gorham	8182 Excelsior Road, Apt 320, Baxter MN 56425
Jean Widmark	8182 Excelsior Road, Apt 220, Baxter MN 56425
Jim Flath & Duane Shatave	103 4 <sup>th</sup> St. NE Crosby MN 56441
Jerry Kuehn (Phil's Dad)	8182 Excelsior Rd, Apt 305, Baxter MN 56425

## A CaringBridge Site for Paul Mans.

A CaringBridge site was created for Paul Mans. It's a caring social network to help people stay connected with family and friends during a health event. Visit Paul's site often to stay updated and share messages of encouragement and compassion in the Guestbook.

[www.caringbridge.org/visit/paulmans](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/paulmans)

## In Our Prayers

**These joys and concerns were shared on prayer cards during recent services.**

Pray for those affected by addictions and for all those working to overcome addictions. Pray for those facing pressure and stress with their work. Pray for those who are victims of bullying or abuse. Pray for

healing—in every way—for individuals, families, and relationships. Prayers of thanks for a car accident with no injuries; for blessings; for an abundant life. Pray for those whose lives are coming to a close; those losing loved ones; those growing up in a confusing world; those who travel; our Pastor Search Committee. Prayers of gratitude and love for families, friends, this church family, those who help us find our way. Pray for parents. May all of us set a good example, to nurture love, respect, safety and responsibility in our world. Pray for those who are falsely accused. Pray for those seeking peace and resolution in times of family crisis. Pray for all who are struggling in any way. Pray for all those who are grieving, including the loved ones of Curtis and Levi. Pray for those who are homeless and for those who have lost their jobs. Pray that the hearts and minds of those now elected to serve will be opened to the needs of people and the care of the earth—may they feel the blessing of life! Pray for healing, comfort or strength for: Paul, Cheri, Lois, Cheryl, Aaron, Richard, Kay, Ron, Karen, Mark, Greg, Don, Matt, Rachel, Sandi, Justin, Roz, Rod, those affected by Ebola, Kathy, Baby James, and a new grandbaby.



## December Birthdays.....

12/01	Mary Harder	12/28	Donald Ford
12/05	Karen Ford	12/29	Marcia Mans
12/06	Austin Froemming	12/29	Carol Phelps
12/09	Lisa Wigand	12/29	David Ten Eyck
12/11	Benjamin Froemming	12/30	Bonita Wunderlich
12/12	Betty Johnson	12/31	Greg Johnson
12/20	Donald Crust		

## Church Council Minutes

The Church Council did not meet in November but will meet on Thursday, December 11 at 5:30 pm.

## Church Financials

**First Congregational UCC of Brainerd  
Financial Results - General Fund  
As of October 31, 2014**

	Annual Budget	Results Through October 31, 2014	% of Budget
<b><u>Income:</u></b>			
From Giving Units	\$ 131,090	\$ 120,920	92.24%
Other Giving	\$ 26,820	\$ 30,315	113.03%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>\$ 157,910</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 151,235</u></b>	
 <b><u>Expenses:</u></b>			
Council	\$ 106,261	\$ 93,563	88.05%
Christian Ministry	\$ 10,800	\$ 10,733	99.38%
Christian Education	\$ 1,300	\$ 3,256	250.46%
Stewardship	\$ 440	\$ 315	71.59%
Trustees	\$ 47,900	\$ 46,816	97.74%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$ 166,701</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 154,683</u></b>	
<b>Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:</b>	<b><u>\$ (8,791)</u></b>	<b><u>\$ (3,448)</u></b>	

Note that the Christian Education expenses include \$2,720 paid in Camp Scholarships. We did not budget for these, but we did receive contributions to cover 100% of that expense.

***The best and most beautiful things in the world  
cannot be seen or even touched.  
They must be felt with the heart.***

Helen Keller (1880-1968)

## CHURCH CALENDAR — December 2014

	<b>1</b> 9:45 Confirmation Field Trip to St. Johns University	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 5:30 Trustees	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 10:30 Book Group	<b>6</b> 10 – 1:00 Greening Of the Church
<b>7</b> 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship - <b>Communion</b> 11:00 Fellowship/Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation 11:30 Adult Forum – LTQ with David Crum 2–4:00 <b>Open House - Parsonage</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 3:00 Christian Ministry	<b>11</b> 5:30 Christian Ed - <b>New time to be Announced</b> 5:30 Church Council	<b>12</b> 10:30 Book Group	<b>13</b> 11:00 Pageant Practice
<b>14</b> 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship <b>Sunday School Christmas Program</b> 11:00 Fellowship/Turkey Potluck	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 10:30 Book Group 6:00 Process & Film	<b>20</b> <b>10:30 Kids Baking Party</b>
<b>21</b> 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship – Bell Choir 11:00 Fellowship/ <b>Kids Bake Sale</b> 11:30 Confirmation 11:30 Adult Forum – LTQ with David Crum	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	<b>25</b> <b>Merry Christmas</b> 	<b>26</b> 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	<b>27</b>
<b>28 *FOOD SHELF OFFERING*</b> 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship/Sunday School 11:30 Confirmation	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn			

Friendship News  
is a publication of  
[First Congregational  
United Church of Christ](#)  
**415 Juniper Street  
Brainerd, MN 56401**

[firstcong@brainerd.net](mailto:firstcong@brainerd.net)  
**218-829-2528  
uccbrainerd.org**

**Interim Pastor  
Linda K. Crowe**

**Admin. Assist.  
Colleen Todd**