



Friendship News

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

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

Our Pastor, Leslie Moughty is also available at other times by appointment.

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uccbrainerd.org

November 2016

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

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December Birthdays

12/1	Mary Harder	12/12	Betty Johnson
12/5	Karen Ford	12/12	John Krueger
12/6	Austin Froemming	12/22	Paige Gustafson
12/8	Virginia MacArthur	12/29	Marcia Mans
12/9	Lisa Wigand	12/29	Carol Phelps
12/11	Ben Froemming	12/29	Dave TenEyck
12/11	Jack Kraywinkle	12/30	Bonita Wunderlich

Pastor's Pen

The season is upon us! During the season of Advent, we are in both an "already" and a "not yet" time. Christ was already born two thousand years ago and is reborn again every year in our hearts and through our lived faith. But the world that Christ envisioned is not yet here. We are still waiting. Waiting is not my strong suit. Waiting also doesn't seem to be highly valued in our culture anymore. We live in an era when news channels seem to place a higher value on being the first to break a story rather than wait to verify facts. Our smartphones allow us to access an internet full of information anywhere at anytime. So patiently waiting for Christ to come again and for the manifestation of God's vision of a peaceable kin-dom is naturally a tall order.

But in waiting we have the opportunity to slow down; to focus on our priorities and to resist the temptation to rush. My hope for each one of us during this time is that we might resist the temptation to rush through this season; that we might take our time and truly prepare our hearts and minds for the miracle of Christmas.

With Christmas blessings,
Pastor Leslie

Moderator's Notes

The Parade Passes By
Dan Hegstad, Moderator

I've noted that there is a very fine line between the realist and the cynic. I try to live in reality and accept it, but I seem to leap across the fine line into cynicism quite easily.

Enter The Christmas Season.

The message and reality are at odds. **Jesus**, and the message of peace, love and hope are the very antithesis of reality where The Word (caps are intentional) is SHOP, BUY and SPEND. America is counting on you! Spend money you don't have to buy things for people who don't need anything. If you don't the entire economy and country will suffer and maybe even collapse.

I dislike pretention. The wolf doesn't even bother to dress as the sheep anymore and the people don't seem to notice or care if they do. "OK. If I say 'peace, love and joy' do three 'ho, ho hos' and pretend to like singing chipmunks and smile at the caribou (AKA 'reindeer') in a Santa hat can I go to the mall earlier this year?" Santa says, "Yes! Your credit card is the golden ticket to happiness!" I'm a pretty good cynic, aren't I? It's easy. It may be negative, but I'm not wrong.

I'm always amazed how a few words at the right time can change your life. They don't need to be Biblical or pontificated by an ancient with only one name. No, just a thought . . . an observation from a friend . . . an overheard comment. Simple, yet powerful things these words. They are like little pathside bombs of goodness. Bam! And your world has changed forever.

One day I was blathering about the nonsense of The Season and a friend said, "Well, you could choose to see it differently you know." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Just because everyone else is caught in the trap of commercialism doesn't mean you have to be too. You can make Christmas about whatever you want."

Of course! It's so simple. Why couldn't I see that on my own? Who knows and who cares. I have a choice.

So now I choose to let go of the rampant commercialism. I choose to observe but not participate. I embrace the joy, the lights and opportunity to be with family – birth family and chosen family.

It's all about people.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday are just ginormous distractions. They have no power if we just say no. I imagine them as an illustration of a bandwagon by Dr. Suess. Tooting, banging, clanging, and blaring with banners, bright colors and lights, but passing. As it passes throngs of people clamor and worship as they follow it down the street to Big Box oblivion.

I choose to watch it pass. Once the cacophony fades the void is filled with peace, love and hope.

Join me?

Christmas Flowers

You can give a gift in the name of your loved one(s). We will use the money to purchase flower arrangements for the altar. All memorials will be listed in the Christmas bulletin.

Please fill out the following completely.

Amount of Memorial Gift: \$ _____

In Memory Of:

Your Name:

Write your check to: "First Congregational Church" Memo: "Christmas Flowers"

Leave this form with your check in the offering plate, the church office, or mail it to:

First Congregational Church

415 Juniper Street

Brainerd, MN 56401

Food Shelf Offering – November

Each month we bring groceries, necessities and financial donations to help feed hungry neighbors in our community. The Salvation Army Food Shelf serves 400 families each month. In November we received \$150 and 90 pounds of food. Our next offering will be Sunday, December 25. **Thank you for helping to feed our hungry neighbors!**

14th Annual 12th Night of Christmas Concert

First Congregational United Church of Christ
January 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Hello fans,

First, a big thank you to all of our musicians, all others who have donated time and energy toward the event, and to all of our local congregations who come together each year for a last hurrah of Christmas merry making!

Come hear some of the Lakes Area's finest musicians perform your favorite Christmas music. Hans Blix and the Weapons Inspectors will be performing an original composition, BHS's Windfall, a flute trio with BHS's Minnesota Varsity's award winning Claire Gunsbury, the vocal ensemble Consensus, a small group from The Legacy Chorale, vocalist and pianist Phil Kuehn with an original Christmas song, Laura Raedeke and Grace Forbord on an organ/piano duet, among others. Join us!

With Peace~

Lori Howe on Behalf of the 12th Night Committee

Creche Display

Thanks to a wonderful idea from Lilja Behr, your Arts Committee is organizing a special way for us to share our Christmas crèches! Bring your crèches on Saturday, December 17th to Fellowship Hall between 1-3:00 pm. We will arrange them and have them on display Sunday, December 18th, during coffee hour. If you are unable to come on Saturday, they may be dropped off in the office for safe keeping during office hours the previous week, or bring them on Sunday morning in time to have them set up before church. You will be able to take your crèches home after coffee and have them for the week before Christmas.

Lilja has offered to prepare descriptions of the manger scenes if you are willing to email or send them to her. She would include:

How the crèche was chosen or obtained (gift, family treasure, purchase)

Age of crèche

Origin of crèche

Why the crèche is special to the owner.

Lilja's email is behrier2831@gmail.com.

Grace Forbord will lead us in singing some favorite carols and Erik Steen will entertain us with Christmas readings. Your Arts Committee invites you all to come and join us for this Christmas celebration on Sunday, December 18th!

Address Change

Marcia Mans will have a new address effective December 9th. Her cell number is (218)839-8055.
The Kenwood #912, 825 Summit Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Christmas with Consensus

Friday, December 16th at 7:00 pm – Cascade United Methodist Church, Deerwood

Sunday, December 18th at 2:00 pm – First Congregational UCC, Brainerd

Join us for a concert of Holiday Vocal Harmony favorites new and old. Free will offering.

[Facebook.com/concensusvocalensemble](https://www.facebook.com/concensusvocalensemble).

HUGS

December 4

Hosts: ?

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

Greeter: ?

Counters: Jeff Behr

December 11

Hosts: Maria Bertram

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

Counters: Deb Griffith & Marcia Mans

December 18

Hosts: Deb Griffith & Barb Stokke

Ushers: Dan Hegstad & Claire Steen

Greeters: Marcia Mans & Preston Newgord

Counters: Coleen Carder & Vi Heiser

December 25

Hosts: Ellie Burkett & Sharon Carlson

Ushers/Greeters: Caroline & Rebekah Bender & Jean Gustafson

Counters: Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

LAKES AREA MUSIC FESTIVAL

On Thursday, January 19th, the Lakes Area Music Festival is organizing an orchestral journey to Minneapolis for a [Coffee Concert](#) at Orchestral Hall. And you're invited! The daylong tour will include: round-trip bus transportation with your musical tour guide, LAMF director Scott Lykins, a ticket to the 11:00 a.m. performance of the Minnesota Orchestra including complimentary pre-concert donuts and coffee, and lunch at the News Room with conductor Roderick Cox and other LAMF friends of the Minnesota Orchestra! Cost of the trip is \$80. The bus will depart Brainerd around 8:00 a.m. and return at around 5:30 p.m. Please contact Bethany at bethany@lakesareamusic.org or [218-820-6193](tel:218-820-6193) to reserve your spot. **Space is limited to 50 participants and the bus is filling up fast**, so secure your spot today!

Walk to End Alzheimer's

If you participated in the Team First Congregational UCC Walk to End Alzheimer's (walking and/or donating), you may be the winner of a special yoga mat with carrying case. Contact Karen Ford to put your name in a drawing. Email: kaford10551@charter.net - Cell: 651-492-3600. We will draw a name on Sunday, December 11 during the coffee hour.

Donations are still accepted until December 31. We do not know our team total yet, but the Brainerd Lakes Walk has just hit \$100,000. The good news is that 78% of every dollar goes to research. Thank you to everyone who participated.

MN Communities Caring for Children

The Circle of Parents group has a need for 2 people to provide child care during the meetings. This is a stipend position. If you are interested, contact Lowell Johnson (johnsonlowells@gmail.com or 218-828-6233). The positions needed are:

Children's Program Assistant/Volunteer. Weekly for one year minimum commitment. The Children's Program Assistant/Volunteer is responsible to help the children's program lead to provide an ongoing organized program for children while their parents participate in the concurrent support group(s). This position is responsible to help the program lead ensure that the program meets and maintains the partnership standards of quality.

Children's Program Lead. Approximately three hours/week for a one year minimum commitment. The Children's Program Lead is responsible for the provision of an ongoing organized program for children while their parents participate in the concurrent support group(s). This lead position is responsible for youth participants, the development, training, and maintenance of the children's program as well as all assistants and/or volunteers, and ensures that the program meets and maintains the partnership standards of quality.

November 16, 2016 Church Council Minutes

Moderator – Dan Hegstad Assistant Moderator – Claire Steen Clerk – Barb Stokke
 Treasurer – Mike Schrader Christian Ministry – Ann Turnbull Trustees – Coleen Carder
 Stewardship – Judy Whiteman Christian Education – Marina Grabowski
 Council at Large – Mike North and Bonnie Crum

Present: Dan Hegstad, Claire Steen, Barb Stokke, Mike Schrader, Ann Turnbull, Coleen Carder, Marina Grabowski, Judy Whiteman, Bonnie Crum, Rev. Leslie Moughty, and guest Rev. Michael Small, Union UCC, Hackensack, Minnesota.

Dan Hegstad called the meeting to order and welcomed guest Rev. Michael Small, minister at Union UCC in Hackensack, Minnesota.

Rev. Small extended greetings from the MN Conference UCC board and affirmations of our church's ministry. He shared the Conference's proposed mission, vision and goals to help our churches meet the needs of this changing world.

Mike Schrader shared Food for Thought. Ann Turnbull will provide November's Food for Thought.

CLERK'S REPORT – No report

PASTOR'S REPORT – Highlights: held the first session of a new member class; supported our members and friends during four hospital visits, an extended home visit, four office visits, and a funeral; attended an Ecclesiastical Council in St. Cloud; performed a house blessing; attended MN Conference Clergy Convocation; greeted 700+ trick or treaters and families on Halloween; and met with Northeast Clergy Cluster. When God's Garden came down, so did the Rainbow banner. Council agreed that the banner should be moved to a visible place in front of the church. Ann Turnbull volunteered to fill while Bobbie is on vacation.

STEWARDSHIP – No report. Judy provided an update: pledges for 2017 are down \$21,000 from 2016 pledges. There are a few new pledges and the average per pledge is up slightly, but there are fewer pledges at this time.

TRUSTEES' REPORT – The large dead pine tree has been removed, the foundation under the chapel is fixed, the structure of the gables has been inspected and found to be fine with only minor work needing to be done. A used dishwasher has been located to replace the present one, and Mark and Becky Stadem donated a commercial coffee maker. *Thank you Mark and Becky!* Northland Cabin Care submitted a bill for work done in 2015. Trustees asked to be billed twice a year. Work continues on upgrading the wifi, creating accessible seating in the sanctuary, and revamping the offices.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – Over 700 trick-or-treaters and their families received candy and an invitation that included service schedules and our UCC mission statement. Work continues on these upcoming events: Sunday, December 4, Make-N-Take; and Sunday, December 11, The Sunday School Christmas Program and Potluck. CE reminds each committee that they are to bring a cooked turkey for the potluck.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – Upcoming events include Transgender Day of Remembrance service Sunday, November 20, at 4:00; Greening of the Church Friday, November 25, at 12:00; and the ordination of Tony Romaine on November 21 at Peace UCC in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Planning continues for Advent services Christmas Eve.

AT-LARGE MEMBERS – How can we be a more welcoming church and how do we provide opportunities for all to help accomplish our church's mission? Becoming a sanctuary church, forming 'get-acquainted' groups, or forming solidarity groups were three ideas offered by my council members.

OLD BUSINESS – Council discussed the proposed 2017 budget and its \$33,818 deficit. Council will meet again Nov. 30 at 7:00 p.m. to revise and finalize the budget to be presented to the congregation at the annual budget meeting after services Sunday, December 4.

The Exec Committee meets Thursday, December 1, at 2:00 to continue work on pastoral job description. Dan and Marcia will compile a list of ideas discussed at the Visioning Retreat. Work continues on the treasurer job description.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

The next committee meetings are December 8. Christian Ed will host.

Council meets December 14 at 7:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stokke, Clerk of Council

Church Financials

Financial Results – General Fund Year to Date Results as of 10/31/16	2016 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 10/31/16	% of Budget
Income:			
From Giving Units	\$ 150,481	\$ 132,167	87.83%
Other Giving	\$ 5,500	\$ 15,938	289.78%
Total Income	\$ 155,981	\$ 148,105	94.95%
Expenses:			
Council	\$ 97,324	\$ 84,836	87.17%
Christian Ministry	\$ 13,150	\$ 9,931	75.52%
Christian Education	\$ 2,950	\$ 712	24.13%
Stewardship	\$ 570	\$ 582	102.18%
Trustees	\$ 60,170	\$ 40,242	66.88%
Total Expenses	\$ 174,164	\$ 136,304	78.26%
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (18,183)	\$ 11,801	

Church Calendar – December 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1		1	2 10:30 Book Group	3
4 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship/Communion 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Make 'N Take 11:00 Annual Budget Meeting 11:30 Painting the Stars New Pathways	5 New Pathways	6 New Pathways	7 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn New Pathways	8 5:30 Committee Meetings New Pathways	9 10:30 Book Group New Pathways	10 New Pathways
11 8:30 Choir 10:00 Christmas Program 11:00 Fellowship/Potluck	12	13	14 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 11:30 Clergy Cluster 7:00 Council Meeting	15	16 10:30 Book Group	17
18 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:30 Painting the Stars 3:00 Concensus Concert	19	20	21 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	22 5:30 PPRC	23 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	24 4:00 Christmas Eve Service
25 Christmas 10:00 Worship & Food Shelf Offering 11:00 Fellowship NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	26 Office Closed	27	28 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	29	30 10:30 Book Group	31 New Year's Eve