



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

December 2018

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

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Millie Gjertson



We are saddened to inform you of the death of Millie Gjertson. Millie was recently diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumor which resulted in the end of her earthly life on Saturday November 25. Pastor Leslie and her husband Ken were with Millie at the time of her death at Woodland Good Samaritan. Millie lived a full life in her 95 years and she will be profoundly missed. We are deeply grateful for the love and care of Coleen Carder, Ann Turnbull, and everyone who made up “team Millie.” Details of a memorial service will be announced in near future.

Pastor’s Pen

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year.” Except when it isn’t. The holidays are a time when everyone is supposed to be happy and excited and yes, maybe a little stressed out. But if you’re entering the holiday season this year with a heavy heart, you are not alone. If you experienced a loss this year, of a loved one, a pregnancy, a job, a relationship, of your own health, the traditions and celebrations of the holidays may feel more like a reminder of your loss than a reason to celebrate. For some, the short, cold days of the season can bring seasonal depression or worsen existing depression. Those of us with anxiety may begin to dread this time when we are expected to attend parties and events, make small talk, and give the perfect gift.

It may feel like there are only two options for how to handle these feelings – either “grin and bear it,” putting on a happy face and pretending everything is fine, or, isolate ourselves from other people as much as possible, withdrawing into a private space where we grieve in peace. For many situations, these are the most publicly acceptable options. My hope for us as a church, is that we can allow ourselves to be authentic as much as possible and that the members of our church family will continue to love, accept, and support us just as we are. What does that look like? It might look like someone being asked how they are doing and the person responding “I’m struggling a bit. I’m really missing so and so this time of year.” Followed by the first person saying something like “I’m so sorry, that must be really difficult. You are not alone.”

We have started our journey in becoming a W.I.S.E (Welcoming, Supportive and Engaged for mental health) congregation. One of the goals of this process being that we as a church would become a safe haven for people experiencing mental health challenges such as depression, but also to become more comfortable with being authentic when we aren’t feeling particularly festive. It is a gift to ourselves and to others when we have a place where we can be honest and genuine about the pain or loss we are feeling, especially at a time when it seems that everyone else around us is filled with the joy of the season.

With this in mind, I will be offering an informal **“Blue Christmas” service on Saturday December 15 at 10:00 am.** This will be a peace-filled, gentle, and safe time of prayer, ritual, music, and reflection. While the service will acknowledge the pain and grief of those gathered, we will ultimately depart in hope. Not the shiny, fake hope of wrapping paper and ribbon, but the sustaining hope of our ever-present, ever-faithful God whose incarnation we await in birth of Christ.

With Peace,

Pastor Leslie

Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly

It will soon be that time of year when we deck our church with Christmas beauty. We wish we had a group of elves to do the work, but they are all busy at the North Pole. Fortunately, we have our own elves. You are invited to a Greening of the Church party on Saturday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m. We need a couple able bodied folks, maybe someone who can climb a ladder, and several more who can do the rest. Your reward? A beautiful church plus treats and beverages. Marina Grabowski has the sign up sheet.

Christian Ministry Team

Special Offering – November

In November we donated \$40.00 to the Soup Kitchen. Our next special offering will be on Sunday, December 23 and will go to Pocket Change for Change.

January Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the January newsletter is December 16th at 5:00 pm.

December Birthdays

12/1	Mary Harder	12/12	Betty Johnson	12/29	Dave TenEyck
12/5	Karen Ford	12/12	John Krueger	12/29	Carol Phelps
12/8	Virginia MacArthur	12/22	Paige Gustafson	12/30	Bonita Wunderlich
12/9	Lisa Wigand	12/29	Marcia Mans	12/31	Greg Johnson
12/11	Jack Kraywinkle				

HUGS

December 2

Hosts: Carla Benjamin & Jan Morton

Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Greg Johnson, Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman

Counters: Jeff Behr & Gale Landem

December 9

Hosts: Jack & Kay Kraywinkle

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

Counters: Deb Griffith & Georgia Harris

December 16

Hosts: Claire Steen & Barb Stokke

Ushers: Charlotte Goedsche & Cynthia Janes

Greeters: Marina Grabowski & Barb Stokke

Counters: Tracy Lyons & Mabel Schultz

December 23

Hosts: Ellie Burkett & Sharon Carlson

Ushers/Greeters: Jolene Hojem, Tracy Lyons, Jean Schaeffer & Ann Turnbull

Counters: Nancy Gould & Judy Whiteman

December 30

Hosts: Sue Hadland & Lisa Wigand

Ushers/Greeters: Reed Campbell, Greg Johnson, Austin Newgord & Gary Whiteman

Counter: Cynthia Janes

New Pathways

Sunday, December 30, 2018 – January 6, 2019

Happy New Year

Let's help our guests bring in the New Year!!

Consider volunteering for dinner, overnights, set up, tear down or transportation Please contact:

Staying overnight: Sue Hadland - 829-2381 dghrose@charter.net

& Kathi Hefti 839-1578 hefti3@gmail.com

Dinners: Sharon Carlson – 828-1581 - sharoncarlson62@charter.net

Set up and take down (2 Sundays) - Deb Griffith - 828-4841 - debrange@brainerd.net

Transportation: Scott Gutierrez - 838-7066 - sljtgutierrez@gmail.com

Activities: Lance James - Lance James lancejames32@gmail.com

Basic food buying, (other than dinners) Jan Morton – jan56401@gmail.com

The white board used for signing up, is in the church sanctuary lobby each Sunday starting Dec 2nd. **Once you sign up, please go online by pressing down the ctrl key on the keyboard and clicking on [Sign up Here](#), and pick your dates for any of the above five activity opportunities.**

THANK YOU from The New Pathways Team!!!

THE REWARDS ARE MANY, AS A VOLUNTEER, AND AS OUR GUEST

CHRISTmas Journey at Bethlehem

You are invited to experience CHRISTmas Journey on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 11, 12. Open house from 5:00-8:00 pm. Take a 20 minute indoor walk as we share the story of God sending Jesus into the world. The four theatrical scenes climax with the nativity. Bring your loved ones to the CHRISTmas Journey as a reminder that Jesus is the Reason for the Season. Afterwards, enjoy chili, Christmas cookies and hot beverages. Bethlehem Lutheran - 418 Eighth Ave. NE - Brainerd (across from Caribou Coffee)

High School Trip to Chicago and Milwaukee – Register Now!

Registration is open for the 2019 High School Trip to Chicago and Milwaukee! Please fill out the form at <https://tinyurl.com/hsucc> no later than **December 28**. We will be fundraising to offset the cost of the trip. In the meantime, a deposit of \$100 is due with the registration to secure a spot. Please give payment to the church office (make checks payable to First Congregational UCC). Financial assistance is available, and payments can be made over time. The most important piece is completing the form. Please let Pastor Leslie know if you need assistance or if you have any questions.



Real Talk: Sexuality and Our Faith for 9-12 grades

Save the date! In partnership with our sister congregations in New York Mills and Wadena, we will be offering a series of workshops on Sundays after church called "Real Talk: Sexuality and Faith". The current plan is to meet once a month at 12:30 pm for lunch and a workshop on the topic of sexuality and faith. These workshops will be using the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum as its basis.

Lori Alford, who will be leading the series, will be hosting an **information session** for parents and youth on **January 13** after worship. If you are a youth or a guardian who is at all interested in possibly attending one or all of the workshops, please save the date and plan to attend the information session. The first workshop session will take place on January 27. More information will be available in the January Newsletter.

Women's March in Washington

Do you remember the Women's March in Washington in 2017? Do you wish you had been there? Well, a second Women's March is coming to Washington on January 19th. The North family plans to be there along with some friends from Up North, and we want to gauge the interest in others attending. If you have an interest in attending, please talk to Sue North about possible logistics.

Church Council Minutes – November 14, 2018

Moderator – Mike North	Assistant Moderator – Tracy Lyons
Clerk – Barb Stokke	Treasurer – Deb Lundberg
Ministry – Karen Ford	Stewardship – Judy Whiteman
Trustees – Deb Griffith	Education – Lowell Johnson/Jolene Hojem
Council at Large – Bob Jones, Gary Whiteman, Claire Steen	

Present: Mike North, Barb Stokke, Karen Ford, Deb Griffith, Judy Whiteman, Bob Jones, Gary Whiteman, Claire Steen, Tracy Lyons, and Rev. Leslie Moughty.

Mike North called the meeting to order. Deb Griffith shared November's *Food for Thought*. Mike will provide it in December.

Approval of October Council Minutes – Previously approved

CLERK'S REPORT – No changes

PASTOR'S REPORT – Highlights: Held second new member class with 4 participants; led 1 confirmation class on the Nicene Creed; held W.I.S.E. forum with Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe October 20; participated in Ordination Panel for Member in Discernment Sheri Nelson at Community UCC in Saint Paul Park; and held Usher/Greeter Training. **Community engagement:** Held Life Saving event; Halloween – 620 kids and adults; led worship at 3 senior-living facilities; and attended Bridges of Hope faith leader luncheon.

Pastoral Care Contacts: 2 home visits, accompanied family to court, 2 off-site visits, 2 phone counseling conversations, 1 office visit for wedding planning. **Concerns/Updates:** Received positive feedback on Usher/Greeter training; plan to offer a hospitality workshop to expand the training and reach more people; need 2 or 3 more people on the Christian Ed committee; safe church policy still on the radar; Bylaw committee is planning to meet in November or December. **Upcoming events:** Transgender Day of Remembrance Service November 20, 6:00 pm; Thanksgiving Eve Service at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church November 21, 6:00 pm; Greening the church Saturday, December 1, at 10:00. **Out-of-the-office dates:** •November 21-25: remaining 2018 Vacation; •December 31-January 15: Next Generation Leadership Initiative (NGLI) Core Class in Arizona and vacation days.

TREASURER'S REPORT – No report

TRUSTEES' REPORT – Trustees reported that the dead elm tree has been removed, the grounds have been cleaned, snow plowing is in place for the winter, and a coat rack has been donated for the lower level. Other projects in progress include installing the engraved plates in the Columbarium when they arrive; replacing florescent lighting with LED; installing a vanity in a parsonage bathroom; receiving bids for boiler and furnace repairs and thermostat replacements; getting bids to replace water fountains or install water coolers; starting incremental changes to FH men's bathroom, and finding the best way to sell un-needed pews.

STEWARDSHIP – Stewardship completed a successful pledge drive. Pledges may be given to Bobbie in the office.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – CM's upcoming events include the Taizé service Thursday, November 15, 6:00 pm; Worship Service Sunday, November 25; Greening of the Church Saturday, December 1, 10:00–12:00.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – No report

MEMBERS AT LARGE – At-large members continue the search to fill two vacancies on the Christian Educations committee.

OLD BUSINESS – 2019 Budget: Council reviewed the projected budget; the Exec committee will continue work on it November 21.

Pastor Leslie reported that WISE is off to a good start. The WISE Task Force will meet November 18, and a WISE adult forum is scheduled for December 2.

NEW BUSINESS – Council approved and welcomed Tracy Lyons as Assistant Moderator; approved an honorarium for Rev. Rachel Keefe for her October presentations on WISE Congregation and Suicide Prevention; recommended the flags be placed beside the entrance doors; approved the use of the church for Mid-Minnesota Women's Center Board meetings; discussed the Pastor's Discretionary Fund and agreed that its purpose is to provide a small donation (a gas card, transportation, a meal or groceries) for short-term relief in an emergency situation. Church members and friends may choose to provide additional help.

**Annual Budget Meeting, December 2, following the Service
Church Council Meeting, December 19 at 7:00 pm**

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Stokke, Clerk of Council

Church Financials

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd		
Financial Results - Designated Funds		
Year to Date Results as of 10/31/2018		
	2018 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 10/31/18
Income:		
Building Fund		\$ 23,760
Columbarium	\$ -	\$ 2,189
Camp/Youth	\$ -	\$ 1,214
Total Income	\$ -	\$ 27,163
Expenses:		
Building Fund		\$ 44,981
Columbarium	\$ -	\$ 6,726
Camp/Youth	\$ -	\$ 878
Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 52,584
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ -	\$ (25,422)

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd				
Financial Results - General Fund				
Year to Date Results as of 10/31/2018				
	2018 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 10/31/18	% of Budget	Actuals Through 10/31/17
Income:				
Giving Units	\$ 129,892	\$ 153,691	118.32%	\$ 126,559
Loose Offering (10% to OCWM)	\$ 3,278	\$ 2,788	85.05%	\$ 3,830
Other Giving	\$ 4,938	\$ 7,318	148.20%	\$ 5,407
Revolving Income	\$ 3,933	\$ 14,950		\$ 18,400
Total Income	\$ 142,041	\$ 178,747	125.84%	\$ 154,197
Expenses:				
Council	\$ 101,821	\$ 82,221	90.43%	\$ 79,719
Christian Education	\$ 2,300	\$ 703	43.43%	\$ 289
Christian Ministry	\$ 1,900	\$ 1,691	99.68%	\$ 3,197
Music	\$ 8,990	\$ 6,884	84.74%	\$ 6,408
Stewardship	\$ 695	\$ 522	85.41%	\$ 589
Trustees	\$ 56,810	\$ 77,887	145.26%	\$ 41,777
Revolving Expense	\$ 3,724	\$ 13,739		\$ 14,696
Total Expenses	\$ 176,241	\$ 183,647	113.17%	\$ 146,676
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (34,200)	\$ (4,900)		\$ 7,521

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd		
Financial Results - Revolving Accounts		
Year to Date Results as of 10/31/2018		
	2018 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 10/31/18
Income:		
Film License	\$ 225	\$ -
Flower Income	\$ -	\$ 365
OCWM Income	\$ 8,398	\$ 7,480
Other Mission Income	\$ -	\$ 3,217
Special Offering Income	\$ -	\$ 123
Special Worship Services	\$ 500	\$ 1,330
UCC Mission Income	\$ -	\$ 2,435
Total Income	\$ 8,898	\$ 14,950
Expenses:		
Film License	\$ 225	\$ 237
Flowers	\$ -	\$ 719
OCWM Payments	\$ 8,398	\$ 6,818
Other Mission Payments	\$ -	\$ 2,614
Special Worship Services	\$ 500	\$ 771
UCC Mission Payments	\$ -	\$ 2,580
Total Expenses	\$ 9,123	\$ 13,739
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (225)	\$ 1,211

Church Calendar – December 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 10:00 Greening the Church
2 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship & Communion 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 11:00 Budget Meeting	3	4	5 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	6	7 10:30 Book Group	8
9 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School	10	11	12 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	13 5:30 Committee Meetings	14 10:30 Book Group 11:30 Clergy Cluster	15
16 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School 5:00 Newsletter Deadline	17	18	19 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council Meeting	20 6:00 Taize Service	21 10:30 Book Group	22
23 10:00 Worship & Special Offering 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School	24 Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26 9:30 Prayer Circle 12:00 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	27	28 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	29
30 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:15 Sunday School New Pathways families arrive	31 New Pathways Host Week					