Friendship News, January 2021

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Brainerd

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Church Office is currently closed due to Covid.

Office phone 218-829-2528 Office E-mail uccbrainerd@gmail.com Pastor’s E-mail: pastorleslieucc@gmail.com Website: [www.uccbrainerdmn.org](http://www.uccbrainerdmn.org)

**Schedule an online 1 to 1 or an outdoor 1 to 1 with Pastor Leslie:**

[www.calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1](http://www.calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1)

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

**Pastor’s Pen: God is Holding Our Lives**

The coming of the New Year has been on my mind a lot this week. Well, not just this week. I think a lot of us have been ready for 2020 to be over for quite some time. It has been a difficult year for pretty much everyone to some degree. We have all experienced losses of some kind. Some of us lost family members or friends or both. Some of us lost jobs. Some of us lost the ability to attend school with our friends, go to football games, participate in sports or choir. All of us lost the normalcy of being able to go to church in person, to sing and hug and break bread together. And so, it is no wonder that we look at turning the page on our calendars to 2021 with hope and anticipation.

As a kid, I viewed New Year’s Eve as a sort of magical moment. We got to stay up late, we usually went to a party of some sort, we wrote resolutions, and we sang a song with words I didn’t understand (what is an old lang zine anyway?) I would go to sleep thinking about how the change from one year to the next felt so big. How the last day of December would feel one way and then, like magic, the next day, everything would be different!

As I grew older, I realized that there isn’t really anything magical that happens when December 31 turns into January 1. But I’ve also learned the powerful difference a new perspective can make in our lives. And I think that’s what the new year is really all about – evaluating and changing our perspectives. When a new year begins, we perceive a new opportunity to shift our priorities and to be transformed. Many of us feel renewed hope as we perceive a leaving behind of old hurts and disappointments. Powerful things can happen with a change in perspective. New possibilities come into view. The roadblocks that seemed impassable can morph into speedbumps that simply need to be navigated with intention.

One perspective I invite all of us to consider, is placing our hope in the Eternal, the Divine, in the invitation God extends to us to be co-creators of our world. We often place our hope on specific outcomes or individual human beings. We think that once X has changed, it will all be ok. Too often this leads to deep disappointment – when our leaders and heroes turn out to not be perfect, when a solution to a problem comes slower than we want or in a different form that we expected. But the steadfast love and abundant grace of the Divine is unwavering.

Our worship for the season of Epiphany starting with January 10 and ending on February 14 will focus on the idea that God is holding our very lives. Holding us in tender care and mercy when life feels overwhelming and hard. Holding us in delight when we experience moments of celebration and joy. Whether our exclamations are more “O No!” or “Help!” or “Oh Yeah!” We know that God is right there with us.

Each week during the series we will have a moment to write prayer concerns on small pieces of paper. You will then be invited to place these prayers in a container (a bowl, box, basket, etc.) as a symbolic action of placing them in God’s hands, God’s care. I encourage you to choose a container in the next few days and set it, along with a few pieces of paper, somewhere near where you typically watch the worship service. You are more than welcome to write prayers throughout the week and place them in the container as well. At the end of the series, or as the container gets full, or whenever it feels right to you, what you do with the pieces of paper is up to you. You may choose to burn them, bury them, put them in recycling. The prayers have been heard and what you do with the paper will not change that.

This new year promises to be one of continued challenge as well as renewed hope, one of grief and loss as well as rejoicing, one filled with newness and change as well as the return to some familiar ways. And God will be with us through it all.

With you on the journey,



**How to watch Sunday worship**
The worship service is **broadcasted on the church Facebook page and the church's YouTube channel every Sunday at 10:00 am.**
To watch worship on Facebook, go to <https://www.facebook.com/uccbrainerd/live>
To watch on YouTube, go to <https://www.youtube.com/firstcongregationaluccbrainerd>
Live stream videos are saved and can be viewed at any time.

**Worship Bulletins will be available for download each week at** <http://tinyurl.com/UCCBrainerdBulletins>**.**The bulletins will be ready for download first thing Sunday morning. They are available in both Word and PDF formats and are labeled by date. You can download the document and print it at home or follow along on your screen.
We can also send a copy of the bulletin in the mail each week as we have been doing for some of our home-bound members. Just contact Terri in the office.

**Financial Help Available**
Your Church Council voted at the March Council Meeting to allow the Pastor's Discretionary Fund to be used to assist church members and others in the Brainerd area who are experiencing financial distress during this time. We received many generous donations! If you need assistance, please email, call, or text Pastor Leslie. Let her know what your situation is and how the church might be of help.

**You can now donate to the church online!**We are now accepting your offerings and donations using **PayPal.** You do not need to have a PayPal account to make an online donation with a credit card. To use PayPal, go to: <https://www.paypal.me/uccbrainerd>

**Calling all singers and musicians!**

**We want to include your voice and instruments during the worship services. If you are able to record yourself using a smartphone or other device, you don’t even have to leave the comfort of your home to add your talents to the services!**

**Please contact Diane Hauan if interested.**

**January Birthdays**

Lilja Behr January 1 Marcia Ferris January 13

Linda Downs January 5 Betty Alderman January 16

Macyn Harder McBroom January 7 Pam Patrick January 22

Deb Lundberg January 8 David Schaeffer January 26

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|  **First Congregational UCC News & Updates****January 31st Special Offering: Minnesota WARM Line**The Minnesota Warmline provides a peer-to-peer approach to mental health recovery, support and wellness. Calls are answered by our team of professionally trained Certified Peer Specialists, who have firsthand experience living with a mental health condition. The Warmline provides a safe, anonymous and confidential environment to connect with people who are here to listen…here to help. Learn more at <https://www.mnwitw.org/> Please send your donation to First Congregational UCC, 415 Juniper St. Brainerd, MN 56401. Make sure to note on your offering: WARM Line Special Offering. Thank you!**Reframing Christian Education**What is the purpose and function of the Christian Education (CE) Department of First Congregational UCC? Conversations among CE members (Mary, Austin, Lowell) and the Church Council are happening that indicate this may be the time to re-invent and possibly re-name Christian Education.**Why consider a change at this point?**First of all, Christianity in general has recently gotten a bad reputation due to a host of social and interpersonal problems perpetrated by church leaders. More and more people identify as spiritual, but not religious due to the perceived hypocrisy of Christian churches and leaders. At First Congregational, it seems that most members think CE has been about Sunday School and Adult Forum. With the COVID 19 pandemic crunching our normal lives, it may be that we won’t be able to offer either of these services in person for quite some time. If a more accurate description of our purpose is spiritual development, how might we creatively support present and prospective members on their spiritual journeys?The members of CE and the Church Council would like to invite you into a process for reinventing our purpose and function. The following are beginning questions to ponder and discuss.Do physical/recreational activities also have a spiritual dimension? Can we organize winter activities aimed primarily at youth (open to adult participation) and pay attention to their spiritual value?Can we design activities, either face to face or Zoom based, that are intergenerational by design? Will adults and youth participate? Are there creative ways for adults and youth to connect to learn about and support each other’s faith journeys? If we meet face to face, can that be done safely? How can we “do church” outside the church building? If you have questions, want to give feedback, or participate in this evolving process, contact any member of the church council, Pastor Leslie, or CE members Mary Harder c 218-851-3275, Austin Newgord c 218-316-9593, or Lowell Johnson c 218-820-5290. |

Nick Kalinoski January 31

**The Columbarium at First Congregational UCC, Brainerd**

 The Columbarium is located in the historic space that once was our church’s front entry way. How appropriate it is that our Columbarium now marks another entry way into a new life — where the Spirits of Love and Truth are always present!

 Our Columbarium is now complete. Should you wish to learn more about the purchase of a niche for your own cremains or for the ashes of a loved one, please call the church office at (218) 829-2528. Terri Chidester, Administrative Assistant, can send you a packet of materials via email or regular mail. The Memorial Committee has prepared the information packet, and it contains all the details you will need as you consider inurnment here at First Congregational UCC. Have any other questions? Contact Dawn Stattine at dawnstattine@gmail.com

**Online Gathering Opportunities!**

***\*All church Zoom Gatherings use this link:***
[**tinyurl.com/UCCBrainerdZoom**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6452350419?pwd=YkxGc3NhYjlraUJ6RHJod0J2LzZRdz09)**or**[**us02web.zoom.us/j/6452350419**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6452350419?pwd=YkxGc3NhYjlraUJ6RHJod0J2LzZRdz09)

By phone:  +1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID: 645 235 0419, password: 56401

**Process Film Group – 3rd Friday of each month from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.** **via Zoom.** Watch the movie on your own in advance and then join the discussion. **January 15th movie** “***The Prom”***
View the movie trailer at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJ0jBNa6JUQ><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJ0jBNa6JUQ>. Please watch the movie  (available on Netflix) before January 15 then join the discussion at 7 PM. Email Ellie Burkett at if you want to be added to the email list at prairiesmoke757@gmail.com

**Poetry Happy Hour – 4th Friday of each month at 4:30 pm via Zoom. January 22nd.** We are taking turns reading aloud (it is completely fine and wonderful if you simply wish to listen and enjoy) the collection:*Stone Gathering: A reader. Volume II, Issue I Sumer 2020*. Published locally in Brainerd. Copies are available at Crow Wing Co-op or The Crossing Arts Alliance or at <https://danielledufy.com/> (subscriptions only on the website). Stone Gathering: A Reader is a collection of poems, small fictions, and short essays–5 times each year: there are four quarterly issues and an annual special issue.

**The Friday Book Group** – **Each Friday morning at 10:30 am via Zoom.** We continue to read the book ***Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind****,* by Yuval Noah Harari.

**Sunday Morning Book Study Group – Each Sunday morning at 8:30 am via Zoom**. We are reading, ***Jesus for the Non-religious***by John Shelby Spong*.*

**"Wednesday Word" with Pastor Leslie on Facebook Live**: Tune in at **Noon on Wednesdays** for a short time of prayer, pause, and reflection via Live stream on Pastor Leslie's Facebook page. Click here to participate live or to view recorded videos at any time: <https://www.facebook.com/revleslieucc>

**Fellowship Hour via Zoom:** Our Fellowship Hour starts immediately after worship, hop on to Zoom and say hello! Stay as long or as briefly as you like.

**Wednesday Devotional at 9:30am:** Join us for a short devotional time from **9:30-9:55 am each Wednesday morning** as we reflect on the scripture for the upcoming Sunday.

**Prayer Circle via Zoom**: Join our prayer circle for a time of fellowship, conversation, and prayer from **10:00 am - 11:30 am every Wednesday**.

**UCCMN Board of Directors Announce Sale of Pilgrim Point Camp**

(This is an excerpt from the letter from the Board of Directors. To read the full letter, go to <https://tinyurl.com/campsale>)

Since our first full camping season in 1959, Pilgrim Point Camp has been a setting for ministry beloved by many in our Conference. Pilgrim Point Camp has also been a place of challenge for the Conference. Since at least 2009, the Conference has had numerable difficult conversations about the financial sustainability of Pilgrim Point for the longer term as facility needs at the camp multiplied and our Conference demographics changed. Following a long and prayerful discernment process, the Board of Directors voted to sell Pilgrim Point Camp in March 2019. That decision was affirmed by delegates at our Annual Meeting two months later.

On November 30, the Conference closed on the sale of Pilgrim Point Camp. The camp was sold to two different buyers in one joint transaction. Douglas County, where the camp is located, purchased 8.2 acres of the property and will develop that section into a public park that will incorporate the beach and Point area. A developer with long-standing family ties to Lake Ida purchased the remaining acres for residential lakeside lots under the name “Pilgrim Point Shores.” The total purchase price was $5.4 million.

Those dollars will seed the newly established Pilgrim Point Legacy Fund. Together with the insurance recovery money the Conference received after the camp’s dining hall fire in July 2018, this fund will support the strategic priorities of the Conference as determined by the Board of Directors, including (but not limited to) our ongoing outdoor ministry and for the critical work of racial justice.

**Highlights from the Council Meeting, December 16th, 2020 - 7:00 pm (via Zoom)**

~ These are highlights. If you would like a copy of the full minutes, please contact the church office ~

**Present:** Tracy Lyons, Joe Stattine, Barb Stokke, Deb Griffith, Mabel Schultz, Sue Hadland, Lowell Johnson, Claire Steen, Cassie Lyons, Admin Terri Chidester, and Rev. Leslie Moughty.

**Report Highlights:**

**Clerk**: Ken Nelson died Nov. 26, 2020. Brainerd Service TBD

**Pastor**: • Pastor Leslie was honored to be one of two people from the conference who participated in a group discussion with the UCC Philanthropy officer, the UCC General Minister, MN Conference President John Dorhauer and pastors from around the United States, to give feedback about the denomination’s resources and their usefulness to local churches.

**Stewardship:** Stewardship discussed possible fundraisers for the church. They hope to do something next year to celebrate coming back together and in appreciation for what the church has provided.

**Christian Ministry:** Decorating the church Friday, December 18, for the Pilgrimage through the Church on Christmas Eve from 4-6.

**Christian Education:** •The outside gathering scheduled for December 19 at the Karlgaard’s home is postponed until January due to COVID-19 restrictions. CE hopes to hold a multi-generational outdoor activity each month when possible. •CE has been re-examining the role of Christian Education in our church. The article “Reframing Christian Education

**COVID-19 Task Force:** The COVID-19 Task Force will meet at 10 a.m. Saturday, December 19.

**Members at Large:** Pastor Leslie and Cassie Lyons will discuss setting up a youth Zoom call.

**New Business:**

1. Council passed a motion to accept the following calendar of 2021 Fourth Sunday Special Offerings: January – the Warmline, February – the Food Shelf, March – One Great Hour of Sharing, and April – Habitat Faith Build. (Motion Deb G. Second Mabel)
2. Council agreed that the Annual Budget Meeting went well, and the budget recap sheet was easier to understand. Participants asked good questions, raised important concerns, and offered possible solutions.

**Next Regular Council Meeting:** January 20, 2021 7:00 pm via Zoom

**Brainerd Lakes Area Information**

**~ Opportunities to Know and Share God’s Love ~**

**The Wild & Scenic Film Festival**

A collection of films which speak to the environmental concerns and celebrations of our planet, is coming virtually to Brainerd as a Northland Arboretum fundraiser on **Saturday, January 9. Virtual lobby doors open at 6:30 and the shows begin at 7 p.m.** Tickets are only $5 and may be reserved at [northlandarb.org](http://northlandarb.org/). Featured will be a series of 10 films which were chosen from the annual festival held in Nevada City, Calif. The festival is a natural extension of the Northland Arboretum’s mission of education, recreation and conservation work to inspire people to act on behalf of the environment.  The event is sponsored by Lakeland Public Television, Hubbard Radio, R&J Broadcasting and the Brainerd Dispatch.

Viewers will be invited to look inward and rediscover their connection with and responsibility to the natural world.  They will be taken to the Arctic Coast, Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda, Acadia National Park in Maine and the stunning Oregon Coast. They’ll hike with an autistic person through 900 miles of the Great Smoky Mountains and see the Sacramento River as a place of surprising beauty, home to otter, eagle and osprey and endangered salmon.  Viewers will also see the efforts of East Detroit urban beekeepers, follow a man with a traumatic brain injury making Lake Tahoe a better place and see parents adventuring with a two-year-old hoping to inspire the next generation to care about wild places.

Tickets can be purchased on the Northland Arboretum website or by following this link: <https://qudio.com/event/NorthlandTrees>

**Weaving Community Loom at the Arboretum**

The Lakes Area Guys Network (LAGN) is working on Weaving Community, a project funded by a grant from the Five Wings Arts Council. Looms of various sizes are being built and distributed to different sites in the community.
**We have installed the first outdoor loom at the Northland Arboretum**, 14250 Conservation Dr in Baxter. **Check it out!**The loom is next to the Secret Garden, east and south from the parking lot. To find it, go east from the parking lot at the Arb building, through the gate for about 50 yards until you reach a T. Go right for another 30-40 yards and you will see it on your right. Cars can be driven to the loom site for folks not able to walk.
The purpose of the loom is for people to build relationships by having fun participating in weaving on the loom. Loom weavings can be constructed and de-constructed at participants choice. Weaving materials are provided, but additional materials are welcome also.
Please check out and enjoy the first of our Weaving Community looms. If your group would be interested obtaining one of the smaller looms, or using one at a special event, contact Lowell Johnson for arrangements at johnsonlowells@gmail.com or 218-820-5290.

**Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen**

We have teamed up with **Operation Sandwich** to put together bags of food for the guests at the Soup Kitchen. Each Saturday, anyone in need of meals can come to the soup kitchen from noon-12:30 and receive two to-go meals. We are doing this in addition to the Wednesday night food distribution.
Wednesdays: 5:30-6:00 pm Come and get a warm meal and bags of food.
Saturdays: Noon-12:30 pm Come and get two to-go meals to help you through the weekend.
Please check out our website for more information: <https://www.sharingbread.com/mealtimes>

If you can't make it during that time, contact Operation Sandwich 218-829-2619 or Bridges of Hope at 218-297-4223 to make other arrangements.

**Want to help?** We would love for you to partner with us in helping get food out to the people in our community. We are welcoming any non-perishable (non-expired) food items. These items can be dropped off at the soup kitchen (218-829-4203), Operation Sandwich (Bethlehem Lutheran) or Bridges of Hope. If you would like to make a monetary donation, to help cover the cost for these bags of food, you can go to these places to make a donation:
[www.sharingbread.com](https://uccbrainerd.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7358d6fe5c26410d29dfb93f0&id=63df5b7723&e=5e2c6f93e6) or [www.bridgesofhopemn.org/donate](https://uccbrainerd.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7358d6fe5c26410d29dfb93f0&id=008c32cb3f&e=5e2c6f93e6)

(Please indicate that you would like your donation to go to Operation Sandwich)

**Habitat for Humanity Update!**

Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity has been awarded a Faith Build for 2021!  This will be our first build next year as we partner with the Svoboda family to build their 5-bedroom 2-bath home on 28th Street in Brainerd.
 Travis and Mary Svoboda know how to get by.  They are raising 6 children including 4 adopted children in a 2-bedroom apartment. They’ve managed with an unsafe and unhealthy basement and have barely managed to stay ahead with their $980 rent. We will share fundraising and volunteering opportunities in the near future.
 For now, how can you help?  **PRAY!**  As we prepare for our 2021 Faith Build, would you be willing to pick a day (or several days) in the coming months to offer a prayer for the Svoboda family, for Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity, and for the success of our Faith Build?

God bless, **Cathy Wells,**Phone: 218.828.8517 [www.lakesareahabitat.org](http://www.lakesareahabitat.org/)

**Coping During COVID-19 Support Group**

**Daily at 9am and 8pm Via Zoom ID: 449 846 8853.**

We are all having stress reactions to varying degrees – irritability, forgetfulness, worry, difficulty getting things done, poor sleep…Gain valuable insight from the safety of your own home that you may find helpful from seasoned mental health professionals. We are building a sense of community where we share our experience, strength, hope and needs. Please join us and invite others to log on

Additional FREE ONLINE RESOURCES:

Tools 2 Thrive <https://www/mhanational.org/mental-health-month>

Coping with COVID <https://mn.gov/dhs>

**Crisis Services** - All are available 24-hours (unless noted), FREE and confidential

**Crisis Line & Referral Service:** 218-828-4357, 218-828-HELP or 1-800-462-5525

**CRISIS:** from cell phone call CRISIS (274747)

**Crisis Nursery-Crow Wing County:** 218-692-2859

**Crisis Text Line:** Text “MN” or HopeLine” to 741741

**Bridges of Hope:** 218-825-4357 or 1-800-462-7682

**Minnesota 1st Call for Help:** 211

**Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline:** 833-600-2670

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255

**Poison Control Center:** 1-800-222-1222

**Suicide & Mental Illness:** 1-800-462-5525

**Teen Crisis Line***:* 310-855-4673

**The Trevor Project (LGBTQ Crisis & Suicide Hotline – Youth under 25):** 866-488-7386

**Trans Lifeline:** 877-565-8860

**Veteran’s Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-8255 – press 1

**WARMLINE:** Speak with peers who are there to listen and support adults experiencing emotional distress. 1-844-739-6369 from 5:00pm -7:00am.

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| Church Calendar January 2021 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  | Office Closed | Office Closed  | Office Closed  | Office Closed  | **New Year’s Day** 1 10:30 Book Grp - **V***OFFICE CLOSED*  | 2*Pastor Leslie back from vacation* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8:30 Book Study - **V**  3 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y**10am Worship & Communion **V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V**  |  44pm Girl Scouts-#373- **Y**6pm Tai Chi - **Y** 7pm BACP Mtg - **Y** |  52pm Emotions Anon- **Y?**5:30 Overeaters Anon-**Y?** |  9:30 Devotional & 6 10am Prayer Circle**-V** 11:30 Memorial Mtg - **V**Noon Wed. Word - **V** 7pm AA Common- **Y** |  7  |  810:30 Book Grp - **V** |  9 |
| 8:30 Book Study-**V**  10 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y**10am Worship-**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V** | 11 |  122pm Emotions Anon- **Y?**5:30 Overeaters Anon- **Y?** | 9:30 Devotional & 13 10am Prayer Circle -**V**12pm Wed. Word - **V** 12pm Memorial Mtg- **V**7pm AA Common- **Y**  |  148:30 Foundation Mtg- **V**3:00 Trustees Mtg- **V***No Stewardship Mtg*4:00 Girl Scouts #43-**?**6:30 BLUE (Brnd Lakers United for Envrnt.)-**Y**  |  1510:30 Book Grp - **V** 7pm Process Film Group-**V**  |  16 |
| 8:30 Book Study-**V**  17 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship & Special Offering -**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V**  |  184pm Girl Scouts-#373- **Y** |  192pm Emotions Anon- **Y?**5:30 Overeaters Anon- **Y?**  | 9:30 Devotional & 2010am Prayer Circle- **V**12pm Wed. Word - **V** 7pm AA Common- **Y**7pm Council Mtg – **V** |  21 7pm AA Dist. - **V** |  2210:30 Book Grp - **V** 4:30pm Poetry Happy Hour- **V** |  23 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8:30 Book Study**-V** 24 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship -**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V****Newsletter Deadline**  |  255:30 AAUW - **C** |  262pm Emotions Anon- **Y?**5 pm Le Mesa – **V**5:30 Overeaters Anon- **Y?**  |  279:30 Devotional &10am Prayer Circle- **V**Noon Wed. Word - **V** 7pm AA Common- **Y** |  28  |  2910:30 Book Grp - **V**  |  30 |
| 8:30 Book Study**-V** 31 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship -**V Online***Special Offering –* *WARMLine*11am Fellowship Hour-**V** |  |   |  |   |  | **V** – Zoom or Specified Online**C** – Cancelled**Y** – Meeting held? – Unknown/no updates |