Friendship News, February 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 phone if preferred) 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: *Through the Wilderness***

It’s not easy to get physically lost these days - not compared to the generations before us who didn’t have the use of GPS, maps in our phones, paved roads with street signs, and very little unexplored territory. When Moses set out from Egypt, there were no sidewalks or highways, no AAA to call for roadside assistance. Making the journey from Egypt to Canaan meant leaving the familiar and predictable and entering something unknown, mysterious, dangerous. In the Biblical stories about wilderness journeys and in our own stories, we rarely enter wilderness times voluntarily. The Hebrew people were fleeing slavery. Forced into back-breaking work and abuse under Pharaoh. Through Moses, God invites the people to take the courageous step to leave the only life they had known and make the journey toward liberation. It wasn’t much of a choice. Stay in Egypt and continue to suffer or leave with the hope of something better for themselves and the generations to follow.

The last 11 months have been a prolonged wilderness time for all of us in many different ways. We have had to change so much about our daily lives as we continue to navigate living through a global pandemic. We witnessed (and continuing to experience) political unrest in this country like none of us have ever seen before. Many of us have experienced job loss, the loss of family members and friends, and other losses we may not fully understand until we come out the other side. We did not choose to enter this wilderness time, and yet here we are.

As people of faith on a journey through a wilderness time, we find ourselves in good company among our ancestors of faith who have also been on wilderness journeys. A common theme we see in almost every wilderness experience, is that the journey changes us. God can use this time to transform us in ways that may not be possible if we had stayed comfortable in our status quo.

As we journey through the season of Lent this year, let us embrace this wilderness time. May we listen deeply with open minds and open hearts to the ways in which God might be working to transform us as individuals, as a community, as a nation, and as a world.

With you on the journey,



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**Make the most of your Lenten journey. Put these dates on your calendar and read the This Week email for more information.**

* **Wednesday February 17 at 6:00 pm – Ash Wednesday Service on Facebook & YouTube**
* **Thursdays Feb. 18 - April 8 at 6:00 pm - *“The Ridiculous Journey: Following a Nobody from Nowhere”* Join Pastor Leslie for an engaging study and discussion about why we might say yes to Jesus’ invitation to “Come, follow me.” The series includes videos featuring Brene Brown, Rachel Held Evans, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Richard Rohr, and more.**
* **Sundays at 10:00 am – Worship live on Facebook and YouTube**
* **Sunday April 4 at 10:00 am – Easter Worship Live on Facebook and YouTube**

**Additional events may be added for Holy Week, so look for updates in the March Newsletter.**

**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 are 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 last year 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.**

**February Birthdays**

Yvonne Leiser February 2

Annie Grabowski February 7

Roger Best February 10

Dorothy Blau February 11

Roger Maas February 11

Georgia Harris February 15

Mary Reardon February 17

Ann Turnbull February 18

Colleen LeBlanc February 24

Autumn Caldwell February 27

Ken Moughty February 28

Grace Johnson February 29

**Birthday Parade**

Jolene Hojem would like to invite everyone to help celebrate Autumn’s birthday with a car parade past Autumn’s apartment. Decorate your car and join us!

**Meet at the Best Buy parking lot at 1:00 pm on Saturday, February 27.**

**Youth and Adult Snowshoeing**

Join us at 2 PM on Saturday February 13th for Snowshoeing at the Northland Arboretum. Bring snowshoes if you have them. If you don't, Mary Harder will bring extras. Dress for the weather. We will snowshoe the Arb trails in groups of 3 or less families, as per the Governors guidelines. Snacks and cocoa provided by the Cooking Group at the end of the walk. Please RSVP your numbers of youth and adults to the church office by Thursday, February 11th.

**Lent Family Toolkit Available Starting February 10**

During the season of Lent, the Minnesota Conference is excited to offer a new Family Connection Toolkit to nurture faith formation and connection at home. The toolkit will be available electronically in weekly installments, starting February 10th. Each one will include a thoughtfully focused and curated collection of video reflections, spiritual practices, readings, creative/art activities, games, community service projects, justice, and advocacy opportunities, and more. Each Wednesday afternoon, we will upload the toolkit to our website on the page [Youth & Faith Formation Events – United Church of Christ Minnesota Conference (uccmn.org)](https://www.uccmn.org/uccmn-events/youth-faith-formation-events/). If you would like to receive a direct email each week, please email Sandy Kellen at info@uccmn.org.

*Each week of Lent will include:*

**Feb. 10 -** Ash Wednesday-Practicing Ritual (Ash Wednesday is Feb. 17)

**Feb. 17** - Practicing Emptiness

**Feb. 24** - Practicing Boldness

**March 3** - Practicing Belovedness

**March 10 -** Practicing Community

**March 17-** Practicing Repentance

**March 24 -** Holy Week- Practicing Revolution and Self-giving Love

**March 31-** Easter- Practicing Resurrection

*This curriculum and interactive content are being developed in collaboration with Danger Boat Productions (*[*https://dangerboat.net/*](https://dangerboat.net/)*), Doing Good Together (*[*https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/*](https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/)*), the Ministry Lab (*[*https://theministrylab.org/*](https://theministrylab.org/)*) and pastors in the MN Conference: Leslie Moughty (Brainerd), Tony Romaine (Little Falls), Sara Morse (Hazel Park), Vanessa Bradby (Savage), Eli’jah Carroll (Mayflower), Amy Wick-Moore (New Brighton), Robin Raudabaugh (Elk River), and Rick King (Falcon Heights.)*

**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. **February 19th** movie “**KUESSIPAN*”***
View the movie trailer on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knIvMiKfvG4>

Please watch the movie (available on Netflix, YouTube, Amazon or Vudu) before February 19th 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. February 26th.** 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**/](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, ***“God and Human Suffering”***by Douglas John Hall.

**"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**.

**Information for Groups who meet at First Congregational**

**Please** [**click here**](https://mcusercontent.com/7358d6fe5c26410d29dfb93f0/files/5169e6ed-6815-4cf1-9bf1-0a337c193cbf/2021_Update_Bldg_Use_to_groups_Letter.docx) **to read our expectations for groups meeting in our building at this time. (No changes have been made since last month.**

****Join in **The Outdoor Ministry Creation Justice** series of four events held via Zoom. Together we will consider our sacred connections to the lands, waters, and air, and how we might respond to the global environmental crisis. The events are free and open to all.

 **How Then Shall We Live?**

**Putting Faith Values into Earth Practice**
February 18, 7:00- 8:30 pm

[**REGISTER**](https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07ehgshw18c3815a0a&oseq=&c=&ch=)

[**READ FULL DETAILS ABOUT THE SERIES**](https://www.uccmn.org/ministries/outdoor/)**: https://www.uccmn.org/ministries/outdoor/**

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**UCC General Synod Online This Year**

The UCC General Synod (the big meeting of the entire denomination) will be online-only this year. A Special Virtual General Synod 33 July 11-18, 2021. Registration opens on February 1st, 2021. One of the blessings of an online Synod is that more people will be able to attend! No travel or hotel costs, no need to be away from home for multiple days. Consider participating this year. Updates will continue to be made on the General Synod Website here: http://www.generalsynod.org

**Highlights from the Council Meeting, January 20th, 2021 - 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, Sue Hadland, Lowell Johnson, Cassie Lyons, Kelly Keller-Heikkila, Admin Terri Chidester, and Rev. Leslie Moughty.

**Report Highlights**

**Pastor:** •Organized and co-created Christmas Eve in-person pilgrimage experience (Thank you Christian Ministry and Dan Hegstad!) •Crafted and pre-recorded Christmas Eve worship service. •Compiled and edited worship service for the Sunday after Christmas to take the place of Live worship while I was on vacation. •Began continuing ed preaching class through the Damascus Project and Backstory Preaching, which consisted of 5 meetings the first week and continues to meet every Tuesday until February 16. •Recorded Ash Wednesday video for Minnesota Conference Lent Family Toolkit. • THANK YOU to everyone who donated something extra at the end of the year, including a gift of $10,000 from one of our members!

**Financials:** The final 2020 financial report shows a year-end deficit of $1,600. Careful spending, members’ financial support and year-end gifts to the church helped to reduce the initial budget shortfall.

**Trustees:** Trustees reported both boilers were off line and the temperature in the church had dropped to 41˚ in some areas. Climate Control has corrected the problems and temperatures are rising. The church’s insurance company is sending a monitoring system that can be used in addition to the present system. Trustees are focusing on the two remaining stained-glass window projects: venting the south sanctuary window and re-leading parts of the interior north window. Trustees have approached the Memorial committee for funds to complete these projects. Trustees continue to investigate the best way to repair the alley staircase and parsonage back entry.

**Christian Ministry:** CM decorated and undecorated the church for Christmas, including setting up for the Christmas Eve Pilgrimage. Before we return to in-person gatherings (and when it is safe to do so), CM proposed that all committee and Council members gather to clean out the offices and storage areas behind the altar and perhaps plan a grand re-opening.

**Christian Education**: To ensure the safety of winter activities, such as snowshoeing, CE asked for clarification of the latest COVID guidelines. It was determined that outside activities would be safe if participants wear masks and remain 6 feet apart. All congregants are invited to participate in Faith Journey Story Circles scheduled for 5:30 Thursday, January 21, and 2:00 Saturday, January 23.

**COVID-19 Task Force:** No plans at this point for in-person worship to resume. The number of COVID cases and the progress of vaccinations will determine when in-person services are possible.

**New Business:**

1. Council passed a motion to have a Yvonne Leiser review the church’s finances of the past three years. Yvonne has offered to do this at no charge!
2. The Foundation Board is soliciting requests for funding. The applications are due March 15.

**Next Regular Council Meeting:** February 17, 2021 7:00 pm via Zoom

**Brainerd Lakes Area Information**

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

**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 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)

**Special Offering Food Shelf – February 28th**

In the wake of COVID-19 people are facing poverty. Your generosity helps provide the essential gifts of food, shelter, and hope to those hurting right here in your community.Please send your donation to First Congregational UCC, 415 Juniper St. Brainerd, MN 56401. Make sure to note on your offering: ***Food Shelf Special Offering***. Thank you!

**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. 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 February 2021 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  | Office Closed  | Office Closed  | Office Closed  |  Office Closed  |  Office Closed  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  14pm Girl Scouts-#373- **Y**6pm Tai Chi - **Y** 7pm BACP Mtg - **V** |  22pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon-**Y** |  39:30am Devotions & 10am Prayer Circle**-V** Noon Wed. Word - **V** 7pm AA Common- **Y** |  4  |  510:30am Book Grp - **V** |  6 |
| 8:30 Book Study-**V**  7 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y**10am Worship & Communion-**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V** |  8 |  92pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon- **Y** |  109:30am Devotions & 10am Prayer Circle -**V**Noon Wed. Word - **V** 12pm Memorial Mtg- **V**7pm AA Common- **Y**  |  113pm Trustees Mtg- **V**4pm Girl Scouts #43-**?**5:30pm Stewardship Mtg- **V**6:30 BLUE (Brnd Lakers United for Envrnt.)-**Y**  |  1210:30am Book Grp - **V** |  132pm CE Youth & Adult Snowshoe at the ARB |
| 8:30 Book Study-**V**  14 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship-**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V**  |  154pm Girl Scouts-#373- **Y** |  162pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon- **Y**  |  179:30am Devotions &10am Prayer Circle- **V**Noon Wed. Word - **V** 6pm Ash Wed – **V Online**7pm AA Common- **Y**7pm Council Mtg – **V** |  18 6pm Lent Study– **V**7pm AA Dist. - **V** |  1910:30am Book Grp - **V**7pm Process Film Group-**V** |  20 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8:30 Book Study**-V** 21 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship -**V Online**11am Fellowship Hour-**V*****Newsletter Deadline***  |  225:30 AAUW - **V** |  232pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5pm Le Mesa – **V?**5:30pm Overeaters Anon- **Y**  |  249:30am Devotions &10am Prayer Circle- **V**Noon Wed. Word - **V** 7pm AA Common- **Y** |  256pm Lent Study – **V**   |  2610:30am Book Grp - **V**4:30pm Poetry Happy Hour- **V** |  271pm Birthday Parade at Best Buy Parking Lot for Autumn Caldwell |
| 8:30 Book Study**-V** 28 9am Brainerd Friends- **Y** 10am Worship -**V Online*****Special Offering*** *–* *Food Shelf*11am Fellowship Hour-**V** |  |   |  |   |  | **V** – Zoom or Specified Online**C** – Cancelled**Y** – Meeting held? – Unknown/no updates |