



Friendship News, July 2024

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

The Church Office Hours: Wednesdays – Fridays from 10:00am – 2:00pm

Office phone 218-829-2528

Office E-mail uccbrainerd@gmail.com

Pastor T. Michael's E-mail: tmichaelrock@gmail.com Website: www.uccbrainerdmn.org

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

Pastor's Pen

"There's No Place Like Home"

Exploring new places and interacting with people as I travel is one of my favorite things to do. So those who know me well were not surprised when my 3-month renewal time included 8 destinations including 3 cities in Spain totaling more than 16,000 miles. I journeyed with God around a labyrinth in New Mexico, marveled at canyons, mountains, rivers and oceans, created art, danced like no one was watching, shared high tea, ate delicious food, and visited multiple art museums including a massive outdoor sculpture park called Storm King, and the Picasso Museum in Barcelona. I am extremely grateful that I also had the opportunity to visit my dad's grave for the first time since he was laid to rest in Snohomish, Washington in 2016. It was something I didn't realize my spirit needed until I was in the area visiting my dear friend, Carey. It felt as if God whispered in my ear to go, so I did. The experience was healing and powerful.



During my three months away, I found myself thinking about how I wanted to share my experiences with all of you when I returned to Brainerd. I did my best to unplug and be fully present in each moment, but I also couldn't keep from wondering how the renewal time was going back at church. Were you enjoying the new practice of testimony in worship? Did you learn a lot about yourselves and each other through the Meyers-Briggs and the Spiritual Gifts sessions? What experiences were shaping you as individuals and as a community?

When I returned to worship on June 9th, I was so excited to see everyone who came to church! I have enjoyed hearing the anecdotes of your renewal time and sharing my own. We will certainly continue to share and integrate the experiences and learning as we continue in co-ministry together. My sermons and future newsletter articles will certainly include a few stories from my travels and I will likely offer an adult forum for those who want to hear more.

I want to say a BIG THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this time possible - Sue Hadland, Kay Cox, Colleen LeBlanc, Joe Stattine, Charlotte Goedsche, Steve Newcom, Deb Griffith, Dan Hegstad, Marcia Ferris, Mary Reardon, and Rev. T. Michael Rock as well as all of the lay leaders and volunteers who stepped into new or additional responsibilities. Thank you!

Rev. Jessie Moughtin

First Congregational UCC News & Updates

“First Congregational UCC is a welcoming, inclusive, and progressive community committed to promoting social justice, spiritual growth, and love for all people. We reject discrimination and advocate for equality and dignity for marginalized communities. Through worship, education, and service, we work to make a positive impact on the world and invite all individuals to join us in this journey of faith and service.”

Pastor Leslie’s Workday Schedule

>> Sunday through Thursday (Days off are Friday and Saturday) <<

Drop-in Hours*

Wednesdays 11:00 am – 1:00 pm Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00 pm

**Drop-in hours are times set aside for “drop-in” conversations, much like a professor’s office hours. Pastor Leslie is typically working at the church the rest of the week, but it is possible that she may be in meetings, at a community event, or working off-site.*

Everyone is encouraged to make an appointment if the above times are not convenient. You can go to www.calendly.com/pastorleslieucc and select a day and time that works for you, or you can email Pastor Leslie at pastorleslieucc@gmail.com or call/text at 218-656-0096.

Pastor Leslie will be out of the office Monday, July 15th through Sunday, July 21st.



**Need some fur-therapy?
Daisy is on duty!**

Daisy will be joining Pastor Leslie during office hours on most **THURSDAYS** from 2:00 – 4:00pm.

If you have allergies or other concerns, please contact Pastor Leslie to arrange for a dog-free meeting.



Church Office Hours

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Admin. Asst. Terri Chidester will be on vacation:
Wednesday July 10th through Friday July 12th.

The office is closed Thursday, 11th & Friday 12th.
Leave a voice message to receive a returned call: 218-829-2528

Announcements & Reminders



New Church Council & Committee Members!

Assistant Moderator - Kim Slipy

Clerk - Georgia Harris

Treasurer - Cynthia Janes

Member-At-Large - Joy Persall

Christian Ministry - Ellie Burkett

Foundation - Colleen LeBlanc &
Pam Wible (July of 2023)

Church Leadership

Get Involved, Give Back, Grow Connections – Volunteer at Church!

***Council Member-At-Large:** Attend council meetings, act as a liaison for church members and council, help with nominations, spokesperson for historically underrepresented groups (HUGS).

There are many other opportunities for you to share your talents!

Committees needing fresh faces and leadership:

*Christian Education *Stewardship *Music *Arts *Trustees

Contact Mary Reardon -Moderator with your nominations

Stay Connected

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/uccbainerd/live>

****Live stream videos are saved and can be viewed at any time. All memorials, weddings and 12th Night Concert are on our church Facebook page.**

How to stay connected with First Congregational friends and members: Join the private group for our Facebook Connections Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/uccbainerd>
Follow Pastor Leslie on her blog during Renewal: renewal24.weebly.com.

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.

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/uccbainerd>

Highlights from the Council Meeting, June 20, 2024

Thursday, 4:30 pm (In-person and Zoom)

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

Member present in person: Rev. Leslie Moughty-Pastor, Cynthia Janes-Treasurer, Kimberly Slipy-Asst. Moderator, Marcia Ferris-Stewardship, Rev. Dr. Steve Newcom-Pastor of Justice Ministries, Kay Cox-Member at Large, Dan Hegstad, Lowell Johnson

Members present via Zoom: Deb Griffith-Trustees, Mary Readon-Moderator, Terri Chidester-Admin. Asst., Joy Persall-Member-at-large

Pastor Leslie opened with prayer.

The meeting was called to order and moderated by Kim Slipy

Cynthia, as the treasurer, would like expense detail for review. Income from building use has increased. To continue that trend, we can invite organizations and other people to use the building. The church's insurance is now paid quarterly.

The 2024 Annual Meeting received positive feedback.

The church picnic is scheduled for Saturday, July 6th.

Pastor Leslie and Admin. Asst. Terri have created a shared folder on Goggle Drive to upload all of the material from the Council's binders. Terri and Pastor Leslie will have editing privilege for updating and everyone else will have viewing privilege, A link will be sent out. There will be two binders-one for the office and one for the meeting room.

There will be no need to discuss reports fully. Updates can be given if the information wasn't included in the report.

The Door Project is to represent diverse skin tones of people. This is a steppingstone to improve diversity toward people of color. The Rainbow doors will come back in September prior to Pride in the Park.

The church re-naming to be on July's agenda.

Summer fundraising to be discussed at July's meeting.

Money left to the church by Shirley McConnell Utzman, was given on the condition that funds would be distributed at the discretion of the Pastor. Pastor Leslie designated the money as a Justic Fund. Steve Newcom will request money from this fund to support the Faith in Public Life event in October.

The 12th night will be held 1/5/2025. It was discussed splitting the offering with some of the money being used to help repair the organ.

Sound and Video—there may need to be a completely dedicated line/network for the sound system and video to avoid the problem the church experienced going without streaming for two past services.

Kay Cox attended a Ready Zone meeting. If an act of violence-such as an active shooter enters the church-don't stay in place; look for objections to throw; have a safe place designated to go.

The following resolution of acknowledgement for Alvin Velsvaag was offered by Dan Hegstad and seconded by Steve Newcom and passed unanimously; "We recognize your pain, and we hear you as best we are able. We would like you to know that we want you to stay, and we love you."

It was motioned and passed to change the by-laws to allow non-voting members to serve as Members-at-large. Georgia-Clerk will update bi-laws and present them at July Council Meeting.

Clerk,
Georgia Harris

Next Regular Council Meeting: *Thursday, July 18th, 2024, 4:30 pm*
in-person and via Zoom tinyurl.com/uccbrainerdzoom

July Birthdays

Charles Widmark	July 12	Chris Yager	July 23
Steve Newcom	July 17	Stephen Crum	July 26
Carol Crust	July 23	Roger Grussing	July 30



Adult Forum



Adult Forum will resume in the Fall.
Contact Lowell Johnson if you have an idea for a presentation.
johnsonlowells@gmail.com

Saturday, July 6th

12:00 Noon to 4:00 pm



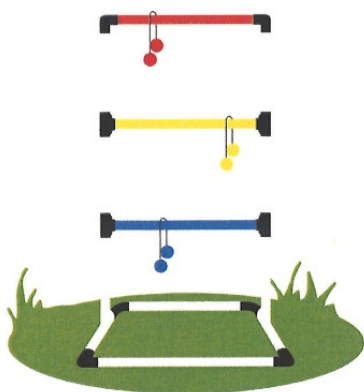
POTLUCK



**Bring a salad
and/or dessert to
share.**

**Meat & Vegetarian
Black Bean Burger
provided!**

**First Congregational UCC
415 Juniper St. Brainerd**



**Join us for games on
the church lawn &
bring your favorite
game to share!**

****Bring your
folding/lawn chair!***





W.I.S.E

*Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged
in the Mental Health of the community and the wider world*

First Congregational UCC Brainerd has devoted time the past 12 months learning about mental health issues to become a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged around mental health) Congregation registered with the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network.

After a year of study and raising awareness around mental health, our church members voted at the June 2024 Annual Meeting to reconfirm our WISE Covenant which will allow us to be designated as a WISE Congregation in the United Church of Christ. Stay tuned for upcoming study date

UCC Women's Coffee

Saturday, July 13th 9:30 am

UCC Brainerd in Fellowship Hall

Marcia Ferris is hosting



UCC Women's Luncheon

Thursday, July 25th 11:30 am



Location: **Baxter Bar & Grill**
@ Arrowwood, The Lodge.

*The topic of the day:
"Share a humorous story."*

Everyone is welcome - no reservations are required for either gathering.

UCC Men's Lunch

Not Organized - No Agenda - Join us!



Each Wednesday of the Month @ 11:45 am

Location: Wings Café - Brainerd Airport

Spiritual Drum Circle

to honor

Jim Newgord and Lance James



*Both Lance and Jim were avid drummers.
They will be with us in spirit!*

Friday, July 12th 6:30 pm

First Congregational United Church of Christ

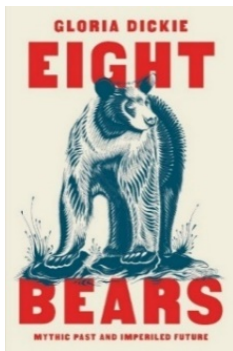
5th & Juniper, Brainerd

All are welcome.

Bring a snack to share and beverage of your choice.

*You may bring your drum or other
percussive device but we have
many drums, rattles, tambourines
and such.*





Friday Book Group

We meet each Friday morning at 10:30 am via zoom.

Church Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/uccbrainerdzoom>

We are reading the non-fiction book about animals, "***Eight Bears: Mythic Past and Imperiled Future***", by Gloria Dickie.

In ***Eight Bears***, journalist Gloria Dickie embarks on a globe-trotting journey to explore each bear's story, whisking readers from the cloud forests of the Andes to the ice floes of the Arctic; from the jungles of India to the backwoods of the Rocky Mountain West.

Weaving together ecology, history, mythology, and a captivating account of her travels and observations, Dickie offers a closer look at our volatile relationship with these magnificent mammals. Engrossing and deeply reported, *Eight Bears* delivers a clear warning for what we risk losing if we don't learn to live alongside the animals that have shaped our cultures, geographies, and stories. Contact Pat Scott for more information.

UCC Care Team

For anyone who wishes to join in on making calls or visits, the Care Team meets every month on the first **Thursday at 10:00 am**. The next meeting is **Thursday, April 4th**. *If you know of anyone who would enjoy a call from the care team, please contact one of our Care Team; Barb Hoeft, Jack and Kay Kraywinkle, Pat Scott, Chris Yager, Deb Griffith, Joey Halvorson (text or email only), Carla Benjamin and Pastor Leslie.*



Garden Gleaning

A Biblical (and environmentally) inspired activity

This is how it works: Gardeners and plant people bring in their "gleanings" to share. This ranges from rhubarb and vegetable plants in the spring to daffodil bulbs in the fall. A table, poster and donation basket are in Narthex entrance. Enjoy the fruits of our labors! It's RHUBARB

time! All are welcome to help themselves – no charge! All monetary donations are given to the Food Shelf.

Historical note: Begun here circa 1988 when our church began Hunger Action outreach, Central America updates and global food connections.

Note: Using our resources, recycling, re-purposing, and not wasting our food are all acts of Creation Care and Justice. Garden Gleaning is an Easy-Peasy way to put words into action.

H.U.G.S.

Hosts, Ushers, Greeters, Scripture-readers

Sunday morning greeters/ushers and coffee hosts play an important part in making our church a warm and welcoming place for all. Signup below for your first Sunday as the face of the church!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E48A9A823A5FFC07-hugs/16034811>



First Congregational Food Shelf Collection



Our church continues to collect non-perishable food items for the Salvation Army Food Shelf. Please consider bringing items and donating. There are two collection boxes: one in the parking lot entry hallway, the other in the Narthex. Brian Twamley picks up and delivers the food. **Thank you!**

Special Offering Sunday Worship July 28

Salvation Army FOOD SHELF

This month we have an opportunity to help as we give our Fourth Sunday Special Offering to the Salvation Army Food Shelf. The food shelf offers a wide range of groceries, allowing individuals and families in need to stretch their budgets. Food boxes may include shelf-stable pantry items, breads, cereals, meat and other household necessities. On occasion, fresh produce is also made available.



You may also send a money donation to the church; First Congregational UCC 415 Juniper St. Brainerd, MN 56401. Or for your convenience use our Paypal account at: [paypal.me/uccbrainerd](https://www.paypal.com/merchot/xr?from=paypal-me&to=uccbrainerd) Make sure to write in memo "Food Shelf".

Cooking for Everyone



Cooking for Everyone is a loosely knit group of church folks who like to cook and eat good food, and occasionally do fundraisers for the church. If you would like to be included on the email list, contact Lowell Johnson at johnsonlowells@gmail.com

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!

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 and a packet of materials will be sent you 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

Coming Soon! New Doors Painted for Church Lawn



Two day painting project.

Tim & Marcia started and final crew of Marcia, Tracy, Jack and Mark finished up.

Brainerd Lakes Area Information
~ Opportunities to Know and Share God's Love ~

Micah Group Celebration: What Does the Lord Require?

Food-Fellowship-Singing-Inspiration

July 15, 2024 – 6:00–8:00pm Lord of Life Lutheran Church

The Rev. Dr. Steven Newcom, Messenger



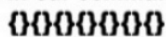
Pastor Newcom will reflect on the profound and timeless wisdom of Micah 6:8, which calls us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. How does this ancient call speak to our modern time, and what is required of us today? By exploring this powerful scripture, we uncover enduring relevance and transformative potential for our lives today. The prophet Micah envisioned a society rooted in justice, compassion, and humility—values that resound loudly in today's world of division and polarization. Micah was a common citizen from a small village in the foothills southwest of Jerusalem, yet his prophetic words echo through the centuries. Grounded in our knowledge of what is good, how can we embrace this call to justice, mercy, and humility and come together to transform our communities?

Pastor Newcom serves as volunteer Pastor of Justice Ministries, First Congregational United Church of Christ, and facilitates Lakes Area Justice Table. Before retirement he was Founding Director of Kaleo Center for Faith, Justice, & Social Transformation, housed at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. The Center was launched in 2010 to advance social transformation as a practical theological discipline and core ministerial competency. In 2015 Newcom created a MA and MDiv Concentration in social Transformation for United and was its founding Program Director. Kaleo Center was an outgrowth of Newcom's Bush Foundation Fellowship, which researched justice education within theological contexts. Kaleo Center also served as a multi-faith-movement hub supporting marriage equality and the movement for Black lives. Before launching Kaleo Center, Newcom served the Headwaters Foundation for Justice as Executive Director for 18 years and previously worked for the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.



Music will be led by Kristoffer Koop and Koreann Martin

May our coming together create a deeper connection to our faith and each other and a revitalized commitment to making a difference in our community and in the world.

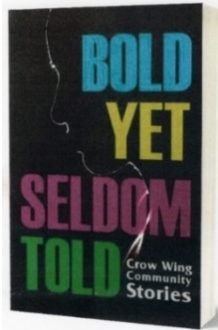


Reservations required: Please send name/s and special food needs to otherpeoplecount.period@gmail.com

There will be opportunity for a free will offering to support the ongoing work of Micah Group.



“Bold Yet Seldom Told”



The book, was launched on April 14 and includes stories of church members; Joey Halvorson, Alvin, Barb McColgan, Jim Newgord and Tracy Lyons.

Books are available at CatTales – downtown Brainerd.

Either link below will allow you to view videos produced by Dan Hegstad, which include church members Tracy Lyons and Alvin.

Powerful stories!



Crow Wing Energized:

<https://crowwingenergized.org/story-project/>

Steve Newcom's Justice Table website:

<https://sites.google.com/kaleo.center/justicetable/bold-untold-stories?authuser=0>



Mark Your Calendars!

The Brainerd Lakes Pride Weekend.

Pride in the Park Picnic is September 14th 10:00 am – 4:00 pm in Gregory Park.

Follow their Facebook Page for other Pride Activities that weekend.

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

UCC News & Updates!



Minnesota Conference
United Church of Christ

Upcoming Conference Retreats

Below is a brief highlight of each event; you can find full details on the [Conference's website](#).

To help facilitate a more comprehensive and secure registration process, the Conference has implanted a new registration system for overnight events in 2024. [Check out CampDoc!](#)

Great Lakes & West Central Regional Youth Event

July 17-20 | Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois

Clergy Family Retreat:

"What Do You Mean We Don't Have to Plan Anything?"

August 11–13 | Camp Onomia, Onamia, MN



Women's Retreat: "You Are a Story"

Friday, September 13 – Sunday, September 15 | Camp Onomia, Onamia, MN
Martha Brunell, Facilitator

Fall 2024 Conference Youth Event

October 11–13 | Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center



Facilitated by
Martha Brunell



Women's Retreat

YOU ARE A STORY

Enjoy being in nature with other women as we learn how we can connect to the earth and the cosmos in the never ending quest to find out who we are.

Sept 13 - 15 2024 Camp Onomia, Onamia, MN



Scan me!

Contact Us 
sherin@uccmn.org

Visit Our Website 
www.uccmn.org



Faith Formation

Minnesota Conference
United Church of Christ

How You Carry It: Grief Retreat

October 28–30, 224 | Dunrovin Retreat Center | \$225



IN THE CORNER OF A PARKING LOT, BY AN OLD CEMETERY, A PILE OF DECOMPOSING LEAVES AND GRASS CLIPPINGS IS NO LONGER UNDER A SNOWBANK. FROM IT SEEDS OF NEW GROWTH RISE.

ABOUT OUR RETREAT

Grief is inevitable in our lives in response to losses small, medium, or large. We live grief saturated lives that destabilize and shatter our sense of identity over and over. Grief has many faces. The pandemic laid bare our personal grief, our grief regarding political and institutional history and decline, our grief around continuing racial injustice, our grief prompted by economic insecurity, and our grief in the face of mounting evidence of climate change and extinction. This is by no means an exhaustive list of how grief visits our life journeys. Grief is the great equalizer, in every life, breaking down and breaking open what was. Enfolded in the deep and wise ways of the earth, we will spend gentle days together exploring the breadth and depth of how we might carry our grief while open to its potential gifts and growth.

OUR RETREAT LEADER: REV. DR. MARTHA BRUNELL

Martha dwells at an intersection of transformative possibilities she calls Oak Leaf Oasis. There, earth wisdom, contemplative and creative practices, and grief awareness crisscross one another. In that space of intersection, she invites a widening circle of others to slow down, to step into a more spacious way of being, and to dare to harbor hope. She offers presence, programs, and practices with individuals and groups as a spiritual director, a retreat and workshop leader, and a writer and writing group convener with additional training as a SoulCollage® Facilitator, an Advanced Accredited Labyrinth Facilitator, a Forest Therapy Guide, a Grief Educator, and a Story Sharer.



QUESTIONS: CONTACT KEVINB@UCCMN.ORG

REGISTRATION OPENING SOON!

MN Conference UCC YOUNG ADULTS COHORT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

FAITH FORMATION
LEADERSHIP

BORDER TRIP

JUSTICE WORK

TRIVIA NIGHT



What?

Young Adults serve as a catalyst and connector for welcoming and affirming action. We aim to build community while advancing peace, justice, and equity.

Why?

To connect with each other, the wider UCC community, and the communities outside of the UCC. To promote peace, justice, and the necessity of engaging in tangible change.



Meet the Fellows



Madison Plemens-Schunk
Mankato UCC
Events



Kristen Peterson
Hazel Park UCC
Media



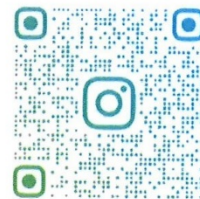
Cole Marshall
Anoka UCC
Outreach



Liam Magistad
St. Anthony Park UCC
Liaison

Follow us on Instagram!
[@mnuccyac](https://www.instagram.com/mnuccyac)

Look out for upcoming events!



MNUCCYAC