

Bismarck-Mandan Area United Church of Christ

1200 E Highland Acres Rd ~ 701-223-2915 ~ office@uccbismarck.org ~ www.uccbismarck.org ~ Like us on Facebook

February 2021

A GLOBAL MINISTRY CHURCH

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Honoring Losses Leads to Blessings

by Rev. Gretchen Deeg, Pastor

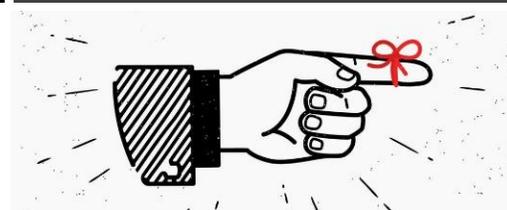
When this all began last year, a question I never thought I would be asking is "How do I administer ashes on Ash Wednesday and maintain a 6 ft distance?" The answer our wise Deacons responded with was, "You don't."

There are some parts of our lives which just cannot be modified and still maintain the integrity of the ritual. Yes, we could do ashes-to-go, you could pick up ashes in a cup from church, you could make your own (ashes and olive oil...never use water!). We could find a modification that would work well enough, but there are also times in our lives when we are meant to stop, take a deep breath, and leave space to grieve a loss. Lent has always been that time.

In the season of Lent, we are reminded that after he was baptized, Jesus went straight into the wilderness for 40 days to pray. In the wilderness, he experienced the loss of food, the loss of power to rule nations, the loss of ego to do whatever he wanted without consequence. The story goes that the Tempter offered him all of these things, but Jesus denied them all and let a loss be a loss. And after sitting in loss after loss for 40 days, the angels came and waited on him.

Honoring losses often results in unexpected blessings. We experience this most intentionally at funerals when we honor the deceased and discover the blessing of celebrating their life. Giving time to honor a loss without rushing to replace it, opens our minds to witness life right in front of us. This year although we will not be putting ashes on our foreheads or have Lenten Soup Suppers, we will let those be holy losses, we are presented with an unexpected blessing to have all of our Wednesday Lenten worship services be larger than they have ever been. This year, we are partnering with numerous other local churches to encounter Jesus exactly where we are...at home, at school, at work, in nature, in our day-to-day life.

Come experience this new Lenten time with us by joining our **Wednesday Lent worship services online** at www.uccbismarck.org/worship on Wednesdays at 6 PM. Our Sunday worship services will still be offered both online and in-person at 10 AM.



Dates to Remember

Every Sunday @ 10 AM:
worship in-person & online

Every Wednesday @ 6 PM:
worship online

Feb. 15th – Church Office Closed

Feb. 17th – Ash Wednesday



PRAY FAST GIVE

Ash Wednesday & Lent

Wednesday evening Lenten worship services start Feb. 17th – March 31st at 6pm online.



Thank you to everyone who was able to attend our Annual Meeting on Sunday, Jan. 31st.

Annual Reports can be picked up in the church office Mon. to Fri. from 9 AM – 1 PM or emailed to you.

Worship with us every Sunday at 10 AM and Wednesday at 6 PM | Bible Study Fri. at 8:30 AM

Vision Statement

Adopted January 2016

**The Bismarck-Mandan UCC
is a thriving church transforming our
lives and community:**

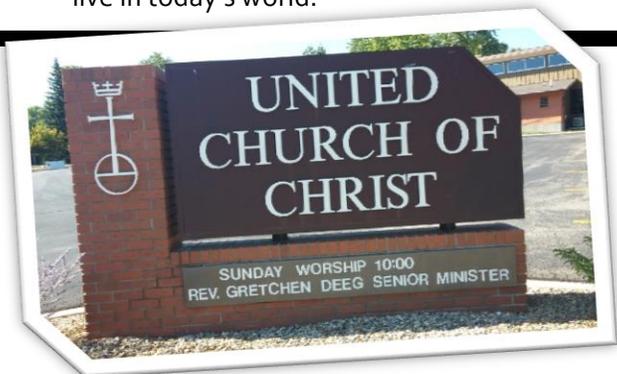
- Where all are unconditionally welcomed, affirmed, accepted and loved;
- Where the good in every person is recognized and their talents are encouraged to be shared;
- Where children, youth, and adults learn that God is love and all are welcome to freely explore spirituality in a safe and nurturing environment;
- Where we can bring our personal needs and struggles and count on support from our church family – which is the loving family we all deserve;
- Where powerful messages inspire and challenge us to be caring and compassionate to all – in our church, community, and world, seeking opportunities to put our faith into action with courage to go beyond what we think we can do;
- Where we embrace the still-speaking God and live in today's world.



LIVING OUR VISION HIGHLIGHT

"Where we embrace the still-speaking God and live in today's world."

Last month on Jan. 10 when we celebrated the baptism of Christ, we held worship down by the river! Due to the continued pandemic, we did not have anyone physically in attendance, but we had many members and friends from across the country join us down by the river through the tools of technology. Although there are many things we cannot safely do during a pandemic, we continue to live in today's world with creativity and worship!



Council Corner

by Mike Stein, Moderator

Hello Everyone,

2020 is officially behind us! It was an emotional year. We look forward to the New Year and a new beginning.

The Council decided to resume the indoor church service effective Sunday, January 24th. We will continue to practice social distancing and mask wearing is mandatory. Our decision

was based on state guidelines and the lower COVID-19 numbers. We will continue to monitor these guidelines and make our decision accordingly.

We need to get back to a new normal. It is important to the church and it is important to us. When this will take place is anyone's guess. I believe it will be the beginning of the Summer. As we get back to a new normal, we will need everyone's support.

A few items we will be concentrating on for 2021 are; 1. Continue working on the communication and social media aspects of the church. 2. Look at restructuring the church board and committees. 3. Continue with the development of an alternative worship service.

As the environment around us continues to change, so does the need for our church. We know that all the church denominations are losing members. It is because of this that it is imperative for our church to be creative. We need to think out of the box on how we can differentiate ourselves.

I am looking forward to the New Year. We need to continue monitoring our General Offerings/Income and control our expenses. We need to be creative in our thinking. We need to concentrate on growing the church. We have the right people on our committees. It will be a good year! Take Care and God Bless!

FINANCIAL STATUS

January 2020 to December 2020

Revenue

General Offerings

Actual = \$ 145,914

Other Income (Dedicated, Earned)

Actual = \$ 11,760

Expenses

Actual = \$ 156,815

Total Revenue = \$ 157,674

Total Expenses = \$ 156,815

NET ACTIVITY = \$ 859

SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION PARTNERS IN 2021

East Timor Education Fund	\$
Charles Hall Youth Services	\$
Our Church's Wider Mission	\$ 100
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$
Strengthen the Church	\$
Neighbors in Need	\$
CROP Walk	\$
The Christmas Fund	\$
Total Shared Ministry	\$ 100

Stewardship and Mission Report

by Pamela Clark-Stein, chairperson

I want to start off the New Year by extending thanks and appreciation for the support and participation in "Sponsor a Sunday" in 2020. Our committee is amazed and so proud to report to you that 22 Sunday worship services were sponsored last year, only slightly down from the 24 sponsored worship services in 2019 – the first year for this initiative. Considering the pandemic and necessary move to many services having to be online, this says so much about the members of UCC and their love for this church. This year the Stewardship and Mission Committee again invites members to participate in Sponsor a Sunday.

You are also invited to participate in the 2021 pledge drive. The pledge drive was kicked off in November 2020. The level of participation to date falls short of last year so please consider making a pledge for this year. It's not too late.

The committee will be exploring a matching grant opportunity available through the Northern Plains Conference of the United Church of Christ. Up to \$500 per church is available starting now through Easter, to use in showing support for frontline workers as COVID-19 continues. From medical workers to first responders, teachers and chaplains, these matching funds may be used for an act of kindness for a particular group of our choosing either as a one-time event or a recurring project that extends over time. Stay tuned for an update as we explore the possibilities!

Lost Your Pledge Card? Need Another?

Have you had time to fill out your pledge card yet? If not, we have made it really easy to get another by including it below. If you would still like to pledge, please cut out the card below, fill out and mail in or drop off at the church office. Thank you to all who pledge and help us to continue our church missions.

Primrose Ministry Team

by Darcy Avery, coordinator

On January 6, Marcia Lerberg led the Primrose Service focusing on the Epiphany. Virginia Luger served the sacrament of communion for the 9 of us. Darcy led the music. Dale Carmen will be scheduled to hold services on February 3rd and 17th for Ash Wednesday. Dale is scheduled to serve on March 3rd and 31st. Camille Grothier has agreed to volunteer this year again. She is a much-welcomed addition to our group. We are so pleased we are able to continue providing in-house services during this Covid-restricted period. The residents appreciate this ministry and we love doing it.



Lentils R US

by Camille Grothier

Unlike many years in the past, I decided to stay up on New Year's Eve (to make sure 2020 was actually GONE). It was an interesting experience. My husband, noting that I was a bit unbalanced (his exact words "Sweetheart, I love you but you're nuts"), decided to bed down earlier. Well, since I made up my mind to stay up, I decided to continue a tradition from my youth and in memory of my Mom. On New Year's Eve, a pot of lentils was cooked and a spoonful taken at the stroke of midnight to ensure a good new year.

Superstition you say! You bet it is, but, even though I do not hold with the superstition, I was comforted by the memory of my Mother carrying on this tradition (she didn't buy into it either, but it was a 'family time' tradition which made it special).

It sure didn't take long for this superstition's message to be proven wrong. However, I began to think (usually a dangerous endeavor in any circumstance) that the spoonful of Lentils was meant to internalize strong HOPE the new year would be better. For many reasons, albeit not literally, WE are LENTILS.....for within each of us there springs a deep seated HOPE that WE can make the future better....and the difference between the lentils in the pot and the Spirit within us giving rise to that HOPE is that we CAN.

LOVE is the answer and I can't think of a body in Christ more grounded in LOVE than ours. It's going to take work and determination to LIVE OUT our Vision Statement, but this time in our history gives us an opportunity to put our Faith in listening and responding to the Still Speaking Godlisten....listen...listen.

When a stone is thrown in a pond, the ripples reach the shore in all directions, may the actions we take make such a difference in our congregation, community, state, nation and the world. With God, nothing is impossible. May God bless us as instruments of PEACE and bless our efforts as we work to make LOVE the norm.



With the return of in-person services, the church is looking for assistance on Sunday mornings to make our services as special and meaningful as they can be.

We are looking for volunteers for:

- Liturgist
- Video Recording

These are great opportunities to use skills you already have, or to learn a new technology skill that is always nice to have in our tech prone world.

Please contact Lonna Augustadt at 701.391.5775, or contact the church at 701.223.2915 or by email at office@uccbismarck.org.



Ongoing Classes

Friday Morning Bible Study

A group for our thoughtful thinkers! This dedicated group meets every Friday at 8:30 AM on Zoom for Bible study and fellowship. All are welcome.

Sunday School

Faith-at-Home materials for pre-school through junior high school aged are available for delivery or pick up every month.

Confirmation

This year's class is currently meeting outside every month! Contact Pastor Gretchen if you are interested.

Have an idea for a class? Contact Pastor Gretchen (223-2915) or a member of Christian Education.

Ministry & Fellowship Groups

UCC Choir

- Craig DeVos, Choir Director

Due to the ongoing virus we are looking for pianists, organists, and string instrument players for our services or musicians to record music. We will not have in-person singing at this time.

Mayflower Circle

This women's fellowship group continues to meet every second Thursday of the month (September – May) at noon on Zoom. Mayflower Circle leads various ministries throughout the year including funeral luncheons, annual rummage sale, numerous fundraisers, and others. Next meeting on Feb. 11th at noon.

Knitting Group & Threads of Love

Knit, purl, tell stories, and have a great time with this group of knitters. Bring your own project or knit a prayer shawl to be blessed and gifted to another. Experience or even participation in sewing, quilting, crocheting, knitting are NOT required—we LOVE to fellowship with any and all. Hope to see you soon! This group will meet online the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

Primrose Worship Team

Have a passion for serving those in care centers? This team preaches and leads worship services at Primrose Retirement Community on College Dr at 12:30pm on various Wednesdays throughout the year. Talk with Darcy Avery to join this group of worship leaders.

Be Among the First!

Honor or remember a loved one, celebrate birthdays or other special events in the New Year all while helping our congregation meet its budgetary needs during these unusual operating times!

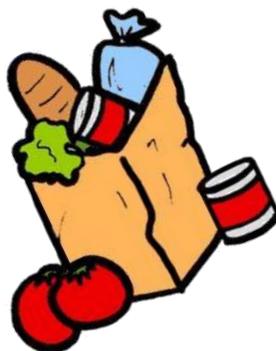
Sponsoring a Sunday is as easy as 1...2...3!

- 1) Contact the church office by phone, email, or fill out the form at www.uccbismarck.org/sponsor and request a Sunday.
- 2) Make your payment by check or Paypal. Sponsorships are \$500.
- 3) Accept our gratitude!

Gifts like yours give people hope; and because of that we can't wait to share why you sponsored a Sunday with everyone who joins worship and reads the monthly church newsletter (~200 households) on the date you chose!



Jack's Food Pantry



We are still donating our collected items to Adopt-a-Block, and they are still distributing food boxes 6 days a week. Before Christmas we were informed that had been giving 100,000 pounds of food away each month, up from the 40,000 that had been going out in the spring. Food insecurity is increasing in our community and your continued assistance in providing items for these boxes is truly a blessing in the community.

Support Mayflower Circle

As a result of the pandemic, Mayflower Circle was unable to hold its annual rummage sale this year, which provides funds to help with items not included in the budget and to support our mission partners. Currently, we are holding an online fundraiser through RADA Cutlery. They have a wide variety of items, in addition to the cutlery, at very reasonable prices. The Circle will receive 40% of any sales made. You may go online through the following fundraiser link, <https://radafundraising.com/?rfsn=4878041.68abbo>, or pick up a catalog at the church office.



Youth News



Ash Wednesday
— Lent Begins

February 17, 2021



Pretzels and Lent

You might be wondering what pretzels have to do with Lent? The word *Pretzel* comes from a German word that means “little arms”. The twisted shape of the pretzel is meant to remind us of arms crossed in prayer, and Lent is a season of prayer. Pretzels became popular because they required very few ingredients as the first pretzels were made with only flour, salt, and water. During the 7th century, Christians were strict about what they could eat during the season of Lent. The simple ingredients of pretzels were perfect for their fasting.

Below is a simple pretzel recipe to try making with your family as the Lenten season starts as a way to remember and talk about the meaning of Lent and a reminder to pray.

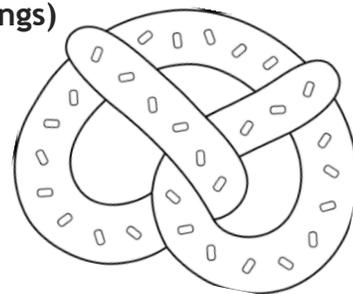
Just like arms
folded,
My **pretzel** will
stay.
A snack that
reminds me,
To **PRAY** everyday.



Homemade Soft Pretzel Recipe (8 servings)

1 ½ c water, warm
1 tbs salt
1 tbs sugar
1 packet active dry yeast
coarse salt

4 ½ c flour
3 tbs oil, divided
2/3 c baking soda
2 eggs, beaten



Preparation

1. In a bowl, mix water, salt, and sugar until combined. Add yeast, and let rest 5 minutes until yeast starts to foam.
2. Add flour and 2 tablespoons of oil, and mix thoroughly until a dough forms.
3. Remove the dough and use the remaining oil to cover the bowl.
4. Cover bowl with plastic wrap, and leave in a warm place for 1 hour.
5. Preheat oven to 450°F (230°C).
6. Cut dough into 8 pieces and roll them out into thin ropes, twisting the two ends to form a pretzel shape.
7. Add baking soda to a large pot of water, and bring to a rolling boil. Boil each pretzel for 30 seconds per side.
8. Transfer pretzels to a baking sheet, brush with egg wash, and sprinkle with salt. Bake for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown.

Deacons Greetings

by Harold Karch, Deacons chair

The board of Deacons hopes this newsletter finds you all in good health during this time unusual time. Please try to stay in touch with as many of your fellow church family as you can.

We hope the "Connector" calls are a source of comfort and are helping you to stay "connected" as we continue to navigate in person services during the pandemic. Please feel free to make suggestions and feel free to call the church office if you need spiritual help.

Jack's Food Pantry continues to be a great help to many in the Bismarck/Mandan area, where the food we give to the church is made available to the needy through the "Adopt-a-Block" program. We can all be proud of helping to do God's work and being the "Voice of God" in the world.

God Bless you all; from your board of Deacons,

Carol Baber, Sandra Domagala, Harold Karch, Darlene Kinnischtzke, Loren Knoll, James Mandigo, and Camille Grothier



Options for Giving

Are you looking for alternate ways to get your donations to the church, especially with the pandemic still going on? We have many options available, and hope that you find one or more that really works well for you.

- Mail a check
- Set up automatic donations using your bank's online "bill pay" options
- Paypal at www.uccbismarck.org/donate
- Drop donations off at the office
- Drop in offering box during worship
- Pledge
- Sponsor a Sunday
- Consider a larger gift to our United Living Trust Fund or Memorial Fund
- Include the church in your planned giving

Your donations along with the sharing of your time and talents are what help us to continue our missions each and every year. In addition to our missions, the sharing of your time and talents helps us to continue to strong legacy of community we have built here at United Church of Christ.

*Happy Birthday to our beloved members and friends!
May God's gift of life be a blessing to you and may your life be a blessing to others all year long.*



- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 03 Carrie Mandigo | 19 Karsten Klein |
| 07 Tiffany Sonnenberg | 20 Aiden Meidinger |
| 08 Lucille Ritz | 23 Delani Berger |
| 09 Ella Kraft | 24 Amber Augustadt |
| 11 Eugene Weekes | 25 Priscilla Sauer |
| 16 Ashley Leier | 28 Elise Smokey |

**Please contact the church office or sign up in the narthex if you would like your birthday listed in the newsletter.*