



The Shining Light – March 2022

MARCH WORSHIP SCHEDULE.....	2
DESIGNATED PASTOR’S MESSAGE/PRAYER OF MONTH	3
MODERATOR’S MESSAGE.....	5
FEBRUARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES.....	7
TREASURER’S REPORT	9
SUBMITTED MINUTES FROM WINTER ANNUAL MEETING.....	10
EVENTS	13
MINNESOTA CONFERENCE & NAT’L CHURCH NEWS	14
SEASONS OF OUR LIVES	19
MARCH CALENDAR.....	20



WORSHIP IN MARCH

Sunday Worship on ZOOM at 10:30 AM

Worship Planner

Sunday, March 6th, 1st Sunday in Lent, we begin the Lenten journey in the desert with Jesus. Jesus is sent into the wilderness after he is baptized center himself in God's kingdom and love. During this time, he is tempted to use his power and authority to put himself first, to test if God loves him and prove that he is special, and invited to worship something other than God in order have absolute power in this world. What temptations do we face in our lives?

Sunday, March 13th, 2nd Sunday in Lent, we skip over much of the Gospel of Luke to where Jesus is now journeying to Jerusalem to confront the religious, financial, and political powers of that part of the world. Jesus laments over this seat of power on how they kill the prophets and those who are sent to help.

Sunday, March 20th, 3rd Sunday in Lent, we look at the Old Testament this Sunday going back to Isaiah to hear God's calling to all people, God's vision of a just and equitable future, and what we invest in that satisfies. Isaiah reminds us that God's ways are not our ways when we only focus on ourselves.

Sunday, March 27th, 4th Sunday Lent, we explore the story, or parable, that is often called the Prodigal Son. We will explore why Jesus is telling this story, the main characters, and ask we character we most resemble. Where are the moments of trust, of selfishness, and why is reconciliation left open-ended between the siblings?

DESIGNATED PASTOR'S MESSAGE

The Rev. Enno Limvere

There isn't enough time...

The Russians are moving troops into the Ukraine, another black man was killed in the Twin Cities because the cops had the wrong address, but in good news, the City of Grand Marais and the Cook County Commissioners have passed the Global Climate Emergency Resolutions. We continue to be in the midst of a pandemic with some hopeful signs that it is finally winding down, but we have been here before. It is continuing to snow, snow, and snow which takes up much time and energy to get anywhere. How many things aren't I mentioning that are on your radar and happening in this world? There isn't enough time to focus on what we want, to listen, to understand, or to act.

We are studying the Book of Isaiah which spans over 200 years of Israel's history which dealt with wars, sieges, nations rising and falling, diaspora (during Babylon's conquering of Judah the people were taken from their homes and enslaved around the empire), worship, justice for the poor, the widow, and the orphan, and then it took another 100 years to edit and develop the form we follow today. We also have the story of Esther which deals with a very specific time during the Diaspora in which God doesn't make an appearance at all, but gives guidance through prayers for strength and wisdom.

We don't have enough time to learn it all, understand it all, and do it all. When the Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light of Cook County was meeting, we were trying to set some goals for this year and there were lots of good ideas and lots of needs. I asked our breakout group to consider two criteria to make a decision: where could we make the most impact as a group or what story needs to be told because no one else is talking about it? We decided to go with where we thought we could have the most impact as a group and decided to advocate for renewable energy for our county, business, and homes and partnering with CCLEP (Cook County Low Energy Project) so amplify our voice.

In the book of Isaiah, there are times when no one seems to be listening or taking Isaiah seriously. There are also times when he is heard and changes the course of the nation. In the book of Esther, a woman who is part of a harem who could be killed for approaching the king, but if she doesn't, all her family and people will die. So, she must risk it all to tell their story.

As our church looks to a new mission statement and goals for our fellowship, we can't do it all. We can't save the world. We can lend our voice to speak for those who can't or those who aren't heard. We can lend our strength to make an impact here that could send ripples out into the world. We can trust that even if we are part of a story that lasts years, decades, or even centuries; what we do or say, if planted with love, compassion, and justice, will bear fruit.

Peace

Pastor Enno

MARCH PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Almighty and glorious God, we come to you in this time of prayer having doubts and fears. Our lives are filled with hurts, pains, and distractions. We try to do it ourselves and feel like failures when we don't succeed. Merciful God, we need you in our lives. Not just in times of prayer and worship, but when we rise in the morning, go about our business, and lay down to sleep. You are truly one who can bring us peace and heal our lives, our bodies, and this world. In Jesus' name we pray, with you and the Holy Spirit reign eternally.

Amen.

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

By Jenny Delfs

Moderator Message March 2022

My favorite moments in Board of Directors meetings are when someone says, "You know, I disagree."

These moments are when conversation and discovery can begin. When we all show up from our individual backgrounds and expectations and somehow find common intent and purpose. The process of consensus and relationship building is fascinating work. This church is full of individuals, living in this unique and beautiful place in an unprecedented time in human history. We come from different faiths and hometowns and life experiences. We bring assumptions, past trauma and tender hopes to the table. If we meet each other with open hearts and curiosity, real conversation can happen. But, as one of my favorite quotes from Khalil Gibran goes, "Between what is said and not meant, and what is meant but not said, most of love is lost." We must be sure to listen generously.

I recently finished listening to Suzanne Simard's Finding the Mother Tree. She is a Canadian Forester who has done research showing how trees and other plants in a forest support each other and communicate with each other through mycorrhizal networks. This peek into how God's creation works left me in awe. How can human communities learn from this example of mutual support that is literally beneath our feet and all around us? We do better when we look for the interconnections, build the networks.

Lent seems a good time to reflect on our faith – individually and as a collective. I am so happy to see so many people sign up for the next discipleship group. I know this past year of conversations with Pastor Enno, the Bottgers and Travises have been so important for me in thinking about my own faith and in building relationships of trust and understanding. I know this work is happening in committee discussions and book studies as well. We are building together. Growing community. Asking questions. Having conversation. I hope we can lean into this in Lent. Find joy in what we are building together.

The Seven Of Pentacles by Marge Piercy

Under a sky the color of pea soup
she is looking at her work growing away there
actively, thickly like grapevines or pole beans
as things grow in the real world, slowly enough.
If you tend them properly, if you mulch, if you water,
if you provide birds that eat insects a home and winter food,
if the sun shines and you pick off caterpillars,
if the praying mantis comes and the ladybugs and the bees,
then the plants flourish, but at their own internal clock.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.

You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.
More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.

Live a life you can endure: Make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,
for every gardener knows that after the digging, after
the planting,
after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

2/16/22 First Congregational United Church of Christ BOD minutes

Present: Pastor Enno Limvere, Jenn Delfs, Tom Yuhasey, Kevin LeVoir, John Bottger, Carol Bennett, Carol Winter
Unable to attend: Lesaann Foris

Meeting was called to order at 5:02pm

Mission statement was read by JD.

Joys and concerns were shared.

Pastor Enno's question of the month was 'Who was your favorite teacher about the Bible or religion?'

Communication agreement was read by KL.

Return to in-person worship was added to the agenda under New Business. Amended agenda approved. JB moved, KL seconded.

Financial report given by KL. Written report provided in advance. Highlights include that the church's liquid cash position has improved, all insurance policies are paid for 2022 and income exceeded expense for January (acknowledging the release of some pledges made in 2021 for 2022).

Discussion on best use of several pass-through funds which are inactive or currently have excess money ensued. These are the Chiapas, Thanksgiving, Pastor search funds. We agreed to seek input and bring suggestions to next month's BOD meeting.

Financial report was approved. KL moved. CB seconded.

March BOD meeting will be 3/8/22 at 5:00pm.

Pastor's written report was provided in advance. Additions and highlights include that MNIPL met 2/15/22 and is looking to do a community event for Earth Day. Pride Parade will be 6/4/22. Pastor Enno will be recording a reflection on loneliness, part of a Lenten Toolkit for the church conference. Bibles for children have been purchased and more donations to defray the expense needed. A gift of crosses was gratefully received from Peggy Little. Another discipleship group is forming. Pastor Enno is working on the sound system almost every day to get it functioning properly.

Old Business

- a. Review of 2022 winter congregational meeting: We agreed meeting went well and the minutes will be sent one more time for our review before submission for March newsletter.
- b. 2021 annual report is complete
- c. Pastor's contract: Monthly reports for the BOD in addition to monthly meetings with the Pastor Relations Committee will continue. An annual performance review will be conducted. Pastor and BOD reviewed the goals used in the designated term contract and will develop mutually agreed upon goals for this contract. The current contract language will be reviewed once

- more by BOD members prior to signing.
- d. Safe church/abuse prevention policy: no new information
- e. Cemetery property: no new information
- f. Charging station: TY reported that an offer has been made to help defray the cost of installation. We are on the list of interested parties and are waiting to hear from State about this.
- g. Pastor Enno called GES regarding their request to rent space next year, but they have not responded.

New Business

- a. BOD endorses renting space to Explorer's Club
- b. Discussion regarding development of a 'membership' list. Interested individuals will be invited to work on this. CB will make initial contact.
- c. Mission statement update: We agreed that this project would be a good BOD goal for 2022.
- d. Worship indoors? Although Covid numbers are dropping it is too early to move services indoors. We are hopeful to be able to safely do so by April and will look forward to a recommendation from the Worship Committee. Immunization will still be required.
- e. A letter was received requesting to purchase part of church property. KL and JB will review plot. It was noted that the playground gets significant use.

Church life brief reports/updates:

- a. Care Team – no active members at present. Pastor Enno visiting elders, families, individuals.
- b. Pastoral Relations – has been meeting monthly
- c. Finance committee – meeting regularly, helping new bookkeeper on board
- d. Stewardship committee - Has sent follow up letters
- e. Children and Youth Life/faith formation – monthly Sunday Fun Days, Sunday school, monthly youth group PSJ
- f. Memorial committee
- g. Building and Grounds Team – meeting regularly, plan congregation wide discussion of priorities, fund raising
- h. Outreach – WOW, collaborations with Arrowhead Indivisible, Pride, Women's march, Climate meetings, Afghan Resettlement, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
- i. Worship Committee – Delfs, Carters, Noble, Russ – meeting monthly as worship pivoted from in person to zoom, tech issues
- j. Standing Grievance committee: Delfs, Mattice, Bennett – have not been needed
- k. Food Team- Sjoberg memorial in May

Treasurer's Report for March 2022 Newsletter

The January 2022 (latest fully available information) Financial Report shows a total income of \$20,841.43 and expenses of \$15,433.12 (See Detail Below). This means that the Church's expenses were less than Income by \$5,408.31.

Income for January 2022			
Pledged Donations	\$ 19,871.35		
Non-Pledged Donations	\$ 300.00		
Loose Plate Offerings	\$ 65.00		
Building Use	\$ 220.00		
Income from Outside Sources	\$ 383.38	(Endowment Interest)	
Interest Income	\$ 1.70		
	<u>\$ 20,841.43</u>		

Expenses for January 2022			
General Expenses (Pastor, Staff, Building, Loan Interest)	\$ 15,204.39		
Loan Principle	\$ 228.73		
	<u>\$ 15,433.12</u>		

The full report for January is available in the Church office.

The 2021 Annual Report is available for viewing.

Click on the Link below:

<https://www.grandmaraisucc.org/s/2021-January-Annual->

SUBMITTED Minutes from the Winter 2022 Congregational Annual Meeting to be approved at our Summer 2022 Congregational Annual Meeting

MINUTES FROM WINTER UCC CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JANUARY 30, 2022

WELCOMING AND REVIEW OF PROCEDURES FOR THE MEETING

Moderator Jenny Delfs called the zoom video meeting to order at approx. 1120 hours. Jenny welcomes all in attendance and read the Congregational Purpose & Mission Statement.

Rules of the meeting were explained by the Moderator. She said the procedures will be overseen by Kevin. Vote was to be determined by simple majority of members attending. With no formal membership records existing, Jenny stated our practice has been that those who affirm the mission and purpose of this church and consider themselves to be members of the church, may participate in voting. She said this policy is “consistent with the beliefs” of this church.

Determination was made that a quorum existed for the current meeting to proceed

CALL TO ORDER

Outline of meeting given by Jenny

Opening Prayer given by Pastor Enno asking for the Lord to lead us in wisdom and be with us in our actions this day.

Communications agreement read by Jenny

Jenny presents agenda, agenda is shown on screen, agenda approved by vote.

Minutes were approved from previous summer meeting in June of 2021, and Winter meeting in January of 2021, with some minor edits

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2021

Kevin gave the Finance Report, the balance statement for end of the year 2021, was reviewed. Then the profit and loss page was presented, this showed approximately \$150,000 had been spent, which was about \$14,000, more than what was taken in. Reserves were used to cover those expenses. Repaying a \$10,000 loan we received last fall from the government was also discussed. Kevin felt there was a chance we would have this debt forgiven by the government.

Proposed budget of \$153,000 was presented, minor amendments were made in five categories. Kevin did not anticipate the need to take more

money out of the endowment account, which has a current market value of about \$198,000, but said there was a possibility this might be necessary.

The loan for the roof was discussed and the fact it would be beneficial if the church could make efforts to pay some of the balance early to reduce the interest. Kevin said the interest rate, currently at 5%, had recently been renegotiated to a more favorable rate but could not be done again for two years.

Budget was approved by vote of members

VOTE ON CHANGE TO CALLED PASTOR

Jenny gave a summary timeline of previous pastors at this church leading up to the Board of Directors designating a Search Team who hired Pastor Enno as a Designated Term Pastor in 2022, under a two-year contract. Based on his successful performance the first year of the contract, the board felt it was now appropriate to offer Pastor Enno a permanent Called Pastor position. Unlike a Term Pastor, this action requires approval of the congregation.

A motion was made by Don Davidson and seconded by Nancy Starr that we proceed with this action. An overwhelming approval was reflected in the vote of the membership.

Jenny welcomes Called Pastor Limvere who accepts the mandate (God Rest His Soul)

BOD 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted by Moderator Delfs who begins by announcing in June she will be stepping down from her position as moderator but will continue as a member of the board. She appealed to the congregation to search their hearts as we consider a replacement for this position.

Jenny continues with an overview of board activities in the past year, stating we strived in a time of pandemic, to deal with the challenges and to remain vibrant and encouraged by the works being done. Specifically noted were board actions involving the successful hiring of a new Called Pastor, passing necessary Bylaw changes, dealing with difficult budget situations as well as supporting building and grounds needs. We have also hired another wonderful office manager, resolved the bookkeeping situation, while still having time to welcome new members.

PASTOR REPORT

With renewed spirit Pastor Enno stated how blessed he felt to become our Called Pastor and how thankful he is to stay and continue his work. He

expressed his belief that our church has changed in the past year and, as the healing continues, will continue to move forward.

BYLAW CHANGE, RE DEFINITION OF QUORUM

Current Bylaw III #2 & #4 were amended to define quorum, for purposes of calling a congregational meeting and vote determinations, as *members in attendance numbering at least 50% of the average weekly worship attendance*.

The Bylaw change was passed by overwhelming majority.

Don suggested a formal membership list be produced to determine how many “members” our church has. Considering the term “member” has been a sensitive issue, the action was not taken up at this time.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

We welcomed new members who wished to formally join with us, greetings to Steve Aldrich, Bruce Tyler, and Linda Noble.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE UPDATE

John Bottger used this opportunity to draw our attention to all the work that has been done by Jeff Kern to keep the church building functioning at minimal expense. Many thanks to all you’ve done Jeff.

Also, John acknowledged the many needs the physical church is presently facing and will have in the future. With the help of the congregation, he is seeking a “vision,” a plan for future projects, and discussion as to how this all can be made possible. Enno added we must determine to best way to approach our needs and to raise money to address issues.

CLOSING PRAYER

Enno gave thanks to all who were involved in the process today and gave blessings to the leaders of this church and all gave their time and support to its success.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Relating to the meeting, issues were discussed shortly afterwards regarding a suggestion a mid-year review of the pastor’s performance for the first year may be needed. Also discussed was the proposal to take a more thorough look into membership situation at the church. Jenny felt the pastoral review change could be taken up at the next board meeting and wholeheartedly agreed with Pastor Enno that the membership definition issues be addressed after June of this year with a new moderator.

Support MN State Legislative Efforts for Affordable Housing

One of our critical needs for justice and equity is affordable, workforce housing, both locally and state-wide. Here is an opportunity to support legislative assistance here in Minnesota.

The Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC) is a state-wide, interfaith organization supporting progressive legislation to improve conditions for all Minnesotans so all may thrive. Each year JRLC organizes a “Day-on-the-Hill” in March to facilitate opportunities to speak with your own legislators about specific issues for the common good. This year’s theme is “For such a time as this.” To learn more about all JRLC initiatives go to: jrlc.org

March 15-16-17-18: Learn more and register: Day-on-the-Hill: <https://jrlc.org/2022-day-on-the-hill> , details available soon.

March 15: Zoom Kick-off Program: Keynote speaker and preparation for legislative visits. 6:30-8:45 p.m.

March 16-18: Legislative visits

More Readers Wanted as Book Study, Rooted and Rising, Draws Interest

We will start on March 9th, Wednesday, at 11:00 am and meet each Wednesday through April 13th. Each gathering will be 45 minutes to an hour.

First Congregational UCC of Grand Marais is hosting a book study: Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis (edited by Leah D. Schade and Margaret Bullitt-Jonas). during Lent. It would be great if more readers would sign up to read and discuss it, or simply read it on your own.

Please contact Bruce Tyler(brucertyler@gmail.com) to indicate your interest, we have ordered the books in time to start in the week of March 6 for six weeks, through April 13. We will be meeting primarily on Zoom.

The full price is \$32. Please help pay for your copy by giving what you can, \$20, 25, or 32. Scholarships are available. No one will be denied the opportunity to read this book.

You won't want to miss this thought-provoking, hopeful book about ways to move forward to mitigate the threat of the climate crisis. For those who read Active Hope by Joanna Macy a few years ago, this will be an opportunity to renew your acquaintance with the principles she outlined: Expressing Gratitude for What is Positive, Naming your Grief, Choosing Action to move toward Hope.

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light

Discipleship Groups

We now have two Discipleship Groups. The first one that began has decided to call themselves the Journey Discipleship Group. They have now been meeting for a year, gathering once a month to learn and discuss about the Bible, the church, faith, and discovering what they believe. Their next gathering is on March 13th, at 4:00 pm.

Our second group will start on March 19th, Saturday, at 10:00 on Zoom. We have 9 people who have said they are interested in seeing what this group is about.



Minnesota Conference

On Amir Locke: No More Words...

February 9, 2022

In the aftermath of the death of Amir Locke, who was shot by police in Minneapolis on February 2, the Minnesota Council of Churches (MCC) has issued the following statement. The Minnesota Conference UCC is a long-standing member of MCC and is grateful for its work to seek truth-telling and reparations, which we as a Conference are also financially supporting. Conference Minister Shari Prestemon is a member of the Board and Executive Committee of MCC and is thankful for this statement. No more words ...

A young Black man, Amir Locke, was killed by Minneapolis police on Wednesday morning, February 2, 2022. Reminiscent of Breonna Taylor, Minneapolis police used a no-knock warrant to silently enter the private residence where he was asleep and they shot and killed Amir. They were looking for someone else.

We have no more words ... First, we are still numb and in shock. Second, with the police killings of George Floyd and Daunte Wright, we made statements, quoted Scripture, protested, and called for action. Our colleagues around the country who are speaking out about police killings of Black people, Native people, and other people of color in their communities are also feeling like they have said all that needs to be said already. We have no more words ... Yet Amir's family needs our prayers. We have no more words ... Yet Black women, many who were Mothers, gathered on Monday to cry out for justice, accountability, and the transformation of public safety. So, we must join these courageous Black women and once again find the words, the Scriptures, the protests, and the actions to demand that the City of Minneapolis account for its racism and incompetence in policing. We must demand from the Mayor of Minneapolis to use his newly gained powers to transform public safety in Minneapolis. And we use the prophet Isaiah's words to demand, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed" (1:17).

Minnesota Council of Churches
Presiding Elder Stacey Smith, President
Bishop Richard Howell, Vice President
Rev. Curtiss DeYoung, Chief Executive Officer
Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, Co-Director of Racial Justice
Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri, Co-Director of Racial Justice

UCC/Peace & Justice

UCC med debt buys now top \$75 million

by [Connie Larkman](#) | published on Jan 10, 2022

The United Church of Christ sent a present over the holidays to 2,950 families in Arkansas and Tennessee. People in those households have received letters, telling them their medical debt has been forgiven.

In the denomination's latest buy, [20 churches of the Missouri Mid-South Conference](#) have abolished \$3.9 million in medical debt for families in 43 counties in Arkansas and 58 counties in Tennessee. Contributions totaling \$30,000 came from 19 Missouri congregations, one in Tennessee and a national UCC ministry, [United Church Funds](#). [The donors are listed here](#).

News conference participants kick off the Jan. 10 announcement of the medical debt buy. They are (clockwise from top left) the Rev. Rob Van Ess, Holy Trinity Community Church, Memphis; the Rev. Cheryl Cornish, First Congregational UCC, Memphis; Tennessee State Sen. Jeff Yarbro; and the Rev. Mary Nelson, Missouri Mid-South Conference.

“This is the second time in three years that we have held a major campaign to address the issue of medical debt relief, and we exceeded our goal,” said the Rev. Mary Nelson, transitional Conference minister, at a [Jan. 10 news conference, which gathered clergy, a Tennessee senator and participating reporters via Zoom](#). Nelson noted that churches initially hoped to raise \$20,000 in 2020, and while COVID paused the campaign, it did not quash it.

‘Campaign for liberation’

The Rev. Mary Nelson, transitional leader of the UCC’s Missouri Mid-South Conference, announces debt relief for 2,950 families.

“This is a campaign for liberation,” she said. “Medical debt is one of the significant factors contributing to ongoing poverty in this country. Liberating families from medical debt brings them out from under the weight of guilt and shame, but also from under the weight of a credit report that keeps them from accessing better housing, or from under the weight of the multiple jobs they are working to pay off their debt, or from under the weight of the trade-offs like choosing between paying off debt or feeding their families.”

The Rev. Cheryl Cornish, senior pastor of [First Congregational Church](#) in Memphis, said her congregation was delighted to participate.

The Rev. Cheryl Cornish describes why First Congregational Church, Memphis, contributed to the debt-relief campaign.

“A [study done earlier this month](#) estimates that 20 percent of Tennesseans — that’s one in five people in our state — live under the weight of this kind of financial debt ...

“To be able to provide medical debt relief is not only an act of joy, it’s an act of justice,” she said. “Members of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Memphis were happy to have been able to join with other UCC congregations in sharing the grace this debt forgiveness has brought nearly 3,000 families ... in the name of Jesus who said ‘your faith will make you well.’”

Personal testimony

The Rev. Rob Van Ess of Holy Trinity Community Church, Memphis, gives personal testimony about the effects of medical debt.

“When I was diagnosed with cancer I was afraid my inability to pay for treatment would cost me my life,” said the Rev. Rob Van Ess, senior pastor of [Holy Trinity Community Church UCC](#) in Memphis. “After I received my first medical bill for \$97,000 I was afraid my inability to pay for the treatment I needed would ruin my life.

“Medical debt relief and ultimately health care for all is an act of mercy and a basic human right,” he said. “We shouldn’t have to choose between our medical debt and our groceries.”

Tennessee Sen. Jeff Yarbrow thanks the UCC and urges systemic change. Tennessee Sen. Jeff Yarbrow of Nashville thanked UCC churches for “this act of kindness and charity that should not have had to be done in the first place.” A proponent of health care reform, Yarbrow said he wanted to celebrate the difference that this faith community is making. “This is a perfect example of recognizing that the people who are often overlooked, and slip through the cracks, are our neighbor.

“No family should have to choose between going to the doctor or putting food on the table. No family should weigh the consequences of staying in their home or seeking medical treatment. This is a choice that politicians have made for them. ... We collectively have made a policy decision to put families in this impossible decision and we don’t need to do it anymore. We need to recognize there’s another way ... to free people from this impossible choice and the predatory consequences that come from it.”

Policy changes needed

The Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, UCC minister for economic justice, said that’s why the denomination is also working to change the system. “Simply put ... we know health care is a human right, and no one should be penalized because they are too poor to be well.”

The Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, UCC minister of economic justice, describes policy efforts toward “an economy rooted in debt jubilee.” Hamlin said the UCC continues to advocate for Medicaid expansion, calls

on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to protect people from abusive debt collection practices and supports the passage of the Veterans and Consumer Fair Credit Act.

“We are committed to a just world for all and an economy rooted in debt jubilee,” she said. “This means we stand on the biblical principal of jubilee where families are not strapped with oppressive, unending, prolonged debt in a cycle that continues and continues. A bedrock biblical principal found in Leviticus 25.”

History of UCC debt-relief

This buy marks the ninth time in which the UCC has teamed up with the New York-based nonprofit [RIP Medical Debt](#) to abolish medical debt for pennies on the dollar, changing the lives of tens of thousands of people. The denomination has become the organization’s largest faith-based donor in a initiative that began after the 2019 General Synod.

In each case, buys met specific criteria: qualifying debtors were those earning less than two times the federal poverty level; in financial hardship, with out-of-pocket expenses that are 5 percent or more of their annual income; or facing insolvency, with debts greater than assets.

UCC churches in Chicago kicked off the initiative in September 2019, in collaboration with the denomination’s national ministries. That first buy abolished \$5.3 million in debt for 5,888 families on the city’s South Side. The collaborative efforts continued in 2020, when Missouri Mid-South churches in the St. Louis area teamed up with the Deaconess Foundation, abolishing \$12.9 million; nine churches in California’s East Bay area followed, eliminating \$7.4 million; 122 churches and individuals in the [Southern New England Conference](#) wiped out \$26 million; and 20 churches in the [Kansas-Oklahoma Conference](#) forgave \$5.2 million that year.

In April of 2021, eight UCC congregations in the Washington, D.C., area teamed up with the national setting and the [Potomac Association](#) of the [Central Atlantic Conference](#) to abolish more than \$9 million in medical debt in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and West Virginia, changing the lives of more than 7,800 families.

In late June, the national setting sent \$15,000, money from the [First Congregational United Church of Christ](#), Lake Worth Fla., and from a Giving Tuesday 2019 campaign, to wipe out more than \$1.3 million in medical debt for 815 families in Florida, Louisiana and Texas.

In late July, eleven churches of the [Southwest Conference](#) abolished \$3.6 million in debt in eight Arizona counties, benefiting an additional 1,559 families. \$75 million since 2019



In a little more than two years, the United Church of Christ, collaboratively, has wiped out more than \$75 million in medical debt — touching families in every region of the country in which it serves. The denomination still has a few buys pending as it brings the national initiative to an end. The total debt forgiven should top \$100 million.

“The shame and the stigma attached to medical debt are real,” Van Ess said. “The physical, emotional, and spiritual effects of carrying medical debt you are not able to pay are proven and significant.”

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

(Ecclesiastes 3)

3/2 Bev Gruman

3/3 Malinda Tasler

A time to Celebrate.....

3/5 Lou Goodell

3/9 Damian Zimmer

3/9 Meredith Eliot

3/10 Ada Igoe

3/11 Eli Wharton

3/12 Vanessa Jacobsen

3/17 Korey Bockovich

3/19 Mike Carlson

3/20 Kathy Jo Thompson

3/22 Lindsay Edson

3/31 Sarah Smith

3/31 Wren Eliot



MARCH ANNIVERSARY

3/19 Ann & Wayne Russ

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 3:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	2 7:00am AA (FS) 4:30-6:30 PM Food Shelf Open to Everyone (LL) 5:30pm Ash Wednesday Service	3 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 1:30pm Isiah Bible Study 3:00pm Building & Grounds Mtg	4 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch	5
6 9:00am Sunday School 10:30am Worship 5:00pm Pride	7 7:00am AA (FS) 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 7pm ALANON (FS) Pastor Enno's day off	8 3:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study 5:00pm BOD meeting 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	9 7:00am AA (FS) 11:00 Book Study 7:00 Lent Service	10 9:15 Chaplin Meeting 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 1:30pm Isiah Bible Study	11 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch	12
13 9:00am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Hour (Communion) 4:00pm Journey	14 7:00am AA (FS) 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 7pm ALANON Pastor Enno's day off	15 12:00pm Clergy Cluster 3:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study 7:00pm MNIPL 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	16 7:00am AA (FS) 11:00am Book Study 5:15pm PASJ 7:00pm Lent Service	17 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 1:30pm Isiah Bible Study	18 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch	19
20 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30am Worship 2:00pm FUN Day	21 7:00am AA (FS) 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 7pm ALANON Pastor Enno's day off	22 3:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	23 7:00am AA (FS) 11:00am Book Study 7:00pm Lent Service	24 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 1:30pm Isiah Bible Study	25 7:00am AA (FS) 8:00am Harbor Watch	26
27 9:00am Sunday School 10:30am Worship	28 7:00am AA (FS) 3:00pm-5:00pm Food Shelf Open to the Public (LL) 7pm ALANON Pastor Enno's day off	29 3:00pm Ministerial Lectionary Study 7:00pm Zen Meditation (LL)	30 11:00pm Book Study 7:00pm Lent Service	31 12:00pm Women's AA (FS) 1:30pm Isiah Bible Study		

FS—Fireside Room SH—Social Hall MR—Media Room SA—Sanctuary N—Narthex/Lobby SR—South Room LL—Lower Level

BOD—our Church Board of Directors AA—Alcoholics Anonymous ALANON—Families and Friends of Alcoholics
CODA—Co-dependents Anonymous

First Congregational United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 95 / 300 W 2nd Street
Grand Marais, MN 55604-0095

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Purpose and Mission

First Congregational United Church of Christ is an open, inclusive church that exists to worship God and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. We welcome all people of goodwill who seek to share the love of God and honor the diversity of creation in a spirit of tolerance and flexibility. As a Just Peace Church, we invite all who seek the reign of God to join us in reaching out in healing ministry, working for justice, witnessing for peace and striving to overcome all forms of oppression. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Communion

Our Open and Affirming Covenant

We covenant to be an accessible, open and affirming community of faith, committed to peace and justice, reaching out in healing love to all of creation. We exist to worship God and practice the gospel. We welcome all persons, including those of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities and economic circumstances to fully share and participate in leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family.



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For pastoral emergencies: Call Pastor Enno (605) 460-0330
Church Staff: The Rev. Enno Limvere, Designated Term Pastor
Nancy Backlund, Office Manager • Marie Fenstad, Custodian
Brooke Shannon, Bookkeeper