



FOCUS

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2020



FIRST UNITED
METHODIST
BROOKINGS
AT THE
CORNER OF
**CHURCH &
COMMUNITY**
625 Fifth Street, Brookings
605-692-4345
www.brookingsmethodist.org

Fear Not

Christmas has always been about hope in the midst of darkness. At the time that Jesus was born, the Jewish community of Jesus was suffering bitterly. They were taxed both by Roman and Jewish authorities; they lived with political uncertainty and they suffered disease and illness and devastating infant mortality rates. In this context the Angels announce: *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).

I invite us to hold onto these words of hope for Christmas 2020. Not only are we reminded that we have a Savior who holds us in difficult times. I also point to hopeful signs on our horizon. I thank God for blessing the medical community with the wisdom to care for us: 1) it seems that there will be a vaccine for COVID-19 in the very near future, 2) we also know that doctors and nurses have gained expertise in managing cases of this virus, 3) and that the testing capacity has greatly improved.

For this reason I am encouraging us not to lose hope. Hebrews 10:23 says: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful”*. It is tempting to throw caution to the winds in frustration at the way this virus has limited us. I beg of you: choose instead to avoid people over Thanksgiving and over Christmas. The best Christmas gift we

can give one another is to care enough to keep the people around us safe until we can all get the vaccine. I plead with us all to wear masks, to observe safe social distances and to sanitize our hands.

Jenny and I wish you God’s Blessings for Thanksgiving and for Advent.

Pete

Pete Grassow, Pastor



Dear Church,

In this time of thanksgiving, I am deeply grateful for you! You continue to be present during this difficult season of pandemic, you lead our community in practicing care and sacrifice for others, and you serve in so many ways that are desperately needed right now. Thank you!

I’m sure many of us are missing time with our loved ones as this holiday season begins; spending Thanksgiving without dear ones in our lives is hard. Re-thinking holiday traditions takes a lot of energy. But rest assured, these efforts are not in vain. Every day we hear more hopeful news of effective vaccines on the horizon, soon to deploy to those who need it most. We are nearing an end to this devastating virus.

But for now, we must remain vigilant and creative. We must continue to care for one another as we never have before, because the challenge is greater than it has ever been here in the Dakotas. Let us not lose heart in these final days.

So; as we head into Advent this Sunday, know that we, your church, are giving you ways to connect with God and each other! Our online worship services give us opportunities to worship with our families in meaningful ways; to take ownership of our worship lives together. Here are some ways you can participate:

1. **Pick up a pack of Advent candles** from our narthex to light in your homes as you worship with us each Sunday! They are available on the table at the north side of the building; create an advent wreath, or simply find a few candle holders (dollar stores are great for this!) and share in our Advent candle lighting at home.

2. **Send in Christmas greetings** to your church family! Take your smart phone and gather the family to wish your church a merry Christmas; email office@brookingsmethodist.org with your video and we will make sure it is shared over the Christmas holiday!
3. Get creative! **Show us your crafty creations**; how are you bringing Christ into your home this Christmas? Send in photos of your home nativity, or have the kids color or paint a Christmas masterpiece to share. Look on our Facebook page during Advent for invitations to share your masterpieces!

While it may feel strange for us to worship at home, it is a tradition that goes back to the earliest believers and before. Early Christians first met in homes for worship; and Jewish sabbath worship, as well as Passover, are celebrated primarily in the home still today. So let us connect to our roots this Christmas by making our home a welcome place for Christ to dwell. God is surely with us as God promised! Let us make God welcome in our homes this Christmas.

I pray God's blessing and protection over us all this holiday season; and know that, no matter what, you are not alone. You are loved. And God is with us always.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Krista

Bringing Christ Home for Christmas Devotional Booklet for Advent

Advent celebrates the coming (*adventus*) of Jesus. It is a season filled with anticipation and hope. This is an opportunity to look beyond the COVID-19 virus, the political wrangling, and the bitter hostility of 2020; and draw courage in the promise of Jesus' coming. We not only celebrate his birth, but we celebrate the hope that he brought into this world. This year we will "put Christmas back into our homes" through telling the Christmas Story, singing Christmas Carols, and sharing the love of Jesus within our homes and families. This will be done through the Sunday Sermons as well as through daily devotional readings. This Advent booklet is available on our church website as well as in printed format in the narthex on the table at the north side of the church.



Mission Committee

Christmas Eve Offering Recipients

The Mission Committee continues to meet by Zoom. During the November meeting we discussed future mission offerings and designated mission donations sent in monthly by church members. These are the highlights all made possible by your generosity!

1. We will continue to use **#onething** as the main way to receive mission donations, as well as checks mailed to the church or placed in the offering plates, when available.



2. BROOKINGS FUMC website for online giving <http://www.brookingsmethodist.org/donate.html> sign up and make your donation thru the **#onething**. #onething Donations until Nov 15 go to **Lake Poinsett Camp** needs.
3. All #onething Donations from Nov 15 to Dec 24 go to the Pastors emergency fund.
4. **CHRISTMAS EVE Offering** (online) from Dec 24 to Dec 31, 2020 will be split between:
 - a. Pastors Emergency Fund (we feel the needs will continue to mount in our community).
 - b. Harvest Table (ditto).
 - c. You may donate mittens and/or socks if you come to the services on Dec 24. (Will be dispersed by Harvest Table committee.).
 - d. And Harvest Table always needs diapers....
5. A total of \$2210 came in as pledges this year and \$735.00 will be go to each of these missions:
 - a. Flandreau Indian Chaplaincy
 - b. Brookings Domestic Violence Center
 - c. Red Cross
6. UMC Missionary Covenants will be paid in December out of the church budget. We continue to support Evelyn and Teri Erbele (Mission Interpreters) and Ardell and Gordon Graner (Dominican Republic) who maintain a covenant partnership with our church. \$500 will be sent to Susan Huggins from the Restricted Account as she continues her work with WyCliffe Bible Translators.

7. KIVA recipients repaid loans totaling \$45.95 this month. We are relending \$25.00 and await the next installment of repayments! (Lending is by \$25 increments.) Visit KIVA.org to learn more about giving small loans to entrepreneurs around the globe!

Thank you so much for your continued generosity!
And remember to wear a mask to show your love for others!

Other news from the Mission Committee

The FUMC Mission committee has committed to maintaining covenant relationships with two mission projects within the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

1. Walter (Teri) and Evelyn Erbele's focus is on mission personnel, including support of missionaries through the Advance.
2. Ardell and Gordon Graner are serving within the Dominican Republic. Graner's mission focuses on the development of Christian education/materials for some 70 Christian churches in the area.
3. We also support our home town missionary, Sue Huggins.



Please consider these missionaries in your prayers and designated financial support.

Brookings FUMC patrons donated \$2700 to **NOT** attend the annual Turkey Dinner (Thank You!). Half went go to Feeding South Dakota and half went to the UMCOR Covid Response!

Thank you,
Perry Johnson

Education News

Children's Christmas Program

The children of the church have come together (in a safe way) to present a Children's Christmas program. I would like to invite you to watch our children online beginning December 20 as they present "Jesus Was Born on Christmas" to the wider church.



You will be able to access it through our website at www.brookingsmethodist.org.

Share in their joy of the Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of our savior!

Sunday School and Confirmation in New Year

Due to the uprise in Covid in our nation and state, the Education Committee has decided that Sunday School will remain online for the rest of the Sunday School year. We feel this is the best way to keep everyone safe. If your child has not received a notice or link for a Sunday school class (2 year olds – high school), please let me know and I will get you connected with the appropriate teacher.

Likewise, confirmation will continue to meet online for the rest of the school year. There again, we feel it is safest for all involved. They hope to be able to meet together for a special meeting as a group in the spring or summer – depending on what Covid is doing. Stay tuned for updates on that!

Encouraging message from an online teacher

"Ope Niemeyer and I teach 3rd grade Sunday School to 5-8 students each week via Zoom. We cover as much material as possible in 30 minutes. By using the handbook as a study guide, we are able to keep the students focused on the material. We appreciate the parents who sit with their 3rd grade child to help them read the names from the Old Testament and help keep them on track. There are usually 2-3 students each week who volunteer to read from the handbook. When we get into the New Testament we'll try to have the students find and read some bible verses."

Steve Eliason

Annual Flu Shot during the pandemic

As the Faith Community Nurse, I sometimes feel like a broken record. Please understand that this is not laziness but science! So, my annual fall message: please get your flu shot!! During the COVID pandemic, the flu shot has even more importance. It is possible to get both COVID and influenza at the same time. Many of us have had influenza and know that it is not comfortable. Adding influenza to COVID could be devastating, especially to anyone who is elderly or who has preexisting health conditions. To say it again, GET YOUR INFLUENZA VACCINE!

As a member of the Recovery Committee, I would like to say thank you to everyone who has been to the CLC or church building since we have had a limited reopening. In general, everyone has been respectful of our guidelines. As we continue to pray for the health and safety of our congregation, I encourage you to remain vigilant—stay home, wear your mask if you go out, wash your hands frequently and monitor for symptoms. If you have been exposed to COVID or develop suspicious symptoms, isolate until you have tested negative!

Joanie Holm
Faith Community Nurse

Harvest Table filling community needs

Harvest Table continues to take donations and is open to distribute diapers, baby wipes, laundry detergent, dish detergent, toilet paper, Kleenex, and any non-perishable food items.

For assistance, contact Vonda Kirkham and arrangements will be made for a no contact pick up.

Vonda Kirkham
Harvest Table Coordinator
communitylilfe@brookingsmethodist.org
605-692-4345



Our Condolences

Let us pray for all who grieve the loss of loved ones during this past year.

We especially remember the families of: Lorraine Allstot, Lynda Bailey, Carol Bender, Don Bender, Mardella Buchenau, Wayne Buus, Luverne Crosser, Barbara Dickerson, Claudia Dinkel, Doug Hai, Jim Hagedorn, Harlan Heibult, Rick Holm, Truman Howard, Darrell Iverson, Kenneth James, Jeff Jung, Leland O'Connell, Cindy Pedersen, Ruth Thaden, Howard Schutt, Clayton Sloat, Virginia Tarver, and Viola Wagner.

Meals on Wheels Continue Despite the Pandemic

Meals on Wheels is dedicated to providing seniors with the necessary nutritional support to protect them against food insecurity, and to help them continue to live independent and fulfilling lives. FUMC has been assisting this local program for over 20 years. A special thank you to the following volunteers who have put on their protective masks and demonstrated God's love in the last four delivery sessions:

Aug 3-7: Judi/Don DeZeeuw, Bertie/Dwight Combs, Roger Sandness, Keith/Betty Allison, and Lynette/Bob Smith.
Aug 10-14: Sam/Kay Becker, Brenda Hieb, Ron/Linda Thaden, Bertie/Dwight Combs, Yvonne/Donn Fetzer.
Oct 26-30: Joanie Holm, Judi/Don DeZeeuw, Ron/Linda Thaden, Lorna Jost, and Bob/Lynette Smith.
Nov 2-6: Sam/Kay Becker, Lynn Darnall, Joanie Holm, Jenny/Pastor Pete Grassow, and Yvonne/Donn Fetzer.

Thank you again, Perry Johnson





At the November FUMC Mission Committee meeting, it was decided that we would not be recruiting “Salvation Army” bell ringers this year. It was the consensus of the committee that we would support them in other ways. If you normally donate to the

“Salvation Army”, the easiest way is to use the Registertoring.com website, where you can donate or sign up to be a “virtual ringer”. Donations can be mailed to their office at, 410 7th St, Brookings, SD.

Worship with Us

Through the generous gifts of the **Together** Campaign, we are gathering (in our own homes) for worship experiences. As always you can join us during our radio station broadcast at 9:30 am on Sunday mornings on KBRB 1430AM, or you can watch us online by clicking on the Livestream link on our website:

<http://www.brookingsmethodist.org/worship>

Worship services are aired Sunday mornings at 10 am. You can also join us for Manna in the Middle on Wednesday evenings at 6 pm. All services are archived on our Sermon Archive page on the website.

Advent Series 2020:

Week 1	Sunday, Nov 29	Mary	Luke 1: 26-56
Week 2	Sunday, Dec 6	Joseph	Matt 1: 18-25
Week 3	Sunday, Dec 13	Shepherds	Luke 2: 8-15
Week 4	Sunday, Dec 20	Wise Men	Matt 2: 1-12



United Methodist Women Memorial Luncheon

The United Methodist Women’s Memorial Luncheon for 2020 has been cancelled due to COVID. The UMW members who passed away since our last luncheon or in 2020 are: Viola Wagner, Ruth Thaden, Claudia Dinkel, Mardella Buchenau, and Carol Bender.

These faithful members will be remembered for many years to come. Their families are in our thoughts and prayers.

Prayer Chain

The Prayer Chain is still active. You are welcome to contact Sharon Anderegg at 605-692-4925 with any requests.



Notes from the Office

With much enthusiasm, I am embracing my new role as the office manager for Brookings FUMC which started October 1, 2020. It is part-time, and I am in the church office every morning. During the afternoons (and some evenings), I continue the part-time work of the financial secretary. Thank you for your kind words of encouragement and lovely notes over the past several weeks.

I am very grateful to Amy Merchant and Deb Cowan for their guidance and leadership, and I know that I have “big shoes” to fill.

JoAnn Lee
Office Manager/Financial Secretary

Church Office hours:

M-F 8:30 am—Noon

The Church Office will be closed from December 25, 2020 —January 3, 2021.

Susan's Saga

The account of Abraham contains timeless truths, very relevant to today.

Abraham and Sarah were unable to have children, and God provided the child of promise in their old age, against all human odds. Yet in Genesis 22, God makes the startling request of Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham's response is prompt obedience. He gets up early the next morning and sets out. He not only starts the journey, but it lasts for three long days. We aren't told what Abraham thought or felt during this prolonged time. But he must have had a range of profound emotions, from deep sadness to doubt to wondering why? But whatever he must have thought or felt, he kept going. He didn't procrastinate, come up with distractions (surely there was something he needed to do with his ample flocks), go somewhere else, make excuses, rationalize, ignore, re-interpret, delay, or do any of the myriad of other responses that would have detoured him from carrying out God's instructions. Whether he argued with God during those three days, we aren't told. But he didn't wrestle with God like his grandson Jacob did, decades later. His actions took precedence over his thoughts and emotions. He just kept going in steadfast obedience.

His relationship with God was such that he trusted God, even when asked to give up Isaac, the son of promise, the one on whom his hope for future generations lay. He had his priorities straight: it is better to trust God, even for something painfully difficult, than to insist on one's own way. Of course he did not 'want' to give up Isaac. But he was willing to let obedience to God override what he wanted or wished. His relationship to God was even more precious to him than his beloved son.

Abraham provides an example that is exemplary to this day. His trust and obedience were unwavering. He didn't make excuses or play games with God. He didn't understand why God was asking him to do this, and he certainly would not have felt 'good' about it. But he didn't let his thoughts or feelings de-rail him from carrying out God's instruction. His response to God wasn't selfish, withholding from God what was precious to him. He didn't let anything, even that closest to his heart, outrank his first priority, which is to God.

What a contrast to modern thinking, where our typical response is to insist on our 'rights', strain to understand what we cannot, or rely on our feelings: "If it feels good, do it." We procrastinate, make excuses for our selfishness, come up with alternate 'solutions,' argue, discuss, and try to out-reason God. Instead of clear, unwavering focus on God, we are dissipated and distracted. We have many other priorities, and we shrink from anything unpleasant, difficult, or painful. We allow what we 'want' or desire to outweigh God's will.

We have much to learn from Abraham's model. In this case, it was a win-win outcome. Abraham obeyed God, even though it was excruciatingly painful. God approved Abraham's faith response, and Isaac's life was preserved.

Millennia later, Jesus was also obedient, even to death. His suffering was more extremely acute than Abraham's and Isaac's, but he carried through, not turning back. Even though he did not 'want' to (as we see in the Garden of Gethsemane), He submitted His will to that of God's. His sacrificial death is for our salvation. His love outranked His own personal comfort or convenience. We have even more to learn from His humble example.

Susan Huggins

Susan Huggins is a daughter of this church serving in full-time ministry as a Bible translator among the Mixtec people of Oaxaca, Mexico. Susan's sending agency, Wycliffe Bible Translators, is a non-denominational organization; she raises her own funds to support this ministry.

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