Friendship News, November 2022

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Brainerd

An Open and Affirming Congregation

*Church Office is currently closed due to Covid. Please call to make an appointment.*

Office phone 218-829-2528 Office E-mail uccbrainerd@gmail.com Pastor’s E-mail: pastorleslieucc@gmail.com Website: [www.uccbrainerdmn.org](http://www.uccbrainerdmn.org)

**Schedule a 1 to 1 (in-person or by Zoom or Phone) with Pastor Leslie:**

[www.calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1](http://www.calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1)

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

**Pastor’s Pen – Merry Christmas!**

I know it’s not actually Christmas yet. In fact, I am writing this article before we have even celebrated Halloween and Thanksgiving is weeks away. But if you’ve been to Costco or Target, or many other stores, you may have noticed that Christmas items are beginning to show up on the shelf. Many stores start selling Christmas products as early as August! The primary reason that Christmas shows up so early in retail settings is the simple because customers will buy Christmas stuff really early. I know this from first-hand experience. As an assistant buyer for Harry and David, we started stocking Christmas home décor items in our stores in October because people bought it in profitable quantities. But why?

According to the Georgia Retail Association, when October rolls around, 44% of all shoppers are looking for Christmas gifts![[1]](#footnote-1) As much as we as consumers might get frustrated with what has become known as “Christmas creep,” it does have one benefit that I have been pondering a lot this year – it invites us to think about and plan for Christmas not just for a couple of days, but for weeks! I don’t have an issue with making Christmas preparations early. The issue for me is that we focus our preparations for Christmas on what we need to buy instead of preparing our hearts and minds and spirits for the arrival of a baby whose birth signaled the beginning of a revolution of love.

I invite you this year to set an intention to take the time to prepare for Christmas spiritually. We prepare for Christmas in a variety of ways - buying gifts, decorating our homes, writing Christmas letters and cards, listening to Christmas music, baking, and more. These things help us “get into the spirit” of Christmas. I want to encourage you to also get into the soul of Christmas with a specific invitation…

***Come to church all four Sundays of Advent.*** Advent is a unique time during which we prepare our hearts and minds and spirits for the momentous event of Christmas. Being part of the journey through Advent each and every week can be a powerful experience. I want you to have that experience of feeling the anticipation and the excitement of the birth of Christ and to be present with others in our community as they make the journey with you. So come and be part of the journey. **The journey begins on November 27.**

With many blessings,

**Pastor Leslie will be out of the office for Clergy Retreats November 1st – 5th**

**Moderator’s Musings**

After having been gone overseas for a month, I returned to in-person Sunday services today. “Rooted in Love - Soaring into the Future”, the theme chosen by our Stewardship Committee, permeated the surrounds.

Welcoming me was a special colorful table display done up by Jan Kurtz about understanding cultural rituals; there were bright colored mums saying hello from various spots in the front entryway; a large beautifully decorated box, with an open cover, half full of candy bags for distribution from FCUCC’s door on Halloween night; colorful cloths gracing tables holding the booklets “Stories in Stained Glass” and “Our History”; there was a “Bridges of Hope-Warming Shelter” volunteer opportunity sign-up sheet.

Entering the sanctuary, ushers gave me friendly smiles and greetings, a bulletin, and a tiny box of bright green play dough (which was used in an exercise led by Pastor Leslie about change).  In the front, I saw three bright balloons attached to a giving basket and several white soaring doves. During “sharing the peace”, while my ears took in the melodic music Diane played, I greeted old friends and new.  Their faces, hand shakes, and hand bumps were all so welcoming and warm.  After the uplifting sermon, smells of coffee and tea enticed me to join fellowship downstairs, followed by Jan Kurtz inviting all to join her upstairs for adult forum.  To my surprise, 17 folks joined in the discussion which turned out to be marvelous.

If you haven’t been to in-person services for awhile, I invite you to do so.  For me it provided spiritual comfort, stimulated my mind to think more deeply and creatively, met needs for human interaction, and strengthened connections to old friends and new.  See you in church next week?

Colleen

**First Congregational UCC News & Updates**

**How to watch Sunday worship** The worship service is **broadcasted on the church Facebook page and the church's YouTube channel every Sunday at 10:00 am.**
To watch worship on Facebook, go to <https://www.facebook.com/uccbrainerd/live>
To watch on YouTube, go to <https://www.youtube.com/firstcongregationaluccbrainerd>
Live stream videos are saved and can be viewed at any time.

**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/uccbrainerd

**November Birthdays**

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Floyd Schultz Nov. 2

Eleanor Burkett Nov. 4

Dale Hadland Nov. 9

Jan Kurtz Nov. 20

**Church Office Hours**

 **Wednesday, Thursday and Fridays
10:00 am to 1:00 pm.**

Please call Terri at the office 218-829-2528 or cell 218-537-1636 for further assistance.

**Pastor Leslie’s drop-in hours\* are as follows:**

**Wednesdays 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Fridays 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

*To make an appointment outside of the drop-in hours, go to* ***calendly.com/pastorleslieucc/1to1*** *to schedule an appointment, or call or email Pastor Leslie directly.*

**Church Leadership**

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

**The First Congregational UCC’s Foundation** is looking for a volunteer to join the Board.

 It is a great job – only 4 meetings a year, usually via Zoom. The Board receives requests for funding, evaluates requests and either accepts or rejects requests based upon the by-laws of the Foundation Board and the dollar amount requested.

The Board may request more information before a decision is made to accept or reject.

The best part of being on the Board is that its members get to spend money!

 If you are interested or would like more information, contact Lisa Wigand, president, at (218)330-8477 or lisawdavet@outlook.com.

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

--**Treasurer,** serves a 1-year term (may renew for 6 terms). The primary role is oversight of bookkeeping, church finances and Executive Committee discussions. This candidate should have a strong background or interest in finance or banking.

--**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).

**Committees needing fresh faces and leadership:**

-Christian Education -Trustees -Stewardship -Memorial

-Music -Arts -Christian Ministry

Call or text Colleen LeBlanc - Moderator, with your nominations: 218-251-4065

**Highlights of Council Meeting, October 20th, 2022**

**4:00 pm (In-person and Zoom)**

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

**Present:** Colleen LeBlanc, Marcia Ferris, Alvin Velshaug, Karen Ford, Lowell Johnson, Marina Grabowski, Tim Anderson, Leslie Moughty, Deb Griffith, Judy Whiteman, Terri Chidester (via Zoom)

**September Council Minutes -** Approved with no changes

**Clerk Report** – Karen – Death of Vi Heiser

**Financials**

* 1. Reports completed by Terri.
	2. Budget process discussed. Terri will need budget proposals from each department by 10/31.
	3. Minnesota law and use of the church building and equipment. Leslie will check with Minnesota Conference office for guidelines. Tabled until Leslie gets information from the Conference office. Legal information is needed before any decisions can be made.
	4. Questions of facility and fees regarding use of building and equipment. Council members are requested to notify Colleen if anyone raises questions or concerns about rentals.

**Pastor’s Report**

1. Leslie reported that Monday/Halloween will be Trick or Treat Day. Volunteers and treats are requested. A volunteer leader is needed for this project. Suggestions for volunteers are the Psychology Club from CLC and The Shop. Comment: Good idea for a project. Closure of the Outreach gap is needed.
2. The council approved Leslie’s overnight in the Metro area between meetings in November which will save mileage money.

**Member at Large Report** – Alvin Velsvaag – Dream Catcher project part of the Adult Forum on 11/20.

**Department Reports**

1. Trustees - Trustees have decided that the sanctuary bulbs will be replaced but remain halogen. The LED change out is tabled for later due to cost and uncertainty. Deb also presented the 2023 Trustees’ projected budget which is higher than 2022.
2. Stewardship – Marcia Ferris – See reports of department meeting. See also comments on the process and schedule.
3. Christian Ministry – Marina reported that the committee will meet this week to finalize 2023 budget proposal. By-Law revision is not yet completed.
4. Christian Education – Lowell – Forums have been scheduled. By-Law revision is completed.

**Old Business**

1. UCC Manual of Church – not addressed. Tabled to November.
2. Department By-Law revisions is ongoing. Tabled to November.
3. Development of Care Team – Leader needed to partner with Pastor Leslie to get this project going (how to schedule, training, advertising, etc.)
4. Cleaning and purging in counting room and other storage areas –Tabled until January meeting.
5. Accounting system/storage for technology equipment – Leader needed.

**New Business**

1. Any Social Justice Engagement? Lowell noted the Indigenous People’s Day
2. Other: Study of Treaty Rights was suggested as an Adult Forum
3. Memorial Committee Request – Ideas for memorials are requested
4. Parking Lot: Social Media Guidelines, Creation Justice, Visioning of church’s future including directions, organizations, etc.

Respectfully submitted: Karen Ford, Clerk

**Next Regular Council Meeting: November 17th, 2022, 4:00 pm in-person & via Zoom**

**Mark Your Calendars! ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING**

**Sunday, December 11th, at 11:15 am after worship in-person and via Zoom** Please attend the congregational budget meeting to review and vote on the 2023 church budget.Meeting packets will be emailed to voting members on December 2nd and distributed in person on the previous Sunday December 4th. Please notify Terri in the office if you need a packet sent to you by mail.

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**Stewardship Commitment Season is Here**

***Rooted in love ~ Soaring into the Future***
Dear Church Family,

The Stewardship Pledge Drive for our **2023**budget is nearly over. There are so many things our church can share with our community and greater outreach when the mindset of abundance sees the fullness of God’s love.

Our church is Rooted in Love with 150 years of history, and now we would like to make plans to Soar into the Future. We cannot do that without our members and friends support.

The Stewardship Committee requested that pledge forms be returned by October 30th. If you have not done so already, please do that at soon as possible.

A blessing ceremony was held during worship on October 23rd and many pledges were returned.   Thank you for your thoughtful and prayerful consideration.

In faith, First Congregational UCC Stewardship Committee, Judy, Marcia, Carla & Sarah Jo

**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. Here’s a secret; it’s FUN!! If each household committed to 3 Sundays a year as greeter/ushers and/or coffee hosts we would have a full complement of participants. For instance, I plan to take 2 Sundays in August to greet/usher and 2 Sundays in February to Host Coffee.
The Christian Ministry Committee is working on simplified instructions for these duties and one of us will be available to guide you through your first go if needed. Are you ready to take the leap into RADICAL HOSPITALITY? Give it a go and signup below for your first Sunday as the face of the church! <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E48A9A823A5FFC07-hugs/16034811>

**Friday Book Group - 10:00 am**

Via Zoom: [tinyurl.com/uccbrainerdzoom](http://tinyurl.com/uccbrainerdzoom)

Reading “*DINNERS WITH RUTH: A Memoir on the Power of Friendships”*, by Nina Totenberg.

**Join Pastor Leslie for UCC Covenant Day!**

**Saturday, November 12th 9:30 am – 3:00 pm**

**First Congregational UCC in Alexandria (221 – 7th Ave. W.)**

**Practical Resources & Workshops, Inspiring worship, connections with your UCC neighbors!**

**Registration required. $10/person**

[**https://www.ucccmn.org/event/covenant-day**](https://www.ucccmn.org/event/covenant-day)

**If you would like to carpool, meet in the church parking lot at 7:30 am.**

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**Meets at Noon each Wednesday of the month**

**Weekly rotating Schedule**

**1st Wednesday**: B-Merri - 19624 Co. Rd. 3 Brainerd
**2nd Wednesday**: Yesterday's Gone Bar & Grill - 219 So. 9th St. Brainerd
**3rd Wednesday:** Dunmire's on the Lakes - 19090 MN 371 Brainerd
**4th Wednesday**: Dennis Drummond Wine Co. - 11919 Thiesse Rd. Brainerd
**5th Wednesday**: El Tequila Mexican Restaurant - 7399 Garrison Rd. Baxter

**Vi Heiser Memorial**

Violet Heiser, 95, of Baxter, passed away on October 15, 2022. Services will be held 11:00 am on **Saturday, November 19,** 2022 at First Congregational Church with a visitation one hour prior. Reception follows service in the Fellowship Hall. Interment will be held on the Minnesota Sate Veterans Cemetery.

**November Adult Forum - 11:30 after worship**

**November 20th –** “**Dream Catchers”**

Dani Richter will be leading this session about the significance of Dream Catchers in various regions around the globe. Participants will have the opportunity to create their own dream catcher to bring home while enjoying snacks and listening to flute music.

**November 27th – “Resilience”**

Resilience is the capacity to respond to life's pressures and tragedies quickly, adaptively, and effectively. Join Lowell Johnson for a PowerPoint overview and discussion of this basic tenet of individual, family, and community well-being.

*Do you have ideas for topics or connections with people who might be willing to lead Adult Forums? If so contact Lowell Johnson at 218-820-5290 or* *johnsonlowells@gmail.com*

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**Special Offering - Soup Kitchen**

**Sunday November 27th**

This month we have an opportunity as we give our Fourth Sunday Special Offering to the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen. A lifeline for hungry souls in the Brainerd Lakes Area since 1987. The Soup Kitchen’s mission is to demonstrate the love of Christ by providing meals to the hungry of our community. We offer meals to-go for those that aren't comfortable dining in (must be present to receive meal). Address: 923 Oak Street, Brainerd. Soup Kitchen hours: Sunday: 12:30-1:30pm, Monday- Saturday: 5:00-6:00pm.

Please send your donation to First Congregational UCC, 415 Juniper St. Brainerd, MN 56401. Make sure to note on your offering: “Soup Kitchen”. Thank you! Or for your convenience use our Paypal account at: [paypal.me/uccbrainerd](https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/uccbrainerd) Be sure to note on your offering “Soup Kitchen” in comments.

**UCC TheShop Meal**

**Wednesday, November 16th at 3:45 pm.**

New volunteers will be helping with the meal! For the last several years, UCC volunteers have provided a meal to the youth at TheShop - Brainerd Baxter Youth Drop-in Center. On the third Wednesday of the month, 3-4 youth from TheShop come over to our kitchen and help prepare a delicious meal that is then brought back to TheShop for the hungry and appreciative teens there.

If you are interested about joining this effort, contact Sharon Carlson 218-828-1581or Lowell Johnson 218-820-5290 or 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. Terri Chidester, Admin. Asst., can send you a packet of materials via email or regular mail. The Memorial Committee has prepared the information packet, and it contains all the details you will need as you consider inurnment here at First Congregational UCC. Have any other questions? Contact Dawn Stattine at dawnstattine@gmail.com

**UCC News & Updates!**

**Upcoming Minnesota Conference Events**

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| * **November 10:**[Parents & Caregivers as Sexuality Educators](https://uccbrainerd.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7358d6fe5c26410d29dfb93f0&id=956c58928f&e=5e2c6f93e6)
* **November 12:**[Covenant Days Kick-off, First Congregational UCC, Alexandria](https://uccbrainerd.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7358d6fe5c26410d29dfb93f0&id=553fa70ee5&e=5e2c6f93e6)

**Stay in the know! Sign up for the Outdoor Ministry newsletter!** https://www.uccmn.org/ministries/outdoor/ |

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**United Church of Christ’s Pakistan Response Fund** - Following massive flooding the United Church of Christ is issuing an appeal in support of the people of Pakistan. Declared a ‘calamity hit’ by the government and is expected to increase as rain and flooding continues. The United Church of Christ is already supporting early relief efforts. Your gift will help maintain this relief work and support the long-term recovery for vulnerable persons and affected communities. mail a check made payable to the **United Church of Christ, PO BOX 71957 Cleveland, OH 44194**. Please be sure to note “Pakistan Response Fund” on your check in the memo section.

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

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| **A picture containing text, clipart  Description automatically generatedBridges of Hope Updates!****Happy Thanksgiving!** |

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| **Can you provide a meal this Thanksgiving? Last year, with the help of sponsors like you, Bridges of Hope connected ~165 households to a Thanksgiving Basket! We are so thankful for the sponsors who helped make this happen!**It's that time of the year again! We are seeking sponsors to provide the ingredients for a Thanksgiving meal for households, ranging from single-parent families with one child to large families of multiple children. **Interested or have questions? Sign up today by emailing jess@bridgesofhopemn.org or calling our office  at 218-825-7682.****Please include how many families you with to sponsor, preferred location/city of where you wish to deliver the meal, and size of family you would like to help. Bridges of Hope will match you with a****family and provide you with the details of that family and some shopping suggestions. You will receive your families no later than Tuesday, November 15th.****Thank you for helping others in our community this Thanksgiving. We are so grateful for your support!** |

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**Bridges of Hope - OVERNIGHT SHELTER UPDATE**

The Overnight Shelter reopened for season number two on Thursday, September 15th! Our shelter director, Ann Hunnicutt, and our incredible staff are returning for the second season. Last year we were open for 147 consecutive nights and offered 78 unique adults 942 nights of sleep.

**The shelter will be open from 7 PM to 8 AM this year, accepting walk ins from 7 PM - 11 PM. All guests must be 18+.**

Mark your calendars for another Sleep Out at Bethlehem Lutheran on the nights of **November 7th-10th.** If you or anyone you know would like to volunteer to Sleep Out so that others can Sleep Inside, email ann@bridgesofhopemn.org to get on the list!

If you have a group of adults that would like to volunteer, we are going to be offering volunteer opportunities this season. Contact Ann for more information.

**Collection of Winter Gear for the Warming Shelter -** CLC’s Phi Theta Kapa is hosting this collection and First Congregational has a collection box in the Narthex. Please donate new or gently used items for men and women 18+ of snowpants, boots, heavy duty gloves, long johns, hand/foot warmers. For more information about the shelter: [www.bridgesofhopemn.org](http://www.bridgesofhopemn.org)

**\*\*\*First Congregational needs a point person for future volunteering at the Warming Shelter in December and the rest of the winter. Please contact Chris Yager for more information at 425-286-5456.**

**Hello wonderful supporters of TheShop!**
Our mission at TheShop is to mentor youth to improve overall wellness and develop assets to support healthy life transitions–and the last few years have seen challenges for us and the youth that we serve.

This fall, we have been busy building a sense of normalcy and consistency for local youth as the cold weather sets in. Food scarcity is real. Our 3pm **After School Snack** is often the first "meal" of the day. Our 5:00pm **Dinner** is never soon enough and leftovers rarely happen. We supply a **Food Shelf**, an **Open Closet** with coats, socks, and gloves, and fresh towels and blankets for youth who spend months couch-surfing as best they can.

Whether you support us and our mission by donating monetarily, donating supplies, or just by sharing about TheShop to your community connections, your help impacts our youth in a significant and meaningful way.

TheShop continues to provide a physical space for youth to come and be themselves. Your support is deeply appreciated by all of us here at TheShop.
Thank you for your support,

Your friends at TheShop, Brainerd/Baxter Youth Center

PS We know GiveMN’s Give to The Max Day is almost upon us, but you don’t have to wait to support theShop! We accept donations through our website year round: <https://www.givemn.org/organization/Theshop>

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| Church Calendar November 2022 |

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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  | Office Closed Open by Appt.  | Office ClosedOpen by Appt.  | Office Hours10am – 1pmPastor Drop-in 2-4pm  | Office Hours10am – 1pm  | Office Hours10am – 1pmPastor Drop-in11am-1pm  | **1** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  \*Request for Christmas Flowers – Copies in Narthex  |   |  **1**2pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon-**Y**  | 10am Pryr Crcl-**C 2** 12pm Mens Grp@ B-Merri-**Y** 3:30 TheShop Cooking-**Y**7pm AA Common-**Y**  |   **3**  |  **4** 10:30am Bk Grp- **Z** |  **5** |
| 9am Brnrd Frnds-**Y**  **6**10am Worship& Communion-**Y&V**11am Fellowship11:30 Confirmation |  **7**5pm Stewardship-**Y**6pm AAUW-**Y** Fellowship Hall7pm BACP -**Z** |  **8**2pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon-**Y**  |  **9** **10am Pryr Crcl-Y**12pm Mens Grp @ Yesterday’s Gone-**Y** 7pm AA Common- **Y** |  **10** 3pm Exec Team/Thrivent6:30 BLUE-Park/church backup-Y  |  **11** 10:30am Bk Grp- **Z** |  **12** |
| 9am Brnrd Frnds-**Y**  **13**10am Worship-**Y&V**11am Fellowship **Y**11:30 Confirmation |  **14** 5:30 AAUW-**Y** Fellowship Hall |  **15**2pm Emotions Anon- **Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon-**Y**  |  **16** 10am Pryr Crcl-**Y**12pm Mens Grp @Dunmire’s North-**Y** 7pm AA Common-**Y** |  **17**4pm Council Mtg –7pm AA Dist.-**Y**  |  **18**10:30am Bk Grp- **Z** |  **19****Vi Heiser Memorial**Visitation prior to11am Service12pm ReceptionAt 1st Cong |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8:30 Choir Practice-**Y**9am Brnrd Frnds-**Y** **20**10am Worship-**Y&V**11am Fellowship-**Y**11:30 Adult Forum-**Y**11:30 Confirmation |  **21**   |  **22**2pm Emotions Anon-**Y**5pm LeMesa-**Y**5:30pm Overeaters Anon-**Y**  |  **23**10am Pryr Crcl-**Y**12pm Mens Grp @Dennis Drummond Wine Co.-**Y** 7pm AA Common-**Y** |  **24** |  **25**10:30am Bk Grp- **Z** |  **26** |
| 9am Brnrd Frnds-**Y** **27**10am Worship-**Y&V**11am Fellowship-**Y**11:30 Adult Forum-**Y**11:30 Confirmation***Special Offering******Soup Kitchen******Newsletter/Deadline*** |  **28**  |   **29** |  **30**10am Pryr Crcl-**Y**12pm Mens Grp @El Tequila-**Y** 7pm AA Common-**Y** | **Pastor Leslie Clergy Retreat 11/1-11/5/22**  | **V** Virtual Online streaming Facebook **or Z**– Zoom **C** – Cancelled**Y** – Yes Meeting in-person**?** – No updates | \*Sun. Bk Stdy on hold\*Choir practice is on hold until further notice |

1. https://www.11alive.com/article/news/why-are-we-seeing-christmas-decorations-in-october/85-607442305 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)