



# EXCELSIOR

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*Loving Beyond Ourselves*

## Shorelines Newsletter

January and February 2021



### January Sermon Series

Following the birth of Jesus, joy seems like an appropriate response. Emmanuel—God with us, seen in the fragile life of a baby. In Minnesota, January can be a hard month to feel joy. It's cold, dark, and spring still seems a ways off. Vaccines for Covid have begun, but we still have a ways to go before we can walk around without a mask and not worry about our dear ones. How can we experience joy in the midst of this season? In our everyday lives, where does joy grow and prosper? Join us as Pastor Brooke ventures out with a GoPro to find the places and experiences where the joy of Jesus does fill our hearts, souls, and minds.

|             |                            |                 |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| January 10: | Being Transformed by Love  | Matthew 2: 1-12 |
| January 17: | Known by God               | Psalms 139      |
| January 24: | Finding Goodness in Others | John 1: 43-51   |
| January 31: | Following Jesus            | Mark 1: 14-20   |

Worship online | Sunday mornings | 10:00 am

# PASTORAL UPDATE

"I can't wait until this is over."

"I can't wait until we can return to normal."

"I wish we could....."

"I miss being able to....."

If you're anything like me, you've been saying these things, or something similar, on repeat since last March. I can already start to see some things coming back—camp signups for summer are being advertised, schools are making plans to welcome all ages back in person, family weddings for the summer are moving full force ahead. Still, I'm missing writing in coffee shops, eating inside restaurants, meeting with people in person without spotty internet freezing my screen. I'm not sure I'm used to preaching to a camera, even after 9 months. I wish I could see people's facial expressions when I talk to them on the phone. There is a big appeal to rushing back towards the way life was in February 2020 as fast as we're safely able.

Yet, I don't know if that's good or wise. Life didn't stop happening these past several months. It wasn't all for naught. We learned a great deal. Some of what we learned I hope we hold onto. A lot of the way we were doing things back when life was "normal" wasn't working for us anyway. For starters, I think virtual worship and meetings are here to stay. We have been able to expand our reach and broaden our community in ways we weren't able to when we only did things in person. That will continue to evolve and adapt, and I hope we are able to change and adapt with it as we learn to be more effective in our outreach and involvement of others.

This has been a year to try many new things and get creative. Some of the most fun I have had this past year was doing the sermon series with the GoPro, which is why we're doing it again in January. I adored the different ways people gathered outside safely—on walks, on driveways, on porches, at farms,

in lakes. Even signs asking people to wear masks were clever—"to mask or not to mask is not a question. Wear a mask!" (seen in downtown Excelsior) I hope this spirit carries us past the time of social distancing. Working together to solve problems has revealed new thinking that might not have come to be otherwise.

I hope that 2021 won't have us just yearning for the way things used to be, but excited about the new way of life that we're creating together. What new people will we come across? What new ministries will we begin? How might we approach building community, serving others, and standing for justice in ways we haven't tried before? I'm eager to see how this faith community surprises me in 2021 in delightful ways, just like you did in 2020.

In gratitude,  
Pastor Brooke

*Rev. Brooke Heerwald Steiner*



Pastor Brooke Heerwald Steiner,  
Lead Pastor

Join us for virtual worship every Sunday morning at 10am. You can access the livestream by going to our website ([www.excelsiorumc.org](http://www.excelsiorumc.org)) and clicking on the Live Stream link, or going to our Facebook page to watch the videos. If you need help accessing the worship services or could use a iPad, please let us know and we will be in touch. For an update to virtual worship, see page 10.



## UNRAVELED: SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS **FALL APART**

### February Worship Series

Lenten Worship Series - Beginning February 17 on Ash Wednesday

What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? When the song we've been singing, the life we've been living, the road we've been cruising, comes undone? What if this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed. We will explore stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, and expectations—stories where God meets us in the spiraling and our unraveling plans turn us into something new.

# STANDING FOR JUSTICE



## New Year Greetings from the EUMC Anti-Racism Team

*Loving Beyond Ourselves for Racial Justice*

It was nine months ago, after the March 29 death of George Floyd that our Social Justice Ministry created an Anti-Racism team to address the issue of Racial Justice. Hopefully in those nine months we have connected with you as you:

- Read our Declaration for Racial Justice committing all of us to this work.
- Read the definitions of terms often used in this work.
- Chose a book or video from our resource list.
- Read the weekly emails including word of the week, quotes & notices.
- Participated in one of several sessions about White Identity and White Privilege.
- Read articles in the EUMC Shoreline.
- Joined with other EUMC members in the monthly St. Luke Dialogues on Dismantling Racism.
- Completed the Church Survey about Racial Justice.
- Participated in Zoom dialogues during October's Bumper Sticker Sermon Series.
- Noticed the *United Methodist Stand Against Racism* banner outside EUMC.

Now we begin the New Year 2021 and we are planning new and interesting experiences for our Congregation.

We will be offering circles and other EUMC small groups dialogue opportunities lead by our team members.

A special *Conversation That Matters* with Thaddeus and Natasha Johnson is in the works. They are a Black couple we connected with through Chris Stone. They live in Atlanta and are both faculty members in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.

Continuation of our effort to support the work of the Minnetonka Coalition for Equitable Education.

Exploring a connection with the Minnesota Council of Churches Truth and Reparation Initiative's effort.

This is a first in the nation project to heal the deep wounds of racism.

We ask that you make it your New Year's Resolution to seek out a place for yourself in this important Social Justice Ministry. Blessings to all for the New Year.

# SERVING OTHERS

## Volunteer Spotlight ~ Kurt Jewell

Meet Kurt Jewell. He's the face behind the camera for every virtual worship service. During the day, he works as a software engineer at Dell. When he's not working or filming at church, you're most likely to find him out on a run or on a walk with his wife Jill. He and Jill have two adult sons, Andrew (married to Bryce) and Rob. They first joined EUMC a month after they were married in 1989, when they lived across the street. They're still here, even though they now live in St. Louis Park and drive by many other churches on their way here. He loves the people at our church and all the smiling faces. He also really values the passion in our congregation for serving the world and standing for justice.

- Other volunteer roles he's held: Finance/SPRC/ Ad Council teams, bells, Simpson shelter, sound board operator, teaching Sunday school, Rally Sunday organizer, creating short films, ramp builder at RUMM, host of the pumpkin walk at Trunk or Treat.
- # of virtual services filmed: 40!
- Times he's fallen asleep during a sermon: 0!
- Favorite virtual worship moment: when Melanie (unknowingly) was twiddling her thumbs.
- Least favorite virtual worship moment: when he left the card with the audio back at church and had to come back late at night to pick it up.

What brought him hope and joy in 2020: "It's been important for me to stay connected to family and friends, even if virtually. We visited with people in small groups outside. It reminds me that even in these tough times our individual connections continue to be strong and make a big difference. That is joyful to me."



### Conversations That Matter

Join members and friends of EUMC in learning about and discussing the questions, challenges, and opportunities that social justice issues present.

Beginning in January on the second Sunday of each month, after the service, there will be a short presentation, followed by a discussion of a current, social justice topic. Sponsored by EUMC's Adult Learning and Social Justice Ministry teams.

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| January 10  | Health Care |
| February 14 | Anti-Racism |
| March 14    | TBD         |

# BUILDING COMMUNITY

## ICA Foodshelf

Thanks to the generosity of our church family and incredible volunteers, we served over 22,000 pounds of food to neighbors in need through our ICA Food Shelf in 2020! We adapted to the enhanced need and regulations caused by Covid-19, and saw many families find the groceries they need to keep going.



## Our New Little Free Pantry!

A special thanks to our incredible Outreach team and construction volunteers, who have our new Free Pantry up and running! Stop by anytime and “take what you need and leave what you can”! Our Free Library is back in business too, with both serving all neighbors in need, with no questions asked. Our community needs are constantly changing, and we are grateful for donations. If you’d like to donate items, please drop them off inside the pantry or contact Jordan at [jordan@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:jordan@excelsiorumc.org).

## Year End Giving: Housing Relief

Families in our community are struggling to stay in their current housing situation, which led us to request year end donations to split between three of our non-profit partners: ICA, His House, and WeCAN. These organizations are working on the ground to make sure no one loses their housing, and we can still help. You can still donate at [excelsiorumc.org/give](http://excelsiorumc.org/give) or via check made to the church, with a note for “housing”. We can make a world of difference for those who need us. Thank you to all who have already supported this effort!



## ICA Food Shelf Current Needs

- \* Peanut Butter
- \* Size 6 diapers
- \* Cat Food (wet & dry)
- \* Broth
- \* Toilet Paper
- \* Laundry & Dish soap
- \* Gluten Free items
  - Flour
  - Crackers
  - Oatmeal

# ADULT STUDIES & CONNECTIONS

## Member Address Updates

Glenna Cheney  
3595 Owasso Street, #320  
Shoreview, MN 55123

Bill and Merlene Keeler  
17710 Old Excelsior Blvd, #311  
Excelsior, MN 55331

Jennifer Rosengren  
4501 Shoreline Drive, Apt 209  
Spring Park, MN 55384

Nina Stark  
5330 Beacon Hill Road, Apt. 324  
Minnetonka, MN 55345

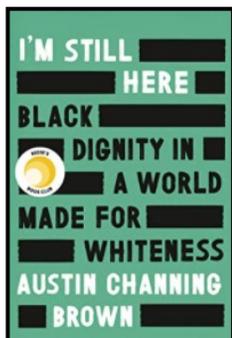
## Esther Circle

Wednesday, January 20- Zoom at 6:30pm.

We will have a virtual discussion on the book *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown. Amy Fischer will lead the discussion.

Austin Channing Brown provides a new voice on racial justice, an eye-opening account of growing up Black, Christian, and female in middle-class white America.

Contact Jill Jewell to get the Zoom link to participate at [JLL.jewell@gmail.com](mailto:JLL.jewell@gmail.com) or 952-688-9245.



## Sarah/Lydia Circles

We will continue to meet in 2021 via Zoom. If you're not already on our mailing list, please contact Joyceln Hughes at 612.802.7105 or [joycelnhughes@gmail.com](mailto:joycelnhughes@gmail.com). We'd love to have you join us.

Thursday, January at 7 to 8:30pm  
Thursday, February 11 at 7 to 8:30pm

Looking forward to seeing you in the New Year!

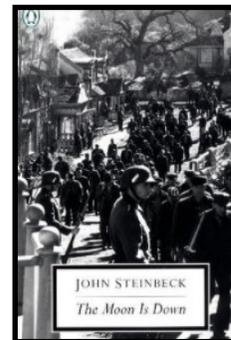
~Joyceln Hughes

## Cover Girls Book Club

*The Moon is Down* by John Steinbeck

Monday, January 25 - Zoom at 3pm.

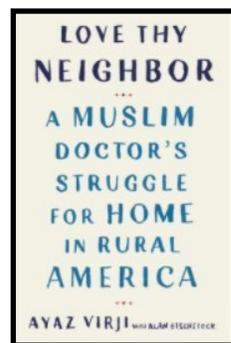
Steinbeck's novel was published in 1942 for the purpose of motivating resistance in occupied countries during WW II. The story starts as a small coastal town in Northern Europe is overtaken by invaders, because of their large coal mine. Little resistance is provided by the town, but the story evolves to tell of how the town's people cannot tolerate being occupied. The theme of Steinbeck's novel is democracy vs totalitarianism. This book is one of the best examples of Allied propaganda of WWII and was published in 92 countries during the war. Susan Dragsten will lead our discussion.



**February Book Club** - Monday, February 22

*Love Thy Neighbor: A Muslim Doctor's Struggles for Home in Rural America* By Ayaz Virji M.D.

In 2014, Dr. Ayaz Virji left the East Coast to practice medicine in the rural town of Dawson MN, because of the shortage of doctors in rural communities. The doctor recounts how he and his family were welcomed until the human consequences and racism of toxic politics following Donald Trump's election. Dr. Virji is ready to leave until a local church pastor gives a sermon on the Islam faith and Islamic beliefs. This is a powerful true story about a Muslim doctor overcoming the climate of racism, hostility, and fear in his community. Lynne Farrell will lead our discussion.



Everyone is welcome!

~ Sue Judd

# YOUTH MINISTRIES



## Confirmation

We continue to adapt to the realities of Covid-19, even as we celebrated the hope that Christmas brings and the beginning of a new year. For Advent, Jordan and Pastor Brooke created a video talking about the importance of waiting, to share with our students, families, and mentors. Advent has passed, but still we ask "What are you waiting for?". You can watch our discussion and find questions for reflection at [excelsiorumc.org/youth](http://excelsiorumc.org/youth).



An exciting area of partnership emerging is our connection as a youth group and church with the **Minnetonka Coalition for Equitable Education (MCEE)**. Our own high school senior, Eleanor Dolan, is a part of this organization, which is "a Minnetonka Schools student-, alumna- and parent-led organization advocating for more equitable education for all Minnetonka students through the district's adoption of MCEE's 11 Imperatives." She spoke on behalf of MCEE at a recent Anti-Racism team meeting, and is helping us find ways to partner our local schools to fight for equity in education.

## Upcoming Events

We are navigating Covid restrictions as we plan for the coming year. The best way to stay up to date is by signing up for our youth newsletters, at [excelsiorumc.org/weekly-news-emails](http://excelsiorumc.org/weekly-news-emails). We are sending out lessons and activities each month via email. Please contact Jordan at [jordan@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:jordan@excelsiorumc.org) with any questions.

Please RSVP for the following events:

- January 24: Movie Night (Virtual, unless the Conference has moved to the Orange Phase of their Regathering Plan)
- February 21: Ski/Tubing Trip to Buck Hill

To celebrate Christmas, we had a Zoom Christmas Trivia Party with our youth group and confirmation mentors! We are planning events for 2021, and plan on continuing confirmation in whatever format we're able to, given meeting restrictions. If you or your student are interested in joining us, please contact Jordan Harper at 312.866.5878 or [jordan@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:jordan@excelsiorumc.org).



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

## Christmas Eve Children's Pageant



# LEADERSHIP TEAM

This Advent season, Pastor Brooke worship series asked us to think about the dreamers of the Bible. As we enter the new year, the Leadership Team continues to work on plans for our dreams as a church. During the past few months, we have been meeting in small groups to brainstorm specific activities and tasks that will help us make progress towards our three main priorities which include:

These goals include:

**Children's Ministry** – looking for ways to invite & engage, equip various age-groups, identify needed building updates

**Connections** – strengthen relationships outside of worship, intentionally intergenerational, consider various formats.

**Virtual Worship and Collaboration** – plan and prepare for sustainable & effective online worship moving forward (even post COVID-19), build our online community and digital tools, support access for all ages.

Leadership Team met virtually on November 16 and December 14 where in addition to goal planning, we discussed the following topics.

## Ministry Teams

We discussed all the wonderful ways our church continues to provide ministry to our congregation members and the larger community. There exists many opportunities for people who want to get involved, lead a small group or project or put your organizational talents to use. Please let us know if you would like to explore being a volunteer on any of the various ministry teams connected to our church.

## Trustees

Consistent with our goals of Connections and Virtual Collaboration, we are excited about the progress made towards updating the website and use of online tools to improve communication and access to information including virtual worship.

The solar project continues to progress and we look forward to installation and operation by spring of 2021.

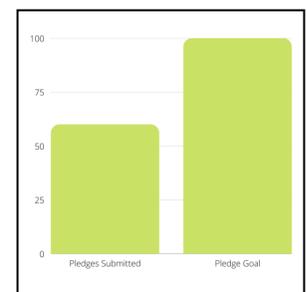
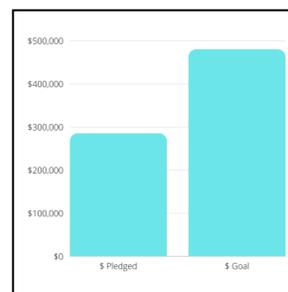
## SPRC

On November 25<sup>th</sup>, we held a virtual church conference where Pastor Brooke's salary and compensation for 2021 was approved. During the December meeting, we reviewed the SPRC Feedback for the District Superintendent.



## Finance

As 2020 draws to a close, our overall church budget looks to be a good balance of income vs expenses. We are very thankful for all the giving to keep ministries running and special gifts for church improvements. A little over half of you have returned your Estimates of Giving for 2021 and we thank you for doing so. We need to hear from more of you in order to plan for the year ahead, so please take a minute and complete an online Estimate of Giving on the [excelsiorumc.org](http://excelsiorumc.org) website. The 2021 budget has been created and will be finalized in January. The success of our first virtual stewardship campaign depends on everyone's input!



In closing, dare to dream about what is possible in 2021, challenge yourself to look for opportunities to get involved in making our common goals a reality.

~John Peichel  
Communications, EUMC Leadership Team

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## Treasurer's Report

2020

|                                | November  | Year-To-Date |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Operating Fund Income          | \$43,800  | \$413,448    |
| Offering Income                | \$42,854  | \$409,279    |
| Income - Other                 | \$946     | \$4,170      |
| Operating Fund Expenses        | \$42,111  | \$375,985    |
| Net Operating Income           | \$1,688   | \$37,464     |
| Net Operating Income-Last Year | \$(7,706) | \$(19,989)   |
| All Funds Cash Balance         | \$492,230 |              |
| Less Designated Fund Balances  | \$394,221 |              |
| Unrestricted Cash Balance      | \$98,009  |              |
| Long Term Mortgage Balance     | \$415,538 |              |

\*The table above represents our standing at the close of November.

Thank you for your continued financial support! We are approaching the end of 2020 and in good shape financially.

As we start 2021, please consider completing an Estimate of Giving, if you haven't done so already. You can do this at [excelsiorumc.org/give](http://excelsiorumc.org/give). It helps us plan for the coming year, ensuring we run a smart and balanced budget in 2021.

The past few months have seen giving for our ICA satellite food shelf, our Free Little Pantry, Simpson Shelter, Social Justice ministries, Housing Help, Christmas Gifts, Winter Clothing Drive, and more! Our congregation continues to step up and support the needs in our community. Thank you to all who have given toward these ministries!

- Jordan Harper, Glenna Cheney, and Chuck Welle

The upcoming Leadership Team meetings are scheduled for

Monday, January 29 at 6:30pm

Monday, February 23 at 6:30pm

# OUR PURPOSE

*Loving Beyond Ourselves*

# OUR VISION

*To be known as a nurturing, inclusive, and courageous Christian community.*

# OUR MISSION

*Sharing God's love by building community, serving others, and standing for justice.*

# STAFF

Church Phone: (952) 474-5471

Pastor: Rev. Brooke Heerwald Steiner  
[Brooke@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:Brooke@excelsiorumc.org) x103

Youth, Community Engagement Director,  
Financial Treasurer: Jordan Harper  
[Jordan@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:Jordan@excelsiorumc.org)

Office Administrator: Jennifer Specca  
[office@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:office@excelsiorumc.org) x100

Property Manager: Steve Colby  
[steve@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:steve@excelsiorumc.org) x110 (off Mondays)

Music Director: Gail Fisk  
[gail@excelsiorumc.org](mailto:gail@excelsiorumc.org) x109

Organist/Keyboard: Jane Kuhn

Nursery Care: Tricia Sweeney

Custodian: Kevin Krotze

# VISIT

Office & Church Building Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 11am-1pm

Check website for updates

Friday CLOSED

[www.excelsiorumc.org](http://www.excelsiorumc.org)

Find a current calendar, weekly emails, information on events, and other resources.



Facebook by searching for Group "Excelsior United Methodist Church"

## Sunday Worship at 10:00am Currently Online

More information:  
[www.excelsiorumc.org](http://www.excelsiorumc.org)



Our  
"Pageant in  
Pictures"  
was a success!

Thanks  
to all our  
participants.

