

Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



From Pastor Dana

A Reflection on Suicide upon my nephew's completion of suicide April of 2015

My mother died when I was 15, my father when I was 20. I was carrying around a lot of unprocessed grief. I was emotionally stuck in survival mode. I had made many conscious and subconscious decisions since my mother's death to isolate myself. I didn't realize I was reacting in a protective manner out of fear of suffering another loss, any loss.

I was graduating from college and my 21st birthday was coming up. There was no one attending my graduation and there was no one anticipating the celebration of my birthday. I lived in an apartment off campus. I had no job. I had no sense of place. There was no longer a "home base" I felt I could go to, to collect myself, find a job and help me make the transition to standing on my own two feet. I felt weighed down by the obligation to soon be repaying student loan debt. I felt exhausted and so very old at 21. Life was hard, really hard. As my future stretched out before me, it was overwhelming to think of continuing on with the burdens I carried. I only wanted to be set free from the weight of my pain. It also "appeared" life was easy for other people. They were in relationships, they were finding jobs, and they had the clear presence of people who loved them in their lives and who celebrated milestones of graduation, 21st birthdays, and even engagements with them. I was not in a sustaining loving relationship. I was in communication with one brother but I needed" o much more emotional support than that relationship could provide. There were a number of other family dynamics that added

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Father's Day
Sunday, June 18

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to the complexity of my suffering. There are really no words to describe the depth of pain and despair I felt at that time in my life. The day I contemplated ending my life, I really wondered why I was created at all. I prayed to God, sharing my pain. I felt like I was worthless and could be cast away like trash. No one would miss me and I would not have to feel the pain anymore. I was standing on “the edge” about to decide to step off, when I believe God responded to my prayer. I envisioned the face of a friend and heard their familiar voice say, “God doesn’t make junk!” I listened. The beauty of all creation came to mind and it resonated with me. It made sense to me that I was not junk. I realized I was made for a purpose. I had yet to discover what that purpose was. In that moment I stepped back from the edge of that possible fatal decision. I chose life. The battle was not over but in that moment I received what I needed to keep going until I was clear of the darkness around me.

As I write I am aware that I still, upon occasion, struggle with the value of my life, even if I know I have a purpose and that I am living out that purpose. When those feelings or thoughts surface I take them to God in prayer, and I trust the value he has for my life. Literally I would not be alive today if it were not for God’s relationship with me.

A friend reminded me of the story of Legion, in the Gospel of Mark chapter 5. A man was living in darkness, in the tombs. He could not be subdued. He threw himself about and was

bruised. He was possessed by demons; his name, Legion, indicated there were many that tormented him. Jesus sent the demons out and Legion was healed but he was still bruised and there would still be scars of the many injuries he sustained over the years. I have such wounds. I intentionally worked not to find myself “there” again. I recognize the importance of community, for me that eventually was to be found in the Body of Christ.

I now push through my introverted tendencies to withdraw (while at times it is still self-care to do so) by reaching out, intentionally sharing where I am, what I am thinking, and what I am feeling. It’s an ongoing balancing act to manage my need to withdraw while ensuring I don’t withdraw too far or too long. Some would describe me as “fiercely” independent. I would propose that while I may be wired that way, the traumas I experienced when I was a youth forged a sense in me that I had to protect myself and be self-sufficient. I felt so alone in my journey. At times when I might need to ask for help, I simply don’t, because while I would offer it to others...a wound that remains is that I struggle with expecting anyone to help me. When people respond in helpful loving ways, it means so much to me.

It is clear God continues to work on healing in this area of my life, as I am completely dependent on asking for help from group of people who are my dog care team as I make my way through graduate school. Also historically ministry requires I ask people to come along side me and to help me serve others.

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Tragically, on March 28 2015, one of my nephews committed suicide. Unfortunately, I do not know his story of pain. I don't know what brought him to the edge and drove him to step off it to end his life. I can only say I have experienced a pain like that. I know it is not a sudden decision. The battle of choosing life or death is a prolonged one. He was carrying a great burden for some time. I now stand on the other side of suicide, experiencing a different kind of pain as part of the family grieving in the wake of his loss.

Some faith traditions suggest that suicide is an unforgivable sin. I do not believe that. I realize this is supported by suicide being classified as our fullest act of free will, not trusting God with the possibilities in our future. When I consider the great vast love of God, his complete understanding of who we are, and the gift and protection he provides of our free will, I conclude he knows there is a risk some of us will make that suicide decision. I believe that God's intention is for us to be in relationship with him. I believe we each have a unique place in God's plan and it is important that we reach the fruition our journey on earth, working in cooperation with God toward the salvation of the world. I believe that heaven is a place of no more pain, no more sorrow and where every tear will be wiped away. I can think of no better place for those who feel such deep despair to find welcome and loving understanding than in the arms of God.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and

you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew

11:28-30 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are

trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:3-5 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The United Methodist Book of Discipline (Paragraph 161 N)

"We believe that suicide is not the way human life should end. Often suicide is the result of untreated depression, or untreated pain and suffering....A Christian perspective on suicide begins with an affirmation of faith that nothing, including suicide, separates us from the love of God. (Romans 8:38-39) Therefore, we deplore the condemnation of people who complete suicide..."

Written May 2015 by Dana Caldwell

06/07 Rae Wooldridge

06/16 Nancy Sigsworth

06/20 Emma Rose Dusek

06/20 Layla Rondeau

06/22 Dana Caldwell

06/22 Bill Faughn

06/28 Gabriella Moody



Office hours will be changing in June, Rae will be in the office Mondays Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 am to 2 pm but not Fridays. Beginning the week of June 5th.

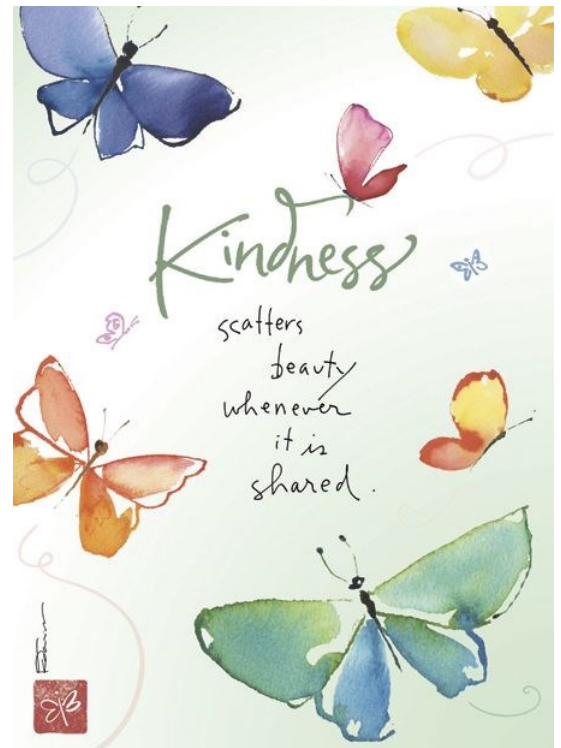
Family

Whoever does the will of God
is my brother and sister and mother."
—Mark 3.35

In a culture where family is right up there
with God, maybe higher—
Jesus says, "Yeah, family is it.
But family isn't blood.
It's love."

Without, by the way, a "father,"
an authority figure. Just God.
No more tiny family,
with my little fence around who I care for,
who I'm responsible to.
Instead you give me this infinite family.
All those who follow you differently than I do—
I belong to them. We are one.
I am to care as much about strangers as my own
sister,
respect opponents no less than my own brother,
honor people so unlike me as my own mother.
And this miracle: though it seems hard
to love them all as if they are mine,
when I do—
I come home.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Unfolding Light
www.unfoldinglight.net



Happy Father's Day to all
the dads out there! Whether
you are a Dad, Daddy, Dad-
to-Be, Stepdad, stepping up
as a dad figure for children
without a dad- Thank you!
The world needs you and
we are grateful for you!!

- Rahul Naik

From
Abby Betzold
YOUTH MINISTER



Youth Summer Activities

Summer is upon us & we have activities to enjoy! We are inviting all youth grades 6th-12th to participate in the following activities:

June 14th : Youth Service & Fun Night at Dave & Cheryl Bowman's Home 5-9pm

June 28th : Service & Fun Day (Wild Mtn.) 8am-4pm

July 12th: Service & Fun Day (Northwoods Newsletters & Trampoline Park) 8am-4pm

August 9th : Service & Fun Day (Feed My Starving Children & Whirlyball) 8am-3:30pm

August 23rd : Valley Fair Fun Day 8am-7pm

Ways to support our youth program this summer are both by volunteering to chaperone or drive youth to events, or by supporting us financially. We are estimating it will cost about \$100 per youth for the entire summer of events. We would love to have members help sponsor our youth at any dollar amount to allow students to attend these events without worrying about the cost. If you are willing to volunteer or donate funds please reach out to me. Finally, we appreciate your prayers & sharing these events with friends & family who may have youth in these age groups!

Blessings,

Abby

Youth Director Contact Information:

Abby Betzold
715.268.7390; ext. 12
715.715.641.2237 (cell)
Youth.ameryucc@gmail.com



Congo Church Rummage Sale

Our church rummage sale will be Saturday, June 3rd from 8am-1pm

Items will be free will donation unless marked!



We could use your help! Sign up in the narthex or by contacting Abby Betzold to help sort items beforehand or be there on the day of the sale, we appreciate all help!



Women's Fellowship Night

Thursday, June 8
5:30-8:00pm

Please join us for an evening of fun, fellowship and making a flowerpot for a shut-in. All costs are covered for the evening. Please call Cheryl Bowman At 715.268.2062 if you have any questions.



MISSION TEAM 2023

Our 2023 Mission Team is getting ready to do the Lord's work through our hands by working with Lake Agassiz Habitat for Humanity of Moorhead, MN. We will be heading up there on Sunday, June 18th for the week! We hope you'll help send us off at our 10am worship service that day, we gladly accept baked goods to get us through the week too! Follow our Facebook page for updates throughout the week and then see what we've accomplished at our comeback service on Sunday, June 25th.

Wednesday Bible Study

The Wednesday 10am Bible study decided we will go in a bit of a different direction for the month of July. We are going to hold a "celebrate Jean Murphy month.". Jean was a beloved member of our Congo Church who passed away last September. Jean was a was a passionate Photographer, Artist, and Author. We will be reading through Jeanne Murphy's Book "Small Town Women" the four Wednesdays in July. We plan on reading two short stories a week and have some discussion about what we read. Any and All are invited.

Shanon Hayes has volunteered to be one of our readers. We hope others will volunteer to add their voices in reading one of Jean's delightful short stories. If you are interested in being a reader or would like to join to listen and discuss the stories, please contact the church office 715.268.7390.



MINNESOTA TWINS BASEBALL GAME

Batter up! Join us for a church wide outing on Sunday, July 9th to go to a Minnesota Twins baseball game! We will leave directly after church & carpool to the game! Tickets are \$10 a person and you must pay to reserve your spot by June 15th. This ticket includes your seat, a pop & hot dog in the nonalcoholic Cub Foods Family Section at the stadium. To RSVP reach out to Abby Betzold at youth.ameryucc@gmail.com or 715-641-2237, this is open to all ages!

Council Meeting 5/9/23

Attendance: Sherry Monson, Pastor Dana Caldwell, Sandy Morris, Heather Rushfeld, Cheryl Bowman, Sheldon Betzold, Abby Betzold, Chad Leonard, Dave Bowman

Meeting opened in prayer by Pastor Dana

April Council minutes reviewed. Motion to accept minutes made by Sandy M and Cheryl B. Passed.

Clerks Report – Sandy M reported 2 new members, Leslie Nyholm and Penny Carter and 1 death, Scott Edin. Current members = 145. Sandy also reported a previous long-time member Meredie Danielson passed away. Her funeral will be held at our church in June. MaryAnn Bowman will co-minister the service with Pastor Dana.

Youth Director – Abby B reported the youth participated in music and reading for the Easter Service. Amery Area breakfast Club has been meeting. The average students attending have been 9-10. The last one will be held in May. The youth game night had approximately 50 kids from 5 area churches. The plan is to have 2 youth activities/month and 1 church wide event/month over the summer.

Board of Christian Education – Abby B reported VBS will be held July 16-20 th from 5 – 7:30. Wapo staff will be involved with VBS. Beth Leonard, Abby B and Pastor Dana will be attending a workshop regarding the Picture of the Bible Curriculum. There will be a movie night on June 5.

Board of Deacon – Cheryl B reported on the following events: Dana's Installation, Blessing of Police and Fireman on June 4. The Board of Deacon's will be attending a workshop at Pastor Dana's on August 5. They will be providing cake during coffee hour on June 11 to recognize Sherry M retirement.

Board of Congregational Giving – Abby B reported a letter will be sent out announcing summer Church activities. May 28 (Pentecost Sunday) will be honoring/remembering all members/friends of the church who have passed away from 2022-2023 during worship.

Pastor's Report – Pastor Dana reported the following:

- ☐ Ashley Prellwitz wedding on Friday September 22, 2023
- ☐ May 20 – Prayer Walk 8 am
- ☐ July 15 – Prayer Walk 8 am at the Amery School
- ☐ June 9-11, 2023, Dana will be attending the Conference Meetings. Abby B will be doing the Worship Service that week.
- ☐ September 23 from 10-2 pm Mental Health Walk and Education
- ☐ Planning to have the "Mr. Roger's" Movie at the Amery Theater with Adam Tulkki presenting a Question & Answer after the Movie. Adam did his graduate thesis on Mr. Roger's. Cost will be \$250.00 to rent the theater.

Community Director – Heather R gave her resignation from the Community Director Position. She found another job at Journey House at UWRF that will help her meet the qualification for the Chaplin criteria.

Board of Trustee – Dave B reported all the church policies have been missing since the re-modeling/re-organizing. They are working on the Employee PTO policy and Youth Directors Job description. Painting projects are being completed. The church may need a lawn mower for the summer.

Treasure and Financial Secretary – Chad L (no report)

Old Business – none

New Business

- ☐ Summer Worship discussion – consensus of council to leave worship time the same.
- ☐ Family Events – Twins Baseball Game – recommendation to offer tickets for ½ the cost. The other ½ would be funded by the church.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Motion to adjourn made by Chad L and Abby B. Passed

Submitted by: Sherry Monson



28 Cleaning - Emerson 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School	29 Memorial Day	30 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	31 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm –7:00pm Youth Group	1 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	2 9:00am – 1:00pm Office Open	3 8:00am – 1:00pm Rummage Sale
4 Cleaning - Monson/Ormsby/Morris 9:00am Diaconate Meeting 10:00am Communion 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School	5 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	6 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 11:00am – 12:00pm Health and Happiness Walk and Block Party Mtg.	7 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm WOW 7:00pm Christian Education Mtg.	8 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	9 Office Closed Wisconsin UCC Conference	10 Wisconsin UCC Conference 6:45am Ruby's Pantry Volunteers 7:30am – 9:00am Ruby's Pantry Distribution at SMC
11 Cleaning - Dusek Wisconsin UCC Conference 9:00am Mission Team Meeting 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School	12 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	13 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 11:00am Hope and Healing Meeting 6:00pm Council Meeting	14 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm –9:00pm Youth Night at the Bowman's	15 8:15am Ministerium 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	16 Office Closed	17 11:00am Meredie Danielson Service - visitation 1 hour before service
18 Cleaning - Betzold 8:30am Trustee Meeting 10:00am Mission Team Leaving Service	19 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	20 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm Gaither Video	21 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	22 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	23 Office Closed	24
25 Cleaning - Bowman/Anderson/Bevington 10:00am Mission Team Return Service	26 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	27 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	28 8:00am –4:00pm Youth Service and Fun Day 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	29 10:00am – 2:00pm Office Open	30 Office Closed	1