#### **July 2013 Newsletter**

First Congregational United Church of Christ 1000 Willson Avenue Webster City, Iowa 50595 515-832-2232



Years ago Bertrand Russell, a famous British philosopher and logician, gave a short address entitled "Why I am not a Christian." (If you've never read it, you can google it and take a look.) I've excerpted a few of his many comments:

"I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above Him in those respects."

"I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world."

"The whole conception of God is a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men. When you hear people in church debasing themselves and saying that they are miserable sinners, and all the rest of it, it seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings... A good world needs knowledge, kindliness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men."

All of us who self-identify as Christians have reasons to do so, even if they are imperfectly understood or named...and my guess is that we also have, like Bertrand Russell, a list of reasons why we are "not Christians"—although for us this translates as "I am not a Christian because..." rather than Bertrand's "I am not a Christian, because..." (the power of a *comma*—very UCC!) Perhaps you have never understood your faith in terms of what you <u>don't</u> believe, but for many of us in the UCC what we *don't* believe can be as compelling as what we *do* believe!

And so in response to Bertrand's address outlining his many objections to being a Christian, here is *my* short (and incomplete) list of why "I am not a Christian because..."

"I am not a Christian" because I believe in eternal punishment, aka Hell, Gehenna, Hades, etc. Some would say this dilutes or even blasphemes the truth of God, but it has become impossible for me to embrace the idea of a loving and merciful God inflicting a cruel and unjust punishment (eternal torment) on any human being, even the most twisted. To be a Christian because it offers "fire insurance" against eternal damnation seems to me to reduce the Gospel to a fear-based message about avoiding endless torture, rather than a life-giving message of love.

"I am not a Christian" because I believe in the inerrancy of scripture. Our denomination states it well in two ways: "We take the Bible seriously but not literally," and "God is Still Speaking," meaning we hold that the Bible contains both timeless and time-bound truths and therefore must be studied and interpreted in our time and place, rather than accepted verbatim uncritically. While the witness of the scriptures is a cornerstone of the Christian faith, to be a Christian simply because "The Bible tells me so," or more importantly, to proclaim and teach doctrines simply because "The Bible

tells me so" requires us, as Bertrand observed, to fetter our free intelligence by words uttered long ago—long before modern science, psychology, sociology, medicine, the discovery of four continents, the human population explosion, the abolition of slavery, women getting the vote, etc.

"I am not a Christian" because of John 3:16, in part because of items #1 and #2 on my list above, and in part because "exclusive" truth claims made by Christians and Christianity have created so much darkness and misery in the world, as well as light(Remember the Crusades and the Inquisition?) Being a student of world religions and modern spiritual movements I have found profound truths and lofty moral teachings packaged without any references to Jesus; truths and teachings that stand on their own as windows and pathways to the Divine. In short, I am not a Christian because I believe there are no other legitimate pathways to God; to my mind that makes God not the God of Christians but instead a "Christian God" (you may want to reflect on the difference.)

"I am not a Christian" because of other Christians. Of course in one sense that isn't true--if there was no transmission of the faith over the last 20 centuries by other Christians there would be no organized religion known as Christianity. Yet I put this item on my list because I have been repelled by Christianity, as well as attracted to it, because of its purported followers. Perhaps it's unfair to judge the power or merits of any faith by those who identify with it, but I am certainly not a Christian because of the sanctification, or even congruence of belief and behavior, among Christians!

So you now may be wondering "Why is Craig a Christian?" or even "Is this guy a Christian at all?" While there isn't space here to go into the details, the short answer to that question would be: culture of birth, upbringing, my life experiences, sense of Call, Scripture, Jesus, the Church...and of course the single best answer would be "God" –whose hand I sense being present in the midst of all of these other "answers."

So enough about me... why are YOU a Christian? Why did you join—and why do you remaining this centuries- old faith? I suspect we all have unique answers to that question, and I suspect our answers have changed over the course of our lives. But regardless of how you answer that question today, I hope you count these as some of the reasons you are a Christian—at least of the UCC variety.

"I **am** a Christian" because our faith proclaims:

The Good News that all of us are invited to have a living encounter with the Still-Speaking God:

The Good news that following Jesus is a call to humility, love, and service, not a reason for arrogance and judgment;

The Good News that the testimonies of our ancestors' faith are not the test of ours;

The Good News that "No matter who you are, or where you are at in life's journey, you are welcome here!"

In a religion that purports to have "Good News"—doesn't that sound like Good News to you?

That's why I'm a Christian!

—Pastor Craig





Recipe for healthy living:

- 5 daily affirmations (positive statements you make about yourself).
- 24 hours of being kind to yourself every day.
- 3 balanced meals daily.
- 2 healthful, tasty snacks daily.
- 2 hugs from someone special daily.
- 2 good daily laughs.
- 3-6 days of moderate exercise weekly.
- 1 handful of close friends.

#### **CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

M 8 am - 1 pm

T 9 am - 1 pm

W 8 am - 12:30, 1 pm to 4:30

Th 8 am - 12:30, 1 pm to 4:30

F 9 am - 1 pm

#### **Church Staff**

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor

Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316

Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. 838-2989

Church's e-mail: fcuccwc@wmtel.net

Sharon Perry: Stephen Ministry Ldr
Nancy Shelton: Choir Director
Myra Maxon: Organist
Mary Van Diest: Pianist
Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's.
Myra Maxon: Financial Secretary
Luverne Bierle: Church Treasurer

832-5435
832-5435
832-3662
832-3754
832-3662

# ATTENDANCE

**June 2** 72 **June 9** 80

June 16 65 June 23 59

June 29

#### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

- 1 Katie Short
- 1 Chris Swanson
- 2 Ava Stockdale
- 2 Katie Anderson
- 2 Barb Stearns
- 3 Jeff Anderson
- 3 Samuel Aubrey Thurman
- 5 Nicholas Brim
- 5 Dale Olson

- 6 Branden Bahrenfuss
- 6 Jacob Dean Rohmiller
- 7 Mary Gilbert
- 7 Susie Brim
- 8 Duane Vavroch
- 9 Erica Oberender
- 9 Jean Mowry
- 9 Kellie Henning
- 10 Aspen Pauline Lomicka
- 11 Dylan McCoskey
- 11 Sadie Anderson
- 12 Caryl Hollingshead
- 13 Leah Maass
- 13 Kyzer Patrick Zinnel
- 16 Verie Hollingshead
- 17 Anne Prescott
- 18 Ed Latham
- 18 Cindy Henning
- 20 Luke Rohmiller
- 21 Candy Butz
- 23 Mike McKee
- 23 Nate Lahr
- 24 Melissa Abbott
- 24 Donald Royster
- 25 Landen Ploeger
- 25 Alex Swanson
- 26 Marian Abbott
- 26 Scott Jaycox
- 27 Troy Stockdale
- 27 Van Thompson
- 28 Riley Nelson
- 28 Nicholas Blake Paton
- 28 Michele Rexroat
- 31 Jayce Abens
- 31 Breanna Lee Bahrenfuss



#### **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

- 13 Ben & Erin Pullen
- 16 Branden & Tracy Bahrenfuss
- 19 Al & Christy Fiala
- 22 Clark & Jean Mowry
- 24 Ron & Vicki Long
- 26 Todd & Katie Sonsalla
- 29 Colby & Candy Butz
- 31 Charles & Anne McMurray

#### **Hygiene Kits**

The Mission Board would like to remind everyone that the Hygiene Kit collection tub is still in Fellowship Hall as an ongoing project. With the devastation parts of the country have felt due to the tornados I am sure that these kits would be a welcome sight for victims of these disasters. So this is just a friendly reminder that the tub is available and if you want to add to it, the Mission Board will see they get to CWS and on to folks who need them. As a reminder these are the items that go in the kits: towel, Washcloth, Wide tooth comb, Nail clipper, Bar of soap, Toothbrush, 6 Band-aids, \$2.00/kit as postage costs.



#### **Tornado**

The caring and compassion of this church family was again evident on May 26 when the pickle jar was set out for donations to be sent to the victims of the Moore tornado. \$601.00 was collected and sent to the national UCC which will then be sent to churches and families that need it in the Moore area. Thank you!

#### **Baby Shower**

Our church is once again responsible for the food pantry at UDMO for the month of July. From July 1 to July 30 you are all invited to a baby shower. There will be a basket for our goodies set up in Fellowship Hall. A few of the things they could use is baby food, diapers, diaper rash cream, and teething gel. Formula is not necessary as they are all able to get this through the W.I.C. program. Thank you in advance for your kind generosity.

The Mission Board

#### **Mission Trip**

Eleven members of our congregation will travel to St. Louis on July 1 to the "Urban Mission Inn", an inner-city mission program of Union Avenue Christian Church. They will return on July 6. If you are in need of pastoral services during this time please contact our Vice-Moderator, Verna Bierle at 832-4752 and she will contact Pastor Graves.

#### 50 Great Days

Our total for the 50 great days of Mission4/1 Earth

Engaged Earth Care - 226 Trees planted - 331 Letters - 1

Thank you for all you have done. We hope that your concern and care for our planet earth continues even though the tracking of hours is over.

#### Condolences

We offer condolences to the family of Del Klaver who passed away on June 13. A celebration of his life was held on June 23 at First Congregational Church.

#### **Thanks**

To everyone from the UCC, Thank you for everything you have given me in these past ten months. Thank you for your kindness, your support, your open ears...and most of all your open hearts. In the Sunday morning services and in Fellowship Hall. at choir practice and during Meals -n-More, I have made some of the most beautiful memories of my entire stay in Webster City. With you I have found true friendship and acceptance. And I will miss you all so much. I hope I can stay in touch with as many of you as possible - I am on facebook and my email address is cm-nottbrock@web.de Thank you for making me feel so welcomed, so loved. Thank you for making this place my home. ~Clara

#### **Thanks**

The Mission Board thanks all who helped make the Ice Cream Social held in June such a success. A big thank you to those who furnished ice cream, toppings, bars, worked in the kitchen, cleaned tables and cleaned up! We cleared \$835 which was divided between UDMO and the Webster City Free Clinic.

#### **Congratulations**

Karmen Rocker and Andy Wehrhan were joined in marriage on June 15, 2013. Congrats!



#### **Summer Lunch**

On June 10-15 volunteers from First Congregational helped with the Summer Lunch Program held at the WC Middle School. During our week to volunteer we served between 180-190 children and adults daily. In addition, 100 sack lunches were sent out to various groups. Thanks to the many volunteers who graciously took time to serve the children of our community!





### Summer Camp

Pilgrim Heights is in full swing. It's not too late to attend a camp of your choosing. There are opportunities for all age groups. Registration forms are available in the church office and more information is on the bulletin board. <a href="http://www.pilgrimheights.org/camps/residential-camps">http://www.pilgrimheights.org/camps/residential-camps</a>

#### Relay for Life!

Thank you to all of you from First Congregational for making the Relay for Life such a success. Our church raised a whopping \$1958 for the cause—\$803 at Marjorie and Wil Groves' coffee which was then matched by Marjorie's employer, Meredith Corporation, and \$152 at the coffee after church held by the Congo Clippers team, and \$200 from the guilt made by the Piecemakers. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And thank you to the team who walked in the Relay—Marjorie and Wil Groves, Dale and Gayle Olson, Jenny Maass, Mabel Prescott and Duane Vavroch. Your efforts will make a difference in the fight against cancer. ~Mary Vavroch



#### Recharge: Marjorie's Takeaways

This year the Iowa Conference United Church of Christ separated the education from the business by organizing two days of rejuvenation, inspiration and learning called Recharge, June 8-9. I was your lay representative. For me, points to remember include:

Social media is connectional, not so much for marketing. Email and voice mail have lost to texting, social media, blogs. You can have meaningful ties with people you never meet. Speaker Rev. Victoria Weinstein blogs on www.beautytipsforministers.com. Church signage communicates with the community, including the unchurched. Add a "take one" box by the door to hold info on our church, mission, groups, times, email, phone numbers, website. In the social hall, remove leaflets except the most critical and current. Look at bulletin boards weekly and remove

letters, posters, brochures; they look

junky. Use same font and logo on signs, Facebook, and newsletters. Use the local church mission statement often. Don't use clip art or acronyms (VBS, OCWM, UCC) unless they are spelled out nearby. Look at how the public sees us as they pass by in car or on foot. Most seekers find us on the Internet: make sure info is up to date, says Rev. Weinstein, in the church image workshop.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is reexamining how pastoral leaders are identified, formed and authorized for the future of the church. Level 1 is a path for leaders in lay ministry, focusing on Biblical and theological reflections and practices. www.tasc21.net.

The Church's next moves are into faith communities that may not exist now. We need to be open to different approaches and to honor and validate models that aren't traditional. Take risks, says Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President, UCC.

How do you reach new people when the matriarchs/patriarchs want things to remain the same? Look at church history and you'll find common threads between groups, e.g., leading to Civil War or struggle for civil rights. There will be resistance to reaching out, so start with small groups outside Sunday service, says Rev. Chuck Kelsey, Journey Church startup, near Coralville. Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) funding is often based on loyalty. Now, folks are more likely to give to projects that appeal to them; fundraising is more donor centered, notes Rev. Black. The Iowa Conference UCC business meeting is Oct. 19, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Ames UCC. I am gone for October so Webster City UCC needs a delegate. Please contact Dale Olson, cabinet moderator, to volunteer. Thanks for sending me as your

representative to Recharge!

Marjorie Groves

#### **VOLUNTEERS!**

We need YOU!

There are sign sheets in Fellowship Hall. We need workers and food Contact Linda Lahr if you are interested in helping each day or just one or two days!

VBS will be held July 8 - 12 from 4:30 to 7:30 at Asbury United Methodist Church. This includes kids in Preschool through sixth grade!

The kids attending will be fed supper from 4:30 to 5:00, then we head upstairs for 2 and a half hours of fun! A program from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday will cap off the week.

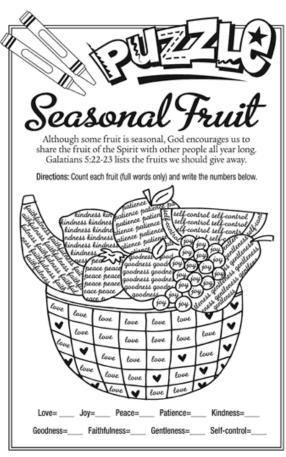
To help promote Vacation Bible School, we will have a float in the 4th of July parade in Williams. Come help decorate and have the kids join us in the parade!

Please call or email Linda Lahr if you would like to volunteer or if you have any questions.

Email: lahr0575@hotmail.com

Cell: 297-2407





Faithfulness=6, Gentleness=6, Self-control=5 Answers: Love= 24, Joy=18, Peace=7, Patience=7, Kindness=7, Goodness=6,



"peace" of this yummy desse

#### What you need:

- adult help
   two 8" cake pans
- cooking spray
   gups mini marshmallow
   tablespoons butter
   food coloring (green
- and red)
   9 cups crisp rice cereal
   mini chocolate chips

- Spray cake pans.
   Melt 4 cups marshmallows and 2 T. butter in micro wave or on stove top. Add
- green food coloring. Stir.

  3. Pour 4 cups cereal into bowl. Add green mixture.
  Stir with buttered spatula.
- 4. Put half into each pan and press along the sides with buttered hands.
- 5. Repeat using 5 cups marshmallows, 4 T. butter, 5 cups cereal and red food coloring.
  6. Press half into the center
- of each pan, leaving a narrow outside border of
- green. Smooth the top. 7. Press mini chocolate chips into the red mixture.
- 8. Let cool. Then cut into wedges. Enjoy!

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST Webster City, Iowa Cabinet Meeting-June 11, 2013

Members Present: Moderator-Dale Olson Pastor-Rev. Craig Blaufuss

Vice-Moderator- Trustees-Bruce Perry

Treasurer- Women's Fellowship-Dalene Schltter

Finance Sec.-Myra Maxon Mission

Finance-Duane Vavroch Worship-Holly Riemenschneider

Christian Ed- Evangelism-Wilma Reinsel

Staff/Parish- Clerk-Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Moderator, Dale Olson. Pastor Craig Blaufuss opened with a meditation and prayer. With the addition of two items, approval was given to the consent agenda. The treasurer's report was presented as printed showing the May offering at \$8,306.00 and expenses for May at \$11,394.08. Wilma moved and Dalene seconded to approve the committee and board reports, the minutes of the last meeting and the treasurer's report. Under pending business there is a conference survey to be completed. As Dale is our Moderator, he will be doing this. Summer picnics will probably take place again this summer. Watch the calendar for date and time. The Trustees will be reporting in a couple months on the results of the building surveys. Pastor Craig reported that the summer lunch program is very well attended. He did say that it does take many volunteers to help with this program. Vacation Bible School will be held from July 8-12, from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm at Asbury Methodist. Let us not forget about our youth and continue to support them in VBS, and our own KLAB and Sunday School program. The Ice Cream Social will be held on June 19<sup>th</sup> at our church this year.

#### **Reports of Pastor and Boards**

**Pastor's Report:** Congratulated the Women's Fellowship upon hearing all the monetary gifts that this group has given to area charities and service organizations. Well done indeed! All those in attendance at the Women's Fellowship Spring Dinner enjoyed a taste of Deutschland and listened to Clara Nottbrock share her reflections about her year as an exchange student. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> First Congregational said goodbye to Clara with a skit, gifts, a congregational blessing, and a reception held in her honor. June 9<sup>th</sup> was our first service of the summer with worship beginning at 9:30 am. On Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, we will gather at 5:00 pm for our weekend worship, replacing the traditional Sunday morning service on the 30<sup>th</sup>. First Congregational is scheduled to lead the care center services on the 30<sup>th</sup>. We are adding Windsor Manor to the schedule at 1:15 pm. They have purchased the same hymn books as Southfield and Crestview, and have CD's with music to accompany hymn singing. The first draft of the church's website has been returned to the committee for review. After revisions it should go "live" in July. First Congregational was well represented by volunteers for the summer food program which began June 10<sup>th</sup>. The volunteers will be greeting, counting, hosting, delivering food, doing cleanup and interacting with the students. Twelve people will be participating on the St. Louis Mission Trip on July 1-6. The schedule so far is to work with underprivileged children, at the St. Louis Food Bank, in a community garden and at the Bridge (large homeless support shelter). The Mission Board has agreed to host the 2013 CROP walk here at First Congregational. We will need to recruit a coordinator and treasurer for this event. If you are a CROP enthusiast, please speak with the Mission

Board or the pastor to volunteer. The pastor attended the Recharge Iowa Conference Event at which Rev. Tony Stoick, our ACM, is now officially retired and being replaced with Rev. Brigit Stevens of Minnesota. We will now have the Rev's Pleva, Jensen and Stevens as our entire conference staff in Iowa. This means less service and support for our churches. Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President of the UCC was in attendance and spoke on the key themes: rethink church, embrace risk, continue spiritual/missional engagement with the world. The Shalom Circle will be meeting in the East Chapel on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm for an hour of reflection, meditation and prayer. Scheduled dates are June 12 and 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Evangelism Board:** Reported that Pastor Craig and Vicki Blaufuss took Easter gifts to shut-ins and people at the nursing homes. The public relations committee is working to get the website up and running. Darcie Swon is the church's technical person assisting in this project. Stephen Ministry is working on ongoing education for Stephen Ministers. The Congregational Preservation and Renovation Survey is completed and will be presented to the Trustees when they can all be present. Laurie Epps talked about the 50 Ways to Build Strength in the church and how to welcome visitors and members to our congregation. Donna Ryherd reminded all to attend the Sunday afternoon worship times when we can to support Pastor Craig and those who go regularly.

**Worship Board:** Discussion centered on plastic vs. glass cups for pew Communion. When it is a busy time, such as Christmas or Easter, and pew communion is being served, plastic cups will be used to speed the process of cleanup. All communion during this summer months will be by intinction with Mary Vavroch in charge on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Holly on July 14<sup>th</sup> and yet to be announced who will be in charge on August 4<sup>th</sup>. All bread and wine that are leftover from communion should be taken home. June 29<sup>th</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup> will be the dates for Saturday evening church services. On these weekends there will be no Sunday morning church services. Beginning June 9<sup>th</sup> and continuing through September 1<sup>st</sup>, Sunday morning church service will be at 9:30 am. Next meeting will be June 13<sup>th</sup> 6:30 pm.

Mission Board: Discussed the addition of Windsor Manor to the Sunday services. Ginnie Veach reported that donations of \$555.00 were given to Strengthen the Church Mission. Stephanie reported that the goal for trees was met on the Mission 4/1 Earth. All plans have been made for the Ice Cream Social to be held at First Congregational in conjunction with Faith Methodist. The individuals who have volunteered to help with the Summer Food Program have had their orientation meeting. Mary Vavroch is serving as captain from our church for the Relay 4 Life to be held at Jewell on June 28. There will be a coffee on June 16<sup>th</sup> with the pickle jar out for donations. The next packing date for the backpack program will be August 22. Gail Olson will captain the July 24<sup>th</sup> serving at Beacon of Hope. The focus for UDMO in July will be collecting items with a baby shower theme. This will run through the month of July. It was decided we would be willing to host the CROP Walk event and willing to find a treasurer, but as a board do not want to take on coordinating this event. If Mark Gustafson is filling the pulpit some Sunday in the future, then after the worship service, we would invite him to share his hope for a Haiti orphanage project at this time. An invitation would be given to Connie Gustafson to have a table to sell jewelry at our December Alternative Giving Fair. Next meeting will be Saturday, June 29, at 3:48 before the first Sat. evening worship service. **Trustees:** As soon as they are able to get all the trustees together, they will be meeting to discuss the Congregational Preservation and Renovation Survey.

Women's Fellowship: Reported that they were able to give away \$4,600.00 to various

area charities and service organizations.

Christian Ed: No report. Staff/Parish: No report. Finance Board: No report.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm. Mary Van Diest, Church Clerk

#### 9:30 A.M. WORSHIP

# **Treasurer's Report**

INCOME	MAY	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$8,306.00	\$66,366.61
Other Income	1.75	7.71
Memorial/Special Income/Interest 6,368.42		16,531.42
TOTAL INCOME	\$14,676.17	\$82,905.74
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,417.00	\$7,471.96
Pastoral Services	5,265.41	31,342.52
Maintenance and Repairs	1,847.99	13,108.89
Church Office	2,000.62	11,981.12
Music Ministry	589.58	2,947.90
Christian Education	136.98	19.48
Local Ministry	0.00	30.00
Mem. Funds Distribution	403.45	13,095.03
Misc. Expenses	<u>136.50</u>	540.11
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$11,797.53	\$80,537.01
Difference	\$2,878.64	\$2,368.73

First Congregational United Church of Christ 1000 Willson Avenue Webster City, IA 50595

## **Address Service Requested**

God is still speaking to everyone in the home of:

