

December 2014 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>



“They said there'll be snow at Christmas, they said there'll be peace on earth. But instead it just kept on raining a veil of tears for the virgin birth...” –from the song “Father Christmas,” by Greg Lake and Pete Sinfield

It would be difficult to ignore what has been happening in Ferguson, Missouri the last few days. With the grand jury's decision not to indict officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown there has come a rain of tears and tear gas that has deeply troubled the hearts of many Americans, including my own. I can't begin to make sense of the countless news reports, opinions, and all the evidence and conflicting testimonies that veil this tragedy like an unholy fog, obscuring the truth....and I can't begin to make sense of all the senseless violence that has not only lit up the nighttime sky in that tortured town, but has also lit up the airwaves, social media, and even our personal conversations with all manner of verbal violence and ugliness. Seeing and hearing all of this as we approach the season of Christmas, it is hard, as Lake and Sinfield observed in their song “Father Christmas,” to believe that anything, much less Christmas, can deliver “peace on earth, goodwill among men”. ..and in my cynicism I am tempted to agree--just as I am tempted to agree with the concluding lines of their song: “Hallelujah Noel, be it heaven or hell, the Christmas we get we deserve.”

And yet the coming of the Christ and the coming of Christmas have never been a guarantee of anything... other than the eternal love of the Creator for all of humanity, and the hope of a *new heavens and a new earth* that continues to elude us. **The essence of the Christmas story is that God so loved this world that a Son was given to us—not so God could remake this world for us, but so God could offer us the image of who we could be as sons and daughters of God, and offer us a vision of what life could be like if we would only choose to live justly, and in peace.** Sadly, we collectively continue to see and choose images and visions that often take us closer to hell than to heaven...as Ferguson attests.

And yet each year Christmas returns, and with it the possibility returns that this year we will see differently and choose differently...and in doing that put an end to the veil of tears that has rained far too long on the Fergusons of this world. That, rather than a new toy or a new tie, is the hope of Christmas that we celebrate, and it is a dream that needs every heart, every tongue, and every hand so that the dream can become our reality... and the Christmas God believes we all deserve can become our reality as well.

Friends, as you spend the season of Advent preparing for the coming of Christmas, do not forget that Christmas is above all else an opportunity for heaven to come a little closer to earth-- *with your help*. Do not neglect your spirit, nor neglect the spirits of others who need your thoughts, your kindness, your support and your love. Do not allow the crass materialism of the holidays to blind you to what is loveliest and best at this most beautiful time of the year. And most of all, consider that the greatest gifts you can give to the Christ-child—and to the Fergusons of the world—is for you to advocate for justice for ALL people, and to be a peacemaker with your thoughts, your words, and your deeds...a peacemaker in your family, your community, your country, and your world. Do that, and you will have honored the spirit of both Father Christmas and the Heavenly Father, whose deepest wishes have always been for peace on earth, and goodwill among all people!

–Pastor Craig

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



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Tracy Wehrhan
3 - Alexis Tudor
4 - Ron Epps
5 - Grant Ryherd
6 - Jamie Roelfs
8 - Angelina Brim
8 - Pat Kesler
9 - Myra Maxon
10 - Joyce Gelhaus
11 - Galene Groves
12 - Mark Riemenschneider
17 - Bob Van Diest
17 - Matt Byrne
19 - Phyllis Hovland
20 - Don Bruner
20 - Jessica Larson-Bailey
21 - Liz Weieneth
22 - Ann Latham
23 - Linda Thurman
23 - Jeb Long
23 - Jennifer Van Diest
23 - Amanda Remington
24 - Jayd Brown
24 - Brenda Brown
25 - Dan Ryherd
26 - Alan Yungclas
26 - Benjamin Brincks
31 - Dawn Kesler



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

18 - Sharon & Bruce Perry
28 - Dale & Gayle Olson
29 - Bob & Sandi Weieneth

30 - Lynn & Debbie Jaycox
30 - Ed & Andrea Mosbach
31 - Mark & Connie Gustafson

ATTENDANCE

November 2	55	November 9	86
November 16	58	November 23	75
November 30			

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 832-5435
Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr 839-5619
Nancy Shelton: Choir Director 835-0208
Myra Maxon: Organist 832-3662
Mary Van Diest: Pianist 832-3754
Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's. 832-5341
Myra Maxon: Financial Secretary 832-3662
Luverne Bierle: Church Treasurer 832-4752



Ways to Avoid Winter Falls

- Before it freezes, cover surfaces around your home with de-icer, rock salt, sand, or kitty litter. Carry a small bag in your car or pocket to sprinkle on patches of ice when you see them.
- Look out for broken paving or cracked sidewalks. If a surface looks slippery, walk on the grass.
- Wear proper fitting boots or shoes with wide, low heels and rubber soles, not smooth leather.
- Snow and ice cleats that fit over your boots and shoes will grip the ice and give you the most traction. Make sure they are easy to put on and take off before purchasing a pair.
- Carry a flashlight. It will help you see and make you more visible to others.
- Walk flat footed, not on your toes, lengthen your stride and give yourself extra time.

Celebrate Christmas by Worshipping at First Congregational UCC

What better way to experience a deepening of your faith than to spend time in church during the Season of Advent? These are the worship opportunities at First Congregational UCC we will observe in December 2014:

- **During each Sunday in Advent**, members of First Congregational will lead us in the lighting of our Advent wreath, and we will sing traditional Advent hymns and Christmas carols.
- **On November 30th** we begin our Advent season with Holy Communion, and following the service we will decorate the church for Christmas.
- **On December 21st**, our children will present the Christmas program "Listen To Christmas" during worship.
- **On Wednesday, December 24**, we will hold our **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship service at 5 p.m.** Pew Communion will be offered at this service.
- **On Sunday, December 28**, we will gather to worship at our regular time with guest preacher John Lint. There will be no Sunday school that day.

Come and share in the beauty and joy of the Christmas season as we worship God and celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World!



Christmas Luncheon

Women's Fellowship will hold their annual Christmas Luncheon on Saturday, December 13 at 12:00. Cost for the luncheon will be \$6.00. Everyone is welcome including spouses and all church members.



ORDER YOUR Poinsettias

It is time to order poinsettias. Order forms are in the Sunday bulletins or you may place an order by calling the church office. Plants are \$14.00 and orders are due by December 7.

Meals'n More

Join us for Meals'n More Wednesday, December 3 at 5:00. The Henning and Tudor families are hosting the meal.

Christmas Program

Kids are getting excited about this year's Christmas program, "Listen to Christmas" coming December 21 during morning worship. Rehearsals are held during KLAB on Wednesday afternoons. There will be a dress rehearsal on Saturday, December 20 at 9am. Please make plans so your youngsters can attend these important rehearsals. Plan also to be in morning worship December 21 to "Listen to Christmas."

Advent

Advent is here and we are again asking for volunteers (families or groups of friends) to lead the Advent Candle Liturgy. If you are willing to help with this important part of our Advent worship please sign the sheet that will be posted by the church office.

Alternative Giving Fair

The Mission board is again sponsoring the annual "Alternative Giving Fair" during the month of December. We invite you to consider honoring friends and family members with a gift to one or more of these projects instead of adding to their "collections" of stuff. The following projects will have a display in Fellowship Hall starting December 7:

KLAB – Almost Home Shelter
Women's Fellowship – Equal Exchange coffee and chocolate and Haystack pecans
Church World Service – blankets, hygiene kits
Stepping Forward Ministries in Romania
Heifer Project
Quakerdale Christmas stockings
Shoeman Water Project

KLAB Fundraiser for Almost Home

What better way to honor the spirit of Christmas than to care for our nonhuman companions who bring such love and joy into our lives? This year at the Alternative Giving Fair our KLAB students will be selling snowmen filled with hand-dipped frosted pretzels. They make great gifts—and the proceeds will support the “Almost Home” no-kill animal shelter in Fort Dodge.

Church World Service Clean Up!

The Mission Board would like to ask for your help and contribution for Church World Service and the hygiene kits! We have quite a few things ready to go but we still need TOWELS, WASH CLOTHES, NAIL CLIPPERS, BAND AIDS, and one gallon zip lock bags. You may drop off your donations in the Fellowship Hall.



Stockings for Quakerdale

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care....or at least in the Fellowship Hall with care! Once again, it is time to think about the young people staying at Quakerdale this holiday season. There are 4 boys from ages 14 to 17 and 7 girls from ages 13 to 17. There is a stocking display where you may drop off some of the needed items to fill the stockings for Quakerdale. These items might include (but feel free to use your imagination): Pens/Pencils, Soap, Hair Ties, Socks, Shampoo/Conditioner, Mittens, Flashlights, Cards/Games, Christmas Candy, Deodorant,

Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Sticky Notes, Hats, DVDs, Small calendars, Stickers, Gum, Nail Clippers, Small Games



YSS of Hamilton County

Youth & Family Center of Hamilton County requests the pleasure of your company at the 2015 Friends Campaign Kickoff on Tuesday, December 2 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. (program is at 5:30) at the County Extension Office.

Ornaments

The brass family Christmas ornaments will again decorate a tree this year in our sanctuary. If you have changes to your engraved ornament or wish a new one, please contact Donna Ryherd (835-8016) or the church office. We will hang the ornaments during the December 7 service. Some ornaments have been retired and may be taken by interested members. (See box in Fellowship Hall)

Kids Against Hunger

To further the spirit of the season and do something for others, the Mission Board has arranged for us to have a date with Kids Against Hunger. We will be meeting at The Bridge on Sunday afternoon, December 14, at 1:30 to pack some boxes to help feed hungry kids. Plan on joining us for about an hour and share the joy of the season with others in our church and then pass that on to those who are hungry.

See you on December 14!
Mission Board

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25. Reports are due on Saturday, December 20.

Thanks

I want to thank everyone for all the prayers since my surgery. Thank you for all the cards of well wishes and all the goodies. I had to share with the boys. Most of all thank you for all the prayers. God was truly with me thru this my fourth back surgery. Prayers to all for a blessed holiday season.

Vicki

November 9, 2014 Congregational Meeting

At 11:10 a.m. on November 9, 2014, Vice Moderator Luverne Bierle called to order the congregation of First Congregational United Church of Christ for the purpose of considering the 2015 budget and proposed renovation plans. Vice Moderator Bierle appointed Myra Maxon as clerk pro-tem.

Alan Yungclas moved, Kolleen Taylor seconded that the 2015 budget be approved. A written ballot resulted in 60 in favor and 2 opposed.

Don Bruner moved, Alan Yungclas seconded that the proposed renovation plans be approved in its entirety, including the airlock entryway. Tom Riemenschneider briefly discussed the plan; Tracy Wehrhan explained how the project would be financed. After a brief discussion a written ballot resulted in 55 in favor and 10 opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Myra Maxon
Clerk pro-tem

KLAB Halloween Party



Dismantling the Bookcase



Practicing the Christmas Program



9:15 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL
10:30 A.M. WORSHIP

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting – November 11, 2014

Members Present:

Moderator.....	Verna Bierle	Pastor.....	Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator.....	Luverne Bierle	Trustees.....	Tom Riemenschneider
Finance Sec.....	Myra Maxon	Women's Fellowship.....	
Finance.....	Duane Vavroch	Mission.....	Diane Vasquez
Staff/Parish.....		Worship.....	Holly Riemenschneider
Christian Ed.....		Evangelism.....	Wilma Reinsel
Clerk.....		Clerk Pro Tem.....	Myra Maxon

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by the Moderator, Verna Bierle. Pastor Craig Blaufuss, opened with a meditation and prayer. Luverne Bierle moved, Holly Riemenschneider seconded that the minutes of the October cabinet meeting be approved as printed. Motion carried upon vote.

Committee reports were open for review and discussion. Worship had not met, thus no report. Tom Riemenschneider reported that they would be meeting with Wayne Schlotfeldt to go over the specifications for the renovation. Mark Trueblood would be starting his portion after the first of the year. Christian Education had not met; Staff/Parish had no report; Wilma presented the Evangelism report; Diane Vasquez the Mission report; Finance had no new news; budget had passed at the Congregational Meeting on the 9th of November. Duane moved, Wilma seconded that the reports be accepted.

Luverne Bierle presented the Treasurer's report and moved that it be put to audit; Duane Vavroch seconded; motion carried upon vote.

Luverne Bierle reported on the Nominations Committee – a few slots remain to be filled; A discussion ensued about the time of the cabinet meeting; **it was decided that the Cabinet would meet on Wednesdays at 5:15 p.m.** Next meeting will be January 14, 2015 at 5:15 p.m. Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Clerk Pro Tem
Myra Maxon

Reports of Boards and Committees:

Trustees: Met on Nov. 2, 2014 of the congregational renovation informational meeting. Les Ploeger and Don Bruner (for Gretchen) will move and remove the bookcases in fellowship hall. Al Yungclas wants to start working on the coat rack this week. Joyce Gelhaus and Les will check to see if we can get some flooring remnants for a temporary fix under the new coat rack. Tom Riemenschneider will call Wayne Schlotfeldt and Tracy Wehrhan on reviewing the specifications. Joyce will call Mark Trueblood again to find out about the start date and removing the box and old vents. Moved by Gretchen Bruner and seconded by Les that we use Jaycox Construction for the work in fellowship hall after Mark Trueblood is done with the new air system. Tom will ask Cabinet who is to be responsible for opening and closing church when other groups use the building. Motion made by Bruce Perry and seconded by Tom to approve the use of the church for Blood Dives on January 8, May 14, and September 10, 2015. Motion approved. The date of the next meeting to be announced.

Women's Fellowship: Get well, birthday and thinking of you cards have been sent to members of the congregation. Mabel Prescott has purchased a stool for the water fountain. Joyce Gelhaus reported that the oven has been cleaned. SERV V Sale will be held on Friday, 11/7/14 and Saturday, 11/8/14 at Trinity Lutheran Church. Verna Bierle reported that Equal Exchange products for the Alternative Giving are here. The pecans are here and selling for \$10 a bag. The Christmas luncheon will be held on December 13, 2014 with a \$6.00 charge. Mayflower Circle is the hostess, Providence in charge of decorations and Resource committee responsible for devotions. Joyce read an e-mail from Steve Mather from Stepping Forward Ministries about a former orphan they helped escape from human trafficking. Steve will be here in March to give us an update on this situation. Karin Yungclas presented an opportunity to support women. It is entitled Women to Women and operates training schools in war torn countries. To sponsor a woman the fee is \$30 per month with a \$30 enrollment fee. Gayle Olson told about a program called "Kiva: a loan program that helps women. You are able to choose whom you would like to help by going online. When their loan is paid back to your account, you can then loan money once again. Mabel has experience with this program. This information will be brought back to the circles and will report feedback at the next Executive Board Meeting. Christmas gift ideas were discussed for the Pastor. There are sign-up sheets for coffee, Meals 'N More and Klab. Verna gave the Treasurer's report as follows: Old Balance, \$1,409.53. New Balance is \$2,532.31 with \$1,735.10 in the Alverson Trust.

Mission Board: Craig Blaufuss reported that the church has a team for Warm Hearts Warm Homes. There are 10 teams in the county. There are 21 homes throughout the county that are in need of the services of these 10 teams. The teams are to meet at 8:30 am at the Sr. Citizens Center on Nov 15. The next meal to serve Beacon of Hope will be Nov. 19, 2014. The NIN offering totaled \$480.00 as of 10/5/14. The 2013 offering was \$562.00. The question was asked if not making announcements and bringing it to people's attention accounts for this difference. Literacy Initiative update: Gayle Olson has met with Molly Olinger Topf, Reach Out and Read Iowa coalition leader, Angie Martin Schwarze, and 2 providers from the WC Medical Clinic. These providers are on board with the implementation of this program. The clinic is now in the process of filling out the application. The next step will be to identify funding streams for this program. There was some discussion of applying for a NIN grant for some of this funding. This will be pursued further as the application is completed and approved. Towels, washcloths, bandaids, nailclippers along with gallon size ziplock baggies are need for the hygiene kits. A mission trip for 2015 is still a possibility. Alternative Giving Fair: several tables will be set up and ready to go from December 7th through the 21st. So far the groups represented are: Almost Home—KLAB, Equal Exchange Items---Women's Fellowship, Pecans—Haystack Circle, Hygiene Kits/Church World Service—Mission Board, Heifer Project, Stepping Forward orphan and the Shoeman Water Project. Karin Yungclas is writing a newsletter article promoting this activity. The Quakerdale table will be set up on Nov. 23rd. There is a possibility of packing food for Kids Against Hunger on December 14th. The items that are in Fellowship Hall for UDMO will be taken to them after they are moved to their new location. On Thursday January 22, 2015 will pack backpacks for the local backpack program. Steve Mather will be in Iowa on March 3, 2015. Diane Vasquez volunteered to be the cabinet representative for November. The next meeting of this board will be Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2014 at 5:15 pm.

Pastor's Report: Noted that at the Congregational Meeting held on November 9, 2014 that both the 2015 budget and the building renovations proposed by the Trustees were approved. He thanked the Trustees for their tireless efforts to move this project to a vote. Also thanked the Finance board for their work on the budget and their work with the Trustees concerning how to finance the renovation. The Children's Sabbath was well attended. The haunted house in the catacombs netted \$157 for Relay for Life. The KLAB Halloween party was held on Nov 5th with

18 kids enjoying an afternoon of games and goodies. The KLAB students will participate in the Alternative Gift-Giving fair, raising money for Almost Home Animal Shelter. The adult education class is now studying Christian Mysticism. The confirmation class is studying Genesis and the topic of “sin,” and watching the movie “Noah.” There are four individuals who wish to join the church. Membership classes will be scheduled after Nov. 17, 2014. The holiday grief support series “How will I Get through the Holidays?” began on Nov. 2nd. There are 6 participants in this group. This series is being led by Al Fiala and Sharon Perry. The Stephen Ministry’s annual Christmas party will be held Dec 4th at the church. Currently 6 Stephen Ministers are matched with care receivers. The annual community Thanksgiving service will be held Sunday, Nov. 23rd at 7:00 pm, at Asbury UMC. Pastor Jeff from Asbury will preach. Asbury is making plans to hold a “Blue Christmas” service some time in December The CROP walk held on Oct. 12th generated a total of \$1459 in donations with \$322 contributed by First Congregational. Rev. Chris Burtnett was installed as pastor and teacher of the Congregational Church in Algona on Sunday, Nov. 9th, at 2:30 pm. Pastor Jim Cunningham of the UCC church in Eagle Grove announced his retirement, and with the departure of the interim at Humboldt UCC and John Willson at Blairsburg UCC, there are now 3 UCC churches in our vicinity who are searching for pastoral leadership. All Saints Sunday will be held on November 23rd. The first Sunday of Advent (with communion) will be November 30th. The Children’s Christmas program will be Dec. 14. That has since been changed to Dec. 21st.

Treasurer’s Report for October 31, 2014: October offering---\$10,983.46, Other income---\$7.38, October expenses---\$13,091.19. As of this date the income to budget is 69.17% and the expenses to budget is 79.29%.

Annual reports are due on December 20, 2014.

Annual meeting will be on January 25, 2015.

Next meeting of the Cabinet will be on January 14, 2015 at 5:15 pm.

Reports of Boards and Committees Respectfully submitted by Church Clerk, Mary Van Diest

Report of Cabinet submitted by Church Clerk Pro Tem, Myra Maxon.

Treasurer’s Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$10,983.46	\$132,606.29
Other Income	7.38	1,037.84
Memorial/Special Income/Interest	2,413.01	24,914.04
TOTAL INCOME	\$13,403.85	\$176,690.85
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	\$2,128.33	\$16,837.34
Pastoral Services	5,162.91	69,250.18
Maintenance and Repairs	11,191.86	61,605.35
Church Office	2,649.51	25,218.39
Music Ministry	604.00	6,040.00
Christian Education	29.62	977.99
Local Ministry	0.00	2,476.93
Misc. Expenses	192.46	3,314.95
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$21,958.69	\$185,721.13

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:

