

January 2016 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>

“My heart is open wide tonight for stranger, kith or kin. I would not bar a single door where love might enter in.”—

Kate Wiggin

I’m writing this article a little more than a week before Christmas, and so I am fully immersed in the momentum that hurtles us toward December 25th. After a rocky start at the beginning of Advent, the Christmas Spirit is now growing within me... and all the woes of the world currently seem to be less than all-consuming, and worry is giving way to an inner glow. I am always amazed that in spite of my best efforts to force or hasten this feeling of joy and goodwill, it eventually does come—and it comes, like the Christ-child, as a gift to be received with wonder and gratitude.

I am also amazed how the Spirit of Christmas can dissipate so quickly after the holidays, leaving me wishing that this welcome guest might remain longer. That too seems to be out of my control—although I know that I have a part to play in the length of its lingering. Perhaps part of the reason the Christmas Spirit recedes in the face of the new year has to do with the symbolic turning of the calendar, the start of a fresh new year, and the desire, even if short-lived, to make changes in our lives: resolutions that break with the past in favor of new directions, and new dreams.

What has struck me as a way to channel the peace and goodwill of Christmas into the coming new year would be to make a simple resolution that captures both the heart of Christmas and the heart of Christ, and the new life we so often speak of him offering to us. That simple resolution is this:

“This New Year I resolve to love those whom Jesus loved.”

Now that’s a simple resolution, isn’t it? Nothing complicated in it all all—just love the people whom Jesus loved. And to help with that, here’s a short list of who that would be:

Children

The sick, crippled, blind, deaf, deformed, and “unclean”

The Poor

The Rich

“Sinners”

Friends

Enemies

The Family of God

One Another.

Needless to say, this list points to the inclusivity of his love...a love that simply flowed out of him like water-- or in his case, *living water*-- to a thirsting world. And at Christmas, when the Christmas Spirit has opened our hearts and we feel genuine love flowing out of us, it almost seems possible to love like Jesus--and not only possible, but natural; even inevitable! But then the Spirit recedes, and we return to our love-starved state...and we marvel at the impossibility of Jesus’ command to “love one another as I have loved you.”

Friends, the miracle of experiencing extravagant love at Christmas gives us a foretaste of what our lives could be like if we would surrender to the power of love, and cooperate with its flow. And while we may all join with Perry Como in lamenting “What a blessed place the world would be if we had that Christmas feeling at year”... the dissipation of the Christmas Spirit may be necessary because **God doesn’t want to do all our loving for us**. As children of God we have the capability within us to love like Jesus, but it is a capability that we must learn to actualize. That takes intention, that takes work, and yes, that even takes some hardship and suffering (you may note that my list is in the shape of a cross).

But the promise of Christmas has always been the promise of new life that springs from love, and if we really want 2016 to be more loving than 2015 turned out to be, then a good place to begin—and end—the new year is to **resolve to make Christ’s way of love... our way to love**. What better way to greet the new year? What better way to spread the lingering Christmas Cheer?

Happy New Year! —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

ATTENDANCE

December 6	114	December 13	93
December 20	106	December 24	143
December 27	35		

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
 Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316
 Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omgig: 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
Sunshine Yoders: Choir Director 835-7626
Melissa Hindt: Organist 209-8087
Mary Van Diest: Pianist 832-3754
Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's. 832-5341
Tracy Wehrhan: Financial Secretary 297-0370
Luverne Bierle: Church Treasurer 832-4752



PARISH NURSE NEWS

Take a mental health day every day!

- Connect with others.
- Be positive.
- Get physically active.
- Get enough rest.
- Eat well.
- Care for your spirit.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 4 - Mary Vavroch
- 6 - Kayleigh Weig
- 7 - Dick Burnett
- 7 - Toni Epps
- 8 - Christa Stirling
- 10 - Robin Myers
- 12 - Amanda Maass
- 13 - Jennifer Struchen
- 14 - Marjorie Groves
- 14 - Keegan Del Klaver
- 14 - Travis Wearda
- 18 - Mike Tudor
- 21 - Beverly Rickabaugh
- 21 - Mary Mertz
- 23 - George Groves
- 27 - Al Fiala
- 27 - Dennis Bahrenfuss
- 28 - Jennifer Brim
- 29 - Andy Brim
- 29 - Kristi Schmidt
- 30 - Adam Burnett
- 30 - Jenny Maass
- 31 - Heather Kuhlman
- 31 - Kolleen Taylor



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

- 1 - Lynn & Sherry Leksell
- 4 - Don & Gene Royster
- 12 - Keith & Dawn Holdgrafer
- 17 - Wil & Marjorie Groves

Souper Bowl and Annual Meeting

Join us January 24th for the Annual Meeting following our 10:30 am worship service. After the meeting make sure you stay and take part in our annual Souper Bowl.



SOUPER BOWL

Plans are underway to have a variety of soups and sides available. Details will be forthcoming in the Sunday bulletins. Plan to join us in fellowship to support a great cause.

Safe Church Policy

The Safe Church Policy task force appointed by the Cabinet has submitted a policy to the Cabinet for review and corrections, and the revised policy is now available in the Fellowship Hall pamphlet rack. We as a congregation will vote to adopt this policy at the Annual Meeting after worship on Sunday, January 24. Before that vote it is very important that members review the policy so they may familiarize themselves with it, ask questions, and offer comments and suggestions. Please take a copy of the policy to read, and direct your questions and comments to Pastor Craig or the any member of the Safe Church Policy task force: Luverne Bierle, Mary Van Diest, and Dalene Schlitter.

Meals'N More

Join us January 6 at 5:00 pm for our next Meals'N More. Mayflower Circle is hosting this event.

Quakerdale

Thanks to everyone who donated items for the stockings. They were delivered on December 17.

Thanks

◆ Thank you for the Bible. I'm already reading it. I miss everyone. Love Tristan Tusing

Grief Support

Our next Grief Support group will meet Sunday, January 24. They will meet each Sunday for 6 weeks from 3:30 to 5:00.



Piper Marie Williams, daughter of Zach and Jennie Williams, was baptized on December 6.



Jose, Dilcia and Jayleen help decorate the Christmas tree.



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

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	NOVEMBER	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$20,803.00	\$154,143.22
Other Income	.11	572.21
TOTAL INCOME	\$20,803.11	\$154,715.43
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,583.33	\$17,533.68
Pastoral Services	5,081.08	73,632.95
Maintenance and Repairs	1,478.31	133,232.96
Church Office	2,581.68	29,746.01
Music Ministry	1,395.00	6,487.50
Christian Education	42.78	563.68
Local Ministry	0.00	1,639.30
Misc. Expenses	436.30	1,883.85
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$12,598.48	\$264,719.93

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting – December 8, 2015

Members Present:

Moderator-----Luverne Bierle	Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator-----Sherry Leksell	Trustees-----Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.-----	Women's Fellowship---Joyce Gelhaus
Finance-----Tracy Wehrhan	Mission-----Ginny Veach
Staff/Parish----- Dalene Schlitter	Worship----- Holly Riemenschneider
Treasurer-----Luverne Bierle	Evangelism-----Sharon Perry
Christian Ed-----Vicki Blaufuss	Clerk-----Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by the moderator, Luverne Bierle. Pastor Craig opened with a meditation and prayer. Tracy Wehrhan made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous cabinet meeting as printed. Vicki Blaufuss seconded. Motion carried. The following attendees highlighted items of their reports: Ginnie Veach from Mission said the Alternative Fair is presently going on and on Souper Bowl Sunday (Sunday of annual meeting) the Cabinet will provide the relishes and dessert; Sharon Perry from Evangelism reported that on the 3rd Sunday of the month, at the coffee fellowship following church, that those who have birthdays that month will be honored (will do this for a trial period of 12 months), also encouraged families to bring meaningful ornaments for the tree in fellowship hall and the next grief support starts the 3rd Sunday in Jan. for 6 weeks; Joyce Gelhaus from Women's Fellowship reported that the Christmas Luncheon will be on Dec. 13th following worship. Luverne Bierle gave the Treasurer's report with the November offering of \$20,803.00 and November expenses of \$12,948.48. Luverne made a motion to approve the report and put it to audit. Vicki seconded. Motion approved.

Reports of Pastor, Boards and Committees

Pastor's Report: Started the Advent Season with communion during worship, and following worship decorated the church for Christmas ending with pizza and chili. New this year are two 12 ft. Christmas trees in the sanctuary. Piper Williams will be baptized during worship on December 6th. The Children's Christmas program "No Ordinary Night" will be held Sunday, Dec. 20th during worship. The Christmas Eve Service with candles and communion will be held at 5:00 pm with Josie Greenley as our organist. We are so pleased to have Sunshine Yoders leading the choir.

We look forward to her direction and the new ideas she will bring to our music program. Dale Olson will lead worship on Dec. 27th while our pastor is on vacation. For the last three weeks KLAB has been rehearsing for the Christmas program "No Ordinary Night". Additional rehearsals are scheduled for Sundays, Dec. 6th and 20th at 9:15 am and Sat. Dec. 19th, from 9:00-11:00 am. KLAB is collecting supplies for Almost Home at the Alternative Giving Fair. The Adult Education class has finished watching the documentary entitled "Racism; the Power of an Illusion." They are continuing with a study of "White Privilege." The Holiday grief support offering "How Can I Survive the Holidays?" attracted five participants. Their interest has resulted in scheduling the next round of grief support from January 23rd –February 27th. The Stephen Ministers had their annual holiday party at the Emporium on Thursday, Dec. 3rd. They will not meet again in December. Because the Community Thanksgiving Service held at Faith UMC on November 22nd was so poorly attended, it was decided not to hold this service next year. In spite of the low attendance \$237 was raised to be split between the food pantries at Trinity and St. Paul Lutheran churches. The Ecumenical Human Needs Committee has revised its application form, and it is now available at all churches plus various other locations in town. The Backpack program is now receiving pre-packaged "care packs" for elementary students from the Iowa Food Bank, which will be supplemented by other groceries provided by the backpack team. Middle and High backpacks remain unchanged. Currently there are two churches participating in ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. They are Trinity Lutheran and First Congregational. Our church also fielded two teams in the Warm Hearts Warm Homes program. All together 12 teams weatherized 26 homes on Saturday, Nov. 7th.

Board of Trustees: Present for the Dec. 3rd meeting were Les Ploeger, Bruce Perry, Gretchen Bruner, Joyce Gelhaus, and Pastor Craig. Wayne Schlotfeldt and Tracy Wehrhan were guests. The main purpose of the meeting was to go over the renovation punch list with Wayne. Wayne will email the punch list for us to review, before sending to Jensen's. The following are items on the list: WB (Women's Bathroom) wall trim on tile not centered, also corner pieces, WB tile on divider not even, WB grout not finished, WB sink 3 feet from electrical box, WB tank handles not on correct side, WB door frame and new door, WB & MB sink and counter-paint around sink, BAD (metal strip)-sink to be under the counter-toilet paper holder and paper towel holders, WB no plumbing covers on the floor by the toilets, unisex bathroom door needs more varnish, the step flooring is not even that goes upstairs, step edge bends on stairway, no safety glass on stairway window, varnish on the window, at top of stairs there is a gap between flooring and carpet, doorway into fellowship hall at the top, trim board not on stairway, not all stairway rail posts have enough stain and not sanded, the wainscot and rails have rough spots and need for sanding, rugs in entry have paint on them, entry light and electrical not fixed and need to get Keystone back. Jaycox has finished the ceiling and lights in Fellowship Hall. Joyce and Gretchen looked into the cost of replacing the carpet in Fellowship Hall, the hall way and pastor's study. This project will cost approximately \$15,000. In other business the following were discussed: coat rack in the basement will go to the Community Theater, Joyce will get an estimate for painting Fellowship Hall and the hallway, Gretchen will get an estimate for carpeting Fellowship Hall, they will get paint and carpet samples, will have Scott Jaycox put the trim on the wood over the doors to the choir and an all church cleaning day will be needed after the renovation is completed. FYI-the Renovation planning began June 27, 2013. The date of the next meeting will be announced.

Evangelism: Each family in the congregation is asked to help decorate the tree in Fellowship Hall by bringing a special ornament and place it on the tree. Any ornaments not taken home after the tree is taken down will be sold at the next Thrift Sale. The leaders of the Stephen Ministry/Grief Support on "How Shall I Make it Through the Holidays?" were Al Fiala and Lorraine McCoskey. The next Grief Support group is scheduled for January 24, 31, February 7, 14, 21 and 28th. Educational opportunities for ongoing training for Stephen Ministers are being planned during December for the coming year. Please let Pastor Craig, Dale Olson or Sharon Perry know if you have a referral to Stephen Ministry. Mabel Prescott, the church nurse, will give review on using the defibrillator in the spring, maybe at Meals and More.

Mission: Pastor Craig reported that next year the Warm Hearts Warm Homes needs to be publicized earlier and needs to have auditors. The pulled pork meal was well received that was served to Beacon of Hope on Nov. 17th to about 40 men. Correspondence was received from Steve and Annette about the need for food offerings and money for Beacon of Hope. A donor has offered to match all dollar donations up to \$25,000 received by the end of 2015. Quakerdale, Angel Tree, Almost Home, Romania Orphanage, Heifer, Holy Joe's, Serrv, Pecans and CWS are all represented in the Alternative Giving Fair. The Salvation Army Bell Ringers will be ringing on Saturday, December 5th at Hy-Vee. Ginnie Veach is in charge of the UCC Christmas Fund Offering. Two people have shown interest in a 2016 mission trip. Craig reported on Ecumenical Human Needs organizational progress. Now this will be handled through the churches instead of UDMO. Steve and Cami Mather from Romania will be present for an informational gathering on Sat. morning on February 6th. The Souper Bowl fund raiser for UDMO Food Panty will be on January 24th following the annual meeting. The mission board members will make soup and have asked the Cabinet to

provide relishes and desserts. The pickle jar will receive the offerings. Checks are to be made to the church with a note for UDMO. Ginnie will be the January Beacon meal captain. Gaye will prepare the annual report.

Women's Fellowship: Devotions were given by Glenda Wehrhan. Pastor Craig lifted up Dona Jaycox, Sally McIntyre and Tom Riemenschneider. He reminded all of us about the Bell Ringing at Hy-Vee on Dec. 5th. Piper Williams will be baptized on Sunday, Dec. 6th. Verna Bierle gave the treasurer's report: Old Balance \$2508.12, New Balance of \$2548.18 and \$1736.00 in Alverson Trust. Wilma Reinsel, made a motion to transfer the Alverson CD to the Women's Fellowship Saving account. Carol Crystal seconded. After discussion, the motion, passed unanimously. Kay Harfst moved that Cindy Henning be an additional signer on CD to transfer CD to savings account and also be added as signer on savings and checking account for Women's Fellowship. Shirley Yungclas seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Shirley Yungclas sent get well cards to Dennis Bahrenfuss and Sally McIntyre and a congratulation on new business card to Stacy Wearda. Cindy Henning shared newsletters from Opportunity Village and Youth & Shelter Services of Hamilton Co. She also shared a letter from Steve at Beacon of Hope in Ft. Dodge with a plea for volunteers, food for their pantry and financial donations. This letter has been passed onto Mission Board. Old Business: Christmas Luncheon is Dec. 13; Haystack is decorating and Providence is preparing food; Pastor Craig will bring boom-box and music to play during dinner; Alternative Giving-Cindy Henning will talk to Donna Ryherd about Stepping Forward and Dawn Holdgrafer about the Blanket program; Kayla Nelson will help Ginnie Veach with the Quakerdale stockings. New Business: reminded everyone to bring the honorary members during Christmas; sign up for KLAB Treats, Meals and More and coffees; Verna Bierle will help Wilma Reinsel with calling in the future. The January meeting has been cancelled. Next meeting is February 2nd.

Christian Ed: Nov 11 meeting with Pastor Craig, Wil Groves, Leah Maass, Jane Klaver and Vicki Blaufuss attending. Old Business: the upstairs class rooms have been cleaned and are being used; 7th grade and up are being taught by Alyssa Kenville with 5 youth attending; 4th thru 6th is being taught by Leah Maass with also 5 youth attending; kg. through 3rd is being taught by Laurie Epps with 4 youth attending. Wil Groves will again be directing the youth Christmas program, to be held Sunday, Dec. 20th. Acolytes have been assigned thru December. New Business: Are in need of adults that are willing to substitute teach when regular teachers are absent; Wil Groves will be contacting Katie Sonsalla to see if she will cover the Sunday school singing while Don Bruner is south for the winter; will continue to have regular meetings on the first Wed. of the month at 6:30 pm. At the March meeting will plan the Easter Breakfast and discuss if we are going to have a traditional Easter egg hunt. Children's Sabbath will be celebrated in October 2016. It was suggested that youth be in charge of the service. We will continue to discuss this in the future. Graduation Sunday will be May 22, 2016. Wil Groves will check with the graduate's parents to see if this date will work for them. We possibly have 4 graduates. Participation Sunday will be May 15, 2016. Certificates of participation will be passed out and teacher's gifts will be given. Wil Groves will be contacting absent youth to encourage them to take part in Sunday School and KLAB. Leah Maass will be in charge of sending birthday postcards starting in December. A list of the youth with name, address and birthday date will be given to her. Wil Groves will take over scheduling the acolytes starting in January for three months at a time. The past three month list has been given to him. Jane Klaver will keep track of all Bibles and baptism books to be given out. A list of past Bibles and baptism books has been given to her. She will let Pastor Craig know of any youth that will be due to get Bibles and he will order them. Jane will also let Leah know when a baptism book is needed. Next meeting is Dec. 2nd at 6:30 pm. Be thinking about what kind of token we can give out to the youth who participate in the Christmas program.

Worship Board: Meeting on November 12th with Audrey Burnett, Gretchen McGlynn, Cindy Henning, Linda Lahr, and Pastor Craig attending. We are going to make a \$200 donation to Kids Cancer Squad in the honor of Sister Act. Holly Riemenschneider and Linda are communion servers for Nov. 29th. The Hanging of the Greens will take place immediately after the worship service on the 29th of Nov. We will provide 10 large pizzas, coffee and milk. Gretchen will also make some chili. She will get the pizzas, milk and check on plates, napkins, etc. Dale Olson will lead the worship service on Sunday, December 27th. Pastor Craig will be guest minister at the Community Thanksgiving Service at Faith Methodist on Nov. 22nd at 7:00 pm. We will not meet in December and will accomplish any business that needs to be taken care of by texting. Two people are needed to help with communion on Jan. 3rd. The next meeting will be Thursday, Feb. 11th with our new board. Bring your calendars so a permanent date can be set for our meeting date.

Staff Parish: Met on Nov. 24th with Verna Bierle, Greta Oberender, Dalene Schlitter, Mark Vance, Shirley Yungclas and Pastor Craig present. Old Business: the Funeral Policy will meet after the holidays; the Safe Church Policy with its revisions will be made available to the congregation to read; the policy will be voted on at the annual meeting on Jan. 24th; Sunshine Yoders has been hired as the new choir director for a 90 day trial period. Josie

Greenley has substituted for organist Melissa Hindt, when she has not been available. Josie will be play on Christmas Eve. New Business: a concern was expressed about supervising youngsters in church who are attending without parent/other adults present; Evangelism is addressing this issue; the Nominating Committee has begun working on nominees for the 2016 church year; Greta, Shirley and Stephanie will complete their two year terms; Mark Vance has requested to not serve another term on the board; custodian, Curt McCoskey, will be out of town from Dec. 23rd through Jan. 3rd. The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 24th, after church. Immediately after the annual meeting, a brief meeting will be held with new members helping to select a date and time for the regular staff/parish meetings. Greta will chair the Funeral Policy committee and will call the members together sometime early in 2016. Shirley will compile the Staff/Parish report for the annual meeting booklet.

Pending Business: Pastor Craig reported that a total of \$833 was donated to the Salvation Army Bell Ringing on the first Friday and Saturday that Trinity Lutheran and First Congregational ran the bell. He noted that 90% of the amount donated stays here in the Webster City area. The Community Christmas dinner has been cancelled for 2015. Dalene Schlitter will substitute for the church clerk at the annual meeting on January 24th, 2016 as the clerk will be returning from overseas on that date.

Next meeting is January 12, 2016.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Cabinet reopened at 8:00 pm for the purpose of voting on the Safe Church Policy. Tracy moved to approve the Safe Church Policy as per Pastor Craig's revision. Dalene seconded. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted
Mary Van Diest, Church Clerk

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

