

July 2015 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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While I was on vacation this past week the Supreme Court certainly wasn't, and in a few days' time that august body of Justices delivered rulings on a variety of petitions, including the use of commissions to shape voting district lines, the regulation of exhaust smoke from coal fired power plants, and the use of a certain concoction of lethal injection drugs in state executions. However the most controversial decision of the week was rendered on June 26, when in a 5-4 split decision the high court ruled that states cannot keep same-sex couples from marrying...thus making same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states. Since that ruling the country has literally erupted with every conceivable reaction—from extreme joy and celebration to anger and dire predictions of doom. None of these reactions are surprising, for this truly is a pivotal decision not only for our democracy, but also for our particular iteration of Judeo/Christian/Western culture.

Needless to say there is a superabundance of arguments and reactions available for you to digest—enough to keep you reading nonstop on the subject in the weeks ahead. I do want to share with you some thoughts composed by Adam Hamilton, a prominent UMC pastor and author, who is committed to keeping the United Methodist Church from splitting over this very polarizing issue. In a recent post he says, among other things:

“The question for pastors, churches, and Christians continues to be, ‘What is the will of God concerning same-sex marriage?’ Yesterday there was no shortage of Christians speaking up to criticize the Supreme Court’s decision and to make clear their view of God’s will on the matter...

...I read the Bible every day. I study it, memorize it, teach it, preach it, and seek to live it. It is the defining story of my life. But, 37 years of studying the Bible has also taught me that the Bible is at times complicated. Within its pages we learn of the heart, character, and will of God, but we also find on its pages things that we might question. Things that seem to reflect the culture and times the biblical authors lived in more than the timeless will of God.

...My views on the ‘issue of homosexuality’...changed over the last 25 years due to two factors: my daily study of scripture and weekly preaching from it helped me appreciate the complexity of the Bible and why it needs to be carefully interpreted; and coming to know and care for an increasing number of gay and lesbian people, hearing their stories and seeking to make sense of sexual orientation helped me to see them as human beings and to ask if it was really God’s will that they not be able to share their lives together.

One of the texts I always quote in wedding ceremonies is Genesis 2:18 where God saw that the human he had created was lonely. God had compassion upon the human and in that context we read God saying, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his companion.’ This second human being was the woman, a complement to the man – a gift and blessing – that the two might be one another’s helpers and companions. I don’t believe God makes us gay or straight. I think sexual orientation is developed in most of us at a very early age through some combination of nature and nurture. Heterosexuality is normative, but roughly 5% of the population is drawn to love someone of the same gender in the same way that heterosexuals are drawn to love the opposite gender. Is it possible that God might look at his gay and lesbian children and say, ‘It is not good that this one should be alone; I will make them a helper as their companion’?

I’ve spent the past week on vacation with my wife, LaVon, driving up the Pacific Coast Highway taking in the scenery and savoring sharing time with my companion, soul mate, and best friend. Very little of my relationship with LaVon is about sexual intimacy, though it is an important part of our lives. My love for her is largely about sharing our lives together as one another’s helpers and companions. It is about holding hands, sharing dreams, helping one another when one of us is struggling. It is about shared

memories, companionship, and a warm embrace. It is about a deep love that we have for each other, and a commitment to act with love even when we don't feel like it. This is what we signed on for when we married, pledging, 'to have and to hold from this day forward; for better or for worse; for richer or for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish until we are parted by death.' The Supreme Court has said that this kind of committed covenant love should not be legally denied to same sex couples." You can read the entirety of his post here: <http://www.adamhamilton.org/blog/view/196/the-bible-and-the-supreme-court-on-same-sex-marriage#.VZF-wPDwX0r>

While we here at First Congregational may not all agree on the Supreme Court's decision or the validity of same sex marriage, I want to share with you that I support both the Court's decision and the UCC's Equality of Marriage pronouncement which came out of General Synod 25 in 2005 (read that pronouncement here: <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/2005-EQUAL-MARRIAGE-RIGHTS-FOR-ALL.pdf>). For some time now I have accepted same-sex marriage as both a human right and an institution in accord with God's overarching purposes in human relationships. While there are a variety of arguments for opposing same sex marriage, most of the arguments against it come from Christians who cite God's will as their ultimate source of opposition. With that in mind I want to briefly share with you my very personal reasons for supporting same sex marriage --as a Christian.

I have an openly gay relative, and my relationship with him has shown me that same sex attraction is not innately "depraved" or inherently destructive in human relationships. What our relationship has forced me to do is reexamine my stereotypes, my prejudices, and my fears regarding what seems "unnatural" to me regarding sexual orientation and attraction. It has also required me to wrestle with the meaning of both human love and God's love, and I believe I have been asked by both God and "Love" to expand my vision of how love is shared and expressed in human relationships.

I do not hold to the doctrine of inerrant inspiration of the Bible, particularly when it comes to gender identity/roles and sexual behaviors. For decades I have believed that the Bible is an inspired HUMAN product, meaning that it is composed by MEN (literally—no women! which makes the idea of inerrancy suspicious in itself) who have achieved what I consider to be rather uneven glimpses of divine truths. As Adam Hamilton notes in his full post, in the Bible human relationships are a central concern, but many of the relational customs and mores held within its pages have already been set aside by Christians today as contextual, time-bound truths created by MEN. So much has been written to debunk the Bible's so-called "clobber" passages against homosexual relations that I need not go into that here, although if you wish to speak with me about this matter I am certainly willing to have that conversation with you.

Marriage—whether heterosexual or same-sex—is not a sacrament in our protestant tradition, meaning that marriage is not a "means of grace", and not necessarily a window to the divine. Anyone who is married already knows that marriage is fraught with all kinds of very human shortcomings played out in this covenanted relationship. And even though divorce was specifically forbidden by Jesus, we all know that human shortcomings can—and have-- literally destroyed marriages. Marriage is above all a chance to try to make love work in a special, committed relationship that is unlike any other...and I believe that this "chance to make love work" also applies to same-sex covenants of marriage as well. But whether this "chance to make love work" works out or not in our mortal lives (gay or straight)... marriage is no substitute for the love of God, nor is it to become an idol of God. (And speaking of "clobber passages"...how about this one: *"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."*—Matthew 22:30. Did you hear that? No marriage in heaven!)

I have no doubt that We the People will continue to debate and discuss, celebrate and protest the Supreme Court's decision for the foreseeable future. As for me, I believe that the chief threat to the institution of marriage isn't a Supreme Court ruling allowing same-sex couples to be married—it is the human heart that does not take to heart the covenant of mutual care and concern expressed as love, and therefore isn't willing to work through all the relational challenges that are part of married life. *For the life of me I cannot understand how a committed, monogamous same-sex relationship does anything other than honor the spirit of fidelity, trust, mutual care, and love that is at the very heart of marriage. For that reason I will continue to bless and pray for those marriages...just as I bless and pray for mine-- and yours.*

--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

June 7	55	June 14	51
June 20	58	June 28	48

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**
Choir Director
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**



Words of wisdom from Thomas Jefferson:

- Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
- Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.
- Never spend your money before you have it.
- Never buy what you do not want because it's cheap.
- Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst, and cold.
- Never repent of having eaten too little.
- Don't let the evils which have never happened cost you pain.
- When angry, count to 10 before you speak; if very angry, count to 100.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 1 - Katie Short
- 1 - Chris Swanson
- 2 - Ava Stockdale
- 2 - Katie (Kesler) Anderson
- 2 - Barb Stearns
- 3 - Jeff Anderson
- 3 - Samuel Aubrey Thurman
- 4 - Allison Arkland
- 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
- 10 - Jasmine Remington
- 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



Annual Church Picnic

Join us for our annual church picnic on July 12 at Shelter #2 at Brigg's Woods, 10:30 am worship time. Please bring a dish or 2 to share, place settings, and you might want to bring a comfortable chair. Evangelism will bring coffee and water to share. We will worship together, eat, and then have fun!



Youth Swim Party!

SWIMMING!

Pool Party for KLAB and Sunday School! Mark your calendars on Wednesday, July 1, from 2-5 pm at the Americinn Pool. Everyone welcome; snacks will be provided. See you at the pool!

UDMO

July is our month to fill the food bank at UDMO. This year the Mission Board decided to cover a pig (graciously drawn by our own Pastor Craig) with gift cards from the grocery stores. They in turn can purchase frozen food items as needed or room permits. Thank you in advance for your generous gifts!
~The Mission Board



Reach Out and Read

On the first of June the Mission Board received a check for \$1200.00 from our national church via Neighbors in Need. NIN is one of the 4 UCC annual offerings that we support on an yearly basis. This offering is designed for churches to apply for grants to help fund different projects that their churches are overseeing to further the mission of the church. Last fall Mission Board decided that we would apply for some money from this offering to help fund the Reach Out and Read initiative being started here in WC. We are very excited and rejoice to receive this check from funds that this church has faithfully supported over the years.

As an update to where we are with the ROR program the WC Medical Clinic just ordered their first order of books and will be starting to send them home with families when they come in for their well-child visits. We are also working with the other providers in town to get them on board with this program so we can be a Reach Out and Read community!

Shoeman Water Project

As you may or may not have noticed, the table with the donated shoes has disappeared from Fellowship Hall. Thanks to some strong muscles from Michele's 2 boys the tubs and sacks were carried downstairs in May. The first part of June they were carried back up to the back of Cindy Henning's vehicle and taken

to St. Louis where they will be sent on their way to help build wells and support families. We do have 1 more tote to send with Cindy the next time she heads back down to St. Louis, but Mission Board wants to thank those who were involved in bringing shoes for this project. We also want to give Cindy a great big thanks for being our delivery person for this!

Olde Fashioned Ice Cream Social

Thanks to everyone who helped make this a success we raised over \$670.00! This would not be possible without people supplying ice cream, bars, and toppings, not to mention all the volunteers. Thank you!

The Mission Board

Third Saturday Worship

Our next Third Saturday service begins at 5:00 pm on July 18th. Join us!



VBS is coming!

Mark your calendars on July 6-10 for our joint VBS program, to be held at Asbury UMC. This year we are reverting back to an afternoon schedule (1-4 pm).

UDMO

The Back to School Bash will be Thursday, August 6 from 3:30 to 5:00 pm at The Bridge, 905 Des Moines St.

To determine eligibility families may go to the UDMO office until July 24.

UDMO needs help to make this happen, monetary donations or school supplies are greatly appreciated.

Thanks

Thank you so much for all you all have done for me. You've supported me through everything the past few years. Thank you for letting me help out with KLAB. It's truly been a joy. Thanks to all for helping me celebrate my graduation!

~Alexis Tudor

Relay for Life

The Piecemakers have once again provided items to raise funds for Relay for Life. Between these items and funds donated by the congregation we raised \$850. Thank you to everyone for making that happen!



THANKS!

A HUGE thank you to the Trustees. Joyce spent time with me solving some space issues that will result as of the renovation and on June 30, Les, Tom, and Bruce came in and moved the cabinets to the opposite wall.

~Michele



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Webster City, Iowa
Cabinet Meeting – June 9, 2015**

Members Present:

Moderator-----Luverne Bierle	Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator----	Trustees-----Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.-----	Women’s Fellowship-Joyce Gelhaus
Finance----- Tracy Wehrhan	Mission-----Ginnie Veach
Staff/Parish-----Dalene Schlitter	Worship-----
Christian Ed-----Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism-----Wilma Reinsel
Treasurer-----Luverne Bierle	Clerk-----Mary Van Diest
Guest-----Dale Olson	

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by the Moderator, Luverne Bierle. Meditation and a prayer were given by Pastor Craig Blaufuss. The minutes of the May 12, 2015 were approved as printed. Committee and board reports were open for review and discussion. Vicki Blaufuss reported from Christian Ed that there is a teacher for all the classes from pre-k through high school for church school starting this fall. Carol Crystal has volunteered to lead the pre-k and Alyssa Kenville will lead the youth who have been confirmed. The Cabinet was thrilled that all the classes have a teacher. Wilma Reinsel reported for Evangelism that July 12th is the date for the church picnic. It will be held at shelter #2 at Briggs Wood with church at 10:30 am followed by a pot luck dinner. She also reported that a Stephen Minister had a match this past week. Ginnie Veach from Mission’s explained the Reach Out and Read program and reminded all that the Ice Cream Social with Faith Methodist will be at the Congregational Church on Wed., April 17th. Tracy Wehrhan from Finance reminded us that applications for scholarship are to be turned in by June 30th. The first Sunday in August will be scholarship Sunday. Luverne Bierle gave the treasurer’s report for May 30, 2015. May offering was \$18,037.00 with expenses of \$12,243.29. Luverne moved and Tracy Wehrhan seconded that the report be put to audit. Motion carried. Dalene Schlitter reported from Staff/Parish that an organist/pianist position has been filled but the choir director position is still vacant. The cabinet suggested that the music committee and worship committee meet together for better communication and co-ordination. Dale Olson who is the Vice Moderator of the Iowa Conference reported from the “Recharge 2015” meeting in Ames. Dale and Marjorie Groves attended this meeting. The conference emphasized that all churches need to be open to new and different possibilities. The presenter believed that one person should write all the checks and not have various groups with their own checking accounts.

REPORTS OF PASTOR, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Pastor’s Report: Thanked everyone who helped make Anne McMurray’s memorial service a healing event for her family. On May 10th we honored Jenna Short, Alexis Tudor, and Brian Johnston as they graduated from WCHS; on May 17th we honored our students and teachers/assistants for Promotion/Participation Sunday at which time we gave out 7 children’s Bibles and 5 adult Bibles; on May 24th we confirmed Kayla Nelson, Dylan MCoskey and Jackson Leman in the Christian faith. Our THIRD Saturday service will begin on June 20th at

5:00 pm (last year it was called the Second Saturday Service). Sixteen KLAB students attended the KLAB lockin at the church on May 29th with Wil Groves, Alexis Tudor and Pastor Craig as chaperones. The first KLAB summer event will be a pool party at the AmericInn with all Sunday School students invited. The date for that event is July 1. Mabel Prescott gave an interesting presentation on a micro-lending investment organization called KIVA at the Women's Fellowship Dinner. The Women's Fellowship gave away a total of \$3,000 this year. On behalf of Almost Home Animal Shelter, Pastor Craig thanked the ladies for the \$250 donation and also thanked the Mayflower Circle for the \$150 donation to KLAB. Five Stephen Ministers are currently matched; the April/May Grief Support group has finished another series. The next series is scheduled for September 6-October 11. May 28th was the final delivery of Backpacks to the schools before the summer recess. A Backpack appreciation coffee was held at Trinity ELCA on the 28th of May with Lori Hartnett presenting these facts; over the school year 37 deliveries were made of totes containing backpacks and each week averaged 157 bags given out to kids K-12, for a total of 5,772 bags assembled and sent home. The summer lunch program begins June 8th. First Congregational is the lead-off group of volunteers to begin this program. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and thanks to Vicki Blaufuss who has solicited and received a large number of gift certificates to be raffled off during the lunch hour. Pastor Craig explained the Quaker Dale "Hope for Healing Program" in which the Stephen Ministers could possibly use in their work.

Mission Board: The Shoeman Water Project has ended. The shoes will be transported to St. Louis by Cindy Henning when she visits her family this summer. Volunteers assembled, delivered and served the Beacon of Hope meal on May 27th. The Strengthen the Church offering collected \$794.00. The annual Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social is scheduled for June 17th, 6:00-8:00 pm at UCC church in partnership with Faith Methodist. Donations of home-made ice cream, bars and workers are needed. WCCT will provide entertainment from Spamalot. Free will offerings will be shared between ACE and UDMO; The community school lunch program begins June 8th. Workers from UCC are needed the first week, (June 8-12) from 11:00-1:00 pm. Mary Vavroch is our team leader for Relay for Life. The pickle jar at the church coffee on June 1st yielded \$375.00. There is still time to donate or sign up to walk on the team on June 19th, 6:00-10:00 pm. From our UCC Neighbors in Need offerings a grant of \$1200 was received for our Reach Out and Read literacy project. This, plus the \$250 Women's Fellowship gift, will enable the committee to purchase books to be given to families when they attend "well baby visits" at local medical clinics. Our plan for July UDMO collection will focus on gift cards to purchase frozen food item for the food pantry. A display will be set up on June 28th. Watch the newsletter and bulletins for more details. Mission Board will meet on July 2, at 5:00 pm.

Board of Trustees: May 24, 2015 meeting: Old Business-Mark Trueblood will be done with the new air system as far as he can get by Thursday, May 28th. He is then going on vacation and after his return will put the vents in the west side of fellowship hall after the roof work is done and the new ceiling and lights are installed. New Business-Two bids have been received for the work on the ceiling and lighting in Fellowship Hall. Jensen Builders bid was \$10,783 and Jaycox Construction bid was \$6,800. A motion was made by Gretchen and seconded by Les to accept the bid from Jaycox Construction. Motion was approved. June 3, 2015 meeting—The meeting was called to review renovation plans and answer any questions. Tracy Wehrhan, Wayne Schlotfeldt and from Jensen Builders, Steve, also attended the meeting. The following items were reviewed: Wayne reviewed the contract; the two change orders for the doors and paint on the stairway; the doors to be replaced in Fellowship Hall will be mission style to match the rest of Fellowship Hall; the office door will have glass on the top for safety reasons; the renovation

will start in 2-3 weeks; they will be working 6:30 am to 5:00 pm and will start in the basement to not interfere with the upcoming Ice Cream Social; to enter the church during renovation people will enter the church using the elevator, main entry or back entry; the billing will come at the end of the month; the bill will first go to Wayne to review and then the church will receive a copy of what is approved; Steve thought everything on the project was straight forward; he will be consulting the committee on the color of some items; he believed they should be close to finishing the project around the August 15th target date. Old Business; Widick will be starting to repair the roof next week; this should take approximately three weeks; Mark Trueblood will be working to finish up what he can of the new air system until June 20th; Jensen Builders will start working around the third week of June; Jaycox will do the work in Fellowship Hall after Jensen is finished, and after Jaycox is done Mark Trueblood will finish up by putting in the venting on the west side of Fellowship Hall; a new motor and valve have been installed in the elevator so it is functioning now; the coat rack is now up; have decided to try and sell the old rack; Cindy Henning will put it on Buy Sell and Trade; if it is not sold then it will go on the Thrift Sale; Joyce Gelhaus, Gretchen Bruner and Les Ploeger went over the office renovations ideas with Michele. Next meeting to be announced.

The next Cabinet meeting will be on August 11, 2015.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.
 Respectfully submitted
 Mary Van Diest, Church Clerk

Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>MAY</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$18,477.00	\$76,710.63
Other Income	1.78	570.47
TOTAL INCOME	\$18,478.78	\$77,281.10
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,9973.33	\$7,785.70
Pastoral Services	5,425.36	31,567.73
Maintenance and Repairs	2,266.62	24,490.45
Church Office	3,011.57	14,077.57
Music Ministry	687.50	3,287.50
Christian Education	193.92	364.81
Local Ministry	0.00	67.45
Misc. Expenses	22.62	1,167.16
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,604.92	\$82,808.37

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: