

February 2016 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>

***“There is no pain you are receding
A distant ship smoke on the horizon
You are only coming through in waves
Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying
When I was a child
I caught a fleeting glimpse
Out of the corner of my eye
I turned to look but it was gone
I cannot put my finger on it now
The child is grown
The dream is gone
I have become comfortably numb.”***
—Pink Floyd, “Comfortably Numb”

I wonder if it is nearly impossible to live these days without being “comfortably numb.” One doesn’t need to be a rock star like Roger Waters or David Gilmour of Pink Floyd to feel the pressures of daily living, to feel insecure about our personal futures and our collective futures as both Americans and inhabitants of Planet Earth, to wonder what happened to the innocence and optimism of youth, and to feel the collapse of meaning that historically has been provided by the institutions of religion, society, and family. Our national obsessions with distractions and addictions merely point to our need to be “comfortably numb” as a coping mechanism for modern life, which seems sad... and in many cases, tragic.

As Christians, we have received the Good News that Jesus came so that we would “have Life, and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). Yet I wonder: how I am faring with Life Abundant? Am I transmitting a “Living Spark” to my children, grandchildren, and those with whom I am in contact, day in and day out? Am I feeling the Spark of Life Abundant in me—or am I, as the Pink Floyd song suggests, receding into a place where there is no pain, but also no life—just me being comfortably numb? How are *you* doing with Life Abundant? Is the Living Spark alive and well in you...or are you too *comfortably numb*?

We are now nearly to the season of Lent, that 40 day observance in the Christian calendar leading to the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It has historically been a time associated with self-examination and repentance, acts of charity and self-denial, prayer, and meditation on the words of scripture. Unfortunately for many it has become an anachronism, a relic of bygone days with little relevance to modern life.

Yet it need not be so! Lent can be a time—perhaps for many of us the only time in the whole calendar year—when we can be intentional about cultivating the Living Spark of Life Abundant in our lives, and sharing our Living Spark with the world. The difficulty is getting the promise and challenge of Lent past being distant smoke on the horizon of our lives....so that we will become active participants in our own resurrection from chronic numbness.

On February 10th at 5:30 pm, I urge you to join me in East Chapel as we begin Lent with the Imposition of Ashes, and share in the Body and Blood of the one who said “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” These ancient rituals have always carried the power to rouse us from numbness in all of its forms, and set us on the path of Life by following Jesus the Christ—and sharing in his death and resurrection.

--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

January 3	64	January 10	64
January 17	60	January 24	70
January 31			

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 835-7902
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

How to know if friends are real friends. Signs of real friends -

- They will tell you the truth even if it hurts.
- Even if you don't see one another often, when you do it's like you have never been apart.
- They don't gossip about you or say anything behind your back.
- They know all your "issues" but don't share them with anyone else.
- They listen to you rant and rave and give you a shoulder to cry on.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 2 - Jolan Fogle
- 3 - Isabella Nicole Nelson
- 4 - Leanna Ploeger
- 5 - Jane Klaver
- 6 - Sharon Perry
- 7 - Gene Royster
- 7 - Beth Van Diest
- 8 - Erin Sue Bailey
- 8 - Michele Omgig
- 9 - Les Ploeger
- 11 - Ryan McCoskey
- 11 - Greta Oberender
- 12 - Blakely Ploeger
- 13 - Peter Brim
- 14 - Curt McCoskey
- 15 - Everett (Bud) Crystal
- 16 - Ronni Arnold
- 16 - Nicholas Paul Harfst
- 17 - Letabelle Riemenschneider
- 18 - Jackson Groves
- 18 - Lindsay Anderson Murray
- 19 - Gretchen McGlynn
- 19 - Jenna Short
- 21 - Alan Maxon
- 21 - Ann Heimberger
- 22 - Alexis Anderson
- 22 - Curtis Alan (PJ) Swanson
- 23 - Stephanie Hill
- 25 - Dorothy Brim
- 25 - David Weieneth
- 25 - Rachel Hollingshead
- 26 - Richard Fogle
- 26 - Wilma Taylor
- 26 - Nick Nelson
- 27 - Luverne Bierle
- 28 - Conner Clum
- 28 - Midge Tudor
- 28 - Gracie Elizabeth Smith



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

- 10 - Dick & Jayne Hahne
- 13 - Dick & Midge Tudor
- 13 - Rob & Brenda Brown

Lent Begins February 10

First Congregational will begin the observance of Lent with an Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 10, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the East Chapel. Ash Wednesday is a day of penitence and preparation which begins our Lenten season; it is a day which reminds us of our mortality, and our need for repentance and renewal. We will observe Ash Wednesday with the Imposition of Ashes, and share the sacrament of Holy Communion by intinction.

Stepping Forward Romania

Steve Mather will be at First Congregational UCC on Saturday February 6 at 10:00 am speaking on the progress of the Stepping Forward Romania ministry with abandoned children and Camp Living Water. Recently members of our congregation sponsored many of the children for Christmas as part of the Mission Board's Alternative Giving Fair. Steve is a cousin of Donna Ryherd. Please come and enjoy Steve's stories over coffee and muffins with us on the 6th.

Lenten Luncheon

The women of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church wish to invite you to the annual community Lenten Luncheons. The luncheons will begin Tuesday, February 16 and continue through March 15. Serving will begin at 12:00 followed by a short devotion. Sign up in Fellowship Hall or let Michele know by Monday noon previous to the luncheon you are attending. The cost is \$6.00.

Grief Support

Our Grief Support group will meet each Sunday in February from 3:00 to 4:30.

KAH

The Mission Board has scheduled a packing time for Kids Against Hunger. We will be gathering at The Bridge on Sunday, February 7 at 1:30 to pack the meals that get sealed up and sent overseas. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for about an hour of your time, remembering that your hour allows children and adults to eat who might not otherwise.

Thanks

♦Many thanks for the sponsors of Stepping Forward Romania Children's Christmas Gifts for 2015! We sent **\$540** in donations! You may learn more about this charity and mission on Saturday morning Feb. 6th from Missionaries Steve and Cami Mather. Watch for more details soon.

♦The Mission Board would like to thank all who played a part in making our Souper Bowl on Jan. 24 such a success. For those who made soup, bars, cornbread, brought relishes, did dishes, ate soup we say thank you, thank you, thank you. As a result of your efforts we are able to make a donation of \$328.00 to UDMO. We are so appreciative of all your help and support.

Mission Board



KLAB visited Almost Home and brought supplies that were raised during the Alternative Giving Fair.

Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>DECEMBER</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$11,576.90	\$166,260.12
Other Income	.44	1,926.69
TOTAL INCOME	\$11,577.34	\$168,186.81
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,583.33	\$19,117.01
Pastoral Services	11,415.36	85,048.31
Maintenance and Repairs	15,226.80	149,448.11
Church Office	4,447.84	34,193.85
Music Ministry	1,000.00	7,487.50
Christian Education	244.22	807.90
Local Ministry	175.00	1,814.30
Misc. Expenses	110.51	1,994.36
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$34,203.06	\$299,911.34

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Webster City, Iowa
Cabinet Meeting – January 12, 2016

Members Present:

Moderator-----Luverne Bierle
Vice-Moderator-----Sherry Leksell
Finance Sec.-----
Finance-----Tracy Wehrhan
Staff/Parish-----Dalene Schlitter
Treasurer-----Luverne Bierle
Christian Ed.-----Vicki Blaufuss

Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Trustees-----Tom Riemenschneider
Women's Fellowship---
Mission-----Ginnie Veach
Worship-----Holly Riemenschneider
Evangelism-----Sharon Perry
Clerk-----Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 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 December cabinet meeting as printed. Dalene Schlitter seconded. Motion carried. Luverne asked the board and committee representatives if there were any items they wish to highlight from their reports. Sharon Perry reported from Evangelism that Al Fiala and Ginnie Veach will be the leaders of the grief support group starting in January and continuing for six weeks. Sharon also said we will celebrate the birthdays of those members who have birthdays that month, on the third Sunday of the month at the fellowship coffee held following worship. She also read a letter from 5 prisoners at the Hamilton County Jail thanking the church for its contributions to all for commissary purchases. The prisoners felt so warmed that even though they had made poor choices, people still care for them. Vicki Blaufuss reported that the Christian Ed Board will hold their meetings on the 2nd Wed. of Feb. at 7:15 pm. Tom Riemenschneider reported for the Trustees that there was a misunderstanding on who is responsible for putting ice melt on the sidewalks when it is icy. In the future Tony will take care of this. Ginnie Veach from Mission Board said the donations collected at the

Souper Bowl Luncheon will be donated to UDMO. Luverne gave the Treasurer's Report with the December 2015 offering of \$10,576.90 and December 2015 expenses as \$24,077.06. The offering for the year was 85.12% to budget and the expenses were 95.20% to budget Luverne moved a motion to approve the report and put it to audit. Vicki seconded. Motion carried.

Reports of Pastor, Boards and Committees:

Pastor's Report: Piper William was baptized on Dec. 6. "Buddy" from the Christmas Hillbilly visited us during worship on Joy Sunday. Eleven children presented the Christmas Program "No Ordinary Night" on Sunday December 20th. We thank Wil Groves for his perseverance in leading this program. Dale Olson led worship on December 27 while the pastor was on vacation. On January 3, Epiphany, the Christmas decorations were taken down speedily after worship that day. Ash Wednesday is February 10th. KLAB will deliver the supplies collected for Almost Home on a Wednesday in January and also tour the facility. The group will be studying Bible stories from both the Old and New Testament now. Anne Sherve-Ose will be back this month leading ORFF. The Adult Education Class has finished the topic of Racism in America. The next topic will be announced. The next grief support group begins January 24 for 6 sessions with a new start time of 3:00 pm. Stephen Ministry will embark on a year-long continuing education program entitled "Discovering God's vision for your life." At the heart of this program is a 200 question evaluation of participants' spiritual gifts, which the program seeks to help participants name and align with God's greater purposes in the world. The Salvation Army bell ringing campaign raised \$2,538.45. Thanks to all who rang the bell on short notice. First Congregational alone raised \$1,111.97. Trinity ELCA, Asbury UMC and Opportunity Village also participated in the bell ringing campaign. The pastor has been asked by Kathy Getting to be an adult participant in the World Conversation Café with some of the Webster City High School youth on Friday, January 8th. The topic is "promoting peace."

Board of Trustees: Present at the Jan. 8th meeting were Tom Riemenschneider, Les Ploeger, Pastor Craig, Joyce Gelhaus and guest Tracy Wehrhan. Old Business: the Jiffy billing on Dec. 14th was to clean out the floor drains which were plugged with tree roots and sanitary wipes; a container and sign have been put for their correct disposals; suggested that we need to treat the sewer again this spring with root destroyer. On the Renovation Punch List of Dec. 16th, 2015, the only thing that has been done is a new stool tank; Wayne Schlofeldt had Steve Ahlers from Jensen Builders at the church on Jan. 7th, 2016, to go over the list; Steve is planning on getting the items on the list done as soon as possible; Tracy suggested that we contact Master Builders of Iowa to put in a complaint; The Renovation Bill-Wayne suggested to Tom that we should pay \$48,633.59 and hold back \$22,74.60 until the punch list is complete; the Pastors study, church, office, fellowship hall and choir room have been painted; Les made a motion to pay Randy Temple \$1,350 for his labor and supplies for painting; the paint bill will be coming from Gilbert's. New Business: Pagel repaired the west door by putting on a new panic bar. He also has a new glass seal ordered for the door; Les made the motion to accept the lawn care package for \$487.28 from Stony Creek Lawn Care. Motion carried; there was a problem with snow removal on Christmas Eve. The Lahr boys cleaned the sidewalks. Tony Jones did not realize we were having church on Christmas Eve so hadn't cleaned the walks. In the future we are to notify him if we are having a special

service. He will be salting sidewalks and doing the sidewalks on the lot and the garage. Tony's phone is 290-2952; Chris McNeil is waiting for another light fixture for the stairway. He will need scaffolding to fix the sanctuary fan; approved the usage of the church for Karen Yungclas for PEO on Jan. 14, 2016 from 6:00-10:00 pm; Joyce put in a request for the Garden Club to use the church when needed. Les made a motion for the request, Bruce seconded, and motion was approved; need to get pictures back up in Fellowship Hall; the Mission Board and Trustees need to meet about the bulletin boards; approved storing the Salvation Army items in the garage; contacted Vic on when he will start the west entry. He will be here sometime in January and will also do the baseboards for the new carpet; trustees moved the fire safes out of the choir room; a new mat was ordered for the west entrance; a sales representative will be coming in next week from our paper company to look at paper towel holders, sanitary disposal, and toilet paper dispensers. The next meeting will be announced at a later time.

Mission Board: The board met on Jan. 7th, 2016. Ginnie Veach reminded the board to read the Safe Church policy and the notice of the annual meeting. She also gave the donation amounts collected by Salvation Army bell ringers. Unfinished Business: At the Alternative Giving Fair \$545.00 was contributed to Stepping Forward (Romanian orphanage); eight names were sponsored for the Angel Tree; five stockings were filled for Quakerdale Home; Kayla Nelson helped Ginnie with this project; the leftovers went to UDMO; for the Almost Home Shelter the doghouse was filled plus \$25 cash; other displays were Heifer Project, Church World Service, Holy Joe's and SERRV. The Christmas Fund Offering received \$1,579.00. Beacon of Hope meal will be served Tuesday, Jan. 26th with Ginnie as captain. Please donate food or time. For the Annual Meeting on Jan. 24th, the Mission Board will serve a Souper Bowl lunch. The Cabinet will provide relishes and dessert. Mission Board will bring 5 kinds of soup plus crackers and milk. Stepping Forward orphanage directors, Steve and Cami Mather, will be here to meet with UCC members on Saturday, Feb. 6th at 10:00 am. Everyone is welcome to visit and ask questions. Muffins and coffee will be served. The Reach Out and Read continues at Webster City Medical Clinic. We are working on participation of other medical facilities. New Business: Kids Against Hunger packing will be on Feb. 7th at 1:30 at The Bridge. All ages welcome. This was Ginnie Veach's last meeting as she is going off the board. The board is very grateful for her years of faithful service, great ideas and hard work. The Ice Cream Social notebook and files were passed on to Karin Yungclas. Gayle Olson brought a treat for us to share. Discussions: several members are concerned about the loss of places to display project information and sign-up sheets for projects. The evidence of service activities is important for members and visitors to our building. Two members have expressed interest for a Mission Trip in 2016. We will be checking UCC resources about possible needs for flood clean-up workers and other opportunities. For new projects discussed the possibility for a volunteer to lead the Salvation Army Bell Ringing activity and to inquire into ways to provide aid to those in our prisons. Other possibilities for discussion are: Is it time for a visioning event for the congregation? What would that be like? The next meeting will be decided after the Annual Meeting to decide on good meeting days and times for the board's members.

Evangelism Board: Met on Dec. 8th with Pastor Craig, Laurie Epps, Marjorie Groves, Kay Harfst, Dawn Holdgrafer, Sharon Perry and Wilma Reinsel present. Carol Crystal and Mabel Prescott were unable to attend. Pastor Craig reminded us to keep Tom Riemenschneider, Sally McIntyre and the family of Dona Jaycox in our prayers. Tracy

Wehrhan has had surgery on a deviated septum in his nose, Glenda Wehrhan is scheduled for knee surgery and Ron Epps will have back surgery in January. Wilma continues to send get-well and sympathy cards. Sharon reported the grief support group which has completed the "How Will I Survive the Holidays?" session. They have signed up for the next series of grief support beginning Jan. 24th. Al Fiala and another Stephen Minister will lead the group. The Stephen Ministers meet twice a month; one of these meetings is for training. They will take cookies to jail employees as a service project and plan to give money to the sheriff to buy a Christmas tree for the jail. When Mabel returns in the spring from Florida she will schedule a defibrillator training session. Jose and Dilicia are grateful for the response for their need of furniture. They still are in need of a bed for one year old Jayleen, a couch and a car. In the coming year, 2016, we will honor birthday celebrants each month and propose it to be held on the third Sunday during coffee fellowship time. They suggest cake but recognize that friendship bread, banana bread, brownies, bars, muffins, etc. can be considered "cake." Dawn, Kay, Laurie, Sharon and Wilma will continue to serve on the board. The next meeting will be Jan. 5th at 6:15 pm.

Christian Ed. Board: The board met on Dec. 9th for a special meeting to complete the plans for the Christmas program and coffee after worship. Members will bring the following: juice and bags of goodies for those who participate in the Christmas program; grapes-Wil Grove; puff corn-Vicki Blaufuss; surprise-Jane Klaver; red and green popcorn-Curt McCoskey; candy canes-Leah Maass for all other youth who attend worship the day of the Christmas Program. It was voted to give Pastor Craig \$350 per year to defer the cost of candy passed out after the regular children's message in worship. Christian Ed will meet on the second Wed. of the month at 7:15 pm.

Pending Business: Tom reported that the items on the "punch list" are starting to be completed. Tracy said there should be approximately \$8000 to \$9000 remaining in the Building Fund after all the bills are paid for the renovation. As the cabinet is to furnish the relishes/bars at the soup luncheon following the Annual Meeting on Jan. 24th, 2016, the relishes will be contributed by Sherry, Dalene and Luverne and Tracy Ginnie, Holly and Sharon will furnish bars. A reminder was made that a quorum (50) members are to be present for the annual meeting. Tracy said the Dow bond was sold and a Host Hotel bond was purchased to replace it.

Next meeting is February 9th, 2016 at 7:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Van Diest, Church Clerk

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

February
2016

A decorative graphic for the month of February 2016. It features two stylized purple birds perched on a grey, swirling line. One bird is positioned above the word 'February' and the other is below it. Between the birds is a large pink heart, and several smaller brown hearts are scattered around it. The word 'February' is written in a large, elegant, grey cursive font, and '2016' is written below it in a similar but smaller font.