

January 2017 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.” –Isaiah 11:1
The other day I was walking the dogs in the old part of Graceland Cemetery, and on the gravel road there was a small branch from a conifer tree. It was out of place on the road, but it was beautiful. It was a small bit of displaced Wonder whose very existence spoke of a larger reality of which it was a part...a larger reality we call a “tree. “

I picked up the branch and continued my walk, looking to find the tree to which the branch belonged, but none nearby were the right species. And then about 50 yards down the road I found it towering over the road—a majestic old fir free from which this branch had sprung. Standing in the presence of that ancient tree while holding its displaced branch, I realized that we, like that branch, are both beautiful *and* displaced. Like that branch, the beauty and wonder of our existence points to a greater reality from which we have sprung: in the case of the branch, a giant tree; in our case, God. And like that branch, our separate and displaced existences leave us cut off from the very Source of Life, which supports and sustains our individual lives.

I placed the branch by the tree, but I know the branch will eventually wither and die because it is irreversibly separated from the tree. But once there was a shoot from the stump of Jesse who came to proclaim the Good News that our displacement from God can be healed, and our separation rejoined. He came to share with us the Good News that God’s love for us is steadfast and everlasting, and this love, this connection, is what brings to us “life Abundant,” and the peace that passes all human understanding. To receive this gift and be rejoined to our source is God’s great joy, and God waits for this great rejoining just as the Father waited for the Prodigal Son to return.

But Jesus also taught us that we must do our part if this healing and rejoining is to take place. We must “seek the tree” and cultivate the vision of how we are one with God, even as the branch is one with the tree. We must allow *grace* room to work in our lives and heal us, and not lose ourselves in the busyness, the distractions, and the addictions of this world. We must unlearn much about ourselves, and we must be patient and willing to re-learn who we are in relation to the Source of All Life. We must remake our lives, and choose differently how we use our time and our gifts, and how we will relate to others. And we must allow the nearly unconscious yearning to be reunited with God to become our great conscious yearning, and the great passion and joy of our lives.

Friends, a New Year is upon us now, and many have said “good riddance!” to 2016—and for good reasons. But let me remind you that a Year is neither good or evil in human terms-- is it simply a gift and an opportunity. To my mind the greatest woe of 2016 is that too many are collectively living very disconnected from the Source of Life, resulting in a profound sense of anxiety and loss which is barely understood, often suppressed, and results in all manner of misery-generating behaviors. This need not be so—and 2017 could indeed see a break from this pattern if people of faith like you and I will recommit to the central teaching of our faith, and seek the ONE who seeks us. In our rejoining to God is our peace—and the power to make our human lives into works of beauty, deep purpose, and lived joy. This is the central teaching of the one whose birth we just celebrated a week ago. May we make his joy complete—and this world a better place--by joining *him* in joining ourselves to God! –

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 4	55	December 11	75
December 18	88	December 24	138
December 25	23		

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss , Pastor	
Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316	
Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net	
Michele Omgig : Admin. Assist. 227-8358	
Church's e-mail: administrative.office@fcuccwc.org	
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 : Church Treasurer 297-0370	
Luverne Bierle : Financial Secretary 832-4752	



PARISH NURSE NEWS

Well-rounded wellness

- Social - have positive friendships with family, friends, and co-workers.
- Emotional - Understand yourself and your feelings, good or bad.
- Spiritual - Have peace in your life, make sure that what you do matches what you believe.
- Environmental - Get involved in making your world a better place.
- Occupational - Enjoy your job and keep a work-life balance.
- Intellectual- Open your mind to new ideas and life-long learning.
- Physical - Choose a healthy lifestyle that includes eating right and exercising.
- Financial - Money can't buy happiness; have enough money for your needs without going into debt.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 3 - Alec Tudor
- 4 - Mary Vavroch
- 6 - Kayleigh Weig
- 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 Burtnett
- 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

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar for January 22. We will hold our annual meeting following worship. The revised version of the constitution will be voted on at this time.

SOUPER BOWL RETURNS

Sunday January 22nd Mission Board is again sponsoring our SOUPER Bowl to benefit food pantries here in Webster City. This year we are encouraging our church family to bring items, soups, crackers, peanut butter etc., to help stock the shelves of the food pantries in the Lutheran churches of our community throughout the whole month of January. We are trying to give some support to them as they are able to be more responsive to families food insecurities without the restrictions that UDMO operates

under. We will also have the pickle jar out on the 22nd so you can express your appreciation for the delicious soups served by our board that day!! These funds will be given to UDMO so that they can purchase food at the food bank in Des Moines.

So please mark your calendar for January 22nd, attend the annual meeting and stay for the soup and fellowship following.

Amazon Smile

We are registered with Amazon Smile and it works with Amazon Prime. You simply start shopping through smile.amazon.com and select First Congregational United Church of Christ, Webster City as your charity of choice. A portion of your purchase will be returned to First Congregational to be used towards the Clifford Doty memorial fund.

Pecans

Pecans have arrived. Haystack Circle is offering 16 ounce bags of either halves or pieces for \$10.

Thanks

I would like to thank everyone for their cards and prayers following my knee surgery. I would also like to thank the volunteer drivers. They made it so much easier to get to and from my therapy appointments. A special thank you to Michele for making all the driver arrangements. Tracy Wehrhan

Christmas Program

Our Christmas program was Sunday, December 18 during worship. We send a huge thank you to Wil Groves for heading this up. Also thanks to all the others who made it a success, the children and adults.



Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>NOVEMBER</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$9,822.77	\$166,205.22
Other Income	.41	3.58
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,823.18	\$166,208.80
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	3,266.68	\$17,942.66
Pastoral Services	5,186.08	75,738.48
Maintenance and Repairs	1,941.15	84,825.79
Church Office	2,526.54	30,131.46
Music Ministry	837.50	7,537.50
Christian Education	5.48	492.39
Local Ministry	84.44	656.65
Misc. Expenses	218.55	1,588.86
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,066.42	\$218,913.79

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST Cabinet Meeting – December 13, 2016

Members Present:

Moderator-----Sherry Leksell	Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator----Al Yungclas	Trustees-----Tom Riemenschneider
Finance Sec.-----	Women's Fellowship-Karin Yungclas
Finance-----Dale Olson	Mission-----Lorraine McCoskey
Staff/Parish-----	Worship-----Holly Riemenschneider
Christian Ed-----Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism-----
Treasurer-----	Clerk-----Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order by Moderator, Sherry Leksell, followed with a prayer by Pastor Craig. Highlights of the board were given as follows: **Worship**-getting organized for Christmas; **Treasurer**-Dale gave the report in the absence of the treasurer-the offering for November was \$9697.00 and the November expenses were \$14,066.42; **Mission**-Lorraine reported that we will be serving Beacon of Hope every other month. Tom moved with a second by Vicki to approve all board and committee reports.

Old Business: Constitution-discussed the latest changes to the revised constitution and made a few additional changes. Dale made a motion to approve the revised constitution with the changes by the cabinet, Karin seconded. Motion carried. The constitution will be voted on at the annual meeting in January.

New Business: The annual meeting will be held on January 22, 2017. Following the meeting there will be a Souper Bowl Luncheon with the cabinet serving the dessert. Dale moved with a second by Al to send money to Ecumenical Human Needs. All this money stays local. Motion carried.

Next Cabinet Meeting Date—January, 10, 2017 at 7:00 pm.

Annual Meeting is January 22, 2017 immediately following church worship.

Reports of Boards and Committees

Pastors: Worship- All Saints Sunday was observed with a memorial candle-lighting during worship on Nov. 20th. Advent began on November 27th, with communion and the baptism of Macklin Elkin. Following the service the congregation decorated the church for Christmas and

then enjoyed a pizza and chili lunch sponsored by the Worship Board. On December 18th during worship, our children will present the Christmas program "Not so Silent Night", followed by a coffee hosted by the Christian Ed Board. Christmas Eve worship will be at 5:00 pm with pew communion and Joise Greenley as our organist. Christmas Day will be observed with a worship service beginning at 10:30 am (no accompanist that day). As the pastor is on vacation on January 1st, 2017, worship service will be observed by lay readings and carols. There will be no Sunday School class on either December 25th or January 1st. KLAB-We are rehearsing for our Christmas pageant. On December 21 we will hold our final KLAB of the year with a Christmas crafting party. There is no KLAB on December 28th. The Adult Education Class has been holding weekly discussions of topics pertaining to Christmas. The confirmation class packed meals for Kids against Hunger on November 20th. They will be meeting on December 11th to discuss the meaning of "Christmas". The WCMA packed 15,000 Kids against Hunger meals in two hour with 90 volunteers. Fifteen cases of mac and cheese were given to Trinity ELCA and UDMO. St. Paul Lutheran received 28, and ACE two. Pastor Michael of Faith UMC has chaired the Salvation Army bell-ringing campaign with bell ringers being stationed at both HyVee and Fareway for the first three Fridays and Saturdays in December. First Congregational rang at Fareway on Dec. 2nd, 3rd, 9th and 10th. Thanks to all who volunteered. Rev. Mike Kroona reported that the Ecumenical Human Needs Fund is still operational, but inactive due to lack of funds. They do plan to continue not only with the Morrison Trust moneys, but also with congregational donations. Stephen Ministers have finished with the curriculum exploring our spiritual gifts. A new match was made this month, so currently have six Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. The holiday grief support series finished on November 20th with uneven attendance, averaging two participants. The final Stephen Ministry meeting of 2016 was hosting a caroling party, at Crestview and Southfield, and chili/soup supper in memory of Myra Maxon on December 2nd. Reporting on the Committee on Ministry that the subcommittee did a follow-up of our previous Situational Support Consultation with the First Congregational of Fort Dodge on November 16th. The subcommittee for the Eastern Cluster conducted a Periodic Support Consultation for Pastor Nancy Hofmeister and the UCC church in Rowan on November 29th.

Board of Trustees: Met on November 20th with Tom and Holly Riemenschneider, Gretchen Bruner, Joyce Gelhaus and Pastor Craig present. Absent were Tracy Wehrhan and Bruce Perry. Tom reported that a new light has been installed over the NW door; Joyce continues to try to contact Ray K. about the outside lighted sign; Tracy got the ceiling tile repaired in the kitchenette off the meeting room; the code has been changed on the west door keypad and given to those who need it; Gretchen, Holly and Tom have been looking at new furniture for the pastor's office; Joyce is checking to make sure that the fellowship hall carpet has been repaired. Under New Business it was reported that a water leak has been repaired in the basement by Jiffy; Tony Jones has been taking care of the leaves when he mows. Board members for 2017 will be Joyce, Bruce and Tracy will stay on for one more year with Tom, Holly and Gretchen going off. Tom will stay on for two years. The annual report is due December 17th.

Women's Fellowship: The Executive Board met on November 30th with Karin Yungclas, Kay Harfst, Cindy Henning, Verna Bierle, Gayle Olson, Carol Crystal, Ginnie Veach and Stephanie Hill present. Dates to remember are December 18th children's Christmas program and the pastor will be on vacation from December 26th thru January 3rd. The Ecumenical Human Needs is not giving to those in need unless it is a dire need. Verna Bierle reported the following Treasurer's report-Old Balance-\$2,294.67, Distributions-\$24.48, Income-\$579.37, New Balance-\$2,849.56 and Savings account-\$1,736.78. Karin reported on the discussion of the Constitution vote and the follow-up regarding a new vote. The responsibilities for the Christmas Dinner on December 11th following worship are Haystack-food, Morning Star-decorations and Mayflower-entertainment.

Group 2 (Kay, Amani and Wilma R.) will be serving the coffee following worship on January 15th. The honorary members will be remembered during the holidays. Mayflower will add Charlene McKee and Mary Byrne and Morning Star will recognize Wilma Taylor. First Congregational is responsible for a speaker at the Lenten Lunch on March 14th, 2017. The Piecemakers will not meet in December. Remember these dates—Dec. 2-Myra Maxon Caroling Party; Dec. 11-Christmas Luncheon; Dec. 24-Christmas Eve Service at 5:00 pm; Dec. 26-Christmas Day Service at 10:30 am; Jan. 22, 2017-Annual Meeting. There will be no Executive Board meeting in January. Feb. 1st, 2017 will be the next meeting.

Mission Board: Met on November 29th with Audrey Burtnett, Marjorie Groves, Alyssa Kenville, Lorraine McCoskey, Gayle Olson and Karin Yungclas. Lorraine reported much discussion on the failed Constitution vote. A letter was sent to church members asking for input. Karin is on the nominating committee and asked if the current members are willing to continue. They all said yes and Lorraine would like to be considered as the cabinet representative for 2017. The annual church meeting is January 22nd. Reporting on Beacon of Hope that the shredded potatoes and ham casserole was popular with the 40 men served on November 15th. A man and woman came in at the end of serving. Rev. Eric Howard said to feed them and he would talk with them later. They had hitch hiked from Des Moines and hadn't eaten all day. We need to increase bags of lettuce from four to six. The next meal will be January 31st with tri-captains Audrey, Karin and Lorraine. The menu will be chili, oranges, bars and three loaves of peanut butter sandwiches. The March captain is Marjorie and she is proposing the shredded potatoes and ham casserole again. On November 12th Luverne Bierle, Pastor Craig, Don Bruner, Stephanie Hill, Arden Schlitter and Al Yungclas participated in the Warm Hearts, Warm Homes. They winterized one home's outside windows one home's inside windows, two apartments inside windows and delivered window supplies to another home, where there was an illness and workers did not enter. There is a different focus each week of Advent on the Alternative Giving Fair. The Local (Gayle in charge)-feature was warm recess wear for youngsters at Sunset and Pleasant View. She delivered a total of 93 pairs of socks, 22 pairs of sweatpants, 8 pairs of shoes, 3 sweatshirts and 4 pairs of boots between the 2 schools. The International (Donna Ryherd in charge) decorated small Christmas tree with pictures of Romanian orphans from the Stepping Forward Program and noted that \$20 would buy each child's Christmas gifts. The National (Karin Yungclas in charge) will prepare a list of items needed for Church World Service hygiene kits for the U.S. The UCC (Marjorie Groves in charge) will have a pickle jar for donations to a Global Ministries partner assisting in education for displaced Syrian children in Jordanian refugee camps. Alyssa has not had a reply from the Neighbors in Need grant that they requested for the Backpack Program. The Mission Board has agreed to serve a soup lunch after the Annual Meeting on January 22nd. They will put out a pickle jar for donations. We will continue our January commitment to Upper Des Moines Opportunity with these donations. We have tentatively decided to collect food and/or money for food pantries in July and give that money to St. Paul and Trinity Lutheran churches' food pantries. The coloring books that Pastor Craig gave out Sunday were from the UCC national office to promote the Christmas Fund which will be collected on Christmas Eve. Marjorie submitted the Mission Board summary to Michele. "White Privilege" is the title of an adult curriculum prepared by the national United Church of Christ. We would be interested in offering the study to our church, as well as other churches in the community, if Pastor Craig is willing and has the time to facilitate it. There are four parts to the discussion on race. The next meeting is January 3rd, 2017, at 5:30 pm.

Next Cabinet Meeting – January 10, 2017 at 7:00 pm

Annual Meeting-----January 22, 2017 following worship service.

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

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:

