

January 2018 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>

“Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming, from tender stem hath sprung...” –Traditional Carol
In the morning, when Jesus returned to the city, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!”
And the fig tree withered at once.—Matt. 21:18-19

I love Christmas cactuses! I am amazed at how they can remain dormant for most of the year, living as green succulents until the season of Christmas approaches...and suddenly they begin to bud, then gloriously flower in the dead of winter as if caught up in the joyous magic of the season. There surely is a sermon in each Christmas cactus flowering! It is a miraculous reminder of what is possible for both plants and people when heaven’s power and heaven’s hope come to earth.

Seeing that miracle unfold in the life of a humble plant reminds me of how that miracle unfolds in my own inner life at Christmastime, year after year. Sometimes the magic comes early, and I feel like I am flowering with joy and goodwill all season long. And while in other years the magic seems to arrive very late, it does arrive...and I am again coaxed into flowering as the best of what is in me comes to bloom, filling me to overflowing with generosity, goodwill, lovingkindness, and a renewed vision of life that is sweet, innocent and fresh; hopeful and confident.

And yet, as with the Christmas cactus, it seems inevitable that as the new year arrives the flowering I experience at Christmas begins to fade, until it becomes only a memory...and a hoped-for, dormant possibility for another year.

As I think about how the magic of Christmas makes both plants and people bloom, I wonder what Jesus would have done to a Christmas cactus—or to me—if he had encountered either of us in our non-blooming states on the road to Jerusalem. Would he have cursed us and withered us as he did the fig tree? Of course that notion is unthinkable. But what does Jesus ask of us in the “off-season” after Christmas, as we return to our more routine states of heart and mind? Certainly more than a cultivated nostalgia for Christmases past...and certainly more than the sad lament “what a blessed place the world would be, if we had that Christmas spirit all year!”

As disciples of Jesus and people of faith, we are called to more than just the rhythmic flowerings of heart and mind that coincide with the right seasons and the best conditions. Unlike the Christmas cactus, we are called by God to bloom and bear fruit in *every* season for the sake of a world hungry for Good News. That means we are called to cultivate the generosity of spirit we feel at Christmas in the coming new year as we actively seek to help and serve others—especially those in deepest need. That means we are called to cultivate the goodwill we feel toward others at Christmas all year long—even toward the strangers in our midst, and toward our enemies (yes, even them). That means the hope we feel at Christmas should not be lost when the sweetness of Christmas is replaced by the harsher realities of daily life: the not-so-good-daily-news which reminds us that life on planet earth is not all sweetness and light.

And yes, that means on a daily basis we are called to cultivate our capacity to bloom, so that the flowering of our highest selves becomes a lived reality in our daily lives, rather than a seasonal miracle that comes and goes as if we have no part to play in its coming, and no responsibility for its enduring beauty and power. For make no mistake: our blooming and our fruiting are to help others bloom and fruit as well, so that each of us can experience the magic, the wonder, the joy and the possibilities of our highest selves—our “Christ-selves”—blooming with beauty and life-giving good fruits. That is the highest hope of “Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All” that seems so possible at Christmas, so impossible at every other time of the year...and so needed all year long!

Friends, by the time you read this we will have entered into another new year, and Christmas will be quickly becoming yet another ghost of Christmas past. This year let’s outdo our Christmas cactuses and not go dormant, but work at blooming and producing fruit all year long! What a wonderful witness that would be to the power of God in human life! What a wonderful gift that would be to give to the world—and to ourselves! What a wonderful goal to set for our lives in this 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 3 68 December 10 65
December 17 103 December 24 am pm 124
December 31

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**
Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. **227-8358**
Church's e-mail: administrative.office@fcuccwc.org
Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr **839-5619**
Sunshine Yoders: Choir Director **835-7626**
Melissa Hindt: Organist **209-8087**
Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's. **832-5341**
Tracy Wehrhan: Church Treasurer **297-0370**
Dale Olson: Financial Secretary **839-5619**



PARISH NURSE NEWS

KEEP YOUR FITNESS RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR.

- Write it down and post it where you'll see it every day.
- First thing in the morning, do something to support your resolution.
- Listen to a tape, read a book, or take a class on the health habit you want to improve.
- Put it on your daily calendar and make it a priority
- Post inspiring quotes in your work area or on your refrigerator.
- Search out different places to do your resolution to keep it fun.
- Ask for help from family members and friends.
- Volunteer to support someone else who is also trying to change their habits.
- Start a savings jar or offer other reward system.



- 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



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

Rice and Beans Galore

We have delivered more than 100 pounds of rice and dried beans to the All-Cultures Equal Community Center – thanks to the food collection for the Advent Alternative Giving Fair and to Christmas gifts from Haystack Circle. We appreciate your generosity! – *The Mission Board*

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar for January 28. We will hold our annual meeting following worship. The revised version of the constitution will be voted on at this time.

Souper Bowl

Sunday, January 28, 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 to help stock the shelves of the food pantries in our community. We will also have the pickle jar out on the 28th. Please mark your calendar for January 28, attend the annual meeting and stay for the soup and fellowship following.

The Christmas Fund

Thanks to your generosity we collected \$1,527 for The Christmas Fund.

The third week of advent we collected all of these clothing items for Head Start.



Leah and her assistants cleaning up after coffee on December 17



Ye Olde KLAB Gang making Christmas Ornaments



Thanks

Upper Des Moines would like to thank you for the generous donation of \$1,000, this money will help so many in the community, we could not offer all of the services without your support. You help us make a difference.

UDMO Staff

I want to thank everyone for all the cards, calls, goodies, warm wishes, and prayers before and after my recent surgeries. Thanks to the Trustees for taking over the custodial duties in my absence. All these acts of kindness really do mean a lot and again I say Thank you!

Hopefully 2018 will be back to "normal."

Curt McCoskey

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your gift of \$1,000 to the work of the Ecumenical Human Needs Committee. With your help we have been able to assist those who have fallen through the cracks of the Human Services in Hamilton County. We have helped with rent, rental deposits, and utility payments.

Thank you,

EHN Committee

First Congregational UCC

I would like to send my sincere appreciation for the generous scholarship I received for the 2017-2018 academic year. The funds were used directly for my tuition and have eased the financial burden for my family. Nursing school is a rewarding and challenging endeavor and the support of the congregation is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Amanda Groves

Dear First Congregational,

Thank you for your cash donation and your generous donation of food to our food pantry. It will help to feed many families in need this season.

Sincerely,

Janet Toering

Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$18,211.00	\$165,989.30
Other Income	.00	12.03
TOTAL INCOME	\$18,211.00	\$166,001.33
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	3,166.68	\$17,945.58
Pastoral Services	5,817.55	78,444.73
Maintenance and Repairs	1,161.14	27,554.35
Church Office	3,875.82	31,203.95
Music Ministry	669.50	6,665.25
Christian Education	115.95	526.00
Local Ministry	.00	211.39
Misc. Expenses	18.30	939.06
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,824.94	\$163,490.31

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting – December 12, 2017

Members Present:

Moderator-----Al Yungclas	Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator----	Trustees-----Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.-----Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship-Karin Yungclas
Finance-----Tracy Wehrhan/Dale Olson	Mission-----Gayle Olson
Staff/Parish-----Shirley Yungclas	Worship-----Mary Vavroch
Christian Ed-----Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism-----
Treasurer-----Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk-----Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Moderator, Al Yungclas. Pastor Craig gave a devotion entitled "Start Early" by Matt Fitzgerald, followed by a prayer. The November cabinet meetings were approved as printed in the church newsletter. A brief highlight of the board's reports were given:

Mission Board by Gayle Olson-on Souper Sunday (the day of the annual meeting) the cabinet will furnish veggies and dessert following the annual meeting. **Evangelism** reported that they are short on volunteers for ushering. **Trustees** by Joyce Gelhaus- Realtor Stacy Wearda is asking \$50,000 for the two empty lots that the church owns; the repairs on the back hallway are finished; the end of next summer (2018) the repair of the leaded glass windows will begin. **Women's Fellowship** by Karin Yungclas-there will be no executive board meeting in January and the purchase of new dishes in the kitchen has been postponed at this time. **Finance** by Tracy Wehrhan-a GE bond has been sold and a Goldman Sachs bond purchased. **Treasurer's report** by Tracy Wehrhan-the initial payment of \$32,823.00 for the repair of the stained glass windows has been paid. He reported that the offering for November was \$18,211.00 and expenses were \$14,824.94. Tracy moved and Dale seconded to put the report to audit. Tracy also reported that \$7,332.00 has been donated to the restoration of the windows. The full report of the boards and the pastor's report will be found later in the cabinet minutes.

Old Business: None

New Business: Gayle Olson moved, and Dale Olson seconded that the annual meeting be held on January 28th, 2018 immediately following the morning worship service. A quorum of 45 is needed for this meeting. A policy review of our Safe Conduct Policy has been tabled until the January cabinet meeting. Dale Olson brought up the confusion in our constitution in the Special Funds area and in the Finance section of the constitution. Tracy moved and Dale seconded that a constitutional amendment be written to have this clarified and added to the budget. Motion carried. They will write the

amendment, which will then be emailed to members and printed for everyone to review. It will be voted on at the annual meeting on January 28th, 2018.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

Board of Trustees Old Business: The basement back hallway is being worked on by Neibergall. He has the dry wall up and ready for paint. He will then finish with baseboards etc. Joyce will contact Randy Temple to paint the repaired area the light gray to match the stairway. The broken kitchen window has been repaired. Bruce hauled away the old refrigerator from media room and the old lamp stands. The contract for the Stained Glass windows was reviewed. Tracy made a motion to approve the contract. Sherry seconded the motion. Motion carried. Joyce will have Al Yungclas the moderator sign the contract. Joyce will contact Duane Vavroch of the finance committee to arrange the finances for the down payment.

New Business: The toilet in the brides restroom needs a new seat. Tom will take care of fixing it. Curt will have his next knee surgery December 15. He will have church ready for Sunday, December 17. Trustees will clean December 20 at 5PM and December 28 at 2PM. The annual report is due December 16. Joyce will do it. Discussion was held on selling the two lots. We do not want to sell for less than \$30,000. We want them on multiple listings. Sherry will contact Stacy Wearda of Neighborhood Reality about listing the lots and see if she would wave some of the closing cost. Then she will let Joyce know.

November 19, 2017 **Business:** The contract with Stacy Wearda of Neighborhood Reality for selling the two lots was reviewed. Tracy made the motion to approve the contract. Tom seconded it. Motion passed. Al Yungclas signed the contract. Joyce will deliver the contract. Two donations have been received for the windows for a total of \$5,500. The contract with Cathedral Crafts is signed and the finance board is working on the down payment- \$32,823. Discussed a fundraising letter for the Stained glass windows, to former members who would have family and historical interest with the church. Sherry will write a letter for Trustees to review.

Finance Board Tracy gave a report on the Sale of the bond from the Poole Scholarship fund. The Staples bond was called and sold. The board had decided to purchase a bond from Verizon Communications. The net gain on the sale of the Staples bond was \$4,135.00. Tracy presented that he discussed with an accountant on how to enter the window restoration loan into Church Windows program and how to make contractor payments and loan payments. Tracy supplied a draft of a proposed amendment to the By-Laws for the Finance Board. Two minor changes were made and the board voted to present this to the cabinet at the December Cabinet meeting. Discussion was held on the amendment to the budget showing budget amounts for the special fund accounts. These accounts never had a budget amounts entered and the cabinet thought there should be amounts listed. The budget format was also discussed and Tracy will work with Michele to implement these changes. This will be presented at the December Cabinet meeting. The board discussed the annual audit of the church books. Duane will contact Dalene Schlitter to see if she will contact the person that did it last time. Discussion was held on adding a line item to the budget for audit expense. The board decided to add the line item with an amount of \$500.00 which will be included with the special funds budget amendment.

Mission Board Lorraine McCoskey prepared chili at home for the November 28 meal at the Beacon of Hope shelter for homeless men in Fort Dodge. Servers were Jill Coons, Jenny Maass, Curt McCoskey, and Andrea and Ed Mosbach. They served 40 to 50 men and got a tour of the facilities afterward. We delivered more than 60 boxes of Kleenex/tissue to the shelter. The Mission Board decided to keep displays for the giving opportunities up through Advent but to feature a new one each week. Donna Ryherd has set up a little Christmas tree with Romanian children's photos for the week of December 3 for Stepping Forward. Gayle is working on a tree for the December 10 collection of winter clothing for Head Start students. Karin and Audrey are designing a display for December 17 -- Puerto Rico recovery -- to raise money for water filters, a national UCC effort. Our church has shifts for Salvation Army bell-ringing on December 8 and 9, 3-8 p.m. at Fareway. 90-percent of money collected stays in Webster City community and will go to Ecumenical Human Needs and maybe also

to the Backpack Program. Some money will be used to buy gas cards that local clergy can give if people approach them needing an emergency tank of gas. The Christmas Fund will be gathered at the Christmas Eve service, December 24, 5 p.m. We set February 25 for the Funding Future Leaders collection; it's the Iowa Conference UCC collection for seminary students. Gayle will be captain of the January Beacon meal. The Mission Board serves a soup lunch after the Annual Meeting January 28.

Pastor's Report Worship: We have begun Advent! Dec 3 was our first Sunday of Advent, and following the service we had plenty of help to "hang the greens"—and delicious pizza/chili lunch to follow. Dec 17 will be our children's Christmas program—a big thank you to Mary Van Diest and Leah Maass for putting this together. On Dec 24 we will hold a 10:30 am service (4th Sunday of Advent) in the East Chapel, and then hold our traditional 5 pm Christmas Eve service in our sanctuary with pew communion. December 31 will be a lay-led service of readings and carols while I am away on vacation.

KLAB: We have been studying the annunciation, and working on Christmas crafts. The older KLAB kids have also been making crafts and visited a homebound member to deliver a gift. There will be no KLAB December 20 or 27 due to Christmas break.

Adult Education: We are now studying materials pertinent to Advent and Christmas.

Stephen Ministry: We currently have 5 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. On December 8 our Stephen Ministers met at the Emporium at 6 pm for dinner and our Christmas gathering, and on December 9 we will host a caroling party at the church, beginning at 5:45pm. We will carol the care centers and return to the church for a chili supper. The 3 week grief support series "How Will I Get Through the Holidays?" was cancelled due to a lack of enrollees.

WCMA: the ACE Community Thanksgiving meal, held Nov 12, netted \$2000. Great Job! There will be another Salvation Army Bellringing Campaign in Webster City during Advent; I am organizing the event on short notice so there may not be bellringers at both HyVee and Fareway this year. First Congo rang Dec 8 and 9th at Fareway—thank you to all volunteers! Asbury UMC will ring on the 15th and 16th at HyVee, and Trinity will ring the 22 and 23rd at Fareway. Mike Kroona and Jeff Flagg will try to recruit other churches or organizations to ring on their weekends. In other news, the principal of St Thomas school spoke with members of the ministerium, and invited each of us to come to their religion class and speak about our respective denominations and what we believe. Great idea!

CoM: Information reviews and yearly questionnaires will be sent out to all NW Association churches and clergy in January. We will hold our annual relicensing gathering (of licensed clergy) in March. The UCC/Methodist church in Milford has withdrawn from the UCC. We will set up a Periodic Support Consult for Eagle Grove UCC in January—they are without a called pastor since Jim Cunningham resigned. Brigit will begin her official duties as Executive Conference Minister in January. A PSC has held at the UCC church in Schleswig; they continue to struggle with pastor/parish relations and their search process. We interviewed their new interim Duane Mullen.

NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 9 at 7:00 PM. Respectfully submitted--Church clerk, Mary Van Diest

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:

