

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

*“What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” –Romans 6:1-4*

You may remember the Buddhist story of “the mustard seed”—the story of a mother whose young son died and left her inconsolable. While she was grieving, she heard talk of a great sage named Gautama, and so she went to him and asked that he bring her son back to life. In his compassion the Buddha instructed her to go throughout her village and ask for a mustard seed, with the stipulation that she could only receive it from a household that had never experienced a death. If she would bring such a seed, then a miracle would be possible.

Hearing this, the woman went door to door and asked at each house if they had escaped the tragedy of death, so that she might receive a mustard seed from them. At every house she heard the same sad news that they could not honor her request, for they too had lost ones who were dear to them. After she had visited every household in the village she returned to the Buddha, and asked to be initiated into the Way...for now she knew that *Death was the one great certainty of life.*

This story reveals a great truth about one type of death: **the Unchosen Death**. The Unchosen Death is the inescapable end of physical life; it is the one great certainty that we share with all living creatures on earth. Yet it is the one certainty that most of us seek to avoid, or deny, as did the grieving mother who had lost her child. Confronted with the Unchosen Death we flee from it, curse it, push it into the corners of our minds, or sanitize it with silk-lined coffins and park-like cemeteries. Like the grieving mother who sought refuge in the Buddha, we see the Unchosen Death as the thief, the enemy—the greatest thief and the greatest enemy of our lives.

And because we see it as the enemy, we cannot understand that the Unchosen Death is also the friend who comes bearing gifts. One of the greatest gifts the Unchosen Death brings is this paradox: it is only when we accept the inescapability of our death that we can truly begin to live. *When we know that this life will end; when we meditate on that certainty, and feel in the very depths of our souls that the Unchosen Death will come to us...then we come to understand with clarity and a motivating urgency that what we do with our lives does matter, because the gift of this life won't last forever.*

When we see our lives with the clarity and urgency that is born of our acceptance of the Unchosen Death, we are empowered to rise from our spiritual sleep and embrace another gift: **the gift of the Chosen Death**. Each of us, from the time we are born until the time the Unchosen Death arrives, has been given the opportunity to choose how we will live. Each of us has the power and the responsibility to choose what we will live for, and what we will die to. That is what Paul means when he tells us just as Christ chose to die *for* sin, we can choose to die *to* sin—those beliefs and behaviors which only lead to more misery, suffering, and death in all of its forms--so that we may ally ourselves with God's purposes for our lives, and for all of Life.

By the time you read this, we will be but a few days away from Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. All of us would benefit from using this time to remind ourselves of the Unchosen Death that is coming, and the need to choose what we will live for, and what we will die to, so that we may truly live as God intends us to live. So what *do* you need to die to this Lenten season...so that you may live? Do you need to die to the belief that your worth lies in the things that will die with your body: your looks, your strength, your IQ, your charm, your skills, your social status, your bank account? Do you need to die to negativity in all of its forms: anger, resentment, prejudice, bitterness, and the holding of old grudges? Do you need to die to the fears that are crippling you and keeping you from a life lived with courage and with joy? Do you need to let go of the belief that your happiness somehow resides in the behavior of others, or in the accumulation of things?

What *do* you need to die to, so that you may live? Friends, **the Unchosen Death is coming to us all...but before it comes there is much we can do to put to death the things that will cause us to die long before our physical deaths.** That is the way of the Chosen Death; that is the Way of Jesus. And that is the Way each of us is meant to travel on our journey through this life.

May this Lenten season be a time to re-commit to your walk of faith as you follow the Way of Jesus: the way of death that leads to New Life! --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 7	42	January 14	44
January 21	45	January 28	53

### Church Staff

**Rev. Craig Blaufuss**, Pastor  
Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**  
Pastor's email: [revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net](mailto:revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net)  
**Michele Omvig**: Admin. Assist. **227-8358**  
Church's e-mail: [administrative.office@fcuccwc.org](mailto: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**



Seeing the Bright Side

- Write your future success story. Put your goals and dreams down on paper.
- Make lemonade. Try to find something good in every negative situation.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Savor moments. Stop and smell the roses.
- Share good news.
- Write thank-you notes.
- Be your own best friend.

### Adult Education Class: UCC Hidden Histories

Our next Adult Education Class series will begin February 4, and it will focus on the United Church of Christ and its "Hidden Histories." Join us at 9:15 am in the Multipurpose Room as we explore our UCC roots and study some of the remarkable milestones in our denomination's history!



- 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 Omvig
- 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 - 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



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

### Alternative Giving

What a warm, loving, giving church family! You continue to amaze us on the Mission Board with your generous response to the projects we bring to your attention. The latest is the 4 projects we had highlighted during our Alternative Giving Fair. A check for \$1120 was sent to Stepping Forward in Romania, 100 pounds of beans and rice were delivered to

ACE, \$473.00 was gifted to provide water filters in Puerto Rico, and the following were given to the local Headstart classroom: 8 pairs of sweatpants, 1 sweatshirt, 1 thermal shirt, 29 pairs of socks, 2 pairs of pjs, 11 pairs of gloves, 13 pairs of mittens, 2 hats, 5 pairs of underwear, and 2 playmats with 3 trucks. Thank you for your love of neighbor!  
Mission Board

### **Lent Begins February 14**

First Congregational will begin the observance of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, February 14, beginning at 7 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.

### **Lenten Lunches**

This year Asbury UMC is hosting the Lenten lunches, starting February 20 through March 20. Serving begins at 11:45 in the dining room with the luncheon concluding at 1:00. Cost is \$6 per person. Sign up in Fellowship Hall before noon on the Monday before.

### **KLAB Fundraiser for Almost Home**

Our KLAB students are busy working on our next fundraiser for Almost Home (the no-kill animal shelter in Fort Dodge)...cat treats! Last year we sold out of our homemade dog treats, so this year we wanted to give equal time (and treats) to our feline companions by making homemade treats for cats. Look for a display in February with jars of cat treats for sale!

### **Safe Church Policy Training—February 11**

Our Safe Church Policy requires yearly screening and training of all adult volunteers and staff who work with our children. On Sunday, February 11 we will conduct our annual training in the multipurpose room following our morning worship service. All adults who work with children are required to attend this training session, or schedule a make-up training date with our Safe Church policy TEAM. The training will last about an hour.

### **Funding Future Leadership**

Training ordained clergy is an expensive proposition, leaving many pastors and seminary students (a.k.a. members in discernment) deeply in debt. We can help reduce the financial burden through scholarships. A special offering organized through the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ, Funding Future Leadership: Scholarships for Ministry Preparation, will be taken *February 25* to fund these scholarships. These scholarships are specifically for members-in-discernment who are from Iowa. Please make out your check to 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational UCC and write “Funding Future Leaders” or simply “FFL” on the memo line. The Mission Board will host fellowship time after worship on February 25 and will have the Pickle Jar out for donations to Funding Future Leadership. The seminary students thank you and we thank you. – *The Mission Board*

**In conjunction with our Super Bowl luncheon, these soup donations will be given to our local food pantry. Thank you all for your generosity!**



### **Annual Meeting held January 28**



## Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$22,299.77	\$189,939.07
Other Income	.00	12.03
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$22,299.77</b>	<b>\$189,951.10</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Outreach and Mission	1,831.34	\$19,776.92
Pastoral Services	11,558.92	90,003.65
Maintenance and Repairs	3,154.25	31,546.73
Church Office	2,962.39	34,166.34
Music Ministry	744.50	7,409.75
Christian Education	50.62	576.62
Local Ministry	2,000.00	2,211.39
Misc. Expenses	64.67	1,003.73
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$22,366.69</b>	<b>\$186,695.13</b>

**FIRST CONGEGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Webster City, Iowa**  
**Cabinet Meeting January 9, 2018**

**Members Present:**

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by the Moderator, Al Yungclas. Pastor Craig Blaufuss gave a devotional entitled "Sympathy Empathy" followed by prayer. As there were no objections to the December 12, 2017 cabinet minutes as printed in the church newsletter, the minutes were approved. A brief highlight of the pastor's and boards reports were given: **Finance** by Dale Olson-some bonds came due and purchased others. **Mission** by Gayle Olson-expressed thanks to the entire congregation for their generous giving and donations to the Alternative Giving Fair. For the Souper Bowl the board will furnish the soups and the cabinet the relishes and dessert. Shirley Yungclas and Karin Yungclas will furnish the relishes, Joyce Gelhaus and Dale Olson the ice cream and Mary Van Diest the ice cream toppings. **Treasurer** by Dale Olson in the absence of Tracy Wehrhan-He reported the December offering was \$21,299.77 and December expenses were \$22,344.94. Dale moved and Donna seconded to put the report to audit. Motion carried. A discussion was held on how to present a visual on the contributions to the re-leading of the church windows. Al and Karin Yungclas have a contact who can help with this. A full report of the boards and pastor's report will be found later in the cabinet minutes.

**Old Business:** The nominating committee reported they have a full slate of officers to be presented at the annual meeting.

**New Business:** The constitution states that every two years there needs to be a policy review of the Safe Conduct Policy. It was recommended that the Task Force be reinstated for this.

**Board of Trustees:** After cleaning the church for Curt, Trustees met for a short meeting. **Old Business:** Update on the sale of the lots- Stacy has an interested party but not interested until spring. The fence by the compressor fell because the posts were rotten. Tom put in two new treated 4X4 fence posts. Tom tightened the screws on the bride's room toilet. We have a toilet seat in storage if we need one. Stained Glass window renovation donations= \$12,862.66. We will check with Curt on the central vacuum, it kept going off and on.

Sherry will check with Kolleen to see if she is going to write the grant for the stained glass windows. New Business: Church usage for December 25, 2017 and May 20, 2018 was approved. Schumacher Elevator Maintenance contract bill was approved.

**Worship Board:** There will be NO communion at the December 24<sup>th</sup> morning service. Elements were to be prepared after this service for the Christmas Eve service. Josi Greenley will be playing at our Christmas Eve service, and we will not need a pianist at the morning service on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Communion servers for Christmas Eve: Cindy, Linda, Gretchen. We still need 3 more servers. Cindy and Gretchen have signed up to be readers for the December 31<sup>st</sup> worship service. We are in need of 3 more readers. Cindy will do announcements, joys and concerns, etc. Gretchen presented a bill of \$140.19 for pizzas, milk and crackers for the Hanging of the Greens. We need 2 communion servers for January 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Pastor's Report:** Worship: We are now nearly finished with Christmas! Dec 17 was our children's Christmas program—a big thank you to Mary Van Diest, Leah Maass, and Don Bruner (Music) for putting this together. On Dec 24, 33 people gathered at 10:30 am service (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent) in the East Chapel, sang carols and listened to stories about Christmas. We held our traditional 5 pm Christmas Eve service in our sanctuary with pew communion, and then on December 31 folks gathered for a lay-led service of readings and carols while I was away on vacation. Sunday (January 7) we will observe Epiphany Sunday, and following the service we will pack away the Christmas decorations for another year. KLAB: We finished up the year on December 13<sup>th</sup> with a Christmas craft blitz, and returned after a 2 week break to study the story of Epiphany, the flight to Egypt, and the slaughter of the innocents. The older KLAB kids returned from break to visit 2 members in the Care Center and deliver gifts. Adult Education: We will resume with a study of Epiphany, and the group will decide what topic to study next. Stephen Ministry: We currently have 4 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. Our January meeting focused on our spiritual health, with a series of devotional readings and discussions. WCMA: We marked the season with another Salvation Army bell ringing campaign during Advent: First Congo rang Dec 8 and 9<sup>th</sup> at Fareway—thank you to all volunteers! (First Congo brought in about \$630). Asbury UMC rang on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> at HyVee, Faith UMC rang at Fareway on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and Trinity rang on the 22 and 23<sup>rd</sup> at Fareway. We raised a total of \$2,456.89, and subtracting \$270 in checks for the Salvation Army, we netted \$2,186.89. Considering our late start and lack of coverage, we did well—but we need to get better organized next year. In other news, several ministers in town were given \$20 Caseys giftcards (funded by last year's bell ringing campaign) to pass out to people who come with a need for transportation \$\$ for medical appointments, etc., and we have already been scammed by a family who tried to collect cards from every church. We have tightened up our application and will discuss other ways to prevent this from happening in the future.

**Mission Board:** Pastor Craig said \$2,456.89 was collected Dec. 8-9 for the Salvation Army bell ringing. The Salvation Army \$270 in checks that were written to it. Most of the rest went to Ecumenical Human Needs. Some was used to buy gas cards that went to local ministers and EHN to give to those needing an emergency tank of gas. Action has been taken to prevent another scam like the one that took place almost immediately after. \$1,527 was netted at the Christmas Eve 5 p.m. service for the Christmas Fund. Gayle has written a thank-you note for the newsletter and bulletin, reporting how much was collected for each of the four causes featured in the Advent Alternative Giving Fair. The Mission Board will host coffee fellowship on February 25 when we accept donations for Funding Future Leaders, the Iowa Conference UCC collection for seminary students. Gayle and Audrey will chair the January 30 meal at the Beacon of Hope. The Mission Board serves the Souper Bowl, a soup lunch after the Annual Meeting January 28. We also will ask the congregation to bring canned and packaged soups to go to food pantries. We will be looking for projects relating to the 3 Great Loves (of children, of neighbors, of the earth), talking with folks in our church and researching what other churches are doing.

**Next Meeting: February 13, 2018 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:

