

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

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them will bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." --John 15:5

My cucumber plants are again doing well this summer, and I have been canning plenty of pickles: bread and butter, dill spears and chunks, lime pickles (my new favorite) and of course, pickle relish. Every 3-4 days I find enough cucumbers in the garden to make another batch of pickles, and it won't be long before I run out of storage space for them! What is amazing to me is how all of these cucumbers are the fruit of just 4 cucumber plants, and it is a wonder to watch these 4 plants grow, climb, blossom, and produce so much fruit. The fecundity of nature is an ancient and ever-new source of inspiration, which is one of the reasons why so many of Jesus' parables and allegories are agriculture-based.

When Jesus told the disciples "I am the vine, you are the branches," I am reminded of our garden cucumbers and how prolific they are...and I also think about what happens when a branch is broken and no longer receives nourishment from the vine. This occasionally happens when I am careless in picking cukes, and when a branch is broken and the connection to rest of the vine is severed, that branch never bears fruit again. This fact was well known to every vinedresser and agricultural worker in Jesus' day, and so he used the imagery of vine and branch to convey the necessity of staying connected to him-- if we, the branches, are to bear fruit.

But of course we are intelligent and mobile branches, so we humans inevitably "vine-shop" and seek out vines (my cucumbers haven't figured out that trick yet ☺) that tend to nourish the fruits we prefer to bear. It literally is a jungle out there of tangled and competing vines, each seeking to attract us, each seeking to encourage us to engraft ourselves to them so that these vines can bear fruit through us (and we can bear fruit through them). These vines can be life giving and positive relationships(healthy family systems, networks of friends, churches and religious organizations, service organizations, support groups, hobby and sports clubs, etc.) or poisonous and destructive relationships (abusive/toxic family systems, street gangs, hate groups, etc). These vines can also be the daily "feeds" in our lives (Facebook, Twitter, CNN, Fox, or the neighborhood watering hole or coffee shop), memories (both good and bad), and our positive and negative coping behaviors that lead to either more well-being and shalom, or addiction and mental illness. What is critical to understand is that we engraft ourselves to many vines in our lives, and so we must decide what vines we will join ourselves to, and what vines we must separate from, so that we can bear fruit that gives honor to God, and life to ourselves and to the world.

To return to my pickles...the variety of pickles I prepare are all unique, but what they have in common is that they are all forms of cucumbers--the fruit of cucumber vines. The fruit that we will bear when we are engrafted to Jesus will also be unique, but what our diverse fruits will have in common is that they will all be forms of love—the fruit of Jesus, the True Vine.

Summertime is an ideal time to examine the fruit you are bearing, and to discern what vines are bearing fruit in your life. And summertime is a good time to do some pruning *if* the fruit you are bearing is bitter, stale, unhealthy, toxic...or in any way unworthy of the True Vine-- and us, the True Vine's branches. --Pastor Craig

Meetings

Please inform Michele when your next board meeting is so the calendar can be kept up to date.

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

July 1 48 July 8 30
July 15 50 July 21 45
July 29

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
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



Great grilling starts with safety -

- Place grill at least 10 feet away from your house, shrubs, or bushes.
- Never leave a grill unattended.
- If using a gas grill, check connections thoroughly before use.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Never bring a grill indoors.
- Remove grease buildup from grates and trays.
- Use utensils with long handles.
- Allow grill to cool before cleaning or discarding charcoal.

Gift from Teresa Treat Stearns Trust

We are pleased to be the recipient of a \$2500 gift toward the restoration of our stain glass windows from the Teresa Treat Stearns Trust. To learn more about Teresa Stearns see the newspaper article from the Freeman Journal archives on the bulletin board. Please join in the spirit by contributing to the restoration of the windows which will be returning to us this fall.



1 - Madison Babington
2 - Bruce Perry
5 - Patty Gescheidler
7 - Richard Tudor II
12 - Jan Maxon
12 - Howard Stearns
15 - Audrey Burtnett
15 - Laurie Epps
16 - Tom Riemenschneider
16 - LaVonne Osmundson
18 - Debbie Jaycox
19 - Allison Yungclas
19 - Mary Van Diest
20 - Chad Elkin
21 - Mark Carlson
21 - Mary Worthington
24 - Nick Oberender
27 - Shari Rothrock
28 - Bob Weieneth
31 - Betty Ploeger
31 - Margy Wood



11 - Luverne & Verna Bierle
11 - Mark & Jennie Brim
23 - Don & Gretchen Bruner
31 - Jason & Amanda (Maass) Strahl

D/SAOC

Saturday, August 4 at Lakeside Golf Course, Fort Dodge D/SAOC is hosting their 2nd annual "Tee'd Off! Against Violence" event. Cost is \$200 per team or \$50 per person. There are multiple levels of sponsorship if you are interested. The tournament will be followed by a silent auction and award ceremony. More information is on the board in Fellowship Hall.

Teacher Appreciation

As a part of The Three Great Loves initiative in our church the Mission Board decided to show "love of neighbor" by hosting an appreciation break for the teaching staff in the Webster City school district. We are planning to have a snack for the staff during one of their breaks during their Staff Development days on Aug.

20 or 21. Plans are still being finalized so we are unable to share details, but know we will need volunteers to help say thank you to our teachers and help start their year on the right foot. Please be watching for more information on this event in your email.

Thank you!

Mission Board

Third Saturday Worship

We will continue our Saturday evening services on August 18 (the third Saturday of the month), beginning at 5 p.m. Our Saturday services are more informal than our regular Sunday services, and dress is casual—come as you are! Like our previous years' Saturday services, there will be no refreshments following the service, and there will be no Sunday worship services on the weekends of our Saturday services.

Church Family

We all miss the choir in the summer months but for the month of July you did a fabulous job of keeping their chairs filled for them! Thanks to all of you we delivered the following items to the food pantries at Trinity and St. Paul's

Lutheran churches:

5 boxes of diapers

4 packages of diapers

6 packages of wipes

154 rolls of toilet paper

24 boxes of Kleenex

33 rolls of paper towels

Thank you so much for your support of this drive and helping restock the shelves of these pantries that help so many in our community.

Mission Board



Summer Fun Road Trip

First Congo is carpooling on Friday August 10th to Mason City's North Iowa Event's Center for

the Pyrotechnics Guild International (PGI) fireworks public display.

The Thunder & Fire show **on Friday August 10th** will start at dusk. (Rain date is August 11th) Gates will open at 6 pm for general admission.

Tickets are \$20. There are no guarantees tickets will be available the night of the show. (there are also public shows on August 5 and 7 if you plan your own trip).

Interested??? More details at:

<https://www.pgi.org/convention/2018/tickets.php>

Purchase advance tickets at: ShowClix, or in person at either the Mason City Visitor Center or the North Iowa Events Center. Everyone (all ages) must have a ticket for Friday's show. Contact Donna Ryherd (835-8016) if you want to be part of the carpool planning or if you have further questions.

Ushers

August 5 Don & Gretchen Bruner

August 12 Chris & Isabelle McNeil

August 18 Pat Kesler, Joyce Gelhaus

August 26 Arden & Dalene Schlitter, Sherry Leksell

Letter from Transitional ACM Gordon Rankin

"For Everything There is a Season" –

Ecclesiastes 3:1 Partners in Ministry in the Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota Conference:

I am writing to share that my time working with you and among you will soon be drawing to a close. The Search Committee and Board of Directors of the New Hampshire Conference have named me as their candidate to be their next Conference Minister. As a matter of fact they are announcing this to the Conference this very day. On August 4th, I will join them at a Special Conference Meeting and the Conference will act on this recommendation. Pending a favorable outcome of that Meeting, I will be submitting my letter of resignation to Brigit immediately. While timing details are still a little fluid, it looks like my time formally serving on the Tri-Conference Ministries staff will draw to a close the weekend of September 29th and 30th. In sharing this news, there are a few other things I need to say: ☞ The season of working in the South Dakota Conference and more recently in the Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota Conferences that I have had has been professionally challenging, fulfilling and

rewarding. I am nothing but grateful for all the gifts and graces you have offered. My time among you will influence my practice of ministry each and every day going forward. And I would add that there feels to me there is some serendipity (perhaps something of God at work) in the timing of this transition. A couple of major projects I have been involved with for years (the Dakota Association lease with Simply Smiles and our fabulous West Central Regional Youth Event) have drawn to a close in the last couple of weeks. I cherish everything this season among you has been but I also see clearly that God is calling me to a new place for a new season. ☞ Among the many gifts I have received has been working with your Tri-Conference Ministries staff. Brigit, Jonna, Karen, Jo, Diane, Kerry, Laura and Sam are all amazing at what they do. I mean that. They are truly amazing at what they do. I pray that the gifts they bring to the adventure you are on together may never be taken for granted. Let me in particular say a word about Brigit and Jonna. I have never worked on a ministerial staff where we have both gelled as quickly and become deeply devoted to one another as thoroughly as I have with my two Tri-Conference Ministry colleague. I have not one doubt that you have the right foundation for the new staff you are building. God has graced you abundantly ☞ I know that my departure could be misconstrued as a statement about what we are doing together as a Tri-Conference. Please

don't foster that narrative. Nothing could be further from the truth. I believe wholeheartedly in what we are doing. I believe God is at work in it. I believe that the Spirit has some wonderful surprises in store and that the churches of our conferences will be a bit more prepared because in this season we have learned how to be more adaptive. I believe new ways for ministering to Christ's church and the world will arise in the months to come. And I will be cheering for it all, even if from a distance. ☞ Not only do I believe in what God is doing, but I believe in what God is about to do. In this I am referring to the arrival of new staff. I am confident that God is already at work to bring you the right people for this season (and I trust the Search Committee to be in tune with what God is doing). That said, I must say that once my time serving you draws to an end I cannot and will not continue to offer you any of the services associated with my current role. You will soon have dynamic new leaders among you. I encourage you to invest fully and thoroughly in what they have to offer you in this new season. ☞ Finally, while again there are many details in fluid motion, there is a possibility that my family may be remaining among you for a few extra months after I depart. As you have always done, I would ask your prayers, support and care be with them while we are apart. Thanks you so much for welcoming me to minister among you in this season that we have had together. Yours in Faith, Gordon

Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$18,390.00	\$92,043.32
Other Income	.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$18,390.00	\$92,043.32
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	2,018.34	\$9,934.96
Pastoral Services	11,550.57	45,859.62
Maintenance and Repairs	4,095.05	16,269.20
Church Office	2,780.07	19,069.54
Music Ministry	238.77	4,853.98
Christian Education	0.00	85.10
Local Ministry	0.00	48.20
Misc. Expenses	5.00	1,110.76
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$20,687.80	\$97,231.36

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Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:



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