

**January 2015 Newsletter**  
**First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
**1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595**  
**515-832-2232**

<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>



*“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”—Matthew 2: 1-2*

I wonder if the magi had any idea of the full meaning of that star. We know from Matthew’s gospel—the only gospel with a star sighting—what the magi believed that star portended: it was a sign announcing the birth of the “King of the Jews.” But did those wise men really grasp the significance of that sign--and that king’s birth?

Did they know his birth would not only be a sign of hope to many, but also a sign of threat to paranoid kings, hypocritical priests, a roman governor and a roman emperor?

Did they know that the sign they followed would lead them to a king who would one day wear a crown adorned not with gold and precious jewels...but one adorned with thorns?

Did they know that the sign would lead them to a different sort of “Wise-man” who would speak of a new kind of kingdom so different from their own—a kingdom where privileged people like them would be last, not first?

We really don’t know what sort of king the magi were hoping to find. We only know that when they saw the star, they knew it to be a sign... and they followed that sign until they found a child. Did their lives change from that encounter? We really don’t know...but I’d like to think so.

You may be familiar with the one act television opera “Amahl and the Night Visitors” written by the Italian composer Gian Carlo Menotti. In the opera there is a moment when one of the magi, Melchior, forgives Amahl’s mother for attempting to steal some of the gold intended for the Christ child--her theft motivated by her desperate need to feed her own impoverished child. At the climax of the opera Melchior realizes the true significance of the child-king he has come to adore, as he sings these soaring words of revelation:

***Oh woman, you can keep the gold...the child we seek doesn’t need our gold...  
On Love, on Love alone, he will build his kingdom,  
His pierced hands will hold no scepter,  
His haloed head will bear no crown...  
His might will not be built on your toil,  
Swifter than lighting, he will soon walk among us,  
He will bring us new life, and receive our death.  
And the keys to his city belong to the poor.***

In Menotti’s imagination the sign of the star led the magi to a deeper sign found in a widow’s predicament and a child’s hunger—a revelation of the reason for the coming of the child-king: to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the Good News of the Lord’s favor for all--especially those thought to be “least!” (Luke 4:18-19)

We are now in the season of Christmas, the celebration of the birth of the Christ, the Messiah. On January 6th it will be Epiphany, a season filled with “signs” of God’s intentions toward humanity that are revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. What better way to begin the new year than to imitate the magi and seek diligently for the child—and in the process learn from the “signs” along our faith journeys...signs that will not only illumine his mystery, but also illumine our walks of faith and the duties of our discipleship!

And what better way to begin the new year than to imitate Menotti’s magi and summon the commitment and the courage to follow those signs to our new lives: healed lives; empowered lives, generous lives, loving, peaceful, and joy-filled lives... Christ-like lives! --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



### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

4 - Mary Vavroch  
6 - Kayleigh Weig  
7 - Dick Burnett  
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 Bahrnefuss  
28 - Jennifer Brim  
29 - Andy Brim  
29 - Kristi Schmidt  
30 - Adam Burnett  
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

## ATTENDANCE

December 7	75	December 14	79
December 21	151	December 24	145
December 28	52		

### Church Staff

**Rev. Craig Blaufuss**, Pastor  
Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316  
Pastor's email: [revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net](mailto:revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net)  
**Michele Omgig**: Admin. Assist. 838-2989  
Church's e-mail: [fcuccwc@wmtel.net](mailto:fcuccwc@wmtel.net)  
**Sharon Perry**: Stephen Ministry Ldr 832-5435  
**Dale Olson**: Stephen Ministry Ldr 839-5619  
**Nancy Shelton**: Choir Director 835-0208  
**Myra Maxon**: Organist 832-3662  
**Mary Van Diest**: Pianist 832-3754  
**Curt/Lorraine McCoskey**: Cust's. 832-5341  
**Myra Maxon**: Financial Secretary 832-3662  
**Luverne Bierle**: Church Treasurer 832-4752



"Just for a day" resolutions:

- Just for a day, eat right.
- Just for a day, go for a brisk walk.
- Just for a day, make time to be alone.
- Just for a day, wear my seat belt.
- Just for a day, exercise my sense of humor.
- Just for a day, take care of myself.

### Souper Bowl and Annual Meeting

Join us January 25<sup>th</sup> for the Annual Meeting following our 10:30 am worship service. After the meeting make sure you stay and take part in our annual Souper Bowl.



**SOUPER BOWL**

For the January UDMO Appeal, Mission Board is planning to host a Souper Bowl Sunday. Plans are underway to have a variety of soups and sides available. Details will be forthcoming in the Sunday bulletins. Plan to join us in fellowship to support a great cause.

## Beacon of Hope

We will be providing the meal for Beacon of Hope on Tuesday, January 20. Early in January there will be a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall for those who wish to volunteer food items, help prepare food or help serve that evening. We appreciate your willing response to this mission work.

Thank you,  
Mission Board

## Office Use

Recently there have been several incidents of inappropriate use of the church office and supplies. In response to this the Trustees have voted to remove the office key which has been available for general use, and encourage church members to conduct office business during regular church office hours. Please contact Michele in advance if you need photocopies of Board and Committee documents, and she will be happy to make those copies for you. Pastor Craig will also be available at most meetings to unlock the office door for meeting business that requires access to the church office. In addition, the office will be kept open for extended hours on Wednesdays and Sunday mornings.

## Meals'n More

Join us for Meals'n More Wednesday, January 7 at 5:00. It will be hosted by the Olson and Yungclas families.

## Update

Recently we received a Christmas newsletter from a former interim pastor here at 1<sup>st</sup> Congo. Keith Purscell is retired and living in Mankato, Minnesota (PO Box 3639 – Zip 56002-3639.) His wife passed away in August of 2014. The complete newsletter is on the bulletin board.

## Thanks

A sincere thank you to all the hands who helped pack Kids Against Hunger bags of food! Thank you for taking time to show you care and also for your generous donation to help offset the costs of the bags of food. Much appreciated from the bottom of our hearts.  
Todd & Lori Hartnett and the Backpack Team

## KAH

Sunday December 14 more than 20 members, children and adults gathered at The Bridge to spend an hour packing meals for Kids Against Hunger. We packed 15 boxes which should be 1080 meals and they will all stay local as the boxes were delivered to Trinity to be used for the local backpack program. Thanks to all who donated your time to help with this project.



## Christmas Luncheon

"Sister Act", a women's choral group from Jewell, graced the Women's fellowship annual Christmas luncheon with some lively and entertaining music. Thank you, ladies!



## Christmas Program

The Christmas program was held on Sunday, December 21. The children performed "Listen to Christmas" with 151 people in attendance! A special thanks to all the adults who helped make this happen.



9:15 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL  
10:30 A.M. WORSHIP

### Treasurer's Report

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>YEAR TO DATE</b>
Pledges and Offerings	\$12,417.00	\$145,023.29
Other Income	7.13	1,044.97
Memorial/Special Income/Interest	8,496.47	33,410.51
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$20,920.60</b>	<b>\$197,611.45</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,583.33	\$18,420.67
Pastoral Services	4,952.91	74,203.09
Maintenance and Repairs	2,324.39	63,929.74
Church Office	2,227.46	27,445.85
Music Ministry	604.00	6,644.00
Christian Education	90.06	1,068.05
Local Ministry	32.10	2,509.03
Misc. Expenses	110.40	3,425.35
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$11,924.65</b>	<b>\$197,645.78</b>

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**Address Service Requested**

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

