

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

**“...Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters, streaming lights of joy,
ringing bells of hope and singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air. The world is
encouraged to come away from rancor,
come the way of friendship.**

It is the Glad Season.

**Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner. Flood waters recede into
memory. Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us as we make our way to higher ground.
Hope is born again in the faces of children. It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk
into their sunsets. Hope spreads around the earth, brightening all things—
even hate, which crouches breeding in dark corridors.**

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.

**At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust. We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of
hope. All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
to celebrate the promise of Peace....**

Peace, My Brother.

Peace, My Sister.

Peace, My Soul.”

As we begin the Season of Advent I thought it would be good to share with you excerpts from Maya Angelou's "Amazing Peace: a Christmas Poem." These are words I needed/need to hear as I begin to hurl headlong into a season so filled with blunted hopes, shape-shifting memories, burgeoning to-do lists, and precious little peace. Maya's words remind us that though the world is groaning in travail with the news of political scheming here and abroad, caravan invasions, suicide and opioid epidemics, and fires, floods, and hurricanes out of control...

And though our personal lives are groaning in travail with sickness, injuries, financial strains, overwork, family conflicts, weariness, weakness, and doubts and fears of every kind,

God has not forgotten us, and even now is gifting us *again* with a new Spirit and a new Season: the Glad Season of friendship and forgiveness, the Season of hope and the halting of hate...

A Season of Amazing Peace which we can exchange for our Amazing Anxiety, our Amazing Rancor, and our Amazing Hopelessness. That sounds like Good News! And what must we do to greet this new Spirit and this new Season, and find this Amazing Peace that Maya proclaims to us?

We must believe it is REAL. We must believe it is from GOD. We must be willing to trust in God and goodness again. We must be willing to forgive others-- and ourselves. We must be willing to let go of what is hurting us so our opened hands and minds can receive new "gifts." We must halt our hate and open our hearts to LOVE. We must look for Higher Ground, and bring others with us—or at least show them the way we have taken to gain that Ground. We must jubilate, we must shout, we must clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas into our LIVES. In short, we must welcome not only the *news* of the birth of the Prince of Peace, we must take his life and message to heart and change our living so that it aligns with his vision, his work, his LIFE. Then we will truly know the reason for the Season; then we will be able to know the Amazing Peace that loosens our voices so that we can say at last: "*Peace, my Brother. Peace, my Sister. Peace, my Soul.*"

Friends, the season of Advent is upon us, and what we make of it will go far toward our experience of Amazing Peace, or our experience of its absence. This Holiday Season let us all work to "prepare him room" by opening ourselves to Jesus the Christ so he may work his works in us. If we will do that,

then we will experience the miracle of this season of Peace which comes as a gift from God, given as all good gifts are given—with great love and great joy.

May this Advent season bring to you this promised Amazing Peace, and may you share that Peace and goodwill with the world, as he did! –Pastor Craig

Annual reports from each board/committee are due by December 16.

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

November 4 74 November 11 68
November 18 58 November 25 65

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**
Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. **209-9177**
Church's e-mail: administrative.office@fcuccwc.org
Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr **839-5619**
Sunshine Garth: Choir Director **835-7626**
Melissa Hindt: Organist **712-351-1074**
Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's. **832-5341**
Tracy Wehrhan: Church Treasurer **297-0370**
Dale Olson: Financial Secretary **839-5619**



Avoiding post-holiday blues. This December keep stress in check.

- Keep expectations realistic. A Norman Rockwell Christmas is fiction.
- Plan your time and don't over-commit.
- Stick to your budget. A mailbox full of bills in January is sure to deflate you.
- Don't drink excessively. Stress is magnified by hangover exhaustion.
- Avoid the urge to recreate a childhood Christmas. Commit to a new tradition instead.
- Take "me" time. Your body is craving downtime.



1 - Tracy Wehrhan
3 - Alexis Tudor
4 - Ron Epps
6 - Jamie Roelfs
8 - Pat Kesler
10 - Joyce Gelhaus
11 - Kaelyn Butz
13 - Susan Meinders
14 - Nancy Urich
17 - Bob Van Diest
17 - Matt Byrne
17 - Tucker Askelson
20 - Don Bruner
21 - Liz Weieneth
23 - Sara Imhoff
26 - Alan Yungclas



18 - Sharon & Bruce Perry
28 - Dale & Gayle Olson
29 - Bob & Sandi Weieneth
30 - Lynn & Debbie Jaycox
30 - Ed & Andrea Mosbach
31 - Mark & Connie Gustafson

Celebrate the Season

What better way to deepen your faith than to spend time in church during the season of Advent? Here are ways to celebrate the Season at First Congregational UCC during December 2018:

- During each Sunday in Advent, members of First Congregational will lead us in the lighting of our Advent wreath, and we will sing traditional Advent hymns and Christmas carols.
- On **December 2** we will begin our Advent season with Holy Communion, and following the service we will decorate the church for Christmas. The Worship

Board is hosting a pizza and chili lunch following the hanging of the greens.

- On **December 7** members of our church will ring the bell for the Salvation Army at Fareway Food Store from 3-9 pm.
- On **December 9** we will observe the second Sunday of Advent, and following the service the Women's Fellowship will host a Christmas Luncheon in Fellowship Hall. That afternoon volunteers will lead Care Center Worship services from 1:15 until 3:45 pm.
- On **December 15** our Stephen Ministers will host a caroling and chili party at the church. Please arrive by 5:45 pm, and we will carol at Southfield and Crestview before returning to the church for a chili and soup supper. You are welcome to bring a side or treat to share!
- On **December 16** we will observe the Third Sunday of Advent, and our children (and some adults!) will present a Christmas program during worship. That afternoon we will "share our joy" with the community by hosting an open house at the church for our newly renovated stained glass windows, from 1-3 pm.
- On **December 23** we will observe the Fourth Sunday of Advent during worship.
- On **December 24** we will hold our Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship service at 5 p.m. Pew Communion will be offered at this service.
- On **December 30** we will gather to worship at our regular time while Pastor Craig is on vacation. There will be no Sunday school that day.

Come and share in the beauty and joy of the Advent and Christmas season as we worship God and celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World!

KLAB Gifts

Please donate small gift items that the KLAB kids can choose from to give as Christmas gifts to family members. Have items to the church by December 18.

Poinsettias

The deadline to order your Christmas poinsettias is December 9. There are order

forms in the worship bulletins or you may contact Michele at the church office.

Christmas Lunch

Our annual Women's Fellowship Christmas Luncheon is scheduled for Sunday Dec. 9 following our morning worship service. Providence and Morning Star Circles are planning and preparing what is sure to be a delicious meal. Christmas music will be playing to help enhance the feelings of joy, peace, and goodwill. Cost of the meal is a free will donation. So please mark your calendars and plan to join us to share the spirit of the season with your church family.

Open House

Our 120 year old stained glass windows have been restored. Come experience the view from inside our church with a leisurely walk-through on Sunday, December 16 from 1-3. Coffee and cookies will be served. If you don't have time to come in that afternoon, drive by to see the lighted windows until 10pm that day.



Come Share Our Joy!

Our 120 year old stained glass windows have been restored! Come experience the view from inside our church with a leisurely walk-through on

Sunday, December 16
From
1-3 PM.

**First Congregational
United Church of
Christ**
1000 Willson Avenue
Coffee and home-made
cookies will be served.

If you don't have time that afternoon, drive by our church to see the lighted windows from the outside until 10 PM the same day.

Alternative Giving

Our Alternative Giving Advent Fair again will focus on four causes, charities or needs, with

ways the congregation can donate on in honor of folks on their Christmas gift list. Each week, you'll find a table decorated with the theme of the featured group and the way you can contribute.

Week 1 Stepping Forward Romania. Sponsor an orphans Christmas for \$20

Week 2 Breakfast items for the Webster City Back Pack Program

Week 3 Sharing the Weight. Collecting funds weighted blankets for people with special needs.

Week 4 Headstart. Collecting bedtime routine items, watch for the display.

Christmas Fund

For over a century, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, United Church of Christ (UCC) members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. In 2017, UCC congregations and members generously contributed over \$1,500,000 to the Christmas Fund. This enabled the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA), the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Supplementation of Small Annuities, Retiree Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals in need. The theme of this year's Christmas Fund Offering is The Light Is Surely Coming. Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of your gifts are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years. And now, in their time of need, you can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to join thousands of UCC members and congregations who will support this year's appeal and trust the light is surely coming. The Christmas Fund offering will be received at our Christmas Eve service on December 24, 5:00 pm.

Pecans for sale

Pieces, \$10 per bag. Make checks out to Haystack Circle.

Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper

You and your family are invited to a Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper party hosted by our Stephen Ministers on Saturday, December 15th. We will meet at church by 5:45 pm and proceed to carpool to Southfield Care Center for caroling. Then we will proceed to Crestview Care Center to brighten their season with song. Following our caroling, we will return to the church for Chili, potato soup, relishes, cheese and crackers—all provided by our Stephen Ministers. You are invited to bring a side dish or Christmas treat to share! This will be a very special way to enjoy your Holiday season. Hope you can come!

Confirmation News

Our Confirmation class has been busy in November! On November 3, our confirmands participated in Warm Hearts Warm Homes and weatherized 2 homes. On Friday, November 9, they travelled to the Temple Bnai Jehurun in Des Moines to participate in a Shabbat service, tour the temple, and learn more about Judaism. On Sunday, November 14, they helped package Minestrone soup for Kids Against Hunger, and all together over 80 volunteers packaged 26,137 meals that day! And on November 28 our confirmands travelled to Beacon of Hope men's homeless shelter to serve a meal of tacos and fixin's to the men. Well done, confirmands!



Warm Hearts Warm Homes





Packing minestrone soup for Kids Against Hunger



Serving tacos at Beacon of Hope

Medicare

Open enrollment is until December 7. Make sure you have coverage that meets your needs. SHIP can help you sort things out 832-7769.

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	October	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$5,816.00	\$157,395.32
Other Income	.00	13.94
TOTAL INCOME	\$5,816.00	\$157,409.26
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,583.34	\$17,851.66
Pastoral Services	5,649.36	80,308.63
Maintenance and Repairs	1,986.78	31,830.17
Church Office	2,681.66	33,632.23
Music Ministry	813.25	7,785.04
Christian Education	136.95	295.59
Local Ministry	0.00	48.20
Misc. Expenses	5.00	1,303.48
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$12,856.34	\$173,055.00

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on November 13, 2018

Members Present:

Moderator: Donna Ryherd

Vice Moderator:

Finance Sec.:

Finance: Tracy Wehrhan

Staff/Parish: Stephanie Hill

Christian Ed: Curt McCoskey

Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan

Pastor:

Trustees:

Women's Fellowship: Holly Riemenschneider

Mission:

Worship:

Evangelism:

Clerk:

Rev. Craig Blaufuss

Joyce Gelhaus

Lorraine McCoskey

Mary Vavroch

Laurie Epps

Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Donna Ryherd. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a devotional and prayer called 'Not for Nothing'. The October cabinet meeting minutes were approved as printed.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS: **Worship Board:** The Hanging of the Greens will be done December 2nd after worship followed by pizza and other goodies. Christmas Eve service will be Monday, December 24th at 5:00pm. **Trustees:** The Church inventory is complete. Our insurance representative will review the building and might be able to reduce our premium. Bats are no longer an issue. **Christian Education:** The Christmas Program is still scheduled for December 16. Donna Ryherd has resigned and a replacement will be found. **Staff Parish:** No report. **Evangelism:** No written report. **Mission:** The soup and mac & cheese donation was a success with 54 cans of soup and 68 boxes of mac & cheese delivered to UDMO. The opportunity to ring the bell is available again this year from November 23rd through December 23rd. Volunteers are needed. An article will go into the newspaper extending this opportunity to anyone in the community. Alternative Advent Fair details are in the full report. **Finance:** Cathedral Craft has been paid in full for the stained-glass window refurbishment. Donations so far amounted to 93% of the total cost. **Women's Fellowship:** The kitchen cleaning is complete. UCC will host the Lenten Lunches this coming Easter season. See details in the full report. A Faith Journey led by Gale Olson has provided the attendees with interesting and thought-provoking ideas. There are 2 weeks remaining. **Pastor's Report:** The confirmands helped with the Warm Hearts, Warm Homes on November 3rd. They also visited the Temple B'nai Jeshurun and met with a Kristallnacht survivor. Teams from UCC and other churches packed 26,137 meals for Kids Against Hunger on November 11th. Caroling and a chili supper will be organized by the Stephen Ministers for Saturday, December 15, from 5:30 to 8:00pm. **Treasurer:** To date the church expenses exceed income by about \$10,000. The report was put to audit.

PENDING BUSINESS: Windows: the suggestion was made to have an open house to show off the newly refurbished and repaired windows. Joyce Gelhaus, Jane Klaver, Sherry Leksell and Leah Maas are the organizers. The date will be December 16th. A tentative plan includes a tour, cookies provided by Haystack, Christmas music and decorations.

Jordan Church request: A draft building use agreement between First Congregational UCC (FCUCC) and Jordan Church was presented to the cabinet members and discussed. There were several edits made. Overall if the conditions and prerequisites of the draft are acceptable to Jordan Church, a UCC congregational vote will follow.

The full report of the boards and the pastor's report are at the end of the cabinet minutes.

Next meeting at December 10 at 7:00pm.

Adjourned at 9:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Hill, church clerk.

Worship Board Christmas Eve service will be at 5:00 p.m. Linda will contact Josie G. about serving as organist. In case Josie is not available, Verna will check with Asbury and Mary will check with some people in Jewell. Communion elements will be prepared after worship on Dec. 23rd. We will also be lighting candles for congregation members.

The Hanging of the Greens will take place immediately after worship on December 2nd. Gretchen will order and pick-up the pizza. Gretchen will provide crackers for chili, milk, pop and cookies. Jenn will provide a pan of bars. Mary will have chili available.

Linda and Gretchen will serve communion on November 4th.

Mary suggested that sometime before the next thrift sale that we go through the cupboard containing communion items.

Linda will prepare the Worship Board report for the Annual Report.

A video sermon will be used for the December 30th worship service.

Those going off the board for 2019 are Linda, Gretchen and Mary.

Finance Board Discussion was held on various ways to make the final payment for the stained glass window project. Discussion was held on a short term investment for the General Fund. Presently we have a substantial amount of money in the General Fund interest account that is not receiving any

interest. It was decided to transfer about 60% of the balance to a fund through Wil Johnston at First State Bank that is paying about 2% on the investment. This would keep the invested money fairly liquid. We would be able to get money if needed within a couple of days.

Mission Board Marjorie reported that \$664 was collected by our church for the CROP Hunger Walk, with a total of \$1,861 donated by the community. Audrey said \$590 was collected in October for Neighbors in Need. The Warm Hearts, Warm Homes winterizing project was scheduled for Nov. 3, with two teams from our congregation: one of the confirmation youth and the other of adults. Thanks to a grant, there was no need for team participation fees. As of our Nov. 1 Mission Board meeting, one and a half teams from our church had signed up for the November 11 Kids Against Hunger packing event at Fuller Hall. The confirmation youth will plan, prepare, transport and serve the meal to the Beacon of Hope men on Nov. 28. Pastor Craig and Vicki will supervise and participate. The soup and macaroni and cheese collection for Upper Des Moines Opportunity was been a success, with Gayle and Lorraine delivering 54 cans of soup and 68 boxes of mac & cheese. After discussing several worthy causes, we settled on four for the Alternative Giving Advent Fair: Stepping Forward – Romania, Back Pack Program, Sharing the Weight (special blankets for special needs children), and Head Start. Pastor Craig chairs the Salvation Army Bell Ringing for Webster City this year. Plans are to have the red buckets out and bells ringing starting Black Friday, Nov. 23, and wrapping up Dec. 23, with shifts of churches' and organizations' teams at HyVee Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and at Fareway Fridays and Saturdays. Gayle will promote the Christmas Fund, to be collected at the Christmas Eve service. Pastor Craig will post skill set forms, so folks can volunteer to assist with Marshalltown recovery after the tornado. The next Mission Board meeting will be Dec. 6, 4 p.m.

Christian Ed Board Old Business: Plans were discussed "if" and "reality" if we should move on and have a children's Christmas program with such few children in Sunday school and KLAB who attend regularly. It was decided to go ahead with Leah and Don being responsible for the program. The board will serve the fellowship coffee after church with the following assignments: Curt-colored popcorn, Mary-cookies/bars and napkins Jane-muffins, Leah- apple cider, Jane and Mary-treat bags for the kids.

New Business: KLAB: Donna Ryherd has resigned and Karinne Tudor has stepped up to take her place. Vicki Blaufuss is willing to help Karinne but wishes for it not to be permanent. Consequently one or two individuals are **desperately** needed for KLAB to continue now and the remainder of the year. **We do not want to forget these children-they are the future of the church!** Pastor Craig reported the confirmation class is going well. They helped do "Warm Hearts-Warm Homes".

Confirmation will be on Palm Sunday, April 14, 2018.

Next board meeting: December 12, 2018 at 7:00 pm.

Pastor's Report Funerals: This month we lost longtime member Charlene McKee. Her funeral was held here at First Congregational on Oct 18. In addition, this month I officiated at the services of Dean Simpson and Gary Kraemer.

Worship: Our Stained glass windows are in! Cathedral Crafts did a great job and installed them speedily. We made it through another time change on Nov 4 as we "fell back" for Fall. We will hold a Congregational Meeting to ratify the 2019 budget after worship on Nov. 18, so the worship service will be shortened, and on Nov. 25th we will observe All Saints Sunday. December 2 is the first Sunday of Advent! We will decorate the sanctuary for Christmas following worship. We participated in Care Center services on October 14, and our next CC services will be December 9.

KLAB: Karinne Tudor and Vicki Blaufuss are now leading this group. We continue to experience growth with new guests coming! We had a raucous Halloween party on Oct. 24, with no KLAB scheduled for beggar's night, October 31.

Confirmation: We have been busy! Confirmands helped with Care Center worship services on Oct 14, helped weatherize houses with Warm Hearts Warm Homes on Nov. 3, visited the Temple Bnai Jeshurun in Des Moines Nov. 9, and they will plan, cook and serve the next Beacon of Hope meal on Nov. 28th! For coursework we have discussed the story of the Fall, the Exodus and the Torah.

Adult Education: we finished with our study of prayer, and will begin a new study TBA.

WCMA: We have had quite a few donations for the Backpack program, so we are no longer broke (we have \$2540, and could still use more \$\$). Area church members will gather on Nov. 11 to pack food for Kids Against Hunger. There will be another Christmas Salvation Army Bell Ringing Campaign this year, with more days of planned ringing through Advent. We hope to begin Black Friday and end Dec. 23, and reach a goal of raising \$6000!

Stephen Ministry: We have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. We met October 18 for our monthly check-ins, and we met for a social event at the Emporium on Nov. 8. Our Stephen Ministers will organize a caroling/chili supper on Saturday, December 15, from 5:30pm until 8 pm. Chili and fixins will be provided; everyone is welcome to attend and carol the Care Centers.

Tri-Conference: The Iowa Conference Annual meeting was held Saturday, Oct 13 in West Des Moines. Business included approving the 2019 budget, installing Rev. Brigit Stevens as our Tri-Conference Executive minister, approving constitutional changes to our UCC Constitution, and the election of new officers to the Conference Board. Other news: 3 new Associate Conference Minister positions have been filled by Rev. Samantha Houser, Rev. Nicole Havelka, and Rev. Ellis Arnold.

Request for First Congregational to host Jordan Church: A task force has crafted a "Building Usage Agreement" which will be presented to Cabinet for their approval at their Nov. 13 meeting. If it is approved it will be presented to Jordan Church to see if they are agreeable to its provisions; if they are, then the Cabinet will schedule a Congregational vote in order to decide if we will enter into this agreement with Jordan Church.

Warm Hearts Warm Homes: First Congo had 2 teams this year, and the project took until almost 1 pm! Participants will evaluate the program and recommend improvements to RSVP for next year—if they even plan to continue organizing the event.

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:



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