

January 2019 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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No man desires anything so eagerly as God desires to bring men to the knowledge of Himself. God is always ready, but we are very unready. God is near us, but we are far from Him. God is within, and we are without. God is friendly; we are estranged. The prophet saith, "God leadeth the righteous by a narrow path into a broad and wide place, that is into the true freedom of those who have become one spirit with God." May God help us all to follow Him that He may bring us to Himself.

—from the sermon “The Nearness of the Kingdom”, by Meister Eckhart.

I really like this quote! In Meister Eckhart’s sermon “the Nearness of the Kingdom,” he captures the essence of our Good News as Christians: God is not distant or disengaged from our lives, but rather is eagerly waiting to lead us closer to the presence and knowledge of God’s very self! The thought that God is eager to bring us knowledge of God’s self is an amazing revelation, but one that we are certainly aware of as we finish our Christmas celebrations. After all, wasn’t the birth of Jesus a physical display of God’s eager desire for us—and an invitation to draw close to God that came packaged in the form of a tiny child?

As we flip the calendar and embark on another new year, we would do well to take Meister Eckhart’s words to heart, and hold in our hearts the good news of God’s desire *for us*—a desire that will manifest itself in a million different ways if we only have eyes to see and ears to hear! No matter what our hopes are for 2019, imagine how much more fulfilling the year could be if God were our intimate partner...our traveling companion...our guide and inspiration throughout the journey. Imagine if we were connected in a more vital and empowering way to a new source of wisdom, strength, and love that would literally change our lives in the most amazing ways. Imagine, as Meister Eckhart suggests, the experience of a new kind of freedom as our spirits are united with the freeing spirit of God, which has the power to make all things new! Wouldn’t the new year then be something really *new*—rather than a rehash of the same old worries; the same old patterns; the same old problems; the same-ol’-same-ol’? Isn’t that what we—and the world--really need?

But for that to happen, we have to heed Meister Eckhart and move by a narrow path to the broad and wide place that is the experience of true communion with God. We have to reprioritize our time, our energy, and our commitments so we are not “unready” for God. We have to quit holding God at arm’s length because of our other plans and interests which consume all our time. We have to stop being strangers to the world behind our eyeballs, and start looking within--where God does indeed dwell. We have to be willing to work at cultivating our friendship with God; a friendship which requires our genuine interest and our heartfelt desire!

Friends, we are all hoping that 2019 will be a better year with less hatred, less violence, less angst, and less despair in our world. But even though we don’t know what 2019 will bring, we can still make it a very good year by walking the narrow way and cooperating with God’s desire to bring us to God’s self...so can experience a human-sized portion of God’s freedom, God’s peace, God’s wisdom, and GOD’S LOVE.

May your New Year be blessed with a new knowledge of God—the One who is eagerly waiting...*for us!* --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 2	49	December 9	64
December 16	82	December 23	54
December 24	120	December 30	

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
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Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omgig: 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



Who are your Caring "Cs"?

- People that **comfort** us,
- People who **clarify** issues with us,
- People who **challenge** us,
- People who **collaborate** with us, and
- People who **celebrate** with us.

God provides people in our lives who provide one or more "Cs". Identify them. Celebrate them (even the ones who challenge you) and thank God for each of them.



- 3 - Alec Tudor
- 4 - Mary Vavroch
- 7 - Kallista Gilbert
- 12 - Amanda Maass
- 13 - Jennifer Gilbert
- 14 - Marjorie Groves
- 14 - Travis Wearda
- 18 - Mike Tudor
- 21 - Cooper Askelson
- 27 - Al Fiala
- 28 - Jennifer Brim
- 30 - Jenny Maass
- 31 - Kolleen Taylor



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

Thanks

The Trustees would like to thank you for your support of this year's stained glass renovation. Financially we reached our goal of \$88,517 and the loan has been paid off! This went above the Trustees expectations. Thank you to EVERYONE for your donations, they were all greatly appreciated. Blessings to everyone this Christmas season. – Joyce Gelhaus, Trustees Chairperson

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who had a part in making the stained glass windows open house a success. All of your work and time was appreciated. Our guests were pleased with the opportunity to see and enjoy the windows. Thank you again, Jane and Joyce

Stained Glass Window Open House

On December 16th from 1-3 pm around 75 people "shared our joy" by coming to our open house showcasing our newly renovated stained

glass windows. There were many, many positive compliments about the restored windows' beauty and the quality of the work by Cathedral Crafts. Cookies and coffee were served in fellowship hall, and church members were stationed in the sanctuary and East Chapel to greet visitors and answer questions about the restoration.

The Random Christmas Program

Our December 16th Christmas Program was "the Random Christmas program"! 17 children and youth assembled with readings of the Christmas Story, which were pieced together by the congregation (with Leah's help). The hand-colored scrolls were hung in Fellowship Hall after the program to remind us of the "Reason for the Season!"

Window Rededication Service

Our restored stained glass windows have been such a source of delight and pride for our congregation! We will hold a service of rededication for our 128 year-old windows on Sunday, January 20, during our 10:30 worship service.

Annual Meeting January 27

Mark your calendar for January 27th! We will hold our annual meeting following worship, and vote on the proposed slate of nominees for the vacancies on the various boards and committees.

SOUPER BOWL RETURNS January 27

On Sunday January 27th the Mission Board is again sponsoring our SOUPER Bowl to benefit food pantries here in Webster City. We will have the pickle jar out so you can express your appreciation for the delicious soups served by our board that day!! So please mark your calendar for January 27th, attend the annual meeting and stay for the soup and fellowship following the meeting!

Church Family

Another thank you from the Mission Board for your outrageously fabulous support of our annual Alternative Giving Fair. The projects highlighted this year were Stepping Forward, the Romanian children being helped by Steve and Cami Mather, the local backpack program, Sharing the Weight, and our local Headstart.

With your support we sent \$740.00 to Romania to help make Christmas brighter for 34 children. To help the local backpack program 37 servings of pop tarts, 84 servings of oatmeal, 28 servings of Nutrigrain bars, and 54 servings of fruit were donated.

Sharing the Weight will receive \$170.00 to use to make more blankets to help families with children who benefit from this kind of blanket. And last but not least many children will receive bedtime bags so they can brush their teeth with new toothbrushes and hear a story before bed. Extravagant gifts for showing the Love of Children this Advent season! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Salvation Army Bell Ringing



Hanging of the Greens



KLAB Christmas Present Scramble



Christmas Lunch



Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper



Pecans for sale

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

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	November	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 December 11, 2018

Members Present:

Moderator:	Donna Ryherd	Pastor:	Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Nate Lahr	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec:	Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship:	Holly Riemenschneider
Finance:	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Lorraine McCoskey
Staff/Parish:	Stephanie Hill	Worship:	Linda Lahr
Christian Ed:	Curt McCoskey	Evangelism:	Laurie Epps
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Donna Ryherd. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a devotional titled 'Who are you' by Vicki Kemper and offered a prayer. It was moved by Lorraine

McCoskey and seconded by Dale Olson to approve the November cabinet meeting minutes in absentia. The motion carried unanimously.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS: Worship Board: The Christmas Eve service will be held at 5:00pm. Josie Greenley will be the accompanist. A video sermon is scheduled for December 30th when Craig is on vacation and Kolleen Taylor will accompany. Communion will be the first Sunday in January.

Trustees: Discussed items in the church that need repair. On December 20th the church insurance agent, Jeremy Butler, will meet with the Trustees to assess the church policy. The church inventory is now on a flash drive. **Christian Education:** The Christmas Program scheduled for December 16 has been finalized. Since there are only 1 or 2 children in the older students Sunday school classes, the situation will be discussed. **Staff Parish:** All the annual interviews with staff are complete. **Evangelism:** No report. **Mission:** January 27, 2019 is the Annual Meeting and Souper Bowl Sunday. Cabinet members will bring desserts and/or fresh relish treats. It was strongly suggested that a special 'Thank You' to church members be made to recognize the loan repayment for the window repair. And a rededication of the windows could be done during the Annual Meeting. **Finance:** Did not meet. **Women's Fellowship:** Met last week; no new business. The meal at the Christmas dinner was great! There were issues with the dishwasher. **Nominating Committee:** Most of the committee members contacted via e-mail agreed to remain on their respective committee. According to the church constitution, the next Vice Moderator must be female. **Pastor's Report:** An article about the renovated stained-glass windows will be in the next Hometown Magazine and the church will be on the cover. **Tri-Conference:** all slots were filled with 4 new Associate Conference Ministers. KLAB asked for donations of small gift items for KLAB family members. **Treasurer:** The total cost of the loan for the windows (including interest) is \$88,517.43 and the donations were \$88,502.41- a difference of \$15.02. Unfortunately, with the expenses in December, our General Fund is short by \$15,600. Offerings are still short of the budget. A motion to put the report to audit was made and seconded. The report was put to audit.

PENDING BUSINESS: The Windows: An Open House to show our refurbished windows is scheduled for December 16th. Pastor Craig and 4 volunteers are currently planning this event.

Jordan Church request: Pastor Craig took the draft of the building use agreement to Pastor Eddy who presented it to their leadership and congregation. The majority did not want to proceed under the terms of the agreement. They are seeking space at ACE.

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

Next meeting is January 8 at 7:00pm.

Adjourned at 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Hill, church clerk.

Trustees Storage closet doors in the west entry have new hinges. Alan is doing some adjusting on them. We will get a new small vacuum for the Fellowship Hall and put the old one up on second floor. The one on second floor does not work well, so will go to the dumpster. We did not get the Railroad grant. The projector in the sanctuary is up and working after 3 tries. It was the board, not the light as first thought. The people who put in our projector system are no longer a company. There was discussion on who to get for repair. Church inventory is done. Orff instruments were put on the inventory. Michele put the inventory on the computer and then to 2 flash drives. One is at the church and the other will be in the safety deposit box at the bank. Tracy talked to Scott Jaycox about finishing the elevator room. He told them we needed it by the end of the year, because we will be inspected in 2019. Donna Ryherd gave the Orff information to a friend in Cedar Rapids and he will also check to see if the Cedar Rapids school would be interested in the instruments.

New Business Cathedral Crafts update. Pastor Craig signed the Completion Report. The last bill was paid- \$41,390.00. We also had a letter from Cathedral Crafts wanting an evaluation and letter of recommendation. Joyce will work on that. Tracy reported that he has paid off the loan, that our donations are \$82,318.14, we have a verbal commitment of \$5000, and the total cost of the project was \$88,517.60. An Open House for the community to come and view our renovated stained-glass windows, will be on Sunday December 16, 1-3 PM. Joyce and Jane Klaver are organizing this. We have 4 volunteers to help us with that. Another Trustee would be good to answer questions, Tracy is a maybe. Gretchen Bruner had a church usage request for 6-13-19, for PEO. This was approved.

Jeremy Butler, our church insurance agent, will meet with us December 20 at 6PM. We will go over the church policy to see if any changes need to be made.

Christian Ed The children's Christmas Program will be during worship service on Sunday, December 16th. The board will be the fellowship coffee following the service. Leah Maass and Don Bruner are in charge of the program. For the coffee Curt McCoskey will be furnishing colored popcorn, Mary Van Diest cookies/bars and napkins, Jane Klaver muffins, Leah Maass apple cider and Jane and Mary treat bags for the kids.

Women's Fellowship Group 1: Holly, Cindy, Kay, Shirley (Nov. 18) Group 3: Gayle, Verna, Mabel, Ginny (Nov. 11) Review of old WF records is no longer needed. The committee doesn't think we need to get rid of the historical info and we have room for them in a convenient place for Michele to access them. Lenten Lunches will be held here for the Easter season, 2019 – plan to serve 100. Karinne Tudor will have KLAB kids make centerpieces. Gayle Olson will ask about the song and placemats, Tuesdays, March 12, - Providence Circle plans to have a baked potato bar. Tuesdays, March 19 – Haystack – soup and salad Tuesday March 26 – Morning Star Tuesday April 2 – Mayflower – casseroles Tuesday April 9 – Exec. Board serves – To be determined. Palm Sunday—April 14, 2019 Easter Sunday—April 21, 2019 Christmas Dinner Sunday, December 9 after worship. Plan to serve 50 – 60. There will be a free will offering. Providence and Morning Star will cook the meal. Decorations will be putting up by Mayflower. Music – Haystack will set-up music.

Pastor's Report Worship: On Nov. 25th we observed All Saints Sunday, and remembered Al Maxon, Charlene McKee, Ina Cormaney, and Dorothy Stearns. December 2 was the first Sunday of Advent, and although the weather was poor, we held church plus decorated the sanctuary for Christmas following worship, then enjoyed a pizza/chili luncheon. December 9 we will observe our second Sunday of Advent, enjoy the annual Women's Fellowship Christmas Luncheon, and then lead services at our 3 care centers. December 16th will be our "Random" Christmas Program, December 23rd will be the 4th Sunday of Advent, and Christmas Eve service with pew communion will begin at 5 pm. On December 30 we will again enjoy a sermon video and sing Christmas carols while I am on vacation. KLAB: KLAB is going well, and Wil Groves has returned as a KLAB leader. KLAB will have class on December 19, which was not originally scheduled. KLAB is asking for donations of small items that the kids can choose from to give to family members as Christmas presents; please have your donations to church by December 18. Confirmation: The class planned, cooked and served 37 men a delightful Taco Dinner at the Beacon of Hope meal on Nov. 28th! We have learned about the prophets, and will now turn our attention to the Christmas Story. The class will lead the Advent candlelighting liturgy on December 16. Adult Education: we are wrapping up the year with eclectic Advent/ Christmas themed studies. Article in Hometown Magazine: Hans from the Ft. Dodge Messenger met with me Nov 29 to photograph our windows and get information for an upcoming article in their monthly magazine. WCMA: the Backpack program currently has \$4539.75 thanks to continued donations coming in! About 84 people gathered to pack 26,137 servings of Minestrone soup for Kids Against Hunger on Nov. 11 at Fuller Hall. The event was not well organized, but we persevered! First Congo led the first Salvation Army Bell Ringing of the season, and collected \$332.33 at Fareway! We will ring again Dec. 7, and Asbury UMC, Trinity ELCA, and Southfield wellness community have also pledged to ring this year. Asbury will host a "Blue Christmas" service on December 16 at 6 pm. Stephen Ministry: We met for a social event at the Emporium on Nov. 8. Our Stephen Ministers have organized 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 last Tri-Conference Associate Conference Minister has been called—the Rev. Darrell Goodwin joins the 3 other new Associate Conference Ministers Rev. Samantha Houser, Rev. Nicole Havelka, and Rev. Ellis Arnold. Request for First Congregational to host Jordan Church: Donna Ryherd and I presented the Cabinet- approved "Building Usage Agreement" to pastor Eddy and Patricia of Jordan Church on Nov. 20; they have not responded to either accept or reject the proposed agreement. Vacation: I will take vacation from December 25-Jan1, and will return to the office January 2.

Mission Board Cabinet date: Rev Craig reported a meeting of our representative and Pastor Eddy of the church seeking to use our church space. A list of the requirements to use our church was presented and discussed. They will take it back to their congregation and get back to us. A debt for restoring our stained glass windows has been paid in full. We questioned why there has not been a "thank you" or celebration of this accomplishment communicated with the church body.

Unfinished Business Warm Hearts Warm Homes: Rev Craig reported 36 homes were cared for by 11 teams. Fire fighters assisted by putting "blankets" around water heaters and carbon dioxide detectors in each home. Concerns about this program were discussed and will be shared with the organizers.

Beacon Report: Rev Craig shared that 37 men were served a taco supper by the confirmands in November. They really liked the meal. There were plenty of leftovers to leave for another meal.

Bell Ringing: \$332.33 was collected by the first Friday "ringers." The schedule for the next two weekends is full but the response by some churches and the public is not what we hoped it would be.

Alternative Giving Fair: This is going well. The emphasis for the last Sunday is called "Bedtime Kids Routine" and is to collect toothbrushes, toothpaste and bath soap for the 20 kids in the Early Headstart program.

Kids Against Hunger: 26,137 minestrone soup packages was the count at the community packing effort at Fuller Hall.

Christmas Fund: Gayle is heading this project. Bulletin inserts have been prepared and the offering will be received at the Christmas Eve service. Retired pastors are the beneficiaries of the Christmas Fund.

Marshalltown Relief Survey: No response to this request. Possibly due to the holiday rush. We will address this again in the new year.

New Business Annual Report: Marjorie has done this and copies were passed out with her request we read it and make any suggestions before it is turned in.

Nominating Committee: Karin, Lorraine and Gayle are willing to serve another term.

January Beacon Meal: The meal will be served Tuesday, January 22. Lorraine and Audrey will be in charge. There are concerns about what to do if bad weather occurs on serving night. Can we hold (or freeze) the meal for another night. We also questioned if it is possible to serve the same menu each time since we only go every other month.

Souper Bowl: The church annual meeting is Sunday, January 27. Mission Board will again serve a soup meal, plans to be made at the January meeting. We will ask the cabinet to provide relishes and dessert.

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.