

**March 2019 Newsletter**  
**First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
**1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595**  
**515-832-2232**  
**<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>**

***“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” –Eph.***

5:1

Do you have any plans for Lent? I’m guessing the minister will be the only person who asks you that question, so I’m glad I did.

So...do you have any plans for Lent?

Now make no mistake—Lent comes with its own plans starting with Ash Wednesday, when we consciously claim our mortality (*from dust you came and to dust you shall return*), a deeply disruptive thought that is meant to focus our minds and hearts on what is most important in life. Then there is Holy Week, which begins with the waving of palms and ends with drama, blood, tears, and a sealed tomb. But during the 40 days or so of Lent there is plenty of time for you to execute your plan *if you take the time and set the intention to make one*. You could choose to study scripture daily, or commit to a deeper prayer life. You might decide you want to put your faith into action and seek to serve others in a more committed way. And of course there is the old standby: you could give up something for Lent, preferably something you will miss—your “sacrifice” drawing you closer to Jesus’ supreme sacrifice on the cross. (One of my neighbors once told me he was giving up “his” Sundays for Lent, and he faithfully attended church on Sundays until after Easter)

If you haven’t made any plans yet, here’s one: Spend 40 days meditating on “LOVE.” Wrestle with questions like:

- **What is love, really?** Is it sentiment? Passion? An exchange? What types of love am I experiencing in my life?
- **Am I truly loving, or am I fooling myself?** Is my “love” just a cover for other emotions and needs? What needs to be healed in me so that I may experience and share greater love? Do I believe that I am even capable of love—or being loved?
- **Who am I NOT to love?** (this is a tough one) We know that what made Jesus’ life distinct was his decision to love all people--and not just “love” them but also act from that love in all of his dealings with them. And yet we know that we all have internal lists of people we resist loving because they are different, or threatening, or revolting, or simply do not fit in with our agendas or preferences. Ask God to teach you about divine love this Lent! But be mindful that love is a Pandora’s Box, and once you open yourself to love you may, like Jesus, lose yourself to love.
- And the biggie: **Why am I so afraid of love?** Because of my past? Because I’m afraid of being hurt? Because I believe deep down that it will not save me but destroy me...because love only weakens, while hate strengthens? Go deep into this one question and ask yourself: *Why am I afraid of God’s love?*

As you can see, there really is a LOT to meditate on and wrestle with when it comes to love. What is ironic is that Christianity is a religion of love, and yet it has historically been filled with so much that is not born of love! We all can see the fruits of the sorrowing loss of love in our current culture, and even we Christians are double-minded about love and suspicious of its demands and power. And yet we will not reach the heart of this faith, nor will we find *salvation* as healing and unity with God without giving ourselves totally over to love, as did Jesus. That is why this seemingly fluffy Lenten plan may be the most life-changing 6 weeks you will undergo!

I continue to be haunted by this thought taken from the book *A Course in Miracles*, from the chapter entitled “The Fear of Redemption:” ...***But exempt no one from your love, or you will be hiding a dark place in your mind where the Holy Spirit is not welcome. And thus you will exempt***

***yourself from His healing power, for by not offering total love you will not be healed completely. Healing must be as complete as fear, for love cannot enter where there is one spot of fear to mar its welcome.***

Friends, if we should give up one thing this Lenten season let it be our fear of LOVE....and everything else we cling to so that LOVE is not the centerpiece of our lives. If we will do this, surely we will know the Master's heart and the very Mind of God, and we will know from what, and *for* what, we came into being as the lovely thoughts of God's loving Mind. –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**

**February 3 41 February 10 37**  
**February 17 -- February 24 --**

**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. 209-9177**  
 Church's e-mail: [administrative.office@fcuccwc.org](mailto: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**



- 4 - Vicki Blaufuss
- 6 - Jennie Williams
- 8 - Vada Williams
- 13 - Shirley Yungclas
- 14 - Talon Stockdale
- 16 - Craig Blaufuss
- 19 - Kaleb Butz
- 20 - Verna Bierle
- 20 - Jacob Meinders
- 22 - Macklin Elkin
- 23 - Todd Sonsalla
- 23 - Jose Burgos
- 24 - Garrett Shelton
- 25 - Jackson Elkin
- 28 - Jackson Leman



- 7 - Robert & Mary Van Diest
- 15 - Curt & Lorraine McCoskey
- 21 - Alina & Steve Imhoff



The 10 most dangerous driving mistakes

- Failing to pay attention.
- Driving when under the influence or drowsy.
- Distractions.
- Failure to adjust to weather conditions.
- Driving aggressively.
- Making assumptions about another driver's intentions.
- Speeding.
- Driving when angry or upset.
- Changing lanes without checking blind spots.
- Ignoring essential auto maintenance.



## **Women's Lenten Luncheons begin Tuesday, March 12**

The First Congregational, UCC, Women's Fellowship will be hosting the Women's Lenten luncheons this year. You are invited to join us on Tuesdays starting March 12 and going through Tuesday April 9, 2019 at 1000 Willson Ave. You may arrive at 11:45 for the lunch with devotions to follow. We plan on being done by 1:00 pm. The cost is \$6:00 per person and can be paid at the door. We ask that reservations be made by calling the office of the UCC, 832-2232 or by signing up on the table by noon the Monday before the Tuesday lunch. We look forward to gathering as a community of faithful women and sharing a meal together as we prepare our hearts and spirits for Easter.

## **Lent Begins March 6**

First Congregational will begin the observance of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, March 6, 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.

## **Adult Education Class**

### **What Wondrous Love: Holy Week in Word and Art**

During the season of Lent our Adult Education Class will frame our studies around the great themes of Holy Week using the resource from the Chandler School of Theology entitled "What Wondrous Love: Holy Week in Word and Art." This DVD-based study uses the artwork of John August Swanson and video commentaries by academic scholars to study the stories of Holy Week and Easter. The major themes we will discuss are: "Power and Triumph" (Palm Sunday) "Enlightenment through Service" (the Footwashing) "Meeting God in a Meal" (the Last Supper) "Fear's Power" (the Betrayal and Arrest) "Sin and Suffering" (The Crucifixion) "Resurrection and Life" (The raising of Lazarus and Easter) Join us at 9:15 am in the Multipurpose Room as we explore our faith and

its vital intersections with the central themes of human life. There will be plenty to discuss!

## **Donate to D/SAOC**

The Domestic Sexual Assault Outreach Center Cake Auction fundraiser is April 13, and we're making plans to contribute to the event. In the past, we raised money to put together a basket of goodies to be auctioned. This year we'll donate the money directly to D/SAOC. Please put your generous donation in the Pickle Jar next to the nifty backpack on the table in fellowship hall. We'll combine your donations into one large check and send it -- along with the backpack -- to the folks at DSAOC. The auction is a family-friendly event featuring a plethora of items -- from tools or a backpack to travel packages -- for both silent and live auctions. The tasty appetizers are free. It's April 13, 5-9 p.m., at the Iowa Central East Campus in Fort Dodge, 2031 Quail Avenue. **-The Mission Board**



## **THRIFT SALE**

**April 26 & 27**

Spring cleaning time and de-cluttering.

**Friday & Saturday, April 26 & 27** - Women's Fellowship will be conducting their semi-annual Thrift Sale.

**Wed. April 24** - We will be accepting those items cluttering up your lives.

**Contact** Cindy Henning at 297-0422 or [jbhfam@mchsi.com](mailto:jbhfam@mchsi.com)

- **If you have Large items**
- **Need assistance transporting items**
- **or have Questions**

**Remember items should be clean, complete, and in good repair.**

Thank you for your donations and help making this fundraiser a success.

Cindy Henning

## **Agape Means Love**

What makes you happy? The sun shines, you get a call from a friend, your grandchild makes the honor roll, you celebrate a birthday ending in a 0, your favorite team wins, and the list goes on. Soon, we will launch Happy Dollars for the Agape Fund, encouraging folks to put a dollar in the jar in honor of anything that makes them happy. (We borrowed the idea from Kiwanis.) To keep the Agape Fund healthy, we plan to repeat this the last Sunday of every month, during coffee fellowship time, starting in March. "Agape" is a Greek word meaning love – not the romantic, Valentine's Day type, but a grander, divine, all-encompassing love. The Agape Fund at our church was established many years ago to assist persons who face an unusual or unexpected financial crisis. The pastor, Evangelism Board chair and moderator meet to decide when aid will be given and have helped a couple of folks recently. We'd like to keep the Agape Fund big enough to help. Thank you! You make us happy. – **The Mission Board**

## **One Great Hour of Sharing**

Our congregation, along with 1,000 other UCC congregations, is proud to be a 5-for-5 church. In addition to OCWM, we participate in One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, The Christmas Fund, and Funding Future Leaders. The Mission board informs you and you respond generously. Thank you! On March 31 we will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. The funds collected will help places lacking in health and education resources and where disaster has struck. Please thoughtfully consider your support for this opportunity to help.– **The Mission Board**

## **Thanks**

Thank you to everyone for the cards and prayers I received during my surgery and recovery. They were very much appreciated. Blessings  
Joyce

## **Barbershop**

The men of the Fort Dodge Harmony Brigade would like to invite you to a show, April 6 at the

Fort Dodge Middle School, 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm. Tickets are at Hy-Vee or 570-3414.

**On February 27th the Mission Board hosted a potluck to honor Steve Mather and to hear about his continuing ministry with Romanian children.**



**February 13th KLAB had their annual Valentine's Day party! They decorated cookies, made cards for church members, and enjoyed a few games.**



## Treasurer's Report

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>January</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR TO DATE</u></b>
Pledges and Offerings	\$10,300.68	\$10,300.68
Other Income	.00	.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$10,300.68</b>	<b>\$10,300.68</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Outreach and Mission	1,583.26	\$1,583.26
Pastoral Services	5,585.09	5,585.09
Maintenance and Repairs	1,981.89	1,981.89
Church Office	2,699.77	2,699.77
Music Ministry	866.99	866.99
Christian Education	23.80	23.80
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	88.21	88.21
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$12,829.01</b>	<b>\$12,829.01</b>

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**Address Service Requested**

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:



March 2019