

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

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the Children of God."—Matthew 5:9
"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God..." --Romans 8: 14-16

Are you familiar with the YouTube series "Middle Ground?" I stumbled upon it by accident, and what I saw was compelling enough to share awareness of the series' existence with you. The first "Middle Ground" episode was uploaded in October of 2017 to the Jubilee YouTube Channel. According to their website, Jubilee is a media company that "makes human-centric videos that challenge conventional thinking, bridge people together, and inspire love." The idea for the "Middle Ground" series was to take a polarizing topic and bring six strangers together to discuss the topic, and in the process find some "Middle Ground." The topics intentionally chosen are hot button issues like "Pro-Life and Pro-Choice", "Socialists and Capitalists", "Pro-Vaccine and Anti-Vaccine", "Atheists and "Christians", "Cops and Ex- Felons", "Pro-Gun and Anti-Gun"... to name a few. The process works by having a middle ground area where people can gather when they agree with a statement the producers suggest, and then after a couple of minutes of discussion those who disagree with the statement can join the group in the middle ground area and contribute their viewpoints. After another minute or so the group is sent back out of the middle ground area, and another statement is thrown out...and the process begins again.

While I'm not sure how much consensus is actually arrived at through this process, what is remarkable to observe is how the participants will listen to each other and be softened by each other's stories and viewpoints. The producers of this series do an excellent job of preparing the questions, for they intentionally frame the questions in ways that touch on the underlying middle ground that we all share as human beings: the need for safety in a contentious world; the desire to be heard on our own terms; a hunger for reconciliation with our fellow human beings; a hope for shalom in this world. I urge you to take some time this month and watch a few episodes of "Middle Ground." You may well be touched by the common humanity of all the participants as they meet together and attempt to talk out some of the most intractable divisions facing Americans today.

When Jesus said "Blessed are the Peacemakers" in the Sermon on the Mount, I am sure he was thinking of more than those who sign armistices and help orchestrate the end of violent conflicts. Our daily lives are filled with many, many small opportunities to be peacemakers—whether it's asking for clarification instead of jumping to conclusions, listening attentively to HEAR another's truths rather than reacting to what you disagree with, and even engaging in the increasingly countercultural act of looking for some middle ground in the midst of contentious debates. What has become clear to me is that peaceful people have in investment in peaceful relationships and peaceful living because they know that anger, provocation and attack sabotages their peace...and that is a price they are unwilling to pay in order to prove a point, defend their egos, or demonize opponents in order to justify attacking them. However, the flipside of this observation is also true: those who feel little inner peace will often have little reticence in creating conflict and waging every type of battle imaginable...for they have nothing to gain by promoting an external peace that eludes them internally. I am afraid that our collective inner peace quotient is sorely lacking these days, and the polarizing flames of our political ideologies and affiliations and the toxic effect of the media-- especially social media—have so shattered any real sense of inner peace in so many of us that any external peace amongst our citizenry has very little chance of long-term success. That is a sobering assessment to say the least...and I hope I am wrong, although I suspect that I am not.

So what can we as Christians do? Certainly we can unlearn much of what we have learned from our increasingly militant culture and use resources like “Middle Ground” to remind ourselves that our fellow humans are not our enemies—even if they do disagree with us on many fundamental issues. We can learn and re-learn the art of listening for understanding. We can do the difficult work of looking within ourselves and seeing WHY we are not experiencing any real inner peace—and then seek our healing.

Most importantly, we can turn to God and seek God until we know in our being that we are indeed Children of God! For our faith makes the astonishing claim that when we are united with God and have received a new Spirit within us, then we will experience a peace that is not of this world. The fact that so few have actually united with God and received this Spirit does not invalidate the truth of the promise; it only reminds us that we have unfinished business to attend to in our lives. And if we are going to experience this miraculous peace that our inner beings hunger for...if we are to be the self-realized Children of God who are real peacemakers in this world...then we must turn toward God and make God our ultimate priority and the *summum bonum* in our lives.

Friends, in what ways are you being called to be peacemakers in this world? How can you help bring others to the rarified middle ground where each person is valued and respected; a middle ground that have *love* as its grounding value? How can you lean further and deeper into the Spirit of God rather than the shalom-stealing spirit of this age? The need for peacemakers is as great as ever, but God stands ready to equip us with a new Spirit that is both peace-full and peace-seeking. May we bless the world with the presence and witness of this saving Spirit in us! May we bless the world with our commitment to be peacemakers! –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



Kids' eye-Q - Before kids head to school, be sure and get their eyes checked. Contact your doctor of optometry if your child frequently:

- Loses place when reading
- Avoids close work
- Tends to rub eyes
- Turns or tilts head
- Makes reversals when reading or writing
- Omits or confuses small words when reading
- Struggles to complete homework
- Squints when reading or watching television.
- Consistently performs below potential

ATTENDANCE

July 7 40	July 14 55
July 20 60	July 28 34

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss , Pastor	
Office: 832-2232	Cell 297-4316
Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net	
Michele Omvig : Admin. Assist.	269-7210
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



- 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
 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

UCC to Begin Manual on Church

The Faith Education, Innovation, and Formation (Faith INFO) team of the national setting of the UCC is in deep deliberation pulling together a working group for a denominational manual on church, holding space for the life and diversity of church which this manual will collectively represent. By the end of the fall, a group of people will have been identified to be in the process of gathering to begin this work.

However, in order to do their work well, they are committing to be attentive listeners to the Local Churches and leaders of those churches. There are a few ways in which you can help:

Pray. Please hold the INFO team in prayer as they sift through nominations and discern faithfully who will be invited to serve on the working group. Please pray for guidance, discernment, and deep intentionality. Pray that God moves through their choices for the sake of the church we know and love.

Take this survey! The results of this will help the working group determine the scope and function of the Manual on Church.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ManualonChurch> Thank you!

Third Saturday Worship

We will continue our Saturday evening services on August 17 (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! We will gather after worship to enjoy root beer floats, courtesy of the Worship Board! Like our previous years' Saturday services, there will be no Sunday worship services on the weekends of our Saturday services.

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 in August/September. 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

Let's Blow Them Away!

Last month we focused our giving and outreach to Upper Des Moines Opportunity here in town. We decided to help them collect some portable electric fans for families in need of cooling. Because of your generosity we were able to donate 24 fans Thanks! - The Mission Board

Thank You

♦Thank you to everyone who acknowledged Marc's passing. The memorials, food, cards, prayers and kind words were all appreciated. You will never know how much each of you touched my heart.

In Christian Love, Wilma

♦A great way to spend an evening is with friends and food. That's exactly what we did the night of THE GREAT JELLO COOKOFF. Almost too many crockpots to count filled the counter of the kitchen along with many

casserole dishes and breads. Tables with salad jellos made this potluck perfect. Evangelism would like to thank all the cooks who made this night taste so good. A heartfelt thanks to all who stepped in to help. There was so much food that getting it out of the kitchen was a little daunting. Your assistance was very appreciated. Also much appreciated was your willingness to stay and help clean after the event. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Congratulations to all the winners; Patty Gescheidler, Sharon Perry, and Vicki Blaufuss. The much appreciated judge was Marilyn Middleton.

Again, thanks for a wonderful evening,
The Evangelism Board



Scholarship SATURDAY

Finance Board awarded scholarships on Saturday, July 20. Recipients for our FCUCC scholarships are:

Poole Scholarship \$1075

Lauren Leman

Bess Lyon \$435

Jose Burgos

Kylie Crystal

Jackson Leman

Dylan McCoskey

Riley Nelson

Jacob Nixt

Helen Johnson \$950

Jose Burgos

Jackson Leman

Lauren Leman

Dylan McCoskey

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	June	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$8,658.00	\$89,427.68
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$8,658.00	\$89,427.68
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,994.34	\$9,910.96
Pastoral Services	7,829.94	46,432.55
Maintenance and Repairs	3,038.50	15,457.13
Church Office	2,639.47	16,727.57
Music Ministry	320.79	4,466.88
Christian Education	0.00	269.51
Local Ministry	0.00	.00
Misc. Expenses	200.00	1,105.59
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$16,023.04	\$97,370.15

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on July 9, 2019

Members Present:

Moderator:	Nate Lahr	Pastor:	Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Gretchen McGlynn	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:		Women's Fellowship:	Holly Riemenschneider
Finance :	Dale Olson	Mission:	Audrey Burtnett
Staff/Parish:	Stephanie Hill	Worship:	Gretchen McGlynn
Christian Ed:	Laurie Epps	Evangelism:	
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by the Moderator, Nate Lahr. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a devotional and a prayer. The minutes of the May cabinet meeting were read. Laurie Epps moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded that the minutes be approved with minor grammatical corrections. The motion passed.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS: **Christian Education:** Rally day plans will be discussed at the August meeting. **Evangelism:** Though no representative was present, the Potluck is still planned for July 20th. **Finance:** This board met and reviewed scholarship applications. Selections were made and will be presented on July 20th. Budget sheets for each board will be sent out and are due by September 15. **Mission:** Audrey summarized the events sponsored by the Mission Board - the Agape Fund, Relay for Life, the summer lunch program, Beacon of Hope dinner this month, the Ice Cream Social and the Strengthen the Church collection. **Staff/Parish:** We have had no issues so far this year therefore nothing to report. **Trustees:** Sharing the church with Inglesia de Dios Pentecostal MI has been going well. They were gracious about our prior scheduled event on July 21st – the Lehman recital so they will not be using the church that day. Trustees meeting will be July 25th instead of the 18th. **Worship Board:** The gospel group '3 Longs and a Short' was a great addition to the service on June 15th. The video services are well received when Pastor Craig is on vacation. **Women's Fellowship:** The Circle Booklet is being reviewed and a meeting is planned at the end of August. **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Craig expressed his thanks those who helped with the two memorial services June 29 and July 1st. Also mentioned were vacancies for WCMA and Ecumenical Human Needs Committee due to the resignations of Rev Mike Kroona and Rhonda Masser. **Treasurer:** The May and June offerings were reviewed. Tracy Wehrhan moved to put the report to audit. Dale Olson seconded. The motion passed and the report was put to audit.

Complete Board reports are attached.

Next meeting is August 13 at 7:00pm.

Adjourned at 7:42pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Hill, church clerk.

Board of Trustees We have not received any bids on the lots. The contract with Neighbors will run out May 21. We will put up our own sign. Sherry will get the sign. Women's Fellowship has requested a paper towel dispenser and soap dispenser for the kitchen. This was approved. Michele can order these when she orders the paper products. Discussion was held on renewing the Freeman Journal Paper for the church. It was decided not to renew the paper. The Pentecostal Church of God has requested the use of our church. They will need our church at least six Sundays 12:30 to 4:30 PM for worship and fellowship. The need for them is just on Sundays because it is only their sanctuary that is being remodeled. They will bring in their own sound system for worship and use the kitchen for only serving. The Pentecostal Church does have insurance and they will pay \$75 weekly for the church use. After discussion, Tracy made a motion to approve the request and Sherry seconded the motion. Motion was approved. Pastor Craig will visit with the pastor to keep the kids under control and let him know that if we see any abuse of the church, the agreement will be terminated.

Mission Board Happy Dollars were collected the end of May with an amount over \$262. It was felt by the committee that this is being well received and that we will continue with this the last Sunday of each month. 8 people from the church met at the Bomgaars parking lot and picked up several garbage bags of trash on May 16. Thank you to those hardy souls as it was a hot and muggy afternoon. Relay 4 Life coffee will be Sunday June 9. The pickle jar will be out for donations. The items from Piecemakers will continue to be available for bids with those proceeds going to Relay as well. Others are encouraged to join Joyce in signing up to walk on Wed. June 19 in Stanhope. The sign up sheet for volunteers for the summer lunch program, June 17-21, is looking good. Craig will get books to the Middle School and if he wants help will let us know. We will check with Kolleen to see if someone still needs to get the books from the Story City library. Treats were taken to the Hamilton County road workers in May - they were well received and appreciated. It was reported that all went well at the Beacon meal on May 28. It was recommended that someone from the organizing team go with to serve to just know how things were received. DSAOC Cake walk - our donation \$900.00; total raised \$53,000.00. Ice cream social is in good hands with Karin and Audrey. There is a need for more ice cream, but bars and worker sign up was nicely filled. Strengthen The Church offering is Sunday June 9. UDMO has been contacted and it was reported that they do not buy fans but there is a need and if fans are donated they are given out. At the present time they do not have a pressing need for other items so we decided we would collect funds to buy fans or encourage fans to be donated during the month of July. Gayle will take on the PR for that but is very hopeful Marjorie will help with a catchy promotion! The next Beacon meal will be Tues. July 30 with Gayle and Audrey in charge. Pulled pork sandwiches are being considered for the menu. It was decided we would do another Teacher Appreciation event. Gayle will be in touch with the school to find out if they are willing and a possible time. The idea of making a fruit cobbler or crisp with ice cream was talked about. Discussion was held about how we would like to use the \$1000 donation that was gifted to Mission Board. Several ideas were thrown out and we will continue this discussion.

Pastor's Report to Cabinet June 6, 2019 Worship: We began our 9:30 summer worship hours on June 2. We will enjoy the gospel quartet "3 Longs and a Short" during our first Saturday 5 pm service on June 15th. There will be no sermon—just music ☺. I will be gone for GS 2019 on Sunday, June 23rd, so I will select a video sermon for that day and the rest of the service will be led by a member of the Worship Board. Church Building Sharing with Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal MI: Our space sharing arrangement with Iglesia has gone well, and they have been careful of our building during their Sunday afternoon worship service and fellowship afterward. Adult Education: We finished our last class on Sunday, May 19th. We are now in summer recess. Stephen Ministry: We currently have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. We met June 6 at Sweet Treats for a Stephen Ministry social and to discuss the future organization of this ministry. We decided as a group to continue the program and our monthly education/check-in meetings and we will work at raising awareness of this program in the community. Currently flyers are being placed in the community promoting Stephen Ministry. WCMA: There is breaking news concerning the WCMA that I will share at our Tuesday Cabinet meeting (sworn to secrecy until then). Flyers were recently mailed to area churches concerning a new youth ministry coming to town called Freedom Quest Ministries. All Summer Lunch weeks have been filled with volunteers. IRMS COLLECTION TO BE SOLD: the contents of the Iowa Religious Media Services collection will be sold to their clients within the next month, and in doing that the largest collection of religious media resources in the state will be broken up. IRMS notified us that due to the loss of funding from the Iowa Methodist Conference they could no longer continue to operate after June. This terrible turn of events means that it will be difficult to secure religious materials on loan for Sunday School and Continuing Education events. We have used IRMS extensively over the last few years and this is sad news indeed! KLAB: we held our KLAB lock in at the church on Friday, May 24, with 7 kids attending. We have not yet scheduled any future events for the summer. Tri State Annual Meeting Iowa-Nebraska-South Dakota United Church of Christ: no one has volunteered to be a delegate at this meeting. General Synod 2019: We (delegates) are preparing for Synod by reading and doing "homework." My resolution committee assignment is to Committee 2: 1.) A Resolution On Ecumenical Relationship Between The United Church Of Christ

And The Iglesia Evangelica Unida De Puerto Rico; 2.) Reaffirming The United Church Of Christ's Commitment To Interreligious Relations, And Deploring Religious Bigotry. Our work is to read the supporting materials for the resolution, attend the educational intensives for the resolution and then speak for or against the resolution. We are also reading the book "Evicted", which was written by the Synod keynote speaker Matthew Desmond. Vacation: I took Friday May 31 as a vacation day in order to spend a couple of days in my hometown with family. Continuing Education: I attended the Mental Health Awareness Day hosted by Trinity ELCA on Friday, May 17th. One of the most disturbing parts of the event was the presentation of human trafficking, which continues even in small town Iowa. Speaking at the event was a 22 yo who told her story of what it was like to be trafficked.

Evangelism Carol has agreed to help Dawn keep children's bags up to date and full, and Leah will help Wilma with visitor's bags. But do we need to continue the visitor's bags? They contain a poem and Hershey Hugs & Kisses and the candy gets old before the bags are all handed out. There was a suggestion of placing a small bottle of wine in each bag. Leah passed around a "welcome" card we could adapt, and we will canvas the congregation for suggestions of any items they have received while visiting other churches. Scheduling ushers "is like pulling teeth" so we need to work on a strategy to encourage members to sign up. Craig suggested texting members as a best means of communicating so we will try that. The July 20 Saturday Service will also include an "Old Fashioned Potluck" and "The Great Jello Cook Off" and Evangelism will provide coffee, lemonade, and chocolate milk. This will also be Scholarship Sunday (Saturday) so there will be a good time had by all. Jello competition to be determined! Kay challenged us last month to come up with ideas to "evangelize" and we all realized that we had forgotten to do so. Should we have a moment of concern? Should we invite a friend to church? How do we share "God's Party"? Challenge to be continued

Evangelism Dawn has kept the children's bags filled and reminded us to pick up note pads to add to these bags. Pastor Craig displayed the "Welcome to our Church" cards he created and printed and we will trade out the current chocolate candies for mints or lifesavers that Leah will research.

As far as recruiting ushers, we will call people instead of trying to text them and also use folks who show up for services to help with collecting offering. Evangelism will host a potluck following our Saturday, July 20 Service, and supply coffee, chocolate milk, and lemonade. Members will bring food to share, their own table service, and a jello dish for the "Great Jello Cook Off Contest"! The categories for this competition are: Salad, Dessert, and Fun. They will be judged on taste and creativity and there will be "prizes" for the winners! We, as Evangelism Board, will make more of an effort to visit our members in Care Centers.

Mission Board June 30 Happy Dollars during coffee fellowship time netted \$57 for the Agape Fund. Our church gave around \$1,000 to the Relay for Life. The event was held June 19 in Stanhope. First Congregational UCC provided volunteers the first week of the free summer lunch program, starting June 17. Gayle and Audrey oversee the July 30 dinner served at the Beacon of Hope, the Fort Dodge shelter for homeless men. Following the Ice Cream Social, a check for \$295 has been sent to Willson Brewer renovation and the same to the Free Clinic. \$377 was donated for the Strengthen the Church collection. So far, we've collected two fans for our July Upper Des Moines Opportunity collection – and the month has just begun. We hear that Bomgaar's has fans for \$14. Gayle has been in touch with Jama Hisler, curriculum director for Webster City schools, to discuss a date for us to treat the staff to vanilla and chocolate ice creams; butterscotch, caramel and chocolate toppings; and choice of cone or small paper bowls.

Pastor's Report to Cabinet July 9, 2019 Worship: We enjoyed the gospel quartet "3 Longs and a Short" during our first Saturday 5 pm service on June 15th. I was at General Synod on Sunday, June 23rd, so Gretchen McGlynn led the service and the congregation watched a video sermon. Our next Saturday Service is July 20th—our Scholarship recipients will be recognized that evening, and the Evangelism Board is hosting a pot-luck with a creative Jello cooking contest. I will be on Vacation July 22-29 so I will again select another sermon video for worship on July 28. Memorial Services: Cleo Graham's and Marc Reinsel's Memorial services were held at First Congregational on June 29 and July 1, respectively. Thanks to everyone who helped make these services comforting to the family

and friends of Cleo and Marc! Thanks especially to the ladies of our church who made arrangements for food and served the meals! Church Building Sharing with Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal MI: Our space sharing arrangement with Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal MI continues to go well, and they continue to be careful of our building. I have not yet received word when their remodeling will be concluded. They have been told by Michele that if they need the building July 21, they will need to move their worship service to the evening to accommodate Lauren Leman's recital that afternoon in the sanctuary. Stephen Ministry: We currently have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. Summer Lunch Program: First Congregational volunteers again helped with the opening week of the Summer lunch program (June 17-21). We had ample volunteers, and this year there were more walk-ins attending the lunch, which is good! Only Riverview Daycare attended the lunch this year, and attendance ran from the high 60-s to the high 90's. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with this program! WCMA: Mike Kroona has resigned his call as Pastor of Trinity ELCA, effective at the end of June 2019. He has taken a staff position with the newly elected Bishop of the Western Iowa Synod of the ELCA. He has also resigned as the head of the WCMA, and so we will need to fill that vacancy. Also, Rev. Jeff Flagg of Asbury UMC announced that he will retire from Ministry in a year. Ecumenical Human Needs Committee: Rhonda Masser, who has been the chief volunteer and head of the EHNC, resigned after 19 years, effective immediately. A meeting was held by EHNC volunteers on Monday, July 8, and the group decided to suspend operations until the WMCA meets and determines how to move forward with this benevolence program. Judy McLaughlin has agreed to stay on as treasurer for now; the WCMA will need to meet ASAP to determine how to restructure and continue this needed program. Tri State Annual Meeting Iowa-Nebraska-South Dakota United Church of Christ: no one volunteered to be a delegate at this meeting (June 14-16), and apparently that was true across the state, for I was told that there wasn't a needed quorum present at this meeting to conduct business. General Synod 2019: Stephanie and I had quite an experience at General Synod! Please read my report in the July Newsletter for more information, or ask me about it! Vacation: I am on vacation from July 22-29.

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:

