

January 2020 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>

"In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near! Bear fruit worthy of repentance!'"—Matt. 3: 1, 2, 8

Several years ago on New Year's Day a friend of mine asked me this question: "How was Advent for you?" The question caught me off guard, for my thoughts were focused on the new year that was upon us, rather than on the Advent season which had just recently ended. I gave her question the usual assortment of answers that one would expect to hear: it was good; it was busy; it was colorful; it had a lot of positive experiences; it was emotional---the kinds of platitudes that we often tend to use when we speak about the time leading up to Christmas.

And then my friend started speaking to me about her Advent. She told me that this had been an important Advent season for her ...and she told me that the words of John the Baptist had been quite inspirational for her.

What she told me went something like this: *"This is been a difficult year for me. My health has deteriorated, causing me to lose my job. I'm having a difficult time getting on disability, and so money has been tight. I feel that God is calling me to a new vocation, but that really isn't taking off as I hoped it would. I guess I was going into Advent looking at all the negative things in my life: the things that were happening to me that I didn't like; the things that were not to happening in my life that I was counting on. I kept looking at the past and thinking to myself: "Look what I've lost!" ...and I was feeling pretty down, because things seemed hopeless."*

"And then in church I heard the words of John the Baptist calling the people of his day to "repentance" ... and his call for people to "turn away" from the old and the negative and to turn toward the Light was exactly what I needed to hear. I realized that I wasn't looking for the Light because I was looking at all the things going on in my life that I didn't like. And I realized that if I didn't turn toward the Light...how would I receive its coming?"

I thought that was a pretty good message! So often we hear the words of John the Baptist and his calling for "repentance" and assume that he's talking about feeling sorry for the bad things we've done. But in reality the Greek word translated as "repent" really would be better translated as "turn around!" John's call for repentance, or to "turn around!", is *a call to release the things in our lives that are holding us captive*; the things and events that are keeping us from turning to see the Light. My friend's story was a good reminder that we can get so bogged down and lost in regrets, old grudges, painful memories, and undesirable life circumstances that we stop believing that the Light is available to us...and then we lose heart and do not turn toward the Light, so that we might find the New Life that the Light is offering us.

Friends, as you read this, another new year has arrived. We all know what it means to usher in a new year... in spite of our resolutions and best intentions a new year is usually more of the same ol' same ol'. But this year it need not be this way with us! A new year can remind us that every new day is a day in which we can repent, "turn around", and rededicate our lives to seeking the Light of God and letting the Light work its works in us, so that we can become new creations who are liberated for new lives of peace, joy, and loving service to others!

As this New Year begins, my prayer is that we all hear the call of John the Baptist and the calling of our Baptisms, and "turn around!", so that we will see and be transformed by the wondrous Light of God...which promises to each of us the gifts of New Sight, New Hope, and New Life. —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 1 62 December 8 66
December 15 75 December 22
December 24 December 29

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316
Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
Michele Omgig: 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



Get Moving: Your heart likes activity. Physical activity is anything that makes you move your body and burn calories. It doesn't need to be a formal exercise workout to count. Physical activity includes just walking more. It's enjoyable, free, easy, social, and great exercise. A walking program is flexible and boasts high success rates because people can stick with it. Your heart matters! Being active can help with overall cardiovascular health.



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

Thank you for partnering with Stepping Forward this year. God is changing the hearts of hundreds of children all over Romania through your generous support. Thank you!
Steve & Cami

UDMO would like to thank you for your generous donation of food items to our pantry. Thank you for helping low-income families have a nice meal this holiday season.
Sincerely, UDMO Staff

Christmas Program

Thanks to all the helpers and all the kids who worked so hard on this year's Christmas program, "All My Christmas Friends."

Annual Meeting January 26

Mark your calendar for January 26th! 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 26

On Sunday January 26 the Mission Board is again sponsoring our SOUPER Bowl to benefit UDMO 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 26, attend the annual meeting and stay for the soup and fellowship following the meeting!

Caroling

On Dec. 14, Carolers from First Congregational spread Christmas cheer at our local care centers. They finished the evening with a soup and chili supper.



Live Nativity

On Dec. 7, First Congregational staged a "Live Nativity" from 5:30- 7:30 pm. Many members and friends put on period garb and gave our community an early Christmas present! Members of the Evangelism board hosted visitors and participants with cocoa and cookies inside.



Women's Fellowship Annual Christmas Luncheon—December 15



Advent

An Advent work crew trying to bring the Light to one of our sanctuary Christmas trees! We stayed after worship for the "Hanging of the Greens" on Dec. 1, and after the church was decorated we shared a pizza/ chili lunch provided by the Worship Board.



Bell Ringing

Salvation Army bell ringers at Fareway. Volunteers from First Congo raised \$650 by ringing on Nov. 30 and Dec. 13. Thank you, volunteers! 90% of moneys donated remain local!



Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$12,059.00	\$158,751.14
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$12,059.00	\$158,751.14
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$16,289.02
Pastoral Services	7,898.02	85,516.33
Maintenance and Repairs	2,028.63	28,120.29
Church Office	2,985.39	31,779.93
Music Ministry	839.68	7,852.91
Christian Education	55.94	333.45
Local Ministry	0.00	73.09
Misc. Expenses	0.00	1,293.42
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,807.66	\$171,258.44

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on November 12, 2019

Members Present:

Moderator:		Pastor:	
Vice Moderator:	Gretchen McGlynn	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:		Women's Fellowship:	Holly Riemenschneider
Finance :		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 7:03pm by the Vice Moderator, Gretchen McGlynn. Gretchen McGlynn opened the meeting with a devotional and a prayer. The minutes of the October cabinet meeting were read. Laurie Epps moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded that the minutes be approved as read. The motion passed. **Christian Education:** KLAB has been very active, exciting and more students are attending than anticipated. A Live Nativity program for Christmas is being organized for December 7. The Post-Confirmation class will attend the movie "Harriet" in Ames on Saturday. Sunday School is also going better than expected with 9 children attending. Fortunately, it was not cancelled. **Evangelism:** There was no representative in attendance. The written report is below. **Finance:** October offerings were \$18,368.00 and expenses were \$18,213.27. **Mission:** The Angel Tree will be placed in Fellowship Hall for church members to purchase gifts for children. Reusable items (cutlery, straws, etc.) are being ordered to honor our commitment on reducing single use plastic items and will be available for purchase in Fellowship Hall. The November Beacon of Hope Meal will be hosted by the confirmation students and will feature pulled pork sandwiches. Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army will be organized this year. Hopefully other groups will also be included. UDMO needs Thanksgiving sides dishes like canned sweet potatoes, cranberries or gravy. Items are due to the church by November 17th. **Staff/Parish:** Stephanie Hill attended the Safe Church Policy Training on November 10th. **Trustees:** The fan in the kitchen is repaired. Modern Sound checked the backup system for the projectors and everything was fine. **Worship Board:** December 1st will be Hanging of the Greens with pizza served after the church is decorated. The next meeting will cover plans for the Christmas Eve service. Josi

Greenley will provide accompaniment. There was no written report. **Women's Fellowship:** The Thrift Sale brought in \$1800.00. A Christmas Potluck is planned for December 15th after service. Kitchen cleaning will be discussed to assign tasks better suited to the age of the circle members. **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Craig was not present due to knee surgery. His written report is below. Safe Church Policy Training was held after service on November 10th. Seven people attended. Since Leah Maass is no longer on the Christian Education Board, Laurie Epps volunteered to replace her on the Safe Church Policy Team. **Treasurer:** Offerings were just above expenses. The two bonds that came due were put into a mutual fund because of better interest rates. Tracy Wehrhan moved to put the report to audit. Holly Riemenschneider seconded. The motion passed and the report was put to audit. **Nominating Committee:** All 17 vacancies on the Boards and Committees were filled for next year. The committee was very pleased with the new method used and plans to use it again next year. **Pending Business:** There is concern that the shortages in the church finances are not being adequately addressed. Several large church donors that we depended on are no longer with us. We need to find ways to relate the seriousness of the situation to the congregation to remain a functioning entity. Complete Board reports are attached.

Trustees The Pentecostal Church is done using our church on Sundays and has paid their bill in full. Al will get a new switch for the fan in the kitchen. The fan is repaired. The drawer under the microwave was repaired by Tracy after the meeting. LED light may be done in December. A church use request for a graduation party May 15 and 16 was approved. The check valve on the sump pump in the multipurpose room blew up. Mark Trueblood repaired it for now. Also made suggestions on how to improve the sump pump and gutter drainage on the south side of the church. Al will work with Chris on this project. Modern Sound was here and the backup system for the projectors is ok. Talked about getting a TV screen on north wall so pastor and choir do not have to turn and see the large screens. Screens need cleaning; money will be used from the building fund. Outside fall cleanup is done.

Christian EducationKLAB- Karinne and Vicki talked about past activities KLAB, about 10 students, have done. They decorated mini pumpkins and went to Crestview to give them to their pen pals during a visit. With the arrival of 2 more students making the 10, it is necessary to look for 2 more pen pals at Crestview also. They are investigating what personal hygiene items could be placed in Christmas stockings for their pen pals and will be singing Christmas carols at Crestview next Wednesday. KLAB is interested in doing a live Nativity scene in front of the church on Saturday, December 7 with publicity on Facebook. Pastor Craig will contact the Evangelism Board to see if they might help serve hot chocolate to the public the same night for a free-will donation going to the youth programs at the church. In case of bad weather, it could be moved to Saturday, December 14 when the rest of Webster City will have activities available. Besides the live Nativity, KLAB would like to present a Christmas program in church on Sunday, December 22. Both Karinne and Vicki spoke of the openness these KLAB students have to new activities and their hopes of moving all resources and activities to the upper floor of the church. Post-Confirmation Group- Pastor Craig is meeting with 3 students every 2 weeks on Wednesday after school at the same hour as KLAB. They interact well with the students of KLAB before both groups start. This Saturday they will be going to Ames to attend the movie, "Harriet", about Harriet Tubman. On November 20, they will serve a meal at Beacon of Hope in Fort Dodge.

Sunday School – Laurie Epps reported that Sunday school is going well with approximately 11 people including teachers with older students happily helping with the younger. An attendance chart is used to track numbers. They have been practicing a song for Christmas, "A Gift to You".

Adult Sunday Classes- Pastor Craig spoke of the multi-week series of videos about the "Bible Project" being used in his Sunday morning class.

This Sunday, November 10, the church will offer Safe Conduct Policy instruction lasting about an hour which everyone that works with children in the church must attend once a year. Stephen's Ministry will meet to plan a possible caroling party that would also include KLAB

students. The next meeting of Christian Education Board will be on Wednesday, December 5 at 5:00PM.

Women's Fellowship Cindy Henning read an invitation to Gateway to Discovery 5th anniversary "It's a Chocolate Thing" fundraiser, Saturday Nov. 16, 1-3 pm, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge. It includes chocolate tasting, silent auction, and stories of hope. A thank you from D/SAOC for \$300 gift and a request from Beacon of Hope to help provide a Thanksgiving meal for just \$2.07 per person was received. Kitchen cleaning by circles is done. Mayflower has requested they not have the assignment of washing windows. The assignments will be reviewed for next year, look at getting rid of some unused dishes or at least downsizing number, i.e. serving trays, glass juice glasses. The fan has been fixed. Thrift sale report from Cindy Henning was a success. We raised close to \$1,800. Thank you to all who gave their time and/or donations. Without the volunteer workers it would be a much bigger job. Cindy had 10 more signs made to advertise the sale. Members took them to place in their yard and several are keeping them until next sale. Cindy will send out a reminder to let people know when to set them out again. Cindy will also be getting the heavier stakes. The wind can do damage to the lighter ones. The next sale is April 24 & 25. Christmas Lunch after worship on Dec. 15. It will be a potluck, (bring your own table service) Drinks will be provided by Women's Fellowship. Women's Study to begin in January, if there is enough interest. Ask in your circles and let Gayle know. RECYCLE plastic grocery bags by folding them and bringing to church where we will collect and send them to Cindy Middleton in Guttenberg who makes them into beds for the homeless. We are still encouraged to use re-useable bag as much as possible. Mission Board will have them available for sale at Alternative giving fair. IRMS – Media Services has closed their doors. This is where we have obtained information and videos in the past.

Mission Board Happy Dollars for the Agape Fund were not collected the last Sunday of October because of the Rotary Turkey Dinner. \$488 was donated for Neighbors in Need. The Alternative Giving Advent Fair begins November 24. We discussed a variety of options. The Webster Theatre and Kay Ross will again coordinate the Angel Tree tags. Gayle will pick up 10 tags and give the congregation the option of buying the gifts or donating money; Gayle has offered to purchase gifts with money given. Kay Ross is looking for volunteers to register people's names 4-6 p.m. daily when they come to pick up tags at the movie theater. Gifts are due at the movie theater December 15. Sherry Leksell told Gayle about the need for coats at the Eagle Grove school where she teaches. Several organizations in Webster City collect coats for students here. Marjorie will contact Sherry for more info. Audrey will talk with Donna Ryherd about Stepping Forward Romania. Gayle has ordered Chico bags, insulated shopping bags, reusable straws, mesh produce bags and bamboo utensils for a focus on reducing use of plastic. We plan to feature the following: November 24 – Angel Tree; December 1 – Alternatives to single-use plastic; December 8 – Coats for students; December 15 – Stepping Forward Romania. In other business, the post-confirmation students and Pastor Craig host the November meal at the Beacon of Hope in Fort Dodge. Marjorie will organize the January meal for the Beacon. Details to come for the Salvation Army Bell Ringing. Mission trip with Asbury: Gayle says the trip to the Illinois distribution center appears less likely because the dormitory bunks are already reserved. Backpack Program: Gayle reports that the program no longer has a school employee as a contact person. The Backpack Program will use paper bags, rather than plastic, for upcoming packing. High school age students will receive food in reusable shopping bags. Christmas Fund: Audrey will prepare info for the church bulletin. Upper Des Moines Opportunity: UDMO could use Thanksgiving sides, such as cans of cranberry sauce, cans of sweet potatoes, jars of gravy and boxes of bread stuffing. Everything is due to the church by November 17.

Pastor's Report Knee surgery: I am having a partial knee replacement Tuesday, Nov. 12. I hope to be home that day, and back in the office Thursday, Nov. 16. Worship: We survived the time change on November 4 and had a good gathering for worship that morning. Nov 10th will be Veteran's Day Sunday, and it will be an abbreviated worship service to accommodate the

annual budget meeting following worship. November 24th will be All Saints Sunday, when we will honor our departed saints, and December 1 will be the First Sunday of Advent, followed by the hanging of the Greens AND Care Center worship services! There will be a pizza/chili luncheon following the Hanging of the Greens. KLAB: We are receiving new students! We now have 8 children ranging from K-6 attending. They have been a busy group! We enjoyed a Halloween party Oct. 30, and they have made candy cornucopias to give to their Crestview pen pals, and they are planning to be a part of both a LIVE NATIVITY, to be held Saturday, December 7, from 5-8 pm, and they are also planning a Christmas program to be held Sunday Dec. 22 during worship! Wil Groves is back helping—we appreciate Karinne, Vicki, and Wil leading this program! Post- Confirmation Youth Group: This group is organizing the next Beacon of Hope meal, held Wednesday, Nov 20. Menu is pulled pork sandwiches! On Saturday Nov. 9 we will travel to Ames to watch and discuss the movie “Harriet”—the story of Harriet Tubman of the underground railroad. Our schedule has been bumpy, but we hope it will smooth out...and in the off weeks the teens are encouraged to come and be teen helpers with KLAB. Adult Education: We are now studying “The Bible Project” videos. Stephen Ministry: We currently have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. We met in November and Stephen Leader Dale Olson present a program of thanks to our Stephen Ministers, who have been engaged in this ministry for 7 years now! We will hold a Stephen Ministry social on Dec 5 at the Emporium, and the group will sponsor an all-church Christmas Caroling party on Saturday, December 14, from 5-7: 30 pm. We will Carol the care centers and return to the church for a light soup supper. Everyone is welcome to come! EHNC: The program is going well, and we have had many applicants come for assistance. We will need to ask for more funds from our congregations in 2019, and Sharon Perry will write the 2020 Morrison Trust application so we can receive money from that trust. We are still meeting to finalize the new guidelines: financial assistance is now capped at up to \$400 yearly. WCMA: The WCMA has STILL not yet met! We had to cancel our Oct. 31 meeting...we have currently not yet scheduled our next meeting. Boundary Training: I completed my required Boundary Training on Saturday, October 19. Safe Church Policy Training: We will register and train our teachers and youth leaders/helpers after church on Sunday, Nov. 10. Salvation Army bell ringing: No plans have been made yet—but it will happen!!! We will need volunteers for this event! Funeral: I officiated at the memorial service of Chet McNelly on October 10 at Fosters. The breakdown of my ministry since Oct. 7: Worship services led: 4; Christian Ed: 7; Meetings: 8; Visitation: 13 Vacation: Oct 21-28 **Evangelism Board** Leah was reminded that she is responsible for November and December ushers and we are so thankful for Laurie training new candle lighters and ushers!!! Our New Business discussion centered on the question of hosting more potlucks. It seems that the congregation enjoys the fellowship of these events following church as opposed to organizing them for evenings. Nothing was decided on this topic and we will be partnering with Cabinet and Mission Boards in hosting the Souper Sunday meal by organizing a chocolate competition (title and information to follow). It was mentioned that we could partner with Steven Ministries in hosting the Caroling Party, but no decision was made. Kay then shared information about a woman who crochets sleeping mats out of plastic grocery bags. It requires 300 bags and 1 week of crocheting to create one mat and she is always looking for bags. Our board will promote this “Bags 4 Beds” project and Leah and Bob will deliver them to Dubuque where this woman lives when we’ve collected the first boxes of bags.

Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Hill, Clerk

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on December 10, 2019

Members Present:

Moderator: Nate Lahr
 Vice Moderator: Gretchen McGlynn
 Finance Sec.:

Pastor: Craig Blaufuss
 Trustees: Joyce Gelhaus
 Women’s Fellowship: Holly Riemenschneider

Finance :		Mission:	Audrey Burtnett
Staff/Parish:	Stephanie Hill	Worship:	Gretchen McGlynn
Christian Ed:		Evangelism:	Carol Crystal
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Nate Lahr. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a Native American devotional and a prayer. The minutes of the November cabinet meeting were read. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Gretchen McGlynn seconded a motion that the minutes be approved as read. The motion passed. **Christian Education:** There was no report. **Evangelism:** The Live Nativity was successfully held on Saturday, December 7th headed by Wil Groves. The participants and viewers were served cookies and cider. A Christmas Potluck will be held in Fellowship Hall after service on December 15th. **Finance:** November offerings were \$11,009.00 and expenses were \$12,714.03. **Mission:** For the Alternative Giving - All the tags on the Angel Tree in Fellowship Hall for church members to purchase gifts for children were taken. The sale of reusable items (cutlery, straws, etc.) to honor our commitment to reducing single use plastic items will continue through Advent. Boots, hats and glove donations are being taken for students in need. Next Sunday, the 15th, a tree will be up for the Romanian children. A donation in the amount of \$20.00 each for gifts. Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army brought in \$375 on November 30th. UCC members are ringing again on the 13th of December. The Thanksgiving Meal prepared by ACE was enjoyed by 21 people from UCC. Fifty traditional Thanksgiving sides were collected for UDMO. The Christmas Fund will be collected on Christmas Eve during service. The Mission Board will serve soup at the Annual Meeting in January. **Staff/Parish:** This board has had no issues over the past month. **Trustees:** A monitor for the north wall of the sanctuary will be purchased to give the choir and minister an easier line of sight and paid for from the Building Fund. Two offers on the vacant lots next to the church are being reviewed. **Worship Board:** The Hanging of the Greens happened – the church is decorated. The Christmas Eve service will feature pew communion and Josi Greenley will provide accompaniment. Pastor Craig will be gone December 29th – Gretchen McGlynn will lead the service. **Women’s Fellowship:** The Serrv Sale was successful. Only a few items remain that could not be sent back. The Christmas Potluck Luncheon is planned for December 15th after service. **Pastor’s Report:** Pastor Craig had Care Center Services on December 1st and was not able to participate in Hanging of the Greens. The ornaments made by the KLAB kids all sold. The money is for Almost Home. There were 1200 ‘likes’ on-line for the Live Nativity on the 7th. It is worth doing again next year. The Church of Christ will be doing a Live Nativity the following week. A caroling party is scheduled for December 14th for several homes and the care centers. **Treasurer:** Offerings in November were \$1,000.00 short of expenses. Over the year, funds from the General Fund were used to cover church expenses and obligations when offerings were short. At year-end, the General Fund will be depleted to about \$250.00. Tracy Wehrhan moved to put the report to audit. Stephanie Hill seconded. The motion passed and the report was put to audit. **Pending Business:** The Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2020. The Safe Church Policy Team needs a representative from the Christian Education Board. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded the motion that Laurie Epps be accepted as that representative. The motion passed.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Worship Board The Hanging of the Greens will be December 1st. Pizza, chili and bars will be provided by the Worship Board. Josi Greenley will serve as the organist at the Christmas Eve service at 5:00 p.m. Pew communion will be served. The lighting of the candles will be done by those serving communion. Pastor Craig will be on vacation December 29th. We will have a video sermon with Gretchen McGlynn being the service leader.

Board of Trustees LED lights will hopefully be done in December. The gutters on the south side of the church now drain under the sidewalk into the street. The work was done by Hubbard

Concrete and Masonry. The west side gutter still needs to be done. Chris and Al will have the pipe that comes from the sump pump be 2", and then have it drain under the sidewalk. Sherry will get a 70" TV and bracket for the north wall of the sanctuary. She will check black Friday sales. The TV will be for Pastor Craig and the choir, so they do not have to turn and see the large screens. Tracy will get Modern Sound to hook it up. Tom will fix the 6 wooden chairs, so they will slide on the carpet. Then the chairs legs should not wobble. Al will get a new toilet flapper for the unisex restroom by fellowship hall. Curt is taking vacation December 16 to December 28. Trustees will clean the following times if available: Saturday December 21 at 9am, check Sunday December 23, and clean Friday December 27 at 9am.

Women's Fellowship Notes and/or Letters: Cindy Henning reported we received thank you cards from Wings of Refuge, Beacon of Hope, Stepping Forward Ministries, and Peacemakers received one from UDMO for quilts. Cabinet Meeting Report: Joyce Gelhaus reported – We have new lights in Fellowship Hall. SERRV was a success. We were able to pay the bill. Donna Ryherd has the remaining items. A shawl, scarf, purse, and 2 ceramic bird pot. Christmas Lunch after worship this year will be Dec. 15th. It will be a potluck. You are asked to bring your own place setting. Women's Fellowship will provide drinks, coffee, water, or milk. Each circle will decorate 2 tables. Gayle will let Curt McCoskey know how to set-up tables. Cindy will bring CD of Christmas carols to play.

Mission Board Happy Dollars collected November 30 for the Agape Fund totaled \$47. The Alternative Giving Advent Fair began November 24 with the Angel Tree. Before it came down December 1, all 10 tags had been taken. The Going Plastic Free table had a good start; Gayle says the bamboo cutlery and silicon straws have sold well. We have lots of the red insulated bags – plus some Chico bags and metal straws left to sell so we'll leave that table up through Advent. Boots, Hats and Gloves: Marjorie has set up the giving-opportunity table for the week of December 8. The Stepping Forward Romania giving opportunity begins December 15. Post-confirmation students (Chesney Fuller, Brandon Lahr and Madison Babington), along with Craig and Vicki Blaufuss, hosted 30-plus men at the November 19 Beacon of Hope meal. The pulled pork sandwiches were tremendously popular. Andrea Mosbach will chair the January 28 Beacon meal. The recent Backpack packing was done using paper bags, rather than plastic, Gayle shared. 14 high- school-age students received food in reusable shopping totes and transferred the food to their own backpacks. Salvation Army Bell Ringing: Our church's first bell ringing (November 30) at Fareway went well with all shifts filled and \$375 collected there. Another team rang at Hy-Vee. Five more days of ringing have been scheduled. Trinity, Asbury and Faith have agreed to ring. Our church will ring again Friday, December 13. Mission Trip with Asbury: Gayle noted that the trip to the Illinois distribution center has been cancelled because low-cost housing for work teams is no longer available. All Cultures Equal Meal: Audrey reported that around 20 from our church came to the fund-raising meal November 17. Putting out sign-up sheets for group attendance worked well. Upper Des Moines Opportunity: In one week, our church members donated 50 Thanksgiving "sides," such as cans of cranberry sauce, cans of sweet potatoes and pumpkin, jars of gravy and boxes of bread stuffing. Marjorie delivered everything to UDMO on November 18. The Christmas Fund will be collected Christmas Eve. Pastor Craig will contact Lotus shelter for homeless women and children to arrange a tour of the facility. Marjorie will prepare the Mission Board Annual Report. The Mission Board will serve a soup lunch after the church Annual Meeting January 26 and accept donations of cans and packages of soup for the food pantry. Our next meeting is January 7, 2020, 3:15 p.m.

Pastor's Report Worship: On November 24th we observed All Saints Sunday and lit candles for Lavonne Osmundson and Verie Hollingshead, then members came forward to light candles for friends and loved ones who are now departed. December 1 we observed First Sunday of Advent, decorated the church for Christmas AND led 3 Care Center worship services! A big thank you to all who helped decorate, and a big thank you to the Worship Board for hosting the pizza/chili lunch! KLAB: our students are collecting personal hygiene items for their penpals at Crestview, and they are also selling handmade ornaments to raise money for Almost Home

animal shelter. Christmas Program: "All My Christmas Friends" will be held Sunday Dec. 22 during worship! Wil Groves is directing this play. LIVE NATIVITY: yes, its going to happen! Thanks to many willing adults, we are moving forward to have this outdoor tableau on Saturday, December 7, from 5:30-7:30 pm. There will be cocoa and cookies in Fellowship Hall for visitors.

Post- Confirmation Youth Group: 3 teens served 35 men at Beacon of Hope a pulled pork sandwich meal on Wednesday, Nov 20. Thank you to everyone who was so generous in donating toward this meal! On Saturday Nov. 9 we traveled to Ames to watch and discuss the movie "Harriet"—the story of Harriet Tubman of the underground railroad. The movie was powerful—we recommend you watch it! Adult Education: We continue our study of 'The Bible Project' videos; we are currently watching the series on "Spiritual Beings in the Bible."

Stephen Ministry: We currently have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. We will hold a Stephen Ministry social on Dec 5 at the Emporium, and the group will sponsor an all-church Christmas Caroling party on Saturday, December 14, from 5-7: 30 pm. We will Carol the care centers and return to the church for a light soup supper.

EHNC: The program running low on money! The regular account, as of 11/21, had only \$1292.92, and the Morrison Account has \$1434.51. We will need to ask for more funds from our congregations, and Sharon Perry has submitted the 2020 Morrison Trust application so we can receive money from that trust. We have finalized the new guidelines: financial assistance is now capped at up to \$400 yearly, and filling out a household budget clearly showing income and expenses is now a requirement for assistance.

WCMA: The WCMA finally met! We have started the Salvation Army Bellringing Campaign—we need more groups to ring! We voted to move the last of the 2018 Bellringing monies to the Ecumenical Human Needs Fund--\$1500.

Other news: ACE is getting its kitchen up to code so it can be rented out as a commercial kitchen. Jordan church is still renting the facility for services. We received a thank you from the Enhance Hamilton County Foundation for our donation of \$900 to 3 local food pantries; EHCF matched our \$900.

Safe Church Policy Training: We trained 9 teachers and youth leaders/helpers after church on Sunday, Nov. 10. We need to schedule another training session for those who could not make the Nov. 10 training.

Salvation Army Bellringing: First Congregational rang Nov 30th at Fareway, and brought in nearly \$400! We have scheduled another ring date of Friday, December 13 at Fareway.

Funeral: I will officiate at the funeral of Genevieve Carroll on Monday, December 9, here at First Congregational.

Vacation: I will be on vacation Dec 25—Jan 1 and will be back in the office January 2nd. We will have a video sermon while I am away on Sunday, December 29.

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Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

