

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

Have you ever heard of “Ram Dass?” He was born Richard Alpert, and he became a Harvard professor and clinical psychologist of great repute—before he fell in with Timothy Leary and “turned on, tuned in, and dropped out.” (Remember those days?) His work in the 60’s exploring the effects of psychedelics on the human psyche eventually led to his dismissal from Harvard (he had given psychedelic drugs to undergraduates) and in 1967 he went to India, met his guru, and underwent a great spiritual awakening and conversion to Eastern thought and mysticism. I bring him up because he died December 23rd of last year, and reading of his passing I immediately went to my bookcase and pulled out my copy of his signature work “Be Here Now” and reacquainted myself with it. I purchased my copy in 1979 (I was 20 at the time) and I consider it one of the spiritual works that helped frame my understanding and love of Eastern and New Age spirituality. Of course at age 20 there is a lot of libidinous and intellectual energy that can be readily channeled into the spiritual quest...and as I again thumbed through the pages of “Be Here Now” I could feel the deep yearnings of my younger self return: feelings of a deep hunger for some kind of absolute Truth, a hunger for a spiritual path that deeply resonated with me, and a yearning for an encounter with the transcendent, the “Holy”...leading to an unfolding sense of great purpose for my life.

I will confess that I think of those heady and intense days with both nostalgia and a tinge of sadness as I consider the “path not taken” and the choices I have made which have led me to the relatively settled life of a 60 year old mainline Protestant pastor rather than a Sannyasin. Yet, as we say in the UCC, “God is still speaking”...and my acquaintance with Ram Dass’ deeply spiritual life reminded me that all of us, in whatever vocation or circumstances we find ourselves, are invited and summoned to a spiritual quest for God. In our own Judeo-Christian tradition Jesus reminded the people of his day that the greatest commandment and the highest purpose of a human being was “To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength” (Mark 12:30); likewise when Jesus was admonished by Martha to tell Mary to stop sitting at his feet and help her with the day’s work, he replied “You are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.” (Luke 10:41) Of course Jesus was not suggesting that we all should be renunciants and retreat from the world and its concerns, nor was he unappreciative of Martha’s efforts...but it was a teaching opportunity to remind Martha, and us, that our quest for God is the one thing above all else that holds the power to change and empower our lives as we align ourselves with the Highest Good. When we forget that great truth; when we forget our highest purpose and settle for the distractions and diversions our culture now specializes in as its substitute for an authentic spiritual quest; or when we are so angered and heartbroken by the condition of the world that we jump to action and leave our need for God on the back burner because “duty calls, and there is work to be done!” then we have missed, or settled, or worse—we have forgotten or abandoned the quest. And then God and our highest selves go begging, and the world revolves but it doesn’t *evol/ve*...and the kingdom and the power and the glory remain prayerful, unrealized dreams.

Friends, this need not be! It is never too late to return to the quest for God and to again resume the path of the Seeker of God. Lent will begin February 26th, and once again we will join all the saints and seekers of our tradition and be invited and summoned to a time of repentance and transformation, committal and renewal as we go deeper into our walks of discipleship, draw closer to Jesus, and return again to our lives’ quest for God. My prayer for each of us is that this holy time of Lent reawakens in us our need for God, our love of God...and our need to get on with our quest for God--what Ram Dass called “The only dance there is!” —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

January 5 67	January 12 62
January 19 0	January 26 72

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



The Whole You: Emotional Health

Top traits of highly successful people

- Drive - You work hard and get things done. You don't procrastinate.
- Self-reliance - You take on responsibility and are accountable for the decisions you make and actions you take.
- Self-confidence - You trust your instincts and abilities so you don't hesitate or second guess yourself.
- Optimism - You believe the future is bright and full of opportunities so you're less likely to give up.
- Creativity - You come up with better solutions to address problems/issues/needs.
- Integrity - You're honest even when it's difficult or uncomfortable to do so.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Chris McNeil
4 - Leanna Ploeger
5 - Jane Klaver
6 - Sharon Perry
7 - Gene Royster
8 - Michele Omgig
9 - Les Ploeger
11 - Greta Oberender
12 - Blakely Ploeger
14 - Curt McCoskey
15 - Everett (Bud) Crystal
17 - Robert Stidolph Jr
17 - Piper Williams
19 - Gretchen McGlynn
19 - Jenna Short
22 - Curtis Alan (PJ) Swanson
22 - Colby Butz
23 - Stephanie Hill
25 - David Weieneth
26 - Wilma Taylor
27 - Luverne Bierle
27 - Diana Oberender
27 - Adelyn Oberender
28 - Midge Tudor

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

13 - Dick & Midge Tudor
17 - Jose Burgos & Dilcia Franco

Joint Mission Trip with Asbury United Methodist Church

This opportunity has become a reality after a week in February became available for housing at the Midwest distribution Center in Pawnee, IL. The week of February 16-21 has been reserved. There is room for 3 more volunteers to go and serve at this center. The plan is to leave on Sunday Feb. 16, after church, and return Fri. Feb. 21. Volunteers would be helping at the center Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday morning. Wednesday is being set aside as a day to spend some time in Springfield exploring some of their historical sites. Any other questions please talk with someone on the Mission Board. A sign-up sheet is in Fellowship Hall if you would like to be a part of this joint effort.

Lent Begins February 26

First Congregational will begin the observance of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, March 6, beginning at 6:30 p.m. 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.

Lenten Lunches

Lunches start March 3, the location will rotate between the participating churches.

Adult Education Class: Black History Month

During the month of February the Adult Education class will study topics pertaining to Black History Month. This year marks two significant anniversaries impacting voting rights for African Americans. In 1870 (150 years ago) the 15th Amendment was ratified: "The right of citizens...to vote shall not be denied or abridged...on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." 2020 is also the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment securing women's right to vote. With these anniversaries in mind, the 2020 theme for African American History Month is "African Americans and the Vote.," The theme is set each year by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Join us at 9: 15 a.m. in the Multipurpose room for this important study!

Care Center Services

First Congregational will be leading Care Center services on February 2, not January 26 as originally scheduled. We begin at Windsor Manor at 1: 15 pm, then lead at Crestview at 2 pm and begin our final Care Center service at Southfield at 2: 45 pm. Volunteers are welcome to help at any or all of these services!

CWS School Kits

The Post-Confirmation class is sponsoring a Church World Service School Kit drive in February to benefit underprivileged children who need basic school supplies. Donations needed are:

- 1-- pair blunt point scissors (children's)
- 3-- 70 ct. bound notebooks

1-- 12 inch ruler

1--handheld pencil sharpener

1-- large eraser

6—new, unsharpened pencils with erasers

1-box of 24 crayons (only 24)

Donations of money are also welcomed, to purchase more supplies, cloth bags, and to pay for shipping of the kits.

The PC class has set a goal of assembling 50 CWS School Kits to ship. Thank you for helping reach this goal!

Spaghetti Supper

KLAB and the Post-Confirmation Class invite you to an all-church spaghetti supper, to be held on Ash Wednesday (February 26), from 5:30-6:30 p.m. On the menu is spaghetti with sauce (meat or meatless), salad, garlic bread, bars and drinks. There will be a sign- up sheet for the meal in fellowship, and a free will donation will be taken up to benefit the youth ministries of First Congregational.

Thanks

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your gift of \$1,000 to the work of the Ecumenical Human Needs Committee. We had a lull in the summer but have regrouped under the inspiration of Pastor Craig and Sharon Perry. We give them both high praise! Since then we have been able to assist others with utility payments and housing deposits. Thank you again for your help. Ecumenical Human Needs Committee

Thank you church family!

Thanks to all of you and your support at our Souper Bowl lunch! We are able to gift \$327.00 to UDMO. This allows them to purchase food from the Food Bank in Des Moines at a much lower cost to help stock their shelves here in town.

We also want to thank the Cabinet for providing the veggies and deviled eggs and Evangelism for the Chocolate Offering and all of the yummy chocolate treats to round out our meal.

Mission Board

Thanks!

The Alternative Giving Advent Fair went well thanks to you! All pictures on the Stepping

Forward Romania orphan tree were taken and \$675 was donated. All 10 Angel Tree tags were taken. Sherry Leksell has received a thank-you note from the Eagle Grove school nurse for the cold-weather gear we collected, especially for student newcomers: five bottles of lotion, eight wooly scarves, nine pairs of boots, 12 lip balms, 25 pairs of gloves and 30 wooly hats. For the plastic-use reduction effort of the Advent Fair, the bamboo “silverware” sold quickly; we still have metal straws and insulated red bags.



The Mission Board recently toured the Lotus Community Project, a women and children's homeless shelter in Vincent. Ashley Vaala (center) is the Director.

Ice Cream Sundaes

Mission Board feels the success of our thank you to educators was worth a repeat this school year. We had to split the staff into support staff, which was done last fall, and the certified staff, which is to be done in Feb. This will happen on Monday Feb. 17. We are again serving ice cream sundaes and because we need to make this break happen quickly we have a sign-up sheet out so others can help us out with this project. We do not have an exact time but think we are looking at an afternoon break time period. The school does not want this to take much time, so as a volunteer you would be looking at maybe an hour to scoop, pour, and say thank to our local educators! Thanks for your help and support!



The Post Confirmation group recently went to Fort Dodge to watch the movie "Just Mercy" as part of their studies during Black History Month.

Souper Bowl

On January 26th a quorum of over 40 members braved the winter cold to attend our annual meeting. Following the meeting the Mission Board hosted a Souper Bowl luncheon featuring soups made by members of the board. We also held a Chocolate Offering Competition.



Wintery days are good days for KLAB kids to stay inside and play marshmallow baseball.

Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$25,022.00	\$183,773.14
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$25,022.00	\$183,773.14
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	3,416.68	\$19,705.70
Pastoral Services	7,864.69	93,381.02
Maintenance and Repairs	5,513.09	33,633.38

Church Office	6,240.14	38,020.07
Music Ministry	1,069.30	8,922.21
Christian Education	152.95	486.40
Local Ministry	2,000.00	2,073.09
Misc. Expenses	<u>24.89</u>	<u>1,318.31</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$26,281.74	\$197,540.18

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on January 14, 2019

Members Present:

Moderator:	Nate Lahr	Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Gretchen McGlynn	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:	Tracy Wehrhan	Women's Fellowship:	Holly Riemenschneider
Finance:	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Audrey Burtnett
Staff/Parish:	Stephanie Hill	Worship:	Gretchen McGlynn
Christian Ed:	Laurie Epps	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 devotional and a prayer. The minutes of the December cabinet meeting were read. Gretchen McGlynn moved and Carol Crystal seconded a motion that the minutes be approved as read. The motion passed. **Christian Education:** The Christmas program was a success. The activity bags were cleaned out by Laurie Epps and Luna. **Evangelism:** The nursery was checked and looks good. The Evangelism Board members will host a Chocolate Offering Competition after the Annual Meeting on January 26th. Ushers are still needed. Sign-up list is on the table in Fellowship Hall. **Finance:** December offerings were \$24,372.00 and expenses were \$24,134.89. The funds from the sale of the lots will be added to the General Fund. **Mission:** Audrey Burtnett reported on the Agape Fund; the Alternative Giving opportunities; the Romanian Tree and the Angel Tree; the coat and other cold weather items donated to the Eagle Grove students and the sale of bamboo and metal utensils. Ringers for the Salvation Army collected \$2000.00. Just over \$1,600 was collected for the Christmas Fund. After the Annual Meeting on January 26th Mission Board members will serve soups for the Souper Bowl luncheon. Cabinet members are asked to bring relishes. On February 17th, ice cream will be served to about 260 area teachers as an appreciation for their work. **Staff/Parish:** This board has had no issues over the past month. **Trustees:** The sale of the lots at 1104 Willson has been tabled. **Worship Board:** Has not met yet. Pizza was served after the Hanging of the Greens and enjoyed by all. **Women's Fellowship:** The members wanted to know how we thought the potluck went in December. Most of the reactions received were favorable. **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Craig reported on the success of the Live Nativity; 2 baptisms; Scentsy sale for KLAB kids in Fellowship Hall; post-confirmands activity in February; adult education; Stephen Ministers needing matches; Ecumenical Human Needs funds will be used by the end of the year. The funds collected by the Salvation Army bell ringers is about \$1,000 less than last year with only a few churches participating. There will be no care center services on the 26th of January due to the Annual Meeting. **Treasurer's Report:** Offerings to date total \$183,773.14 and expenses are \$197,540.18. Bond fund interest will offset some of this deficit. The General Fund is about \$4,000 less than last year. **Pending Business:** The minutes of the special meeting held on January 5,

2020 to vote on the sale of the lots were read. Tracy Wehrhan moved to approve the minutes. Laurie Epps seconded the motion. The motion passed.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Evangelism Board. Pastor Craig reported on various members he has called on and others we need to keep in our prayers followed by Wilma who listed the recipients of the cards she sent this past month. Carol shared some new Visitor Bags she created, and will fill them with the Visitor Cards Pastor Craig printed out, a "These Days" booklet, and some chocolate kisses. Leah reported that begging for ushers during church was effective as the roster has been filled. We'll be serving coffee after church on December 7 and Wilma will bring bars, Carol offered crackers and cheese, Kay will bring juice, Leah will bring caramel puff corn, and Dawn will be asked to bring grapes or muffins. Under new business: our grocery bag collection is very successful and we will deliver the first batch. We decided to continue this project until we lose our "market". Our board was asked to serve hot chocolate and cookies during the Live Nativity activity from 5:30 to 7:30 on Saturday, December 7. Wilma and Kay will be going off Evangelism Board so Leah offered to take over the responsibility of sending cards and Dawn was elected chair because she wasn't at the meeting to defend herself!! The meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m.

Evangelism Board As this meeting was held so early following the Holidays, neither Dawn nor Carol had chances to check activity bags or nursery but will take care of them. Leah sent one card as "corresponding angel" so far. Pastor Craig reported on members needing prayers. Leah will contact Mission Board about sponsoring a "Chocolate Offering Competition" in conjunction with our Souper Supper following our annual meeting on the last Sunday of January. Ushers are needed for 2020 and Leah agreed to take January and February; Dawn will supply March and April; Carol will fill May and June and we'll work with our new board members to help will usher spots for the rest of the year. Michele mentioned that no one was signed up to serve coffee this coming Sunday so we agree to: Dawn-assorted muffins, Carol-cheese and crackers, and Leah will bring caramel puff corn, brownies, and banana bread and juice. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10.

Board of Trustees Guest: City Manager Jeff Sheridan. Meeting was called to visit about the sale of the lots to the city. The city manager told us some back ground information and that they wanted to use the area for a park. Joyce had called the city manager and told him we would like \$30,000 for the lots and it was rejected by the city council. At this meeting we discussed the price. After much discussion Trustees said \$25,000 and not anything less. The city manager then said he would poll the city council and let us know.

Board of Trustees Meeting was called to approve review and approve the agreement of the lots purchase from the city. Business: We reviewed the agreement, which was received from the city manager on 12- 31-19. Agreed on \$25,000 for both lots. City wanted the agreement signed by January 7,2020, so we called moderator Nate Lahr to set up a cabinet meeting after church on Sunday January 5,2020. We needed approval of the agreement from the cabinet. Nate will sign the agreement. Joyce will take the agreement to the city hall on Monday. Then the purchase will be confirmed at the city council meeting January 6 ,2020.

Mission Board We met January 7 with Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Audrey Burtnett, Marjorie Groves, Lorraine McCoskey, Gayle Olson and Karin Yungclas attending. Happy Dollars for the Agape Fund totaled \$21 on December 29. Alternative Giving Advent Fair went well: All pictures on the Stepping Forward Romania tree were taken and \$675 was donated. All 10 Angel Tree tags were taken. Sherry Leksell has received a thank-you

note from the Eagle Grove school nurse for the cold-weather gear we collected, especially for student newcomers: five bottles of lotion, eight wooly scarves, nine pairs of boots, 12 lip balms, 25 pairs of gloves and 30 wooly hats. For the plastic-use reduction effort of the Advent Fair, the bamboo “silverware” sold quickly; we still have metal straws and insulated red bags. Around \$2,000 was raised in the Salvation Army red kettles at Fareway and HyVee. Andrea Mosbach chairs the January 28 Beacon of Hope meal. The mission trip to the Illinois distribution center with Asbury is back on for February 16-21 because lower-cost housing for a team is available. \$1,630 was given to the Christmas Fund for retired clergy and church staff in the collection taken at the Christmas Eve service. We will tour Lotus, the facility for homeless women and children, on January 23. The Mission Board will serve a soup lunch after the church annual meeting January 26. The Evangelism Board will partner by hosting a chocolate dessert competition. We will ask for donations of canned and powdered soups to go to the All Cultures Equal food pantry and put out the Pickle Jar to collect monetary donations for the Upper Des Moines Opportunity food pantry. Cabinet will bring relishes. February 17 is the in-service for 162 teachers from Webster City school system, St. Thomas Aquinas and Stratford; we plan to serve vanilla and chocolate flavors of ice cream, along with toppings, to show our appreciation for the educators. Our next meeting will be February 6, 3:15 p.m.

Pastor’s Report Worship: We have finished out Advent, enjoyed a beautiful candlelight Christmas Eve Service, and now are worshipping in a new year. Thanks to everyone—especially the worship Board, for making these services meaningful, and for leading the service on December 29 while I was in Burlington. Thanks to Wil Groves for directing the Christmas Program “All My Christmas Friends” on Dec. 22—it was well attended! We lead the next Care Center services on Sunday, Jan. 26th. **Baptisms:** On January 5 we had the unusual blessing of celebrating 2 baptisms (one infant: Liam McCarville, and one believer’s baptism: Robert Stidolph) plus sharing Holy Communion. **KLAB:** KLAB was on a long 2 week break for the Holidays before returning on January 8. They are beginning a “Scentsy” fundraiser to benefit Almost Home no-kill animal shelter in Fort Dodge. **Post- Confirmation Youth Group:** We met after break on January 8 to brainstorm ideas, and we are going to organize a collection of school materials to assemble Church World Service school kits. We will begin the drive in February. **Adult Education:** We spent 3 weeks discussing “Christmas as reversal”, “Christmas as anticipation and arrival” and “the Christmas Let-Down, Divestment, and Resolution.” Next we will spend a few weeks studying “The Second Coming.” **Stephen Ministry:** We currently have 2 Stephen Ministers matched with care receivers. We enjoyed Stephen Ministry social on Dec 5 at the Emporium, and the group sponsored an all-church Christmas Caroling party on Saturday, December 14, from 5-7: 30 pm. We gathered Jan. 9 for our monthly meeting. **EHNC:** Sharon Perry submitted the 2020 Morrison Trust application, and we have received \$8000 for 2020! We will continue to look for funding sources to keep this fund viable—Webster City needs it! **Salvation Army Bellinging:** First Congregational rang Nov 30th at Fareway, and brought in nearly \$400! We also rang Friday, December 13 at Fareway, and brought in an additional \$250. The total for the season’s ringing was around \$2000—more than a \$1000 less than last year. **Funeral:** I officiated at the funeral of Genevieve Carroll on Monday, December 9, here at First Congregational.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Special Cabinet Meeting held on January 5, 2020

Regarding the Sale of Lots

Members Present:

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:55am by the Moderator, Nate Lahr. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and vote on an offer received from the City of Webster City for the purchase of the two lots located at 1104 Willson Avenue for \$25,000. Joyce Gelhaus gave background information on the lots. The Trustees approved the sale January 2nd. Dale Olson moved to accept the offer. Nate Lahr seconded the motion. Discussion followed. Eleven voted in favor of the motion. One opposed the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:08pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Hill, church clerk

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: