

March 2020 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>

“I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do...” –John 17:4

Are you a filer, or a piler? One way to know is to look at your office, or desk, or even your dining room table. Are they clear and uncluttered, organized...or are there piles of unopened junk mail, unanswered personal mail, bills, medical papers, old newspapers, magazines, and now-- tax forms? If you are a piler rather than a filer you don't immediately deal with the business of your life as it arrives... instead you let things “pile up” into a kind of disorganized mess of unfinished business...waiting for you to attend to it.

I was thinking of filers and pilers when I gave the Ash Wednesday message which was entitled: “Unfinished Business.” We all have it—it is the unfinished business of our lives that we don't attend to; it is the often difficult, traumatic, painful, or confusing experiences of our lives that we tend to avoid or try to forget. These kinds of difficult experiences pile up in the hidden places within us if we don't deal with them, and there they remain-- unresolved, unquestioned, unhealed, unchallenged...just “piled up”...stealing happiness and peace from us; working in the shadows to sabotage our relationships, our stability; our very lives.

So with these thoughts in mind, what is the unfinished business in your life that you might take care of now--during this season of Lent? What unfinished business has piled up in you that your God is now laying on your heart to do something with—so you can heal, be happy and be at peace again?

Is your unfinished business something from your *past* that needs to be faced, healed, and resolved? Perhaps your unfinished business comes from painful childhood experiences. Perhaps you had a parent who was an alcoholic or was abusive. You may have forgiven them, but the damage, the voice, the acts...remain like unhealed sores in you even now.

Or perhaps as a parent *you* have made some serious mistakes...and those mistakes are haunting you even now, and you don't know how to make it right.

Perhaps your unfinished business is your relationship with a family member, a friend, a coworker, or a neighbor. Maybe you are holding a grudge against them, or maybe they are holding a grudge against you--and you haven't apologized; you haven't talked to them or tried to work it out...and your damaged relationship sits in the pile of unfinished business you are trying to ignore.

Or perhaps your *future* is where your unfinished business lies. Is there a difficult decision to be made that will affect your future, or a loved one's future—and you are putting it off? Is your unfinished business making a commitment to a new relationship, or saying goodbye to someone whom you need to say goodbye to—for whatever reason? Maybe your unfinished business is to make a needed lifestyle change, start a second career, or end a toxic career. Perhaps your future unfinished business is to take better care of yourself, to make that dreaded doctor's appointment, or to make or update your will!

Or perhaps your unfinished business is your *relationship with God*. Maybe you and God have been strangers for far too long for a whole host of reasons, and you've been avoiding God by not praying, not coming to church, not deepening your faith...letting the TV or your phone be your God--and your distraction from your need for God. Maybe you need a faith “makeover!” Perhaps you've outgrown your old beliefs but you don't know what to do about it, so you leave God and your yearning Spirit on your pile of unfinished business!

I could go on and on. The truth of the matter is that I barely know what my own unfinished business is—it's all in a pile somewhere inside me, where I'd rather not look at it or deal with it. And if I have a hard time getting a handle on what *my* unfinished business is, I certainly don't know what *your* unfinished business might be....

But I do know this: God knows all of our business...including what's piled up on our desks and in our hearts and minds. And hear this well: *God is a filer, not a piler.* God wants to help us sort our lives out—even those piles of pain and fear and anger and remorse and callousness and apathy and hurt and aimlessness that are in all of us. God wants to go through those piles with us—to help us see them, learn from them, heal from them...and let them go. God wants to help us fix what needs to be fixed in our lives so we can live fully and love deeply, and at the end die in peace....completing the business we came to complete in this life.

Friends, Lent reminds us that we don't have all the time in the world to deal with our piles of unfinished business if we want to live—and die—in peace. And Lent reminds us of the One who came and finished the business he was given: his Father's business--the difficult and joyful and painful and saving business that he could finish because he and his Father were one...and he trusted in that Holy Union.

During this season of Lent, let us honor Jesus' example and strive to finish the unfinished business in our lives, which is also part of our Father's business. And let us do that as Jesus did, relying on *our* holy union with God for wisdom, clarity, strength, and peace...so we too can learn to be filers, not pilers.

May your continued Lenten journeys be blessed as you tend to your unfinished business--with the help of your Savior, and your God! –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 2	62	February 9	45
February 16	50	February 23	54

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

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



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

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

Lenten Lunches

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

\$6 LUNCH STARTS AT 12:00 TUESDAYS
 RSVP TO 1st CONGO BY 9AM THE MONDAY BEFORE

March 3 Asbury UMC

March 10 Trinity Lutheran

March 17 St Thomas Aquinas

March 24 Faith UMC

March 31 Church of Christ (at The Bridge)



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

4 - Vicki Blaufuss
 6 - Jennie Williams
 8 - Vada Williams



Important Pieces of Life Advice from a Cat

- Constantly stretch your limitations. And your paws.
- Don't be afraid to have conversations about what you want (i.e., more wet food).
- Sometimes you have to take a moment during the day for yourself.
- Don't sweat the small stuff. You'll catch another mouse.
- Get out and make new friends from different backgrounds. And possibly different species.
- Spend quality time with those you care about -- even if you don't understand them half the time.
- Don't get upset with the dog when he disrupts your personal space; you can get creative in avoiding him.
- There is almost nothing that stuffing yourself in the couch won't solve.
- Adventures are necessary for staying cultured.
- It's important to get enough rest -- like, maybe 16 hours a day?
- Don't worry so much about how you look. Being photogenic isn't everything.
- And lastly, never lose confidence, because confidence is key (to getting treats).

Lenten Faith Study

Women's Fellowship is starting a Lenten Faith study beginning on Fri. March 6. We will be using a DVD looking at 'When Christians Get It Wrong' by Adam Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor. We will, as a group look at a segment of the DVD and then have the opportunity to discuss what was said. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join us from 9-10 starting March 6.

OGHS Offering March 22

One Great Hour of Sharing is the first of 4 yearly offerings of the United Church of Christ

and will be taken Sunday, March 22. The theme this year is "Invest in Futures."

When we participate in this offering we reach people who suffer from emergencies, poverty and violence worldwide. Clean water, irrigation systems and wells are provided to improve health. Support following storms such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis is given. Share alongside your church family in this vital mission on March 22. Please give generously. Mission Board

Ash Wednesday Spaghetti Supper

The Ash Wednesday Spaghetti Supper was a great success! The meal generated \$430 for our youth ministries. There are so many people to thank who helped prepare, cook, serve, and clean up following the meal. Thank you—we couldn't have done it without you!

Shalom Circle Resumes

The Shalom Circle will gather for Lent beginning Friday, March 6 at 6:30 pm. A Shalom Circle is a group of seekers who come together regularly for a time of meditation, prayer, and sharing, with the intention of cultivating Shalom in our individual and collective lives. At each gathering there will be time to "check in", a group meditation, an opportunity for prayer, and time to process what participants have experienced. Our group meditations will vary and will include relaxation techniques, guided meditations, creative visualizations, and other techniques. Cultivating a sacred and safe space, confidentiality, spontaneity, and seeking the Spirit's guidance are the essentials of this Circle that will allow each participant to experience the blessings of Shalom. Each session will last about an hour to an hour and a half, but I am asking participants to remain flexible about the time. (If at any time you need to leave for any reason, you are welcome to quietly do so.) You may want to bring water to sip, and you may want to bring a large pillow if you wish to sit on the floor. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact Pastor Craig.

Lotus Community Project to Present at First Congregational

Ashley Vaala, the Executive Director and founder of the Lotus Community Project (the women and children's homeless shelter in Vincent) will give a community presentation on

the history, mission and vision of Lotus in our sanctuary on Thursday, March 26th, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Come and hear the inspiring story of her life and how her vision and commitment have resulted in a women's homeless shelter here in Northern Iowa! Refreshments will be served following the presentation.

Thanks

The end of 2019 found our church in financial need. The call was given out for funds to put us on stable footing entering 2020. We asked and you responded. The Cabinet sincerely thanks our members for their generous monetary gifts. We truly have a wonderful and giving congregation. – The Cabinet

Thanks

I was so excited to get your box of donations (coats, hats, boots.) There are so many things in there we really had a need for, and we can send home with students over the long break and know they have what they need. I appreciate your big hearts! God bless all of you! Beth Wilson - EGCS D Elementary Nurse

Thanks

With the help of Tom & Holly Riemenschneider, Karin Yungclas, Steph Hill, and Dale & Gayle Olson ice cream sundaes were served to the WC school staff on Monday February 17 during their break on a staff development day. About 120 staff enjoyed chocolate or vanilla ice cream topped with chocolate, butterscotch, or caramel for their afternoon break on that rainy Monday. The staff seemed to enjoy the break and we were able to express our thanks for all they do for the young people in our community.

A big thank you to all who helped make this a smooth and quick break for them.

Mission Board

Thanks

Thanks for bottle cap donations, we are still collecting these. We cannot use black caps, dirty caps or caps with any paper on them. For example: milk jug lids with paper on top, please soak and scrape these clean.

KLAB Valentine Party



Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$13,572.74	\$13,572.74
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$13,572.74	\$13,572.74
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	1,583.26	\$1,583.26
Pastoral Services	7,728.93	7,728.93
Maintenance and Repairs	1,215.46	1,215.46
Church Office	2,637.11	2,637.11
Music Ministry	866.25	866.25
Christian Education	0.00	0.00
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	456.11	456.11
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,487.12	\$14,487.12

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on February 11, 2020

Members Present:

Moderator:		Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Nick Oberender	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:	Tracy Wehrhan	Women's Fellowship:	Holly Riemenschneider
Finance :	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Lorraine McCoskey
Staff/Parish:	Stephanie Hill	Worship:	Donna Ryherd
Christian Ed:	Karinne Tudor	Evangelism:	Carol Crystal
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Vice-Moderator, Nick Oberender. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a devotional and a prayer. The minutes of the January cabinet meeting were read. Lorraine McCoskey moved and Donna Ryherd seconded a motion that the minutes be approved as read. The motion passed. **Christian Education:** The Scentsy and Ornaments sales made \$534.00 for Almost Home. The spaghetti dinner will be served before the Ash Wednesday service. Towels, sheets, blankets, etc. are still being collected for Almost Home until March 1st. A Valentine's Party for KLAB children will be held February 12th.

Evangelism: The Board members will meet Sunday after service. Ginnie Veach will send cards. Visitor bags need to be made up. The Board members will serve coffee after service on March 15th. The Chocolate Offering Competition after the Annual Meeting went well. Ushers are still needed. Sign-up list is on the table in Fellowship Hall. **Finance:** The Board members have not met. January offerings were \$13,572.74 and expenses were \$14,487.12. Both these totals are higher than last year. **Mission:** On February 17th, ice cream will be served to about 260 area teachers as an appreciation for their work. Volunteers are still needed for this event. An offering to support Future Leaders in the church will be taken February 23. **Staff/Parish:** This board has had no issues over the past month. **Trustees:** The Board members will meet next week.

Worship Board: No written report submitted because the new board has not met. Donna Ryherd was appointed chairman and Susan Andrew has agreed to be the final member of the board. **Women's Fellowship:** The Board members met last week. See full report attached to these minutes. Dale Olson moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded the motion to approve the board reports. The motion passed. **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Craig reported on the Scentsy sale by the KLAB kids to benefit Almost Home and the Spaghetti Supper the kids will be cooking for Ash Wednesday; the activities of the post-confirmands coming up in March; adult education and Black History Month; Stephen Ministers needing more matches; and the Lotus Community Project – a newly opened women and children's shelter in Vincent, IA. **Treasurer's Report:** In response to the concern about the 300 accounts on the Balance Sheet expressed at the Annual Meeting, these accounts have been eliminated because they are meaningless and a holdover from a previous Financial Secretary. All funds are accounted for in other entries. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Carol Crystal seconded the motion to put the report to audit. The motion passed.

Pending Business: a. The letter explaining the difficult financial position of the church went out to all members. The response was great. Gretchen McGlynn wrote out a Thank You note. b. The 2020 RAGBRAI route may go through Webster City. Each Board is asked to see if and how our church could participate in this event. If WC is a 'pass through' town, people will be able to sign-up in Fellowship Hall to be on a committee. c. The news of the possible sale of the lots did not go out to the congregation as timely as it could have. This concern is noted and will be remedied in the future. See the full Board reports below.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Women's Fellowship Lenten Lunch meeting Thursday, February 6, 10 AM at Asbury with other churches to organize new plan. Lenten Lunches will be on every Tuesday in March. March 3rd – Asbury, 10th Faith, 17th St. Thomas, 24th -Trinity, 31st – Church of Christ. Spiritual/Faith Journey for 2020. Gayle will lead one during Lent. On Fridays in March at 9 am. New Leadership for 2020-2022 should be taken to your circles for volunteers. Discussion about the frequency of meetings should be considered by new officers. Most felt like we need to have them, but if not necessary we can cancel then.

Mission Board We met February 6, 2020 Officers: Chairperson– Gayle; Cabinet Representative – Audrey; Secretary – Marjorie. Beacon of Hope: Andrea Mosbach reported serving 50-55 at the January 28 meal. The Fort Dodge shelter for homeless men is near capacity. Marjorie will chair the March 24 meal. Mission Trip with Asbury: No one in our church has signed up to participate in the trip to the Illinois distribution center, February 16-21. Annual Meeting Souper Bowl: We collected \$372 in the Pickle Jar for the Upper Des Moines Opportunity food pantry and served eight kinds of soups after the Annual Meeting January 29. Gayle took the rice, peanut butter and tuna to All Cultures Equal. Teacher Appreciation: Chocolate and vanilla ice cream will be purchased from the Mission Board budget. The certified staff thank-you event will be February 17 at the Middle School. Funding Future Leaders: An offering to assist Iowa students in United Church of Christ seminaries will be taken February 23. We will host coffee time after worship on February 23 and put out the Pickle Jar. Agape Fund: We now have \$2,764; next collection is March 29. Lotus: All of the Mission Board, along with Pastor Craig, toured the facility for homeless women and children on January 23. Founder and director Ashley Vaala gave her story, as well as shelter progress and needs. Ice Cream Social: Karin and Audrey will represent our church in the planning with Faith United Methodist. Offering Assignments: One Great Hour of Sharing, March – Audrey; Strengthen the Church, May – Karin; Neighbors in Need, October – Lorraine; Christmas Fund, December – Marjorie. Next Meeting: March 5, 3 p.m.

Pastor's Report Worship: We cancelled services on January 19th due to the weather. On January 26th we observed a shortened worship service to accommodate the Annual Meeting. On Feb. 2 we led the Care Center services in town after our Sunday worship. On Feb. 26 Lent begins with an Ash Wednesday service of worship in the East Chapel, beginning at 6: 30 pm. There will be imposition of ashes and communion by intinction.

Sanctuary projection: We now have a 70 inch flat-screen TV in the back of the sanctuary for the choir and myself to use during the service, so we do not have to rely on the chancel screens. We are still working out the bugs and getting used to it, but it is a nice enhancement to our sanctuary projection!

Baptism: on January 31st Jennifer Brim was baptized in our sanctuary at 6 pm, with her family and selected friends in attendance.

KLAB: I continue to help with KLAB when the Post-Confirmation Group is not meeting. We have been looking at videos of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman for Black History month, and our discussions have been very meaningful. The kids have created Valentines for their Crestview pen pals, but changeover of activity staff at Crestview has made it difficult to schedule a time to go there to visit their pen pals. The Scentsy fundraiser for Almost Home was amazingly successful: \$534 was collected to present to Almost Home! Thanks to everyone who bought Scentsy or donated for this worthy cause! We will have a Valentine's Day party on Feb. 12. KLAB is cooking up a Spaghetti Supper for Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26, from 5:30-6:30 pm. A free will donation will go to support youth ministries at First Congregational.

Post-Confirmation—We continue to meet as we can. We have started our CWS School Kit drive, which will run through February with a goal of assembling 50 kits. We attempted to go to the theater to see "Just Mercy" on Jan 24, but the weather made us postpone until Jan. 26th.

Adult Ed.: We continued our discussion of the "Second Coming" until Feb. 2, when we started with topics relevant to Black History Month, including the children's campaign of Birmingham in 1963, and the contribution of African Americans to our Armed Forces, the desegregation of the military, and the race riots of 1919 and during WW 2.

Stephen Ministry: we continue with 2 Stephen Ministers matched with Care Receivers. We met Feb. 6 to discuss "Caring Encounters".

Lotus Community Project: On January 23 I went with members of the Mission Board to tour the Lotus Community project, a women and children's homeless shelter in Vincent IA. Ashley Vaala is the director, and she has an amazing story about her life and her call to start this shelter! The Mission Board is exploring ways we can help support this important ministry. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm. Next meeting is March 10, 2020.

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:

