

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

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” –Colossians 3:15-17

Lately my mood has been rather melancholy, and that is not sitting well with me. Now I realize there are reasons these days to be listless, un-optimistic, sullen and sad. The pandemic rages on, and our numbers here in Webster City are the highest they have ever been (which should be concerning to say the least!) Earlier this week I received news that our neighbor two doors down on South street died of Covid, and this news was in addition to the shocking news I received a few days ago of a 5th grade classmate of mine who died of Covid overnight because he was too stubborn to go the ER when he started showing severe symptoms. The election news is wearying, and the national tone is enough to make anyone despondent...and so my recent bout of melancholy doesn't seem like such a distorted response to what is happening all around us these days. It seems like a natural response to all that is overwhelming and heartbreaking in our personal and collective lives.

And yet I think there is another reason for my melancholy. It is the realization that the end- of-the-year holidays are rapidly approaching, and we all know that this year the holidays will surely be “different”, thanks to the virus. Thanksgiving will surely be different: our plan is to cook a traditional Thanksgiving meal for a group of eight--of which six of the eight gathered will be...pets. (To be fair the pets are excited!) Vicki and I have already discussed our plans for Christmas, which will likely include gifting by UPS and gathering by Zoom-- which is a far cry from every other holiday celebration we have known. And while New Year's Eve has not been a time of extreme revelry for us in quite a while, reminiscing over the past year while singing “Auld Lang Syne” will be anything but lighthearted and joyful. The pandemic is poised to make this holiday season very forgettable (in the sense of “I want to forget about it!”) which makes my anticipation of the *hap-happiest season of all* feel far more like a mixture of mild grief and a vague dread.

And yet it occurs to me that there will still be ample opportunities to celebrate the Holidays in creative and life-giving ways...if we will only let go of our past expectations and plans and be flexible, open minded, and willing to adapt during these unprecedented times! For example, as you prepare to observe Thanksgiving this year why not take time to write notes or send cards to your missing guests, telling them in your own words why you are thankful to have them in your life? If your Thanksgiving grocery list is smaller than in other years, why not donate the difference to our local food pantries, or to the Iowa Food bank? If you are feeling melancholy at the prospect of being deprived of company, why not make a Thanksgiving gift bag for a care center resident or a neighbor who will also mark the holiday with the sadness of solitude? One of the blessings we can be thankful for this year is that in spite of the pandemic there are still many ways we can share our love and goodwill with others, which is a wonderful way to bring a sense of thanksgiving to another human soul...who will be thankful for *you!*

And to celebrate Christmas this year.... why not try new ways to share your Christmas spirit? Why not make or purchase pandemic ornaments to mail out—whimsical or serious creations that remind the giftee that the joy of Christmas continues-- even in 2020? (This is not my idea—google “pandemic ornaments” and you will see what I mean). Pull out old photos, scan them, and create your own Christmas cards...try your hand at writing a Christmas story or a poem to share...go big with your outdoor decorating this year—that gift benefits the entire community! The pandemic may keep us

from observing many of our holiday traditions, but it need not dampen our resolve to keep joy alive in our Christmas celebrations!

And even during this pandemic we can remember *the reason for the season* and share our Christmas Spirit with others through our generosity and service! The Mission Board will again be sponsoring the Alternate Gift Giving Fair this year, so why not support these worthy causes and share Christ's love with others? Why not volunteer to ring the Salvation Army Bell this year? In this season of extraordinary need, we all need to continue to support our favorite charities-- and even enlarge our generous impulses by supporting new ones! This Christmas why not give the gift of your *time*, and make time for more phone calls, notes, cards, and for selecting small but special gifts to give to others --a reminder that they are not alone or forgotten. And don't forget to share your goodwill with the wildlife outside your door, who will need seed and shelter during the cold winter months!

And of course-- do not neglect to nurture your own spirit as well! For how will you share joy and goodwill with others if you have none in you?

Re-read "A Christmas Carol" or watch the Movie "Scrooged"(seriously, if you haven't seen this movie—watch it!)...

Listen to your favorite Christmas music with the lights turned low...

Meditate on the Christmas stories in the Gospels...

Spend time alone in quiet candlelight, rediscovering the truth of the old carol's words "How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given"...

Ponder the mystery of your faith, which proclaims that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son"...

Find your peace by opening your heart to the glory of a humble feeding trough which housed the Prince of Peace...

Let the love and goodwill which saturate this season saturate *you* with the Good News that what came down at Christmas was truly a "love divine, all loves excelling"...a love that lives in you as surely as it lives in your Creator, and in the One sent to us whose birth we are celebrating!

Friends, it will take an act of faith and determination to make the approaching holidays a season of joy and goodwill in the midst of all that plagues our world! Yet aren't the holidays about celebrating the Good News that joy and goodwill can thrive in every human life and in every circumstance *because these gifts are from God, and not of this world?* And aren't the holidays about experiencing and proclaiming the Good News that joy and goodwill, love and peace are what will transform and reclaim this broken world of ours...if we, like Jesus, will choose to be instruments of these graces and ambassadors of God's goodwill to all? My prayer is that the melancholy of these times not choke out the Good News the holidays proclaim to us! With God's help we *can* end 2020 with a spirit of thanksgiving, joy, hope—and goodwill for all! –Pastor Craig

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

M 8 am - 11 am

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor

Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**

Pastor's email: **revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com**

Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. **269-7210**

Church's e-mail: **administrative.office@fcuccwc.org**

Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr **839-5619**

Sunshine Duffy: 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 BIRTHDAY TO:

3 - Bob Maass

4 - Chase Berhow

5 - Joely Gilbert

6 - Amanda Kalkwarf

9 - Keith Holdgrafer

11 - Dilcia Franco

13 - Holly Riemenschneider

13 - Katie Sonsalla

13 - Oliver Sonsalla

13 - Andrea Mosbach

14 - Emily Maass

18 - Donna Ryherd

20 - Jon Follett

20 - Jayleen Burgos

20 - Laurie Smith

24 - Maggie Kennedy

24 - Tyler Nelson
25 - Diane Vasquez
26 - Andrew Wehrhan
27 - Susan Andrew
27 - Glenda Wehrhan

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

21 - Mark & Deb Carlson
22 - Tom & Holly Riemenschneider
25 - Arden & Dalene Schlitter
29 - Ray & Diane Vasquez



"HAPPY" ENHANCERS

- Get regular brisk exercise
- Rent funny movies
- Listen to inspiring music
- Buy some brightly colored flowers
- Snuggle with your dog or cat
- Plan a change of scenery
- Take care of your body
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Learn how to meditate
- Forgive
- Do something for others
- Form relationships
- Follow your dreams

Indoor Worship Services Suspended

This email was sent out to all members on Friday, October 23:

Dear Members and Friends of First Congregational,

Because of the increasing numbers of Covid 19 cases in Hamilton County and specifically in Webster City, the Worship Board voted unanimously this past Wednesday to recommend that the Cabinet suspend in-person indoor worship services for an indefinite period of time. Our Moderator Gretchen McGlynn contacted all Cabinet members and asked them to vote on the Worship Board's recommendation. The final vote of the Cabinet was 9 votes in favor of suspending in-person indoor worship, and 1 vote against doing so. Therefore we are suspending our indoor in-person worship services beginning immediately. An audio recording will be sent out as a substitute as has been our practice for these

last several months. The Cabinet will review the situation in a few weeks in order to determine if reopening the church for indoor worship is reasonably safe for all concerned.

Please be aware that this vote does not revoke the Cabinet's previous decision allowing Circles, Boards, and Committees to meet in the building. Remember that meetings must first be scheduled with Michele, and recommended safety protocols are to be followed.

Please continue to pray for our church, our members' health and safety, and indeed everyone who has been, is now, and will be impacted by the virus. These are difficult days for everyone! God bless you all! --Pastor Craig

Suspension of the Annual Congregational Budget Meeting

This email was sent out to the congregation October 24:

Greetings congregation members, 2020 has been a year of many surprises, hardships and challenges. We have yet another challenge before us. We need to ratify the church budget for 2021 in November. Several options were on the table but with the suspension of in-door in-person worship we find ourselves with just one at this time.

As members of the church you will be voting by absentee this year. We are trying to make this as easy as possible in these difficult times, but we certainly welcome comments. The proposed budget will be sent out in the near future. Please look over the proposed budget. If you have any questions, contact one of the members of the Finance Board. The Finance Board members are: Duane Vavroch, Nate Lahr, Dalene Schlitter, Tracy Wehrhan and Dale Olson.

We ask that your vote be cast YEA (for approval) or NAY (do not approve). Your vote is to be sent to Gretchen McGlynn, the church moderator. Please include your name or names so that we have a correct count. My email address

is: jamesa.mcglynn@gmail.com Your vote needs to be received between November 22nd and November 26th. A reminder will be sent out when votes are due. If you cannot vote by email, you may either phone me with your vote

(home: 515-832-4763), send it by mail, or drop it off at the church mail slot.

We need 40 people to vote so that we have a quorum in order for this to work.

I know that this is not the perfect option, but it is what we have right now. Thank you for participating in this vote.

Stay safe and make healthy decisions.

Gretchen McGlynn

Moderator

Pecans

They are \$12 a bag for halves or for pieces.

You can make your check out to Haystack Circle. They are in Fellowship Hall so you can stop by and pick some up.

Boards and Committees

It is time for us to begin filling openings for our various boards and committees for the 2021 calendar year. An all-church email will be sent out with further details regarding what open positions exist on which boards, who carries over from this year to next, etc. Expect phone calls and/or emails to be coming from the Nominating Committee (Nick Oberender, Erica Pawletzki (Oberender), and/or Pastor Craig) until all vacancies are filled. Please note that in 2017 the constitution was revised and as such now states that anyone serving on a board for two consecutive full terms will automatically roll off of that board and be asked to not re-up for that board again until they have been off that board for a year. Given that most board terms are two years, 2021 will be the first year that this change comes into play. Due in part to this change, but more so due to the current environment in which we are living, for continuity's sake we will likely ask for those that are eligible to re-up for another term on the same board that they are currently serving on (even though their term may be expiring) to do so if they are willing. If you'd like to get a jump start on signing up for a specific board or committee or to inquire about where we have current openings before all of the details are sent out in the church-wide email, feel free to contact Vice Moderator, Nick Oberender. Nick can be reached at 515-297-2982 both via call and text (feel free to leave a voicemail with return phone number if you don't get him) and by email at nickoberender@gmail.com

Meetings

Meetings in the church building may resume! To schedule a meeting please contact Michele by email: administrative.office@fcuccwc.org or at 832-2232 on Monday mornings. Please note that meeting dates are limited to Tuesdays through Thursdays.

Circles

Haystack meets November 11, 6:00 p.m. in East Chapel.

Morning Star meets November 12, 9:30 a.m. in the Adult Sunday School room.

Mayflower meets November 12, 1:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

All Saints Sunday—November 22

All Saints Sunday is a time to remember those departed “saints” who have shaped and blessed our lives in so many ways. On Sunday, November 22, we will observe All Saints Sunday but at this time it is uncertain if we will be returning to our sanctuary for in-person worship. Therefore this year we will make the provision to remember our departed saints virtually. If you would like to have the name(s) of your loved one(s) read during the recording of the All Saints Sunday service, please email Pastor Craig with the names and your short remarks and he will read them at the appropriate time. If we have resumed in-person worship services we will still observe social distancing requirements by having Pastor Craig read the submitted names and light candles in their honor, rather than inviting family members to come forward to do so as we have done in the past.

The departed saint of this congregation whom we will remember during this year's All Saint's Sunday on November 22 is **Genevieve Carol**.

Advent Begins—November 29

Advent is just around the corner! Sunday, November 29 is our first Sunday in the season of Advent, and while we do not yet know if we will have resumed in-person worship by then, we are again asking for volunteers to lead the Advent Candle Liturgy that will be part of the worship service. If we have resumed in-person worship then the volunteer(s) will come forward to the lectern, read the liturgy, and light the candle as we have done in the past. If we are

not yet worshipping in-person, then volunteers will be asked to come into the sanctuary on Wednesdays or Thursdays to read the liturgy and make the recording that will be a part of the following Sunday's service. If you are willing to lead a week's Advent Candle liturgy, please contact Pastor Craig.

Fall Festival

St. Mary Catholic Church of Williams is hosting a drive thru/take out meal consisting of chicken and homemade noodles, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, corn, salad and pie on Sunday, November 1 from 4:30-7:00 p.m. Cost is \$10.

From T-Shirts to Food Totes: Second Round

The Mission Board seeks your help a second time in making totes from t-shirts for the Food Bank of Iowa. The Food Bank says the totes are still needed. Each tote will need to hold up to 30 pounds of cans, bags of rice or beans, potatoes, etc., so don't use worn out tees with holes, kiddie tees or thin/gauzy ones. If you have questions, email Marjorie Groves at marjoriegroves@hotmail.com. If you can sew but don't have t-shirts or have t-shirts but can't sew, email her and she'll see if she can match you up. You'll find information on making the totes at <https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp3283131.jsp>

Salvation Army Bell Ringing Campaign

The Webster City Ministerial Association is again sponsoring the Salvation Army Red Kettle bellringing campaign in Webster City! Ninety percent of all donations to the Red Kettle campaign in Webster City will remain local and will go to support ministries endorsed by the WCMA, such as the Ecumenical Human Needs Fund, our local food pantries, All Cultures Equal, UDMO, and others. We will begin ringing early in December--watch for more information coming soon!

Alternative Giving Fair returns for the Advent season!

The Mission Board is again sponsoring the Alternative Giving Fair this year. This is an opportunity for you to shop for loved ones and support very worthy causes during this season

of giving. More information will be released soon--be looking for it!

KLAB Pumpkin Carvers

In October our KLAB and Sunday School kids received Halloween treats and pumpkins to carve (donated by the Crystal/Lahr family). Jayleen Burgos-Franco and Luna Lahr display their pumpkin carving skills!



On October 4 we held our first indoor worship service since March 15th! 34 worshippers socially distanced and wore masks to gather safely.



Outdoor worship during the Fall has been beautiful!



NOTICE

All persons entering the building are warned the Hamilton County Public Health will not notify the church or pastor of individual positive cases of Covid 19. If there are multiple cases linked to the church location, a courtesy call will be made to the pastor, but no names given.

When an individual test is positive, they are asked to name the people they were in contact with-in the past 48 hours before receiving the positive test results. (Contact= within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more). IF the infected person supplies names, those individuals will be notified and asked to quarantine for 2 weeks.

Therefore, the cabinet requests individuals entering the church building and later testing positive for Covid 19 inform Pastor Craig.

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	September	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$11,495.00	\$124,040.18
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$11,495.00	\$124,040.18
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$3,592.60
Pastoral Services	7,741.60	70,826.53
Maintenance and Repairs	2,898.30	20,299.12
Church Office	2,411.26	24,643.46

Music Ministry	336.00	6,017.75
Christian Education	0.00	121.75
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	<u>57.21</u>	<u>1,038.96</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,444.37	\$126,540.17

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Webster City, Iowa
Cabinet Minutes

**The Worship Board
Oct. 21, 2020**

Topics of discussion included Communion prep for Sunday, Nov. 1, worship as we move into cooler weather, Advent/Christmas decorating and services, and board membership for 2021-22.

After discussion, the board made a recommendation to the Cabinet that due to recent state/county/city increases in Covid-19 numbers, the weather becoming cooler, and low attendance at the two indoor worship services held so far, that we suspend inside worship at this time. Mary Vavroch made the motion, seconded by Susan Andrew, all members approved. Gretchen McGlynn took the motion to the Cabinet, which approved it.

Pastor Craig sent an email to our members informing everyone that we are suspending our indoor in-person worship services beginning immediately. An audio recording will continue to be sent out as it has for several months, and Michele Omvig will send out weekly announcements via email. The Cabinet will review the situation in a few weeks in order to determine if reopening the church for indoor worship is safe.

Circles, boards and committees can still meet in the church building and must be scheduled with Michele, with safety protocols followed.

Advent/Christmas decorating/services will depend on how worship continues to evolve, and will be discussed at the next meeting.

Regarding board membership, Gretchen and Mary will complete terms at the end of the year; Donna can decide what she wants to do, and Susan and Don Bruner have one more year left.

It was decided that doing a conference call is the best way to hold our next meeting, with discussions via email as items come up.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35.

**Trustees Update
October 2020**

The following are projects attended to by the Trustees this fall.

1. New LED lights were put in the basement Sunday School/meeting room.

2. Jason Struchen ordered a part for the large refrigerator in the kitchen and will be soon putting it in.
3. We did get an estimate for repair work on the outside door frames. Shawn Moran had a bid of \$2,500. If the weather stays good he hopes to get the project done this fall.
4. Pastor Craig purchased three computers for the sanctuary, office, and pastor's office. Pastor Craig will install the computers.

Joyce Gelhaus Trustees Chairperson

Mission Board
Oct. 22, 2020 in Fellowship Hall.

Pastor Craig offered the opening prayer.

Moderator Gretchen McGlynn was present representing the Cabinet.

She presented items of concern:

Due to increasing numbers of positive Corona Virus cases, indoor Sunday Services will be suspended until further notice. Use of rooms for meetings must be reserved through Michele.

Church budget, and Mission Board's request for the 2021 OCWM Offering.

After much discussion, a motion was proposed that The Mission Board's asking for 2021 be reduced to \$17,000 for one year due to the Covid crisis. Lorraine moved, Karin seconded, vote of those present was unanimous, with Marjorie voting by cell phone. Gayle and Marjorie will compose a letter to the Finance Board explaining our concerns.

Old Business:

T-shirt bags project continues. Some shirts were donated by Asbury members.

Neighbors in Need: \$125.00 collected so far.

Teacher Appreciation: working on ideas for American Education Week in November; possibly Goody gift bags for teachers and staff. Maybe Microwave popcorn and M&MMs.

Alternative Giving Fair: We'll present 4 ideas for giving for Dec. 6, 13, 20, 27. Items may be dropped off in the West Entrance.

Open and Affirming: Resources available at the church: "Brave Space," Made in God's Image", Faith in Our Family."

New Business:

Beacon Meal Nov. 10. Poultry casserole of cook's choice, Green beans, Cranberry sauce, Pumpkin Bars. Donations will be requested from congregation.

Salvation Army bell ringing is in the planning stage.

Next Meeting: Nov. 11 3:30

Karin Yungclas, Secretary pro tem.

TREASURER'S REPORT For	September, 2020					
September Offering	10,845.00					
September Expenses	12,842.07					
	0.00					
Offering to date	123,390.18	57.59%	of income to budget			
Expenses to date	127,937.87	59.71%	of expenses to budget			
Other income to date	0.00					
	Month	Expenses so		Budget		Percent
	Expenses	far this year		Amount		Spend
Outreach & Missions	-	3,592.60		19,850.00		18.10%
Pastoral Services	7,741.60	70,826.53		96,454.00		73.43%
Maintenance & Repairs	2,296.00	19,696.82		39,220.00		50.22%
Church Office	2,411.26	26,643.46		41,907.00		63.58%
Music Ministry	336.00	6,017.75		10,388.00		57.93%
Christian Education	0.00	121.75		650.00		18.73%
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00		2,500.00		0.00%
Misc. Expense	57.21	1,038.96		3,300.00		31.48%
General Fund Budget	12,842.07	127,937.87		214,269.00		59.71%
Memorial Fund	0.00	0.00		6,000.00		0.00%
Building Fund	0.00	4192.21		13,000.00		32.25%
Medical Careers	0.00	0.00		2,500.00		0.00%
Agape	0.00	0.00		1,300.00		0.00%
Helen Poole	1100.00	1100.00		1,000.00		110.00%
Cliff Doty	0.00	0.00		1,000.00		0.00%
Bess Lyons	520.00	2600.00				100.00%

				2,600.00		
Helen Johnson	3800.00	3800.00		4,000.00		95.00%
Special Funds	5420.00	11692.21		31,400.00		37.24%
Total Budget	\$ 18,262.07	139,630.08		243,640.00		57.31%
2019 Income to date	\$127,424.14					
2019 Expenses to date	\$138,952.02					

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Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

