

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

"The apostles said to the Lord: 'Increase our faith!' –Luke 17:5

So...don't you wish you had a crystal ball these days? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could predict—or at least be forewarned—about what the future is going to bring? Our Worship Board met today (Aug. 27) in our vacant lot, and of course we would love to have a crystal ball to tell us what we can expect in the distant and not-so-distant future as a church. We would love to know when the weather will turn too cold to continue worshipping outside...when we will have a vaccine so we can "return to normal" and gather safely as we have done since 1919 (when the last global pandemic ended)...if the decision to return to our sanctuary would cause sickness, or death...whether the decision to re-suspend in person gatherings will be made for us because the infection rate surges due to students returning to school. In a week and a half the Cabinet will meet to deliberate on reopening the building--or at least the sanctuary—and what precautions will need to be taken if we reopen. I'm sure a crystal ball would be welcome at that meeting as well!

In a wider sense a crystal ball would have been nice to help farmers cope with the drought...for central Iowans to have prepared for the derecho...for Louisianans and Texans to have better prepared for hurricane Laura...for Wisconsin and the nation to have prepared for the aftermath of the shooting death of Jacob Blake, and the deaths attributed to the 17 year old vigilante gunman Kyle Rittenhouse. And of course a crystal ball would be coveted by all of the politicians and pundits who are preparing for the most hotly contested (and expensive!) political season in recent memory...as well as by all of us (and the citizens of the world) who are watching with fervor, unease, even alarm--as the future of our Republic unfolds in very uncertain times. Yes, a crystal ball would be helpful to know how to plan and prepare; to know if we should be patient, or hopeful--or very worried!

In the midst of all this uncertainty stands God (metaphorically speaking, of course.) Since the pandemic began we have all heard the resurfacing of very ancient questions about God's role in all of this upheaval. Is God responsible for the state of our weather, the state of our pandemic, the state of our nation and the world? Are we being punished, or warned by all of this? Has God withdrawn God's protections because we are errant children and "took God out of our schools and public institutions"—and so God is being passive-aggressive with us and letting us either sink or swim on our own? Has God anything to do with *any* of this—or did God long ago take a hands-off approach to human affairs so that we could create and *miscreate* uninhibited by any higher power than our own? The theologian in me is fascinated by these types of questions...but the human being in me is thoroughly confused, even frightened by what seems to be happening all around us...and in my fear and uncertainty I look for answers, reassurance, and hope to calm my anxiety and stem my rising fears of tomorrow. The human being in me cries out that if God won't take charge of this mess, then at least it would be nice to have a crystal ball to help me cope...so I can get ready for what is coming.

Well I don't have a crystal ball, but I do have faith...and these days I am joining with the disciples of Jesus' day who were honest enough to beg for more faith in troubling times! I need to have more faith that our church will weather this pandemic and together we will make the best decisions to keep our congregation safe—and our metaphorical doors open-- until we have a vaccine. I need to have more faith that our climate crises will finally arouse our better angels who will at last realize that the fate of humanity and the fate of our planet and all of her life forms are inextricably intertwined and ultimately dependent on humanity's wise conservation and stewardship. I need to have more faith in my fellow citizens, who are also caught up in uncertainty and polarization and real fears about the future of our country. I need to have more faith that there are real, positive answers to the real problems we are facing as a nation—answers that a consensus can agree upon and implement together.

And I need to have more faith that what God has shown to us in Jesus Christ-- which is the transcendent power of love, mercy, forgiveness, gentleness, and a hunger and thirst for righteousness for ourselves and justice for all people—these charisms constitute the power that we need and our world needs more of NOW...rather than the power of more bullets, more jail cells, more looted and burned buildings, more strident political speeches, more insane greed, more inhuman cruelty, and more hopelessness that only leads to mind-numbing distractions and addictions of every kind. I NEED TO HAVE MORE FAITH IN WHAT GOD IS OFFERING TO US EVEN NOW: WISDOM, INSIGHT, COURAGE, RESILIENCE, MATURITY, EQUANIMITY, BOLDNESS, HOPE, AND ABOVE ALL—THE CONSOLATION OF GOD’S ETERNAL PRESENCE AND EVERLASTING LIFE AND LOVE. And I not only need to have more faith in what God is offering to us now, I need to grasp it, incorporate it into my very sinew and blood and bones, and lean upon the everlasting arms in ways that make my life an offering of complete surrender and trust in what God is doing and will do in my personal life, in the life of our church, and in the life of our nation and our world.

Friends, we all would love to have a crystal ball to help us cope and prepare for every uncertainty in life, but instead we have faith! In these troubling times I would encourage you to join me and pray in the spirit of our spiritual forebears, who in their weaknesses and woes cried out “Increase our faith!” For we are promised that prayer will be answered with certainty! And with more faith, we will be equipped for every tomorrow that is conceivable --until our tomorrows are over, and we at last stand in the presence of Eternity, and the Lord of Time. —Pastor Craig

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

M 8 am - 11 am

Th 12:30 pm to 2:30

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor

Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316

Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net

Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. 269-7210

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

Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr 839-5619

Sunshine 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 ANNIVERSARY TO:

1 - Ron & Laurie Epps

1 - Travis & Stacy Wearda

18 - Les & Leanna Ploeger

18 - Jim & Cindy Henning

19 - Landen & Betty Ploeger

Scholarships

Scholarships were awarded on Sunday, August 9 during the 9:30 a.m. worship.

Recipients are:

Hannah Stirling (accepted by Don Bruner)

Jackson Leman

Allison Arkland (accepted by Sharon Perry)

Riley Nelson

Alexis Tudor (not available)

Karl Heimberger (accepted by Joyce Gelhaus)



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Sunshine Duffy

2 - Ayla Jackson

6 - Debra Carlson

7 - Brandon Lahr

8 - Vada Rae Williams

9 - Robbie Maass

15 - Mark Vance

16 - Morgan Struchen

20 - Mary Byrne

20 - Amani McMurray

26 - Kayla Nelson

28 - Dena Rohmiller

30 - Mark Brim





A parent's cheat sheet to calming kids

- Speak in a calming voice without frustration or yelling, If you want your children to be calm, remain calm yourself.
- Provide regular, structured physical activity to help redirect unfocused hyper energy.
- Find activities that allow children to develop creativity and release emotional energy.
- Massage temples or scalp, lightly run your fingers through their hair or rub their shoulders.
- Encourage children to monitor their breathing when overstimulated. Teach them to take deep breaths.
- Stick to routines, Make certain children know what is expected of them and the consequences for not following expectations.

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. We had such great success the first time around (more than 40 totes) that we're asking again for the bags made from t-shirts. The Food Bank says the totes are still needed. Can we top our first collection? Shirley Yungclas says son Ted has given her 15 t-shirts to use, so we're on our way! 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. She'll take t-shirt totes from First Congregational UCC of Webster City to a Food Bank of Iowa site at the end of October. You'll find information on making the totes at <https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp3283131.jsp>

Bread for CR free meals

August 15th Donna and Dan Ryherd transported the bread and bun donations from our congregation to First Lutheran's free meal program. It was immediately used the same day for an evening meal that they and Jan and Drew Lockhart helped Donna's sister Ruth prepare and serve. Donated were 44 loaves of bread, 116 hotdog and 128 burger buns. Cedar Rapids was in day 5 of clean up from the derecho, many without electricity. Grocery stores did not reopen till Friday and freezer and refrigerated food had spoiled. Your donations were very appreciated and timely. Thank you!!



Book Studies on Racism

We recently completed a multi-week study of the book "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo, which was our first collaborative study with members of Jewell UCC and Alden UCC! Rev. Kerry Oliver led the two different discussion groups via Zoom. We will begin our next study on Racism by reading and discussing Raising White Kids, by Jennifer Harvey. We will cover two chapters per week for a total of 4 study sessions. Our first session was held in the vacant lot Wednesday, August 26, at 7 pm.

Beacon of Hope Meal September 15

The next Beacon of Hope meal that our church is preparing and delivering is on Tuesday, September 15. We have had a wonderful response for donations for our meal of Pulled Pork sandwiches, BBQ sauce, buns, potato salad, baked beans, and bars. It isn't even September yet—and we have our ingredient

want-list filled! Thank you all for your ongoing support of this ministry!

Ordination of Kerryn Oliver

Kerryn Oliver was ordained as a pastor of the United Church of Christ on August 16, 2020 at 4:30 pm. Her ordination was unique in two respects: she received her ordination under the "Multiple Pathways to Ministry" resolution ratified by General Synod 27 in 2009, and she was ordained during a pandemic! Those who wanted to share her special day had the option of being a part of her ordination via Zoom! Kerryn Oliver has served as the Associate Pastor of the Alden and Jewell United Church of Christ since 2005. She is a graduate of the CENTER/LEARN program, holds a Masters degree in Education from Viterbo University, a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Northern Iowa, and an Associate of Arts degree from Ellsworth Community College. She is certified with the International End of Life Doula Association. She has also taught music in the public schools for 22 years. She and her husband, Mike, have two grown children: Erin (Brett) Bandow of Iowa Falls, and Mark (Michelle) Oliver of Alden, six grandchildren, two spoiled dogs and two spoiled cats. Kerryn's hobbies include reading, flower gardening, and playing the piano. Congratulations and God bless you, Rev. Oliver!

Thanks

☸Dear Church Members,
Thank you so much for your April donation to our food pantry. With so many families in need, our numbers are growing. Your donations are being put to good use!
Kathy Vaughn and the ACE Board

☸First Congo,
From all of us at Lotus we thank you for the very needed gifts of the push mower and weed eater. It was lovely having your group come and tour and we're grateful for your contributions. Hopefully after this covid calms down we can get together again. Looking forward to it.
Thanks again,
Ashley Vaala

☸Dear Scholarship Committee,
I would like to express my appreciation for the Bess Lyon and Helen Johnson scholarships that I received. I am thankful for the support of the congregation over my time at the church. These scholarships will be a great help in paying for my education at Iowa State. Thanks to the scholarship committee and congregation once again.
Sincerely,
Jackson Leman

☸Dear Friends,
Thank you for your gift to Enhance Hamilton County Foundation. We appreciate your gift and commitment to your community. Your support improves quality of life for all.



School has started! Luna is in 1st grade and very excited! She loved the school gift bag from the Christian Ed. Board. Thanks to Pastor Craig and Vicki for all the goody bags since this Covid 19 started. She also eagerly anticipates Sundays and going to church. We belong to a very loving and caring church! Thanks! Glenda, Tracy and Luna



Cru Simonton enjoys the figures in his July "We Care" gift bag from the Christian Ed Board. In August 20 children and youth received a "Back-to-School" Bag with school supplies (and treats).



Natalie Garwood models one of the 13 sets of matching gowns and masks sewn and donated by Donna Ryherd to the Good Samaritan Home of Davenport, Iowa.



Gayle Olson presents Darcy Swon with a check for \$2078 for the Enhance Hamilton County Foundation's Food Bank Challenge. The money was raised by the Brownie Sundae Drive Thru held at the church on July 24th. The donation will be matched dollar for dollar and will be distributed to the 6 food pantries in the county.

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	July	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$14,835.00	\$97,553.18
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$10,467.46	\$82,068.18
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$3,166.60
Pastoral Services	9,758.53	57,121.06
Maintenance and Repairs	990.61	16,799.01
Church Office	2,645.76	18,783.99
Music Ministry	336.00	5,261.75
Christian Education	39.00	39.00
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	0.00	949.66
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,769.90	\$102,121.07

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

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES FOR WEDNESDAY, August 5, 2020, 5:30 PM

New Business

Circle meetings, time, location are up to each individual circle. Some ideas include Zoom, members garage, ask Cabinet permission to meet in church (cleaning afterwards, of course). Do what you feel is comfortable.

Thrift Sale - Due to the Covid-19 virus, there will not be a thrift sale for the foreseeable future. If you need to get rid of items, Goodwill and The Key in Fort Dodge are accepting items.

Fundraising ideas tossed around to keep up our level of giving were:

Each circle can contribute in their own way. Such as Haystack selling pecans, Hold a no-bake bake sale.

Sell items on a buy-sell page. (Cindy could help if you send a picture with details)

Silent Auction (Holly has a quilt she could donate)

Hold another sundae drive-by sale – or something similar.

Kitchen Cleaning – is not needed. Jose and Dilcia Burgos did a deep clean in the spring.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2020, 5:30 pm

Worship Board August 2020

The Worship Board has not met in person since late February, but continues to address business items via email.

Following much discussion, preparation and planning, outdoor services started July 5 in the vacant lot to the south of the church with summer hours. All is going well. Plans are in place should inclement weather prevent a morning worship, and it will be rescheduled for 7 p.m.

Worship Board members assist in set-up/tear-down of podium, keyboard, microphones, table, and other necessary equipment for the outdoor worship. During worship, members bring their own chairs and wear masks. Restrooms at the church are not open. Bulletins are available, as is a wooden chest for offerings, located on a table near the podium. Music has been incorporated with congregational singing, keyboard, and a song leader. A liturgist has also been included. Individual communion has been made available with single-serve elements. The board has worked with Pastor Craig on order and preparing these communion supplies.

Mission Board Minutes

August 20, 2020, 10 a.m.

Church vacant lot: Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Audrey Burtnett, Marjorie Groves, Lorraine McCoskey, Gayle Olson, Karin Yungclas. Karin led us in prayer.

Food Pantries: Our July food pantry collection netted 21 bottles of syrup and 28 boxes of pancake mix. Pastor Craig delivered about half to St. Paul Lutheran's food pantry and the rest to Trinity Lutheran's.

One Great Hour of Sharing and Strengthen the Church: As of the end of July, \$605 had been given for OGHS and \$455 for STC. We thought that was great for taking two collections at once.

Book Study: Gayle has a copy of *White Fragility* that she's willing to share. The Zoom discussion group ended August 19. Zoom worked well. Rev. Kerryn Oliver of the Alden UCC did a nice job leading the discussions. *Raising White Kids* discussion starts August 26 in the Webster City UCC vacant lot, with Pastor Craig facilitating.

Ice Cream Social: We're trying to be humble, but the Webster City First Congregational UCC July 24 first-ever Brownie Sundae Friday drive-thru was a huge success, making well over the traditional indoor version. It was rewarding to send a large (\$2,078) check to the Enhance Hamilton County Foundation to be matched for the local food pantries.

T-Shirt Totes for Food Bank of Iowa: Michaela Devaney, Senior Volunteer Training and Development Manager for the Food Bank of Iowa, would be happy to have more t-shirt totes. Marjorie will contact her to find out if the totes could be delivered to a Webster City site or should be delivered to the Des Moines warehouse. Marjorie will also write a promo for the church bulletins and newsletter.

Open and Affirming: Pastor Craig will contact colleagues for resources to use in discussions with the congregation. Advice on the process is on the UCC website: openandaffirming.org/ona/how/guide

Derecho – How Can We Help? Donna Ryherd's sister is a cook for a homeless shelter in Cedar Rapids and reported a need for bread and hotdog and hamburger buns. Donna contacted Gayle and an email went out to our church email list. Our members donated quickly, and Donna took 44 loaves of bread and more than 100 buns to Cedar Rapids where it was quickly distributed. In further research, Gayle hasn't learned of other ways our church could help that didn't involve a chainsaw. Has anyone in the church heard of other needs?

Beacon of Hope: September 15 is our next time to supply a meal to the Fort Dodge shelter for homeless men. Annette Howard of the shelter staff says they now have 35 men “who eat like 50.” We will try a pulled pork and buns, potato salad, baked beans, and bars menu. Pastor Craig and Gayle will look for Boston butt roasts at 99 cents a pound. We will pay for 30 lb. meat from the Mission Board budget. Lorraine volunteers to make potato salad with 5 lbs. of potatoes and 18 hardboiled eggs. Audrey recommends Fareway’s potato salad, too, and would offer 3 lbs., if Lorraine’s offer needs to be supplemented. Karin and Marjorie will each give two cans of Bush’s baked beans. We will request eight additional cans (for a total of 12), along with a call for four 9X13 pans of bars in disposable pans, 10 packages of hamburger buns (eight buns to a package) and three large bottles of barbecue sauce.

Homes for Iowa: Karin shared information on a program for training inmates in home construction skills at the Newton Correctional Facility.

Neighbors in Need: Lorraine will promote the collection taken October 1.

Next Meeting: September 24 at 9 a.m. (Time is tentative.)

Respectfully submitted, Marjorie Groves, Secretary

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:

