

February 2021 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwcc.org/>

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” --1 Cor. 1:20-25

This morning a headline popped up on my phone with this exciting news: “Five Finger Death Punch to Rock Iowa State Fair.” I literally burst out laughing reading that headline, as I had never considered a Five Finger Death Punch to be good news of any kind! Now to be fair I have never listened to any of their music so I can’t really judge them by anything but their name...and perhaps that was one of the underlying reasons for my laughter as I considered what might drive a musical group to choose that as a name for itself. But regardless of the reason for the laughter I was appreciative of the humorous break in my day.

But upon further reflection I thought about the “Headline” that we Christians have been claiming as our Good News for nearly 2000 years now... a scandalous and absurd claim that the One sent by God, the promised Messiah who would right this world of ours, was *crucified, dead and buried*. Imagine how *this* headline would have sounded to ancient ears: “Crucified Savior Rocks Roman Empire”. No doubt there would have been outbursts of laughter at the absurdity of such a claim, for it was unimaginable that a Savior, God’s anointed, should ever suffer such a fate! And yet this has been our Christian message of Good News for nearly 2 millennia: that God sent to our messy world a man of Light and Love, a son of God and Adam who would willingly give up his life for the sake of the world. When you think of it, that really is quite an astonishing—even scandalous—claim!

Now it is true that this proclamation has been the source of much theological speculation throughout the history of this religion. Much of what constitutes orthodox Christian teaching comes from Paul’s writings which assert that the degrading and unjust death of Jesus is the mystical cornerstone of our faith and the atoning act which brings us *salvation*. And to me much theological speculation regarding the meaning of Jesus’ death frankly borders on blasphemy—such as the idea that God was dishonored by human disobedience and so Jesus died to “satisfy” God’s need for restored honor, or the belief that God’s wrath toward sinful humankind had to be directed somewhere, and so Jesus took God’s wrath in our stead. But regardless of how Christians have strived to understand the scandal of the cross, it remains central to Christianity and to our Good News.

So how do you understand the scandal of the cross? How have you made peace with such a complex, messy death? What does it mean to you that a man would love you so much that he would be willing to die for you? What kind of courage and trust did it take to say “*not my will, but thy will be done?*” Do you see in Jesus’ death the glorification and the amplification of his LIFE of empathy, love, service, and healing...and also his willingness to speak truth to power—even when it cost him his life? Has Jesus’ death taught you that there are worse things than death, such as a loveless life; a fearful life; a hate-filled life; an aimless life? Do you sense in his death the hidden promise of life beyond death; the work of a God who is making *all things new*—in him, and also in us?

It’s hard to believe it is already that time of year when we enter into that forty-day period of repentance and transformation which characterizes the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday is February 17th, and as of this writing we do not know if it will be a virtual observance or whether we will be able to gather in our sanctuary, hear again the ancient words “*from dust you came and to dust you shall*

return,” and begin our Lenten journeys of wrestling with his death, and our deaths...his life, and our lives...so that we, like Jesus, can live our lives to God, and trust in God *even unto death*.

Friends, I don't have to tell you that we are living in difficult and unprecedented times in many ways, and in the midst of all the fear, the anger, the confusion, and the pain what the world needs now are faithful souls who have found the way, the truth, and the life in the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus, who loved, trusted, and obeyed God above all else. May we all use this Lenten season to meditate on the life and the death of Jesus, so we may enter into the fray of this life and this world with his courage, his conviction, and his faithfulness to what God is doing to reclaim our world from aimlessness and sin! --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:

1 - Chris McNeil
4 - Leanna Ploeger
5 - Jane Klaver
6 - Sharon Perry
7 - Gene Royster
8 - Michele Omvig
9 - Les Ploeger
11 - Greta Oberender
12 - Blakely Ploeger
14 - Curt McCoskey
15 - Everett (Bud) Crystal
17 - Piper Williams
19 - Gretchen McGlynn
19 - Jenna Short
22 - Curtis Alan (PJ) Swanson
22 - Colby Butz
23 - Stephanie Hill
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



Parish Nurse News

After you fasten your seat belt:

- Constantly scan the road ahead and check your rear and side-view mirrors.
- Anticipate the worst-case scenario when you make your moves
- Never assume that another driver will let you in or is going to stop at intersections
- Always keep both hands on the wheel
- Look for a spot that you could move to in case you need to maneuver suddenly
- Keep a safe stopping distance between your car and the car in front of you
- Always turn on your headlights in dim daylight or in bad weather conditions like rain, snow, and fog.
- Avoid distractions like cell phones, changing CDs, and eating or drinking.

Officers

The voting to confirm this year's slate of officers and board members has passed by a vote of 41 yea and 0 nay. Each board will now need to select a chairperson and a cabinet rep.

These have typically been two different people in the past, but don't necessarily have to be if one person wants to take on both duties. It would be ideal if we could select these people as soon as possible in order to be able to tackle some important cabinet business here in early February. Once these positions have been agreed upon within each board, please email

Nick Oberender (nickoberender@gmail.com) and Michele (administrative.office@fcuccwc.org) with the chairperson and cabinet representative's email address and cell phone number. Nick will be reaching out to each board group individually in the coming days as well.

Adult Sunday school classes via Zoom

The Adult Christian Ed class has been meeting virtually on Sunday mornings via Zoom--and you are invited to participate! We have already discussed "Peace," "Judgment," and "Anger." We begin our classes at 10 am., and they generally run about an hour. To participate please look for the emails Pastor Craig will send out on Thursdays or Fridays, which will contain the topic and the Zoom link. For more information please contact Pastor Craig!



The Christian Education Board thanks everyone for their Valentine-themed donations which will be used in our February We Care bags for our church kids!



The Mission Board's food pantry soup collection brought in quite a stockpile of soup! 18 powdered soup mixes, 2 boxes and 42 cans of soup. Thanks to everyone who donated!



Luna Lahr showing her completed Christmas crafts!

Indoor Worship Services Suspended

Because of the rising cases of Covid19 in our county and beyond, the Cabinet voted to suspend all in-person worship services. Audio recordings will continue to be sent out.

Pecans

They are \$12 a bag for halves or for pieces. You can make your check out to Haystack Circle. They are in the west entrance so you can stop by and pick some up.

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.

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

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$16,525.00	\$175,995.18
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$16,525.00	\$175,995.18
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	1,833.34	\$19,676.00
Pastoral Services	8,004.80	94,553.73
Maintenance and Repairs	3,152.47	26,537.17
Church Office	5,065.52	35,809.31
Music Ministry	866.25	8,847.50
Christian Education	136.95	278.70
Local Ministry	2,000.00	2,000.00
Misc. Expenses	0.00	1,077.45
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$21,059.33	\$188,779.86

Cabinet Reports

Trustees New heat and water sensor were set up in different areas of the church. The sensors were activated as they are being monitored by HSB Connected Technologies. They will alert us of an issue before too much damage is done. This was required by the church Insurance Board.

Christian Ed The Christian Education Board met January 27, 2021 at 5:00 P.M. via the ZOOM Conferencing System. Participants included: Wil Groves, Vicki Blaufuss, Craig Blaufuss, Dawn Holdgrafer, Linda Lahr and Patty Gescheidler.

Officers for 2021 are as follows: Wil Groves, Chair. Vicki Blaufuss, Cabinet Representative. Patty Gescheidler, Secretary.

Vicki updated the Board on the Youth Bags being distributed each month to the youth of the church. January theme was the Epiphany, February theme, Valentines, March

tentatively will be Easter. She asked for ideas for what could be done for April. Any ideas are welcome for things to do to keep the youth connected and engaged with the church. She reported that there are lots of craft materials at the church. At the present time we are distributing bags to 19 youth.

There was discussion on age-appropriate bags. Linda will check with her Middle School youth to see what would be appropriate activities.

The Board meetings will be held on an as needed basis. We will stay connected through texting and emails. Patty Gescheidler, Secretary

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Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

