

April 2021 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>

“But we have the mind of Christ...” –1 Corinthians 2: 16

This morning I googled the question “Do any ancient texts claim to be written by Jesus?” I was pretty sure I knew the answer to that question, but I wanted to be sure I hadn’t missed some obscure claim made by some fragment of parchment purporting to be Jesus’ autobiography. The resulting search confirmed what I had learned in seminary: there are no currently existing documents or copies that claim to be written by Jesus—either narrating his story or even compiling his words directly in first person.

This “fact” leads to some interesting speculation. Why would Jesus not tell his story or give his message firsthand, in writing—and in doing so control his story and his truths directly? Why didn’t Jesus leave his followers a book, a scroll, or *something* to keep the message pure and his story unembellished? Of course we will never know the answer to that question, but this line of speculation leads to an even more provocative question: if he had written his autobiography, what would he have said? Would he have settled certain questions about his own identity? Would he have proclaimed that indeed he was the Son of God? Would he have discussed the trials and tribulations of his ministry? Would he have made clear, as the gospels do, that he was fully aware of the need for his sacrificial death and was willing to complete that divine project? Would he have doubts of any kind? Would he have grumbled about his disciples, the authorities, or even the people he helped? Would the tone and content of his autobiography shatter our theological understandings of his identity as we read of his very human feelings and motivations which might sound very far from being “godly?”

The truth of the matter is that because Jesus was apparently silent about himself in any self-composed writings, all we have are testimonies about him and recorded conversations penned by folk who likely never met Jesus in person. For 2 millennia believers and nonbelievers alike have been putting words into Jesus’ mouth, and not so much to create a dispassionate autobiographical work as to give voice to shaped theological testimonies showcasing their fervent beliefs about who this mystery man was, and what he was ultimately up to in his short human life. This work continues even today, for the ancient question which Jesus was alleged to have asked his followers “Who do you say I am?” is ultimately our question to answer as well...as disciples of this ancient Galilean holy man whose factual obscurity belies his enormous impact on civilized human history.

So with that rambling preamble in mind, if an autobiography of Jesus were actually discovered in some darkened cave, what do you think it would say? Would he talk of God in loving, fearless terms? Would he profess that even in light of the injustices and sufferings of this world that life is a good gift? Would he proclaim that love is indeed the highest good and therefore should be our highest aspiration? Or would he speak of anger, and revenge? Of what a collective, unredeemable mess humanity really is? Would he bare his sacred heart to us, and show us that he too was broken and “poor in spirit?” Would we finally know, as various people have speculated, that he was a Jewish mystic; a zealot, an end-times preacher of doom, or even a complete fraud?

What would you need his autobiography to say?

While I generally don’t verbally articulate the answer to that question, how I approach the gospels and the doctrines and traditions of the Christian faith reveals my need.

I need to believe that Jesus truly taught that God is wholly and holy Love.

I need to believe that miracles are possible and limited only by what we believe IS possible.

I need to believe that I have the potential to change for the better, to uncover my Godliest Self and live it out-- with help from the Beyond.

I need to believe that there is something beyond this earth-life; something beyond this material body; something beyond even my wildest speculations about the nature of Life itself--something good and wondrous and validating of my faith and trust.

I need to believe that we are all joined together in some cosmic journey, and that we will all eventually find our ways and discover the truth of ourselves, and ultimately create the "heaven" together we have secretly hoped for and dreamt about in our saner moments.

And because I find all of these needs in the gospels and in the midst of all of the teachings and traditions of the Christian faith, I can yet remain a Christian...for I can believe that there once was a man of God who came to speak to our deep, unnamed needs; a man who was willing to share his "Mind" with us--a Mind enlightened with a timeless Good News that can still fill our aching hearts with hope, and give wings to our secret and deepest yearnings for meaning and purpose.

Friends, in a few days it will be Easter—the culmination of our faith and the ultimate proclamation and validation of Jesus as the Son of God and messenger of Good News. How amazing it would be to one day discover a resurrection scroll or codex—a book actually written by Jesus of Nazareth on the far side of his resurrection from the dead!

But we need not wait for that improbable discovery to have the Mind of Christ. For we are promised that there is such a mind available to us! And if it is our heart's desire, his Mind can be shared with us through the power of the Holy Spirit, who can fill our mind with his holy Mind. What an amazing promise! What better Easter gift could we ask for, and receive: to share the Christ-Mind of the resurrected Christ, and in that supreme gift experience our own resurrection to a new and profoundly blessed life! –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:

2 - Karin Yungclas
4 - Sherry Leksell
6 - Karla Krebs
9 - Wil Groves
9 - Lynn Leksell
15 - Lorraine McCoskey
16 - Jacob Lahr
16 - Karla Krebs
17 - Alaina Imhoff
18 - Shelby Brim
19 - Christy Fiala
19 - Arden Schlitter
21 - Joe Gilbert
25 - Hailey Marie Brim
26 - Patty Yungclas

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

4 - Alan & Karin Yungclas
17 - Bob & Leah Maass
28 - James & Gretchen McGlynn



Before you start pedaling:

- Make sure all adults and kids wear a safety helmet.
- Choose bright-colored or reflective clothing.
- Wear shoes that grip the pedals, no flip-flops or barefoot.
- Check brakes, handlebars, seat position, and pedals.
- Spin the wheels; they should not rub against any part of the frame.
- Keep tires pumped to recommended pressure.
- Clean and oil the chain.
- Review the rules of the road for biking.

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.

Adult Education Zoom classes We are continuing our Adult Education Sunday Zoom classes, which have now been rescheduled for Sundays beginning at 7 pm. Join us each week as we discuss pertinent topics to our lives of faith--via Zoom! Look for the materials and Zoom link in your email inbox.

Holy Week Monologues members of First Congregational, under the direction of Wil Groves, have created 5 monologues of Biblical figures associated with the life of Jesus. Each of these figures explains in first person how their encounter with Jesus changed their lives from "notorious to glorious." Beginning on Monday, March 29, a link to a YouTube video will be sent out daily that you can click on to view these monologues during Holy Week. Thanks to: Karin Yungclas (the woman accused of adultery), Marjorie Groves (the woman at the well), Melissa Hindt (the woman who anointed Jesus), Al Yungclas (Zacchaeus) and Chris McNiel (Paul) for offering their talents to create this meaningful Lenten project.

Women's Fellowship Executive Board Meets April 7, 5:30 at Fellowship Hall.

Supporting Seminary Students Thanks to your generosity, our church is helping ease the financial burden of becoming a minister. You gave \$415 to Funding Future Leaders and the

Funeral protocol The Cabinet recently authorized these policies for funeral and memorial services for First Congregational:

- We will allow funerals for members.
- Up to 50 people in attendance socially distanced with masks and following all other worship protocols (an allowance beyond 50 people may be considered for family only).
- Funerals only to be scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday to allow for the church to sit idle before and after Sunday worship services.
- No bereavement meals to be served at the church at this time.
- We will enlist funeral home staff to usher so no need for members in those roles.

If you have any questions regarding these policies, please contact the church Moderator, Nick Oberender.

Worship Board Recommendations for re-opening the Church--Revised February 2021

The cabinet voted to hold worship services in the church when weather does not warrant meeting in the open lot. Pastor Craig will determine the location and notify the membership if changed. Worship in the Sanctuary will begin at 10:00 am. We will continue to meet in the outdoor lot as weather permits.

The following protocols will be followed by all entering the church building:

- **Mask-** will be worn within the church building. Some masks will be available if person attending does not bring one. Safety pins will be available to adjust to smaller faces. The mask will be in zip-lock bags on table with sanitizer near entrances.

Endowment Committee added \$500, for a grand total of \$915. This special offering is organized through the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ. The scholarships are for members-in-discernment who are from Iowa. Marjorie Groves has been asked to join the FFL committee. – **The Mission Board**

Thanks

UDMO would like to thank you for the generous donations to our soup promotion. Clients needed the food pantry have doubled since the pandemic started. Thank you for helping so many families in need. We appreciate all your support!

Sincerely, UDMO Staff

My sister Ann would like to THANK everyone for their prayers and concern during her two recent illnesses. Prayers were answered. They were very much appreciated. Joyce Gelhaus

Vacation Pastor Craig will be on vacation from April 19 to April 26 to attend his brother's wedding.

Cabinet will meet in Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, April 12.

- **West door**-Please use west door to enter the church and sanctuary. Front NW door will also be open for entry and exit during worship service in the sanctuary.
- **Elevator**- Each person using the elevator should use sanitizer before and after riding. Sanitizer will be at each level. One person/family unit at a time may ride in the elevator wearing a mask(s).
- **Surface touching minimized**-no passing of **offering plate**- instead the plates will be placed by the entries to the sanctuary. The Financial Board will pick up offerings at end of service. **Candle lighting and extinguishing**- will be done by Pastor Craig, **Bulletins** will be available on a table when entering sanctuary.
- **Worshippers** -During the heating season, the sanctuary will be kept cooler than normal so we can avoid the use of fans. Please, dress appropriately. Coat racks will be available for your use; please social distance while using them and be mindful of the risks. You may want to keep your coat with you. Worshippers should go directly to a pew and practice 6' social distancing from non-family members. Children must remain with parents or guardians [\[DR1\]](#) . Wandering in the church or sanctuary will not be tolerated.
- **Ushering**-An usher will be at each service to assist worshippers. Usher will promote social distancing and give reminder of socializing outside.
- **Social distancing in pews**- People will refrain from sitting in the back rows (too close for people walking past in the back). Family units may sit together. 6' social distancing between family units will be maintained. Some cushions are removed, and signage placed to social distance safely.
- **Bathrooms**- will be available if needed. Signage will be posted directing the cleaning of everything touched before person leaves the room. One adult only at a time in bathroom. We encourage people to not use bathrooms unless they cannot wait before leaving. Cleaning supplies will be available. Disposable gloves will also be available. Bathrooms will be posted to "use at your own risk", since we cannot ensure cleaning between use.
- **No social coffee or visiting inside the church**- visiting may take place outside church at safe social distancing with mask. Signage reminders will be posted.
- **Communion**- Individual communion cups will be prepared and distributed at the sanctuary entrance.
- **Choir/ Singing**- will not be scheduled at inside worship
- **Closure of Sanctuary**-Sanctuary will be closed for 72 hours following each service. The COVID 19 virus does not last longer than 72 hours on a surface.
- **Meeting in the church**- Cabinet, Boards, committees, circles, Stephen Ministers may meet in the church by reserving time and location with the Administrative Assistant. Meeting days will be Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There are three meeting rooms available.
- **Audio of the service**- will be available via email the same day for those not attending the in-sanctuary service.
- **Pastor Craig** – will remain in his office before and after service to minimize the temptation of close interaction. He may elect to socialize outside the church building. Phone calls, emails, text, and mail will be promoted for communication with him.
- **Expectations** – must be posted and sent to members and friends prior to reopening the church. This includes the Public Health notification policy for individuals testing positive.

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	February	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$9,600.00	\$19,134.00
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,600.00	\$19,134.00
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$0.00
Pastoral Services	7,283.92	14,337.19
Maintenance and Repairs	9.83	1,832.17
Church Office	2,819.47	5,933.45
Music Ministry	946.24	2,069.90
Christian Education	0.00	0.00
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	22.34	28.76
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$11,081.80	\$24,201.47

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

STAFF/PARISH COMMITTEE The Staff/Parish Committee met on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at the church. Present were Cindy Henning, Lorraine McCoskey, Mary Van Diest and via zoom Holly Riemenschneider and Mary Vavroch. Our officers are: Chair-Cindy Henning, Sec. Mary Van Diest and cabinet representative Holly Riemenschneider.

Cindy gave us a brief summary of our duties. Mainly to have an annual performance review of all staff members, recommendations as to continuing education and consider staff time off.

Pastor Craig Blaufuss will be gone on Sunday, April 25, 2021 and Sunday, May 30, 2021.

Each member of the committee was assigned a contact person from the staff.

Cindy Henning-----Pastor Craig Blaufuss; Mary Van Diest----Michele Omvig

Lorraine McCoskey---Sunshine Yoder; Holly Riemenschneider---Curt McCoskey

Mary Vavroch-----Melissa Hindt

The meeting was adjourned a 5:45 p.m.

Mission Board: We met March 18 via Zoom. Attending were Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Audrey Burtnett, Marjorie Groves, Sherry Leksell, and Karin Yungclas. Sherry will be the Mission Board chairperson. Delivery of taco fixings and bars to the Beacon of Hope on March 17 went well, Marjorie reported. Pastor Craig coordinated the sign-up emails and cooked the hamburger meat. Volunteers for food items responded quickly but things sometimes got confusing as to who was to bring what. Once we're back inside the church, paper sign-up sheets should make the process clearer. One Great Hour of Sharing will continue through the end of March. Approximately 270 t-shirts to be made into totes for the Food Bank of Iowa and the All Culture Equal food pantry have been donated so far, Sherry says. ACE is delighted to have all the t-shirt totes we can bring. The tote project will continue to the end of March, thanks to church members who've kept their sewing machines humming. Marjorie notes that \$415 was donated for Funding Future Leaders in February, plus an additional \$500 we are grateful to add from the Endowment Fund. Marjorie has been asked to join the Iowa FFL committee. Audrey will contact Fuller Hall to see if Parks & Recreation has suggestions for places nearby to target for picking up trash. The Domestic Sexual Assault Outreach Center fund-raising cake auction has traditionally been the second Saturday in April, but this year – like last year – has been cancelled for covid reasons. D/SAOC lists continuing needs on their website for the folks they serve. Pastor Craig has contacted them to see what they need most from the lengthy list. We will set a date for this summer's Brownie Sundae Drive-Thru at our April meeting. Pastor Craig has been contacted by Wendi Dinsdale, juvenile court officer, requesting help finding community service work for young people. The clean-up project Mission Board is considering might be an option. Next meeting: April 14, 4:30 p.m. at the church.

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:

