

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

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain it.”—Psalm 139:6

You may have noticed that Cathedral Crafts of Winona, Minnesota is back in town and renovating more of Asbury UMC’s stained glass windows. Seeing the familiar trailer of Cathedral Crafts caused me to fondly remember our own stained glass window renovation. If you remember, workmen from Cathedral Crafts came in June of 2018 to remove and transport all 38 of our windows to their shop in Winona, Minnesota. There Cathedral craftsmen made an etching of each window, painstakingly disassembled each piece of stained glass, cleaned them, and then reassembled the windows by custom cutting the lead came, bending and fitting it around each piece of glass and then soldering each piece together. When all the stained-glass pieces were reassembled, the entire window was mudded to make it weathertight and then the glass window was carefully reinstalled in its wood frame. This morning when I entered the sanctuary and gazed up at our largest windows, I noted the hundreds of pieces of glass in each one...and I was filled with wonder at the amount of skilled work that made these glass curtains possible. I was also filled with wonder at the cost of restoring all 38 windows: only \$88,280! While that is no small sum, I can’t imagine how they could remove, transport, restore, and reinstall all of our windows for that amount of money. It *still* seems nothing short of miraculous, and this morning I was as touched by this sense of wonder as I was touched by the wonder of their beauty.

Wonder. It is certainly one of the most unique characteristics of being human. All of us have experienced wonder in our lives, and we all can recall moments when a sense of wonder overcame us with feelings of amazement, gratitude...and a sense of bumping up against something beyond us that we can somehow sense but can’t fully grasp: a *beyond-ness* which brings a feeling of reverence to our minds. Now it is true that most days we don’t necessarily like being reminded that there is far more to Life than what we know, have experienced, and will ever understand...and add to that a desire or need for efficiency in getting through our demanding days, and wonder can seem like a luxury best left to poets, astrophysicists, and movie makers.

And yet from time to time we are surprised by wonder-- even as I was this morning. Frost makes a pattern on a window that is transfixing--more like the work of God than the freezing characteristics of mist—and we feel wonder. Spring returns, flowers emerge, and trees bud out, and we marvel at the return of Life after another cold winter. A puppy or a child is born...and we are put on our knees by the incomprehensible mystery of how such life came to be. Who formed its *form*? Where did this life come from? What kind of world do we live in where such things that we could never make happen on our own seem to happen so magically; so spontaneously? When you feel this kind of wonder you are transported to a different state of consciousness where your rambling mind is paused-- silenced by your entrance into one of Life’s Holy of Holies: the wonderful *beyond-ness* of things that suddenly grasps hold of you, filling you with the light of reverent thanksgiving for the mystery and the goodness of Life.

Friends, we need these experiences of wonder to counteract our malaise, our boredom, our cynicism and our general lack of appreciation for all that Life offers us! For these days I know that so much of our wonder feels less ecstatic and more fearful as we wonder what tragedy or human injustice will next occur, or what byproduct of our insatiable greed and incredible shortsightedness will bring more suffering and weariness to our weary world! This kind of wonder—fearful wonder—is the great killer of the reverence and joy that wonder should bring to our hearts, even as it is the great killer of trust in the mysterious *Beyond* whom Christians call God. And yet the Psalmist who

composed Psalm 139 assures us that the mysterious and wonder-filled *Beyond* we sense in the midst of all Life is benevolent, pervasive, and of loving intent; infinite in thought and being, and steadfast toward us. This God, who is so beyond our human comprehension, has brought all the wonder-filled worlds into being, and in the vast unnumbered thoughts of God's inescapable Presence our story is known, cherished, and held fast with an otherworldly love. That God should be so beyond us, and yet so with us and for us was a source of comfort, joy and ultimate wonder to this ancient sage who found his peace in the God he tried to describe in his psalm. And we who inherit his wonder-filled words can still join him in his amazement and wonder as we too realize that such love, such care, such creativity and such purpose is so near, so helping, so enlivening, and so inspiring! As we continue to live into 2021, may we all be blessed to experience this sense of wonder, so that we can live with more joy, more gratitude, and more TRUST: in God, and in the wonder-full unfolding of our human lives! – Pastor Craig

Pastor Craig will be on vacation from Thursday, May 27 through Wednesday, June 1.

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 Omgig: 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:

11 - Lauren Leman
 11 - Mabel Prescott
 11 - Eli Imhoff
 11 - Thomas Arnold
 16 - Neil Oberender
 19 - Gretchen Bruner
 22 - Ed Mosbach
 26 - Carol Crystal
 27 - Isabelle McNiel
 28 - Kasyn Weig
 29 - Linda Lahr

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

7 - Craig & Vicki Blaufuss
 17 - Tracy & Glenda Wehrhan
 28 - Diana & Nick Oberender
 29 - Dan & Donna Ryherd

Graduation

Please join us to celebrate the graduation of Jake Lahr from Webster City High School Saturday, May 15 from noon until 4pm 2214 225th St, Webster City.



In addition to drunk driving and texting while driving, drowsy driving is another form of impaired driving that is just as dangerous.

Warning signs that you are fighting fatigue -

- Turning up the radio or rolling down the window
- Delayed reaction time and judgement
- Trouble focusing, keeping your eyes open, or your head up
- Daydreaming or wandering thoughts
- Yawning or rubbing your eyes repeatedly
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or missing signs and exits
- Feeling restless, irritable, or aggressive

Scholarships

The Finance Board will be receiving scholarship applications until June 15th. Applications are available from the church office and from the table in the entryway.

Updates from the Christian Education Board

On Sunday, May 16th we will honor our 2021 graduates during our worship service (either held indoors or outside). Our graduates are: **Jake Lahr** (Webster City High School), **Kaelyn Butts** (Webster City High School) and **Kaleb Sterler** (Iowa Central College.) Join us May 16th to hear our

graduates' future plans, and to honor their accomplishments!

Also, we are scheduling a Summer church youth event to be held at Briggs Woods between July 5 and July 17th, date to be determined. There will be learning activities, hiking, a service project and swimming at the beach! More information will be coming soon-- please watch for it!

Also please note that we will deliver our last Christian Education "We Care" bags in May and will suspend delivery of them for the summer months. Our firm hope is that in September we will be able to resume our regular Sunday School and KLAB activities! --The Christian Education Board

In Gratitude for Your Giving

Thank you for your generosity supporting One Great Hour of Sharing during April. You gave \$1,630 to this special mission offering! – *The Mission Board*

Save The Date for Sweetness

Friday, June 18, 6:30-8 p.m., you're invited to cruise slowly past our church for the second Brownie Sundae Drive-Thru. Last year's event netted more than \$2,000 from generous donors to help local food pantries. Can we top that? At least, we can top the treat with chocolate sauce and a maraschino cherry. Yum! – *The Mission Board*

Spring Cleaning for Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center (D/SAOC)

Our annual support of the D/SAOC may not have happened this year, but the need is still great! DSAOC is a crisis based shelter that offers a host of assistance to victims and their children fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, stalking and violent crimes. DSAOC shelter services are available 24/7, 365 days a year. Services within the shelter are all free of charge, confidential and supports the survivor's ability to once again control their own life.

High on their list of needs are paper products and cleaning supplies. Items needed include:

- Disinfectant Wipes
- Paper Towels
- Toilet Paper
- Kleenexes
- Cleaning Supplies

Dishwasher pods

Trash bags

Dish Soap

Laundry Detergent & dryer sheets

Please drop your items inside the west entry - either in the collection box or our pink tote! These items will be collected throughout the month of May. Your support and contributions are greatly appreciated. Donations can be made via paypal found on their website www.dsaoc.com.

Pecans

They are \$12 a bag for halves or for pieces. You can make your check out to Haystack Circle. They are in the entryway and more are stored in the freezer.

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.

Strengthen the Church

The yearly offering of the United Church of Christ known as Strengthen the Church will be taken on Sunday, May 23. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.

Meetings

Women's Fellowship Executive Board Meets May 5, 5:30 at Fellowship Hall.
Worship Board meets May 11, 3:30 in East Chapel.

Change of Location

The annual City clean-up Mission Board project to be held Saturday, May 8 beginning at 1:00 p.m. has been moved to the ditches near the old Kmart and McDonalds. Volunteers meet in the parking lot next to McDonalds to pick up your trash bags and gloves.

We need your help! There is a sign up sheet on the table in Fellowship Hall or just show up.

Memorial Services

A memorial service for Dr. Caryl Hollingshead will be held at First Congregational on Thursday, May 13, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

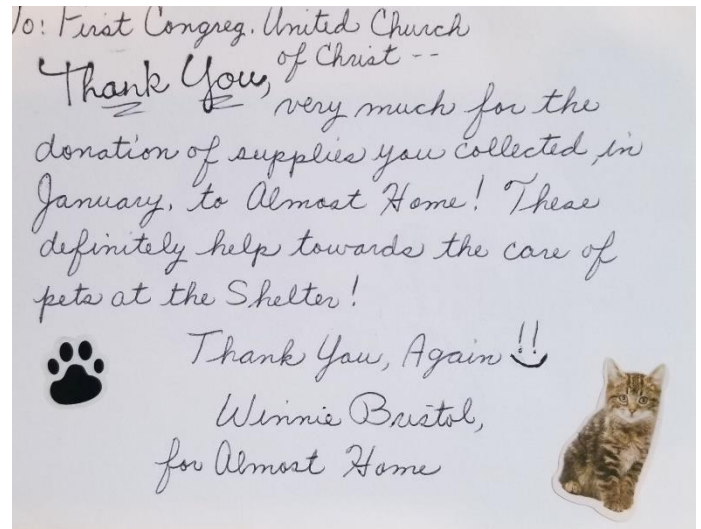
A graveside committal service for Karen Weir will be held at Graceland Cemetery on Friday, May 14 at 11:00 a.m.

Pizza, Pizza, Please

Our church hosts the meal for the men of Beacon of Hope on May 12. They loved the pizzas we gave them in February, so let's do it again! We'll be ordering the pizzas so need your assistance with a Pickle Jar donation. There'll be a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall for the rest of the meal. The folks at the shelter for the homeless thank you - and so do we! - **The Mission Board**

Thanks

Thank you so much for your gift to the work of the Ecumenical Humans Needs Committee. Things are picking up after a break for Covid 19. We have mostly been asked to assist with rent/rental deposits and utilities. Your help means so much.
EHNC



Luna Lahr shows the flower arrangement she made from her April "We Care" gift sponsored by the Christian Ed. Board.



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	March	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$16,775.00	\$36,577.31
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$16,775.00	\$36,577.31
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	4,249.97	\$4,249.97
Pastoral Services	7,169.92	21,507.11
Maintenance and Repairs	3,748.93	6,548.60
Church Office	2,642.23	8,575.68
Music Ministry	1,005.38	3,075.28
Christian Education	0.00	0.00
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	137.00	165.76
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18,953.43	\$44,122.40

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on April 13, 2021

Members Present:

Moderator:	Nick Oberender	Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Joyce Gelhaus	Trustees:	Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:	Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship:	Holly Reimenschneider
Finance :	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Stephanie Hill
Staff/Parish:	Cindy Henning	Worship:	Gale Olson
Christian Ed:	Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism:	Carol Crystal
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Nick Oberender in Fellowship Hall with protocols in place. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a prayer. The minutes of the February 2021 cabinet meeting were read. Gayle Olson moved and Carol Crystal seconded a motion that the minutes be approved with corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Expenses exceeded income by approximately \$4,000. Offerings for February are \$10,268.31 and expenses are \$12,049.30. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Dale Olson seconded that the report be put to audit. The motion passed without challenge.

Pending Business:

a. Continued discussion on current worship status and worship protocols were discussed. Several changes were made: Seating on the red cushions only; Limited indoor visiting; though choir will not be reenabled, singing by the congregation with masks is permitted; worship will begin at 10:00 and will be outside as weather permits. Stephanie Hill moved that the adjusted protocols be adopted. Joyce Gelhaus seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Board Summaries: Women's Fellowship: The Mayflower and Morningstar circles are combining. September 25 and 26 and tentative dates for the Thrift Sale. Determining how to control the amount of donations we can handle is being considered since it's been so long since our last sale. **Christian Education:** met last week. Twenty-three We Care bags were given out. Birthday cards by Patty Gescheidler will be sent out. There are now 5 confirmands and 3 graduates. Graduation day is May 16, 2021. **Mission:** Beacon of Hope meal served on March 17th went well. There were 270 t-shirt totes donated to the Food Bank of Iowa and All Cultures Equal so far. This project will continue until the end of March, but may continue after that if other uses are found. A date will be set for a Brownie Sundae Drive-thru. The annual clean-up project organized by Mission Board will be scheduled and may serve as community service work for juveniles. **Staff Parish:** Has not met yet. **Trustees:** Several projects are being completed in the church. Repair and painting of outside doors; high toilet for the bride's bathroom; pricing of lawn care and a scanner/copier; a phone line for the elevator which is required by the state. Fire

extinguishers need filled; new LED lights in the office. **Worship:** Communion by intinction is no longer permitted. Pew communion only from now on. Feedback is needed for the question of how often communion should be served. There is no issue with the current scheduling – this is just a question. Please send feedback to Worship Board or Pastor Craig. **Finance:** Has not met. **Evangelism:** Has not met. **Pastor's Report:** Attendance has been close to 50 for services so far. Care Center Sunday church services are not resuming. Visitations are now allowed with a negative Covid test or vaccination. UCC General Synod will be held virtually. Stephanie Hill and Pastor Craig will be attending as delegates. The memorial service for Caryl Hollingshead will be held May 13th in our sanctuary with a 50 person limit. A graveside service for Karen Weir is planned for May 14th for family members only.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40p.m.

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:

