

July 2021 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father."—John 8:31-38

The word Liberation is on my mind today, in part because I heard these words internally spoken to me during a quiet moment of reflection: **"All I ever wanted was your liberation."** Now these words did not come in a vacuum; I had just finished watching an hour PBS documentary entitled "The Oregon Experience: Rajneeshpuram" which is the tale of the rise and fall of the Sannyasin commune set up near Antelope, Oregon from 1981-1985. It is a complicated tale of humans striving for liberation by creating an alternate community of renunciants who were trying to follow the teachings of their guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. I won't go into the details, but tensions between the community and the local citizens dangerously escalated over time, resulting in some dubious and even criminal behavior among the leadership of Rajneeshpuram. Eventually indictments were handed down by the state of Oregon, and Bhagwan was subsequently arrested along with several other high-profile leaders of the commune. Bhagwan was deported to India, and his legacy is marred by scandal and suspicion—much of it the fallout from his time at Rajneeshpuram.

"All I ever wanted was your liberation." I can't honestly say that these were words from Bhagwan to me, but after viewing the mess some of his followers made of their opportunity to create an alternate utopian community I can appreciate the sentiment. We humans have a penchant for wanting freedom; indeed in a few days we will celebrate that great milestone of liberation in our culture: the 4th of July. Americans in particular hunger for liberation from all that oppresses and hold us captive and in misery, and the great battle cry of America since the beginning has been "give me liberty or give me death!" And yet much like the story of Rajneeshpuram, the story of the American Experiment is rife with dubious decisions and even criminal behaviors that are a profound distortion of our desire for liberation. The desire for a free homeland led our ancestors to dispossess native peoples of their homeland and their freedom. The desire for the liberating effects of wealth and affluence at the expense of someone else's exploited labor led Americans to enslave Africans. Wars of liberation that our country fought morphed at times into imperial conquests which stole land and subjugated other cultures to American interests (the Mexican War and the Spanish American War come to mind). And now in our divided country "freedom" too often seems to equate with a barely concealed desire to silence, disempower, and virtually annihilate those who are on the other side of the aisle, or those who don't agree with our political/religious/social views! And of course none of this is unique to Rajneeshpuram or to America, for it is the perennial human story. We say we want liberation—and we do, to a degree...as long as it is an exterior liberation which amounts to a thinly veiled license to do whatever we want to whomever we want...so we can be the primary beneficiaries of the fruits of our cherished freedom.

When Jesus said "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" he was speaking of a deeper liberation of the human heart and mind than what most of us are comfortable with. His "word" to us is that our ultimate heart's devotion must

be to God and to love; that our *thoughts* beget our liberation or our enslavement; that we are not to lay up our treasures on earth and so live as if earth's treasures—her resources, wildlife, and human populations-- were ours to possess, despoil, and use as we see fit. His word to us is that our confusion comes from having 2 masters, God and greed; that our eye must be single and full of the light of revealed wisdom that comes from God rather than the murk that comes from human minds and mouths. His word to us is that we must become as little children and be born anew, which means a willingness to renounce and let go of the baggage and rubbish of our lives that keep us self-hating, other-fearing, and in ignorance of our unity with God's great mind and soaring spirit, which is our peace. His word to us is that our God-quest is our life-quest, and if we will feast on his word which comes not from him but from the Father, then we will be heirs to the household of God and we will know what true liberation really means: the clarity and purity of mind and heart that are the marks of a *Master*—one who has achieved true liberation from sin in all of its forms. The leaders of Jesus' day could not abide this message, and so they killed him. We today are subtler and slightly less violent. We simply ignore him, side-line him, or give some lip-service to him while avoiding his real purpose for coming to us, which is our liberation from slave to Son and Daughter of God. And yet he persists, trying to awaken us...trying to plant his word in us...trying to show us the way to Life in Abundance, which is the treasure he found, the Pearl of Great Price that he offers to us out of love.

Friends, July is a good month to reflect on what kind of liberation we crave and what kind of liberation we really need in our lives as disciples of the Word Made Flesh. We have his word to us already—we need to make a place for it on our minds and hearts! And we have the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, to help us! We need to ask for guidance and illumination, and then practice and put in place what we are being taught. For all he ever wanted was our liberation...and if we can manage even one moment of great clarity then we will know his offer, his gift, is our greatest need, our greatest good, and our greatest joy. May each of us seek that gift as we tread the path of dedicated discipleship! –Pastor Craig

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

M 8 am - 1 pm
 T 9 am – 1 pm
 W 8 am – 4:30 pm
 Th 8 am – 4:30 pm
 F 9 am – 1 pm

7 - Susie Brim
 8 - Duane Vavroch
 9 - Erica Oberender
 11 - Dylan McCoskey
 11 – Melissa Hindt
 14 – Kaleb Sterler
 18 - Cindy Henning
 20 - Luke Rohmiller
 21 - Candy Butz
 23 - Mike McKee
 23 - Nate Lahr
 24 - Donald Royster
 25 - Landen Ploeger
 25 - Alex Swanson
 27 - Troy Stockdale
 28 – Brenden Ploeger

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 ANNIVERSARY TO:

16 – Jennie & Zach Williams
 19 - Al & Christy Fiala
 22 - Clark & Jean Mowry
 26 - Todd & Katie Sonsalla
 29 - Colby & Candy Butz

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Katie Short
 1 - Chris Swanson
 2 - Ava Stockdale
 5 - Dale Olson
 6 - Jacob Dean Rohmiller



Happy July! Simple mid-year resolutions

- Smile every day wherever you make eye contact with someone.
- Be the most positive person you know.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Spend at least 10 minutes daily alone, doing nothing.
- Call an old friend and invite him or her to coffee or lunch.
- Get involved in your community, volunteer or join a committee.
- Sleep at least 7 hours every night.
- Avoid people who don't make you feel good about yourself.

SUMMER THRIFT SALE

Thank You to everyone who donated items and those who worked on the sale. We raised \$1,100.

Cindy Henning - Thrift Sale Chair



Scholarships

On Sunday, August 1st we will hold an outdoor worship service. During that time scholarship

recipients for our FCUCC scholarships will be announced and checks given out. Come support our scholarship recipients and hear about their current and future plans! Please note for next year, applicants that do not follow the instructions of applying separately for each scholarship will not be considered.

Let's Eat – Now!

What does a busy person or family do when the hungries take over and there's not much time to cook? They open a box or can and – in a jiffy – supper is on the table. All through July, please bring fast-meal items, such as shelf-stable meats (e.g., tuna, Spam), packaged or canned meals (e.g., mac and cheese, corned beef hash) and meal starters (e.g., Hamburger Helper) to go to the St. Paul and Trinity food pantries. We'll deliver the food items at the end of the month. Cash and checks are welcomed, too, of course. If you write a check, please note "Food Pantries" on the memo line. The food pantries thank you – and we thank you, too!

– *The Mission Board*

BRIGGS WOODS YOUTH DAY! WEDNESDAY, JULY 7

We are planning a day for fun at Briggs Woods from 10 am-4 pm on Wednesday, July 7. We will use the Shelter #2 as our base camp, and we will hike, play games, swim, enjoy a dunk tank, have a learning project and a service project, EAT...and finally get together again as a church group after a year of being apart! We are looking forward to seeing you all there! Pastor Craig and the Christian Ed Board

Summer Youth Program

ACE is hosting a weekly summer program for kids ages 4-18. Call 832-4153 to sign up.

Relay for Life Results

Thanks so much for striding purposefully to the Pickle Jar June 27 and dropping in a much-appreciated \$450 for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life! Joyce Gelhaus, our go-to person for Relay for Life info, says there is talk of a walk for survivors this fall. In the meantime, we are grateful for your generosity.

– *The Mission Board*

Drive-Through “Brownie Sundae Friday”

The Mission Board presented a check for \$1,332 to Darcy Swon, Development Director of the Enhance Hamilton County Foundation. On June 18, the church hosted a Brownie Sundae Drive-Through for free-will donations. “We were delighted to be able to generate \$2,664, thanks to the Enhance Hamilton County Foundations matching campaign to benefit the local food pantries,” said Marjorie Groves, Mission Board member.

“Our food pantries will be so happy to receive the financial support,” commented Swon. She said those local recipients are Lord’s Cupboard in Jewell and Stratford Food Pantry. Webster City food pantries are Upper Des Moines Opportunity, St. Paul’s Lutheran, Trinity Lutheran, and Asbury United Methodist/All Cultures Equal.

“It’s a great way to double the value of your donation,” said Swon. “And this is a time when the need is great.”



Delivering a check from the brownie-and-ice cream event to Darcy Swon are Sherry Leksell and Audrey Burtnett.



Thanks

I cannot begin to express how much your love and tenderness has meant to me and my family over these last few months and even more so, over these last three weeks. Your outpouring of prayers and gracious concern has truly been a witness of how we are to love as Jesus loves. Your actions of reaching out and offering comfort has brought much strength to our family, and because of your kindness we are able to find joy in our trials. Even though our hearts are broken at the suddenness of his passing, it is without a doubt that my dad is fully embracing his eternal place with our dear Father in heaven; and knowing this truth, will dry our tears and give us hope of being with him again. Much love to you all ~ Melissa, Jim & family

A huge thank you to the congregation for the outpouring of donations for D/SAOC. We filled the boxes twice and made two separate deliveries. D/SAOC ladies asked us to express our gratefulness for the paper products, cleaning supplies, and other bathroom essentials. These are products that they go through very quickly - so the need was great. Thanks for all you do - Mission Board.



Despite the risk of rain, our annual city clean-up near the KMart parking lot was able to happen on Tuesday, June 22nd. Present were Pastor Craig, Sherry Leksell, Marjorie Groves, Stephanie Hill, Karin Yungclas, Audrey Burtnett, and not pictured Joyce Gelhaus, Dale and Gayle Olson, and grandkids.

Tri-Conference Meeting Practices Sustainability

Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota UCC met virtually June 25-26 at the Joint Annual Meeting – or JAM. The theme was Creation Care, including our neighbors (regardless of race or income), as well as Mother Earth.

Pastor Craig and I represented the Webster City UCC. Alas, Iowa fell just short of the number of delegates needed to make a quorum. (South Dakota also fell short, but Nebraska was successful.) This means we could discuss issues and make recommendations but could not vote on business. That step will be taken by the Iowa Conference Board of Directors.

We met new Associate Conference Ministers Rev. Kendy Miller and Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones and participated in lively workshop and meeting discussions. Technology wasn't always our friend. Harvard-educated economist Winona LaDuke, a member of the Ojibwe Tribe of the White Earth Minnesota reservation and two-time U.S. vice presidential Green Party candidate, was to be the keynote speaker. Internet connections failed, so JAM staff rallied with a video of Ms. LaDuke's presentation to a college audience.

Here are a few take-aways from the workshops and meetings:

Our church again was a 5-for-5 participants in the special Conference offerings in 2020.

Anamosa and Iowa City UCCs are celebrating 175 years.

Environmental racism means low income and people of color suffer most from tainted land and water because don't they don't have the resources to fight back. We need to stand with those with less privilege.

Production of greenhouse gases is accelerating. Signs of climate change: more frequent and severe extreme events such as droughts, heat waves, hurricanes, floods; changes in where plants can grow, and global seas rising. We each can act in some way, such as driving less or in more fuel-efficient cars, using renewable energy, not wasting food, investing in renewables, such as solar or wind energy.

We need to listen to each other. Sustainability is actionable. Resilience is the ability to return amid disruptions, such as the pandemic and racial unrest. Sustainability requires collaboration. Leave people better than you found them. The more you change, the more you see that can change. Read "You Can Change The World," by Lori Myren-Manbeck.

Democracy is not a spectator sport.

The U.S. consumes 30 percent of the world's resources. Cutting consumption is more efficient than building power plants.

From the business meeting, the Iowa Conference is on solid ground financially, although Our Church's Wider Mission giving was down – likely because of covid.

People of Webster City's First Congregational UCC, I was honored to be your lay delegate to the Joint Annual Meeting and thank you for sending me. – **Marjorie Groves**

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	May	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$20,189.00	\$83,241.31
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$20,189.00	\$83,241.31
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$7,083.31
Pastoral Services	6,986.92	35,777.95
Maintenance and Repairs	2,152.19	10,281.06
Church Office	2,843.36	14,301.03
Music Ministry	821.96	4,843.48
Christian Education	91.75	120.85
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	114.31	294.40
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,427.16	\$72,702.08

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on June 8, 2021

Members Present:

Moderator:	Nick Oberender	Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:		Trustees:	
Finance Sec.:	Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship:	
Finance :	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Stephanie Hill
Staff/Parish:		Worship:	Gale Olson
Christian Ed:		Evangelism:	
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Nick Oberender in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a prayer. The minutes of the April 2021 cabinet meeting were read. Tracey Wehrhan moved and Dale Olson seconded a motion that the minutes be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Offerings for April were \$25,425.00 and expenses were \$13,180.75. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Dale Olson seconded that the report be put to audit. The motion passed without challenge.

Pending Business:

- a. Protocols in place that need to be discussed/voted on: None
- b. RAGBRAI: After discussion it was decided that UCC would not do anything specific for this event. Anyone interested in participating is welcome to assist other groups.

Board Summaries: **Christian Education:** No 'We Care' bags are given out during the summer months and no Sunday School will be held. There will be an event for kids at Briggs Woods on July 7th. Visitor bags have been updated. **Evangelism:** No report. **Finance:** Scholarship applications are available. **Mission:** Trash pickup is rescheduled to June 22 at 5:00. Sherry and Lynn Leksell took donated cleaning and paper items to D/SAOC in Fort Dodge. The items were gratefully received. As an Advent Alternative Giving Fair, freezable casseroles will be collected for D/SOAC. The Brownie Sundae Drive-Thru will be held June 18, from 6:30 - 8:00p.m. **Staff Parish:** No report. **Trustees:** The outside door on the northeast side is in the process of being fixed. The fire extinguishers were examined and the pressure was found to be low. A new scanner in the office is needed, but not yet ordered. The refrigerator was ordered and will be delivered soon. The phone has been installed in the elevator. **Worship:** Protocols for COVID-19 were updated May 13. Most of the restrictions

were lifted. Communion will be monthly using the single serve containers. Fellowship after service can be hosted, however, simpler treats are encouraged; it's not a meal. AGAPE offerings need to begin again. **Women's Fellowship:** A single day Thrift Sale will be held this Friday, June 11, 2021. **Pastor's Report:** Because ministers in Webster City are leaving and others coming in, the Ministerium has not been too active. Bell ringing at Christmas may be done this year without aligning with the Salvation Army. A graveside service for Craig Vance will be held on July 10th at 10:00am. Complete Board Reports follow.

Mission Board \$1,630 was donated for One Great Hour of Sharing. Approximately 240 t-shirts were transformed into totes for the All Cultures Equal community center food pantry. Sherry was pictured in the April 6 Daily Freeman Journal delivering totes. Up to 70 families receive food at ACE on pick-up days. The t-shirt totes project is ended for now. The Backpack Program might be able to use t-shirt totes if it starts up again in the fall. Audrey contacted Larry Flaws, parks and recreation director, to see if there's an area of the city in need of trash pickup. Larry was happy for the offer of help and suggested River Street, along the railroad tracks, from Bank Street to Ohio Street. Audrey will pick up the trash bags and disposable gloves from Larry. Pastor Craig will tell Wendi Dinsdale, juvenile court officer, about the clean-up as an opportunity for young people needing to do community service work. Pastor Craig reached a Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center representative to find out what supplies they needed most. Cleaning and disinfecting products, along with paper products, ranked high. We'll ask church members to donate spring cleaning (especially for bathrooms) items, toilet paper and paper towels during all of May. We've designated Friday, June 18, 6:30-8 p.m. for the second Brownie Sundae Drive-Thru. This is the Friday before Father's Day. We chose Sunday, May 23, for the Strengthen The Church collection. We'll do another pizza supper for the men of the Beacon of Hope on May 12. Our next meeting is May 20, 4:30 p.m. at the church.

Mission Board Trash pickup near McDonald's has been rescheduled for Tuesday, June 22, 5 p.m. Audrey has the bags and gloves. The collection of cleaning and paper products continues through May, but Sherry and Lynn Leksell already have taken a load of donations to the Domestic Sexual Assault Outreach Center by delivering them to The Key thrift store in Fort Dodge. The staff will take the items to the shelter and was thrilled to receive them. Sherry will take another load at the end of the month. In October or so, we'll talk about freezable casseroles for D/SAOC as an Advent Alternative Giving Fair cause. The Brownie Sundae Drive-Thru will be Friday, June 18, 6:30-8 p.m. Darcy Swon of Enhance Hamilton County was delighted to hear that our church plans to give Drive-Thru proceeds for the food pantry match. The sign-up sheets for brownies, ice cream and toppings are on the table in Fellowship Hall. We plan to use compostable bowls and spoons again this year. The Strengthen the Church collection will be taken May 23. Relay for Life: Whether the American Cancer Society fundraiser will be totally virtual or also include a walk is yet to be determined. We plan to put out the Pickle Jar for ACS donations. Beacon of Hope: Our church will host a meal for the homeless shelter in Fort Dodge in July so will talk about it at our next meeting. For the May 12 meal, Marjorie and Wil delivered 15 large pizzas from Leon's, Webster City, 4 pans of bars, a large bag of carrots, a large container of ranch dressing, and a donation of toilet paper to the appreciative Beacon residents. Shelves by the Office: Karin will get the pop tabs to the Ronald McDonald House folks. The toothbrushes and other toiletries on the D/SAOC shelf will go with other things for the Leksells to take to D/SAOC. Marjorie will get the food items on the Food Pantry shelf to Upper Des Moines Opportunity. Next Meeting: June 15, 2 p.m., at the church.

Board of Trustees- Old Business Shawn Moran gave us a bid to repair the outside doors last fall. He was not able to get it to them because of weather. His bid was \$2500, we look for that to increase because of the increase in cost of building supplies. Nate from Lamperts has worked with Shawn in getting the materials for the doors. The materials for the NE door were ordered to see how it works, before materials are ordered for the other two doors. Shawn hopes to start the project on May 17. The Fire Inspector found out the pressure is not good in the Fire Extinguishers. Al will call Don Zehner to work on them. Note: Al is meeting with Don Zehner Monday May 10 to work on the fire extinguishers. Michele needs a new scanner for the office. Pastor Craig and Michele have checked on the pricing. The Epson Eco Tank Wireless all in one

printer was chosen. It was approved for \$200. They will order from Best Buy. The office ceiling and lights need to be redone. Tracy looking into pricing. Cost for ceiling grid, tile, and to remove old fixtures and install new LED fixtures will be \$3270. This was approved. The large refrigerator in the kitchen is not working. Jason from Home appliance Repair checked it and repairs would cost over half of a new one. It was approved by Trustees to get a new one. Joyce is working with Women's Fellowship on a new refrigerator. Note: Women's Fellowship Board is going to replace it with the same size refrigerator. Cost will be covered by their savings account and a donor. The bill from Jiffy Plumbing for the water line leak, removal of the old bathroom, and new bride's bathroom toilet is \$1,708.51. We are required by Schumacher and state to have a dedicated phone line in the elevator. Century Link did get a line to the church. Now we need to have someone bring the line in and get it to the elevator. We have been waiting for a company in Ft. Dodge to do this, or Chris McNeil is going to check it out. Pastor Craig sent in the projector for repair. The cost is \$657. A discussion was held on upgrading. Pastor Craig will be checking on pricing so we could get it in next year's budget.

New Business Looked at Lawn Care and Service contracts. We have from our current ones: Tony Jones for mowing and snow-\$45 a time. Lawn Ranger for lawn care- \$375.72 for the year. Bids received a. AW mowing- \$ 82 each time. B. Ruba's - Mowing-\$95, Snow removal \$75, yard care -\$500 a year. A motion was made and approved to keep our current service.

Next meeting: June if needed

Worship Board The topic of business was to evaluate worship service protocol for the summer. Donna gave results of the 48 adults who replied to a recent survey. She also noted the current CDC recommendations for people who have received vaccinations. Pastor Craig informed the board of the current practices at Trinity Lutheran and at Faith Methodist. The current infection rate for Covid 19 in Hamilton County is 1.6.

The board made the following decisions: Worship services will be held in the sanctuary now through the end of August at 10 am. The current mask protocol will continue for the congregation. Pastor and liturgist may go without a mask during their participation in the service. Back pews will be available for seating. Children's sermon will remain the same style with children listening from their parent's pew. Social Distancing will continue to be encouraged between households. Bathroom restrictions will be eliminated. No social coffee time will be held. By keeping social distancing recommendations of 6 feet, the congregation may socialize and visit inside the building. A/C will be used during hotter weather. Communion will be prepared with single servings.

Future communion dates will be Pentecost Sunday May 23 and June 6th. Pastor Craig will be on vacation May 27- June 3. He will provide a video sermon. Don and Gayle will be available to lead the service and be liturgist on Sunday May 30th.

The next Worship Board meeting will be called as needed.

Worship Board On May 13, the CDC changed their recommendations for fully vaccinated persons. The board emailed to reevaluate our protocols. The board made the following updated recommendations for cabinet to discuss: Worship services will be held in the sanctuary now through the end of August at 10 am, with outdoor service held once a month in the lot on the first Sunday of the month. (June 6, July 4, Aug 1) Back pews will be available for seating. Children's sermon will be held up front. Bathroom restrictions will be eliminated. Coffee may be held following worship- KISS coffees (Keep It Super Simple). A/C will be used during hotter weather. Communion will continue to be prepared with single servings. Offering collection will remain at Fellowship Hall. Ushers, Greeters and Acolytes will not function this summer. Joys and Concerns may be emailed to Pastor Craig or shout out at that service. Pastor Craig and Vicki may greet at the end of the service in Fellowship Hall. Jane will be available to prepare the elements for Communion on the 23rd and Gayle will clean up. More biodegradable containers will be ordered. Worship Board will host coffee after worship on the 23rd with the remaining cupcakes and Gayle will bring bars. Future communion dates will be Pentecost Sunday May 23 and June 6th. Pastor Craig will be on vacation May 27- June 3. He will provide a video sermon. Don and Gayle will be available to lead the service and be liturgist on Sunday May 30th.

The next Worship Board meeting will be called as needed.

Pastor's Cabinet Report - Worship: It's hard to believe that just a little over 2 months ago we resumed in-person worship services with extensive protocols...and now we are essentially back to "normal!" The CDC's surprise announcement on May 13 allowed us to resume having regular church services and coffee hour—and just in time for Graduate Recognition Sunday on May 16! That Sunday we recognized Kaelyn Butz, Jake Lahr and Kaleb Sterler during worship and the CE Board hosted a reception in their honor. On Sunday May 23rd we celebrated Pentecost. On Sunday May 30th we used another video sermon during worship as I was on a week's vacation. Sunday, June 5 we held our worship service outdoors in our vacant lot—the first of 3 outdoor worship services scheduled on the first Sundays of June, July and August.

Visitation: I have resumed care center and hospital visitations. Care center visits require an appointment. Also I am back to monthly Gospel Hour services at Southfield.

Care Center Sunday Worship Services: I have consulted with all 3 care centers in town, and they are in agreement that we can resume in-person Sunday afternoon services as before, beginning July 11. I have sent out an email to all the local pastors and churches who have participated in the past, asking who is ready to commit to returning to the worship service rotation. If we do not get enough participants, then we may not be able to resume weekly services at this time. The protocols: All 3 prefer vaccinated worship leaders, but those who are unvaccinated may participate if they mask and socially distance, except for Southfield--at this time Southfield is requiring vaccines to participate in these services, but they may relax that protocol by July. All 3 CCs will require some form of screening upon entry: temp taking, answering questions, showing proof of vaccination (if vaccinated). Windsor is requesting no more than 5 worship leaders and helpers per church service.

Christian Education: We finished our last Zoom Adult Education session on May 23, and we are now in recess for the summer. Vicki and I delivered the last set of "we care" packages to our children and youth in May; they are being discontinued for the summer. The Christian Ed Board is organizing a day event at Briggs Woods for our youth, including a dunk tank, hiking, games, an education component and a wiener roast from 10am -4 pm July 7.

WCMA: Trinity ELCA will have their new interim pastor on site this week. St Paul Lutheran has called Joseph Pierson to be their pastor. His ordination will be held June 20th. Father Steve Meyer will be retiring from St. Thomas Aquinas in July. The Summer lunch program will be a drive thru event held once weekly at the WCHS Middle School, Mondays from 11-noon beginning June 7 and ending July 26th. Each child 18 and under will receive 5 free breakfasts and 5 free lunches. No community volunteers are needed for this event. The Salvation Army Bellringing campaign appears to be finished; Dan Taylor of the SA has asked me again what we intend to do about the 2021 Bellringing campaign and since I have received only 1 reply from the other members of the WCMA in regard to complying with SA requirements in order to continue using their name and equipment, I will return the equipment to the SA Fort Dodge headquarters.

Tri-Conference UCC: the Annual meeting of the Tri-Conference will be held virtually via Zoom on June 25th and June 26th. The focus is "Creation Care: Understanding our Commitment to Eco-Justice". The event will include several workshops, participating in an article study group, listening to our guest speaker, and more! We are entitled to 2 delegates to represent us; currently we have one volunteer.

UCC General Synod: Both Stephanie Hill and I will continue our duties as General Synod delegates for the 33rd UCC General Synod, which will be held virtually from July 11-18 via Zoom. Registration is free to us as the Iowa Conference pays for us to represent them as delegates.

Memorial services: A graveside service for Sharon Luppess was held Apr 30. A memorial service for Caryl Hollingshead was held in our sanctuary on May 13th, 1:30 in the afternoon. His burial was with masonic and military honors at Graceland in the morning of the 13th. A graveside service for Karen Weir was held at Graceland Cemetery at 11 am, with a small meal following, hosted by First Baptist church. A memorial service for Barb Stearns was held in our sanctuary May 26th, with a visitation held in our Sanctuary May 25th. I have been contacted by the daughter of Craig Vance to officiate at his graveside service to be held at Graceland Cemetery on July 10 at 10 am.

Weddings: I will officiate at the wedding of Kelly Dodge (my neighbor) and Jay Sulwood on Saturday June 12. I will officiate at the wedding of Kurston Smith and Cody Long on Saturday August 21. (Neither will be held in our church)

Continuing Education: I virtually attended the Mental Health Awareness Conference held May 20th, sponsored by VDMC and CICS.

Vacation: I have asked for a week's vacation beginning Thursday, July 22 through Wednesday July 28. Vicki is having her hip replaced July 22 and I need to take time off to care for her after she returns home.

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:

