

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

As you may know, our denomination's General Synod 33 was recently held from July 11-18th. The original plan for the Synod was to meet in-person in Kansas City, but because it takes over a year to plan and create a Synod the decision was made in 2020 to host the event completely on a virtual platform—a first for our denomination. Here is a brief synopsis of the event:

The Synod began at 5 pm Sunday July 11 with a virtual worship service with the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis preaching on the intersection of faith, justice and love. Following the service, the first of 3 Plenaries began-- and for the first time we conducted official synod business entirely on-line!

The following evening activist Valarie Kaur offered a powerful keynote address where she outlined her vision of a “revolutionary love compass” — a way to change our world through the intentional practice of love which strives to see the stranger and the enemy as one sees one's self. Later in the week another keynote address was given by Sojourners leader Adam Russell Taylor, who urged us to hold out the power of the “beloved community” as an antidote to systemic racism and toxic polarization.

During the week we had the opportunity to experience two other GS 33 worship services which were the labors of many voices and many hours of work. Using top-of-the-line videographers, audio technicians, editors and musicians, worship leaders created worship services that were amazingly diverse and broad in tone and taste. While I will say that not all of the portions of the worship services spoke to me, I certainly can appreciate that others found the music and liturgy deeply moving.

The large volume of business pertinent to the operations and life of the UCC is one of the primary reasons for holding a national synod in the first place, and I will confess that I was concerned how we could possibly discuss, discern, and vote on so many matters that would come up during GS 33 if we could not gather in person! And yet according to the UCC News, GS 33 drew 715 voting delegates and almost 2,000 visitors, which is quite a turnout for a virtual Synod! Some of the highlights of the business of the GS 33 included:

- The nomination and reelection of Associate General Minister Traci Blackmon, who is a powerful voice for antiracism and social activism in our denomination.
- Eleven resolutions in which the governing body lent its voice to theological and social issues.
- A “State of the UCC” speech by our General Minister and President Rev. Dr. John Dorhaur, who commended the UCC for its faithful witness to justice issues and for our resiliency as individual churches and as a denomination while we struggled through the Covid pandemic.
- There were many, many presentations on every facet of the mission and ministry of the UCC, from the Pension Boards to the 25th anniversary of Global Ministries. There were also: over 50 workshops that could be logged onto and watched live or as a recording, opportunities to participate in more than 40 optional events, and more than 82 vendors in a virtual exhibit hall!
- GS 33 saw the “retirement” of the Three Great Loves campaign and the launch of the new all-UCC initiative named “Join the Movement,” which will focus on issues of racism and how local churches can become anti-racist churches.

All of this business was conducted through meet.ucc, a special web-based platform that delegates used to watch presentations, engage in debate, and vote on resolutions and other items of business that pertained to GS 33. I was skeptical how this would all work with so many in attendance, but the technology did not experience any significant glitches and the “voting panel” allowed vote tabulations to speedily occur. This technology will pave the way for future virtual gatherings and hybrid meetings that will now be part of the future ways we conduct business.

Also during GS 33 we took time to celebrate a number of milestones and welcome new churches to the denomination, and near the end of the event the Indiana-Kentucky Conference issued an invitation to General Synod 34 which will be held in Indianapolis in 2023.

So that in a nutshell was General Synod 33! I do have a few thoughts I want to share about the overall experience:

The UCC has been undergoing some big shifts as a denomination, and these shifts were evident throughout GS 33. The showcased leadership was amazingly diverse, with many, many women now in leadership roles at all levels of the UCC. People of color were very well represented at GS 33, as were members of the LGBTQ community and their allies. Our motto “no matter who you are, or where you are in life’s journey, you are welcome here” certainly rang true at GS 33!

We are a denomination that has become increasingly activist regarding issues of justice. While this has always been central to our denominational identity in some sense, at this synod it was clear that at least at the national level our leadership has chosen justice activism as the singular focus that defines who we are as a denomination. While many justice issues were presented at GS 33, the three that stood out to me as currently paramount to the UCC are racial justice, LGBTQ inclusion and justice, and eco-justice.

The UCC has some very talented members and leaders who are passionate about the future of our denomination. While we often bemoan the decline of the local church and the wider church in this increasingly secularized society, the UCC has many dedicated souls who envision a future for us that is alive, passionate, and working to make a difference to both UCC members and the wider world in which we both witness and serve.

As I look back on GS 33, I am reminded of the words of one of our national leaders of bygone days who called the UCC a “heady and exasperating mix!” Yet we as a denomination still have the audacity to believe that we can come together and discern what is the word and will of God in our time and place...and that is a remarkable belief to hold and act upon. And so I pray that God continues to speak to us as a denomination, even as I pray that God continues to speak to each of us as individuals, and as members of the church located at 1000 Willson Avenue in Webster City, Iowa!
–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

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:

1 – Madison Babington
2 - Bruce Perry
5 - Patty Gescheidler
7 - Richard Tudor II
12 - Jan Maxon
12 - Howard Stearns
15 - Audrey Burtnett
15 - Laurie Epps
16 - Tom Riemenschneider
18 - Debbie Jaycox
19 - Allison Yungclas
19 - Mary Van Diest
20 - Chad Elkin
21 - Mark Carlson
21 - Mary Worthington
24 - Nick Oberender
27 - Shari Rothrock
31 - Betty Ploeger
31 - Margy Wood

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

11 - Luverne & Verna Bierle
11 - Mark & Jennie Brim
23 - Don & Gretchen Bruner
31 - Jason & Amanda (Maass) Strahl



Fiscal Fitness

- Stay healthy - eat nutritious meals, exercise regularly and quit smoking
- Think stability - stay married, and don't "job hop".
- Get educated
- Live below your means
- Save regularly
- Invest widely
- Be tax smart.

Weddings We need to replace our wedding coordinators. If you would like to take on this ministry, please contact Pastor Craig or Michele.

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.

Elderbridge Agency on Aging-Volunteers Needed

Elderbridge Agency on Aging serves North Central, Northwest, and Central Iowa, currently serving a 29-county region including Hamilton County. Elderbridge provides information, guidance, and assistance in finding services for older Iowans and disabled Iowans to live with dignity, well-being, and independence. Services offered include respite services, case management and counseling, in-home meals delivered, support groups, legal assistance, older worker employment programs and training, and other services. Our local Elderbridge group is looking for volunteers! Volunteer opportunities include delivering meals, medical transportation, groundskeeping, errand buddy, Food Bank runner, volunteer chore service, volunteer companion, translator/interpreter, educational

technology volunteer, and other opportunities not listed. To learn more or to volunteer, please contact Laura Allen at 1-800- 243-0678 or email lallen@elderbridge.org.

Let's Eat – Now!

Thanks for all your generous donations! These items are going to local food pantries.



Thanks

We would like to thank you for your generosity toward the Funding Future Leaders Scholarship. Because of your giving, we were able to award a \$5,000 scholarship for the 2021-22 academic year. Thank you for your faithfulness and support! FFL Oversight Committee

Beacon of Hope

Thanks for all the donations we were able to serve a meal to the men at Beacon of Hope on July 27. Sloppy joes, baked beans, bars, carrots and cantaloupe prepared by Andrea Mosbach and Karin Yungclas, joined by husbands Ed and Alan. It was a pleasant experience and the men were grateful.

BRIGGS WOODS YOUTH DAY! WEDNESDAY, JULY 7





Treasurer's Report

INCOME	June	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$12,789.00	\$96,030.31
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$12,789.00	\$96,030.31
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,436.67	\$8,519.98
Pastoral Services	7,283.92	43,061.87
Maintenance and Repairs	4,864.89	15,145.95
Church Office	3,087.28	17,388.31
Music Ministry	257.13	5,100.61
Christian Education	0.00	120.85
Local Ministry	16.67	16.67
Misc. Expenses	67.26	361.66
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$17,013.82	\$89,715.90

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Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of: