

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

“..And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” –Matt. 10:42

Recently I was in Fort Dodge and I stopped at Aldi's to get trash bags and a few other items. While I was standing in the checkout line, I noticed a couple attempting to purchase 2 loaves of bread and a half gallon of milk. The checker rang up the items, and the man immediately grabbed them from the cart and hurried out the door while the woman produced a debit card and swiped to pay. The cashier paused while staring at her screen, and then without a word swiveled the smaller customer screen toward the woman and pointed to what was written there. It wasn't hard to guess what it said, since the woman let out a gasp, moaned, and hurriedly left the store.

Now if you have ever shopped at Aldi's you know declined debit cards aren't that rare of an occurrence. Yet whether it is because of inept management of one's debit account or genuine poverty, it inevitably leads to embarrassment for the customer and inconvenience to those in line. But yesterday it was different. The checker sat silently staring into space wondering if they were going to return with the bread and milk...when the man in front of me leaned over and asked her, “How much was it?”

“Three dollars and eighty-one cents,” she replied, and hearing this, the man handed her a twenty and said, “I'll pay for it.” The checker raised an eyebrow, and asked, “Are you sure?” to which the man curtly replied “Yes”...and so the checker completed the transaction, made change for the twenty, and asked him if he wanted the receipt. “No thanks,” was all he said as he waited for her to ring his sale, and after paying for his goods he hurried from the store. I then watched her ring up my sale, and after paying for it I hurried out as well--just as the couple was breathlessly re-entering with the milk and bread.

As charity goes \$3.81 is a small pittance, and perhaps that is why the man paid for the couple's food without knowing whether they were truly needy, or just poor money managers, or worse—grifters running a scam at Aldi's. Perhaps he paid it out of a sense of impatience so he could get out of the store and go home. Or perhaps he was a disciple and so he was helping these folks in the name of a disciple. Who knows? All I know is that he paid for their bread and milk and departed...a good deed done without hesitation, without weighing the pros and cons, without wanting a background check or the assurance that his goodwill was not being misused. And seeing this, I wonder how many countless other “cups of cold water” are offered every day by anonymous folks who simply act on the impulse to help, without thought of risk or reward. Perhaps is it these many anonymous cups of cold water freely given, rather than the large endowments and gifts of giant charities and foundations, that make possible the flow of the Living Water that runs through our common life, keeping us human, humble, and kind-hearted...and keeping us connected to the Primal Goodwill that has given us Living Water, and bread, and milk, since the beginning.

To return to my story...I was almost to my car when I saw the couple leaving the store, hollering at someone in the parking lot while holding up their bread and milk as if they had just won the lottery. I wish the man who had paid for their groceries could have seen their smiles—it would have been a great reward for his kindness. For whether they deserved it or not, the \$3.81 boon they had received at Aldi's that day, and the thought that they had been smiled upon by someone in this weary world of ours, made them in turn smile in a way that made my heart glad.

How often in our lives do we have the opportunity to offer someone a cold cup of water, and in so doing bring a smile to their face—and the good news that someone has noticed and cared for them? How often do we count the cost of our compassion when the gift of our kindness, our generosity, our

LOVE is its own reward—a reward that aligns us with the kind, generous, and loving soul of the cosmos that we call “God?” In these days of skepticism and suspicion, of means testing and wide profit margins, every cold cup of water offered to the little ones of this world is the one drink that will truly satisfy our thirst for life as it could be, life as it should be...life lived with one another and FOR one another as God, and Christ, intended it to be lived. May we all be blessed to be able to offer many cups of cold water in our earthly lives, and as we are blessed with a cup or two in return, may we give thanks for all the generous hearts which make such small acts *among the greatest acts of all.*
 –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 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**



Fall Allergies - Another Sneezing Season.

- Wear a mask when you mow the lawn, rake leaves, or work outdoors.
- Clean furnace air filters before you start heating your home.
- Use a dehumidifier to retard mold growth.
- Clean window sills, shelves, and other places where dust collects.
- Shower and wash your hair before you go to bed.
- Wash bedding weekly and dry laundry indoors.
- If possible, stay indoors between 10 AM and 4PM when pollen is high.

SEPTEMBER



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 1 - Sunshine Duffy
- 2 – Ayla Jackson
- 6 - Debra Carlson
- 7 - Brandon Lahr
- 8 - Vada Rae Williams
- 9 - Robbie Maass
- 16 - Morgan Struchen
- 20 - Mary Byrne
- 26 - Kayla Nelson
- 28 - Dena Rohmiller
- 30 - Mark Brim

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

- 1 - Ron & Laurie Epps
- 1 - Travis & Stacy Wearda
- 18 - Les & Leanna Ploeger
- 18 - Jim & Cindy Henning
- 19 - Landen & Betty Ploeger

Church Protocols

Due to the emergence of the Delta variant and updated guidelines from the CDC, the cabinet has voted to accept and implement some new recommendations from the Worship Board with regards to our worship services, effective immediately.

Until further notice, all services will be held outside in the vacant lot as weather permits. If weather doesn't permit, a call will be made to move the service indoors. If the service is held indoors, we will require masking, there will be no singing, and we will refrain from having coffee fellowship following worship for the time being.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding during these challenging and frustrating times.
 Nick Oberender

Thrift Sale

We will not hold a thrift sale this fall due to the increase in Covid-19 cases.

CE postpones youth programs—for now

Christian Education board met Wednesday, August 18, and reluctantly decided to postpone fall youth activities and indoor adult Sunday School. Postponement includes Rally Day festivities September 12, KLAB and Confirmation starting September 15, and children Sunday School beginning September 19.

The situation will be monitored closely and evaluated each month. We hope to be able to resume normal program schedules by Thanksgiving. We plan to sponsor an outdoor living Nativity scene during the advent season in lieu of a Christmas program.

Meanwhile, we will resume the monthly “we care” package program we used last year during the shutdown. Each package includes an activity sheet, a treat, and other items.

Board members noted that at least the outdoor “day camp” July 7 at Briggs Woods went as scheduled and was deemed a great success. Pastor Craig, Wil Groves, and Dawn Holdgrafer led the event. Activities for the 14 participants included scavenger hunt, presentation by park naturalist John Laird, litter pick-up service project, dunk tank and water fight, and birdhouse build. Arden Schlitter and Luverne Bierle provided the fire and helped with the hotdog roast and s’mores lunch.

Adult Sunday School Resumes--Outdoors!

Due to the ongoing pandemic the Adult Sunday School Class will NOT meet in-person indoors until further notice. However, starting September 12 we will resume meeting outdoors in our vacant lot following our outdoor worship services! Materials will be sent out in advance, and following our worship service we will circle up to the south of our garage and hold class there. If the weather does not allow in-person meeting outdoors then we will Zoom Sunday evening at 7 pm. If you have not participated in Adult Sunday School in the past but want to join the group, please let Pastor Craig know so he can send you the materials in advance.

Appeal for Haiti

The United Church of Christ is issuing a **call to action to help the people of Haiti**. A massive 7.2 earthquake on August 14th has killed nearly 1,300 people. To donate to this appeal, mail a check made payable to the United Church of Christ, to 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115. Be sure to note “Haiti Appeal” on your check in the memo section, or in an attached letter. You may also donate to First Congo with the words “Haiti Appeal” on the memo line.

Confirmation Class of 2021-2022 to be Delayed

Attention Youth in seventh grade and older who have not yet been confirmed! A letter from Pastor Craig was sent out to you advising that because of the uncertainty surrounding the delta variant the Christian Ed Board has voted to delay beginning our confirmation program. Our hope is that we can begin classes soon—in the meantime please let Pastor Craig know if you are planning to attend confirmation classes when they begin. Thank you!

Beacon of Hope Meal

On September 28th, Mission Board will serve the evening meal for the residents of Beacon of Hope. The menu will be based on Dorothy Stearn's Beef Stew recipe. Lists will be out for donations the 1st Sunday of September.

CROP Walk Adapted

Late September is the traditional time for the CROP Walk. Because of COVID's resurgence, the Mission Board will put out the Pickle Jar on September 19, instead of doing a community walk. The Pickle Jar will be near the bulletins – whether we're worshipping outdoors or indoors. CROP fights hunger at home and around the world. Twenty-five percent of the money collected is donated to Upper Des Moines Opportunity in Webster City. The other 75 percent goes to international programs through Church World Service. The CROP Project was organized in 1947 when farmers were asked to donate food and seed crops to folks in post-World War II Europe and Asia, a program that became known as the Christian Rural Overseas Program - CROP. Hungry

people worldwide thank you – and so do we! –

The Mission Board

Scholarships

Scholarships were awarded to Karl Heimberger, Riley Nelson, Gracie Smith, Hannah Stirling, Carl Swanson, Jake Lahr, Jonah Hindt, Alexis Tudor, Kylie Crystal, Benjamin Sterler, and Jenna Short.

Neighbors in Need

Traditionally, Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Additionally, in 2020-2021, a Covid-19 relief fund was established. Churches could apply for micro-grants to meet their congregations' needs during these unprecedented times, and some of the Neighbors in Need budget assisted in making these available.

First Congregational UCC will accept an offering for Neighbors in Need on Sunday, October 3rd. Neighbors in Need helps make Unfailing Love possible. For this to occur, it needs your support.

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.

Southfield Wellness Community Hog Roast

Southfield Wellness Community at 2416 Des Moines St. will host a hog roast on Sunday, September 12 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. It will be a covid-friendly event with to-go boxes only. A free will donation will be taken when you drive thru to pick up your meals!

Time to Eat!

We asked for get-supper-on-the-table-fast items for the St. Paul and Trinity Lutheran food pantries for our July collection – and you responded big time! Thanks so much for 83 speedy-meal boxes, jars and cans! You brought in peanut butter, Hamburger Helper, cans of tuna, Bush's baked beans and so much more. Hungry tummies thank you – and so do we! –

The Mission Board



Thanks

► I want to say thank you very much for investing in my education. I am immensely grateful to receive this financial gift. As for my educational plans, I will be attending Iowa Central and narrowing down my future career paths that are involved with theatre. This scholarship will allow me to enroll in extra classes that will benefit my theatre experience

at Iowa Central. May God bless you for your generosity and kindness that you have shown to me and my family.
In gratitude, Jonah Hindt

► I am honored to receive this scholarship. It will help me in my education by helping to pay for textbooks.
Love you all, Alex Swanson

► Thank you for the generous scholarship. I greatly appreciate the help in funding my continuing education as I start my journey through vet school.
Kylie Crystal

► Thank you very much for awarding me a scholarship. The money is very much appreciated and needed. Thanks to your donation I will be able to continue my education with a more comfortable financial situation. This award is very important to my family and I as I work towards completing my degree at Iowa State University. Once again, thank you very much.
Ben Sterler

Our Northeast doorway recently underwent a renovation! Water damage and rot made extensive repairs necessary, and Shawn Morran did a fine job of restoring the 1890 entrance to its pristine state. Stop by and take a look!



The peacemaker's quilting group is donating 12 quilts to the Elderbridge "Santa for Seniors" program. RSVP volunteers will work in partnership with Elderbridge and assemble and deliver these care bags to homebound seniors this Christmas, making their Holidays much brighter!



Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$13,490.00	\$109,520.31
Other Income	<u>0.00</u>	<u>.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$13,490.00	\$109,520.31
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$9,936.65
Pastoral Services	8,210.92	51,272.79
Maintenance and Repairs	1,015.93	16,161.88
Church Office	2,524.84	19,913.15
Music Ministry	257.13	5,357.74
Christian Education	0.00	120.85
Local Ministry	0.00	16.67
Misc. Expenses	<u>52.38</u>	<u>414.04</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,477.87	\$103,193.77

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1000 Willson Avenue
Webster City, IA 50595
Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

