

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

“God has made everything beautiful in its own time.” –Ecclesiastes 3:11

Lately my mood has not been the best, and I attribute that in part to the continuing pandemic and in part to the days of gloom that have marked the turning of the season toward winter. The shortened daylight and the gray skies have been dampening my spirit more than I care to confess...and yet when I am out walking or driving my mood brightens as I notice the beautiful fall foliage this year! The trees have certainly taken their time turning, and I am impressed with the gorgeous colors we are enjoying. Their beauty reminds me of a poster in my office which was a KLAB art project back in 2018: it was created by brushing watercolors on leaves the kids had collected, then using the colored leaves to imprint poster paper so that it became a Fall collage of autumn beauty. In the middle of the poster are these words from Ecclesiastes: “God has made everything beautiful in its own time.” I keep the poster to remind me of the beauty of fall and the beauty of God’s intention that we enjoy such beauty as a gift; a kind of “love letter” from God--not written with words but with deep reds, brilliant yellows, and the marvelous interplay of light and shadow that is both breathtaking and wondrous.

The beauty of the natural world has long been a pathway leading to deeper faith, but in our modern world this pathway seems less travelled than before. This I believe is due in part to how we have been trained by science to see nature primarily as a product of impersonal natural forces that do not carry supernatural intent. Fall leaves may be beautiful, but that doesn’t make them a miracle or a love letter from anyone, let alone God...they are simply a product of natural decay processes as the seasons change and deciduous trees shed leaves for the long winter. We may appreciate their beauty, but there is nothing personal or supernatural about such “natural” events.

And yet this year the beauty of fall keeps *calling* to me...hinting at a divine love that delights in bestowing beauty on anyone who has *eyes to see*. Time and time again when I am walking or driving and observing the magnificence of the fall foliage, breathing in the fresh fall air and enjoying the sunshine...there is this sense that all of this beauty and wonder is an intentional gift; a material expression of the joy and the creative exuberance of GOD who offers such beauty as an act of love...a “love letter” written in autumn leaves and azure-blue skies...a love letter reminding us that this world and this life are deeply moving, deeply personal—and yes—deeply mystical and filled with hidden meaning and soaring purpose.

This month we will observe Thanksgiving, All Saints Sunday, and the first Sunday of Advent as part of our worship life together. What these observances have in common is the profound sense of gratitude we can experience as we take stock of life and realize that all of THIS exists as an expression of God’s divine love. The blessings of the good land; the blessings of loved ones—both living and dead-- who have blessed our lives with love; the blessings of a Son given to us for the sake of love...all of these gifts, like autumn leaves dancing in the wind, are signs of the eternal love of God. To sense in some inutterable way that divine love is at the very heart and foundation of our lives is a deep “knowing” that is at the very heart of faith: a knowing that is less like a testable truth and more like a revelation glimpsed in a golden leaf floating to the ground...before nature completes her processes, and turns this love letter into compost.

If you have not yet received your “love letter” from God this fall, I urge you to take time to get out and enjoy the colors of the season before they are gone! For while I cannot guarantee that you will get your letter as you do so, my hope is that this pathway to faith will bless you with new eyes to see as it did the unknown author of Ecclesiastes, who saw God’s hand and heart in the beauty of this world. This month as we gather at our Thanksgiving tables, light candles for our departed saints, and

prepare to hang the greens in anticipation of the birth of God's great love letter to the world, may we all be touched by the beauty of the love of God: a love that fills our world--and seeks to fill our lives!
-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:

4 - Chase Berhow
5 - Joely Gilbert
6 - Amanda Kalkwarf
9 - Keith Holdgrafer
11 - Dilcia Franco
13 - Holly Riemenschneider
13 - Katie Sonsalla
13 - Oliver Sonsalla
13 - Andrea Mosbach
14 - Emily Maass
18 - Donna Ryherd
20 - Jayleen Burgos
20 - Laurie Smith
24 - Maggie Kennedy
25 - Diane Vasquez
26 - Andrew Wehrhan
27 - Susan Andrew
27 - Glenda Wehrhan

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

21 - Mark & Deb Carlson
22 - Tom & Holly Riemenschneider
25 - Arden & Dalene Schlitter
29 - Ray & Diane Vasquez



Indoor Activities that keep you moving -

- Go dancing
- Power walk around indoor shopping areas
- Do household chores that let you move your arms and legs
- Walk flights of stairs
- Take a yoga, tai chi or Pilates class
- Sign up for a self-defense class
- Visit a library and check out exercise videos to use at home
- Join a community sports league
- Play an electronics sports fitness game on your TV or computer
- Volunteer to lead walking and stretching sessions.

Congregational Meeting

There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, November 14 to vote on the proposed budget for 2022. We need a quorum of 40 for this vote. Absentee ballots are available in the church office.

Confirmation Bios for 2021

► Hello, my name is Isabelle P. McNiel, my parents are Cara and Matt Scott. I have a baby sister named Luna. I have a dog named Gaige and a cat named Elsa. My hobby is arts and crafts. My main goal in life is to be successful. Some fun things I remember doing in First Congregational UCC is when we had a field day with water balloons and a water dunk chamber that was fun.

► My name is Amanda Lahr. My parents are Nate and Linda Lahr. I have 3 siblings, Zack, Brandon, and Jake Lahr. I have lived in Webster City my entire life. I go to WCMS, my favorite subject is reading. I play volleyball and participate in choir and band. I plan on playing basketball in the winter. As long as I can remember I've been a part of UCC. I really enjoyed KLAB so I am looking forward to confirmation.

► My name is Hailey Brim and I go to school at Webster City Middle School. I live on a farm NE of town and I have two dogs and 1 cat. I play volleyball and softball and I love it. I couldn't give you anything if you asked what I wanted to be when I am older, and I am okay with that. My dad went to this church while growing up and now it is my turn. I love hanging out with my friends on weekends or any chance I get. I like being productive and staying active.

► My name is Zack. My siblings are Jake, Brandon, and Amanda. My pet's name is Oreo, she can be kind of a pain but she's great to everyone but us. I live in Webster City, Iowa. I do a lot of sports including football, soccer, and I'm going to do basketball.

► My name is Brayden, mom's name is Jill, my step dad's name is Patrick, and my sister's name is Madison. I live by Sunset and I have lived there for almost six years. I go to Webster City Middle School. I play football, basketball, soccer, and baseball. My favorite subject is PE and Math. I want to be a farmer but I kind of already am a farmer because I drive my grandpa's tractor and semi. I like to play sports and farm and play with my friends.

No KLAB --November 17 and 24

There will be no KLAB on November 17 and 24 due to schools dismissing 2 hours early on those days.

All Saints Sunday November 21

All Saints Day is a time to remember those departed "saints" who have shaped and blessed our lives in so many ways. On Sunday, November 21, we will observe All Saints Sunday during worship by reading the names of our departed congregation members who have died in the past year. Following their remembrance, individuals and families will be invited to come to the front of the sanctuary to light candles in memory of loved ones and friends who have departed. The departed saints of this congregation whom we will remember during this year's All Saint's Sunday are:

Genevieve Carroll, Caryl "Doc" Hollingshead, Karen Weir, Barb Stearns, and Mark Vance.

Advent Begins—November 28

Sunday, November 28 is our first Sunday in the season of Advent, and we are again asking for

volunteers (families or groups of friends) to lead the Advent Candle Liturgy. If you are willing to help with this important part of our Advent worship please sign the sheet that will be posted by the church office.

Neighbors in Need

We raised a total of \$645 for Neighbors in Need thanks to your generosity.

Medicare

Open enrollment is until December 7. Make sure you have coverage that meets your needs. SHIP can help you sort things out 832-7769.

Alternative Giving

Mission Board is planning on alternative giving options for the weeks of Advent. More information will be in the bulletin.

Hanging of the Greens—November 21

Mark your calendars! Following worship on Sunday, November 21, we will again bring out the Christmas decorations and spend some time beautifying our church in preparation for the birth of Jesus. Please plan to stay and help with one of the most enjoyable activities of the year! Note: this year we plan to decorate on the Sunday before Advent begins so that our church will be decorated on the First Sunday of Advent. Also, due to concerns about covid we will not have a pizza party following the decorating this year.

KLAB Halloween Party

On October 27th KLAB and THE confirmation class had a joint Halloween party in fellowship Hall. There were plenty of games and goodies--and mummies!

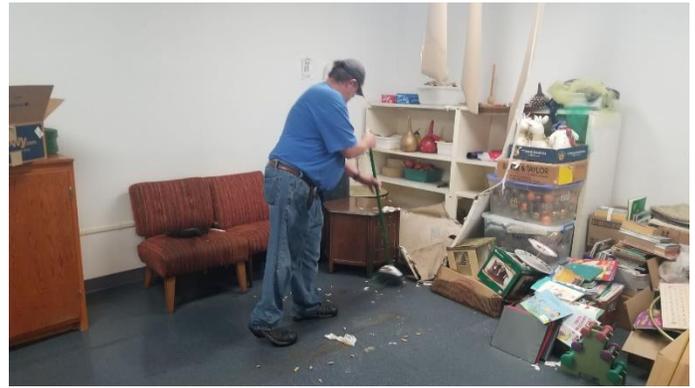




Water damage

On Tuesday October 19th, Curt McCoskey discovered water leaking in the lower level of the church due to a ruptured pipe in the ceiling of the ORFF room. Service Master speedily came and began a drying process to prevent mold and mildew from growing. Unfortunately, the water damaged most of the thrift sale storage items in the ORFF room, and so they needed to be disposed of. At this time only one bathroom is operational in the church!





Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$9,697.20	\$134,282.51
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,697.20	\$134,282.51
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$12,769.99
Pastoral Services	14,723.44	72,056.15
Maintenance and Repairs	4,763.94	23,733.42
Church Office	3,452.19	26,449.35
Music Ministry	349.99	6,050.57
Christian Education	0.00	120.85
Local Ministry	0.00	16.67
Misc. Expenses	108.42	528.88
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$24,814.65	\$141,725.88

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on October 12, 2021

Members Present:

Moderator: Nick Oberender	Pastor: Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator: Joyce Gelhaus	Trustees: Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.:	Women's Fellowship: Joyce Gelhaus
Finance: Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:
Staff/Parish: Holly Riemenschneider	Worship: Donna Ryherd
Christian Ed: Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism: Patty Gescheidler
Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:

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 September 2021 Cabinet meeting were approved via the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: Offerings for August were \$9,097.20 and expenses were \$23,966.58. Expenses are inflated to an error in the Conference billing for Craig's retirement. That bill was paid, but there is still enough in the checking account so no transfer from the General Fund was needed. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded that the report be put to audit. The motion passed.

Pending Business:

2022 Budget The budget for 2022 was reviewed and discussed. The 2022 budget is about \$4,500.00 larger than last year. Tracy Wehrhan moved that the budget be approved and Vicki Blaufuss seconded the motion. The motion passed and the 2022 budget will be presented to the congregation for final approval. The Congregational Budget Meeting is set for November 14, 2021 after service.

Worship Protocols Worship Board suggested changes to the protocols covering indoor/outdoor services, singing, coffee, and service start time. The discussion covered the lack of a choir – since Sunshine Duffy recently cancelled it because of limited singers, though special singing is still possible. Sunday school does not have enough young folks and Adult Sunday school can meet from 9:00 to 9:45. Tracy Wehrhan moved that service be moved indoors beginning the 17th of October with a 10:00 start time; masking, social distancing and singing are optional; with coffee possible after service. Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed. Outside groups, though, are still not allowed to meet in the building.

Nominating Committee There are 9 positions to fill on the various boards and committees. The spreadsheet will be in Fellowship Hall this Sunday.

Board Summaries:

Christian Education: Since there are no children able to attend Sunday School, it will not be held. Last week there was a KLAB reunion and 11 children attended with 1 confirmand. Masks were optional since it's very hard to understand children with masks on. 'We Care' bags are still going out to kids either too young or too old for KLAB. **Evangelism:** Cloth is okay for the activity bags as they do not transmit viruses/germs very well. Usher duties have changed a bit as only 1 person may be needed to hand out bulletins, count attendance, and tidy up after service. 'We Care' cards are being sent also. **Finance:** Met October 6 to work on the budget to be presented to the Cabinet. **Mission:** Beacon of Hope meal was served on September 27th. The beef stew, cornbread and bars were received well. Stepping Forward Romania presentation will be January 13th given by Steve Mather. Pizza will be served. The CROP Walk pickle jar set out September 19th netted \$455.00 and Neighbors in Need collection was \$620.00. Alternative Giving Fair events were discussed. Helping resettle Afghan refugees is also being discussed. More information will be forthcoming. **Staff Parish:** 2022 budget items were discussed at the last meeting. **Trustees:** Have not met in October. Further repairs/painting on the front and east doors are needed. Roof repair is also underway. **Worship:** November 21st is All Saints Celebration Sunday. Projector repairs are slow because the companies being very busy. Plans for Hanging of the Greens are in the works. **Women's Fellowship:** Did not meet in October because there was no business to discuss. **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Craig thanked the congregation for the card and gift basket he received for Pastor Appreciation Day on October 10. He will lead a church service at Southfield Care Center this Sunday, October 17. Folks have expressed interest in having Adult Sunday School indoors before service. The confirmation class will have 4 students and April 10, 2022 will be Confirmation Sunday. Ecumenical Human Needs approved 18 of 24 families for financial assistance. There is no information on the Backpack Program yet. Audio recorded services will now have a separate link to any copyrighted music for the service to avoid copyright infringement.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Worship Board 1. Craig will survey choir members on their desire to sing in small groups inside without masks and/or as a choir. Singing inside by congregation with masks may resume if cabinet approves. This be taken to cabinet.

2. Next Communion will be Sunday October 3, 2021, Jane will prepare, Donna and Gayle will bless and serve as Craig will be recovering from surgery. Sermon/message will be given by Donna.

3. All Saints Celebration will be Sunday November 21, 2021

4. Projector maintenance was updated. We are waiting for bids from two companies.

5. Next Worship Board Meeting will be Tuesday October 19 by email.

Donna Ryherd, Chairperson

Finance Board Each board budget proposals were discussed regarding projected amounts used through July and what totals would be at the end of the year. Insurance items were discussed and

amounts inserted for these items. Motion was made by Duane and seconded by Tracy to forward the budget as submitted to the cabinet with all members voting in favor.

Mission Board: Beacon of Hope: Stephanie Hill delivered the September 28 meal to the homeless shelter in Fort Dodge. Karin, Al Yungclas and Andrea Mosbach helped with preparation and loading of the meal. The congregation donated stew ingredients, pans of cornbread, and bars. Budget: Sherry submitted the Mission Board budget to the Church Office: \$17,000 for Our Church's Wider Mission, \$250 for Mayflower Community, \$150 for Mission Board expenditures. Prior to our request in 2020 for the 2021 church budget, our OCWM budgeted giving was \$19,000. Because Covid protocols have continued to restrict church gatherings and giving, the Mission Board voted at our August meeting to continue the reduced giving of \$17,000 for a second year only. CROP Walk: Michele Omvig reported the final tally was \$455. Neighbors in Need: \$620. Advent Alternative Giving Fair: Discussion will continue next meeting, but here's the tentative list of giving events. November 29, Stepping Forward Romania – Karin volunteered to organize the project of contributing to gifts for orphans. December 6, Casseroles for the Domestic and Sexual Outreach Center – Sherry talked with D/SAOC staff, who said that any size and any kind of freezable casseroles would be appreciated by shelter residents. The casseroles should be in disposable pans and covered with aluminum foil, with information on prep (e.g., name of dish, main ingredients, oven temperature, cooking time) taped on top. All of the casseroles donated will be delivered at one time. December 13, Almost Home No-Kill Animal Shelter – Pastor Craig noted this has been a favorite for the church youth. They will determine the project, and the Mission Board will assist. December 20, Yet to be determined.

Pastor's Cabinet Report *Worship:* We continue to worship outdoors and we are fortunate that the weather has cooperated thus far! On October 3 Donna Ryherd and members of the Worship Board led the service with Donna preaching the message due to my absence. They also served Holy Communion to observe World Communion Sunday. Melissa Hindt asked for 3 weeks of leave from accompanist duties, and while she was gone Kolleen Taylor graciously played in her absence. We are now preparing to wind down Sunday outdoor services and return indoors. A poll was taken of choir members gauging their willingness to return to choir as well as their availability; 5 women and 5 men indicated they would sing as their schedules allowed. Sunshine has sent the members an email with her thoughts, suggesting that due to our low census the choir only sing for special services rather than every week.

Also--a huge thank you for thinking of me on Pastor Appreciation Sunday!! I love the card and the fruit/veggie basket!

Care Center Sunday Worship Services: Southfield has returned to sporadic care center worship services, moving their Tuesday Gospel Hour to Sundays at 1 pm. I will be leading a Sunday service at Southfield on October 17.

Christian Education: KLAB has resumed, beginning with a KLAB reunion in our vacant lot on October 6, from 3:30-5 pm! There were games, pumpkin carving, some-mores and other treats, a cupcake walk and a scavenger hunt. We had 11 children in attendance! Thanks to Vicki Blaufuss, Susan Meinders, and Wil Groves for organizing and leading the event, and thanks to Luverne Bierle for supplying the fire and helping kids make their some-mores. KLAB will continue on a weekly basis, and we will follow our traditional format. Treats are needed weekly, and there is a signup sheet in Fellowship Hall to volunteer to bring them. Also, the KLAB leaders and teachers conferred and decided that indoor masking for the children will not be required, and a text was sent to all parents advising them of this decision.

Confirmation begins Wednesday October 18 at the same time as KLAB; 3:30-5 pm. We have 4 students: Amanda and Zach Lahr, Hailey Brim, and Brayden Babington. We will begin by meeting weekly, gauge our progress and adjust our schedules as needed. April 10 (Palm Sunday) will be Confirmation Sunday.

WCMA: We again met Sept 14 at St. Paul's Lutheran. Sharon Perry attended the meeting to give us an update on the Ecumenical Human Needs Fund. This year EHN has helped 18 families (48 people) and denied assistance to 6 families (15 people) for various reasons. Current expenditures for assistance in 2021 totals \$5280.45. Balances

on Hand: Morrison Trust--\$11,465.59, General Fund--\$8734.61. Also we have 2 new donor churches—after Father Anane of St. Thomas, and Pastor Tony Streigle of WC Church of Christ heard Sharon's presentation they went back to their churches and encouraged them to donate to the EHN! The school backpack program is still in the works, but no distribution yet. Pastor Joe Pierson has indicated that he would be interested in becoming the next WCMA treasurer.

Continuing Ed: I attended by Zoom the Ames UCC Theologian in Residence program held September 18, which hosted Dr. Karen King, who present on the topic of Jesus as Light of the world, and "the challenges of truth in our time".

I also participated in a Webinar sponsored by the UCC Insurance Boards on copyright concerns in ministry. What was concerning to learn was that music and literary agents now employ web crawlers to search the internet for violations of copyrighted material use--including during livestreamed worship services! There are fines from \$500 to \$30,000 dollars per incident, so we are no longer sending out audio recordings containing copyrighted music. Instead, links to the music are provided by email and the listener can access the music by clicking on the links. This does make for a less seamless audio recording, but it is necessary to prevent copyright infringement on our part.

Surgery: I took a few days off to recover from hernia surgery, which was October 1.

The breakdown of my ministry since September 10:

Worship services led:4; Christian Ed:4; Meetings:8; Visitation :4; Continuing Ed:

The Cabinet meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

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:

