

November 2022 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwlc.org/>

“You are the Light of the world...”—Matthew 5:14

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...”—Hebrews 12:1

Who taught you how to walk? You did—with help.

Who taught you how to run? You did—with help.

Who is teaching you how to run your race; to live your earthly life? You are—with help.

The myth of the self-made man or woman is just that—a myth. When you learned to walk, you did not learn to walk alone. You had encouragers; you had helpers to hold your hands for balance; you had comforters who held you and dried your tears when you fell and hurt yourself.

When you learned to run, you didn't learn alone. You had a brother or a sister running with you. You had playground friends urging you to run like the wind when you played tag or baseball. You had coaches instructing you how to run at your best.

And who is teaching you to run your race in life? Who is teaching you how to live with purpose, with discipline, with courage, with joy? YOU ARE. You are learning how to run this race called human life...but you are not learning alone. Thank God, none of us are learning alone!

As you have run your earthly race you have had family helping you by imparting life lessons to you, sharing their love with you, encouraging you to be who you are—the BEST you can be. Notable teachers have surely helped you run your race—teachers whom you have looked up to, teachers who saw your gifts and encouraged you to grow them; teachers who believed in you, and you in them! Close friends have shown you not only what a blessing friendship is, but also how to be a real friend. Strangers have helped you run your race in chance encounters that offered opportunities to learn who you are in relationship to people you don't know. Leaders have helped you run your race, whether it's a political leader or community leader or spiritual leader whose courage, integrity, and life values are a source of inspiration for your race. Healers have helped you run your race, whether it has been a doctor or nurse, a therapist, a chaplain, a prayer partner...someone who has helped you get well, helped bind up your hidden wounds, and helped you regain hope and well-being again.

Who else is helping you run your race? What about the departed saints of our faith? Saints like Noah, or Abraham, or Ruth, or David? Saints like the Hebrew prophets, who were courageous enough to speak truth to power and to insist that justice was God's will for all people? Saints like the 12 disciples, whose earthiness and human weaknesses remind us that none of us is too ordinary, too flawed, too HUMAN to be called and changed by God so that we can take part in God's healing and saving work in the world?

How about the saints in your life whose lived faith has shaped your faith? Perhaps it was Sunday school teacher, a past pastor, or a “pillar” of this church. It might have been a parent or grandparent who walked the walk of discipleship. It may have been someone seated next to you in a pew who has helped you run your race by their commitment to running their race...with faith and hope.

On Sunday, November 20, we will observe All Saints Sunday. It is the day we remember the departed saints of the church universal, our own particular departed saints from this congregation, and the departed saints of our own personal lives. As is our custom, on November 20 we will remember our departed saints by lighting a candle for them, by speaking their names, by remembering how they lived, and *by remembering how they have helped us run our races.* We do

this, at least in part, because it's easy to forget how much Light we have been offered by others who were busy running their races, and yet were never too busy to help us with ours.

November will be a busy month for us all, which to my mind makes it important that we intentionally set aside some time to think about the races we have been running and how we have been helped by so many as we run our races. As we approach All Saints Sunday, I urge you give thanks for your cloud of witnesses—those bearers of Light who have helped you run your race...

And I urge you to recommit to running your race so that you can add your Light to theirs, and in doing that be a part of the great cloud of witnesses that others will look to as they in turn run their races: races you will help them to run because of your example and support. —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
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Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. 269-7210
Church's e-mail: administrative.office@fcuccwc.org
Dale Olson: Stephen Ministry Ldr 839-5619
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

Parish Nurse News

Are you an RSI (repetitive stress injury) risk?
Practice good posture.
Take frequent breaks.
Use the right tools for the job.
Keep your hands and body warm and relaxed.
Warm up and stretch before you start.
Strengthen your muscles with exercise.
Eat well.
Manage stress.

Congregational Meeting

Join us for our Congregational Meeting on November 6 following worship. We will vote on the budget and on changes made to the constitution.

Advent

Keep the following dates in mind for the Advent season.

Mission Board is again hosting an Alternative Giving Fair, which will begin November 27 and run through December 18 in Fellowship Hall. The first Sunday, November 27th KLAB will have a sock and mitten tree. The next week, December 4, we will fulfil requests by Romanian children who need items. On December 11, we will be collecting funds for the Native American Heritage Association. Funds are needed to provide warm clothes, heaters and other winter necessities. The final week, December 18, we'd like to collect/assemble hygiene kits for Beacon of Hope residents. There will be much more information about each of these collections coming soon. And we thank you for your continued support.

The Mission Board

Advent Begins—November 27

Sunday, December 1 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.

ANGEL TREE

The angel tree will be part of the WC community this year under new leadership, which is bringing some changes. What is not changing is that we will have a tree in our church to make it easy for you to take a name and shop for that child. The tree will be up Sunday Nov. 6 so you will have the opportunity to get a name early and shop for those early bargains! So look for the tree starting in November!

All Saints Sunday November 20

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 20, 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: Pat Kesler, and Alan Joseph Fiala.

Decorate the Church for Christmas—Nov. 20

Mark your calendars! Following worship on Sunday, November 20, 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! And as an added bonus, following the decorating of the church the Worship Board will be serving chili and pizza!

PECANS ARE HERE!

You can start planning that holiday baking and include pecan recipes as Haystack Circle decided to order a reduced number of pecans this year. We have 72 bags of pecan halves and 24 bags of pieces. They sell for \$12.00/bag. So be it for gifts or your baking, you can stop by the church and pick up your pecans!

From T-Shirts to Food Totes

Do you have a sewing machine? Do you have a bunch of perfectly good t-shirts that you/your family don't wear? We are ready to renew a service project.

The Mission Board is once again asking for folks to donate old t-shirts (adult sizes - but not overly thin) and are looking for a group of volunteers to make shopping bags from t-shirts. We will be running this project through Thanksgiving.

Basically, you cut off the sleeves, trim the neckband and run your sewing machine across the bottom a time or two. The tote will need to hold up to 30 pounds of cans, bags of rice or beans, potatoes, etc., so don't use worn out tees with holes, kiddie tees or thin/gauzy ones. If you have questions, email Sherry Leksell at mrsleksell@gmail.com. If you can sew but don't have t-shirts or have t-shirts but can't sew, email her and she'll see if she can match you up. Totes are going to be used at the church for a used clothing closet and at ACE for groceries. <https://www.thebalanceeveryday.com/how-to-make-a-t-shirt-tote-bag-1388075>

KLAB kids had a great time at the annual Halloween party! What a spooky group!





THRIFT SALE

Our Thrift Sale was a huge success again! We raised approx. \$1,381 before expenses. I will be setting up downstairs for another sale to add to our profits. This mini sale brought in \$197.25. The proceeds from the sale will help us give money to many deserving organizations in this community and around the world, "Thanks" to each of you. Whether you helped donate, sort, clean-up, haul away, provide food or worked, the Thrift Sale could not get done without YOU. It's a lot of work, but also a lot of fun and fellowship.

The next sale will be April 28. Hope to see many more of you join the fun. Thank you all so much!!! And start collecting!
 Cindy Henning
 Chairperson, Thrift Sale



Notes from the Joint Annual Meeting

From the evening of Sunday, October 9, through noon, October 11, Rev. Craig Blaufuss and I were delegates for First Congregational UCC of Webster City at the Joint Annual Meeting in Sioux City. The theme was "Loving Is Who We Are." We were among the online participants but were able to ask questions, make comments and vote. Thank you for letting me your lay delegate! Marjorie Groves
 Among the many things I heard and saw: The Webster City Church is well respected and well represented. We continue to be a 5-for-5 church, participating in all five annual collections We're one of 11 Iowa churches contributing in 2022 to Funding Future Leadership. Joyce Gelhaus serves on the Conference Committee on Authorized Ministry; Al Yungclas is on the Iowa Conference Board of Directors; I am on the FFL board.

The Clarion UCC celebrates 150 years this year. Rev. Chris Burnett celebrated 20 years since ordination in 2021; Rev. Mark Gustafson, once our interim pastor, celebrated 50 years. From Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell, keynote speaker: Listening is the foundation of every loving, successful relationship. Be a person of expectancy, rather than expectations. You won't always see results of what you try in your church but try new ideas at least once; that is what hope is. Show up, be faithful, be delighted.

From Andy Debrader, National UCC Philanthropy Team: We're now a "pandemic informed church" – learning new ways to communicate, serve, volunteer. Ask members to tell why they give to or love this church and ask them to include the church in their estate planning; you need to ask. Donations to aid Ukraine have been the largest giving effort in the UCC.

Rev. Phil Hart, Interim Executive Tri-Conference Minister: We have decisions to make in the next few months about what our story is and will be, how to go forward. The Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota conferences care about each other. What would our Tri-Conference look like if churches considered each other neighbors? What if we declared that no matter how the Tri-Conference panned out, we would do what we could for each other?

Dr. Dyanis Conrad, professor of equity and diversity in education: Are all races and immigration statuses recognized in your community? What are three or more

weaknesses you feel called to work on – perhaps homelessness, inadequate housing, hunger? In the context of community, love builds bridges. How do you trace your cultural connections, define your identity. What is a core belief that you hold? How has this been shaped by your culture?

Hooray! We had a quorum at the Iowa Conference UCC business meeting. (Last year we did not.) 87 churches sent delegates. CCAM recommending 10 percent increase in compensation guidelines for pastors. The Iowa Conference is struggling with finances. About \$60,000 short. Iowa is dipping into investments to pay bills, salaries. Rev. Hart asks if we'd rather have a balanced budget or dip into reserves. Heavy reductions are anticipated.

Treasurer's Report

INCOME	September	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$13,990.19	\$136,364.78
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$13,990.19	\$136,364.78
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$11,333.32
Pastoral Services	8,046.50	73,622.10
Maintenance and Repairs	4,297.53	32,430.67
Church Office	3,124.50	26,908.56
Music Ministry	340.05	3,160.45
Christian Education	0.00	68.79
Local Ministry	0.00	539.98
Misc. Expenses	18.42	995.77
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$17,243.67	\$149,059.64

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on October 11, 2022

Members Present:

Moderator:		Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Wil Groves	Trustees:	Nick Oberender
Finance Sec.:	Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship:	Patty Gescheidler
Finance :	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	
Staff/Parish:	Holly Riemenschneider	Worship:	Gretchen McGlynn
Christian Ed:	Vicki Blaufuss	Evangelism:	
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Vice Moderator, Wil Groves in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a prayer. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Gretchen McGlynn seconded a motion that the minutes be approved as printed in the church newsletter. The motion passed.

Board and Committee Summaries:

Treasurer's Report: For September offerings were \$23,990.19 and expenses were \$17,243.67.

Expenses continue to outweigh offerings. A \$5000.00 transfer was made to the General Fund earlier.

Tracy Wehrhan moved and Holly Riemenschneider seconded a motion that the report be put to audit.

The motion passed. **Finance Board:** The Finance Board members met to compile the 2023 budget.

Stephanie Hill moved and Gretchen McGlynn seconded a motion to approve the 2023 budget. The

motion passed. A bond came due and another purchased with better yield. **Christian Education:** Six

children came to KLAB – 3 in each class which was disappointing after all the work needed for the

classes. The school early-outs on have been unpredictable to some extent and interfere with a

successful turnout. No written report. **Evangelism:** No report. **Mission:** No report at the meeting, but

written report attached. **Staff/Parish:** No report. **Trustees:** Nick Oberender reported via note that a

problem with the boiler in the East Chapel is being fixed by Jiffy Plumbing. A new bearing is being

ordered. **Women's Fellowship:** The Thrift Sale earned \$1385.00, but there are lots of clothes left over.

They will decide what to do with them. Kitchen cleaning will be done by Haystack and Providence circles.

A Christmas Potluck will be held on December 4th in Fellowship Hall after service. There will be no

"SERVV" sale until spring. **Worship:** Hanging of the Greens will take place before Advent – on

November 20th followed by chili and pizza. Taking down the Greens is scheduled for January 8, 2023.

Pastor's Report: An article about the Angel Tree was sent to the Freeman Journal but had not appeared

in print yet. Availa Bank will have the tree. The 'Angels' will be made on November 3rd based on the

applications received. A church will be assigned on the back of the 'Angel'. Each church will call the

families whose angels they were assigned and distribute the gifts to parents on December 11. Gifts can

be put in the old nursery which is currently empty. Adult Education covering the topic of abortion

continues. There is no Sunday school. Our website disappeared for a bit, but is now back. It was created

by Darcy Swon and maintained by Michele Omvig.

Old Business: 2023 Annual Budget: Tracy Wehrhan moved to set the Annual Budget Meeting date to November 6, 2022. Vicki Blaufuss seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Organ Tuning: The organ will be tuned as needed this year. The issue of replacing the organ leathers in 10 years (recommended maintenance) is tabled for now. Pastor Craig found recordings of organ music that could be purchased for \$325.00.

New Business: The work of the nominating committee will begin after the revised Constitution is approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:56pm The next meeting is November 8, 2022 at 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall. Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Hill, Church Clerk

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

MISSION BOARD September 8, 2022- **OLD BUSINESS** **Beacon of Hope Meal:** Will be served September 27, 2022. The meal will be a Taco Bake by special request. **T-Shirt Totes:** Sherry Leksell will

get the write-up done. A few of the totes will be kept here at our clothes closet. **NEW BUSINESS**

Angel Tree Update: The WCMA meets September 15th. Original plan was to have gifts picked up at the

churches where the tags were. However, a central pickup is being considered. We will have tags

available on November 6, 2022. **Neighbors in Need:** We have not received any information or envelopes in the mail. Sherry will do a write-up using resources we have used in the past.

Alternative Giving Fair: Tentative schedule: November 27th – KLAB will have a sock and mitten tree;

December 4th - Romanian children – Sherry and Karin looking into. December 11th – Native American –

Gayle looking into. December 18th – Almost Home / Advo Cats – KLAB. Stephanie Hill will contact Lotus

to find out what their needs might be. **Next Food Drive:** This is tabled until January **Budget:** Sherry

moved and Gayle seconded a motion that the OCWM line item remain at \$17,000 for 2023. Motion

passed. Stephanie moved and Karin seconded a motion that the Mayflower line item remain at \$250.00

for 2023. Motion passed. Sherry moved and Stephanie seconded a motion that the Mission Outreach

line item remain at \$150.00 for 2023. The motion passed.

Next Meeting Time: October 20, 2022 at 5:00pm at UCC.

PASTOR'S REPORT October 11, 2022- **Medical Leave:** Again I want to express my thanks and appreciation for everyone's prayers and support during my most recent surgery. I am grateful for the leave time so that I can heal and return to my pastoral duties. **Tri-Conference UCC Meeting:** Marjorie Groves and I represented First Congregational at the Annual Tri-Conference meeting of the UCC, which began in the late afternoon Sunday, October 9, and concluded at noon Tuesday, October 11. We both

attended via Zoom, which saved costs for the church. But Zoom also showed its weaknesses, including poor audio quality and a lack of interpersonal engagement among Zoom participants. I am grateful that the technology allowed me to attend, but this meeting convinced me that these meetings need to be attended in person in order to receive (and offer) the most benefit. Highlights: Current Conference Staff was introduced, and our new interim Tri-Conference Exec. Officer, Rev. Phil Hart, gave a wonderful message about how we all are helping “co-create” God’s unfolding story of love and grace in the world. He reminded listeners that God is unpredictable, and so we must be prepared to be moved by God’s hidden will. He also suggested that practicing “neighboring” in all aspects of our lives is the central claim of the gospel call for all of us! We also (tried) to hear a keynote by Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell, who reminded us that the church is to be a “visible, Viable Voice” to bring about God’s will in the world, and in this process we are to be a people of hope who can balance joys and woes, setbacks and successes, with faithful desire to continue ministering to the world. Unfortunately, one of the keynotes on Monday and the keynote on Tuesday morning was impossible to hear clearly, so that was a Zoom fail, but we did manage to conduct Iowa Conference’s annual business which was the centerpiece of the gathering. Our church was noted as a 5 for 5 church in the Conference (!) and we also are exemplary givers to OCWM basic support. We should be proud! What was troubling is the current financial state of the Iowa Conference and the Tri-Conference. Over the last 5 years the Tri-conference has spent a million dollars more than it received in donations, and the Iowa Conference was responsible for \$800,000 of that deficit due to inadequate levels of giving. So a new budget proposal was made last week by the Iowa Conference Board of Directors and presented at this meeting, which superseded their original budget proposal they were to make. Essentially this proposal will continue on with “business as usual” for the first Quarter, then the Board of Directors will recraft a new, BALANCED budget for the rest of the year which will likely entail staffing cuts! This new budget did pass, so it remains to be seen what impact this decision will have on the Tri-Conference and the Iowa Conference. **WCMA:** we continue to plan for the Angel Tree Christmas Gift Assistance project, and a press release was sent to the DFJ outlining the new process under the WCMA. Donations to the project may be made to the WCMA (memo line: “Angel Tree”) and sent to St. Paul Lutheran. Applications are already available at ACE, UDMO, and Public Health. Our next WCMA meeting is this Thursday at Faith UMC. **Christian Ed:** Adult Ed met Sept 18 for an initial discussion of the topic of abortion. We will resume discussing that topic on Sunday, October 16. KLAB and KLAB + have begun meeting on Thursdays with 3-6 in KLAB and 2-3 in KLAB+. **Website:** Our church website mysteriously disappeared from the internet! Michele has contacted Darcy Swon who maintains the site; meanwhile the link to the site was re-uploaded and google has accepted it and is displaying it again. Ministry since Sept 13: Worship Services led: 3; Christian Ed: 2; Meetings: 3; Visitation: 2
Medical Leave: Sept 19-Oct 11

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:

