

**December 2013 Newsletter**  
First Congregational United Church of Christ  
1000 Willson Avenue  
Webster City, Iowa 50595  
515-832-2232  
<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>



Pastor's Voice

*"Cause you don't have to be an angel to sing harmony; you don't have to be a child to love the mystery; and you don't have to be a Wise Man on bended knee...the heart of this Christmas is in you and me..."*

-- from the song "*The Night Before Christmas*," by Carly Simon

What is "the Heart of Christmas"...to you? Is it: Giving and receiving gifts? Trimming the tree? Caroling? Baking cookies? Burning Candles? A sleigh ride? A Crèche?

Is it "Peace on Earth?" A special charity? Christmas Eve candlelight services? A family gathering on Christmas day?

Could it be something else? I once heard a commercial from Campbell's Soup Company which suggested that the heart of Christmas was to be found in children and traditions...especially when children clamored for the tradition of green bean casserole—made, of course, with genuine Campbell's soup. Now you may wince at the crass commercialism equating the heart of Christmas with green bean casserole, but there is a useful observation to be made from it. We all tend to associate the heart of Christmas with *triggers* that have special meaning to us—triggers that somehow magically create that elusive feeling of well-being, contentedness, and joy we loosely call the "Christmas Spirit." That trigger might be a smell, a memory, a beautiful sight, a family tradition, or a special time spent with others...and when that magic occurs and the Christmas Spirit arises within us, a connection is made between the trigger and the Christmas Spirit—and we begin to associate the heart of Christmas with the trigger, rather than the Spirit. The problem with that, of course, is that the Heart of Christmas then becomes a chase after the right triggers, which is why at this time of year there is so much commercialism, so much nostalgia, so much busyness...and yes, so much *anxiety* as we try to control what really cannot be controlled, *just received... as a gift.*

I have a simple suggestion to make for the upcoming Christmas Season: don't allow your Christmas preparations to become a chase after the right triggers to make your season bright. Instead, try to shift your focus and receive the Christmas Spirit as a **gift from God**. Imagine how different this year might be if you made that intentional shift from all the "fixing", "pleasing", "rushing", and "ritual" behaviors that typically underlie, and often sabotage, the Season and the Spirit...

and instead sought nothing more than to be open and receptive to the "gifts" each day will bring at this special time of the year: the people, the situations, and the opportunities that God will indeed send to us. ***These gifts are given to us in the same spirit as Jesus was given to us: to teach us to open our hearts to life's song, to invite us to be generous with our abundance, to stir us to heal and grow, and to inspire us to share ourselves in a meaningful way with others...as Jesus did! These gifts from God are the very heart of Christmas because they bring out the heart in us...and the enlivened heart is where the Christmas Spirit lives, because that is where the Spirit of the Christ lives.***

So why not try something different this year as you prepare for Christmas? Let your mantra for this Christmas Season be: "**The heart of Christmas will be found in my loving heart.**" Use this as a reminder to refocus when you are caught in long shopping lines, when you are stressing about baking, wrapping, and bills, or when you are wrangling with relatives about how you are going to split yourself 6 ways so that everyone is accommodated with your presence on Christmas Day. Who knows? This mantra might be the best Christmas gift you can give yourself this year—and the best Christmas gift you can give to everyone around you.

I'll conclude with more lyrics to Carly's song "*The Night Before Christmas*":

*"If your heart's been longing, you've been afraid to try;  
Sorrow's kept you company and the Dance has passed you by;  
I'll lift you up and blaze with you across the Moonlit sky...  
It's the Night Before Christmas..."*

*Cause you don't have to be an angel to sing harmony; you don't have to be a child to love the mystery; and you don't have to be a Wise Man on bended knee...the heart of this Christmas is in You and Me...*

**Merry Christmas!—Pastor Craig**



**Snacks to keep on hand:**

- Mixed dried fruit packets.
- Small boxes of raisins.
- Small packets of lightly salted or unsalted nuts.
- Apples and oranges.
- Instant soups.
- String cheese.
- Bottled water.



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

- 18 - Sharon & Bruce Perry
- 28 - Dale & Gayle Olson
- 29 - Bob & Sandi Weieneth
- 30 - Lynn & Debbie Jaycox
- 30 - Ed & Andrea Mosbach
- 31 - Mark & Connie Gustafson

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

- M 8 am - 1 pm
- T 9 am - 1 pm
- W 8 am - 12:30, 1 pm to 4:30
- Th 8 am - 12:30, 1 pm to 4:30
- F 9 am - 1 pm

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

- 1 - Tracy Wehrhan
- 3 - Alexis Tudor
- 4 - Ron Epps
- 5 - Grant Ryherd
- 6- Jamie Roelfs
- 8 - Angelina Brim
- 8 - Pat Kesler
- 9 - Myra Maxon
- 10 - Joyce Gelhaus
- 11 - Galene Groves
- 12 - Mark Riemenschneider
- 17 - Bob Van Diest
- 17 - Matt Byrne
- 19 - Phyllis Hovland
- 20 - Don Bruner
- 20 - Jessica Larson-Bailey
- 21 - Liz Weieneth
- 22 - Ann Latham
- 23 - Linda Thurman
- 23 - Jeb Long
- 23 - Jennifer Van Diest
- 24 - Jayd Brown
- 24 - Brenda Brown
- 25 - Dan Ryherd
- 26 - Alan Yungclas
- 26 - Benjamin Brincks
- 31 - Dawn Kesler

**Church Staff**

- Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor**
- Office: 832-2232 Cell 297-4316
- Pastor's email: revcraigblaufuss@wmtel.net
- Michele Omvig: Admin. Assist. 838-2989**
- Church's e-mail: fcuccwc@wmtel.net
- Sharon Perry: Stephen Ministry Ldr 832-5435**
- Nancy Shelton: Choir Director 835-0208**
- Myra Maxon: Organist 832-3662**
- Mary Van Diest: Pianist 832-3754**
- Curt/Lorraine McCoskey: Cust's. 832-5341**
- Myra Maxon: Financial Secretary 832-3662**
- Luverne Bierle: Church Treasurer 832-4752**

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>November 3</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>November 9</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>November 17</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>November 24</b>	<b>79</b>

**WEBSITE**

Make sure to visit our website at <http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>  
 The more traffic we get the easier it will be for people to find it.  
 The website has our newsletters, pictures of events, information about our church and more.

**Pecans**

Pecans are here! They are \$9 a bag; checks can be made to Haystack Circle.

**MEALS N MORE**

Join us for Meals N More on December 4 at 5:00 pm. It is hosted by Providence Circle. They are serving a Chicken Casserole, homemade applesauce, veggies, and homemade bars.



## **Celebrate Christmas by Worshipping at First Congregational UCC**

What better way to experience a deepening of your faith than to spend time in church during the Season of Advent? These are the worship opportunities at First Congregational UCC we will observe in December 2013:

- **During each Sunday in Advent**, members of First Congregational will lead us in the lighting of our Advent wreath, and we will sing traditional Advent hymns and Christmas carols.
- **On December 1st** we begin our Advent season with Holy Communion, and following the service we will decorate the church for Christmas.
- **On December 8<sup>th</sup>**, our children will present the Christmas program "Christmas Magic" during worship.
- **On Saturday, December 24**, we will hold **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship services at 5 p.m.** Holy Communion served in the pews will be offered at this service.
- **On Sunday, December 29**, we will gather to worship at our regular time with a service of scriptures, reflections, and carol singing that continues our Christmas celebration. There will be no Sunday school that day.

***Everyone is encouraged to share in the beauty and joy of the Christmas season as we worship God and celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World!***

## **Alternative Giving Fair**

The Alternative Giving Fair will be taking place in our Fellowship Hall again this year. The Mission Board is sponsoring this again this year to give our church family the opportunity

to do some shopping for family and loved ones and at the same time help others in our community and world. The tables set up give you the opportunity to help someone less fortunate in today's world and make it so you do not have to figure out which 'stuff' the person on your Christmas list MIGHT need or want. Give them the gift of you having helped someone in honor of them. This allows the joy of the season to be spread to more individuals and to those who are in need of extra help at this time.

Organizations represented are: Church World Service where you can give the gift of a blanket or help fill our Hygiene kits; Beacon of Hope; Quakerdale - by filling the stockings for the young people who will not be going home for the holidays; UDMO - either an angel from our angel tree or helping make family #25 have a special Christmas; Heifer Project - helping a family in a different country become more self-sufficient by purchasing an animal for them; Stepping Forward orphanage in Romania - sponsoring a child for Christmas; Almost Home animal shelter in FD; Holy Joe's - coffee for our fellow Americans serving in the armed services.

## **Alternative Giving – Quakerdale**

Stockings for Quakerdale has become a 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational tradition. This year there are 5 young men, and 7 young women, all teenagers, who will be spending Christmas at the facility. This campus of Quakerdale at New Providence is a Christian ministry providing a structured environment with preventive and therapeutic services for at-risk juveniles. Patty Geschieder, one of our very own, has been employed there for many years. We will be collecting the following items to share as stockings at their Christmas celebration later in the month – additionally, we usually have enough items to also fill some stockings for UDMO.

Would you be willing to help us play Santa and spread the Christmas cheer? We could use the following items:

Soap, Deodorant, Playing Cards, Toothpaste, Brushes, Insulated cups/travel mugs, Toothbrushes, Shampoo/Conditioner,

Water bottles, Candy, Socks, Lanyards for keys, DVDs, Hats/Gloves/Scarves, Flash drives, Pen/Pencil sets, Flashlight, Puzzles, Hand Sanitizer, Lotion, Magnets, Small tape measure

Snack items – crackers, beef sticks

Please see the display in Fellowship Hall beginning on Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> to drop off articles – or grab a tag as a reminder as you do your Christmas shopping.

Thanks for your support,  
The Mission Board

### **Holy Joe's Café**

During the Revolutionary War, the Congregational Church furnished chaplains for the Continental Army. They were for the comfort and succor of the leaders and the army. We continue this tradition of support in the form of coffee houses located in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait called Holy Joe's Café where we offer troops a cup of coffee and support through the ministry of our military chaplains. This project originates from the First Congregational Church in Wallingford, CT, begun in 2006, and has since supplied 22,400,000 cups or 112 tons of coffee through over 120 chaplains.

Please consider donating to this ministry as an alternative gift idea!!

Thank you,  
Leah Maass

### **KLAB raises donations for ALMOST HOME**

Once again KLAB will participate in our Alternative Giving Fair with the opportunity to support Almost Home, the no-kill animal shelter in Fort Dodge. Each year KLAB students take a field trip to this shelter, play with the animals, and hear about the mission of Almost Home. Please support our KLAB kids as they work to support the work of Almost Home!

### **Saturday Evening Service**

We will have Saturday evening services on January 11<sup>th</sup>. When we have Saturday services there will be no Sunday Worship Service, and Sunday School will be held Saturday night after the Children's Message.

Also, there will be no Fellowship Coffee after the Saturday services.

### **Snacks for KLAB**

KLAB is off to a great start with 14 young people participating! That's a lot of energy and enthusiasm—and a lot of appetites. We have been serving snacks at KLAB, and we are looking for volunteers to help provide snacks for our weekly programming. It can be homemade or store-bought treats; we need enough for 14 children. If you would like to provide treats for a week, please contact the church office or Pastor Craig.



Spread the joy of the holiday season around the globe with decorations and gifts from SERRV.

First Congregational, UCC Women's Fellowship is hosting a SERRV consignment sale at 1000 Willson Avenue. Sale dates are Sundays, Dec. 1 and Dec. 8th after worship until 1 pm.

SERRV is a nonprofit organization with a commitment to fair trade going back more than 60 years. Their mission is to eradicate poverty and provide a market for artisan products produced by over 60 community groups in over 30 countries.

With the holiday season just around the corner, their new decorations are products you can feel good about buying. With decor ranging from adorable ornaments to nativities to exquisite handmade holiday decor, the holiday spirit will warm your home this year with SERRV's new products. They have wonderful gifts from baskets, scarves, jewelry, and their famous chocolates as well.

For more information please contact the church office, 832-2232.

### **Coffee**

Do you enjoy fellowshiping together after the morning worship service? If so please consider providing coffee on December 22 or 29. We also need someone to help on January 19 and 26. Thanks!



### **Christmas Luncheon**

Women's Fellowship will hold their annual Christmas Luncheon on Saturday, December 14 at 12:00 noon. Cost for the luncheon will be \$6.00. Everyone is welcome including spouses and all church members.

### **Christmas Magic**

The young people of the congregation are working hard on the "Christmas Magic" program coming up December 8. It will be presented during worship under the direction of Wil Groves, Nancy Shelton, and Alexis Tudor. Dolls, toy soldiers, and teddy bears come to life under the tree and discuss the meaning of Christmas. The Christian Education board will host coffee afterwards.

### **WCMA Community Thanksgiving Service**

The night was chilly but the spirit was warm as members of Webster City gathered in our sanctuary for the annual Webster City Ministerial Association's Community Thanksgiving Service. Rev. Michael Slininger preached a message emphasizing the call to Christian service as our grateful response to all that God has done for us in Christ. Our choir graced the service with two songs of thanksgiving, Myra Maxon and Josie Greenley played lovely duets on the organ and piano, and ladies of our Women's Fellowship circles hosted refreshments following the service. The evening's offering gathered in \$510 for the WC School Backpack Program! It was a beautiful and meaningful service as we gathered to give thanks to God for our abundant blessings.

### **Thanks**

UDMO would like to thank you for your monetary donation. Your continued support in the community is greatly appreciated.  
Sincerely,  
Jamie Ragland

### **Thanks**

Thank you for your kind donation of School Kits to Church World Service. Your compassion has given individuals and families touched by disaster the tangible evidence that they matter. With deepest gratitude,  
Rev. John L. McCullough

### **Thanks**

Thank you so much for your financial support for an orphanage in Haiti! Thanks also for the delicious meal.  
Mark & Connie Gustafson

### **Congratulations, Diane!**

Our very own Diane Vasquez has been named to the Finance Committee of the Mayflower Community Board of Trustees. She was officially installed at the October annual meeting in Grinnell. Diane brings with her a wealth of experience from years in the Crestview Nursing and Rehabilitation business office. Diane's selection continues the Webster City 1st Congregational United Church of Christ's long history with Mayflower. Participants on the board have included Marjorie Groves, Anne McMurray, Clark Mowry and others.

### **Concert**

Sunday December 8 at 3:00 pm at the new Middle School in Fort Dodge there will be a concert by the Fort Dodge symphony. Guest soloist is Max Wellman. After the concert there is a reception at the Vincent House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S and 12<sup>th</sup> street. Proceeds from this fund raiser reception will go toward Pilgrim Heights. Max Wellman is an enthusiastic supporter and chose this way to celebrate Pilgrim Heights 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Plan to join the celebration.

### **Advent Begins—December 1**

Hard to believe, isn't it? Advent is just around the corner! Sunday, December 1 is our first Sunday in the season of Advent, and we need volunteers (families or groups of friends) to lead the Advent Candle Liturgy on December 15. 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.



**Decorate!**

Come join in the HANGING OF THE GREENS, to be held after worship on December 1, the first Sunday of Advent. Everyone is invited to help decorate our church for this wonderful time of year! Pizza will be provided for volunteers.



Kids Against Hunger



Fellowshipping together during Meals N More



Beacon of Hope meal



Beacon of Hope



All Saint's Sunday

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Webster City, Iowa**  
**Cabinet Meeting-November 12, 2013**

Members Present:

Moderator-----Dale Olson	Pastor-----Rev. Craig Blaufuss
Vice-Moderator----Verna Bierle	Trustees-----Brue Perry
Treasurer-----Luverne Bierle	Women's Fellowship—Joyce Gelhaus
Finance Sec.-----Myra Maxon	Mission-----Lorraine McCoskey
Finance-----Duane Vavroch	Worship-----Holly Riemenschneider
Staff/Parish-----Luverne Bierle	Evangelism-----Laurie Epps
Christian Ed-----	Clerk-----Mary Van Diest

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Moderator, Dale Olson. A meditation and prayer were given by Pastor, Rev. Craig Blaufuss. Bruce Perry moved and Laurie Epps seconded that the current agenda be accepted. Motion carried. Luverne Bierle gave the Treasurer's Report. He reported that October's income was \$7,130.05 and expenses were \$14,276.56. He moved that the report be placed on record for audit. Duane Vavroch seconded. Motion carried. Verna Bierle reported that the nomination committee was starting to function. Bruce brought up that the elm tree by the west door and the one by the northwest door needed to be trimmed. The city will trim these trees. Myra Maxon asked how long the church's records needed to be kept. Laurie Epps said the government requires that seven years of records need to be kept. As the closet in the church office that is currently holding records will be utilized to expand the women's bathroom, it was decided that these records could be move to the rafters in the church's garage. A discussion was held on the church's finances. Duane moved, with a second by Bruce to send a stewardship letter to the congregation. Myra and Laurie will compose the letter.

## **REPORTS OF PASTOR AND CABINET**

**Pastor's Report:** We will host the Community Thanksgiving service in our sanctuary on Sunday, November 24 at 7:00 pm. Rev. Michael Slininger, pastor of Faith UMC will preach, and members of the WCMA will help lead the service. Our church will provide refreshment following the service. The church will be decorated for Christmas after worship on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The adult class has been studying "life after death" on Sunday am. KLAB has finished studying Joseph, held a Halloween party and beginning rehearsals for the Christmas Program "Christmas Magic" which will be held during worship on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>. Thanked all the people who have provided snacks for the KLAB kids. New Acolytes are being trained, thanks to Leah Maass. Dr. Ann Kenney spoke to the Stephen Ministry about signs of depression and suicide as part of our ongoing continuing education. Kendric Weinschnek led a forum on "Ministering to people with disabilities." Currently 6 Stephen Ministers are matched with care receivers. We are working on getting our Stephen Ministry program promoted on the local radio station during a Wednesday Windsor Wellness Show. We are in the process of developing a grief support group that would be led by Stephen Ministers and be made available to the community. He attended the annual business of the Conference held in Ames in October. At this meeting the new Associate Conference Minister, Rev. Brigit Stevens, was installed; heard the report of Rev. Rich Pleva, amended the articles on Incorporation of the Mayflower Home and the Iowa Conference By-Laws; and approved the Conference's 2014 budget. Pastor Craig was the representative for the NW Committee on Ministry at the annual Boundary Training Continuing Ed. Event. Clergy are

required to complete boundary training every 3 years. He is thankful that our Mission Board continues to organize and promote events as the CROP Walk, Kids Against Hunger food packing and Make a Difference Day cleanup on old Hwy. 20. Pastor Craig is serving on the CIRSVP North Advisory Council. He reports that RSVP offers many volunteer opportunities.

**Staff Parish:** All staff evaluations have been completed. Some changes to the contract for the Administrative Assistant need to be made and will be worked on before the next meeting. A one-time year-end bonus for the Administrative Assistant was discussed and agreed upon. Luverne will take care of this. The next meeting date is December 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm.

**Mission Board:** The city wide total for the CROP walk was \$1712.56 with \$428.14 staying local. Also 46 jars of peanut butter were collected. Thanked Mabel Prescott and Marjorie Groves for their leadership in organizing the CROP WALK and Lynn Leksell for being the photographer. Eight people collected 8 bags of garbage for the Make a Difference Day. Fifteen boxes were packed for Kids Against Hunger. This is a total of 3,240 meals which will stay local and be distributed thru the local backpack program. Alternative Giving Fair will set up displays after the church has been decorated on December 1<sup>st</sup>. On November 20<sup>th</sup> will serve Beacon of Hope. Next meeting will be Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.

**Evangelism:** Hospitality Committee will meet with Donna Ryherd and Sharon Perry in the near future to implement the recommendations of the Congregational Survey for Preservation and Renovation of our church. Pete Gardner, with Webster City Living, has offered a choice of advertising options to the committee for public relations. All church members need to look at the Website often so we have enough hits to get our web page recognized by Google. Wilma Reinsel and Nancy Shelton will develop a plan for the family Christmas ornaments. Beginning in January, Dale Olson, will be a new Stephen Leader. Stephen Ministry Sunday is the last Sunday in January, 2014. This next year the Stephen Ministry will offer grief support groups for anyone in our community needing the service.

**Trustees:** Met with Lynn Jaycox to go over the possible renovation project. Items discussed were: Restrooms on main floor-leave the unisex as is, make the Women's restroom with one toilet handicap accessible, move the vanity, and put the changing table in this area, with plans of removing the closet; the men's restroom in the basement needs to be made handicap accessible and install a urinal; discussed the west entry-could add on out to the sidewalk and then make the entry from the south; discussed the stairs and hand rails. Asked Lynn to give an estimate for this project. Will not have a fall clean up since most of it has been done. Don and Gretchen Bruner will help Joyce Gelhaus trim the tall bushes in the next couple of weeks. Bruce will talk to the city about the elm trees.

**Women's Fellowship:** The church is hosting the Thanksgiving Community Service on Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm with Faith IMC minister, Michael Slininger, leading the service. The SERV V Sale will be held Saturday Nov. 23 from 10:00-12:00 am and after worship on Nov 24, Dec. 1st and Dec 8<sup>th</sup>. All areas of the kitchen have been cleaned. Meals 'n 'More will be served in Nov. by Mayflower, Dec. by Providence and Haystack in January. Treats for KLAB are covered thru December. The Christmas Luncheon will be held on Saturday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon. Charge will be \$6.00. No reservations needed. Men are welcome. Karin Yungclas will contact Peter Amstalden about providing a program with a \$50 compensation. Pecans are now available at \$9.00/bag. Discussed the conditions of the church's card tables. Cindy Henning will compare



prices and get back to Dalene Schlitter. ACE Festival of Tees is Nov. 24<sup>th</sup>-contact ACE if you wish to contribute a display. Christmas Eve service is at 5:00 pm (no midnight service).

**Christian Ed:** No report

**Worship Board:** No report

Next Cabinet Meeting: December 10, 2013 at 7:00 pm

Mary Van Diest, Church Clerk

**10:30 A.M. WORSHIP  
9:00 & 9:15 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL**

### Treasurer's Report

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>OCTOBER</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR TO DATE</u></b>
Pledges and Offerings	\$7,130.05	\$130,414.29
Other Income	172.12	875.83
Memorial/Special Income/Interest	2.79	31,447.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$7,304.96</b>	<b>\$162,712.12</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Outreach and Mission	\$1,567.00	\$14,954.96
Pastoral Services	5,325.41	67,552.61
Maintenance and Repairs	2,140.73	27,944.55
Church Office	3,342.96	23,071.08
Music Ministry	589.58	6,035.80
Christian Education	0.00	359.33
Local Ministry	0.00	2,822.18
Mem. Funds Distribution	95.00	25,447.86
Misc. Expenses	1,310.88	3,723.39
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$14,371.56</b>	<b>\$171,911.76</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>(\$7,066.60)</b>	<b>(\$9,199.64)</b>



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1000 Willson Avenue  
Webster City, IA 50595

**Address Service Requested**

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

