

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

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” –Psalm 8:3-4

(The following is an adaptation of the message I preached at our care centers this past Sunday.)

Have you been wondering about anything lately? I would be amazed if you were not! There is so much to wonder about, and so much of our time as human beings is preoccupied by wonder. On any given day I may wonder about nearly everything, including: What’s for dinner? What’s happening with my family members? How high will the cost of gasoline go? How is my health? What will tomorrow be like: for me; for our county; for our species?

So what is wonder, anyway? It is more than mere curiosity. My cats are curious for sure, but I don’t think my cats wonder about much. *Wonder is curiosity combined with a desire to understand*, and that is what makes wonder a distinctly human preoccupation.

Wonder has done much for us as a species. Schools and education have their foundation in wonder as we humans down through the ages have asked: how do things work? Why do things happen? Think about all the advances in the sciences, in medicine and technology. All of these tremendous changes were created by human wonder, as curious minds asked: Why does an apple fall from a tree and not just float around in the air? What causes sickness? What is the universe really like? What would be better ways for humans to communicate? Can you imagine what our lives and the world would be like without these forms of wonder? We’d still be living in caves! To me, these are positive forms of wonder.

But there are other forms of wonder that are not so “positive.” Worry is one you are likely familiar with. Worry is when I ask: is something bad going to happen to me, or to my family? Will my money hold out as long as I live? What is going to happen to our country, given its current state of division and discontent? Worry is trying to understand what may be coming at us so we can prepare for it or ward it off, yet worry is based on trying to predict what may well be unpredictable, and so we gravitate to worst case scenarios almost as an obsession until our peace of mind, and even our health, suffer!

Yet there are even worse forms of wonder that we humans are all too good at; I call these malicious or malevolent uses of wonder. I indulge in this form of wonder when I ask: Why are people who don’t agree with me so stupid? What can I do to get my way—at all costs? How can I build a better gun/tank/bomb to destroy my enemies? How can I return evil for evil? Would you agree that this kind of wonder is a gross misuse of the human power of wonder, and a source of most of the hell we experience on earth? And yet this form of wonder is one of the hallmarks of our species, and the current state of the world bears witness to this abhorrent form of human wonder.

But I don’t want to dwell on these negative forms of wonder, for there is another form of wonder that is our highest human good. We hear it alluded to in Psalm 8, and I call it mystical wonder. It occurs when you bump up against what Rudolph Otto called the *mysterium tremendum*—the deepest mystery of life--and you are changed by the encounter. I experienced this form of wonder the other day when I was weeding the garden and for a moment forgot my anger at all the weeds that were choking out my vegetables. In this mystical moment of wonder I became entranced by how marvelous weeds really are...they have deep roots, and they thrive in places where so-called desirable plants cannot exist. Why? Who taught these weeds to be so resilient, so fruitful, in spite of our best efforts to eradicate them? What great love of life is instilled in them so deeply that they will flourish in almost any conditions?

And then as I was weeding, I disturbed a colony of small ants who within seconds literally swarmed the ground in furious alarm. Again, I was mesmerized with wonder. Who taught these ants to form such colonies? Who taught them to socialize and create divisions of labor? How is such a tiny collective even possible? If you've ever had such a moment of mystical wonder, you know what I'm talking about. It is a feeling of touching the hem of something utterly beyond you; a mystery beyond mystery...and this state of mystical wonder puts us on our knees as we sense a power, a beauty, a plan, and an intelligence utterly beyond us!

Such mystical wonder leads to REVERENCE—a sense of the sacredness of All That Is which is the creation and expression of the great and divine *mysterium tremendum*...

And this reverence changes us. We become more patient, gentle, and compassionate, and we experience gratitude, joy, and love for the Creator, the Created, and the ineffable mystery that is so beyond us...a mystery of which we are a part...a mystery into which we are allowed some small access into its unimaginable grandeur because we have become aligned with its root cause, which is LOVE.

Friends, each and every day we will spend some time in wonder, for it is our inescapable preoccupation as humans. And so I hope you take time today to look at our world using positive forms of wonder, rather than with worry or malicious longings...

And I pray that the miracle of mystical wonder touches your heart today, so that you connect with the Mystery that created you, and loves you without end; the great Mystery that will flower into reverence and gratitude and love in our human hearts; the great Mystery which sweetens, deepens, and enlivens 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

11 - Melissa Hindt
14 - Kaleb Sterler
18 - Cindy Henning
20 - Luke Rohmiller
21 - Candy Butz
23 - Mike McKee
23 - Nate Lahr
24 - Donald Royster
25 - Landen Ploeger
25 - Alex Swanson
27 - Troy Stockdale
28 - Brenden Ploeger

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

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

16 - Jennie & Zach Williams
22 - Clark & Jean Mowry
26 - Todd & Katie Sonsalla
29 - Colby & Candy Butz

Scholarships

On Sunday, July 31 we will announce scholarship recipients for our FCUCC scholarships and checks will be given out during our 10:00 am worship service. Come support our scholarship recipients and hear about their current and future plans!

Summer Worship Hours and Saturday Service Dates

Our summer worship hours will remain at 10:00 am. During the summer months we will hold 2 more Saturday evening services: July 23, and

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Katie Short
1 - Chris Swanson
2 - Ava Stockdale
5 - Dale Olson
6 - Jacob Dean Rohmiller
7 - Susie Brim
8 - Duane Vavroch
9 - Erica Pawletzki
11 - Dylan McCoskey

August 27. Saturday services will begin at 5 p.m., and following our Saturday services there will be no Sunday morning worship service that weekend.

Music to Our Ears

We're looking for "special music" for our Sunday – and Saturday – worship services during the summer. Instrumental or vocal, solo or more, young or seasoned: If you have music talent you're willing to share, please contact Michele in the church office (832-2232) or Curt, Don, Gretchen, Jane or Marjorie of the Worship Board. Thank you! – *The Worship Board*

Hamilton Co. Fair Ecumenical Service

On July 24 at 9:30 a.m. members of the Webster City Ministerial Association will lead an ecumenical service of worship on the fairgrounds in conjunction with the Hamilton County Fair. First Congregational will hold its second summer Saturday Service on July 23, so Pastor Craig will be participating in the fair service on the 24th. You are invited to attend as well!

UCC Annual Meeting

This year's meeting will take place in Sioux City, Iowa on October 9-11. Contact Joyce by July 8 if you are interested in attending.

Pet Blessing

We had several animal companions to bless at our first Summer Saturday Service of 2022, which was held outdoors in the vacant lot next to the church. This was our first "Blessing of the Animals" since 2015, and we blessed the pets in attendance as well as those who could not be there, but were represented with a photo. Each blessed animal received a certificate and a charm to acknowledge their blessing.



Thanks!

First Congregational has come through again - just like you always do! This time there will be 13 families that will have things to help celebrate and make a family members birthday special. We collected 13 birthday bags with a

cake mix, frosting, candles, napkins, plates, birthday banners, and some other fun things! We also have several containers of easy to make meals that will be at the food pantry to help make a special meal. Thank you so much for your support of the projects we bring to you! You, church family, make our responsibilities as Mission Board such a joy! Thank you!



generously. But without your generous contributions of brownies, ice cream, and toppings we would never be able to accomplish this. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!! With everyone's contributions we have over \$1500 to donate to Enhance Hamilton County Foundation where they will match this gift and then over \$3000 will be gifted to food pantries here in Webster City.



Brownie Sundae Drive Thru

Our 3rd annual Brownie Sundae drive-by was another success. On that beautiful summer evening we collected \$1542, enjoyed greeting and delivering sundaes to the friends and community members who drove by and gave



Treasurer's Report

INCOME	May	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$16,381.00	\$76,767.52
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$16,381.00	\$76,767.52
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$7,083.31
Pastoral Services	8,046.50	41,095.90
Maintenance and Repairs	2,227.23	16,365.68
Church Office	3,021.93	14,815.76
Music Ministry	428.40	1,976.95
Christian Education	0.00	38.79
Local Ministry	175.00	189.98
Misc. Expenses	113.12	618.78
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$15,428.85	\$82,185.15

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:

