

August 2023 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
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<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>

“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” –Hebrews 13: 1-8

Have you met our new door greeter named Lila? Lila is the ash and cinnamon colored female cat who has been hanging around the neighborhood lately, and she is quite a greeter! During Scholarship Sunday she was at the west entrance demanding people’s attention, and her outgoing manner and guttural Siamese-sounding meows are pretty charming! Now Lila is not feral; nor is she a stray as she belongs to a church neighbor who tells me she goes home at night, only to sneak out for the day at first light. She spends a lot of time on the Streigle’s front porch (our neighbor directly to the west of us) but she is so social that she has now come calling on members of First Congregational. She is small and looks a bit undernourished, but while she has an appetite she doesn’t gorge, and she is even finicky about what she eats so apparently she isn’t starving. I find myself driving by the church more often these days hoping to see if she is perched on our marble bench or curled up on the sidewalk in front of the door, and she lightens my spirits with her feigned neediness and her feline charms! She is a wonderful greeter indeed!

Lila also feels like a godsend, an angel in the guise of a cute and winsome cat who has come with Good News at the right time. Now perhaps it’s just me, but this summer has not felt like the lighthearted and lazy, hazy, crazy days of summers’ past--not with all that is going on these days. There have been struggles with health conditions that are affecting family members, church members, and community members, and these are a source of great worry. The rising costs of basic necessities and the number of people in our own community who are struggling to keep afloat is a somber reminder of the challenges so many face each and every day just to acquire the basics of human life. We are facing a serious drought, and wildfire smoke ominously hangs over us as a reminder of how our planet’s environment is being so dangerously compromised by climate change. Add to these worries the countless others we see on the news and in our social media feeds, and it is very easy to feel overwhelmed!

And while there have always been reasons to worry and feel somber about the state of affairs in the world, this summer it all seems to be hitting home pretty hard...which makes the appearance of Lila so appreciated and so needed. For one thing, her demand for my attention is a reminder that we all need to be more intentional of how we are using our attention during the course of the day. It is all too easy to let the world’s problems and our own problems consume us with no beneficial outcome, other than the diminishment of our spirits. Lila is a reminder that even in the midst of our worries and problems we would do well to pay attention to the small and sweet moments—and the small and sweet creatures—that grace and refresh our lives! Lila takes us to our tender side, to that place within us all where innate gentleness, contentedness and delight abide...which is a strong antidote to this summer’s anxious worries.

And Lila’s presence reminds us to abide more fully in the present moment, and to abide more faithfully as we live with the present moment’s challenges and worries. As you may know, a cat lives in the here and now, and Lila trusts that whatever the present moment brings, along with it will come help and strength and the innate assurance that Life is worth living, even in the midst of its hardships and challenges. We would do well to learn from her, for our present moment-- not our anxious fretting about the past which is gone, or the unknown future that is ahead-- is also our point of power, and our peace. Whatever life will demand of us; however we are summoned to meet the challenges of our lives, we need not surrender our peace, our goodwill, our hope, and our faith that Life remains a

beautiful, vital, and wondrous gift...even as we suffer through a thoroughly worrisome summer. How amazing that a neighborhood cat can remind us of such simple and vital truths! Maybe Lila is an angel after all—a feline “messenger” from God!

If you haven't met Lila yet, be sure to make her acquaintance! It's not often we get to entertain angels at First Congregational without knowing it! –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

12 - Jan Carden
 12 - Howard Stearns
 15 - Audrey Burtnett
 15 - Laurie Epps
 16 - Tom Riemenschneider
 19 - Allison Yungclas
 19 - Mary Van Diest
 21 - Mary Worthington
 24 - Nick Oberender
 27 - Shari Rothrock
 31 - Betty Ploeger
 31 - Margy Wood

Church Staff

Rev. Craig Blaufuss, Pastor
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 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
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:

11 - Luverne & Verna Bierle
 11 - Mark & Jennie Brim
 23 - Don & Gretchen Bruner

Parish Nurse News

Count Your Words Carefully
 6 most important words "I admit that I was wrong."
 5 most important words "You did a great job."
 4 most important words "What do you think?"
 3 most important words "May I help?"
 2 most important words "Thank you."
 1 most important word "We."
 least important word "I"



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Madison Babington
 2 - Bruce Perry
 5 - Patty Gescheidler
 7 - Richard Tudor II

Webster City Food Packing -Last Call

You will notice the pickle jar has been out during this month of July for donations for this packing event. Asbury is spearheading this event, similar to the Kids Against Hunger

packing our church has done in the past. The packing is scheduled for Saturday September 16, but their lofty goal of raising \$9000.00 has to be met by August 7. Mission Board made the decision to try and contribute to this goal and decided our infamous pickle jar would be the way to do that. Please give generously to help feed the hungry internationally, and look for a volunteer sign-up sheet to help pack meals on September 16! Thank you for your help.

2023 Alternative Giving

As many of you know, it is never too early to start thinking about Christmas and getting those shopping lists ready. Thanks to a suggestion from a church member, the Mission Board wants to try something new in conjunction with our annual Alternative Giving Fair. We were reminded before 1 of our meetings this winter that we have many talented members; woodworkers, quilters, bakers, etc. in our midst, and it was suggested that we make use of these talents to help raise funds for 1 or more of our designated groups this year. So here is our plea and plan. We are inviting members to create something that can be auctioned off during a Sunday in Advent with the funds raised going to the organization identified. Not knowing how many items might be consigned, this auction could be a silent one with people making bids on paper, a live auction, or maybe both! Just think you could do your shopping knowing the money you are spending would be going to help others.

We bring this idea to you now asking that you talk to someone on Mission Board, Sherry Leksell, Steph Hill, Andrea Mosbaugh, Jose Burgos, Gayle Olson and let them know you have something you would like to contribute to this event.

Scholarship Sunday



Clean Up

The parks dept. has put 2 garbage cans on the Boone River trail, and we will check them and get them emptied on a weekly basis. The garbage cans will be located at the canoe access at City Park and by the dam off the White Fox Rd. There is a sign-up sheet for volunteers to help check and empty these, taking the full bags to the dumpster at the church.

Saturday Service August 26

Our last Saturday Service of 2023 will be held in our sanctuary on August 26, beginning at 5 pm. Dress is always casual, so come as you are! And following the service the Worship Board will treat us to root beer floats! What a tasty way to wrap up a Saturday Service! Remember--when

we hold a Saturday service there is no Sunday morning worship the following day.

Thanks

We would like to once again say thank you to the women of the First Congregational Church for the donation to All Cultures Equal. Your donation will help us meet our new goal – reaching the young families living in down town Webster City. Sincerely, The ACE Board

Lights

Have you noticed how much brighter our kitchen is these days? The old fluorescent lights have been upgraded to LED panels, and they look great! Thanks to Chris McNiell and associates for installing the new lighting.



Angel Tree

Our baked bean pyramid is getting bigger! These will all be combined into a roaster of delicious baked beans to be donated to the American Tap's Angel Tree Ride and Community Dinner, to be held Saturday, August 26. The goal for the ride is to raise \$10,000 to sponsor 100 "Angels" for the children's Christmas gift assistance program.



Treasurer's Report

INCOME	June	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$12,935.00	\$98,077.33
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$12,935.00	\$98,077.33
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$8,898.98
Pastoral Services	6,442.72	50,921.79
Maintenance and Repairs	2,700.42	24,986.96
Church Office	3,121.39	18,585.92
Music Ministry	408.33	2,749.98

Christian Education	100.87	291.51
Local Ministry	0.00	16.26
Misc. Expenses	70.62	871.09
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$14,261.02	\$107,322.49

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on July 11, 2023

Members Present:

Moderator:	Wil Groves	Pastor:	Craig Blaufuss
Vice Moderator:	Gayle Olson	Trustees:	Chris McNeil
Finance Sec.:	Dale Olson	Women's Fellowship:	Patti Gescheidler
Treasurer:	Tracy Wehrhan	Mission:	Gayle Olson
Staff/Parish:	Cindy Henning	Worship:	Gretchen McGlynn
Christian Ed:	Patty Gescheidler	Clerk:	Stephanie Hill

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Moderator, Wil Groves in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a prayer. The May Cabinet minutes were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Board and Committee Summaries:

Treasurer's Report: The May and June offerings were \$12,049.00 and \$12,535.00 respectively. Expenses for May and June were \$20,992.75 and \$14,261.02 respectively. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Dale Olson seconded a motion that the report be put to audit. The motion passed. **Pastor's Report:** Our first Saturday service was held on June 24 and all enjoyed an 'indoor potluck' after service. Worship Board organized the event. The American Tap is organizing a ride to raise funds for the Angel Tree on August 26. Our congregation lead by the Mission Board pledged to donate a roaster of baked beans, so a display is up in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Craig will lead the "Faith at the Fair" service at the Hamilton County Fair on July 30. Coffee and fellowship will begin at 9am; the service at 9:30pm. A food packaging event similar to Kids Against Hunger is being organized by Asbury UMC and will be held on Saturday, September 16. See Mission Board for more details. **Finance Board:** Scholarship applications were reviewed and selections made. Discussed how to pay for the bat/squirrel damage in the attic. **Trustees:** Joel Kennedy will work on 1. Closing holes for squirrels and possibly powered ventilation in the attic. 2. New lights in the kitchen and entries. 3. Louvers need repaired. **Mission:** The Brownie Sundae Drive-thru received \$861.00 on total. Remaining sundae stuff was served at the church potluck. The sign-up sheet is still out to empty two garbage cans at the canoe ramp on the Boone River and at the fishing spot just south of the bridge on White Fox Road. The special offering for "Strengthen the Church" was held June 18th. An idea from Curt McCoskey for the Alternative Giving Fair was discussed. The idea is to have an auction of items created by artisans within our congregation if they are willing to donate them. Details are being worked out. Bushes Baked Beans are being collected in Fellowship Hall to support the Angel Tree motorcycle ride on August 26th. American Tap is hosting the ride to raise funds to sponsor 100 children in the Angel Tree Project. The beans will be part of a meal served after the ride. Asbury UMC is sponsoring a food packaging event on September 16th. The goal is to pack 4,500 rice meals which cost \$2.00 each to assemble so Asbury is trying to raise \$9,000.00 to cover the cost. Each bag will feed 6 people. This is a community effort. The pickle jar is out in Fellowship for contributions. The funds are needed by August 7th. More information will be coming out about this event. **Women's Fellowship:** A taco buffet was served at the May Dinner where the funds were distributed to local organization. The booklets are being printed and an effort to recruit more members will be made. **Worship:** July 23rd will be Scholarship Sunday. Evening service will be July 29th. At our final evening service in August, root beer floats will be served. **Christian Education:** A celebration for our graduates was held June 18th. KLAB resumes two weeks after Labor Day. **Staff/Parish:** Nothing to report. The next meeting is August 8, 2023 at 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall.

Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Hill, Church Clerk

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Trustees Report: On the topic of the attic / roofline repair: The Trustees have decided to contract with **School Time Construction** (Joel Kennedy) to complete the roofline, window, and gable repairs to the church.

Goal #1: To have all access holes repaired preventing any wildlife from reentering the attic space. Joel does plan to vacuum out the soiled insulation in the bell tower area, which will not only clean it up, but will clear the way so we can see if there are more holes that need repaired. Joel believes they will have time this month to complete this work.

Goal #2: Chris McNiel will work to get some sort of commercial grade attic ventilation installed, including some power operated louvers. Having ventilation in the attic will improve our heating and cooling efforts/costs, will prolong the life of the roof (shingles) and overall structure, and literally clear the air (of smell).

Both jobs will be billed as time and materials. Estimated cost of \$5,000.

After these jobs have been completed, we will reevaluate the need to further remove/disinfect/replace insulation in the attic.

- We received a bid from Orkin for \$65,000 – of which \$43,000 would remove the contaminated insulation, disinfect, and re-insulate; but in our opinion did not properly address repairing the access sites.
- We received a bid from Serv Pro for \$70,000 – but it not only did not address repairing the access sites, it also did not include replacing the insulation. They would only remove the insulation and disinfect the area.
- We received a bid from Toftee Masonry for \$41,000 – to simply brick in the windows in the bell tower to prevent wildlife access.
- We received a bid from Foam Catz for \$26,000 - to install/re-install/replace the insulation.

ALSO OF NOTE:

A few weeks ago the air conditioner that services the church office area quit. Chris McNeil was called and responded to discover a broken wire. He repaired the connection and having noted the coolant was low, added freon. However, this is an R22 unit unfortunately. Manufacturers quit making air conditioners that use R22 freon back in 2010. We will start searching the archives to see if we can pinpoint when the air conditioners and boiler were last replaced, but we suspect they are both nearing end of life sooner rather than later.

We have spent considerable time and discussion on this situation and are confident in our decision to proceed with these plans (re: the bat/squirrel situation anyway).

Plymouth Circle Annual Report Plymouth Circle held their regular meetings in the church dining room at 10:00 am on the second Thursday of the month except December and May when 11:30 lunch was served at a restaurant. There are sixteen women in the Circle with an average attendance of 11 for eight meetings. The March meeting was cancelled because of bad weather.

At the December luncheon held at La Perla Jarocha, members brought feminine sanitary products which were delivered to Upper Des Moines Opportunity (UDMO) for the use of those in need.

During the Fellowship year, members served after Church coffee, worked at two Thrift Sales, provided help and food products for the preparation of several Beacon of Hope meals which were taken to the homeless men's shelter in Fort Dodge. They were also involved with the Lenten Luncheon where several churches prepared the luncheon and presented the program to about 100 ladies. A vote was taken to continue the practice for another year.

In April, the meeting was held in the dining room at Southfield Wellness Community so members Audrey Burtnett and Ginnie Veach, who live there, could attend the meeting. All were happy to spend time together.

Plymouth Circle members were involved in making suggestions for revising the Fellowship Constitution and bringing it up to date.

In March, Honorary member Wilma Taylor, mother of Circle member Kolleen Taylor, passed away and the Circle helped serve the coffee following her funeral service.

Our May meeting found us sharing lunch at Leon's Pizza with eleven members present. Our only item of business was voting to give our accumulated cash donations of \$266 to Pastor Craig Blaufuss for his work with the youngsters in KLAB (Kids Learn About the Bible).

A devotion from "Soul Retreats For Women", titled Rose Colored Glasses helped us end our year together with this thought; "Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens. Circumstances and situations do color life, but you.... choose what the color will be." by John Homer Miller

Finance Board Meeting The Finance Board has not met. We are requesting scholarship applications be submitted by June 16. We will then meet to review applications and set amounts for each scholarship. We will also set a date for scholarship Sunday.

We had a bond come due in May for the Johnson Scholarship. I purchased a one-year bond from Century HSG Corp. with a yield to market of 5.75%.

Finance Board Meeting Tracy handed out the June treasurer's report and stated offerings are up over \$ 8,400.00 from last year and expenses are up over \$ 5,900.00. Income is short \$ 8,500.00 for the year and there has been a \$ 5,000.00 transfer from the general fund bond interest account.

Held discussion on how to pay for the attic clean up and re-insulation of the attic. Tracy stated Trustees have contracted to close all locations where rodents and bats can get in. The remainder of the project is to be determined. Tracy stated that \$ 20,000.00 is available in the building fund bond interest account and would leave at least \$ 10,000.00 for other repairs. Discussed the possibility of a fund raiser in conjunction with the Trustees to cover the remainder of the cost.

Reviewed the scholarship applications received and the following will be awarded on July 23rd.

Dalene will ask Nate to make the presentations.

BESS Lyons: 5 @ \$ 380.00 each (\$ 1,900.00 total)

Hannah Stirling, Lauren Stirling, Bella Nelson, Kamryn Pruisman and Isabella Dietrich.

Helen Poole: 1 @ \$ 1,100.00

Jackson Leman

Ptacek Medical Careers: 3 @ \$ 1,000.00 (\$ 3,000.00 total)

Dilcia Franco, Addison Stearns and Ben Sterler.

Helen Johnson: 2 @ 1,800.00 (\$ 3,800.00 total)

Dilcia Franco and Jackson Leman

Respectfully Submitted

Tracy Wehrhan, Treasurer

Pastor's Cabinet Report June 9, 2023 Worship: We had a special treat on Mother's Day when our choir sang for the service and the Worship Board passed out carnations to all the mothers in the congregation. We observed Pentecost Sunday on May 28, and we shared the sacrament of Holy Communion that Sunday in lieu of Communion on the first Sunday of June. Don Bruner, Kolleen Taylor, and I led care center worship services on May 21. Looking forward, we will celebrate Father's Day and graduation Sunday on June 18, and we will take up our UCC Strengthen the Church Offering that Sunday as well. On Saturday, June 24 we will hold our first Summer Saturday service beginning at 5 p.m., and following the service we will enjoy an "indoor picnic" potluck organized by the Worship Board! Our next time leading care center worship services will be July 9.

CE Programming: We held our last KLAB before summer recess on May 18, with our annual trek to the Dairy Queen and then East Twin Park. Five children participated. Adult Education finished discussing "Christian Commitment" on May 21. The class is now in summer recess.

WCMA: The summer lunch program is up and running, and all the meal hosting days for the summer are already taken! The meals are being held at East Twin Park, Mondays and Fridays, June 5-August 18, from 11:30am -1 p.m. The American Tap is organizing an Angel Tree ride on August 26 to raise funds for our Angel Tree program, and area churches are being asked to provide desserts and sides for a community meal that is part of this fundraising ride. The ride hopes to raise \$10,000 to sponsor 100 kids! The Ecumenical Human Needs Committee is evaluating the role of church donations to the committee's work; apparently only First Congregational is now sending money to help the EHNC. We now have a care center worship service schedule for the entire year, with the addition of St. Paul Lutheran into the rotation.

Tri Conference: the names of 10 Tri-Conference Deacons has been released, they are: Rev. Blair Kirkpatrick, Eastern South Dakota; Jeff Hagaman, South Eastern Nebraska and South Western Iowa; Rev. Bob Molsberry, Eastern Iowa; Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones, Western Nebraska; Elaine Miller, South Eastern South Dakota and North Eastern Nebraska; Pastor Erin Erickson, Western South Dakota; Rev. Dixie Laube, North Eastern Iowa; Bonnie Lipton, Central and South Western Iowa; John Chaplin, Southern Iowa; Brice Hughes, Central and South Western Iowa. Note that our Northwestern Iowa area is not on this list! We will have to wait and see which Deacon contacts me. The Tri-Conference is also looking for nominees to serve on the Board of Directors. Interested? Let me know!

Shalom Circle: we continue to meet in East Chapel at 7:30 pm.

The breakdown of my ministry since May 9:

Pastor's Cabinet Report July 7, 2023 Worship: We celebrated Father's Day and graduation Sunday on June 18, and we honored our graduates Shelby Brim and Chesney Fuller with a gift of a journal and a cake and punch reception, hosted by the Christian Ed Board. Fathers got a variety of Chex mix snack bags courtesy of the Worship Board. On Saturday, June 24 we held our first Summer Saturday service and enjoyed an "indoor picnic" potluck organized by the Worship Board! Kolleen Taylor, Don Bruner and I led Care center services on July 9. I continue to lead Gospel hour at Southfield one Wednesday a month at both the Care Center and at Assisted Living.

WCMA: The summer lunch program is experiencing good numbers—50 to 70 at some meals. The American Tap is organizing an Angel Tree ride on August 26 to raise funds for our Angel Tree program,

and we have set up a display asking for donations of Bush Beans so we can donate a roaster of baked beans to the cause. The Ecumenical Human Needs continues to have applicants, earlier this week alone I staffed 3 cases. The "Faith at the Fair" worship service will be held in the green space of the Hamilton County Fairgrounds on Sunday, July 30. Coffee and fellowship time will begin at 9 a.m., and the ecumenical worship service will begin at 9:30am. Asbury UMC is organizing a food packaging event similar to the Kids Against Hunger food packing events in years past. It is a ministry of Midwest Missions, and the product is a rice meal in a bag that will feed 6 people. The cost to create these meals is \$2. The date of the food packing event is Saturday, September 16, location to be determined, and they are inviting all churches and community members to join in this worthwhile mission project. To meet the goal of packing 4,500 meals, Asbury is wanting to raise \$9,000 dollars. The Mission Board will be putting out the Pickle Jar during our after-worship coffees starting Sunday, July 9 to raise funds for this cause. Beginning July 17 Trinity Lutheran will have their next pastor: Pastor Jean Morse. The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd is also welcoming a new priest: Katherine Schroeder.

Brownie Sundae Drive Thru: we had good business and a great time at the Drive Thru on June 23! \$867 was raised, which will be matched by the EHC Foundation.

Graveside Service: I officiated at the graveside service of Amy Lateer on June 30.

The breakdown of my ministry since June 9:

Worship services led:6; Meetings:4; Visitation:14 Graveside Service: 1

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:

