

September 2023 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.”

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” –Luke 7: 27-36

Ever throw a boomerang? If you have, you probably learned something about boomerangs: they do NOT always come back to you. I had one once when I was younger, and whenever I threw the thing it would land 50 feet in front of me, 50 feet behind me, or 50 feet to the side of me. I could throw that boomerang a hundred times and *never* have it come back to me the way I wanted it to!

Have you noticed that love is very much like a boomerang? Have you noticed that when you throw love out into the world you are always hoping it will return to you-- and yet there's no telling where it will travel, or where it will land? Have you noticed that like my childhood boomerang you can throw love out in a hundred different ways, but there is no guarantee that it will ever come back to you?

Now to be fair, sometimes boomerangs do return to the thrower, and most of us have thrown love out into the world and had it returned to us from those we are closest to: our parents, our spouses, our children, our friends, and our pets. It is a blessing to be able to throw love out into the world and receive it back from those who are near and dear to us!

But Jesus wants us to take the art of throwing love out into the world *beyond* those we are closest to. As Jesus notes in the Sermon on the Plain, even “sinners” love those who love them, do good to those who do good to them, and lend to those who can repay the loan with interest. There is a strong sense of certainty in that; an expectation of a guaranteed return which is more like a *game of catch* than it is like throwing a boomerang.

And while I certainly believe Jesus doesn't despise the love of family, friends, and pets, he is asking us to take the love we have to give *beyond* the game of “catch.” Jesus is asking us to throw our love out into the world knowing that there are those who cannot return our acts of love...those who WILL NOT return our acts of love...even those who will stomp on our acts of love and return anger, or even hatred, to us. *Jesus teaches those with ears to hear that we are to join him in the work of throwing love out into the world in the hope that love may be seen, felt, and known where it has not been seen, felt, and known before.* And Jesus teaches us that we are to do this *without* the expectation that our love will be returned to us!

As I think of benevolences we support as a congregation—UDMO, ACE, DSAOC, Ecumenical Human Needs, the Agape Fund, Beacon of Hope Men's Homeless Shelter, Backpacks against Hunger, our UCC special offerings, Heifer International, and our local food pantries (to name a few) it occurs to me that we are sending our love out into the world like a boomerang, instead of playing a game of catch with it. We can't possibly meet everyone who is benefiting from our gifts; we can't see all the hidden healing work that our gifts make possible; we won't get “paid back” by all the souls whose lives are made a little better by our loving acts of generosity. Yet because we choose to send

our love out in this way, a little more love has been shown and known...regardless of whether it ever comes back to us.

I don't remember what ever happened to my childhood boomerang—whether I lost it on a tree, or broke it in frustration because it wouldn't come back to me. Sometimes our love is like that, too—we lose sight of it, or we give up on it in frustration. Yet it's good to remember that Jesus never gave up on love, and it's good to remember that as we throw our boomerangs of love out into the world, we keep good company...

For the greatest boomerang of love was not thrown by humans but by God, when God sent Jesus into the world to offer a better way of life: an invitation to become part of God's endless outreach of love. That boomerang thrown by God 2000 years ago in a Roman-occupied province in the Middle East was a real risk with no guaranteed returns...but that act of love is still reaping blessings in the life of the world--and Jesus has indeed returned to God! May we all be blessed by the grace of that life-changing and world-changing love, and may we join God in throwing our boomerangs of love into the world with full and open hearts!

--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

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

1 - Ron & Laurie Epps
1 - Travis & Stacy Wearda
14 - Mark and Susan Andrew
18 - Les & Leanna Ploeger
18 - Jim & Cindy Henning
19 - Landen & Betty Ploeger

Church Staff

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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



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Sunshine Duffy
7 - Brandon Lahr
8 - Vada Rae Williams
16 - Morgan Struchen
20 - Mary Byrne
28 - Dena Rohmiller
30 - Mark Brim

Parish Nurse News

Rules to Live By - the Daily Dozen

- Make up your mind to be happy.
- Make the best of your circumstances
- Don't take yourself too seriously
- You can't please everybody
- Don't let your neighbor set your standards
- Do the things you enjoy doing but stay out of debt
- Don't borrow trouble
- Avoid people who make you unhappy
- Have many interests
- Don't be the one who never gets over things
- Do what you can for those less fortunate than yourself
- Keep busy at something

THRIFT SALE

Friday, Sept. 29, 2023

Women's Fellowship will be conducting their semi-annual Thrift Sale.

Wed. Sept. 27 & Thurs. Sept. 28 - Drop Off Donations & Set-Up.

NO - large items or furniture, but you can send a picture of the item and your name, phone #, and price. It will be posted on a board for people to see and call you.

Remember items should be clean, complete, and in good repair.

Workers can sign-up in Fellowship Hall or at your circle meeting. All church members are encouraged to sign-up.

Contact Cindy Henning at 297-0422 or bestgrandmacindy@gmail.com with questions.

Thank you for your donations and help making this fundraiser a success.

Cindy Henning

Budgets Budget worksheets are due September 15.

KLAB (Kids Learning About the Bible) is starting soon! We will start KLAB Wednesday, September 13, after school from 3:20- 5 pm. KLAB is for grades K-7, children must be in school to join KLAB. Look for registration forms soon!

Rally Day Is Coming! The Christian Education Board is planning another great day of fun, food and fellowship on Sunday, September 10—Rally Day! We will begin at 9 a.m. with games for kids of all ages, then meet in our sanctuary for a Rally Day Worship Celebration at 10 am, and following the service we will gather in Fellowship Hall for a Rally Day Potluck! Please bring a dish to share and your own table service; the Christian Ed Board will provide Lemonade, coffee, and water. There will be a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall, please sign up with the dish you will share so we have a variety of foods.

Adult Education begins Sunday, September 17, 9 a.m.

Summer is over, and our Adult Education class will resume meeting in the multi-purpose room in the lower level of the church, beginning September 17 at 9:00am. Our first topic will be a study of our current national defense budget and its military, political, economic, and moral/theological ramifications. Currently the U.S. has budgeted \$816.7 billion for defense spending in 2023, and the 2024 Defense budget of \$826.45 billion in new discretionary spending has been approved by the Appropriations Committee. Defense spending is 12% of the total U.S budget, and about 50 % of our discretionary spending, competing with health, environment, education, transportation, housing, justice, and social services for discretionary spending dollars. Yet defense

spending is also at a historical low of just under 3 % of our Gross Domestic Product, a downward trend that has been going on since 2010. Meanwhile, the U.S. is expected to post a \$1.4 Trillion dollar deficit for 2023. So how needed is our current level of defense spending? How efficient is our military apparatus, and does it meet the defense needs of our country? Are we overspending on our defense, when the threats to our national security are analyzed in relation to our ability to successfully defend ourselves? What economic benefits are we experiencing in relation to our defense spending? What political benefits are we deriving from our defense apparatus? And what are the moral and theological implications of such levels of spending, especially when we consider what else defense dollars could fund? As Christians, how do we understand the need for defense weighed against the call to renounce violence and “render no man evil for evil”? Join us in the lower level for an informative look at current state of our nation’s defense and the “treasure” we offer on the altar of national security.

Faith at the Fair

Tony and Robin Streigle gave their messages as part of the ecumenical Faith at the Fair, held at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds on July 30. Several pastors from local churches participated in the service.



Rice Meal Bag Assembly September 16

On Saturday, September 16, church and community members will gather at the Van Diest building at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds to pack 9,600 rice/protein/nutrient meal bags—enough to feed 57,600 people worldwide! To do this Asbury has been raising funds and recruiting volunteers, and on Saturday, teams of 8-10 people will assemble

for 2 hour shifts to pack the meals. There is a sign-up sheet in fellowship hall for this event; let's see if we can't get enough volunteers to field a team for this humanitarian project! There will be treats for all workers, and a lunch will be served at noon. And if you cannot stand for 2 hours, there will be "sit-down" jobs for you to do as well! The deadline to sign up is September 8.



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 Mosbach, Jose Burgos, Gayle Olson and let them know you have something you would like to contribute to this event.

Angel Tree

First Congregational outdid itself with our support of the American Tap's Angel Tree ride, held August 26. We asked for donations of Bush's beans for their community meal, and you donated 100 pounds worth! (the photo is just a sample of what was donated). Volunteers from the Mission Board met and made up 3 roasters of baked beans to donate-- plus a box of unopened beans to replenish a roaster when it was emptied. The meal was delicious, AND THE ANGEL TREE RIDE RAISED \$17,500 TO PURCHASE CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR CHILDREN!! Amazing-- and we helped!



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.

Thanks

Dear Congregation, Thank you so much for the gift of the scholarship. It will be put towards this years tuition at Iowa State. I was accepted into

the College of Design majoring in Graphic Design this year and will be working towards my degree the next 3 years.

I want to apologize as I was not in attendance to receive the scholarship in person. I misplaced the event info that was sent in the mail. I am very appreciative for this gift, thanks again.
Kamryn Pruismann

Dear First Congregational UCC, I want to personally thank you for the generous scholarship I was given July 23! I am extremely thankful to have brothers and sisters like you all to help me during my college education. I plan on using this money to help pay for books and classes that help me become helpful in the social work field! I am, again, extremely thankful for you all!
Bella Nelson

First Congregational Church, Thank you so much for rewarding me with a scholarship. The money will be very helpful with all the expenses coming my way! Your church and community are helping me pursue my dreams at UNI.
Thank you, Addison Stearns

Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of 2 scholarships again this year. I apologize that I was unable to make it in person. The church has been very supportive of me throughout the years, both personally and financially. I'm

grateful to have grown up in the church, and I am very thankful for all the support.

Thanks, Jackson Leman

Lila

After a 3-week disappearance, Lila showed up for a few days to check in with us and let us spoil her a bit.



Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$16,728.27	\$114,805.60
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$16,728.27	\$114,805.60
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	1,416.67	\$10,315.65
Pastoral Services	10,462.70	61,384.49
Maintenance and Repairs	2,820.63	27,807.59
Church Office	3,151.14	21,737.06
Music Ministry	558.33	3,308.31
Christian Education	6.15	297.66
Local Ministry	0.00	16.26
Misc. Expenses	96.42	967.51
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18,512.04	\$125,834.53

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

