

November 2023 Newsletter
First Congregational United Church of Christ
1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595
515-832-2232
<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>

“For all the saints, whom from their labors rest...” –from the hymn “For All the Saints”

Marjorie Groves and I recently attended the Iowa Conference UCC Annual Meeting held at Urbandale UCC on October 14. Marjorie has written a good summary of the meeting, so please read that to be updated on our Iowa Conference business and our current financial picture. What I want to comment on concerning the meeting is more personally subjective, but I thought it important enough to share as my thoughts for the November Newsletter.

First, those of us who remember the Iowa Conference of years’ past and the Annual meetings we once held would scarcely recognize the gathering on October 14. Gone are the days of 4-6 Associate Conference Ministers serving churches in Iowa; gone are the days of meetings that stretched into 2 days filled with keynote speakers, business, continuing education, presentations, and much conversation and catching up among clergy and lay delegates alike. At our 2023 Annual Meeting we barely met our quorum of attendees (and those included attendees participating virtually via Zoom), and the entire meeting lasted a scant 4 and a half hours, including time for lunch. Our only remaining full time Associate Conference Minister who serves THREE states, Kendy Miller, was in attendance, while our interim Executive Conference Minister Phil Hart was ill and attended remotely. In short, our Conference Annual Meeting seemed to have the feel and attendance of an Association meeting of days gone by, and frankly, it was somewhat deflating in comparison to what the Conference Annual meetings once were...and for that matter, what the Iowa Conference once was.

However...as I looked around, sat through the business of the day, shared lunch with other delegates and pastors of the Iowa Conference, I began to feel both a sense of gratitude and a sense of the preciousness of this gathering of Iowan UCC’ers. It was generally an aging crowd, and many of the faces looked familiar from other UCC meetings and events held over the years. Do you remember Ken Briggs? I believe he was your Associate Conference Minister some years ago, and I had worked with him in Southeast Iowa as well. He is still alive—and still taking part in the ongoing life of the UCC here in the state of Iowa! There were other silver-haired servants of the church in attendance as well, veterans of many meetings, many programs, and many good causes. It was humbling to see the decades of dedication and service to our respective churches, Associations, and our Conference all assembled on that Saturday afternoon...saints of the church in every respect, even if now many are becoming “Saints Emeriti” who hold a wealth of knowledge of our history and theology and polity; Saints Emeriti who have done decades of work helping lead their local churches and our gatherings of churches; Saints Emeriti who have given a good portion of their lives laboring for the Gospel and for the Mission we have been entrusted with as Christians who are members of the United Church of Christ. Seeing these aging saints of the church so faithfully gathering and continuing the business of the Church in uncertain times was both heartening and yes—heartbreaking...for so many were in the later years of their lives and service, and it wasn’t hard to imagine a not-very-distant future where they would no longer be a living part of the UCC in Iowa.

And yet they had come to gather, to continue this important work, to offer their expertise and devotion, and to give witness to their faith in this particular setting of the Church of Jesus Christ in our time and place! And so I give thanks to God that I could see these saints once again in Urbandale, Iowa...even while knowing it is possible that I might never see them again on this side of eternity.

And all of this brings me to our own church here at 1000 Willson Avenue in Webster City. Like the Iowa Conference, we too are seeing fewer attendees and learning to work with fewer resources of money and people. Like the Iowa Conference, our attendance increasingly skews toward silver haired saints, most who have a long and storied history with this church. And like the Iowa Conference,

every gathering we share is precious, knowing that there will come a time when our own saints will depart from this church and our lives (as they have been doing all through our church's history), leaving those of us who are left to give thanks for their dedication and their faith in leading us to this present time...even as we assume the mantles of responsibility, mission, and leadership that will continue this church into the future.

On November 26 we will light candles to honor the departed saints of this congregation who have left us in 2023, and as we are doing this, other departed saints of this church may well come to mind. In this ritual there is both pain and rejoicing, for we acknowledge the impact of their loss even as we celebrate that they are now resting from their labors in the Kingdom of God. May the light of the candles we offer to their memory and faith illumine our lives and inspire us all to greater acts of devotion and service to this church, to the UCC, and to the Kingdom of God. For the church in every setting needs all her saints—past, present, and future--to continue the great work we have received as the body of Christ on earth! And isn't it a wonderful acknowledgment to know that WE are now the silver-haired saints who are to lead the church into the future! Thank God we have the inspiration, the example-- and the encouragement-- of the saints who have gone before us! --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**
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 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
20 - Jayleen Burgos
24 - Maggie Kennedy
26 - Andrew Wehrhan
27 - Susan Andrew
27 - Glenda Wehrhan

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

22 - Tom & Holly Riemenschneider

Parish Nurse News

Behind the wheel.....

Eating behind the wheel can be dangerous. It is not so much eating, but rather the spilling! Trying to clean the spill when you are behind the wheel is the main cause of food-related wrecks

Top 10 Foods to Avoid While Driving

Coffee - Hot soup – Tacos - Chili-covered food
Juicy hamburgers – Barbeque - Fried chicken
Jelly- and cream-filled doughnuts
Soft drinks - Chocolate

All Saints Sunday November 26

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 26 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: Diane Vasquez, Wilma Taylor, Bruce Perry, Arden Schlitter, and Luverne Bierle.

Decorate the Church for Christmas— November 26

Mark your calendars! Following worship on Sunday, November 26, 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 a soup luncheon!

Advent Begins—December 3

Sunday, December 3 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.

Thank YOU From Pastor Craig and Vicki

We were surprised and humbled by the Pastor Appreciation coffee that followed worship on October 22! Thank you all for your cards, gifts and words of appreciation! Vicki and I want you all to know that we deeply appreciate your support and your ongoing dedication to our common ministry and witness together over the last 13 years. May God grant us more years of fruitful and joyful work together!

Living Nativity December 2

Webster City is planning to hold their annual "Christmas in the City" celebration on Saturday, December 2, and the Chamber of Commerce has asked if we would present our Living Nativity as part of the city-wide celebration. We have agreed, so we are asking for volunteers to help present this meaningful testimony of our faith on that date. We will hold it in front of the northwest doors to the church as we have before, from 6:30-8 p.m. A sign-up sheet is available in Fellowship Hall; please sign up and be a part of what has become our annual Christmas tradition!

NO KLAB November 22

There will be no KLAB on Wednesday, November 22, which is the day before Thanksgiving and a two hour early release for all students in the district. Our students will be back to KLAB on November 29!

Angel Tree Update

The 2023 Christmas Angel Tree Gift Assistance program is up and running! We are finishing up collecting applications from families requesting assistance, and in early November we will assemble the Angels and place them on Angel Trees at Webster City Financial and Kendall Young Library. Seven Webster City churches

are again organizing this event, and the American Tap has pledged to sponsor 100 Angels as part of their fabulously successful Angel Tree Ride they organized in August. Be looking for the Mission Board to place a small angel tree in our church starting November 19.

Iowa Conference UCC Gathers

"Making All Things New," our Annual Meeting theme, came from Isaiah 43, and the format October 14 at the Urbandale UCC was, indeed, different from past yearly updates; it was a business-filled meeting, without keynote speakers or workshops. Rev. Craig Blaufuss and I were delegates for First Congregational UCC, Webster City. With 84 congregations represented in-person and online, we had a quorum. Rev. Kendy Miller, Associate Tri-Conference Minister, represented the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota staff in person, with Rev. Phil Hart, Interim Executive Conference Minister via Zoom. Rev. Hart announced that the new Executive Conference Minister nominee could be presented as soon as the end of this year.

Other updates:

The Iowa Conference UCC budget has been reduced by half, primarily by divesting itself of a building and by cutting staff. Remaining staff has taken a pay cut, said Rev. Melanie Van Weelden, Board of Directors President. The Conference Minister and Associate Conference minister are the only fulltime employees, with a team of Deacons, each working five hours a week and assigned to geographic areas, keeping in touch with churches.

On average, each Iowa UCC member gives \$25 a year to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), according to Board Treasurer, Terry Kaduce. That figure needs to be raised \$10 to meet the budget. Money from investments is currently being used to cover expenses.

Compensation guidelines for ministers and the budget amount for TCM staff have both been increased by 3 percent.

More than 20 delegates from Iowa will be needed for the 2025 General Synod in Kansas City. Contact Martha Wolf, Nominating Committee Chair, Fort Madison, St. John UCC, if you are interested in being nominated.

We have 22 Members in Discernment (persons studying to become UCC clergy) in Iowa. First Congregational UCC, Webster City, remains one of the top 5 for 5 and OCWM churches.

I would be happy to share the Annual Report of the Iowa Conference UCC with you, if you would like more information. Thank you for letting me be your lay delegate. Marjorie Groves

2023 Alternative Giving

Thank you to all who have volunteered your talent by donating items to our first Alternative Giving Fair auction/silent auction. Mission Board has met and tried to get some more details in place. We are asking for all NON-FOOD donations to be at the church on Saturday December 2 by noon. Silent and live auction items will be determined by the board at that time. The silent auction will begin on Sunday December 3 and run until Sunday December 17. We are asking that FOOD donations be at the church at noon on Saturday December 16. They will be available to bid on on Sunday the 17th. We will run the live auction on Sunday December 17 as a part of the Women's Fellowship Christmas luncheon. Silent auction items will also be 'sold' at this time as well. We are planning on GoServ Global being the beneficiary of all auction items. This is an organization that serves in various countries and has a project where they ship, and build, the Sukup Safe-T homes. These homes have been found to withstand hurricanes and earthquakes, with Haiti being the primary recipient of these homes. For \$7500 a home can be shipped, and set-up being ready for occupancy by the end of a day. Funds we raise with our auction will be designated for this part of their ministry. Any questions you have please talk to a Mission Board member.

Our KLAB Halloween party was spooky fun!



Kolleen Taylor playing piano at Crestview during our October 22 Care Center worship services.



Women of the Plymouth Circle gather for a festive October meeting



Iowa Conference Annual Meeting held at Urbandale UCC



Treasurer's Report

INCOME	September	YEAR TO DATE
Pledges and Offerings	\$14,385.00	\$140,890.60
Other Income	0.00	.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$14,385.00	\$140,890.60
EXPENSES		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$10,315.65
Pastoral Services	8,947.41	78,619.71
Maintenance and Repairs	6,420.06	37,435.52
Church Office	3,104.59	28,445.51
Music Ministry	408.33	4,124.97
Christian Education	23.49	321.15
Local Ministry	0.00	16.26
Misc. Expenses	31.42	1,005.35
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18,935.30	\$160,284.12

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on October 10, 2023

Members Present:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Moderator: | Wil Groves | Pastor: | Craig Blaufuss |
| Vice Moderator: | | Trustees: | Nick Oberender |
| Finance Sec.: | | Women's Fellowship: | Patti Gescheidler |
| Treasurer: | Tracy Wehrhan | Mission: | |
| Staff/Parish: | Cindy Henning | Worship: | Curt McCoskey |
| 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 September Cabinet minutes were read. The Moderator approved the minutes. Guests at this meeting were Les Ploeger and Laurie Epps.

Board and Committee Summaries:

Treasurer's Report: September offerings were \$13,335.00 and expenses were \$17,492.29. This makes a \$19,000.00 deficit between the Year-to-Date offerings and expenses. A transfer of \$15K was made to cover expenses. OCWM has not been paid out yet. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Curt McCoskey seconded a motion that the report be put to audit. The motion passed.

Pastor's Report: A Celebration of Life was held for Luverne Bierle on Tuesday, October 10 with a visitation preceding. This is the third loss of a congregant in the past 9 weeks. We are encouraged to reach out to the widows. The Asbury food packing event held on September 16th produced 50,400 meals. We packed 8400 bags. Each bag feeds 6 people. This could not have been done without those who volunteered. On Rally Day, held September 10th, children's games were set up in the vacant lot before service. But the turnout of children this year was disappointing. This activity may need to be reevaluated. KLAB kids, met on October 11 and were to carpool to the Olson home to walk their maze. The trip was postponed due to a lack of permission slips. The Chamber of Commerce asked if we could do our Live Nativity on December 2nd, the same night as the Holiday/Christmas Parade. We would like to do this depending on the level of interest and volunteers from the congregation. Doing this as a float is not feasible.

Finance Board: Met on October 4 to discuss how to fund the repairs needed to the church roof and attic as recommended by the Trustees: The Finance Board has several recommendations outlined in their report (See below). **Trustees:** There are several areas of concern with the roof and bell tower: 1. the roof flashing, downspouts, fascia boards, gutters etc. 2. The bell tower has deteriorated louvers, contaminated insulation, and siding. 3. There are 3 gables at the peaks of the roof that need repaired. 4. Finally tuckpointing is needed for damaged bricks. The Trustees received a detailed estimate from Woods Roofing for \$30,000 that would take care of most of the infiltration, animals and water, issues in (1.). Chris McNiel has been working on sealing up the dome, removing insulation and cleaning out the bell tower sections (2). The third and fourth concerns will be addressed in turn. A new concern about the stability of bell tower itself has surfaced due to water damage to wood structures.

The cabinet members discussed at length the cost of repairs versus the viability of the church. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Nick Oberender seconded a motion to amend the building fund of the 2023 budget from \$12,500.00 to \$40,000.00 to pay for Woods Roofing repairs as well as all outstanding repair bills, and for an evaluation by a structural engineer. Motion passed. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Cindy Henning seconded a motion that the budget adjustment proposal be sent to the congregation for a vote at the budget meeting this year. The motion passed.

Because of the length of the preceding discussion, Cindy Henning moved and Tracy Wehrhan seconded a motion to dispense with reading the remaining board/committee reports. Motion passed.

New Business

2023 Budget Meeting. Tracy Wehrhan moved and Nick Oberender seconded a motion that October 29, 2023 be the date for the budget meeting. Motion passes. Absentee ballots will be available. If amendments are required, absentee ballots will be moot.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm. The next meeting is November 14, 2023 at 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall.

Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Hill, Church Clerk

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Worship Board The Worship Board of First Congregational UCC met Tuesday, October 3, 3:30 p.m., in Fellowship Hall.

Curt and Pastor Craig reported on the Cabinet meeting. Finances, bats, and squirrels continue to challenge. A bid of \$30,000 for roof repair has been received and will go to the Cabinet for authorization.

Old Business: Communion on October 1 went well. Three loaves of Jane's homemade bread are in the refrigerator freezer for future communions.

Advent decorating – Hanging of the Greens – is November 26, after the worship service. Worship Board will provide lunch: Gretchen: cinnamon rolls and cornbread muffins; Curt/Lorraine: potato soup; Jane: chicken noodle soup; Marjorie: chili (it will be in the chest freezer; Jane will thaw and heat in crockpot); Craig: a vegetarian option, possibly minestrone. Whether we need crackers, celery, carrots and who will bring them will be decided at the next meeting.

December 24 is the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. The Advent service will be in East Chapel at 10 a.m. The Christmas Eve service will be in the sanctuary at 5 p.m.

New Business: Communion for November 5 will be prepared by Gretchen – if she is willing. Jane and Curt or Don are available to be stewards.

Worship Board members Don and Curt have completed their terms, we think, so will need to be replaced with new folks voted on at the Annual Meeting.

Baptism of Kelly Riemenschneider Midtling's baby is scheduled for October 29.

Next Worship Board meeting is Tuesday, November 7, 3:30 p.m. This is Election Day, so vote earlier in the day or by absentee ballot. Marjorie will be in Egypt so unable to attend meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Marjorie, subbing for Gretchen

Mission Board Mission Board met after worship on Sunday September 17. The primary item of business was to make some decisions about our Alternative Giving Fair auction. The following was decided. We are asking for all non-food auction items to be at the church at noon on Saturday December 2 with those items that are silent auction be available to make bids on starting Sunday December 3 and running thru Sunday December 17. All food items should be brought to the church by noon on Saturday Dec16 with those items being available for bidding on December 17 when they would also be sent home with the winning bidder. The live auction will be held on Sunday December 17 in conjunction with the WF Christmas luncheon. It was thought that the auction should be held sporadically throughout the meal. GoServ Global will be the recipient of our auction funds with the intent these funds be earmarked for their SafeT homes.

The other AGF projects include: Angel Tree Nov. 19 &/or 26, KLAB - Advocats - December 3, Casseroles for Lotus - December 10 (I have been in touch and they would be pleased to work with us on this project) GoServ Global auction items - December 17. Next meeting ????? Secretary pro-tem Gayle

Women's Fellowship Executive Board Minutes Old Business:

Kitchen Cleaning still needs completed. Circles are encouraged to choose areas to clean. **Thrift Sale:** Preliminary totals were \$1,100.00 after expenses. This amount isn't as much as we have been getting. Next Sale April 26, 2024. Talk in your circle meeting about these suggestions and how you feel about the sale and bring back to Exec. Board.

New Business: The Christmas Luncheon will be Dec. 17 after worship. A Potato Bar will be served by us. Circles will be assigned toppings to bring. Exec. Board will make

bars or cookies for dessert. The meal is free because the Mission Board will be having a Live & Silent Auction as part of the Alternative Giving Fair. Silent Auction items will be available to see Dec. 10. **SERRV** – We will have a Spring Sale when we receive catalogs.

Program Book Corrections –

Sharon Perry – change email - hbperry60@gmail.com

Holly Riemenschneider – remove home phone #832-2608

Susan Meinders – change email – svmeinders1@gmail.com

Finance Board Meeting Tracy presented the September treasurer's report. Discussion was held on the report. Offerings are behind expenses by \$19,000.00. Tracy has transferred \$15,000.00 from the bond interest account to cover the expenses. It was also noted that the bond interest received in 2022 was \$10,437.04.

Discussion was held on the Trustee's request to fund the repairs to the church roof and attic. These recommendations were agreed upon;

1. We need to know what the total amount of the repairs are going to be.
2. All money needed for current bills will come out of the building fund interest accounts and these bills need to be submitted ASAP.
3. If more funds are needed for this year, The amount needed will have to be known, A congregational meeting will have to be advertised and the budget will need to be amended.
4. If additional money will be needed for next year's budget, the cabinet will have to adjust the budget at their October 10 meeting. Again, cabinet will have to know the amount that is needed to adjust the proposed budget. If the total for next year exceeds the budgeted amount, another congregational meeting will need to be called to amend next year's budget.
5. Discussion was held about a possible fund raiser to cover some of the expenses for the repairs. We do not want this to affect the offerings given to the general fund.
6. All money received from the fund raiser would be directly deposited in the building fund interest account.
7. Tracy will give a detailed report on the status of the general fund and building fund at the cabinet meeting on October 12.

Respectfully submitted, Tracy Wehrhan, Treasurer

Pastor's Cabinet Report October 8, 2023 Celebrations of Life: We gathered to celebrate the life of Arden Schlitter on Friday, September 22 in our sanctuary. We are scheduled to celebrate the life of Luverne Bierle on Tuesday, October 10, beginning with visitation at 1 and the service at 2 pm. The service will be held in our sanctuary.

Worship: On September 10 we held our traditional Rally Day worship service (with jokes), and the choir assembled to sing once again! Following the service, we enjoyed an indoor potluck picnic. I continue to lead Gospel hour at Southfield, now one Tuesday a month at both the Care Center and at Assisted Living. Kolleen Taylor, Don Bruner and I will lead the next care center services on October 22. We will baptize Joseph Stanley Lewis on October 29 during Worship. **Thrift Sale:** Friday September 29 was a busy day with the Thrift Sale! Thanks to everyone who donated, sorted, worked the sale, and cleaned up afterward. A special thanks to Cindy and Jim Henning who work so hard at making this sale a success! **WCMA:** Asbury UMC's food packaging event on Saturday, September 16 went well, with 8,400 bags (six meals in each bag) packed during the day, for a total of 50,400 meals! Thank you to our volunteer workers who helped make this happen. The Ecumenical Human Needs fund is eligible for an Enhanced Hamilton

County Foundation Grant; our pastors will meet with Sharon Perry to assess applying for the grant. The Angel Tree Christmas Gift Assistance project began October 1, with applications available in English and Spanish at ACE, UDMO, County Health, St. Thomas, and the Lutheran food pantries. Applications will be available until October 31. On Tuesday, Oct. 10, reps from the WCMA will meet with Reps from the American Tap to discuss how we will proceed with utilizing the American Tap's money raised by their Angel Tree Ride. **CE Programming:** On September 10 we enjoyed our Rally Day games in the vacant lot of the church before worship, but with so few children participating we will have to evaluate if there is interest in this event going forward. We have begun our KLAB programming with 7 youth ranging in age from kindergarten through 6th grade. We need donations of snacks! We have been spending time outdoors while the weather is good, and the kids love our nature hikes. On October 11 we will carpool to the Olson's home to walk their maze. Our annual Halloween party will be held on October 25. Adult Ed continues with their study on the topic of national defense and defense spending. We have looked at the breakdown of the defense budget, and we will next study Mutual Assured Destruction and why the Armed Forces are having difficulty in recruiting enough personnel. **Iowa Conference:** will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, Oct 14 at Urbandale UCC in Urbandale, Iowa. Marjorie Groves and I will be attending. **Shalom Circle:** we have missed a couple of weeks of gathering for the Shalom Circle, but we will reconvene on Friday, October 13, beginning at 6:30 pm in the East Chapel.

The breakdown of my ministry since September 8:

Worship services led:7; Christian Ed.:7; Meetings:9; Visitation:2; Celebration of Life: 1

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

