

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

“...Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters, streaming lights of joy,
ringing bells of hope and singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air. The world is
encouraged to come away from rancor,
come the way of friendship.
It is the Glad Season.

Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner. Flood waters recede into
memory. Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us as we make our way to higher ground.
Hope is born again in the faces of children. It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk
into their sunsets. Hope spreads around the earth, brightening all things—
even hate, which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust. We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of
hope. All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
to celebrate the promise of Peace....

Peace, My Brother.

Peace, My Sister.

Peace, My Soul.”

As we begin the Season of Advent, I thought it would be good to share again with you excerpts from Maya Angelou's "Amazing Peace: a Christmas Poem." These are words I always need to hear as I begin to hurl headlong into a season so filled with blunted hopes, shape-shifting memories, burgeoning to-do lists, and precious little peace. Maya's words remind us that though the world is groaning in travail with the news of political scheming, terrorist massacres and retaliatory invasions, suicide and overdose epidemics, and a climate that increasingly seems out of control...

And though our personal lives may be burdened with sickness, grief, injuries, financial strains, overwork, family conflicts, weariness, weakness, and doubts and fears of every kind,

God has not forgotten us, and even now is gifting us *again* with a new spirit and a new season: the Glad Season of friendship and forgiveness; a season of hope and the halting of hate,

A season of Amazing Peace which we can exchange for our amazing anxiety, our amazing rancor, and our amazing gloom as we face an uncertain future. That sounds like Good News! And what must we do to greet this new spirit and this new season, and find this Amazing Peace that Maya proclaims to us?

We must believe it is REAL. We must believe it is from GOD. We must be willing to trust in God and goodness again. We must be willing to forgive others-- and ourselves. We must be willing to let go of what is hurting us so our opened hands and minds can receive new "gifts." We must halt our hate and open our hearts to LOVE. We must look for higher ground, and bring others with us—or at least show them the way we have taken to gain that ground. We must jubilate, we must shout, we must clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas into our LIVES. In short, we must welcome not only the *news* of the birth of the Prince of Peace, we must take his life and message to heart and change our living so that it aligns with his vision; his work; his LIFE. Then we will truly know the reason for the season; then we will be able to know the Amazing Peace that loosens our voices so that we can say at last: "*Peace, my Brother. Peace, my Sister. Peace, my Soul.*"

Friends, the season of Advent is upon us, and what we make of it will go far toward our experience of Amazing Peace, or our experience of its absence. This holiday season let us all work to "prepare

him room” by opening ourselves to Jesus the *Christ*, so he may work his works in us. If we will do that, then we will experience the miracle of this season of Peace which comes as a gift from God, given as all good gifts are given—with great love and boundless joy.

May this Advent season bring to you this promised Amazing Peace, and may you share that Peace and goodwill with the world, as Jesus did! –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
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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**



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

1 - Tracy Wehrhan
3 - Alexis Tudor
4 - Ron Epps
6 - Jamie Roelfs
10 - Joyce Gelhaus
11 - Kaelyn Butz
13 - Susan Meinders
14 - Nancy Urich
17 - Bob Van Diest
17 - Matt Byrne
20 - Don Bruner
23 - Sara Imhoff
26 - Alan Yungclas

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

28 - Dale & Gayle Olson
30 - Ed & Andrea Mosbach

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE DECEMBER 16

Parish Nurse News

Suggestions for Christmas for shut-ins
Large print editions of Psalms or New Testament
Assorted greetings cards and stamps
Small flashlight
Wall calendar with large numbers
Hand or body lotion
Lap robes
Warm socks
Plug-in night lights
Magazines with colorful photos
Lip balm
Simple guest book for visitors

Celebrate the Season at First Congregational UCC!

What better way to deepen your faith than to spend time in church during Advent and Christmas? Here are ways to celebrate the Season at First Congregational UCC during December 2023:

- **On December 3** we will observe the First Sunday of Advent, and share the sacrament of Holy Communion.
- **On December 10** we will observe the Second Sunday of Advent, and in the early afternoon we will lead worship at our local care centers.
- **On December 17** we will observe the Third Sunday of Advent, and following the service we will enjoy a baked potato bar Christmas Luncheon courtesy of the Women's Fellowship, and participate in a silent and live auction of donated goods sponsored by the Mission Board.
- **On December 24** we will observe the Fourth Sunday of Advent in East Chapel with an informal service of worship beginning at 10 a.m. We will hold our Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship service at 5 p.m. Pew Communion will be offered at this service.
- **On December 31** we will observe the first Sunday of Christmastide in worship. Pastor Craig will be on vacation, so we

will enjoy a video sermon that day. There will be no adult education that Sunday.

Come and share in the beauty and joy of the Advent and Christmas season as we worship God and celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World!

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.

Alternative Giving For Christmas

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3RD - The KLAB kids will sponsor a fundraiser for Advocats in Webster City. Look in Fellowship Hall for ways to support this needed local service. This organization takes in and adopts out homeless kitties in our town. Our four-footed friends need your support. Please support them in honor of your pets!

SUNDAY DECEMBER 10TH - Are you an at-home chef who loves putting casseroles together for a rainy day? Mission Board is sponsoring a casserole drive for Lotus - put together a 9 x 9, or 13 x 9 favorite casserole in a disposable foil container. Label it with the type of casserole made and directions to heat it up. Lotus will use these meals in their shelter. Please help provide for those in our community who most feel food scarcity. Casseroles can be turned into the deep freeze in the kitchen through December 20th.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 17TH - Please join the Mission Board and Women's Fellowship for a Christmas meal and silent/live auction. Various donated items will be sold on a live auction throughout the meal. Members who want to contribute items for the silent auction in the manner of baked goods, a craft, a gift certificate for the silent auction can be dropped off by December 16th. Whether you come to eat, bid, or provide something to bid on - you are all welcome!

Angel Tree Gift Program update

We want to thank everyone who so generously responded to our 2023 Angel Tree Gift Program! As a reminder, the **gifts need to be**

returned to First Congregational by Sunday, December 3. Please remember to include the Angel tag with your gifts. On **December 10, from 2-4 pm, members of the Mission Board will be handing out the Angel gifts** to their respective families who will pick them up at the church.

Living Nativity Saturday, December 2

As part of the "Christmas in the City" celebration sponsored by the Webster City Chamber of Commerce, First Congregational will again share our "Living Nativity" on Saturday, December 2, from 6:30-8 p.m. We will again stage the tableau in front of the Northwest Entrance to the church. You are encouraged to drive by and enjoy this annual gift to the citizens of our town! AND as an added bonus some of our Living Nativity participants will be on a float in the Webster City Christmas Parade! It will be a festive and meaningful evening for us all, and a contribution to the "Christmas in the City" celebration that reminds us all of the "reason for the season."

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.

Thank YOU

Thank you for all the cards, prayers, and visits when I was in the hospital. I am getting better every day. - Vicki

A big thank you to all who stayed and helped decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season. We very much appreciated it. Worship Board.

Dear Church Family,
I want to thank everyone for their prayers and love sent to Mom over the last couple months. She has been in the hospital, care center, home, and U of I hospital. She is home now and we expect only good health from now on. To God's ear!
Bless you all, Family of Midge Tudor

KLAB Christmas Fundraiser

Starting December 3, there will be a tree in Fellowship Hall hung with festive kitchen whisks with a special treat inside—Hershey's kisses! The KLAB Christmas fundraiser that is part of our Advent Alternative Gift-giving fair will be to sell these whisk ornaments to raise money for the Webster City Cat Hut—a feline rescue and adoption shelter. The suggested donation for an ornament is \$5. They would make great stocking stuffers—especially for cat lovers!

WE Whisk you a MERRY KISSMAS!

Buy an ornament, help a Cat!

SUGGESTED DONATION \$5

Proceeds from the sale of this ornament will go to the Webster City Cat Hut, a feline rescue shelter.

ORNAMENTS MADE BY KLAB



Mario pausing to pose during the hanging of the greens





made with PosterMyWall.com

Treasurer's Report

| INCOME | October | 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 November 13, 2023

Members Present:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Moderator: | Pastor: Craig Blaufuss |
| Vice Moderator: Gayle Olson | Trustees: |
| Finance Sec.: | Women's Fellowship: Patti Gescheidler |
| Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan | Mission: Gayle Olson |
| Staff/Parish: Cindy Henning | Worship: Gretchen McGlynn |
| Christian Ed: Patty Gescheidler | Clerk: |

There was not a quorum. Cindy Henning took notes.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by the Vice Moderator, Gayle Olson in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Craig opened the meeting with a prayer. The October minutes were not available to be approved.

Treasurer's Report: Tracy Wehrhan will send out official report at later date.

Pastor's Report: Bob Erickson of The Chamber of Commerce asked if we would please do a Live Nativity on December 2nd, using his hay rack in Christmas Parade. He has a hay rack we can use. Pastor Craig will enlist help to do the float. Cindy Henning will make a sign promoting our Church and directing people to the church to see nativity after parade.

Board and Committee Summaries:

Finance Board: Tracy Wehrhan reported approx. \$8,000 in receipts and same in bills for November. December will be a hard month for expenses.

Trustees: No official report. Tracy Wehrhan told us Wayne Scholtfelt from Schlotfelt Engineering inspected the bell tower for \$250. Tracy discussed his findings. It was decided to close front entrance. A sign will be made by Michele for outside and sanctuary doors will be tied shut. Pastor Craig updated the Bridal bathroom sink was unclogged by Randy Chalfant for \$465.25. Roofers will start Wed. Nov. 14. There were 3 dead bats removed from attic. There was no visible sign of other live animals.

Mission: Gayle Olson reported the 3rd Advent Sunday Live & Silent Auction during Women's Fellowship Christmas Luncheon is on schedule. The next Beacon meal is November 28.

Women's Fellowship: Patty shared a devotion we read. Pastor's Report – Shared upcoming dates in life of church and those to keep in prayer. Cards – Shirley sent out 3 sympathy cards and 1 get well card. Old Business: Kitchen Cleaning still needs completed. Circles are encouraged to choose areas to clean. December Luncheon Duties – Dec. 17 – Baked Potato Bar Women's Fellowship will buy potatoes. Toppings will be provided by circles. Exec, Board members will provide bars. Providence will set tables. Joyce & Jim will run dishwasher. Funeral Committee – Patty will get committee together to review policy. Mabel's Findings: Mabel reported some items she found in kitchen while cleaning some things. Review in circles and Cindy will follow-up with Mabel. Next Meeting – Dec. 6

Worship: Old Business: Curt gave a Cabinet report. Discussion mainly concerned an up-date on the squirrel and bat problem in the attic. Advent decorating on Sunday, November 26: 6 soups will be served after decorating. Chile – Marjorie Chicken Noodle & a Tomato Dill – Jane Potato – Curt Cheeseburger – Gretchen Lentil – Craig Cinnamon rolls, cornbread muffins and some type of gluten free bread will also be served. Gretchen contacted Dobson Organ Tuning and they will again be servicing the organ this year. New Business: Children's Message: Craig will be contacting some of the young children and see what they think about continuing the message. The small

number of children is an issue. The children's message is a nice prelude to the main service. Could we find a better title for the message than Children's Message? The 4th Advent Sunday is December 24. A service will be held in East Chapel at 10:00. Christmas Eve service: 5:00 p.m. Pew communion will be served. By the end of this week we should know if Josie G. will be able to play the organ, but she believes that she can. The undecorating of the church will take place after the worship service on January 7. The next meeting will be December 5 at 3:30. There will be no meeting in January. Don will be leaving the board and Cindy H. will be joining us.

New Business

January Annual Meeting. Cindy Henning moved and Tracy Wehrhan seconded a motion that January 21, 2024 be the date for the annual meeting. Nick Oberender was contacted by phone to make quorum. Motion passed. Snow date will be January 28, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm. The next meeting is December 12, 2023 at 7:00pm in Fellowship Hall. Respectfully submitted, Cindy Henning

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking
to everyone in the home of:

 December 