

**March 2024 Newsletter**  
**First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
**1000 Willson Avenue - Webster City, Iowa 50595**  
**515-832-2232**  
**<http://www.firstcongregationalwc.org/>**

*"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." –Luke 9:51 KJV*

A few years back I once saw a Mediacom commercial touting the virtues of their X-stream internet broadband service. In the commercial a Mediacom service van appeared at the bottom corner of the screen for a second or two, and I just happened to get a glimpse of the slogan blazoned in bright colors on the entire side of the van: "Easter." *Huh*, I thought to myself, *that's an interesting marketing ploy: treat yourself to faster WiFi for Easter! Why not? It would last longer and contain fewer calories than Peeps or Cadbury Crème Eggs!*

Fifteen seconds later into the commercial the van showed up again, this time taking up the entire screen...but now the Mediacom slogan on the van said: "Faster." OH. I turned to Vicki and explained that I had thought a Mediacom van had painted "Easter" on its side, but it really said "Faster." She looked at me with the weak smile you give a child who has told you about the wonders of a pebble by the back door.

*Faster, not Easter.* I don't know why, but that message touched some hidden truth in me. Perhaps that is yet another reason why our culture gives increasingly little attention to the holiest of Christian holidays--unless we can use it as a marketing ploy or an excuse to take a long weekend. In this culture we like *Faster* when it comes to just about everything: Faster Internet, Faster Food, Faster Service, Faster Entertainment...but there is nothing really "fast" about Easter. The season of Lent is 6 weeks long, and because it straddles the end of winter and the beginning of spring it seems to plod along as slowly as the seasonal change we are impatiently waiting for. By the second week of Lent we are already tired of giving up chocolate or caffeine—and we have weeks yet to go. And the tone of Lent is usually somber; serious; even grave. There isn't much pretty or fun about the final weeks of Jesus' life. As he heads closer to Jerusalem his words become more urgent, dire, even threatening. There is talk of him being handed over, and talk of the persecutions his followers will endure after he is gone. He weeps over Jerusalem, and predicts the temple's destruction and the desolating sacrilege that will cause people to covet the end of the world. Holy Week arrives, and other than some cheering hosannas and waving palms the rest of the week is like drinking bitter waters. His opposition mounts; he gathers his followers for a final farewell meal served up with pieces of his flesh and sips of his blood that will soon be shed; he is betrayed, tried, mocked, whipped, and crucified between two thieves. There have been times in my life that I couldn't wait for the "weeping and wailing" to be over. Can't we go any faster here—and get on to something lighter; less ominous and depressing?

On March 28 the Christian faith begins the observance of the *Triduum*, the three slow days that begin on Maundy Thursday evening and end on Easter Evening; three slow days that are filled with malaise and sorrow, suffering and tragedy, watching and waiting...and waiting. And we who imagine that we already have too much suffering in our lives because our grandchildren are inattentive to us, or the copays for our arthritis medicine have risen *again*... find it hard to do better than the sleepy disciples who also could not remain awake with Jesus as he groaned under the weight of the *wait* for the coming terror that he could not "fast forward" through.

But if Easter is to be more to us than a sugary pastel imitation of Christmas, a Holy-Day that feels a bit yucky in some sense because it has been marred by the shadow of Good Friday...then we have to slow down, walk with Jesus at the pace he took during the last week of his mortal life, and resist the urge to go *faster*. It is not glamorizing or sensationalizing pain and suffering to empathize with Jesus, the Tragic Figure of Holy Week. It is what we need to do to prepare ourselves for Easter.

I remember my first-grade teacher Mrs. Waljasper once summoned all of us in her class to circle up in the front of the room, and in a hushed tone she showed us a color illustration of the crucifixion of Jesus. Most of us had been to Sunday School (it was the 60's, when it was still fashionable to attend church) so we were acquainted with the story, and yet there was an almost sacred silence as we drew near to our teacher who was now out of character: soft, vulnerable, almost child-like herself as she shared something vitally important to her...with us. I don't remember the theology she shared; I don't really remember much at all about what she said about the crucifixion, but I saw that it mattered to her to see this man suffer--so much that she didn't want to shield us from his suffering, but with tenderness walk through it with us. I am sure that today this would not happen in a public-school setting, and out of respect for those who do not share the Christian faith that is for the best. But I am still grateful for what happened in that first-grade class in 1965, when a woman of faith was willing to walk with Jesus—and with her students—on the road to Golgotha.

When you haven't really lived, it's isn't so hard to face dying—other than facing the fear of death, and perhaps facing some regret that you had lived so *little*. But when you have really lived—as Jesus lived—it must be hard to let go of the people you have met; it must be hard to accept the ending of the miracles and the healings, the love, the teaching, and even the bitter and frustrating moments that have made your life....LIFE. That Jesus was willing to renounce the fullness of his life to go to Jerusalem where he knew he would surely die, took courage-- and a kind of vision that is lost on us in our anxious scurrying from one unsatisfying destination to the next. And because he trusted God completely, and trusted that there would be an Easter on the far side of his suffering...that didn't make his journey to the sealed tomb any less pain-filled or horrific, or any faster. He would walk the Via Dolorosa under his own power—each step slow; painful. It must have felt like an eternity for the ending to come. Yet it was the ending he chose: the slow death that was to be his final testimony to his trust in God, and the fullest measure of his devotion to his message, his mission...and us.

Friends, on the night Jesus was betrayed he gave his disciples a new commandment: the *Mandatum* that we love one another as he has loved us. To love in this way takes a lifetime, and a lifetime of commitment. There is nothing *fast* about this kind of love; it can't be hurried, only practiced with humility. And if we want to practice this kind of love (a real commitment even for Christians) then we would do well to walk with Jesus on his suffering journey of Love, so that we have some real idea of *how loved we are by him*.

*Easter, not Faster.* That is the way we will come to know the depth of his love for us.

*Easter, not Faster.* That is the way we will learn to share that depth of love with others. –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**  
**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 - Vicki Blaufuss  
6 - Jennie Williams  
8 - Vada Williams  
13 - Shirley Yungclas  
14 - Talon Stockdale  
16 - Craig Blaufuss  
19 - Kaleb Butz  
20 - Verna Bierle  
20 - Jacob Meinders  
22 - Macklin Elkin  
22 - Jayden Burgos  
23 - Todd Sonsalla  
23 - Jose Burgos  
24 - Garrett Shelton  
25 - Jackson Elkin



### **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

7 - Robert & Mary Van Diest  
15 - Curt & Lorraine McCoskey

### **Parish Nurse News**

Advice from a Butterfly

- Let your true colors show.
- Get out of your cocoon.
- Take yourself lightly.
- Look for the sweetness in life.
- Take time to smell the flowers.
- Catch a breeze.
- We can't all be monarchs.

### **Ladies Lenten Lunch, March 14**

Thursday, March 14 – a few days before the first day of spring – please gather with us at Asbury United Methodist Church, 921 Des Moines St., for the Lenten Lunch at noon. Calyn Thompson, WHO news anchor and breast cancer survivor, will share her story. The catered lunch menu features chicken, with a gluten-free option. Cost is \$12 and is to be paid when the reservation is made, either to Michele in the church office or to Marjorie Groves ([marjoriegroves1@gmail.com](mailto:marjoriegroves1@gmail.com)). Please make your check to First Congregational UCC and write “Lenten Lunch” on the memo line. Reservations need to be made by March 5. Asbury has an elevator, located inside near the center doors.

### **Palm Sunday March 24 10 a.m.**

April 2 is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. Join us in worship as we remember Jesus’ triumphal procession into Jerusalem, and prepare our hearts and minds for his passion, crucifixion, and resurrection. First Congregational will lead Care Center services that afternoon.

### **Maundy Thursday Evening Service March 28, 6 p.m.**

We will observe Maundy Thursday with a service of worship beginning at 6 pm in the East Chapel. We will reflect together on the meaning

of this night, and share the sacrament of Holy Communion.

### **Easter Activities Sunday, March 31**

Easter is the pinnacle of the Christian faith, the day of our greatest celebration as Jesus “conquers sin and death, and reconciles the world to himself.” Join us as we begin our Easter celebration at First Congregational with a festive Easter Breakfast, starting at 9:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall, provided by the Christian Education board. There will be a free-will offering that will benefit our Christian Education program. There will be no Adult Education class that day. At 10 a.m. we will gather in the sanctuary for our Easter Worship service, which will include the sacrament of Holy Communion. There will be no coffee after worship that day.

### **Revised Entrance Security at First Congregational**

Due to a recent security incident at First Congregational, the Cabinet has voted on the following changes to our entrance security: On days/afternoons when Michele is alone in the building, she will lock the West Entrance so that no non-members can enter the building without phoning her office first. Members are welcome to enter the building using the numerical keypad, but please let Michele know you have entered the building so she is aware of who is inside the church. The Trustees are currently investigating installing a doorbell camera or an intercom at the West Entrance so Michele will be able to communicate with visitors with those devices. Please remember that the Northwest Entrance remains closed for the time being, and that all other doors to the church remain locked for security purposes.

### **Shalom Circle Continues**

The Shalom Circle continues to gather weekly whenever possible, usually on Fridays beginning at 6:30 p.m. Join us in East Chapel as we experience Shalom through prayer, meditation and silence!

### **Adult Education Through Lent: “He Gets Us”**

For the remainder of Lent the Adult Education class will review and discuss materials from the “He Gets Us” campaign, which present a wide range of Jesus’ teachings offered in the imagery of our current culture. These videos also come

with thoughtful commentary designed to get us to rethink what Jesus taught and how we can apply it to our current lives. Join us at 9 a.m. in the lower level of the church for a good discussion of how Jesus "Gets Us" and how we might take this good news to heart and incorporate it into our daily lives.

### **Task Force**

Task force members convened Thursday evening, February 15 at 7pm to organize to begin exploring options for the church for the next few years. Members representing various boards and committees within the church include past moderator Wil Groves, current moderator Gayle Olson, and current vice moderator Curt McCoskey. Others are church treasurer Tracy Wehrhan, church clerk Kolleen Taylor, trustee Chris McNeil, women's fellowship chairman Patty Gescheidler, and pastor Craig Blaufuss.

The committee will focus on three primary areas of concern as we plan for the future:

1. Pastoral leadership: where will it come from and in what form. What do we want and what can we afford.
  2. Building: what are current needs and those expected in the next years.
  3. Finance: how changes in our financial picture might affect what we do and how we do it
- Plan is to explore each of these areas, come up with options within each, present them for congregational discussion and then voting for the course of action.

### **Pecans**

Haystack Circle still has pecans for sale. They are in the chest freezer in the kitchen. \$12 a bag.

### **D/SAOC Auction - Online Auction, Thursday, March 21-26**

Can you appreciate that morning cup of coffee or tea? The smells and flavors of specialty coffees and teas can be intoxicating. This year, Mission Board is assembling a Gourmet Coffee/Tea basket to auction off for DSAOC. Bring in your favorite or an exotic coffee or tea to share. Also, a coffee mill, press, or specialty tea cups are all things that would spruce up our basket. Please bring your items into the fellowship hall by March 17.



### **THRIFT SALE**

**Friday, April 26, 2024**

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

**Wed. April 24 & Thurs. April 25** - 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](mailto:bestgrandmacindy@gmail.com) with questions. Thank you for your donations and help making this fundraiser a success.

### **Thank YOU**

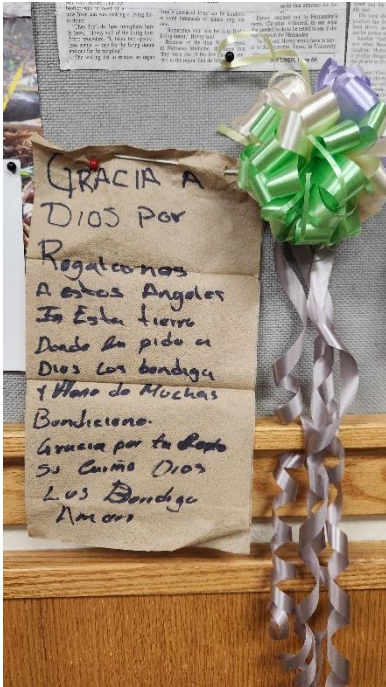
Pastor Craig and Piecemakers,  
Thank you so much for the love, support and time that went into preparing both the ceremony and the baby quilts for the baptisms of my godchildren, Bradley and Nicolas Bogenrief. As a 20 plus year member of the church I am so relieved to know that my godchildren would be welcomed into the church so whole-heartedly. I also want to thank the congregation for their life-long support of me. While I may have moved far away from Webster City, it is good to know that I've always got a community that cares about me. Thanks for everything! Katie Short

Thank you guys so much for raising money for the kitties at The Cat Hut! Your donation will be used to help continue to care for the cats and kittens that are waiting for their forever homes! Hamilton County Animal AdvoCATes

Recently this note was left in our clothes closet by a male who came in need of clothing! It says: Gracias a Dios por regalarnos a estos Angeles en esta tierra donde le pido a Dios (que) los bendiga y llene de muchas bendiciones. Gracias por todo su carino. Dios los bendiga. Amen



"Thank you God for giving us these Angels on this earth where I ask God to bless them and fill them with many blessings. Thank you for all your love. God bless!"



### Shrove Tuesday

Our Shrove Tuesday Pancake supper on Feb. 13 was a delicious meal served up by our volunteers! Thanks to everyone who helped cook, serve, and clean up afterward. The free will offering was given to UDMO's food pantry.



### Piecemakers

Our Piecemakers quilting group is a lively gathering of talented hands! Thank you, ladies, for sharing your sewing gifts! The Piecemakers meet the third and fourth Tuesdays of the month beginning at 9:30 a.m. (They also meet when there is a fifth Tuesday in the month). Quilters of all abilities are welcome to join!



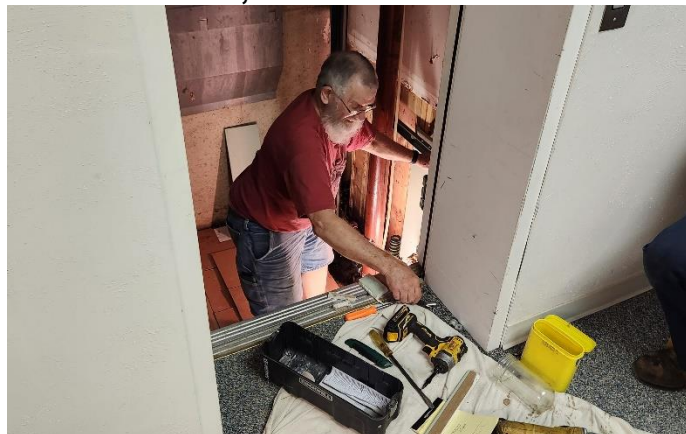
Our KLAB Valentine's Day Party was full of fun!







A HUGE thank you to Jim Henning, who applied drywall to a missing portion of our elevator shaft's firewall so that we would be code-compliant again. He is a man of many talents. Thanks, Jim!



### Remember Lila?

She has been away all winter, but the KLAB kids recently spotted her in the window of her home next to St. Thomas' playground. Here's hoping she will be let out to visit us this spring!



### Treasurer's Report

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>January</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR TO DATE</u></b>
Pledges and Offerings	\$15,840.00	\$15,840.00
Other Income	0.00	.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$15,840.00</b>	<b>\$15,840.00</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$0.00
Pastoral Services	8,660.06	8,660.06
Maintenance and Repairs	3,468.53	3,468.53
Church Office	3,032.01	3,032.01
Music Ministry	492.25	492.25

Christian Education	0.00	0.00
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	297.50	297.50
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$15,950.35</b>	<b>\$15,950.35</b>

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Webster City, Iowa

Cabinet Meeting held on February 20, 2024

Those attending: Gayle Olson-moderator, Kolleen Taylor-Clerk, Dale Olson-Financial secretary, Tracy Wehrhan- Treasurer and Finance Committee, Patty Gescheidler-Women's Fellowship, Pastor Craig Blaufuss, Nick Oberender-Trustees, Curt McCoskey-Worship Committee & Vice Moderator.

At 7:03 pm moderator Gayle Olson called the meeting to order.

Minutes were read by Clerk Kolleen Taylor. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Dale and seconded by Tracy, all approved.

**Treasurers report:** Tracy reported that there appears to be more income than expenses in January, however several bills were not actually paid in January that were budgeted. Tracy made a motion to put the report to audit, Dale seconded and all approved.

**Pastors report:** Pastor Craig summarized his written report. He also noted that 17 people attended the Ash Wednesday service. The sanctuary Christmas trees that were taken down after Christmas did not go to the landfill, as they were given to the Anchor Point church.

**Ministerial Association:** The travelers fund still has money, a little over \$400, as the police department is extremely frugal with their resources. Backpack fund still has \$5282 thanks to a grant Gayle wrote, and this amount should fully fund it this year. The Ecumenical Human Needs fund has distributed \$18,800 but there remains over \$17,000 in the bank. We seem to be the only church putting money into this fund. The Christmas remembrance service was poorly attended and may need to be revamped. The Summer Lunch program may be held at East Twin parks if the park is not torn up, so there will be updates on this. Pastor Craig also commented that the Clothes Closet was being regularly accessed, and noted that just today (February 20) 3 people used the Clothes Closet. One left a very grateful note of thanks, a first to have a written thank you. Discussed how this was promoted, and it was noted that there are flyers at the local food pantries. Considered whether we need to promote this more.

**Finance Committee:** Tracy reported that this committee has not met yet. The next big consideration will be scholarships.

**Trustees:** Reported by Nick Oberender. Weather has stalled progress on roof. The elevator was inspected, but failed as there is a missing piece of drywall, that needs to be added. The water meter was changed out on February 1.

**Mission:** Reported by Gayle Olson. They are discussing the various mission projects they promote and support. They will continue with the drive through brownie sundae. Alternative giving fair will remain and so will the auction. They are looking at projects that involve doing something, not just give money. Some programs have disappeared that we used to do, such as packing food, and feel the garbage pickup by McDonalds has lapsed lately. There may be an opportunity at UDMO if they revamp the backpack program.

**Women's Fellowship:** Did not meet in January, but had a meeting in February. Cindy Henning coordinated a garage sale in the basement of the church, and \$300 was raised from this. She wants to have some pop-up sales. The next Thrift sale will be in April. Women Lenten luncheon will be at Asbury United Methodist Church, reservations and payment are needed by March 5 for the meal catered by Leons. There has been discussion of the May dinner and most want to continue this, but this needs more discussion and planning.

**Worship Board:** Curt McCoskey talked with Melissa Hindt who has been able to coordinate the music. Some discussions about replacing the Christmas trees, and directing the efforts. Easter worship may not be at the regular time. No communion will be on the first Sunday of April

since we will have just had the Easter communion. Talked about the Maundy Thursday service. Asked about the Good Friday services, but that will not be one at our church, at one time there may have been a noon Good Friday service. Gale said several have asked about how to bring back the choir for services. It was noted that we need more voices, especially female voices, those already involved are willing to sing, so need more volunteers.

**Christian Education:** Has not met

**Staff Parish:** Has not met

**Building update:** Pastor Craig said the elevator work was supposed to be done on Friday, but now is supposed to be completed this week (week of February 19). Tracy talked with Peterson about an estimate for the work on the bell tower. Tracy offered a rough estimate that the quotes will come in between \$100,000 to \$200,000 to rebuild the belltower. The architecture firm out of the Ames was going to give another estimate. Tracy noted that this quote would be a teardown and rebuild as it stands. This would encompass only about the top six feet. There was also a question about other building needs; the boilers condition, furnaces and if they are in need of replacement.

**New Business:**

**Task Force:** A group has met on February 15. A general outline has been distributed about the objective of the task force. Tracy Wehrhan made a motion to approve the formation of a task force, Nick Oberender seconded, all voted in favor. The task force is going to keep cabinet and the church membership informed. Nothing will be done without approval of the Trustees and membership. The task force has asked Kolleen to complete a letter of intent to the Sacred Places Foundation which has matching grants available.

**Security of the Office:** Last Monday when Michele was by herself, she had an unknown woman come into the church, but did not check into the office. Michele came out to see if she could help her. The woman appeared homeless, and became difficult, and made Michele feel unsafe. The cabinet discussed locking the building anytime Michele is alone in the building. Temporarily they will have Michele put a sign on the door and lock the door when she is alone. The trustees will discuss other options at their next meeting.

There will not be a Cabinet meeting in March. Each committee should have a separate person representing them at future Cabinet meetings. The next meeting will be April 9 at 7 p.m. Each month the meeting will be held on the second Tuesday of the month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Kolleen Taylor-Church Clerk

**Women's Fellowship** Cindy held a garage sale on Friday, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> and she has sold some items on Facebook. She gave \$300 to Verna. She will continue to have pop-up garage sales until April. Then items will be packed up until Thrift Sale on April 26.

Lenten Luncheon is Thurs., March 14 at 12 noon at Asbury United Methodist Church. Calyn Thompson, WHO news anchor and breast cancer survivor will share her story. The catered lunch by Leons features chicken with a gluten-free option. Cost is \$12 and is to be paid when the reservation is made, either to Michele in the church office or to Marjorie Groves ([marjoriegroves1@gmail.com](mailto:marjoriegroves1@gmail.com)). Please make your check to First Congregational Church UCC and write "Lenten Lunch" on memo line. Reservations need to be made by March 5. May WF Luncheon – take to circles for suggestions.

**Mission Board** The January Beacon meal served 41 men and 6 staff and servers. The next meal will be the end of March. The \$201 from the January Souper Bowl meal will be gifted to UDMO. Gayle will deliver.

New Business Members volunteered to shepherd the 4 special offerings of the UCC as follows: OGHs - received March 10 - Gayle. Strengthen the Church - May – Steph.

NIN - October – Sherry. The Christmas Fund - December - Andrea?

Beacon is a ministry we plan to continue to support as we have the last few years.

Food pantries will remain a focus in January and in June with our Brownie Sundae Drive-thru.

Gayle will find ideas to continue to keep Earth Day in everyone's minds

DSAOA auction will be supported. We plan to put together a gourmet tea/coffee basket for the 2024 auction. Sherry will get the details and promote this. Alternative Giving Fair will also remain a project for the year. We discussed searching for more projects that we can bring



forward that are hands on projects and decrease the number where we ask for monetary donations. Members will be looking for ways we can do this.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday March 13 at 5:15.

**Worship Board** At the Annual Meeting, January 21, we welcomed Cindy Henning to the Worship Board and were pleased that Curt McCoskey was willing to serve a second term. We thanked Don Bruner for his two terms. Our officers for the new year are Co-Chairs Jane Klaver and Gretchen McGlynn, Cabinet Representative Curt McCoskey, Communion Cindy Henning, and Secretary Marjorie Groves. Rev. Craig Blaufuss remains a highly valued ex officio member. Marjorie (2023 Communion chair) and Curt trained Cindy in communion preparation February 3, an easy task as she's been on Worship Board before. Cindy will prepare communion and designate communion stewards in the future – or substitutes will volunteer when Cindy is unavailable. The Worship Board has been tasked with making sure we have music when Melissa Hindt is unavailable. Josi Greenley and Kolleen Taylor were willing to step in. Canned music is another option. Josi will accompany us at worship services on February 11, March 10, and April 7. In the future, Melissa will contact Jane if Melissa is not able to accompany for a worship service. Jane will confer with Pastor Craig about lining up a substitute or using canned music. The subject of replacing the large artificial Christmas trees for the sanctuary was brought before the Worship Board. They have since been given to the Anchor Church. However, replacements will need to be bought. What to do with communion bread, wine, and grape juice not used during the communion service also has been mentioned, another topic for discussion.

**Trustees** Not much has happened since the last update. Winter weather has stalled all progress in the roof repairs, and bell tower estimates. Follow-up emails are being sent this week to all parties about these repairs to ask if we can capitalize on the warm weather next week and make some progress. In other Trustee news we “failed” an elevator safety inspection. The inspection cited missing “double 5/8ths inch drywall” inside the elevator shaft. This area is in the lower level that is referred to as the Control Room. To the best of our knowledge, it has never been covered, but it does make sense that this should be covered in the event of a fire. Jim Henning has offered to help with these repairs and is working with Gary from Schumacher Elevator to access and make the repairs this week. Just like many others within the city limits we needed our water meter changed out. This was completed on Feb 1st without issue.

**Pastors Worship:** We held our annual meeting worship service on January 21, and followed the meeting we remained in the sanctuary for our annual meeting then enjoyed a good soup luncheon sponsored by the Mission Board. I led Gospel Hour services at Southfield on February 6. We met in East Chapel for our Ash Wednesday service, which coincided with Valentine's Day (first time since 1945!) New this year was moving the service to early afternoon (1 pm) instead of holding it in the evening. Looking ahead--First Congregational leads the care center services on Palm Sunday (March 24). **Kay Harfst Memorial Service:** We said goodbye to another beloved church member on Saturday, January 27, with a memorial service for Kay in our sanctuary. Kay's inurnment will be held at a later date to be scheduled. I want to thank the Funeral Committee, the Women's Fellowship, and all the members who donated food for the meal and then stayed to clean up! **Sanctuary Christmas Trees:** After sending out an email to all the churches regarding the donation of our Sanctuary Christmas trees, Patrick Wiedemeier of Anchor Point Church contacted me, and after looking them over he brought help and hauled them to Achor Point to be used in their sanctuary. We will now need to select/purchase new Christmas Trees for our sanctuary! **WCMA:** We have \$489 in the Traveler's Fund which is administered by the WCPD. The group felt that this was enough to cover demand for the remainder of 2024, so no fundraising for that fund was decided on at this time. The Backpack Fund has \$5,284, which is enough funding to continue the program this year without fundraising at this time. The Morrison Trust awarded the Ecumenical Human Needs fund with a \$10,000 grant and a \$3000 grant to the Backpack Program! However, EHNC spent on Rent (25 households) \$14,377.75, and on Utilities (18 households) \$4,422.17, for a total of \$18,800! Our current EHN Fund balance is \$17,600, which we will likely deplete by year's end. Sharon Perry has recruited 2 more intake specialists for EHC: Lorraine McCoskey and John Gaul. We discussed possible changes to the Christmas Remembrance service which was poorly attended this past December. The group decided we would again hold a summer lunch program

sponsored by local churches on Mondays and Fridays in the Summer, location depending on construction at East Twin Park. It was noted that UDMO has funds and a program to help with homelessness via rent assistance. **CE Programming:** Adult Ed has been discussing our church building and our ministries and missions as they align with our mission statement. We are currently discussing CHANGE in our church, and identifying what we believe may need to change, and what should not be changed. We will discuss the topic for one more Sunday and then return to topics that focus on Lent. KLAB visited the Cat Hut on January 24 to tour the facility and give them a check with the money raised from the KLAB Christmas ornament sale. We recently made Valentines to send to church members, and on Valentine's Day we held our annual Valentine's Day party. **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper:** We had 7 volunteers prepare a delicious supper of pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, and drinks on Shrove Tuesday, and over 40 people attended and enjoyed the meal! Over \$180 was donated to UDMO, after expenses for the meal were deducted from the free will offering. Thanks to everyone who helped, attended and donated to this event! **Shalom Circle:** We continue to meet on Fridays during Lent. **Envisioning the Future Task Force:** Wil Groves, our outgoing Moderator, has called for the formation of a Task Force entrusted with envisioning future possibilities for our church, researching our options, and presenting to the congregation various options for our future which we will vote to implement. The Task Force is composed of Wil Groves, Gayle Olson, Curt McCoskey, Tracy Wehrhan, Kolleen Taylor, Patty Gescheidler, Chris McNiel and myself. We met Feb 15 to begin the initial conversation and identify primary areas of concern to be discussed. The Task Force will continue to meet every 2 weeks or so and will keep the congregation informed of its work.

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

