

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

*“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” --Hebrews 10: 24-25*

This week, as I was setting up for children’s baptisms in the sanctuary, I was overcome with strong feelings that brought tears to my eyes. For a few seconds I felt transported back to my childhood, and memories of St. Luke church, various church rituals, the building itself, the pastors, and the people presented themselves to me in a blur of memory and feeling that is hard to describe. It was, in a word, *intense*, and in that moment, I realized again how much of my past experiences of church has shaped my inner landscape of faith.

What seemed particularly vivid to me were the feelings of those bygone days that were a product of my young observations of the *adults* in church. Because we went to church weekly, it was hard *not* to observe the adults around me. And let’s be honest-- some of the adult behaviors that I witnessed (and likely you have as well) did nothing to promote the faith or instill in me a greater sense of what the faith was capable of achieving in a human life. And yet to come to church as a child, and see the adults I knew deeply moved, sometimes to tears...to see the better angels of their nature come alive...to see a tender, almost childlike reverence show forth from time to time when they were being touched by *something*, be it a hymn, a scripture, a baptism, Christmas Eve by candlelight, or a pastor’s effective words from the pulpit...those memories of seeing something remarkable happening to these adults continues to stick with me. And I realized this week in a very deep way how much of my faith formation grew from seeing the effects of “faith” working its works in the adults around me in church. Seeing them changed by church and faith helped me, even then, see that there was something being offered by church and faith that was real, and really happening; something I too could place my faith and trust in because the adults around me were doing so...and being changed by that faith and trust.

Now I believe that the power and merits of our faith stand on their own apart from their effects on people we may know. Sometimes the power and merits of our faith speak deeply to us when other people are oblivious to it! In this sense one may indeed be a solitary Christian in a crowd, and that should be self-evident as we think of the martyrs of the faith who were so powerfully shaped by their faith--even as others were persecuting them.

But generally we as Christians are blessed to *not* be a solitary people, and I know my faith grows from my interactions and interconnection with other people of faith. I remember one Sunday afternoon during our Care Center services hearing a resident at Crestview give thanks that we could gather to sing and praise God *together*, and her words helped me realize just how desolate it would be to never gather with other people of faith to worship, to rejoice, to pray, to sing together, and to feel faith, hope, and love move through our gathering! So often we dismiss or downplay how sharing our lives together in church affects our faith life, or we ruminate over how disappointing or even annoying other Christians can be—even those folks sharing our sanctuary week after week. But there is a power in gathering together in church...and children can see and feel this power in the adults around them. So can we adults! We can see and feel this power around us as we come to church to hear a word of faith;

as we come to be touched by something that stirs our souls;

as we come to sing songs that bring smiles or tears;

as we come to share a moment of quiet intention before praying together;

as we come to have our grief transformed by hope;

as we come to have our fears quieted by reassurance;  
 as we come to know that there is something greater at work for good in our lives, and in the life of the world;  
 as we come to know that “all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

What a gift we give to our children and grandchildren when they see faith working its works in us—especially in church! And what a supportive witness we offer each other when we surrender to faith and its works, and show faith’s changing power at work in our lives!

Friends, summer is in full swing now, and we all have much going on in lives--either with summer activities, or the daily demands and challenges of our lives. But I truly believe that now, more than ever, we NEED each other so we can grow in faith together and share the fruits of our faith-growth with each other in all our gatherings. What a wonderful gift to share as we grow in Christian love and service! What a wonderful example we can offer to our children, grandchildren, our community of faith, and our community at large! What wonderful memories we are making--even now--that will write themselves into our stories and souls: memories of coming to church, worshipping God, and being touched by love and by one another...as we share our lives of faith with each other here, at First Congregational UCC! –Pastor Craig

| <b>Church Staff</b>   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>Rev. Craig Blaufuss</b> , Pastor   |                      |
| Office: <b>832-2232</b>   | Cell <b>297-4316</b> |
| Pastor's email: <a href="mailto:revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com">revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com</a>                |                      |
| <b>Michele Omvig</b> : Admin. Assist.   | <b>269-7210</b>      |
| Church's e-mail: <a href="mailto:administrative.office@fcuccwc.org">administrative.office@fcuccwc.org</a> |                      |
| <b>Melissa Hindt</b> : Organist   | <b>712-351-1074</b>  |
| <b>Curt/Lorraine McCoskey</b> : Cust's.   | <b>832-5341</b>      |
| <b>Tracy Wehrhan</b> : Church Treasurer   | <b>297-0370</b>      |
| <b>Dale Olson</b> : Financial Secretary   | <b>839-5619</b>      |

- 22 - Clark & Jean Mowry
- 26 - Todd & Katie Sonsalla
- 29 - Colby & Candy Butz

**Parish Nurse News**

Sun Safety Tips

- Use Sunscreen; check expiration
- Wear a Hat
- Seek Shade; trees, umbrella
- Wear Clothing That Covers; long sleeved shirts
- Plan Activities for Morning, Late Afternoon, or Evening

**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 BIRTHDAY TO:**

- 1 - Katie Short
- 5 - Dale Olson
- 6 - Jacob Dean Rohmiller
- 7 - Susie Brim
- 8 - Duane Vavroch
- 9 - Erica Pawletzki
- 11 - Dylan McCoskey
- 11 - Melissa Hindt
- 18 - Cindy Henning
- 20 - Luke Rohmiller
- 21 - Candy Butz
- 23 - Mike McKee
- 23 - Nate Lahr
- 24 - Donald Royster
- 25 - Landen Ploeger
- 25 - Alex Swanson
- 28 - Brenden Ploeger

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

- 16 - Jennie & Zach Williams

**Summer Worship Schedule**

Summer is upon us and the Worship Board would like to let everyone know the summer worship time will remain at 10:00. We will also have 2 more Saturday services July 27, and August 24. These services will start at 5:00 pm and will be held indoors. There will be no Sunday services those weekends.

On July 27 we have nothing planned. However, the Hamilton County Fair is that week and there will be a community ecumenical service on July 28 at the fairgrounds.

On August 24 we will serve root beer floats after worship. We hope you will stay and enjoy this treat and fellowship.

Watch for information on these Saturday services in the newsletters and bulletins.

**Notes from Cindy**

- #1 -- It is never too early to organize closets, basements, drawers, etc. for the Fall 2024 Thrift Sale on September 27 & 28. Just a Reminder.
- #2 -- I am looking for more names to include in the '24/'25 Women's Fellowship Book. Perhaps

you would be interested in joining one of the 3 circles, sewing with Piecemakers, starting a new younger circle, or helping as a service group member, serving funerals, helping serve special dinners, KLAB, Beacon of Hope or just furnish food or financial assistance. Please call me at 515-297-0422 or talk to any circle member for information.

Cindy Henning

### **Drive by Brownie Sundae Fundraiser!**

The Mission Board invites you to a delightful evening of sweet indulgence and community spirit! Join us for our **Drive by Brownie Sundae Fundraiser** on **July 19th** from **6:30-8 p.m.**

#### **Event Details:**

- **Date:** July 19th
- **Time:** 6:30-8 p.m.
- **Location:** First Congregational UCC

Indulge in a scrumptious brownie sundae topped with ice cream, caramel, or chocolate, all from the comfort of your car! This is a fantastic way to support our mission while enjoying a delicious dessert with family and friends.

All proceeds from this event will go directly to food banks in Webster City. Your participation helps us continue our outreach and make a positive impact.

**Spread the Word!** Tell your friends, family, and neighbors! The more, the merrier. Share this announcement on social media and invite everyone you know. Let us make this fundraiser a sweet success!

We cannot wait to see you there!

### **Task Force**

The task force meets July 9 to review progress and make preparations for the next leg of our journey.

As you may know, our application to submit a request for grant funding for bell tower restoration was not approved. Trustees are now working on Plan B, which is repair of the tower louvers and a couple of other repairs that should solve the problem for the near future. Chris McNeil's effort to remove soiled attic insulation and to seal bat and squirrel entry points seems to have alleviated that problem, at least for now.

We'll also review the recently completed member survey. Thanks to all for your timely

responses. Results will help us get a true picture of our active membership, helpful when we prepare our church profile in another year or so.

The third agenda item is to start the process of establishing a "leadership team" specifically geared to filling our congregation's needs in the absence of full, part time, or interim pastoral service.

Look for a further update on these topics in next month's newsletter.

Thanks,

Wil, Tracy, Kolleen, Curt, Gayle, Chris, Patty, Craig

### **No Cabinet Meeting in July**

At their last meeting the Cabinet voted not to meet in July. The next scheduled Cabinet meeting will be held Tuesday, August 13, beginning at 7 pm.

### **Coming Soon**

The coffee served at Sunday coffee Fellowship will soon contain caffeine.

**On Wednesday, June 26, volunteers from First Congregational helped with the summer cooking class hosted by the WC Church of Christ. The youth learned cooking skills and enjoyed interacting (and eating) with the adults!**





Volunteers from First Congregational prepared the food and hosted the Summer Lunch Program at West Twin Park on Monday and Friday, June 24 and 28. The menu on Monday was maidrites, chips, bars, watermelon, and lemonade. Friday's menu was walking tacos, bars, gogurt, and lemonade. The kids loved the meals! Thanks to everyone who donated food for the meals!



### Treasurer's Report

| <u>INCOME</u>           | <u>May</u>         | <u>YEAR TO DATE</u> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Pledges and Offerings   | \$24,470.00        | \$102,454.00        |
| Other Income            | 0.00               | .00                 |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>     | <b>\$24,470.00</b> | <b>\$102,454.00</b> |
| <u>EXPENSES</u>         |                    |                     |
| Outreach and Mission    | 1,250.00           | \$6,250.00          |
| Pastoral Services       | 8,545.86           | 42,319.40           |
| Maintenance and Repairs | 2,005.53           | 16,908.14           |
| Church Office           | 3,788.28           | 16,649.81           |
| Music Ministry          | 567.25             | 2,536.25            |
| Christian Education     | 22.61              | 166.52              |
| Local Ministry          | 0.00               | 0.00                |
| Misc. Expenses          | 87.69              | 946.32              |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>   | <b>\$16,267.22</b> | <b>\$85,776.44</b>  |

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Cabinet Meeting**  
**June 11, 2024**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Moderator: Gayle Olson

Pastor: Craig Blaufuss

Financial Secretary: Dale Olson

Trustees: Absent/Nick Oberender

Mission: Stephanie Hill

Staff/Parish Relations: Carol Crystal

Vice Moderator/Worship: Curt McCoskey

Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan

Clerk: Absent/ Kolleen Taylor

Women's Fellowship: Patty Gescheidler

Christian Education: Cindy Henning

Moderator G. Olson opened the meeting, and asked Pastor Craig to lead us in prayer to start the meeting.

Minutes were reviewed as received by e-mail. No changes were noted for the minutes, a motion was made to approve the minutes as written by Hill, seconded by Wehrhan, all voted in favor

**Treasurers report:** Wehrhan noted that we are ahead of expenses with donations year to date. He moved that the report be put to audit, D. Olson seconded, all approved.

**Pastors Report:** We celebrated Mother's Day, Graduation, and Pentecost since the last meeting. No outside summer services this summer, but the first Saturday service will be on June 29 with a potluck. The Epps-MacRunnel wedding will be Saturday, June 22. Two private baptisms will be upcoming also. Southfield Apartments have requested that he conduct a memorial service for Carol Leshner at the Southfield Center on June 18. A family gathering for Kay Harfst's graveside committal was held June 7, Mary Vavroch's service was on June 1, and inurnment on June 10 at the Iowa Veteran's Military Cemetery in Van Meter.

Webster City Ministerial Association: Will host the meeting at our church on June 13. Summer lunch program kicked off with first meal serving over 100 kids. We host June 24 & June 28.

Kids cooking class at the WC Church of Christ to be June 26, and need volunteers from our church to help. Ministerial Association will showcased at the June 27 Market night, and will be providing volunteer help, with donations gathered for WCMA. They will help the chamber set-up and clean-up. The Shalom Circle continues on Friday nights in addition to the Adult Education classes at 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

Pastor Craig completed updated scripts for our new website and only need one more photo so all materials can be passed onto OHP Marketing.

There will be a JAM (joint annual meeting) of the Tri-Conference with individual state conferences breaking out in sessions at the meeting on Friday, September 27 and Saturday, Sept 28. I plan to attend in person, and Marjorie Groves has volunteered to be the FCUCC church delegate.

**Finance:** Wehrhan reported that they are taking scholarship applications which are due on June 15. They will be reviewing those, determine amounts to be distributed and setting a date for Scholarship Sunday to present checks. He also reminded each of the boards to start thinking about budgets.

**Trustees:** Cabinet gave Trustees the authority to open the doors to the NW entrance of the church, and that has now taken place. Laurie Epps contacted Wood Roofing about the problems with the work and invoices. She has been contacted by the owner and things are now progressing. There is a change in management and a crew showed up and got to work right away. Peterson Construction has finalized their proposal for handling/repairing the louvres in the bell tower and will be presenting two options to the Trustees. Wehrhan updated the cabinet with the two options. He also brought up two different cost savings for the Trustees to consider: lawn mowing and changing the trash pickup from a dumpster to a rolling cart. Pastor Craig reported work on the roof was progressing and the downspouts were completed at the northeast entrance.

**Mission Board:** Hill reported that recent fundraising efforts netted the following: DSAOC Fundraising Basket auctioned earlier in spring raised \$289, Hannah Sterling's Philippines trip raised around \$200; and the Strengthen the Church offering was \$390. The next project will be the Brownie Sundae Drive Through on Friday, July 19, 6:30 to 8 p.m. June will be designated as Disaster Relief Month, with money raised to help in Iowa communities which have had major disasters. Bell ringing in July was discussed, but may be cancelled. Pastor Craig noted it will be discussed at Ministerial meeting and probably not happen. The Beacon of Hope meal in July will not be seeking donations, as there have been many food requests for various events, but there will still be a meal served. The Angel Tree Ride sponsored by American Tap will be August 24. Our church has not been asked for anything yet.

**Women's Fellowship:** Gescheidler reported they are on recess until fall. The membership book is being updated. She said the spring dinner went well, but disappointed that people who received donations didn't attend.

**Worship:** The Worship Board did not meet this month. All business was taken care of through emails and texts. The issue with the organ has been handled. Dobson has been contacted and informed that our organ budget needs to be replenished before we can do more. Worship Board will be providing snacks on Father's Day.

**Christian Education:** Nothing to report, except that Adult Sunday School is continuing.

**Staff Parish:** Crystal said there was nothing to report.

#### **Old Business:**

**Shadowing Michele:** Cindy Henning has shadowed with Michele. Kolleen has been trained on Church Windows, handling bills, payroll and other financial tasks. Michele has developed a file of her job duties as Administrative Assistant.

**Disaster Preparedness:** A survey was developed by the Ministerial Association to assist the county with Disaster Preparedness. Each church is being asked to complete the survey to help develop an Emergency Action Plan. This was discussed in-depth by cabinet, and will be shared with the Ministerial Association. This is to help our community if a disaster in Webster City should occur. This could be a school shooting such as Perry, an apartment fire that would displace multiple families, or a storm such as the Greenfield Tornado. The cabinet discussed the facilities we have and Pastor Craig highlighted resources that might be available through the United Church of Christ. Even though there are some resources through the UCC, there is not a disaster coordinator any more.

**Pastor Vacation:** Pastor Craig will take vacation the last week of October.

**Status on Member Updates:** A meeting with the task force will be held in the next few weeks to address this.

#### **New Business:**

**Tri Conference Delegate:** A motion was made by Henning that Marjorie Groves be appointed as our official Tri-Conference Delegate. This was seconded by Hill. All approved.

**Safe Church Policy:** Needs to be reviewed and a report brought back to cabinet. Gescheidler and Hill will work with moderator G. Olson on this.

Wehrhan noted that there may need to be a budget amendment meeting taken to the congregation to address some of the building costs.

There is not normally a July meeting, so the next meeting was scheduled for August 13.

Meeting was adjourned by Moderator Olson.

Transcribed by Kolleen Taylor - Church Clerk

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

