

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

***“Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”*** -1 Corinthians 12:4-6

I often walk my dogs in the cemetery, and along the way there is no shortage of tombstones that catch my eye. Many tombstones have special engravings that personalize the stone, often showing the deceased’s “vocation”, or livelihood. Yet this week as I was noticing those vocational etchings and thinking about Labor Day... I also noticed how many tombstones had crosses on them, and I realized that the cross could be understood not only as a symbol of belief and salvation, but it also could—and should—be understood as a symbol of vocation in the original sense of the term, which meant a summons or calling from God. And while vocation in that original sense is often linked to a church vocation—a calling to be a priest, pastor, nun, or monastic, in the largest sense it is the acknowledgment that we *all* have a calling from God: a claim on our lives that is deep and meaningful...a claim that isn’t set aside when we punch out for the day, or take the weekend off, or retire, or even when we stop “laboring” in honor of Labor Day.

In this sense vocation is more of a *lifestyle* than a livelihood; a way of life, rather than a way to make a living. And indeed, Christianity was first known as “the Way,” meaning the way of life shown by Jesus that leads to LIFE—both in this life, and in the next. And so I want to suggest to you some of the “labors” that we as Christians should be engaged in (a job description of sorts) as the expression of our Christian vocation.

The first labor of the Christian vocation is summed up well in this short quote by Mother Teresa: “Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus.” I hope this quote gives you pause, as it did me...because so often it’s easy to lose sight of Jesus when we have our eyes and our hearts set on just about everything and everyone else! And yet, if our Christian faith stops being about our love of Jesus, our willingness to listen to Jesus, to wrestle with Jesus, and to yoke ourselves to Jesus...then time and time again we stray from “the Way” and our labors become not the shared labors of Jesus, but the labors of aggrandizement and accumulation, the labors of judgment, cynicism, and quarreling, and the labors of only loving a select few, rather than loving all others as Jesus has loved each of us!

The second labor of the Christian vocation is to give the Holy Spirit breathing room in our lives and in our labors. Now I think most of us feel that we have gifts to utilize and share with others, gifts that allow us to make a living and be productive citizens. And on Labor Day, we give thanks for those gifts! Yet Christians recognize that we all been gifted in some way by a source other than our own selves and our own hard work, and this giftedness is not just for our own needs and interests. These gifts are bestowed upon us for the sake of all people—the common good! And part of our Christian vocation is to listen and discern how the Spirit wants us to use *our* gifts for the common good...and that’s where things get tricky, because the Spirit may lead you to the labors you’d rather not get involved in. The Spirit may send you to new places even though you are content where you are, and the Spirit may place you with the people you might not have previously considered rubbing elbows with! And that is what makes listening to the Spirit a vital part of our Christian vocation—for we are the ancestors of a wandering Aramean who answered the call of God’s Spirit to leave his home and be led to a new place and dwell among new people, in order to begin new labors. And he was sent not for his own comfort or gain, but in order that God’s great plan could unfold. And we as his spiritual descendants also share in Abraham’s vocation: to be led to labor for the unfolding of God’s great purposes, as the Spirit of God equips us and leads us to do so.

Finally, the third labor of Christian vocation is to live a Christian life...and that is a challenge in itself! For to live a Christian life means praying without ceasing for others, and for ourselves. It means sharing out of our abundance, and giving of our time, talents, and possessions. To live a Christian life means working for a just world and caring for the least of these; it means being a peacemaker and living peaceably with all, as our conscience allows. To live a Christian life means seeking the truth, and confessing and seeking forgiveness when we have wronged others and not lived out the truths of our faith. And living the Christian life means doing all things with love, for the sake of love!

Friends, our Christian vocation isn't a job we eventually complete, or retire from! Our Christian vocation is a lifelong calling, a lifelong commitment, a "narrow way" that leads to life—as Jesus has shown us what life can be. And so as we observe Labor Day and honor all our earthly labors, let us all recommit ourselves to our Christian vocations: the Christian labors that will change *us* into new creations, and help change this earth into the promised Kingdom of God.

May God bless all of your labors in this life--especially those that are the fruits of your calling, and your faith! –Pastor Craig

### Church Staff

**Rev. Craig Blaufuss**, Pastor  
 Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**  
 Pastor's email: **revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com**  
**Michele Omgig**: 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**

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

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

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

### Parish Nurse News

Best ways to reuse or discard old pill bottles and avoid plastic pollution

- Storage - pills, seeds, screws, nuts and bolts, buttons
- Travel - earbuds, shampoo, Q Tips, small candies
- Organize - junk drawer items, paper clips, batteries, keys
- Crafts - decorations, small crayons, game pieces
- Animal Shelters - they can always use them; just be sure to remove labels.



## **THRIFT SALE**

**Friday, Sept, 27<sup>th</sup> & Saturday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Wed. Sept. 25 & Thurs. Sept. 26** - Drop Off Donations & Set-Up.

NO - large items or furniture, but donations to Beacon of Hope and Lotus are encouraged.

**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.  
Cindy Henning

### **Alternative Giving Fair Live and Silent Auction Return**

After the fun and success we had with our auction items during Advent 2023 our auctions will be returning for a repeat performance! We are again asking for hand crafted items from you, our church family, to be donated to this event in December. We are asking that those who want to donate and be a part of this fun event to please do 2 things: first let a member of Mission Board know what you are planning to contribute, and two please limit your donations to no more than 3 items. Mission Board will again make decisions as to silent auction items and live auction ones. The auction is being planned for Sunday December 15 so get those creative juices flowing so your items will be ready by the first of December!

### **Women's Fellowship**

New Yearbooks are on the Fellowship Hall table. Please pick up your 2024-2025 Yearbook. Circles and Women's Fellowship events resume in September for the new program year. We are looking forward to a great year! *"Service is what prayer looks like when it gets up off its knees and walks around in the world."*  
Haystack 9/11 at 7:00 pm  
Plymouth 9/12 at 10:00 am at the church  
Providence 9/13 T 6:30 PM

### **Rally Day!**

Join us on September 8 at 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall for games for all ages! Worship is at 10:00 followed by a potluck dinner.

### **Kids Learning About the Bible**

Summer's winding down—and that means KLAB is beginning! Grades: K-5  
We have a special year lined up with:

- games after school
- snacks
- special Bible lessons
- neat crafts and projects
- some field trips
- and Parties!

We will start KLAB after school,

**Tuesday, SEPTEMBER 10,**

At First Congregational UCC

1000 Willson Ave

To Register (it's all free!),

or to learn more,

call the church office at 515-832-2232.

**Come Join Us!**

### **The Mission Board would like your support.**

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive on October 6, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. The UCC's Love of Church Unit uses two-thirds of the offering to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Through the national Love of Church Unit, <https://tinyurl.com/2bfytatb>, you can find resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), the Love of Church Unit continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice. Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hockak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska. Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. CAIM supports these churches and their pastors. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S. Behold! With your assistance, we together can help our Neighbors in Need. Please give generously. And remember, contributions to Neighbors in Need can be made online at any time.

### Meal Packing Event

Celebrate Community by helping at a food packing event on September 14th from 8 to 12pm. at Hamilton County Fairgrounds. Asbury Methodist Church is sponsoring this event as part of the Kids Against Hunger campaign. Donations can be made to purchase meal kits which are \$2.00 each and each meal feeds 6 people. \$80.00 will sponsor a box of meal kits, and \$2,400 will sponsor a pallet of meal kits. You can either sign up at Asbury or just show up on Saturday. You do not need to be part of a group. There will be plenty of folks there to work with and befriend.

### Website

Our new website is up and running! Check it out at <https://firstcongregationalwc.org/>

### Magazines for Shari Rothrock

Do you have any magazines you would like to share with Shari Rothrock at Southfield? She loves looking through magazines, and she appreciates seeing new ones. If you have any you would pass on to Shari, either take them to Shari at Southfield or give them to Pastor Craig. Thanks!

### Thanks

Thank you so much for the scholarship! I put it right towards my tuition. I'm anxious to start nursing school in just a couple of weeks. Being a nurse will allow others the opportunity to see Jesus' love. I appreciate you all for helping make this dream come true. Thank you!

Kristen (Perry) Hovey

Thank you for choosing me to receive your scholarship. The money will be put to great use

at Kirkwood CC. Thank you for your support!

Brandon Lahr

### Thinking of Christmas in August

After many years of assembling the large Christmas trees- and having some lights not work, a committee of Cindy Henning, Kolleen Taylor, and Greta Oberender were tasked with exploring the purchase of new ones. The original price of the two 9' Sierra Cashmere trees at Hobby Lobby was \$799.98 BUT there was a sale in August that brought the price down to \$399.99. Cindy and Jim rushed over to Fort Dodge following our last Saturday service and purchased the two trees (52 inches wide with 700 LED lights each). Mabel Prescott has offered to pay for these two trees. Decorating the church for Christmas just got easier. A big Thank You to the committee and Mabel. Mission Board

### Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges and Offerings	\$13,499.61	\$131,328.61
Other Income	0.00	.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$13,499.61</b>	<b>\$131,328.61</b>
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Outreach and Mission	0.00	\$6,250.00
Pastoral Services	7,847.06	58,403.29
Maintenance and Repairs	2,505.59	25,732.68
Church Office	4,037.84	23,435.71
Music Ministry	567.25	3,595.75
Christian Education	0.00	209.35
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	546.42	2,097.91
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$15,504.16</b>	<b>\$119,724.69</b>

First Congregational UCC  
Cabinet Meeting  
August 14, 2024

ATTENDANCE:

Moderator: Gayle Olson

Pastor: Craig Blaufuss

Financial Secretary: Dale Olson

Trustees: Nick Oberender

Mission: Stephanie Hill

Staff/Parish Relations: Carol Crystal

Vice Moderator/Worship: Curt McCoskey

Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan

Clerk: Kolleen Taylor

Women's Fellowship: Patti Gescheidler

Christian Education: Cindy Henning

The meeting was called to order at 7 a.m. by Moderator Olson. Pastor Craig led the cabinet with prayer.

Taylor summarized the minutes from the June meeting. A motion was made by Henning, seconded by Dale, all approved.

**Treasurers Report:** Wehrhan presented the financial reports. Revenues from the summer were down, as expected. He noted that the Insurance bill is more than budgeted. Wehrhan moved that the financials be put to audit, seconded by Taylor, all approved.

**Pastor's Report:** We continue to worship throughout the summer at our regular gathering time of 10 am. I continue to lead monthly Gospel hour at Southfield, and we continue to lead worship services at the care centers in town.

June was an extremely busy month. Pastor conducted a personal record breaking five baptisms in June: Mya and Matt Macrunnel and Della, Dean and Wynn Kennedy. On June 22 Kayleigh Epps and Matt Macrunnel were married in our sanctuary. Held memorial Services: for Mary Vavroch's inurnment at the military cemetery in Van Meter. On June 18 I led a memorial service for Carol Leshar at Southfield. With a quiet July and vacation, lastly on August 11 I led the celebration of Life for Jeff Follett held at Briggs Woods Shelter #2.

WCMA: The Summer lunch program served from 50 to 100 each week in June. We have decided not to file for 501c3 status. We did apply for the Teresa Treat Stearns grant, and received \$6000 for Ecumenical Human Needs. (EHN) The EHN committee will now purchase bus passes for people who have no transportation options. We also staffed a booth at WC Market Nights and raised \$37 and blew lots of bubbles! Trinity Lutheran and WC Church of Christ hosted "Faith at the Fair" this year.

Hamilton County Emergency Preparedness Coalition asked churches to compile a list of emergency resources they could offer. Our cabinet has done this, and Faith United Methodist has responded. I will present the list at our next meeting in October.

CE Programming: Adult Education class concluded our study of "Happiness," and we are now studying "The Body". KLAB will resume for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. Shalom Circle: We continue to meet most Fridays with 3-7 members.

Website Update: The new website is live!

Tri-Conference: There will be a JAM (joint annual meeting) of the Tri-Conference on Friday, September 27 and Saturday, Sept 28. Marjorie Groves is our delegate, and I will also attend.

**Boards and Committees:**

**Finance:** Wehrhan reported that the scholarship applications were reviewed and were given as follows:

- Bess Lyons - \$250.00 each to Brynne Crystal, Jonah Hindt, Isabella Hindt, Brandon Lahr, Sherry Leksell, Zachary Midtling, Bella Nelson, Lauren Stirling and Addison Stearns.
- Helen Poole: No applications received.
- Medical Careers (Ptacek); \$1,000.00 each to Kirsten Hovey and Benjamin Sterler.
- Helen Johnson: \$1,850.00 each to Brandon Lahr and Sherry Leksell.

Budget Sheets for each board were given out and need to be returned by September 18.

**Trustees:** Oberender reported that roof work is completed, elevator pit has water again, there is a trip hazard at west entrance, and they recommend a congregational meeting to discuss a budget amendment.

**Mission:** Has not met since May, Brownie Sundae Drive through was held and was great.

**Women's Fellowship:** New year is starting and the new books for members are ready to print. The Thrift sale is Sept. 27 & 28. Cindy placed a new resource book downstairs, "52 Week Bible Study for Women". Next Meeting will be Sept. 4th.

**Worship:** Has not met, but been communicating through emails, next meeting is September

**Christian Education:** Klab will start on Thursday Sept. 12 (after the meeting KLAB was changed to Tuesdays, starting September 10). Rally Day will be different this year. On Sunday Sept. 8 at 9:00 there will be games and fun activities inside the church for all ages, and a potluck will be held after church. Christian Ed. will supply beverages, everyone is to bring a dish to share and their own table service. Adult Ed. is still meeting and going strong

**Staff/Parish Relations:** Has not met but Pastor Craig has met with his liason.

#### **Old Business**

**Safe Church Policy** review has not happened yet

**Bell Tower:** Discussed the engineer reports, costs to repair and work to be done. A meeting of the Trustees with the cabinet will be coordinated for a better understanding of the need for a congregational meeting.

#### **New Business**

**Budget Amendment:** Trustees request for church meeting to discuss amending the budget was tabled until after joint meeting is held. Moderator Olson will arrange the meeting

**Cabinet Budget:** Set the budget for 2025 at \$1750.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 11

Respectfully submitted, Kolleen Taylor, Clerk

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

SEPTEMBER

The word "SEPTEMBER" is written in a bold, dark green, sans-serif font. The letters are decorated with various autumn-themed illustrations: leaves and a small apple are placed around the 'S', 'E', and 'P'; a spiral notebook spine is integrated into the 'T'; and a large leaf is positioned above the 'R'. Dotted lines are scattered around the letters, suggesting a path or a trail.