

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

***“I have called you by name; you are mine.”*** –Isaiah 43:1

***“I and the Father are one.”*** –John 10:30

What would happen if we had no names?

What would happen if we never were taught to identify with a name, believing a name pointed to a misleading experience of ourselves as a discrete object, an ego, a separated self in a body—distinct and disconnected from other selves?

What would happen if, from birth, we were never given a name except for the name of *“Love?”* What if everyone called everyone by one name, one reference...and that reference was *“Love?”* If that were the case, when someone yelled out *“Hey Love!”* everyone would turn and look! How would you know they were talking to *you*? Can you imagine? Things could get confusing—fast!

Maybe so—but imagine a world in which all had the same name, and only one name: *“Love.”* Would it teach a child not to identify as a separate, isolated, disconnected self? Would it teach a child not to be territorial, not to begin to pile up false descriptors and definitions of who he or she is...trying to capture that which is beyond words; beyond symbols; beyond *form*?

It’s probably a foolish idea, to get rid of names and keep just one name: the name of *“Love.”* How would you enter into legal contracts? Be taxed? Receive your Social Security? How could you keep medical records? How could you keep a distinct sense of self?

Yes, it’s impractical to even think of such a thing...but it is interesting to contemplate. For if I wasn’t labeled; if I wasn’t taught from infancy that I am a breathing, thinking “thing”...if I wasn’t taught that I had to be separate and distinct in order to function; if I wasn’t taught that I needed to have a special name and a reference label in order to understand, and to relate...

How different would my experience of reality be? How different would my sense of relatedness be—in a world in which there was no name for anyone...other than the name of *“Love?”*

I had a dream one night that I died and went to “heaven”...and no one there was called by any name but the name of *“Love!”* And it didn’t feel like a lack; it didn’t feel like a slight; I didn’t feel lost or left out or unknown. When people called me *“Love,”* they were looking at me in a way no one on earth ever did. It felt like they actually could see me, and they knew me all the way to the core of my being! And I realized that my name meant nothing compared to the experience of being seen and loved so deeply and completely...and this experience of being deeply loved and known was heaven! This is the kind of knowing and loving that I associate with Jesus; this is the kind of knowing and loving that caused him to say: *“I and the Father are one!”* And while I know I will have a name as long as I live (and necessarily so, I will admit), I also know that what I really need from God, and from others...what I really need to GIVE to God, and to others...is so much more than a name! I need to see with the eyes of love; I need to know with the heart and mind and soul of love; I need to live in a heaven where God and everyone are ONE in the sense of sharing a power and gift that is unlike any other—the power and gift of love!

And so it would be useful for all of us to ponder who we are—and who others are—beneath the names we like to hang on every “thing” (including other people) while pretending that we know every “thing” because we can *name* it. It would be useful to look within and find our life and vitality, which is beyond name and time and place. And it would be good (and Christ-like!) to try to see and feel our oneness with ALL...a oneness that love offers to us. For God has called us ALL by name...and it is the name of *“Love!”* And Jesus reminds us that we can join him in his unity with the Father (John 1:12-13)—if we will only look with the eyes, and the heart, of love! –Pastor Craig

## Church Staff

**Rev. Craig Blaufuss**, Pastor

Office: **832-2232** Cell **297-4316**

Pastor's email: [revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com](mailto:revcraigblaufuss@gmail.com)

**Michele Omvig**: Admin. Assist. **269-7210**

Church's e-mail: [administrative.office@fcuccwc.org](mailto: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:

9 - Dawn Holdgrafer

10 - Gayle Olson

14 - Larry Brim

15 - Richard Tudor

15 - Jim Henning

30 - Luna Lahr

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

5 - Bud & Carol Crystal

9 - Nate & Linda Lahr

29 - Russ & Michele Omvig

## Parish Nurse News

Time's 5 R's

- Relationship Time; How we spend time with God, family, friends, children, pets, colleagues, and neighbors.
- Requirement or Responsibility Time; the times we are required at work and to do activities in our home.
- Rejoicing Time: time we devote to worship, praise, and singing.
- Redemption Time: time for using our given talents and gifts.
- Recreation Time: time for relaxing, rebuilding, renewing, recreation, and rest.

## Task Force Update

When Craig retires in March, 2026, our church life goes on. Boards and committees continue to

function, we remain committed to our members, to our mission in our community and in our world. But someone else will have to take over the duties and responsibilities Craig has assumed during his tenure, whether it's short term during a replacement search or longer term, as a lay-led church community. Those duties and responsibilities comprise a long and varied two-page list, but one that could be "divvied up" among individuals, boards, and committees. We'll post this list in fellowship hall, have copies for you to take and peruse. And if you see an area where your expertise might be helpful, please let us know by signing the master list.

When the Task force met last week we divided that list into "Needs" and "Wants." Needs are those duties and tasks that must be performed for First Congregational to remain a viable church entity. Most obvious example is continued Sunday Worship service. Other "Needs:"

Visit home bound, hospitalized, care center residents, and other members with significant events occurring in their lives. (Perhaps this is an opportunity to revitalize and expand our Stephen Ministry.)

Provide tech support for microphones and sound system, projection system, office computers, heat and lights, insurance boards sensor alerts (fire and water)

We also identified "Wants"—those are still essential parts of our mission, but survival does not hinge on them being in place:

Prepare and lead adult education and Klab Lead Care center services

Bereavement visits

Prepare and take home communion as requested

Edit bulletins, make Facebook posts, write/edit/update website information

Make announcements on one call now, our phone tree

We invite you to take a copy of the duties and responsibilities, peruse the list, and make your own need and want choices. Feel free to discuss with task force members, nothing is set in stone. If you see a want or need you could fill, please add your name.

The task force would like to form a leadership team of people who would like to help make

sure these vital church functions are fulfilled. You are invited to be a part of it.

### **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!

### **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/2bfyatb>, 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.

### **Ecumenical Human Needs Committee Needs Your Help**

Greetings to All from the Webster City Ministerial Association. The WCMA consists of clergy from 9 churches in Webster City. A facet of our Association is a relief program called the Ecumenical Human Needs Committee. The Ecumenical Human Needs Committee assists Webster City residents with financial assistance for deposits, rent or utilities. There are guidelines which require these recipients to have a steady income. This last year we have seen an increase in the number of persons/families in need of emergency assistance, as well as an increase in the dollar amounts needed to assist persons facing an emergency situation. The EHNC program is funded primarily by 2 grants and funding from our collective churches.

This fiscal year, only one of the 9 churches has donated funding to the Ecumenical Human Needs Committee. Also, the awards of the grants were less this year than they have been in the past. We recently audited expenditures for this year. The trajectory indicates EHNC will run out of funds in January of 2025.

The Webster City Ministerial Association is calling upon our collective congregations to consider making an offering to the Ecumenical Human Needs Committee. 100% of the money that goes into EHNC is used for our clients. EHNC is staffed solely by volunteers. Please consider helping us help our community members who face financial hardship and who need assistance to get back on their feet. We appreciate your consideration of this worthwhile ecumenical ministry offered to our community.

### **Webster City Ministerial Association**

Invite you to help ring bells to raise

Money for homeless and families in crisis. It is a fact that Ecumenical Human Needs Committee will run out of money by end of January 2025. EHNC interviews homeless people and families in crisis to help them solve their immediate problems. Our homeless population has increased. Also we are getting more applications for families in crisis situations. As you know, cost of food, rent, utilities, and gasoline continue to increase and that is a huge problem for families in crisis. Crisis families may go without food, electricity, or be evicted because they cannot pay their rent. We do not want families to suffer. We want to be able to help them by giving them hope this winter. We have the opportunity to "Ring Holiday Bells" between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The managers of Fareway, HyVee, and Bomgaars have agreed to let us come on Friday, Saturday, and Sundays. They tell us that the most customers are in their stores from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the weekend nights. We recommend that 1st Congregational UCC take 1 day to ring bells. It is a unique opportunity for community service. You can ask a parent, your spouse, a child, or a friend to ring bells with you. Your community service of ringing bells is very important to our Webster City residents this Holiday Season. Our crisis clients will receive 100% of the money collected to help them get back on their feet. Please consider this worthy project and help a family get through the cold winter we are facing. You will make a difference in the lives of others. We are asking for around 6-12 people share in this important community service. Remember, this is a FUN way to raise money at Christmas time! You are creating a memory that your children will remember forever and it helps encourage your children to do community service too.

**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!

**KLAB**

KLAB resumed on Tuesday, September 10 with 6 students! Welcome back, KLAB Kids and leaders!



**The Plymouth Circle members enjoying their September meeting!**



**KLAB**

The small KLAB class on September 17 made a splash attending the dedication of the new Splash Pad at East Twin park. They had fun!





**Lila**

Look who showed up (briefly) one morning! (Her mom came and got her shortly after her appearance)



**Treasurer's Report**

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>August</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR TO DATE</u></b>
Pledges and Offerings	\$15,380.00	\$146,708.61
Other Income	0.00	.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$15,380.00</b>	<b>\$146,708.61</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Outreach and Mission	3,750.00	\$10,000.00
Pastoral Services	8,545.86	66,949.15
Maintenance and Repairs	1,655.13	27,387.81
Church Office	3,855.68	27,291.39
Music Ministry	492.25	4,088.00
Christian Education	0.00	209.35
Local Ministry	0.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	30.25	2,128.16
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$18,329.17</b>	<b>\$138,053.86</b>

First Congregational UCC  
 Cabinet Agenda  
 September 10, 2024

ATTENDANCE: 7 attending, 3 absent

Moderator: Vice Moderator/Worship: Curt McCoskey  
 Pastor: Craig Blaufuss Treasurer: Tracy Wehrhan  
 Financial Secretary: Clerk: Kolleen Taylor

Trustees: Women's Fellowship: Patti Gescheidler

Mission: Stephanie Hill Christian Education: Cindy Henning

Staff/Parish Relations: Carol Crystal

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Curt McCoskey, Vice Moderator.

Pastor Craig led cabinet in prayer.

**Minutes:** Taylor read and summarized the minutes from the August meeting. Hill made a motion to approve the minutes as read. All approved.

**Treasurers report:** Wehrhan reported that monthly receipts are slightly down for August, however YTD income is more than the expenses to date. Worship expenses are slightly over budget due to replacement of the lavelier microphone for the pastor. Wehrhan made a motion to put the financial report to audit. Seconded by McCoskey, all approved.

**Pastors report:** We concluded our summer Saturday worship series on August 24, which featured root beer floats following the service thanks to the Worship Board! The monthly Gospel hour at Southfield has been moved to Wednesdays to accommodate KLAB's move to Tuesdays. Our next Care Center worship services will be held Sept. 15. Held the memorial service for Howdie Stearns on August 26 in the church. Webster City Ministerial Association (WCMA) voted to send \$2,000 of Backpack donations to the Iowa Food Bank to help offset the cost of our receiving Backpacks for elementary aged children. WCMA will again lead the Angel tree gift assistance program, but have not yet started planning it. Our Adult Education class continues to study "The Body" with a look at how intergenerational trauma is passed from generation to generation. **KLAB** will resume September 10 and will meet on Tuesdays, not Thursdays, to accommodate schedules. Glenda Wehrhan, Susan Meinders and myself will lead the program. Postcard announcements have been sent out to prospective students. Christian Ed board planned a different type of Rally day, and that was held Sunday Sept. 8. People of all ages enjoyed games and fun activities inside the church then shared a potluck meal. Donations during the meal went to the Christian Ed program. The Shalom Circle continues to meet most Fridays at 6 pm.

There will be a JAM (joint annual meeting) of the Tri-Conference on Friday, September 27 and Saturday, Sept 28. Blaufuss and Marjorie Groves will be attending as our church delegate.

**Finance:** Wehrhan noted that they have not met since the last meeting, but will be meeting shortly. He expressed concern about boards spending money that will cause them to go over budget without talking with the Finance Board. They will be discussing this further.

**Trustees:** A written report by Oberender was read in his absence. The trustees will be meeting on Sept. 11, and also will be meeting with the cabinet regarding the bell tower sometime in September. There was much discussion about the roof work done by Wood Roofing and attic ventilation. A ring doorbell will be installed soon. Air conditioning concerns were noted as temporary thermostats are being replaced. Discussion also ensued about the concrete and sidewalk problems and Henning offered some solutions at the end of the discussion. Cabinet members directed Henning to resolve issues if possible.

**Mission meeting:** The Brownie Sundae drive through accrued \$535.00 which will be donated to the food pantry. Enhance Hamilton County Foundation will match our donation. Approximately 80 sundaes were served. Leftover food from the Summer Meal program was used for the Beacon of Hope meal in July where they served 38-42 people. There were also leftover Go-Gerts which will be used for the Backpack program, and KLAB. Advent Bell ringing for Ecumenical Human Needs is being

planned, but there is not a schedule yet. We will again get some tags for the Angel Tree and make them available in church during Advent. Pastor Craig is trying to submit a grant application for Ecumenical Human needs to Neighbors in Need. Will continue the Alternative giving program and auction in December. The next meeting is October 2.

**Women's Fellowship:** Henning reported that the Women's Fellowship Booklets have been completed and distributed. Circles are starting to meet now. They will be sponsoring the December luncheon which will be held on the day of the Alternative Giving Fair Auction. The next SERRV catalogs will be placed on the table in Fellowship Hall, with sales done direct online. The Thrift sale is Sept. 27 & 28. They also have been reviewing the Funeral policy and will be making recommendations. Their next meeting is October 2 .

**Worship Board:** Worship Board carried out their business by text in August. New Christmas trees have been purchased for the sanctuary, at savings of 50%. Mabel Prescott paid for the trees, while Jim & Cindy Henning picked them up and delivered them to the church. Anchor Point Baptist Church was given our old trees. We have been providing Root Beer Floats after services and they have been well received. Attendance has been good at Saturday night worship services and they would like feedback if we should do it more often. Melissa Hindt has submitted days she cannot play for the church and Jane Klaver is working on substitutes. A calendar will be posted near the piano. For the 2025 budget we are requesting \$200 for Chancel and \$1,500 for 2025 Worship Board expenses. That includes funds for music and video licensing Pastor Craig informed them that the pulpit microphone was fixed with an inexpensive part thanks to Webster City newcomer Dave Parrott for analyzing and fixing the pulpit mic – at no charge. The next meeting will be October 3 at 3 p.m. The next communion will be October 6.

**Christian Education:** No report

**Staff Parish:** Need to work on salaries for staff for the 2025 budget.

**Old Business:**

- Safe Church policy – Tabled
- Bell Tower – Tabled (discussion for joint meeting)
- Budget Amendment – Tabled

**New Business:**

Trustee requests: Joint meeting to be held with cabinet & trustees at 7 p.m. on September 25 for discussion.

Task Force Update: Gescheidler reported that the task force met and is seeking individuals to create leadership team to manage the services and church when Pastor Craig retires. A letter explaining the process will be in the next newsletter. Membership lists have been reviewed and a final letter is being sent before names will be taken off the membership roll. Members who get these letters need to respond.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm

Respectfully submitted, Kolleen Taylor, Church Clerk

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Address Service Requested

God is still speaking  
to everyone in the home of:

