

Congregational Tidings



*No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*

A weekly newsletter



www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCWaterlooIowa

July 29, 2020



Welcome, Pastor Bret!

This coming Sunday will be a very special Sunday--our first Sunday with Rev. Bret Myers as our new interim pastor! We, from the Search and Call Committee, who have gotten to know Bret through our interviews with him, are very excited for his upcoming ministry with us, and are looking forward to the congregation getting acquainted with him. Although he will be serving us from New Hampshire for the first few weeks, he will be joining us in the Cedar Valley as soon as it is feasible. Due to Covid-19, our welcome to him will be virtual, by phone, or snail mail, and together with him, craft our way of communicating and getting acquainted during these difficult and unusual days. Please feel free to drop him a line at revbmyers@yahoo.com or at: 4 Post Office Square, P.O. Box 86, Plymouth, NH 03264.

Anne Hoekstra

laughs ... smiles ... share joys ... smiling faces ... virtual hugs
... just chat ... catch up ... see old friends ... laugh some more
... smile some more ... share more ... **JOIN US ON ZOOM**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY
EVENING
6:30 - 7:30 PM**



**WE WANT
TO SEE
YOU!!**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89698477798?pwd=K25ERitRYmk3MFZnMHZCYVNSNGY2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 896 9847 7798

Or Dial: 312 626 6799

Password: 554196

Questions? Call Paul Greene: 319-404-4940

In Our Hearts and Minds and Prayers ...



Please let us know of those we should be keeping close

* Please pray for all people making decisions for our educators and students as the beginning of the school year draws near. Keep their minds clear and decisions focused on the people we serve through education.

* Please remember Scott Bessman and keep his family close after his passing last week. Bonnie is still at the Western Home and his sister is still on the east coast. They both feel very far away at this time. Scott's brother, Gary, is still in the Cedar Valley. We will miss Scott sorely. Cards can be sent to: Bonnie Bessman

420 E. 11th Street #365
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Nicaragua Shoeboxes

*****Boxes are available for boys and girls ages 4 to 18. If you would like to fill a box or two, please contact Steve or Liz Thorpe and they will get you the boxes.*****

Monetary donations for BOTH shoeboxes and layettes are still being accepted in the church office if you would like to mail a check or donate online through our website, www.firstcongucc.org. Thank you in advance!

Sunday Morning Discussion Group

We gather at 9:30 via Zoom to check in with each other and discuss interesting and sometimes challenging parts of the book. If interested in joining our group or have questions, contact Evie Waack at 277-0163.

You can order your copy of "A Bigger Table" at christianbook.com, Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, or other places you get your books.

JOY is Everywhere!!!



If you haven't smiled in a big way today, give someone you miss a call ... that will make you smile! If you have smiled in a big way today, let us know! Joy is everywhere ... everywhere. We'd like to know what gave you Joy today, or yesterday, or in the 90s, or before. 'Just think about all the Joy you've been blessed with in your life. Wow!



Building and Grounds Report

For those who may have noticed big heaps of dirt on the South St, side of the

church this week, we have exposed a portion of the basement wall to waterproof the outside after a major leak in the kitchen area. The work was successful and the landscape should return to normal soon.

We had previously promised that the last three big stained glass windows in the sanctuary would be removed this summer for cleaning and repair. Sadly, our contractor, Don VanderHoff, who did such marvelous work on our big rose windows, has suffered a bad accident which leaves him unable to do the last three this year. We hope he will be able to get to them next year.

News from Kay Stevens!

"I got Mom moved in to assisted living near me on June 30th. There have been quite a few glitches to work out but she is settling in. Her positive attitude helps so much. With COVID increasing we can only do window visits or outside at a picnic table with plexiglass down the middle. The facility is Covid free so that's good. She is using her cell phone: 319-230-8021 and address is:

Heritage Monona Apt. 68
111 Owen Rd., Monona, WI 53716

Stay well!"

Notecards and Flowers and Phone Calls ... Oh, My!!



Who will you remember today? Who do you think needs a call the most? Who would just enjoy a fifteen-minute chat ... or more? Whose day would be brightened by a bouquet? Or maybe by a root beer float? Who needs you today? There are so many, but today who will it be? Make your own day ... send that notecard!!! You'll be glad!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!



Thanks to Kathleen Marsh and Celeste Bemby for a wonderful worship service last Sunday. It was incredible and so relatable to this world in which we live. Thanks, also, to Evan and Maxon for their contribution to the service. It was such a joy to watch Maxon (and Evan) join in! And a special thanks to Matthew Daley for the inspiring piano piece to close the service ... WOW! We are so incredibly blessed, aren't we?

And speaking of wonderful worship services, we also need to give a huge "Thank you!" to the Highnam family for their offering to us the week before. All of the individual pieces added meaning to the whole service. And how nice to see Brad, Cole, and Emily. We don't see them often enough ... thank you for taking time for your church family. Emily's rendition of the Good Samaritan will not soon be forgotten! It was a great message throughout the service.

John Mardis delivered a great worship service on July 19th. Music and message were woven together as only John can. And after years of sharing his messages with us, we are learning John's favorite hymns. Thank you, John, for sharing so much with us!



Squirrels? Joy? ...

I don't know if it hits the Joy threshold or not, quite honestly. But in these days of uncertainty, in these days of sequestering, in these days of witnessing indifference, Peanuts, the squirrel does make a difference in my day. It's a good way to start the day when I see her standing up with nose and paws pressed against the deck door window looking for her benefactor. It's a good start to the day when she waits patiently for me to open the door so she can take one peanut after another from my fingers. No, I don't think she's doing it for my benefit, it's just a free meal, right? Or is it? :-)

Keep Everyone Safe ...



Wear your face mask, not for yourself, but to protect everyone around you.

Stay at least 6'0" from everyone WITH your face mask on.

Stay away from all places where you cannot maintain a safe distance from others.

Remind others to follow the same guidelines... it's a group effort ... a family effort!

August Birthdays



August Anniversaries

- 1
Melinda Farmer
Diana (Blankenfeld)
Paige
John Mardis
Cathy Thiele
Jeni Lara
- 2
Sara Thompson
- 3
Michelle Holt
Katinka Keith
Bob Tefft
- 4
Dave Zellhoefer
- 5
Nolan Farmer
- 6
Katy Forcum
- 8
Christian Petersen

- 10
Kris Johnston
- 11
Marcia Johnson
- 12
Erika Meyer
- 13
Rodney Grandon
- 16
Diane Highnam
- 17
Evie Waack
- 18
Michael Thuesen
- 21
Cole Highnam
- Sara Holdiman Lynch
- Michael Vandeventer
- 24
Aaron Petersen

- 25
Alecia Lee
Cindy Stevenson
Brian Thuesen
Crosby Prescott
Josie Lauterbach
Clausen
- 26
Christine (Ellison)
Gallagher
Jim Stevenson
Ryan Waldon
- 28
Rudy Bernhard
Mary Kay Petersen
Clara Lara
- 29
Rocky Petersen
- 30
Russ Towsley

- 5
Duane & Kathy Franke
Craig & Karen Jensen
- 8
Paul & Gina Greene
- 18
Tim & Lynne Ensworth
- 26
Jim & Kris Johnston
- 30
Dave & Jeanne Allbaugh



Hello friends and family of First Congregational UCC!

In every bulletin, I like to give people scriptures and commentary on them in order to get our hearts and minds centered on the theme of the day. This I call “Points to Ponder.” Since this is new to you, I’m adding it here ahead of time to give you a chance to reflect on the gospel lesson for this coming Sunday. I also invite you all to correspond with me on your own thoughts, questions, and reflections on these “Points to Ponder.” You are welcome to contact me by email at revbmyers@yahoo.com. I hope to set up some zoom conversations in the weeks ahead that we can get to know each other better, and perhaps enter into discussions that will be a blessing to our spiritual journeys. Here are the “Points to Ponder” for this coming Sunday, August 2, 2020.

*Blessings,
Bret*

POINTS TO PONDER

“Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.”
— Matthew 14.13ab

“The lectionary text begins oddly by referring to what had just happened, and by doing so Christian ministers and congregations have heard this story out of context. The context is the prior 12 verses of the chapter, which describe how John the Baptist, a political dissident and cousin to Jesus, was beheaded for speaking truth to power. Tyranny then, as today, does not want to hear about how it is being called out for being immoral and unethical. And in order to instill fear in those who would speak out, tyranny militarizes against the prophets and truth-tellers who are seeking justice for ‘the least of these.’ If we don’t understand Jesus from the context of battling against an oppressive government, we fail to gain insight into the radicality of his ethic of nonviolence and love. Here, after hearing that a family member whom he admired for resisting empire had been brutally murdered, Jesus temporarily retreats to a place where he can be alone and gather his thoughts. He is not retreating for good. Herod and empire have not scared him into submission. Rather, he is taking the necessary time out to collect his thoughts and reclaim his spiritual fortitude in speaking and acting for right and against wrong.”

— Bret S. Myers, 7/28/2020

“But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.”
— Matthew 14.13cd

“I had always read this verse in response to the verse that came after it rather than before it. Thus I heard it from the context of Jesus having compassion on those who followed him and healed their sick (the presumption being that they followed him because they wanted him to heal them); rather than that they, too, had heard of John’s beheading (not simply that Jesus had gone to the other shore) and might actually be following Jesus to give him comfort, as they knew how dear John was to Jesus. Perhaps their finding him was also a show of solidarity; letting Jesus know that they were behind him, even as they were behind John, in speaking against the injustices being heaped upon them...letting him know that they had his back, even as he and John had theirs. How different is the interpretation depending upon our own presuppositions! If they followed him to give him support, his act of reciprocating compassion to them for affirming him in his hour of need becomes not simply a tale of his generosity toward them about giving them food, but about a mutual generosity of spirit and compassion. If the latter is true, then this story is not simply about a miracle of multiplying food, but an actual instance of what the Community of God looks like on earth: people caring for one another emotionally, spiritually, and physically – all of them suffering in various ways, but all doing what they can to help others in their needs, even while simultaneously being helped by others in one’s own need. Wow! That is powerful! It is effectively heaven on earth – just as Jesus was trying to promote. They came to give Jesus emotional and spiritual support, and he in turn, moved by their kindness and generosity, had the disciples support them in their physical needs. Everyone had their needs tended to on this day in Jesus’ life, and all helped to make that happen. What inspiration for how we should live our own lives, and come to aid of those in need!”

— Bret S. Myers, 7/28/2020

“When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd;
and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.”
— Matthew 14.14

"Realizing that Jesus is emotionally distraught over not only a loved one being mercilessly murdered, but also one who was killed, like he would be himself, for political reasons in protesting injustice, I gain a tremendous amount of respect for his willingness to not focus on his own needs, but those of the people. It is a too uncommon aspect of leadership today, and it attests to the human ability to consider others even before considering ourselves in a world that is 'me first', 'America first', 'Christians first', 'Whites first', etc. Jesus exemplified compassion for all, but especially for those who most needed it. In a day when some resist healthcare for the poor and underprivileged, should we not be more like Jesus and extend it especially to those most in need?"

— Bret S. Myers, 7/28/2020

"When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.'

Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.'"

— Matthew 14.15-16

"The greatest acts of generosity are not those times when those with abundance give to those with little or nothing, but when those who have little find it within themselves the courage of giving to others when doing so is a sacrifice to themselves. Jesus and the disciples both knew they had little among themselves to feed such a large group of people. But the point in generosity is not having enough to give, but giving despite not having enough. The disciples were indeed thinking for the welfare of the masses in ensuring that they did not starve or dehydrate out in this barren landscape. They were caring for the people in doing the reasonable and practical thing: have them go to the villages where they could get food and drink. But Jesus saw this as an opportunity to teach us all about giving as a matter of principle, and not simply when it was expedient to do so. He told his disciples to give them something to eat, fully aware that what they had with them would not be enough. Sometimes the spiritual and moral example is much more important than the pragmatic concerns. In teaching his disciples to give out of their lack, he informed them how to be 'fully' ethical; how to teach the people a lesson about a spirituality that sought to serve and help those most in need regardless of the lack of resources to do so. In other words, being a 'whole' or 'fulfilled' person is less about having all one's needs supplied, and more about a generosity of giving despite one's needs."

— Bret S. Myers, 7/28/2020

"Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

— Matthew 14.19b-21

"Jesus and his disciples, according to Matthew's version, had five loaves of bread and two fish to feed likely 15,000+ people (only men were counted among the 5000, not women and children). Matthew does not cite how they came to have 12 baskets full of food left over after everyone had eaten and were full. Was it miraculously multiplied, as has often been surmised? Or did something even more miraculous happen, in that people saw Jesus' generosity and were moved to be as generous themselves in sharing the food they had packed? If you were there, and you saw Jesus hold up the measly amount of food he had to feed everyone, bless it, and then have his disciples to distribute it, would you wonder how it was to happen or would you be inspired to share what little you had yourself given that this is what he did? Honestly, who would go out into a wilderness area with no food and water? And isn't the greater miracle that thousands of hearts were changed that evening in learning to share with everyone else, than to selfishly keep one's own stash for oneself? Which truly is more profound and life-changing: that food was divinely multiplied, and no one had to do anything but eat it and collect the leftovers; or that people's hearts were changed to care about their neighbors as they cared about themselves and their own families, and so they shared their own provisions with everybody else? Might this be a grand event of learning to 'pass it forward,' or do 'random acts of kindness' or 'intentional deeds of compassion?' Is this the real message Matthew wants to convey to his audience: how to be a true community of Christ? What ways can we daily be generous with kindness and compassion?"

— Bret S. Myers, 7/28/2020

"All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action."

— James Russell Lowell, 20th century

🔴 Hip Hop Summer School Online Performance 🔴

“Live From Quarantine”



Join us for our fourth annual Hip Hop Summer School performance. Due to Covid this year students will be performing live for you via Facebook Live and Zoom. Tune in July 30th as virtual doors open at 2:45 and the show will begin promptly at 3:00. Students will be masked up, socially distanced, and ready to entertain you!

Zoom: <https://uni.zoom.us/j/4039421038>

Facebook Live: <https://facebook.com/events/s/hip-hop-summer-school-2020-per/1150231902022228/?ti=icl>

Create an endowment of love. Please consider including our church in your estate planning.

F I R S T C O N G R E G A T I O N A L U C C

First Congregational UCC
608 WEST FOURTH STREET
WATERLOO, IOWA 50702

Congregational Tidings

Place
Stamp
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