

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

February 3, 2021

OUR BOARDS HAVE NEW NAMES

As part of business for the church's annual meeting on January 24, there were several changes in our by-laws made to reflect our church as it currently functions. Program boards have been given new names that are more descriptive of the job they do. Here is a description of each boards from the bylaws with former names in parenthesis:

The purpose of the Program Boards shall be as follows:

BOARD OF SPIRITUAL LIFE & CARE (*DEACONS*) - To provide leadership in the spiritual life of the Congregation in matters pertaining to worship, membership, and the care of members.

BOARD OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES (*BUILDING AND GROUNDS*) - To provide leadership in maintaining and improving the facilities, equipment, and physical environment of the church to the end that its spiritual life be enhanced.

BOARD OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH & PROGRAMS (*RELIGIOUS EDUCATION*) - To provide educational opportunities and encourage members of all ages to participate in exploring and understanding the life of Christ and His teachings. Further, to assume responsibility for the development of new programs for the educational and spiritual growth of the church family.

BOARD OF CREATIVE MINISTRIES (*FINE ARTS*) - To provide a ministry to stimulate and enrich the spiritual life of the church through creative arts.

BOARD OF SOCIAL CAUSES & JUSTICE (*MISSION*) - To interpret and promote the outreach ministries of our Congregation and denomination locally and beyond and to stimulate and encourage full Congregation participation in these ministries.

It will take us time to remember these names. Of course, "The saying 'A **rose by any other name** would smell as sweet' means that what matters is what something IS, not what it is called. We know these boards will continue to do their own particular good work as we learn to call them by their new names! Celebrate Our Change!

First Congregational UCC Reopening Protocol

The First Congregational UCC Board of Trustees approved a set of documents explaining the protocol we will follow to allow small groups to begin using the church building & grounds for meetings and events, when appropriate. Our Reopening Committee also recommended these documents. The documents are available for your review and download from our website at www.firstcongucc.org.

If you have a group of six or less who are interested in using the church for a meeting or event, please review the documents, fill out the request form, and submit it per instructions for review and approval. The decision to allow the gathering will depend on many variables including the current status of COVID in Black Hawk County.

Please submit your completed request form to Anne Hoekstra or Michelle Wolfe for approval.



Did You Ever Notice ...?

Did you ever notice how excited you get when you get a handwritten letter from someone? ... a letter you can hold in your hands and read, and read again later ... a letter that sits on the dining room table until you see it and pick it up and read it again? Yes, that kind of letter, the one that takes an envelope and a stamp. Did you ever notice how when you write a letter, fold it, put it in the envelope, address it, put a stamp on it, and mail it, you really feel like you've accomplished something? Do you know why? Because you have!! Please make someone's day!! Write a note or letter to someone you miss today!!

Sunday Morning Book Read

We are currently on Chapters 7-8 of Chris Stedman's book, *Faithiest*. Please feel free to join us for good conversations and discussions about topics we may not encounter in our everyday worlds, as we try to step into someone else's shoes for an hour.

Please join us 9:20 on Sunday mornings at the Zoom link below or join by phone only at the Dial In number.

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83998402038?pwd=b1JYRnZjMFRhWUEvNm5MM)

83998402038?

pwd=b1JYRnZjMFRhWUEvNm5MM

TJ2bk5aUT09

Meeting ID: 839 9840 2038

Passcode: 246810

Dial In: 312-626-6799 then

83998402038# then 246810#



Creative Arts

CREATIVE ARTS CORNER

Back by request, the Board of Fine Arts, now called Board of Creative Ministries, will be featuring more creations by YOU in the weeks ahead. And our corner takes a new name. "Creative Arts Corner" reflects the many ways that our members are creative.

Our fall features were a wonderful variety of creative expressions: photography, drawings and paintings, poetry, musical performances, woodworking, textiles, holiday crafts, and a refurbished phonograph and LP collection. FCUCC is blessed with many creative folks! And as before, we are encouraging creations of all kinds, great or small from our congregation family and friends.

We welcome photography, paintings, sculpture, poetry, stories, dance, music, acting, recipes, knitting, crocheting, sewing, needlework, woodworking, pottery--whatever you enjoy creating. Or maybe you have a favorite hobby that isn't necessarily your own creation, but an appreciation of the creativity of others. You can take a picture of your creation or something you appreciate. If you would like to present a video, we can link it to our website and/or Facebook page. We would like to know a little about what you are sharing, perhaps a story of how you created your work, and why it, or the experience, is important to you. If you would like to present a video, we can link it to our website and/or Facebook page. We miss seeing each other and this is a way that we can share ourselves in a different way. We welcome artists of all ages and abilities. Please send your creation or questions to Anne Hoekstra at annelouisehoekstra@gmail.com or call 319-269-0241.

Youth News:

Valentine's day? STEM Sunday? Snow? What do they all have in common?

They are part of a fun-filled afternoon for middle and high schoolers!

Stay tuned for more information.



Taking Care of Our Family

Please let Pastor Bret, Michelle, or Anne know of those we should be keeping close ...

Prayers for our church family as we continue to find new ways to be our church

Prayers for our county and state as they continue to struggle with vaccinations

Prayers for our country ... may we find healing toward the Unity that first created us

Prayers for those most affected by the world today ... may we help them find peace



FCUCC Thanksgiving and Christmas Concerts



If you missed our Thanksgiving and Christmas concerts, you can still watch them online!

The Christmas concert can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7uWXU3d0KM>
or <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=846754262534353>

The music from Thanksgiving can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=747152265879480>

Luke also has offered to send an MP3 (audio) version of the Thanksgiving concert to anyone who requests it. Please email Luke at firstconguccmusic@gmail.com or call the church office to request a copy.

Women of FAITH

The February Women of Faith program will feature Dr. Suzanne Freedman talking about the psychology of forgiveness. Dr. Freedman teaches in UNI's College of Education and is the coordinator of its Professional Development for Teachers Program. She has conducted research and taught courses on forgiveness and has worked with women survivors of abuse. Dr. Freedman describes forgiveness as a process whereby the injured person can pursue emotional healing but she emphasizes that forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation.

You can read more about her work here: <https://insideuni.uni.edu/value-forgiveness> Dr. Freedman is a warm and engaging speaker, and I'm sure you will enjoy learning about the process and power of forgiveness.

This zoom gathering will take place on **Tuesday, February 16 at 6:30 p.m. (note change in starting time)**. If you would like to participate, please send an email to Ratliff@cfu.net by Saturday, February 13. Kathy Klink-Zeitz will e-mail the link to the Zoom the day before the meeting. Feel free to contact Evie Waack with questions.

Pastor's Corner

February is Black History Month. It is a time to remember and celebrate the American history that has long been neglected and ignored: that written from the perspective of our Black siblings. And so I submit the following poem by Margaret Walker.

Blessings,
Pastor Bret

For My People

BY [MARGARET WALKER](#)

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs
repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues
and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an
unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an
unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years, to the
gone years and the now years and the maybe years,
washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending
hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching
dragging along never gaining never reaping never
knowing and never understanding;

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of
Alabama backyards playing baptizing and preaching and
doctor and jail and soldier and school and mama and
cooking and playhouse and concert and store and hair and
Miss Choomby and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to
learn to know the reasons why and the answers to and the
people who and the places where and the days when, in
memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we
were black and poor and small and different and nobody
cared and nobody wondered and nobody understood;

For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to
be man and woman, to laugh and dance and sing and
play and drink their wine and religion and success, to
marry their playmates and bear children and then die
of consumption and anemia and lynching;

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox
Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New Orleans,
lost disinherited dispossessed and happy people filling the
cabarets and taverns and other people's pockets and
needing bread and shoes and milk and land and money
and something—something all our own;

For my people walking blindly spreading joy, losing time
being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when
burdened, drinking when hopeless, tied, and shackled
and tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures
who tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in
the dark of churches and schools and clubs and
societies, associations and councils and committees and
conventions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and
devoured by money-hungry glory-craving leeches,
preyed on by facile force of state and fad and novelty, by
false prophet and holy believer;

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better
way from confusion, from hypocrisy and
misunderstanding, trying to fashion a world that will hold
all the people, all the faces, all the Adams and Eves and
their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a
bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second
generation full of courage issue forth; let a people
loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of
healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing
in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs
be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now
rise and take control.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM A LOOK AT OUR CHURCH'S HISTORY?

Hello First Congregational Faithful!

As a part of the interim process, churches reflect upon their history to see patterns and learn lessons from their past. This is more than a trip down memory lane. It is an intentional and self-reflective journey to identify trends, emphases, and ways of service that have impacted our members and wider community.

To start us out in this process of reflection, we will be asking you as the members to create a "Church Timeline" of the events, activities, and ministries which have influenced our church in the past. We will focus on the past several decades, to get a better sense of how our church has met the needs of our congregation and community.

The timeline we make will include a variety of different aspects of our church life, and these will be listed at the appropriate dates along the timeline. We include important events in our nation, state, and local community along with our events within our own church family.

However, the timeline will also extend into the future, where we will list our hopes and dreams of what our church may do and become. Honestly, this is an exciting time as we engage with one another as we recall and reflect upon our church's past and prepare ourselves for continuing in God's service in the present and future!

There are many questions we will need to ask of our ourselves, and you can see a list of these in the expanded version of this letter on our church's Facebook page. All of this is designed to give us a better sense of where we've been and what is our current identity so that we may better consider where God may be calling us in the years to come. It will also help us to recognize all aspects of our past so that we may mend anything that needs mending.

Typically, this brainstorming session might be done by the whole congregation at one church meeting. But during this time of pandemic, we will employ the use of teleconferencing technology which is done best in smaller groups. The first group will be during the regular Wednesday Night Gathering on Feb 10th at 6:30. We will be posting dates and times for other zoom meeting opportunities. After an assessment of our results, we may delve deeper into specific aspects of our recent history that may need to be addressed.

I look forward to learning from you more about this wonderful church we all call our spiritual home, and to help us all to see important connections and patterns that may assist us in being the best church we can be for the future. God's blessings be with us in this important process.

Love and peace,

Pastor Bret

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Love INC Service Project:

The Board of Missions has agreed to participate in an activity involving Love INC. Our participation will start immediately and last as long as there is interest. Love INC is accepting donations for their stores to assist persons in need of essential items. The items can be delivered to:

2603 Rainbow Drive Suite 2, Cedar Falls, IA 50613 from 9 AM to 3 PM, M-F. Love INC can be contacted at 319.266.1264, M-F, 9 AM – 12 PM.

Essential items can also be dropped off at **First Congregational Church on T/TH from 9:00 – 12:00.** Your donations can be placed in a donation box located in the Crossroads area. If you do not have code or key access to the church, Kyle will answer the door bell located at the main door under the veranda off the parking lot.

Essential items include *unopened packages of non-perishable foodstuffs, shampoo, deodorant, soap, toilet paper, laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, etc.* Food should be kept separate from cleaning supplies.

Thanks for considering participation in this wonderful program for distributing essential items to persons in our community who are in need.

Cliff Highnam, Chair, Board of Missions



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
Here