

Congregational Tidings

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



A weekly newsletter



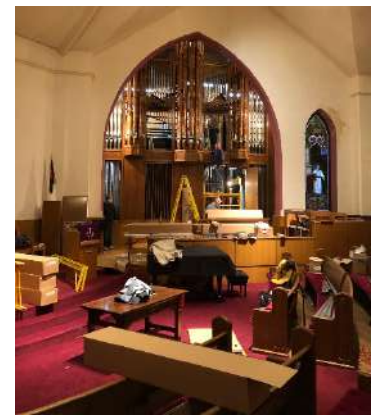
www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCWaterlooIowa

February 17, 2021



The Pipe Organ Project Is Underway!!

And here we go ... The organ console was disassembled and hauled to the waiting truck backed up to the church. Pipes were pulled from the organ chamber and boxed up for their trip to the shop. The pipe pressures were checked before disassembly to see how they would react to higher pressures ... of course. Reuter is doing its part and now we need to do ours. Your pledge card should have come in the mail. Please give prayerful consideration to your three-year pledge and return it in the stamped envelope provided. If you didn't get a pledge card and envelope, please contact Michelle at 319-234-8927 or email at fcuccoffice@gmail.com and we will get you one. Thanks for keeping our church a community treasure!



WE TOLD YOU IT WAS COMING ... AND HERE IT IS!!

Yes, it's time! It's time for the return of the First Church Talent Show! We need to know your talent and your interest in participating right away! Please contact **Greg Holt** greg.holt@wcpbhct.org or **Meach Meacham** shuaib.meacham@uni.edu. Give them: 1) your name, 2) your talent, and 3) a phone number. They'll contact you and arrange for videography at church or for you to send in a video of your own. They'll also discuss other details you need to know for your performance.



All acts must be videoed, by you or by us, by the end of February so they will be ready for a March world premiere.

COME ONE, COME ALL TO THE FIRST CHURCH TALENT SHOW ...
THE NEXT GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!!



Taking Care of Our Family

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

- * Prayers for Jeff and Peggy Essmann, Henry Ensworth and Jeff Corson who have Covid.
- * Please pray for Joanne Lane who is in a lot of pain from a fall down her stairs. She is recovering from injured ribs and a sore back.

* Prayers for Pastor Bret's mother, Ruth Ann Myers who fell, and is in severe pain after injuries to 3-4 of her vertebrae and also some ribs, and also found out that the tube leading to her liver is collapsing.

* Prayers for Pastor Bret as the issue with his eye has reoccured. Also our sympathies to Bret at the the loss of his Aunt Pat who died after suffering from dementia.

* Our sympathies to Zoe and Eli Lennox at the loss of their grandfather, Jeff Armstrong, on Sunday night.

* Richard Cook has been diagnosed with a myocardial bridge. He is home now but would appreciate meals if anyone could help out in this way. His phone number is 319-296-8623 and his email is rhcook1952@gmail.com.

CREATIVE CORNER

Beth Hurley shares a short poem that she wrote a few years ago and a reflection to accompany it for this week's Creative Corner:

For the past 30 years, I have had the pleasure of living amidst the pristine beauty of an ancient oak forest on a bluff over-looking the Cedar River. Many of these enormous trees are 100 years old or older. One pleasant day, as I was relaxing on the patio, I looked up at them towering above me, and I wondered what they might have endured during their long lives. I found myself studying the form of one old giant and, as my gaze flowed up this particular tree, I noticed some strong, straight branches as well as some limbs that were gnarled and contorted. I imagined the years of tempests and drought as well as seasons of nourishing sun and rain that had caused it to develop this unique form.

I was suddenly struck with the notion that it is not so different for us. In our lives there will be times of sweetness and harmony and other times when we struggle with the storms of life. As growing Christians, our faith assures us that there is hope through Christ as is written in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (NIV). And as my gaze continued up past the gnarled, crooked branches to the very tops, I saw the crown of glorious foliage adorning each tree; fresh and renewed. After considering this analogy of the trees, I was moved to compose this poem.

Lessons of the Trees

I sit beneath ancient trees.
Their limbs, gnarled with age,
Tower over me,
Casting strange shadows
here and there.

What tragedies of time
Have they endured
To have grown so old
And so twisted?

Yet there is a beauty in their canopy
High over head,
As they spread their arms eagerly
Into the the endless expanse of sky.
Reaching for the warm reassurance
Of the Light.

Thank you, Beth, for a reminder of God's lessons through nature and scripture. On behalf of the Board of Creative Arts, I would like to invite others to contribute your creations. 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. 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. Thank you.

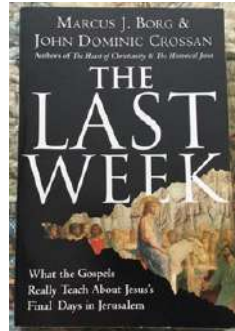
Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 17th at 7 p.m.

You may access the service on our Facebook page or YouTube channel, which can be found on our church's website. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, a season of introspection, reflection, and transformation. We hope this meaningful service will help start you off on the right foot for Lent.

Sunday Mornings During Lent

During Lent, starting Sunday, February 21, the Sunday morning Zoom gathering will read and discuss the book *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem*, by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan.



"Using the gospel of Mark as their guide, Borg and Crossan present a day-by-day account of Jesus's final week of life. They begin their story on Palm Sunday with two triumphal entries into Jerusalem. The first entry, that of Roman governor Pontius Pilate leading Roman soldiers into the city, symbolized military strength. The second heralded a new kind of moral hero who was praised by the people as he rode in on a humble donkey..."

Topic: FCUCC Sunday Morning Book Study

Time: 09:20 AM

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83998402038?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83998402038?pwd=b1YRnZjMFRhWUEvNm5MMTJ2bk5aUT09)

[pwd=b1YRnZjMFRhWUEvNm5MMTJ2bk5aUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83998402038?pwd=b1YRnZjMFRhWUEvNm5MMTJ2bk5aUT09)

Meeting ID: 839 9840 2038

Passcode: 246810

Dial in: 312 626 6799 US

Contact Evie Waack with any questions.

Lenten discussions

During Lent we will take a half an hour after the worship service, starting at approximately 11:35 a.m. to talk about the theme of the day and/or our own Lenten reflections and thoughts. This is an opportunity to have some intentional fellowship after the worship service to deepen and broaden our spiritual connection with one another, and to edify our own faith journeys. A zoom link will be available on our church website and our church Facebook page. We hope to see you there!

~ Pastor Bret

A Dinner, Movie & Conversation!

OK, you have to make your own dinner, but you can eat it during the movie! :) The movie, *Amistad*, directed by Steven Spielberg, and nominated for 4 Academy Award nominations, is based on a true story of a group of Africans who were taken from their homes, shipped to Cuba, and then sold into slavery in 1839. Unloosing their chains, they staged a mutiny on the ship that was to transport them to the slaveowner, and ended up in U.S. waters. Helped by abolitionist Congregationalists in Connecticut, they went through district, state, and US Supreme court until their verdict of freedom could no longer be appealed. It is a tale of national and international intrigue, the politics, alienation, and horrors of slavery, and a final vindication that leads them home to Africa, but with a surprise.

Join us Saturday, March 6th (Link to be announced in future Tidings) where we'll stream the movie via zoom. This 2 1/2 hour movie (we'll take a break!) will deeply move your soul. Because of the graphic nature of the film, and its "R" rating, you may not wish to have your children to watch. However, the issues illuminated may shed light on our own issues in 2021. The movie will set the context for Sunday worship on March 7th at 10:30 a.m., i.e., the next day, in which a narrative of the African who became the leader of the group, Sengbe Pieh, will be given. There will be African drumming and other special music for this worship experience you won't want to miss.

Help Support Laura & Japhy

February 26th and 27th is the University of Iowa Dance Marathon's 27th Annual Big Event! This benefits the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital in Iowa City. Japhy and I will be joining thousands of other U of I Students in a 24-hour virtual fundraising event that will involve dancing, various activities, and listening to patients' family's heartwarming stories.

I am hoping to raise \$1,200 before the Big Event in February. Japhy is a first year dancer this year and she is hoping to raise \$1,000 by the Big Event. We recognize that this year has been especially hard for everybody, so any amount is very much appreciated by every single one of the Dance Marathon Families.

<https://donate.dancemarathon.uiowa.edu/detail/385> (Laura)

<https://donate.dancemarathon.uiowa.edu/detail/1297> (Japhy)

For more information about our organization please visit our website: <https://dancemarathon.uiowa.edu/about/>

Thank you in advance!

~ Laura Kaliban

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.

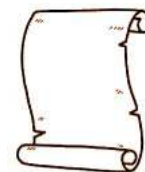
Typically, this brainstorming session might be done by the whole congregation at one church meeting. But during this time of pandemic, we will employ the use of teleconferencing technology which is done best in smaller groups. The **second** group will be **Tuesday on Feb 16th at 7:00 p.m.** The third, and perhaps final group, will be **Sunday, February 21st at 7:00 p.m.** Please be sure to attend one of these groups if you were not a part of the first group. 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

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.

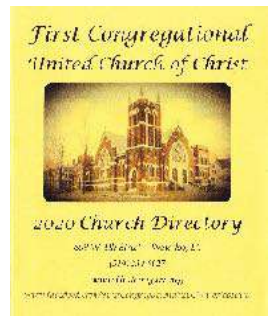
Please submit your completed request form to Anne Hoekstra or Michelle Wolfe for approval.

Pete Blankenfeld moved to the Sanford Sheldon Care Center at the beginning of this month. The address to the care center is:

ADDRESS CHANGE

Sanford Sheldon Care Center
Attn: Peter Blankenfeld
PO Box 250
Sheldon, IA 51201

Pete's new phone number is
712-631-4019 that rings
directly into his room.



If You Don't Have Access to a Computer...

...And would like help trying to get a Covid vaccination appointment at CVS, Walgreens, or HyVee (**NO GUARANTEE, will check for availability on a daily basis**), please call Jeanne Allbaugh at 235-1386 with the following information available: birthdate, doctor, Medicare and drug insurance numbers, dates and times to avoid. Veterans can call 1-877-222-8387. Also if you need a ride to the appointment, please call Laurie Allbaugh at 319-504-3212. If anyone else reading this would like to help with above, please let us know! Below is an example of questions that are asked when registering or your can go to this link for more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/pre-vaccination-screening-form.pdf>

1. Are you feeling sick today?

2. Have you ever received a dose of COVID-19 vaccine?

- If yes, which vaccine product did you receive?
Pfizer Moderna Another product

3. Have you ever had an allergic reaction to:

(This would include a severe allergic reaction [e.g., anaphylaxis] that required treatment with epinephrine or EpiPen® or that caused you to go to the hospital. It would also include an allergic reaction that occurred within 4 hours that caused hives, swelling, or respiratory distress, including wheezing.)

- A component of the COVID-19 vaccine, including polyethylene glycol (PEG), which is found in some medications, such as laxatives and preparations for colonoscopy procedures
- Polysorbate
- A previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine

4. Have you ever had an allergic reaction to another vaccine (other than COVID-19 vaccine) or an injectable medication? (This would include a severe allergic reaction [e.g., anaphylaxis] that required treatment with epinephrine or EpiPen® or that caused you to go to the hospital. It would also include an allergic reaction that occurred within 4 hours that caused hives, swelling, or respiratory distress, including wheezing.)

5. Have you ever had a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to something other than a component of COVID-19 vaccine, polysorbate, or any vaccine or injectable medication? This would include food, pet, environmental, or oral medication allergies.

6. Have you received any vaccine in the last 14 days?

7. Have you ever had a positive test for COVID-19 or has a doctor ever told you that you had COVID-19?

8. Have you received passive antibody therapy (monoclonal antibodies or convalescent serum) as treatment for COVID-19?

9. Do you have a weakened immune system caused by something such as HIV infection or cancer or do you take immunosuppressive drugs or therapies?

10. Do you have a bleeding disorder or are you taking a blood thinner?

11. Are you pregnant or breastfeeding?

Opportunity to join the Board of Social Causes & Justice

Lois and A.J. and Diane and Laurie are Lonely! We are your members of the BOARD OF SOCIAL CAUSES & JUSTICE (previously Mission), and there should be at least FIVE of us! We are jealous as all the other boards have seven to nine serving and even some committees have that many participants! Our church has always prided itself on our neighborhood, community, national and international involvement for the betterment of humanity, whether by delivering meals on wheels, mentoring through the Job Foundation, walking for CROP, volunteering with Love, INC, or educating about Neighbors in Need, to name a few opportunities. Now is a great time to get involved since we can't do a lot in person due to Covid, our work will be on the phone and through Tidings. We must be creative in promoting the outreach ministries of our congregation and denomination locally and beyond and to encourage full congregation participation in these ministries. If you are not already on a board, please consider joining us by calling/texting/emailing laurie.allbaugh@gmail.com or 504-3212. Thanks! We would LOVE for you to join us.

Valentine's Bags

** Many calls, cards and emails came in for a big thank you from the congregation to the Board of Spiritual Life and Care (formerly called Deacons) for the lovely Valentine Bags--the card and candy, Lenten calendar, and Scripture readings! It was a most welcome surprise and treat, and a sweet way to celebrate Valentine's Day and Lent as a congregation. This was a group effort including many in the congregation who helped in various ways, including buying candy, preparing bags and cards/notes, bag assemblers, and bag deliverers. A total of 150 goodie bags! Wow! A huge shout out of thanks to all who helped and made our hearts a little lighter! We are a fortunate congregation!

** Thanks also to the Bazaar Committee for their support with the Lenten/Valentine Care Bags. It was appreciated!

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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