



FIRST CHURCH UNITED
 1100 North Calhoun Street, West Liberty, Iowa 52776
 Office—627-2989 Activity Area—627-2446
 Pastor, Marian Hart
 Secretary, Katie Thrasher
 December 2014



Dear Friends in Christ,

Though the weather outside is frightful...in my heart it's so delightful. There are so many positive and joyful events happening right now, and I hope you are relaxing enough to enjoy them and NOT letting them stress you. Our church is readying for the annual Christmas box giving. We've already sent shoeboxes full of goodies around the world for children in need. We've already been able to provide warm coats to about 20 thanks to a Rotary partnership called Operation Warm. Our own children are practicing in earnest for the pageant on Dec. 7. Our choirs are working hard for anthems and special music on the 14th, 21st, and 24th. Families have feasted together and are planning more festivities in the next several weeks. There are concerts and cookies and caroling events. We will observe a live nativity again this year. (See Jodi Kelly to sign up for a shift)

Amidst the hustle and bustle of Santa, saints and sinners, where does Christ figure in this picture? My answer is anywhere light is passed. It may be in a smile, a hug, a food box, a bag of toys, a bathrobed shepherd, an angel with a cock-eyed halo, a gas voucher, a shared tear, a phone call, a card, a prayer, a Hallmark movie, a favorite song, or a thousand other places. This Advent please be intentional in keeping the light of hope, love, joy, and peace burning. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me, and you, and you.....

Holiday (holy day) blessings,
 Pastor Marian

CHURCH RECORD		
November 2014		
DATE	OFFERING	ATTEND
November 2	\$1,288.00	86
November 9	\$2,480.00	NA
November 16	\$3,951.00	62
November 23	\$1,067.25	102
November 30	\$2,335.00	67



LECTIONARY

Dec. 7 – Isa. 40:1-11; Ps. 85:1-2, 8-13;
 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

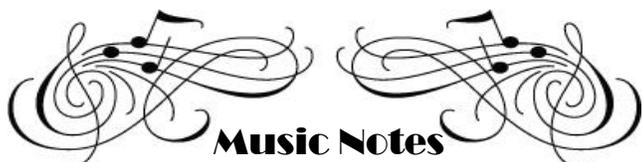
Dec. 14- Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps. 126 or
 Luke 1:46b-55; Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Dec. 21 – 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 or
 Ps. 89:1-4, 19-26; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Dec. 24- Isa 9:2-7; Ps. 96; Titus 2:11-14
 Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Dec. 28- Isa 61:10-62:3; Ps. 148; Gal. 4:4-7;
 Luke 2:22-40





So many have expressed so much appreciation lately for the amazing music in our church services. And when is it ever more amazing and appreciated than at Christmas? This year, December starts with our Children's Program - always a delight!!! The following Sunday is our annual Advent service of Narrative and Songs, featuring many selections to help spread the word. The 3rd Sunday is another tradition - our Candlelight and Carols service, featuring scripture, carols, and contributions from both of our choirs. On Christmas Eve, both of our choirs will again contribute to the message and the celebration! The last Sunday of December is during Christmastide, and some special music is being planned for that occasion as well.

Please join us and feel the inspiration that music and its message can provide!

Wed., Dec. 3: Chime Choir - 6:45 to 7:30

Chancel Choir - 7:30 to 8:30

Sun., Dec. 7: CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Wed., Dec. 10: (same as Dec. 3)

Sun., Dec. 14: CHANCEL CHOIR (Narrative and Songs)

Wed., Dec. 17: (same as Dec. 3)

Sun., Dec. 21: CHIME AND CHANCEL CHOIRS (Candlelight and Carols)

Wed., Dec. 24: CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - CHANCEL AND CHIME CHOIRS

Sun., Dec. 28: Special Music

Wed., Dec. 31: New Year's Eve - No Choir Rehearsals



ROAD TRIP

The December visit to Oaknoll will be on Thursday the 11th. Meet at the church at 11:00 to carpool. We will share lunch, a short bible study, and lots of fellowship.

Christian Education Director's Report

Hello from the Christian Education Department,

We are truly blessed at First Church United to have a wonderful group of children. They are learning the Scriptures at their own level and applying it to become people of faith. Each day we are together we celebrate God's glory through education, practice of being good, and song.

Our big project currently, of course, is learning to be worship leaders by practicing for the Christmas play. The children are working very hard at learning their lines, memorizing the songs and understanding what the play is about.

It is a traditional Christmas play celebrating the birth of Jesus. It has been a great joy seeing the light of revelation on the faces of the children as they come to understand the history of Jesus' birth through the rehearsal of this story. The children will lead worship this upcoming Sunday, December 7 via this play. We hope you can all attend!

Yours in faith, Jason thrasher

Blood Drive at FCU
Monday, December 8th
from 2-7 p.m.

SPIRIT of GENEROSITY-Leaving a Legacy
Prayerfully consider including First Church United in your will. A Charitable bequest is a way in which we can leave a legacy and express our faith and values to the church. The church benefits from gifts that provide for future generations. For questions, please contact Tom Brooke.

VOLUNTARY ACTION COUNCIL

Christmas Box Sort & Pack

Dec. 16th Sort & Pack toys at St. Joseph's 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 17th Pack boxes at FCU 7:00 p.m.

Distribute boxes Dec. 19th, 5:30-8 p.m. and Dec. 20th 8-10 a.m. at FCU.

**OFFICIAL
BOARD SUMMARY**

November 6, 2014



The monthly Official Board meeting was called to order with prayer by Co-Chair Bill Koellner. In attendance were: Syd Harned, Karen Nortman, Jan McCrabb, Margaret Barnhart, Ken Noble, Joe Myers, Pastor Marian Hart, Treasurer Keith Barnhart and Clerk of session Katie Thrasher. Those not in attendance were: Tom Probst, Darren Brooke and Tom Brooke.

Approval of Docket: move to approve docket 1st Ken N. 2nd Jan M. unanimously approved by the Board.

Approval of Sept. Minutes: move to approve minutes 1st Ken N. 2nd Karen N. unanimously approved by the Board.

Tom Brooke’s resignation from Board - move to approve with reluctance and with best wishes and good health. 1st Syd H., 2nd Karen N. Unanimously approved by the Board.

Board moves to approve Joe Myers as interim Board Member until Congregation can vote at the Annual Meeting on January 11, 2015. Board welcomes and thanks Joe for serving. 1st Syd H., 2nd Karen N. Unanimously approved by the Board.

Treasurer’s Report:

Keith Barnhart gave the Treasurer’s report. There was a large City bill in Sept. but it wasn’t as bad as we had thought it would be (\$718.01). Checking Acct. is positive but the bill for the carpet cleaning will be paid soon. November is slow as far as pledges but pledges for kitchen are still coming in. Motion to approve Treasurer’s report 1st Ken N., 2nd Syd H. unanimously approved by the Board. Board and Keith worked on the 2015 budget. Will work on again at December meeting.

Starting of September balance	\$ 1,090.71
Receipts	\$ 8,375.16
Subtotal	\$ 9,465.87
Disbursements	\$ 8,569.91
Ending Balance	\$ 895.96
Board checking balance	\$ 800.96

Starting of October balance	\$ 895.96
Receipts	\$ 9,187.22
Subtotal	\$ 10,083.18
Disbursements	\$ 9,415.30
Ending Balance	\$ 667.88
Board checking balance	\$ 572.88

Co-Chair’s Report - Many special projects have been or are nearly completed at First Church United. Last year the Church Board along with a special kitchen committee asked the Congregation to consider funding a new kitchen. The Board promised not to start the kitchen project until funds were either received or pledged during a three year commitment. Just before the Muscatine County Fair, the new kitchen was put into service, and nearly all the funds have been given. We are within \$5600 of all pledges received. The kitchen has been in operation now since July, and during the visits made by church callers, an explanation of the kitchen funding and expense sheet was provided to each family. If you have not received yours yet, copies are available in the church office, or ask either Bill Koellner or Tom Probst for a copy. Thanks to all members of the congregation who helped with this project.

This spring, the Board asked anyone who wished to contribute a 13th month pledge and also to fund new, brighter lights in the Sanctuary. Four new lights were funded by several families at FCU. Thanks to all those who funded this special project and contributed to the 13th month pledge campaign.

Early this summer, the Board asked anyone who was interested in funding the cleaning of carpets in all rooms in the church could provide funds for this special project. Costs for each room were made available, and several families provided for part or all of each room. This project was fully funded, and this project has been completed. Thanks to all the families who funded cleaning of the carpet.

These projects were successful because your Board decided to ask you to help fund each project, and the Board would not complete a project unless we had all the funding available.

At the Annual Meeting either Tom Probst or Bill Koellner will share all the details of these projects and outline future needs that the Board has discussed and require funding. Thanks for all your cooperation and our church property looks very nice.

Bill Koellner
Board Co-chair

Pastor’s Report –

Office hours kept as possible.
Planning and leading worship Sept. 7, 14, (planning only 21), 28
Adult Sunday school Sept. 7, 14, 21, 28
CYG Sept 7, 14, 21, 28
Worship team meeting Sept. 8
Ministers and school faculty meeting Sept. 9

Women in ministry lunch and study Sept. 9
Oaknoll road trip lunch and study Sept. 11
Vacation Sept. 15-21am.-snuck in a couple card games at Heath manor, mostly cleaned closets and visited the cabin
Premarital planning meeting Sept. 23 for Emily and Jesse
Pastoral Relations Committee meeting Sept. 24
Choir meals on Wednesdays
Simpson worship Sept. 26
Welcome Table expansion planning meeting Sept. 26
Ministerial Assoc. meeting Oct. 1
Pastoral visits 8
Mileage-August and September-150
Oct. 2-Nov. 6
Oct. 4-Presbyterian Women of East Iowa Fall Gathering, Mount Pleasant
Oct. 4-Camp Wyoming Dinner Theatre
Oct. 5-CROP Walk
Plan and lead worship Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26
CYG Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26
Oct. 7 Presbytery meeting Washington
Oct. 9 Road trip to Oaknoll
Oct. 13 Worship team meeting
Oct. 14 Women in ministry study and lunch
Oct. 16 Cluster meeting
Oct. 22 Pastoral Relations Committee
Oct. 23 Cards at Heath Manor
Oct. 27 Funeral for Nahum "Doc" Blackman (died Oct. 20)
Oct. 28-Nov. 2 VACATION
Nov. 4 Bible study at Simpson
Nov. 5 Ministerial Association Meeting
Visits-10
Mileage 70

Ongoing business -

Carpet cleaning bill will be paid soon.

Painting the Sanctuary - Syd will speak with Rich Hambright to see what estimate is and when it might be able to be done.

Update on Advanced Planning - Pastor Marian and Bill K. will be signing up for the spring training.

New Business -

Elder on call - Bill K. will be be Elder on Call for November and December.

Margaret B. asked if anyone would be able to be either an Usher, Host Coffee Hour or help with the PowerPoint on Sunday, December 28th. No one from the Board was able to answer at that moment.

Building Use Policy Questions - Board unanimously agreed that if a responsible adult is involved in the church event/group using the building a member from the Building Use Committee is not needed to be in the building during or after the event.

Question of Boy Scouts use of the church. Karen N. will talk to Pam Meyer or Randy Prayder to clarify when and if they use the building. If so, a Building Use Policy will need to be filled out and returned with current information.

Check Freezer doors needs to be added to the Building Use Checklist.

Annual Meeting reports due by Dec. 12th. The reports will then be available by January 4th for the congregation to be able to read prior to the Annual Meeting.

Devotion - Pastor Marian read from Colossians Chapter 3. Stewardship Home Visit results discussed. Pastor Marian, staff and the Board will put many of the suggestions to work right away!

Evaluations of Pastor Marian and Staff - Board will fill out Pastor Marian's evaluations and Letha Ottaway will give out to committee leaders. These will be due back to Letha O. by Sunday, Nov. 9.

Nominating Committee- Board moves to accept Nominating Committee recommendations.

Official Board - Bill Koellner, Susie Lehman, Ken Ruegsegger & Joe Myers to fill out Tom Brooke remaining one year.

Board of Deacons - Evelyn Evans, Margaret Barnhart
Communion Speaking Elders - Leon Larson, Dean Phelps

Endowment Fund - Jodi Kelly, Jeanine Williams

Pastoral Relations - Wayne Noring

Personnel Relations - Brenda Miller

Christian Ed. - Marilyn Ruegsegger

Congregational Life - Jason & Katie Thrasher, Norma Brooks

Memorial Comm. - Marianne Phelps

Trustees - Tom Probst

Snow Removal Bid - Board approves bid from Mac Construction. Katie will call to confirm. Conditions Mac Construction needs to agree to are:

-Parking spaces need to be cleared by 6:00 a.m. on west end of lot.

-The handicapped spaces need to be cleared by 8:15 a.m.

-Sand/Salt will be only applied upon request from church.

-Pastor Marian or Katie will call to ask for snow removal at other times if needed.

Necrology - Nahum "Doc" Blackman died Oct. 20, 2014

Ministry Reports - accepted.

PRC Meeting August 27, 2014

The PRC met on August 27, 2014 at Burrito Gabby's. Those present were Margaret Barnhart, Marian Hart, and Missy Johnson. Letha Ottaway was absent. Prayer concerns were discussed. A number of church members are in need of prayer at this time. Discussion was held about the new project of taking bread to visitors and how we can obtain addresses of folks shortly after their first visit. Missy volunteered to make cards to attach to the loaf of bread. We discussed who should be "in charge" of this project but felt that it might be best if those feeling moved to participate do so at this time. At this time we have two homes to visit.

No congregational concerns were expressed at this time. Pastor Marian requested September 15-21 as vacation. She will be attending CYG during that time but would like to use her vacation time to work around her house. Additionally, she has asked for October 27-November 2. The committee approved her leave pending board approval.

The next scheduled meeting for PRC is September 17.
Respectfully submitted,
Missy Johnson

PRC Meeting October 22, 2014

The Pastoral Relations Committee met at noon on October 22. Those present were Margaret Barnhart, Letha Ottaway, Missy Johnson and Pastor Marian Hart. The group discussed the facilitation of the pastor's evaluation. This will be discussed at length next month. The group continued their discussion about communication within the church.

The committee had previously discussed having the Memorial Committee purchase a clerical robe for her use. Since the last meeting, Marian has located a clerical robe that she can use for special events. This was given to her from a friend.

Pastor Hart asked to move one of her vacation days from October 27 to a different day. This is due to a need within the congregation. It was agreed to give her the flexibility to use one vacation day when she can fit it into her schedule.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Johnson

MUSIC MINISTRY REPORT

November, 2014

The choirs are well underway for this year. Included with their part in the worship services, Chancel Choir prepared a special baptism anthem in September, and we honored World Wide Communion with a new anthem and flute. In addition to our services, Chime Choir will be playing at the Holiday Open House later this month (MidWestOne Bank). They have new Christmas music to share this year, and will be presenting it at church as well. Besides the offertories provided by our choirs, much preparation and thought goes into the piano and organ music for the rest of our worship services. All of our musicians are much appreciated!

CHRISTIAN ED. REPORT:

Things are going great in Sunday school and Kids W.O.W. Attendance ranges from 3 to 16 children, the children are learning good things about church, God, and themselves as Christians.

We have been following a service – based routine in Sunday school. We sing songs, talk about the importance of tithing, do crafts and have a lesson each week that follows one or more of the scriptures talked about in the worship service.

At the October Kids W.O.W. we decorated pumpkins kindly donated by Gary Hahn. We then began rehearsing our Christmas play. Special thanks to Bud Barber and Norma Brooks who provided the meal for us all. Everyone enjoyed the walking tacos! November WOW will be on Nov. 19th.

The next several weeks of Sunday school will be devoted to practicing for the Christmas play. Regular attendance will help to ensure that everyone understands their roles. So, if possible, please help to get your children to Sunday school each week!

Syd H. asked for Personnel Committee description from office computer.

Pastor Marian let the Board know that if Dillon Brooke is available she is going to ask him if he can clean the carpets at the Manse.

Move to adjourn

Prayer concerns shared

Closing Prayer

Meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for December 4th at 6:30 p.m.

KIDS AGAINST HUNGER NEEDS YOUR HELP

There are lots of good causes out there soliciting for end-of-year giving. If you are able, please consider supporting First Church United's KIDS AGAINST HUNGER program. Just \$10 feeds 40 children for a day. \$50 buys 1 box of food which consists of 216 meals. \$84 feeds 1 child for a whole year. The need is greater than ever before...locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

See pictures of a child nicknamed Junior who is 7 years old. A feeding partner affiliated with Kids Against Hunger found Junior and took him to the hospital, but no doctor would see him. The picture on the left is Junior weighing 32 lbs and wearing size 2T clothes. The picture on the right is Junior playing after only 10 days of eating Kids Against Hunger's nutritious meals. Now Junior has a future because of the Kids Against Hunger program.

Checks may be made payable to FIRST CHURCH UNITED, with "Kids Against Hunger" written in the Memo line. No amount is too small....every dollar helps. Thanks so much for considering.

FCU's Kids Against Hunger Committee

Syd Harned, Arnie Hart, Bill Koellner, Ken Ruesegger



ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIVING

Many of us reach the point where we don't need anything more to wear, or eat, or play with. If that is the case for you and your family, please consider giving to organizations that work for justice throughout the world.

Some with good reputations locally would be the Salvation Army, our own food pantry, Miracles Can Happen Boys Ranch, Camp Courageous, Christian Conference Center and camp, Camp Wyoming, Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Family Resources; Kids Against Hunger, our Welcome Table ministry, and Voluntary Action's collection of toys, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, boots, socks, and coats.

Some that reach a wider mission field would be the Heifer Project, World Vision, Compassion International. Some in our Presbytery would be Mission Starfish Haiti, homeless shelters in the Quad Cities, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids. The Denomination has various choices that can be found on the buffet in our fellowship hall. In the most recent newsletter, our Disciples of Christ Regional Minister urges all of us to find a local project or charity to give to.

Please help to share Christ's love by the nature of your giving this season.



FCU Live Nativity Scene Dec. 21-24 –Contact Jodi Kelly if you have any questions or to let her know you want to participate.

Church Workers

December 7

Communion/Children's Program

SPEAKING ELDERS:

Tom Brooke & Mary Larson

COMMUNION SERVERS:

Gary Hahn, Shirley Sterner, Bob Dewar,
Lisa Murphy, Jeanine Williams, Brenda Miller

USHER: Scott Skubal

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

The Skubal Family

ORGANIST: Susie Lehman

POWER POINT: Keith Barnhart

CANDLE LIGHTER: Conner Skubal

December 14

Chancel Choir, Narrative and Songs

USHER: Arnie Hart

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

Evelyn Evans & Betty Burton

ORGANIST: Marianne Phelps

POWER POINT: Bill Koellner

December 21

Communion/Chancel & Chime Choirs

Candlelight and Carols

SPEAKING ELDERS:

Tom Brooke & Mary Larson

COMMUNION SERVERS:

Gary Hahn, Shirley Sterner, Bob Dewar,
Lisa Murphy, Jeanine Williams, Brenda Miller

USHER: Joel Murphy

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

Marilyn & Ken Ruegsegger

ORGANIST: Marianne Phelps

POWER POINT: Bill Koellner

CANDLE LIGHTER: Tenley Murphy

December 24

Communion by Intinction, Chancel and Chime Choirs

Live Nativity Scene

Christmas Eve Service at 9:00 p.m.

ORGANIST: Brenda Miller

December 28

USHER: Keith Barnhart

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

Bud Barber & Norma Brooks

ORGANIST: Susie Lehman

POWER POINT: Jim Kiwala

Communion Preparer's for December are
Tom & Mary Pat Brooke.



December

1 Susan Lehman

3 Carolyn Bengé

4 Kelly Larson

4 Ron Jacobs

5 Brenda Miller

6 Ken Minor

6 Andy Moreland

7 Roger Bengé

9 Jessica Simon

10 Louise McCoy

11 Jackson Gingerich

11 Jan McCrabb

12 Margaret Barnhart

13 Kyle Jacobs

13 Gina Skubal

14 Roger Johnson

14 Dee Johnson

17 Payton Murphy

21 Zachery Newcomb

21 Mike Deahr

23 Dillon Brooke

30 Marianne Phelps

30 Mary Kay Morrison

31 Bruce Bengé

31 Dinette Myers

31 Roberta Baker



7 Arnie & Marian Hart

Co-Chair Report for December 2014

The new kitchen has proved to work very well, as not only has it been used for Sunday coffee hours, but the Brooks Family friends used it extensively for meat preparation for Emily & Jesse's wedding. As of this writing (12/1), we plan on 30 at FCU and 54 at ELC for the 12/6 start of Welcome Table.

Beginning the last quarter of 2014, \$5600 in pledges remained to be paid. As of December 1, only \$1600 remained to be paid. Those families plan on all gifting for the kitchen project by mid-December. The board was able to pay for all the concrete work with funds transferred from Board endowment funds.

The remodeled single toilet has been made into a handicap toilet by the end of the first week of December thanks to Darren and Dillon Brooke.

Food items are beginning to fill the hallway by the food pantry in preparation for the Christmas Box food and toy program. The sorting and filling of the boxes will be done on December 17 at 6:00 PM, and pickups will be on December 19 and 20. If you want to help, it is a great program to serve others.

The start of the 2014 church year was financially difficult as income was far less than expense. I looked at the last 4 years of weather, and this is what I found: The winter of 2011/12 we were 1000 degree days warmer than normal and had only 4 snows that required snow removal; winter of 2012/13 we had a normal temperature winter with only 4 snows that required snow removal; but last winter we were 1100 degree days colder than normal and we had 17 snows that required snow removal. The tremendous expense for heat and snow removal used most of our checking account cash. In addition, we had insurance and per capita mission to the Presbyterian Church on January, taking much of our savings. November 2014, we were 226 degree days below normal, but we had only 1 snow removal. This is the coldest November in over a decade. Depending on the December through March, we have started into another very cold winter.

I want to thank all committees for your helping our church become a wonderful place to worship our God and His Son Jesus Christ. I also want to thank all the church committees for their service in 2014. Please come to the Annual Meeting in January to learn more about what occurred in 214.

Board Co-chair, Bill Koellner