



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 2018



Dear Friends in Christ,

I attempted to walk my dog this morning. After forging through a couple of drifts, shuffling across an icy parking lot, crunching partway down the sidewalk in a mix that would better fit a Frozen movie than a bit of enjoyable exercise, we turned back for home. Both of us were disappointed at having our routine broken.

Somewhere in there I had time for the random thought, “If you connect snow with Christmas, you should really be in the Christmas Spirit now!” Which led me to ponder what it means to be in the Christmas Spirit. So here are my musings on what that means to me...

Joy-filled, anticipating the beauty of decorations, the community drawing together to share, family meals, choosing gifts and planning surprises, candlelight worship, music, children’s faces, cleaning, packing food boxes, setting up clothing displays for distribution. Truthfully, we can do these things all year round if we want, so what makes it Christmas? Jesus, of course. Jesus, the Christ.

In my Bible Dictionary it takes 13 pages to define Jesus Christ. “The name Jesus is derived from a Hebrew word that means ‘savior’ and the title Christ means anointed, and refers to one commissioned by God for a special task. The accounts of his life, death and resurrection in the New Testament represent for Christians God’s saving act for sinful humanity.” So I am convinced that as Christians, you and I are to carry on the telling of the story AND the continuation of saving acts. As John the Baptizer shouts in the wilderness, “Repent! Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” It is up to each of you to listen and heed the voice of Christ to you each Advent season, as we prepare to celebrate his birth.

I invite you to consider how you will be open to the Spirit of Christmas this year as we look to God’s incarnation of Godself. How will you, in turn, be ‘in-Christed?’

Years ago, I heard a tired and grumpy daycare worker tell a three year old that Christmas was over when he requested to sing another Christmas song after Dec. 25. I heard him whisper, “But Christmas is always in my heart.” Amen to that, little one. May Christmas find lodging in your heart for the rest of eternity!

In His Service,
Pastor Marian

| CHURCH RECORD | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------|
| November 2018 | | |
| DATE | OFFERING | ATTEND |
| November 4 | \$4,965.00 | 51 |
| November 11 | \$225.00 | 58 |
| November 18 | \$12,478.00 | 95 |
| November 25 | \$2,462.93 | 27 |



C-c-c-can you feel it: the Christmas Choirs, Carols, Candlelight & Communion bringing us the hope, peace, joy and love of the season? Share with all of us in these sacred services, steeped in tradition and immersed in the sincere meaning and message of our faith! The story doesn't change, but the music and shared experience of the retelling take us back and bring us together.

- Sun., Dec. 2:** WORSHIP TEAM
- Wed., Dec. 5:** Chime Choir - 6:45 to 7:30
Chancel Choir - 7:30 to 8:30
- Sun., Dec. 9:** YOUTH BELL CHOIR
- Wed., Dec. 12:** (same as Dec. 5)
- Sun., Dec. 16:** CHANCEL CHOIR - Service of Narrative and Songs
- Wed., Dec. 19:** (same as Dec. 5)
- Sun., Dec. 23:** CHANCEL & CHIME CHOIRS - Service of Scripture & Carols, Candlelight & Communion
- Mon., Dec. 24:** Christmas Eve Service at 9 p.m. - CHIME CHOIR
- Wed., Dec. 26:** No Choirs
- Sun., Dec. 30:** SPECIAL MUSIC

CHRISTMAS BOX COLLECTIONS Area churches are asked to collect coats, gloves, hats, underwear, socks, boots for distribution to those in need. Items can be placed under the Christmas tree in the Narthex. Please bring by Wed. Dec. 12.

CHRISTMAS BOX Toys may be brought to St. Joseph's Sunday, December 9 from 5PM to 7PM and Monday, December 10th between the hours 9 AM to 5 PM at the Parish hall. The toys will be sorted and packed at St. Joseph's Tuesday, Dec. 11 beginning at 6:00p.m. Food will be sorted and packed at First Church United at 6 PM Wednesday, Dec. 12th. Distribution is Friday, Dec. 14 from 5:30-8:00 and Saturday from 8-10a.m. at FCU. Your help is needed and appreciated at any of those times.

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.

WOW Activities

We will have WOW December 5 and 12 from 5:45-7:30 then celebrate with our annual Christmas program and potluck on December 19th from 6-7:30. There will be no WOW December 26 and no Sunday school December 30th. We will meet again January 2nd for a New Years WOW party!

POINSETTIA'S AT JAN'S FLOWER YARD

This year Jan's Flower Yard will offer poinsettia's in 6 inch pot, cost is \$15.55 + tax. Call 627-2616 to order yours.

CYG News

There will be regular CYG and lessons on December 2 and 9. On December 16, Belinda Heckman will be our special guest speaker telling of her time in Africa. There will be no meal that night. No CYG December 23 and 30 for holiday break. Kickoff Fun Night January 6 at WLCF, pizza and games.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT

Hello Church family!

We are happy to be starting the advent season in Sunday school and on the Wednesday night program. We have been discussing what it means for Christ to be

the king, and what the progressive season of Advent leading up to Christmas means for us as Christians.

Additionally, the children have been rehearsing for the Christmas program. If you have any extra angel, lamb or Shepherd costumes in your closet, now is the time to bring them to the church, as we will likely have many more actors than the wardrobe can facilitate.

The Christmas program is open to everyone in the church and the community, and will be at 6 o'clock on Wednesday, December 19. There will be a potluck following, and it should be a wonderful time. Thanks as always for your continued support of this important ministry.

Sincerely, Jason Thrasher.

Food Pantry report for the month of November 2018

We had the pleasure of working with a number of volunteers from First Church United this month. We served 42 families representing 130 people. Some families visited more than once this month the total number of families visiting the food pantry was 57 and with the extra visits the number of people served was 175. We had a few new families again this month. We received 102 pounds of cleaning supplies. From all the sources of gifts to the food pantry we received 501 pounds. All these donations were not enough to keep the shelves full. On November 29 Ron Jensen and Mike Duytschaver went to the food pantry and picked up 598 pounds of food.

We received a few donations of cash this month. We thank all the donors for their support, without them we would not be able to visit the Riverbend Food Bank and get large orders of food stuff at deep discounts over other sources available to us.

Volunteers gave the food pantry 56 hours. Considering that we were only open 1 hour on 8 days this month this shows it takes about 7 volunteer hours for every hour the food pantry is open.

We look forward to having help from West Liberty Christian Fellowship Church in December. January will be split with help from Cedar Valley Methodist and Atalissa Church of Christ are scheduled to help in January

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Here is the list for the next 4 months:

December – West Liberty Christian Fellowship, Julie McKillip is in charge

January – I have grouped Cedar Valley Methodist, Louise Newcomb is in charge and Atalissa Church of Christ, Sheryl Brown is in charge, together since they are both small churches and do not have a large number of volunteers. Louise and Sheryl should be able to split it

any way that suites you, just let me know who will be there on what days.

February - West Liberty Methodist Church, Cindi Sanders is in charge.

March – St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Mike Duytschaver is in charge.

Here is my form to track visits to the food pantry. As you can see we have grown very steady this year.

Number of visitors year to date

| total # of | People | Families |
|---------------|--------|----------|
| Jan | 130 | 48 |
| Feb | 86 | 34 |
| Mar | 190 | 61 |
| Apr | 146 | 52 |
| May | 181 | 61 |
| June | 195 | 58 |
| July | 172 | 56 |
| Aug | 188 | 59 |
| Sept | 260 | 88 |
| Oct | 203 | 64 |
| Nov | 175 | 57 |
| Dec | | |
| Year to date: | 1926 | 638 |

| Average | people | families |
|---------|--------|----------|
| | 175 | 58 |



**OFFICIAL BOARD SUMMARY
FIRST CHURCH UNITED OFFICAL BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

November 1, 2018 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER by Board Chair, Deepak Giri. Those present were Joe Myers, Pastor Marian, Treasurer Keith Barnhart, Syd Harned, Secretary Katie Thrasher, Vince Ottaway, Lori Brooke, Bob Dewar, Ed Moreno, Brenda Miller

DEVOTION TIME Pastor Marian read from the book “Everyday Psalms” Psalm 90.

OPEN IN PRAYER

APPROVAL OF DOCKET add Ed Moreno, PRC Committee, Personnel Committee, Choir Library. Motion to approve as amended 1st Vince O., 2nd Brenda M., unanimously approved by the Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Move to approve as presented 1st Syd H., 2nd Brenda M., unanimously approved by the Board.

ED MORENO spoke about the community gardens FCU hosted on our land summer of 2018. Ed is the Chair of Master Gardeners of Muscatine. He said that this year the scope of the project expanded to 6 plots of community gardens. Almost 1000lbs were grown and donated. Ed submitted a written report that will be on file in the church office.

Next year the ISU extension SNAP Program is proposing another opportunity with a different focus. This would be to hold classes to focus on education and eliminate the 6 plots of community gardens. Move that the Board is in support of the community gardens by providing the garden site and the kitchen for their use 1st Syd H., 2nd Vince O., unanimously approved by the Board.

PRC COMMITTEE reported to the Board

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE reported to the Board.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Keith Barnhart reported the \$10,000 came in from the Ireys Estate. It was transferred to the General Savings Account. Keith has had to transfer \$2,000 in October and will likely have to borrow more soon. Insurance is paid for the year.

Camp Wyoming, CCC, and Ministerial Association were each given \$1,000 from Endowment Interest as previously voted and approved by the Board. Quarterly payment to IRS was paid.

Receipts have been a bit lower this year, but the budget continues to increase. Motion to approve 1st Syd H., 2nd Brenda M. unanimously approved by the Board.

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Start of Sept. balance | \$885.72 |
| Receipts | \$22,763.08 |
| Sub Total | \$23, 648.80 |
| Disbursements | \$23,093.74 |
| Ending Balance | \$555.06 |

Board Checking (\$17,269.44)

PASTOR’S REPORT Oct. 4-Nov. 1

Office hours kept

Prepare and lead worship Oct. 7, 21, 28

CYG, co-teach lessons every other week, plan and shop for meals every week, prepare meal Oct. 28

Adult Sunday School

W.O.W.

Vacation Oct. 8-14

Planned and co-led Commissioned Ruling Elder retreat at Camp Wyoming, served as host camp for this event as well, Oct. 12-13

Book study at Col. Jct., Oct. 16

Visitation for Larry Morrison Oct. 18
Funeral for Larry Morrison (non-member) Oct. 19
Community Music and Praise Night Oct. 28
Deacons meeting Oct. 28
Voluntary Action Council meeting Oct. 29
Received, sorted 24 cases of Operation Warm coats
Trick or Treat on the Trail for FCU Oct. 31
Pastoral visits-8
Mileage-154

Reminder I will be on vacation Nov. 5-11, Jason is preaching.

Move to approve Pastor's Report 1st Vince O., Joe M., unanimously approved by the Board.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

Inside the Church

1. Immersion Baptismal tub leak- tabled till December meeting.
2. Vacuum cleaner – Brenda M. met with Bret Akers. Bret was given a commercial vacuum to try out from Steve Bowly. If bought, we would get it at Steve's cost. Brenda will let Bret know Board approves and Bret will get the bill to Brenda.
3. FCU Website - tabled till December meeting.
4. Church address book- tabled till December meeting.

Outside the Church

1. Door area near sanctuary entrance– Board agrees we need to wait to take action on this till Spring.
2. Parking lot light- Deepak talked to Mike Kessler and we may need to replace the light. Deepak will let the Board know how much it might be at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Budget- tabled till December meeting.
2. New LED lights in the attic space above the pulpit area- Brenda reports we need new LED lights. Deepak will look at it and see if Kessler can fix it.
3. Snow Removal- Deepak will contact Heath Snyder to see if he is available to take care of the church/manse again this year.
4. Staff Evals- discussed behind closed doors.
5. Endowment report thru end of 3rd quarter- Budget update. Spreadsheet included in file.
6. Stewardship update- Joe M. reports for 2019 we have 21 units equaling \$40,800. 7 of those are brand new. 9 families who normally pledge have

not done so yet. In 2018 we had 22 units equaling \$51,860. Joe is going to mail a reminder letter to those who normally pledge.

7. Nominating report to date
Official Board Class of 2020 - Leon Larson (filling out last year's class since we only got two to serve)
Official Board Class of 2021 - Blaine Kelly, Susan Deahr (still looking for one more)
Board of Deacons Class of 2021 - Norma Brooks, Pat Brooke
Endowment committee class of 2021 - Brenda Miller, Lisa Murphy
Communion Speaking Elders class of 2021 - Jason Thrasher, Dean Phelps
Pastoral Relations Committee – Pastor Marian will provide two or three names for Nominating Committee to contact.
Personnel Relations Committee - Deepak Giri
Christian Education Committee – Looking for individuals to serve.
Congregational Life Committee - class 2021 - Gary Hahn
Community Center Board - class of 2021 - Jodi Kelly
Memorial Committee - class of 2021 - Evelyn Wilkerson
Trustees - class of 2021 -we'll ask Jim Kiwala upon his return from Mexico.
8. 7th Day Adventist request- Pastor Marian reports 7th Day would like to use the church every night for a week at 7:00p.m. for the dates November 24-December 1. They would not use it on Wednesday. They would only use the Sanctuary. Move to allow the 7th Day Adventists use the Sanctuary November 24-December 1 (except Wednesday, Nov. 28). 1st Syd H., 2nd Vince O., unanimously approved by the Board.
9. Help fund process- Brenda M. expressed concern people coming to Pastor Marian's house to seek assistance. Pastor Marian is not concerned about it.

ADJOURNMENT move to adjourn 1st Joe M., 2nd Vince O., unanimously approved by the Board.

PRAYER CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

MEETING December 6, 2018 at 6:30pm

Church Workers

December 2

Communion/Worship Team

SPEAKING ELDERS: Tom & Mary Pat Brooke

COMMUNION SERVERS:

Karen Nortman, Syd Harned, Susie Lehman,
Gary Hahn, Rob Miller, Brenda Miller

USHER: Dave Baker

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR: Marilyn Ruegsegger

ORGANIST: Lori Brooke

POWER POINT: Keith Barnhart

December 9

Youth Bell Choir/Gathering Music

USHER: Tom Brooke

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR: The Giri Family

ORGANIST: Brenda Miller

POWER POINT: Katie Thrasher

December 16

Narrative & Song Choir Sunday/Communion

SPEAKING ELDERS: Tom & Mary Pat Brooke

COMMUNION SERVERS:

Karen Nortman, Syd Harned, Susie Lehman,
Gary Hahn, Rob Miller, Brenda Miller

USHER: Dave Baker

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR: Bill & Jan Koellner

ORGANIST: Marianne Phelps & Brenda Miller

POWER POINT: Bill Koellner

December 23

Communion, Candlelight & Carols

SPEAKING ELDERS: Tom & Mary Pat Brooke

COMMUNION SERVERS:

Karen Nortman, Jo Noble, Bob Dewar,
Letha Ottaway, Vince Ottaway, Missy Johnson

USHER: Tom Brooke

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

Vince & Letha Ottaway

ORGANIST: Brenda Miller & Marianne Phelps

POWER POINT: Marcy Dewar

December 24

Organist: Susie Lehman

December 30

USHER: Tom Brooke

GREETERS & COFFEE HOUR:

Dave & Bertie Baker

ORGANIST: Brenda Miller

POWER POINT: Bill Koellner



Birthdays in December

- 1 Susan Lehman
- 3 Carolyn Bengé
- 4 Kelly Waters
- 4 Ron Jacobs
- 5 Brenda Miller
- 6 Ken Minor
- 6 Andy Moreland
- 7 Roger Bengé
- 7 Breona Maurer
- 9 Jessica Kelly Simon
- 10 Louise McCoy
- 11 Jackson Gingerich
- 11 Jan McCrabb
- 11 Jude Woodburn
- 12 Margaret Barnhart
- 13 Kyle Jacobs
- 13 Gina Skubal
- 14 Roger Johnson
- 14 Dee Johnson
- 17 Payton Murphy
- 20 Wade Deahr
- 21 Zachary Newcomb
- 21 Mike Deahr
- 23 Dillon Brooke
- 25 Deepak Giri
- 30 Marianne Phelps
- 30 Mary Kay Morrison
- 31 Bruce Bengé
- 31 Dinette Myers
- 31 Roberta Baker



Anniversaries in December

- 7 Arnie & Marian Hart
- 13 Deepak & Amrita Giri

**Communion preparers for December are
Butch & Karen Nortman**