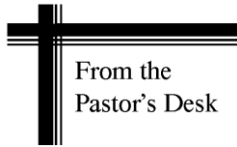


Pilgrim's Progress

December 2021

"The purpose of this church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ, for the object of sharing in the worship of God and in making His will dominant in the lives of men and women, especially as that will is set forth in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ."



Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has

scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever." And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

The Season of Advent reminds us of the circumstances surrounding the birth of our Savior, and the whole mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus the Christ. It also reminds us of the prophecies of sacred Scripture regarding the ultimate return of Jesus, never again to leave. I think the season also reminds us that God-the Holy Spirit-though always with us, visits us in different seasons of our journey through time to bring growth and change. Mary, the mother of Jesus, gives us an example of how to reflect on this and thus cooperate with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. In the above passage in Luke's Gospel, Mary visited her relative Elizabeth, who was herself expecting.

During the visit, Mary records a reflection that is so epic that it has its own name, the Magnificat. It is itself a re-working of another inspired reflection of praise by Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10). Mary is not trying to plagiarize, but reflecting on how the Holy Spirit has done great things in the past, she notes that the same Holy Spirit is doing great things now, in her life.

Recently we finished phase 1 of our Church Renewal program, asking people to reflect upon the times the Holy Spirit did great things in our church in the past. Sometime soon after the turn of the year we'll start to interview people about both the challenges and blessings in our fellowship today. Mary reflects that process. She looks back and praises God when great events in earlier generations, but also praises God for what is happening now. Advent is the perfect time to do this, both in our fellowship and in our personal lives. Have a wonderful, blessed, and thoughtful Advent.
Pastor Dan

Sermons

December 5	The Paths of Peace	Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79
December 12	Bearing Good Fruit	Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18
December 19	Christmas Pageant	
December 24	Christmas Eve	Readings and Carols
December 26	My Father's Business	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Luke 2:41-52



Your support of our Church is always appreciated. As we end this giving year of 2021 it is important that you know that all donations for 2021 need to be **in the office** by Dec 28th to be counted towards your 2021 taxes. Thank you.

Please keep our Members in Care Facilities in your thoughts & prayers:



Bickford : Joanie Smith-Legg #108, Marilyn Rhodes # 123
Grandview: Pattye Morrison #107 **IVH:** JoAnne Ainley
Suites of Ankeny: Romaine Mackaman
Southridge: Betty Runner #212, Carmalee Kothenbeutel
Glenwood Place: Loretta Stubbe #150, Jan More #112, Mildred Lathrop #145,
 Bob Becker #175, Bonnie Pappas #177, Lenora Brown #147, Joan Carter #116, Iva
 Howard #164



Alan & Sandy Packer	12/02/10	11 years
Breana & Luis Alvarado	12/4/15	6 years
Greg & Barbara Ellcey	12/12/60	61 years
John & Roberta Olson	12/22/84	37 years



December 2	Sarah Paustian	December 21	Loretta Stubbe
December 6	John Beaty	December 23	Jeb Long
December 8	Don Bogenrief	December 25	Norma Dannen
December 11	Brent Vellinga	December 27	Nate Speas
December 12	Shauna Banks	December 28	Sarah Nullmeyer
December 19	Phyllis Wyatt	December 29	Patrick Stewart
December 20	Anita Niehouse, Nay Liew	December 30	Todd Stanley
		December 31	Cindy Shirar



The 2nd Chance Thrift Store
 230 S 3rd Avenue
 Marshalltown, IA 50158



The 2nd Chance Thrift Store was opened to create a source of funds for the work being done in Sierra Leone at Jonathan's Child Care Ministries. The store continues to fulfill its original mission, while also being a pillar in the Marshalltown community by providing a safe, clean, and local way for Marshalltown to shop. Donations and revenue earned through the 2nd Chance Store are making a local and global impact every day.

They are always looking for Volunteers and if anyone is interested in volunteering you can contact Susanna Paul (641)750-3959 or Cindy Krull (641)750-3110



CHRISTIAN ED HIGHLIGHTS

Power Hour has been going well with the kids doing "Pumpkin Parables" and the "Upside Down" series.

Youth Groups are well attended, up to 40 youth a week! They recently filled boxes for Operation Christmas Child. The older two groups watched "Facing the Giants". They will start the Identity Bible study soon, including the movie "Overcomer". Upcoming youth events include a concert at Journey church on December 4, Winter Jam in Des Moines (featuring Skillet) on Saturday, January 22, and a possible ski retreat, probably in February.

Sisters in Christ: The group will meet after the first of the year for fellowship and to take a look at the centerpieces and décor for Fellowship Hall.

Past Events: In October we hosted Trunk or Treat. In November, 3rd graders received their Bibles and had a reception downstairs.

Children's Christmas Program: The date has been changed to December 19. Following the service, there will be a soup lunch downstairs. We are asking for donations of crockpots of soup.

NAPF/Hope conference news: The conference will be in Wichita from June 25-29. The theme is "Carry on a Harvest of Love"

NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHURCH FINANCIAL INFORMATION THROUGH NOVEMBER

While we have made progress in reaching our 2021 Budget amount, we still need additional support to achieve our goal. Our tithes and offerings are trailing the November year to date Budget by 17.0%. If you are able and willing to assist our church through new or additional Tithes & Offerings, we gratefully thank you.

January – November 2021	Actual	Budget	% of Budget thru November
GIVING	122,237	143,000	-17.0%

ONLINE GIVING

You may also contribute to First Congregational Church using On-Line giving. Simply click the link below to give to the church using On-Line giving.

[My Tithes and Offering Online Link](#)

Thank you for your continued support of First Congregational Church!

CAPITAL DONATION SUGGESTIONS

Your church has the need to invest significant dollars in several capital projects for the long-term health of the church. The financial plan approved at the 2020 annual meeting included the strategy of funding capital improvements through donations for designated projects. The Trustees have determined that the projects listed below are of the highest priority to be accomplished in the near term. By donating to these projects, or to the general capital fund, you can assist your church in maintaining its strength for many years. Please prayerfully consider supplementing your normal giving with gifts directed to the following capital projects.

2021 Capital Improvements

Make <u>removable</u> guard rails on East side of Narthex	\$1,000
New Sanctuary A/V control system and a new camera	\$1,000
New flooring for the landing going up to Loft	\$2,000
Motion sensors for lights/fans in 4 bathrooms	\$3,000
New vented system for tip of Sanctuary roof	\$7,000
16 Education Wing windows – Maintenance/Paint/Replace	\$15,000
Stain glass windows – Inspection/Repair/Replace	\$40,000
Organ upgrade - It is time for us to do a major organ upgrade	\$90,000



NEWS FROM THE DIACONATE BOARD

The Christmas Eve Candlelight service of Lessons and Carols will be held Dec. 24th at 5:30 P.M. The service tells of the promise of the Messiah and the birth of Jesus told in 7 short Bible readings (lessons) from Isaiah and the Gospels interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols and instrumental selections. Starting around 5:15 we will have prelude music provided by our church musicians. The service will conclude with the traditional candlelighting and the tolling of bells.

A big thank you goes out to Lynn Maas for directing the sanctuary decorating and to those who helped her. It looks beautiful.



News from Missions and Benevolence

HOC Giving Tree at FCC 2021



The House of Compassion (HOC) has a new director, Chad Hammer. He, the HOC Board and staff are making good strides in expanding services for citizens in need. They have reorganized the Adopt-A-Family project in 2021, making it a project to which FCC Missions and Benevolence Committee (MBC) is excited to commit our church.

Jonna Wagar is heading up the project, but the whole committee had a great time kicking off the Thanksgiving into Christmas season decorating the HOC Giving Tree just inside the south entrance of the church. The tree is decorated with gift tags describing the age, gender and when appropriate, size of one of our adoptees plus the gift items needed or wanted.

To receive these services, families had to demonstrate financial need. Only children less than 18 years of age will receive gifts of essentials (like clothing) and a couple of nonessential items. All families are offered a bible in the language they choose and a \$30 gift card from one of six local stores.



MBC has reserved funds to finance the purchase of bibles and the gift cards. We invite all church members to join us in the joy of giving as follows.

- **Take one or more gift tags from the tree. MAKE SURE TO KEEP THESE TAGS!**
- **Purchase the item on the gift tag**
- **Tape the gift tag to the unwrapped gift; if clothing, also attach the sales receipt**
- **Deliver the gift UNWRAPPED WITH THE TAG ATTACHED to the Choir Room at FCC NO LATTER THAN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2021.**

If you would like to contribute to this project, but are unable to shop, consider a cash donation. Write your check to FCC earmarked for HOC Giving Tree Project and mail or deliver it to our church secretary no later than Sunday, December 12, 2021. The MBC will use cash contributions to purchase of items on tags remaining on the gift tree after December 12th and additional gift items as funds allow.



MEALS ON WHEELS is still "in motion" as volunteers continue to take care of feeding those who need us. Our church volunteers are so willing to help deliver these meals, and we thank you all!

December delivery volunteers are Shelly Speas and Jody Brintnall....with that FCC volunteers complete another successful year of MOW deliveries.

The 2022 sign up sheet is ready for names...so if you'd like to sign up for a Saturday, just call the church office 641-752-4239 and we will get you on the list. Have a blessed holiday season. Kristi Hassler



Youth Group News & Schedules

Power Hour: For Preschool-12th grade students. Sundays at 9:15am in the Loft.
Dec. 5,12

Dec. 19–Christmas Program

Dec. 26th - No Power Hour Christmas Break

DOG's (Depend on God): For Preschool-5th grade students. Tuesdays, 6:15-7:15pm in the fellowship hall.

Dec. 7,14

Dec. 21,28 – No DOG's Christmas Break

Jr. PY (Pilgrim Youth): For 6-8th grade students. Wednesdays, 5:15-6:30pm in the Loft.

Dec. 1,8,15

Dec. 22,29 – No Jr PY Christmas Break

PY (Pilgrim Youth): For 9-12th grade students. Wednesdays, 6:45-8pm in the Loft.

Dec. 1,8,15

Dec. 22,29 – No PY Christmas Break

Our Children's Christmas Program will be Sunday, December 19th during the 10:30am service at FCC.



Our youth groups were so happy to help put together Operation Christmas Child boxes to bring Jesus love and joy to some children this Christmas. This is a program put together by Samaritan's Purse.



Six wonderful third grade students were presented with their very own Bible's in November which we prayerfully hope will be the guiding light as God's Word in each of their lives.



Had a fun trip to Appleberry Farm with some of our younger kids in November where we enjoyed apple picking and great treats!



Some youth and leaders were happy to put up American Flags around Marshalltown in honor of Veterans Day on Nov. 11th. This is an opportunity put together by the Morning Optimist Club as a youth group fundraising opportunity.



Some of our members and youth participated in Trunk or Treat at FCC on Oct.31st where they passed out candy, providing a safe place for families to come and were able to be a light of Christ in our community.



Reflecting on the Story of Who We Were

December 2021 Newsletter Update

Kim Schryver, Chair RCT

Last month in the FCC Newsletter we shared a draft of “Who We Were – Cycle I Survey Highlights.” Here is a link to the newsletter:

<https://www.fccmarshalltown.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/November-2021.pdf>

That summary is considered a working document. As new major themes and trends emerge from additional feedback from you, we will update the summary to reflect those new insights. There are two encouragements from the FCC Renewal Committee (RCT) at this point.

First, reread the summary and consider the following questions:

- What strikes you in our narrative? What rings true? What is missing?
- Do you see your own story and the story of your family as a part of FCC Marshalltown in this summary?
- Where do we see God active in our story?
- How does this summary help you prepare to see our future connected with God’s story?

Second, join us in further conversation. During December the RCT will be engaging the congregation in discussions that will help us get feedback about these questions. Here some ways we’ll do this:

1. All boards and committees are encouraged to add Renewal Update and Discussion to their agendas monthly. In December, a RCT member will attend your meeting and lead discussion using the questions posed above.
2. At youth programs during the week and the women’s gathering in December, a RCT member will include reflection time regarding the Cycle I Highlights.
3. We invite any of you who have not done a Cycle I interview to arrange for one by calling Miriam Bryant – (515) 771 – 5930.

Answers we compile will be important considerations in preparation for our next phase of interviews – Who Are We Now? The Cycle 2 interview has a different set of questions – still only two. Our next wave of surveys will start early in 2022.

In the mean time, Pastor Dan is planning to carry on the theme of renewal in his sermons and a new bible study launching soon. The RCT appreciates the time, energy and spirit so many of you have contributed to strengthening this community of faith. Thanks! We’re looking forward to a wonderful Advent and Christmas with all of you!



Everyone is invited for Bible Time with Pastor Dan every Sunday!

When? Every Sunday at 4 PM

Where? In the comfort of your home (wherever your PC or cellphone is)

How? Via ZOOM. Text or email Pastor Dan for an invite. 419-699-2910 or
pastor@fccmarshalltown.org

Length? 1 Hour Maximum



2021

FCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS!
 Sunday Worship Services: 8am & 10:30am



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Monday-Friday 9am-Noon 641-752-4239				
			1 Jr PY 5:15-6:30p PY 6:45-8p Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hyvee	2	3	4
5 Communion In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc in Bible w /Dan 4pm Power Hour 9:15am	6	7 DOGS 6:15-7:15p	8 Jr PY 5:15-6:30p PY 6:45-8p Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hyvee	9 6:30pm RCT	10	11
12 In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc in Bible w /Dan 4pm Power Hour 9:15am	13	14 DOGS 6:15-7:15p 8:45am BMC	15 Jr PY 5:15-6:30p PY 6:45-8p Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hyvee	16 6:30 Trustees	17	18
19 Christmas Pageant In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc in Bible w /Dan 4pm 11:45am BCE	20	21 6:30pm Deacons	22 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hyvee	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 5:30pm	25 MOW Jody & Shelly
26 In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc in Bible w /Dan 4pm	27	28	29 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hyvee	30	31 New Years Eve OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED color code: youth events Church mtgs Special events Comm. Events Color copy on bulletin boards



First Congregational Church
312 W. Main St.
Marshalltown, IA 50158

Office hours 9 a.m. - noon Mon - Fri 641-752-4239
Worship Services: 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m. All ages in the LOFT
web page: www.fccmarshalltown.org

A member of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

