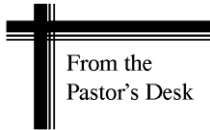


Pilgrim's Progress

December 2023

"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."



Main Article: Persevering in the Disciplines

This past year all the newsletter articles I've submitted involved the value of spiritual disciplines in our life. They aid in our growth and our perspective and for this last article on the subject I want to mention the importance of perseverance and consistency in the spiritual disciplines. Like exercise, spiritual disciplines work best when we get involved with them regularly. For someone with a busy lifestyle, and that seems to be everybody, being consistent in things like worship, prayer, Bible, outreach, service, stewardship, fasting, silence, journaling and learning can be difficult and leave you with the feeling that you have to start at the beginning over and over. It can be frustrating. Donald Whitney, author of Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, offers three encouraging insights. First, the role of the Holy Spirit is to constantly motivate and then give us the power to follow through. He will encourage us to keep going or to start again as often as it takes. The second is the role of Christian fellowship. None of us are alone in finding the spiritual life challenging, especially making the time for it. When we discuss this together, we encourage each other and may even come up with some new ideas about making the time for spiritual matters. Finally, there is the role of struggle. It is normal to find the Christian life challenging and we should not be surprised that we have to work hard to make the time to pray, be silent, etc. But a fellow I knew back in college once told me that the Christian life is like a baseball game, except you don't play for nine innings, you play until you win. You may often start a habit of the disciplines, get too busy, and then start again. Continue with that and don't give up. It is of value to your spiritual life even if it is not every day. The disciplines will help you live a life that is full of value in the eyes of God.

-Pastor Dan

Sermons

December 3 The Mind of Christ Psalm 22:6; Philippians 2:1-11
December 10 The Beginning of the Gospel Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8
December 17 A Kingdom with No End Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 1:26-38
December 24 The Shepherds Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:8-20
December 31 The Fullness of Time Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40



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



Bickford: Joanie Smith-Legg #108,
Mill Pond Care Center: Romaine Mackaman
Southridge: Betty Runner #212,
Glenwood Place: Mildred Lathrop #145, Lenora Brown #147, Iva Howard #164,
Bonnie Pappas #112, Marian Gerdes #166, Anita Niehouse #116
Willows of Marshalltown: Evelyn Thompson



Breana & Luis Alvarado

12/4/15

8 years



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

News from Missions and Benevolence



The mission's team is still committed to doing our part for Meals on Wheels in Marshalltown! Our part is; one Saturday a month (the fourth Saturday) and we do the east route. What's new and exciting is that we now go to the new hospital and pick up and our old blue route has become the east route. Please sign up in the narthex or call the church office (641-752-4239) to volunteer. You will be making a difference for someone that day and it feels good to help out. Any questions please call me Kristi Hassler 641-753-3276 or Doris McCarty 641-752-7604.

The following Dates for 2024 are available! Thank You!

February 24	March 23	April 27	May 25
June 22	July 27	August 24	September 28
October 26	November 23	December 28	

Hello from the Missions Committee!

Our "mini mission" to help the "mini food pantries" is a continuous project.

In November, we delivered food items to 3 pantries, Elim Lutheran, United Church of Christ, and the pantry on 9th and Summit St. Please remember when shopping, to think of the old Clifton Shopping Cart in the Narthex. Dried soups, bean, canned goods, instant potatoes, etc. are all good. Thank you all so much!

Let's keep our blessings flowing!



Adopt-A-Family Angel Tree - Enjoy the Gift of Giving!

3 families need some Christmas generosity
10 kiddos will love gifts you provide

36 tags are on the tree - choose one or more!
6 of those tags are detergents or body hygiene products

Each family will receive:

Dish and laundry detergent, 1 each
Body wash and shampoo, 1 each

A Bible financed by Mission & Benevolence Comm.
A gift card to a grocery store of choice financed by
Mission & Benevolence Comm.

Here's how you help:

1. Take a tag from the tree; **MAKE CERTAIN TO KEEP TRACK OF THE TAG!**
2. Buy the item on the tag
3. Attach the tag securely to the purchased item
4. **NO LATER THAN, SUNDAY, 12/10/23 Deliver the UNWRAPPED gift with tag to table in Fellowship Hall**

Have a question? Ask Janna Waggar, Christmas Proj. Chair.
Kristi Hassler, Doris McCarty, Kim Schryver or Cheryl Waltjer.



NEWS FROM YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHURCH FINANCIAL INFORMATION THRU NOVEMBER 26, 2023

Through November 26, our year-to-date Tithes and Offerings are \$119,122.03. Compared to the 2023 total year budget of \$174,000.00, we are at 68.4% of Budget. If you are able and willing to support our church through new or additional Tithes and Offerings, we gratefully thank you. It would be wonderful if we were able to achieve our 2023 Tithes and Offerings Budget goal.

ONLINE GIVING

If you prefer Online Giving to First Congregational Church, 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 2021 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. 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.

<u>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS</u>		
Capital Projects	Est. Cost	\$ Raised
Narthex east door railings - make removable	\$500	0
Motion sensors for lights/fans in 4 bathrooms	\$3,000	0
New fabricated gate system - east side of church	\$5,000	0
Vented roof system - tip of roof over the Sanctuary	\$7,000	0
Replace 16 Education Wing windows	\$35,000	0
New 2023 15 passenger Ford Transit 350 van	\$57,486	\$4,000
Stain glass windows – Inspection/Repair/Replacement	\$100,000	\$40,000





Women's Ministry News

The December Women’s Ministry gathering will be held on December 11 at Georgia Thomas’ home at 5:30.

There will be no Bible Study with Jane during December.

The next Bible Study will be January 8 at 5:30 in the church library. There is no scheduled large group Women’s Ministry meeting in January, however, you are ever in our prayers!

 For unto us a Child is born! Hallelujah! 



News from Diaconate Board

Many thanks to the Harvest Dinner Committee (Jane, Kristi and Lisa) for the wonderful Thanksgiving dinner. Also, thank you to those who helped set up and cleanup. Pastor Dan will be on vacation on November 26th. The Revs Miller-Todd's will fill the pulpit that Sunday.

Advent begins Sunday, December 3rd. We will decorate the sanctuary and Christmas tree on Saturday, December 2nd at 10 A.M.

We will have the 8 AM service on Christmas Eve Day, followed by the kids Christmas program at 10:30 A.M. and then the family candlelight service at 5 P.M.

There will be regular services on December 31st. No fellowship time that Sunday.

Symbolism during Advent/Christmas

Advent is the beginning of the church yearly calendar, it is a period of spiritual preparation for the coming birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and lasts through Christmas Eve. It involves prayer, fasting, repentance, and anticipating the joy of his arrival. The parament color is blue (altar cloth, pulpit scarf and Dan's stole). Blue was the most expensive cloth at the time of Jesus' birth. The advent wreath, a circular garland made of evergreen branches, symbolizes eternity and God's eternal life and love. Christmas Eve the Christ Candle is lit, representing Jesus as the Light of the World.



Youth Group News

Power Hour: Sundays 9:15-10:20am for Preschool-12th grade

December 3rd will be a regular day.

December 10, 17, 24 we will have Grinch play practice instead of regular Power Hour.

No Power Hour December 31st (Christmas break)

DOG's (Depend on God): Tuesdays 5-6:30pm with a meal for preschool-4th grade

December 12th (Christmas caroling) and December 19th (Christmas party)

No DOG's December 5th or 26th (Christmas break)

Jr PY (Pilgrim Youth): Wednesdays 4:45-6:15pm with a meal for 5-8th grade

December 13th (Christmas Caroling) and December 20th (Christmas party)

No DOG's December 6th or 27th (Christmas break)

PY (Pilgrim Youth): Wednesdays 6:30-8pm with a meal for 9-12th grade

December 13th (Christmas Caroling) and December 20th (Christmas party)

No DOG's December 6th or 27th (Christmas break)



The Children's Christmas Program will be on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24th during the 10:30am worship service. This year's production, we will be bringing back a favorite "How the Grinch Found Christ at Christmas", a wonderful message about how Jesus makes broken hearts new when we understand our salvation found in Him. Please come join us!

Practice Schedule:

- *Sunday, December 10th 9-10:20am in the Loft
- *Saturday, December 16th, 10:30am-12:30pm in the sanctuary
- *Sunday, December 17th, 9-10:20am in the Loft
- *Dress rehearsal: Saturday, December 23rd, 10:30am-12:30pm in the sanctuary

*Sunday, December 24th, kids be at church by 8:45am in the sanctuary & service starts at 10:30am.

In November we had wonderful weather for a picnic and scavenger hunt with some of our 5-12th graders at Grimes Farm!



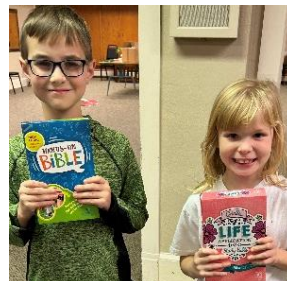
We were so happy to put together Operation Christmas Child Boxes with our youth groups in November and pray over the children who would be receiving them!



We had the great honor of putting up American flags for Veteran's Day as a youth group fundraiser through the Morning Optimist Club. We were also blessed by some of the moms of our kids with breakfast for the morning and ice cream for the afternoon.



We were so happy to present Bibles to our other 3rd graders in our DOG's group in November!



We will be having a fundraiser to help raise money for our NAPF/HOPE 2024 trip in June to Spokane, Washington.



Let us help you get ready for Christmas by providing you with Christmas goodies! We will be making Christmas cookie ball packages with 8 cookies in each box. We will be taking orders beginning Friday, December 1st through Friday, December 15th. Each box will be \$10 and will include 2 Oreo balls, 2 monster cookie balls, 2 peanut butter balls, and 2 vanilla wafer cookie balls. We can only deliver locally and won't be able to ship orders. The cookies will be delivered Friday, December 22nd just in time for Christmas celebrations! Please contact Shelly Speas to place an order 641-751-9868.



We had an amazing time at Women's Ministry in November putting together fall flower arrangements.



We had a wonderful Harvest Dinner on Sunday, November 19th with many friends and family sharing a delicious meal and praising God together for His many blessings!



Harvest Dinner 2023

The Harvest Dinner of 2023 is over, and the committee would like to thank all of you for your support and volunteering to make this a success!

We served up ham, turkey, and rolls from HyVee this year, and prepared our own green beans, cheesy potatoes, and cranberry sauce. In addition, the Hays family party celebrated Al and Judy's 60th wedding anniversary, adding to the menu a cake in their honor. We estimate that we fed about 115 people.

Greeters in costume this year were Ian and Claire Meyer, and our volunteer servers were so helpful, as were those who came to help set up on Saturday, do the Sunday morning preparations, and clean-up! Thank you to all the volunteers, and everyone who came and enjoyed the fellowship.





Chancel Choir

The chancel choir will rehearse each Friday night in December except the 29th at 5:30. We have a chair and music waiting for you. Join the fun. Sing praises to God!



The true meaning of Christmas is love. John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love.





Pillars of Faith @ F. C. C.

For those of you who read “Pillars of Faith” in November, the person was Miriam Bryant, our current Moderator. If you haven’t read this article in the church’s newsletter and you have a computer, you can find it at this web site: <https://www.fccmarshalltown.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Oct-2023-newsletter.pdf>. Thanks Miriam for all you have done, do and will do!

One of the definitions of a pillar is: a person or thing regarded as reliably providing essential support for something. In the New King James Version of the Bible, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” This gift of God is the reason the receivers of this gift want to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth. So, with these two things in mind, we would like to present the “Pillar of Faith” for December.

The background of the December Pillar of Faith starts with a maternal Great Grandfather, George Goodwin Perkins, who was born in 1833 in New Hampshire and died in 1924. George was a minister, first serving in the Methodist church but in 1860 became a Congregational minister. He served churches in Maine, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Arkansas. George’s daughter, Harriet Temple Perkins (the Pillar of Faith’s maternal Grandmother) was born in 1872 and graduated from Iowa College in 1894. Iowa College’s name was changed to Grinnell College in 1896. Harriet joined First Congregational Church in 1895 and began teaching school in Marshalltown that same year. Harriet married Charles Casnor St. Clair in 1903 and Catherine (the Pillar of Faith’s Mother) was born in 1907. Being a conscientious young woman of five years old, Catherine brought her parent’s fireplace shovel to the groundbreaking ceremony of our current church and broke it. Catherine, along with Maxine Britton, became the first ever women Trustees at First Congregational Church. Catherine also went on to become the Church’s first female Moderator in 1973 and served again in 1975.

This month’s Pillar of Faith was baptized by Rev. George Thomas in 1946. His memories include: going to Sunday School and to Bible School in the summer; the basketball court in the church, its location in the church and the women’s basketball team that played there; memorizing the books of the Bible (probably in confirmation) and, most memorably, being an acolyte walking toward the altar and worried the light would go out before he got to the candles on the altar. This memory made a lasting impression on him!

As an adult, he has been on the Diaconate Board three times and was chairperson one of those terms. He has also served on the Trustees for ten years.

When asked which of these activities he enjoyed doing most? He replied, “I enjoyed them all! I enjoyed serving! This is a beautiful church and a great place to worship Christ.”

When asked, do you have any advice for the future of our church? He replied, “Be generous, Be kind, Be welcoming and Be supportive of everybody and the church. Never stop giving of your time and gifts



2023

FCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS!
 Sunday Worship Services:
 8:00am & 10:30am

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <p style="text-align: center;">Monday-Friday 9am-Noon 641-752-4239</p>						
<p>color code: youth events Church mtgs Special events Comm. Events Color copy on bulletin boards</p>					<p>1 Chancel choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>2 Sanctuary decorating @ 10am</p>
<p>3 Communion In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc Power Hour @ 9:15am</p>	4	5	<p>6 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hy-Vee</p>	<p>7 Bell choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>8 Chancel choir practice 5:30</p>	9
<p>10 In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc Grinch practice at 9am</p>	<p>11 Women's Ministry 5:30pm @ Georgia's</p>	<p>12 8:45am BMC meet DOG's 5-6:30 pm (Christmas Caroling)</p>	<p>13 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hy-Vee Jr PY 4:45-6:15pm PY 6:30-8pm (Christmas Caroling)</p>	<p>14 Bell choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>15 Chancel choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>16 Grinch Practice @10:30am</p>
<p>17 In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc Grinch practice @ 8:45am 11:45am BCE</p>	18	<p>19 Diaconate Meets 6:30 pm DOG's 5-6:30 pm (Christmas Party)</p>	<p>20 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hy-Vee Trustees meet @ 10:00am Jr PY 4:45-6:15pm PY 6:30-8pm (Christmas Party)</p>	<p>21 Bell choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>22 Chancel choir practice 5:30</p>	<p>23 11am MOW Volunteer: Rod & Kristi Hassler Grinch Practice @10:30am</p>
<p>24 Christmas Eve In-Person Worship Christmas eve 8am and 10:30 svcs Family candlelight service at 5pm Grinch practice @ 9:15am</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day  Office Closed</p>	26	<p>27 Men's Church coffee 8am @ Hy-Vee</p>	28	29	30
<p>31 In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube</p>						



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

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

A member of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

