

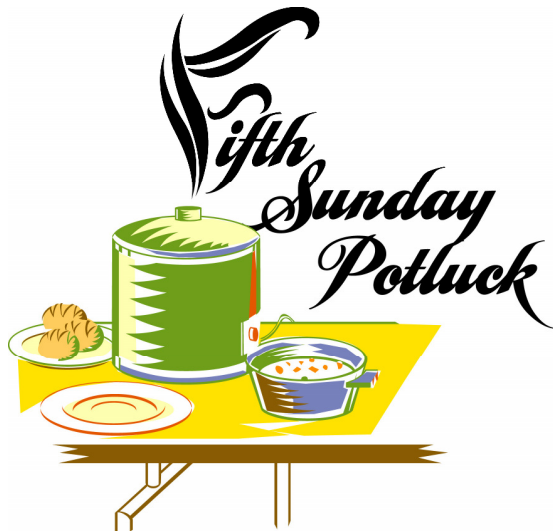
First Congregational Messenger
First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Serving God with love and faith



July 2023

Volume 5, Issue 105



July 30 is a fifth Sunday, so a potluck with donations to the scholarship fund will be held. Since it is summer and really warm, a suggestion has been made that this be a picnic themed lunch. Bring your food, your donation, and your appetite!

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Do you go grocery shopping? At Lou's? At HyVee? **We have an easy way to bump up your donation to the church budget--use a Lou's or HyVee gift card when you go shopping or get gas. You can buy them Sundays in Fellowship Hall. We currently get \$25, \$50 and \$100 gift cards.**

See you at the table in Fellowship Hall! Please help out. The gift cards fit right in your billfold by your dollar bills, so it's even easy to remember to use them when you go to pay for your groceries. Questions? Leave a message for Jane Uzzell at (402)640-6623.



Monday-Thursday 10-4
Other times by appointment
May be out of the office for meetings or visits



Office Hours
Monday-Friday
8-12

Unity

"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" – Psalm 133:1

Many hands make light work. On Saturday, May 27th, thanks to our sisters and brothers from Linaje Escogido and First Congregational, we cleaned up the church grounds in two hours!



Unity is something to lift up these days. When First Congregational and Linaje Escogido joined together in worship on December 1st, 2019, we welcomed our new friends, expressed our hopes for the future, and prayed. Our friends, also gifted musicians, played a worship song in Spanish.

Pastor Abel Garcia chose Psalm 133 to express our happiness and gratitude to God for bringing the two

churches together.

From a commentary on the Psalms, James L. May, wrote that Psalm 133 is one in a collection of short songs of ascents (Psalm 120-134). Pilgrims would sing these songs either on their way to Jerusalem, or in worship assembled as one family in Zion. Zion is another name for Jerusalem and is also the place believed to be where God lived.

In the Psalm, "good and pleasant" are words associated with unity. "Blessing" not only pointed to Zion (where God lived), it also pointed beyond Zion to the achievement of unity.*

May God continue to bless our friendship and unity. –Peace, Pastor Jackie

*From *Interpretation: Psalms*, by James May, "Psalm 133: When Sisters and Brothers Sit in Unity" (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994) page 412.



Nebraska Annual Meeting, June 2-3, 2023
Ramada Convention Center, Columbus, NE
A Report submitted by Jackie Perry

On June 2 and 3, I attended the Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Conference held at the Ramada Convention Center in Columbus. It was well organized and I came away energized, happy to be in ministry with so many others. Meeting in person is the best way, I believe, to keep and build 'ties that bind' us together as the United Church of Christ.

At Friday night's meal, we recognized ordination anniversaries, 5 for 5 churches (our church was named among them), church anniversaries, and those ministers who have died since we last met.

Rev. Phil Hart, Interim Conference Minister for the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences (also titled our Executive Minister) reported on the state of the Nebraska Conference and the Tri-Conference.

Since arriving August or September of last year, he and the NE Boards and staff have been working hard to remedy the unsustainable budget that he inherited in 2022. As reported in October, if the budget proposed last year was allowed to continue, Phil said that the Conference would have lost 1/3 of its endowment, which was unacceptable.

The return to a balanced budget meant staff lay-offs, a creative new structure to get ministry done, and an agreement that all three conferences would agree to a Jubilee Year. Jubilee year is a concept in the Old Testament where all debt is forgiven. In the conference setting, this meant that the three conferences were allowed to not pay their portions to the Tri-conference. With all these conditions in place, the Nebraska Conference saved over \$400,000 and is back to a balanced budget.

Phil had reported at the October meeting in Sioux City, that for 5 years, the Tri-Conference was allowed to withdraw nearly \$100,000 per year from the endowment for its operations.



*Rev. Phil Hart, Interim
Conference Minister
for IA, NE, SD
Conferences*

The new creative staffing model includes 3 deacons to replace the Associate Minister in Nebraska. The deacons work 5 hours per week. Our deacon for Northeast Nebraska is Elaine Miller from Southern South Dakota. She will check in with us to learn more about our church.

At a panel discussion of the NE Board members, TCM Board members, and Phil, they spoke about the work of the Conference. The Conference facilitates Search and Call, and “serves and connects” local churches to the resources of the wider United Church of Christ, be it disaster relief, mission, mental health, finances, etc.

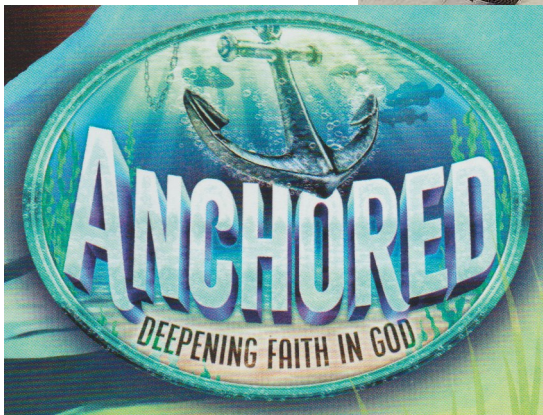
My take away was that the Tri-Conference is still an experiment worth continuing. Phil commented how the 3 conferences cared for one another and held one another in respect. They are becoming a model around problem solving.

Phil also announced that a search committee was in place to search for a settled Conference Minister for the 3 conferences; he expects a new Conference Minister to be in place by the next annual meeting.

Phil Hart was our Illinois Interim Conference Minister when I served in Moline, IL. His gifts for preaching continue to amaze me, and his long experience as an interim conference minister has come to aid the Nebraska Conference today. Our ministry as a Tri-Conference with our brothers and sisters in Iowa and South Dakota is stronger today, thanks to him and our devoted Boards.

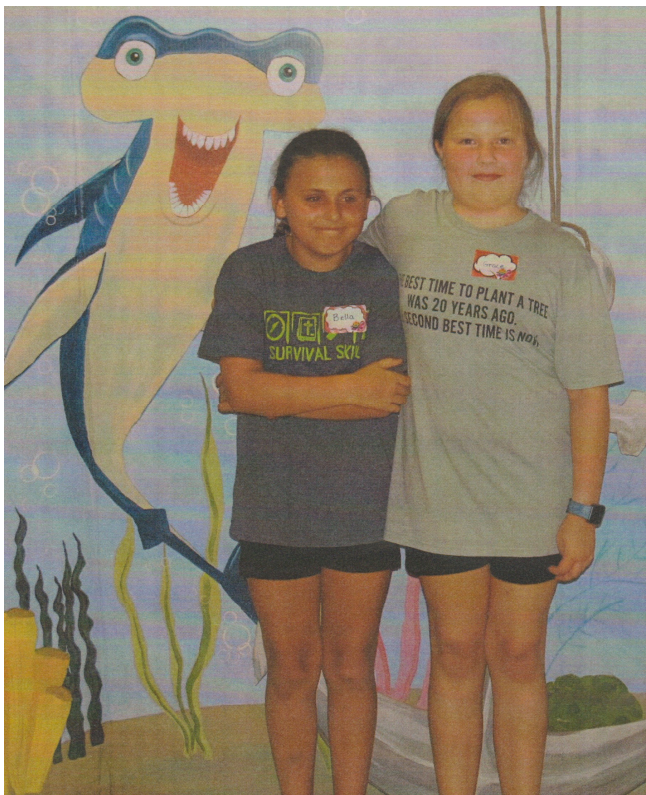
Peace, Pastor Jackie





A HUGE thank you to our 2023 Vacation Bible School volunteers! We had 2 fun filled evenings, June 12 & 13, at Trinity Episcopal Church with 35 amazing kids and lots of super helpers.

Kay Neuharth	Barb Koenig
Pat Jenny	Paige Uzzell
Candice Korthals	Reese Uzzell
Michelle Indra	Linaje Escogido helpers



We're grateful for the opportunity to get back to having VBS and looking forward to 2024!

**Whitney Kumm, Kim Rusk, Darlene Korthals
VBS Planning Committee**

School supplies for Stuff the Bus

Salvation Army is Stuffing the Bus this summer. All donations must be in by **July 19**. The list of materials is given here and can be purchased to donate or a monetary donation to the Salvation Army may be made. The collection box is in the Fellowship Hall at the back table.

Facial Tissues

Pocket Folders

Spiral Notebooks

Zipper Binder (Trapper Keeper)

Wide-ruled Loose-leaf Paper - not college-ruled, (150 sheet)

Dark Blue and/or Black Pens

Several Red Pens

Several Pencils and Erasers – (At least one dozen)

Colored Pencils

Assorted Dry Erase Markers

Pen/Pencil Bag

4 oz. bottle Elmer's Glue OR 2-3 Glue Sticks

Student Scissors

Book bag

Individual Headphones or earbuds (stored in ziplock bag)

Standard /Metric Ruler

Inexpensive Calculator

Disinfecting Wipes

Crayons - 1 box of (24 or 36 count)

Highlighter Pens (yellow, blue, green and pink) No Sharpies





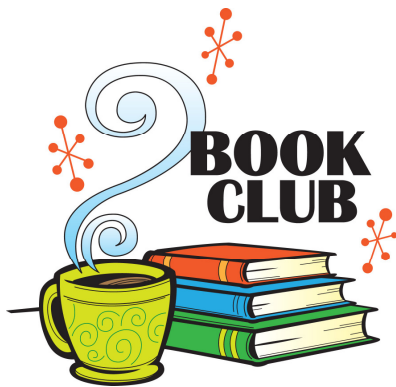
**Happy
Father's
Day!**





serving the food pantry





Book Club will meet July 12 at 10 AM. *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* by Dan Santat. The books can be found in Fellowship Hall or you can contact Jane Uzzell.



On behalf of our family (Mike Synovec, Wayne (Diane) Synovec, Gayla and Terry Koerting) we would like to express our sincere thanks on allowing us to hold the jewelry estate sale at your church. The sale was a huge success because we had the perfect venue and location to hold it in Norfolk. We truly appreciate your kindness and generosity of your board and church members in support of this unique garage sale of jewelry. Best regards, Gayla Koerting

Church family, I thank you all, my dear church family, for your prayers, cards, kind words and expressions of sympathy for my daughter, Allison, and my grandchildren, Abigail, Lucas and Max, at the sudden loss of their father, Craig Leach. Their lives changed in an instant and I pray for God's guidance and strength at this difficult time as they move forward and try to adjust to the changes while missing Craig so very much. Your thoughtfulness gives me comfort and peace. Verletta Olson

Birthdays & Anniversaries

6th	Verletta Olson
10th	Evonne Burkink
12th	Michelle Indra
	Merle Rix
17th	Chuck Balsiger
18th	Terry Hamilton
28th	Randy Neuharth
30th	Pat Jenny

Anniversaries

5th	Tom and Sandy McConnell
15th	Erik and Katie Gamerl



July 2

Communion: Randy and Kay Neuharth
Ushers: Ed Lindsay and Tom McConnell
Greeters: Verletta Olson and Suzan Podliska
Reader: Brian Seier
Leader: Sue Allyn
Flowers: Rita Woodard

July 9

Ushers: Mike Synovec and Sue Surber
Greeters: Jane Uzzell and Rita Woodard
Reader:
Flowers: Barb Koenig

July 16

Ushers: Evonne Burkink and Bonnie Dewell
Greeters: Charlene Fosdick and Barb Koenig
Reader: Tom McConnell
Flowers: Erik and Katie Gamerl

July 23

Ushers: Randy and Kay Neuharth
Greeters: Brian Seier and Mike Synovec
Reader: Jane Uzzell
Flowers: Ginge Dudley

July 30

Ushers: Scott and Lori Williams
Greeters: Ed Lindsay and Sue Surber
Reader: Verletta Olson
Flowers:



August 6

Communion: Brian Seier and Ben Uzzell
Ushers: Stacie and Reese Uzzell
Greeters: Grace Uzzell and Charlene Fosdick
Reader: Kay Neuharth
Leader: Randy Neuharth
Flowers: Garry and Suzan Podliska

August 13

Ushers: Barb Koenig and Verletta Olson
Greeters: Evonne Burkink and Bonnie Dewell
Reader: Lori Williams
Flowers: Susan Surber

August 20

Ushers: Ben and Grace Uzzell
Greeters: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger
Reader: Reese Uzzell
Flowers:

August 27

Ushers: Charlene Fosdick and Rita Woodard
Greeters: Ben and Stacie Uzzell
Reader: Verletta Olson
Flowers: Karen Allyn

June

From 6/1/23 through 6/30/23

Checking account information

Beginning balance	\$	166.65
Transfer from savings	\$	1,000.00
Strengthen the Church	\$	315.00
Kitchen Fund	\$	50.00
Food Pantry	\$	100.00
<u>Weekly deposits</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>14,276.94</u>
Subtotal	\$	15,908.59
Salary	--\$	7,533.03
Church Maintenance	—\$	2,020.52
Office Expenses	—\$	314.33
Insurance	—\$	2084.40
Substitute Organist	—\$	70.00
Worship Ministry	—\$	52.50
Kitchen Fund	—\$	50.00
Living Waters Association	—\$	276.00
OCWM, Strengthen the Church	—\$	1,354.30
Food Pantry	—\$	100.00
<u>Renner's</u>	<u>—\$</u>	<u>500.00</u>
Final Balance	\$	1,553.51



▶ July 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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10:15 Worship Renewed Hope 4-7 FH						
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		OFFICE CLOSED				
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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10:15 Worship						
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Sue out 9-10						
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		Sue out 9-10 5:30 PM Girl Scouts				
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		Sue out until 10:30 10 Book club				
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
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10:15 Worship						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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10:15 Worship Unity Council						
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Sue out 8:30-10						
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		5:30 PM Girl Scouts				
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30	31					
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10:15 Worship Potluck follow- ing worship						
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▶ August 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10:15 Worship Renewed Hope 4-7 FH		5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10 Book club			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10:15 Worship		NPS begins				
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
10:15 Worship		5:30 PM Girl Scouts				
27	28	29	30	31		
10:15 Worship						