

First Congregational Messenger
 First Congregational United Church of Christ
 1102 W. Norfolk Ave.
 Norfolk, NE 68701
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 firstcongoucc@fastmail.com
Serving God with love and faith



What if in-person worship is cancelled?

We hope it is rare, but when the church needs to cancel worship on short notice due to bad weather, no water in the building, or late notice of a Covid-19 exposure, consult these news outlets under “weather, closings”. Pastor Jackie will try to post a notice on Facebook as well. If we know soon enough, Susan can send notices through an “Email Blast”. She also calls those who do not have email. We will do our best to get the word out.

December 2020

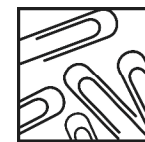
Volume 5, Issue 74

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**Pastor’s
Office Hours**

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



**Office
Hours**

Office Hours

Mon-Fri

8-12

SPREADER

Each week, the public health department gathers information about Covid-19 that officials need for their work to slow the spread of disease and keep the public safe. The report includes various projected or scheduled events that may create spread; for example, fall weddings have been a concern, as well as election activities. Each day of the week, there may be three to five public events listed.

Taking a quick glance at one such report, among the 'Multi-cooking classes' and 'Husker Hoedown', I spotted 'Paranormal Tours'. I chuckled. Why? I'm not sure. I knew of TV shows like 'Ghost Hunters', and that many people are believers of purported supernatural phenomena. Even for those who aren't believers, the stories are entertaining. A late-night Paranormal Tour might be a fun time.

The dictionary says that the word 'paranormal' means "of or relating to the *claimed* occurrence of an event or perception *without scientific explanation...*"

For me, placing Covid-19 pandemic (that is real and serious) close together with Paranormal Tours (which is unreal and wacky), tickles my funny bone. I hope that they were able to have this fun event and that it was not a Covid 'spreader'. Hopefully, all it spread was a little release from the anxiety of these weird times.

Recently I read that scary movies may benefit your mental, emotional and physical health. Fright gets the heart pumping.

"The energy boost you receive from the adrenaline pumping through your system is unbeatable—and it's all natural! Who needs Red Bull when you have Norman Bates and the thrill you feel every time you hear the Psycho theme song?"¹

In the dark days of December, amid a worldwide pandemic, fun and laughter are good things to spread. Under the weight of Covid fears and responsibilities, physical distancing, and economic uncertainties, the church season of Advent is a gift. The gift of Advent is that we hear the good news of Christ's coming into the world to save us from human sin and folly. Christ saves us for relationships, so we can become spreaders of Hope, Love, Peace, and even runaway JOY!

See you in church or online as we figure out new technologies in December and the coming year.

Peace, *Pastor Jackie*



¹From Vocal Media, "Horror" at <https://vocal.media/horror/reasons-why-horror-movies-are-good-for-your-health>



Thank you, Jill Waterbury, for the many masks you have made and donated to the church throughout this COVID-19 season. Jill and her sister have sewn +500 masks each--that is over 1,000! Jill began sewing masks for her daughter, who is an emergency room doctor in Phoenix. Dayna has treated many COVID-19 patients; she wears her mother's masks to and from work and believes that masks save lives. First Congregational has been able to worship in person since late May in large part because of these colorful masks and social distancing.

"God of health and wholeness, of neighbor love and kindness, bless this mask, my slight shield against great ills."



2020 GIVING CHRISTMAS TREE:
Faith Development and Transformation Ministries are sponsoring a Giving Christmas Tree for Westside Elementary School. Please help decorate the tree in the Narthex with needed items for K-4th grade students. Requested items are hats, mittens, gloves, (NO scarves please) and underwear. Monetary gifts are also welcome for the purchase of items and all donations will be accepted through December 31. Help share the Spirit of Christmas with our local youth!

Advent 2020: I Believe Even When...



Worship Schedule

| | |
|--------|--|
| Nov 29 | 9:00AM Hanging of the Greens 10:15AM Worship-HOPE |
| Dec 6 | 10:15AM Worship-LOVE |
| Dec 13 | 10:15AM Worship Christmas Program "RUNAWAY JOY" |
| Dec 20 | 10:15AM Worship-PEACE |
| Dec 24 | 5:30PM Christmas Eve Service |
| Dec 27 | 10:15AM Worship |

Dec 13 - Christmas Program: Runaway Joy by Katie Miller.



A new play based on the Wizard of Oz. Katie is Youth & Family Pastor at First Central UCC in Omaha. She has created many wacky characters who discover the Christmas message as they follow "the gray dusty road"!



150th Anniversary

Wooden Christmas Ornaments

Great for the tree, stocking stuffers, or package decorations.

\$5.00 and comes with a red bow in a plastic bag. Please make check to: First Congregational UCC with the note "ornaments". Also for sale in the office. If purchasing with cash after worship, please bring exact amount (if possible).





“For Such a Time as This.”

Esther 4:14

The Rev. Jeanne Tyler was called to ministry in the 1960s, and along with her husband, John, spent 33 years jointly serving congregations in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Iowa.

Born with cerebral palsy and diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss in the third grade, Jeanne became a fierce advocate for the church’s awareness of, and response to, those with disabilities.

“There is a hidden cost of disability of which many are unaware,” she explains. “The financial cost – speech therapy, hearing aids, motorized wheelchairs, specialized computers – all expensive. Without these, isolation and depression can set in.”

Jeanne served with the UCC’s Disabilities Ministries and in other capacities with the national church and was instrumental in the conception and funding of the Virginia Kreyer Endowed Scholarship Fund, which provides tuition and assistive technology for ministers with disabilities.

“I’m grateful for the United Church of Christ being with me on my journey, and it’s essential that the church continue its commitment to clergy who have disabilities.” Hearing aids have been a godsend to Jeanne, from the first ones she used while still in college. “They worked well for the time – I could hear the fire crackle for the first time and it was just thrilling.”

After retirement, the high cost of newer technology hearing aids was problematic. A grant from the Christmas Fund filled the gap left by her insurance allowance, allowing Jeanne to have hearing aids that make all the difference. “As a pastor, I always asked people to support the Christmas Fund, to support those whose life work has been serving and empowering others, but I never thought I would be on the receiving end. I am humbled and grateful for this acknowledgement by my church that hearing aids are life-giving.”

In 2019, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health premium supplementation for 144 retired clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

PASSIONATEPENNYPINCHER.COM

NORFOLK'S FIRST COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS IN THE YEAR 1877

The Christmas of 1877 was lean for the citizens of Norfolk and other pioneers of Nebraska. The grasshoppers had been recent visitors. The people were recovering from that and did not have much money to spend on gifts for children and there were few gifts to spend it on. There were 150-200 people living in the Norfolk area at the time. The idea for a community Christmas Celebration came to life.

A committee included, Mrs. Beels, Deacon and Clarinda Ward, Mrs. S.W. Hayes, Mrs McClary, Mrs. C.P. Mathewson, Charlotte Olney, Mrs Wm. Gerecke, and Mrs Kidder. It would be held on Christmas Eve at the Congregational Church, that very hospitable little church, as practically all denominations held services under its roof; and so everyone felt at home there.

A special christmas tree would be hauled from Wisner or Columbus. Christmas candy for the celebration would be bought at the only two stores in town, the Olney Store and Hayes and McClary. Every child would have a gift under the tree. There would be knives for the boys and dolls for the girls. For weeks every spare minute of the ladies was spent making dresses for the dolls. They met and made generous stockings of bright mosquito net. There were no beautiful decorations for the tree at the time so they made their own. Bright decorations, of gilt and silver stars of various sizes, and yards and yards of pop corn were strung. The tree arrives. It was a big tree reaching almost to the ceiling of the little Congregation Church. When the bright stockings and all those decorations were in place it was a gay bright tree that awaited the evening festivities.

Christmas Eve was clear and crisp, a little snow on the ground, bitter cold. The guests began arriving early, so eager were they for the festivities to begin. Some came in lumber wagons, many of them pulled by ox teams.

As they entered, they stood in awe of the beautiful tree. Candles for the occasion were brought in large pails and placed around the church, it was bright and gay. Their eyes rested upon a large white banner occupying the entire end of the church upon which were the words "MERRY CHRISTMAS" made with large gold letters. Possibly the lettering was not very artistic, but the

spirit of good will atoned for any defiance in that line. Much amusement was occasioned by the fact that one letter was upside down in that line. This was the first banner displayed in Norfolk.

Mounds of candy were passed around. No ill effects were reported from all the highly colored sweets that everyone ate that night. The program begins. A choir composed of two Hurford girls, Mrs. Tanner, Mrs. Berry, Deacon Ward and George Beels sings. The Sunday School do a number. George Beels sang a solo as does Clara Hazen. The children do not hear a word! They await impatiently for the ending of this part of the festivities, as they had eyes only on the tree.

Every child had a gift: there were knives for the boys and dolls for the girls. One of the scenes that has always lingered in the memory of those present was the joy of a little girl when she received her doll. She had been looking at them with longing eyes and great eagerness. Several of the others had received their dolls and her hopes of having one were gradually going. When her name was called, she rose to her feet quivering with excitement and when the doll was handed to her, her exclamations of joy brought tears to the eyes of everyone present. No one can ever know the longing of that little one for a doll. Her parents were too poor to buy one for her and the only one she had ever possessed was one made at home. To possess a real doll beautifully dressed was joy beyond words. This one incident repaid all who had worked for the success of the occasion.

Mr. Lew Taylor played the part of Santa Claus and right royally did he fill the part. The gifts were simple and inexpensive as the committee did not have a very large amount of money to spend; but by careful planning something was provided for every child, and the spirit of good will and kindness atoned for any lack. The toys and pleasures of those days were so simple that any gift was something to be prized and treasured.

“Thus ended the first community Christmas celebration and it lingers as a happy memory with all those who had a share in the festivities.”

Thanks to Mrs. George Beels, committee member, for writing and sharing in 1921, this amazing story.

Reimagined by Verletta Olson
2020

Dear members of First Congregational UCC,
I just wanted to extend a personal thank you to you all. My mom, Alta Crandall, felt you were extended family. The kindness and respect that you gave her. The honor you blessed her with as an elder member of the church. Her Sundays spent with you were the highlight of her week.
Thank you so much for the cards and memorial gifts. I'm sure the church will find a good place to sue those. Also thank you for all the visits and special things you brought to Mom while she was in the Homestead and St. Joe's, as well as, the extra cards and notes that you sent. While Mom was a blessing to us, you all were a blessing to her.

Many thanks, Marita Brandl



DECEMBER Birthdays & Anniversaries

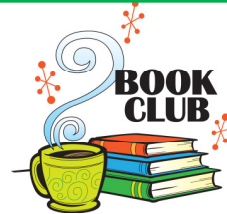
Birthday

1st Stacie Uzzell
7th Susan Hansen
18th Ben Uzzell
26th Karen Allyn
27th Ruth Brown
31st Virginia Barritt

Anniversary

23rd Jeff and Evonne Burkink

Book club meets December 9, Fellowship Hall at 10 AM.



2021 Church Book Club Announcement!

The theme for the 2021 book club is "Celebration!" Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will need to make a small sacrifice—well, maybe it's medium sized—in that we will not be sharing a potluck lunch. We can meet in Fellowship Hall, but each will need to wear a mask and sit at their own table. If this small sacrifice of not sharing food as we meet should cease to be necessary, Pastor Jackie and the Unity Council will let us know. So, let's meet in January, but no food and no drink so we can leave our masks on and discuss the children's book of the month.

January: Celebrate New Year's Day with Freedom Soup by T. Charles

February: Ground Hog's Day celebrated with A Garden for Groundhog by L. Balian

March: will celebrate International Women's Day with Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History by V. Harrison

April: Earth Day! with Alba and the Ocean Cleanup by L. Hawthorne Maybe we could spend some time outdoors and clean up, spruce up the church's flower gardens?

May: National Pet Month with Remembering Vera by Patricia Polacco

June: Summer Solstice with Under Alaska's Midnight Sun by D. Vanasse

July: Ice Cream Month! Saffron Ice Cream by R. Kheiriyen If MJ's Gelato and More is open, we could enjoy a scoop—outside their shop. In 2020 they had 2 outside tables. Or, perhaps we could meet in a park, and bring our own ice cream.

August: Back to School with Your Name is a Song by J. Thompkins-Bigelow

September: Grandparents' Day so My Day with Gong Gong by S. Eye

October: Fall Harvest and a Tommy dePaola book, Strega Nona's Harvest

November: Thanksgiving and the book We Are Grateful by T. Sorell

December: Winter Solstice with The Shortest Day by S. Cooper

Jane Uzzell will order the books from the library, and put them on a table in Fellowship Hall for each person to pick up and read before the meeting.

Meeting will stay on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. Please email Jane at juzzell@telebeep.com or call her at 402-640-6623 to let her know you will try to attend each month. That way she can ask the Norfolk Public Library to get the correct number of books for you. Hope to see you January 13~10 a.m., Fellowship Hall with a mask on!



December 6

Communion: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger, Ben Uzzell
and Susan Surber

Ushers: Terry Hamilton and Bonnie Dewell

Greeters: Ben and Stacie Uzzell

Reader: Lori Williams

Leader: Scott Williams

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 13

Ushers: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Greeters: Chuck Balsiger and Bonnie Dewell

Reader: Scott Williams

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 20

Ushers: Randy and Kay Neuharth

Greeters: Suzan Podliska and Barb Koenig

Reader: Chuck Balsiger

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 24 Christmas Eve

Ushers: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Greeters: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Reader: Tom McConnell

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 27

Ushers: Mike Synovec and Ed Lindsay

Greeters: Randy and Kay Neuharth

Reader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers: Poinsettias

January 3

Communion: Evonne Burkink, Verletta Olson,
Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Ushers: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Greeters: Susan Surber and Evonne Burkink

Reader: Verletta Olson

Leader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers:

January 10

Ushers: Cole Uzzell and Jane Uzzell

Greeters: Verletta Olson and Barb Koenig

Reader: Ben Uzzell

Flowers:

January 17

Ushers: Susan Surber and Barb Koenig

Greeters: Karen Allyn and Terry Hamilton

Reader: Randy Neuharth

Flowers:

January 24

Ushers: Verletta Olson and Evonne Burkink

Greeters: Tom McConnell and Ed Lindsay

Reader: Karen Allyn

Flowers:

January 31

Ushers: Suzan Podliska

Greeters: Cole Uzzell and Jane Uzzell

Reader: Kay Neuharth

Flowers:

Please notify the office if you are not able to attend on Sunday.

November

From 11/1/20 through 11/30/20

This does not include the deposit for 11-29



Checking account information

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Beginning balance | \$ 3,186.45 |
| <u>Weekly deposits</u> | <u>\$ 8,216.00</u> |
| Subtotal | \$11,402.45 |
| Salary | --\$ 6,824.71 |
| Church Maintenance | —\$ 1,164.22 |
| Office Expenses | —\$ 585.52 |
| Renner's | —\$ 755.00 |
| Substitute Organist | —\$ 210.00 |
| Faith Development | ----\$ 43.52 |
| Worship Ministry | —\$ 95.97 |
| 150th Ornaments | —\$ 321.50 |
| <u>OCWM, Neighbors in Need</u> | <u>----\$ 574.00</u> |
| Final Balance | \$ 828.01 |

Linaje Escogido \$800.00 was deposited in Madison County Bank.

▶ December 2020

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--------------------|--|--------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| | | 1 5:30 Girl Scouts | 2 | 3 | 4 7 Card Group | 5 |
| 6 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship | 7 | 8 LifeLine Screening FH 5:30 Girl Scouts | 9 | 10 | 11 5 Card Group | 12 10-11:30 Christmas program practice |
| 13 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship | 14 | 15 5:30 Girl Scouts 7 PM Unity Council | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship | 21 | 22 5:30 Girl Scouts | 23 Sue vacation | 24 5:30 PM Christmas Eve service Sue vacation | 25 OFFICE CLOSED | 26 |
| 27 10:15 Worship | 28 Sue vacation | 29 Sue vacation | 30 Sue vacation | 31 OFFICE CLOSED | | |

▶ January 2021

Sun **Mon** **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat**

1 2

OFFICE
CLOSED
7 Card Group

3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10:15 Worship 5:30 Girl Scouts 1-3 FH Delphians 5 Card Group

10 11 12 13 14 15 16

9 Sunday School
10:15 Worship
Undecorate the church 5:30 Girl Scouts

17 18 19 20 21 22 23

9 Sunday School
10:15 Worship 5:30 Girl Scouts

24 25 26 27 28 29 30

9 Sunday School
10:15 Worship 5:30 Girl Scouts

31

9 Sunday School
10:15 Worship