

First Congregational UCC

TIDINGS

A weekly newsletter for our
church family and friends

May 10, 2023

No matter who you are or where you are on Life's journey, you are welcome here!



PULPIT SUPPLY

Thank you to Cliff Highnam for leading worship on April 30, and to Paul Greene for assisting as worship leader. Thank you to Paul Greene for preparing a special Music Appreciation Sunday on May 7. Touch of Brass and the Chancel Choir, under the baton of Luke Overton, Director of Music, presented a beautiful and music-filled Sunday celebration. Choir leaders--Lauren Leman, Joley Seitz, and Brandon Whitish were thanked for their talented contribution to both choirs. Lauren will be graduating this month with her Masters in Performance

from UNI and pursuing new ventures. Joley has one more year of her Masters program, and Brandon earned his Masters last year. He has been teaching voice at Wartburg and serving coffee at Starbucks this year.

This Sunday we welcome Abbie Chronister to our pulpit, Jayne Slaughter as worship leader, and Cliff Highnam will provide the mini-lesson. We will be observing Mental Health Sunday, a way for congregations to provide education and support to members around mental health challenges. Although anxiety and depression have always been a part of our lives, both have been on the rise for many people--significantly worse since COVID. Teens and adolescents are a population particularly hard hit. As Christians, we want to support each other in body, mind and spirit. Abbie and Jayne have both been involved in various ways to address concerns about Mental Health and Mental Health Care.

Looking ahead, the Youth will be leading worship on May 21. Our Sunday School students will be singing, and Bibles will be gifted to our elementary students, 3rd grade and up.

GRADUATES

It's that time of year again! Now is the time to let the church office know if you have someone in your family graduating from high school or college. Please submit their names to the church office for publication in Tidings at a later date. Include school they are graduating from and any future plans they may have in mind such as colleges they will be attending.



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

This week, we will be discussing Chapter 3 War Stories, pp. 61-79 of INSPIRED by Rachel Held Evans. We have 2 extra books for those who would like to join us. Let Anne Hoekstra know if you would like a Zoom link to join our discussion at 9:15 a.m. We will meet in the Friendship Room.

PRAYERS FOR...

~ Pat Brock's dad, who is going through rehab from a fall, and her mother, who is needing increased assistance.

DON'T FORGET THE FOOD PANTRY

Heading to the store? Don't forget to pick up something for your neighbors to fill the food pantry. Hunger continues through all seasons. Thank you for your generous support of this community project. A special thank you to our pantry "delivery team" for March- Anne Hoekstra and Kay Thuesen and for April- Sue Hummel and Marcia Johnson.

NAMI PRESENTATION TONIGHT

Tonight, Wed., May 10th, Mary McKinnell, LMHC M.S. ED in counseling psychology, will present "Ways of Self Care and Coping with Stress." The presentation will be held here, downstairs, from 7pm to 8pm. All are invited!

NEWS FOR OUR YOUTH

Last Day! May 10th: The youth group will end for the school year tonight, Wednesday 5/10/23 at Kimball Ave with a youth party!

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY DEDICATION

Join Habitat for Humanity for a dedication for one of their latest home renovations in our Church Row neighborhood! On May 16th at 4pm, the home at 300 Allen St will officially be dedicated to its new owners. Many of our church members helped with the building of this home. If you'd like a tour of the home, Habitat for Humanity is also offering open houses on May 15th and 16th from 12-1pm. We look forward to welcoming our newest neighbors!

Sunday, May 21 Youth Sunday at First Congregational UCC with Rumen Hulmequist and members of the Youth Group leading worship.

WELCOME TO CHURCH ROW...

Amani Community Services is moving into Church Row Neighborhood this summer! Their new office will be located at 1024 W 4th Street. Amani offers services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, particularly for the African American community. They offer individual and group counseling, advocacy, outreach services, prevention services, teen & child programming, and information & referrals to other agencies. Stay tuned for opportunities to help with painting, moving office furniture, etc as their move-in date gets closer! They are currently housed on Falls Ave in Waterloo and we welcome them to the Church Row neighborhood. See information on the bulletin board in the Crossroads area of the church or at www.amani-cs.org.

FREE MONEY FOR YOUR EDUCATION!



The Scholarship Committee is excited to announce that FCUCC has again received a tuition grant from the Donna Koweil Scholarship Fund. The intention is for current college students who have already completed at least one year of schooling. Preference will be given to those students who are pursuing a degree in the health field.

Deadline to submit an application is May 18th. Please contact Michelle in the office for more information or an application.

MOMENT FOR MISSIONS...

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING

On Holy Ground

The Holy Ground Where God Appears

By Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, Associate General Minister United Church of Christ

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Exodus 3:5

Scripture names many places as holy.

Yet my heart resonates most with Moses’ encounter with the burning bush in Exodus. God appears in the flames of a burning bush that is not consumed. Yet what matters most to me in this text is not where or to whom God appears, but why God appears.

God appears in response to the cries of God’s people who are being treated unjustly. God appears because of the people’s cries, and wherever God appears is holy ground.

I often have the privilege of standing on holy ground as I travel the breadth of our beloved Church. These are places where God shows up through the work of God’s people to treat other’s needs as holy.

Plymouth UCC in Des Moines is holy ground, a church that removed the stairs to the pulpit and replaced them with circular ramps, honoring a God who still speaks through preachers and laity who do not stand.

Plymouth Congregational in Kansas is holy ground, a church where one of our unhoused siblings welcomed me to “their church” after worship, before heading back outside by choice with his bags and dog. This reminds us that those unhoused should still have a home with us.

Saint John’s UCC in St. Louis is holy ground, a church that partners with the community to feed and clothe those in need of help, and whose members take communion to their surrounding neighbors as an extension of Christ’s table of grace.

Trinity UCC in Chicago is holy ground, partnering with the food security network to import organic fruit and vegetables in a neighborhood robbed of access to healthy food options.

Wherever you are this morning, take the time to see how God is moving through the work and witness of those who gather and know that you are, we all are, on holy ground.

The Strengthen the Church Offering reflects the commitment of all settings of the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations as we work to become a multi-cultural/ multi-racial, accessible to all Christian movement.

On Holy Ground

We will collect this national UCC offering on 5/28.

DONATIONS TO WORLD GRACE PROJECT

Many of you have contributed to the Nicaraguan shoe box project for years, led by Steve and Liz Thorpe through the Rotary. These boxes have provided hundreds of children with clothing, school supplies, hygiene products, toys and books. In 1997, a project began by Father Marco Dessy to assist “children of the dump” in Chinandega was established with the help of Rotary for those children and others to access education, meals, clean water, medical care, vocational training and housing. Unfortunately, the Nicaraguan government will no longer allow the trucks with supplies into the country. Those boxes that were already filled were eventually taken to children in a Native American settlement in Arizona.

Recently, our custodian, Kyle, uncovered a couple more bins filled with supplies for shoeboxes. Since we can no longer send these to Nicaragua, they were donated to The World Grace Project here in Waterloo for children new to our community. The World Grace Project provides relief for newcomers from other countries to the Cedar Valley. Historically, Waterloo is a secondary resettlement site, meaning that refugees and immigrants coming directly into the country migrate here in search of employment and housing opportunities. Since December 2022, they have seen over 275 newcomers to Waterloo - most non-English speaking from Chad, Togo, Congo, Haiti, and Chile. World Grace Project assists in various ways as ethnic newcomers start a new life in Iowa.



This picture shows Naomi Miller, a volunteer coordinator, picking up the supplies which will be distributed to children World Grace Project serves in our community.

Create an endowment of love. Please consider including our church in your estate planning.

F I R S T C O N G R E G A T I O N A L U C C

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Congregational Tidings

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