

# Congregational Tidings

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



A weekly newsletter



[www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCWaterlooIowa](https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalUCCWaterlooIowa)

August 4, 2021

## FROM THE REOPENING COMMITTEE...

Reopening Committee continues to meet and monitor what is going on in Black Hawk County. Like last week, the rating is still High – based on percent positivity and rate of disease. We are recommending that we meet in person, but outside. For those that are not able to get out, or don't feel comfortable, or are not feeling well, we will continue with live streaming and posting to the website.

This week we will plan to meet at the church parking lot. Some folding chairs will be provided, but you are welcome to bring comfy lawn chairs or blankets. And we strongly recommend you bring some fluids for hydration....water, coffee, tea, sodas. We will set up in the shade, but it looks to be a warm one!

Please get vaccinated.

Please continue to wear masks. We will ask you to do that for the service, for everyone's sake. Maybe Greg can give us a lesson on how this variant seems to be different, and why it is showing up in the vaccinated community....and why masking is still important for our health and well being.

Greg, Tim, Beth, Dave



We wish *Duane and Kathy Franke* a Happy 60th Anniversary on August 5th.

***Congratulations!***



Continued Prayers to Pastor Bret for a complete recovery from his eye surgery last Thursday!



PRESENTED BY GALLAGHER BLUEDORN

**BLOCK PARTY - CHURCH ROW**  
**SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 2021 / 4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM**

Join us while we listen and dance to Windsong. This summer, the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center will partner with Hearst Center for the Arts, Waterloo Center for the Arts and Waterloo Urban Farmers' Market and take its portable stage into Cedar Falls and

Waterloo neighborhoods for a series of Gallagher Bluedorn Block Parties.

Location: Church Row Neighborhood, Washington Park, Waterloo, IA

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**RETIREMENT PARTY FOR LYNNE ENSWORTH**



We are throwing a party to celebrate Lynne's retirement from the University of Northern Iowa and you are invited! You means YOU, all the dear folks of our church family. Children are welcome. Lynne's retirement celebration will be held on Tuesday evening, September 7, from 7:00-9:30 pm at Montage in Cedar Falls in the large first floor room (no stairs). We hope to see you there!

*~ Lynne and Tim Ensworth*

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**MOMENT FOR MISSIONS**



Love In the Name of Christ

Love, In the Name of Christ

Each month specific donations are requested to help our neighbors. For August, please bring bed linens (sheets, pillowcases, comforters) to the church to support this outreach. Thank you for your help! “

# PASTOR'S CORNER

## REEVALUATING OUR PRIORITIES IN AN AGE OF SPIRITUALITY

Serenity is overrated when injustice is present.

Finding peace within oneself while others are suffering is gross negligence.

That is not spirituality, but transcendent egoism. It is not religiously inspired faith, but hedonistically manifested self-justification.

When my contentment requires my apathy about your condition, my turning a blind eye to your travails, then I have broken the covenant of caring and compassion that is between us.

I cannot be happy while you are sad if I am an empathetic person. I cannot feel fulfilled if I see that you are languishing.

I cannot enjoy my perceived accomplishments if you were not given a fair chance to attain the same. Your welfare is tied up with mine, and it is only the unethical who can focus on their own interests by ignoring those of others.

We are social animals, and our proper destiny is being in right relationship with one another. We defy our humanity when we put our own interests above those of others. We renounce the best that is within us when we seek our own good over and above the good of others.

What is sacred about each one of us is our ability to feel, think, speak, and act compassionately. Compassion is the divine virtue implanted within us that we must plant, cultivate, water, and let it see the light of day in our lives.

All the world religions attest to this truth. Compassion is the Golden, the Platinum, and all other Rules that require us to have as much empathy for others as we have for ourselves. It rests upon a spiritual understanding that we are all one and interrelated.

Compassion always seeks to establish distributive justice between us all; a desire and determination to let goodness be parceled out equitably among all beings. It is to recognize where inequalities exist, and to be impassioned to correct the reality where some are not treated with the same respect and love as others.

Compassion tends first to the needs of those hurting most, and will walk with another in pain rather than saunter on one's own way in blissful isolation. Compassion, like religion, requires community. While we can be spiritual all by ourselves, compassion requires that we look out for one another -- starting with the least among us.

We are not here to achieve our own enlightenment, heaven, or nirvana independently of others. Such a state is unworthy of its characterization if we all can't find our way there, or if any is excluded or deemed as hopeless. Bodhisattvas, Christs, and other great teachers have shown us that it is not about our own welfare, but the welfare of all, that is to prod our ethical actions and spread the generosity of our compassion. Creating beloved community, not sublime self-transformation, is to be our ultimate goal.

We are not here to isolate ourselves from the unruly and callous of heart and evil of action, but to show each and every one how there is a better way. We are not to disassociate from the mean-spirited and apathetic, as tempting as that may be; but to engage in acts of loving-kindness, empathetic care, and virtuous motivations that will reveal the blessings of mutual compassion.

We are not here to find a way to extinguish our own suffering through disengagement from the world and our relationships. We are here to create and build beautiful relationships in which we are fully engaged in the joys and sorrows of our fellow beings; where we will "suffer with" (the literal meaning of compassion) others and celebrate their joys together in relationship because we value our connection even more than our independence.

We are to value our interdependence more than we value our personal fulfillment. We are not to see only ourselves as the "end all, be all" of the universe, but rather see how all things are interconnected with one another, and how we need to give and receive in accordance with our need to bless and be blessed.

Our age's greatest temptation, by both the uncouth and the supposedly enlightened, is to put our wellbeing above that of others -- whether in pursuing wealth, power, and influence; or serenity, enlightenment, and personal salvation.

Blessings that only exist for us and not for others are unworthy of our pursuits. They are indicators of our own selfishness and greed, our own hubris and sense of superiority. Until we see such priorities as being unethical and unspiritual, we will not see the blessing that is rooted within us -- that divinity of being waiting to grow forth from our souls to be shared with one and all: the virtue of compassion.

-- Rev. Bret S. Mvers, 8/4/2021



### Pilgrim Heights:

Gordon and Abbie enjoyed a wonderful visit to Pilgrim Heights Camp and Retreat Center last Tuesday!

To learn more about what's happening at Camp, visit <https://www.pilgrimheights.org/>



### Youth Group:

Youth Group will happen each Wednesday this month! Join us on the 4th for round two of Elephant Toothpaste! It's sure to be a blast!



### Sunday School Teachers:

We are still seeking Sunday School teachers! It is a bi-monthly commitment where everything will be ready for you to just pick up and do! Email Abbie if interested or if you have any questions.

*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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