

# 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)

December 22, 2021

## Special Music Prelude

December 24

6:35 pm

## Christmas Eve Service

December 24

7:00 pm

The service will be live-streamed and available to watch at a later time on our Facebook page.

Variety of Carols & Christmas Music:

Touch of Brass Handbell Choir

Hudson Lourenço, Organ

John Mardis, Vocalist

Greg Hoekstra, Trumpet

Abbie  
Hudson  
Kyle

Merry Christmas!  
from your  
First Congregational  
United Church of Christ staff.

Bret  
Michelle  
Luke

# TAKING CARE OF OUR FAMILY . . .



~ Prayers for Connie Paul who is in Allen Hospital.

~ Prayers for our youth director, Abbie's brother, Danny who has breakthrough Covid.

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## SUNDAY WORSHIP - DEC. 26TH

This Sunday, join us for a carol sing  
with Evie Waack leading Worship.

## ADULT BIBLE STUDY

We meet next Tuesday, December 28th at 4 pm  
over Zoom. Check Facebook for updates!

## VETERANS OF THE CROSS (THE CHRISTMAS FUND)

This offering is usually collected the Sunday  
before Christmas but you can also place your  
donation in the offering this Sunday or mail  
your check with "VOC" in the memo to Michelle  
in the office by December 28th. Thank you in  
advance!

## YOUTH NEWS:

### Youth Director Office Hours:

December 22, 27, 28, 29, 30 from 1pm - 5pm

No Wednesday night youth group until Jan. 5th.

Childcare will not be available for the Christmas Eve  
Service on Friday (Dec. 24) or the worship service on  
Sunday (Dec. 26).

## OFFICE CLOSINGS

No office hours will be held by staff on  
December 24th, 31st, or January 3rd for the Holidays.

## FROM THE REOPENING COMMITTEE

The committee recommends continuing to meet  
in the sanctuary. Remember, the omicron has a  
shorter incubation period. So mask up, get  
vaccinated, avoid crowds, and come to the  
Christmas Eve service. Merry Christmas.

~ *Beth, Tim, Dave, Greg*

## GRIN & GROW NEWS:

This note is long overdue. I wanted to say thank  
you to everybody for your support of Grin &  
Grow Child Care for the last twenty years. The  
support from the congregation and the front  
office has been amazing. Because of this  
partnership you have provided over 100 families  
with 80,000 hours of free and reduced cost child  
care in just the last year. I wish you could hear  
some of the stories from these families. Many of  
these parents are single moms who are now able  
to go to school or are able to work. This is what  
it looks like when a community comes together  
to make the world a better place for everybody.  
We are proud to be in this partnership with you!  
If you would like to find out more please contact  
me at [ed@grinandgrowchildcare.org](mailto:ed@grinandgrowchildcare.org).

~ *Ed Gruenwald*

*G & G Director of Operations and Development*

## OUR CONDOLENCES...

...to the family of **Pearl Goos** who passed  
away on Tuesday, December 14th.



Greetings all,

I hope you will enjoy the following Christmas story.

The short, inspirational Christmas story below was originally published in the December 14, 1982 issue of Woman's Day magazine. This moving story inspired the creation of The White Envelope Project, a caring nonprofit organization dedicated to developing the next generation of givers, civic leaders, and philanthropists.

### **Christmas Story: For the Man Who Hated Christmas**

By Nancy W. Gavin

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas. Oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it – overspending and the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma – the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was on the wrestling team at the school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes.

As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids – all kids. He so enjoyed coaching little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came.

That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes, and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed a small, white envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done, and that this was his gift from me.

Mike's smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year. And that same bright smile lit up succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition – one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The white envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children – ignoring their new toys – would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the small, white envelope never lost its allure.

The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree. And the next morning, I found it was magically joined by three more. Unbeknownst to the others, each of our three children had for the first time placed a white envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down that special envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit will always be with us. Merry Christmas everyone!

~ *Pastor Bret*

# MOMENT FOR MISSIONS...

## “Did You Ask Santa for Books? If you did and need to downsize your current selections, please remember that our church has a Little Free Library box on the corner of South and 4th Streets, right underneath the flag . The mission of this nonprofit is to be a catalyst for building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries.

The vision is a book for every reader. All people are empowered when the opportunity to discover a personally relevant book to read is not limited by time, space, or privilege. Please share with your friends and neighbors and on social media so we can keep our often empty box full! You might see something you'd like to borrow and enjoy.

~ Laurie Allbaugh

*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*

Place  
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