THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Newsletter November 2026

Friends in Christ—

In the early years of New England Congregationalism, Election Day was a great holiday as local assemblies and colony officials were chosen for the coming year. The day would begin with canon firing and military exercises. Then government officials would process from the seat of government to a nearby church meeting house. There the assembled power players would—what else—listen for a few hours to the "election sermon."

The church historian, Barbara Brown Zikmund, tells us that election sermons generally followed a pattern:

First, they asserted that civil government is founded on an agreement between God and citizens to establish political systems that promote the common good. Scripture tells us that government is necessary, but no system is perfect. Therefore, voters and rulers were told that they must do what is needed for their "peculiar circumstances."

Second, the people were encouraged to promise to follow those they had elected, and rulers were to promise to act for the good of all. As long as rulers acted "in their proper character," subjects were to obey. On the other hand, if rulers acted contrary to the terms of the agreement, people were "duty bound" to resist.

In all civic actions, voters and rulers were charged to promote virtue, suppress vice and support people of "proven wisdom, integrity, justice, and holiness."

The political process is the way that communities and nations organize their common life, allocate their resources, and deal with shared problems. Politics is about the values we honor, the money we allocate, the process we follow so that we can live together with some measure of justice, order, and peace.

Politics and faith are public acts. Again and again as we open the Bible we discover God's concern with:
Honest weights and measures in the marketplace;
Judges who will not take bribes;
Leaders who seek the good of the people;
The plight of the poor and the perils of wealth;
Hospitality for strangers and foreigners;
Beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

That is to say, again and again as we open the Bible we discover God's concern with our political life.

For people of faith, concern with politics is never simply about the triumph of one party or another. It is one way that we try to plow God's wholeness into the soil of our history. It is a way that we seek to live out the two great commandments—loving God as we love our neighbor.

And if we are serious about the love of God and the love of neighbor, the election this November gives us a wide variety of issues to stir our thoughts and our prayers. We have, as did our New England ancestors in faith, our own "peculiar circumstances." Truth telling, education, healthcare, immigration—all are religious and political issues.

Of course, people of good will can take different positions on how these issues are to be addressed. Indeed, because we are part of the United Church of Christ—and especially because we are members of this congregation, where everyone's right to his or her own opinion is also a religious tenet—we will differ.

It is only as we relate to the poor and the hungry, only as we work toward peace, only as we recognize the judgment of God on all of our actions that our light will break forth and healing shall come. Our faith keeps opening up the doors of our sanctuary and calling us into relationship with the rest of the world. We won't always like what we see and hear, but we are called to look and listen. We won't always get it right but we are called to raise our voices.

All of this is cause once more for thanksgiving and gratitude—this month and every month. We are the heirs of a glorious and troubled past, living in a troubled and sometimes fearful present.And with some slight echo of gratitude in our hearts, we might go forward with some modicum of compassion for others. We might show some basic Christian love, some basic Christian decency.

We know now that each vote matters. In this very troubled and hurting world, voting is one of the most empowering, just, and peaceful actions we can take to make a difference.

Peace,

Bill

Congregational UCC
Christian Education

November 2026

Our small but MIGHTY youth group meets weekly. Each week, we gather for food and fellowship, nourishing our spirits and preparing our hearts for the week ahead. During October, we cleaned and sorted bags of medicine bottles for the 100 Grannies project serving medical clinics throughout Africa, as well as prepared envelopes to help with our church's many tasks.

The Lord makes springs pour water into the valleys. It flows between the mountains. The springs give water to all the wild animals. Psalm 104:10–11 NRSV

In Sunday School, we explored the gift of water and the many ways it sustains life throughout creation. We reflected on how water connects us all—people, plants, and animals—and our shared responsibility to care for this precious resource. Inspired by the beauty and movement of water, the children created colorful paper marbling artwork, discovering how water can be both life-giving and a source of creativity and wonder.

Give Thanks, Give Food, Youth Group Soup Drive for CommUnity

Help us feed the hungry by bringing a canned soup, stew or other shelf gable items to our collection table in Oakwood Hall through Sunday, November 22. Collected items will be delivered to CommUnity Food Pantry on Monday, Nov. 23.

November in Christian Ed

Tuesday, Nov 3 CE board meeting 6 PM

Sunday, November 1 All Saints Day
9.12:15 Nursery open
9:15 Pre-K - 8th grade Sunday School
Children's Church during worship
2-3:30 Cider & Cycling
ALL AGES welcome @Ashton House

Sunday, November 8
9-12:15 Nursery open
9:15 Pre-K - 8th grade Sunday School
Children's Church during worship
5-6:30 PM Youth Group Grades 6-12

Sunday, November 15
9-12:15 Nursery open
9:15 Pre-K - 8th grade Sunday School
Children's Church during worship
5-6:30 PM Youth Group Grades 6-12

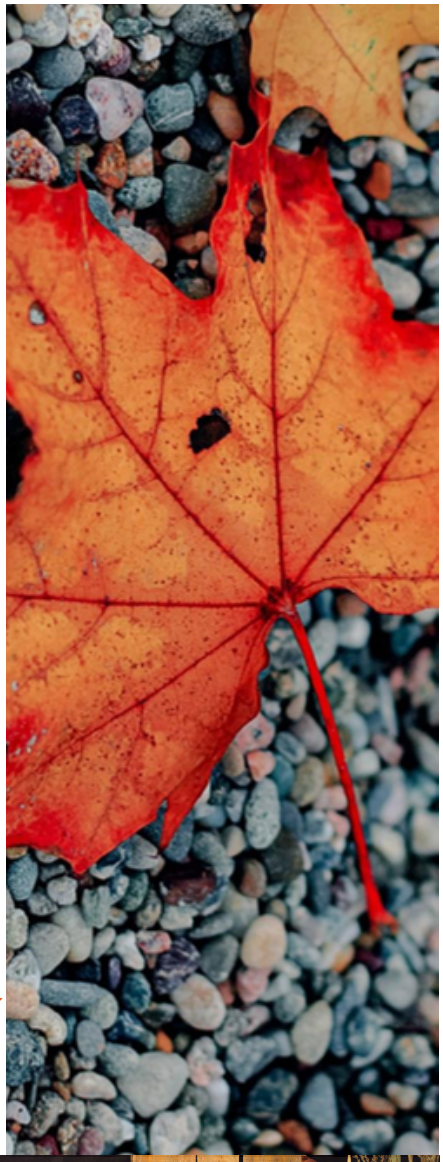
Sunday, November 22
9-12:15 Nursery open
9:15 Pre-K - 8th grade Sunday School
Children's Church during worship
5-6:30 PM Youth Group Grades 6-12

Sunday, November 29 Thanksgiving Weekend Break
9-12:15 Nursery open
Children's Church during worship
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL/YOUTH GROUP

SAVE THE DATE:
Sunday, December 13 Christmas Pageant during worship

START OF NOVEMBER

RETURN TO STANDARD TIME
Most of us can use a little extra sleep. Set your clocks back an hour before bedtime on Saturday, October 31. Get some rest and join us for Worship on November 1 (All Saints Sunday) at 10:15 a.m. —CENTRAL STANDARD TIME.



ALL SAINTS SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 1
Each year on the First Sunday in November, Congregational UCC observes "All Saints Sunday." This is a time for us to remember and give thanks to God for the lives of those members of Congregational UCC who have died in the past year—and for all the saints. This year we will remember Bob Stein, Bob Ashman, Richard Bloesch, Del Brown, Ann Romanowski, and a friend of our congregation, Larry Koepnick. Our worship service on this day is both solemn and joyful, befitting a congregation of people who live in the light of the resurrection. As is our custom, we will have a jazz band leading our worship on this Sunday to help us look toward that day when the saints go marchin' in. This year the well-known local jazz pianist Dick Watson will again lead the music in what promises to be an inspiring event. Please plan to join us on November 1 for this special time of worship.

WE WILL RECEIVE OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED (NIN) OFFERING ON ALL SAINTS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1
NIN is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice.

SHARE THE HARVEST
Throughout the summer and fall, members and friends bring produce and flowers from their gardens to sell after worship each Sunday. When members and friends buy the abundant harvest, all proceeds go to the Food Pantry and CommUnity Crisis Center. So far this year we have "harvested" over $800. We hope to reach $1000. Eat your vegetables (they're good for you), pick up some flowers (they're good for you, too), and contribute to a great cause. Thanks again to Kathy Fait and John Fuller for leading this effort and to all who shared their harvest this summer and fall.

MIDDLE OF NOVEMBER

SERVE AT HOPE LODGE! HELP PREPARE THE NOVEMBER 9 MEAL

Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, November 9 at 6:00 p.m. You are welcome to help provide and serve dinner, and visit with the Hope Lodge residents. If you would like to contribute food, see the signup sheet in Rockwood Hall. If you have questions, see Sue Dayton.

Our congregation occasionally provides an evening meal for the residents of Hope Lodge. The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge houses cancer patients (and their caregivers) who are receiving treatment at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. The address of Hope Lodge is 750 Hawkins Drive (near the Ronald McDonald House). If you have questions about this project, contact Sue Dayton, cdayton7@mchsi.com or 351-5886.

WOMEN'S LUNCH– NOVEMBER 19

On November 19th, at 11:45 am, Women's Lunch will meet at Big Grove. Please call or Text Martha Ann Crawford at 319-855-8340 to reserve a seat at the table.

MEN'S BREAKFAST— NOVEMBER 21

Men's Breakfast will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 21st, at the Waterfront Hy-Vee. All Congregational UCC men who eat breakfast are invited. This is a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new friends. Join us!

ALTERNATIVE GIVING FAIR—NOVEMBER 22 & DECEMBER 13

Please plan to visit Rockwood Hall after worship on November 22, and December 13th for our Alternative Christmas Giving Fair! There will be Heifer Project gift cards bearing Ginny Clemons' graceful calligraphy and Church World Service "ornaments". Proceeds from cards, jewelry, and gift baskets donated by artists and craftspeople in our congregation will go to local community agencies. You can trim the Mitten Tree with your new or gently used mittens, scarves, and hats for the Joan Buxton School project. And the Angel Tree will have toy request cards from the Salvation Army and envelopes for a holiday meal donation to be distributed by CommUnity. Contact John Reitz at 319-333-9588, john-reitz@uiowa.edu for information. Come have a cup of coffee and browse!

END OF NOVEMBER

THANKSGIVING CLOSING
Please note: The Church office will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 26 & 27, in celebration of Thanksgiving. Please have any material for the November 29 bulletin to the office by Tuesday, November 24.

HELP AT THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAM THIS MONTH —NOVEMBER 30
Providing Good Food and Hospitality since 1983
When there is a fifth Monday in the month, our congregation serves at the Free Lunch Program, one of the "quiet services" in the Iowa City area that strives to do one thing well: provide a free, filling and healthy lunch to anyone who comes to us. Volunteers bring a spirit of caring and compassion to our program as the people we serve are treated as guests. We come together knowing that we're all deeply connected and dependent on one another, no matter our current circumstances.
We will serve on Monday, November 30. You can help by providing food or by serving at the site at 1105 Gilbert Court. Please sign up in Rockwood Hall. If you would like to begin to receive the signup sheet sent by email, please contact Vicki Thomae at vickithomae@gmail.com

PLEASE RETURN YOUR 2027 PLEDGE CARD
Pledge/estimate of giving cards for 2027 were sent out in early October. If you misplaced yours or did not receive one, please contact the church office—319-337-4301. If you have received a card, please prayerfully fill it out and return it to the church as soon as possible. Your deeply considered, prayerful support will help us to continue our Church's ministry and mission in the Iowa City area and around the world.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

LOOK AHEAD TO ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Each year brings festivity and celebration as we move through Advent and the joy of Christmas. Mark your calendars so that you can be a part of these special events:

November 29—First Sunday in Advent; Lighting of the Advent Candles begins; Communion Sunday.

December 6—Second Sunday in Advent; Special Music Sunday; Advent Potluck in Rockwood Hall after worship.

December 13— Third Sunday in Advent; Children's Pageant.

December 20—Fourth Sunday in Advent; Worship at 10:15 a.m.

Christmas Eve is Thursday, December 24—Christmas Eve candlelight worship service at 5:30 p.m.; Christmas Fund Offering; Gala reception follows.

December 25 & 28—Christmas Day and Christmas Monday—Church office closed.

Save the date:
Sunday, December 6:
Special Music Sunday followed by the Advent Potluck.

LOOKING FORWARD

SERVING OUR CONGREGATION

Every year in January a slate of new members for the various church boards is presented to the congregation for approval. Work to prepare this slate occurs throughout the fall and is managed by the two Council Members At Large, Marie Von Behren and David McCartney.

This work is now underway, and we would like to invite all members of the congregation to consider serving on a Board. Serving on a Board is an excellent way to develop close working relations with other members of the church.

What is involved in serving on a Board? Each of the six church Boards meet monthly, usually on a week day evening. Each of the boards has different responsibilities, and thus the tasks undertaken by each board are different. For example, the Membership Board plans the church picnic and other fellowship events; the Trustees provide oversight of the church budget and the building.

In addition to positions on church boards, there are also several positions representing the church to various agencies and organizations. Members of the church serve as representatives to the Eastern Iowa Association, the Community Pastoral Counseling Service, the Common Fund, and other organizations. As an alternative to serving on a church board, you might serve as a special church representative.

We encourage you to consider offering your name for consideration to serve on a Board. If you would like to discuss any of these options, please contact Marie Von Behren at marie.vonbehren04@gmail.com or David McCartney at dfmcc@yahoo.com.

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES AT ICE CHECK-INS

On the first Tuesday morning of every month, area families and individuals who are required to do so report at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Cedar Rapids. These ICE check-ins are an annual procedure for each family or person.

Each month during these check-ins we gather outside the ICE facility in support of these families. We pray, sing, and offer them support, and ensure that when they check in, that they are also able to leave. Prayers are offered in English and Spanish.

Our gatherings are co-sponsored by Esucha Mi Voz of Iowa, the Iowa City Catholic Worker House, and other organizations. More information about their services is at:

https://www.grassrootsiowanetwork.com/organization/escucha-mi-voz-iowa
https://iowacitycatholicworker.org/

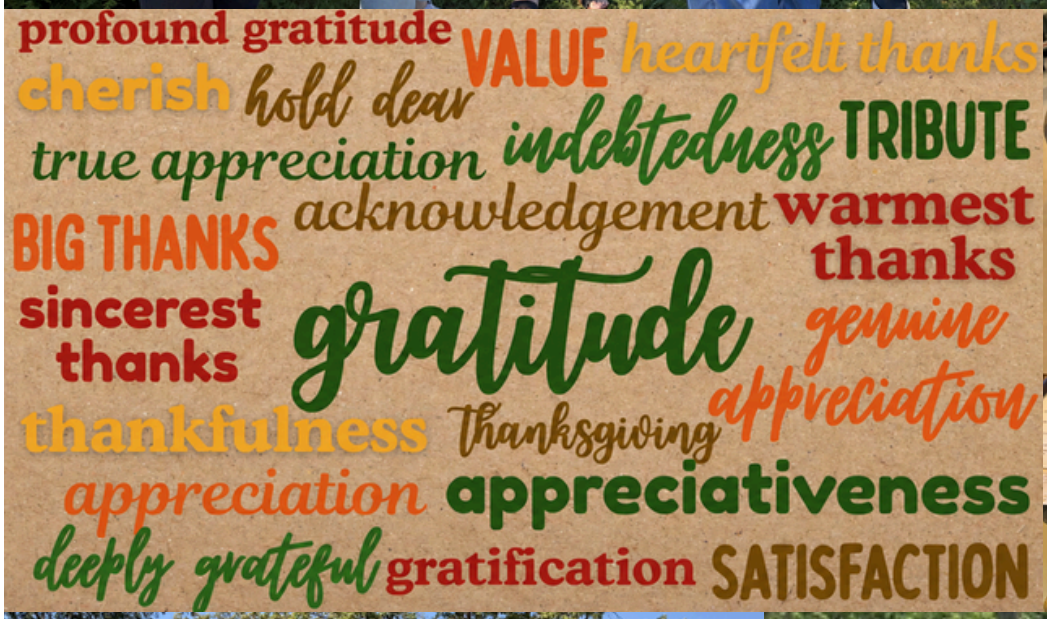
Please consider joining us. Those traveling from Iowa City leave around 7:00 or 7:30 a.m., returning by 10:30 a.m. If you are interested, please contact David McCartney at dfmcc@yahoo.com.

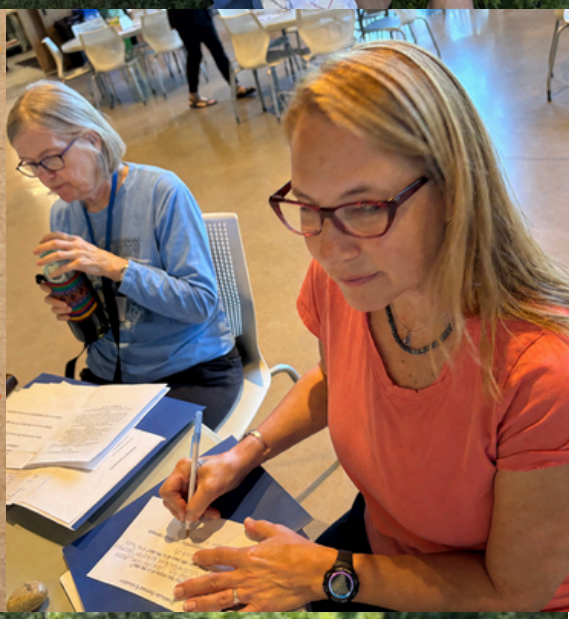
The ICE facility is located off 33rd Ave SW at 3351 Square D Drive SW, in Cedar Rapids. The facility is behind the Elks Lodge; parking is just to the west of the Lodge.

FALL RETREAT

The day of our retreat was beautiful in so many ways. The sky was sunny and warm, filling the space with light and creating a perfect setting for walking the labyrinth and paths. Most beautiful of all were the connections we shared with one another—sharing experiences, hopes, and stories inspired by Grateful, scripture, song, and art.The photographs capturing our time together are a treasured reminder of this special day and the moments we shared. With gratitude to everyone who participated and helped make the day so meaningful,

Rebecca & Marsha





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY RAY MUSTON & REBECCA WEATHERFORD

PROGRESSIVE DINNER

PROGRESSIVE DINNER FUN—SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17—Great weather, great food, and great company made this year's Progressive Dinner a wonderful time for all. Thanks to Membership Board members Sue Dayton, Randee Fieselmann, Marsha Lowe, Martha Ann Crawford, Marcy Kuechenmeister, Dean Logan, Sheila McKenna, Joyce Myer, and Pam Willard for planning and organizing this delightful event. Thanks as well to those who hosted: Linda and Ray Muston and Bill Dickinson (appetizers), Steve and Sue Wolken (dessert), and Rebecca Weatherford, Donna Hirst, Randee and John Fieselmann, John and Sharyn Reitz, Chuck and Sue Dayton, and Rick and Phyllis Ruppert (dinner). Also thanks to those who provided transportation: Marcy Kuchenmeister, Kevin and Tina Koepnick, Sam Bierman, Amy Lewis, Rebecca Weatherford, Linda and Ray Muston, and Bea Hicks.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHUCK & SUE DAYTON

MISSION BOARD:
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS THAT STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY

Through our Mission Board, Congregational UCC supports two significant organizations in the life of our community. Both recently released annual reports and the information is motivating.

The Dream Center

The Dream Center, founded by Fred Newell in 2012, opened its new 12,000-square-foot facility in 2025. The center provides youth development, family engagement, and workforce opportunities, particularly for those facing barriers to success.

Served more than **400 youth** and **125 entrepreneurs**

Hosted **90 events,** including STEM programs, summer camps, workshops, and community service projects.

With expenditures of **$513,692,** the center ended the fiscal year with a modest surplus.

CommUnity

CommUnity envisions a community where everyone can live with stability, dignity, and opportunity. Its programs include the Food Pantry, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, GuideLink Center, and Healing Prairie Farm.

The Food Pantry distributed nearly **2 million pounds** of food to **18,320 individuals.**

Rent and utility assistance was provided **464 times,** and **76 families secured housing.**

The crisis lifeline handled **11,962 Iowa contacts,** including **571 active safety interventions,** most of which did not require law enforcement.

Healing Prairie Farm provided **1,315 nights** of safe shelter for youth in crisis, whose average age was just **15.**

CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR
Nametags help newer members and friends trying to put names and faces together. And—admit it—they help long-timers know who the new people are as well. They are available on the board outside of the sanctuary. Please wear them. And if you'd like one, please contact the church office.

GENTLE YOGA meets every Tuesday at 11 AM! This 45-minute class is appropriate for beginners, experienced or anyone wishing to focus on body awareness, increased mobility, and relaxation. The $10 suggested donation goes entirely to the Immigrant Welcome Network. We are pleased to announce we sent this year's first six months of donations totaling $1045! Thank you to all who participated. If you'd like to join us, call the office to register.

USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES—There are still some opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING?
This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.

SENDING USED MEDICINE BOTTLES TO AFRICA FOR REUSE IN CLINICS—IMPORTANT REQUEST

1. Please donate only orange bottles; other colors should be recycled. Caps can be any color.
2. Bottles must have labels and all adhesive removed. Sticky bottles or bottles with residue should be recycled. I can't use them. If this is difficult for you, consider finding a partner who can help you prep the bottles.
3. Bottles should be washed in warm, soapy water. We don't want to inflict harm on individuals who could come into contact with foreign medicine.

100 Grannies, a local environmental activist group, is sending used plastic medicine bottles to Africa to assist clinics in distributing medication. Donna Hirst is in charge of this project and would be pleased to have participation from members of our congregation. For more information contact donna-hirst@uiowa.edu. She will pick up bottles on Sundays. Thank you for your assistance.

THE CHURCH LIBRARY may be interested in your donated magazines. If you subscribe to a Christian or general interest periodical and would like to give them to the church, please talk to Libby Conley on a Sunday before you bring your donation..

WANT TO GIVE ONLINE?
Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

November 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Church School for Children& Adult 9:15 am Worship 10:15 All Saints Jazz Communion AWE 11:15 Choir 11:15 Coffee After Youth Group 5:00 pm-6:30 pm	2	3 Yoga 11 am CE 6pm Mission 7pm Stewardship 7:00 PM	4	5 Prairie Piffari 6:30 PM	6	7
8 Choir 9:00 am Church School for Children& Adult 9:15 am Worship 10:15 Coffee After AWE 11:15 am Youth Group 5:00 pm-6:30 pm	9	10 Yoga 11:00 am	11 Staff Meeting 11:00 AM	12 Prairie Piffari 6:30 PM	13	14
15 Choir 9:00 am Church School for Children& Adult 9:15 am Worship 10:15 Coffee After AWE 11:15 am Youth Group 5:00 pm-6:30 pm	16	17 Yoga 11:00 am Membership 5:30 pm Diaconate 7:00 pm Trustees 7:00 pm	18	19 Women's Lunch@ Big Grove 11:45 am Prairie Piffari 6:30 PM	20	21 Men's Breakfast 8 AM
22 Choir 9:00 am Church School for Children& Adult 9:15 am Worship 10:15 Coffee After AWE 11:15 am Youth Group 5:00 pm-6:30 pm	23	24 Yoga 11:00 am	25 Staff Meeting 11:00 AM	26 Church Office Closed in Observance of Thanksgiving	27 Church Office Closed in Observance of Thanksgiving	28
29 Choir 9:00 am Church School Adult 9:15 am Worship 10:15 1st Sunday of Advent Communion Coffee After Youth Group 5:00 pm-6:30 pm	30	27 Yoga 11:00 am	28	29 Prairie Piffari 6:30 PM	30 Serving at Free Lunch Program	DEACONS OF THE MONTH: Alfrieta Monagan & Diane Dahl-McCoy

HAPPY Birthday

11/1 Frank Zlatnik
11/7 Scott Hansche
11/8 John Fuller
11/10 Michael Seidl
11/11 Jeanna Otto & Stephanie Frazee
11/13 Amy Lewis
11/20 Marcia Kuechenmeister
11/26 Carson Fixmer
11/27 Caroline Tolbert & Mark Hovey
11/29 Hayden Beerends & Kevin Richards

2026 CHURCH CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2026

Deacons of the Month—Alfrieta Monagan & Diane Dahl-McCoy

1 All Saints Sunday—Jazz Service
Communion
Neighbors in Need Offering
Deacons change paraments to green after worship

9 Hope Lodge

22 Thanksgiving Sunday
Alternative Giving
Last Sunday of the Church Liturgical Year
Deacons change paraments to blue after worship

26 Thanksgiving—Church Office Closed

27 Church Office Closed

29 First Sunday of Advent
Communion

30 Serving at Free Lunch Program

DECEMBER 2026

Deacon of the Month—By Committee

6 Second Sunday of Advent
Special Music Sunday
Advent Luncheon

13 Children's Pageant
Alternative Giving

20 Fourth Sunday in Advent
Deacons change paraments to white after worship
Deacons set up crèche

24 (Thursday) Christmas Eve Worship at 5:30
Christmas Fund Offering

25 & 28 Church Office Closed (Friday and Monday)

27 First Sunday after Christmas
Christmas candle only in the Advent wreath (light before worship)
After worship on 12/28, deacons move crèche to upper narthex and reset the altar

Have an announcement, event, or update to share? Please submit your items for the December Newsletter by November 20th. Thank you for helping keep our community informed and connected!

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 North Clinton Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52245-1700

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

November 2026 NEWSLETTER

CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.uccic.org

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Choir Director	Dr. David Puderbaugh	davidjpuderbaugh@gmail.com
Organist	Bill Crouch	Contact the Office
Children's Choir Director	Rachel Burchett	rburchett.mtbc@gmail.com
Office Manager	Nancy LeaVesseur	uccicadmin@uccic.org
Financial Manager	Sharyn Huriaux Reitz	sharynreitz@gmail.com
Sexton	Douglas Herrera	Contact the Office
Custodian	Claudia Landaverde	Contact the Office

For up to date announcements, check us out on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/UCCofIC