

Words of Service June and July
Algona First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Sunday Worship 10 am
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FROM THE FRONT PORCH

I have a confession to make.....I haven't read the Bible. Okay, that was to get your attention. But it is partially true. Allow me to clarify. I have not read the entire Bible. You know, cover to cover, front to back. Why? I guess I just hadn't felt motivated to do so. I have read parts of it, of course. The parts included in the Revised Common Lectionary, the three year cycle of suggested readings that many pastors (including me, with occasional exceptions) use for preaching, and sections for the occasional Bible study, but it just didn't seem that high on my list of things to do to read the whole thing.

That changed several years ago when I led a Sunday morning adult class in a study of the minor prophets, which required me, as part of my preparation, to read each of those Hebrew scriptures in their entirety. Then I read Marcus Borg's book "Evolution of the Word" which presents the books of the New Testament in the chronological order they were written rather than in the order we find them in the Bible. Each chapter opened with commentary, followed by the book featured in that chapter. When I had finished Borg's book, I had read the entire New Testament. Since I had now read all of the minor prophets and the New Testament, why not read the rest of the Bible? With some prodding from the Holy Spirit, I decided the time had come.

Lent was approaching, so I chose as my spiritual discipline for the season, reading a chapter a day beginning with the Psalms until I had read the remaining books and thus completed a reading of the entire Bible. That was two years and 94 days ago. At the time I write this article, I have just read the 10th chapter of the book of Job. By my calculation, I will finish reading the Bible on June 28th.

Am I glad I did this? Yes. Have I changed my mind about the importance of reading the entire Bible? Yes! Only a complete reading can give one the scope, breadth, and depth of scripture. Only

through a complete reading can one realize the diverse understandings, our ancestors in faith had about God and the common ones as well. The late pastor William Sloane Coffin pointed out that "As we grow older, our understanding of the Bible evolves." Reading the entire Bible, I believe, plays a significant role in that evolution.

I found the scriptures that are foundational to our faith to be rich, surprising, shocking, boring, challenging, controversial, conversational, and worthy of our attention. They have affirmed some of what I believe, called some things into question, and caused in me a desire to continue to know more about our faith and the God who is at the center of it.

Once I've completed my reading, will I do it again? I think so. I'll most likely take a break to digest and discern all that I have encountered in its pages, but it has been my experience that when one reads something a second time one always notices things that were missed the first time around or see things differently from the first read. I read the New Revised Standard Version this time. Next time I think I'll read a different translation.

Maybe you've already read our Bible in its entirety. Maybe more than once. If so, good for you. If you haven't, give it a try. After all, reading the Bible is part of our faith. May it be part of yours too!

Pastor Chris

APRIL-MAY BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

April

No April Board Meeting

May

- New redesigned bookmarks were printed, picked up and distributed to Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center.
- The Steinway piano that was in the chapel has been removed.
- Easter Lilies were taken to two of our church members who reside at Good Sam and one who lives at home.
- Chapel roof gutter has been repaired.
- Our church will host a Nativity display for Founder's Day again this year on July 7th from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.
- Last day of Sunday school will be May 21. It will resume on September 10th.
- June 11th there will be an outdoor movie and supper here at the church at 6:00. Rain date is same time on June 25th.
- Seven members of the Iowa conference UCC RAGBRAI team will be staying with Pastor Chris and Pam when they are in Algona. Beds for five more riders are still needed. Another group will be staying in our education wing that night.
- A 7x7 projection screen has been purchased. Delivery is expected soon.
- Problems with the sound system have been checked out. Adjustments have been made and if the issue persists it was approved to purchase a new wireless microphone and receiver. Cost would be approximately \$800. Pastor Chris will take care of this if needed.
- June 11th will be recognition Sunday for Mahana Scholarship Recipients. The Algona High School Scholarship Committee will begin selecting the applicants with input from our Awards Committee next year. Our Church will continue to manage the Mahana Funds.

***Complete minutes of the Board meetings are available in the church office.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Account balances as of April 20, 2017

Checking \$691.34

Savings \$9,576.15

MISSIONS- WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Today as Julie was requesting news articles for this newsletter I felt motivated to speak of what missions has meant in my life. So I offer the following.

Frequently we think of Missions as assisting another far away place in times of need. Also, our church embraces thinking of local needs such as the food pantry, ministerial support and the like. The past three years I have had an additional thought. Maybe missions is as much about personal transformation. That has certainly been my reality.

We all experience personal transformation in unique ways. Some relate throughout life to serve others. Many come to an awareness of helping others less fortunate as we succeed. These are wonderful revelations. However this article is more about self-disclosure both past and present. As long as I can remember, I have always wanted to experience God personally. Through times of prayer and meditation, I have experienced a closeness profound for me.

Many of you know, my life has been yet again been enlightened with a brief exposure to God through the Indian ways. This opportunity has forever changed my approach with life, my strength in belief, and my dedication to pray for others. For me, mission work begins with such an experience. To acknowledge God and all His greatness for us. My life has been enriched beyond belief. Each morning I thank God for another day of life. Experiencing all the love life gives and the beauty of nature.

You see for me I believe to truly be a mission for Christ, one needs to experience transformation individually which then catapults us to do God's

work. So I invite each of us to become open to God's rich love to transform us individually so we may experience and serve others through our Church's mission. God bless us all.

Thoughtfully, Phil

SEEKERS

October 31, 2017 will be the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We will celebrate that significant event in the life of the church during worship on Sunday, October 29th. At a recent meeting the Seekers class decided to begin the new Sunday school year on September 10th exploring the Reformation with a four session study using "A Study Guide for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation" written by several members of The Still-speaking Writers Group. Everyone is invited to be a part of this discussion. If you would like to preview the study guide, a copy is available for you to borrow and explore. Just stop by the office and pick it up. More information will be available in the August/ September issue of the newsletter and in the Week Ahead Door Posting.

GRADUATE

Congratulations to Nicole Montgomery! Nicole graduated on May from Northwestern College in Orange City with a degree in . She has accepted a position with the MOC Floyd Valley School District and will be teaching 10th grade . Way to go Nicole! God's blessings and our best wishes!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian Education met the end of April. The last day of Sunday School will be celebrated on May 21. We will begin again on September 10th in the Fall.

We are planning an Outdoor Family Movie Night on June 11 with a rain date on June 25th. Before the movie we will be having a grill/cookout with popcorn and ice cream. Please come and join us. More details will follow in the Week Ahead..

CHRISTMAS IN JULY 2017

Third annual Christmas in July event Friday afternoon July 7 from 3-6 pm. Members of the First Congregational UCC invite the community to view a display of Nativities from here and around the world. These have been collected by members of the congregation, friends and family. There are

simple homemade sets, and purchased sets, both elegant and simple from various times and places. Each portrays the Christmas gift as interpreted by different individuals and cultures. The display will be in the church parlor so you can also enjoy the beautiful architecture of the 130 year old sanctuary and the beauty of the stained glass windows. The facility is air conditioned so regardless of the weather it will be comfortable inside. In addition, there will be root beer floats on the lawn. Stop by, sit and visit for a spell. The church is located on the corner of McGregor and Moore Streets.

Mahana Scholarship Recipients The Class of 2017

Jeff Buchanan	Megan Eden
Addy Foertsch	Amanda Hentges
Joseph Ingalls	Faith Kahler
Cameron Kaltschnee	Ciera Klein
Morgan Lanndorf	Amber Lenz
Trevor Loeschen	Alyssa Mechler
Madison Miller	Khusbu Patel
Austin Petersen	Michaela Priebe
Ryan Reebenacker	Hannah Reno
Shelbi Schadendorf	Xue (Diana) Wang
Chandler Wilhelmi	Kala Zwiefel
Keagan Zwiefel	Mallory Zwiefel

PICTURES

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes

