

The Sunday School teacher said to the class: “According to the gospel, the love of money is the root of all evil.” One student responded: “Well, it’s not that I love money, I just love the things money can buy.”

Pastor Kenneth L. Samuel makes this observation: “What we love says a lot about who we are. And since we usually spend our money on the things we love, our financial statements are really statements of disclosure. They reveal our true priorities, our true values, our true delights.

Talk is cheap, we can say that we are committed to being healthy through a healthy diet and exercise, but if we are spending more on junk food and alcohol than on vegetables and exercise, we know what has really taken place in our hearts.

We can say that we love the church and are committed to the vitality and sustainability of its mission, but if our financial contributions to the church do not reflect the substantive consistency of God’s faithfulness in our lives, we know what the priorities of our hearts really are.”

I love the Church and I love what our church is doing to communicate the good news of God’s love to all people. In the past year: We voted to become an open and affirming congregation, announcing to our community and the world that everyone, persons of every gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and ability, age, race, nationality, economic and social status, faith background, marital standing and family structure are welcome here. We have reached out to the community of Algona, hosting a February organ concert. We are working with Oak Crest and Lentz Funeral homes, offer our facilities to families who don’t have church home, a place to gather for a meal after the memorial service. We erected and dedicated a Peace Pole, inviting the community to be a part of that dedication and proclaiming our call as Christians to advocate and work for peace in the world. We have expanded our educational mission to include a mid-week faith exploration class. We continue to gather for fun and fellowship, love, care, and support one another inside and outside of the church. We actively support local missions such as the CARE Team and Meals on Wheels. Our church participates in the Algona Ministerial Association, hosted the annual CROP Walk, a day of the Week of Prayer For Christian Unity, World Day of Prayer, Community Thanksgiving and Good Friday worship services, and other ecumenical events. Just last week we went Halloween Caroling to shut-ins and our care centers and are nearing the completion of the installation of a handicapped accessible restroom. All of these ministries are in some way supported by your generous support.

Looking ahead, on December 20th we will host a community concert by classical guitarist Peter Fletcher and preliminary plans in the works for a discussion series that will explore the diversity of faiths in the world I which we live. As we move forward into 2016 we will continue with the ministries that originate here and be in partnership with other denominations and community groups to address the needs of our congregation and community, always be looking for and open to new ways to minister in our setting.

It’s stewardship time again in 1st Congregational UCC just as it is in many other churches this time of year. That is the reason for this letter and the pledge card that accompanies it. As you decided what you will give to the ministry of our congregation, I invite you to think about what it is that you love and how you express that love. Consider it prayerfully. There is a lot of good ministry happening here and, I believe, much more to come! Be a part of it! Give joyfully and generously to the work God has for us to do.

Pastor Chris