



# Congregational Communicator

Volume 5, Issue 3

March 2025

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Church News
- Easter Celebrations
- Lenten Lunches & Worship
- Youth Pictures
- NAPF/HOPE
- Next Step/Mission Trip
- Tith.ly Giving

## “NOTES FROM THE PASTOR”

As I sit waiting for my preoperative consult at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, I thought about the long road of recovery ahead of me. I reflected on the fact that this is not my first rodeo, and looking back at where I have been, to where God has brought me, this will just be another obstacle on my path. I was reminded that our life is a journey of waiting, preparing, and pursuing the journey ahead.

I am somewhat a perfectionist, my own enemy at times, and a person who, when I set my mind to something, will do whatever it takes to succeed. When I started my PhD, (which was initially not my first choice as I had begun another track, until the Lord intervened and rerouted me), I was excited and nervous for what was to come. I compared it to climbing a mountain. A mountaineer has to prepare properly before their climb, and for me it was a similar scenario, encompassing lots of preparation, before starting the research journey. Just as a mountaineer prepares their body and mind for the climb, so do researchers as they prepare for their PhD coursework; figuring out what type of research they will do, the methods they will use, and how they will go about it. Then the dissertation journey begins. The next step for a mountaineer is ensuring that all their equipment is ready to be used, and is in working order, followed by the final step... The actual climb, beginning with the ascent. Nothing is better for a mountaineer once they have reached their halfway mark and start their descent with the end goal in sight.

In the same way, to pursue one's PhD, a person needs to prepare their mind for the road ahead. A clear mind, healthy body, and suffi-

cient workspace with minimal unnecessary distractions is needed. If the mind is not clear and ready for the journey ahead, the researcher will be unprepared for the challenges they will face at some stage, which could ultimately lead to failure. Pursuing a PhD is a challenge on its own, and when a researcher works full time while pursuing it, additional challenges are brought to the forefront.

Eventually we are ready for the climb, taking slow and steady steps as we embark on the journey. There are times I wondered when it will end, believe me, I questioned myself, “why?” But when I reflected on the fact that the Lord is the one who brought me on this journey, my mind was at ease as I consoled myself with the fact that He would see me through it.

Each step is a step closer to the end and each small step is progress. Excitement kicked in once I had completed my core classes and had set my mind on my research topic, which had been approved by the Institutional Review Board. There was no going back. Unlike other courses that have their respective professors, research encompasses many moving parts, with many parts that have to be approved before moving forward. It is time-consuming, tedious, and the researcher is at the mercy of their study participants. The process can sometimes become quite frustrating, as is anything where human subjects are concerned. What may initially seem to fit the study criteria may have one component that doesn't fit, and there is no place for deviations, but rather to move on to the next potential study participants and site. But in the end, it is worthwhile. I have made it, bag-

gage and all, and have descended the mountain. My perseverance has paid off, and I look forward to my commencement ceremony in May 2025.

I was reminded of Hebrews 10:36: “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of GOD, you will receive what He has promised.” As difficult as it is to endure and practice patience, Christians are expected to effectively do God's will and receive the promises He has made for us. When considering the Greek word for endurance (hupomones), as it is used in this text, Paul was telling the believers who were suffering for their faith in Jesus that no matter what the circumstances are, and how under pressure they may be, they should persevere.

It is so easy to give up when the going gets tough, but knowing that when God ordains our path, He does so for a reason—reasons we may not always understand. However, one thing we can be assured of is that God doesn't do anything in vain.

I questioned why God put me on this PhD journey, and all I know is it is for a reason that He only knows. I have obeyed, and I was persistent and persevered. I thank Him daily for the people He placed in my path, both at school and of course my Congo family who rock, and all who have supported me throughout this journey. Now the race has been won, and all praise goes to GOD. Let's celebrate our mighty God together for all He has done for us.

Pastor Shazzy



## CHURCH NEWS

### HOSPITALIZATIONS/SURGERIES, TESTING...

- Denny Phillips had knee replacement surgery the beginning of February.
- Pastor Shazzy had ankle surgery on February 19th.

### THANK YOU...

- Dear Church Family,  
Thank you for the Valentine carnation and candy. It's always nice to be remembered.  
- Warmly, Dean Saunders
- To my church family and friends,  
Thank you for all the birthday cards on my 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. I am blessed to call you family and friends "God is Great". Again Thank You!  
- Mary Kay Zinn
- Thank you to all my wonderful friends for the thoughts, prayers, flowers, food, cards, texts, and phone calls. All have been greatly appreciated. Also thanks to Women's Fellowship for the carnation. I appreciate all this caring!  
- Sandi Nielsen
- Thank you so very much for all the Christmas gifts. The robe, vest, stamps, candles, and gift card. I especially enjoyed the pictures and treats from the kids. Robe and vest fit perfect! I so appreciate everything you gave me. It is very kind and generous of you. When you live alone it really helps brighten the holidays. Thanks again.  
- Sincerely, Sue  
*Adopt-A-Family recipient*

### CONDOLENCES...

- To the family and friends of Mary Kay Zinn who passed away on February 20th at the age of 99.

### CONGRATULATION...

- Well done to the youth in our church who were part of the Tiger Jazz Ensemble. They placed 3rd at the NWIBA Jazz Contest and received an at large bid for the Iowa Jazz Champi-

onships. Molly Moser was selected as an Outstanding Soloist for her flugelhorn feature.

- Congratulations to Don Hemphill on his retirement!

### OUTREACH MINISTRY...

- Have you tracked your Christmas Child Shoebox yet? It would be fun to track where some of the boxes went from our town of Spencer, Iowa all the way around the world! God helped us provide the opportunity for 491 children to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Spencer! Our area, which includes Northwest Iowa, increased the giving of shoeboxes up 24%! I think that is amazing considering all the flood issues a lot of families and churches had. The total shoeboxes that were packed this year were 11,927,439! That is 11 million, nine hundred twenty-seven thousand, four hundred thirty-nine boxes! WOW! Let me know if you have tracked your box and where it landed. In the meantime, if you happen to see specials on toys, washcloths, t-shirts please grab a few and save them for our packing party's next fall. Thanks, First Congo Church Family for being the hands and feet of Christ!

- Kathy, *Operation Christmas Child Chair*

### CHURCH NEEDS...

- The church is in need of a couple wheelchairs and a sit down walker. The ones we had were never returned after they were used while we served as a safe haven for flood victims. They went with the folks when they left the church and were never returned. I'm sure they had lost their own and were needed and much appreciated.



### CLOSED CAPTIONING TIPS

We have had some questions about closed captions on our Live Stream Worship on YouTube. YES, you can turn on the captions! You must go to your settings on your live stream and enable them.

## CONGO CACKLES



## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### CONGO NIGHT OUT



Food Fellowship Fun

Tuesday, March 4th

**COUNTRY CLUB**

**5:30 - 7 p.m.**

*Dutch Treat*



MAYFLOWER CIRCLE  
will meet at  
Family Table at 9:30 a.m.

**Thurs., March 6th**

ALL WOMEN OF THE CHURCH  
ARE INVITED.



**LifeServe Blood Center** is a non-profit organization that provides blood and blood products to hospitals across Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota. They will be using our church on the first and third Mondays of the month.

**March 3 • 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**March 17 • 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.**

JOIN US FOR OUR  
**Palm Sunday**



MEAL AFTER WOSHIP

SUN., APRIL 13TH  
11:30 - 12:30

*Ham, Cheesy Hashbrowns,  
Vegetable, Roll, Dessert  
Free Will Offering*



**TUESDAY MORNING • 10:00 a.m.**

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT • 7:00 p.m.**



7:00 a.m. - Sunrise Service  
@ Gary's on the River

8 a.m. - 10 a.m.  
Easter Breakfast  
*in Fellowship Hall*

9:45 a.m. - Easter Egg Hunt  
*In the church court yard*

10:30 a.m. - Easter Worship



## LENTEN LUNCHES AND EASTER SERVICES



Join us for services during the Lenten Season!

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You're invited to join us for Lenten Lunch and Worship every Wednesday during the season of Lent!

Lunch will be served at 11:30 with worship service following.

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**March 12th:**

Faith Lutheran Church

**March 19th:**

First Congregational Church

**March 26th:**

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

**April 2nd:**

First Baptist Church

**April 9th:**

Faith Pentecostal Church

**April 16th:**

Hope Church

**MARCH 5TH:**

Ash Wednesday  
5:30 p.m.

**APRIL 13TH:**

Palm Sunday  
*with meal to follow*

**APRIL 17TH:**

Maundy Thursday  
5:30 p.m.

**APRIL 18TH:**

Good Friday  
5:30 p.m.

**APRIL 20TH:**

Easter Sunrise Service at Gary's on the River  
7:00 a.m.

Easter Worship at FCC  
10:30 a.m.

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## CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

NOTES FROM  
**Katie!**

We had over 30 kids attend Parents Night Out!  
We made \$300 towards the kitchen remodel in the basement.  
Thank you to Matt Baltes for cooking the food for Kids Night Out and to Amy Simpson and Brea Schmidt for providing snacks and drinks.



### PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP SCHEDULE:

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

6:00 - 6:30 - Middle School devotion time

6:30 - 7:30 - High School/Middle School dinner, mentorship moment and game/activity time

7:30 - 8:00 - High School devotion time



## MISSIONS



### UPCOMING MISSION TRIP WITH NEXT STEP MILWAUKEE, WI – JULY 27- AUGUST 1

#### WHAT IS THIS MISSION EXPERIENCE ABOUT?

During your time in Milwaukee, you may have the opportunity to work on block beautification and home repair projects, or serve at local gardens and food pantries. But at the end of the week, you can know that your understanding of the city, as well as growth in and understanding of prayer will have taken place. Relationships will have formed. Projects will have been completed. And the love of Christ will be made known.

#### COST PER PERSON: \$449

INCLUDES MEALS AND ACCOMMODATION.

First Congo has secured funding and credited it towards a mission trip, and depending on the number of participants, we will have a fundraiser to raise the additional funds needed. Sign up asap! A deposit of \$50 will be required to secure your spot.

If this is something you'd be interested in, please contact the church. **The deadline to sign up and pay a \$50 deposit is MARCH 10TH.** We can add additional people after this date, but will not be able to remove anyone. We ask that you be very thoughtful that you can commit and attend the mission trip so that we do not lose money; currently we are at 7 and can take up to 15.

## SAVE THE DATES!

NAPF/HOPE ~ JUNE 22 - 27 (*Exact date TBD*)

#### NAPF

NAPF is for youth who are entering 9th through 12th grade. NAPF allows teens to meet and bond with other Christians from throughout the country and to share their faith in a fun-filled atmosphere. Small groups are led by dedicated adult counselors, many of whom volunteer and use vacation time to attend. In conjunction with tremendous worship music, worship times may be led by members of the Commission on Youth Ministries or other adult leaders. Local church youth groups are also asked to prepare and lead morning and evening devotionals. Opportunities to express faith through acts of service are always a highlight of the conference. Any time a group of young people is gathered, there is always plenty of fun!

#### HOPE

HOPE offers young adults post high school through age 26 a great opportunity to further grow in faith with peers in an environment similar to NAPF. While still including worship, speakers, small group time, and mission work, HOPE promotes closer connection with peers and deeper discussion about faith through peer-led small groups. The experiences and perspectives that each person brings to their small group are valued and can enrich discussions about faith in remarkable ways. In addition, HOPE provides more opportunities for leadership involvement through prayer team, small group leader, or CYM (Commission on Youth Ministries) representative positions. HOPE creates a genuine, meaningful, and fun atmosphere to grow in faith while creating new friendships!

#### NAPF and HOPE Scholarships

Scholarships have been made available through various funds to assist in reducing the cost of registration to the annual youth conference. Scholarships will be awarded according to available funds and can be used to cover part or all of the registration fee to attend the meeting. Various scholarships include the Lynn Merkel & Joanne Simpson NAPF/HOPE Scholarship. This scholarship was created in 2018 and named to honor the tireless work and the many years of leadership these two individuals gave to the youth ministry of the NACCC. Scholarships assist anyone wishing to attend a NAPF/HOPE conference and event, who has financial need and has shown outstanding development in any or all of the following areas: Christian character, Participation in local church youth programs, Community service. Scholarship applications are available to all who are affiliated with a church that maintains membership in the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.





## UDMO Donations Challenge MARCH: Cereal & Oatmeal

Any food or hygiene donations can be delivered here to the church in our blue barrel by the office, or taken directly to Upper Des Moines.

## ONLINE GIVING WITH TITHE.LY



### Do You Give With Cash or Check?

We strongly encourage you to switch to digital giving! Online giving with Tithe.ly makes it fast and simple to donate, and also reduces the amount of administrative labor we need to process gifts in cash or with a check.



Scan this QR code with your smart phone camera, click the yellow link that will pop up, it will take you to our online giving webpage.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email or call the office, we'd be happy to assist you further.

## REMEMBERING OUR MILITARY

Evan Ball  
4120 Van Buren Avenue  
Sutherland, IA 51058  
(grandson of Jackie Ball)

Brandon Black  
1804 Division Rd., Apt #110  
Great Falls, MT 59404  
Bradon.black85@yahoo.com  
(son of Jon & Lori Black)

LTC Mark Ivey  
21326 Thimbleweed Ct.  
Ashburn, VA 20147  
(husband of Cara  
Wilkerson-Ivey)

Nathan Jones  
29 E. Campus Drive  
Campus Center 116  
Bluffton, SC 29909  
(son of Deb Jepson)

Major Kathryn Polking  
949 MDVSS  
APO, AE 09366  
(sister-in-law of Alison Munter)

Lt. COM Patrick Sullivan  
5850 Kyiv Place, Box #176  
Dulles, VA 20189-5850  
(grandson of the late LaVonne  
Peterson)

SGT Daniel Wilkerson  
616 Willow St W, Unit 2  
Harrisburg, SD 57032  
(son of Rick & Barb Wilkerson)



**SEND A CARD, NOTE OR  
CARE PACKAGE  
TO OUR DEDICATED  
SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN.**





WHEN?

Sundays!

WHAT TIME?

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

WHO?

Children in 5th grade and under!

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Adult Education classes are at 9:00 a.m.



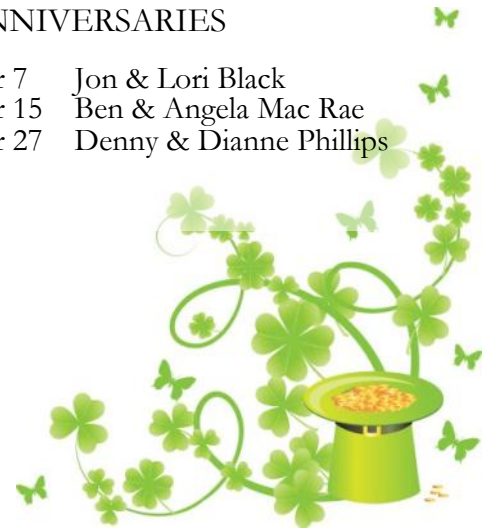
BIRTHDAYS

- Mar 1 Nyle Dotson
- Mar 2 Heather Whittenburg
- Mar 3 Linda Littlefield
- Mar 6 Claire Koeneke
- Mar 7 Jay Muggle
- Mar 8 Rodney Soma
- Mar 10 Robbie Gerlock
- Carly Larson
- Mar 19 Don Hemphill
- Mar 20 Bob Rose
- Mar 21 Denny Price
- Louie Schmidt
- Steve Sundblad
- Mar 23 Helen Castenson
- Al Van Buren
- Mar 26 Maisy Schmidt
- Mar 28 Emma Fassbender

- Mar 29 Pam Trosin
- Mar 30 Shazzy Britz

ANNIVERSARIES

- Mar 7 Jon & Lori Black
- Mar 15 Ben & Angela Mac Rae
- Mar 27 Denny & Dianne Phillips



PASTOR SHAZZY

Mon - Thurs

SECRETARY

Mon - Fri

OFFICE HOURS

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

MISSION STATEMENT

The First Congregational Church of Spencer joyfully worships and praises God. Bound by our covenant, we strive to be the Body of Christ throughout the world by loving, helping and supporting our church family and others through fellowship, missions, and outreach. Our philosophy encourages all people to experience God's grace by freely thinking and building personal relationships with Christ to the glory of God.



First Congregational Church is a member of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
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712-262-4392 ~ [www.congospencer.org](http://www.congospencer.org)

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

Pastor: Pastor Sharon "Shazzy" Britz

[pastor@congospencer.org](mailto:pastor@congospencer.org)

emergency contact 864-407-9022

Church Secretary: Michelle Tullberg

[office@congospencer.org](mailto:office@congospencer.org)

Assistant Secretary: Amber Stoutenborough

[amber@congospencer.org](mailto:amber@congospencer.org)

Christian Education Coordinator: Katie Baltes

[congospencer.ed@gmail.com](mailto:congospencer.ed@gmail.com)

Organist/Accompanist/Bell Choir/Choir Director: Elina Ozolins-Leander

Building Manager: Lori Haburn



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