

# Congregational Communicator

Volume 5, Issue 10

October 2025

## “NOTES FROM THE PASTOR”

I share with you this month a part of a text God gave me when He was pursuing me, and unfortunately, I would have realized the joy of trusting in God earlier, had I taken a moment from my busy life to read the text. Instead of sharing my story, I will share one I encountered in “Christian Perspective.”

There was a girl named Brittany who loved to play her violin. She especially enjoyed practicing with her father, who would be by her side to adjust her bow or fix her form. She would spend hours playing song after song, and with her father by her side, her notes became beautiful music.

One day, Brittany’s friend asked if she would play in an upcoming event. With her father’s help, she was able to select a beautiful arrangement. Brittany realized that it proved much harder than anticipated and soon found herself practicing every spare minute of the day. She became obsessed with learning the music, but exhaustion set in, and there were days that she could hardly even concentrate on the music before her. The event drew nearer, and eventually she could not stand it anymore. Brittany burst into tears with the frustration that even with weeks of practice, she felt like it had all been a waste of time.

Preoccupied by her tears and sense of worthlessness, she eventually realized her father was in the room, empathetically telling her; “You can’t keep bearing the weight of learning those songs on your own.”

Brittany didn’t quite understand. “But, Father, I simply have to get those songs learned! And I don’t know how. Why am I struggling like this?”

“You don’t have to let those songs burden you. Let me worry about your progress and the event. I will plan your days and make sure you know whatever it is I think you need to know. And right now, I want you to take the afternoon off and go to the park with me.”

Brittany was somewhat concerned and hesitated for a moment. How could she spend a whole afternoon without practicing? That was simply absurd. Learning the songs was more important than going to the park. But Brittany trusted her father and accompanied him to the park. On the way, she felt as if a load had been taken from her. The following weeks were amazing. Her father helped her structure her days so that she intentionally engaged in other things, as well as violin practice. At first, Brittany felt things were going well, and there were days she felt she didn’t need to practice at all. But there were days when she would worry about the event and would miss out on the things her father had planned for her by refusing to put down her violin. Her father reminded her that she needed to be diligent in doing whatever he had assigned for that day. There were days they needed to sit down and practice together, working through the songs measure by measure, and she found refreshment and peace in following his plan, whatever that plan was.

There were days she wasn’t always sure of his plan, but Brittany discovered that during those times, she just needed to continue with the “next thing” before her with a willing heart, asking her father to redirect her focus if necessary. Quite often, he used people and changes in circumstances to guide her steps. Brittany found that she began appreciating and enjoying the daily unexpected surprises that used to annoy her, and she was learning that, even in the middle of the busy preparations and unexpected interruptions, each day could be a joy if she chose to sit back and trust her father.



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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Church News
- Ray’s BBQ Pics
- Blessing of Animals
- Congo Cackles
- Italian Night
- Bible Studies
- Sunday School
- Leaf Raking Fundraiser
- Grief Share
- 12 Hour Prayer Vigil
- Spencer Congo Youth
- First Responder Meal
- Ministry Appreciation Month
- Outreach Ministry

## CHURCH NEWS

### **HOSPITALIZATIONS/SURGERIES, TESTING...**

- Mary Schomaker was hospitalized again for breathing issues in September and is now recuperating at home.
- Jared Gerlock had knee surgery and is recovering nicely.
- Grace Simpson had knee surgery and is doing well.
- Lori Haburn had knee surgery in September and is now back at work, caring for our church property.

### **CONGRATULATIONS...**

- Kyle and Amber Stoutenborough welcomed home a baby girl September 18; Evelyn Mae Stoutenborough, 9 # 7 oz. 21 1/2 inches long.
- Louise Simpson was welcomed in as a new member September 21.

### **THANK YOU'S & NOTES...**

- A heartfelt thanks to everyone that attended the Barn BBQ at Ray Grandstaff's farm. The barn tour was fascinating, so much rich history and interesting stories, the nature walk was lovely, volleyball and horseshoes fun and most of all yacking with everyone. Sure appreciate the food that was provided. Well done!
- The family of Ina Faye Underwood wishes to thank everyone who honored her with a donation to St. Luke and other great causes, and also who sent flowers, notes and lovely messages on her online obituary. We do not have addresses for many of you but want you to know how much we appreciate everything.  
- Family of Ina Faye Underwood

### **SPENCER MESSIAH 2025**

- The Spencer Messiah Board would like to invite area singers of all ages to join us for rehearsals for this year's presentation of Selections from Handel's Messiah. The concert will be presented on December 7 at 7:00 pm at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Rehearsals will begin October 19 at Sacred Heart and continue each Sunday at 6:00 pm. Singers are encouraged to bring their own copies of the music. Additional copies will be available for purchase at the rehearsals. For more information visit their page on Facebook: Spencer Messiah.

## PICS FROM RAY'S BBQ



## CONGO CACKLES



**BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS**

**October 12**  
**10:30**  
**North School Park**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING



Tuesday Morning  
@ 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Night  
@ 7:00 p.m.



MAYFLOWER CIRCLE  
will meet in the  
Fireside Room on  
Thursday, October 16  
at 1 p.m.

ALL WOMAN OF THE CHURCH  
ARE INVITED.

# ADULT Sunday School

ADULT ED EACH SUNDAY  
AT 9:00 A.M.!!  
ALL ARE WELCOME!

**Chef Luigi invites you to  
Dine-in & To-go  
Italian Night  
Wednesday  
October 29, 2025  
5:00-7:00 PM**



**Home Made Lasagna  
With Garlic Breadsticks,  
Fancy Green Beans & a Cookie!**

Workers are needed for lasagna assembly on Sunday, October 26 after church and help is needed the afternoon/evening of the event October 29.

We are also in need of 80# of hamburger.

Contact the office or Vickie Montgomery if you are able to help.



**GRIEF SHARE  
SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS**  
Saturday, October 25  
10:00—1:00

**REGULAR GRIEF SHARE  
CLASSES**  
Monday Evenings  
From  
6:00-8:00  
Runs through  
December 15th



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6  
7:00 AM—7:00 PM**

Help us pray! Come to the chapel or pray from home. We invite you to sign up for a 30 minute slot during our 12 hour prayer vigil.

We welcome you to read, ponder, and pray during this time. Materials will be provided to each of you for your prayer time.

Contact the office to sign up.

## Leaf Raking Fundraiser!

Need your yard raked this fall?  
Call the church office to  
schedule the youth to come by  
on October 25th!

**FREE WILL DONATIONS**

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

## SPENCER CONGO YOUTH

### NEW HOURS

Wednesdays  
 6:00–7:00 PM – Middle School  
 7:00–8:00 PM – High School

Due to our growing group and increased costs, we will no longer be serving a weekly meal. However, donations of snacks and drinks (water, pop, Gatorade, etc.) are always appreciated and can be dropped off in the office, Katie's office, or the youth room. Thank you!

### AGAPE ACTS

Once a month, Middle & High Schoolers will meet together from 6-8pm for an Agape Act — a special night of service, food, and community. Dinner will be provided on these nights, and we may ask for donations to help support the event.

#### Upcoming Agape Acts:

October 22 – EMS Appreciation Dinner  
 (Donations needed: sides & desserts)

October 25<sup>th</sup>- 9-3pm Leaf Raking  
 Fundraiser

November 19 – Making sleeping mats for  
 the homeless @ Grace Methodist- dinner  
 provided

December 3 – Potluck & Cookie Bake for  
 Holly Jolly Market Fundraiser

## SOYG RETREATS



### Camp Okoboji- Milford, IA

March 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>  
 Spring Recharge 6th-12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 MS and HS Separate  
 \$109

Check in- Friday Between 8-9:30pm  
 Pick up Sunday 12:30



### BigStuf - Panama City Beach, FL

June 8th-12<sup>th</sup> (Leave on the 6th-back on the 14th)  
 6th-12th Grade

Large beach-camp experience, keynote speakers,  
 worship, community.  
 \$550 -Tier Registration  
 \$80 Deposit by 10/15  
 Church pays \$175



### NAPF -Springfield, MA

June 26<sup>th</sup>- July 2nd  
 HS Only

\$450 (Scholarships Available)  
 Meet other Congregationalists from around  
 the country, worship, guest speakers,  
 service project.



To attend any of the retreats, youth — and  
 any friends they invite — must participate  
 in at least 10 youth group activities before  
 March 2026.

Questions? Call Katie Baltes- 712-262-4392



*Agape Acts  
 Picking up Trash  
 at the Clay Co. Fair*



Cont. from page 1

When the event she'd worked towards for so long was finally over, Brittany felt a little lost. She set about spring cleaning the house to keep herself busy. Then she tuned her violin, played a little, and curled up in front of the television. But deep down, she felt that something was missing. She longed for the excitement and joy that filled her during those weeks leading up to the event. "I wish I knew what was next," she said to her father.

Her father smiled, "I know. You're longing for the joy you had leading up to the event. But you're looking for it in the wrong places."

Brittany looked at her father in surprise. "What do you mean?"

Her father nodded. "It wasn't the busyness of the event that brought you joy; you found joy when you surrendered and trusted me. Brittany, won't you continue to trust me to orchestrate your days? I know the plans I have for you."

A smile crept across Brittany's face as she realized she could continue living in the joy and peace of trusting her father. He knew what would come next, and that was all that mattered. There was joy in her heart again as she went about her afternoon tasks. She still didn't always know exactly what she should work on, and switching from playing the violin constantly to working on other tasks was still an adjustment. However, she slowly began to enjoy them as she worked alongside her father. She was learning that in the quiet seasons, as well as the busy ones, she could have the joy of trusting her father to orchestrate each detail.

We should learn to trust our Father, instead of relying on ourselves. He has the perfect plan for us, even if we do not know it.

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Pastor Shazzy

FOR THOSE WHO ALWAYS  
ANSWER THE CALL

## First Responders Appreciation Dinne

October 22 6:00-8:00



Burger Bar ~ Chips ~ Salads  
Desserts ~ Refreshments

Spencer Congo Youth will be coordinating a First Responders Meal in appreciation and acknowledgement for all they do for our community day in and day out. This meal is open to all first responders, their families, and our Congo family. Please call the church to RSVP! Hamburgers have been donated, if you would like to donate a salad or dessert, please contact the church office, we will need seven of each.



## October is Ministry Appreciation Month!

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. A time set aside each year to honor and give thanks for our pastors who give, care, and serve us and our communities in remarkable ways.

Thank you Pastor Shazzy and DCYM Katie Baltes for all you do for our church family and beyond!

Thank you to all who help minister the church in some way; whether through ministry teams, or outreach, we appreciate you!



## OUTREACH MINISTRY

### Pray for Operation Christmas Child Season



National Collection Week is Nov. 17-24 this year. Please pray for the upcoming season of Operation Christmas Child and pack a shoebox or maybe 2 or 3. It's all about Jesus! Each Shoebox gift is truly an opportunity to introduce a boy or girl to our Lord and Savior. In addition to the gifts in the box the children are introduced to a 12-week discipleship course called, "The Greatest Journey". Samay is an example of a boy that heard about God's love for

him and he later made a faith decision to follow Christ. Today he is an evangelist to his friends and family in their farming community. His Pastor said, "By the grace of God, not only Samay, but his Mom has also accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. Their lives have been changed!" God is working in response to the prayers of His people! As Pastor Shazzy said in her sermon last Sunday, Pray intentionally; don't just say I'm praying for this or that; Do It! "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2) We received several school supplies as a gift from Wal-Mart for our boxes, and could really use other items like toys, hygiene items, a WOW present, or anything that can fit into a shoebox. No liquids or soaps are accepted. Thank you for being a part of this mission project for First Congo!

Thanks, Kathy

### Operation Christmas Child Project Leader Workshop

On Saturday, September 20, First Congo hosted the Operation Christmas Child Project Leader Workshop. We had 52 people in attendance, from Spencer, Storm Lake, Milford, and the surrounding areas. We heard a testimony from Ella, who went to Romania to deliver shoeboxes, and the lives that were changed. Several new churches and community groups are excited to get involved in this amazing ministry, and First Congo is blessed to be a national drop-off site again this year. Last year, we packed over 200 shoeboxes at First Congo. Let's double it this year and change more lives.





## UDMO Donations Challenge OCTOBER: SHAMPOO, BODY WASH, TOOTHPASTE

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.



**Your Blood. Your Hospital. Your Neighbors.**

**LifeServe Blood Center** is a nonprofit organization that provides blood and blood products to hospitals across Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

**October 6th • 9:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.**  
**October 20th • 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.**



**ONLINE GIVING WITH  
TITHE.LY**

### Do You Give With Cash or Check?

We strongly encourage you to switch to digital giving! 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.



## REMEMBERING OUR MILITARY

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

Major Kathryn Polking  
1770 E. McKinley Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50320  
(sister-in-law of Alison Munter)

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

Lt. COM Patrick Sullivan  
3 Goodrich Rd.  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(nephew of Linda Norgaard)

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

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

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



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





WHEN?  
Sundays!  
WHAT TIME?  
9:30 a.m. - 10:25 a.m.  
WHO?  
Children in 5th grade  
and under!



**PASTOR SHAZZY**  
Mon - Thurs  
9:00 - 4:30

**KATIE BALTES**  
Mon-Wed & Fri  
9:00 - 3:30

**SECRETARY**  
Mon - Fri  
9:00 - 4:30



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



**BIRTHDAYS**

- Oct 2 Angie Fassbender  
Maggie Moser  
Etta Schmidt
- Oct 7 Dave Johnson
- Oct 8 Melissa Moser
- Oct 10 Jay Oldenkamp
- Oct 11 Dennis Taylor
- Oct 12 Beatrix Gerlock  
Susan Wedel
- Oct 13 Sally Holck
- Oct 14 Harry Whittenburg-  
Nelson
- Oct 18 Sara Van Buren
- Oct 19 Jackie Ball
- Oct 20 Jody Halverson
- Oct 22 Lori Black

- Oct 25 Cara Gerlock  
Anita Miller  
Sharon Peterson
- Oct 27 Ada Conover  
Nate Schmidt
- Oct 30 Dianne Phillips

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Oct 2 Jim & Linda Maxson
- Oct 6 Matt & Katie Baltés
- Oct 7 Josh & Alison Munter
- Oct 13 Mike & Becky Conley
- Oct 19 Jason & Sarah Ellis
- Oct 31 Rod & Helen Castenson

**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

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
1212 First Avenue West, Spencer, IA 51301

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

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES: Katie Baltés  
[dcym@congospencer.org](mailto:dcym@congospencer.org)

CHURCH SECRETARY: Michelle Tullberg  
[office@congospencer.org](mailto:office@congospencer.org)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY: Amber Stoutenborough  
[amber@congospencer.org](mailto:amber@congospencer.org)

ORGANIST/ACCOMPANIST/BELL CHOIR/CHOIR DIRECTOR: Elina Ozolins-Leander

BUILDING MANAGER: Lori Haburn