




**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
 1212 1st Ave West  
 Spencer, IA 51301  
**Church Office:** 712-262-4392  
**Pastor's Cell:** 864-407-9022  
**Email:** office@congospencer.org  
**Website:** www.congospencer.org  
**Facebook:** FirstCongregationalChurchofSpencerIA  
**YouTube:** search for "CongoSpencerIA"



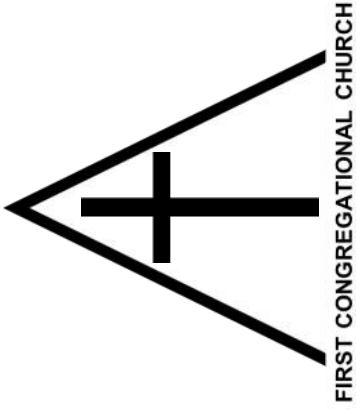
# 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 COMMUNION SUNDAY 9:00 Adult Education 9:00 Youth Sunday Practice 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	2 9:00 - 2:00 LifeServe Blood Center	3 10:00 Bible Study 5:30 - 7 Congo Night Out Sports Page 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	4 1:30 Staff Meeting 5:00 Bells 6:00 Choir 6:00 - 8:00 SCYG 7:00 Installation of Officers 7:00 Bible Study	5	6	7 9:00-1:00 Mayflower Circle Bake Sale Southpark Mall
8 YOUTH SUNDAY 9:00 Adult Education 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	9 6:00-8:00 Grief Share	10 10:00 Bible Study 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	11 1:30 Staff Meeting 5:00 Bells 6:00 Choir 6:00 - 8:00 SCYG 7:00 Bible Study	12	13 9:00-3:00 Camp Congo Kids Day Camp	14 
15 9:00 Adult Education 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	16 Office Closed for Presidents Day 1:00-6:00 LifeServe Blood Center 6:00-8:00 Grief Share	17 10:00 Bible Study 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	18 1:30 Staff Meeting 6:00 Ash Wednesday 6:00 - 8:00 SCYG 7:00 Bible Study	19 1:00 Mayflower Circle Fireside Room	20	21
22 9:00 Adult Education 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Hour 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	23 1 6:00-8:00 Grief Share	24 10:00 Bible Study 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous	25 1:30 Staff Meeting 11:30 Lenten Lunch & Service 5:00 Bells 6:00 Choir 6:00 - 8:00 SCYG 7:00 Bible Study	26	27	28
					<p align="center"><b>KEY</b>            CME = Core Ministry of Education            CMF= Core Ministry of Fellowship            CMCC=Congregational Care            CMM = Core Ministry of Missions            CMW = Core Ministry of Worship            MARS = Ministry of Assets &amp; Resources            EC=Executive Council            B/G = Building &amp; Grounds      MFC=Mayflower Circle</p>	

First Congregational Church  
1212 First Avenue West  
Spencer, IA 51301

NON PROFIT  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
SPENCER, IA  
PERMIT #149

Return Service Requested



Remember to pray for our sister churches

THIS MONTH:

Our Sister Churches of the NACCC

Community Congregational Church, Big Piney, WY  
First Congregational Church, Albany, NY

NACCC Missions

Love Worth Sharing, Haiti  
Child Voice, Newmarket, New Hampshire



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Church News	2
Congo Cackles	2
What's Happening	3
Lenten Season	4
Youth Ministries	5
Missions	6
UDMO Donations	7
Military	7
Tithe.ly	7
Birthday/Anniversary	8

SPECIAL POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- Church News
- Orientation of Officers
- Valentine Tea in Peterson
- Lenten Season
- Envelope Challenge
- Church Improvements
- Next Step/Mission Trip
- Tithely Giving



# Congregational Communicator

Volume 6, Issue 2

February 2026

## “NOTES FROM THE PASTOR”

Greetings, church family.

We haven't even fully adjusted to 2026, and February is already rolling by. As we move past the intensity of the new year and into the “deep winter” of February, it is easy to feel weary. The weather may not be pleasant, as we face the reality of snow and sub-zero temperatures, and the days may still feel short. The season of winter can seem too long and grey to bear. Yet February offers us a beautiful invitation: to focus on two things: 1) continued growth and 2) the enduring, Agape love of God.

During my life, I have experienced several long periods when I couldn't see the good things coming and wondered whether there was light at the end of the tunnel. There were times I questioned things and wondered, “How long will THIS season last?” But I was aware that God was my constant, and it would be in His time, not mine. The more I turned to God in these experiences, the more I recognized the seasons of life, and I realized that there **will** be a season of rebirth after the one that seems stagnant. I also acknowledged that just as in nature, where the buds and blooms are different each time, the buds and blooms in my life will differ from the previous times. It's a timely process that does not come without obstacles; a process that sometimes feels like having to break through hard ground. But within that process, God's goodness will be made evident.

Let me remind you that even

when we can't see things looking brighter, it doesn't mean that nothing is happening. Even though nature may be silent during the winter season, underground, trees and bulbs are being prepared to push forth in new life. The constant in all this change is that God is with us and for us, for eternity, as He showed us when He sent Jesus to earth in human form. I may not be able to provide answers for you as to why your February season is as it is. But I can do one better. I can speak to God's faithfulness, presence, and peace as I turned toward him during my hard times, and encourage you to do the same.

That leads me to the second focus point, the Agape love of God.

While the world focuses on romantic affection as Valentine's Day creeps closer, I encourage us as a church family to deepen our understanding of the sacrificial, unwavering love that God has for us and calls us to share with others. I Corinthians 13: 1-3 reminds us that without love, all our actions are just noise.

As we step into the second month of 2026, let's turn our hearts toward God's unfolding story for us, which would not be possible if it were not for His unending love for us. His mercies are new, offering fresh grace for every day. Let's choose faith over fear, intentional worship over distraction, serving our neighbors with passion, and loving the unlovable. Let's embrace God's warmth by trusting in the

God who makes all things new, even in the cold seasons of life, show kindness, and connect deeper by seeking opportunities to support one another in fellowship and prayer. Let us start a clean slate as we make way for a season of spiritual growth, a chance for new beginnings, and an opportunity to align life with God's purposes. Let me remind you that God's love and compassion are new every morning; “<sup>22</sup> Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV), and He is faithful to complete the good work He started in you as the apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 1:6 (NIV); “<sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Let me encourage you to trust that God, who keeps nature cycling through the seasons, will do the same for you. There are glimpses of new growth in process. Look to our merciful and compassionate God who promises to make all things new.

*Lord, as this new month unfolds, fill our hearts with gratitude. Let every day be a reminder of Your goodness. As the world feels cold, may our church be a beacon of warmth and love, reflecting You in all we do. May we be reminded that even though we don't see or feel growth within us, the little shoots are start-*

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Con't from page 1...

ing to take root and, in your time, will evolve. Amen.



## CHURCH NEWS

### HOSPITALIZATIONS/SURGERIES, TESTING...

- Fran Groover fell and broke her hip late December and has recently been in the Spencer Hospital. She plans to recuperate in the Ruthven Community Care Center.
- Ray Garnatz has recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer.
- Denny Van Goor (brother-in-law) of Marcie Muckey has had multiple surgeries and in the hospital in Sioux Falls.
- Judy Hemphill was treated at Mayo Clinic and is now at home.
- Angie Edington has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- David Lynn has been having health.

### THANK YOU...

- Thank you to everyone who have contributed to the 100 Envelope Challenge. Your support is greatly appreciated.  
Katie Baltes & Spencer Congo Youth

### THOUGHTS...

#### If God Had Voicemail

Have you ever wondered what would happen if God used voicemail to handle all our prayers?

Let's imagine it for a moment.

I had just finished gossiping and wanted to confess, so I got ready to pray—or

rather, to “call.” Immediately, a voice answered:

“You’ve reached the throne room of Heaven, the Prayer Department. All of our representatives are currently assisting other callers. Your call is important to us, and we want to help you. Please stay on the line, and your request will be answered in the order it was received.”

Soft music plays. Then another message comes on: “Listen carefully to the following options and press the appropriate number.

Press 1 for prayer for a loved one.  
Press 2 for prayer for your church.  
Press 3 to give thanks.  
Press 4 to confess sins.  
Press 5 for salvation.  
Press 6 for physical needs.  
To repeat this menu, press 9.”

Since I had a sin to confess, I pressed 4. Another voice responded cheerfully: “We’re so glad to help you with your confession of sins. Please select from the following options:

If you cursed, press 1.  
If you yelled at your spouse or another family member, press 2.  
If you gossiped, press 3...”

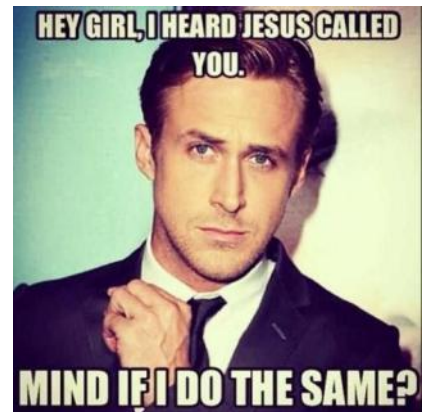
The list went on and on. About then I decided to hang up and keep on gossiping. But then I remembered what the Bible says about God and how He attends to our needs. He doesn’t route our prayers through a heavenly call center or put us on hold. We don’t get busy signals, menus or automated voices.

Instead, our Father listens instantly, personally, and lovingly. Instead of a voice mail system, He says, “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.” (Isaiah 65:24, KJV)

ChurchArtPro



## CONGO CACKLES



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## CONGO NIGHT OUT



Tuesday, February 3rd

### SPORTS PAGE

5:30 - 7 p.m.

Dutch Treat

RSVP to Office by 2-2-26



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.

February 2 • 9:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
February 16 • 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.



### ORIENTATION OF OFFICERS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH

7:00 PM

Fellowship Hall

This orientation will be for all current Core Ministry members as well as newly elected members.

You will be discussing meeting dates and times, electing a chairperson, vice chair, and secretary. There will also be discussion on what activities each CM team is working on, goals for the new year etc.



## YOU'RE INVITED

### Valentine Tea

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH  
AT 2 P.M.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
PETERSON, IOWA



Mayflower Circle will meet at Church at 1:00 a.m.

Thurs., February 19th

ALL WOMEN OF THE CHURCH ARE INVITED.



Mayflower Circle  
Bakesale Fundraiser  
Southpark Mall  
February 7 from 9-1



GRIEF SHARE  
Begins February 9—May 4  
at 6:00 pm

**YOU ARE INVITED !!!**

**UPCOMING BIBLE STUDY**

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT THE ANCIENT HIDDEN TEXTS?**

**JOIN US ON THIS EXCITING JOURNEY AS WE DIG INTO THE APOCRYPHAL WRITINGS.**

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY THEY ARE IN THE CATHOLIC BIBLE AND NOT OURS?**

**TUESDAYS AT 10 AM  
WEDNESDAY AT 7 PM**

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SPENCER  
1212 FIRST AVENUE WEST**

# LENTEN SEASON



**ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE**  
**FEBRUARY 18**  
**6:00 PM.**



**2026 Midweek Lenten Services & Light Lunch**  
**Meal begins at 11:30**  
**Free Will Donation**

**February 25**  
**Faith Lutheran Church**  
**2912 Hwy. Blvd., Spencer**

**March 4**  
**First Congregational Church**  
**1212 First Avenue West, Spencer**

**March 11**  
**Grace United Methodist Church**  
**311 Second Avenue West, Spencer**

**March 18**  
**Foundation Church**  
**1410 West 18th Street, Spencer**

**March 25**  
**Sacred Heart Catholic Church**  
**1111 Fourth Avenue, Spencer**

**April 1**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**900 Eleventh Avenue West, Spencer**



**Join us for services during the Lenten Season**

February 18:  
 Ash Wednesday  
 6:00 pm

March 29:  
 Palm Sunday  
 with meal to follow

April 2:  
 Maundy Thursday  
 6:00 pm

April 3:  
 Good Friday  
 6:00 pm

April 5:  
 Easter Sunrise Service at  
 Oneota Lodge  
 7:00 am

Easter Worship at FCC  
 10:30 am

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY



## YOUTH SUNDAY

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Come hear our talented youth (pre-k through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) perform songs, share the message, lead the Call to Worship, and guide us into a beautiful Sunday worship service beginning at 10:30 on February 8th!

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
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Practices Wednesday Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 6-8pm  
Sunday Feb 8<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00am.

## CAMP CONGO KIDS DAY CAMP

**AGES 5-10**

FEBRUARY 13<sup>TH</sup>  
9AM- 3PM \$40/KID

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
1212 1<sup>ST</sup> AVE W  
SPENCER, IA 51201

Activities:

- Arts & Crafts
- Games
- Indoor games
- Outdoor games
- Stem Stations
- Movie with Popcorn
- Lunch Provided




Scan to Register 

Thanks for supporting Spencer Congo Youth Group!

Questions? Call Katie Baltus 712-262-4392

## Support Our Youth 100 Envelope Challenge 100

\$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$10
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\$11	\$12	\$13	\$14	\$15	\$16	\$17	\$18	\$19	\$20
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\$21	\$22	\$23	\$24	\$25	\$26	\$27	\$28	\$29	\$30
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\$31	\$32	\$33	\$34	\$35	\$36	\$37	\$38	\$39	\$40
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\$41	\$42	\$43	\$44	\$45	\$46	\$47	\$48	\$49	\$50
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\$51	\$52	\$53	\$54	\$55	\$56	\$57	\$58	\$59	\$60
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\$61	\$62	\$63	\$64	\$65	\$66	\$67	\$68	\$69	\$70
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\$71	\$72	\$73	\$74	\$75	\$76	\$77	\$78	\$79	\$80
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\$81	\$82	\$83	\$84	\$85	\$86	\$87	\$88	\$89	\$90
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\$91	\$92	\$93	\$94	\$95	\$96	\$97	\$98	\$99	\$100
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\$1000 Thank you, Kellal!      \$200 Thank you, Mike Healey!

## HOW IT WORKS

Please take an envelope from the box below and fill it with the dollar amount that matches the number on the front. Once you've filled your envelope with the corresponding amount on the envelope either by check/cash or Venmo turn it in to Michelle in the church office.

Venmo: @spencercongoyouthgroup

After you give, you're invited to color in your envelope or write your name on the display to show your support!



Your generosity helps cover key trip expenses, including:

- 15-Passenger Van — \$1,500
- Gas — \$800
- Registration — \$2,500
- Emergency Fund — \$1,000
- TOTAL — \$5,800**

THANK YOU for helping our youth get to the BigStuf Retreat in Panama City Beach, Florida — June 6th-14th!

BigStuf - Panama City Beach, FL



## CHURCH IMPOROVEMENTS



**Light Bulb Replacement**



**Dead Tree Removal**



**Spencer Congo Youth Kitchen Remodel  
Thanks Jim & Vickie Montgomery**

## MISSIONS



The Mission in Cheyene River, South Dakota...

This reservation is full of rich stories, beautiful scenery, and diverse culture. But like many Native American reservations, its history is also marred by hardship and injustice — the effects of which can still be felt today. Alcoholism, drugs, unemployment, abuse, and suicide all impact family dynamics and the larger community on a daily basis.

Our desire is to humbly walk alongside the friendships we have built and faithfully support the local organizations who work day in and day out on the reservation. Although families and individuals on the reservation face many challenges, there is hope. We know that Jesus deeply cares about this community and He is empowering individuals from Cheyenne River to rise up, advocate for their community, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and love the broken. God is there, and God is working.

While every partnership and project looks different, our goal is to meet the tangible, physical needs of people living on Cheyenne River. Usually this involves teams of students and adults working on trailers and homes across the reservation. Even though our primary platform for partnership on Cheyenne River is construction-based, the heart of our ministry is relational. Students and adults will have the chance to spend meaningful time with community members and hopefully leave their trip with a better understanding of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe.

Core Ministry of Missions invites one and all to join them on this mission trip July 19—25, cost is \$509 per person.



## UDMO Donations Challenge FEBRUARY: Canned Tuna & Chicken

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)

Major Kathryn Polking  
949 MDVSS  
APO, AE 09366  
(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  
5850 Kyiv Place, Box #176  
Dulles, VA 20189-5850  
(grandson of the late LaVonne Peterson)

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. - 10:15 a.m.  
WHO?  
Children in 5th grade  
and under!



BIRTHDAYS

- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Feb 4 Sandi Nielsen        | Feb 25 Bridget Bailey         |
| Feb 5 Becky Sanders        | Makayla Black                 |
| Molly Moser                | David Robison                 |
| Feb 9 Katie Halverson      | Feb 26 Bill Green             |
| Feb 11 Bill Orrison        | Feb 27 Mindy Heiter           |
| Feb 12 Isabella Fassbender | Allison Richter               |
| Feb 16 Scott Simpson       | Feb 28 Sara Montgomery-Porter |
| Feb 18 Steve Berends       |                               |
| Andy Dietz                 |                               |
| Feb 20 Aries Chu Wang      |                               |
| Polly Nelson               |                               |
| Angie Nielsen              |                               |
| Feb 22 Curtis Swanson      |                               |
| Feb 24 Carter Johnson      |                               |
| Ray Garnatz                |                               |

ANNIVERSARIES

- Feb 15 Nyle & Lynn Dotson



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

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

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



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 [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)

Director of Children & Youth Ministries: Katie Baltès  
[dcym@congospencer.org](mailto:dcym@congospencer.org)

Organist/Accompanist/Bell Choir/Choir Director: Elina Ozolins-Leander  
Building Manager: Lori Haburn

