

The Tower

September 2022

Decorah First United Methodist Church

302 W. Broadway, PO box 221, Decorah, Iowa 52101

Email: decorah-first-umc@iaumc.net Website: decorahfirstunitedmethodist.org



By: Nancy Ruen

There is a sense of positivity bubbling up in our congregation that many of us are excited to be experiencing. It started about a year ago when our Inclusive Ministries (IM) group resumed meeting. Soon after that the decision to ask for a vote to become a reconciling congregation was made, and in December that vote showed our overwhelming support of this ministry. In January the IM group discussed the desire to make our decision visible to the community on the outside of our building. Last week this desire became a beautiful reality! Decorah First United Methodist overwhelmingly welcomes ALL to worship in our building and shares God's Abundant Love with ALL!

Dedication September 18, Sunday Morning Worship 9:00

Join us for a special celebration service on Sunday, September 18 at 9:00. We will hear about the artist's (Retired Pastor Jim Dale) explanation of his vision for the design of our welcoming sign. Following the regular morning worship service, we will gather outside around the beautiful creation to prayerfully dedicate this symbol of our congregation's commitment to be a welcoming and inclusive church. Please make a special effort to join in the dedication and celebration. We will then continue the celebration with coffee fellowship.





September Worship Leaders

Liturgist

September 4

Sherry Schilling

Coffee Servers

Dave & Candace Arp

September 11

Deb Tekippe

Sharon Rossman & Deborah Bishop

September 18

Emily Young-Johnson

Don & Sally Stromseth

September 26

Mark Landas

Deb Tekippe

If you would like to volunteer as a worship leader or help with serving coffee, please let Pastor Mee or Nancy Ruen know. We are grateful to all who help keep our church family sharing God's love with all.



Flowers for September

Flowers for the altar this month are provided by Deb Tekippe. If you would like to bring an arrangement to share in honor or memory of someone, please contact Deb.



Announcements & Prayer Concerns



Special Birthday Blessings for Barb Welgos on Celebrating 100 Years! Your church family sends you special love on this milestone, Barb! You are a treasure to our congregation!

Barb called on August 30 to express her deep gratitude to all who sent her birthday greetings. She has been enjoying them thoroughly. She also expressed sincere gratefulness for all of Pastor Mee's visits.

- ◇ Healing prayers for Carol Caldwell following her recent fall and symptoms of weakness. Her address is 127 Gettysburg Way, Lincoln Park, NJ 07035 if you wish to send her greetings.
- ◇ Continued prayers for our dear church friends who are unable to join us in worship on Sunday mornings due to pain, illness, or inability to be as mobile as they would like.
- ◇ Congratulations to Lim Kang on his recent retirement! Wishing you blessings on this new journey.

Crisis Operations Management Team Announcement!!!

The team met this week and discussed the current situation and CDC recommendations. All members of the team felt that it is safe to resume opening of our church for use by the public on a regular basis at this time. It was felt that most people that would be using the building would be doing so in a cautious way and would not increase the health risk to any of our congregation at this point. As always, the team will continue to monitor things and make any suggested changes as necessary. Thanks to all for your understanding during these last months!



Church Staffing News!



We are still looking for that right person to step into the Office Director position. Please contact Jayme Folkedahl if you are interested or want more information about the position.

We are excited to announce that Dr. Du Huang is starting as our Music Director on September 1st! As many of you remember he was with us many years ago and has also helped us out many times in recent years. **Welcome Back Du!**

A Message From Du to Our Congregation

Hello everybody! First, a bit of self-introduction to folks I have not met yet. I spent the last twenty years teaching piano at Luther College. I served for several years as Director of Music here at Decorah First United Methodist Church (probably from 2002 to 2005), so I have many old friends here. I know during the pandemic, much has changed. Church services moved online for much of this time. We lost our last Director of Music, due to Amy's relocation to her home state of Kentucky. I would like to give thanks to the loyal choir members, talented accompanist Nathan, church choir organizer Sally Stromseth who contribute and sustain church music during this uncertain time. The world is getting back to normal. So, I hope you will consider my invitation to join the church choir, and make music to enhance church services and have a wonderful time with friends at the same time.

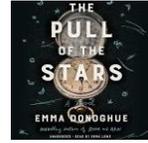


September Birthdays please let Nancy Ruen know of any errors or additions

- ◇ 1st -Amy Weldon
- ◇ 3rd-Lia Vscecka, Ranell Bolson
- ◇ 4th-Pam Ransom
- ◇ 6th-Joan Lubke
- ◇ 9th-Joshua Vscecka
- ◇ 11th-Paul Horsfall
- ◇ 13th-Denise Northup
- ◇ 16th -Herb Hageman
- ◇ 19th-Sue Anderson
- ◇ 20th-Karen Gipp
- ◇ 21st-Jane Vande Berg, Amey Schedinger, Samantha Amdahl
- ◇ 22nd -Wayne Wasta
- ◇ 24th-Brenda Headington
- ◇ 29th- Deb Tekippe



Book Club Information



September 20 7:00 PM [Pull of the Stars](#) by Emma Donoghue Jane H. & Kathy

Meeting at Nancy Ruen's, 602 E. Water Street, Unit 1. We will also send out a Zoom link for those not able to attend in person.

If you are currently not in the group but would like to receive a Zoom link to join the discussions, please send Candace Arp an email and you will be added to the list. Her email is darpcarp@hotmail.com.



The Pantry is open for in-person shopping **by appointment** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 12:30 to 4:30PM, and on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 to 7:00 PM. **Check out our Facebook page or Instagram to see what is happening at the pantry.** For further information consult our website decorahfoodpantry.org or call the pantry during daytime hours at 563-202-0872. We have been serving an increased number of clients in recent months. Local growers have been providing us with an abundance of produce, but the Food Bank in Waterloo has not had its usual stock of goods. The pantry can always use small bottles of laundry detergent, paper towels, pasta, 4-pound bags of sugar, brown sugar, powdered sugar, baking supplies, and jam/jelly. We are always interested in more volunteers if you are looking for a way to help spread God's Love in our community.



A message from our Parish Nurse Deb Tekippe

What's new in the world of influenza and COVID-19

Beginning mid-September, you should plan on getting your flu vaccine. Many of us in healthcare were hoping that a combination vaccine of a COVID booster and flu vaccine would be available, but that is not the case. It is **very important** that you receive the flu vaccine as you have in the past!!

You may be hearing in the near future that a new COVID vaccine is being made available. Both Pfizer and Moderna have developed a new vaccine that targets the Omicron subvariant which is the prevalent strain people are testing positive for. Once they have been authorized by the FDA and recommended by the CDC, vaccinations can begin. This would be in addition to the boosters we have previously been given.

As of mid August, Winneshiek County is considered to have low community-level incidence of COVID-19. This is good news for all of us. It doesn't mean that we can let our guard down, but due to the numbers of people vaccinated and those following masking guidelines, there is significantly less risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death compared to earlier in the pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has streamlined its guidelines. Some highlights of this new guidance strategy are:

Stay up to date with vaccines – especially as new ones come out (as I noted earlier)

If you are exposed to COVID-19, instead of quarantining, wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day 5.

You should isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID 19 as you wait for your test results.

If you test positive, it is recommended that you stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. You are likely most infectious during these first 5 days. Wear a high-quality mask when you must be around others at home and in public.

- If after 5 days you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication, and your symptoms are improving, or you never had symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5.
- Regardless of when you end isolation, avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 until at least day 11.
- You should wear a high-quality mask through day 10.
- If you have a weakened immune system, you should isolate through day 10.

If all of this seems confusing, don't feel like you are alone. Health care workers continue to discuss these guidelines with each other when asked questions. As with anything, always check with your health care provider if you have any questions. If there is anything I can help you with, don't hesitate to give me a call at 563-380-0974. I think Decorah FUMC has done an excellent job maintaining the guidelines set by the CDC. Thanks to Pastor Mee and the members of the Crisis Operations Management Team for their commitment to the health and safety of our congregation!

Deb Tekippe, Parish Nurse



Sunday School Corner from Miss Sally!

September 2022

Greetings to our Sunday School kids, teachers, and church family. I hope you all had a wonderful summer filled with adventures at home and away. Years ago, when we were raising our two daughters,

we seldom went on a vacation, aside from visiting their grandparents. It wasn't until they were old enough not to have to be carried or in a stroller that we decided that a weekend away to Clear Lake, Ia. was in our future. We even stayed in a motel that had a little playground and a small pool to enjoy. What a thrill that was for them to go down the slide and splash in about 3' of water! We took our cast iron frying pan with us and cooked our breakfast outside using the charcoal grill that was available. Eating breakfast outside at a picnic table was new to them and bacon and eggs disappeared in a hurry. Then, there was the added thrill of Clear Lake and the adventures there in the water and sand. I'm not sure how clear our daughters' memories are of that first vacation time, but my memory is treasured.

At this writing, you'll have been in school for a little over a week. Welcome back! Seeing friends you might not have seen all summer must be the cause for a happy reunion. New school supplies and maybe new clothes, because you outgrew your last year's clothes over the summertime, have been purchased. Now, you're ready to learn all the wonderful new things that you need to know in order to grow up to be responsible citizens of this world. We, your church family, are cheering you on!
HURRAH!!

Jesus went to school, too. When He was a boy in the village of Nazareth, He no doubt attended the synagogue school, a religious school for Jewish children, starting at age 5 or 6 years. All Jewish males were offered free public education in the 1st century BC. All boys would have been taught Scripture and law, but also included reading, writing, history, elementary sciences, and mathematics. Teachers and students either stood, or else sat on the ground in a semi-circle facing a teacher. Until children were 10 years old, the Bible (Old Testament) was the one text book which was probably a scroll.

Joseph and Mary would have taught Jesus, too, just like your parents teach you. Since Joseph was a carpenter, Jesus likely would have worked beside his father to learn the trade. Not much is known of Jesus growing up until he was 12 years old and went to Jerusalem with his parents, family, and friends to celebrate the annual Feast of Passover. You can read all about it in Luke 2: 41-51.

Thankfully, girls have the privilege of going to school, too! Can you imagine what an uproar there would be if girls in this country could not go to school? Amazingly, there are places in this world where girls past age 11 cannot continue with their schooling. What a sad thing to think that all the possible talent hiding inside their brains and souls that could make such a positive impact on society would go to waste. In some places, young women are learning in secret at great risk to themselves. Be thankful for your teachers and fellow students that you are able to learn and use the knowledge you gain to make this a better and more responsible world!

'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.'
Proverbs 22:6

Speaking of school, Sunday School will start on Sunday, Sept. 18th. We'll make time to sing with Sally at 10:30. Emily, your faithful teacher, will look forward to your company from 10:45 to 11:30. Hope you can all come!

In Christ's love,
Sally

Back To School Poem

The first day of school
Not sure what's in store
A brand new teacher
And a whole lot more

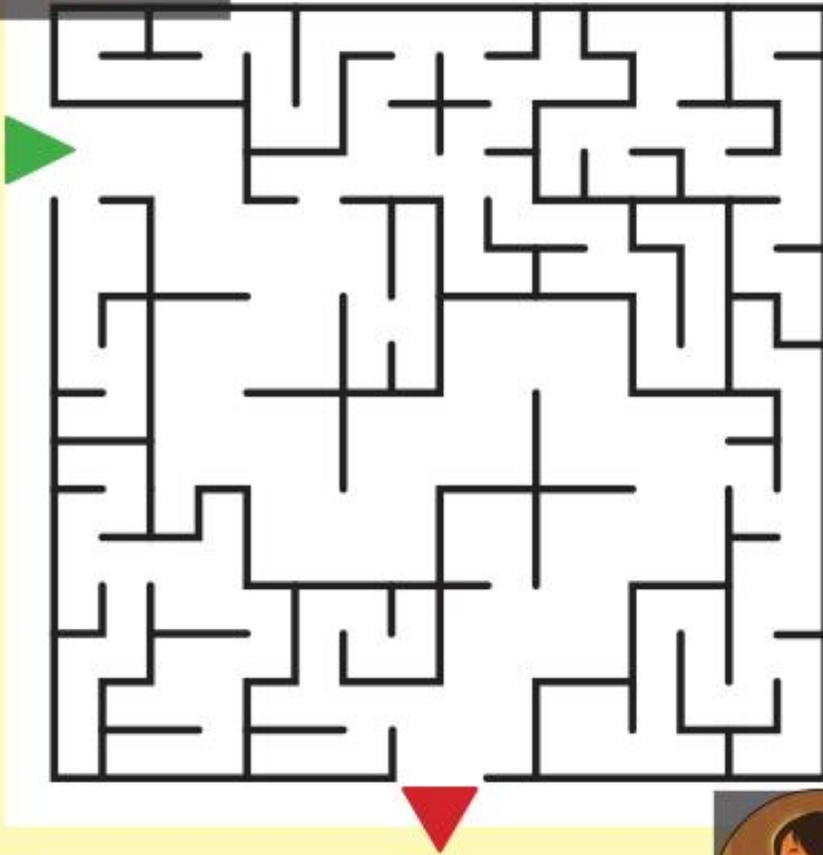
Making new friends
And seeing old ones too
What will we learn?
I have't a clue

Will we learn about animals?
Or outer space?
Will we learn to be writers?
Or in gym will we roce?

I have so many quesitons
About how this year will be
A brand new adventure
We'll just have to wait and see

Where is Jesus?

Help Mary and Joseph find Jesus at the temple.



Jesus Taught About Prayer Secret Code

Each number stands for a letter of the alphabet. Write the correct letter in the blank to find the coded words and phrase.

Code key

A 1	J 10	S 19
B 2	K 11	T 20
C 3	L 12	U 21
D 4	M 13	V 22
E 5	N 14	W 23
F 6	O 15	X 24
G 7	P 16	Y 25
H 8	Q 17	Z 26
I 9	R 18	

16 18 9 22 1 20 5

4 5 2 20 19

7 12 15 18 25

20 5 13 16 20 1 20 9 15 14

11 9 14 7 4 15 13

PHRASE

10 5 19 21 19 20 15 12 4 21 19

8 15 23 20 15 16 18 1 25 •



United Women of Faith Corner

General meeting Wednesday, September 7 at 1:00 PM

12:30 Executive Committee

We have decided to meet at the church instead of going to the Butterfly Garden, in order to make it easier for all of our members to attend. Jeri Osenga will still provide a lovely program about the Butterfly Garden for everyone to enjoy.

Pam and Nancy will provide refreshments.



Inclusive Ministries



We are overwhelmed by the loving generosity of our church family for the wonderful donations received for the church's beautiful sign! We were blessed to receive \$2,000 from the Depot Outlet and our generous congregation has donated \$7,040 which brings us almost to our goal. Blessings to you all for your thoughtfulness.

?



Announcement from Bishop Laurie Haller



From the Office of
Bishop Laurie Haller

August 29, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Iowa Annual Conference,

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As summer concludes and students prepare to return to school, I rejoice in anticipation of the coming of fall as well as the changing seasons of life.

As you are aware, I have been on a six-month medical leave since April 1, 2022. On February 16, I fell on black ice while running outside and sustained a significant concussion as well as a fractured wrist. Over the course of these last months, I have engaged diligently in concussion therapy, often several times a week. I also had surgery on my wrist, followed by extensive wrist therapy. I am deeply grateful for your prayers and support during this challenging time. The medical leave has given me the opportunity to draw closer to God as well as restore my health and tend to my spirit. I have treasured this time to read, write, and do some long-distance running.

I wish to thank Bishop Deborah Kiesey for her gracious willingness to lead the Iowa and Dakotas Annual Conferences during my recovery. I am also grateful for the excellent ministry of the Iowa Cabinet and Conference leadership during this time. And I am especially grateful for my husband, Gary, who has been my greatest support, companion, and sounding board.

This has been a time of discernment for me. I am writing to let you know that I plan to return to active ministry in the Iowa Annual Conference on October 1 until the end of 2022. At that time, I intend to retire. I have been under appointment for forty-one years, having started my ministry in Michigan on January 1, 1982, five months after our first child was born. I am looking forward to having more time to spend with our three adult children and two grandchildren and to travel and write.

Thank you for your prayers over these past six years. Thank you for your gracious spirit. Thank you for the hope that is in you. And thank you for the opportunity that each one of us has to make a positive difference in our world. Thanks be to God!

Blessings,

Bishop Laurie Haller

