

The Open Door

March 2020



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Who We Are

We are a community of God's beloved dedicated to **following** the teachings of Jesus as we live our faith by **loving** and **serving** all of God's creation and **striving** for justice and peace throughout our community, our nation, and the world.

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Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Homelessness in Newton

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these siblings of mine, you did for me." - Matthew 25:40, 45

Over the past month or so, I have had the distinct honor of developing relationships with a number of folks who were living homeless here in Newton, Iowa. Additionally, I have been engaging in conversation with the Newton Area Ministerial Association about how we are called by our faith to serve the most vulnerable members of our community and how we can do that work better together than we can apart. I've also had discussions with folks associated with a variety of organizations and groups serving folks here in Newton from Neighbors Helping Neighbors to Connections Peer Drop-in Center, from Discover Hope to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, from the Newton Correctional Facility to Central Iowa Crisis Services, and more. And, I've engaged in conversation with individual citizens of our community who are simply interested in creating a community where everyone is given the ability to thrive all while they see people in places of established power ignoring or stereotyping these neighbors of ours who are struggling to simply survive.

Through these conversations and experiences, I have witnessed firsthand how difficult it is for the most vulnerable among us to access the resources needed in order to obtain the safety and security that we proclaim each and every one of God's beloved deserve. Part of this is because these resources are scattered across various organizations and offered through disparate groups. Another reason is that we simply do not offer adequate resources to those who have fallen on hard times (for whatever reason) here in Newton or in our broader county.

Several years ago, I encountered a woman and a child who were living homeless here in Newton. The only thing I could think to do to offer them the immediate assistance they needed was to drive them to Des Moines where they could receive temporary housing at a shelter as there was no shelter from them here in Newton. And, now just over four years later, our community still does not offer such important and impactful support to those who may need it.

When I think about how a community should faithfully respond to its citizens experiencing homelessness, shipping them off to the closest city for others to take care of seems far from the gold standard. Yet, that has essentially been the response offered by Newton and Jasper County as many seem to ignore that there are even folks living homeless in our community. But this is not the way it has to be. Indeed, I have experienced a movement to do something more, to respond better, more compassionately, more generously, more equitably as I've engaged with folks over the past month.

I have already seen what a loose network of people and organizations can do when we work together to encourage and support and follow the lead of our homeless neighbors. I can only imagine what we could accomplish if members and organizations from various sectors (religious, private business, non-profit, government) join together with our neighbors who are directly impacted by homelessness in an organized, intentional way. And, I am committed to seeing what that outcome will be. I am working with some of our congregation's members to convene an initial meeting of folks from a broad array of sectors and form a coalition to focus our attention on homelessness and how we can and will work together to ensure the safety and security, the health and well-being, the dignity and respect of our homeless siblings. If this is an effort you would like to be involved with, please reach out to me, as we would love to add you to the team!

I am not so naïve to think that we'll eradicate homelessness in Newton through a meeting or two. I realize full well that to really ensure the well-being of all of our community's members will take years to accomplish as we work together to transform the policies and procedures of our community, our state, and our nation that result in people living homeless. Though the work is long and complex and we will certainly encounter obstacles along the way, I believe it is the work we are called to as those who seek to follow Jesus. And, I invite you to join with those of us who are coming together to serve "the least of these siblings" of Jesus, who are indeed our siblings as well.

Fellowship

Monthly Game Night

We do much together in terms of learning, serving, and worshipping together, but rarely do we take time to play together. That is about to change!

Friends and members of the congregation are invited to gather in the Dining Room on the third Friday of each month, 6:00pm-8:00pm, for a monthly game night. This month's gathering will be held on **Friday, March 20th**. You are encouraged to bring your favorite board games and come enjoy some fun with your church family! Snacks will be provided.

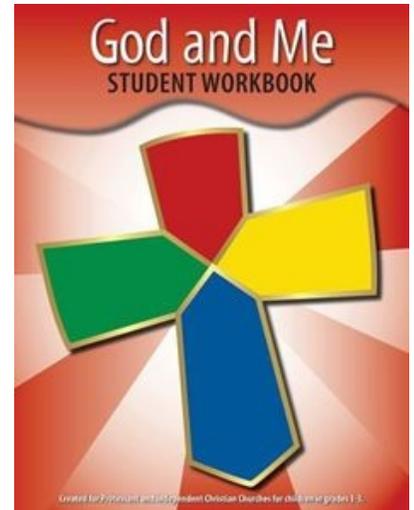


God and Me

Children are invited to participate in the God and Me program for five Wednesday evening sessions beginning March 18th. We'll meet upstairs in the Parish House at 6:00pm on the following Wednesdays: March 18th, April 1st, 15th, and 29th, and May 6th.

The God and Me curriculum is designed to help children become best friends with Jesus and tell their story of "God and Me" together. Children will make a game in each lesson and keep their games in a GAMEBOX (**G**od **A**nd **M**e **E**xploring **B**OX). These games will reinforce each session's Bible lessons and provide opportunities for families to explore God's love together. The goals of the program are to provide an opportunity for young people and families to explore their faith together, to help children realize that God is active in every part of their lives, to help children know that Jesus is their best friend, and to memorize the Lord's Prayer.

Please contact Rev. Petersen if your child would like to participate.



UCC General Synod Resolutions

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ is the national decision-making body for the denomination, responsible for giving general direction to the evangelistic, missionary, and justice programs of the UCC. Because the UCC holds to a covenantal polity, any decisions made by the Synod are not binding upon the UCC's congregations (or its associations or conferences) in any way, though the national offices and the UCC's *Constitution and Bylaws* expect serious consideration to be given them.



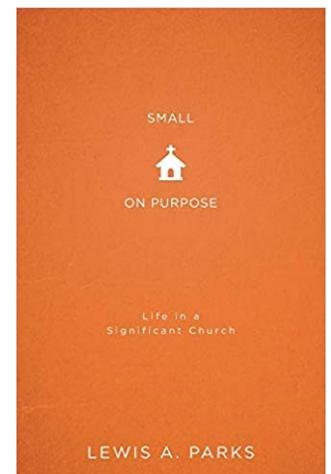
Twenty resolutions were approved by the delegates to the 32nd General Synod (June 21st-25th, 2019). You are encouraged to read each of these resolutions and listen to how God is speaking to our local congregation through this witness of the wider UCC.

Two binders, each including all 20 resolutions, are available in the church library. The resolutions may also be accessed online at ucceverywhere.org/synod. Additionally, throughout the upcoming months, one resolution will continue to be introduced during worship on the first Sunday of each month.

Lenten Sunday Study

During the season of Lent (February 26th-April 11th), you are encouraged to engage in a study of "Small on Purpose: Life in a Significant Church" by Lewis A. Parks. In his book, "Parks shows us how life in a small congregation is profoundly significant and the important role these churches play. This book includes clear instructions on how leaders can streamline ministry to maximize the unique and powerful contributions small churches make in their communities. This book is inspiring and practical, a refreshing point of view for the church and church leaders." (from amazon.com)

Participants should purchase the book, read the designated chapter, and gather on Sunday mornings at 9:00am for discussion. This month's reading schedule is: March 1st—Chapter 1; March 8th—Chapter 2; March 15th—Chapter 3; March 22nd—Chapter 4; March 29th—Chapter 5.



Service and Outreach

Prayers and Concerns



Please hold in prayer

- The family of Tanya Anderson, relative of the Grandstaff-Fresh family, following her death
- Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- Jeannie Johnston
- Stormy Storms
- Bev Edge



If you know someone in need of support – a visit, a call, a note, or prayer – please contact Rev. Jessica Petersen.



Second-Grade Tours

As a part of our relationship with Progress Industries (PI), we will once again host PIs regular “second grade tours” here in our building on **Tuesdays, April 7th (9:00am-10:30am) and April 14th (1:00pm-2:30pm) and Monday, May 4th (9:00am-10:30am)**. In addition to holding the tours in our building, we will also be leading the second-grade students through five stations aimed at helping them to better understand the impact of a disability on one’s life. PI will provide necessary instructions and supplies and additional volunteers. If you are willing and able to help, **please sign up on the sheets available in the Parlor or contact the church office**. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns.

Blood Pressure Monitoring



Carolyn Hobbs will offer blood pressure monitoring any Sunday during Fellowship Time. If you are curious about your blood pressure reading, please let Carolyn know.

Opportunities to Serve



All volunteers/workers in the church are very much appreciated.

Many of you are seen carrying on the work of the church and many things are done unseen, but just as appreciated. It takes many hands and minds to get everything done. Thank you so much for your willingness!

There are many different ways in the church to serve God and others. The more who help, the less work there is for each one. Signup sheets to provide flowers, greet, usher, serve as a lay reader, and host fellowship time are located in the vestibule. Please help if you can.

Additionally, there are a few members who need transportation to worship and church activities.

One Great Hour of Sharing

The 2020 One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) theme is “Invest in Futures.” The scripture reference is 1 Corinthians 3:5–9. It tells us we are servants in the service of God, one planting, one watering, and God being the one who grows and nurtures it all. When we participate in the OGHS offering, we provide valuable support. Our church reaches people who suffer from emergencies, chronic poverty, and violence worldwide. Among

the support we give, water, sanitation and adequate nutrition top the list of resources needed. Assets such as irrigation systems, wells, latrines and wash houses change peoples’ lives in amazing ways. Clean water and adequate facilities improve health and gives dignity to people at the same time. Clean water is also provided to grow better gardens. A combination of water, seeds, tools, and training on modern farming techniques produce a great harvest—leaving more money for families to live on. Lives are changed when health improves. Lives are changed when communities thrive. With water, sanitation, and adequate food, children are more likely to attend school, and women, no longer searching for water, are able to earn money to contribute to their families’ well-being and overall health.

Stand with UCC congregations by lending a hand through support to the OGHS offering on **Palm Sunday, April 5th!** Your financial assistance will directly help people and communities affected by disaster, violence and poverty. Your financial assistance will be an investment into the lives of people and communities who need it most. Together, we are co-workers in God’s service, planting and watering seeds for God to nurture. Thank you on behalf of the individuals and communities who will benefit directly from your support.



2020 Central Association

Spring Meeting

Saturday, March 28, 2020

9:30am-1:00pm

St. Paul UCC

501 High Ave E.

Oskaloosa, IA 52577

Come learn about trends facing all congregations in our current landscape and hear from an association task-force on what this could mean for the future possibilities in Central Association.

This is also the yearly business meeting for the association. We will vote on the 2020-2021 budget and officers and receive reports from our standing committees, as well as celebrate ordination anniversaries.

Schedule

9:00am Registration

9:30am Worship w/
Rev. Jonna Jensen

10:00am "The New Normal
In Congregations" Dr.
Sarai Rice & The
Association Task Force

11:15am Association
Business Meeting

12:15pm Lunch &
Fellowship

1:00pm Blessing &
Departing

To Register

Please send your:

- name/s,
- pronouns
- dietary needs
- accessibility needs
- church of membership

To:

contactus@centraliowaucc.org
or 1400 8th Ave., Belle Plaine, IA
52208

or 319-444-2341

Please register by March 22 so
we can ensure enough food and
workshop materials.

***We are allowed two voting delegates
and as many guests as we'd like.***

***Please contact Rev. Petersen if you
are interested in attending.***



Worship Attendance

<u>February Attendance</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
First Sunday	25	28
Second Sunday	32	29
Third Sunday	33	40
Fourth Sunday	32	50



Birthdays to Celebrate in March

- 1-Barb Holdsworth, Jeanne Hershey
- 4-Elizabeth Pearson, Leslie McNew
- 9-James Jensen, Bruce Nuzum Sr.
- 10-Marilyn Deppe
- 11-Brad Penick
- 16-Lonnie Appleby
- 19-Kelly Mathes
- 20-Janie Kahn, Gayla Snook
- 24-Marilyn Planer, Cindy Tool
- 25-Dylan Yoder
- 30-Alexander Stonehocker



Anniversaries to Celebrate in March

- 3-Pam and John Wagner
- 29-Rev. Jessica Petersen (11th ordination anniversary)

Take note...

Communion Offering

Our Communion Offering is now being used to offer financial support to our members and friends who are facing monetary struggles. Previously these funds were used to fund our Worship & Music and Service & Outreach efforts; these expenditures are now included in the regular budget (funds previously collected will be used for their assigned purpose until those funds are exhausted). Please contact Larry Leitner, our Treasurer, or Rev. Petersen with any questions.

Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday, March 11th at 6:00pm in the Parish House**. Please contact Sam Sledge, our Moderator, with any matters you wish for the Council to consider as they meet. The Council meets regularly at 6:00pm on the second Wednesday of each month.

Donation Wish Lists

We take up regular monthly collections for the Salvation Army food pantry (first Sundays) and the Jasper County Animal Rescue League (third Sundays). Here are their wish lists:

Food Pantry: tuna helper (not hamburger), pasta sauce, canned soups, cereal, and boxed macaroni & cheese (of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted)

JCARL: paper towels, garbage bags, raw hides (for big dogs and small), peanut butter, bleach, dish soap, Fabuloso (the purple kind), laundry soap, liquid hand soap, rubber gloves, kitty litter, canned shredded and filet cat food, canned dog food (Purina), dry dog food (Purina), and dry cat food (Indoor Purina).



Communications

Church Council Catch Up

In an effort to keep our congregation more informed regarding the various matters that impact our life together, notes from Church Council meetings are shared with our friends and members via this newsletter. Complete minutes of each Council meeting are available in the church office. Previously, highlights from each Council meeting were included in the newsletter prior the minutes being approved by the Council. In order to ensure that correct information is conveyed to the congregation, from now on these highlights will be included only after the full minutes have been approved by the Council at its regular monthly meeting. Therefor, highlights from the February 12th Council meeting will be included in the April newsletter once they have been approved by the Church Council. Should you have any questions regarding the work of the Council prior to that time, you are encouraged to contact a member of the Church Council. The current members of the Church Council are as follows:

Moderator:	Samantha Sledge
Assistant Moderator:	April Faidley
Secretary:	Jennifer Pryke
Treasurer:	Larry Leitner
At-Large:	Lin Chapé
At-Large:	Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
At-Large:	Norm Van Klompenburg
Pastor:	Rev. Jessica Petersen

Special Congregational Meeting

A special meeting of the congregation will be held on **Sunday, March 8th, 2020** immediately following an abbreviated 10:00am worship service. The purpose of this meeting is to consider the Church Council's proposal to move to a half-time pastor no later than October 1st, 2020 and to approve the remainder of the 2020 budget adjusting the Pastor's Compensation figures to reflect 50% of Iowa Conference Guidelines beginning no later than October 1st, 2020 (all other budget numbers will remain the same as proposed during the October 20, 2019 Annual Meeting).



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Fuller Scholarships

Eve Fuller fulfilled the wishes of her husband, Max, and her own by leaving the bulk of their estate to our church to establish scholarships for sons and daughters of members who were working toward a four-year degree. Our congregation recently updated the standards for these scholarships while seeking to stay true to the Fullers' intent in establishing the scholarship fund.

The purpose of these scholarships is to provide post-secondary education scholarships (for both full-time and part-time enrollment), and scholarships will be awarded by priority based on the student's intent to complete a post-secondary degree according to the following (listed in priority order): Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree; Associate Degrees; Certificate program, Diploma program, Trades program; and Advanced Degrees.

In order to be eligible to receive a Fuller Scholarship, the applicant, and/or a parent or grandparent of the applicant must be a member of the Congregational United Church of Christ, in Newton, Iowa (at the time of the application).

The amount of the scholarship will be determined by the Scholarship Committee based on which of the four types of education listed above the student intends to enroll and if enrolled full or part-time. Also, the information provided on the completed application form is a very important factor. Such information includes: the student's academic performance in high school, college, and/or other post-secondary education; their participation in school and community activities; their goals or aspirations; the student's participation in the life and work of our church; a parent's and/or grandparent's participation in the life and work of our church which includes attending worship and serving the church in a variety of ways.

Application forms will be provided for those students applying for the first time and for those asking for a renewal of their scholarship. Please contact the church office for an application. Applications follow a similar format as those used by the Dollars for Scholars Scholarships.

For all applicants, **applications are due April 1st**. Questions about how to complete the application form should be directed to the church office and a member of the Scholarship Committee will contact you with the requested information.

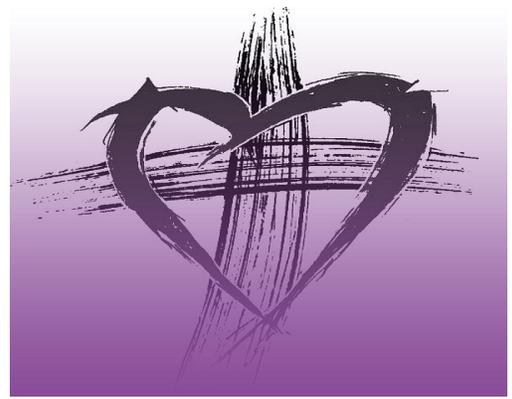
Following the application review by the Scholarship Committee, Newton High school graduates will be awarded their scholarship at the annual Senior Awards Assembly in May. All other applicants will receive a letter regarding the approval of their application and the amount of the scholarship by mail.

Once the scholarship is awarded, the student must submit an enrollment form from the post-secondary institution verifying their enrollment. This form will be provided for the applicant. The scholarship funds will be paid directly to the educational institution the student attends.

Since the inception of awarding these scholarships in 1996, a total of \$186,500 has been awarded. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.

Sundays
10:00am Worship
11:15am Refreshments

March



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

1 Communion Food Pantry Donations 9:00am Lenten Book Study 11:30am Church Council	2	3 6:00pm Racial Justice Book Club	4	5	6	7
8 Daylight Saving Time Begins 9:00am Lenten Book Study 10:45am Congregational Meeting	9	10 10:00am PI Cleaning 6:00pm Exploring Judaism	11 6:00pm Church Council	12 5:00pm Bible Study	13	14 4:00pm Christenson/Pettyjohn Wedding
15 JCARL Collection 9:00am Lenten Book Study	16	17	18 6:00pm God and Me	19 5:00pm Bible Study	20 6:00pm Game Night	21 9:00am Iowa Conference Board of Directors Meeting
22 9:00am Lenten Book Study	23	24 10:00am PI Cleaning 6:00pm Pub Theology	25 9:30am Morning Circle	26 5:00pm Bible Study	27	28 9:30am Central Assoc. Spring Meeting, St. Paul UCC, Oskaloosa
29 9:00am Lenten Book Study	30	31				

Worship Schedule for March

Date	March 1	March 8	March 15	March 22	March 29
Christian Calendar Date	First Sunday in Lent	Second Sunday in Lent	Third Sunday in Lent	Fourth Sunday in Lent	Fifth Sunday in Lent
Special Events	Communion	Congregational Meeting			
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection		
Scriptures	Matthew 4:1-11	John 3:1-17	Exodus 17:1-7	Psalms 23	Ezekiel 37:1-14
Worship Color	White	Violet	Violet	Violet	Violet

White symbolizes purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as respect and reverence.

Violet is the ancient royal color and therefore a symbol of the sovereignty of Christ; it is also associated with repentance from sin.



**We continue to remember our homebound members.
You are missed and continue to be cared for and held in our heartfelt prayers.**

Marilyn Currant
Park Centre #1
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

Betty Hotchkin
Park Centre #40
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

Congregational United Church of Christ
308 E. 2nd St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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The Open Door is a newsletter for the members and friends of Congregational United Church of Christ. Suggestions and submissions are welcome. Deadline for submission is the date indicated on the Calendar.

Pastor	Rev. Jessica Petersen	792-3773 (Office) 641-840-2672 (Cell)	revjessicapetersen@gmail.com
Administrative Assistant	Barbara Vasquez	792-3773 (Office)	uccnewton@windstream.net
Organist	Bev Thomas	792-6465	thomasb@iowatelecom.net
Custodian	Jim Christenson	792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@windstream.net
Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Moderator	Samantha Sledge		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday and Thursday



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Newton Congregational UCC: www.uccnewton.org