

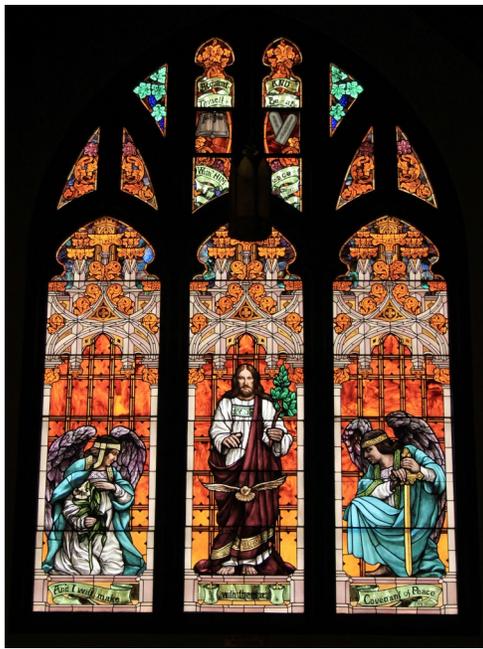
The Open Door

February 2021



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation



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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.

Service and Outreach

The leading newsletter article in the last few months has typically been **What's Next?** This month you will find that article further into the newsletter, as Council turns back to our mission as a church. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the derecho, Pastor Petersen-Mutai leaving, and our transition to a halftime pastor all overlapping, we have needed to focus on our in-church ministry. Although the effects of those events are still with us (and will remain so for some time), Council feels that we have reached a point of sufficient stability that we can re-engage with beyond-the-church ministry.

There are several layers of "beyond:" right outside our doors, in Jasper County, within our conference, in the United States, and in the world. We have a defined amount of resources and we can choose how they will be distributed. That's where the fun begins!

Where would YOU like our outreach to be directed? Our actual in-person engagement will remain curtailed as long as the COVID-19 infection rates are high and while vaccination distribution is in progress. This is hard to take, as we have been a congregation energized by getting out into the community and DOING things. Nevertheless, we can continue to disperse funds that support projects. It's a bit secondhand, yet it is still us out there making a difference. Following are some options.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN): This organization gives financial support for weekly "pick-up" meals prepared by Methodist and Lutheran church members. NHN has clothing drives, provides \$\$ for laundry for those enrolled in that initiative, (cont. on p. 2)

(Service and Outreach cont. from p. 1)

And monitors laundry nights with NHN active members. Also, in the past, participating churches have provided items for Blessing Boxes in random localities.

Food Boxes: There are outside food boxes located around town, such as one at First Baptist Church at 620 South 8th Ave. East and one in front of Christian Reformed Church at 511 S. 5th Ave. East. Anyone can put canned goods and other non-perishable items in these food boxes. If you think back to what you used to bring to church on a Salvation Army Pantry Sunday, you will be on track for what items are most needed and make helpful contributions.

Here is a suggestion from the Conference website:

Black Lives Matter: When a church claims boldly “Black Lives Matter” at this moment, it chooses to show up intentionally against all given societal values of supremacy and superiority or common-sense complacency. By insisting on the intrinsic worth of all human beings, Jesus models for us how God loves justly, and how his disciples can love publicly in a world of inequality.

Some church members, before the pandemic, joined Rev. Petersen-Mutai in supporting the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. From Alaska to Arkansas, the Bronx to the border, people are coming together to confront the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. With the premise that as a nation we are at a critical juncture — the Campaign believes that we need a movement that will shift the moral narrative, impact policies and elections at every level of government, and build lasting power for poor and impacted people.

Which of these possibilities do you want to support? There are many organizations working in ways that further the kingdom of God. Can you suggest others that are of interest to you? Council welcomes your feedback. Please enter this discussion by: 1) speaking with, emailing, or texting council members; 2) writing to the church; or 3) dropping your comments off at the church office.

Being a small church does not stop us from making an impact!



What’s Next

I tried to think of how our new sign might be described in some semi-sophisticated way, but what came to mind, and refused to go away, was: Doesn’t our new sign look snazzy! It took much effort and even more patience, on the part of Norm Van Klompenburg, and it has finally been achieved. The letters that we will use to add content are on order. In addition, there is the possibility of mounting a plastic banner on the back. “No matter who you are or where you are on your life journey you are welcome” is one possibility. Do you have other ideas?

In other What’s Next news, two volunteers will soon be surveying the church for all areas that need a clean up or refreshing. This will result in a list of spring cleaning tasks. Although we are unable to celebrate this event together, members of a bubble can take on these jobs. A brave person could tackle a job alone; however, be aware that some decision making may be required, in which case two heads are better than one. If you are willing to volunteer, please let the church office know. (cont. on p. 3)

(What's Next cont. from p. 2)

Posting our Profile is an on-going challenge. Our first conference reader made enthusiastic positive comments. Our second conference reader sent two pages of editing suggestions! Those suggestions have been addressed and our draft will be submitted to the Search and Call conference pastor again. We anticipate having a ZOOM meeting with her to resolve any issues that require final editing. We are no longer going to project when the Profile will actually "go live," having been overly optimistic and wrong so many times before!

"God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8)



Money Musings

Larry Leitner, Treasurer

We have officially closed the books on the 2020 fiscal year. The 2020 annual treasurer's report is being reviewed by the Finance Committee. After their feedback comes in, I will officially submit the report to Council for consideration at the February meeting. Once Council has approved it, copies will be available in the church office. For this month's Money Musings, I will highlight certain parts of the report.

We generated almost \$101,000 in Pledge, non-pledge, and loose change offerings for 2020. When you add Building Use and UC dividends to our income, we come close to \$105,000 collected for expenses. We also received a Payroll Protection Program loan (since forgiven) of \$21,677. So, our total funds for routine expenses came to approximately \$126,000. Our expenses were impacted by two events. First, moving to a half time pastor compensation package means we lost our pastor. While theologically that is a blow, in terms of finances, it means that we spent \$7,000 less than we had budgeted for pastor compensation (with the budget going to half time in October). Second, the pandemic closed the church for much of the year. Because the church was closed, we wound up under budget for many categories (heating, electricity, organist, and others). Our total routine operating expenses totaled approximately \$109,600. Thus, we entered fiscal year 2021 with a surplus from 2020 of approximately \$17,000.

We distributed \$31,000 in Fuller Scholarship funds in 2020. Thus far, derecho repairs cost approximately \$12,000 and we have received approximately \$17,000 from the insurance company for those repairs. More expenses will be coming, as well as additional insurance reimbursement.

We enter 2021 in a rare position. We made it through an entire fiscal year without drawing a penny from our endowment! The official treasurer's report will provide more details. I encourage all to read it.



We continue to remember our local 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

Bev Edge
Village Assisted Living
2571 Guthrie Ave, Apt. 1402
Des Moines, IA 50317
(515) 299-1845

Betty Hotchkin
Park Centre #40
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208
(641) 791-4687

Norma "Jeannie" Johnson
200 S. 8th Ave E.
Newton, IA 50208
(641) 275-5393

Pastoral Care

We are grateful to have Rev. David Raymond available to provide pastoral care to our congregation. If you have a pastoral emergency, please reach out to Rev. Raymond directly or through the church office (staffed Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:00am-3:00pm). Rev. Raymond can be reached at (641) 521-1506 or davidray@mediacombb.net. Thank you, David, for blessing us with your care.

Prayers and Concerns

If you know someone in need of support—a visit, a call, a note, or a prayer—please contact the church office.

February Birthdays

- 2/2 Tom Turk, Oliver Planer, Aiden Planer
- 2/3 Askel Joy
- 2/6 Carver Christenson-Vasquez
- 2/7 Todd Planer
- 2/14 Coridan McGinley
- 2/17 Nile McCoy
- 2/19 Emma Fresh, Jamie Sawin
- 2/21 Amber Christenson
- 2/23 Bonnie McGinley
- 2/27 Bev Edge, Kristina McNew, Les Morgan





Communications

Church Council Catch Up

In an effort to keep our congregation 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.

January 14, 2021 Council Meeting

Some Council members experienced difficulty getting into the Zoom meeting on the 13th. The meeting was moved to the 14th and held in-person in the dining room of the church, with all attendees masked and spread about the room.

Treasurer's Report: Larry Leitner. The 2021 budget has been revised to reflect changes that have occurred since it was provisionally adopted: we will not have a half-time pastor in place at the time we expected and we will not be back in our sanctuary worshipping as soon as we expected, due to the high level of COVID-19 infections. Discussion followed on the changes that Larry proposes to the 2021 budget and what constitutes "substantial" changes, for which we would need to go back to the congregation for approval. The discussion noted that changes that involve spending more probably need congregational approval, however, changes that involve spending less probably do not. Larry can explain the changes to anyone who contacts him about them.

Maintenance Report: Norm Van Klompenburg. The electrical down feed that was damaged during the derecho has been awaiting repair. Two contractors said they would do the repair, but neither came. Jim Christenson and Norm, after careful thought to the procedure and to safety, completed the repair and the feed is again securely anchored. A leak has been noted in the upper east classroom. It is supposed the damage is due to an ice dam building up in the area. It has been investigated and will be under continued surveillance.

Online worship and music: Norm explained that we have a license that allows blogging, which requires that the music be used for a worship service. Norm, Anne Gerken, and Bev Thomas have spent a significant amount of time in correspondence with One License and working on our compliance. Compliance requires us to submit information about every piece of music being used and we will need to continue to stay on top of this.

As Norm researched equipment for making videos for online posting, he discovered that our plan to purchase a tablet was not a particularly good idea. He will continue to research and speak to knowledgeable individuals to arrive at the best solution. Once he determines the equipment that will serve our needs best, he will communicate with Council members, describing the equipment and cost, to finalize approval for the purchases.

Discussion turned to the devotion that accompanies Bev's music. April Faidley & Larry Leitner, Anne Gerken, Jamie Sawin, Carolyn Hobbs and Bev Thomas have contributed to date. Jane Ann will be responsible for lining up volunteers. We all acknowledged that although this isn't a task we expect everyone to do, we hope we can find enough volunteers to keep producing these videos.

Where We Are:

Profile: We decided that our Profile will be directed to secure a halftime pastor for a designated term, to be mutually agreed upon, compensated at conference guidelines. We will spend the designated term in contemplation and self-study to determine our future viability and plans to move forward.

Gift of appreciation to Grinnell UCC: Consensus was reached that we extend a gift of \$500 to support the mission of Grinnell UCC in appreciation for the consultation, shared programming and support they have made available to us during our pastoral search process. They have invited us to join in online Sunday and special (cont. on p. 6)

(Council Catch Up cont. from p. 5)

worship activities, posted worship materials and the order of worship for our use, made it possible for us to participate in communion through joining their virtual services, provided consultation and advice in posting and publishing our online musical and devotional worship activities, and offered consultation and references for temporary pastoral support. We greatly appreciate their support.

Where God is Leading Us:

Profile: The Conference minister with whom we were working moved to another position. We now have received extensive feedback on our Profile draft from Rev. Samantha Houser, to which we need to respond. April, Norm, and Jane Ann will work on the comments we have received.

Outreach and Ministry: We have been moving through a chaotic time. Now that we have (nearly) completed our Profile and have settled on the leadership we are seeking and how we will worship and conduct business in the interim, we can again consider outreach and ministry. There are local projects to which we can lend our (primarily monetary) support. It was decided that this would be a good article for the newsletter. We can offer some council-generated possibilities and ask congregants in what areas of ministry they would like to see us involved.

Church Council Composition

Moderator: Jane Ann Cotton

Assistant Moderator: April Faidley

Secretary: Jennifer Pryke

Treasurer: Larry Leitner

Members-At-Large: Les Morgan, Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh, Norm Van Klompenburg

Musical Moments

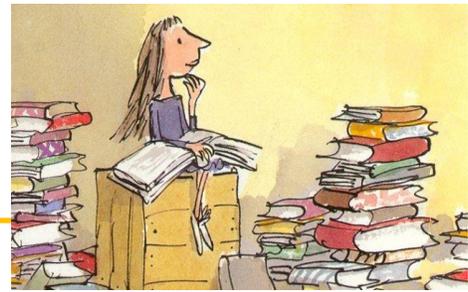
Throughout the pandemic, while the church has been closed to in-person worship, our keyboardist, Bev Thomas, has brought us into the sanctuary and played for us, through videos posted on the church Facebook page and the church website. We have added a devotion to these videos to expand our outreach to viewers (and to satisfy the requirements of our license to use the musical pieces). Each Tuesday a volunteer from



the congregation meets with Bev and, while appropriately maintaining social distance, creates the video for the week. We have had 70 - 100 views of the videos on Facebook, which shows they are, indeed, reaching an interested audience.

We appreciate and thank every one of our members who have volunteered to give a devotion, a poem, a meditation, a song, or a reflection. [We invite more of you to participate!](#) A variety of faces and voices will entertain our viewers and present a cross section of our membership to them. If you are willing to participate but don't have any idea what you might present, Jane Ann Cotton has a devotional book that she particularly likes and would be happy to share with you. Jane Ann has volunteered to handle the scheduling; reach her at 521-3547 or jacotton@pcpartner.net.

EDUCATION



His Truth is Marching On Book Study

Our evening book study of *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and The Power of Hope* by Jon Meacham continues this month, concluding on February 25.

We are halfway through this study. So far we have been struck by the courage and tenacity of John Lewis and those who joined him in the Civil Rights Movement. It brings alive a time that we were too young and/or too far away from to understand or grasp completely. The book is also a timely read, as the Black Lives Matter movement has taken up the torch to move “justice for all” from an abstract concept to a reality in this country.

Our January 28th meeting covered the 1963 March on Washington. The author quotes Harry Belafonte: “Unlike popular opinion that Dr. King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ sermon was *the* speech of the March on Washington, that was not the case. The case was that John Lewis delivered a kind of Gettysburg Address. It was one of the most brilliant speeches I had ever heard. He spoke for the young, for the future of America.” Meacham goes on, “In his closing remarks, King spoke from a mountaintop, a prophet bringing word from on high. Lewis spoke more simply, from the valley, among the people whose burdens he knew because they were his burdens, too.” (p. 142)

Book club meets on Thursdays from 5:30pm to 6:30pm. Here is our February schedule:

February 4: Chapter 5: We are Going to Make You Wish You was Dead

February 11: Chapter 6: I’m Going to Die Here

February 18: Chapter 7: This Country Don’t Run on Love

February 25: Epilogue: Against the Rulers of Darkness & Afterword by John Lewis

Join the Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83595726192?pwd=cm9FTXkrVlhrQmkvalEwVitGZW9nZz09>

Meeting ID: 835 9572 6192

Passcode: 377178

If you need assistance, contact Jane Ann Cotton or April Faidley.

This study is a laity-generated educational program. Prior to her departure it was lead by Rev. Petersen-Mutai. The participants now choose the books studied and (as the spirit moves them) research additional material to add to the discussion. We want the study to have a broad appeal; we do not want it to simply serve the interests of those who currently attend. If you are thinking, “Well, I would join that program, but the book they are studying doesn’t really interest me,” then WE HAVE A DEAL FOR YOU! Please let us know, through the church office, what book or books you would be enthused about studying. We can put them on our list and would be most happy to welcome you into our study!

A Guest Revery

Facing All Challenges

Upon reflection about the year 2020, I would be remiss not to include the church. This poem by Helen Steiner Rice applies to our church life as well as our own individual lives.

“Things achieved too easily
lose their charm and meaning, too,
It is life’s difficulties and the
trial-times we go through
That make us strong in spirit
and endow us with the will
To surmount the insurmountable
and to climb the highest hill.”

Our church leadership and family have faced financial difficulties; a pandemic; loss of our full-time pastor; the derecho; search process for a half-time minister; and a change in conducting both church services and business. The one constant throughout these challenging times has been the leadership of our church council. It is a blessing to have people willing to serve in this capacity any year, but especially this past year and on into the current year. Not an easy job as the council strives to make fact-based decisions with caring, creative, overall concern in the best interest of the life of our church family. Hours upon hours have been spent as they do their best to guide our church forward. “Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God...is with you. He will not fail or forsake you.” ***1 Chronicles 28:20***

Expressing my appreciation to the council for all they’ve done and continue to do just does not seem adequate, but that’s all I have. EXCEPT, not only can I, but each member of the church family can step forward whenever the council expresses a need. Many have done so in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Be there to support the council as you share your time, talent, and abilities.

God bless our church council for all the hard work done in God’s name. You are true disciples.

“In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.” ***Romans 12:6-8***

Marti Barker

Sundays

Online Worship—viewed at your convenience

11:30am Zoom Refreshments



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	First Day of Black History Month	Groundhog Day		5:30pm <i>His Truth is Marching On</i> book study via Zoom		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC Super Bowl		National Pizza Day	6:00pm Church Council via Zoom	5:30pm <i>His Truth is Marching On</i> book study via Zoom	Chinese New Year	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC	President's Day	Mardi Gras	Ash Wednesday	5:30pm <i>His Truth is Marching On</i> book study via Zoom		National Love Your Pet Day World Day of Social Justice
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC	Deadline for submissions to newsletter			5:30pm <i>His Truth is Marching On</i> book study via Zoom		
28						
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC						

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. Submissions are welcome. Deadline for submission is the date indicated on the Calendar.

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Moderator	Jane Ann Cotton	521-3547 (Cell)	jacotton@pcpartner.net
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond	521-1506 (Cell)	davidray@mediacombb.net

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; not open to the public



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