# The Open Door

### November 2019



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 Our Financial Situation (slightly adapted from 2019 Annual Report)

Throughout this year, we have not only taken a hard look at our financial situation but have begun making the accompanying difficult decisions to ensure that we who gather as Congregational UCC can and will continue to engage in meaningful ministry for years to come. During a special meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>, our congregation voted by overwhelming majority to authorize our Council to officially explore engaging in a relationship with another congregation to share resources realizing that at a minimum this would mean sharing a pastor.

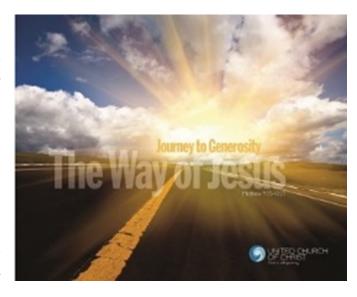
A "scouting" committee was formed and has begun this search for a partner congregation. We have sought guidance and assistance from the Tri-Conference staff and have already begun initial conversations with a few nearby UCC churches who have shown interest in this possibility.

Council has engaged in careful conversation around the timeline for getting a handle on our financial situation as we are well-aware that we cannot indefinitely continue drawing on our endowment funds to cover such large deficits. It is for this reason that the Council is proposed and the congregation adopted the proposed 2020 budget only through March 2020. It is our hope that we will be well on our way to a shared 50-50 partnership with another congregation by this time. However, if that is not the case, then you all will need to decide how much longer you are willing to continue paying me to serve as your full-time pastor. I am fully aware that in March, if we are not far enough along in the process of sharing a pastor (and the associated expenses) with another congregation, that you all may decide you can only afford a part-time pastor. I assure you that I am in this struggle with you all even as I must also prepare for the possibility that I will need to seek another call.

Friends, I am incredibly proud to be your pastor as you wrestle with this hard reality. Change is afoot, and with any change there is loss. It is completely expected and understandable for each of you to experience grief and sorrow during this time of transition. I remind you that you are not alone in facing that grief. I also remind you that, as Christians, we proclaim a crucified and risen savior. As we face these challenges prayerfully and intentionally, I see great possibilities for new life ahead.

### Stewardship 2019: "Journey to Generosity"

During this year's stewardship campaign, we are called to "Journey to Generosity" as we prayerful consider our commitment to supporting the ministries of this congregation. Stewardship letters have already been mailed out inviting you to faithfully and generously respond to the call to follow in the generous way of Jesus. An additional mailing will be mailed out in the middle of this month; this mailing will include a commitment/pledge card for you to plan your financial giving to the ministry of our church as well as a "Nuts and Bolts of Ministry Inventory" to share your gifts of time and talent. Please complete and return both of these items on or before **Sunday, November 24**th as we will dedicate them during morning worship and ask God to bless them and us as we



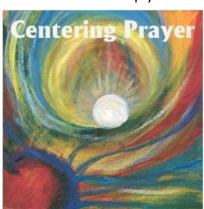
seek to honor our commitment to share our various gifts as we seek to live in the way of Jesus throughout the upcoming year. You are also encouraged to join together for a soup lunch celebration following worship.

As we enter this time of discernment, let us open ourselves to hear how God calls us to be stewards of our resources as we seek to live ever more faithfully as God's beloved people. Please contact Rev. Petersen if you have any questions.

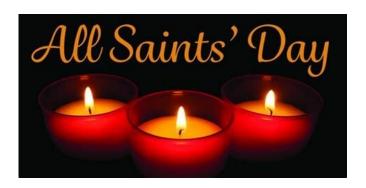
### Worship

### **Centering Prayer**

Centering Prayer is being offered weekly during "Harvestide" (October 16<sup>th</sup>—November 20<sup>th</sup>). Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. It is simply a wordless, trusting opening of



one's self to the divine presence. The group will meet in the **Chapel**, just off of the Sanctuary, on **Wednesdays, 5:15pm-5:45pm**, with the final gathering of the season on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Please contact April Faidley with any questions.



### **All Saints' Sunday**

On **Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>**, we will be observing All Saints' Day during our 10:00am worship service. As part of the service, we will remember and give thanks for the departed saints who have touched the lives of the members and friends of Congregational United Church of Christ, especially those who have died within the past year. Please plan to join us for this celebration of life even as we mourn the loss of these dearly departed ones.

### **Education**

### **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.

The United Church of Christ's Thirty-Second General Synod was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The theme for the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Synod was based on the scripture Matthew 5:16: "In the same way let your light shine before others . . ." Twenty resolutions were approved by the delegates to the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Synod. 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, we will explore one resolution during worship on the first Sunday of each month.

### **Exploring Islam**



On Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm-7:30pm, we will continue our series of monthly educational opportunities to learn more about a diversity of religious traditions that we might better understand our neighbors (both near and far) and be empow-

ered to love them more fully.

During this session, Dr. Caleb Elfenbein will speak about the history; central tenets, beliefs, and practices; and common misunderstandings of Islam. Additionally, he will explore questions relating to anti-Muslim hostility and its effects on American Muslim participation in public life.

Dr. Elfenbein is an Associate Professor of History and Religious Studies at Grinnell College where he is also the Director of the Center for Humanities. He graduated from Vassar College with a degree in political science and has a Masters in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a PhD in religious studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.

### **Interfaith Power and Light**

On **Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am-11:30am**, we will continue our series of monthly educational opportunities to address the great moral challenge of the ecological crisis.

During this session, Matt Russell, Executive Director of lowa Interfaith Power and Light, will speak about the necessity of eliminating our reliance on fossil fuels and further developing renewable, sustainable energy sources. Russell has spent his career working in non-profits and advocating for social justice. He spent the first 11 years training for and working in ministry and the last 16 years doing secular work focused primarily on economic and environmental sustainability. He is energized to be draw-

ing on his diverse background to lead Iowa IPL since April 2018.

A brief worship service will take place at 10:00am prior to the presentation.

Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



### **Education cont.**

### **Racial Harmony & Justice Book Club**

Those interested in promoting racial harmony and justice in our community



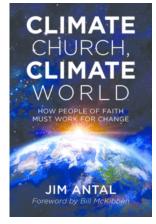
are encouraged to gather for the Racial Harmony and Justice Book Club at **6:00pm-7:00pm** on the first Tuesday of each month at **The Cellar Peanut Pub** (403 W 4<sup>th</sup> St. N, Newton). Over the course of five monthly meetings (September-January), participants will read and discuss "Waking Up White: and Finding Myself in the Story of Race" by Debbie Irving. Participants should read and come prepared to discuss Sections 4 and 5 (Rethinking Key Concepts and Twenty-Five Years of Tossing and Turning) for the **November 5**<sup>th</sup> gathering and Sections 6 and 7 (Leaving My Comfort Zone and Inner Work) for the **December 3**<sup>rd</sup> gathering. Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.

### "Climate Church, Climate World" Study

All are invited to gather in the Parish House on Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm, as we begin a new nine-session study of the book "Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change" by Jim Antal. The book "argues that climate change is the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced. Hunger, refugees, poverty, inequality, deadly viruses, war—climate change multiplies all forms of global social injustice. Environmental leader Reverend Jim Antal presents a compelling case that it's time for the church to meet this moral challenge, just as the church addressed previous moral challenges. Antal calls for the church to embrace a new vocation so that future generations might live in harmony with God's creation." (from amazon.com)

Participants should come prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The November meeting and reading schedule is as follows: November 7<sup>th</sup>—Foreward, Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1; November 14<sup>th</sup>—Chapter 2; November 21<sup>st</sup>—Chapter 3; November 28<sup>th</sup>—no meeting.

Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.





### **Pub Theology**

Pub Theology meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month from **6:00pm-7:00pm** at **The Cellar Peanut Pub**. The next meeting of the group will take place on **Tuesday, November 26**<sup>th</sup>. The format is simple: beer, conversation, and God. Come bring your questions, your curiosity, and pull up a chair. Be ready to engage with people of varying religious traditions,

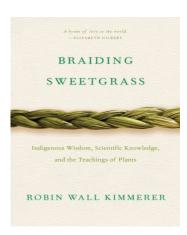
philosophical perspectives, and life experiences. You'll be able to share your own wrestlings and thoughts while learning something new along the way.

We are offering this ministry in cooperation with First Presbyterian Church. Participants are responsible for purchasing their own beverages and encouraged to drink responsibly. No purchase is required. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions. Hope to see you there!

### Marning Circle Morning Circle

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, November 20**<sup>th</sup> **at 9:30am**. Carolyn Hobbs will serve as the host for the group, and April Faidley will offer devotions. The group is studying "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Participants should read pages 98-117 for the November gathering.

All are welcome to join us as we come together for fellowship, devotions, and study seeking to follow more closely in the way of Jesus.



### **Service and Outreach**



### **Neighbors In Need**

We received \$148.00 for our *Neighbors in Need* offering on **Sunday, October 13**<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your contributions. This special offering supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose

work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Through ucc.org/justice, our national Justice and Witness Ministries office offers resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates). Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice.

Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIMI). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hocak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska. Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S.

### **CWS Blankets: Coming together to cover our neighbors**

We can be our strongest, our kindest and our most Christ-like when we are connected. It makes the symbol of a CWS Blanket even more powerful: think of all the individual pieces of thread and wool being pulled together to cover someone with warmth! Without any one of those pieces - without you! - the story would not be the same.

That's what happened in Indianapolis last winter. The Midwest gets cold. You don't have to live on the streets to know that, but for those who do, the deep dives below zero are deadly.

Congregations like Central Christian Church (Indy CCC) in Indianapolis don't want to see their neighbors suffer. So they're doing something about it...and you're helping them. Last winter, this meant the church provided heavyduty CWS Blankets for families without homes. It also meant they opened their doors each night to give people a

comfortable place to sleep, safe from icy temperatures. CWS Blankets made bedding, a warm shelter and hope for life possible.

From you to CWS to groups like Indy CCC to strangers on the streets...we're working together to weave a story of human love and compassion. It's one where families are protected from the cold, comforted after a disaster and reminded that they're not alone.

Will you be a part of this story? Will you make a generous donation to CWS Blankets? We will receive our offering for CWS Blankets during worship on **Sunday, November 10**<sup>th</sup>.



### Service and Outreach cont.

### **Prayers and Concerns**



#### Please hold in prayer

- Steve Holdsworth
- Hilary Montalvo
- Bev Edge



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

## 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.



### "Doggone Good Treats" Project

Over the past several months, the church kitchen has served as the center for the making and baking of dog treats on the second and fourth Mondays at 1:30pm. Progress Industries (PI) participants and church members Stormy Storms, Marti Barker, and Suzanne Van Zandt worked together to mix ingredients, roll out the dough, use cookie cutters to make bone-shaped treats, and bake them with assistance from a PI staff person.

The dog treats were then transported to JCARL where donations will be accepted for the bagged treats. The funds received went to JCARL. Obviously, this combined PI and CUCC project has resulted in many happy dogs and dog owners!

Thank you to all who helped make this ministry happen! This project is now on hiatus for the cooler months and will begin again in the spring.

### **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, host fellowship time, mow the church lawn are located in the vestibule. Please help if you can.

Additionally, there are a few members who need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact the church office to volunteer.

### **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).



### **Worship Attendance**

October Attendance	<u>2018</u>	<u> 2019</u>
First Sunday	33	39
Second Sunday	33	30
Third Sunday	31	27
Fourth Sunday	29	33



### **Birthdays to Celebrate in November**

2-Brent Parker

3-Ginger Dack

4-Jessica Petersen

5-Martha Ellsworth, Dorothy Raymond, Gary Kahn

6-Brad Johnson

8-Richard Hagedorn

9-Jennifer Pryke

12- Jeannie Johnston, Adam Holdsworth

17-Lin Chapé

18-Macy Caves

23-Steve Holdsworth

30-Brandon Pickard



### **Anniversaries to Celebrate in November**

11-Brad & Sarah Penick 25-Ed & Suzanne Van Zandt

### Take note...

### **Congregational Conversation**

"No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15). We have experienced the love of God, and we are not called to hide that love but to share this good news of God's love for all of creation with all of creation.

You are invited to join together with members and friends of Congregational UCC for a Congregational Conversation regarding evangelism. After an abbreviated worship service on **Sunday, November 10**<sup>th</sup>, we will gather in the Parlor to listen for how God is calling us to share the gospel with our community and to share who we are as a congregation seeking to follow faithfully in the ways of Jesus.

### **Church Council Meeting**

The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday**, **November 13**<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the Parish House. Please contact Jane Ann Cotton, 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.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

As we are all aware, lowa weather is always unpredictable. In the event of inclement weather, please check television stations KCCI and WHO or radio station KCOB to learn of any cancellations of worship services or other church events.





## 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. Below please find highlights from the October 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting submitted by Jamie Sawin, Secretary.

- **Treasurer's Report:** A detailed written report was provided and reviewed. Our deficit through September is \$15,944.79, and \$24,242.26 has been transferred from the Endowment Fund.
- Maintenance Report: The elevator lights were not working and has been repaired through paid and volunteer labor. An office light was repaired and a boardroom light bulb was replaced. The heat is back on but there are concerns about the blower on the furnace. Fall clean up is needed for the bushes and roses and is being organized. We will need to revisit the concern about the carpet at the west entry in the spring. A bush was removed on the south side.
- Update on possible partner congregations: We have no new information on Marshalltown UCC. Melbourne UCC has hired an interim for 6 months. Bethany UCC (Baxter) is checking with church leadership regarding exploring the possibility of sharing. Congregational UCC (Baxter) met with Rev. Petersen; they had been looking for a full-time pastor but have no interim.
- ◆ Annual meeting: We still need a third person for Nominating Committee by 10/20.
- ◆ 2020 Budget Adjustment: Errors were found in our budget proposal due to typos regarding salaries for organist and custodian. The minister's health insurance line was adjusted to \$11,472 (due to 2020 rates becoming available). The proposed total budget for 2020 is now \$139,704; we will ask for approval through March 2020. We will also share about the research on sharing a pastor with another congregation.
- Building use agreement with PI: There were concerns regarding "intermittent use" vs. our potential need for funerals. It was decided to remove the "2-day notice" language.
- Active shooter training: This will be held for Council members on 10/27 at noon. Additional people to invite included Bev Thomas, Jim Christenson, and incoming Council members.
- **Stewardship drive:** Will include a series of letters. No new resources will be purchased. The moderator and treasurer will sign letters. November 24 will be "Commitment Sunday" with a soup lunch.
- Pastor Emeritus Designation: Appreciation for David Raymond's ministry was shown through his designation as Pastor Emeritus years ago. This is an honor that is never taken away. The Pastor Emeritus and Moderator will both be listed in the worship bulletin.



### **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 <u>priority order</u>): 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, <u>and/or</u> 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 December 1**<sup>st</sup> (for winter 2019/2020 and spring 2020 enrollment) and April 1<sup>st</sup> (for summer 2020 and fall 2020 enrollment). 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 \$180,500 has been awarded. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.

**Sundays** 

10:00am Worship

11:15am Refreshments

## November



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
Communion Food Pantry Donations All Saints' Sunday	4	6:00pm Racial Justice Book Club Election Day	5:15pm Centering Prayer	5:00pm Ecojustice Bible Study	8	9
Blankets + Offering  10:45am Congregational Conversation	<b>11</b> Veterans' Day	10:00am PI Cleaning 6:00pm "Exploring Islam" presentation	5:15pm Centering Prayer 6:00pm Church Council	5:00pm Ecojustice Bible Study	15	16
10:30am Iowa Interfaith Power and Light presentation  JCARL Collection	18	19	9:30am Morning Circle 5:15pm Centering Prayer	5:00pm Ecojustice Bible Study	22	23
Commitment Sunday Soup Lunch	25	10:00am PI Cleaning 6:00pm Pub Theology	10	<b>28</b> Thanksgiving	29	30

### **Worship Schedule for November**

Date	November 3	November 10 November 17		November 24
Christian Calendar Date	Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost	Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost	Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost	Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Special Events	Communion	Congregational Conversation	Iowa Interfaith Power and Light Presentation	Commitment Sunday and Soup Lunch
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations	CWS Blankets Offering	JCARL Collection	
Scriptures	Jeremiah 6:10, 13-15a	Matthew 10:7-14	Psalm 103:15-17	Genesis 1:1-2:3
Worship Color	White	Green	Green	Green

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

**Green** is the color of growth. It symbolizes the renewal of vegetation and the promise of new life.



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

Marilyn CurrantBetty HotchkinAnn RaridonPark Centre #1Park Centre #40St. Frances Manor500 1st St. N.500 1st St. N.2021 4th Ave.Newton, IA 50208Newton, IA 50208Grinnell, IA 50112

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

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED** 

XXX

**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
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Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Moderator	Jane Ann Cotton		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

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

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