



# The Open Door



## December 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.

### Inside this Issue

What’s Next	1
Worship	2
Service & Outreach	2-3
Prayers & Joys; Pastoral Care; Birthdays & Anniversaries	4
Church Council Catch-Up	5
Council Members Money Musings Covid-19	6
Education	7
A Revery from The Editor	8-9
The Creche	9
Calendar	10

## WHAT’S NEXT?

Winter moves in. The pandemic continues to rage through our country. A new administration forms and waits for January 2021. We wear masks. We socially distance. We stay within our small bubbles. And at Newton CUCC we continue to ask **WHAT’S NEXT?**

Council chose to pursue a relationship with Pastor Jessica Schirm and the Grinnell UCC. Our initial contacts with them were positive and encouraging. We first hoped Pastor Schirm or another pastor from their congregation might preach a sermon in our church, which we could then couple with videos of members of our congregation leading other portions of the service. Grinnell declined having their pastor make that trip to Newton, but offered to check with other pastors in their congregation or to give us a copy of Rev. Schirm’s sermon, allowing us to put together a service in our church, with the addition of the sermon from their church. We continued to expect they could provide pastoral care for our congregation and availability for weddings, funerals, etc. We had hoped all of these arrangements would be finalized by the end of November. We thought we would be launching our own services on December 5th.

Now is the time to remind you of the conclusion of the first **WHAT’S NEXT?** article in the October Open Door: “. . . we all will need to be cautious with our expectations. It has to be ONE STEP AT A TIME. At any point a step may not be achieved as we had hoped it would and we will need to regroup and think creatively about what’s next. “

The step just described has not been achieved as we had hoped. At the moment that is all we can say about it. No negative interactions have occurred, yet communication has floundered. We are unsure as to what we might attribute this, nor how long to wait to see if the process can be resumed. Both the intensity of the pandemic and the demands of the holidays may be involved.

In the meantime, we are regrouping and engaging our creativity! We are adding to Bev Thomas’s **Musical Moments** a welcome, comments, scripture, poem, prayer, brief devotion, etc. by a member of our congregation speaking from our sanctuary. The first of those will appear later this week, with Larry Leitner in the spotlight. AND (insert drum roll here) we will be posting a Christmas Eve service from our sanctuary. The details will come to you in our Administrative Assistant, Annie Gerken’s Weekly Update.

## WORSHIP

### Together from a Distance...

At this time, we continue to suggest you join Grinnell UCC for their virtual worship service on Sunday morning. You receive an email each week from Annie Gerken, our Administrative Assistant, sharing how to access the online worship service with Grinnell UCC. This email has links to multiple YouTube videos, one for each component of the worship service. You have the option to “choose your own service” by clicking on each individual link or to have the videos play automatically in sequence.



**And Remember:** Everyone is invited to “refreshments” each Sunday at 11:30am via Zoom. Bring a snack, lunch (or a dozen donuts!) and join church friends and family for conversation and connection.

Joining with video on a computer or smart device is probably the most fun. However, if you can’t do that or are having a bad hair day, you can join via phone or the audio only option on your computer.

The details for how to join come out each week in the Weekly Update email sent out from the church

## SERVICE & OUTREACH

In every Open Door we suggest reaching out to our homebound members. If you can’t get out, you hope that others will come to you, with a visit, a phone call, a letter, or a card.

This month we are promoting a Christmas Card Blitz! Remember how cards would magically appear on the tables at refreshments and we would write a small note and sign them? We can’t do that this year, but you probably have a stack of Christmas cards you are preparing to send out. Let’s remember these church friends as we send our cards:

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

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



## **OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES**

Without doubt, being able to get together to participate in outreach is more rewarding than doing it alone. As we, together, reach out to help our neighbors, we feel the bonds between us strengthen, which generates more energy for more outreach. As we say so often these days: Unfortunately, we can't do that. Here are some ways you can reach out to make the holidays brighter for the marginalized folks in the community.

### **Neighbors Helping Neighbors**

Unable to host a clothing give away this year, a new socks and underwear give away will happen instead, with the Salvation Army assisting with distribution. If God is calling you to participate in this ministry, please send a check to Neighbors Helping Neighbors, First Lutheran Church, 309 W 3rd St S. Or drop it in the mail slot beside the office door. Any amount will be helpful, even if it is only a dollar!

### **Salvation Army**

Because there is more need than ever, the Salvation Army is keeping up its Red Kettle Campaign. They have implemented several safety measures to keep volunteers healthy; masks, gloves, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer are available at every kettle. You can register to ring online at [registertoring.com](http://registertoring.com). Enter the 50208 zip code and select one of the five Newton locations. Bell ringing is usually done in two-hour blocks, from 9 am to 8 pm.

### **St. Nick's Christmas Club**

The book of families community members can adopt will be located at the Newton YMCA this year. Community members are invited to come and find a family and help fill out their gift list. Once a family is chosen, they will receive an adoption packet with a list of items to purchase, stickers to mark who the gifts are for and a list of instructions.

The St. Nick's program wants each child to have one new outfit, including underwear and socks. Each child provides a wish list and the shopper can choose at least one item on the list to provide. St. Nick's encourages the adopting family to provide an activity that the recipients can enjoy as a family, such as a game or a gift certificate to the movie theater, a local restaurant, or a bowling alley. They also ask the adopting family to provide new wrapping paper and tape to be given to the recipient families to wrap the gifts .

Those wishing to help but not wanting to do the shopping can send monetary donations to the club. Checks can be made payable to St. Nick's Christmas Club to P.O. Box. 162 in Newton. These funds help provide for families who aren't adopted.

Collection will begin Dec. 2 and hours will be announced on St. Nick's Facebook page. Once shoppers have completed their adoption packets, items can be dropped off at Legacy Plaza building 20 . The packages will be distributed to families on Dec. 12th. On that distribution day, volunteers are also needed to be inventory elves, who help as gifts come in to check that each child received everything on the list, shoppers, who go get any items that happen to be missing, and folks to check in families and make sure the correct gifts are delivered to their vehicles.

## Prayers, Concerns, and Joys

Having another share our sorrow lightens the load. Having another share our happiness multiplies the joy.

Please hold in prayer:

- Bruce and Bev Thomas and family following the death of Bruce's father
- Janet Cook and her family following the death of Janet's mother, Mary Cook
- Jim and Linda Christianson as Linda undergoes back surgery

Please celebrate with:

The Jensens as LJ has officially joined the family!!

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

### Emergency Pastoral Care

Our congregation is blessed to have Rev. David Raymond, Pastor Emeritus, offering emergency pastoral care until we have secured a supply pastor or pastoral care assistance. If you have a pastoral emergency, you can reach out to Rev. Raymond directly or through the church office (staffed Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 10:00am-3:00pm). Rev. Raymond can be reached at (641) 521-1506 or davidray@mediacombb.net. Thank you, Rev. Raymond, for continuing to serve us. We appreciate it!

Happy  
BIRTHDAY

- 4– Suzanne Van Zandt, Dickie Teed
- 6– Daniel McPherren
- 10– Megan Pryke
- 11– Katie Schober-Ordenez
- 14– Kayden Jensen
- 15– Pat Van Klompenburg
- 16– Caleb McGinley
- 20– Keiarra Hicks
- 21– Niall Fresh
- 22– Cainan McGinley
- 24– Julie McPherren
- 25– Jesus, son of Mary
- 25– Ayesha Munu
- 27– Alayzha Hicks, Danielle Hasbrouck
- 30– Darrah Schlichte, Liam Fresh
- 31– Rosalyn Smith

Happy  
Anniversary

24– Melissa & Gary Pearson



# Communications

## Church Council Catch Up

To keep the congregation informed about matters that impact our life together, we share notes from Church Council meetings here in the newsletter. The following notes are from the meeting held on November 11, 2020.

Larry Leitner, Treasurer, reported that pledges for next year are about \$20,000 less than anticipated. This will create a huge hole in our budget. He suggested sending an email note to those who pledged this year, to encourage them to pledge again. Approved by consensus. We expect some additional pledges will come in.

Jane Ann Cotton, Moderator noted that Jessica's portrait has been framed by Beckman Gallery and is ready to be hung.

Norm Van Klompenburg reported that final decisions have been made on the sign and its surround. He is hopeful the brickwork will be completed before freezing weather. Jane Ann reminded us all that there is a flurry of repairs at all of the churches around us, and we were very fortunate during the derecho storm.

The Committee for Profile and Ministerial Leadership Options- The committee has chosen to meet through email and ZOOM due to the rise in infection rates. They last met face to face on October 20. The latest Profile draft was sent out today. The committee will look it over to revise and edit. The Council will soon be receiving a copy for review.

On Oct. 20, the committee recommended that we partner with the Grinnell United Church of Christ Congregational to begin special supply pastoral care and weekly virtual services recorded in our sanctuary. The pastor, Jessica Schirm spoke with Norm on Oct. 27. Pastor Schirm stated that pastoral support can be provided, specifics to be negotiated, but a sermon recorded in our sanctuary would not be possible at this time; that can be revisited in the spring. She mentioned that there are some retired ministers in their congregation who might be willing to do this.

After lengthy discussion, the following consensus was reached: We will accept what the Grinnell UCC is offering, while also pursuing how to produce services in our sanctuary. We can start with videoing our members performing parts of the service and adding Rev. Schirm's sermon. We agreed to contact Grinnell to discuss specifics for pastoral care.

Bev Thomas's Musical Moments - It has been 6 weeks since we have had a Musical Moment. Anne Gerken figured out how to video and posted a new one on FB. Within minutes there were 30 people who signed on, so the interest is definitely there. Council agreed we will pursue expanding Musical Moments to contain other offerings, such as a welcome, a short devotion, a scripture, and/or a prayer.

Where God is Leading Us - Postcards were sent to the congregation to remind everyone we are thinking about them and care about them even if we cannot worship together in the sanctuary. Thanks to everyone who thought of it, gave their time to it, and made it happen!

Council agreed to place one mental health sign on the lawn.

The Calling Crew will continue to make calls to the members on their lists.

We will video a brief Christmas Eve service with lighting the Advent candles, the Christmas story and music, which will be posted online.

## Council Composition

Should you have any questions regarding the work of the Council, you are encouraged to contact a Council member:

Interim Moderator: Jane Ann Cotton  
Assistant Moderator: April Faidley  
Secretary: Jennifer Pryke  
Treasurer: Larry Leitner

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



### Money Musings

By Larry Leitner, Treasurer

I start this month's Money Musings with some good news. On November 27, I received word that the U.S. Small Business Administration has approved our application for forgiveness of our Payroll Protection Program loan. We borrowed \$21,677, a loan made available to small businesses to help tide them over losses incurred in the early days of the pandemic. The approval of our application for forgiveness of the loan means essentially that the loan becomes a "grant" and we never have to pay it back. I will return to this later.

In other news, we continue to need pledges! We assumed pledge income of \$85,500 for next year's budget. As of the November Council meeting, we were \$20,000 short of that goal. However, recently, more pledges have come in. We now are \$3,300 short of the goal. We are SO CLOSE. If you haven't pledged for next year, please do so. Making the entire \$85,500 would be so important to our budget.

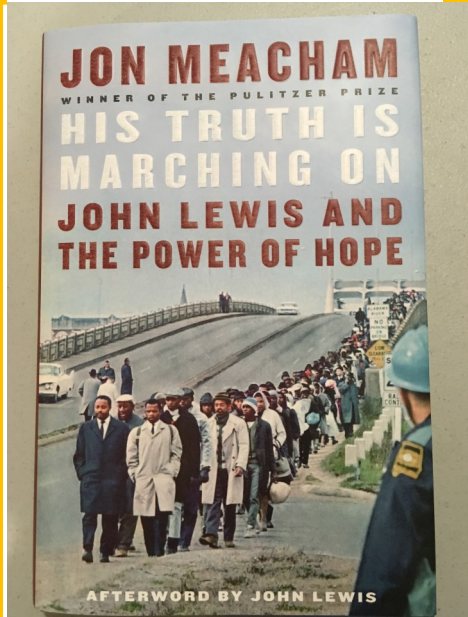
As everyone knows, the pandemic keeps us closed and we cannot meet in person for worship. The closing has had two related financial impacts on our church. First, the closing means that we don't collect as much money from people who are not pledgers. (Many of our pledgers have stood up and made contributions above and beyond what they had pledged. Thank you for helping to close that gap.) On the other hand, our expenses have dropped substantially. Further, our budget assumed that we would begin paying for a half-time pastor effective October 1. Because we have not done that, we have other budgetary savings. When all of this is combined with the \$21,677 PPP money discussed above, I believe that we will not have to draw on our endowment this year for operating expenses. That is great news!!!!

If we can get just a bit more in pledges for next year, we will be looking good financially. GO TEAM NEWTON CUCC!! We can make this happen!

### LOOKING AHEAD: COVID-19 AND WORSHIP

In the last Open Door we reported that the daily totals of positive individuals had dropped between October 23 and the newsletter going to press. Unfortunately, that was a short-lived drop. Positive cases shot up again on October 26 and remained high through November 16, when the count was 56. On November 28 there were 27 new positive cases. The percentages per age group are fairly evenly distributed at the moment. It is good to be able to report that the lowest percentages were in the 70-79 group (8%) and the 80+ group (8%). Last month we reported that Jasper County had 1,117 cases, that is now up to 2,210. Tama, Marion, and Mahaska Counties have similar numbers of cases. Marshall, Story, Polk, and Warren Counties have higher numbers. Poweshiek County, to the east, has a fewer.

# EDUCATION



## *His Truth is Marching On* Book Study

Our next evening book study will be *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and The Power of Hope* by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon Meacham. Goodreads describes the book as “an intimate and inspiring portrait of civil rights icon and longtime U.S. congressman John Lewis, linking his life to the quest for justice in America from the 1950s to the present.” Ann Patchett, the author of 6 novels and 3 books of nonfiction and the Co-Owner of Parnassus Books in Nashville, says, “Seriously, . . . [this] is so moving, so beautiful, and so important for our times. I think the very best Jon Meacham. Should have made the list,” (referring to the New York Times 110 Best Books of the Year list).

John Lewis himself wrote the Afterword. There are any number of quotable quotes in those three pages. Here is just one: “I have long believed—I have long preached—that our nation’s moral compass comes from God. And God so loved the world that he gave us the countless men and women who lost their homes and their jobs for the right to vote. God gave us the children of freedom who lost their lives in a bombing in Birmingham and the three young men who were killed in Mississippi. But above all else God gave us courage—the power to believe that what I call the Spirit of History behind us is stronger than the terror of hatred in front of us. That is what I believed then. And I believe it now.”

The first (Zoom) meeting will be Thursday, January 7, 2021, 5:30pm-6:30pm. That gives you plenty of time to secure your copy of the book. Ask for it for Christmas. Check with the library. If they don’t have it, ask them to purchase it. If it is checked out, put your name on the list. Talk to your friends to see if you can borrow a copy. (Target has it for \$18)

Don’t be intimidated by the book’s 354 pages. The final 100 pages are the appendix, source notes, bibliography, illustration list and credits, and index. The actual reading is only 254 pages! Here is the book club schedule:

January 7: Overture: The Last March & Chapter 1: A Hard Life, A Serious Life

January 14: Chapter 2: The Spirit of History

January 21: Chapter 3: Soul Force

January 28: Chapter 4: In the Image of God and Democracy

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

## A Revery from the Editor

After a dishwasher hose malfunction flooded our basement, it was apparent that the mementos and family history documents stored there in cardboard boxes needed to be organized and more carefully preserved. My sibs and I launched into this process, one that alternates between yawningly boring and absorbingly fascinating. From recipe cards, school records, wedding invitations, letters, diaries, newspaper articles, plat books, deeds, saved objects, photographs, photographs and more photographs the personalities of our forebearers emerge and our memories of those we knew are refreshed and fleshed out.

Of late, I have been thinking about my two grandmothers. I was very fortunate to have spent quite a lot of time with both of them during my entire childhood. Geographically I was closest to my paternal grandmother, Vera Elizabeth Clymer Faidley. [A delightful aside to what I want to say about her, is that she was at the home of her grandparents, directly across the street from our church, when the church burned in 1917. She and her sister made sandwiches for the men fighting the fire.] Grandma Vera made quilts, the best biscuits you ever ate, and equally mouth-watering chicken and dumplings or chicken and noodles. Thinking of how much I loved those chicken and noodles, I tried to make them once---and only once! I discovered how much sheer physical strength went into rolling out noodles thin enough to render them edible.

My Grandma B. (as we called Anne Kooyman Beintema) knit lace doilies and created scrumptious rolls and breads. To please her I was learning how to knit before I entered school. One Pella Tulip Time, when I was about 5 years old, Grandma B., my mom, my sister and I, dressed in Dutch clothing, knit in the window of a furniture store for an afternoon, in front of a backdrop of beautiful knit doilies and tablecloths. You know those white, starched, Dutch hats that have “wings” that swoop out on either side? I thought those were really cool and I was excited to wear one for the gig in the shop window. Instead my mother made we wear a little white knit hat that tied under my chin. Boo! Do you also know butterhorn rolls? No one, and I mean no one, could make better ones than my Grandma B. We waited for them at every holiday dinner and ate as many as we could get away with.

To me at the time, my grandmothers were simply grandmothers, very kind, always helpful, delighted with me and supportive. Only much later did I learn that their backgrounds were completely different. They both had 4 siblings, which about covers the similarities. Grandma Vera’s parents both owned quite a lot of farmland. I have a stained glass window that was in the house her parents built when they were married. There are studio portraits of Vera as a baby and when she graduated from the 8th grade. I believe the family was solidly upper middle class. On the other hand, my Grandma B.’s father died (in the poor house) only a few years after he immigrated from the Netherlands, leaving his wife with four small daughters and another on the way. He has no marked grave, I assume because he was buried in a pauper’s grave. My great grandmother held body and soul together by cleaning houses and serving as a midwife. The family was dependent upon her brother for a place to live. I believe the family was solidly at or barely above poverty.

Yet they both lived their adult lives very similarly: they expressed themselves by their activities, their relationships, their talents, and their creativity. I don’t know that they ever thought, “Is this a good way for me to spend my time?” They lived out who they had been created to be. They were strong, purposeful women who contributed to their families and their communities. Each of you is doing the same. (cont.)

## A REVERY FROM THE EDITOR (CONT.)

You watch out for your neighbors. You write a letter to your friend who lives in a retirement home. You are grateful for each meal you eat. You purchase extra masks in case someone needs one. You wear your mask to the grocery because you care about the community members you will encounter there. You live in the give and take of a long marriage, gifting your “us” beyond yourselves, into your family and the community. You support your children and grandchildren, and because you love them and show it, an extra portion of happiness and self-confidence is added to their souls. You call friends, especially ones who live alone because you know they carry an extra burden of loneliness in these times of social distancing. You write postcards to tell friends you think of them and miss them. You volunteer to help your church navigate a difficult transition and show up for every meeting to contribute your experience. You are quiet, and your quiet blesses those who are worked up with noisy anxiety. Some days you roast a chicken for dinner and some days you put a frozen pizza in the oven; you serve them equally with a smile. You ready your house and yard for the winter that is approaching. You survive Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting, holding fast until the rate of new infections subsides. You donate to the Socks and Underwear drive so that your neighbors in need don't have to choose between food on the table or a decent pair of underwear. You take a moment to tell your significant other that there isn't another person in the whole world with whom you would rather quarantine.

Through it all you are neither diminished or held back, nor pumped up or exalted by your backgrounds. Most likely without giving it much intentional thought, you are expressing yourself by your activities, your relationships, your gifts, and your creativity. And the rest of us are grateful to you and inspired by you! Even a pandemic isn't stopping you! Keep smiling. Keep being who you are.

April Faidley



## The Crèche

Crèche is a word borrowed from French. It originally meant “manger.” By the late 18th century, it had lost this meaning and had come to refer instead to a representation of the Nativity scene itself.

This beautiful pastel crèche was created for our church by Deloris Ober. This is a large scene, with 15 figures that are exquisitely painted. It would have taken Deloris many, many hours to complete. She enjoyed ceramics,

obviously developing her skills well past the level of mere “hobby.” We are grateful that she shared her gifts with us and we can enjoy this crèche year after year.

Deloris served as the Sunday School Superintendent in the late 70's and early 80's. The church used to have Christmas workshops for making Christmas decorations, with both adults and children involved. Deloris would provide the ideas, materials, and a sample so people could see what the finished product would look like. She recruited volunteers from the congregation to help with the projects. The evening would end with a potluck or a soup supper. Kids could take a decoration home and, in addition, could make one for the Children's Tree in the parlor. Often Deloris would make small ceramic gifts for the Sunday School teachers. [Thanks to Jan Turk and Carolyn Hobbs for this information]

**Sundays**

**Online Worship—viewed at your convenience**

**11:30am Zoom refreshments**



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC 2nd Sunday of Advent			6:00 pm Church Council Via Zoom	Hanukkah begins at sundown		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC 3rd Sunday of Advent				National Maple Syrup Day	Hanukkah ends	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC 4th Sunday of Advent	Winter Solstice			Christmas Eve Service	<b>Christmas Day</b>	Kwanzaa
27	28	29	30	31		
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC				New Year's Eve		

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.

Administrative Assistant	Anne Gerken	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
Interim Moderator	Jane Ann Cotton		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

**Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesdays and Thursdays; not open to the public**

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Newton Congregational UCC: [www.uccnewton.org](http://www.uccnewton.org)