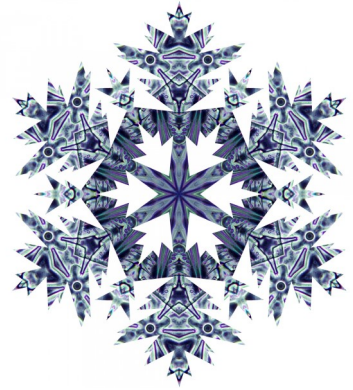




The Open Door

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 **servicing** all of God's creation and **striving** for justice and peace throughout our community, our nation, and the world.

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2022: A NEW YEAR

With the new year we welcome new leadership. Dorothy Raymond graciously agreed to be on the ballot for Moderator and was duly elected at the Annual Meeting in October. We are very fortunate to have Dorothy as Moderator and look forward to her leadership.

Jane Ann Cotton, who served ably as Moderator for as long as most of us can remember (smiley face here!), has moved to the position of Assistant Moderator.

Two members of Council agreed to continue to serve in their positions for another term: Jenni Pryke as Secretary and Larry Leitner as Treasurer. April Faidley moves to a one-year appointment as a Member-at-Large. We have benefited from the good work of these three individuals and are very fortunate for the stability this gives the Council.

We look forward to new and exciting changes during the year 2022. In that regard, the Lutheran church reviewed their goals for the future and are committed to continuing to work with us on a joint profile to secure a pastor for both of our congregations. A small group composed of some members of each of the search committees will be intensely working on the profile early in the year. Our own profile took many weeks to complete. A joint profile between two different denominations will be more complicated, with a number of issues to sort out. Thus, at this time, we don't have any guess as to when the profile will be completed and posted, but we will stay on top of letting you know what is happening.

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

John 13:34

It is as we love and care for one another that we create a healthy, vibrant community. We can communicate with church members and friends who aren't as mobile as they once were. We can celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with one another because these are joyous occasions. We can pray for members, the families of members, and all of our friends, sometimes because they want and need our prayers and sometimes because we are overwhelmingly happy to have them in our lives and are so grateful for them.

BIRTHDAYS

1/2 Reece Caves
 Larry Leitner
1/4 Ardelle Morgan
1/7 Robert Ramsey, Jr.
1/8 Betty Jean Hotchkin
1/9 Laura Parker
1/11 Adam Hansch
1/12 William Shump
1/16 Jan Turk
1/21 Jim Christenson
1/22 Melissa Pearson
 Stormy Storms
1/24 Eileen Gerken
1/27 Joy Faidley-Leitner
1/28 Diane Marvelli
1/29 Ed Van Zandt
1/31 Charlotte Ross

ANNIVERSARIES

LESS ABLE TO BE OUT AND ABOUT

Marilyn Currant
Bev Edge
Martha Ellsworth
Betty Jean Hotchkin
Norma (Jeannie) Johnson

Phone numbers, addresses, and, in many cases, email addresses for all of the folks listed above are in the 2021 Church Directory. If you do not find them under **Local Members & Friends**, check **Out of Town Members & Friends**, on p. 16.

Continued on p. 3

Prayers, Concerns, and Joys

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

Please hold in prayer:

Don Deppe

Martha Ellsworth

Stormy Storms

Kelly Jo Zach

Brent Parker

Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh

Deb Swihart (Melissa Pearson's mother)

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

In the event of a pastoral emergency, please contact Rev. David Raymond, Pastor Emeritus, either directly at (641) 521-1506 or davidray@mediacombb.net. or through the church office at (641) 792-3773 (staffed Tue, Wed, and Thur 10 am to 3 pm). Rev. Raymond is offering emergency pastoral care until we have secured a supply pastor or pastoral care assistance.

***Please remember that when expressing our Joys & Concerns **during the worship service** the information we are sharing is being recorded to the internet. It is therefore, IMPERATIVE when we share a name, that we remain sensitive to that individual's wishes regarding their comfort with public information versus anonymity. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Church Council.

A Brief COVID update

Individuals make up a church, yet "a church" doesn't exist until those individuals come together, right? Similarly, individuals get sick, yet 'public health' impacts all of us. Where, how, and in what numbers individuals come together are important factors in the spread of disease and in maintaining public health. The intersection of "church" and "public health" can be a crucial one for a community. In addition, I have observed less reporting on the pandemic recently, probably because we would like it to be over and we have habituated to it. That does not make it go away. In those regards, we will continue to highlight information about COVID-19 and its variants.

Internationally: The Omicron Variant is now the leading cause of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths world wide. We now know that is the most contagious variant to date; it spreads quickly and easily. It appears to be less deadly, however, more children are becoming infected than with previous variants. The rise in cases that began around the middle of October has continued, becoming precipitous over the last few days. On December 27 the 7-day average of new cases was 859,443; on January 2 it was 1,448,761.

In the United States: On Decemberr27 the 7-day average of new cases was 239,100; on January 2 it was 413,207.

In Iowa: The last peak was Dec. 9, when the 7-day average of new cases was 1,768. On Jan. 2 it was 1,649.

In Jasper County: On November 25 the 7-day average of new cases was 17, On December 29 it was 21, and on December 31 (the last day for which records are currently available) the 7-day average of new cases was 19.

The most effective steps individuals can take to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus is to keep a physical distance of at least 6 feet from others; wear a well-fitting mask; open windows to improve ventilation; avoid poorly ventilated or crowded spaces; keep hands clean; cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue; and get both vaccinations, plus the booster.

EDUCATION

The Book Study's exciting new selection is *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. The following description is from the flap of the book. As you can imagine, the flap is written to put the book in as bright a light as possible. I (Open Door editor) have read this book. I endorse every word of this quote:

“In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings. . . . Beautifully written, original, and revealing, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* is an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of American life today.”

This is a meaty text of 385 pages. It is planned for 14 weeks, with weekly readings being 35 pages or less. We will begin on January 13 and end on April 14, just before Easter. This plan, of course, can change at any time, based on how the participants experience the material and what pace they prefer to pursue.

Proposed schedule:

January 13	Part One, pp. 3-35
January 20	Chapters 4-6, pp. 39-72
January 26	Chapters 7-9, pp. 73-96
February 3	The Foundations of Caste & Pillars 1-3, pp. 99-114
February 10	Pillars 4 & 5, pp. 115-140
February 17	Pillars 6-8, pp. 141-164
February 24	Brown Eyes versus Blue Eyes, Chapters 10-12, pp. 167-201
March 3	Chapters 13-15, pp. 202-237
March 10	Chapters 16-18, pp. 238-260
March 17	Chapters 19-21, pp. 263-281
March 24	Chapters 22-24, pp. 282-308
March 31	Chapters 25 & 26, pp. 311—332
April 7	Chapters 27-29, pp. 333-357
April 14	Part 7, pp. 361-188

The church's ZOOM account has been discontinued. If anyone would like to participate but is unable to attend, please contact the church office to discuss internet participation options.



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. Notes from the December 2021 Council meeting were not available when this newsletter went to press. The following updates are from the written reports on property maintenance and finances that were submitted electronically prior to the meeting, by Norm Van Klompenburg and Larry Leitner.

Property maintenance: Thanks to all who helped decorate the Church Building and grounds for the Christmas Season!

Preparations for winter are well underway:

- * Furnace filters have been changed.
- * Furnace condensate traps have been drained and cleaned
- * North gutter has been repaired
- * Main building NW roof shingle damage has been patched.
- * Thermostat temperature settings are being monitored.
- * Furnace operation is being monitored

If you notice other issues that need attention please notify Norm.

Thanks to all who have helped in getting all of this important work completed. We still need volunteers for several interior patch projects. If you are able to assist in completing any maintenance work, please let Norm know.

Finances: We had a good month in terms of income in November. In terms of expenses, we continue to spend substantially less on Pastoral expenses than budgeted (almost \$3,000 under budget) while we spend a bit more on our organist (about \$100 over budget), because we did not budget for Meditations and Music. We also came out about \$400 under budget for Maintenance costs, despite the fact that our building insurance rose more than we anticipated. I am, by the way, continuing to monitor our utilities to see if the increase built into the 2022 budget actually seems like it will be enough.

Turning to the year-to-date figures, our income looks good thus far. If you take the pledge income we have received during the 2021 calendar year and add the 2021 prepaid pledges, we stand, as of the end of November, with \$81,878.97 in pledge income. We budgeted \$82,615 for the year. Thus, we enter December needing less than \$750 to meet our budget projections for pledged income. I can confidently say that we will make that projection as I have a check given to me on December 2 that will more than put us over the top.

Our current Telephone and Internet expenses are about \$20 over what we budgeted for each month. About half of the overage comes from our Zoom subscription of \$10/month. We used Zoom extensively while we were shut down for the pandemic; currently we use it rarely, primarily for two participants in the Thursday evening book club. These individuals are not doing the current book. Whether they re-join for future books is unclear. Neither of them is a member of the church. We could consider the Zoom expense an Outreach. Alternatively, we could say it has served its purpose and we should quit paying for it. What is Council's pleasure? [Note: Council decided to discontinue the Zoom account.]

Council Composition

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

Moderator: Dorothy Raymond
Treasurer: Larry Leitner

Assistant Moderator: Jane Ann Cotton
At-Large: Norm Van Klompenburg, Les Morgan, April Faidley

Secretary: Jennifer Pryke

A Revery from the Editor

This month's Revery comes via my pastor friend, Cyndi Alte. In Cyndi and Doug's Christmas letter they included this poem. As you know by now, I am awed, inspired, and energized by poetry, by how a few spare words, artfully arranged, can hold so much emotion and embody so much meaning.

The poem is from the website, *Unfolding Light*, and was written by Steve Garnaas-Holmes.

Rock the Child

The Christ child is no longer in the manger.

The Holy Infant is in your heart now—

beloved, full of God's possibilities,

warm with God's gentle presence,

God's tender newness within you.

Love the Christ child.

And how do you do that?

Sit there, mostly.

Hold the child.

Let the mystery of love flow

between your heart and the child's.

Like a new parent,

let this become part of your routine.

Give time to simply sit

and hold the divine child in your heart.

Rock the child,

rock the child,

rock the child.



JANUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
						New Year's Day
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11am Worship with Rev. Mark Holmes		10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments				
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
11am Worship with Rev. Mark Holmes		10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments	6:00 pm Church Council	5 pm Caste book study Parish House		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
11am Worship with Rev. Mark Holmes	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments		5 pm Caste book study Parish House		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
11am Worship with Rev. Mark Holmes	Deadline for Submissions to the Open Door	10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments		5 pm Caste book study Parish House		
30	31					
11am Worship with Rev. Mark Holmes						

Congregational United Church of Christ
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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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Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

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