

# *The Open Door*

## September 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

Derecho Damage	1-2
NEWS FLASH!!	2
Worship	2-3
Service & Outreach	3-4
Church Council Catch-Up & Council Composition	5
Money Musings	6
Education	6
A Revery from The Editor	7
Calendar	8



### 8-10-2020 Derecho Damage

By Norm Van Klompenburg



In the picture to the left you can see the size of the roots that snapped when the tree fell AND the rubble underneath the tree left from the 1917 church fire!

Larry and April informed me of storm damage at the church as the wind was subsiding. They were working there and took shelter in the stairwell to the basement.

I went to the church as soon as travel through town was possible to inspect the damage. The large locust

tree in the west yard was uprooted. It fell on and destroyed the sign. Fortunately the tree fell towards the southeast and there is no apparent damage to the exterior windows nor the walls. Closer inspection by Jim C. revealed that there is a bow in the glass on the north panel of the west window. No fractures are visible but we will evaluate if this may be related to the storm. Lin C. has requested bids for the removal of the tree and associated debris and thus far one bid for has been obtained. We are evaluating this bid and will likely recommend acceptance so the removal can be scheduled within the next several weeks.

The Church sign was completely destroyed (as you can see in the picture above) and will need to be replaced. We have contacted two sign companies and will share preliminary recommendations as we receive their proposals.

The bench and the cornerstone area have been disrupted. They will be re-positioned and leveled when the debris is removed. (continued on page 2)

## Derecho Damage, cont.

The west window in the Bell tower was blown open but not damaged. Jim and I closed and secured it. While there we noted that the ceiling trap door leading to the bell chamber was out of place and that was secured as well.

The power pole near the transformer in the alley was shattered and wires were hanging loose. That has since been repaired and power has been restored to the church. We disconnected the main power supply to the elevator prior to the repairs to avoid possible damage. The elevator and other systems seem to be in good operating condition now that the power has been restored.

There is some roof damage to the ridge cap on the north side and the west side of the upper roofs. Jim and I inspected the damage; it appears that the underlayment is still intact and should prevent water infiltration in case of rain. We have contacted a contractor to schedule repairs but crews are apparently very busy with more urgent repairs around the area. We will ask that the contractor do a closer inspection to determine if there is additional damage.

There is a broken pane in one of the storm windows on the upper north wall of the main building. Tree branches have been removed from the roofs and the covered walkway.

We have been in communication with the adjuster and have the necessary forms and instructions to document and file a claim. We have been cleared to take care of immediate needs that serve to prevent further damage. The insurance coverage appears to be adequate for the damage noted thus far.

The area surrounding the tree damage has been marked with caution tape to warn the public of the potential hazards and to discourage anyone from approaching or climbing on the tree. At this time everything appears to be secure, but we need to monitor the building and surroundings for less obvious damage. If you notice any issues, please inform us.

## NEWS FLASH

Just as the Open Door was “going to press,” we received Rev. Petersen’s announcement that she has accepted a call to a fulltime position in Bloomington, Indiana. She will be in the pulpit for the last time at Newton CUCC on September 27th. We are grateful for her years of service with us and we all wish Jessica, Martin, and Jabali the best in their new city and their new church.

## Worship

### Together from a Distance...

The August Open Door informed you we would be joining with Ames UCC for the final Sundays of Rev. Petersen’s sabbatical. Council reconsidered this decision. So many unusual events have piled on top of one another in the last few weeks and months that it can feel chaotic. We decided to suggest you continue joining Grinnell UCC for their virtual worship service on Sunday morning. You will receive an email each week sharing how to access the online worship service with Grinnell UCC. This email will have links to multiple YouTube videos, one for each component of the worship service. You will have the option to “choose your own adventure” by clicking on each individual link or to have the videos play automatically in sequence.

[In case you are curious about how Ames UCC is dealing with virtual worship, you can access their online worship service through their Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/user109668635>. You will simply need to click on the worship service for the appropriate date.]

**And Remember:** Everyone is invited to “refreshments” each Sunday at 11:30am via Zoom. Bring a snack or even lunch, and join church friends and family for conversation and connection. While you are encouraged to join with video on a computer or smart device if (download the Zoom app for best results), you can also join via phone:

**Join Zoom Meeting online:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89097061745>

**Join via Phone:** (312) 626-6799; Meeting ID: 890 9706 1745

## Worship, cont.

### Musical Moments

During the Coronavirus pandemic we have been able to gather virtually in our sanctuary each Sunday morning for online worship. Despite missing one another, we have appreciated this approximation of our usual Sunday experience. However, while Rev. Petersen is on leave, this is not happening. Here is an alternative. You can visit our beautiful sanctuary virtually and enjoy some delicious, relaxing moments as Bev Thomas plays the organ for you. Videos containing views of the church sanctuary accompanied by Bev on the piano or organ will be posted to the church Facebook page each Wednesday at 2:00pm and subsequently shared on our church website. A personal, private concert.....ahhhhh.



## Looking Ahead: When might we worship together?

By Jane Ann Cotton

Prior to the publication of the August Open Door a team was established to explore and set guidelines for our much anticipated return to in-person worship together. I know we all are looking forward to that time when we can feel safe gathering and sharing the worship in our sanctuary. Unfortunately, we cannot meet the requirements that are necessary for us to feel safe yet.

The team consists of Carolyn Hobbs, Jenni Pryke, Jane Ann Cotton, and Jessica Petersen. They agreed on the following basic guidelines that must be in place in order to resume in-person worship:

1. Number of local COVID-19 cases consistently declining for two months
2. Widespread availability of testing
3. Contact tracing taking place
4. No shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE)

The COVID-19 Response Team will continue monitoring these four factors. Of course we are looking forward to vaccine availability and we aren't there yet. I know it looks and sounds bleak and we need to prepare for this break from in-person gatherings to continue through the end of the year.

Take the effort to contact someone you haven't seen or talked to since we were required to meet virtually. Our relationships with each other are valuable and hopefully can be strengthened even through we are apart. "Coffee time" occurs each Sunday on Zoom at 11:30am or by phoning in. Obviously, not all have internet access but most of us have phones. Make the call to a church friend soon; you will be glad you reached out.

## Service and Outreach

### Emergency Pastoral Care

Our congregation is blessed to have Rev. David Raymond, Pastor Emeritus, offering emergency pastoral care while Rev. Petersen is away on leave (August 1<sup>st</sup>-September 26<sup>th</sup>). If you have a pastoral emergency, please do reach out to Rev. Raymond directly or through the church office (staffed Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am-3:00pm). Rev. Raymond can be reached at (641) 521-1506 or davidray@mediacombb.net. Thank you, Rev. Raymond, for putting on the mantle of the servant yet again. We appreciate your service.



**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> St. N.  
 Newton, IA 50208

## Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer:

- \* Richard Hagedorn and family following the death of his wife, Kay
- \* Jim & Jenny Pryke and family following the death of their mother, Doris Pryke
- \* Judy Brody and family following the deaths of her brother and sister-in-law
- \* Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- \* Tami Hood-Hayes, friend of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
- \* Allison Lanphier, friend of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh

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



### **Birthdays to Celebrate** **in September**

3- Rick McNew; 8- Ashley Christenson  
 9- Catfish Cottrell, Shirley Nuzum  
 10- Zach Johnson; 12- Sonia Sledge  
 13- Steve Schober; 15- Anna Mae Morgan  
 19- Collin McGinley  
 20- Christopher Pearson, Karen Shump  
 23- Brian Schmidt; 24- Clarence Planer  
 28- Gary Pearson



### **Anniversaries to Celebrate** **in September**

8- Ron & Diane Marvelli  
 12- Jessica Petersen & Newton CUCC  
 14- Jerry & Jamie Sawin  
 20- David & Kelly Currant  
 27- Gary & Janie Kahn  
 30- Gary & Lori Yoder





# 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. Highlights from the July 8th Council meeting are below. Complete minutes of the meeting (which were approved by the Church Council during the August 19th meeting) are available in the church office; please contact Anne Gerkin or Jennifer Pryke if you would like a copy.

- **Opening devotions:** Jessica suggested each person share something essential to our ministry: April– spiritual leadership; Larry– the people and relationships; Norm– the community of people; Sonia– spiritual leadership; Sam – the family aspect, worship, educational series; Jenni– being there in times of crisis. We have this work before us. May God be with us as we move forward.
- **Treasurer's Report:** We have received two bids on insurance. The bids are lower because the replacement cost of the buildings was reduced. The Finance Committee recommended, and the Council concurred, staying with Grinnell Mutual.
- **Maintenance Report:** Cleaning and monitoring of all areas continues. The outdoor area looks good. Thanks to Bart for mowing, Les for fertilizer application and weed control, and others for things we may not have noticed. The water shut off at the curb has been located and is documented. This took 2 years because no one knew where it was. The water main, which is 100 years old, will eventually need replacement.
- **The Life of the Church during the Pastor's Sabbatical/Vacation:** During August we will join the on-line services of the UCC in Grinnell. During September we will partner with the UCC in Ames. We plan to have an ecumenical service with the Presbyterian church at the end of September or beginning of October, after Jessica's sabbatical/vacation is ended. Throughout August and September we will have a video social hour, using Zoom. April and Jenni will assume responsibility for the Newsletter. Dorothy Raymond will maintain the website. Bev is preparing music videos for each Wednesday Jessica is gone; they will be posted on FaceBook.
- **Administrative Assistant Position:** Annie Gerken spoke with Jessica about her interest in the position; she is willing to work 10 hours/week. Norm noted that the position should probably be advertised. Larry agreed this ordinarily would be the proper procedure, but we need someone immediately so they can be trained before Barbara vacates the position. The personnel committee will conduct a zoom interview and make their recommendation in regard to Annie's suitability for that job. Barbara has said she is willing to be flexible with her departure date in order to make sure the new person is trained.
- **Transition to half time pastor:** A group, consisting of Norm, April, Lin, and Jamie Sawin was formed to rewrite the call agreement to reflect the October 1st change to a half time pastor. This rewrite will focus on a new agreement with Jessica, but also will serve as advance work on the call agreement we will need for a new pastor once Jessica has secured a fulltime position.
- **Moderator transition:** Samantha Sledge has resigned from her position as Moderator, due to the complications Covid-19 as created in her work schedule and her availability for Council meetings. Jane Ann Cotton was suggested as an interim Moderator and she agreed to serve until December 31st. April, currently the Assistant Moderator, will take over in January as Moderator, and serve out the remainder of Sam's term, an additional year.
- We wish Jessica well on her sabbatical/vacation (and promise to do our best to leave her alone)!

### **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

At-Large: Lin Chapé

Assistant Moderator: April Faidley

At-Large: Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh

Secretary: Jennifer Pryke

At-Large: Norm Van Klompenburg

Treasurer: Larry Leitner

Pastor: Jessica Petersen



## Money Musings

By Larry Leitner, Treasurer

As you might expect, the closure of the church due to the Coronavirus pandemic has played havoc with our budget. To refresh your memory, we have three major sources of weekly income: pledges (congregants pay regularly, having committed to a certain annual amount), non-pledges (regular payments from folks who have not pledged a given annual amount), and loose offerings (money anonymously put into the collection plates). Because we do not know when we might re-open the church, Council had decided to zero out any budget expectations from the non-pledge and loose categories. Zeroing those out reduces our income expectations by about \$1,040/month.

During the initial couple of months following our shut down, we were doing well on the income side of the budget. Several folks stepped up their pledge giving so we actually exceeded our budget for pledge income. However, the last couple of months have seen a drop off in pledge income. In July, for example, we collected \$3,000 in pledge income. We need to collect \$4,250/month to hit our budget. While we currently are not hurting as, for the year, our pledge income has held up well, more months like July could change our situation.

Our shut down also has affected our expenses, predominantly in a good way. Since we only use air conditioning for 5-10 hours/week in the Parish House, we currently are \$750 under budget for electricity. We are \$600 under budget for heat. Should we continue to be shut down, I anticipate continued savings in these areas. Should we open the church back up, though, utility expenses will, of course, go up.

Our Payroll Protection Program grant of \$21,677, has prevented us from needing to tap into any of our reserves to date and I do not anticipate needing to tap any reserves before the last quarter of the year. On the other hand, there will be additional, unplanned for, expenses for clean up and repair of the church from the derecho storm. If pledge income remains down, we may need to use funds from the reserves sooner than I would like.

## EDUCATION

### “See No Stranger” Book Study

We are offering a Thursday evening study of “See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love” by Valarie Kaur. The group will **meet via Zoom** (some online with video and others via phone with audio only) for a five-week study of this powerful and inspiring book. Join this virtual gathering on **Thursday evenings, 5:30pm-6:30pm**, to explore this newly published work by a renowned Sikh activist, filmmaker, and civil rights lawyer, as she declares that revolutionary love is the call of our time, a radical, joyful practice that extends in three directions: to others, to our opponents, and to ourselves. Ms. Kaur enjoins us to see no stranger but instead look at others and say: *You are a part of me I do not yet know*. Starting from that place of wonder, the world begins to change: It is a practice that can transform a relationship, a community, a culture, even a nation. “See No Stranger” is a practical guide to changing the world, a synthesis of wisdom, a chronicle of personal and communal history – all joined together by a story of awakening. (<https://valariekaur.com/see-no-stranger/>)

Participants should purchase a book and be prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The full meeting and reading schedule is as follows: August 20<sup>th</sup>—Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-2 (Wonder; Grieve); August 27<sup>th</sup>—Chapters 3-4 (Fight; Rage); September 3<sup>rd</sup>—Chapters 5-6 (Listen; Reimagine); September 10<sup>th</sup>—Chapters 7-8 (Breathe; Push); September 17<sup>th</sup>—Chapter 9 & Epilogue (Transition; Joy).

#### Join Zoom Meeting Online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89498012155?pwd=cmE3bXNkcVJnODQvV1ljNytZZUFuQT09>

#### Join via Phone:

(929) 436-2866 or (301) 715 8592; Meeting ID: 894 9801 2155; Passcode: 375275

# A Revery from the Editor

When we were considering a move to Iowa, I discovered this concise, thoughtful poem by Emily Dickinson:

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,  
One clover, and a bee.  
And revery.  
The revery alone will do.  
If bees are few.

It became, for me, the focus of our plan to build a house in the country, on the prairie. After years of living in a large city, with its bustle, hectic pace, and noise, the prairie would offer the opportunity for revery. So I share with you my most recent revery.

The Covid-19 pandemic. No in-person worship. Minimal social contact as we stay at home. How do we get a test if we think we need one? Will our children be attending open schools? Will that feel safe? Do our hospitals have adequate capacity and adequate personal protective equipment?

Transitioning to a half-time pastor. Will Rev. Petersen occupy this position for a while? How do we locate a new pastor who is interested in half-time work? What will it be like to get to know a new pastor?

Death. Suddenly, shockingly, a member has died. A mother has passed away. Our friend has lost her brother and her sister-in-law. How do we commemorate their passing when we aren't gathering for a funeral? How do we grieve without friends to hug us and bear our sorrow?

An election year. How will campaigning happen during this time of masks and social distancing? Will we be able to vote by mail? How do we get a ballot? Or will we go to the polls, standing in lines 6' apart? What will it be like to have a new person in the White House or what will it be like to not have a new person in the White House?

And on top of all of this, what the heck is a derecho? We knew from experience long before we added the word to our vocabulary. How long will it take to clean up? How long will it take to get our households, properties, and businesses back in working order? How much loss will our community, our church, and we, as individuals, suffer?

A whole variety of metaphors come to mind describing how all of this feels and what it is like to live through it. Uncertainties stack upon uncertainties; the pile is getting high. When will it fall over? The days are like a train speeding through a tunnel. Is there any light at the end? We stand at a crossroad where the alternative paths radiate out like the spokes of a wheel. Which way do we go? There seem to be a thousand things that need doing immediately. Where do we start?

I have always felt my church community as a touchstone. Our old friend Merriam-Webster says a touchstone is a fundamental or quintessential part or feature. That sounds right. The sacred space of our church, the members gathered, the worship shared, are all fundamental, quintessential features of our lives, when we choose to make it so. Amidst the chaos of NOW, we can continue to choose to make it so. We can join in on-line worship, we can check in to see if there is a job that needs doing, we can call or email other members to let them know we are thinking about them and miss them or to ask if they need anything, we can participate in Zoom Refreshments to see other beloved faces and share our experiences.

It is more difficult now, to feel the glue of shared values and beliefs holding us together. It takes more courage and determination to not be deflated and defeated by the onslaught of uncertainty coming at us from every direction. As Rev. Petersen says, "Take a deep breath. Let it out. Pause." Find a quiet place within you and let yourself relax there. Expect only from yourself the single next thing that needs to be done and do it. Then pause again. And on Sunday morning return to the touchstone for some additional renewal.

April Faidley

## Sundays

**10:00am Online Worship**

**11:30am Zoom  
Refreshments**



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
				5:30pm See No Stranger book study via Zoom		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC	Labor Day		6:00pm Church Council via Zoom	5:30pm See No Stranger book study via Zoom		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC				5:30pm See No Stranger book study via Zoom		Rosh Hashanah
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Online Worship w/ Grinnell UCC				5:30pm See No Stranger book study via Zoom		
27	28	29	30			
Rev. Petersen returns for her last service with us.	Yom Kippur					



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Pastor	Rev. Jessica Petersen	792-3773 (Office) 641-840-2672 (Cell)	revjessicapetersen@gmail.com
Administrative Assistant	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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