



The Open Door

JULY/AUGUST 2021



**CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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Who We Are

We are a community of God's beloved dedicated to **following** the teachings of Jesus as we live our faith by **loving** and **serving** all of God's creation and **striving** for justice and peace throughout our community, our nation, and the world.



OUR DOORS ARE OPEN!!!

The doors have been open for worship since May 30th. If you have not been able to attend, here is what you will experience when you do: We meet at 10:15 in the fellowship room for conversation and coffee. Rev. Mark Holmes, interim pastor at the Lutheran Church, crosses the alley after their service concludes and joins our 11 a.m. service. Our outstanding keyboardist, Bev Thomas, is in place at the piano and organ. The order of service is projected on the north wall of the sanctuary. Singing and praying aloud in unison were added back into the service on June 27th. Pledges and monetary gifts can be placed in the collection plate at the back of the church. We are trying (and I mean TRYING—as in many people and many hours) to live stream the service on Facebook. We continue to work on that. To reduce ambient noise in the video, four pews in the center section of the sanctuary are corded off. (The very quiet foam core people sit in this section.) If you want an announcement made or a joy & concern shared, these requests can be written on cards at the back of the church and will be read during the service by the liturgist. The service lasts 30 minutes.

(cont. p. 2)

(cont. from p. 1) Based on CDC guidelines, if you are fully vaccinated, you may attend without a mask and do not need to socially distance from others. If you are not yet fully vaccinated, or you choose to do so, protect yourself by wearing a mask and practicing social distancing.

We are not only dealing with resuming services after a long closure, we are also adjusting to not having a pastor facilitating and coordinating all aspects of the service, as Jessica's departure occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 shutdown. Thus, you may notice we are somewhat rough around the edges. For example, some Sunday mornings we have an usher and some Sundays we don't. The kinks will gradually get ironed out. **We would welcome volunteers to help with those kinks!!!**

Disclaimer: Newton Congregational United Church of Christ cannot guarantee that in-person attendance at a church event will not result in contracting the Coronavirus that causes Covid-19 or any other virus, bacteria, or illness. Newton Congregational United Church of Christ assumes no liability for any communicable disease believed to be contracted at the church. Persons who attend any event at the church do so at their own risk. For the utmost caution, members may choose to wear face masks at all times over their mouths and noses, to avoid touching other attendees, and to use hand sanitizer after touching any surfaces or objects. Please stay home if you have signs of a communicable illness of any kind.

Attendance Figures

Despite lingering concerns about the coronavirus and many members traveling during the summer, we are pleased to see the attendance at church services gradually climbing.

We can count on the steadfastness of those foam core folks! They are in the pews every Sunday. Unfortunately, we haven't had any luck convincing them to volunteer for tasks that need doing!

	Warm People	Foam Core People	Total
May 30	12	15	27
June 6	18	15	33
June 13	16	15	31
June 20	15	15	30
June 27	20	15	35

Pastoral Care

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

SERVICE & OUTREACH

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Matthew 25: 35-36

Our mission is to serve others, especially the marginalized and vulnerable. Each month the newsletter has been publishing our growing outreach in monetary contributions, in-kind contributions, and ways members have been reaching out to assist others. No information was received by the editor for inclusion in this newsletter.

How about letting the newsletter know about YOUR service, outreach, and gestures of caring? You can:

- 1) email or call the newsletter editor: aprilfaidley@gmail.com; at 515-478-6493
- 2) drop off a note at the church office.

If you have already submitted some service & outreach to the newsletter, please only report new ones. If you are reporting for the first time, submit your year-to-date totals.



WHAT'S NEXT

There has been no new activity arising from the Profile we posted. (Insert sad face here) Although this suggests there are no candidates available for our position, we are continuing to pursue a solution that will serve our congregation.

One, albeit temporary, possibility is that we find a “supply pastor” who could fill more of our needs than Rev. Mark Holmes is available to do. We are looking into that option.

Another path is also being considered. The Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church are facing some of the same budgetary and personnel challenges. We have been meeting with representatives of both churches to discuss various ways to share programming. That group will continue to meet. In addition, a smaller selection of individuals from each church is opening conversation around more specific ways to share ministry. This group will be joined, at the July meeting, by “conference” level representatives from each denomination to delve into the different ways that denominations might join together to consolidate personnel, reduce expenses, and maintain a vigorous presence and ministry in our community.

i thank You God for most this amazing
e.e. cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of allnothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)



JULY BIRTHDAYS

7/2 Mady McKim
 7/2 Marti Barker
 7/2 Judy Brassfield
 7/3 Sherry Backman
 7/6 Rob Kahn
 7/7 Brenda Wilson
 7/8 Summer Margritz
 7/8 Debbie Carter
 7/11 Talbot Mastio
 7/14 Mason Pryke
 7/14 Lindsay Wilson
 7/15 Mark O. Babcock
 7/20 Hilary Montalvo
 7/29 Jenny Jensen
 7/30 Annie Gerken

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

8/5 Mark A. Babcock
 8/6 Ron Marvelli
 8/6 Carolyn Hobbs
 8/6 Megan Kahn
 8/6 Molly Kahn
 8/6 Donovan Deppe
 8/12 Jenessa Koedam
 8/14 Cienna Christenson-Baker
 8/14 Jane Johnson
 8/15 Jane Ann Cotton
 8/17 Kenny Caves
 8/18 Kathy Currant
 8/23 John Gerken



JULY

7/10 Jim & Jennifer Pryke
 7/10 Linda & Jim Christenson
 7/11 Teresa & Les Morgan
 7/18 Jenny & James Jensen

AUGUST

8/1 Marilyn & Clarence Planer
 8/16 Jane & Gary Johnson
 8/13 Katie & Steven Stonehocker
 8/15 Samantha & Sonia Sledge

Musical Moments and Meditation

Musical Moments and Meditation is on vacation during the month of July. This is an area of ministry where we are experiencing a pinch in “people power.” Some of those who have provided the meditation on a regular, monthly, basis since last Fall, would like to reduce the frequency of their participation. Many of our current “MM&M” volunteers also volunteer their time, talents, and energy serving on church committees and several projects.

Please consider doing your part and volunteer to present a reflection for video recording along with Bev’s music. This has been a very successful addition to our church’s worship ministry, and we would be saddened to lose it due to a lack of volunteers (see the Editor’s Revery on p. 7).

Council Meeting - June 9, 2021 - A Summary of Issues Discussed

Maintenance. The city building inspection approaches. We are running out of “people power.” There are several projects that need to be done and we need volunteers to complete them. Some people are working at the church nearly every day.

Norm and Jim have been busy repairing leaks and any evidence of leaks. Following the first rain after the new ceiling tile was installed, a water spot appeared in one area of new tiles. There is a seam in the rubber roofing that may no longer be sealed. Norm would like to try to repair it; estimated cost \$200. If that is unsuccessful, we will need to investigate the commercial repair services available.

Landscaping is coming along. Susan Townsend has planted some flowers. The bushes have been trimmed. Les and Jim have been voluntarily mowing the lawn; we may need to hire someone for this.

Norm noted that we have had great variation in our internet signal strength. This is interfering with our ability to live stream our services. An appointment was made with Windstream to repair the cable into the building, which is presently spliced in three places. Following that, we will determine if the modem needs to be updated.

Pastoral search. No pastor profiles have been received since the last meeting. We considered whether we would receive more applications if we changed our profile to say we are seeking an interim pastor. Norm did not think that would be the case. He suggested we find a supply minister.

Worship. Council agreed that we can sing hymns and pray aloud beginning June 20th. Discussion took place about the difficulties with live streaming and the decision was made to record the service and post it during the week at this time. This might alleviate some of the pressure on those who are trying to make live streaming successful. Concern was raised that, without a pastor, details in regard to the worship service are falling through the cracks. No one is volunteering to be a liturgist, be an usher, bring flowers, or make coffee. Jane Ann will try to find someone to make calls to find volunteers.

EDUCATION

Book Study

The Book Study is taking a summer break during July and August. It will resume on September 9th with a hybrid meeting. Some members will be in-person at the parish house, as we did before the pandemic, and at the same time some members will be “zooming in.” This will accommodate out-of-state book club members and those with obligations at home (such as children to parent). We hope it works well!

The book chosen for the next study is *The Gospel of Jesus*, 2nd edition, by Robert W. Funk, Arthur J. Dewey, and the Jesus Seminar. A new, paperback copy is \$18.00. There are used ones available for around \$11-12. The book is fairly short (less than 150 pages) and would be a good entry point into our studies for new members.

During our studies we have often encountered the Jesus Seminar, a group of biblical scholars and laymen, formed in 1985 to determine their collective view of the historicity of the deeds and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth. (The seminar effectively ceased functioning in 2006.) We hope this book will help us understand their work and their conclusions in more depth.

Secure your book and stay tuned: the schedule and zoom information will come out in the September Open Door.

This study is a laity-generated educational program. The participants choose the books and research additional material to add to the discussion. We hope the books we choose will interest others. If you have a book in mind that you would like to read and discuss in a group format, please let us know, through the church office, what you would be enthused about studying. We would be most happy to welcome you into our study!



We miss our local homebound members.

We hold them in our heartfelt prayers.

Take a moment to call, write, or visit them!

Marilyn Currant
Park Centre #1
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

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

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

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

Prayers and Concerns

Lin Chapé

Craig Armstrong

Annie Gerken and family

Linda Christenson

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

Money Musings



While you are reading this in July, I am writing it towards the end of June. I mention this because I am assuming, for the sake of this article, that our mutual fund balances as of Friday, June 25 are the balances for the first half of the year. Technically, the results I am reporting here are inaccurate as the first half of the year doesn't end until Wednesday, June 30, meaning there are three more trading days before we reach the true midpoint of the year. However, assuming we don't have one of those 1929 style crashes in the next three days, these results are good enough to give you a picture of our investments as of the first half of the year.

We began the year with approximately \$367,000 in our United Church Funds (\$53,000 in Fuller scholarship money, \$40,000 in Seminary scholarship money, and \$274,000 in our endowment reserves). At our midyear point, we have approximately \$382,000 in these funds (\$55,000 Fuller, \$42,000 Seminary, and \$285,000 in our endowment). This translates into a 4% return for the first half of the year or an 8.2% annual rate of return.

We began our new Edward Jones fund this year with approximately \$598,100. As of this writing, we are at \$638,800 for a 6.8% return thus far in the year or a 14.1% annual rate of return. As you can tell, the markets have been good for our investments thus far in 2021. Keep in mind that only the UC Funds endowment money (\$274,000) can be used to offset budget operating deficits.

Turning to income and expenses thus far on 2021, we are basically on target for income in 2021. However, we are over \$8,000 under for our expenses. Now that we are open for in person worship, I believe some of the savings on the expense side will disappear (e.g., heating and electricity). A huge part of that \$8,000 involves our not paying for a half-time pastor yet. Should we get one, our expense side of the budget will go up! But, as of now, our budget looks pretty good!

Editor's Revery

Geese fly in a vee formation. They have figured out the aerodynamics. The one out front is the one working the hardest, the one getting all the recognition. That goose grows tired. Without a vote, without a church meeting, the one at the front moves to the back and another smoothly takes the place at the point. Because the geese understand that MY individual position is not as important as OUR collective destination.

We are a small church. Being without a pastor, with no candidate in sight and not even any in the wings to step in as a supply or interim pastor, presents a large challenge. Yet, we are a small church. It has been particularly highlighted as we have resumed in-person services, that there are countless details that would routinely be covered by the pastor and now need to be covered by others. Yet, we are a small church. There aren't a whole lot of folks who have just been waiting for an opportunity to volunteer for these tasks. People are not massed in front of the volunteer sign up sheets jockeying for position so that they can get their names on those lines. And there isn't a pastor to encourage or cajole people to volunteer.

Have you noticed that even three geese fly in a vee formation? And even three geese know that the "point goose" position needs to rotate among them. We are only a viable, vibrant church if we have a collective destination. And as we move towards that destination, it will be imperative that, in all areas of the church, each of us at times takes over as the "point goose."



I acknowledge and thank Raphael Warnock, Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, for the story that opens this Revery. It was part of his address at Union Theological Seminary on February 6, 2014, for the Trailblazer Series in honor of Dr. Henry Mitchell.

NOTE from the EDITOR: As you have probably realized, this Open Door combines July and August. The next Open Door will be published around September 1st. Have a wonderful summer!



JULY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				National Creative Ice Cream Flavors Day	I Forgot Day	International Plastic Bag Free Day
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary			6:00pm Church Council, Parish House			Teddy Bears' Picnic Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary	Eat Your Jello Day	Embrace Your Geekness Day		National Give Something Away Day		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary	National Get Out of the Dog House Day		Racial Harmony Day		Gorgeous Grand- ma Day	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary		Take Your Pants for a Walk Day				Uncommon Mu- sical Instrument Day



AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary		10: Video taping Musical Moments and Meditation*		National Work Like a Dog Day		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary	National Book Lovers Day	10: Video taping Musical Moments and Meditation*	6:00pm Church Council Parish House	Middle Child Day	Left Handers Day	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary		10: Video taping Musical Moments and Meditation*		World Humanitarian Day		World Honey Bee Day
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary	National Ride the Wind Day	10: Video taping Musical Moments and Meditation*		Deadline for submissions to newsletter		National Bow Tie Day
29	30	31				
10:15: Gather for coffee 11: Worship in the sanctuary		10: Video taping Musical Moments and Meditation*		*Volunteers are needed in order for this ministry to continue. See article on p. 4		

Congregational United Church of Christ
308 E. 2nd St. N.
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

xxx

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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United Church of Christ: www.ucc.org — Iowa Conference: www.ucctcm.org

Newton Congregational UCC: www.uccnewton.org