



Congregational UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Open Door

April 2017

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

Pastor's Perspective	1-2
Worship	2-3
Education	3
Service	4-6
Worship Attendance	7
Take note	7
Birthdays	7
New Members Bio's	8
Fuller Scholarship	9
Worship Schedule	10
Homebound Members	10
Easter Lilies Donation Form	11
Calendar	

Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Why Jesus Was Crucified

As Lent draws to a close with Holy Week and Easter right around the corner, it seemed time to once again address the matter of Jesus' crucifixion. Did Jesus have to die for our salvation? Was his death required in order for our sins to be forgiven? For those of you who know me (and those of you who read the April 2015 edition of *The Open Door* where I previously addressed this topic), it probably won't come as a surprise that I don't believe Jesus died on the cross in order that we might be forgiven for our sins. I don't remember a time in my life when I ever believed this common interpretation of Jesus' crucifixion as it simply doesn't make sense to me.

As the Thursday evening Bible study group recently discovered in our reading and discussion of Karen Armstrong's book "The Bible: A Biography," this line of thinking was proposed by Anselm of Bec, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury in the late 11th and early 12th Centuries. Over 1000 years after Jesus' death, Anselm proposed that human beings are sinful, indeed even the first human (Adam) had sinned against God (original sin). In order for God to forgive humanity, in order for things to be right between God and all humankind a great sacrifice needed to be made – indeed a sacrifice greater than any human being could offer. Therefore, God sent Jesus (God's own son) into the world that he might take on the punishment that humanity so deserved in order that God might forgive us, in order that our great debt might be paid.

Though this way of thinking of atonement became widely accepted in the West, it was not the only way in which redemption was understood within Christianity even at that time. French philosopher Peter Abelard (1079-1142) proposed that God suffers when God's creatures suffer; God hurts when we hurt. He believed the saving act in the crucifixion not to be Jesus' sacrificial death but the act of compassion we experience when we contemplate Jesus being tortured and killed that saves us.

Though I had no idea who Anselm or Abelard were when I was a young girl, I had learned very clearly that God is love. It seems to me that trusting in this God

of love would have led me to think much more along the lines of Abelard than Anselm even at this early age. How could a God of love require the death of God's own son (or anyone else for that matter) in order to forgive humanity for our sins? It simply doesn't follow.

So, if I don't believe Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins, then why do I think Jesus died? Well, that seems pretty clear to me. Jesus died because his message of love – the proclamation that all, no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey, are God's beloved and deserve to be treated as such – was threatening to the authorities of his day (as it continues to be to those in positions of power today). Jesus' proclamation of God's realm, God's empire, God's kingdom was in direct opposition to the empire of Rome and all other oppressive, coercive, violent regimes. And Jesus was a smart guy, an incredibly wise man and knew that what he was teaching and preaching was going to meet strong opposition and that lots of people, especially those in power, would get really upset (not that it took much smarts or wisdom to figure that out).

I believe that Jesus was very aware that living his life in such a way and challenging others, including religious/political (these were intimately intertwined in Jesus' time) authorities, would likely result in his death, even death on a cross (after all, that's the way Rome dealt with enemies of the state). But this way of living, this way of love, this way of God was something worth dying for. Jesus could have quieted down. Jesus could have gone into hiding. Jesus could have turned back around and settled down with a wife and kids while joining in with the family business in Nazareth. But, he chose to walk the path to Jerusalem because that was the way of true life, that was the way of love and justice.

Out of their fear and anxiety, the people and their religious/political leaders nailed Jesus to the cross. And, through the power of God's love, Jesus was raised from the dead and lives even this day. Praise be to God! Hallelujah!



... Worship



Good Friday Cross Walk

Congregational UCC will be participating in the Mission Coalition, the ecumenical group of lay people consisting of ten Newton churches, Good Friday Cross Walk. The walk will be held on **Good Friday, April 14th beginning at 12:00pm**, and takes approximately one hour to proceed to seven downtown churches. There will be a reading and a song at each church stop, then a cross will be carried to the next church along the route.

Centering Prayer

During the season of Lent, you are invited to gather each Wednesday evening for a time of Centering Prayer. Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer—prayer in which we experience God’s presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. It is simply a wordless, trusting opening of one’s self to the divine presence. Please consider exploring this method of prayer as you observe the Lenten season and prepare for the celebration of Easter that is to come. The group will meet in the **Chapel**, just off of the Sanctuary, on **Wednesdays, 5:15pm-5:45pm. Our final meeting will be on April 12th**. Come for one; come for all; come when you are able. No previous experience is necessary. Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.

Holy Humor Sunday

On **Sunday, April 30th** we will celebrate Holy Humor Sunday during morning worship. Holy Humor Sunday services not only give Christians an opportunity for ongoing celebrations of the greatest miracle in human history – Jesus’ resurrection – it also gives each of us an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for our own smaller resurrections in this world and this life. This service will be a mixture of the sacred and the silly. Things will be done a little differently than usual, and there may be some surprises in store. You are invited to come to worship prepared to relax and enjoy yourself, to laugh, to play, to revel in God’s joy as we continue to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

... Education



Bible Study

You are encouraged to join in our Bible study group each **Thursday at 5:00pm-6:00pm** in the Parish House. A new six-week Bible study will begin on April 6th and conclude on May 18th (no meeting on Maundy Thursday, April 13th). The new study will focus on Katharine Doob Sakenfeld’s book “Just Wives?: Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today.” If you are interested in participating in this 6-week study, please purchase a copy of the book or contact Rev. Petersen and she will order one for you. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



Morning Circle

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, April 19th at 9:30am** with Pat Van Klompenburg as hostess and Carolyn Hobbs giving devotions. The group is studying the book “Jesus: The Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary” by author Marcus J. Borg. During this meeting we will be studying Chapters 3 and 4 of the book.

All are welcome to join us as we deepen our understanding of who Jesus was and what that means for us as people of faith seeking to follow in Jesus’ way. Want to participate? Join us on April 19th at the Parish House.

... Service

Progress Industries

A helping hand has been extended to Progress Industries in the form of a place to eat lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday each week. Each member of the group (usually no more than eight) brings their own lunch, and they are with a counselor. They spend about an hour in the Dining Room and do some activity following their lunch. This new requirement that PI persons get out in the community for work projects and other activities means they need this kind of help. Other places that have provided space include the Elks Club, the YMCA, and perhaps other churches.

Duane and Carolyn Hobbs have served as hosts and would welcome some volunteers as back-up when they cannot be present.



Food Pantry Sundays

The first Sunday of each month we receive donations for the Salvation Army Food Pantry. On **Sunday, April 2nd** a cart will be in the west entrance to receive gifts for the food pantry. The Salvation Army is in special need of tuna helper, spaghetti (12-16 ounce packages or 1 pound packages), canned fruits, spaghetti sauce, and macaroni & cheese. Of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted. They also need any kind of personal care items: such as diapers, bath soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, feminine hygiene products, and laundry soap.



Jasper County Animal Rescue League

On the third Sunday of each month we collect items to help the Jasper County Animal Rescue League (JCARL). The next collection date will be **Sunday, April 16th**.

Their current wish list is: 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).



"Barking Good" Project

The Progress Industries partnership with UCC of making and baking dog treats in the church kitchen has resumed again. They will be baking these all natural dog treats on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 12:15pm. Dozens of treats will be produced and shared with JCARL. Our church has helped PI move toward its target goal of getting out into the community setting which has provided a wonderful opportunity for all involved.

The dog treats produced not only make for happy dogs, but happy people too. So, to lend a hand, contact Stormy. You'll have a very gratifying experience if you do.

Cleaning Project with Progress Industries

In addition to our partnership with Progress Industries (PI) to bake biscuits for the Jasper County Animal Rescue League, we also work with PI participants and staff for a church cleaning project. Under the guidance of Carolyn and Duane Hobbs a small group from PI is doing some light cleaning and dusting in the sanctuary, library and other areas of the church building. This cleaning project takes place two times per month, on Tuesdays at 10:30am.

If you are interested in helping with this ministry, please contact Carolyn Hobbs (for the cleaning project) or Rev. Petersen.

One Great Hour of Sharing

On **Palm Sunday, April 9th**, we will receive our One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This special offering of the United Church of Christ enables us to reach people and communities affected by disaster, displacement, or poverty. Through OGHS, we provide assistance to families and communities around the world, helping them to become stronger, healthier, and better equipped to address hardships and catastrophes.

The 2017 theme for the offering is *"You are here,"* which could easily be the response to a question provoked by tragedy, fear, or suffering: "Where are you, God?" Psalm 145:18 echoes the refrain throughout scripture that God is nearby. As soon as a person calls on God, God is here. *You are here* shows the church uniting to respond to the many critical needs present in our world today. Our support is given through partner organizations responding to health, education, and agricultural development needs, refugee initiatives, and both international and domestic disaster relief.

When we give as the United Church of Christ—individuals, groups, and congregations—it means that the church can stand strong, in the midst of need whether it is nearby or far away. When God's love abides in us, we are moved to respond with our own material goods to the needs of other members of God's family. You may use the envelope provided in the bulletin on April 9th for your donation, or you may send your donation directly to the church office. Thank you for your support; whether you are a new supporter, or long-time supporter, every gift matters. Every gift allows us to say, *"You are here."*



SHARE Iowa

Self Help and Resource Exchange (SHARE) is coming back to Newton as our Newton Area Ministerial Association will be offering this program through our churches. SHARE brings people together to build and strengthen community through volunteer service by providing access to good, nutritious food at affordable prices. Through SHARE, members of the community (there are no age, income, or membership requirements to participate; though participants are encouraged to volunteer with SHARE or elsewhere in the community) will have an opportunity to sign up for a food box for up to 50% off supermarket prices. Items available vary each month and include meats, grocery items, fresh fruits and vegetables, and even desserts.

Orders may be placed by contacting Rev. Petersen, our local host organization, First United Methodist Church (641.792.4648, ask for Pastor Gary), or online (www.shareiowa.org) **beginning on Sunday, April 2nd and must be received by April 7th**. Payment is required when you place your order; you may pay by cash, check (made out to: First Christian Church), EBT, or online using Pay Pal. **The first delivery/pick-up day will be on Saturday, April 22nd, 7:30am-8:30am at First United Methodist Church.**

If you would like to volunteer with SHARE, you may contact Rev. Petersen or Rev. Gary Marzolf at First United Methodist Church. You are also welcome to drop in to meet the volunteer coordinators on a distribution day and see what SHARE is all about. If you would like to serve our congregation by taking orders, please contact Rev. Petersen.



Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer

- ♦ Ann Raridon
- ♦ Carrie Osborne
- ♦ Sue Anderson
- ♦ Jim Lukefahr
- ♦ Lori Scheck, cousin of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
- ♦ Karen Shump and family following the death of her father on March 10th
- ♦ The family of Patricia Hybl following her death on February 21st
- ♦ Larry Brody



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 in the Nurse's Nook during Fellowship Time the second Sunday of each month. If you are curious about your blood pressure reading, stop in to see Carolyn on **Sunday, April 9th**.

Community Meal Update

Congregational UCC has been responsible thus far for seven Community Meals. On March 15th, 13 volunteers provided dessert and/or worked to prepare and serve the meal. Wonderfully caring church workers met the needs of 95 people.

This outreach project is a part of who we are as a congregation in that we “..... live our faith by loving and serving all of God's creation”, so if you haven't yet participated there is still time to do so on **April 19th or May 17th** before we take a break for the summer months. If you have not yet joined in this endeavor, please consider doing so. New people are always welcome to our crew. Remember that an added bonus is the enjoyment of visiting with other community members and eating a delicious meal.

Please contact one of the chairpersons if you are interested in joining in this worthwhile experience. The chairpersons are: Bev Edge—Menu Preparation; April Faidley—Desserts; and Marti Barker—Serving & Clean-Up.

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, mow the law, serve as a lay reader, and host fellowship time are located in the vestibule. Please help if you can.

If you are willing to be a greeter, please contact Marti Barker. Additionally, there are a few members who may need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact Duane Hobbs to volunteer.

The office has great volunteers who come in monthly to assemble and ready this newsletter for mailing. If you would like to help, just call the office.

Worship Attendance

<u>March Attendance</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
First Sunday	38	58
Second Sunday	31	60
Third Sunday	36	45
Fourth Sunday	(Easter) 62	57



BIRTHDAYS to Celebrate in April

3-Marilyn Currant, Kelly Zach
4-Lora Caves
8-Diane Babcock, David Raymond
9-Aaron Wilson
12-Karen Dont
13-Larry Richardson
19-Cindy Pollard
21-Karen Petersen
23-Alicia Mitchell, Brent Deppe, Kendall Morgan
26-April Faidley
28-Jon Turk



Anniversaries to Celebrate in April

4-Rick & Leslie McNew
15-Norm & Pat Van Klompenburg
21-Brent & Suzanne Parker

Take note...

Chapel Progress

A committee consisting of Chairperson April Faidley, Jan Turk, Jim Christenson, Marti Barker, and Pastor Jessica are moving forward with the chapel renovation. This area will be a place for individual or small group meditation and prayer as well as Bible study and similar activities.

Next time you're at church, visit the chapel and see what's happening. Just remember that this project is a work in progress. A planned dedication will occur in the future upon the chapel's completion.

Our Way Ahead

On Sunday, March 19th at a special Congregational Meeting, our congregation approved the proposal presented by the Strategic Planning Team regarding our vision and focus for the next 3-5 years of our ministry together. Those present voted unanimously to accept and live out our purpose (*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.*) and process (*Educating Ourselves and Others, Living Our Faith in Our Daily Lives, Reaching Out to Our Community*) as we focus on developing relationships with our neighbors who are living in material poverty. Our congregation also voted to spread the word of who we are and what we are about through expanding our publicity and promotion through local resources, a stronger web presence, and individual members sharing our story with others.

With our purpose, process, and focus in place, we are now called to live this out as a congregation. How will you participate in living into and out of this new vision for our church?

Welcome, New Members!

On Sunday, March 26th, five new members joined our congregation during morning worship. Below you can read a bit about each one of them. These brief bios are only a start, and you are encouraged to introduce yourself to each of them as you welcome them more fully into this congregation and get to know one another better. What a joy it is to celebrate our continued growth and transformation as a family of faith as we welcome Adam, Samantha, Sonia, Ed, and Suzanne as full members of this congregation!

Adam Kyle Hansch is the son of Randy and Deb Hansch. He has one sister, Jill, a brother-in-law, Brad, and a niece and nephew, Camryn and Dominic. Adam works at the Christian Conference Center just south of Newton. When he's not working, he enjoys WWE (that is World Wrestling Entertainment); watching TV and DVDs; listening to CDs; and playing PlayStation 2 and 3. He is also a big Iowa State Cyclones fan. Adam is happy to be joining the church today as he remembers how active his grandfather Dean Backstrom was in his church, and he appreciates how friendly the people are here at Congregational UCC and the guidance he receives to be nice and respectful of others.

Samantha and Sonia Sledge will be celebrating 3 years of marriage come August of this year. Sonia's side of the family lives in Stedman, North Carolina; while Sam's family lives a good deal closer in Cambria, Iowa. When it comes to their work life, Sonia works in Human Resources at Candeo, and Sam is a phlebotomist at LifeServe Blood Center. Both Sam and Sonia enjoy hiking and camping and doing anything outdoors. Sam also enjoys photography and taking on do-it-yourself projects, while Sonia enjoys gardening and repurposing stuff. When asked to name one thing they really enjoy about this congregation, they both said the people and how welcoming and awesome they are!

Edward and Suzanne Van Zandt will celebrate their 19th wedding anniversary later this year. They have a large family with two sons, two daughters, one daughter-in-law, and one Bob; 11 grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter. Ed and Suzanne are both retired (Suzanne from Maytag), and both continue to work part-time. Ed works as a part-time driver for HIRTA, and Suzanne as a part-time cashier at HyVee. Ed enjoys golfing, fishing, and watching college football and basketball. Suzanne is a big Iowa Hawkeyes fan and enjoys exploring her family history, fishing, and watching college and high school sports. They used to enjoy riding motorcycles together but don't ride anymore. One of the things they enjoy most about Congregational UCC is the friendly people they have met, and Ed particularly enjoys sparring with Judy Brody, our organist.



Suzanne Van Zandt Ed Van Zandt Adam Hansch Sonia Sledge Samantha Sledge

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 the “youth” of our members. As stipulated in the will, to be eligible for these scholarships, the student’s parents or the student must be a member of this church and the student’s intention must be to complete a four year program at an accredited college or university.

Applications are available to those who have received scholarships in the past and to those who will graduate from high school or are applying for the first time. Please contact the church office for an application. Applications follow the same format as those used by Newton Dollars for Scholars.

Applications for those applying for the first time are due April 10th. Newton High School graduates will receive their scholarship at the senior awards assembly on May 5th. Applications are due no later than August 7th for those who have received a scholarship in the past and are returning to their college or university. Return your application to the church office.

The scholarship committee will meet on **April 12th and August 9th** to make its decisions and recommendations to the Church Council. If you have any questions about the application form, please feel free to contact the church office and a committee member will get back to you.

Since the inception of awarding these scholarships in 1996, a total of \$155,000 has been awarded to youth of our church. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.



Worship Schedule for April

Date	April 2	April 9	April 16	April 23	April 30
Christian Calendar Date	Fifth Sunday in Lent	Sixth Sunday in Lent	Easter	Second Sunday of Easter	Third Sunday of Easter
Special Events	Communion	Blood Pressure Monitoring			Holy Humor Sunday
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection		
Greeters	Adam Hansch	Alicia Mitchell, Summer Margritz	Lin Chapé	Norm & Pat Van Klompenburg	Julie Schmidt
Ushers	Stormy Storms, Duane Hobbs	Jim & Jenny Pryke	Craig Armstrong, Les Morgan	Cindy Pollard & Gayla Snook	TBD
Lay Readers	Jenny Pryke	Jenny Pryke	Jenny Pryke	Craig Armstrong	Bev Thomas
Scripture	Ezekiel 37:1-14	Multiple texts from Matthew	Matthew 28:1-10	John 20:19-31	Luke 24:13-35
Worship Color	White	Violet	White	White	White

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

Violet is the ancient royal color and therefore a symbol of the sovereignty of Christ; it is also associated with repentance from sin.

We continue to remember our homebound members.

You are missed and continue to be cared for and held in our heartfelt prayers.

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

Betty Hotchkin
Park Centre #66
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

Scott Kingery
Careage of Newton
2130 W. 18th St. S.
Newton, IA 50208

Steven McGinley
1003 E. 15th St. S.
Newton, IA 50208

Jean Jensen
Park Center #51
500 1st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

Jim Lukefahr
Newton Village #14
110 N. 5th Ave. W.
Newton, IA 50208

Carol Robinson
Newton Village #206A
110 N. 5th Ave. W.
Newton, IA 50208

Jean Townsend
1310 S. 10th Ave. E.
Newton, IA 50208

Carrie Osborne
Iowa City Rehab & Health Care
3661 Rochester Ave.
Iowa City, IA 52248



Easter Lilies

If you would like to help decorate the sanctuary with lilies on Easter Sunday, you may give a gift to the Flower Fund in the memory or honor of a loved one(s). Attached, please find a donation form that may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church office. Please return forms no later than **Monday, April 10th**. Your name(s) and the name(s) of the person(s) you are remembering or honoring will be provided in a special insert to the bulletin on Easter Sunday, April 16th.

Easter Lily



If you would like to help decorate the sanctuary for Easter Sunday by giving a gift to the Flower Fund in memory or honor of a loved one, please complete this form and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office (308 E. 2nd St. N., Newton, IA 50208) to be received by **Monday, April 10th** along with your check in any amount. A list of donors and memorials will be shared on Easter Sunday. Thank you.

This gift of \$ _____ for Easter lilies is from _____

(name/names)

In remembrance of / In honor of (circle one) _____

Sundays

10:00am Worship

11:15am Fellowship Time

April 2017



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	01
02 9:15am Choir Rehearsal Communion Food Pantry Donations	03	04 5:00pm Worship & Music Mtg.	05 5:15pm Centering Prayer	06 5:00pm Bible Study	07	08
09 Palm Sunday 9:15am Choir Rehearsal Blood Pressure Checks 11:45am Service & Outreach Mtg	10 12:15pm PI Baking	11 10:30am PI Cleaning	12 5:15pm Centering Prayer 6:00pm Facilities & Finance Mtg.	13 Maundy Thursday 6:30pm Worship	14 Good Friday 12:00pm Cross Walk	15
16 9:15am Choir Rehearsal JCARTL Collection	17 Deadline for Open Door Articles	18	19 9:30am Morning Circle 5:00pm-7:00pm Community Meal	20 5:00pm Bible Study	21	22 Earth Day April 22
23	24 12:15pm PI Baking	25 10:30am PI Cleaning 6:00pm Racial Justice Group	26 6:00pm Church Council	27 5:00pm Bible Study	28	29
30 Holy Humor Sunday						

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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	Patricia Castline	792-3773 (Office)	uccnewton@mediacombb.net
Organist	Judy Brody	792-8129	ljbrody@windstream.net
Choir Director	Bev Thomas	792-6465	thomasb@iowatelecom.net
Custodian	Jim Christenson	641-792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@mediacombb.net
Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Seminary Intern	Carla Cain	515-418-7444	cjc1460@gmail.com
Pastor Emeritus	David Raymond		

Church office hours: 9:30am-2:30pm Monday through Thursday (The office will be closed on Fridays.)



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United Church of Christ: www.ucc.org