



The Open Door

April 2021

**CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**
God is still speaking,
An Open and Affirming Congregation

Inside This Issue

Easter Sunday Service	1
Scholarships Money Musings Spring Cleaning What's Next	2
Get Involved!	3
Get to Know Anne Gerken	4-5
Education	5
Homebound Pastoral Care Prayers & Concerns Birthdays & Anniversaries	6
Council Catch-Up	7-8
Another Move Towards Re-opening	8
Editor's Revery	9
Calendar	10

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.

Easter Sunday Service—April 4, 2021

We are so very excited that we will be able to “gather together” (virtually) in our sanctuary for the first time in nine months. Along with longer days and warmer temperatures, it raises our hopes for what 2021 will bring.

Please join us at 10:45 AM, April 4th for the Easter service, with Holy Communion, live-streamed from our sanctuary. Pastor Emeritus, David Raymond, will preside over the service, accompanied by Jennifer Pryke, serving as liturgist, and Bev Thomas, our keyboardist. Pastor Raymond's sermon is entitled *Together but Separate*.

The live-stream service will be on facebook.com/NewtonUCC. You may want to have a “nibble” and a “sip” ready for communion. There will be a virtual bulletin available for you to download prior to the service. It will be distributed via email on Thursday, April 1. After the service, at about 12 pm, you may view the service at facebook.com/NewtonUCC or on the website at www.uccnewton.org.

In addition to Pastor David and Jenni, we thank Norm Van Klompenburg and Anne Gerken for their technical assistance, which will make this possible. Please see page 8 for more exciting news about worship.

Max and Evelyn Fuller Scholarships



Max and Evelyn Fuller were very dedicated to education and a bulk of their estate went towards educational scholarships. The Newton Congregational United Church of Christ is getting ready to accept applications for the 2021-2022 Max and Evelyn Fuller Scholarships. Please email or contact the church office to have the scholarship information sent to you. Due date for the scholarship application is April 15, 2021.



Money Musings

As I write this, our books have not closed for March 2021, so, I want to summarize our pledge income situation at the end of February 2021. On paper, February was a good month for income. Over \$8,200 came in; our budget anticipated \$6,884. However, looks can be deceiving. Over \$4,000 of that February income came from folks who, after receiving our statement showing their 2020 contributions, said, "Oops. I still owe 2020 pledge money to the church." In other words, a large portion of the February income from pledges for 2020 pledges, not 2021. Actually, in February, we collected \$2,500 less in 2021 pledge income than we had anticipated in our budget.

In one sense, money is money, and we can use the money for our 2021 expenses. However, in another sense, our 2021 pledge income was down for February. Monthly fluctuations tend to be just that and, over time, balance themselves out. However, we were also down in January. Entering March, our 2021 pledge collections are down over \$4,000 from what we anticipated. Obviously, should this continue, we will be very far behind our yearly budget (possibly over \$20,000 for the year at the pace for the first two months).

I hope that, as we move toward re-opening the church for services, people will be reminded of their need to help the church fulfill its mission. As I mentioned, March books are not closed yet. However, my eyeballing of pledge collections in March is that we did better and have reduced that gap some. However, until we have eliminated that gap, please remember to make payments on your pledge!

Larry Leitner

SPRING CLEANING 2021!

(maybe 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015?)

In other words, how long has it been since we actually did a thorough cleaning and sprucing up of the church? Lin Chapé and Marti Barker generously donated their time to an extensive survey of the church building and the parish house. Many areas need work. Objects need to be stored appropriately, rather than left piled up in corners, old posters need to be taken down, old books need to move on to another home, clutter needs to be straightened, and so on. Jim, as the church custodian, keeps the building clean, yet it isn't his job to sort, discard, store, organize, and update everything that is lying about.

Many of our spaces look tired and outdated. We need fresh, clean, uncluttered surroundings to lift up our spirits and help us get on with our mission. To pick a job and volunteer to complete it, go to the church website and click on the "Ministries" button on the menu. You will find a page that says "Ministry of Maintenance." Click on that, view the list of what needs to be done, and sign up!

WHAT'S NEXT?

Our Profile has finally been posted!! (I have waited months to be able to publish that line!) Council assembled a Search and Call Committee. Dorothy Raymond, Carolyn Hobbs, Les Morgan, and Larry Leitner agreed to serve. Jane Ann, as Moderator, is an ex-officio member of the committee. Dorothy agreed to serve as the chair.

We immediately received inquiries from two candidates. Our spirits soared. One candidate was deemed to be a poor match for our congregation theologically. The other had an excellent resumé and we immediately scheduled an interview. The interview went well and our Search and Call Committee was eager to pursue this candidate. Unfortunately, the candidate has designated another congregation as his first choice. Our spirits plummeted.

Council continues to explore options with nearby churches regarding possible cooperative relationships that would be mutually beneficial. We are not the only church in the area facing change. There are many different ways congregations can create "cooperative relationships." Council will apprise the congregation of any new developments, should they occur. [Please also see **Another Move Toward Re-opening**, p. 8]

Service and 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, ³⁶ 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

Although we aren't gathering, we can encourage one another in a practice of regular service and outreach to others. Each month we will publish how our mission is growing by tallying the donations made to different organizations and projects.

Based on the information submitted, the following is our to-date outreach totals.

Monetary contributions:

- 4 to the Salvation Army
- 3 to Neighbors Helping Neighbors
- 1 to United Way of Jasper County
- 1 to the Animal Rescue League of Iowa
- 1 to Garden Gate Ranch
- 1 to First United Church for their special outreach
- 1 to American Red Cross
- 1 to Special Olympics of Iowa

In-kind donations:

- 2 food donations to the Salvation Army Food Pantry
- 2 food donations to the Blessing Box by the Salvation Army
- 5 food donations to the Blessing Box at the Baptist Church
- 1 clothing donation to the Blessing Box at the Baptist Church
- 1 food donation to Teen Challenge in Colfax
- 1 donation to Bibles for Mission Thrift Center in Pella



I thought I hadn't heard from very many people, but now that everything is listed it looks impressive!

How about letting the newsletter know about YOUR donations? You can

- 1) email the newsletter editor: aprilfaidley@gmail.com
- 2) call the editor: 515-478-6493
- 3) or you drop off a piece of paper at the church office.
- 4) Simply say “_____ (how many?) donation(s) made to _____ (fill in the organization or project).”

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

Tom and Jan Turk and their granddaughters encourage you to consider this service option: April is a big fundraising month for **Camp Kesem**, a camp for children whose parent(s) have either died or are going through treatment for cancer. Tom and Jan's granddaughters, who are in college, have both served as counselors and as fundraisers for Camp Kesem. What a great way to help children confronted with such a trauma.



We have had a new administrative assistant for several months. We noted her arrival, but have not introduced her to you in the way that we would like. Anne graciously agreed to participate in an interview and to share a picture of herself and her family.

MEET ANNE GERKEN

Where did you grow up and what were your interests when you were young?

I grew up in Nebraska. Born in Omaha, I was the last of five children coming nine and a half years after the fourth. I lived in “the Big O” until my senior year in high school when my parents moved to Lincoln. I studied theatre history and English literature

at Drake, and then transferred and graduated from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. (GO BIG RED!! I am not ashamed.) Ever the ham, I loved performing for everyone and anyone who would give me their attention.

Tell us about your family

My husband John and I have been married for almost thirty six years (this April 6th), and we have one terrific daughter, Eileen, who lives and works in Des Moines. We lost our lovely puss, Albert, last summer due to her advanced age. Now we have a lovely new and frisky puss named June Bug who keeps us on our toes.

How did you become involved in UCC?

There was a darling white clapboard, steepled church catty corner from our home in Durham, Maine. Durham had no post office, street lights, or commerce of any kind. It’s claim to fame was that Stephen King lived there as a child. The one thing this town did have was a Congregational church which had been founded in the late 18th century. (I believe some of the congregants may have been “founded” that long ago as well.) Anyway, as the social center of Durham’s universe, I decided to give Durham UCC a try. I found the UCC philosophy to be warm, practical, progressive, and embracing. I joined the church in 2000 and remained active there until our move to Newton in 2007.

What do you like about being admin at Newton UCC?

I really enjoy interacting with the church members and friends. Some folks I’ve known for years, while with others I’ve developed new and special friendships.

I must say that I am also quite proud of the level of technical acumen I’ve acquired in the short time I’ve been here - which just proves you can teach an old dog new tricks.

What do you enjoy when you are not at work?

When I am not at work, I am either antiquing or cooking with John.

John and I have owned restaurants and were in the business for decades. That is how we met. I was a sous chef at a restaurant in Omaha’s Old Market, and John was a house manager at another Old Market restaurant. While neither of us are in the business anymore, we still love to cook and entertain.

I love antiques. I could antique 24/7 all year long. I started collecting when I was seven and selling about thirty years ago. I maintain a booth at Smokehouse Square Antiques in Amana, where I also worked for seven years before coming to work at the church. (cont. on page 5)

(cont. from page 4)

What did you miss most during the pandemic?

Thanksgiving with my family. It is our favorite holiday, and normally, John and I cook for days and have often entertained housefuls. This past Thanksgiving was going to be especially important as we were to entertain Eileen, her boyfriend Steven, and his family. We were so looking forward to meeting them, but alas, we'll have to save that meeting for another time.

What did you enjoy about or learn from your experiences with the pandemic?

Top, number one, no question, no brainer,...I have enjoyed having weekends off with John. This was the first year ever, and I mean since before we even met thirty eight years ago, that we both have had weekends and holidays off. It is wonderful!

What I have learned this past year is that too much is just too much. There have been so many overwhelming situations, and perspective has been difficult. To remain calm, sane, and cognizant, I've needed to step back from the talking heads and focus on what I can control.

EDUCATION

The Last Week Book Study

The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem is our current book study. The authors, Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, are building their thesis that the book of Mark illustrates clearly Jesus's message to be, first, that God's nonviolence stands against imperial domination and, second, God's justice stands against high-priestly injustice. Book club meets on Thursdays from 5:30pm to 6:30pm. Here is the April schedule:

April 1: Chapter 4-5: Wednesday; Thursday

April 8: Chapter 6: Friday

April 15: Chapter 7: Saturday

April 22: Chapter 8: Easter Sunday

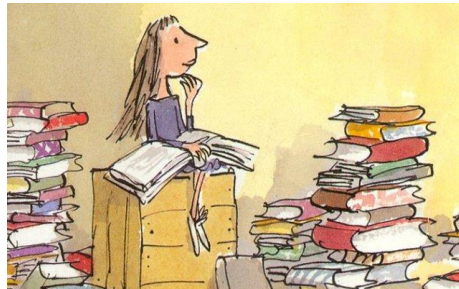
Join the Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83595726192?pwd=cm9FTXkrVlhrQmkvalEwVitGZW9nZz09>

Meeting ID: 835 9572 6192

Passcode: 377178

If you need assistance, contact Jane Ann Cotton or April Faidley.



This study is a laity-generated educational program. The participants choose the books studied and (as the spirit moves them) research additional material to add to the discussion. We want the study to have a broad appeal. If you are thinking, "Well, I would join that program, but the book they are studying doesn't really interest me," think that no more! Please let us know, through the church office, what book or books you would be enthused about studying. We can put them on our list and would be most happy to welcome you into our study!



We miss our local
homebound mem-
bers.

We hold them in our
heartfelt prayers.

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

Pastoral Care

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

Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer:

Gayla Snook

Marilyn Deppe

Pam Wagnor

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



4/3 Marilyn Currant, Kelly Zach
4/4 Lora Caves
4/8 Diane Babcock, David Raymond
4/9 Aaron Wilson

4/12 Karen Dont
4/13 Larry Richardson
4/19 Cindy Pollard
4/21 Karen Petersen
4/23 Alicia Mitchell, Brent Deppe, Kendall Morgan
4/26 April Faidley
4/28 Jon Turk

4/4 Rick & Leslie
McNew

4/6 Anne & John Gerken

4/13 Heidi & Neva Grandstaff-Fresh

4/15 Norm & Pat Van Klompenburg





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.

March 10, 2021 Council Meeting

Present: Jane Ann Cotton, Moderator; April Faidley, Assistant Moderator & Substitute Secretary; Larry Leitner, Treasurer; Norm Van Klompenburg & Les Morgan, Members at Large; Stormy Storms, Guest.

Treasurer's Report: Larry Leitner. Larry highlighted that we are \$4000-\$5000 under our expectations for 2021 pledge income; pledges don't always come in on time.

Maintenance Report: Norm Van Klompenburg. Marti and Lin have completed their survey, a good list of clean-up and repair projects. The report is currently with the building and grounds folks for review and determination of priorities. In addition, there are required maintenance issues that need to be handled. Regarding the derecho damage and insurance, Jim will be going to the roof for a final check to make sure there isn't anything we have missed. Brent Parker has volunteered to bring his tiller to prepare the lawn around the sign for landscaping and grass seed. Les and Jim will help. Brent will monitor the weather and soil conditions and indicate the time to do this task.

Online worship and music: Norm suggests that we put the previous decision to purchase video equipment on hold. We are currently using Bev Thomas's tablet and Anne Gerken's phone; both are working suitably well.

City building inspection program: Norm. City building inspections will begin after June 30th. There is a 30-page document, which details the areas to be inspected and how one might be in violation. Dealing with it will require considerable time and effort. We are, overall, in fairly good shape. Some areas are known to need attention. We have some fire safety issues. Our fire extinguishers need to be replaced; they may cost approximately \$60 each. We may need more exit signs and more lighted signs. We can probably do most of the work ourselves. The city will pay for the first inspection. If we pass the first inspection, inspections will repeat every two years, if not, every year. Our cost, based on square footage, will be about \$400 each time.

Where We Are: Jane Ann Cotton. We held a Zoom meeting with Rev. Samantha Houser to get acquainted and discuss our Profile. We are going to change the font on the references, as Rev. Houser has repeatedly requested. Once that change is made and the date is changed, it can be submitted to be posted. Jane Ann will be the signatory on the Profile. Larry motioned we make the changes noted above and get it submitted ASAP. Consensus received.

We continue in exploratory conversations with two Newton churches who have an interest in shared ministry. Larry suggested we form a search committee, charged with investigating both of these possibilities, as well as speaking with pastors who might provide virtual services from our sanctuary. From Council, Les Morgan and Larry Leitner volunteered to serve on the committee. As Moderator, Jane Ann will be an ex-officio member. Norm is willing to act as a consultant from time to time but would rather not serve on the committee. It was agreed we would also ask Carolyn Hobbs and Dorothy Raymond. We will confer with these individuals to determine their willingness to serve. The consensus opinion for Chair of the committee is Dorothy Raymond.

(Council Catch Up cont. from p. 7)

Where God is Leading Us: Easter Service on April 4th: We set the time as 10 AM if it works for Bev Thomas. [To the reader: This time was later altered to 10:45. Please see the lead article.] David will design the service, choose scriptures, deliver the morning prayer, give the sermon, and preside over Holy Communion. In announcements of the service, it will be suggested that those in attendance have their choice of bread and wine/ grape juice ready for communion. David asked Jane Ann to do the Call to Worship, however, Council, thinking about COVID and limiting the number of in-person participants, decided to ask Jenni Pryke to do all laity portions of the service. David will use the microphone that hooks over the ear, which is his preference. Norm will be available if the sound system needs any adjustments. Jenni will use the microphone at the podium.

New guidelines for resumption of in-person worship: Larry noted that our guidelines were written before vaccines were developed and it is now time to rewrite the guidelines to take vaccines and immunity into account. Jane Ann commented that we haven't met all of the criteria in the first guidelines. Norm stated that Iowa is now at a 14.2% infection rate; the decline in the infection rate signals we can start planning our reopening. The Easter service is one step in this preparation. It seemed that the previous committee for writing the guidelines did not want to participate in rewriting, so Council will put it high on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mission and outreach: Jane Ann reported that the number of meals served by the Methodist Church has jumped up dramatically. They used to make 35-40 meals a week; now the Catholic church is requesting 70 meals for the homeless. The Methodists could use some help, which is an opportunity for us. Jane Ann will get additional information from the Methodists and we will consider a monthly contribution.

Church Council Composition

Moderator: Jane Ann Cotton

Assistant Moderator: April Faidley

Secretary: Jennifer Pryke

Treasurer: Larry Leitner

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

Another Move Toward Re-opening!

Virtual services from our sanctuary will continue following the Easter Sunday service. Beginning April 11th, The Reverend Mark Holmes from First Lutheran here in Newton will be conducting services for us and Bev Thomas will be playing for us. These virtual services, will be posted on our Facebook page and on the church website, available for viewing Sunday mornings at 10:00 am.

Once pandemic/vaccination conditions warrant a resumption of in-person worship, Pastor Mark will continue as a supply pastor for us. At that time, we will be working with Rev. Holmes to adjust the time of our service to accommodate his primary commitment to his Lutheran pastorate.

We look forward to this opportunity to all participate in a service in our own sanctuary, to strengthen the ties between us and enjoy, again, our sense of gathering together.

Editor's Revery

The door in the photo on the front page of the Open Door is, appropriately, open. Through the door we see a quote on the wall, a bit too small to read. If you have been in the chapel, you probably remember what it says. If you haven't, the quote is from the 12th chapter of Mark: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

These words appear in the accounts of the events leading up to the crucifixion. In Mark's narrative, it is Tuesday. Jesus and his followers have come into Jerusalem from nearby Bethany, where they spent the night. They enter the temple area and authorities, "the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes," begin to question Jesus to challenge his authority. He has quite a following. If they can discredit and demean him, perhaps his followers will desert him and disperse. Most of these questions are hostile challenges or tricks. They are attempting to draw Jesus into saying something that a faithful Jew would consider disreputable or scandalous to their religion, thus, illustrating that Jesus is not worthy of the authority his followers have granted to him. A scribe hears these challenges and Jesus's responses. In Matthew this person is described as another hostile questioner. However, Mark describes him differently. A curious scribe, "seeing that he answered them well," asks, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

Jesus responds by saying the greatest commandment is "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31)

Throughout this Q & A session between Jesus and the chief priests, elders and scribes, Jesus is astonishingly clever, brilliant really, as he evades the traps they are trying to set. In this portion, his response is equally faultless. He quotes Jewish scripture. The first commandment paraphrases Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 4-5: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." The second commandment quotes from Leviticus, chapter 19, verse 18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The one and only (also, first and last) sermon I ever wrote and delivered, elaborated the first great commandment. In this short revery, I elaborate the second. I have thought through my whole life that I understood what "Love your neighbor as yourself" meant. It meant: Don't do something to someone if it is something you wouldn't want somebody to do to you. It meant: Don't say something to someone if it is something you wouldn't want somebody to say to you. The world would be such a better place for everyone, if we would take that to heart and follow through in the way we each live our lives. Do you want to be killed while shopping in a grocery store? Of course not. Then don't go on a killing spree in the grocery store. Do you want to die of COVID? Of course not. Then wear a mask to protect yourself and those with whom you come in contact. Do you want your house invaded and damaged? Of course not. Then don't break into the Capital and damage the people's house. Do you want to be denigrated and threatened? Of course not. Then don't denigrate gays, lesbians, or people of color. What could be simpler, really? It is a straightforward statement and even small children can understand it and follow it.

Then I came upon a quote from Maya Angelou, the American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist: "*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.*" This deepens what I thought I understood about "Love your neighbor as yourself." It suggests vast and wonderful opportunities. If I give it just a moment's thought, there are countless things I can do to make other people feel good, things that will nurture them, strengthen them, calm some chaos, make them feel loved, help them to believe in themselves, push back some shadows, turn up some lights, warm their heart, relieve their mind, lift their smile, maybe, even, prompt them to sing or to dance! I like that. Love your neighbor as yourself. People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.



APRIL

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				5:30pm <i>The Last Week</i> book study via Zoom	Good Friday	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
EASTER 10:45 Worship Live-Streamed from our Sanctuary with Rev. David Raymond		Video taping of Meditation and Musical Mo- ments	6:00pm Church Council via Zoom	5:30pm <i>The Last Week</i> book study via Zoom		Siblings Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
TBD– refer to the Weekly Up- date email for information	National Grilled Cheese Sand- wich Day	Video taping of Meditation and Musical Mo- ments		5:30pm <i>The Last Week</i> book study via Zoom	National Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
TBD– refer to the Weekly Up- date email for information		Video taping of Meditation and Musical Mo- ments		Conclusion: 5:30pm <i>The Last Week</i> book study via Zoom	National Take a Chance Day	
25	26	27	28	29	30	
TBD– refer to the Weekly Up- date email for information	Deadline for submissions to the newsletter	Video taping of Meditation and Musical Mo- ments		National Poem in Your Pocket Day		

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. 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
Moderator	Jane Ann Cotton	521-3547 (Cell)	jacotton@pcpartner.net
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond	521-1506 (Cell)	davidray@mediacombb.net

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; not open to the public



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