

The Open Door

June 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.

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Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Our Core Values

As I mentioned a couple of months ago, I am one who endeavors to see what positives can come out of difficult situations as I trust that God is creatively at work even in the most dire circumstances. As we have had to find different ways to be church to and with one another, it seems to me that this time of hiatus from in-person gatherings can offer us insight into what we truly value and understand as essential to being and doing church together. And so, I invite you, dear friends, to join me in identifying our congregation's core values.

What are core values? Core values are a small set (3-5) of timeless guiding principles and tenets that require no external justification but have intrinsic value and importance to those inside our congregation. There is no universal right set of core values, rather we are invited to push with relentless honesty to define what values are truly central to this particular community of faith. This is a process of discovery rather than creation; the values are there, we are simply invited to name them and bring them into the light that we might better understand who we are and live more authentically and intentionally. Finally, in order to be considered core values, they must stand the test of time.

How shall we identify our core values? Let me first start with what you should not do: Do not ask: What core values **should** we hold? Ask instead: What core values **do** we truly and passionately hold?

As we are individuals called into community, it is helpful to start from the individual and move to the congregation answering several questions:

- What core values do you personally bring to the church?
- What would you tell your children are the core values that you hold and that you hope they will hold when they become adults?
- Can you envision these values being as valid for you 100 years from now (supposing you are still alive) as they are today?
- Would you want to hold those core values, even if at some point one or more of them became a competitive disadvantage?
- If you were to start a new congregation, what core values would you build into the new congregation regardless of its context?

After drafting a preliminary list of the core values, ask about each one: If the cir-

cumstances changed and penalized us for holding this core value, would we still keep it?

Finally, once you've gone through this process of discovery, please send me a note (electronically or physical) or give me a call and share your list. I would LOVE to engage in conversation with you all about what you value at your very core and see as the fundamental building blocks of Newton Congregational United Church of Christ. Knowing who we are as a congregation is essential as we seek to move forward and create with one another and God the faithful and fruitful future that lies ahead.

As we continue in this uncertain time, let us use it well to better understand who we are as God's beloved ones that we might build on the core values of our congregation and emerge from this period prepared to live ever more faithfully, authentically, and creatively. Blessings be upon you all as you engage in this time of discernment!



Worship

From a Distance...

Of course, there is nothing that compares to being physically present with one another in worship, and yet this is what we need to do to “love our neighbors” during the current national emergency. In an attempt to remain connected to our worshiping community during this season of social distancing, we are offering worship online. The worship service can be accessed live at 10:00am on Sunday mornings via our Facebook page (facebook.com/NewtonUCC) or phone (Dial: 312-626-6799; when prompted enter Meeting ID: 624 681 423 followed by #; there is no participant number so simply press # again when asked). The full service will continue to be available for viewing on our Facebook page following the conclusion of worship; it will also be posted to our website (uccnewton.org) by noon each Sunday. A virtual bulletin is emailed out prior to each Sunday service and is available on our website (“Virtual Bulletins” under the “Worship” tab) on the Thursday before the service. Please contact Rev. Petersen if you need a hard copy of the bulletin delivered to you.

We have experienced a number of “hiccups” and technical difficulties in offering an online and streaming worship at Congregational UCC and are working on smoothing these out as they come. We apologize in advance for any problems that you may encounter in connecting to the service and welcome your feedback on how to improve the virtual worship experience over the coming weeks when we will not be able to worship in our sanctuary.

As you prepare to join in online worship with us, in addition to making whatever technical preparations you need to make, consider how to prepare your personal space for worship:

- *For Communion Sundays only:* Prepare a piece of bread or a cracker and a small glass of grape juice or wine (if you do not have these items on hand, you may use whatever “nibble” and “sip” you have available at home)
- Silence your phone and eliminate distractions
- Light a candle or some incense
- Open your Bible or browser to the scripture of the day
- Position your body in a posture for prayer and worship

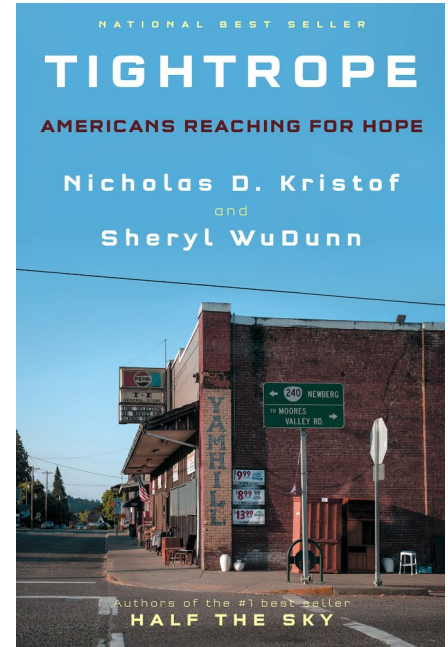
Education

Study “Tightrope” Walking

We concluded our study of the Gospel of Mark a week early and are ready to launch into our next Thursday evening study as we explore “Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope” by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. We will **meet via Zoom** (some online with video and others via phone with audio only) as we engage in a nine-week study of this thought-provoking book. All are invited to this virtual gathering on **Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm**, to explore this newly published work by the Pulitzer Prize-winning authors of the acclaimed, best-selling *Half the Sky* (read by Morning Circle participants some time ago) as they now issue a plea—deeply personal and told through the lives of real Americans—to address the crisis in working-class America, while focusing on solutions to mend a half century of governmental failure (from Amazon.com).

Participants should purchase a book and be prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The June meeting and reading schedule is as follows: June 4th—Chapters 1-2 (The Kids on the Number 6 School Bus; “We’re Number 30!”); June 11th—Chapters 3-4 (When Jobs Disappear; American Aristocracy); June 18th—Chapters 5-6 (How America Went Astray; Drug Dealers in Lab Coats); June 25th—Chapters 7-8 (Losing the War on Drugs; Up by the Bootstraps).

If you are interested in participating, contact Rev. Petersen to receive the call-in information and if you need any assistance purchasing a book.



Service and Outreach

HAPPINESS IS



...when an old friend calls
to see how you are.

Caring Calling Crew

During our hiatus from in-person gatherings, we continue to intentionally stay connected and foster community and care through a ministry of phone calling. Members of our Caring Calling Crew continue to call our members and friends regularly to keep in touch throughout this uncertain time. If you would like to make a specific request for a call, you can do so by contacting Rev. Petersen. Though we have instituted this new way of purposefully connecting with one another, you are also encouraged to continue calling and messaging each other on your own (contact Rev. Petersen if you need contact information for any of our members and friends). We are blessed to have this faith community to help us through challenging and unprecedented times.



Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer

- Rose Marston, friend of Karen Petersen
- Tami Hood-Hayes, friend of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
- Allison Lanphier, friend of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
- Meredith Caves, granddaughter of David & Dorothy Raymond
- Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- Stormy Storms • Zach Johnson • Larry Leitner



If you know someone in need of support – a visit, a call, a note, or prayer – please contact Rev. Jessica Petersen.



Masked Heroes

Thank you to those of you who generously responded to Progress Industries' request for donated homemade face masks. As you are likely aware, social distancing is not possible when working with folks with certain disabilities. These masks will be used to help keep PI staff and clients as safe as possible during this pandemic. Thank you again for your generosity!

Donation Wish Lists

Though we will not be receiving our regular monthly collections for the Salvation Army food pantry and the Jasper County Animal Rescue League. You are encouraged to consider continuing making donations to both organizations during the pandemic as they continue to serve the most vulnerable in our community. Here are their wish lists:

Food Pantry: tuna helper (not hamburger), pasta sauce, canned soups, cereal, and boxed macaroni & cheese (of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted)

JCARL: 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).

Food Assistance

Though these times are trying for all of us, our neighbors who are poor and those who are homeless are the most deeply impacted by the restrictions being put in place to slow the spread of this virus. A few of our members are working together to prepare meals for community members who are in need of additional food sources with a number of the free community meals now being cancelled. If you would like to help provide food to folks in need of meals during this time, you are invited to make a special donation to the church and mail it to the church office; write "food assistance" on the memo line of your check. These funds will be used to purchase food, and a couple of our members will prepare and deliver the meals.



Urgent Message from Council

Please Read Carefully

(This letter was mailed out to all members on Tuesday, May 26th)

The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

At our congregational meeting in March, we were unable to reach a firm consensus on how to proceed as we deal with diminishing financial resources. Council recommended a half-time compensation package for the pastor and the congregation rejected that recommendation. Council has again considered ways to bring our budget into balance. We have listened to suggestions from members of the congregation as well as wrestled over every line item in the budget.

The congregation authorized a budget that funded church operations through the end of June. In order to continue to pay our obligations, we need congregational approval of a budget covering July 1 to December 31. Since the March meeting, we have experienced major unexpected upheaval due to the pandemic. This has led to profound disruptions in all aspects of our lives and we are forced to consider new and innovative ways to move forward as we confront the reality of forging a “new normal” in our communities.

In our church, it has been necessary to suspend all person-to-person meetings. We have compensated by offering online services, study groups, and meetings as well as outreach by telephone, email, and other electronic means. We need to make similar adjustments in how we make policy and financial decisions as a congregation. The Church Council considered that issue at the May 13, 2020 meeting, voted to declare an emergency, and made changes in how we will proceed with policy decisions without face to face meetings of members. We plan to use a variety of communication methods including online Zoom meetings, telephone calls, electronic *Open Door* publications, mailed explanations, and mailed ballots. The time for discussion and action will also span a period of several days rather than being limited to a single congregational meeting. This will give everyone an opportunity to ask questions, make recommendations, consult with one another, and submit a vote.

This letter announces Council’s proposed budget and explains what will change if this budget is adopted. It is being sent to you in accordance with our bylaws that require two weeks’ notice be given prior to a special congregational meeting. We have planned the following meetings, mailings, and opportunities for conversation:

Sunday, May 31st, 2 pm – Zoom Congregational Discussion

Join the meeting online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86312269424>

Meeting ID: 863 1226 9424

Dial in:

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Meeting ID: 863 1226 9424

Wednesday, June 3rd, 7 pm – Zoom Congregational Discussion

Join the meeting online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87937130297>

Meeting ID: 879 3713 0297

Dial in:

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 436 2866 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 879 3713 0297

June 6th – Ballots will be mailed to members.

Completed ballots will be accepted through June 17th. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by June 17th.

All Council members will be available to answer questions and hear concerns during this entire time.

Sunday, June 21st – The outcome of the voting will be announced during the church service.

Financial realities have changed substantially since the onset of the pandemic. We have experienced significant loss of value in our endowment and scholarship funds and face further adjustments. As of May 19th, our reserves for covering our deficit had decreased by approximately \$20,000 due entirely to market value declines. This has added an additional burden to our financial status for the future that needs to be considered as we plan and budget for the coming years.

Proposal of Council

The Council recommends that beginning October 1st, 2020 the compensation package for the pastor will be 50 percent of the Conference Guidelines for a full-time pastor. We have included for you, in this newsletter, the budget based upon this recommendation. While we received a Payroll Protection Program loan from the CARES Act, our best estimate is that we will run a deficit of \$17,200 (rounded) for the year, assuming this budget is approved. Funding the current proposal would still require withdrawal from our endowment funds in excess of \$5000 and therefore would require a 2/3 vote to be adopted.

Adoption of this budget would also require renegotiation of the terms of employment with the Pastor.

This proposal is similar to the budget presented at the March meeting in that it would result in part-time pastoral leadership. Making this change has become more urgent as a result of the adverse market conditions affecting our investments. The Council has struggled with this decision and searched for other solutions. This recommendation represents the best judgment of the Council and is unanimously supported by the members.

Church Council Composition

Should you have any questions regarding the work of the Council, you are encouraged to contact a member of the Church Council. The current members of the Church Council are as follows:

Moderator:	Samantha Sledge
Assistant Moderator:	April Faidley
Secretary:	Jennifer Pryke
Treasurer:	Larry Leitner
At-Large:	Lin Chapé
At-Large:	Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh
At-Large:	Norm Van Klompenburg
Pastor:	Rev. Jessica Petersen

2020 Proposed Budget

Communications cont.

Ministry of Worship

Salary	\$30,118.53
Housing Allowance	18,760.00
Social Security Offset	3,739.21
Pension	6,843.00
Health Insurance	10,046.00
Dental Insurance	874.00
Life/Disability Insurance	733.18
Car Allowance	2,100.00
CE	306.25
Professional Expenses	437.50
Total	\$73,957.67

Ministry of Music

Salary	\$4,117.50
Instrument Maintenance	300.00
Total	\$4,417.50

Maintenance

Salary	\$8,699.40
Lawn/Snow removal	1,200.00
Bldg Maintenance	4,500.00
Custodial Supplies	200.00
Insurance	8,700.00
Heating	4,500.00
Electricity	5,000.00
Phone/Internet	1,200.00
Water	600.00
Total	\$34,599.40

Administration

Admin. Assist. Salary	\$6,609.20
Equipment/Supplies	1,500.00
Website	168.00
Postage	500.00
Total	\$8,777.20

Education/Outreach

Education	\$200.00
OCWM	4,500.00
Central Assn	200.00
Service and Outreach	1,000.00
Total	\$5,900.00

Other

Laity Expense	\$100.00
Misc	300.00
FICA	1,505.37
Worship & Music	500.00
Total	\$2,405.37

Total Expenses **\$130,057.14**

Projected Income

Pledges	\$85,000.00
Non-Pledge Giving	2,023.00
Loose Collections	261.00
Interest Edward Jones	200.00
UC Funds Dividends	3,500.00
Other	200.00
Payroll Protection	21,677.00
Total	\$112,861.00

Deficit **\$-17,196.14**



Communications

Church Council Catch Up

In an effort to keep our congregation more 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 April 8th Council meeting are below. Complete minutes of the meeting (which were approved by the Church Council during the May 13th meeting) are available in the church office; please contact Barbara Vasquez, Jennifer Pryke, or Rev. Petersen if you would like a copy.

- Opening Devotions: Checked in with each other to see how we are all doing as each shared a high and a low. Many comments about people coming together, and we all seem to be doing fine.
- Secretary's Report: Mar. 11 Meeting Minutes were shared electronically and read aloud Minutes accepted after corrections.
- Treasurer's Report: Was sent by email. We were not over budget for March. Choir funds were used to pay the organist. Seeing a drop in collections. Compassion fund is at about \$600. Deficit for the year so far is about \$4000. This is better than the projected \$3000 per month due to some giving greater than their pledged amount. If we stay with a full-time minister, project a \$37,000 deficit. We have lost over \$110,000 in our Fidelity fund, \$30,000 in our endowment funds. Payroll Protection Program forms have been filled out; we may qualify for as much as \$20,000. Council should give formal approval of the application by consensus. Council approved the distribution of \$25,000 through the Fuller Scholarship program by consensus.
- Maintenance Report: Some cans of soda exploded in one of the kitchen refrigerators; we will be more careful about the temperature setting so things do not freeze. Lawn mowing is to be covered.
- 2020 Budget: Unable to hold congregational conversations as previously planned due to pandemic. Will develop an alternate plan to get budget approval and include congregation in conversations. Continue to plan to go to a half-time pastor in October; we need to let Rev. Petersen know about 1/2 time by Jul. 1 (for 90-days' notice).
- Newsletter: Suggested a different format for the May Open Door to highlight changes made during pandemic.
- Request for use of Parish House: Consensus to grant Joy Faidley-Leitner permission to use for online classes.
- Streaming Online Worship: Purchase music licensing contract through One License for one year at cost of \$279.00 was approved by consensus. Paid from the Worship and Music Fund.
- Options for Online Giving: Four possibilities were presented. A transaction-based program was suggested because it would be less expensive. A final suggestion will be proposed via email for approval.
- Personnel Committee update: Nothing to update at this time.
- Ways we are keeping in touch and staying connected: Offering online worship services and putting them on the website and Facebook. Bulletins are now available on the website. Bible study is taking place using ZOOM. The Caring Calling Crew is up and running; people are being called and checked on at least once every one or two weeks. The Open Door continues to be prepared and sent. Rev. Petersen suggested that she could offer something midweek.
- Upcoming events were reviewed.
- Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Mass Poor People's Assembly and March on Washington

COVID-19 has forced the nation into an unprecedented emergency. The current emergency, however, results from a deeper and much longer-term crisis — that of poverty and inequality, and of a society that has long ignored the needs of 140 million people who are poor or one emergency away from being poor.

In 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many others called for a “revolution of values” in America and sought to build a broad movement that could unite poor and dispossessed communities across the country. Today, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has picked up this work. People across the nation have joined under the banner of the Campaign to confront the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, climate change and ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism.

They are coming together to demand that the 140 million poor and low-income people in our nation — from every race, creed, gender, sexuality and place — are no longer ignored, dismissed or pushed to the margins of our political and social agenda.

You are invited to join the Poor People's Campaign for the Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington Digital Justice Gathering, on June 20, 2020. It will be an historic, generationally transformative digital event. Across the internet and the airwaves (it will air on MSNBC as well) as the vision and agenda of our communities is driven into the heart of the national narrative.

In this unprecedented moment, we must tell the truth about the dire failures of our political leaders. We must also demonstrate that it is the leadership emerging from poor and dispossessed people that is paving a different way forward. History teaches us that it is exactly in moments like these that a movement of the many is necessary to force the nation into action. In the midst of pandemic, economic collapse, climate change, and more, the key to real and lasting change lies within our communities — within our ability to come together in new and bold ways. Join this movement for justice by registering for June 20, 2020 at june2020.org and share the news.

Take note...

21st Century Giving

Congregational UCC is excited to offer you the opportunity to give online through Tithe.ly! You can give by visiting <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1633938> or by going to our website (uccnewton.org) and clicking the “DONATE” button. Additionally, you may give by downloading the Tithe.ly app on your smartphone and simply searching for “Newton Congregational United Church of Christ.” Donations may be made using a credit card or a bank account. Tithe.ly gives those donating the option to cover the fees associated with each online giving transaction if you choose (these fees are lower when giving through your bank account). Please contact Rev. Petersen if you have any questions or difficulties giving through this new platform. And, thank you for your continued generosity during these challenge times!



Birthdays to Celebrate in June

3-Suzanne Parker	16-Jacy Yoder
4-Bev Thomas	17-Duane Hobbs
5-Sarah Penick	18-Madeleine Joy
6-Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh	19-Don Swihart
7-Alex Schoettmer	22-James Tool
8-Dylan Easterla	25-Meredith Caves
9-Meredith McKay	26-Benjamin Schober
12-Chelsey McNew	30-Samantha Sledge



Anniversaries to Celebrate in June

5-Cindy Pollard & Gayla Snook
13-Donna & Nile McCoy
18-Jan & Tom Turk
22-Bill & Karen Shump
30-Kenny & Lora Caves

JUNE 20, 2020

#POORPEOPLESCAMPAIGN

JUNE2020.ORG


The Open Door

Sundays

10:00am Online
Worship

June



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
			7:00pm Congregational Conversation via Zoom	5:00pm <i>Tightrope</i> Study via Zoom		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Communion 			6:00pm Church Council via Zoom	5:00pm <i>Tightrope</i> Study via Zoom		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			2020 Budget Ballots Due	5:00pm <i>Tightrope</i> Study via Zoom		Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington (Digital)
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
				5:00pm <i>Tightrope</i> Study via Zoom		
28	29	30				
			10			

Worship Schedule for June

Date	June 7	June 14	June 21	June 28
Christian Calendar Date	Trinity Sunday	Second Sunday after Pentecost	Third Sunday after Pentecost	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Special Events	Communion		Father's Day	Open and Affirming Sunday
Scriptures	Matthew 28:16-20	Romans 5:1-8	Genesis 21:8-21	Matthew 10:40-42
Worship Color	White	Green	Green	Green

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

Green is the color of growth. It symbolizes the renewal of vegetation and the promise of new life.



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 1st St. N.
 Newton, IA 50208

Betty Hotchkin
 Park Centre #40
 500 1st St. N.
 Newton, IA 50208

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

xxx

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	Barbara Vasquez	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	Samantha Sledge		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Thursdays only (until further notice); not open to the public



Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/NewtonUCC

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

Newton Congregational UCC: www.uccnewton.org