



The Open Door

NOVEMBER 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.

WHAT'S NEXT

When it comes to writing this article, I, the Newsletter Editor, feel like the content repeats in the same loop over and over. That loop can be aptly characterized as "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." Last month's article was hopeful that we were about to secure a pastor. It was only going to take a couple more steps, an interview, a call, and "ta-da," we are on our way with spiritual leadership. Except that is not how it played out.

Instead, the interview was followed by scheduling the meeting to finalize the call and before that meeting took place the candidate withdrew.

No new responses to our Profile have been received. The Search Committee is now following all the leads we have to find a "super supply" pastor who will commit to at least a few months in which they would fill the pulpit on Sunday mornings and also provide some pastoral care. At the moment this consists of speaking to five individuals.

While at the pharmacy getting my COVID booster, I saw a poster:

Pessimists see the difficulties in every opportunity.

Optimists see the opportunities in every difficulty.

One opportunity in our current difficulty is joining with another congregation to create a shared ministry with a shared pastor. The Search Committee is also pursuing this possibility.

HAPPY
BIRTHDAY



11/2 Brent Parker
11/3 Ginger Dack
11/5 Martha Ellsworth, Dorothy Raymond,
Gary Kahn
11/7 Brad Johnson
11/8 Richard Hagedorn
11/9 Jennifer Pryke
11/12 Jeannie Johnston, Adam Holdsworth
11/17 Lin Chapé
11/18 Macey Caves
11/23 Steve Holdsworth
11/30 Brandon Pickard

Happy
Anniversary

11/11 Sarah & Brad Penick
11/25 Suzanne & Ed Van Zante

**WHY are we called to be the United Church
of Christ in this time and place?**

**To live into God's extravagant welcome and
advocate for justice.**

**So that all may know love, safety,
belonging and dignity.**

From the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota weekly
eNewsletter

Pastoral Care

We are grateful to have Rev. David Raymond willing to provide pastoral care. Rev. Raymond has continued to be a care-giver to our congregation over this long period of the pandemic and our pulpit being empty. 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 sharing your warm spirit with us and blessing us with your care.

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. At this time, as directed by our conference ministers, we require attendees 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.



Money Musings



The congregation approved a tentative 2022 budget at its annual meeting on October 17. We need an approved budget before January 1 in order to pay bills at the beginning of 2022. Shortly after the first of the year, when we can finalize figures, Council will recommend a final budget for adoption. The provisional 2022 budget was printed in the Annual Report for Year 2021, copies of which were available at the Annual Meeting. I am going to hit the high points in these reflections.

All budgets have assumptions built into them. One of the assumptions built into the tentative budget already has proved erroneous. Council had decided, with inflation having spiked in 2021, to recommend a pay increase for the staff. Council felt it was unchristian to make the staff do the same jobs for essentially less money as inflation ate away at the purchasing power of income. We decided to recommend a pay increase equal to what the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) would be for social security. At the time Council was considering the budget, the AARP website listed a range with the most likely COLA increase being 5.5%. After the tentative budget was approved, social security announced a 5.9% COLA for 2022. Thus, our staff salaries will be slightly higher than what is listed in the provisional budget when the final budget is presented to the Congregation in January. The increase will be less than \$100 for all three staff persons.

In the provisional budget, we assume that we will have a half-time pastor beginning January 1 and that we will be paying the new pastor one half of what we were paying Reverend Petersen. Time will tell whether these assumptions will change in the final budget. (If you are, like me, a “budget nerd,” you may recall that our tentative budget approved last October also made this assumption. The final budget assumed we would hire someone after April 1. The resulting decrease in pastor’s expenses actually moved our 2021 budget from a deficit to a slight surplus.)

In the provisional budget, we assume that rising electricity and natural gas prices will necessitate increasing these lines by \$500 each for the year. We will be closely monitoring these expenses for the rest of the year to decide whether this increase will be sufficient.

We made another major (HUGE) assumption. We assumed that we would get as much money from 2022 pledges as we did in 2021. In 2021 our pledge income totaled \$82,615. We are hoping to come in close to that figure for 2022.

The bottom line: the provisional budget projects income of \$95,425, expenses of \$107,794, and a deficit of \$12,369.

Larry Leitner, Treasurer

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Much of the work of caring for our buildings and property is of the out-of-sight, out-of-mind type. Most of us probably are not aware of the many, many tasks that need to be done to be good stewards of our buildings and property, despite the fact that we all benefit greatly from this work. To raise awareness and help us all be more appreciative of the time and attention put into our campus, the Building and Grounds annual report is included here in its entirety. Please read it. The quantity of work that has been done is amazing!

The Building and Grounds Committee is a group authorized by the Church Council and Comprised of Council members and volunteers who perform the majority of maintenance, repair, and grounds care work at the Church. The past year has been challenging because of the volume of work resulting from the 2020 storm recovery and the upgrades necessary to prepare for the newly mandated Building Inspection Program of the City of Newton which was added to the normal upkeep of the property. Here is a partial listing of work performed by members of the committee:

- Snow and ice removal after each incident
- Lawn mowing and trimming on a regular basis
- Trimmed shrubs and bushes
- Applied lawn fertilizer
- Treated grass and landscaped areas with weed control. (this has been a difficult year)
- Planted and trimmed flowers around new sign
- Repaired ceiling and wall damage resulting from Ice buildup
- Completed fill, leveling landscaping and planting surrounding the new sign
- Re - anchored utility pipes and conduit damaged by the storm
- Repaired, patched, and painted various areas affected by water damage
- Treated mildew damaged areas with disinfectant
- Replaced all fire extinguishers as all of the existing units were outdated
- Replaced all carbon monoxide/smoke alarms
- Organized and participated in cleanup/fix up efforts that made many areas more attractive and useable
- Installed new handrail in parish house basement stairs
- Worked with providers to upgrade the Internet and wireless systems
- Assisted in adapting and adjusting equipment to facilitate broadcast of church services
- Repaired interior blinds
- Replaced water damaged ceiling tile
- Worked with contractors to complete storm damage repair work
- Arranged contract to repair storm damage to west window (will be completed in early winter)
- Arranged contract to repair damaged mortar and fractures in brick exterior of buildings that have resulted in leakage (will be completed this fall).
- Repaired or replaced and installed necessary exit lighting and signs
- Recoated exterior doors with stain finish
- Maintained heating and air conditioning units
- Lubricated organ blower motor
- Replaced interior entrance rugs to make the entrance safer
- Applied for, prepared for and successfully completed City Building Inspection with no deficiencies

We appreciate all of the work done by our volunteers to keep our buildings and property in good condition. This has been a particularly challenging period because of the volume of work made necessary by storms or new regulations. We thank all who have contributed.

Although we expect some relief in repair work, we continue to struggle to find volunteers to participate in the lawn mowing, plant and shrub care, weeding and trimming, and occasional patching and painting projects. We encourage anyone who is interested and available to help to let us know so we may include you in this important work.

Norm Van Klompenburg



Communications

Church Council Catch Up

October 13, 2021 Council Meeting

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

Where we have been

Treasurer's Report: Larry brought up the stock donation that is currently being held. Due to the volatility of the stock market at this time, it was agreed that the church will sell this stock. The UCC is starting a scholarship fund for seminary students. It was decided not to send a donation to the fund at this time; we will look at how our own seminary scholarship fund is administered.

Maintenance Report: Norm presented the Jensen Construction contract for repointing and repairing the cracks where water is entering. He recommended we accept the \$2500 bid. Accepted by consensus.

Where we are

Maintenance: Alliant Energy is requesting the relocation of the overhead primary line on our property to underground. They need our approval of the easement. Norm suggested we have an attorney look at the document and if no problems are noted that we approve this request. Agreed by consensus.

There are lights burned out in the library. Upon investigation it was discovered that they are shop lights that are not repairable. Our options are: do nothing, buy new shop lights for about \$150 each, or buy LED lights for about \$300-400. Council agreed by consensus to the first option, that the lighting is adequate as is.

Concerns have been expressed by a congregant that the exterior landscaping of the church looks unkempt. It was suggested that we hire the work out; congregants have offered to support this with their donations. The pros and cons of this approach were discussed. On one hand, as we are depending upon volunteers, it is true we are not keeping up with the yard work. Nevertheless, we are concerned that hiring out the work could be an insult to our volunteers, and we do not want to minimize their efforts.

It was also noted that this issue is part of the broader context of the many areas where we are seeking volunteers and falling short of what we need. Thus, it is a piece of the larger question of whether the church is actually viable, given the current levels of attendance and participation. If we do not have congregants actively participating in the business of keeping the church open, then why stay open? Regarding the immediate question of the appearance of our yard, there is a solid plan for edging the lawn this fall and we have had one new volunteer. It was decided that at this time we will continue to accept the work of volunteers.

In-Person Worship: Linda Curtis Stolper will be in the pulpit October 17 and October 24. She wants us to have a liturgist each Sunday and the service will continue to follow the structure we have been using. Linda is not available October 31, November 14, and November 21. Discussion ensued regarding filling those dates. It was decided that Jane Ann will check with Linda regarding November 7th and 28th and she will contact Judy Scheer for October 31, Nov. 14 and Nov. 21.

Where God is leading us

Stewardship Campaign: It was suggested and accepted that we send a letter asking for a pledge, with an option of "I do not plan to pledge at this time." We also agreed to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to encourage quick response. April will write the letter and arrange with Annie for its reproduction and mailing ASAP.

Update from Search Committee: Our candidate has withdrawn. It was agreed to instruct the Search Committee to pursue options for a supply pastor, a super supply pastor, sharing a pastor with the Lutherans, and/or what might be available in cooperation with Grinnell UCC.

April Faidley, Substitute Secretary

EDUCATION

The Book Study group found *The Gospel of Jesus* awkward to read and to discuss. Consequently, they abandoned that study and chose instead *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus.*, by Bernard Brandon Scott. From 1910 through the 1950s the significant scholarly contributions to parable studies came from Germany and Britain. In the 1960's scholarship on the parables shifted to America, and has remained such. This book picks up and expands upon the interpretation of parable as metaphor, an interpretation at variance with the traditional understanding of the parable.

Robert W. Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar has this to say about Scott's book: "In this book the author sets his interpretation of the key parables of Jesus in the context of other things Jesus said and did. The result is a startling and provocative picture of the historical figure and the challenge he presents to contemporary life. Brandon Scott is a veteran scholar of the parables. In this volume he outdoes himself in making a difficult subject accessible . . ."

Scott himself begins: "The parables of Jesus, which rank among the supreme literary creations of western literature, testify to the consummate religious genius who had a unique vision of God, a vision he discovered and communicated in parables. . . For many . . . the parables are simple stories, illustrations for the common people. Such interpreters almost always end up with trite meanings for the parables . . . I have never found Jesus' parables simple. . . I am trying to understand what Jesus intended by the parables."

The study began on October 21st and will conclude on December 16th.

Schedule:

November 4	Chapters 5, 6, and 7, The Empty Jar, Hidden Treasure, Samaritan, pp. 41-64
November 11	Chapter 8, The Prodigals, pp. 65-84
November 18	Chapters 9, Shrewd Manager, pp. 85-96
November 25	Thanksgiving. No meeting.
December 2	Chapters 10-11, Unforgiving Slave and Dinner Party, pp. 97-118
December 9	Chapter 12, Re-Imagining the World, pp. 119-140
December 16	Epilogue, Living in a Re-Imagined World, pp. 141-150

Anyone is welcome to participate in this study via ZOOM. We will need to know in advance if you plan to do so. Please contact the church office, April Faidley, or Jane Ann Cotton, so that we can be prepared with the necessary equipment for a ZOOM attendance.

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 the study!

a place at the table

I can taste the sun
in the peaches
of the orchard.
I can taste the wind
in your hair,
your soft skin
furry with
its pale down.

There is a sweetness
in the space between
the things we
come from
and go to,
inside whatever
we touch.
More and more
I feel it, waiting,
whenever I open the door.
I say, "Thank you."
even in the darkness.

I say, "Thank you."
for a place
at this inexhaustible table
to which we all
have come,
sometimes the guest,
sometimes the dinner.
I say, "Thank you."
Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you."
Each day,
I savor
the sweetness.



**By Michael Carey
from the holy ground**

Michael Carey lives and farms in southwest Iowa with his wife Kelly and their four children. His work has been widely published in literary magazines. Most summers he teaches at the University of Iowa’s *Summer Writing Festival*.

Prayers and Concerns

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------|
| Don Deppe | Rev. Mark Holmes | Stormy Storms |
| Brent Parker | Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh | Kelly Jo Zach |
| Judy Brassfield (Gary Pearson’s mother) | Deb Swihart (Melissa Pearson’s mother) | |
| Alex Stonehocker (Jenni Pryke’s grandson) | | |

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



We miss our local homebound members and we imagine they miss us too!

Take a moment to pray for them, to call, to write, or to visit them.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Marilyn Currant
Park Centre #1
500 1 st 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 1 st St. N.
Newton, IA 50208
(641) 791-4687 | Norma “Jeannie” Johnson
200 S. 8th Ave E.
Newton, IA 50208
(641) 275-5393 |
|---|--|---|--|



NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
				5:00 pm <i>Re-Imagine the World</i> book study Parish House		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2am End of Daylight Savings 11am Worship with Linda Curtis Stolper		10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments	6:00pm Church Council, Parish House	5:00 pm <i>Re-Imagine the World</i> book study Parish House		World Kindness Day
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
11am Worship with Judy Scheer		10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments		5:00 pm <i>Re-Imagine the World</i> book study Parish House		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
11am Worship with Judy Scheer		10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments		THANKSGIVING	Deadline for submissions to the newsletter	
28	29	30				
11am Worship with Linda Curtis Stolper	First Day of Hanukkah	10 am Video taping of Meditation and Musical Moments				

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



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

Newton Congregational UCC: www.uccnewton.org