

The Open Door

December 2019



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 Building the Church and Sharing the Good News

As we gathered in November for our Congregational Conversation regarding Evangelism, I shared with those present a strategy for engaging in meaningful conversation with folks not yet involved with our congregation. Prior to sharing these five steps, we briefly addressed the purpose of doing evangelism, that is why we are to share the good news we have experienced. We do not engage in evangelism in order to get more people in the church so that they can help pay the bills or fill other needed roles in the congregation. Rather, we engage in evangelism because building relationships with others by sharing of ourselves and inviting another to do the same is how we are called to live out our mission as stated above. With that purpose in mind, I present that five-step conversation strategy once more.

- 1) Deep Concern—Of course, you'll begin a conversation by introducing yourself. Immediately following that introduction, you are encouraged to get right down to the things that matter in life asking your conversation partner to share their concerns (what keeps them up at night?) and their passions (what do they care about deeply?). Once you ask, LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.
- 2) Connect—Once the other has shared their deep concern with you and you have listened carefully, connect it with who we are as a church, connect it to the mission we believe God is calling us to engage in together. Here you will also share about your experience of the good news and why you are a part of Congregational UCC.
- 3) Invite—Once the connection has been made invite them to join us for something. We have a lot going on in the life of the church (just check out this newsletter). Invite your conversation partner to attend worship, our weekly Bible study, or one of our multiple monthly educational opportunities. Soon you'll also be able to invite them to a monthly game night as well (getting started in 2020).
- 4) Them and Us—Once you've invited them to join us, remind them that this ministry we are seeking to do (which includes addressing their deep concern) can only be accomplished if they get involved, that is, if we do this work together.
- 5) Follow Up—Before you leave the conversation, be sure you have a way to fol-

low up with your conversation partner. Ask for their email or phone number so you can check in with them. Consider making plans to meet with them again (perhaps at a church event or maybe at a coffee shop). Let them know that you will be following up with them, and then **actually follow up with them**.

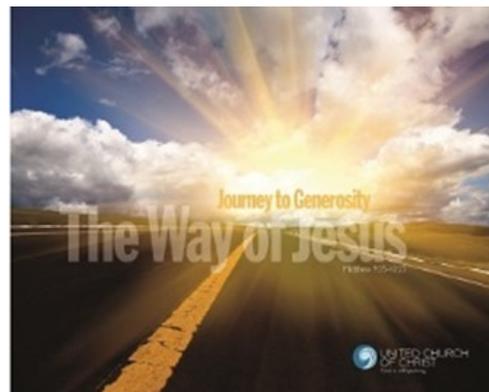
Additionally, remember that we now have a church pamphlet that offers folks a glimpse into who we are as a congregation. Keep a few with you in case you run into someone who seems would benefit from connecting with our congregation. We can always make more copies, so distribute them generously!

Friends, we are called to spread the amazing news of God's love for all of creation. Let us commit to spreading "tidings of comfort and joy" throughout this Advent and Christmas season that lives might be transformed and peace may abound!

Stewardship 2019: "Journey to Generosity"

During this year's stewardship campaign, we were called to "Journey to Generosity" as we prayerfully considered our commitment to supporting the ministries of this congregation. Thank you to those of you who have already faithfully and generously responded to the call to follow in the generous way of Jesus by pledging to support the ministries of our congregation in 2020. A final mailing will be mailed out in the middle of this month to confirm the dollar amount you have pledged for the upcoming year or to encourage you to return your a commitment/pledge card and "Nuts and Bolts of Ministry Inventory" if you have not yet done so.

May God bless our pledges and us as we seek to honor our commitment to share our various gifts as we seek to live in the way of Jesus throughout the upcoming year. Please contact Rev. Petersen or Larry Leitner if you have any questions.



Worship



Christmas Eve Worship

Everyone is invited to attend our annual Christmas Eve Worship and Candle Lighting Service beginning at **7:00pm**. There will be singing of carols, special music, and a Christmas meditation as well as candle lighting.

A small group is meeting to rehearse a special musical selection to be sung during worship on Christmas Eve and Sunday, December 22nd. **Rehearsals take place in the choir loft every Sunday at 9:10am**. All are welcome to join.

Ecumenical Christmas Gathering

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church will host the **1st Annual Ecumenical Christmas Gathering on Sunday, December 8th at 3:00pm**. The gathering will include a traditional service of lessons and carols followed by fellowship and refreshments. If you would like to represent Congregational UCC by reading one of the lessons please notify Rev. Petersen by **Sunday, December 1st**.



Rev. Petersen Away

Rev. Petersen will be on vacation **Monday, December 2nd through Sunday, December 8th**. Judy Scheer will preach and lead us in worship on Sunday, December 8th, and Rev. David Raymond (641-521-1506) will be available throughout the week in the case of any pastoral emergencies.



Migration and the Southern Border

On **Sunday, December 22nd**, Janet Cook will address the struggle for migrant and refugee justice and what is and is not going on at the US southern border. She will speak from her personal experiences with migrants at the border as well as her study regarding this important matter. Her presentation will take place during worship within a service of lessons and carols. Be sure to join us for this powerful service.

Education



UCC General Synod Resolutions

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ is the national decision-making body for the denomination, responsible for giving general direction to the evangelistic, missionary, and justice programs of the UCC. Because the UCC holds to a covenantal polity, any decisions made by the Synod are not binding upon the UCC's congregations (or its associations or conferences) in any way, though the national offices and the UCC's *Constitution and Bylaws* expect serious consideration to be given them.

The United Church of Christ's Thirty-Second General Synod was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 21st-25th, 2019. The theme for the 32nd General Synod was based on the scripture Matthew 5:16: "In the same way let your light shine before others . . ." Twenty resolutions were approved by the delegates to the 32nd General Synod. You are encouraged to read each of these resolutions and listen to how God is speaking to our local congregation through this witness of the wider UCC.

Two binders, each including all 20 resolutions, are available in the church library. The resolutions may also be accessed online at ucceverywhere.org/synod. Additionally, throughout the upcoming months, we will explore one resolution during worship on the first Sunday of each month.

Education cont.

Racial Harmony & Justice Book Club

Those interested in promoting racial harmony and justice in our community are encouraged to gather for the Racial Harmony and Justice Book Club at **6:00pm-7:00pm** on the first Tuesday of each month at **The Cellar Peanut Pub** (403 W 4th St. N, Newton). Over the course of five monthly meetings (September-January), participants will read and discuss “Waking Up White: and Finding Myself in the Story of Race” by Debby Irving. Participants should read and come prepared to discuss Sections 6 and 7 (Leaving My Comfort Zone and Inner Work) for the **December 3rd** gathering and Sections 8 and 9 (Outer Work and Reclaiming My Humanity) for the **January 7th** gathering (final meeting). Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



Pub Theology regularly meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 6:00pm-7:00pm at The Cellar Peanut Pub. However, as that date falls on Christmas Eve, **there will be no gathering in December**. The format is simple: beer, conversation, and God. Come bring your questions, your curiosity, and pull up a chair. Be ready to engage with people of varying religious traditions, philosophical perspectives, and life experiences. You'll be able to share your own wrestlings and thoughts while learning something new along the way.

We are offering this ministry in cooperation with First Presbyterian Church. Participants are responsible for purchasing their own beverages and encouraged to drink responsibly. No purchase is required. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions. Hope to see you there!



Morning Circle will **not meet in the month of December** and will reconvene in January. If you haven't yet participated in the group, now would be a perfect time to catch up on the reading. The group is studying “Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants” by Robin Wall Kimmerer. We have read through page 117.

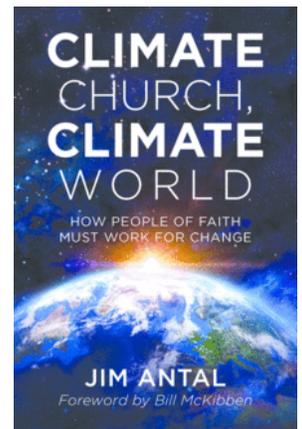
All are welcome to join us as we come together for fellowship, devotions, and study seeking to follow more closely in the way of Jesus.

“Climate Church, Climate World” Study

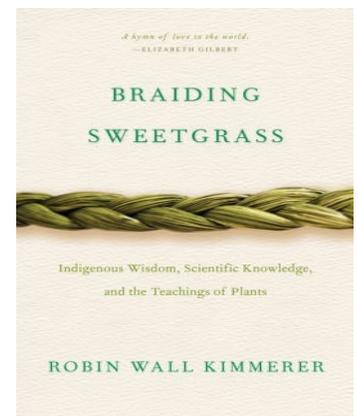
All are invited to gather in the **Parish House** on **Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm**, as we begin a new nine-session study of the book “Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change” by Jim Antal. The book “argues that climate change is the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced. Hunger, refugees, poverty, inequality, deadly viruses, war—climate change multiplies all forms of global social injustice. Environmental leader Reverend Jim Antal presents a compelling case that it’s time for the church to meet this moral challenge, just as the church addressed previous moral challenges. Antal calls for the church to embrace a new vocation so that future generations might live in harmony with God’s creation.” (from amazon.com)

Participants should come prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The November meeting and reading schedule is as follows: December 5th—no meeting; December 12th—Chapters 3 & 4; December 19th—Chapter 5; December 26th—no meeting.

Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



Pub Theology



the joy of



giving

and cleaning/hygiene supplies at no cost. The shop is free and open to any high school student. Helpful supplies include such things as hair care, shaving items, deodorant, oral hygiene, laundry detergent, feminine hygiene, body wash and spray. Students prefer brand-name products and body wash over bar soap. Regular-size products are appreciated. You may place your donations in a basket labeled “Body Shop” in the entryway. There will be tax deductible receipts for your use. Thank you for your generosity and love!

Christmas Shopping for the Body Shop

We will receive the second of our three collections for the school year for the “Body Shop” at Newton High School on **Sunday, December 8th**. The Body Shop is a method of providing high school students with personal care items

Salvation Army

Bell Ringing

As a part of our involvement with the Mission Coalition, our congregation is responsible for ring bells at **HyVee on Saturday, December 7th, 10:00am-12:00pm**. A sign-up sheet for **Salvation Army Bell Ringing** is in the Parlor. Please sign up for one or more 30-minute bell ringing sessions. Thank you!



Holiday Compassion Offering

On **Sunday, December 15th**, we will take up a special offering to offer care and compassion to our members and friends who are experiencing financial difficulties. The donated funds will be used to purchase gift cards to either HyVee or Fareway (recipient’s choice). Donations may also be sent to the church office by **Tuesday, December 17th**. Please prayerfully consider contributing to this effort as we share God’s love with one another.

Christmas Gifts for Nelson Manor Residents

As a member of Mission Coalition, our church members usually purchase Christmas gifts for residents of Nelson Manor who would not otherwise receive any gifts. However, this year another congregation has already agreed to offer this care and support.

We do anticipate continuing this ministry in subsequent years and thank you all for your past and future generosity to help make this season brighter for these Nelson Manor residents.



★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

2019 Special Offering

The year’s final special offering, is the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The collection **during the Christmas Eve service** gives us the opportunity to recognize and honor those who have retired from serving the UCC as authorized ministers or lay employees.

The funds collected are used in four different ways: (1) A monthly pension supplementation for lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees, (2) a supplement for quarterly health premiums for lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees, (3) provide Christmas “Thank You” gift checks for retired UCC clergy/lay employees, and (4) provide emergency grants for large medical expenses and/or home damage due to natural disasters.

When you think about your Christmas list, please consider including a Christmas Eve gift to thank and aid those who have and continue to serve us so well.

Service and Outreach cont.

Prayers and Concerns



Please hold in prayer

- Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- Jeannie Johnston
- Steve Holdsworth
- Bev Edge
- Hilary Montalvo

✝ 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 any Sunday during Fellowship Time. If you are curious about your blood pressure reading, please let Carolyn know.

Thank You for Your Generosity!

Thank you for being a good neighbor this year and helping to ensure that there are enough blankets for all through your generous donations to **CWS Blankets!** We received \$223.00 for this special offering.

And, thank you for your continued support of the Newton-area CROP Walk. This year our congregation contributed \$130.00 to the \$3620.30 raised to help alleviate hunger both locally and around the globe. Thank you for your generosity!



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

Additionally, there are a few members who need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact the church office to volunteer.

Donation Wish Lists

We take up regular monthly collections for the Salvation Army food pantry (first Sundays) and the Jasper County Animal Rescue League (third Sundays). 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).



Worship Attendance

<u>November Attendance</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
First Sunday	37	30
Second Sunday	27	31
Third Sunday	28	34
Fourth Sunday	21	40



Birthdays to Celebrate in December

- 4-Suzanne Van Zandt, Dickie Teed
- 6-Daniel McPherren
- 10-Megan Pryke
- 11-Katie Schober-Ordenez
- 14-Martin Mutai, Kayden Jensen
- 15-Patricia Van Klompenburg
- 16-Caleb McGinley
- 20-Keiarra Hicks
- 22-Cainan McGinley
- 24-Julie McPherren
- 25-JESUS CHRIST
- 27-Alayzha Hicks, Danielle Hasbrouck
- 30-Darraah Schlichte
- 31-Rosalynn Smith



Anniversaries to Celebrate in December

- 12-Greg & Barb Elcey
- 24-Gary & Melisa Pearson

Take note...

Naturalization Ceremony

As you may know, Martin Mutai, Rev. Petersen's partner, has been on the journey to become a citizen of the United States for some time now. He was approved to become a naturalized citizen in November and will officially become a citizen on Friday, December 6th during a naturalization ceremony being held in Des Moines. Please consider reaching out to offer him a warm welcome as a fellow US citizen.

Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday, December 11th at 6:00pm in the Parish House.** Please contact Jane Ann Cotton, our Moderator, with any matters you wish for the Council to consider as they meet. The Council meets regularly at 6:00pm on the second Wednesday of each month.

Inclement Weather Policy

As we are all aware, Iowa weather is always unpredictable. In the event of inclement weather, please check television stations KCCI and WHO or radio station KCOB to learn of any cancellations of worship services or other church events.



Christmas Decorating

All are invited to join us in making the church look festive for Christmas as we decorate the sanctuary, the entryway, and the church parlor on **Tuesday, December 3rd at 3:30pm.** If you can help or have any questions, please contact Bev Thomas or Rev. Petersen.



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. Complete minutes of each Council meeting are available in the church office. Below please find highlights from the November 13th Council meeting submitted by Jamie Sawin, Secretary.

- ◆ **Opening devotions** included praying for church members. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- ◆ **Treasurer's report:** Our expenses are at or below projections. Our year-to-date income is about even with our projections due to prepaid pledges for 2020. Our deficit to date is \$35,150. Another \$10,000 was withdrawn from the endowment fund making a total of \$30,000 this year.
- ◆ **Maintenance report:** Our Internet line was cut and will need to be fixed, probably in the spring. Repairs made on the anchors. The blower on the furnace vibrated and has been fixed. Leaves have been mulched. Light bulbs were replaced. We are thankful for the many people who take care of our church facilities.
- ◆ **Scouting committee update:** Both Baxter UCC churches are interested. Marshalltown UCC has responded as well; it was decided by consensus to drop Marshalltown from the pool for now. We are awaiting more information from Melbourne UCC; they have done a shared ministry before. It was agreed to go with whatever works for Rev. Petersen. We will consider inviting Rev. Darrell Goodwin, an Associate Conference Minister, to meet with the scouting committee. The committee is reviewing the pastor's job description.
- ◆ **Stewardship drive:** A third letters is being signed now (from all church council members to membership). There will be a soup luncheon Nov. 24. Pledge cards will be received during worship that day.
- ◆ **Building use agreement with PI:** The insurance information has been provided as requested. The agreement was signed. We need to think about the cost of heat for reimbursement from PI.
- ◆ **Active shooter training:** This was very good training provided to Council members and some church staff. Follow-up items to be considered: padlock on access behind organ pipes and hatch door back on choir room ceiling. We decided there is no need to lock the boiler room or upstairs classrooms. Will plan an emergency response training in the spring with the whole congregation to include active shooter, extreme weather, fire, and medical.
- ◆ **Building use requests:** Empty Spools quilting group requested occasional use on the first Monday of the month and was approved. Al-Anon requested use on Sunday nights from 6:00pm-7:00pm for children and adults in the parlor and nursery. We will request insurance information or a waiver of liability prior to approval. Katie Fresh has requested to use the dining room for a blood drive on Saturday, January 25. Again we would need insurance information and would like to involve Katie in the promotion.
- ◆ **Church bumper sticker:** This was suggested as a means to promote our church. Cost would be \$50 for 50 stickers. It was decided to go forward.
- ◆ **Church fellowship monthly game night:** We need more fun! Shared experiences build bonds. This would be especially great if we could have kids attend (families will be consulted to determine meeting dates and times). Looking to begin in 2020.
- ◆ **Review upcoming dates:** Martin Mutai will become a citizen December 6; Rev. Petersen will be gone the first Sunday of December, will arrange pulpit supply; Rev. Petersen requested sabbatical leave before shared ministry begins; Ecumenical Lessons & Carols service will be held at St. Stephens on Sunday, December 8, 3:00pm, Rev. Petersen will check roles/volunteers needed for that.

Christmas Poinsettias

You may help decorate the church for Advent and Christmas by providing a donation to help purchase poinsettias. Please complete the form below, detach it, and return it to the church office (by mail or in the offering plate on Sundays) stating whom the donation is in memory or honor of and whom it is from. Include your check or cash in the amount of your choice.

The deadline for having your forms submitted is **Sunday, December 15th**. Poinsettias will be purchased by our Special Flowers Volunteer, and any receipts beyond the total cost will be added to the Worship/Flower Fund. A special insert naming all memorials and honoraria will be included in the bulletins for worship on December 22nd (regular morning worship) and Christmas Eve. Thank you.

(cut here)

Christmas Poinsettias



Each year we decorate the sanctuary for the Advent/Christmas Season using Poinsettias. If you would like to help by giving a gift to the Flower Fund in memory or honor of a loved one or loved ones, please fill out this form and return it to the church office by placing it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office directly along with your gift by Sunday, December 15.

The name of the person/s you are remembering or honoring and your name/s will be included in a special bulletin insert on the fourth Sunday of Advent and on Christmas Eve.

Amount of Gift \$ _____

(\$1.00 to \$20.00 suggested – check may be made out to Congregational UCC)

Given in honor/memory (circle one) of _____

Given by _____

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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

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 sons and daughters of members who were working toward a four-year degree. Our congregation recently updated the standards for these scholarships while seeking to stay true to the Fullers' intent in establishing the scholarship fund.

The purpose of these scholarships is to provide post-secondary education scholarships (for both full-time and part-time enrollment), and scholarships will be awarded by priority based on the student's intent to complete a post-secondary degree according to the following (listed in priority order): Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree; Associate Degrees; Certificate program, Diploma program, Trades program; and Advanced Degrees.

In order to be eligible to receive a Fuller Scholarship, the applicant, and/or a parent or grandparent of the applicant must be a member of the Congregational United Church of Christ, in Newton, Iowa (at the time of the application).

The amount of the scholarship will be determined by the Scholarship Committee based on which of the four types of education listed above the student intends to enroll and if enrolled full or part-time. Also, the information provided on the completed application form is a very important factor. Such information includes: the student's academic performance in high school, college, and/or other post-secondary education; their participation in school and community activities; their goals or aspirations; the student's participation in the life and work of our church; a parent's and/or grandparent's participation in the life and work of our church which includes attending worship and serving the church in a variety of ways.

Application forms will be provided for those students applying for the first time and for those asking for a renewal of their scholarship. Please contact the church office for an application. Applications follow a similar format as those used by the Dollars for Scholars Scholarships.

For all applicants, **applications are due December 1st** (for winter 2019/2020 and spring 2020 enrollment) and April 1st (for summer 2020 and fall 2020 enrollment). Questions about how to complete the application form should be directed to the church office and a member of the Scholarship Committee will contact you with the requested information.

Following the application review by the Scholarship Committee, Newton High school graduates will be awarded their scholarship at the annual Senior Awards Assembly in May. All other applicants will receive a letter regarding the approval of their application and the amount of the scholarship by mail.

Once the scholarship is awarded, the student must submit an enrollment form from the post-secondary institution verifying their enrollment. This form will be provided for the applicant. The scholarship funds will be paid directly to the educational institution the student attends.

Since the inception of awarding these scholarships in 1996, a total of \$180,500 has been awarded. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.

Worship Schedule for December

Date	December 1	December 8	December 15	December 22	December 24	December 29
Christian Calendar Date	First Sunday of Advent	Second Sunday of Advent	Third Sunday of Advent	Fourth Sunday of Advent	Christmas Eve	First Sunday after Christmas
Special Events	Communion	Judy Scheer preaching		Janet Cook speaking		
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations	Body Shop Collection	JCARL Collection; Holiday Compassion Offering		Christmas Fund & Veterans of the Cross Offering	
Scriptures	Matthew 2:13-23	TBA	Luke 1:39-56	Multiple texts	John 1:1-14	Isaiah 64:7-9
Worship Color	White	Violet	Rose	Violet	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.

Rose symbolizes joy in the midst of the Advent season.



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

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

Ann Raridon
St. Frances Manor
2021 4th Ave.
Grinnell, IA 50112

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. 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	Jane Ann Cotton		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday and Thursday



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