The Open Door

February 2019

Congregational
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

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 Earning an MBA

For the past 11 years, I have served as a pastor in the United Church of Christ, and over seven of those years have been spent engaging in ministry with you all here at Congregational UCC. I believe that my undergraduate education in Religious Studies and my seminary education prepared me well to attend to matters of faith, pastoral care, and worship leadership. However, such coursework did not prepare me to address the administrative side of parish ministry equally as well. I have experienced this gap in my education more acutely during the past couple of years as our congregation has been facing ever-growing financial difficulties and struggles to connect with and get our name and identity out into our wider community. Over the last couple of months of 2018, I came to believe that studying best practices used in the business world, both for-profit and nonprofit, would greatly benefit me in my administrative role as pastor as I seek to lead our congregation toward greater organizational vitality and sustainability.

Following this thinking, I applied and was accepted to the online Master of Business Administration (MBA) program offered through Drake University's College of Business and Public Administration. It is my belief and hope that participating in Drake's online MBA program will effectively fill the gap I have found in my education as I seek to faithfully and fruitfully serve the church as the program promises to offer "a broad foundation in advanced business practices." I believe that engaging the curriculum and learning about marketing, finance, evaluating organizational performance, creating customer value, leadership and human capital value, and information technology and business will immediately benefit our congregation as we face our current financial and outreach challenges.

The online MBA was particularly attractive to me as you all know that I am working full-time and have a 1.5-year-old child to care for. The flexibility of the online degree in addition to the ability to concentrate on one six-week course at a time will allow me to gain this valuable information while I also continue to keep my current commitments to our church and to my family.

Pastor Petersen's Perspective cont.

It is my goal to bring the new knowledge and ways of thinking that I will gain through Drake's online MBA program to my role as a pastor in order to lead our congregation in more effectively living out our mission to love and serve all of God's creation and strive for justice and peace throughout our community, our nation, and the world. We have something of immense value to offer our community, but we struggle with how to share that with those around us and to invite them to join us in the transformative ministry we do together. I believe that Drake's online MBA program will empower and enable me to lead our congregation toward greater sustainability and effectiveness in living out our mission. It is for this reason that I have begun this journey with Drake's online MBA degree program.

I appreciate your prayers, encouragement, and support as I return to a formal education setting (though online and on a part-time basis). I am excited for this new learning opportunity and look forward to working with you all to put this new knowledge to good use!

Note: You may be concerned that my participation in this MBA program will consume time that would have otherwise been spent carrying out my regular pastoral duties. I remind you that over the course of my pastorate here, I have received and taken two weeks of continuing education leave each year. I will be attending on a part-time basis with the goal of completing this degree in five years (taking two or three courses each year). Though each course will not be taken in one or two-week intensive sessions but spread out over the course of six weeks, I anticipate spending approximately the same amount of time studying each year as I work toward completing this program as I did exploring other educational endeavors during previous years.

You may also be wondering where I will get the money to pay for this program. You may recall that four years ago I was selected to participate in the Next Generation Leadership Initiative (NGLI), an educational program funded by the UCC Pension Boards. I have six more years of participation in this program and have been approved to use NGLI funds for this undertaking. You are also likely aware that there are funds in our regular budget allocated for my continuing education, professional expenses, and books; I will also use these funds to help cover associated costs. Additionally, I am exploring other scholarship possibilities. I will then pay for any costs incurred not covered by these funding sources from my personal funds.

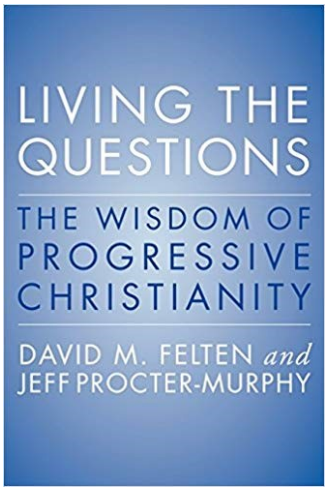
Finally, you may be curious about when I'll begin this journey. My first class started on January 28th.

Connecting with Pastor Petersen

These days as hospitals seek to keep patients' records confidential, private churches are not automatically notified if a member has been admitted to the hospital or is undergoing surgery. We would like to keep you in our prayers when you are experiencing health challenges, but we can't do that if we don't know about them. Rev. Petersen is also most willing to visit and pray with you during these times. To ensure that your church family is able to support you during these times, please tell someone at the hospital (a chaplain or other staff) that you would like to have Congregational United Church of Christ in Newton notified that you have been admitted into the hospital, or contact the church yourself if you know surgery or another medical procedure is coming.

If you desired any other type of pastoral care or would simply like to talk with Rev. Petersen, you are welcome to contact her anytime (Saturday is usually reserved for family time, so please limit contact to emergencies only.). As her hours in the church office can vary due to meetings and visits, you are encouraged to call or text Rev. Petersen's cell phone (641-840-2672) or to send her an email (revjessicapetersen@gmail.com).

"Living the Questions" Study



You are invited to join us in the Parish House on **Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm, in February** as we begin a new study using the book "Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive Christianity" by David M. Felton and Jeff Procter-Murphy (pastors with more than 40 years combined experience in local church ministry). "*Living the Questions* explores matters many churches are afraid to address including the humanity of Jesus and homosexuality and examines in a new light traditional faith topics such as the Bible, atonement, salvation, the rapture, and more." (from back cover)

Participants should read the designated section of the book (approximately 20 pages) prior to our Thursday meeting and be prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The schedule of reading for February is as follows: February 7th—Preface and Chapter 1 (An Invitation to Journey); February 14th—Chapters 2 & 3 (Taking the Bible Seriously and Thinking Theologically); February 21st—Chapters 4 & 5 (Stories of Creation and Lives of Jesus); February 28th—Chapters 6 & 7 (A Passion for Christ and Out into the World).

If you have not yet participated in our Thursday evening study, this four-week study would be a great time to check it out! Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.

Education Series on Poverty

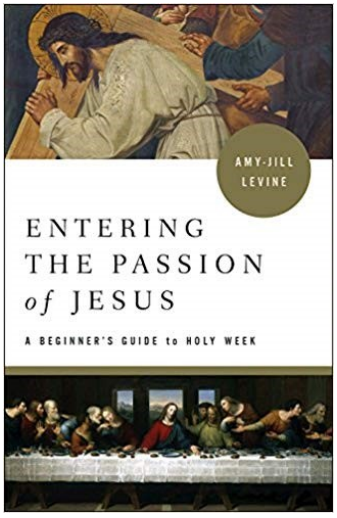
During our 2017 Annual Meeting, we affirmed God's call to focus on developing relationships with our neighbors directly impacted by poverty as we seek to live out our overall mission as a congregation. You are encouraged to continue learning about the state of poverty in our nation and to listen for ways we are being called to address this injustice as our six-month educational series on poverty continues (October-April, no meetings in January).

On **Wednesday, February 6th, 6:00pm-7:30pm**, you are encouraged to gather in the **Sanctuary** for our fourth video teach-in, entitled "The War Economy: Militarism and the Proliferation of Gun Violence." This teach-in, along with all of the others in this series, consists of a panel speaking about poverty from various perspectives as part of this summer's 40-day launch of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

Then on **Sunday, February 17th, 9:00am-9:45am**, you are invited to gather in the **Parish House** to discuss a segment of "The Souls of Poor Folk: Auditing America 50 Years After the Poor People's Campaign Challenged Racism, Poverty, the War Economy/Militarism and Our National Morality" by the Institute for Policy Studies. Participants should read the "War Economy and Militarism" section (pages 68-88) prior to our meeting.

Over the course of these six months, participants will read all of "The Souls of Poor Folk" audit, which is an assessment of these conditions today and trends of the past 50 years in the United States. It challenges us to take a look at how these conditions have changed since 1968, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., alongside a multiracial coalition of grassroots leaders, religious leaders, and other public figures, began organizing with poor and marginalized communities across racial and geographic divides to confront the underlying structures that perpetuated misery in their midst. The stark findings draw from a wide variety of sources, including primary and secondary data as well as interviews with and testimonies by people who have been living through and responding to these changes on the ground. "The Souls of Poor Folk" is available online at www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/audit. Contact Rev. Petersen if you would like a printed copy for $7.00 (to cover the cost of printing).

Education cont.

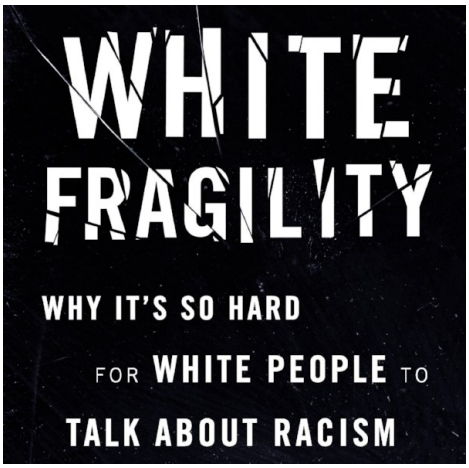


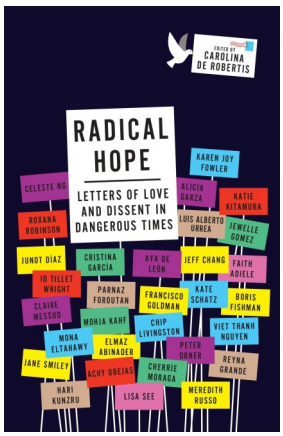
Lenten Bible Study: "Entering the Passion of Jesus"

Beginning on Thursday, March 7th and continuing throughout the season of Lent (March 6th-April 20th), you are invited to gather **in the Parish House on Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm**, to explore the biblical texts surrounding the Passion story. Guiding us during this six-week study (no meeting on Maundy Thursday, April 18th) will be author, professor, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine, as we will be reading her book entitled *"*Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*."* Through her work, Levine "shows us how the text raises ethical and spiritual questions for the reader, and how we all face risk in our Christian experience." (from Amazon.com)

Racial Harmony & Justice Book Club

The Racial Harmony and Justice Book Club will begin meeting once again on a different day of each month and at a different location. Those interested in promoting racial harmony and justice in our community are encouraged to gather at **6:00pm-7:00pm** on the fourth Monday of each month at **The Cellar Peanut Pub** (403 W 4th St. N, Newton). Over the course of five meetings (February-July, no meeting in May due to Memorial Day), participants will be reading and discussing "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism" by Robin DiAngelo. For the **February 25th** gathering, participants should read and come prepared to discuss the book's Foreword, Author's Note, Introduction, and Chapter 1. Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or if you would like help with ordering a book.





Morning Circle

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, February 27th at 9:30am**. Jamie Sawin will serve as hostess, and the person offering devotions is yet to be determined. The group is studying "Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times" edited by Carolina De Robertis. We will be discussing pages 145-172.

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.

Service

Food Pantry Sundays

The first Sunday of each month we receive donations for the Salvation Army Food Pantry. On **Sunday, February 3rd**, a cart will be in the west entrance to receive gifts for the food pantry. The Salvation Army is in special need of tuna helper (not hamburger), Ramen noodles, canned fruit cocktail (peaches or pears), canned tuna, and macaroni & cheese. Of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted. They also need any kind of personal care items: such as diapers, bath soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, feminine hygiene products, and laundry soap.

"Doggone Good Treats" Project

The Progress Industries partnership with UCC of making and baking all natural dog treats took place on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month at 2:00pm. PI participants and church members Stormy Storms, Marti Barker, and Suzanne Van Zandt worked together to mix ingredients, roll out the dough, use cookie cutters to make bone-shaped treats, and bake them with assistance from a PI staff person.

The dog treats were then transported either to JCARL or to the Farmer's Market where donations were accepted for the bagged treats. The funds received went to JCARL. Obviously, this combined PI and CUCC project has resulted in many happy dogs and dog owners and will surely do the same into the future!

The last time for baking dog treats with PI in 2018 took place on October 22nd in the church kitchen. This worthwhile service project will continue in the spring. Contact Stormy Storms or Rev. Petersen if you'd like to participate.

Jasper County Animal Rescue League

On the third Sunday of each month we collect items to help the Jasper County Animal Rescue League (JCARL). The next collection date will be **Sunday**, **February 17th**.

Their current wish list is: paper towels, garbage bags, raw hides (for big dogs and small), peanut butter, bleach, dish soap, Fabuloso (the purple kind), laundry soap, liquid hand soap, rubber gloves, kitty litter, canned shredded and filet cat food, canned dog food (Purina), dry dog food (Purina), and dry cat food (Indoor Purina).

Cleaning Project with Progress Industries

We are working together with PI participants and staff to offer a church cleaning project. Under the guidance of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh, a small group from PI does some light cleaning and dusting in the sanctuary, library, and other areas of the church building twice each month. This ministry will take place again on **Tuesdays, February 12th and 26th at 10:00am**. Please contact Heidi if you would like to help.

Funds for College Books

Ayesha Munu, hosted by Bev Clark Floss a few years back, is starting her junior year of college in Sierra Leone. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to contribute $225.00 to help Ayesha cover the cost of her books. She has received the money, and she and her family are deeply appreciative of everyone's help. Thank you to all who contributed and who hold Ayesha in your thoughts and prayers.

Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer

- Hilary Montalvo
- Judy Brody
- Richard Hagedorn
- Pat Clark, grandfather of Samantha Sledge
- The Sledge Family, following the death of Sonia's paternal grandfather

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.

Welcome, New Members!

Left to right: Bart Teed, Rev. Petersen, Dickie Teed.

On Sunday, January 20th, 2019, those of us who braved the snow and the cold extended a warm welcome to our newest members, Bart Teed and Dickie Teed, as they followed the Spirit's guidance to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the church. Let us rejoice in this blessing as we extend the hand of Christian fellowship to these siblings in Christ!

A bit of get-to-know-you information about these newest members:

Bart Maverick Teed has four siblings: Gloria, Jack, George, and, of course, Dickie. You may have seen Bart out and about as he delivers papers for the Newton Daily News. Bart always enjoys a good meal. One thing he really enjoys about Congregational UCC is the people and the preacher. Welcome, Bart!

Dickie Teed, as you may have guessed, also has four siblings including his brother Bart. Dickie can often be found at home listening to music, putting together model cars, or watching TV. Or, you may find him doing odd jobs. One of the things he loves about this congregation is greeting people. Welcome, Dickie!

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 may need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact the church office to volunteer.

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

Pub Theology

Pub Theology will be begin meeting on **Monday, February 4th, 6:00pm-7:00pm** at **The Cellar Peanut Pub**. The group will continue meeting at 6:00pm on the first Monday of each month. We are offering this new ministry in cooperation with First Presbyterian Church. Participants are responsible for purchasing their own beverages and encouraged to drink responsibly. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions. Hope to see you there!

What Is Pub Theology? (from pubtheology.com)

People have been gathering in pubs and public spaces for ages, talking about life, philosophy, faith, and deep questions of meaning. Increasingly, people all over are rediscovering the pub as a safe, open space where they can explore and express their own doubts and questions, learn from others, and engage people of varying religious traditions. In our increasingly fractured society, these spaces are not only welcome, but needed.

Congregational Conversation

In the gospels, Jesus is shown sending out his earliest followers "to fish for people" and "to make disciples of all nations." You are encouraged to gather together in the Parlor on **Sunday, February 10th at 10:45am** (immediately following worship) for a congregational conversation regarding evangelism and outreach as we seek to more effectively reach out to and connect with our wider community. Come share your experiences and ideas as we discuss and act on ways to share the good news of God's love for all creation and invite new people to join us in the meaningful ministry and authentic fellowship of this congregation.

Potluck Time!

We are past due for a church potluck! You are encouraged to gather in the Dining Room to share a meal and conversation with one another following worship on **Sunday, February 24th**. Drinks will be provided. Please bring a main dish, side dish, and/or dessert to share along with your own table service.

We are in need of a potluck host; please sign up on the clipboard in the entry way or contact the church office to volunteer. You may direct any questions to Rev. Petersen.

Lenten Prayer Partners

Praying for another and knowing someone is praying for you can have a powerful impact on one's life. Once again during the season of Lent (March 6th – April 20th), you are encouraged to begin a new prayer practice, namely to join with a partner in prayer.

How does this work?

You and your prayer partner talk on the phone or in person (no texting! no email!) once a week for fifteen minutes. You talk confidentially about things that really matter, and tell what you'd like your prayer partner to pray for you that week. Then you actually pray together, if both of you are comfortable doing that, or you covenant to pray individually later for your partner.

Interested?

Contact Rev. Petersen by **Monday, February 25th** so that she can partner you with another interested pray-er.

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 being 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 January 9th Council meeting.

- Les Morgan reported our balance on hand 12/31/18 was $26,703, the deficit being $23,296.86. Twenty-five pledges have been received for a total of $89,448. *Les is looking for someone to train as co-treasurer beginning January 1, 2020.*
- Discussion of the financial reality of our congregation is an ongoing one. The January 13th congregational conversation regarding finances will have a brief history of our finances (information provided by Tom Turk) and discussion of cost cutting and increasing revenue. **In about 6 years, our endowment funds will be gone.** Our furnaces and air conditioning units are very old.
- David Raymond and Bev Thomas agreed to serve on the **Fuller Scholarship Committee.**
- Patricia Castline has resigned to move to Arizona. She believes she could have done the job in 3 days. **Barbara Vasquez** has agreed to help out from 2:15pm to 4:15pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and every other Friday. Sharing an administrative assistant needs further discussion.
- Lin Chapé suggested we have **Active Shooter Training** from the police department. They have been doing this with other local congregations.
- **Progress Industries** wants to expand our partnership in the form of letter writing, lobby days, lunchtime. Volunteers will meet with them to flesh out possibilities.
- Regarding our **"Evangelism/outreach plan**," we need to frame our "official story" which needs to be something we can change, something we have control over, and that is true. We need more visibility; we need a sign on 3rd Avenue.

Jamie Sawin, Secretary

Staff Salaries

Following our January 13th Congregational Conversation regarding church finances, the Church Council discussed the suggestion to not increase staff salaries for 2019. As the salary increases were approved during our 2018 Annual Meeting on October 21st and reviewed, discussed, and affirmed during a special meeting of the Council on December 2nd, the consensus of the Council is to keep the salaries as stated in the 2019 budget. We do expect to see some financial savings following the departure of Patricia Castline, our Administrative Assistant, during this time of transition as we discern our administrative office needs and how best to meet those needs.

2018 Year-end Financial Report

The 2018 Year-end Financial Report is available in the back of the Sanctuary. If you are unable to pick up a copy at the church, please contact the church office, and we will see to it that you receive a copy.

Worship Attendance

January Attendance	2018	2019
12/30/18	16	--
First Sunday	32	38
Second Sunday	29	24
Third Sunday	28	18
Fourth Sunday	28	35

Birthdays to Celebrate in February

2 - Tom Turk, Oliver Planer, Arden Planer
3 - Aksel Joy
6 - Carver Christenson-Vasquez
7 - Todd Planer
14 - Coridan McGinley
17 - Nile McCoy
19 - Emma Fresh, Jamie Sawin
21 - Amber Christenson
23 - Bonnie McGinley
27 - Bev Edge, Kristina McNew, Les Morgan

Combining Greeters and Ushers?

During a recent congregational conversation, a suggestion was made that the roles of Greeters and Ushers be combined so that only two volunteers would be needed to cover those duties each Sunday morning. After further discussion and consideration, the Church Council suggests that we continue to have three sign-up slots for each Sunday (two for ushers and one for greeter), as there are some who may want to greet but would not feel comfortable ushering and vice versa. Those who are interested and willing to serve as both an usher and a greeter on one Sunday morning are welcome to sign up for both roles.

2019 Church Directory

The 2019 Congregational UCC Directory is now available! Copies can be found in the back of the Sanctuary and in the church office. Please take one home so that we can stay connected with one another. And, please contact the church office if you find any errors or need to make an update. Happy connecting!

Take note...

Transitioning to Electronic Newsletter

During our Congregational Conversation regarding church finances on January 13th, the idea to transition more fully to an electronically-delivered newsletter was suggested as a way that we might be better stewards of our resources. Currently, we email a pdf version of this newsletter to our entire email list and mail hard copies to over 200 recipients (required for bulk mailings). Beginning next month, we will no longer mail out a hard copy of the newsletter unless explicitly requested. Further, newsletters will only be mailed to those who live out-of-town. Local folks requesting a printed copy of the newsletter may pick up their copy in the Parlor on the last Sunday of the previous month (the March newsletter will be available for pick up on Sunday, February 24th). Any newsletters not picked up by the first Sunday of the month will be hand delivered by a member of the congregation.

Please contact the church office if you would like to continue receiving a printed copy of this monthly newsletter. You are also encouraged to **notify the church office of your preferred email address** if you are not currently receiving this newsletter via email to ensure proper delivery.

Office Staffing

Barbara Vasquez has returned to the office on a temporary basis to ensure that duties are covered following Patricia Castline's departure. She will remain with us at least through the month of February. During that time, the church office will be open 2:15pm-4:15pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and 10:00am-3:00pm every other Friday (February 8th and 22nd). Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time of transition as the Personnel Committee and Church Council work on a more permanent solution.

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.

Sundays

10:00am Worship

11:15am Refreshments

February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31				1	2
3 Communion Food Pantry Collection	4 6:00pm Pub Theology	5	6 6:00pm Poverty Video Series	7 5:00pm Bible Study	8	9
10 10:45am Congregational Conversation	11	12 10:00am PI Cleaning	13 Deadline for Open Door Articles 6:00pm Church Council	14 1:30pm Newton Ministerial Assoc, Mtg. 5:00pm Bible Study Valentine's Day	15	16
17 JCARL Collection 9:00am Poverty Reading Group	18 President's Day	19	20	21 5:00pm Bible Study	22	23
24 Church Potluck	25 6:00pm Racial Justice Book Club	26 10:00am PI Cleaning	27 9:30am Morning Circle	28 5:00pm Bible Study	01	02

Worship Schedule for February

Date	February 3	February 10	February 17	February 24
Christian Calendar Date	Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany	Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany	Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany	Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
Special Events	Communion	Congregational Conversation		Church Potluck
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection	
Greeters	Dickie Teed	Dickie Teed	Lin Chapé	
Ushers	Jerry Sawin	Lin Chapé, Suzanne Van Zandt		
Lay Readers		Suzanne Van Zandt		
Scriptures	Luke 4:21-30	Luke 5:1-11	Luke 6:17-26	Luke 6:27-38
Worship Color	White	White	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 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

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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	Judy Brody	792-8129	ljbrody@windstream.net
Custodian	Jim Christenson	792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@windstream.net
Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Pastor Emeritus	David Raymond		

Temporary office hours: 2:15pm to 4:00pm Tuesday through Thursday and 10:00am-3:00pm every other Friday

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Newton Congregational UCC: www.uccnewton.org