



**Congregational  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

# *The Open Door*

## January 2018

### 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.

### Inside This Issue

### Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Doing a New Thing

*"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:19)*

Friends, we have begun a new calendar year, and at the start of this new year, I am inviting you to try something new with me. I encourage you to engage in an experiment with me and with one another as a congregation. There will be no Bunsen burners or pipettes involved as this will not be a chemistry experiment but an experiment in ministry.

It seems to me that there are two parts of church that we are to attend to as a congregation: the institutional organization and the organic, Spirit-led ministry. And as I understand it, the institution of the church is to enable to the ministry of the church rather than becoming an end in itself.

Over the last few months of 2017, it became apparent to me that our congregation's committee structure was no longer working well for us. That is, it seemed to be stifling creative, transformative ministry rather than empowering it. The meetings seemed to be little more than a time of going through a checklist of tasks to be done rather than a time of listening for the voice of God to guide our next ministry endeavor. Committee members didn't seem to joyfully engage in the work of ministry but simply showed up, when they showed up, out of a sense of obligation. And, as the Nominating Committee began its work of finding willing folks to serve in the positions that were coming open in 2018, they found very few interested and willing to say "yes" to such a job.

Indeed, it was in one of those Nominating Committee meetings as we looked through the list of members yet again wondering where we were going to find the people to fill the vacant positions that I had an epiphany. What if we stopped trying to fit into this old church structure of Council and committees and tried something new? What if we tried to find a new structure that actually fits who we are and empowers the ministry we are called to do today?

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The committee structure we have now was put into place in 2008. Whether or not it fit the congregation well then, it certainly doesn't seem to be fitting us well now. (How many of you are still wearing jeans you bought 10 years ago? Not me!) As individuals and as communities, we change over time. So, it makes sense that the tools and structures we utilize to do the ministry God calls us to would change as well.

Therefore, I am proposing we try a new thing in 2018, a sort of experiment in ministry and management. As I said, there are two parts of the congregation that I believe we need to attend to: the institutional organization of the church and the organic, Spirit-led ministry of the church.

I propose we care for our institutional organization predominantly through our Church Council and no longer have the standing committees of the Council (Facilities and Finance, Service and Outreach, Worship and Music, and Christian Education). The Council would become responsible for overseeing the care of our facilities and faithful use of our finances. The Council would continue as the policy-making body of the congregation and any big church stuff (that's the technical term for it) would be brought to the Council, and if needed before the entire congregation. Additionally, we would have a Personnel Committee to look after staffing matters, a Financial Review Committee to oversee an audit of our finances each year, and a Nominating Committee to invite folks to serve in these positions.

But if we don't have standing committees, who will serve on the Council? I'm glad you asked. The four Church Officers and Pastor of the church would continue to serve on the Council and be joined by three at-large members from the congregation.

But if we don't have standing committees, how will all of those tasks (the ones I said they are currently most focused on) get done? Again, thank you for asking. At various times, a time and talent inventory has been completed by folks in the congregation. I propose that an updated inventory be completed by you all so that you can indicate the tasks which with you are willing and able to help. Maybe you'll indicate a willingness to continue doing tasks you've already been doing such as ushering and maybe you'll mark some new things like preparing for communion (don't worry, there will be a training to teach you what needs to be done). We as a congregation will take responsibility for carrying out the essential tasks of the congregation rather than a few committee members carrying such a heavy load. And, you won't have to serve on a committee in order to do certain jobs.

Ok, so you mentioned something about organic, Spirit-led ministry, where does that come in? Great question! This part of the experiment is the one that gets me the most excited! I propose that we focus on five areas of ministry that I believe we are called to as a community of faith: worship, education, service/mission, outreach/evangelism, and inreach/fellowship. After worship on the second Sunday of each month, a congregational conversation will take place addressing one of these ministries; we will then discuss a different ministry the next month (ex. first month focuses on worship, next month on education, and so on). On that Sunday, the worship service will end no later than 10:45am to encourage folks to participate in this important part of our life together.

Everyone is encouraged to participate; long-time members, first-time visitors, and everyone in between is invited to come and listen, to come and share. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome! Each conversation will be planned for and facilitated by a lay leader and me always with our congregation's purpose, process, and focus in mind. Then we will follow through on any ideas that garner significant energy and support using email, Facebook groups, and more traditional means of communication.

You are encouraged to join in these conversations and the ministry that comes out of them utilizing the unique gifts you have been given, engaging in the areas where you are passionate, where you sense the Spirit calling you. Perhaps you'll come to every congregational conversation because you're passionate about them all. Or maybe you'll come because you want to hear what our congregation is up to in all these areas. Or you might decide to attend only when education or outreach/evangelism is the focus because that is where you believe your gifts will be best utilized in ministry. Your presence and ideas will always be welcome.

As I said, this is an experiment. That means we will try it for a time and then evaluate how it went. After several months, we will need to ask whether or not this way of doing ministry is proving to be fruitful. Are there changes that need to be made? Did anything essential fall through the cracks? How about non-essentials? What did we learn about our congregation and how we are called and gifted to engage in fruitful ministry?

In the revised bylaws that will come before the congregation at our January 21st Annual Meeting, the Annual Meeting is moved to the third Sunday in October rather than taking place in January (this shift makes sense regarding budgeting and promoting greater participation). I propose that we undergo an evaluation of this experiment at that time.

So, what do you think? Are you willing to try something new in this new year? I invite you, encourage you, challenge you to try this new thing not simply because of its newness but in an attempt to live more fully following the way 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.

## ... Worship

### Lenten Prayer Partners

Praying for another and knowing someone is praying for you can have a powerful impact on one's life. During the season of Lent (February 14<sup>th</sup> - March 31<sup>st</sup>), 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 **Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>** so that she can partner you with another interested pray-er.



### Centering Prayer

You are invited to gather each Wednesday evening for a time of Centering Prayer. Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. It is simply a wordless, trusting opening of one's self to the divine presence. The group will meet in the **Chapel**, just off of the Sanctuary, on **Wednesdays, 5:15pm-5:45pm**. Please contact April Faidley with any questions.

## ... Education



### Listen Up! Bible Study: Romans

Paul's letter to the Romans is the first of Paul's letters in the New Testament canon, the longest of them (16 chapters), and, in many respects, the most significant. Though we are in the midst of our 12-session study, you are still invited to join us as we listen for God's still-speaking voice through this letter to the church and seek to discern what it means for us in our time and context.

The group meets in the Parish House on **Thursdays, 5:00pm-6:00pm**. There will be no meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns.



### Morning Circle

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am** with Jan Turk as hostess and April Faidley giving devotions. The group is studying the book "Jesus: The Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary" by author Marcus J. Borg. During this meeting we will be studying Chapter 10 of the book.

All are welcome to join us as we deepen our understanding of who Jesus was and what that means for us as people of faith seeking to follow in Jesus' way. Want to participate? Join us on January 17<sup>th</sup> in the Parish House.

## ... Service



### Food Pantry Sundays

The first Sunday of each month we receive donations for the Salvation Army Food Pantry. On **Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>** 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 PI and CUCC baking activity is concluded until next spring. The church kitchen has been the center for the making and baking of dog treats over the past few months on the second and fourth Mondays. PI participants and church members Stormy Storms and Marti Barker have enjoyed the experience of mixing ingredients, rolling out the dough, using cookie cutters to make bone-shaped treats, and baking them with assistance from a PI staff person.

Stormy then transported the dog treats 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.

Let Stormy know if you'd like to participate next spring when the project restarts. You can participate one time or many times. Whatever works with your schedule.



### 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, January 21<sup>st</sup>**.

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

In addition to our partnership with Progress Industries (PI) to bake biscuits for the Jasper County Animal Rescue League, we also work with PI participants and staff for a church cleaning project. This activity is concluded until next spring. Under the guidance of Carolyn and Duane Hobbs a small group from PI has done some light cleaning and dusting in the sanctuary, library and other areas of the church building. This cleaning project took place two times per month, on Tuesdays at 10:30am.

If you are interested in helping with this ministry when it resumes in the spring, please contact Carolyn Hobbs.

See You In The



SPRING



## Prayers and Concerns

### Please hold in prayer

- ◆ Karen Petersen
- ◆ The family of Jim Lukefahr following his death on Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>
- ◆ Lori Goodman
- ◆ Davis Carter, grandson of Jane & Gary Johnson
- ◆ Sue Anderson

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



### Taking Down the Christmas Decorations

Removal of the Christmas decorations will take place **Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.** Please join us to help. Many hands make less work! Thanks in advance. Jan Turk

### Community Meals Update

Eighty meals were served by CUCC volunteers at the Community Meal event held Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> in the basement of First United Methodist Church. The assistance from all who participated including those who provided the dessert produced another very successful evening of reaching out to others in the community.

This month CUCC is responsible for the Community Meal on **Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>**. Please contact Bev Edge, April Faidley, or Marti Barker if you would like to join us from 5:00pm-7:00pm, or for even part of that time, or to provide a dessert. The more help there is, the sooner we are finished. Any and all help is greatly appreciated.



### 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.

If you are willing to be a greeter, please contact Marti Barker. Additionally, there are a few members who may need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact Duane Hobbs 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.

## Worship Attendance

<u>December Attendance</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
First Sunday	39	31
Second Sunday	29	31
Third Sunday	**	39
Fourth Sunday	20	38
Christmas Eve	113	83

\*\* Canceled due to weather conditions



## Birthdays to Celebrate in January

- 2-Reece Caves, Larry Leitner
- 4-Ardelle Morgan
- 7-Robert Ramsey, Jr.
- 8-Betty Jean Hotchkin
- 9-Laura Parker
- 12-William Shump
- 16-Jan Turk
- 17-Bob Van Drimmelen
- 21-Jim Christenson
- 22-Melissa Pearson, Stormy Storms
- 24-Eileen Gerken
- 27-Joy Faidley-Leitner
- 28-Diane Marvelli
- 31-Charlotte Ross

## 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.

## **Take note...**

### Congregational Annual Meeting

The annual Congregational meeting will be held following the worship service on **Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**. By attending you will receive reports from various church committees and the 2017 year-end financial report. You will also be able to vote on the 2018 proposed church budget, the proposed revised bylaws, and to elect church officers and council and committee members. You may obtain a copy of the revised bylaws by contacting the church office. Copies will also be available at the back of the sanctuary.

There will be a church potluck following the meeting. Drinks and table service will be provided. Please bring a main dish, side dish or dessert to share.

Note: In order to be included in the 2017 Annual Report that will be presented at the Annual Meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup>, reports are to be submitted to the church office by January 10<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Patricia with any questions.

### The Caring Crew

Some of you may wonder "What is the Caring Crew?" It is the name given to several members who call on those of the congregation who are unable to attend worship. The present group consists of Marti Barker, Donna McCoy, Duane & Carolyn Hobbs, and Tom Turk.

Other than occasional visits, we usually accompany Rev. Jessica when she offers home communion. Anyone in the congregation is welcome to become part of the crew. Also, we welcome suggestions of those who may want visitors. Please contact Carolyn Hobbs for more information.

### Sponsor "Into the Mystic"

In an effort to get the word out about who we are as a congregation, we sponsor a weekly airing of a podcast by UCC General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, on KCOB (95.9 FM and 1280 AM) on Sunday mornings at 7:35am. The weekly cost is \$25. You are invited to sponsor a Sunday or two or four or more to increase our community's awareness of what we are all about here at Congregational UCC. We are engaging in wonderful ministry together, and it's time that more folks know about it! Please send your donation into the office referencing "Into the Mystic" if you are interested in donating.

## Worship Schedule for January

Date	January 7	January 14	January 21	January 28
Christian Calendar Date	The Baptism of Christ	Second Sunday after Epiphany	Third Sunday after Epiphany	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Special Events	Communion		Annual Meeting	
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection	
Greeters	Lin Chapé	Bev Edge	Adam Hansch, Craig Armstrong	Ed & Suzanne Van Zandt
Ushers	Les Morgan, Richard Hagedorn	Lin Chapé	Ed & Suzanne Van Zandt	Stormy Storms
Lay Readers	Jamie Sawin	Bev Edge	Jerry Sawin	Bev Thomas
Scripture	Mark 1:1-15	Samuel 3:1-10	Mark 1:14-20	Mark 1:21-28
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 homebound members.**

**You are missed and continue to be cared for and held in our heartfelt prayers.**

Larry Brody  
Accura of Newton West  
2130 W. 18<sup>th</sup> St. S.  
Newton, IA 50208

Marilyn Currant  
Park Centre #1  
500 1<sup>st</sup> St. N.  
Newton, IA 50208

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

Ann Raridon  
St. Frances Manor  
2021 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Grinnell, IA 50112

Carol Robinson  
Newton Village #114  
110 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. W.  
Newton, IA 50208