

The Open Door

October 2020



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Who We Are

We are a community of God's beloved dedicated to **following** the teachings of Jesus as we live our faith by **loving** and **serving** all of God's creation and **striving** for justice and peace throughout our community, our nation, and the world.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Very shortly after you receive this newsletter, Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai will serve her last day as our pastor and move to her new ministry in Indiana. Council has been preparing for what happens next and is diving into the void. The Coronavirus pandemic created enough chaos all on its own. Council is quite aware that being without a pastor is yet another way we may feel cut adrift. The members of Council hope to do all that they can to stabilize and strengthen the church. Many of the tasks that will be required of Council or of individuals asked to serve on committees will not be visible. Word will probably spread, but we want to make sure that EVERYONE knows what is going on. This article will be a regular feature of the newsletters for the next several months. In this, the first one, we will set out the process from beginning to end and indicate what has been done so far. Each additional article will update what has happened and what comes next.

Council's first step was a meeting with the conference minister who heads the Search and Call area, Rev. Darrell Goodwin. If you haven't met him, Rev. Goodwin is a very engaging individual with a hearty laugh. You'll want to meet him sometime! He is also a savvy, knowledgeable person and was tremendously helpful in setting out his recommendations and discussing the particular needs of our church. He will continue to be available to us as a resource.

We start with searching for a Supply Pastor. Sometimes "supply pastor" refers simply to the individual who fills in at Sunday worship and preaches a sermon. Our needs are broader than that. Rev. Goodwin suggested we look for someone who could be available throughout the week and who would be willing to engage in any or all of the following: on-line services, weddings and funerals, pastoral care (calling hospitalized and homebound members, reaching out to members facing difficult life crises), and, as Rev. Goodwin said so well, "hold us together."

As you probably realize, this is the rung of the ladder we currently occupy. Much of the work at this stage is being done by the Committee on Church Profile and Ministerial Leadership Options, a faithful, diligent group of six church members. Their first task is to get a start on our church Profile. This is a 20+ page document describing our church in about as many ways and from as many angles as you can dream up. The conference will post our Profile so that any pastors considering working with us can read about us and get some idea of whether they feel like we are a "fit" for them.

(cont. on p. 2)

WHAT'S NEXT continued

At this stage we do not need our Profile to be spit and polished, we just need to have some of the broad outlines in place and we are almost there. We have received a list of supply pastors within our geographical area. We will be speaking to them to determine if they are interested in this kind of expanded supply position. The reimbursement for this work will be negotiated once the scope of work has been defined. At the same time we are exploring similar possibilities with the Grinnell UCC church. The pastor there, Rev. Jessica Shirm, is interested in discussing with us how their staff and church members might be able to assist us. Before that meeting can be scheduled, she awaits the doctor's determination of treatment for her broken leg.

The next step in the process is securing an Interim Pastor who will serve us until we find a settled pastor. It would be ideal if our community could get past COVID-19 during the time the Interim Pastor is with us, although that, obviously, isn't in our hands. To put it bluntly, we do not know what our membership will look like when we open our doors for in-person worship services again. Our membership may have diminished or it may have grown. Our members may be eager to contribute to the ongoing ministry of our church or may be tired and seeking rest.

The final step is, of course, to determine how our church will move forward. At the moment we are considering hiring a settled halftime pastor or, perhaps, arranging a co-ministry with an area church. Rev. Goodwin told Council it is very typical for a halftime-pastor church to partner with another halftime-pastor church. Sharing a pastor is different from yoking; it is simpler and more flexible. This arrangement would be like the one we were considering when we first decided to move to a halftime pastor, where we thought we might "share" Jessica with Baxter UCC. At that time we were only considering sharing a pastor with a UCC church and, in the end, none were available within a reasonable distance. This time we will be sending out feelers to other denominations that we think might be compatible with us. Council would appreciate hearing any thoughts you have about what has been outlined here. Throughout this entire process it will remain foremost in the minds of those working through it that, whatever direction we seem to be led, we want to maintain our UCC identity.

Although this process has been presented as a series of discrete steps, we all will need to be cautious with our expectations. It has to be ONE STEP AT A TIME. At any point a step may not be achieved as we had hoped it would and we will need to regroup and think creatively about what's next.

Worship

Together from a Distance...

At this time, we will continue to suggest you join Grinnell UCC for their virtual worship service on Sunday morning. You will receive an email each week sharing how to access the online worship service with Grinnell UCC. This email will have links to multiple YouTube videos, one for each component of the worship service. You will have the option to "choose your own adventure" by clicking on each individual link or to have the videos play automatically in sequence.

And Remember: Everyone is invited to "refreshments" each Sunday at 11:30am via Zoom. Bring a snack or even lunch, and join church friends and family for conversation and connection. While you are encouraged to join with video on a computer or smart device if (download the Zoom app for best results), you can also join via phone:

Join Zoom Meeting online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89097061745>

Join via Phone: (312) 626-6799; Meeting ID: 890 9706 1745



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

Bev Edge
Village Assisted Living
2571 Guthrie Ave, Apt. 1402
Des Moines, IA 50317

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

Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer:

- Richard Hagedorn and family following the death of his wife, Kay
- Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- Rev. Jessica Shirm, of Grinnell UCC
- Jerry Sawin
- The family of Michael Williams

If you know someone in need of support – a visit, a call, a note, or prayer – please contact the church office.

Emergency Pastoral Care

Our congregation is blessed to have Rev. David Raymond, Pastor Emeritus, offering emergency pastoral care until we have secured a supply pastor or pastoral care assistance. If you have a pastoral emergency, please do reach out to Rev. Raymond directly or through the church office (staffed Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am-3:00pm). Rev. Raymond can be reached at (641) 521-1506 or davidray@mediacombb.net. Thank you, Rev. Raymond, for continuing to serve us. We appreciate it!



Birthdays to Celebrate

- 2– Kathryn “Kate” Stonehocker
- 4– Jill Sawin, Craynes McGinley
- 5– Josephine Turk
- 6– Donna McCoy
- 7– Marilyn Jagau
- 17– Judy Brody, Steven Joy
- 28– Aurora Schlichte



Anniversaries to Celebrate

- 10/6– Shirley & Bruce Nuzum
- 10/8– April Faidley & Larry Leitner
- 10/21– Diane & Mark Babcock
- 10/23– Kylee & Todd Planer
- 10/25– Dorothy & David Raymond



Communications

Church Council Catch Up

In an effort to keep our congregation 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. Previously, Council first approved the notes at the following Council meeting and then an edited version was published in the Open Door. For example, in the September Open Door we published the notes from the July Council meeting, which had been approved at the August Council meeting. Council reconsidered this process, with an eye to how “old” the information is when it is actually made available to the congregation. Council decided to ask the Secretary to circulate her notes to Council members for edits and approval within the two weeks following the Council meeting. The notes from the most recent Council meeting are then available to appear in the Open Door. Recent events have unfolded so rapidly, Council determined that the August 19th Council meeting is already very old news. Therefore, highlights from the September 9th Council meeting are included for you here.

- **Opening:** Jane Ann, Moderator, reviewed the agenda and opened with a devotion.
- **Treasurer’s Report:** Larry asked if Council wants to continue to purchase *These Days* devotion booklets from Presbyterian Publishing. Since members are not coming to church and picking up copies, Council agreed to discontinue this order. Council considered whether or not we purchase stewardship materials. It was decided not to do so at this time. If we later choose to do so, it is no problem to order them.
- **Maintenance Report:** The roofing contractor has inspected the roof and will furnish a proposal soon. We expect the fill dirt for the stump cavity will be delivered soon. Brent Parker will help grade and level with his equipment. Jim is disinfecting entry handles and areas that will be used for limited person to person meetings. The masonry contractor is preparing a bid for the structure of the sign and Sign Pro will bid on an LED sign with some changeable lettering. The sign was a memorial for Bea McCardle; when we have something to show the congregation we will be seeking their approval of the new sign. The glass contractor has inspected the west window- another is coming next week. A preliminary report and photos were sent to the adjuster, who stated he would probably not visit the site. Following that, another adjuster contacted the church and made arrangements to view the damage. Jim has been treating some small mold problems which are probably due to the A/C running less frequently.
- **The Committee on Church Profile and Ministerial Leadership Options:** The committee is using social distancing while meeting in the church dining room. The writing of the Profile is underway. Historic data which is already available will fill in some requirements. We do not have to have our Profile up and published before we reach out to supply ministers. Norm suggested Jane Ann prepare a brief letter to reach out to those churches we are potentially interested in working with, such as the Disciples of Christ Church next door. Please see the lead article in this issue, *What’s Next?*, for additional information.
- **New Council Member:** Jane Ann shared that Lin has resigned from Council and from the Committee on Church Profile and Ministerial Leadership Options. We will need to find someone to assume her term. Possible candidates were discussed. Jane Ann will reach out to those individuals.
- **Where God is Leading Us:** The Central Association is Sept. 12th. Jane Ann will be attending. Jessica has contacted Rev. Goodwin about participating in her last Sunday service. Jessica is not in favor of a socially distanced service inside the church. Jane Ann will consider other possibilities for a gathering on Sept. 27th. Details of paying Jessica for her remaining vacation and terminating pension and insurance were discussed. Jessica’s portrait for the wall display of former pastors was planned.

Council Composition

Should you have any questions regarding the work of the Council, you are encouraged to contact a Council member:

Interim Moderator: Jane Ann Cotton

Assistant Moderator: April Faidley

Secretary: Jennifer Pryke

Treasurer: Larry Leitner

At-Large: Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh

At-Large: Norm Van Klompenburg



Money Musings

By Larry Leitner, Treasurer

I write this piece in late September as we prepare for what might be the strangest stewardship season in the life of our church. We are trying to finalize a 2021 budget not knowing when we will be able to worship in our building. We also are losing our current pastor and transitioning to a half-time pastor. We don't know whether we will be using pulpit supply pastors (and, if so, for how long), an interim pastor, or when or if we get a settled pastor. Strange times indeed.

Another strange event was the derecho. We hope we will pay the \$1,000 deductible and the rest will be covered by insurance. However, keep in mind that the budgets presented to you did not have any "derecho damage repair" as a line item on our expenses! In other words, the money not covered by insurance will have to be paid by us, either through cash flow or tapping into our reserves.

Despite our uncertain times, a new budget and a plan for financing next year's expenses must be made. Church Council is wrestling with these issues. As of the end of August, it was looking like we will collect as much in pledges as we budgeted for in our 2020 budget. If so, that is very good news for us. It is important for your church's finances that we meet last year's budgeted income projections. So, if you have not met your pledge for this year, please be aware that your church needs your financial support. If you are uncertain as to where you are in terms of meeting your pledge obligations, feel free to contact me and I can let you know.

Not knowing the answers to these many questions has led me to make more than the typical number of assumptions about 2021. As we continue to finalize a budget to present to the congregation, I ask that you prayerfully consider what you can tithe for 2021. The current draft of the budget assumes that we can collect as much money in pledges in 2021 as we did in 2020. Meeting that assumption would make the entire budget process easier.

EDUCATION

"How To Be An Antiracist" Book Study

We are offering an evening study of *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. The New York Times Book Review named this book one of the 100 Notable Books of 2019. The eight-week study will **meet via Zoom** (some online with video and others via phone with audio only), on **Thursday evenings, 5:30pm-6:30pm**.

Here is a review of Kendi's book to entice you to participate:

From TIME: "Groundbreaking . . . Kendi dissects why in a society where so few people consider themselves to be racist the divisions and inequalities of racism remain so prevalent. *How to Be an Antiracist* punctures the myths of a post-racial America, examining what racism really is—and what we should do about it."

Participants should purchase a book and be prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The full meeting and reading schedule is as follows: October 1—Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, & 3 (Definitions; Dueling Consciousness; Power); October 8—Chapters 4-5 (Biology; Ethnicity); October 15—Chapters 6-7 (Body; Culture); October 22—Chapters 8-9 (Behavior; Color); October 29—Chapters 10-11 (White; Black); November 5—Chapters 12-13 (Class; Space); November 12—Chapters 14, 15, & 16 (Gender; Sexuality; Failure); November 19—Chapters 17-18 (Success; Survival).

Join the Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83595726192?pwd=cm9FTXkrVlhrQmkvalEwVitGZW9nZz09>

Meeting ID: 835 9572 6192

Passcode: 377178

If you need additional information or assistance joining the meeting, contact Jane Ann Cotton or April Faidley.

A Revery from the Editor

WHAT'S NEXT: PART II

As I think about what to include in each Open Door, I try to imagine what all of you are wondering about. If an article just reports on something you might skip it because you already know the content. But if you are wondering about the content of the article you probably will read it. And that's the whole point, isn't it? To publish a newsletter that will be read?

This month I felt like Jessica's departure would be uppermost for most of you, so that would be the front-page article. It needed a title. "Now that Jessica is gone, what will we do?" seemed a tad too long. But everyone would probably instantly understand what the article was going to cover by simply "What's Next?" And odds were, I felt, that you would be curious about the answer to that question.

This is an important and exciting time for us. Scary too, huh? We will be asking "What's next?" for quite a while into the future. Getting from the departure of Rev. Petersen-Mutai to a settled, halftime pastor will require us to take a path with many twists and turns. We will achieve Step 1 and ask ourselves, "What's next?" We'll achieve Step 2 and ask ourselves, "What's next?" We will achieve Step 3 and maybe even before we manage to say, "What's next?" Step 3 will fall apart, and we will have to take a step back and ask a different, "What's next?"

It's a familiar pattern. Larry and I do it all the time. We sit at the breakfast table and one of us will say to the other, "What do you have happening today?" Or there is the dinner table variation, "What have we got going tomorrow?" Or the into-the-future version, "If we get a chance to travel next summer, where shall we go?"

"What's next?" gives us purpose, defines our tasks, and keeps us moving along. We don't want to stop asking that vital question. But there is a trick hidden in there that is easy to miss. As soon as I tell you what it is you will think, "Well, of course, I knew that!" But we forget it. Which gives me a chance to write an entire revery reminding us of it.

The trick is this: If we keep moving from one "What's next?" to another, we aren't living in the NOW. And we miss the richness and vibrancy of NOW. We miss the wonder of NOW. I'm already seeing it and it is a beautiful thing to see. It's members with some know-how inspecting the building and grounds after the derecho, communicating with the insurance company, lining up bids, following the work, and planning for the "new look." It's a new administrative assistant zipping along the learning curve and contributing to our smooth functioning during this transition, while essential technology decides to be recalcitrant. It's a stand-in Moderator picking up the reins and doing 10 things at once to plan Jessica's send-off service and to get us started on that twisting and turning path mentioned above. It's a whole group of people saying, "Yes, I can do that," when asked to serve on a task force and digging into the work of writing our church profile, with some others saying, "Hey, would you like some help? We can help."

Don't miss this exciting NOW. Don't miss seeing it happen. Don't miss feeling the energy. Don't miss being a part of it!

Sundays

10:00am Online Worship

11:30am Zoom Refreshments



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				5:30pm <i>How To Be An Antiracist</i> book study via Zoom	Name your Car Day	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC World Communion Sunday				5:30pm <i>How To Be An Antiracist</i> book study via Zoom		World Migratory Bird Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC	Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day		6:00 pm Church Council Via Zoom	5:30pm <i>How To Be An Antiracist</i> book study via Zoom		Int'l. Day for the Eradication of Poverty
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC			Pronouns Day	5:30pm <i>How To Be An Antiracist</i> book study via Zoom		United Nations Day
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Online worship w/ Grinnell UCC			National Chocolate Day	5:30pm <i>How To Be An Antiracist</i> book study via Zoom		Halloween

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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.

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Interim Moderator	Jane Ann Cotton		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesdays and Thursdays; not open to the public

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