



**Congregational
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

The Open Door

December 2017

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 the Birth of a Child

Happy new year! Yes, I do realize that it's still 2017; I'm not talking about that new year, I'm talking about the new year of the church. Each church year begins anew with Advent, with waiting, with anticipation, with expectation as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus into the world. Last year during this time, I had a great deal of additional anticipation and preparation in my life as I was pregnant. I anticipated that my life would change once Jabali was born; I expected that things would be different, but I had no idea that my life would be completely turned upside down as I experienced unexpected challenges and unanticipated joys.

As I prepared for Jabali's birth, I used to imagine him sitting in this little activity chair one of Martin's coworkers gave us while I would run on the treadmill. How many times has that happened since he was born? I whopping zero times! I thought I'd bring the pack 'n play my uncles gave us to the office, so Jabali could nap peacefully throughout the day while I worked on developing worship services, preparing for Bible study, writing newsletter articles, et cetera. The pack 'n play has not left our house as Jabali refuses to nap unless being held (that is unless he is overwhelmed with exhaustion and falls asleep in the car; and that nap doesn't last too long). I imagined heading off to my regular Tuesday Rotary meeting on my own while Jabali stayed and played with his very qualified, kind, and loving babysitter. However, Jabali is now celebrated as the youngest "member" of our club as I bring him with me each week rather than leaving him to cry his eyes out for the hour that I'm away. Many things have not gone as I imagined they would once Jabali was born.

My life has been undeniably altered with the birth of this child. I love in a way I never knew possible. I am constantly amazed at how my body automatically does what it needs to do to care for this growing baby. I am in an almost constant state of awe and wonder as I witness Jabali learn and develop every day. I am ever more thankful, appreciative, and understanding of what my parents experienced in caring for me as a little one. I am filled with such joy every moment of each day despite the headache, the backache,...all the aches simply because this child is. I sing and play

and make silly sounds and faces even when I'm tired and want to just sit in my irritation and grumpiness. Jabali's birth has changed my life in too many ways to name.

As I sit here writing, with Jabali soundly sleeping on my lap, and think about this new season, the new year we are entering as a church, waiting to celebrate once again the in-breaking of the divine through the birth of a child, I wonder if we really have any idea what allowing such an infant into our lives will mean, what it will require, how drastically it will change our lives if we truly welcome this one into our lives.

Are we ready to welcome the God who loves each and every member of creation—Black folks, Brown folks, White folks; NRA folks and gun control folks; Trump supporters and Trump opposers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual folks and heterosexual, cisgender folks; folks who live in poverty and folks who live in over-abundance; I think you get the picture? Are we prepared to welcome this God who loves everyone and calls us to do the same?

If we welcome this God into our lives, the God revealed to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our lives will be undeniably altered. If we welcome this God into our lives, we will be challenged in unexpected ways, in ways we had not prepared for. If we really welcome this God, our lives will not simply continue on as they always have, flowing easily according to our plans. If we welcome this God, our entire lives will be disrupted and reoriented. Our lives will be reoriented by love and justice. We will be challenged to question assumptions we once took for granted. We will be challenged to love those we had deemed unloveable. The birth of this child, this beloved of God, will change everything.

And, if we truly welcome this God, if we open ourselves to life with this child, we will be amazed at how we are able to love in unexpected ways. We will be astonished as we witness how our bodies, minds, and spirits simply know what to do when we have welcomed God into our core and have centered ourselves in God. We will be in a constant state of awe and wonder as we witness the way our lives change and the way the world is transformed around us. We will experience joy beyond belief that endures despite any hardship we may be facing. The birth of Jesus, the in-breaking of God into our lives, will change our lives in more ways than I can name.

Life with an infant is much more challenging than I had ever imagined. I often remind myself that we chose this; Martin and I had hoped and prayed for this little one to enter and completely reorient our lives. What were we thinking?! And, life with an infant is much more joyful, inspiring, and empowering than I had ever dreamed.

Friends, life with God is much more challenging that we can ever imagine. And, yet, we continue to choose this life of faith. We continue to prepare with anticipation and expectation for the divine to break into this world and into our lives. What in the world are we thinking?! Perhaps we have a sense, perhaps we have caught a glimpse, perhaps we have experienced a moment of the joy, the inspiration, the empowerment of the true life that is possible, that is promised in living our lives with this infant through whom we have come to know the God of hope, peace, joy, and love.

I pray that we will welcome this one into our lives ever more fully this new year.



... **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.



Christmas Poinsettias

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

The deadline for having your forms submitted is **Sunday, December 17th**. Poinsettias will be purchased by the Flower Committee, and any receipts beyond the total cost will be added to the Worship/Flower Fund. An insert naming all memorials and honoraria will be included in the bulletins for worship on December 24th (regular morning worship) and Christmas Eve. Thank you.

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 the form below and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office with your gift.

The name of the person/s you are remembering, and your name/s, will be included in the bulletin 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 _____

... Education

“Toxic Charity”: Sunday Morning Study

You are encouraged to join in our study group each Sunday morning. We are reading and discussing the book “Toxic Charity” by Robert D. Lupton. Throughout the book, Lupton reveals the shocking toxic effects that much of modern charity has upon the very people meant to benefit from it and shares new models proven to help—not sabotage—those whom they desire to serve.

As part of our Care ♥ Share ♥ Help Initiative, this 10-week study is challenging and empowering participants to begin thinking about how we will develop relationships with our neighbors living in poverty and to engage in ministry with them in ways that will actually help rather than hurt them and our community. The group meets in the **Parlor each Sunday at 9:00am-9:45am** with our final session on December 10th. Participants read one chapter prior to each meeting and come prepared to discuss questions and insights that were stirred during reading. Our reading schedule for December is: December 3rd-Chapter 9 and December 10th-Chapter 10.

Three copies of “Toxic Charity” are available at the church for your use. If you would like your own copy, you are welcome to purchase the book on your own. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns.



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. You are encouraged to join in a 12-session study 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**. We will take not meet December 28th. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns.

Free Fall Film Series

The Racial Harmony and Justice Working Group in Jasper County, which meets in the Parish House the final Tuesday of each month, is sponsoring a free fall film series open to the public. The series concludes on the first Thursday of December. The film will begin at 6:30pm, and there will be a time for discussion after. The film will be shown in the DMACC Auditorium on the Newton campus.

On **Thursday, December 7th at 6:30pm** the documentary "13th" (Rated TV-MA, 1h 40min) will be shown. Filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the history of racial inequality in the United States, focusing on the fact that the nation's prisons are disproportionately filled with African Americans.



Centering Prayer

You are invited to gather each Wednesday evening for a time of Centering Prayer. There will be no Centering Prayer on December 27th. 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



Morning Circle

There will be no Morning Circle meeting in December.

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, January 17th at 9:30am** with [name] as hostess and [name] 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 17th 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, December 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 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, December 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

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



Christmas Shopping for the Body Shop

When I was a kid, I poo-pooed the truism “Tis more blessed to give than to receive.” Like so many other things in life, Mom & Dad were right. Indeed, it is more rewarding to shop and share with others. There’s nothing quite like the simple joy of Christmas shopping for reasonably priced gifts that are useful and needed (do I sound old yet?). The Service & Outreach Committee will be doing our second collection of personal care items for the Body Shop at the high school on **December 10th**, the second Sunday of the month.

The supplies that the Body Shop is looking for include such things as deodorant, shampoo and conditioners, razors and shaving cream, laundry detergent, feminine hygiene products, body wash, body spray, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Like teenagers everywhere, the students prefer brand names, good smelling stuff, and body wash. There is a particular need for regular size products instead of trial sizes. You may place your donations in the lime green labeled box at the church entryway. As usual there will be tax deductible receipts inside the lime green box for your use. Thanks for your generosity and love.

2017 Christmas Fund & Veterans of the Cross Special Offering

The year’s final special offering, coordinated by the Service & Outreach Committee, 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.
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.

Christmas Gifts for Nelson Manor Residents

As a member of Mission Coalition, our church members purchase Christmas gifts for residents of Nelson Manor. You may sign up in the Parlor to purchase a gift for someone by taking the name and request slip and writing your name on the accompanying sheet next to the corresponding number. Gifts are to be wrapped and should include a tag with the person’s name on it.

Please **bring your gift to the church by Sunday, December 10th** so that the residents will have their gifts in time for their holiday celebration. Thank you to each one of you who is purchasing a gift.





Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer

- ◆ The family of Jim Lukefahr following his death on Tuesday, November 21st
- ◆ Austin Leytham, grandson of Vicky Hutchins
- ◆ 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 December during Fellowship Time. If you are curious about your blood pressure reading, please let Carolyn know.

Thank You!

A BIG THANK YOU goes out to all those who helped to decorate the church on Monday and Tuesday evenings, November 27th and 28th. Very efficient “decorators” had the job finished on Tuesday evening in less than an hour and a half, so we could enjoy coffee, cookies and conversation for another hour.

God’s Blessings to all, Jan Turk

Community Meals Update

Sixty-eight meals were served by CUCC volunteers at the Community Meal event held Wednesday, November 15th 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, December 20th**. 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>November Attendance</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
First Sunday	33	45
Second Sunday	43	33
Third Sunday	34	33
Fourth Sunday	34	31



Birthdays to Celebrate in December

- 4-Suzanne Van Zandt
- 6-Daniel McPherren
- 10-Megan Pryke
- 11-Katie Schober
- 14-Martin Mutai, Kayden Jensen
- 15-Patricia Van Klompenburg
- 16-Caleb McGinley, Dorothy Purtillo
- 20-Keirra Hicks
- 22-Cainan McGinley
- 24-Julie McPherren
- 25-JESUS CHRIST
- 27-Alayzha Hicks, Danielle Hasbrouck
- 30-Darrah Schlichte



Anniversaries to Celebrate in December

- 12-Greg & Barb Ellcey
- 24-Gary & Melissa Pearson
- 28-Larry & Judy Brody

Take note...

UCC Seasonal Choir 2017

UCC Seasonal choir rehearsals take place on Sunday mornings at 9:15am. The choir will sing on Sundays through Christmas Eve and as part of the Christmas Eve evening service.

Contact Bev Thomas with any questions.

Judy Brody's Address

As many of you are aware, Judy Brody has recently moved. Her new address is Newton Village, 110 N. 5th Ave. W. #306, Newton, IA 50208. Her phone number remains the same.

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 December

Date	December 3	December 10	December 17	December 24	December 31
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				
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations	Body Shop Collection	JCARL Collection	Christmas Fund	
Greeters	Lin Chapé	Marti Barker	Suzanne & Ed Van Zandt	AM-Craig A, Adam H PM-Lin C, Suzanne VZ	Jamie & Jerry Sawin
Ushers	Brent Parker, Tom Turk	Lin Chapé, Craig Armstrong	Duane Hobbs, Ed Van Zandt	PM-Craig A, Duane H, Tom T, Larry L	Suzanne & Ed Van Zandt
Lay Readers	Larry Leitner	Jerry Sawin	Brent Parker	PM-Craig Armstrong	Bev Edge
Scripture	Mark 13:24-37	Mark 1:1-8	Luke 1:26-38	AM-Lessons & Carols PM-John 1:1-14	Luke 2:22-40
Worship Color	White	Violet	Rose	AM-Violet PM-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.

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

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

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

Recipe Corner...

Turkey Sausage and Chestnut Stuffing



Ingredients

- 1 medium green apple, cored and diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1 medium red apple, cored and diced into 1-inch cubes
- 1 medium onion, diced into ½-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, plus 2 tablespoons cubed
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 1 (6-ounce) bag dried cranberries
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound sweet Italian turkey sausage, meat removed from casings
- 8 ounce jar steamed whole chestnuts, roughly chopped
- ½ pound day old cornbread or bread, cut into ½-inch cubes
- Pinch red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

In a medium sauté pan add the apples, onion, 1 tablespoon oil and butter cook over a medium low heat for 10 minutes to soften. Add the wine, cranberries, and salt and pepper, simmer for about 5 minutes. Take off the heat and allow the mixture to cool.

In a large sauté pan over medium high heat, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and turkey sausage meat and break up with a wooden spoon and cook until browned and cooked through, approximately 8 to 10 minutes.

In a medium bowl toss together the fruit and onion mixture, the sausage, the chestnuts, the cornbread and red pepper flakes. Combine all the ingredients.

Add the chicken stock, and ¾ cup of the Parmesan. Gently place into an 8 1/2 by 8 1/2- inch glass Pyrex baking dish and top with the remaining Parmesan. Dot with butter. Place in middle rack and bake until top is golden brown, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Sundays

7:35am "Into the Mystic" on KCOB

95.9 FM & 1280 AM

9:15am Choir Rehearsal

10:00am Worship

DECEMBER 2017



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	01	02
03 9:00am-9:45am "Toxic Charity" Study Communion Food Pantry Donations	04 5:00pm Worship & Music	05 5:15pm Centering Prayer	06 5:00pm Bible Study 6:30pm "13th" Film @DMACC	07 5:00pm Bible Study 6:30pm "13th" Film @DMACC	08	09
10 9:00am-9:45am "Toxic Charity" Study Body Shop Collection	11	12	13 5:15pm Centering Prayer 6:00pm Facilities & Finance Mtg.	14	15 Deadline for Open Door Articles	16
17 JCARL Collection	18	19	20 5:15pm Centering Prayer 5:30pm Community Meal	21 5:00pm Bible Study	22	23
24 7:00pm  Christmas Eve CANDLELIGHT SERVICE	25 	26	27 6:00pm Church Council	28	29	30

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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	Patricia Castline	792-3773 (Office)	uccnewton@mediacombb.net
Organist	Judy Brody	792-8129	ljbrody@windstream.net
Choir Director	Bev Thomas	792-6465	thomasb@iowatelecom.net
Custodian	Jim Christenson	792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@mediacombb.net
Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Pastor Emeritus	David Raymond		

Church office hours: 9:30am-2:30pm Monday through Thursday (The office will be closed on Fridays.)



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