

The Open Door

March 2019



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Who We Are

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

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Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Public Confession

The season of Lent is here and calling us to repentance, confession, and penitence. It has taken me years to come to grips with talking about such things as they always seemed so negative to me. I wanted to focus on the good in humanity, the belovedness of humanity, the image-of-God-ness of humanity. But the truth is we are not only good; we human beings do some really awful things to one another, to ourselves, and to the rest of this creation with which we live. And, we do some not so awful but not particularly lovely things as well as refrain from doing life-giving, healing things to one another, ourselves, and to our fellow members of creation. The truth is we sin multiple times a day, each and every day.

That word "sin" was a hard one for me too. Sin seemed to be at the root of repentance, confession, and penitence. When I thought about sin, it became all-consuming; it meant that we humans were all bad, incapable of doing any good. But the truth is that we are neither all good nor all bad; the truth is that we are both. However, it seems to me that as we live our lives most of us seek to show others only the good; we put on masks, put on a show so that others won't see those things in us of which we are ashamed. We put our lives out there through a filter and shove what Carl Jung calls our "shadow side" (the secret, unexplored part of our personality where we put all the parts of ourselves that are ugly, shameful, monstrous) into the closet or the basement or wherever denying its very existence.

As you might have guessed, this is not a particularly healthy or helpful practice. Yet, it seems our fear of rejection, our fear of not being loveable, our fear of being ridiculed too often overrides us doing what would be good for us, healthy for us, life-giving for us. That is, it seems our fear encourages us to keep our shadows and our sins right there in the dark rather than to bring them out into the light where they can be seen full on and thus managed and transformed.

This Lent; this six-week season that calls us to repentance, confession, and penitence; this period in the Christian liturgical calendar that challenges us to look closely at our sins and where we have fallen short of God's best hopes for us, I

want to try something. I want us to try doing this examination, this confession publicly. More specifically, I'd like to invite five of you to give a testimony during worship about a sin you committed, either recently or in the distant past. I am inviting five of you to share openly, honestly, vulnerably a more whole you. I'm inviting you to share for your own benefit as such an outing of that which has been hidden allows us to live more fully, more authentically, more integrated. I am inviting you to share for the benefit of the congregation, for when one shares their full self honestly and openly, showing their warts and all, they inspire the rest of us to do the same. I am inviting you to bring your stories before God and before God's people, to confess a sin with which you have found some resolution and peace and to share the grace of God which you experienced in that resolution. I am inviting you to share as what theologian Henri Nouwen calls a "wounded healer." And, for those of you who will not be standing at the microphone sharing in this way, I am inviting you to be open to hearing of these experiences, to see a side of your fellow members not before seen and to hold them in love.

To be fully honest with you, I am a bit terrified myself to go down this path because I know that I must do this public confessing myself (which is why I'm asking for five volunteers for six weeks). Indeed, I debated writing about something else this month trying to convince myself that we could do this at a later time, when I'm less busy, when the weather is better, etcetera. But God kept working on me and revealed that these reasons were simply rationalizations and excuses fueled by fear. Once again, I feel I am being called to back up my words with actions as I've wondered with you all before, if we cannot be our true, whole selves in the community of faith, then where can we be?

I was recently asked what I think the purpose of the church is. Though I am in full support and completely agree with the statement on the front of this newsletter, I responded that I believe the church is here to inspire, challenge, and support people to live more fully and completely as their authentic selves, which is as beloved children of God. It is my belief that offering an opportunity for such public confession will aid us in that endeavor. I pray that you will find this to be true as well.

Education

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).

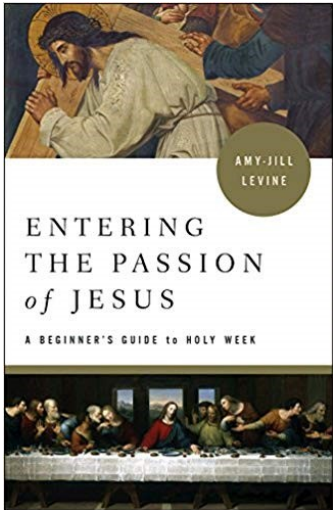
On **Wednesday, March 6th, 6:00pm-7:30pm**, you are encouraged to gather in the **Sanctuary** for our fifth video teach-in, entitled "The Right to Health and a Healthy Planet: Ecological Devastation and Health Care." This teach-in, along with all of the others in this series, consists of a panel speaking 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. **As this is Ash Wednesday, imposition of ashes will be offered at the close of our gathering time.**

Then on **Sunday, March 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 following sections prior to our meeting: "War Economy and Militarism" (pages 68-88) and "Ecological Devastation" (pages 89-111).

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”

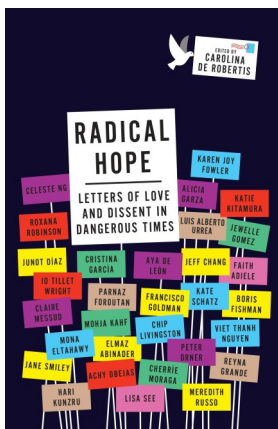
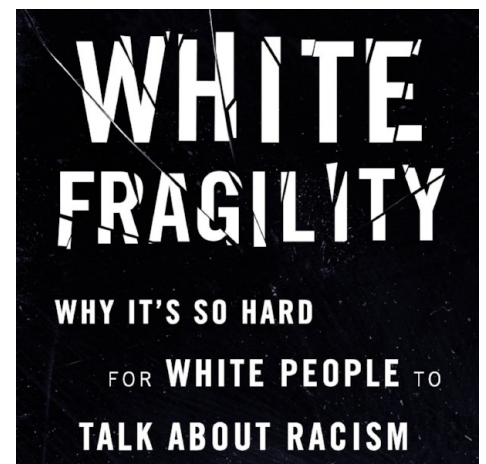
Beginning on Thursday, March 7th and continuing throughout the season of Lent (March 6th-April 20th), you are invited to gather **in the Parish House on Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm**, to explore the biblical texts surrounding the Passion story. Guiding us during this six-week study (no meeting on 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)

Participants will read one chapter of the book each week prior to our Thursday meeting and come together to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. Please contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.

Our reading schedule for this month is as follows: March 7th—Introduction and Chapter 1; March 14th—Chapter 2; March 21st—Chapter 3; March 28th—Chapter 4.

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 first Monday of each month at **The Cellar Peanut Pub** (403 W 4th St. N, Newton). Over the course of five meetings (March-July), 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 **March 4th** 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 **Morning Circle**

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, March 27th at 9:30am**. Pat Van Klompenburg will serve as host, 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 175-196.

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

Prayers and Concerns



Please hold in prayer

- ◆ Jeannie Johnson
- ◆ The family of Tim Cottrell, following his death on February 16th
- ◆ Glennys Hochwender, grandmother of Rev. Petersen
- ◆ Cheryl Rumley, aunt of Ed and Suzanne Van Zandt
- ◆ Hilary Montalvo
- ◆ Judy Brody
- ◆ Pat Clark, grandfather of Samantha Sledge



If you know someone in need of support – a visit, a call, a note, or prayer – please contact Rev. Jessica Petersen.



Second-Grade Tours

As a part of our deepening relationship with Progress Industries (PI), we will host PIs regular “second grade tours” here in our building on **Tuesdays, April 2nd and April 9th, 9:00am-10:30am and 1:00pm-2:30pm**. In addition to holding the tours in our building, we will also be leading the second-grade students through five stations aimed at helping them to better understand the impact of a disability on one’s life. PI will provide necessary instructions and supplies. If you are willing and able to help, **please sign up on the sheets available in the Parlor or contact the church office**. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns.



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.



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.

ONA Certification

Having affirmed our Open and Affirming Covenant during January 27th Special Congregational Meeting, we have become part of the largest and fastest-growing LGBTQ-affirming church movement in the world as we were welcomed as ONA congregation #1576 by the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. Our church will be added to the ONA map at openandaffirming.org/find, and our ONA status will appear on the UCC website. Later this year, the ONA Coalition will celebrate our congregation as a new member of the UCC’s ONA family on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and in their email newsletter, RIPPLES.

Following our ONA certification, we also received these words of welcome:

“I want to add my words of gratitude to you for the courage of your convictions and for leading your church through the OnA process. May the Holy Spirit lead you through the faithful proclamation of a gospel of extravagant welcome, in the hopes that doing so will changes lives.” – Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ

“What joy! I am proud of your faithful commitment to justice and your public witness of the gracious creative God who makes all of us humans in God’s image! Blessings!” – Rev. Brigit Stevens, Executive Conference Minister of the IA-NE-SD Conferences of the UCC

Inreach and Outreach

Pub Theology

Pub Theology meets on the fourth Monday of each month from **6:00pm-7:00pm** at **The Cellar Peanut Pub**. This month the group will meet on **Monday, March 25th**. We are offering this 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

You are encouraged to gather together in the Parlor on **Sunday, March 17th at 10:45am** (immediately following worship) for a congregational conversation regarding our current financial situation. During this meeting, we will follow up on the suggestions offered to cut costs and raise revenue during the January 13th Congregational Conversation. Please join us to offer your thoughts and ideas as we seek to be faithful stewards of our resources while engaging in transformative ministry together.

Central Association Spring Meeting



The Central Association of the Iowa Conference invites you to its Spring Meeting on **Saturday, March 23rd, 9:00am-3:00pm**. The meeting will take place at **Union Congregational UCC in Reinbeck** (225 Broad St., Reinbeck, Iowa). The agenda will include discussions of future events, voting on by-law revisions, and election of new officers. We are allowed two voting delegates and as many guests as we'd like. Please contact Rev. Petersen if you are interested in attending.

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?

If you have not already done so, contact Rev. Petersen by **immediately** 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 February 13th Council meeting.

- **Finances:** We have lost money on our investments. Our balance on hand is \$32,327.79.
- **Maintenance report:** The gutter problem may require taking bids from professionals for repair. We will drop the sanctuary thermostat to 55 degrees during the week and turn it back up to a maximum of 70 degrees for Sundays and events.
- Suggestions offered during the **Financial Reality Conversation** of January 13th were reviewed in detail.
 - ◇ We will follow up on the options for **insurance on the building**. We must maintain liability insurance.
 - ◇ **Selling our building** is not a good option as it would be very hard to sell and may not yield any savings (due to the cost of renting or building a new space, utilities, insurance, etc.).
 - ◇ A new job description will be developed for the **Administrative Assistant position**, which is very important for our church growth. Rev. Petersen will discuss options with Barbara Vasquez regarding continuing her service.
 - ◇ **Yoking with another church** is an option that would require conversations over a long period of time.
 - ◇ **Renting our building** would have numerous financial implications such as property taxes.
 - ◇ We may consider applying for **grants**.
 - ◇ We will follow up on moving our “No matter who you are...you are welcome” **sign** to in front of the air conditioner unit on 3rd Avenue.
 - ◇ We will research **community events** (such as Farmer’s Market and parades) for our possible participation that would increase our visibility in the community.
- Following the affirmation of our Open and Affirming Covenant, **restroom signs** will be changed to “Restroom.” Craig Armstrong volunteered to draft a **press release** for sharing our ONA status with the public.
- **Second grade tours** for Progress Industries will be April 2nd & 9th. Sign-up sheets will be made available.
- A **Building and Grounds Committee** will soon be appointed.
- **Pub Theology** was fun! It will be changed to the 4th Monday of each month.

Jamie Sawin, Secretary

Fuller Scholarships

Eve Fuller fulfilled the wishes of her husband, Max, and her own by leaving the bulk of their estate to our church to establish scholarships for sons and daughters of members who were working toward a four-year degree. Our congregation recently updated the standards for these scholarships while seeking to stay true to the Fullers' intent in establishing the scholarship fund.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since the inception of awarding these scholarships in 1996, a total of \$161,000 has been awarded. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.

Worship Attendance

<u>January Attendance</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Fourth Sunday	28	35
<u>February Attendance</u>		
First Sunday	25	27
Second Sunday	32	19
Third Sunday	33	—
Fourth Sunday	32	—

Birthdays to Celebrate in March

- 1-Barb Holdsworth, Jeanne Hershey
- 4-Elizabeth Pearson, Leslie McNew
- 9-James Jensen, Bruce Nuzum Sr.
- 10-Marilyn Deppe
- 11-Brad Penick
- 16-Lonnie Appleby
- 19-Kelly Mathes
- 20-Janie Kahn, Gayla Snook
- 24-Marilyn Planer, Cindy Tool
- 25-Dylan Yoder
- 30-Alexander Stonehocker



Anniversaries to Celebrate in March

- 3-Pam and John Wagnor
- 29-Rev. Jessica Petersen (10th ordination anniversary)

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. Beginning this month, we are no longer mailing out a hard copy of the newsletter unless explicitly requested and will continue to email a pdf version to our entire email list. Newsletters are only being 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 April newsletter will be available for pick up on Sunday, March 31st). Any newsletters not picked up by the first Sunday of the month will be hand delivered by a member of the congregation.

If you have not already done so, **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 and Hours

Barbara Vasquez has agreed to continue on as our regular Administrative Assistant. Her weekly office hours will begin in March and will be as follows: 2:00pm-4:00pm, Monday and Tuesday, and 2:00pm-5:00pm, Wednesday and Thursday.

Please contact Rev. Petersen if you need assistance getting into the church office or main building outside of these hours.

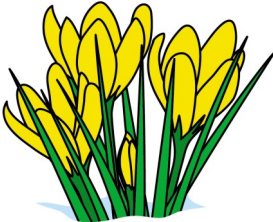
And, welcome back, Barbara!

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

March



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

					1	2
3 Communion Food Pantry Donations	4 6:00pm Racial Justice Book Club	5	6 6:00pm Poverty Video Series Ash Wednesday	7 5:00pm Bible Study	8	9 Turn clocks Forward one hour before bed
10 2:00am Daylight Savings Time begins	11	12 10:00am Pl Cleaning	13 6:00pm Church Council	14 Deadline for Open Door Articles 5:00pm Bible Study	15	16
17 JCARL Collection 9:00am Poverty Reading Group 10:45am Congregational Conversation	18	19	20	21 5:00pm Bible Study	22	23
24	25 6:00pm Pub Theology	26 10:00am Pl Cleaning	27 9:30am Morning Circle	28 5:00pm Bible Study	29	30
31						

Worship Schedule for March

Date	March 3	March 10	March 17	March 24	March 31
Christian Calendar Date	Transfiguration Sunday	First Sunday in Lent	Second Sunday in Lent	Third Sunday in Lent	Fourth Sunday in Lent
Special Events	Communion		Congregational Conversation		
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection		
Greeters	Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh & Family	Lin Chapé	Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh & Family		
Ushers	Jerry Sawin Lin Chapé	Craig Armstrong			Lin Chapé
Lay Readers	Jamie Swain	Craig Armstrong			
Scriptures	Luke 9:28-36	Luke 4:1-13	Luke 13:31-35	Luke 13:1-9	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
Worship Color	White	Violet	Violet	Violet	Violet

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.



We continue to remember our homebound members.

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

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

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

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

Congregational United Church of Christ
308 E. 2nd St. N.
Newton, IA 50208

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

xxx

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		

Office hours: 2:00pm to 4:00pm Monday and Tuesday and 2:00pm-5:00pm Wednesday and Thursday



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