

The Open Door

September 2018

**Congregational
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

Who We Are

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

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Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On My Favorite Hymn

*O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,
where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.*

This is the opening verse of one of my favorite hymns. These words, written by Miriam Therese Winter in 1982 and revised in 1987, seem to speak of, seem to long for the realm of God; a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect; a world where justice guides all our actions and words; a world where lives are lived offering thanks and praise to God. The hymn goes on to make more explicit what such a world will look like: outcasts belong, the poor are rich, goods are shared, truth is spoken, equality is achieved. Now that is a beautiful world indeed! Yet, according to the news of the day, the news of this past month, and the everyday realities experienced by so many in this country and around the globe, it seems we are so very far from such a world.

Immigrants, documented or not, are being treated with further disdain and are looked at with even greater suspicion following the capture of the man responsible for the death of Mollie Tibbetts. These ones who were already viewed as unwanted and outcast by far too many in our state and nation are now facing further marginalization as both our governor and president have used this tragedy to stoke the fires of fear as they promote their exclusionary and punitive immigration agenda. *O for a world where outcasts belong!*

Michael Cohen, the president's former attorney and so-called pitbull enforcer, pleaded guilty to several charges and implicated President Donald Trump in campaign finance violations. And on the same day, just two hours later, Rep. Duncan Hunter, a Republican Congressman from California, was indicted along with his wife for misusing hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign funds. *O for a world where truth is spoken!*

According to a recent audit of the US conducted by the Institute for Policy Studies, massive gains from economic growth have been going to a smaller and smaller share of society instead of going to workers. Since 1968, the top 1 percent's share of

national income has nearly doubled while the official poverty rate for all US families has merely inched up and down. And the 400 wealthiest Americans now own more wealth than the bottom 64 percent of the U.S. population (or 204 million people), while 140 million Americans are poor or low-income. *O for a world where goods are shared! O for a world where the poor are rich!*

According to that same study, legislative actions and legal decisions at the federal and state levels have severely restricted the ability of people of color—especially poor Black people, Latinx, and Native Americans—to participate in democratic processes. This includes the 2013 Shelby v. Holder Supreme Court case, which gutted the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Additionally, 23 states, including Iowa, have adopted some form of voter suppression law since 2010, and 25 states have pre-empted cities from passing minimum wage laws (many in response to successful grassroots living wage campaigns). *O for a world where equality is achieved!*

The final stanza of Winter's hymn reads:

*O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace
where time and tears will be no more and all but love will cease.*

Amidst all the oppression, injustice, fear, arrogance, and greed, I believe there is a world preparing for the reign of God's peace. There are communities that are organizing all over the nation and here in Iowa who refuse to give in, that refuse to give up. There are communities who dare to proclaim love in the face of fear, acceptance in the face of bigotry, humility in the face of arrogance, generosity in the face of greed, peace in the face of violence. There are communities that are preparing for God's peace not by waiting around for God to break open the heavens and intercede but by joining together with God and following Jesus's lead to be creators of that peace.

I count those of us who gather as Congregational United Church of Christ as one such community. May God grant us the courage and the wisdom to continue preparing for God's glorious world where fear, arrogance, greed, oppression, exploitation, violence, time and tears will be no more and all but love—life-giving, healing, transformative love—where all but this love will cease.

Emergency Pastoral Care

Rev. Petersen will leave for vacation on Monday, August 27th and return to the office on Tuesday, September 4th and will again be away from the office Thursday, September 13th through Wednesday, September 19th. If you are in need of emergency pastoral care during these times, you may contact Rev. Petersen on her cell phone.

Worship ...

Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer will be offered weekly during “Harvestide” (September through October). 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**, beginning September 5th with the final gathering of the season on October 24th. Please contact April Faidley with any questions.

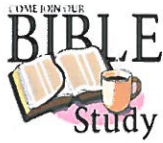
Welcome, Dr. Henry Reitz!

On Sunday, September 16th, while Rev. Petersen is away on vacation, Dr. Henry Rietz will be with us to preach and lead us in worship. Dr. Reitz is Professor of Religious Studies at Grinnell College and a member of Grinnell United Church of Christ Congregational. He received his M.Div. and his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from Princeton Theological Seminary and is the associate editor of the Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project. He has also offered educational presentations here at Congregational UCC in the past. Please plan to join us in worship on Sunday, September 16th as we extend a warm welcome to Dr. Reitz and listen as he shares a good word with us.

Choir Invitation

First Lutheran Church will be celebrating their 150th anniversary on Reformation Sunday, October 28th. They are holding an organ recital that afternoon at 1:00pm and are inviting all Newton-area singers to join the choir in singing two anthems during the recital. Rehearsals will take place in their balcony every Sunday morning at 8:30am beginning on September 2nd. Please contact Jane Johnson (641-417-8861; janebockwoldtjohnson@gmail.com) with any questions.

... Education



Bible Study: "Always With Us?"

Jesus's words "the poor you will always have with you" (Matthew 26:11) are regularly used to suggest that ending poverty is impossible, that poverty is a result of moral failures, and that the poor themselves have no role in changing their situation. In her book "Always With Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor," Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis examines both the biblical text and the lived reality of the poor to show how that passage is taken out of context, distorted, and politicized to justify theories about the inevitability of inequality.

Theoharis reinterprets "the poor you will always have with you" to show that it is actually one of the strongest biblical mandates to end poverty. She documents stories of poor people themselves organizing to improve their lot and illuminates the implications for the church. Poverty is not inevitable, Theoharis argues. It is a systemic sin, and all Christians have a responsibility to partner with the poor to end poverty once and for all.

Theoharis is Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival with the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II. She is the Co-Director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice and a Founder and the Coordinator of the Poverty Initiative.

Join us in the **Parish House on Thursdays at 5:00pm, September 20th through November 8th**, as we engage in this 8-week study utilizing Theoharis's book seeking to follow more closely in the way of Jesus. Participants should read the designated section of the book prior to our Thursday meeting and be prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The reading schedule for September is: September 20th – Foreword, Preface, and Introduction; September 27th – Chapter 1.

Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions or concerns or if you would like assistance with ordering a book.



Morning Circle

The next meeting of *Morning Circle* will be **Wednesday, September 26th at 9:30am**. Pat Van Klompburg will serve as hostess, and April Faidley will offer devotions. The group is studying "Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times" edited by Carolina De Robertis. We will be discussing pages 75-91.

All are welcome to join us as we come together for fellowship, devotions, and study seeking to follow more closely in the way of Jesus.

... Service



Food Pantry Sundays

The first Sunday of each month we receive donations for the Salvation Army Food Pantry. On **Sunday, September 2nd**, a cart will be in the west entrance to receive gifts for the food pantry. The Salvation Army is in special need of tuna helper (not hamburger), Ramen noodles, canned fruit cocktail (peaches or pears), canned tuna, and macaroni & cheese. Of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted. They also need any kind of personal care items: such as diapers, bath soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, feminine hygiene products, and laundry soap.



“Doggone Good Treats” Project

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

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

Contact Stormy Storms or Rev. Petersen if you’d like to participate. You can participate one time or many times. Whatever works with your schedule.

You will have a very gratifying experience!



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, September 16th**.

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

Thanks to the dedication of Carolyn and Duane Hobbs, we were able to work with PI participants and staff for a church cleaning project. Under their guidance, a small group from PI did some light cleaning and dusting in the sanctuary, library and other areas of the church building twice each month. This ministry is on hiatus for the summer and will begin again soon under new leadership. Thank you to Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh for her willingness to work with PI to continue this ministry.

Fuller Scholarship Recipient

Eileen Gerken has been awarded a Max and Evelyn Fuller Scholarship for the school year 2018-2019. Eileen will be a senior and is attending the University of Iowa majoring in History and Museum Studies. After graduation she hopes to work for a museum. Her parents are John and Anne Gerken.

Eve Fuller fulfilled the wishes of her husband, Max, and her own, by leaving the bulk of their estate to our church and to establish scholarships for the “youth” of our members. As stipulated in the will, to be eligible for these scholarships, the student and/or the student’s parents must be a member of this church and the student’s intention must be to complete a four-year program at an accredited college or university.

Since the inception of awarding these scholarships in 1996, a total of \$161,000 has been awarded.

Seminary Scholarship

In 1980, long time members of the church Dwight and Opal Smith wanted to do something more to reach out in ministry beyond the congregation. Following Opal’s unexpected death, Dwight consulted with the Iowa Conference Minister about the needs of the wider church. He learned that seminary students were being burdened with tremendously high loans to pay for their seminary education and that more and more of these students were second career persons and therefore had fewer years to work to pay off their loans than those coming directly out of college. Scholarships for seminary students would help the church gain mature leaders and at the same time help the students themselves. Dwight responded to this need by donating a total of \$15,000 to establish the Congregational United Church of Christ Seminary Scholarship Fund. Others were also invited to contribute to the fund, and several other families have made contributions from memorials and gifts.

This seminary scholarship program is notable for its simplicity. The program seeks to award a scholarship each year and requires no reimbursement. If Congregational UCC has anyone preparing for fulltime ministry, they would receive the scholarship when enrolled in seminary. If none, then another recipient is sought first, from the Central Association; second, from the Iowa Conference; and third, a worthy student at a UCC Seminary.

This year’s scholarship was awarded to Lisa J. Griffith Tierney, a Member in Discernment in the Central Association. Lisa is entering her final year of study as a Master of Divinity student at Chicago Theological Seminary. In the course of her journey, she has worked as a chaplain at UnityPoint hospitals in Des Moines, worked as a Pastor in elder care at Immanuel Pathways of Central Iowa, and interned in a field placement at Salem UCC in Alleman. This next year, she will be working on a constructive thesis on the theologies of God, sin and evil, Christ, church and ministry, as well as completing the requirements of her specialty concentration in chaplaincy. Upon completion of her Master of Divinity degree, Lisa plans to answer her call to chaplaincy.



Prayers and Concerns

Please hold in prayer

- ◆ Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh and family following the death of her step-father, Chuck Stanley, on Saturday, August 11th
- ◆ Stormy's Mom



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

Blood Pressure Monitoring

Carolyn Hobbs will offer blood pressure monitoring any Sunday during Fellowship Time. If you are curious about your blood pressure reading, please let Carolyn know.

Body Shop Collection

We take up a collection of items for the “Body Shop” at Newton High School three times throughout the year. The first of our three collections for this school year will be on **Sunday, September 9th**. The Body Shop is a method of providing high school students with personal care items and cleaning/hygiene supplies at no cost. The shop is free and open to any high school student.

The supplies that they can use include such things as hair care, shaving items, deodorant, oral hygiene, laundry detergent, feminine hygiene, body wash and spray. Sarah Patterson, the high school coordinator of the program says that like teenagers everywhere, students prefer brand name. They also prefer body wash to bar soap. She hopes that we will donate regular-size products. You may place your donations in a box labeled “Body Shop” in the entryway. There will be tax deductible receipts in the box for your use.

ONA Update

Church Council has appointed an Open and Affirming (ONA) Committee to oversee the process of our becoming an official ONA Church. An ONA Church makes it very clear that people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer are welcome in every aspect of our community of faith. The committee (Larry Leitner, Jamie Sawin, and Sonia Sledge) initially decided to meet with people who identify as LGBTQ to understand what their experience is like at Congregational UCC. We have done that and now are brainstorming ways of insuring that we reach as much of the congregation as possible to ascertain everyone’s thoughts and feelings on the matter. This task will be the committees main agenda item for the fall.



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, mow the lawn, and host fellowship time are located in the vestibule. Please help if you can.

Additionally, there are a few members who may need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact the church office to volunteer.

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



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 August 8th regular meeting and an August 16th special meeting.

- ◆ From Treasurer's Report: We have deficit spending of \$31,298.24. Our financial shortfall and reliance on endowment funds continues to be cause for concern.
- ◆ From Maintenance Report: Nursery toilet was leaking and is now fixed; kitchen faucet and water heater have also been fixed. Internet is now fully switched over to Windstream, and progress is being made on getting internet in the main building. Future projects to be addressed: Chapel thresholds, lighting, alley door, CO2 batteries replaced, and lawnmower instructions to be updated.
- ◆ Eileen Gerken was approved to receive a Fuller Scholarship.
- ◆ Craig Armstrong resigned from the position of Moderator due to time constraints. Jane Ann Cotton accepted the Council's appointment to fill this vacancy and will serve the remainder of Craig's term (through December 2019). The Council will appoint a new Assistant Moderator, according to our Bylaws.
- ◆ Updates were given on the 100th Birthday Celebration on August 25th and the continuing ONA process.
- ◆ An Annual Performance Evaluation of Rev. Petersen will be sent to Council members and is to be completed by the end of the month.
- ◆ We will discontinue our involvement with the Community Meal at this time. Great thanks was expressed for those who have provided leadership and volunteered during our involvement with this ministry.
- ◆ Financial Review Committee will review financial information from the previous fiscal year. For the October 2018 Annual Meeting, this will be information from fiscal year 2017.
- ◆ Nominating Committee has no nominations to make for the October 2018 Annual Meeting as the Council is responsible for handling appointments of vacant positions between Annual Meetings and no terms are set to expire this year.
- ◆ Financial information through September 2018 will be shared at the October 2018 Annual Meeting. In January 2019, a full financial report of 2018 will be prepared and shared with the congregation.
- ◆ A bid and design for church t-shirts has been received. Rev. Petersen will seek two more bids before a company is selected and orders are taken.

Worship Attendance

<u>August Attendance</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
First Sunday	35	28
Second Sunday	32	27
Third Sunday	43	35
Fourth Sunday	Worship Downtown	



Birthdays to Celebrate in September

- 3-Rick McNew
- 8-Ashley Christenson
- 9-Catfish Cottrell, Shirley Nuzum
- 10-Zach Johnson
- 12-Sonia Sledge
- 13-Steve Schober
- 15-Anna Mae Morgan
- 19-Collin McGinley
- 20-Christopher Pearson, Karen Shump
- 22-Julie Schmidt
- 23-Brian Schmidt
- 24-Clarence Planer
- 28-Gary Pearson



Anniversaries to Celebrate in September

- 7-Richard & Kay Marie Hagedorn
- 8-Ron & Diane Marvelli
- 12-Jessica Petersen (church Anniv. Date)
- 14-Jerry & Jamie Sawin
- 20-David & Kelly Currant
- 27-Gary & Janie Kahn
- 30-Gary & Lori Yoder

Take note...

New Email Address

We have changed internet providers and are now using Windstream. In doing so we had to set up a new email address which is: **uccnewton@windstream.net**. Please use this new address to contact the church office.

Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday, September 12th at 6:00pm in the Parish House**. Please contact Jane Ann Cotton or Rev. Petersen with any matters you wish for the Council to consider as they meet. The Council meets regularly on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm.

Congregational Conversation

Worship is central to who we are as a community of faith. In worship, we come together as a community of God's beloved to experience the presence of the divine that we might be comforted, inspired, and transformed as we offer our praise and prayers.

You are invited to join together in the Parlor for a Congregational Conversation regarding worship on **Sunday, September 9th at 10:45am** (immediately following morning worship). Please come share your ideas and questions especially in regards to the changes in worship we experimented with throughout the summer. Come listen and learn as we work together to make worship more meaningful for all those who gather in this sacred space.

Sponsor "God Is Still Speaking"

In an effort to get the word out about who we are as a congregation, we have a weekly airing on KCOB (95.9 FM and 1280 AM) on Sunday mornings at 7:35am. Rev. Petersen offers a weekly reflection regarding how "God Is Still Speaking."

The weekly cost is \$25. You are invited to sponsor a Sunday 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 "radio" or "God Is Still Speaking" if you are interested in donating.

Worship Schedule for September

Date	September 2	September 9	September 16	September 23	September 30
Christian Calendar Date	Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost	Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost	Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost	Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost	Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Special Events	No Communion	Congregational Conversation	Dr. Henry Rietz preaching		
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations	Body Shop Collection	JCARL Collection		
Greeters	Craig Armstrong	Lin Chapé	Ed Van Zandt	Lin Chapé	Ed Van Zandt
Ushers	Lin Chapé	Ed & Suzanne Van Zandt	Les Morgan, Larry Leitner		
Lay Readers	Craig Armstrong	Stormy Storms	April Faidley	Bev Thomas	Suzanne Van Zandt
Scripture	Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23	Mark 7:24-37	TBD	Mark 9:30-37	Mark 9:38-50
Worship Color	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Green is the color of growth. It symbolizes the renewal of vegetation and the promise of new life.



We continue to remember our homebound members.

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

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

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

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