

**Congregational  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

# *The Open Door*

## December 2018

Who We Are

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

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**Pastor Petersen’s Perspective:  
On Our SWOT Analysis**

As we gathered for our November Congregational Conversation to discuss living out our mission (stated above) in service to our community, we developed our congregation’s own SWOT Analysis. A SWOT Analysis is simply an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths are those attributes of our congregation that help us to live our mission, while Weaknesses are our congregation’s attributes that are harmful to us living out our mission. Opportunities are characteristics of our environment that help us to live out our mission, and Threats are those characteristics of our environment that are harmful to us living out that mission.

We looked at these areas as a way of thoughtfully discerning how God has gifted us and calls us to engage in ministry in our wider community. Well, actually, we only had time to do a SWO Analysis (as we didn’t get to the Threats portion). Given the time constraints, we also didn’t spend much time pulling all of these pieces together to decide on a specific ministry in which to engage. Rather, it was requested that all of these pieces be shared with you all in writing, so that each of you can take some time prayerfully considering where God is calling us to serve as we live out our mission.

I encourage you to take a look at our SWOT Analysis on the next page (feel free to fill out the “Threats” section as well) and consider how we have been gifted and called to serve our wider community. I encourage you to talk with one another as you process and imagine where God is calling us to act. And, of course, I would love to engage in conversation with you as well as you think through how our congregation will live out our mission through service both now and into the future.

May God guide us as we continue this process of discernment and join in service together with one another and with our God!

Newton Congregational UCC – SWOT Analysis (11/11/2018)

**Our Mission:** 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.

	HELPFUL to achieving our mission	HARMFUL to achieving our mission
<p><b>Internal Origin</b> (attributes of our congregation)</p> <p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stormy (esp. serving as Mission Coalition liaison)</li> <li>- Nonjudgmental/Welcome <u>ALL</u></li> <li>- Loving, supportive, helpful</li> <li>- Cooperative</li> <li>- The people</li> <li>- Individual talents – Art, Maintenance, Cooking</li> <li>- Our building and location</li> <li>- Initiative</li> <li>- Organization</li> <li>- Work together</li> <li>- Personal Relationships</li> </ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not well-known in community</li> <li>- Small in numbers</li> <li>- Aging – energy, physical abilities</li> <li>- Inactive members</li> <li>- Resistance to change</li> <li>- Fiscal crisis</li> <li>- Sometimes need to pressure people to volunteer</li> </ul>	
<p><b>External Origin</b> (attributes of our environment)</p> <p>All of the “Opportunities” under “Desire for” are from Ministry/Insite Report for Newton, Iowa – Percentages indicate the portion of Newton residents who reported desiring such a ministry in our community</p>	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <p>Desire for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family-oriented activities (61.7%)</li> <li>- Adult social activities (67.4%)</li> <li>- Involvement in social causes (62.3%)</li> <li>- Social justice advocacy work (51.2%)</li> <li>- Opportunities for volunteering in the community (67.7%)</li> <li>- Holiday programs/activities (64.7%)</li> <li>- Senior/retiree activities (56.3%)</li> <li>- Warm and friendly encounters (81.5%)</li> <li>- Traditional worship services (62.2%)</li> <li>- Quality sermons (68.8%)</li> </ul> <p>Progress Industries want a place to gather, play cards, and visit</p>	

Idea(s) for mission/service:



## 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 or cash in the amount of your choice.

The deadline for having your forms submitted is **Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup>**. Poinsettias will be purchased by our Special Flowers Volunteer, 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 23<sup>rd</sup> (regular morning worship) and Christmas Eve. Thank you.

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## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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.





## “The First Christmas”: Bible Study

A new 9-week Bible study began on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. We are studying “The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach about Jesus’ Birth” by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Through this work, Borg and Crossan help readers “to see the real Christmas story buried in the familiar Bible accounts. Basing their interpretations on the two nativity narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Borg and Crossan focus on the literal story—the inner truth rather than the historical facts—to offer a clear and uplifting message of hope and peace. With *The First Christmas* readers get a fresh, deep, and new understanding of the nativity story, enabling us to better appreciate the powerful message of the Gospels.” (from amazon.com)

Join us in the **Parish House** on **Thursdays at 5:00pm** (no meeting December 27<sup>th</sup>), as we study Borg and Crossan’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 schedule of reading for December is as follows: December 6<sup>th</sup>—Chapter 2; December 13<sup>th</sup>—Chapter 3; and December 20<sup>th</sup>—Chapter 4.

## 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, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm-7:30pm**, you are encouraged to gather in the **Sanctuary** for our second video teach-in, entitled “Everybody’s Got the Right to Live: Education, Living Wages, Jobs, Income, Housing.” 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.

Then on **Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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 “Poverty and Inequality” section (pages 40-67) prior to our meeting.

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 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](http://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/audit). Contact Rev. Petersen if you would like a printed copy for \$7.00 (to cover the cost of printing).



## Morning Circle

*Morning Circle* will not meet in **December** due to the Christmas holiday. We will meet again on Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. More information regarding this meeting will be included in the January newsletter.

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



### "Doggone Good Treats" Project

The Progress Industries partnership with UCC of making and baking all natural dog treats took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month at 2:00pm. PI participants and church members Stormy Storms, Marti Barker, and Suzanne Van Zandt worked 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 were then transported 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 and will surely do the same into the future!

The last time for baking dog treats with PI for this year took place on October 22<sup>nd</sup> in the church kitchen. This worthwhile service project will continue next spring. Contact Stormy Storms or Rev. Petersen if you'd like to participate.



### 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 16<sup>th</sup>**.

Their current wish list is: paper towels, garbage bags, raw hides (for big dogs and small), peanut butter, bleach, dish soap, Fabuloso (the purple kind), laundry soap, liquid hand soap, rubber gloves, kitty litter, canned shredded and filet cat food, canned dog food (Purina), dry dog food (Purina), and dry cat food (Indoor Purina).

### Cleaning Project with Progress Industries

We are working together with PI participants and staff to offer a church cleaning project. Under the guidance of Heidi Grandstaff-Fresh, a small group from PI does some light cleaning and dusting in the sanctuary, library, and other areas of the church building twice each month. However, this month it will be only once due to Christmas falling on a Tuesday. This ministry will take place again on **Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am**. Please contact Heidi if you would like to help.







## Christmas Shopping for the Body Shop

We will receive the second of our three collections for the school year for the “Body Shop” at Newton High School on **Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**. 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.

Helpful supplies include such things as hair care, shaving items, deodorant, oral hygiene, laundry detergent, feminine hygiene, body wash and spray. Students prefer brand-name products and body wash over bar soap. Regular-size products are appreciated. You may place your donations in a basket labeled “Body Shop” in the entry-way. There will be tax deductible receipts for your use.

Thank you for your generosity and love.

## 2018 Christmas Fund & Veterans of the Cross Special Offering

The year’s final special offering, 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 who wouldn’t otherwise receive any gifts. You may sign up in the Parlor to purchase a gift for one of the two residents by writing your name and the gift you’ll be purchasing on the sheet provided. 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 9<sup>th</sup>** 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.

## Holiday Compassion Offering

On **Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**, we will take up a special offering to offer care and compassion to our members and friends who are experiencing financial difficulties. The donated funds will be used to purchase gift cards to either HyVee or Fareway (recipient’s choice). Donations may also be sent to the church office by **Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>**. Please prayerfully consider contributing to this effort as we share God’s love with one another.





## Prayers and Concerns



### Please hold in prayer

- ◆ Les Morgan and family, following the death of his mother-in-law on Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>
- ◆ Dorothy Raymond



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.

## Progress Industries Speakers

During our November Congregational Conversation regarding mission/service, a request was made to learn more about how we might deepen our partnership with Progress Industries. Three folks from PI will join us on **Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:45am** (immediately following worship) to share more information with us and explore possibilities for further engagement. Please plan to join us for this special presentation.

## Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Through our membership with the Mission Coalition, we are responsible for ringing bells for the Salvation Army at **HyVee on Saturday, December 1<sup>st</sup>** for two hours, and we filled these spots within minutes! More opportunities to help the Salvation Army during their holiday season bell ringing campaign are available at **Theisen's on Thursdays, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm-7:00pm**. Please sign up to volunteer on the sheet in the Parlor. And, thank you to all who have already volunteered!

## Meals on Wheels

Our congregation is responsible for delivering Meals on Wheels December 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. This ministry is a part of our membership with the Mission Coalition. Thank you to those who volunteered your time and energy to assist with this ministry. Your efforts are much 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.

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 November 14<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.

- We will discontinue funding “God is Still Speaking” on KCOB due to insufficient funds.
- Southwest rain gutter has been repaired, but is being carefully watched.
- Fuller Scholarship Review Committee has completed their work. The following changes have been proposed:
  1. Allowance for part-time students
  2. Allowance for degrees other than a bachelor’s (e.g. associate’s degrees, certificates, diplomas, and graduate degrees)
  3. Allowance for funds for grandchildren of members
- Reviewed Jessica’s goals for the coming year following her Annual Performance Review, which include:
  1. Developing and carrying out an evangelism/outreach plan with Council and congregation
  2. Address our current financial crisis with Council and congregation
  3. Connecting with members and friends of CUCC one-on-one
- Reviewed upcoming dates.

The remainder of the agenda (focused on finances, follow up from the structure/bylaws congregational conversation, and evangelism/outreach) was not completed due to extensive discussion on previous agenda items. Council will meet twice in December to address these important items in a timely manner.

Jamie Sawin, Secretary



## Worship Attendance

<u>November Attendance</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
First Sunday	33	37
Second Sunday	43	27
Third Sunday	34	28
Fourth Sunday	34	21



## Birthdays to Celebrate in December

- 4-Suzanne Van Zandt, Dickie Teed
- 6-Daniel McPherran
- 10-Megan Pryke
- 11-Katie Schober-Ordenez
- 14-Martin Mutai, Kayden Jensen
- 15-Patricia Van Klompenburg
- 16-Caleb McGinley, Dorothy Purtilo
- 20-Keiarra Hicks
- 22-Cainen McGinley
- 24-Julie McPherran
- 25-JESUS CHRIST
- 27-Alayzha Hicks, Danielle Hasbrouck
- 30-Darrah Schlichte



## Anniversaries to Celebrate in December

- 12-Greg & Barb Ellcey
- 24-Gary & Melisa Pearson

My Dear UCC,

Thank you so much for once again awarding me the Fuller Scholarship. Your ongoing support has made my college experience even brighter. Hoping to see you all soon!

Sincerely,  
Eileen Gerken

## **Take note...**

### Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet on **Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> immediately following worship** and **Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> 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.

### Radio Program Discontinued

After running a deficit in the "God Is Still Speaking" fund for two successive months, the Church Council decided it would be fiscally responsible to discontinue this early Sunday morning radio spot. Donations have been secured to cover the deficit amount. Thank you to all who supported this outreach effort!

### Christmas Decorating

All are invited to join us in making the church look festive for Christmas as we decorate the sanctuary, the entryway, and the church parlor on **Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00pm-9:00pm.** If you can help or have any questions, please call Rev. Petersen.



### 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.

## Worship Schedule for December

Date	December 2	December 9	December 16	December 23	December 24	December 30
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	PI Speakers	Rev. Susan Sickelka preaching	Poverty Series Reading Group		
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations	Body Shop Collection; Holiday Compassion Offering	JCARL Collection		Christmas Fund Offering	
Greeters	Lin Chapé	Ed Van Zandt		Ed Van Zandt	Lin Chapé	
Ushers	Bart Teed, Craig Armstrong	Lin Chapé, Suzanne Van Zandt	Les Morgan		Craig Armstrong	
Lay Readers	Suzanne Van Zandt	April Faidley		Bev Thomas		Larry Leitner
Scriptures	Luke 1:5-25	Luke 1:26-38	Luke 1:39-56	Luke 1:57-80	Luke 2:1-20	Luke 2:21-39
Worship Color	Violet	Violet	Rose	Violet	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.**

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

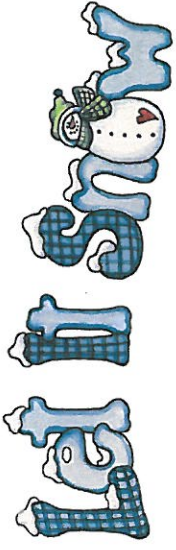
Betty Hotchkin  
Park Centre #40  
500 1<sup>st</sup> St. N.  
Newton, IA 50208


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



**Sundays**  
 10:00am Worship  
 11:15am Fellowship Time

# DECEMBER 2018



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	01
02 Communion Food Pantry Donations 11:15am Church Council	03 6:00pm Church Decorating	04	05 6:00pm Poverty Series: Video Teach-in	06 5:00pm Bible Study	07	08
09 Holiday Compassion Offering Body Shop Collection 10:45am PI Speakers	10	11 10:00am PI Cleaning	12 6:00pm Church Council	13	14	15
16 Rev. Susan Sichelka preaching JCARL Collection	17 Deadline for Open Door Articles	18	19	20 5:00pm Bible Study	21	22
23 9:00am Poverty Series: Reading Group	24 7:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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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@windstream.net
Organist	Judy Brody	792-8129	ljbrody@windstream.net
Custodian	Jim Christenson	641-792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@windstream.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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Iowa Conference: [www.ucciaconf.org](http://www.ucciaconf.org) United Church of Christ: [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)

Newton Congregational UCC website: [www.uccnewton.org](http://www.uccnewton.org)