

The Open Door

February 2020



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

God is still speaking,

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Who We Are

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

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Pastor Petersen's Perspective: On Direct Communication

"If your sibling should commit some wrong against you, go and point out the error, but keep it between the two of you. If that one listens to you, you have won a loved one back; if not, try again, but take one or two others with you, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If your sibling refuses to listen to them, refer the matter to the church. If that one ignores even the church, then treat that sibling as you would a Gentile or a tax collector." — Matthew 18:15-17

Recently, I have been hearing a number of comments regarding my job performance from second-hand sources. A few members have come to me to voice others' thoughts about sermons, about childcare, about visitation. As these comments are shared, I regularly hear the phrase, "some people," as in "some people were upset with your sermon" or "some people have said they think Jabali should be in childcare." In the scripture quoted above, Jesus is shown advising his disciples to speak to one another directly when a problem arises. As David R. McMahill states it in his guidelines for healthy communication, "say what needs to be said to the one who needs to hear it" ("Completing the Circle," 2003).

In all relationships, people are bound to have differences and disagreements. The quality of a relationship is not determined by the number of disagreements but by how the involved parties handle those differences and work through those disagreements. In a healthy relationship, parties do not avoid disagreements; they resolve them while remaining respectful to each other, and in the process strengthen the relationship. I value the relationships I have with each of you individually and collectively and certainly strive to communicate with you in a direct, open, and honest manner at all times. I invite you to share with me (and one another and those with whom you are in relationship outside of the church) in such a way as well.

I realize that communicating with others in such a way requires the one raising the disagreement to be vulnerable as you are sharing your true thoughts, your deep feelings, and your essential self. I promise, and I hope you have come to know me well enough to trust, that I will never treat you negatively because you disagree with me on something. I will always treat you with dignity and respect. I

simply ask that you do the same by bringing matters of concern directly to me so that we can have a conversation, come to understand one another better, and move forward in strengthened relationship.

Direct, open, and honest communication also requires the one bringing forward the disagreement to trust the other to be able to manage their own emotions. You all are not responsible for making me feel happy, sad, content, upset, etc. I am the only one who can effectively manage my own emotions. I ask that you trust that I am attending to my own spiritual and psychological care.

The full suggested guidelines for healthy communication offered by McMahill (which are printed and posted on the wall in the Parish House conference room) are as follows:

- I tell my own story and let others tell theirs.
- I avoid “awfulizing” negative experiences.
- I say what needs to be said to the one who needs to hear it.
- I devote at least as much time to careful listening as I do to careful speaking.
- If something prompts anger in me, I report it honestly in a way that invites positive solutions.
- I refrain from blaming and shaming.

I invite you, friends, to consider these guidelines. Are there others you would add? Will you commit to communicating in line with these suggestions?

I look forward to our future communications with you all. May they be direct, may they be open, and may they be honest that we might for faithfully live together as this beloved community of God.

Worship



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 (February 26th – April 11th), 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

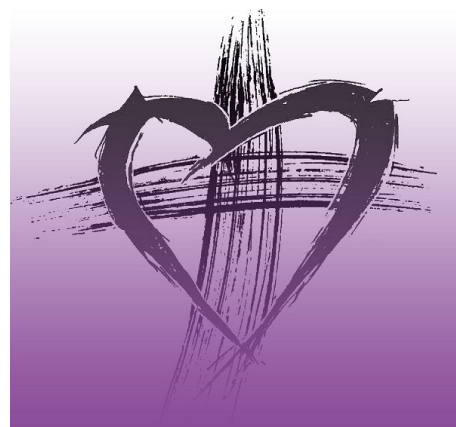
partner to pray for you that week. Then you actually pray together, if both of you are comfortable doing that, or you covenant to pray individually later for your partner.

Interested?

Contact Rev. Petersen by **Monday, February 17th** so that she can partner you with another interested pray-er.

Ash Wednesday Worship

A service of worship will be held in on **Ash Wednesday, February 26th beginning at 6:00pm**. The service will include prayer, scripture, time for reflection, and the imposition of ashes. Please join us as we are reminded of our mortality even as we are reminded of our call to faithfully live our lives to the fullest as we enter the season of Lent.



Monthly Game Night

We do much together in terms of learning, serving, and worshipping together, but rarely do we take time to play together. That is about to change!

Undaunted by our having to cancel in January, we *are* launching our monthly game night in this new year. Friends and members of the congregation are invited to gather in the Dining Room on the third Friday of each month, 6:00pm-8:00pm. Our inaugural monthly **game night** will be held on **Friday, February 21st**. You are encouraged to bring your favorite board games and come enjoy some fun with your church family! Snacks will be provided.



Education

UCC General Synod Resolutions



The General Synod of the United Church of Christ is the national decision-making body for the denomination, responsible for giving general direction to the evangelistic, missionary, and justice

programs of the UCC. Because the UCC holds to a covenantal polity, any decisions made by the Synod are not binding upon the UCC's congregations (or its associations or conferences) in any way, though the national offices and the UCC's *Constitution and By-laws* expect serious consideration to be given them.

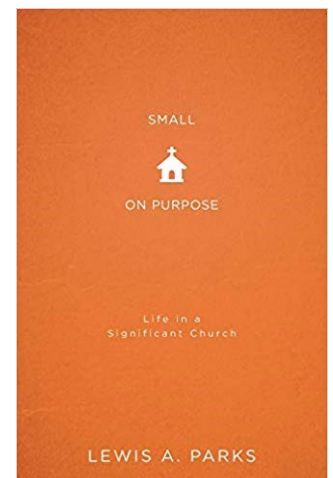
Twenty resolutions were approved by the delegates to the 32nd General Synod (June 21st-25th, 2019). You are encouraged to read each of these resolutions and listen to how God is speaking to our local congregation through this witness of the wider UCC.

Two binders, each including all 20 resolutions, are available in the church library. The resolutions may also be accessed online at ucceverywhere.org/synod. Additionally, throughout the upcoming months, one resolution will continue to be introduced during worship on the first Sunday of each month.

Lenten Sunday Study

During the season of Lent (February 26th-April 11th), you are encouraged to engage in a study of "Small on Purpose: Life in a Significant Church" by Lewis A. Parks. In his book, "Parks shows us how life in a small congregation is profoundly significant and the important role these churches play. This book includes clear instructions on how leaders can streamline ministry to maximize the unique and powerful contributions small churches make in their communities. This book is inspiring and practical, a refreshing point of view for the church and church leaders." (from amazon.com)

Those interested in participating in this study should purchase the book, read the designated chapter (the reading schedule will be in the March newsletter), and gather on Sunday mornings at 9:00am for discussion.



Education cont.

Iowa's Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund

On Sunday, February 23rd, 10:30am-11:30am, we will continue our series of monthly educational opportunities to address the great moral challenge of the ecological crisis.



During this session, State Representative Wes Breckenridge, representing Iowa House District 29 (elected in November 2016), will speak about Iowa's Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. In 2010, 63% of Iowans voted to create the Trust Fund, which is a permanent and protected funding source. However, the fund remains empty to this day because it requires a state sales tax increase of 3/8ths of a cent for funding. Breckenridge will share about what initiatives the Trust Fund is set up to provide and address its connections to the state house. A brief worship service will take place at 10:00am prior to the presentation.

Bible Study: The Gospel of Mark

Our regular Thursday evening Bible study will take a break for the month of February. We will reconvene on March 5th as we begin a 12-week study of the Gospel of Mark. All are invited to gather in the **Parish House** on **Thursday evenings, 5:00pm-6:00pm**, to explore this earliest written and shortest gospel included in the New Testament. Study materials in addition to the gospel text from "Mark: A Listen Up! Bible Study" will be provided throughout the course of our study together.

Participants should come prepared to discuss any thoughts, questions, and curiosities spurred by the weekly reading. The March meeting and reading schedule is as follows: March 5th—Mark 1 (Fasten Your Seatbelts); March 12th—Mark 2-3 (Not Everyone Thinks Jesus is a Good Thing); March 19th—Mark 4 (Sowing Seeds of Confusion); March 26th—Mark 5 (Legions of Demons, Blood, Death, and Healing).

Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



Pub Theology



Pub Theology regularly meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 6:00pm-7:00pm at **The Cellar Peanut Pub**. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday, February 25th**. The format is simple: beer, conversation, and God. Come bring your questions, your curiosity, and pull up a chair. Be ready to engage with people of varying religious traditions, philosophical perspectives,

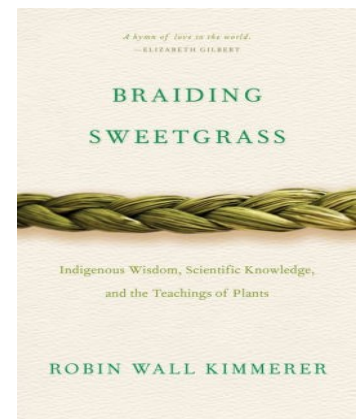
and life experiences. You'll be able to share your own wrestlings and thoughts while learning something new along the way.

This ministry is offered in cooperation with First Presbyterian Church. Participants are responsible for purchasing their own beverages and encouraged to drink responsibly. No purchase is required. Contact Rev. Petersen with any questions.



Morning Circle will meet in the **Parish House** on **Wednesday, February 26th** at **9:30am**. Dorothy Raymond will host the group, and April Faidley will offer devotions. The group is studying "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Participants should read and come prepared to discuss pages 120-155.

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.



Bring a Friend to Church Sunday

You are invited and encouraged to bring a friend to church with you on **Sunday, February 16th**. This Sunday is not about trying to “pack a pew” or feel good about how many people show up. This Sunday is not about inviting your friends from other churches to come visit to show off our worship services. Instead, this Sunday is about inviting our friends who are without a church home; friends who could benefit from being in community with others; friends who need to hear that they are beautiful, gifted, beloved children of God.

This is a day for us to be intentional about reaching out to the people we have been blessed to have in our lives. So, let us reach out, invite, and worship alongside our friends who may benefit from being in a beloved community 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 in our community, our nation, and the world.

Church Potluck

It’s time for another church potluck! You are encouraged to gather in the Dining Room to share a meal and conversation with one another following worship on **Sunday, February 16th**. Please bring a main dish, side dish, and/or dessert to share. Drinks and table service will be provided.

We are in need of a potluck host; please sign up on the clipboard in the entry way or contact the church office to volunteer. You may direct any questions to Rev. Petersen.



Notes of Support and Encouragement

Ayesha Munu, hosted by Bev Clark Floss a few years back, is starting her final year of college in Sierra Leone. You are invited to send notes of support her way as she completes her law degree. The best way to get in touch with her is via Facebook. If you are Facebook friends with her, you are encouraged to reach out to her directly. However, if you are not already connected, you may send a note of support and encouragement by sending your message to Rev. Petersen, and she will pass it on to Ayesha.

A graphic with the text "Thinking of you" in colorful, playful letters. The word "Thinking" is in a mix of colors (red, blue, green, yellow) and "of you" is in blue and red. The graphic is set against a white background with a slight shadow.

“Nuts and Bolts of Ministry” Volunteer List

Thank you to all who filled out and returned the “Nuts and Bolts of Ministry Inventory” for 2020. Lists with the names of those who have volunteered to help with the various tasks included on the inventory can be found in the church office and on the bulletin board in the Parlor. Those of you who have volunteered to help will be receiving an email or phone call soon to let you know when and how you can follow through with your offer of support. If you have not yet filled out and returned your inventory to the church office, you may do so at any time. Thank you!

Service and Outreach



Communion Offering

Our Communion Offering will now be used to offer financial support to our members and friends who are facing monetary struggles. Previously these funds were used to fund our Worship & Music and Service & Outreach efforts; these expenditures are now included in the regular budget (funds previously collected will be used for their assigned purpose until those funds are exhausted). Please contact Larry Leitner, our Treasurer, or Rev. Petersen with any questions.

Service and Outreach cont.

Prayers and Concerns



Please hold in prayer

- Family of Steve Holdsworth following his death on Monday, January 20
- Family of Gary Wirt; grandfather of Katy, Niall, Liam, Heather, and Lauren Fresh; following his death on Thursday, January 9
- Jimmy Northcott, friend of Emma Fresh, and family following the death of his grandmother, Donna
- Khloe Sassman, friend of the Pryke and Stonehocker families
- Jeannie Johnston • Stormy Storms • Bev Edge

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

Congregational Conversation

As you are likely well aware, our congregation has been seeking out a relationship with another congregation to share a pastor. A **Congregational Conversation** regarding the process and progress that has been made concerning this effort will be held on **Sunday, February 9th at 10:45am** (immediately after worship) in the **Parlor**. Please plan to join us for this important update and discussion.



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 need transportation to worship and church activities. Please contact the church office to volunteer.

Donation Wish Lists

We take up regular monthly collections for the Salvation Army food pantry (first Sundays) and the Jasper County Animal Rescue League (third Sundays). Here are their wish lists:

Food Pantry: tuna helper (not hamburger), pasta sauce, canned soups, cereal, and boxed macaroni & cheese (of course, other canned or packaged foods are always accepted)

JCARL: 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).



Worship Attendance

<u>January Attendance</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
First Sunday	38	16
Second Sunday	24	33
Third Sunday	18	11
Fourth Sunday	35	27



Birthdays to Celebrate in February

- 2 - Tom Turk, Oliver Planer, Arden Planer
- 3 - Aksel Joy
- 6 - Carver Christenson-Vasquez
- 7 - Todd Planer
- 14 - Coridan McGinley
- 17 - Nile McCoy
- 19 - Emma Fresh, Jamie Sawin
- 21 - Amber Christenson
- 23 - Bonnie McGinley
- 27 - Bev Edge, Kristina McNew, Les Morgan

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.

Take note...

Church Council Meeting and Composition

The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday, February 12th at 6:00pm in the Parish House**. Please contact Sam Sledge, our Moderator, with any matters you wish for the Council to consider as they meet. The Council meets regularly at 6:00pm on the second Wednesday of each month.

Fuller Scholarship Recipients

For the 2019-2020 school year, there were two application deadlines for the Fuller Scholarships. The three additional Fuller Scholarship recipients for the 2019-2020 school year are as follows:

Jacob Robertson is the son of Laura and Chris Robertson and the grandson of Tom and Jan Turk. He graduated from Linn-Mar High School in 2018. He is currently a student at Coe College and expects to graduate with a degree in Accounting in 2022. Following graduation, he would like to obtain an accounting position where he can make a positive impact on the company with which he works and those around him.

Elena Turk is the daughter of Julianne and David Turk and granddaughter of Tom and Jan Turk. She graduated from Benilde—St. Margaret's High School in May 2019. She is currently a student at The University of Iowa where she is working towards a BS in Chemistry and a BA in Theatre Arts. She expects to graduate in May 2023. While she hopes to pursue a career as a professional actor in the future, she also has a passion for chemistry and forensic science. She is working towards degrees in both of her passions so she can explore both career paths and discover which she will ultimately pursue.

Madeline Turk is the daughter of Julianne and David Turk and granddaughter of Tom and Jan Turk. She graduated from Benilde—St. Margaret's High School in May 2017. She is currently a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she is seeking a degree in Marketing and Environmental Studies. Madeline expects to graduate in May 2021 at which point she hopes to go to law school. She plans to use her future law degree to work for environmental nonprofits and to fight in court to protect our planet.



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 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 January 8th Council meeting submitted by Jennifer, Secretary.

- ◆ The meeting began with a welcoming of new members and a time of quiet prayer and reflection.
- ◆ **Secretary's Report:** Some small changes were necessary. Minutes were approved as corrected.
- ◆ **Treasurer's Report:** Expenses for 2019 were under budget. Non-pledge income for 2019 exceeded expectations, and we received 100.6% of monies pledged for the year. Our 2019 deficit was approximately \$26,800. Pledges for 2020 have exceeded our projections; as the budget stands, we will still have a deficit and need to draw from endowment funds. Due to some problems, it was agreed, by consensus, to stop paying bills online for the time being.
- ◆ **Scholarship Committee:** The remaining budgeted funds were \$5,500.00. Three applications were reviewed and the applicants were found to be well qualified. By consensus, the council agreed to add \$500.00 to the scholarship fund for a total of \$6,000.00. For the 2019-2020 year, a total of \$25,500.00 for 13 recipients will be distributed. In the future, we will have only one application deadline. April 1 will now be the deadline for all applicants.
- ◆ **Maintenance Report:** Thermostats have been adjusted and seem to be working. The West entrance doors also had adjustments to them; they appear to be affected by humidity. These doors may need work in the future.
- ◆ **Scouting Committee Update:** There has been no further communication with St. John UCC in Melbourne. Conversations have continued with Bethany UCC in Baxter, and it seems this would be a good fit. The Scouting Committee will meet with Rev. Darrell Goodwin and Bethany UCC members to create a plan to move forward. Jessica will send out an email to the committee as to the exact date of the meeting during the week of Jan. 20th. Bev Thomas will continue to be consulted regarding service times as conversations continue.
- ◆ **Membership:** A group will be convened to do phone calling to reach out to seldom-seen members. This led to a discussion of sermon content and declining attendance including what Rev. Petersen hopes to accomplish with sermons and worship and a conversation about congregational needs.
- ◆ **Quarterly Potluck:** Our quarterly Potluck will be held on February 16 following the service. It is "Bring a Friend to Church Sunday." The council agreed by consensus that we should provide table service (plates, glasses, flatware, etc.).
- ◆ **O & A:** DMACC said we could not distribute brochures through them due to the religious nature of the information. We discussed leaving a brochure on the bulletin board at the library with a post it note attached stating, "Take Me." This would require that the bulletin board be checked regularly and the brochure replaced. The brochures and bumper stickers will be available in the brochure rack and the pews in our church.
- ◆ **Suicide Prevention Training:** Will take place later in the spring.
- ◆ **Structure Bylaws Follow-up:** Will create a binder with instructions for various volunteer services to the church, i.e., communion set up, ushering, etc.
- ◆ **Upcoming Events:** Game Night on January 17, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.; Congregational Conversation on February 9 will be an update on our plan to share our pastor with another church; due to expected inclement weather and resulting low attendance, it was agreed, by consensus, to postpone our next presentation on various religions previously scheduled for February and continue in March, April, and May.
- ◆ The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

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**. 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 \$186,500 has been awarded. Through prudent investment of the monies received, this will be a continuing church program.

Sundays
10:00am Worship
11:15am Refreshments

February



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

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2 Communion Food Pantry Donations 11:30am Scouting Committee	3 Caucus Day	4	5	6	7	8
9 10:45am Congregational Conversation	10	11 10:00am PI Cleaning	12 6:00pm Church Council	13	14 Valentine's Day	15
16 JCARL Collection Bring a Friend to Church Potluck	17 President's Day	18	19	20	21 6:00pm Game Night	22
23 10:30am Iowa's Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund	24	25 10:00am PI Cleaning 6:00pm Pub Theology	26 9:30am Morning Circle 6:00pm Ash Wednesday Worship	27	28	29

Worship Schedule for February

Date	February 2	February 9	February 16	February 23
Christian Calendar Date	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	Transfiguration Sunday
Special Events	Communion	Congregational Conversation	Bring a Friend to Church; Potluck	Wes Brekenridge, Guest Speaker
Special Offerings	Food Pantry Donations		JCARL Collection	
Scriptures	Matthew 5:1-12	Matthew 5:13-20	Matthew 5:21-37	Matthew 17:1-9
Worship Color	White	Green	Green	White

White symbolizes purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as respect and reverence.

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

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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The Open Door is a newsletter for the members and friends of Congregational United Church of Christ. Suggestions and submissions are welcome. Deadline for submission is the date indicated on the Calendar.

Pastor	Rev. Jessica Petersen	792-3773 (Office) 641-840-2672 (Cell)	revjessicapetersen@gmail.com
Administrative Assistant	Barbara Vasquez	792-3773 (Office)	uccnewton@windstream.net
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Custodian	Jim Christenson	792-3773 (Office) 641-781-0596 (Cell)	uccnewton@windstream.net
Health Ministry	Carolyn Hobbs	792-2687	cdhobbs@iowatelecom.net
Moderator	Samantha Sledge		
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. David Raymond		

Office hours: 10:00am to 3:00pm Tuesday and Thursday



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