



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
August 2021



Friends in Christ—

Welcome to the August 2021 Congregational UCC Newsletter, another step on our way toward reopening and resuming activities here at the church. For the last 17 months we've been sending out occasional updates with information about the congregation. Now we begin monthly newsletters once more. While we are still worshipping online, we'll continue to send out the bulletin to everyone on Saturday. And once we resume in-person worship we will return to sending out a Friday email update.

The last newsletter was sent out for March 2020. It began with the words: "Covid-19 is spreading around the world—although no one knows how widely or how quickly it will spread or how deadly it will be." Here in August 2021, we know it spread widely and quickly and was very deadly. In spite of the availability of vaccinations and their effectiveness, the Delta variant has in some ways brought back the feel of the summer of 2020: indoor masking, greater caution, worry about crowds and attempts at social distancing.

Our own attempts at normalcy and resuming in-person worship did not go well. Electrical problems added to Delta concerns. The good news is that while we have postponed in-person worship until September 12 (see more information below), our congregation has continued to be a vital presence in our community throughout this pandemic. We have fed the hungry, sheltered the homeless, supported refugees, provided fans in the midst of oppressive heat, explored racial justice (see below), supported one another, and nurtured the children of our congregation. So, in a sense, we have been doing what's "normal" all along.

The pandemic isn't over—and our mission and ministry are not finished.

The challenges ahead are many—and so to are the possibilities and opportunities.

In person or online, together or separate, let us continue to walk in the ways of Jesus Christ, known and to be made known to us.

Peace,

Bill

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 12 SET AS DATE FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON WORSHIP

The Church Council met in early August and considered the recommendations of the Reopening Committee for resuming in-person worship on Sunday mornings. As many of you know, our plans for in-person worship on August 1 were changed because of electrical problems that affected the air conditioning and ventilation in the building and the lights in the sanctuary. These electrical problems continued into the week of August 8. As we were recording Bill's sermon on August 7, the power went out! Concerns about the increase of the Covid Delta variant were also taken into account by the Council.

In early August, the Iowa UCC Conference strongly suggested that congregations who are still meeting and worshipping online only continue to do so until the conditions improve.

Putting the safety of both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated in our congregation and the community first, **we have decided to set Sunday, September 12, the first Sunday after Labor Day, as the date to resume in-person worship.** This will allow us to accomplish several things in the coming weeks:

1. Fix any outstanding electrical problems.
2. Monitor Covid cases to make sure they are at a safe level. This is especially important as students begin to arrive from across the state, nation, and world in the coming weeks.
3. Finish preparations for live-streaming worship services so that those who are unable to attend in person can still participate.

Our worship schedule will be as follows;

- **August 15—Outdoor worship service at 10:15 a.m., City Park Shelter #12.**
- August 22—Online only, Ann Molsberry preaching
- August 29—Online only, Bill Lovin preaching
- September 5—Online only, Bill Lovin preaching
- September 12—In-person worship in the sanctuary, 10:15 a.m.

This was a difficult decision and we understand the disappointment that some might feel. Everyone wants to get back to worshipping together as soon as possible. A few more weeks away during the summer will prepare us for coming together once more at the time when our program year traditionally begins.

Rally Day is Sunday, September 12, 2021

Time: 9:15-10:00 am

Place: Upstairs Yellow Classroom in the CE area

- Registration for Sunday School (forms will be mailed ahead of time; extras will be available)
- Family Pictures will be taken
- Sign-Up for Acolytes
- Opening Day Activity and Craft
- Muffins and juice will be served

Children's Church and Choir follows Children's Sermon during worship.

Come meet: Ms. Ann (Director of Children's Programs)

Ms. Avery (Director of Children's Choir)

AND Your teachers

...and all the other kids and parents in your Sunday School class!

(Face masks will be required.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

The Board of Christian Education is looking to fill these positions:

(Please Contact Ann Molsberry: annmolsberry@gmail.com or 314-914-0180)

Adult, 18 or older, to supervise the nursery on Sunday mornings 9-11:30am. This is a paid position. Perfect for a college student—please make referrals!

Adult volunteer to serve as Librarian for our church library. Hours to be determined by the volunteer. Perfect for a retired person—please make referrals!

Mission Board Report, August 2021

Implementation Goals related to the February-April, 2021 Congregational

Racial Justice Discussions

The Mission Board sponsored five racial justice discussion groups from February-April, 2021. The discussions focused respectively on 1) Education, 2) Affordable Housing, 3) Health Care, 4) Immigration, and 5) Environmental Justice. In addition to an introductory speaker, the sessions broke into small groups with discussion focused on action items. Following the discussions, the planning group for each discussion compiled the proposed action items and then forwarded their highest priority items to the Mission Board for possible congregational action.

The following recommendations are a result of Mission Board effort over the summer, 2021.

Highest priority recommendations

- 1) The church should offer Cultural Competency Training for the entire congregation in fall 2021, as a joint endeavor of the Mission Board and the Board of Christian Education.
 - A) This training would help members of the congregation to be effective volunteers for racial justice, to be informed allies, and to be supportive members of the community.
 - B) This training can include topics such as:
 - i) Showing up, listening and supporting (rather than offering solutions)
 - ii) Talking to impacted individuals to better understand their needs
 - iii) Determining local priorities
 - iv) Educating oneself and asking questions to be a more informed advocate for racial justice and race-related disparities
 - C) Consider partnering with other organizations and bringing in trained facilitators (possibly the Episcopal Beloved Community)
- 2) The Mission Board should identify a small core group of people to act as liaisons regarding policy recommendations impacting racial justice.
 - A) This group would ideally consist of people already keeping track of legislation/policies/etc.
 - B) This group could notify the congregation of important upcoming meetings of the school board, the city council, or state legislative actions.
 - C) This group could provide template letters, links to petitions, etc.
 - D) Provide information about legislators and their contact information.
 - E) Examples of possible policy issues include:
 - i) Equitable planning & zoning policies
 - ii) Adequate building codes
 - iii) Supporting local legislation to reduce police involvement and increase mental health professionals in mental health crisis intervention
 - iv) Supporting voter engagement

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

3) The Mission Board should maintain a list of organizations currently doing the work of racial justice in our community, and should encourage personal involvement in organizations working toward racial and social justice.

A) A starting list of relevant organizations includes:

Center for Worker Justice
CommUnity
Free Medical Clinic
Habitat for Humanity
Inside Out Reentry
Iowa City Compassion
Iowa Freedom for Immigrants
Johnson County Interfaith Coalition (JCIC)
NAMI
Neighborhood Nest
Open Heartland
Shelter House
South District Neighborhood Association (SDNA)
Tutoring locations

B) Investigate the possibility of creating a pool of health-care professionals to act as patient advocates for those who might feel overwhelmed or alienated by the health-care system. Focus on providing clarification rather than advice

C) Explore the possibility of a fund to assist individuals with transportation (e.g. to medical appointments, cooling centers)

Recommendations to Continue and Expand Existing Involvement

1. Donation of Fans to the CommUnity Fan Project [a major UCC donation was made July, 2021]
2. Build connections with other JCIC churches to be more effective advocates for social change in Johnson County. Support the current UCC-JCIC Core Team in building relationships with other JCIC churches.

Additional Priorities for Later Consideration

- 1) The Mission Board could facilitate the creation/maintenance of a calendar of events offered by organizations listed in 3.a. above plus events sponsored by the City of Iowa City, the University, and other churches. The CRC is likely to be an ally in this effort. Consider working with the church's administrative assistant to create an online calendar.
- 2) "Adopt" a local immigrant family as a church effort (Unitarian Universalist Society and CWJ could help with logistics). Possible services could include providing transportation, assisting with hospital visits, and general support.
- 3) The following would require a church vote. The Mission Board will consider these initiatives and, as indicated, create a proposal to go to the Church Council.
 - A) Become a UCC Creation Justice church and adopt a Creation Justice Covenant of the UCC.
 - B) Become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation of the UCC and adopt a church covenant related to immigration. This program includes recommendations on congregational education and the Board of Christian Education could utilize educational materials offered through the program.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

TEE OFFERING Will Be Received on September 19

Our annual offering to support the Theological Education by Extension College in South Africa (TEE Offering) will be received during worship on Sunday, September 19. This offering has been a tradition in our congregation for several decades. It was initially started when the brother of our then minister, the Rev. Ed Heininger, worked for TEE in South Africa. TEE is a private, nonprofit, distance learning institution serving five south African countries. The mission of the college is to equip men and women for Christian ministry. Students come from 28 denominations across southern Africa including the UCC of South Africa. For more information about this amazing program, please visit their website at www.tee.co.za. Please plan to give generously—our support makes a difference.

Refreshing the Church - A Volunteer Effort

August 1 was the target – the resumption of Sunday worship. Time to clean and refresh the church. Lots of work started early: the kitchen turned inside out, sorting the artificial flowers used since March 2020, replanting flowers after cable-laying disturbed the churchyard, mowing, window cleaning - started and continuing... through the Official Work Afternoon on July 24th, when nineteen volunteers came ready to spiff up our church building. Thank you all, including Rev. Bill Lovin, who spread the word, and Kevin Richards, Trustee Chair, who organized us. And thank you to all who, quietly, continued maintaining and improving the church building during our Covid-19 separation, including our custodians, Douglas Herrera and Claudia Landaverde and the Trustees.

Diaconate Gears Up for Reopening

Members of the Diaconate will be greeting and ushering as we return to our in-person worship. But soon they will need your assistance in those important roles as we welcome all on Sunday morning. Also, we will return to placing fresh flowers on the altar and narthex tables. Flowers from your garden, Farmer's Market, or your favorite florist – take your pick. The Flower Hallway has a variety of vases, a Flower refrigerator, and room to work on your bouquets. The Diaconate will soon have sign-up sheets in Rockwood Hall. In the meantime, please check your schedules and volunteer to assist by phoning or emailing Jenn Harden, our new Office Manager. She is in the office 9-1, Monday through Friday, at 319-337-4301. Or email Jenn at uccicadmin@uccic.org.

Board and Committee Meetings – Not Just Zoom Anymore!

As we resume in-person meetings and events in the church building, please remember to contact Jenn Harden in the church office to let her know of times and dates needed. She keeps a master calendar to prevent double-booking. Jenn may be reached by phone at 319-337-4301, or email her at uccicadmin@uccic.org

Bulletin Boards Need Refreshing Too!

It is time for boards and committees with bulletin board real estate to update assigned bulletin boards. Jenn Harden, Office Manager, will update the Staff bulletin board and remove outdated materials from the northside boards. Please bring or send current articles or news to post on those newly-empty spaces. Two small bulletin boards in the lower narthex are also available for current news.

Houseworks – Quiet Fundraising for the Church

Marge Hoppin and Gloria Hanson continue to maintain our Houseworks account. You can bring household goods to this consignment shop, located at 1800 Stevens Drive, Iowa City (off of Gilbert Street, just south of Hills Bank) and the church benefits from their sale. Please use our Houseworks number, 21026, when dropping off your donations. Thank you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY CRISIS CENTER

[Volunteer with Crisis Intervention](#)

We are excited to announce we have an **upcoming training opportunity** for those who would like to volunteer with Crisis Intervention!

Our Crisis Intervention volunteers are trained in a wide variety of counseling techniques and will provide direct support to clients in need. The training and volunteer experience are **excellent preparation for those pursuing careers in health care, social work, or related fields.**

More importantly, though, when any situation has become too difficult for clients to cope with alone, our Crisis Intervention team can help. All of our Crisis Intervention volunteers are passionate about helping our neighbors in crisis and making a tangible difference in our community.

[Strike Out Hunger](#)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, **509 families utilized our food services for the first time.** From June to August, at least 200 children and their families will visit CommUnity's Food Bank for the very first time. The summer season is particularly busy at the Food Bank, as families try to bridge the gap between their income and food needs.

CommUnity's Strike Out Hunger food drive, sponsored by Hills Bank, aims to keep the Food Bank shelves stocked through the summer months.

Your support for Strike Out Hunger will help us make a positive impact on the lives of children in our community.

[Almost Famous, Thanks to ECR](#)

Keep an eye out for our advertisements airing on local television and radio stations!

Thanks to a grant from the Mental Health/Disability Services of the East Central Region, we are able to increase our reach and get the word out about our Mobile Crisis Outreach Program.

Mobile Crisis Outreach is a free service, regardless of income level, available 24/7/365 in Johnson and Iowa Counties. Our trained counselors can be dispatched to a location of your choice and are ready to listen, provide support, and help create an action plan for the future.

Thanks to this grant, we will be able to connect with and offer support to more individuals facing crisis.

[Volunteer in the Mobile Pantry](#)

Help us bring the pantry to the people! **Become a Mobile Pantry volunteer today!**

CommUnity's Mobile Pantry is a "pop-up" pantry on Tuesdays - Fridays that travels to locations throughout Johnson County. We can accommodate groups of up to six people. Duties may include loading the truck at the food bank warehouse, unloading on-site, helping clients shop, and returning items to the warehouse.

Take care,

Your Friends at CommUnity

**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 North Clinton Street
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

AUGUST 2021 NEWSLETTER



CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 am to 1 pm

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Visit our Web Site: www.uccic.org

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Music Director

Organist

Children's Music Director

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For up to date announcements, check us out on Facebook.