



## THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

### United Church of Christ

### January 2022



Friends in Christ—

The church consultant, Susan Beaumont, recently wrote: “We are in a liminal season...” That sent me to my dictionary, where I found that “liminal” means “of or at the limen,” which didn’t help very much. Half a page earlier, I found “limen”: threshold. Suddenly, I understood. We’re at the threshold, at the boundary between what has been and what is becoming. It’s the place where we stand each year when two-faced January arrives. Our pagan past names this month for Janus, the Roman god who was the guardian of portals and the patron of beginnings and endings. Janus had two faces, one in front and the other in the back of his head.

After that, I returned to Beaumont. “We are in a liminal season: something has ended, but a new thing is not yet ready to begin. In liminal seasons, systems and processes break down because there are supposed to. We cannot discover a new beginning until something ends or dies. Much of our overwhelm comes from trying to preserve or adapt things that are meant to fail.”

The pandemic grinds on. Yes, we are weary. Yes, we don’t know yet what the latest variant means for us, our nation, and our world. We don’t know what other variants might still develop. We look toward and end of all of this. We long for a return to normal.

But Beaumont encourages us to be ready to set aside some of the past normal so that something new can emerge. She invites us to consider what might need to change as we move through the year ahead. (You know the old joke: How many Congregationalists does it take to change a lightbulb? The answer: Change? There’s also another answer: 5—one to change the bulb and four to sit around and talk about how good the old lightbulb was.)

With such openness, we are brought into the present. Thomas Merton wrote of the church in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, but he speaks to the church today:

In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and with its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love.

*An old hymn sings of “Standing in the living present, memory and hope between.”* That’s where we are as 2022 begins. We are indeed in a liminal season. Let us, in these days, be open to the new things that are emerging within us and among us and between us.

Peace,

Bill

P.S.: I thank everyone in our congregation for your gift at Christmas. I am filled with gratitude, not only for your Christmas gift but also for the ongoing gift of your call to me to be your pastor. Thank you for your support and prayer throughout the year.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

#### Sunday School Epiphany Gifts

Yes! We have already received a few donations to our January **Epiphany Gifts!!**

The Magi brought gifts to the Christ child...we like to give gifts, too! Our Epiphany Gift each year is called a **Blessing Bag**. It is a gift of comfort and hospitality that will hopefully bring relief to those who wander our streets in search of shelter and a meal this cold winter. Please consider giving a small monetary gift to the church earmarked: **Epiphany Gift** so we can purchase the items we need for the Blessing Bags.

These gifts are doubly blessed; first, it is a blessing for the children to be able to give these gifts...and second, it is a blessing for those who receive them.

#### **What is a Blessing Bag?**

A Blessing Bag is a care package or survival kit designed especially for a person on the street. We have very specific instructions about what goes into a Blessing Bag. Our Blessing Bags will be sturdy, clear-plastic zip-lock bags that contains supplies that may be needed by a homeless person such as Band-Aids, lip-balm, hand-wipes, gloves, socks, toothbrush & toothpaste, a food item and some cash. Each church school family will take one Blessing Bag with them to hand out this Epiphany Season to someone they meet in need in Iowa City.



#### **EPIPHANY CELEBRATIONS ON JANUARY 9**

Epiphany (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, the coming of the Magi) falls twelve days after Christmas, on January 6 each year. This year we'll celebrate Epiphany on Sunday, January 9. In our 10:15 worship service we will bring our observance of Christmas to a conclusion, hearing the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew. We will celebrate the sacrament of communion during worship.

#### **ANNUAL MEETING ON JANUARY 30**

The Annual Meeting of the Congregational United Church of Christ will be held on Sunday, January 30, in the sanctuary, following our 10:15 worship service. We will receive reports of Boards and Committees, vote on the budget for 2022 and transact any other business that is fitting and necessary. Copies of the annual report will be available by Sunday, January 23.

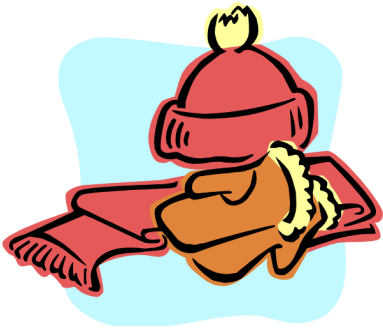


## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.



**THERE ARE SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE CHURCH ON ONE OF OUR BOARDS.** There are openings on the Diaconate, Christian Education, Membership and Stewardship boards. Please contact Barb Sisley at (319) 430-2694 or [sisleywebb@aol.com](mailto:sisleywebb@aol.com) if you are interested in or want more information about any of these opportunities.

**ALTERNATIVE GIVING UPDATE:** We received \$2240 for Heifer cards and donations this year. Thanks to everyone who participated in this annual event. Your giving will make a big difference in the lives of people. Thanks to the Mission Board for coordinating the project. And thanks to Ginny Clemons for her calligraphy that makes the cards so special.



### **THINK AHEAD FOR ANNUAL OUTERWEAR DISTRIBUTION**

Each year in the fall, Congregational UCC joins with other congregations in providing winter coats for people of all ages, especially children. As winter items start to go on sale in the stores, now is a great time to let your dollar go further and purchase coats. Please store them at your home until the fall when they can be brought to the church and then taken to the distribution site.

### **TIME FOR A NEW MASK?**

As the Omicron variant spreads in Johnson County, many are suggesting it's time for a mask upgrade—especially if your current mask is still a cloth one.

“Cloth masks are little more than facial decorations. There's no place for them in light of Omicron,” Dr. Lena Wen, an emergency physician and visiting professor of health policy and management at George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, said recently. “This is what scientists and public health officials have been saying for months, many months, in fact.”

“We need to be wearing at least a three-ply surgical mask,” she said. This is the kind of mask that our Deacons make available to anyone who comes into our church building. In crowded places a K95 or KN95 is recommended. These masks have a better fit and materials that prevent tiny particles from getting into the nose and mouth.

And always make sure that your mask completely covers your mouth *and* nose. Thanks for helping to keep others safe—and yourself as well!

## **Rev. Bob Molsberry's Retirement Set for January 23. Here!**

Since I was confirmed at the iconic Congregational Church UCC on the corner of Clinton and Jefferson, sang in the choir, attended my father's funeral there, married Ann up the street but in a ceremony led by the Congregational pastor, *and* ordained there, I thought it would be appropriate to host my retirement open-house there as well.



**On Sunday afternoon, January 23, 2022, from 3 to 5**

**p.m.**, my family and I will welcome guests to toast my retirement after 40 years of active and varied ministry within the United Church of Christ. Words of celebration of my ministry will be shared at 4:30 p.m. Be sure to ask what the youth room looked like in 1969.

Refreshments will be catered from Bread Garden. You are invited, please let us know if you plan to drop in!

This career, which has spanned serving in Guatemala, New Haven, Aurora Illinois, Tipton, Nicaragua, Urbandale, Grinnell, Belleville, Illinois, Eden Theological Seminary, the Ohio Conference of the UCC, St. Louis, and Donnellson Iowa, is finally coming in for a landing in Iowa City. It's only fitting to formally acknowledge it at the Congregational Church.

Hope to see you there.

***Rev. Bob Molsberry***





## *Ecumenical Towers 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

***Did you know that there is an apartment building in downtown Iowa City with which our congregation has a long-standing connection?*** The Ecumenical Towers apartment building, located at 320 East Washington St, adjacent to the Senior Center, serves housing needs of low income seniors and persons with disabilities. Ecumenical Towers had its start in 1977 when 12 Iowa City churches formed the Ecumenical Housing Corporation with the goal of developing a facility to meet housing needs of seniors and persons with disabilities in Iowa City. Construction began in 1980, with the first resident moving into the facility in late 1981. Ecumenical Towers is celebrating 40 years of service to Iowa City.

The 11-story ET building has 81 units. As a HUD project, rents are subsidized and the building is managed in accordance with HUD regulations. There is an on-site staff, including a resident relations specialist, a service coordinator, and a maintenance specialist. A property management group operates the building under the direction of a local board.

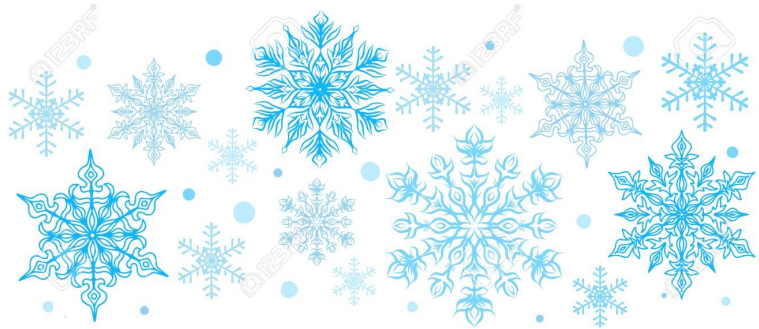
Ecumenical Towers is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, with representatives from each of the founding congregations. These are: Congregational Church of Christ, First Christian Church, First Mennonite Church, First Presbyterian Church, First United Methodist Church, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, St. Wenceslaus Church, First Baptist Church (now closed) and Trinity Episcopal Church.

Charley Platz and Sue Dayton are the board members currently representing our church.



## CELEBRATING JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1/4 Bryon Day
- 1/7 Kai Bouma  
Olivia Groff
- 1/8 Bryan Clemons  
Eva Leighton-Dick
- 1/18 Carol Searls  
John Fieselmann
- 1/19 Connie Parsoons
- 1/20 Kennth Kuntz  
Donna Janes
- 1/21 Barbara McFarland
- 1/23 Susie Brown
- 1/24 Isaac Chen
- 1/25 Bea Hicks
- 1/28 Tyler Seidl
- 1/29 James Smith
- 1/30 Derek Lehman





**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
30 North Clinton Street  
Iowa City, Iowa 52245-1700**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER



**CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Visit our Web Site: [www.uccic.org](http://www.uccic.org)

**Pastor:**

Dir of Church School

Music Director

Organist

Children's Music Director

Office Manager

Financial Secretary

Custodians:

**The Rev. William Lovin**

Rev. Ann Molsberry

Chris Nakielski

Bill Crouch

Avery Nabholz

Jenn Harden

Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

Douglas Herrera

Claudia Landaverde

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