



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
United Church of Christ  
April 2025



Friends in Christ:

Over the past two months, news reports have been filled with stories of US government cuts in funding of health care and disaster relief efforts at home and abroad. The cuts seem to be on again/off again, but NPR reported that former USAID officials estimate the administration's actions will deprive 1 million children of food, 17.9 million additional people will contract malaria and 166,000 will die from it, tuberculosis cases will increase 28% and 28,000 people will get Ebola and other infections. Other nations are following the lead of the United States and planning cuts as well.

The need for money to fund medical care, disaster relief, and services for refugees has never been greater. As our government acts to deport millions and cut funds for humanitarian work around the world, our giving takes on an even greater importance this year.

For the past 10 years, Congregational UCC has been one of the top 50 givers to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in the United Church of Christ. Last year we gave \$4,400 to this special offering that provides support for refugees, immigrants, and victims of natural disasters as well as ongoing health, education, and agricultural efforts nationally and globally.

We can do better.

Give generously to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering that we will receive during worship on Palm Sunday, April 13.

If you have already decided how much you are going to give, double that amount.

If you haven't yet decided, surprise yourself—shock yourself, even—with how generous you can be. When you write that check you should be asking, “What am I thinking, giving this much?”

I'm not asking you to give so that we will continue to be on that Top 50 list. We might be. We might not. But either way, refugees will have water to drink because of your giving; people who lost their homes in natural disasters will find shelter because of your giving; around the world women and men, boys and girls will get the health care they need and would otherwise miss because of your giving.

I'm asking you to give because Jesus calls those who would follow him to love God and love our neighbors. Those two great commandments of love are inseparable. Giving to meet human need is a ministry, a form of religious service open to all people.

I'm asking you to give because you glorify God by the generosity of your sharing. By letting your light shine, a little of the darkness is scattered and in that light people might find new life.

I'm asking you to give because you are stewards of all that you have received from God. You know that. Take some time to remember all the doors that have been opened for you, all the help that you have received to get to where you are today. Great need now meets your great abundance. How do you want to respond?

One final note: Our Church Council has approved my taking some sabbatical time again this summer. I will use the month of June to continue the writing project I began last summer. It worked well for both the church and me to take this creative approach. We are arranging guest preachers and pastoral care for this time. This way I can be here in July and August to continue the momentum that we have developed.

Peace,

Bill



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
United Church of Christ  
April 2025



**A SUSTAINABLE PALM SUNDAY**

When children and adults wave palm branches during on Sunday, April 12 (Palm Sunday), they will be using palms that are harvested in ways that are sustainable and that help to improve local communities' standard of living.

We will be using Eco-palms. Eco-Palms are Chamaedorea palms, a non-oil palm used in many facets of life, including religious ceremonies and floral arrangements. The University of Minnesota Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management, working with the Rainforest Alliance TREES program and Smartwood, has established certification for a sustainable palm harvest in Mexico and Guatemala. Each plant produces two to five harvestable leaves over a two to four month period. Palm gathering actually protects valuable natural forests where palms grow. Many of these palm producing areas are important "biosphere reserves" and tend to be the home of poorer segments of the rural population.

Although US palm purchases may reach as high as \$4.5 million each year, the palm harvesters usually earn very little. Families and communities, who rely heavily on palm harvesting for income, represent the poorer segments of the rural populations in the palm-producing areas of Mexico and Guatemala. Eco-palms are harvested in a more sustainable way—harvesters are paid on the quality of their palms rather than the quantity. These communities are also committed to using harvesting practices that minimize the impact on the natural forest. Eco-palm harvesters and community members sort and package the palms themselves and sell their palms directly rather than relying on middlemen. In this way, eco-palms improve local communities' standard of living and ensure that the money paid for the palms benefit those who labor.

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Christian Ed News:

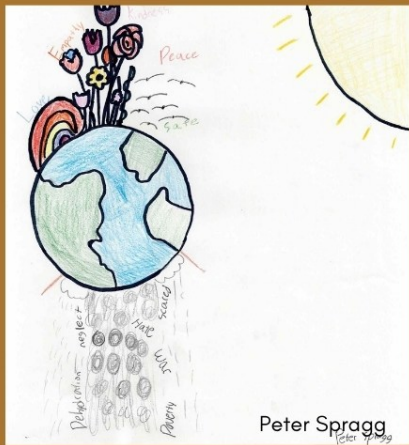
Congregational UCC Iowa City Christian Education

# April 2025

- Four students submitted beautiful designs to the UCC **Climate Hope art contest**. Art is on display in Rockwood Hall, on our "Climate Hope" bulletin board. Please take a moment to check out Fielding, Adelaide, Finnegan and Peter's art work in celebration of Earth month.
- **Sunday, April 6 Youth Group:** We will begin by meeting at Mercer park for a litter clean-up and then car pool to the Senior Center downtown for Agudas Achim's Peace & Justice Seder and potluck meal.
- **Sunday School Breakfast:** If you'd like to help provide breakfast for children & youth, please see the sign up in Rockwood Hall
- **Intergenerational Service Trip:** Contact Hope if you are interest in a potential trip THIS summer to Asheville, NC the week of July 20. We will decide if there is enough interest to go by Sunday, April 27.
- **Summer Social Justice Camp:** Mark your calendars for this year's vacation Bible school! All children pre-k-high school are encouraged to attend as campers or helpers! Monday-Thursday, August 18-21 (hours TBD)  
See sign-up in Rockwood Hall.

### April Calendar

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sunday, April 6</b>           | Sunday School 9:15<br>Children's Church during worship<br>Nursery open 9-12:30<br>Youth Group with First Presbyterian 4-7 |
| <b>Palm Sunday, April 13</b>     | Sunday School 9:15<br>Palm procession and<br>Children's Church during worship<br>Nursery open 9-12:30                     |
| <b>Maundy Thursday, April 17</b> | Worship 7PM<br>Nursery open 6:45-8:15   |
| <b>Good Friday, April 18</b>     | Worship @noon   |
| <b>Easter Sunday, April 20</b>   | Breakfast Rockwood Hall 8:00<br>No Sunday School<br>Children's church during worship<br>Nursery open 9-11:30              |
| <b>Sunday, April 27</b>          | Sunday School 9:15<br>Children's Church during worship<br>Nursery open 9-12:30  |



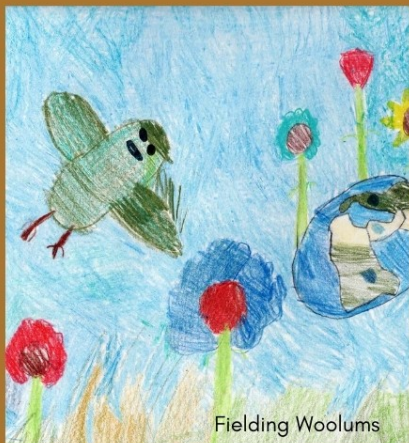
Peter Spragg



Finnegan Nakielski



Adelaide Leeds



Fielding Woolums

## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

- April 6—Fifth Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday
- April 13—Palm Sunday—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering
- April 17—Maundy Thursday—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae
- April 18—Good Friday—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon
- April 20—Easter Sunday—Breakfast in Rockwood Hall starting at 8:00 a.m.; Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.



### ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Palm Sunday, April 13 we will dedicate our One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This offering has long been an important part of the life of our congregation. For many years now, we have been on the list of Top 50 giving churches.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) involves us in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, through our offering, we are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

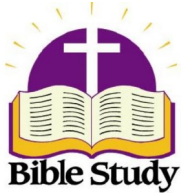
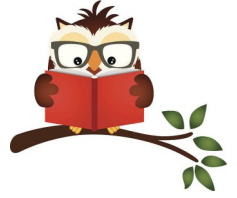
Through OGHS we engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, our contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put us in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. We meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

You can watch videos about the work that OGHS makes possible [by clicking here](#).  
Let us join in this great tradition and give generously.

## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WOMEN'S READING GROUP

The Women's Reading Group is reading *In the Sanctuary of Women* by Jan Richardson. We will gather in Rockwood Hall on April 12 at 10:00 to discuss Chapter 2, "A Habit of the Wildest Bounty, The Book of Brigid." All women of the church are invited.



### 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES IN APRIL

The Rev. Ann Molsberry is offering an 8-week Bible study that promises to do the whole Bible in one 8-week sweep. We will use *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* by Bernhard Anderson. We will meet AFTER worship at 11:30 in the library every Sunday in April except Easter Sunday. Everyone is invited. We decided not to have lunch together...but bring your book, your Bible and your curiosity!

### HELP WITH MEALS FOR MEMBERS:

Occasionally, members of our congregation who are injured or ill can use a meal prepared for them. Our Membership Board wants to be ready when the need arises. If you can help provide an occasional meal, please sign up on the sheet in Rockwood Hall. Thanks!



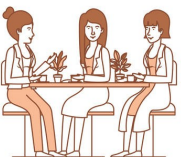
### HOPE LODGE



Thanks to all who helped with the March 17 dinner: Rebecca Weatherford, Andy Bertolatus, Dianne Atkins, Diane Dahl-McCoy, Sally Strang, Bryan and Ginny Clemons, Darci Hutzell and Fielding Woolums, Marsha Lowe, Linda and Ray Muston, and Chuck and Sue Dayton. Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be May 12. Watch for the sign-up sheet in Rockwood Hall.

### SAVE THE DATE—SPRING BRUNCH, MAY 18

Mark your calendars now: Our Membership Board invites everyone to the Spring Brunch, after worship on Sunday, May 18. Following the choir's Special Music Sunday, we'll gather for food and conversation in Rockwood Hall.



### WOMEN'S LUNCH: JOIN US FOR A SHARED MEAL ON MAUNDY THURSDAY

The April 17 women's lunch will meet at Monica's in Coralville. Please call or Text Martha Ann Crawford at 319-855-8340 to reserve a seat at the table.

### MEN'S BREAKFAST—APRIL 19

The April Men's Breakfast will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 19 at the Waterfront Hy-Vee. All Congregational UCC men who eat breakfast are invited. This is a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new friends. Join us!



# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

## CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

Our Stewardship Board supports members and friends of The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Iowa City in developing the principles of Christian stewardship in their lives. The Board focuses on planning a yearly stewardship emphasis to raise funds for the coming year's budget. It is also charged with leading fundraising campaigns for specific projects, building needs, and new programs. The Board is also responsible for stewardship education to help members and friends understand how they can include The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Iowa City in their personal long-range financial plans.

Here is an aid to help you understand the different types of giving.

- **Annual Giving**—gifts to support the annual operating budget, by fulfilling a one-year pledge or estimate of giving made in the fall, or with direct budget donations during the year.
- **Planned Giving**—gifts from a member's accumulated resources and assets to the church's Endowment Fund or other designated or undesignated special funds for future ministries and mission.
- **Capital Gifts**—gifts for a specific purpose, such as building restoration or remodeling, new construction, or new programs.
- **Special Offerings**—typically a once-a-year gift to congregational offerings for a special cause, including annual UCC denomination-sponsored offerings (such as One Great Hour of Sharing) or gifts received for an immediate need, such as a natural disaster.
- **Memorial Gifts**—gifts made in memory of family members or friends upon their death. These gifts can be designated for a particular purpose or fund or be placed in the Memorial Fund for future use.

The Stewardship Board will share information about each of these giving options over the coming months. We hope you will find this helpful as you envision and consider your annual and future giving opportunities.

## JOHNSON COUNTY VETERANS FOR PEACE PUBLIC READINGS OF SPEECHES OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.—FRIDAY, APRIL 4 AN INVITATION FROM DONNA HIRST

For many years, the Johnson County Veterans For Peace has sponsored public readings of two important speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the anniversary of his assassination. This year we will hold our readings on April 4, 11:00-6:00 at the Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center, 220 S. Gilbert Street.

Members of our congregation can read a short segment of one of the speeches. Participation in this event by the Congregational Church would be an excellent way to publicly declare our solidarity with Dr. King's vision for peace in the world. In addition to UCC members, local government officials and the general public will be reading excerpts.

Folks are encouraged to drop by anytime between 11:00-6:00 to read a segment or to listen to the speeches.

The VFP acknowledgment of Dr. King's commitment to peace is one of the significant actions that VFP 161 takes each year. This event is an important way in which the chapter can lead the community in a public demonstration of our values and priorities -- values and priorities that the UCC shares.

- **Is America Addicted to War?**

MLK Jr. warned that Vietnam was a symptom of a deeper sickness—an endless cycle of militarism draining resources from justice.

- **Does How We Spend Our Money Signal Spiritual Death?**

MLK Jr. warned that prioritizing war over social uplift leads to moral and societal decline.

- **Is It Already Too Late?**

MLK Jr. warned that history is filled with nations that waited too long to act—justice demands action now.

Donna Hirst, member of the VFP-MLK Planning Team

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### **“ELUSIVE BALANCE” A TRAVELING GROUP ART EXHIBITION INCLUDES WORKS OF HOPE SPRAGG**

Congregational UCC Director of Christian Education and visual art, Hope Spragg, is part of “Elusive Balance,” a traveling group exhibition composed of Iowa Artist/Mothers that explores the challenges of finding balance within artist and mother/caregiver identities. As there is no one way to embody motherhood, there is a diverse range of artists and artwork. “Elusive Balance” opened on March 14 and will run through April 5 at Public Space One North Gallery, 229 N. Gilbert St, Iowa City.

This exhibition embraces the dichotomies found in motherhood: ideas of rest and productivity, contentment and overwhelm, stability and transition, responsibility and absurdity/play, and societal expectations vs. personal intuition. The pieces visually explore how one finds personal balance, or simply lets go of this elusive state, celebrating imbalance within life and art.

### **PEACE & JUSTICE SEDER—SUNDAY, APRIL 6**

Agudas Achim Congregation and Iowa City Jews (their public space downtown initiative) are organizing their second Peace & Justice Seder. All welcome: whether you’re Jewish, Jew-ish, Jew-curious, Just Plain Human or any other faith/no faith!

They will be gathering before Passover and Easter on Sunday April 6th at the Senior Center in downtown Iowa City. Doors open at 6:15 pm, Seder starts 6:30 pm, festive potluck meal at (approx) 7:30 pm. Please bring a vegetarian dish (no flour or pasta products) to share. Dishes to be served at room temperature.

Please RSVP at [rsvp@agudasachimic.org](mailto:rsvp@agudasachimic.org) (with ‘peace and justice seder’ in the header of your email) by April 3. Seating is limited.

Do you want to volunteer and/or help out? Please email the synagogue office to sign up. Your help is appreciated!

*“At a time of vulnerability, the liberating message of Passover inspires us. Join us as we grapple with the challenges of justice, democracy and peace at home and abroad. Help us to celebrate community and our common strivings for a better world.”*

### **UI LABOR CENTER CONFERENCE: WORKERS ON THE FRONTLINES OF A HOTTER PLANET**

This conference will bring together Iowans from labor, environmental, civil rights, public health, and campus organizations to focus on one example of our interconnections – the struggle for worker safety in extreme heat. This free conference will be held Saturday, April 12 from 9am-3pm at the Iowa Memorial Union on the University of Iowa campus.

The keynote speaker is Jessica Martinez, co-Executive Director of the Council on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH). COSH is a national network that unites immigrant-led workers’ centers, labor unions, occupational safety and health experts, public policy leaders, and educators in a movement for safe and healthy workplaces. Ms. Martinez has built groundbreaking coalitions that empower workers to secure critical workplace safety improvements and served on the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health under President Obama’s administration. The conference will also feature sessions on the science of heat, climate, and health led by University of Iowa professors Brandi Janssen and Charles Stanier; breakout sessions on worker safety organizing, heat policy, and community heat safety; and a panel on national and local initiatives that will include Charlotte Brody, Vice-President of Health initiatives with the national BlueGreen Alliance.

Registration is now open! Sign up here: <https://heli.law.uiowa.edu/laborclimateconference>.

Now, more than ever, we need to come together across organizations to address the most pressing issues of our time.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### OPEN HEARTLAND COMMUNITY EVENT

April 9 at 6:00 p.m.

(Donations to the silent auction are welcome)



**LOTERIA**

Open Heartland  
welcoming • including • strengthening

**APRIL 9th**  
at Big Grove  
Iowa City

Silent Auction • Folklorico  
Dancing • Family Fun!



## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



**SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING:** If you notice something in the building that needs attention—possums in the pews, racoons in Rockwood, a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office know right away. Thanks.

**USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES:** Each Sunday morning brings opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING?** This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



# CHURCH CALENDAR

## April 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b> -CE Board, 7:00pm - Mission Board, 7:00pm - Stewardship Board (Zoom), 7pm	<b>2</b> - New Member Class, 7pm	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> -9:00 Choir Rehearsal - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service w/ communion - 11:30 Choir Rehearsal - 11:30 Bible Study	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> - Women's Reading Group, 10am
<b>13</b> - 9:00 Choir Rehearsal - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Palm Sunday Worship Service - 11:30 Choir Rehearsal - 11:30 Bible Study	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> - Membership, 5:30pm - Deacons meeting, 7pm - Trustees, 7pm	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> - Women's Lunch, 11:45am at Monica's - Maundy Thursday Worship, 7pm	<b>18</b> - Good Friday worship, noon	<b>19</b> - Men's breakfast, 8am
<b>20</b> - 8:00 Easter Breakfast - 9:00 Choir Rehearsal - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Easter Sunday Worship Service	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> - Council Meeting, 7pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> - 9:00 Choir Rehearsal - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service - 11:30 Choir Rehearsal - 11:30 Bible Study	<b>28</b>					

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### CELEBRATING APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 4/1 Bill Hoefler
- 4/7 Del Brown
- 4/9 Grace Whittaker
- 4/12 Mary Lea Kruse
- 4/16 Loralyn Hogue
- 4/19 Ann Gabel
- 4/21 Diana Durham
- 4/22 Randee Fieselmann
- 4/25 Theresa Messlein  
Jacob Koepnick
- 4/26 Anna Whittaker
- 4/27 Joshua Woolums
- 4/29 Jo Bowers
- 4/30 Oscar Lewis



**ARTICLES FOR THE MAY NEWSLETTER**  
are due to the office by Friday, April 18.



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

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER



**CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION**

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

Phone: 319-337-4301

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

**Pastor:**

Interim Director of CE

Music Director

Organist

Children's Choir Director

Office Manager

Financial Secretary

Custodians:

**The Rev. William Lovin**

Hope Spragg

Dr. Chris Nakielski

Bill Crouch

Rachel Burchett

Jenn Harden

Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

Douglas Herrera

Claudia Landaverde

[uccicrev@uccic.org](mailto:uccicrev@uccic.org)

[c.nakielski@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:c.nakielski@cornellcollege.edu)

Contact the Office

[uccicadmin@uccic.org](mailto:uccicadmin@uccic.org)

[sharynreitz@gmail.com](mailto:sharynreitz@gmail.com)

Contact the Office

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