



# THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

April 2026



Friends in Christ:

T.S. Eliot claims that “April is the cruelest of months . . .” But I’m not so sure. Instead, I’m often inclined to agree with Christopher Morley when he writes: “April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks ‘Go.’” Easter reminds us of the new life that we have received in Jesus Christ.

The Easter season that extends from April 5 until Pentecost (May 24 this year) is a good time to take a new look at Jesus. In fact, the Gospel stories of the resurrection are often about people seeing Jesus in new ways. In the twentieth chapter of John, Mary Magdalene stands weeping outside the empty tomb. She encounters a man whom she assumes is the gardener. As they talk, this man speaks her name and she sees him to be the risen Jesus. Luke tells the story, in chapter 24, of two men who walk with a stranger three days after the crucifixion. At evening, when they sit down to eat, this stranger takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. “Then,” Luke says, “Their eyes were opened and they recognized him.”

Easter is an eye-opening occasion that can change the way we look at Jesus, at others, and ourselves. And in his wonderful book, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, Thomas Cahill, reflecting on Jesus’ story of the great judgment in Matthew 25, says after the resurrection, Jesus is “incarnated in the person of anyone and everyone who needs our help.”

Our eyes can be opened to see Jesus anew, or again, or for the first time in these days. Continue to look for the risen Christ in new places and faces.

Peace,

Bill

P.S.: After Easter, I will be taking a little time off. I’ll be at the church as usual from Monday, April 6-Thursday, April 9. I will take the weekend of April 10-12 off, followed by the week of April 13-19. The Rev. Libby Conley will preach on April 12. The Rev. Craig Henderson will preach on April 19. I thank Libby and Craig for their readiness to fill the pulpit and know that you look forward to hearing them. When I return, I will be continuing to follow my general schedule, working from home on Monday morning and being at the church and in the community from Monday afternoon through Thursday. Our congregation gives me two days off each week and I’m seeking to more consciously take Friday and Saturday as those days. Of course, things come up. Please know that, as always, I’m available when you need me.

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 my writing project. It has worked well for both the church and me to take the creative approach of three months of sabbatical time stretched over three years. 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.



**Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026**

**April 2026**

**Sunday, April 5 Easter Sunday**  
*Sunrise Service featuring Confirmand class 7:30*  
 followed by breakfast in Rockwood Hall  
**No Sunday School/Children stay in worship**  
**service 10:15**  
 Nursery 9:00-12:30

**Sunday, April 12**  
**Sunday School 9:15**  
 Children's Church during 10:15 worship  
 Nursery 9:00-12:30

**Sunday, April 19**  
**Sunday School 9:15**  
 Children's Church during 10:15 worship  
 Nursery 9:00-12:30

**Sunday, April 26**  
**Sunday School 9:15**  
 Children's Church & *sing during 10:15 worship*  
 Nursery 9:00-12:30

***SPECIAL YOUTH EVENT after worship!!!***

**Sign up to Acolyte!**

*"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death...light has dawned."*

Matthew 4:16



Acolyte  
 Sign-up for  
 April  
 through the  
 end-of-  
 school year  
 is now up in  
 Rockwood  
 Hall!

Acolytes carry the "Light of Christ" into and out of the sanctuary.

**Children & Youth Spring Break 2026!!!**

Can you name all of our UCC children and youth in our Spring photo collage or are they growing too fast!?!?

***Hints:***

- Nakielskis (pictured separately) Charlotte as Sharky Elsa, Evelyn gets a mani/pedi and Finn turns 9 at Marion Arcade
- Ella, Lily, Malia and Oscar Lewis in Utah
- Nadia Spragg in Prague
- Magnus & Astrid Woolums in AL (pictured separately)
- Peter Spragg in the Everglades
- Izzy Brown in KY
- Kauro Heitzman at Yotopia
- Renn & Willem Morton dressed up in suits
- Sylvie Peters doing laundry
- Niko Gartelos in Rome
- Anika Gartelos, Maeve Doyle, Alex & Butler visit more cousins in KC
- Art & Lev Flippo-Slezak at the St. Louis Aquarium
- Fielding Woolums in the church kitchen with Ms. Bea
- Cecily Collins helping the children with egg dying

**CHILDREN & YOUTH EVENT Sunday**  
**April 26**

**Lunch, Service Project & Frozen the Musical!**

**Who:** Kg-High School students & CE board adults

**What:** Lunch, Litter Clean-up\* & go to City High's production of Frozen\*\*

**Where:** After Rockwood, we will meet; children can be picked up at City High around 4PM after the musical

**When:** Sunday, April 26 after worship-4PM

**Why:** fun, service & fellowship

**How:** Sign-up in Rockwood Hall + \$10 towards ticket & lunch

*\*inclimate weather plan: visit Stanley Museum*

*\*\*Nadia Spragg is performing!*





# CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## HOLY WEEK AT CONREGATONAL UCC

- **March 29—Palm Sunday**—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering
- **April 2—Maundy Thursday**—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae
- **April 3—Good Friday**—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon
- **April 5—Easter Sunday**—Easter Sunrise Service led by members of the Confirmation Class at 7:30 a.m.; Breakfast follows in Rockwood Hall; Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.



## THE WOMEN'S READING GROUP—APRIL 11

The Women's Reading Group is reading and discussing *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We meet from 10-11am in Rockwood Hall the second Saturday of each month through June. If you're interested, contact Marsha Lowe or Rebecca Weatherford or sign-up in Rockwood Hall.

## AWE CONTINUES IN APRIL

Following a Sunday off on Easter, After Worship Encounter (AWE) will start up again after worship on Sunday, April 12. Generally, we gather on the Sundays that the choir meets after worship to rehearse for their Special Music Sunday on May 31. We are using *Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive Christianity*. In this study we will be meeting again progressive theologians that were introduced in the original *Living the Questions* series: Borg, Crossen, and Spong. This is a beginning class that will introduce you to Progressive Christianity.

Rev. Ann Molsberry is leading the discussions. Please purchase your own book and join us on Sunday, April 12 in the library!



## WOMEN'S LUNCH APRIL 16 @11:45

The Women's lunch will be, at Tai Spice on Gibert St, in celebration of Donna Hirst's recovery from surgery. Please call or text Martha Ann Crawford at 319-855-8340 to reserve a seat at the table.

## MEN'S BREAKFAST—APRIL 18

The April Men's Breakfast will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 18 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!



## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RICHARD BLOESCH MEMORIAL SERVICE

The memorial service for Richard Bloesch will be held in the sanctuary at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 25. A reception will follow in Rockwood Hall.



### SAVE THE DATE—SPRING BRUNCH, MAY 31

Mark your calendars now: Our Membership Board invites everyone to the Spring Brunch, after worship on Sunday, May 31. Following the choir's Special Music Sunday, we'll gather for food and conversation in Rockwood Hall.

### READING GENESIS

In April, we will continue our discussion of Marilynne Robinson's Reading Genesis that we began last fall. We'll meet at Oaknoll from 10:00-11:30 on four Tuesday mornings, April 21 & 28 and May 5 & 12. If you would like to be a part of this group, talk with Bill Lovin or Chuck Dayton or sign up on the sheet in Rockwood Hall.



### CONGRATULATIONS TO JAMIE McCOY

On March 12, Jamie received the "Partner of the Year" from Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity. This is for his work on asking people to pay to offset carbon emissions for flying.

## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



### **MISSION BOARD WELCOMES BACK THE PRIDE ALLIANCE CENTER RAINBOW GRADUATION ON MAY 1**

The Pride Alliance Center Rainbow Graduation will be held at our church on Friday, May 1, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. The Rainbow Graduation Celebration recognizes the achievements of LGBTQ+ students and their allies. This annual event honors undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who are graduating this spring semester. The Rainbow Graduation Celebration features UI faculty, staff, students, and community members and is followed by a reception.

This is our second consecutive year hosting this event. Everyone is welcome to attend this joyous occasion and support the graduating students and organizers who are unable to use university spaces, funds, or staff as they have in previous years. If you can help provide refreshments for the reception, please sign up on the sheet posted in Rockwood Hall. Additionally, the Oaknoll LGBTQ+ committee and allies are once again generously supporting the event by volunteering their time and providing food. For more information, contact event organizers Julie Wittig, David McCartney, or Bill Dickinson, or Mission Board LGBTQ+ Subcommittee members: Diane Atkins, Martha Ann Crawford, Carson Fixmer, Dean Logan, Linda Muston, Hope Spragg, and Rebecca Weatherford

### **SAVE THE DATE! IOWA CITY PRIDE FESTIVAL IS SATURDAY, JUNE 20**

Our Mission Board members invite you to participate in the parade, help at the booth, or both. Full event details and signup available in May. For more information or to get involved with the planning, please reach out to any member of the LGBTQ+ subcommittee: Dianne Atkins, Martha Ann Crawford, Carson Fixmer, Dean Logan, Linda Muston, Hope Spragg, Rebecca Weatherford or Julie Wittig.



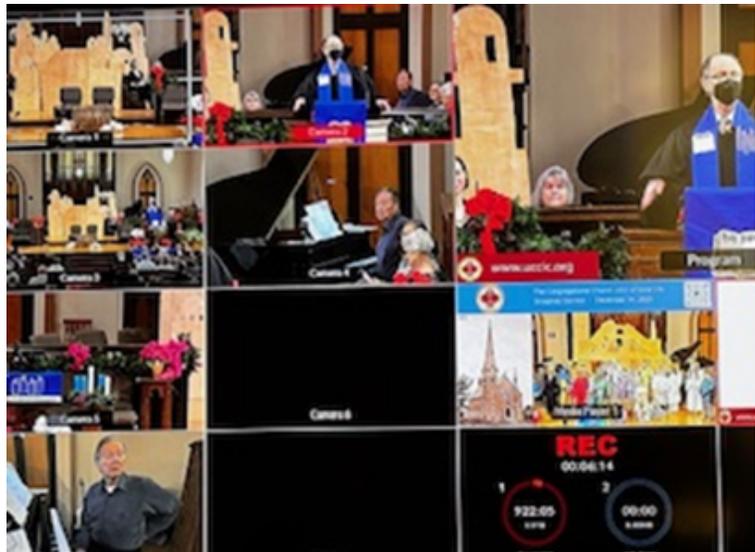
## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



### WHAT IS GOING ON UP THERE?

For six years now, John Johnson, with the help of others, has been recording and live streaming our worship services.

He started by recording Bill Lovin, Bill Crouch, and various singers led by then choir director, Kristin Ramseyer, who spoke, played and sang to an empty sanctuary as the pandemic began. The recordings were made on Saturday and posted on Sunday.



When in person worship resumed, the control room was moved to the room off of the balcony. The services were eventually live streamed and continue to be so today. This has been compared to doing a live TV show without a rehearsal—and it comes across seamlessly week after week, year after year. Through this vital ministry, we reach people locally, across the nation, and around the world. Thanks to John and to Mark Kenaston, Kevin Richards, and Shirley Woolums for making this possible.



## CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### BISON STOP IN I.C. ON WAY TO D.C

Colorado wildlife sculptor, Gary Staab created this bison family for the Smithsonian Museums' 250 Semiquincentennial Celebration. On its way to Washington D.C., the family stopped off to visit Iowa City on Sunday, March 15. Andrea Rauer took this photo of the bison and a Congregational Church member after worship that morning.



By coincidence, Nathaniel Lovin was in Washington, D.C. the following Saturday and took this photo of the bison at the new home off the range at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

### HOPE LODGE

Thanks to all who helped with the Hope Lodge dinner on March 16: Jane Kinney, Sally Strang, Diane Dahl-McCoy, Ruth Bradley and Bruce Tarwater, Shelagh Hayreh, Marsha Lowe, Sharyn Reitz, Rebecca Weatherford, and Chuck and Sue Dayton. Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be May 11. Watch for the sign-up sheet in Rockwood Hall.

The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge, which opened in 2008, offers 28 guest rooms located near treatment centers in the area. The program provides a free home away from home for cancer patients and their caregivers. More than just a roof over their heads, it's a nurturing community that helps patients access the care they need. Each Hope Lodge community offers a supportive, homelike environment where guests can share a meal, join in the evening's activities, or unwind in their own private room. Patients staying at a Hope Lodge must be in active cancer treatment.

# CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## FREE LUNCH PROGRAM NEWS

Providing Good Food and Hospitality since 1983

Our church served 130 lunches at the Free Lunch Program on Monday, March 30, 2026.

Thank you so much to all who volunteered by donating food: Dianne Atkins, Bill Dickinson, Diane Duncan-Goldsmith, Carson Fixmer, Betsy Henson, Marsha Lowe, Alfrieta Monagan, Rebecca Weatherford and Julie Wittig.

Additional thanks to Diane Dahl-McCoy, John Fieselmann, John Fuller, Craig Henderson, Betsy Henson, Alfrieta Monagan, John Reitz, Rick Ruppert and Julie Wittig for their valuable onsite support.

Our next scheduled serving date is Monday, June 29, 2026. Remaining serving dates this year are August 31 and November 30.

If you would like to begin receiving the signup sheet sent by email, please contact me at [vickithomae@gmail.com](mailto:vickithomae@gmail.com)



## Mission Board

The Mission Board is once again a sponsor for the Table-to-Table dinner, to be held on April 22, 5:30-7:30 at the Celebration Farm, Double Round Barn, 4696 Robin Woods Ln NE, Iowa City IA, 52240. We have 9 seats available for church members. If you would like to attend, please let the church office know this week, as we need to submit the names of those attending to the organizers. Unfortunately, we will be unable to support additional persons once 9 have signed up. There will also be silent and live auction as well as raffle tickets for prizes.

Once you have 9 respondents, the function is unable to accept any more. Andy and I will go, but if you have others, we can remove our names. The organizers would like a list of name as soon as we can get it to them.



# CHURCH CALENDAR

# April 2026

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1  Tenebrae Rehearsal 7:00 PM	2  Maundy Thursday Service 7:00 PM	3  Good Friday Service Noon	4
5  Easter Service 7:30 am then Breakfast Choir Rehearsal 9:00 am Easter Service 10:15 am	6	7  -Gentle Yoga, 11:00 am - CE, 6pm - Stewardship, 7pm -Mission Board 7:00 pm	8	9  -6:30 pm Prairie Piffari	10	11  -Women's Reading Group. 10am
12  - Choir Rehearsal, 9:00 - 9:15 CE all ages - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service	13	14  -Gentle Yoga, 11:00 am	15	16  - Women's Lunch, 11:45am at Tai Spice on Gilbert , IC  -Prairie Piffari 6:30 pm	17	18  -Men's Breakfast 8am
19  - Choir Rehearsal, 9:00 - 9:15 CE all ages - Children's - 10:15 Worship Service -Confirmation class, 4pm	20	21  -Gentle Yoga, 11:00 am -Walkthrough Rainbow Grad. 12:30 pm -Membership, 5:30pm -Diaconate, 7:00pm -Trustees, 7pm	22  -Table to Table Dinner	23  -6:30 pm Prairie Piffari	24	25  Richard Bloesch Memorial Service @ 11:00 AM
26  - Choir Rehearsal, 9:00 - 9:15 CE all ages - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service	27	28  -Gentle Yoga, 11:00 am - Church Council Meeting 7:00 pm	29	30  -6:30 pm Prairie Piffari		

## CLEBRATING APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4/1 Bill Hoefler

4/7 Del Brown

4/9 Grace Whittaker

4/12 Mary Lea Kruse

4/16 Lorilyn Hogue

4/20 Ron Bode

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



Please submit Articles for May Newsletter by April  
20th.

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

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

APRIL 2026  
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: The Rev. William Lovin**

Director of CE: Hope Spragg

Music Director: Dr. Chris Nakielski

Organist: Bill Crouch

Children's Choir Director: Rachel Burchett

Office Manager: Nancy LeaVesseur

Financial Secretary: Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

Sexton: Douglas Herrera

Custodian: Claudia Landaverde

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

[hope.spragg@gmail.com](mailto:hope.spragg@gmail.com)

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

Contact the Office

[rburchett.mtbc@gmail.com](mailto:rburchett.mtbc@gmail.com)

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

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

Contact the Office

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<https://www.facebook.com/UCCofIC>