A Just Peace and Open and Affirming congregation

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For pastoral care, please contact Pastor Dave at 276-0625 (church office), 720-6389 (cell phone) or david.sickelka@urbucc.org.
Ponderings from Your Pastor

And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me. (Matthew 11:6, The New Revised Standard Version)

We have been doing a lot of schedule revision in the last 10 months. The normal routines of getting kids on the school bus and heading out to work have been replaced by distance learning, remote working, and on-line activities. Even the normal seasons of sports, concerts and graduations had to adjust to new realities. For me, Ash Wednesday came early. It came on Epiphany, Jan. 6. I watched in horror and dismay as fellow citizens stormed the Capitol Building, defying those charged with protecting it to stop them. I saw them smash doors and windows, trash offices, and treat what I considered to be important spaces with seeming disrespect and disdain. My heart broke.

While I am normally against violence, I saw the images of one of the mob being shot, and I felt satisfaction. “Maybe the Capitol Police should have started shooting earlier!” I thought. In the days that followed, the Iowa Legislature introduce a bill to revive the death penalty, and while I normally oppose such efforts I thought, “Maybe we bring it back for those who commit sedition.” It seemed to me that no punishment for such an offense was too severe. It was, I thought, a crime against the very foundation of our democracy.

At some point, I realized that my thinking was out of character for me. Why was it so easy for me to set aside my values and principles? What was it about what I had witnessed that seemed to override ideals that I thought were firm and well-reasoned? If I was so easily unmoored from my stated beliefs, what did that say about my resolve, my commitments, my faith? That was my Ash Wednesday. My stock answers and untested theories lay in ashes at my feet. I had taken offense because something I held dear was treated as nothing by people I didn’t even know, and in my wounded state, I was ready to lash out, to take revenge, to use my indignation as a justification for judgment and condemnation.

Many people took offense at Jesus, and the Gospel still draws that reaction when we embrace it fully. Forgiving and loving enemies and adhering to high ethics and sharing what we have generously fly in the face of what many hold dear. I never thought I would be one who took offense at Jesus, but there I was, indulging in thoughts and desires that betrayed my faith. I still think those who took part in the melee should be held accountable. Those who encouraged and incited the violence should also be called to answer for their actions. But I have my own reckoning to face.

When we are wronged, we feel justified in lashing out. When we are offended by words or actions, we muster our righteous anger and react. When pain is inflicted, losses taken, hearts broken, we want satisfaction. It is part of being human. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return” is part of the standard Ash Wednesday language. This year, I hear it differently.

Amen.

Pastor Dave
Join us via Facebook Live Stream for two services to mark the Holy Week journey this year. On Thursday, April 1, we will focus on the upper room and communion, with an incorporation of hand/foot washing. On Friday, April 2, we will make the injustice and grief of Jesus’ execution our focus, with a Service of Shadows, or Tenebrae the culmination of our Lenten Journey. Both services will be live-streamed at 7:00 p.m., then available in our archived videos section of our Facebook page.

Request for Spring Art for our Sanctuary
Our young ones are utilizing a curriculum from Illustrated Ministries that brings our sacred stories of the season to life. Attached is a butterfly coloring page from this curriculum that we invite you to print off, color and mail to church by Friday, March 19th. We will decorate our sanctuary window and chancel area for Easter and show our community that Urbandale United Church of Christ is full of life and God's love.

Hardcopies are available if you are unable to print from home. Please email Rev. Amy if you have any questions or need a copy of the butterfly coloring page mailed to you at amy.murray@utbucc.org.

You are also welcome to draw your own butterflies on 8 1/2x 11 paper.
Thank you for showing your gifts with our church and community!

Central Association Spring Meeting
March 27th, 9:30-11:30 a.m. via Zoom
We are connected to other UCC congregations in central Iowa via the Central Association of the United Church of Christ, which meets twice per year to conduct its business and to educate and inspire our members. On March 27, we will connect via Zoom to have a business meeting and elect people to the Advisory Council. Our own Liz Colton is the Association Moderator and if any would like to be more active in this group, please contact Pastor Dave. We will need a number of voting delegates for the meeting and beyond that, anyone can join in as a visitor.
Tri-Conference Joint Annual Meeting and Choirs  
June 25-26, via Zoom

The deadline is fast approaching to register for the Iowa Conference Annual Meeting, to be held jointly with the South Dakota and Nebraska Conferences, via Zoom. This year, there will be two combined choirs, one for youth and one for adults, that any of us can sign up for and try our hand at creating virtual music together! Please don’t put off signing up as the deadline is March 14! The forms can be accessed as follows:
Adult Choir: https://forms.gle/ZxtSgAqnEubZ8ztK8  
Youth Choir: https://forms.gle/RVwMhJHREbwynLbr9
You will get materials and instructions after signing up. This will be a lot of fun as we try something new in the life of the church.

Resources for Racial Justice

Many of us struggle to understand how we might make a difference in the world regarding the bigotry and racism we witness all around us. Pastor Dave has gotten involved with a group of clergy (through the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa) who have pooled their resources and connections to generate the following clearinghouse for print, video, and denominational resources as well as connections with organizations doing important work. If you are looking for a Lenten project, why not explore the Faithful Voices for Racial Justice website!

Daylight Savings Time is March 14th, don’t forget to set you clocks an hour ahead!

March Team Meetings
- Wednesday, March 3rd, 7:00 pm ~ Worship Team
- **Wednesday, March 10th**, 9:30 am ~ Caregivers
- **Thursday, March 11th**, 7:00 pm ~ Leadership Team
- **Saturday, March 13th**, 9:00 am ~ Bowtie Boyz
- **Saturday, March 20th**, 9:30 am ~ UUCC Women
- **Saturday, March 27th**, 8:00 am ~ Bowtie Boyz
Why do you look for the living among the dead?

The dead Christ is not here. He has risen!

Alleluia
## March 2021

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### Events & Activities

- **7:00pm Worship Team**
- **7:00pm Leadership Team**
- **10:00am Worship**
- **10:30am Fellowship Hour**
- **11:30am PreK-5th Grade Sunday School**
- **9:30am Caregivers**
- **9:00am Bowtie Boyz**
- **9:00am UUCC Women**
- **9:00am Bowtie Boyz**
March Food Pantry

Hopefully spring is around the corner and everyone has a garden planting on their minds. The UFP or DMARC are still in need of your assistance. This month’s need is toothbrushes. As always, canned goods and cash donations will be very welcome. Please make checks to Urbandale UCC with “Food Pantry” in the memo line. Thanks for all you give!

Douglas M. Woods Hunger Challenge Returns in March!
The Douglas M. Woods Hunger Challenge is a DMARC tradition! From March 1-28, your $10 donation can be matched dollar for dollar. $10 will provide 33 meals!

DMARC is proud to partner with Doug Woods who challenges YOU to make a difference – big or small – to help our neighbors who need our help. How? There are three ways:

1) **Make a personal donation to DMARC.** Your donation will be matched dollar for dollar, up to a total of $20,000.

2) **Encourage your faith community** to support the challenge.

3) **Make video and share it on Facebook** or other social media and challenge others to make a difference.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

In many ways, our world was not prepared for the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. But because of past generosity through One Great Hour of Sharing, many communities were better prepared to meet the challenges presented. Through projects that have been supported in the past, more people were equipped for the crisis with improved sanitation, access to clean and safe water for handwashing, and empowerment to prevent the spread of disease among family and neighbors.

Previous projects have included helping farmers in Nicaragua build sustainable practices through drought and flooding, bringing water supply improvements to rural villages in Vietnam, and providing grants to organizations that assisted people affected by wildfires in Oregon and California. When we continue to give generously, we continue to give life – in the form of water and so much more. When we share what God has given, we “let love flow” in ways that cross all sorts of spaces and dividing lines, in ways that knit together a better human story, and in ways that bring the Kingdom of God together in our time.

UCC congregations are collecting this offering on Sunday, March 14. There are no special offering envelopes to share this year; please mark your contributions for OGHS.
“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are invited and welcome here.”

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE—Spring
10:00 am ~ Worship
10:30 am ~ Fellowship Hour

The Rev. David P. Sickelka, Senior Pastor.....................................................david.sickelka@urbucc.org
The Rev. Amy Murray, Ministry Program Coordinator..............................amy.murray@urbucc.org
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Sadmir & Umihana Omerhodzic, Custodians........................................sadmir.omerhodzic@urbucc.org

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