

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here."



URBANDALE UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

A Just Peace and Open and Affirming Congregation

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**September 2023**

**The CALL**

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# PONDERINGS FROM YOUR PASTOR

Dear Church,

When I interviewed to be the interim minister here at Urbandale UCC, I learned about you through the website as well as in other ways. One thing I noted was this statement: “Together, we commit ourselves to affirm the tenets of the Christian faith.” There are several other commitments named, but this one caught my attention. I asked the Search Team what they would say are the tenets of the Christian faith. If there was a “stump the Search Team” moment, that was it.

I’ve recently been reading *Stealing Jesus* by Bruce Bawer. This is certainly not a new book, but it called to me from the bookshelf. Bawer describes two streams of United States Christianity that he identifies as legalistic and nonlegalistic – a Church of Law and a Church of Love. He adds the disclaimer that no one is 100% either one, but certain ideas dominate in each one. This concept is only to underscore that the “tenets of the Christian faith” may differ from person to person. I think that can be wonderful as long as we are willing to share our ideas. This has led me to wonder “what do WE believe.”

Some of us grew up learning, memorizing, and reciting the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed and sometimes both. These two creeds have been the staple of Christian belief for centuries. I can be in a worship service and willingly join the congregation in one of these testaments of faith. I will also confess that I would not, myself, offer either one as my personal statement of faith. As a community we can believe many things as a whole body even when individually we may have some differences of opinion. I appreciate that Confirmation students are often asked to write a personal statement of faith. That statement may well change over a lifetime. I hope so.

This September, I invite you to explore Statements of Faith, starting with the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith. I will include a portion of this statement in each worship service. I invite you to think about what you would say you believe about a Triune God or One God. Do you think you are more Church of Love or Church of Law without having details about what that includes? And, on top of that, I will invite you to explore the Divine with your senses in new ways and with the ones we ignore too often.

I’ve named this series “We Believe...We Are Not Alone.” Let’s take this September journey together.

I’m excited by this chance to explore faith and experiences of the Sacred! I’m also excited that on September 29 I leave for a study leave in Ireland. I will be learning about Celtic Women, Celtic spirituality, and touching on the subject of the Feminine Divine. I also look forward to sharing about this journey in October.

Blessings, Pastor Coqui

# A MOMENT WITH THE MODERATOR

Making All Things New Isaiah 43: 18-19

Homecoming Sunday, Sept. 10, is our kick-off to another program year at UUCC! As we continue making all things new, join Sandy Gahn and me at Muffins with the Moderator at 9 AM in Fellowship Hall as the first Adult Spiritual Formation opportunity. Bring your smartphone (or a tablet or laptop) to learn more about Realm, our membership data base program, and how we are using it at UUCC. After the church service, we will celebrate Betty Boller's 99th birthday in Fellowship Hall.

The Pastoral Search Team is gearing up to start meeting in September. Watch for updates and requests from them as they work on updating our church profile. Please keep them in your prayers as they begin this important work.

As we prepare for a new settled pastor, we recognize that our website needs a refresh. Potential pastoral candidates will first look at our website (as do visitors) to see who we are and what we are about. We are looking for folks to help with this process. Please let me know if you are interested! We also need to update our photo library with current photos, so send them to me: [moderator@urbucc.org](mailto:moderator@urbucc.org).

Being a community, both internally and externally, is an important part of who we are as the Church. Our congregation has a long-standing history with Family Promise. Our next hosting is September 10-17, and there are lots of opportunities to make a difference. Check the board in the Narthex (or contact Jon Duvick) to help with Family Promise. The work of the Refugee Ministry Team is important in so many ways, and I know the team appreciates all the donations (both monetary and physical items) you've entrusted the Team with! Finally, the school community was thankful for the school supply items that we delivered over the past month to help kids at Karen Acres and Webster Elementary Schools get a great start.

Let's be the Church together!

In Christ's Service,

Jennifer Gardner  
Moderator

# WHAT IS HAPPENING AT UCC THIS MONTH?

During the month of September, we will explore “We Believe...” The United Church of Christ has a Statement of Faith. Some of us were raised learning and reciting the Apostle’s Creed. Who is God to you? Who is God to us? The Still Speaking Writers Group contributed new statements of faith for the publication, “Stating Our Faith in Urgent Times,” and we’ll look at some of those. We will use a variety of senses to consider how we encounter the Holy. Who is God to you? Who is God to us?

WE BELIEVE...WE ARE NOT ALONE

Date	Scripture	Theme
<b>September 3</b>	Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-7	God Is Good COMMUNION SUNDAY
<b>September 10</b>	Psalm 149:1-5; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 16:13-16	God Loves Us All HOMECOMING SUNDAY
<b>September 17</b>	Exodus 14:19-31 John 14:15-17 Acts 2:1-4	We Are Not Alone JUST PEACE SUNDAY
<b>September 24</b>	Micah 6:8 Philippians 1:21-30 Matthew 25:34-40	God Is Still Speaking AMERICAN INDIAN MINISTRY AND UNITED SAMOAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

**Thursday, September 21, 2023 6:30 p.m.**  
**Cowles Commons Peace Garden**  
**221 Walnut Street, Des Moines**

***“Making Peace Under Polluted Skies and Nuclear Clouds ”***

Dr. David Drake, past president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, will be the keynote speaker. Music will be led by singer, song writer, Bill Connet. The service will explore the existential threats of nuclear war and climate change, and will express a vision of peace and a position against war shared by all faith traditions. We will renew our commitment to be instruments of God’s peace for all people.

Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace

# YOUTH UPDATE

## SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATIONS

Please complete a registration form for youth and preschool- 5th grade and give it to Rev. Amy by September 3. Forms can be found outside Rev. Amy's office and on the table in the narthex.

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL (PRESCHOOL-5TH GRADES)

Sunday school begins Sunday, September 10. Please join us in the choir room from 9 -9:10 am for singing. We will then head upstairs to our classroom until 9:45 am for our Bible story and other activities.

Kelly Jacobson, Claire Sowder, Sarah Boelts, and Taena Fowler will lead our younger youth. We will use Illustrated Ministries Compassion Camp: *What Every Living Thing Needs* which is a Vacation Bible School-type curriculum with many opportunities to help our Bible stories come alive through play, creativity, yoga, music, crafts, and more. For September & October, we will focus on the following themes:

- **Session 1: Every Living Thing Needs Shelter**—Shelter Protects Life: Participants will develop their skills of awareness as the first step in compassion by noticing how God provides shelter in the Bible.
- **Session 2: Every Living Thing Needs Food**—Food Energizes Life: Participants will practice gratitude for food by compassionately acknowledging the world God made (as described in Psalm 104).

Please pick up your child from the classroom promptly at 9:45 am.

Please turn in Sunday school registrations as soon as possible and let Rev. Amy know if you have any questions.

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## BIBLES FOR THIRD GRADERS

Please join us in worship on Sunday, September 17 to present Bibles to our third graders. Please confirm with Rev. Amy you would like your child to receive a Bible and will be present if you have not yet confirmed.

# QUEER & AFFIRMING PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN YOUTH & ADULT MINISTRY



We have an exciting, ecumenical opportunity for youth (ages K-12 grade) and adults. Mark your calendars for the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month starting Sept. 13 from 5:30-7 pm. Dinner will be provided. We will spend our first two gatherings in September building relationships and community.

## **Volunteers Needed!**

Please let Rev. Amy know if you have questions or would like to volunteer. We need folks to help with food preparation, set-up, clean-up, lead small groups (curriculum & activities provided), and help plan for future mission & social justice opportunities. You will need to complete our UCC Safety Training and complete a background check, as with all our youth ministries.

**WHAT?** LGBTQIA+ Affirming, #Black Lives Matter proclaiming children/youth/family ministry between Downtown Disciples, New Beginnings Christian Church, and Urbandale UCC. The purpose of this ministry is to proclaim in body, mind, and spirit the good news of Christ that all persons are beloved by God and created in the image of God. Goals of this ministry are to:

1. Provide a safe space for children/youth/families to grow in faith and to experience the affirmation of their identity as beloved children/people of God.
2. Provide a healthy free meal for participants.
3. Provide Christian faith-based programming around the teaching of Jesus for participants of all ages. This programming will include a progressive Christian curriculum through various mediums.

**WHEN?** Second and fourth Wednesdays, September 13 & 27, from 5:30-7 pm. This program runs September-May 2024

**WHY?** Statistics show that queer, transgender, black, and brown youth are at a significantly higher risk of suicide, poverty, housing insecurity, and bullying. This ministry will counter the growing, hateful rhetoric, condemnation, and systemic oppression of queer, black and brown, and immigrant youth and families. By creating a safe, sacred, affirming, and diverse community, together we will grow in our ability to be a movement for wholeness in this fragmented world.

**WHERE?** Q Exchange 3614 6th Ave Des Moines



## NEIGHBORS IN NEED SPECIAL OFFERING

Neighbors in Need is one of the four special offerings of the United Church of Christ. The designated date is October 1 which is also World Communion Sunday, a great time to focus on our local, regional, and global neighbors. One-third of the offering helps support the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by Justice and Witness Ministries to provide grants to UCC congregations and organizations, as well as supporting a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

Artist: Alexis  
Age: 15

Congregation: Trinity United  
Church of Christ,  
St. Louis MO

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
NEIGHBORS IN NEED 2023  
ucc.org/nin



*"God saw everything God made and behold, it was very good."* Genesis 1:31

This year's focus is on environmental justice. Plastics, electronics, and other non-compostable wastes are being shipped across and even tossed into our waterways, launched into space, as well as buried in landfills. As people of faith, we believe these egregious acts are sinful and unholy. We must be better stewards of our planet!

Urbandale UCC is applying for a grant this year to help with the start-up of Q&A Progressive Christian Youth from Neighbors in Need as a project of Advocacy and Outreach for Justice Work.

**October 1 is the official offering date. Your offerings can be given at any time. Please note that you are giving to Neighbors in Need.**

## REFUGEE MINISTRY

Our group would like to give you an update on the refugee family that you have so generously supported. As we stated in previous reports, the mother of this family decided to seek asylum in this country after it was discovered that she and some of her friends were assisting Ukrainian refugees by giving them food, clothing, and trying to assist them with medical needs.

The mother of this family is strong and resourceful. She has found a number of temporary jobs and has earned enough money to pay for her own car insurance. She continues to explore the possibilities that may eventually allow her to get her cosmetology license in Iowa to return to the profession she had in her country of origin. She is hard-working and

will do her best to contribute to her rent and childcare in the future, but at this point, she continues to need some assistance.

The members of our group continue to do work with USCRI, the resettlement agency we are partnered with. The newest arrivals have been from Africa, most often the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the next few months, we anticipate assisting with transportation to get children to immunization appointments and to schools for enrollment.

There have been fairly large numbers of arrivals in the last few months, so donations are always needed to help the families get set up in apartments, etc. Currently, they are very low on items for the kitchen, such as dishes and silverware, and they are also in need of cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products.

As always, please know that we are so grateful for the support you offer us and the new members of our community.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Sept. 10 at 9 am

Join Sandy Gahn and Jennifer Gardner for the first Adult Spiritual Formation opportunity of the new program year. Come with questions, hear what is going on at UUCC, and bring your smartphone, tablet, or laptop to learn how to use Realm, our church membership database program. Of course, sweet treats will be available!

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### FAMILY PROMISE WEEK

September 10 - 17

Our next Family Promise hosting week is September 10-17, 2023, when our church will be providing shelter and evening meals for three families transitioning to permanent housing. As always, we rely on many volunteers for the various tasks involved, so please take a look at the signup board in the Narthex or sign up online at <https://signup.zone/uucc-fp>. Even if you've never volunteered, take a chance and sign up! You won't regret it. Thanks!

- Jon Duvick UUCC/FP Coordinator.



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### JEAN SWIFT'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

My 90th birthday will be September 28. My family is having an earlier celebration on Sunday, September 24 at Brio Communities at 6901 Peckham St, Johnston from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the Community Room. All are welcome.

-- Jean Swift





The Grief Recovery Method®

## **The Grief Recovery Method® Grief Support Group**

**The Action Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Losses**

Myths about grief:

- *Time heals all wounds*
- *Replace the loss*
- *Grieve alone*
- *Be strong for others*
- *Bury your feelings*

Your feelings are normal and natural. The problem is that we have been socialized to believe that these feelings are abnormal and unnatural.

Whether your loss is from:

- Death
- Divorce or end of a relationship
- Loss of a career
- Loss of trust
- Loss of faith
- Loss of safety
- Loss of health

**THE 8-WEEK PROGRAM WILL BEGIN  
Saturday, September 9, 2023 • From 8am-10am  
Urbandale United Church of Christ  
3530 70<sup>th</sup> St. Urbandale, IA 50322**

People say you have to let go and move on in your life, but they don't tell you what you need to do to accomplish that. The Grief Recovery Method® Outreach Program not only makes that possible, but provides partnerships and guidance to ensure that it happens.

**For further information call:  
Lisa Griffith Tierney • Certified Grief Recovery Specialist®  
• (515) 619-7399**

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**DEBKLINE.COM PRESENTS**

*FORGETTING TO REMEMBER*

**BENEFIT CONCERT:**

**PrairieFire  
Scholarship Fund**

**Mind & Spirit Counseling Center**

**Friday, Sept. 15th  
@ 6:30 - 8:00 PM  
Bethesda Lutheran  
1517 Northwestern Ave  
Ames, Iowa**

### **Freewill Offering**

Poems and prose shared from Deb's book *Forgetting to Remember: A Healer's Journey of Surviving and Thriving*.

Original piano solos, guitar songs, and piano songs performed from Deb's CD albums, and more.

Projected SoulCollage card images companion the performance with Deb's visual healing expression.

### **PrairieFire**

A two-year program of spiritual renewal deepens one's awareness of Divine Presence in oneself, others, and the world. A third year practicum offers Spiritual Director training. Donations to the scholarship fund support students needing financial assistance. Deb graduated from PrairieFire as a Spiritual Director in 2015.

### **Post-Trauma Thriving in Action**

Deb enchants you with her healing journey through adept storytelling, vibrant music, and captivating art. Kline transcends trauma: from a child who forgot she was sexually abused, to an adolescent unable to fathom why she felt terrible wrong, to a young adult plagued by bipolar disorder and attempted suicide, to a thirty-something adult confronted with complex PTSD flashbacks of her forgotten past. To reclaim her joy and zest for life, Deb engages creative arts and inspires kindred spirits to thrive.

### **Audiences Facilitate Healing**

- Break the "Culture of Silence" through group listening
- Support survivors by bearing witness to their lived experiences
- Replace harmful stigma with needed empathy
- Deepen the capacity to create beloved community through connection

### **Deb Offers Arts as Alchemy**

**Author ~ Poet**

**Pianist ~ Guitarist**

**Singer ~ Songwriter**

**Public Speaker ~ Artist**

**Contact Deb by phone or email:**

515-231-0362

**Visit: [www.debkline.com](http://www.debkline.com)**

[deb@debkline.com](mailto:deb@debkline.com)



# CONFRONTING THE HOPELESSNESS OF IMMIGRATION

Sept. 15-17, 2023

## 38th Annual Theologian in Residence Program

Co-Hosts: Ames United Church of Christ, National UCC, Iowa Conference UCC, Central Association UCC  
Free and Open to the Public

Available in person at Ames UCC Church and through a national UCC webinar/Ames UCC Zoom

### Theologian in Residence



**The Rev. Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre, Professor—Author—Scholar Activist.** He is professor of social ethics and Latinx studies, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colo. His books include: *Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration* (2009); *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place* (2016); *Embracing Hopelessness* (2017); *Decolonizing Christianity: Becoming Badass Believers* (2021). He is the recipient of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Excellence in Teaching Award (2020) and the AAR Martin E. Marty Public Understanding of Religion Award (2021). Originally from Cuba, he has been active in immigration issues at the US southern border. In addition to his books, he has produced a number of videos focusing on immigration issues.

### The Program

#### Friday, Sept. 15.

Iowa State University Free Public Lecture. "Why They Come: Exploring the Immigration Crisis at the Southern Border," Miguel De La Torre. 6 p.m. Room 2630 Memorial Union.

#### Saturday, Sept. 16

Morning Sessions: National UCC Webinar broadcast from Ames UCC Church, 217 6th St., Ames IA 50010. Attend either in person or online.

**9:00 – 10:30 a.m.** Video broadcast "Trails of Hope and Terror (2009)" followed by Q&A session with Miguel De La Torre.

#### 10:30-10:45 Break

**10:45-noon.** "Confronting the Hopelessness of Immigration." Miguel De La Torre. Discussion with Q&A.

**Noon-1:00 p.m.** Attendees are invited to join in a box lunch served at the church. Cost is \$10.00.

Afternoon sessions are in-person at Ames UCC Church or by Ames UCC Zoom.

**1:00-2:15 p.m.** Panel discussion: "How Communities Welcome and Address Issues Immigrants Face." Speakers include:

- Rob Denson, president, Des Moines Area Community College
- Maria Ramos, Storm Lake, IA
- Erica Johnson, executive director, Iowa Migrant

Movement for Justice

- Anneke Mundel, United Way.

#### 2:15-2:30 Break

**2:30-3:45 p.m.** Panel discussion: "What Can Faith Communities and Individuals Do?"

Speakers include:

- David Hansen, chair, Ames Sanctuary Interfaith Partners. Congregation considerations and individual opportunities to sponsor and support immigrants;
- Rev. Alejandro Alfaro-Santiz, lead pastor, Trinity Las Americas United Methodist Church, Des Moines, Iowa
- Merced Cruz, social worker and member, Trinity Las Americas United Methodist Church, Des Moines, Iowa
- Rev. Linda Hanson, opportunities for travel to border crossings and countries to better understand immigration motivations, opportunities and problems;

**3:45-4:00 p.m.** Summary and wrap-up: Miguel De La Torre

#### Sunday, Sept. 17

**9:00-9:50 a.m.** Dialogue with Miguel De La Torre concerning immigration issues. Fellowship Hall, Ames UCC Church, 217 6th St., Ames IA 50010. [Not available via Zoom].

**10:00-11:00 am.** Sunday Worship Service at Ames UCC Church. Miguel De La Torre preaching. Everyone is welcome. Online Zoom Access provided.

### Registration

The theologian-in-residence event is open to everyone without charge. Whether you choose to attend in person or online, we ask that you register for the event so that you can receive reminders and so that we can adequately plan for you. Register at [Amesucc.org](https://www.amesucc.org). You also will be asked if you wish to make a voluntary donation.

Now Accepting  
Announcements & Information for  
**October CALL**

**DEADLINE** **MONDAY, SEPT. 25**  
**@ 3 PM**

Please email the info to Abby at [staff@urbucc.org](mailto:staff@urbucc.org)  
If we do not get your CALL submission by Sept. 25  
then it may not be included in the CALL

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE - FALL**

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**10:00 am ~ Worship**

The Rev. Coqui Conkey, Senior Pastor ..... [coqui.conkey@urbucc.org](mailto:coqui.conkey@urbucc.org)  
The Rev. Amy Galarowicz, Ministry Program Coordinator..... [amy.galarowicz@urbucc.org](mailto:amy.galarowicz@urbucc.org)  
Steven Linn, Music Program Director.....[steven.linn@urbucc.org](mailto:steven.linn@urbucc.org)  
Bobby Stinnett, M.M., Organist,  
Children/Youth Choirs and Handbells Director ..... [bobby.stinnett@urbucc.org](mailto:bobby.stinnett@urbucc.org)  
Abigail Sinclair, Communications and Office Coordinator .....[staff@urbucc.org](mailto:staff@urbucc.org)  
Sadmira & Umihana Omerhodzic, Custodians..... [sadmira.omerhodzic@urbucc.org](mailto:sadmira.omerhodzic@urbucc.org)

**Flexible Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm**  
**~ Check Before Coming ~**

**515 - 270 - 0625 | 3530 70 St, Urbandale, IA, 50322**