

## The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



April  
2025

### FROM THE PASTOR...



*Our Partnership Group with Gerber*

Our trip to Coyolate, Guatemala was an incredible blessing in every way.

The 7-person team that went down to participate in this partnership worked really well together and forged deeper bonds of friendship with one another than we could have anywhere else. I was particularly amazed by the variety of gifts within the members of our team and how well they complemented each other as the trip unfolded. As most of you know, I got pretty sick down there almost from the moment we arrived – a combined throat and ear infection that resisted antibiotics and limited my effectiveness as both a worker and a leader. But the way my six teammates stepped up made my limitations become nearly invisible.

Similarly, another member of our team, Hagen Manker, had real difficulty with the 94-degree temperatures in which we were working. While he may not have been able to work as much as he'd hoped, Hagen is the only one of us who is truly fluent in Spanish; it was the primary language of the family in which he was raised. Hagen's language skills more than made up for the manual labor he wasn't able to do. We were a true team in every sense of the word.

One of the greatest blessings of the trip was the relationships we were able to forge with the Guatemalans at the work site. Oscar, Joelle, Lorenzo, Elias, and Tomas were so easy and fun to work with. Despite a certain level of language barrier, we all managed to communicate effectively. The fact that they were laughing during the majority of our workdays was a testament to how much they enjoyed being with us. Ruth, Mariuya, and Doris – our cooks throughout the week – were equally wonderful and so attentive to our every need.

*(Cont'd on next page)*



## ***From the Pastor (cont'd)***

The tiny community health clinic, which stands at the center of this remote rural village, was a place where at least half our team spent significant amounts of time dealing with our various maladies. Ingrid, the head nurse, Wendy, the pharmacist, and Marisol, the nurse assistant, were incredibly gracious about seeing and evaluating us, making sure to get us the medications we needed. I do wish someone had videotaped the “conversation” I had with Ingrid – who speaks zero English – as she attempted to convey to me that what I needed was a big shot in my butt. Some gestures are truly universal. I will say that there is no better motivation to get better at a language than to be sick and under the care of a health professional who speaks no English. Duolingo, here I come!

One of the highlights of the trip was the day I wandered over to the Elementary school during recess and challenged some of the kids to a soccer game. The few student leaders I was talking to kept asking me how many players I had on my team, and I kept reiterating “Ocho...Ocho.” (Eight). I asked them to pick their 8 players and meet us at the center of the field. They showed up with just shy of a hundred kids, who insisted on all being on the field at once. Not only were we severely outnumbered, but somewhere in the first half of the game, the kids decided that having two balls on the field simultaneously would double the fun. Despite my protestations – and here my language skills were more than sufficient – we wound up taking on all one-hundred of them with two balls flying all over the pitch. It was a total blast, but in the 94-degree heat, the eight of us withered pretty quickly and limped back to our worksite next door.



On Wednesday evening, we were invited to participate in a worship service at the little Presbyterian church that serves the village, a church that Tomas and Healthy Communities helped establish and build. Coincidentally, the interior of this church is decorated with purple shrouds and swaths of cloth, making us feel right at home. Our group was introduced, and we sang “Until All Are Fed” as a part of the service. I was given the opportunity to preach and focused my remarks on the trajectory of shepherding in the Bible. I finished the message by playing and singing Johnny Cash’s version of “Bridge Over Troubled Water.” We were all so well received. At the conclusion of the service, literally every person in the congregation came up and warmly hugged each member of our team. It was a powerful experience of Christian community, which runs across all cultural, linguistic, and economic differences.



In the end, we finished roofing, walling, and completely closing in the kitchen and attached bathrooms for the new pre-school. During our final day on the site, the kids from the existing pre-school came over with their teacher to see their new school, kitchen, and bathrooms that they will soon move into. They were super excited and tremendously grateful. Gerber has promised to send us pictures on the day they officially move across the street from their old classroom to their new one.



During the entirety of this powerful experience of partnership, the seven of us were profoundly aware that it was YOU – our church family – who made this entire partnership trip possible. Your prayers, your donated suitcases, school supplies, and medical supplies, along with your generous financial gifts made this an all-church endeavor. I am so thankful and so proud to be a part of 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational United Church of Christ in Charlevoix. God is so good.

## More Photos from Guatemala



## Board of Trustees Jan/Feb Church Spending

The Board of Trustees would like to thank everyone who is maintaining their monthly pledge contributions. Here is the Jan/Feb spending vs the Jan/Feb Budget for 2025.

	Jan - Feb 25 Actual	Jan – Feb 25 Budget
<b>Total Income</b>	38,115.02	53,827.20
<b>Total Expenses</b>	50,652.03	52,930.71

## From Shelley...



Choir rehearsals have resumed weekly on Wednesday evenings at a new time: from 6:30 - 7:30 pm. If you love to sing, please join us. New friends are always welcome!

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Shelley at [r.shelley.fisher@gmail.com](mailto:r.shelley.fisher@gmail.com).



## APRIL VOLUNTEERS

### GREETERS

April 6 .... OPEN  
April 13 ... OPEN  
April 20 ... OPEN  
April 27 ... OPEN

### COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

April 6 .... Mary Duggan,  
Miriam Crump, Pam Ballard, &  
Kenzie Ballard

April 13 ... OPEN  
April 20 ... OPEN  
April 27 ... OPEN

### LAY READERS

April 6 .... Alice Pletz-Miller  
April 13 ... OPEN  
April 20 ... OPEN  
April 27 ... Denise Fate

### WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!!

Please contact the office or sign up on the bulletin board in the lobby if you would like to volunteer for any of the openings above.

### CMA INFORMATION:

#### CMA Hours:

Tues. & Thurs, 11a-2p  
Appointments are recommended.

## Next Issue!

***Things to keep an eye out for coming in May...***

- ***Special Announcements from our Teams***
- ***Garden Volunteer info***
- ***Outdoor Summer Worship Schedule***

## ***An Exciting Ministry Opportunity!***

On Sunday, March 9, we had an absolutely wonderful musical event at our beautiful church. The Notables, a chamber choir affiliated with the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra, performed to an absolutely packed house that afternoon. People LOVED the concert.

However, as terrific as the event was, it exposed a real weakness in our church's ministry: there was nobody from our congregation serving as hosts for the event. Guests were not greeted at the doors when they entered, performers were not offered water nor shown where the bathrooms are, and no one representing the church welcomed people from the pulpit nor introduced DeeDee Pichard when she came forward on behalf of the GLCO.

We don't see our pews totally packed very often anymore – not even at a Christmas Eve service. So, when opportunities like this one come to host a true community event, it is crucially important that we roll out the red carpet and offer the performers and audience the very best welcome and hosting possible.

Let's not miss such an opportunity again. Would you be willing to be a part of a team of hosts that assembles 3-4 times a year when we open our building to the community for such special events? All the existing ministry teams in our church, along with Toby, are already working tirelessly on their designated areas of responsibility, so we need a few additional folks who might be willing to welcome people on those rare occasions like Sunday, March 9.

Please call Stacey at the office (at 231-547-9122) if you would be willing to be a part of this important hospitality endeavor, so that it doesn't have to be a void in our overall ministry any longer. Thank you!

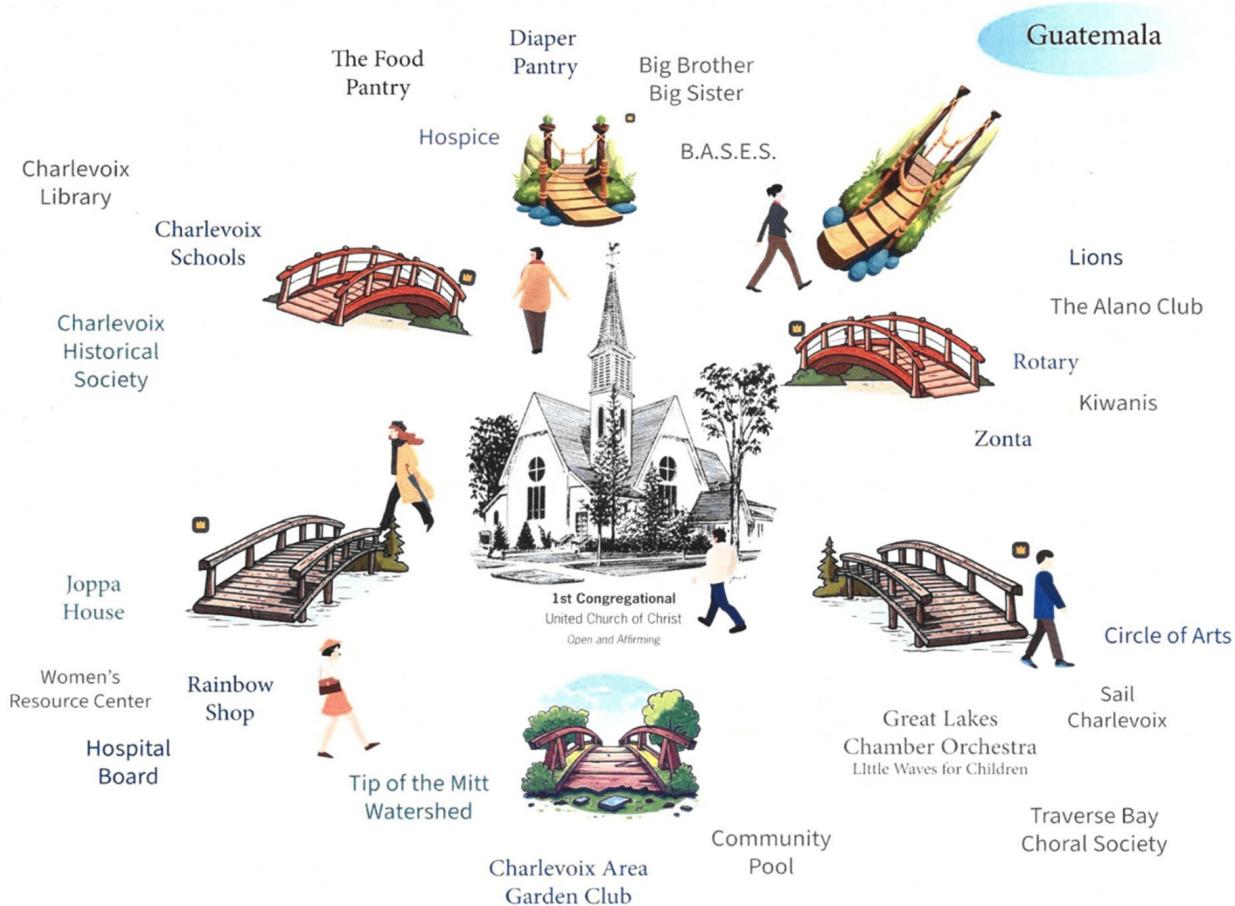


## From Reaching Out...

Have you enjoyed visiting with members of local organizations in Ransom Hall following the Sunday morning service during the month of March? We will continue during the month of April, except for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

A short questionnaire was sent out last fall asking what organizations you belong to, along with your name, email address and phone number, and whether or not you would be willing to be our church's contact for your particular organization. Stacey collected the information and compiled a list. It is from this list that most of the organization representatives were chosen.

If you would like your organization to be added to the list, email Stacey at [office@chxucc.org](mailto:office@chxucc.org) or call her in the church office at (231) 547-9122. She will need your name, the organization you belong to, your email address and phone number. If you would like a copy of the current list, please contact the church office.



## **Easter Garden News**



As most of you know, in the past we have had an Easter Garden placed for Easter Sunday. The participation in this over the last three years has been decreasing, and so this year, the Church will be purchasing & placing the flowers for the Easter Sunday service. We will not be taking orders for flowers as we have done in the past.

If you would still like to bring your own flowers to place at the altar in honor of a loved one, you may do so on that Sunday morning and take them home with you after.

Have no fear, our Sanctuary will still be beautiful on the special morning. Thank you again for your past participation!

# HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAY

TO THE FOLLOWING PARTICIPANTS:

Pam Ballard 4/1 \* Anna Young 4/1 \* Archie Wyatt 4/3  
Jeff Kloiber 4/4 \* Laura Kemp 4/5 \* Carolyn Klender 4/5  
Dave Smith 4/5 \* Bill Wadland 4/8 \* David Heine 4/14  
Terry Rowe 4/18 \* John Young 4/19 \* Tim Troupe 4/30

Wishing you all a HOPPY year ahead!!



## THOUGHT FOR THIS MONTH



## APRIL

### MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,  
4/1 @ 4:30P

Reaching Out Team,  
4/9 @ 9a

Church Council,  
4/27 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,  
4/27 @ 11:45a

Reaching In Team meets on  
the 1st Tuesday at 4:30p

Reaching Out Team meets on  
the 2nd Wednesday at 9a

Church Council meets on  
the 3rd Sunday at 11:45a

Board of Trustees meet on  
the 4th Sunday at 11:45a

## Just a Reminder...

***Stacey will be out of the office from April 22th - 24th. Linda Weller will be filling in for her.***

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***Articles and info to go in May's edition of the Open Door Newsletter is due on April 17th.***



## April 2025\*

		TUE Apr 1	WED 2	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10am Scripture Discuss</li> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> <li>• 4:30pm Reaching In Mt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5pm Centering Prayer C</li> <li>• 6:30pm Choir Rehearsa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<b>Church Offices Closed</b>	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worsh</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10:30am COMMUNION</li> <li>• 11:30am Coffee Hour</li> </ul>	<b>Main Church Office Close</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6pm Products Pantry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10am Scripture Discuss</li> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9am Reaching Out Mee</li> <li>• 5pm Centering Prayer C</li> <li>• 6:30pm Choir Rehearsa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<b>Church Offices Closed</b>	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worsh</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30am Coffee Hour</li> </ul>	<b>Main Church Office Close</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6pm Products Pantry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10am Scripture Discuss</li> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5pm Centering Prayer C</li> <li>• 6:30pm Choir Rehearsa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<b>Church Offices Closed</b>	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> <b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worsh</b>	<b>Main Church Office Close</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6pm Products Pantry</li> </ul>	<b>Stacey Out of Office</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<b>Church Offices Closed</b>	
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9am Woodbury Founda</li> </ul>
27	28	29	30	<p><b>*for more details, please go to the Calendar page on our website, <a href="http://www.CHXUCC.org">www.CHXUCC.org</a></b></p>		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:45am Church Council</li> <li>• 11:45am Trustee Meetin</li> </ul>						

**\*for more details, please go to the Calendar page on our website, [www.CHXUCC.org](http://www.CHXUCC.org)**

★ NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE,  
OR WHERE YOU ARE ON  
LIFE'S JOURNEY, ★  
YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!



# 1st Congregational UCC

*Opening the Doors of Possibility*

**An Open & Affirming Church**



Toby Jones, Pastor

Stacey Luoma, Office Manager

Shelley Fisher, Music Minister

Larry Minch, Custodian

Lynette Webb, Childcare Supervisor

101 State Street, Charlevoix, MI 49720

(231) 547-9122 (office)

[www.CHXUCC.com](http://www.CHXUCC.com)

## Our Covenant

*"Our church community seeks to embody God's Spirit and live the teachings of Jesus. We offer a sense of belonging to each other and to all our neighbors, as we build a just and sustainable world for **all**."*