



The Open Door



**April
2026**

From the Pastor...

As we turn the calendar from March to April, I find my heart to be overflowing with gratitude. First, we made it through one heck of a winter – record snowfall, tons of back-breaking shoveling, and more school closings than I remember in a long time. I am so grateful for the approach of spring.

But I'm even more grateful for all the ways our small family of faith is jumping into the story of Jesus and his love, even with so many of our participants away for the winter. Our Reaching Out Team got a 3-pronged inmate support ministry up and running at the Charlevoix County Jail. The residents there now have access to a book mobile, a free commissary with personal items ranging from sweaters and warm clothes to toothbrushes and other hygiene items, and a mentoring program. We have, to quote Hebrews 3, begun to "remember those in prison as if we were in prison with them." Talk about jumping into the story!

Also thanks to Reaching Out, we've been able to raise some much-needed funds and supplies for our upcoming return trip to Guatemala. There is still time for you to be a part of this church-wide effort by bringing in a few of the items on the supply list and donating to the Guatemala trip through our Global Missions Restricted Fund. Alice and Chris can help with the financial donations, while Lani Ochs is the point person for the supply drive. I am so grateful to be heading back down to Guatemala on April 18 with Hagen Manker and Jeff Kloiber to continue this amazing and life-changing partnership.

Our Reaching In Team put together one of our most meaningful Lenten seasons in recent memory. I know that lots of you took on the "Psalm-a-Day" challenge, as did I. Wow! How relevant, timeless, and instructive these ancient prayers are! And the Wednesday evening gatherings were wonderful times of reflection, meditation, music, and fellowship. Thanks again to Judy Seibert for coordinating our soup and bread suppers.

I'm especially grateful for our Emergency Preparedness Team for continuing to move us toward readiness to serve as a shelter. All we really need at this point is for some volunteers to get trained by the Red Cross to help staff our shelter and to get a food and supply closet configured and stocked downstairs. If you're willing to help with either of these efforts, let Julie Geyer know. How great it will be to have our wonderful but often empty building used for something so in line with our vision of serving our larger community.

I could go on and on all the ways you all are jumping into the story of Jesus and his love. I'm so excited and so proud to be a part of your Church with the Purple Doors family.



Info on Our New Garden Plan

Renewing Our Church Yard: Improving Accessibility and Our Outdoor Gathering Space

in honor of

Lois Lewis, Marty Trubilowicz, and Joan Robinson

This spring we will begin an exciting project to renovate and improve the church yard surrounding our building. These changes are designed to make our outdoor space more welcoming, accessible, and functional for everyone in our church family and the wider community.



One of the most important improvements will be the addition of a handicapped-accessible concrete ramp from the parking lot to the back porch, ensuring that all members and visitors can safely and comfortably access the church. Creating a more accessible entrance reflects our commitment to being a community where everyone can fully participate in worship and fellowship.

In addition, we will be pouring a sidewalk that connects the porch to the public sidewalk on Park Street. Together, these improvements will make our church activities safer and more welcoming for all who enter.

The project will also address the swale in the yard, which currently creates uneven ground and can make the space difficult to use during outdoor services and church events. By filling and leveling this area, we will create a more functional lawn that can better accommodate gatherings, fellowship time, and outdoor worship, while improving overall safety.

We will also be enhancing the beauty and manageability of our church grounds through improved garden design. The plan includes creating terraced gardens around the porch, which will make maintenance easier while providing an inviting and peaceful setting at the entrance to Ransom Hall.

We are grateful that funding for this project comes from designated gifts and memorial funds. Memorial contributions honoring **Lois, Marty, and Joan's** untiring commitment to our church gardens, will help make these improvements possible. Their memories will live on through a space that they dreamed of summer after summer, as they worked together in the yard

We are also pursuing grant opportunities that will help stretch these funds even further.

These renovations are not simply about landscaping; they are about creating a space that reflects our values of hospitality, accessibility, and care for one another. We look forward to watching the work done this May and enjoying this renewed space together.

The layout of the handicapped ramp, sidewalk and structure of the gardens will be on display in Ransom Hall for your review. Our project will commence at the end of April and will be complete by June 1st given any unforeseeable issues. We would ask for your patience while the work is being done and progress made.

Immigrant Care Info

Are you concerned with the welfare of our immigrant neighbors and want to learn how you can help? Please attend!

INAUGURAL CONFERENCE



BELONG

NORTHERN MICHIGAN IMMIGRANT
INCLUSION NETWORK

We work as a collaborative network to make Michigan's Northern Lower Peninsula a welcoming, inclusive region for immigrants and refugees by educating communities, supporting newcomers and service institutions, and advocating for culturally appropriate solutions.

JOIN US!

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

9AM - 5PM

Location

Treetops Resort
3962 Wilkinson Rd.
Gaylord, MI

Registration

Click here or scan the QR Code to Register today!

Investment

\$40/Person
For fee waiver, please contact **Bridgitte**
at **Belong-Info@strangersnolonger.org**





Notes From the Kitchen

It is with tremendous gratitude that I thank everyone who called and volunteered to assist with the Memorial Reception for John Dixon on February 28th. With minimal notice we had helpers to set up tables with tablecloths, place evergreens in small vases on each table, and bake an abundance of cookies that were delicious and tastefully arranged on the serving tables. Your kindness and generosity continue to make an impression upon those who are both inside and outside the church community.

As Kitchen Coordinator I oversee many things taking place within the kitchen and Ransom Hall. I am your "Go-To Person" for questions regarding Coffee and Conversation time. Never hesitate to reach out to me.

Phone or text - 312 608 3996 email: mamamorris834@gmail.com

An Assistant is still needed to take the lead when coordinating any upcoming funeral receptions during the 2nd quarter of the year. (April - June) It's also time to fill in the volunteer slots for hosts for Coffee and Conversation those three months. This can be done by phone, email, or face to face conversations at church. Please consider volunteering for one or both of these 2 positions. Several people have had to step down after years of dedicated service to the congregation. Reach out if you've got questions.

Kitchen Coordinator

Susan Morris - 312 608 3996

Coffee & Conversation Assistants

1st quarter - Susan Morris

2nd quarter -

3rd quarter - Joyce Herbert

4th quarter - Meg Kitson

Funeral Kitchen Coordinators

1st quarter - Susan Norris

2nd quarter -

3rd quarter - Joyce Herbert

4th quarter - Meg Kitson

April, May & June we need one or two people to step up and take on positions that others have had to step down from due to health issues. As needed, you will receive plenty of advice and lots of help.



Serving as a Coffee and Conversation host is always more fun if you buddy up with someone else. Thank you Karen Joy and Ellen Kendall for providing the wonderful treats on March 8th. We enjoy eating just about anything: fruits, cut up veggies, deviled eggs, cake, and did I mention cookies. :) Home made or store bought, do what's easiest for you.



We use Air Pots to serve the hot beverages so it's easy to prepare before the service. You can measure it out with coffee scoops or use the scale. Colin Morris is happy to help out and make the coffee as long as he's in town. We're trying to consistently use our dishes rather than disposables. There are always people around to help with the dishwasher.

From the Reaching In Team..

Spring Greetings from the Reaching In Team!

As we step into this spring season together, we hope that you find small moments of reflection for the Easter Season & for your renewal. Spring can bring us a mix of feelings: moments of renewal, paired with sadness or even anger that your loved one is no longer with you. Your feelings are valid. Gently allow yourself time to feel & allow those feelings to move through you.

If you are interested in exploring your grief in more depth, Sharon Neumann, Advanced Grief Recovery Specialist at Munson Hospital in TC, will be starting another complimentary round of classes next month. Please contact her directly at 231-633-8384 or sneumann@mhc.net to register. Virtual classes are Thursdays at 5:30pm from 4/23-6/25/26 and In-Person in TC are Wednesdays at 5:30pm from 4/22-6/24/26.

If you have questions, or just want to talk, please call Denise Cruz, RN BSN at 248-961-2616.

A Special “Thank-You”

From Judy Siebert:

“I would like to thank those who brought soup and bread for the Lenten Meals during Lent.

They were wonderful and I also appreciate all the help in cleaning up afterward.

What a wonderful success the whole Lenten series was!”



UCC WOMEN OF MICHIGAN

AN INVITATION TO SPRING GATHERING



June 5-7, 2026

Friday evening thru Sunday morning

THEME: "Fortified in Faith, Clothed in Strength!"

Scriptures: Proverbs 31; Acts 16: 14-16

JOIN US FOR OUR CONTINUING ADVENTURE!

We are excited to announce

The 2026 Spring Gathering will be held again this year at

The Lake Huron Retreat Center Located at 8724 Lakeshore Rd., Burtchville Twp., MI

Register For The Spring Gathering 2026

ABOUT OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER & PREACHER

The Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel



The Michigan Conference Minister is responsible for the spiritual care of our clergy and 140 congregations. Since starting July 1, 2022, the Rev. Dr. Daniel has focused on encouraging, equipping and connecting our Michigan churches in Christ's love and justice. Lillian is based in Grand Rapids and travels most weekends to worship with folks in the Michigan Conference.

Registration Brochure Is Available On-Line!

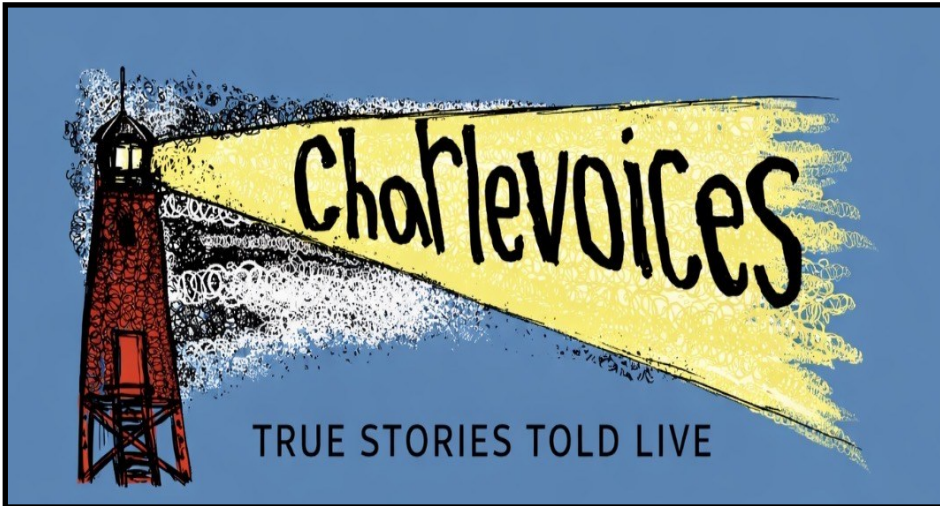
Please watch your email, check on the UCC Women of MI Facebook page, or the MI Conference UCC e-newsletter & website.



Co-Chairs:	April Reh	586-291-8827	a.rehofcolor@gmail.com
	Penny Lowes	248-762-5551	revpen73@gmail.com
	Kristen Rieder	231-818-3831	k3teacher@hotmail.com
Registrar:	Shari Hoppe	614-403-2364	sfhoppe@gmail.com



P1



Despite a winter storm, a well-attended audience gathered on February 20 for Charlevoices: True Stories Told Live, where five storytellers shared moments when life left them “in a pickle.” David Shuman described a frantic winter chase after a runaway rescue dog that ended three miles out on the ice of Little Traverse Bay; Susan Morris recounted a cross-country road trip derailed by a blown tire but redeemed by the kindness of strangers; Ruby Smith told of a late-night gas crisis on a rock-concert road trip saved by a tiny “Push Button for Service” sign; Toby Jones had the audience roaring with a painfully funny baseball mishap that inspired a lifelong commitment to protective gear; and Betty Wadland closed with a tender reflection on believing, at age ten, that a single cornflake before Communion had endangered her soul—an experience that sparked a lifelong conversation about faith.

Guided by the warmth and wit of emcee Ellen Bennett, the evening celebrated the humor and humanity found in life’s unexpected turns, and thanks to those who braved the winter weather, a meaningful contribution was made to the Charlevoix Ministerial Association Emergency Fund to support neighbors in need.

Next Issue!

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

- *News from Guatemala Partnership*
- *Reports from the Teams*

The banner features the text "Next Issue!" in a large, white, bold font against a background of various tools like wrenches and sockets. Below this, the text "Things to keep an eye out for coming in May..." is written in a smaller, italicized font, followed by a bulleted list of two items: "News from Guatemala Partnership" and "Reports from the Teams".

APRIL VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

- Apr. 5 **The Ogdens**
- Apr. 12 ... **OPEN**
- Apr. 19 ... **OPEN**
- Apr. 26 ... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

- Apr. 5 **OPEN**
- Apr. 12 ... **Guatemala Coffee Hour**
- Apr. 19 ... **OPEN**
- Apr. 26 ... **Potluck Collaboration**

LAY READERS

- Apr. 5 **OPEN**
- Apr. 12 ... **Denise Fate**
- Apr. 19 ... **Suzanne Balter**
- Apr. 26 ... **OPEN**



An Update from Donn Start in AZ...

Your support matters! Here is an update from Donn Start, a Participant who lives in Arizona.



Hi Toby.

I thought that you might be interested in knowing that First Congregational Church's generous summer gift was used today to send one of God's beloved homeless children back to his family in South Carolina. After 9+ years of living homeless on the streets in Phoenix, Tim Goddard recently reached out to me asking for help with his drug addictions while also expressing an interest in knowing more about Jesus.



Tim before rehab/detox

Of course I immediately helped Tim get enrolled into a detox/rehabilitation program that he successfully completed. Upon completion of his program, Tim and I both agreed that it was clearly in his best interest to leave the streets of Phoenix behind and return home to South Carolina. There, his father, sister, and a few quality friends would welcome him back and encourage him on his desired path of a new sober and healthy lifestyle.

Being new to Christianity, Tim shared that he believes in God and possesses a desire to know and love Jesus. We prayed about this together and I believe that Tim will continue seeking God's love in his life.

When he thanked me for buying him the Greyhound bus pass, I explained that it was God's loving church in Charlevoix, Michigan that gifted me with money to spend on a very special and worthwhile project. As I handed Tim his bus ticket, I hugged him and told him that one of God's children, named Tim Goddard, was God's worthwhile and special project. Tim teared up with gratitude and asked me to share his appreciation with those "very kind church people in Charlevoix, Michigan." So that is what I am doing.

Please pray for Tim as he continues to build a loving relationship with his family and with Jesus. All the while continuing to reject the cravings of an addiction that has haunted him for the past 9+ years.



Tim after rehab/detox

- Donn Start, Phoenix, AZ

CALL FOR STORYTELLERS WATERMARK

CONTACT US: charlevoices.org

Where Water met a moment in your life.

No performance experience necessary.

If the Story matters to you, we want to hear it!

Charlevoices: True Stories Told Live
May 15, 2026, 7:00 PM
First Congregational UCC
101 State St., Charlevoix
charlevoices.org, (231)330-5441





Happy APRIL Birthday



To the Following Participants!

Anna Young 4/1 * Archie Wyatt 4/3 * Jeff Kloiber 4/4

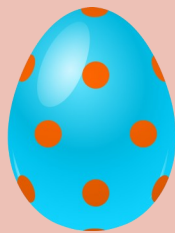
Dave Smith 4/5 * Carolyn Klender 4/5

Laura Kemp 4/5 * Bill Wadland 4/8 * Dave Heine 4/14

Terry Rowe 4/18 * John Young 4/19 * Tim Troupe 4/30



Sending you a basketful of cheer for the upcoming year!



APRIL MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team, 4/2@ 9a

Reaching Out Team, 4/8 @ 9a

Church Council, 4/19 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees, 4/26 @ 9a

Reaching In Team meets on the 1st Thursday at 9a

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 9a

Just a Reminder...



Toby will be out of the office from April 1-4, and April 18-25.

We will have Guest Pastor Rev. Dr. Tom Cook with us during that time.

From the Reaching Out Team...

Storm Preparedness in Action

During the recent snowstorm, our church was contacted by the Charlevoix Office of Emergency Management and asked to be on standby as a warming shelter if the need arose. Thanks to our new generator and the willingness of volunteers to step forward, we were able to confidently say yes.

Fortunately, we did not lose power, and the shelter was not needed. Even so, the experience was a valuable one. As we prepared for the possibility of opening our doors, we learned important lessons—such as ensuring our parking areas are cleared of snow, so that those in need can safely access the building.

If the need should arise in the future, we are now well-prepared. We have the capacity to heat several rooms in the lower level, along with providing lighting, charging capabilities, and access to restrooms. We also have basic supplies on hand, including water and snack bars.

The Shelter Task Force has worked diligently to bring this vision to life. Sincere thanks go to Denise Fate, Teri Stout, Janet VanAlsten, Bill Trubilowicz, Toby Jones, and Julie Geyer for their dedication and hard work.

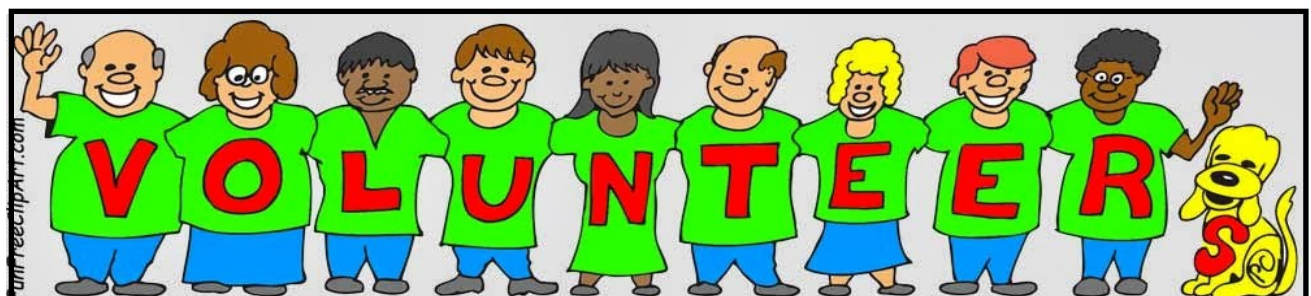
Become a Trained Shelter Volunteer

We're pleased to share that the Red Cross will be offering *Shelter Fundamentals Training* on **Thursday, May 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Ransom Hall.**

This is a wonderful opportunity for anyone interested in supporting our church's role as a community shelter. All are welcome—and encouraged—to attend! By completing this training, you'll be prepared to serve as a volunteer and help staff the shelter should our building be activated, even if you're only able to take a shift or two.

A light lunch will be served. Reservations are required, so please contact the Church Office at **231-547-9122** if you plan to attend.

Having a team of trained volunteers ensures we can respond quickly and effectively when the need arises. We hope you'll consider being part of this important ministry of care and hospitality.



April 2026*

SUN 29	MON 30	TUE 31	WED Apr 1	THU 2	FRI 3	SAT 4
Toby Out						
In-Person & Virtual Wors	Main Church Office Clos ● 6pm Products Pantry	● 10am Prayer Group		● 9am Reaching In Mtg	Church Offices Closed	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
In-Person & Virtual Wors ● 10:30am COMMUNION	Main Church Office Clos ● 6pm Products Pantry	● 10am Prayer Group	● 9am Reaching Out Mee		Church Offices Closed ● 12:30pm COA Grief Sup	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
In-Person & Virtual Wors	Main Church Office Clos ● 6pm Products Pantry	● 10am Prayer Group			Church Offices Closed	Guatemala Partnership T
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Guatemala Partnership Trip/Toby Out						
In-Person & Virtual Wors ● 11:45am Church Council	Main Church Office Clos ● 6pm Products Pantry	● 10am Prayer Group		● 6:30pm Choir Rehearsa	Church Offices Closed	
26	27	28	29	30		
In-Person & Virtual Wors Kalamazoo College Choir ● 9am Trustee Meeting	Main Church Office Clos ● 6pm Products Pantry	● 10am Prayer Group				

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

Shelley Fisher, Music Minister

Stacey Luoma, Office Manager

Lynette Webb, Childcare Supervisor

101 State Street, Charlevoix, MI 49720

(231) 547-9122 (office)

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**."*