



The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



**August
2025**

FROM THE PASTOR...

Are you ready to sow some seeds of hope in 2026?

We are less than two weeks away from our annual, one-day fundraiser. On Sunday, August 10th during worship – and in the picnic/party to follow – we will be delivering and dedicating our financial pledges for the 2026 ministry year, and we need YOU to be there! This gathering is a celebration of our entire church family, and it sets us up for success in the upcoming year.

Our worship that day – along with the potluck picnic to follow – will be outside under the tent, weather permitting. (We'll move into Ransom Hall if God decides to bless us with rain.) We'll have some terrific music that day – both during and after the service. Toby's band – The Haz-Binz – will be rocking the picnic portion of the festivities from 11:30-1:15 with songs that are guaranteed to make you smile. The sermon that morning will be particularly powerful, as Toby will be interviewing one of our participants you may never have seen before. He'll be sharing his story of how many of the seeds that you helped sow in 2025 have, quite literally, changed his life. You do NOT want to miss this unique and transforming message.

Stacey has a "Sign Up Genius" page all ready for you to select which type of dish you'll be contributing to the celebration – Salad, Side, Drinks, or Dessert. The Trustees will take care of providing hamburgers, veggie burgers, hot-dogs, buns, and condiments for us. This year, we'd really like to open up this gathering to folks who are not already participants with us – neighbors, friends, fans of the Haz-Binz – to come as our guests and to see what the church with the purple doors is all about. So, scatter your invitation seeds widely, and let's have our best and biggest party yet!

By now you should have received the information about the 2026 budget year along with your pledge card. Your completed pledge card is your ticket for this incredible summer bash. Our goal is to reach our total goal of \$310,000 on this one day, so you'll never have to hear any more about money for a whole year! Please do your part and encourage others to do the same. This is an amazingly faithful and generous congregation, and I am confident that we will sow even more seeds of hope in 2026, both locally and beyond, than we did this year. Thanks for being the most amazing congregation of which I've ever been a part!

A Sneak Peak at Toby's Sabbatical...

From September 1 through October 31, thanks to the generosity of this congregation, I will be taking my first sabbatical since joining you just over 5 years ago. I will be in Ireland for the first month and in the Basque Country of Northern Spain for the October portion.

I will begin my time in Ireland in Belfast at a retreat center run by Garreth Higgins – a writer, theologian, film critic, and peacemaker – whose work I became familiar with during Covid. He will be co-leading this retreat with renown contemporary theologian Diana Butler Bass, whose books have been tremendously influential in the last 20 years.

From there, I will head over to Limerick, on the western coast of the island, to spend a week with the monks of Glenstal Abbey. This Benedictine community inhabits what was once a Norman Castle. Its magnificent 500 acres of land includes working farmland, forest, lakes, and streams. I'll be living in accordance with the monks' schedule of prayer, silence, worship, and work.

Next, I'll spend just under two weeks seeing as much of Ireland as I can. I'll be renting a car in hopes of seeing as much of the coastline as possible, along with as many Irish jam sessions as I can in pubs and community centers throughout the country.

As September draws to a close, I will fly from Dublin to Bilbao Spain on Aer Lingus, where I will begin a 100-mile stretch of the famous "Camino," an 800 mile pilgrimage you can learn about if you watch the wonderful Martin Sheen film from 2010 called "The Way." I'm still not sure if I'll be walking or biking my beautiful 100-mile stretch from San Sebastian to Bilbao. It will all depend on my soon-to-be-replaced ankle. I'll be covering around 13-15 miles per day, staying in little hostels along the way.



My Camino journey will end right where my two nephews live, on a working farm near Bilbao. I will rest and recover there under the incredible hospitality of my nephew's mother and father-in-law, who have become famous for their meals, beverages, and revolving kitchen door of guests all year long. While there, I may also take advantage of a language immersion experience in Bilbao. My Spanish has come a long way but still has some really big holes, especially involving verb forms and tenses.

I'll return to the states just in time to move out of my Bay View cottage and back into my Petoskey rental. I couldn't be more excited about this amazing opportunity that my favorite church has provided for me. I'll be sure to return to you with lots of photos, sound files, and travel tales. The September newsletter will delineate how my time away will be covered here at the church. You are going to be in excellent hands.



Joppa House
Women's Recovery Homes

GARDEN PARTY

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT!

Friday, August 15th, 2025
5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Joppa House Gardens
803 State St | Charlevoix
Dinner catered by Smoke on the Water
Live Auction | Live Music

Tickets available on our website:
joppahouseministries.org



Reaching Out Theme

July/August Reaching Out Theme: Welcoming the Strangers Among Us - Honoring Immigrants, Migrants, and Guest Workers in Charlevoix



This summer, as we enjoy the beauty and abundance of Northern Michigan, the Reaching Out Committee invites our church family to pause and consider a vital part of our community that often goes unnoticed: the immigrants, migrants, and temporary workers who help make Charlevoix thrive.

Many of the fresh fruits and vegetables we enjoy—from sweet cherries and crisp apples to tender squash and bright berries—are harvested by guest workers who come here on H-2A visas. These men and women often travel great distances, leaving behind families and communities in Mexico, Guatemala, and beyond, to work in our local fields and orchards. Their labor is essential to our local agricultural economy—and to our daily meals.

Others contribute in different ways. International students arrive on J-1 visas to work in restaurants, resorts, and service industries throughout our busy summer season. Businesses like The Earl, the Weathervane, The Castle, Landscape Logic, and Northern Michigan Property Management depend on these young people, who bring energy, hope, and a global perspective to our lakeside town. Still others have made Charlevoix their permanent home. They may run businesses, staff our salons, serve our meals, or even worship in the pew beside us. Some are long-established immigrants, while others may be newer arrivals—still finding their way in a new language and culture. Some are our neighbors. Some are already friends.

As a church grounded in love, justice, and radical hospitality, we believe that learning about the lives of these individuals is one way to live out our faith. On August 17th, we will welcome a guest speaker to Sunday coffee hour to help us explore the experiences, challenges, and contributions of immigrants, migrants, and guest workers in Charlevoix. Details will be announced soon.

We hope this conversation will help us see with clearer eyes and respond with more open hearts. We want to better understand the people behind the produce, the students behind the smiles, and the families behind the storefronts. And above all, we want to let them know they are seen, valued, and welcome—both in our community and in our church.

Please join us this summer in reaching out, learning more, and offering Christ-like hospitality to the many who have journeyed far to be part of our shared life here in Charlevoix.

Volunteer Spotlight...

Judith Schneider Supports Families One Diaper at a Time



Judith and her husband, Don

For the past year and a half, Judith Schneider, a member of Bethany Lutheran Church, has faithfully served as the volunteer behind 1st Congregational's Diaper Pantry. Quietly and consistently, Judith has helped meet a vital need for families in the community.

Located within the Community Food Pantry, the Diaper Pantry has served as a trusted resource for parents in need. Each week, Judith checks the inventory of diapers and baby wipes, making sure shelves are stocked and ready for distribution. When supplies run low, she heads to Walgreens—where employees enthusiastically support the effort

and even set aside diapers when good deals are available.

Thanks to donations and the church's Reaching Out funds, the cost of diapers is fully covered. Remarkably, Judith goes a step further by personally supplying all the baby wipes from her own resources.

Judith's care, commitment, and compassion make a quiet but powerful impact on countless families. 1st Congregational UCC of Charlevoix is grateful for Judith's service and for the community partnerships that help sustain this meaningful outreach.



Muffin Sale News!

Annual Muffin Sale

Saturday, August 9th

We provide muffins to the Artists at the Chx Waterfront Art Sale
and then sell the rest to the public.

Money raised will be used for community outreach.

We are looking for bakers, transporters, and general volunteers!
Please call the office at (231) 547-9122 to sign up.



Next Issue!

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

- ***Updates from our Teams***
- ***Seeds of Hope Fundraiser Results***
- ***Info on Toby's Sabbatical***



AUGUST VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

Aug 3 **OPEN**
Aug 10 ... **OPEN**
Aug 17 ... **OPEN**
Aug 24 ... **OPEN**
Aug 31 ... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

Aug 3 **The Wadlands**
Aug 10 ... **CHURCH PICNIC**
Aug 17 ... **Janet VanAlsten & Bob Dion**
Aug 24 ... **The Morris Family**
Aug 31 ... **The Moore's**

LAY READERS

Aug 3 **Suzanne Balter**
Aug 10 ... **Alice Pletz-Miller**
Aug 17 ... **Denise Fate**
Aug 24 ... **OPEN**
Aug 31 ... **Ellen Zeinert**

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
By Appointment Only

CharleVOICES Event



On May 30th, the sanctuary of the 1st Congregational UCC Church, of Charlevoix, was filled not with hymns, but with stories—true, personal accounts of struggle, resilience, and hard-earned transformation. The event, hosted by CharleVOICES: True Stories Told Live, centered on the theme “Overcome” and featured six local storytellers who took to the stage to share defining moments from their lives. In showing up to help another, Hugh Hansen discovers an unexpected truth—that the support he offered was the very healing he needed. Colin Morris shared a quiet, powerful story of losing—and rediscovering—the deep human need for connection and belonging. Jen Way shared a journey that begins in loss and gently leads to strength, where sorrow softens and love learns a new way forward. Ellen Bennett takes us back to a summer camp where an unexpected journey of self-discovery began—a story of identity, truth, and the winding path to becoming herself. Using a family of phoenixes to tell her tale, Lisa Copass shares a powerful story of loss, renewal, and discovering her true purpose and passion. Larry Denemy story is rooted in generations of cultural resilience and lived experience reminding us that overcoming is not just personal but ancestral.

CharleVOICES was blessed by having the use of the beautiful sanctuary. The stage was backdrop of doors painted for a past event. A special thank you to Bill Trubilowicz and Ellen Hess for sound and video recording. CharleVOICES raised over \$600 for the Rayder Generous Heart Fund. Principal Dan Terryberry spoke about the Fund just before intermission.

For those who weren’t able to attend, the event can be viewed by going to www.CHXUCC.org and clicking the "On-Line Worship" tab and choosing the event called CharleVOICES.

The next Charlevoices, True Stories Told Live is tentatively scheduled for late October. The theme: My Bags Are Packed, I'm Ready to Go. Do you have a true story about a time you left, launched, or let go? If so, we’d love to hear it. You’ll get coaching and support. No stage experience required—just heart. Your story may be the one someone needs to hear. Please call or text, Betty Wadland at 517-410-9922



BLESSING of the Animals



August 24th @ 10:30a

Please join us with your well-behaved furry, fuzzy, feathered, or scaled friends for a very special service where you can have your pets blessed. There will be treats for all pets.

You do not need to be a regular participant in our church to have your pet blessed.

Can't bring your pets? You can bring a picture and we can bless them that way!



Opening the Doors of Possibility
1st Congregational Church

**101 State Street
Charlevoix**



Upcoming Gigs

10
AUG

1st Congregational UCC
Fundraiser Entertainment
101 State Street, Charlevoix, MI

11:30A

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION:**

(231) 881-6734
tobyjones48@gmail.com

From the Reaching Out Team...



Reaching Out saw an opportunity to show who we are as a community and who we partner with when they learned about the Annual Charlevoix Service Event in Downtown Charlevoix on July 20th.

The weather was great and the interest was high for this special event, with many volunteers gathered to show the community how much we care about helping those in need. There were 12 booths from various other organizations in total.

FCUCC had a booth manned by Toby Jones, Max Carthew, and Suzanne Balter with help from The Morris family and Julie Geyer.

We had offerings of special cookies made in the shape of our church (thanks to Lani Ochs) and we handed out a lot of juice boxes.

It was a family outing with folks from Harbor Springs down to Ellsworth with many from out of town. A common question was "where is that church?" A few families from South America were very pleased to learn of our partnership with Guatemala.

The display and marketing materials are on display at the Reaching Out table in Ransom Hall, and we plan to have a presence at the Annual Muffin Sale this year as well. Volunteers are welcome to join!

Happy August Birthday



To the following Participants:

Lucy Witthoeft 8/3 * Kris Jones 8/5 * Kendra Gates 8/6
Sue Fowler 8/6 * Bill Trubilowicz 8/8 * Marilyn King 8/14
Bob Dominic 8/14 * Beverly Rudolph 8/14 * Chris Gengle 8/18
Shelley Fisher 8/19 * John Borths 8/24 * Susan Morris 8/26
Michelle Babcock 8/29 * Danielle Mason 8/30

Special Birthday Wishes

Dolores Cain turns 99 on 8/31!!

Wishing you calm seas for the year ahead!



AUG

MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
8/7 @ 9a

Reaching Out Team,
8/13 @ 9a

Church Council,
8/17 @ 11:45

Board of Trustees,
8/24 @ 11:45a

Reaching In Team meets on
the 1st Thursday at 9:00a

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

THOUGHT FOR THIS MONTH

Planting a Seed of Hope

*Every seed of hope I planted
had the possibility
to fuel my hope
for tomorrow.*

www.KathrynLang.com



Just a Reminder...



As Toby prepares for his two-month sabbatical, just a reminder that the Church Office WILL be open during this time with normal hours.

Pastor George Davis-Williams will be the Guest Pastor for five of the weeks, with other Guest Pastors to cover the three remaining weeks.

Our last service outdoor will be the Sunday before Labor Day, depending on the weather.

August 2025*



					FRI Aug 1	SAT 2
					Church Offices Closed	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
In-Person & Virtual Worship • 10:30am COMMUNION	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours		• 9am Reaching In Mtg • 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours 2 more	Church Offices Closed • 12:30pm COA Grief Sup	Muffin Sale
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
In-Person & Virtual Worship Seeds of Hope Fundraise	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours	• 9am Reaching Out Mee	• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours • 5:15pm Centering Prayer • 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	Church Offices Closed	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
In-Person & Virtual Worship • 11:45am Church Council	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours		• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours • 4pm Kerkstra/Olsen We 2 more	Church Offices Closed • 11am Kerkstra/Olsen We	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
In-Person & Virtual Worship • 10:30am Blessing of the 2 more	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	Rainbow Shoppe Board Mtg • 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours		• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours • 5:15pm Centering Prayer • 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	Church Offices Closed	
31	<p>*for more details, please go to the Calendar page on our website, www.CHXUCC.org</p>					
In-Person & Virtual Worship						

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

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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

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**."*