



The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



February
2026

From the Pastor...

Welcome to Lent 2026 and our Lenten Devotional Journey!



Lent is a season of reflection and preparation, consisting of the 40 days leading up to Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, when we are reminded of our mortality – “from the dust and ashes we were born and to dust and ashes we shall return” – and then concludes with the celebration of Jesus’s resurrection.

Lent is generally considered a somewhat solemn, reflective season, corresponding to the short, gray winter days and the long, dark winter nights. There are some branches of the Christian family tree who commemorate Lent by giving something up or making some sort of daily sacrifice in preparation for the sacrifice Jesus made on Good Friday.

But our UCC tradition tends more toward doing something positive, trying something new and Christlike. It’s in that spirit that your Reaching In Team and I are offering you two opportunities to make these 40-days positive and transformational for all of us.

Opportunity 1 – A devotional journey through the Psalms.

The Psalms are a collection of 150 prayers that grew directly out of ancient Israel’s lived experience. Hymns of praise after battle victories; songs of thanksgiving after the blessings of a harvest; cries of lamentation during the reign of a crooked, ungodly king; complaints calling Yahweh into account during long seasons of loss or hardship; and even cries for help when sickness or aging ravage the body, the Psalms cover a lot of emotional ground. They are raw and honest; they are passionate and intense; they are human and often easy to relate to.

The following is a selection of 40 Psalms that we invite you to read throughout Lent at a pace of one per day. You will find a list of several questions to prompt and guide your reflection, and the same 6 questions can be used consistently with each Psalm. In the spirit of our current sermon series, we are hoping you will use these Psalms as portals or entry points, linking your story with the larger story of God in the world. When have you felt the way the writer seems to feel? Who or what is it in our world that is frustrating or angering you, making you want to cry out to God in lament or complaint? Don’t hold back! Tear into these Psalms and allow them to tear into you. If there is one thing the Psalms should teach us it is that we worship a “no-holds-barred” God who can take any emotion that we can dish out.

We hope these Psalms will deepen and enrich not only your 2026 Lenten journey but your faith as well, giving you a way into the long-standing Judeo-Christian tradition of taking everything to God, including the profound political and national fear and frustration that so many of us are feeling in 2026 America.

Opportunity 2 – Four Soup and Bread Suppers with Meditation and Music

These gatherings will take place on four consecutive Wednesday evenings at 5:30 pm. The dates are February 18, 25th, and March 4 and 11th. We’ll begin in the sanctuary at 5:30 for the worship component and then retire to Ransom Hall by 6:00 for soup, bread, and conversation.

Thank you in advance for taking this Lenten journey with us. If you have any questions or would like to provide soup or bread, contact either Toby or Judy Siebert from the Reaching In team.



40 Psalms in 40 Days – A Lenten Devotional

Wed. 2/18 – Psalm 13
 Thurs. 2/19 – Psalm 5
 Fri. 2/20 – Psalm 10
 Sat. 2/21 – Psalm 12
 Sun. 2/22 – Psalm 16
 Mon. 2/23 – Psalm 14
 Tues. 2/24 – Psalm 15
 Wed. 2/25 – Psalm 37
 Thurs. 2/26 – Psalm 23
 Fri. 2/27 – Psalm 90
 Sat. 2/28 – Psalm 31
 Sun. 3/1 – Psalm 22
 Mon. 3/2 – Psalm 49
 Tues. 3/3 – Psalm 82
 Wed. 3/4 – Psalm 52
 Thurs. 3/5 – Psalm 57
 Fri. 3/6 – Psalm 60
 Sat. 3/7 – Psalm 2
 Sun. 3/8 – Psalm 64
 Mon. 3/9 – Psalm 73

Tues. 3/10 – Psalm 77
 Wed. 3/11 – Psalm 121
 Thurs. 3/12 – Psalm 84
 Fri. 3/13 – Psalm 85
 Sat. 3/14 – Psalm 86
 Sun. 3/15 – Psalm 27
 Mon. 3/16 – Psalm 94
 Tues. 3/17 – Psalm 100
 Wed. 3/18 – Psalm 101
 Thurs. 3/19 – Psalm 102
 Fri. 3/20 – Psalm 109
 Sat. 3/21 – Psalm 112
 Sun. 3/22 – Psalm 116
 Mon. 3/23 – Psalm 55
 Tues. 3/24 – Psalm 130
 Wed. 3/25 – Psalm 133
 Thurs. 3/26 – Psalm 136
 Fri. 3/27 – Psalm 139
 Sat. 3/28 – Psalm 140
 Sun. 3/29 – Psalm 146

Questions to Use with Each Daily Psalm:

To what kind of experience does the writer seem to be responding?
 Who or what from your current context did you find yourself thinking of here?
 What experience(s) have you had that could lead you to pray or feel this way?
 What connections and/or disconnections do you feel with this writer?
 How would it feel to express your feelings this way with a topic like this?
 How might you jump into this story and respond somehow?

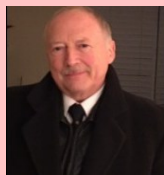
From the Church Council Team...



The 2026 Council looks forward to building upon the excellent and important work done under the leadership of Ellen Hess over the last two years, including the framework for our ministry. While a number of these efforts have been put into action, there are other aspects that we can continue to explore strategically in order to expand our impact serving the community. Meet the team poised to do this:



Denise Fate (Moderator) - Denise moved to SE Michigan from Texas in 1987 in conjunction with her 33-year career with VW/Audi, including overseas assignments. She and her husband Gary built a home at Charlevoix Country Club in 1999 and retired here full time around 2008. Denise has been involved with the board of the Charlevoix Historical Society for many years, and participating at FCUCC since 2020.



Max Carthew (Vice Moderator) - Max moved to Charlevoix from Rochester, MI, six years ago. An engineer by trade, he had his own business for 35 years. He joined FCUCC about four years ago and has been active on the Reaching Out committee, where he felt that he found his calling.



Darlene Heine - Darlene is a born and raised Charlevoixan with a 30 year hiatus while walking beside husband David through his 30 year Navy career. They moved back to Charlevoix in 2005 and are making their home on the family farm (since 1898). They started attending FCUCC about 2 years ago, finding they liked the more traditional form of service and music. Darlene's talents include music, playing alto saxophone (City band and Foghorn Jazz) and handbells.



Dianne Lyons - Dianne grew up in Owosso, MI, lived in Grand Rapids for 34 years and taught elementary school in Kentwood 20 years. She and her late husband retired in Central Lake in 2004. Dianne reunited with her college sweetheart, Charles Lyons in 2021 and they were married in September of 2025. They found FCUCC to be a church with a mission and outreach they can embrace.



Wanda Stopher - Wanda enjoyed many roles in her working life, including teaching and design. Prior to moving to Charlevoix from Ohio with her husband Bret in 2021, she spent 17 years in ministry, both congregational and conference/denominational roles. Currently Wanda enjoys walking the beach and volunteering for Hospice of Michigan. She has been attending FCUCC for about 4 years.

Notes From the Kitchen

Happy New Year!

Some thoughts on coffee hour should be shared as we step into 2026. First and foremost a shoutout of gratitude to all who frequently step forward to make coffee and conversation extra special by sharing sweet and savory treats. It wouldn't happen without your support



How You Can Help

Pick a Date & Sign Up

Volunteers are needed for the first two Sundays in February and all of March. Make life easy and sign up with a friend or other church participant. It's a wonderful way to get to know someone better. As you think about special events, perhaps you want to host coffee hour to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, favorite holiday, or anything else. You can pre-select any Sunday you would like and send me a text or email so that I might put your name in that date on our master schedule.

Remember, coffee hour doesn't need to be lavish. Everyone will be happy with whatever you bring: fruit, favorite cookies, coffeecake,

donut holes, cheese & crackers, whatever you'd like..

Bake Ahead & Freeze

Our kitchen freezer always has some extra space. Should you be ambitious and do some baking mid week, feel free to wrap up a few dozen cookies or a small cake and drop it off at church to be put in the freezer. Recently, someone made the cookies and dropped them off. We popped them in the ovens and enjoyed warm cookies after the service.

Sign up as a substitute

Having a list of backup people who might be able to step in when something happens is to our advantage. If you are willing to have your name on a list, please let me know so that I might reach out to you when we are in need of having someone fill-in for someone else who at the last minute cannot fulfill their coffee hour slot. This is not a definite commitment to assist on a given date, but rather my go to list of people to reach out to.

Finance coffee hour

If you're out of town or a streamer you may choose to finance coffee hour so that someone else might do the prep if you are not able. Last year coffee hour was sponsored

one Sunday by an out of town person who watches our live stream. How cool is that? With everything going on in society today, some people are willing to shop or bake but they're at a point in their life where they just can't afford it. Making a specified donation for an upcoming coffee & Conversation could be a Win-Win moment.

Anyway you look at it, *Coffee & Conversation* is a wonderful part of our Sundays at 1st Congregational Church. It wouldn't happen without your generous hearts and contributions. If at any point you have comments to share or questions please reach out to me at: text 312-608-3996 or Email mamamorris834@gmail.com.

In gratitude,
Susan Morris
Kitchen coordinator



New water glasses are in an upper cabinet near the microwave. We prefer that you use them to avoid the extra cost of disposables. The punch bowl and cups are still available for special events as desired, but remember those cups are small and for some people difficult to hold and drink from.



FEBRUARY
MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
2/5 @ 9a

Reaching Out Team,
2/11 @ 9a

Church Council,
2/15 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,
2/22 @ 9a

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

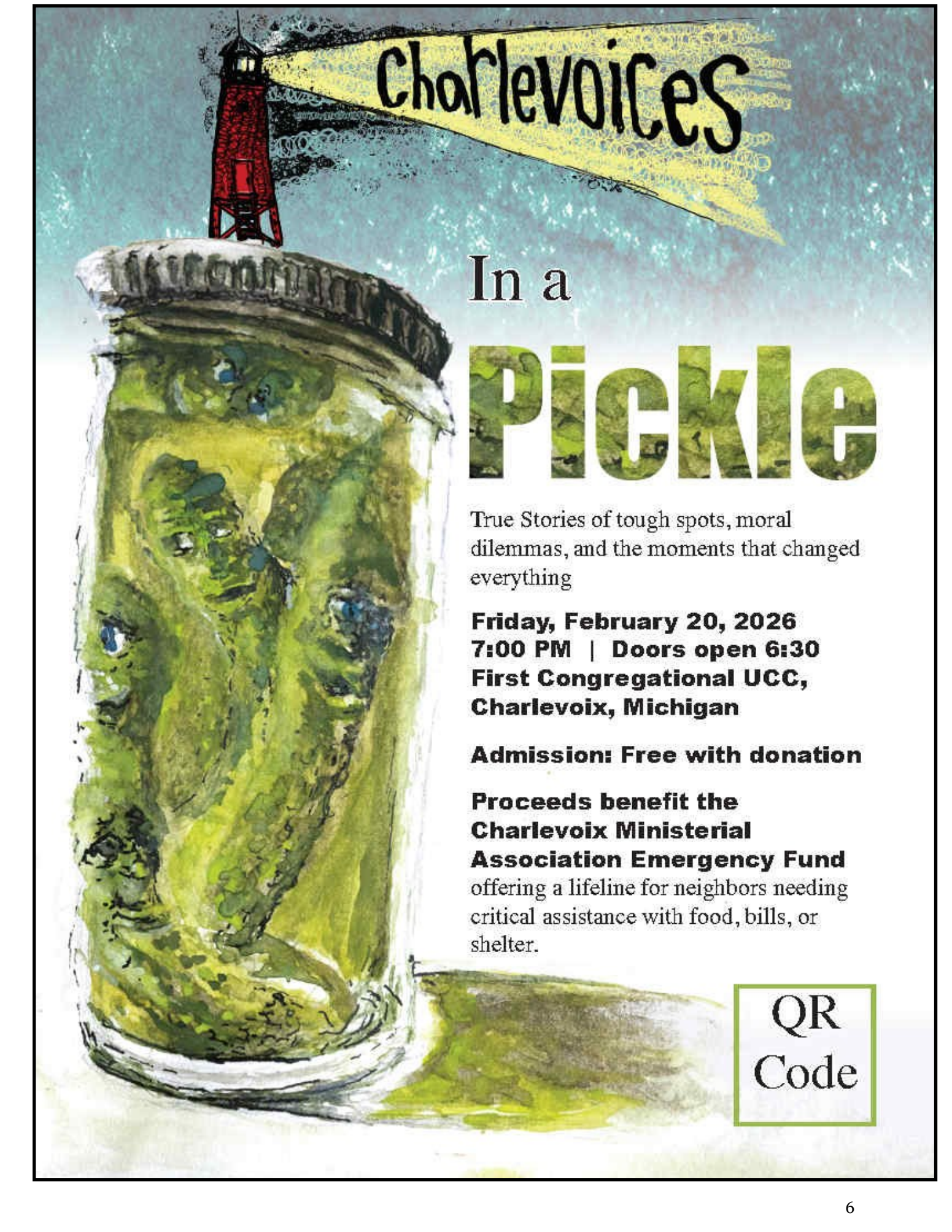
Board of Trustees meet on
the 4th Sunday at 9a

Thought for This Month...

**"Spread love everywhere you go.
Let no one ever come to you
without leaving happier."**

MOTHER TERESA



An artistic illustration of a large glass pickle jar. On top of the jar's lid sits a small red lighthouse with a black top and a white light. A bright yellow beam of light emanates from the lighthouse, shining across the top of the jar and illuminating the word 'Charlevoix' in a stylized, hand-drawn font. The jar itself is filled with a green, textured substance, and several human faces are visible within the jar, appearing to be submerged. The background is a mottled blue and green. The overall style is painterly and expressive.

Charlevoix

In a

Pickle

True Stories of tough spots, moral dilemmas, and the moments that changed everything

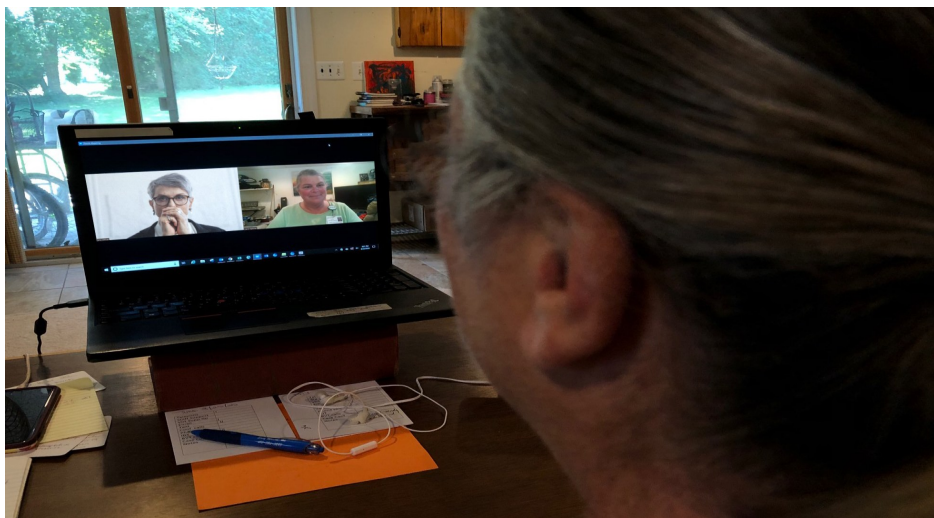
**Friday, February 20, 2026
7:00 PM | Doors open 6:30
First Congregational UCC,
Charlevoix, Michigan**

Admission: Free with donation

**Proceeds benefit the
Charlevoix Ministerial
Association Emergency Fund**
offering a lifeline for neighbors needing
critical assistance with food, bills, or
shelter.

QR
Code

Reaching In Team...

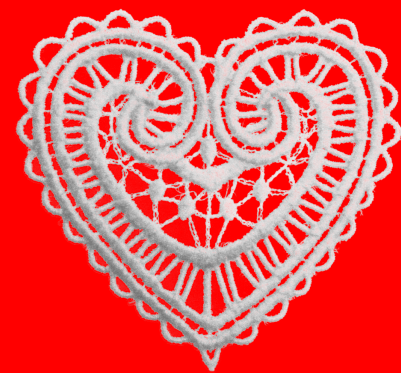


Virtual Grief Support Groups

From Erin Gray, Bereavement Coordinator, Munson, Traverse City:

"We have two main virtual groups. One is every Thursday at 10:00am and the other is every Friday at 10:30am. Typically people attend one or the other. The contact for the Thursday group is Sharon Neumann (sneumann@mhc.net) and the Friday group contact is Karen Henderlong (khenderlong@mhc.net)

We often encourage people to email hospicebereavement@mhc.net with interest and we can help direct them to the one that may be the best fit for them based on the current make up of each of those groups at any given time (group size, types of losses experienced by attendees, male/female, age, etc.)."



FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

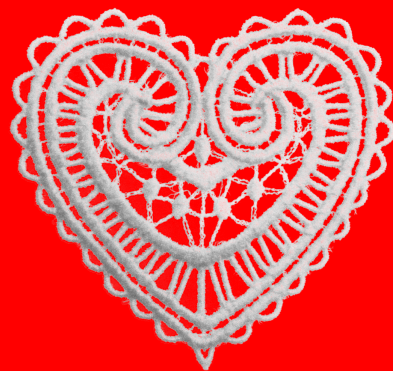
Feb. 1 **OPEN**
Feb. 8 ... **OPEN**
Feb. 15 ... **OPEN**
Feb. 22 ... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

Feb. 1 **The Ogdens**
Feb. 8 ... **OPEN**
Feb. 15 ... **Susan Morris**
Feb. 22 ... **Potluck Collaboration**

LAY READERS

Feb. 1 **Suzanne Balter**
Feb. 8 ... **OPEN**
Feb. 15 ... **Denise Fate**
Feb. 22 ... **OPEN**



Next Issue!

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

- ***Upcoming GLCO Concert***
- ***Switchback is returning! More news next month!***



NORTHERN MICHIGAN BRASS BAND

**Sunday, February 22
3:00 P.M.**

**Charlevoix
1st Congregational UCC**

\$15 Adults - All Students Admitted Free

an afternoon of wonderful music played by thirty of
northern Michigan's finest brass players

for further information

www.northernmichiganbrassband.org

**C
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February 2026*

*for more details,
please go to the Calendar page
on our website, www.CHXUCC.org

SUN Feb 1	MON 2	TUE 3	WED 4	THU 5	FRI 6	SAT 7
In-Person & Virtual Worship 10:30am COMMUNION 3:30pm Safe Haven Min	Main Church Office Closed 6pm Products Pantry	10am Prayer Group		9am Reaching In Mtg	Church Offices Closed	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
In-Person & Virtual Worship	Main Church Office Closed 6pm Products Pantry	10am Prayer Group	9am Reaching Out Mee		Church Offices Closed 12:30pm COA Grief Sup	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
In-Person & Virtual Worship 11:45am Church Council	Main Church Office Closed 6pm Products Pantry	10am Prayer Group	5:30pm Lenten Soup Mi		Church Offices Closed 7pm CharleVOICES: In z	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
In-Person & Virtual Worship Northern Michigan Brass 9am Trustee Meeting	Main Church Office Closed 6pm Products Pantry	10am Prayer Group	5:30pm Lenten Soup Mi		Church Offices Closed	

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**."*