

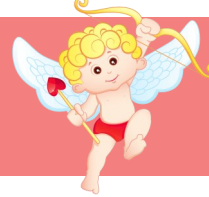
# The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



February  
2025

## FROM THE PASTOR...

February is a big travel month for me, as all of 2025 will be. I have so much to look forward to in my service to this church and to the larger community. First, from February 5-7, I will be down at Calvin University in Grand Rapids for their annual Worship Symposium. It is always a stimulating couple of days with guest speakers, musicians, and writers from all over the world. I'm taking Shelley with me this year, as she is long overdue for a little continuing education and inspiration.

Then, from February 22-March 1, I'll be down in Coyolate Guatemala with 6 other participants from our church. Our hope is to get a good start on building a small kitchen on the back end of a new pre-school. I am so excited about this trip, particularly because of the amazing team of people I'll be traveling and working with. You all will be in good hands back here on Sunday, 2/23 when Tom Cook returns to our pulpit, AND on March 2 when George Davis will preach. George has completed almost all of his final requirements for orientation, so be sure to congratulate him when he is here.



Guatemala Mission Group

Later this year, in September and October, I will be taking my first sabbatical since becoming your pastor. One of the big drawing cards of this church when I was looking for my next church 5

years ago was the generous sabbatical package that you offer. I am super excited to be able to go two places I have always wanted to go to have some very powerful spiritual experiences. My first stop will be Ireland to do a week-long retreat with one of my favorite theologians. That will be in Belfast, and from there I'll head across the island to Limerick where I will participate in the practices of an ancient Benedictine community at Glenstal Abbey. After that, I will spend another couple weeks seeing the sites of this country where so many of my ancestors were born.

*Happy*  
**VALENTINE'S**  
DAY

(Cont'd on next page)

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

The October phase of the journey will take me to the Basque region of Northern Spain, where I will walk a small chunk of The Camino. If you aren't familiar with this, I highly recommend a terrific Martin Sheen film called *The Way*. It will give you a sense of the scope and power of this famous pilgrimage. I have two nephews who live near Bilbao – where my walk will end – and I will stay with them and do some work on their in-laws farm for a week or so. They will show me all the highlights of the Basque Country, since my nephew's wife and her family are native to that region. From there I'll head south to Madrid to practice my Spanish and sample the cuisine, catching as many museums and cathedrals as I can.

Suffice it to say that 2025 will be one of the most remarkable and memorable years of my life, God willing, and I will be sure to share all of the fruits of these journeys with my wonderful church family who made it all possible. I am blessed to be your pastor.

### ***There's Still Time to Be a Part of our Poverty By America Book Group!***

This book study promises to be profound and life changing. Matthew Desmond, a decorated and Pulitzer Prize winning faculty member at Princeton has done something in this book that has truly never been done before. Rather than simply writing about the poor, he uncovers the subversive forces and systems that trap people in poverty, some of which we actually participate in unintentionally and unawares. You will never look at zoning laws and tax breaks the same after engaging this incredible book. Hope you'll join us for this 3-session journey on three consecutive Tuesdays in February – the 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> – from 7:15-8:30. There are still three copies in the church library to borrow.

# POVERTY, BY AMERICA

MATTHEW DESMOND  
PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR OF EVICTED

Written by Princeton professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Matthew Desmond, this award-winning book on economic justice has been on the New York Times Best-Seller list for months. Toby will be facilitating this Zoom-based book group on the first three Tuesdays in February – the 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> from 7:15-8:30pm. The book group discussion is supported by the Reaching In Team of FCUCC.

*Poverty, by America* explores concerns how the United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. "Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without the basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages? This book will deepen your understanding of poverty, its systemic causes, and all the unconscious and unintentional ways that we keep people poor both at home and abroad." This book is available on Amazon, in paperback and Kindle version. There will also be four copies available to sign out in the church library on a First-Come, First-Serve basis.

If you are interested in joining us for this important discussion, please fill out the form located on the back table under the Reaching In Bulletin Board and turn it into the office by Feb. 2, 2025.

# Sign Up Today!



## Our Journey with some young people through the BIGS program.

I found out about the BIGS program by chance at an “After Hours Chamber” meeting and decided to present it to our Reaching Out team. I have had two important mentors in my life, a high school teacher and a boss. We reached out early 2024 to our congregation and so far, we have 5 mentoring relationships in our community. Here are a few progress reports from our gregarious mentors:

*“I have been mentoring my “Little” brother Levi, who is 5 ft 10 in and 12 years old, for about a year now and it has been so rewarding for us both. Levi is a polite young man always ready to do fun projects and help out others in need. He is the social hub for his friends at school and they defer to him. Levi surprised himself using hand tools rather expertly for our model making. We are building a model Maine Lobster Boat out of a wooden kit and it is almost finished. We have turned our hand to baking bread and for his family and cooking up some strange concoctions. We meet every Thursday after school and generally go to our amazing library where we have everything we need. The staff are wonderful and they even have a white board for us to doodle on. I was surprised to learn that Levi and his friend Richard know a lot about history and we have discussed WW2 and the futility of war.” - **Max Carthew***

*“I recently joined the BBBS program to fill some of my spare time & to share some of things I did with my own daughters who are now grown with another young person. I met Kamri in July of this past year. She is an active 6 year old. We meet for about 2 hours every 2 weeks or so. We have spent time at the beach, rock hunting, having dinner at Culver’s, getting our nails done, working in my garden, making gingerbread houses at the library and going to the movies. Her favorite place to go is, however, open swim at the Charlevoix pool. Since we have been together, she has learned to blow bubbles, hold her breath underwater, float, and is now working on some swimming strokes. I really enjoy seeing her be excited & proud of herself about her progress at the pool. We both look forward to the time we spend together.” - **Christine Mason***

*“My first year as a Big Sister has been so rewarding. I wanted to help out, and with my kids far away, I missed spending time with young people. I was matched with Bella, who is 12, last January. We started simple - working on art together at the library and walking on the snowy beach. When I was gone in March and April, I sent her postcards. When I returned, we went mushrooming, worked in my garden, and went to Raven Hill. In the summer, we went swimming and boating and did more gardening and art projects. In the fall, we picked pears and carved pumpkins. Bella loves to cook, so we’ve made soup, quiche, apple pie, and lots of cookies together. We meet every Tuesday afternoon after school and really enjoy it. Bella feels like part of my family now, and she says the same about me.” - **Suzanne Balter***

*“I only recently became a big brother to William, an energetic 5th grader at Charlevoix Elementary School. We have lunch together every Thursday in a special meeting room that gives us a chance to talk, play games, and eat our lunches together. William is a fascinating boy with a lot of challenges in his life. He has been waiting a long time to get paired up with a Big Brother and seems so excited to finally have one. I’m excited too and know that we will enhance each other’s lives in important ways. I’ve been super impressed with the elementary school’s commitment to making this program work and even more impressed by the local Big Brothers/Big Sisters program here in Charlevoix. I hope others in our church family will give this a try. You’ll be glad you did.” - **Toby Jones***

*“**Jennifer Carroll** has spent many special moments with MaKenzie since they first met in June, 2024 through Big Brothers, Big Sisters. MaKenzie, 12, lives in Ellsworth near Jennifer and her husband, Stan. They enjoy outings outdoors, have played in Lake Michigan waves, visited an organic farm with cows, pigs and lambs, attended parades. Inside they’ve shared their love of music and art, compiling crafts and giving each other impromptu percussive concerts. They look forward to more in 2025, including celebrating MaKenzie’s 13th birthday in late January.”*





# Guatemala Mission Trip

Saturday, February 22 to  
Saturday, March 1, 2025

Please hold the following people in your prayers as they help  
FCUCC expand their global support.

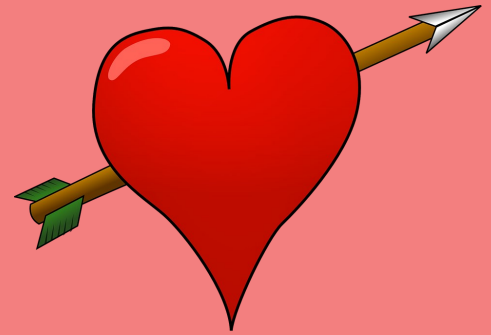
*Scott Carbeck \* Hugh Hansen \* Toby Jones  
Jeff Kloiber \* Hagen Manken \* Karl Meisel  
Greta Meisel*

There will be a lot of incidental expenses associated with this trip - everything from the extra baggage  
expense of the supplies we'll be delivering to airport parking, to gas to and from the airport, etc.

If you would like to support these or any of the other expenses associated with this trip, feel free to write a  
check made out to 1st Congregational Church, being sure to write "Guatemala trip" in the menu line. All of  
our travelers are paying their own way down and back, so any support would be greatly appreciated. We are  
also looking for donations of LARGE suitcases that can be left in Guatemala. Old softside suitcases are fine.

Please contact Toby if you have some. These are needed right away.

Thank you!



## **FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS**

### **GREETERS**

Feb 2 .... **OPEN**  
Feb. 9 ... **OPEN**  
Feb 16 ... **OPEN**  
Feb. 23 ... **OPEN**

### **COFFEE HOUR HOSTS**

Feb 2 .... **OPEN**  
Feb. 9 ... **The Wadland's**  
Feb 16 ... **Kris Jones**  
Feb. 23 ... **Ellen Kendall/  
Karen Joy**

### **LAY READERS**

Feb 2 .... **Alice Pletz-Miller**  
Feb. 9 ... **OPEN**  
Feb 16 ... **OPEN**  
Feb. 23 ... **OPEN**

## **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 March...***

- ***Guatemala Trip Highlights***
- ***Info on upcoming events from Reaching Out and Reaching In***

***NMBB In Concert Here!***



**NORTHERN MICHIGAN BRASS BAND**

**Sunday, February 23  
3:00 P.M.**

**First Congregational Church UCC  
of Charlevoix**

an afternoon of wonderful music played by twenty-  
nine of northern Michigan's finest brass players

\$10 General Admission  
All Students Admitted Free

*for further information*

**[www.northernmichiganbrassband.org](http://www.northernmichiganbrassband.org)**

**C  
O  
N  
C  
E  
R  
T**

***A HUGE THANK YOU!!!***



**The staff of 1st Congregational UCC is sending out a HUGE “Thank You” to everyone who donated toward the staff bonus’s for 2024.**

**Your generosity is beyond measure and is truly appreciated by all of us! This is a congregation that we all feel truly blessed to be a part of!**

*- Toby, Shelley, Larry, and Stacey*



## ***A Note from the Church Office***

As most of you know, Linda Weller has been my backup here in the office whenever I go on vacation or need to take a day off. Linda is very good at helping me, but we could use a backup for the backup, as Linda's schedule this year will be unpredictable.

This will be a PAID backup position, and if you are needed, you will be given a lot of notice ahead of time. Interested persons should be comfortable around a computer, and have basic Outlook (email) experience, as well as basic MS Office experience (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher), and a Participant in the church. There is no need to worry if you need to brush up on skills that haven't been used in a while. I will train you. There is also an updated Office Procedure Manual that I made sure is easy to follow if you have questions and can't reach me.

The hours would be in between Tuesday and Thursday, and 9a-3p. If you need to find out what it would be like, you can talk to Linda Weller about her views being my backup.

Thank you in advance for your consideration! - *Stacey*



*Happy February Birthday*

To these Fellow Participants...

Dave Kendall 2/4 \* Steve Hansen 2/7 \* Bill Rudolph 2/13

Bob Dion 2/15 \* Mary Ann Chew 2/17 \* Denise Fate 2/20

Mary Tate 2/21 \* Alison Swope 2/23

Bill Picotte 2/24 \* Marge McGoff 2/26

*Sending love your way on your special day!!*

**FEBRUARY**

**MEETING TIMES:**

Reaching In Team,  
2/4 @ 5P

Reaching Out Team,  
2/5 @ 9a

Church Council,  
2/16 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,  
2/23 @ 11:45a

Reaching In Team meets on  
the 1st Tuesday at 5p

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

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**

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

MOTHER THERESA

FEARLESS SOUL | ITUNES, SPOTIFY, GOOGLEPLAY

**Just a Reminder...**

Due to the Guatemala Mission Trip from Feb. 22-29, there will be NO Scripture Group Meeting on Feb 25, and NO CMA Hours held on Feb 25 or 27.

Toby will be one of those who will be participating, so he will be unavailable. We will have a Guest Pastor on Feb. 23 & March 2.

Let's all hold those who are going to support the people of Coyolate, Guatemala up in prayer during their travels.



# February 2025\*



SAT  
Feb 1

2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<p><b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10:30am COMMUNION</li> <li>11:30am Coffee Hour</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main Church Office Closed</b></p> <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> <li>7:15pm Book Group: Po</li> </ul>	<p><b>Toby Out of Office</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5pm Centering Prayer C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<p><b>Church Offices Closed</b></p>	
<p><b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11:30am Coffee Hour</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main Church Office Closed</b></p> <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> <li>7:15pm Book Group: Po</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5pm Centering Prayer C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<p><b>Church Offices Closed</b></p>	
<p><b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11:30am Coffee Hour</li> <li>11:45am Church Council</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main Church Office Closed</b></p> <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> <li>7:15pm Book Group: Po</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5pm Centering Prayer C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11am CMA Hours 11a-2p</li> </ul>	<p><b>Church Offices Closed</b></p>	<p><b>Guatemala Mission Trip</b></p>
<p><b>Guatemala Mission Trip</b></p> <p><b>In-Person &amp; Virtual Worship</b></p> <p>3 more</p>	<p><b>Main Church Office Closed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6pm Products Pantry</li> </ul>	<p><b>NO CMA HOURS THIS WEEK</b></p> <p><b>NO SCRIPTURE GROUP</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5pm Centering Prayer C</li> </ul>	<p><b>NO CMA HOURS THIS WEEK</b></p>	<p><b>Church Offices Closed</b></p>	

**\*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**."*