

The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



**January
2025**



FROM THE PASTOR...

Happy New Year, everyone! Let me begin by thanking each of you for all the things you did to make 2024 such a banner year in the life of our church with the purple doors. Our incredible season of Advent couldn't have happened without all the significant behind-the-scenes contributions from our Trustees, Council, Reaching In and Reaching Out teams, our entire staff, and the dedicated work of so many of you, who did things like decorated the sanctuary, met with CMA clients, hosted our craft-making day, baked and sold cookies, prepared our budget, or signed cards of concern and support for our friends in and outside the church family. I have been a pastor for a long time and have served many churches and organizations. But I have never felt so thankful to be serving than I am right here with all of you.

And now it's on to 2025. Can you believe we are a quarter of the way into what we used to call "the new millennium?" Fasten your seatbelts; not only is time flying, but this God of ours has got some incredible things in store for us, as we continue to seek to be:

- A community of faith growing in love
- Espousing Jesus as the Word of God
- Reaching In and Reaching Out
- Making community connections near and far, and
- Opening our doors and hearts ever wider to all God's children as we grow in love

These five affirmations of who we are as 1st Congregational United Church of Christ are more than just words on a page. They are a clear expression of what makes us unique among all the other churches in the area. They remind us of our priorities; they guide us as we plan what we will do in 2025 and beyond; they help us make decisions about what to do with our financial, physical, and human resources; and they call us to move ever closer to Jesus, the one Isaiah called "Wonderful Counselor", "Mighty God", "Everlasting Father", "Prince of Peace".

We'll begin 2025 with a focus on our emerging international partnership with Guatemala. Throughout January and February, our Reaching Out team has events and opportunities planned that will enable all of us to learn more about our Central American neighbor. In late February, I'll be taking a team of 7 people to Coyolate, a tiny village in the southern portion of Guatemala, to help build a small kitchen on the back of new pre-school. Schools in this developing nation must have the capacity to feed their students during the school day, since so few of them will have access to nutritious meals once they get home. We'll be working with an organization called "Healthy Communities" founded by Gerber Perez. On January 12th, during our special Guatemalan Coffee Hour, you'll have a chance to "meet" Gerber in a live Zoom call, as you sample Guatemalan cuisine.

(Cont'd on next page)

2025
HAPPY
NEW
YEAR

From the Pastor... (cont.d)

Your Reaching Out Team has also compiled a reading list for those of us wanting to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Guatemala, a very complicated and tragic history, particularly when we consider the damaging role the US has played in Guatemala's development over the years. The more we know about that history, the better equipped we will be to play a positive and redemptive role in the new Guatemala, represented by Gerber and Healthy Communities.

You'll soon see a list of supplies – both medical and school supplies – we'll be collecting to send down with our 7-person team. This supply-raising endeavor allows those of us who won't be going on the trip to still participate in this mission in a significant and supportive way. Thank you for doing your part.

Your Reaching In team is supporting this overall effort by leading a book study on *Poverty, by America*. 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. I'll be facilitating this Zoom-based book group on the first three Tuesdays in February – the 4th, 11th, and 18th from 7:15-8:30pm. *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 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. Please consider joining us for this important discussion.

Again, thank you so much for being a family of faith of which I am so proud to be a part. Keep up the great work as we begin another year of ministry together.

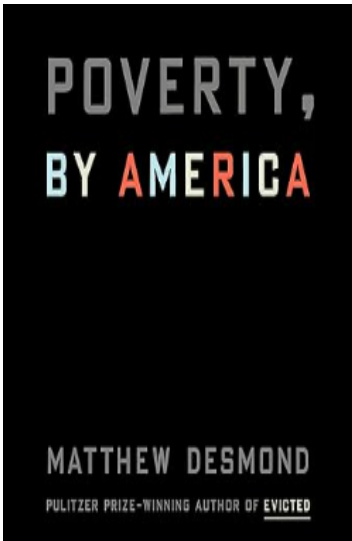
January 26th to be a Big Day in the Life of Our Church!

Mark your calendars for the Congregational meeting immediately after worship on January 26th, the purpose of which will be to formally approve the budget the trustees have presented to us. You'll receive a summary of the budget in a couple of weeks (and you may also have access to the whole document if you desire) as you prepare for this important, year-shaping meeting.

Immediately after this meeting, all of our elected officers and ministry teams will be gathering in Ransom Hall for an important retreat to further shape the direction of 2025 for our small but mighty family of faith. All our ministry teams will be diving more deeply into the 5 aspects of who we are (see Toby's article above), learning how each of us may use these simple talking points in our interactions with those outside our church, since nearly 3/4ths of Charlevoix residents do not have a church to call home. How will they ever consider 1st Congregational if we don't provide them with a clear sense of who we are and why we are so excited about our church with the purple doors?

We all want to share our enthusiasm for 1st Congregational with others; but we don't really know how, nor do we feel comfortable doing so. The goal of this retreat - and the various gatherings that what will follow it – is to equip all of us to be effective ambassadors for this church that continues to make a huge difference in our life.

Please pray for this retreat and for our leaders, as they set the tone for how we will better reach the Charlevoix area with the good news of what God is doing in and through us at 101 State St. Thank you!



Annual Meeting Announcement



1ST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
ANNUAL CHURCH
Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to approve the budget for 2025.

Please stay in your seats after worship is complete.

JAN 26, 2025 | **11:30**
SUNDAY | AM

From the MI Conference UCC



Advent and Christmas Blessings

FROM THE STAFF OF THE
MICHIGAN CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Work of Christmas

~ By Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

From the Music Director



Choir practices will be suspended until sometime in the spring due to low numbers and lack of sopranos.

If you would like to share a solo or have ideas for a small ensemble, even when the choir is not up and running, please let Shelley Fisher know.

Her email is: r.shelley.fisher@gmail.com

Have a Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!

GROUP MEDITATION/ CENTERING PRAYER

Are you experiencing the winter blues? Cabin fever? Anxiety, stress or worry about anything in your life? We are offering a soothing, healing atmosphere for you to experience the peace that meditation and centering prayer can provide. Come join us for meditative piano music, candlelight, quiet centering prayer and guidance each Wednesday evening beginning January 8th from 5:00 - 5:45 in our beautiful sanctuary. The time is yours, even if you can only join us for 15 or 20 minutes, it's ok. You are welcome. Also, please help spread the word. Everyone is welcome.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for you souls."

-Matthew 11:29

Next Issue!

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

- Guatemala Support Events
- Updates from the new Leadership Team



JANUARY VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

Jan. 5 OPEN
Jan. 12 ... OPEN
Jan. 19 ... OPEN
Jan. 26 ... OPEN

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

Jan. 5 OPEN
Jan. 12 ... OPEN
Jan. 19 ... OPEN
Jan. 26 ... OPEN

LAY READERS

Jan. 5 OPEN
Jan. 12 ... OPEN
Jan. 19 ... OPEN
Jan. 26 ... 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.

Another Successful Cookie Walk!

Our Cookie Walk was a resounding success this year. A special THANK YOU to everyone who contributed: the bakers, helpers, donors,, buyers, and my faithful committee. We are able to donate \$1000 more than last year to the Reaching Out Committee!

Marty T





Happy JANUARY Birthday

To the following Participants

- Bret Stopher 1/6
- Ginnie Schairbaum 1/13
- Vince Chew 1/16
- Molly Kitson 1/22

Wishing you all a Joyous Year ahead!

JANUARY MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
1/7 @ 5P

Reaching Out Team,
1/8 @ 9a

Church Council,
1/19 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,
TBD

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

Reaching Out Team meets on
the 1st 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

“

Let our New Year’s resolution be this: We will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word.

GÖRAN PERSSON

PureWow

Just a Reminder...

Church offices will be closed from 12/23/24 to 1/6/25 in observance of the Holidays.

There will be NO CMA Hours during that time and the Scripture Discussion Group will not meet next again until Jan. 7th.

Happy New Year to All!!



January 2025*

			WED Jan 1	THU 2	FRI 3	SAT 4
			NO CMA HOURS			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
In-Person & Virtual Worsh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30am COMMUNION 11:30am Coffee Hour 	Main Church Office Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Scripture Discuss 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Centering Prayer C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	Church Offices Closed	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
In-Person & Virtual Worsh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am Coffee Hour 	Main Church Office Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Scripture Discuss 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Centering Prayer C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	Church Offices Closed	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
In-Person & Virtual Worsh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am Coffee Hour 11:45am Church Council 	Main Church Office Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Scripture Discuss 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Centering Prayer C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	Church Offices Closed	
26	27	28	29	30	31	
In-Person & Virtual Worsh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am ALL Church Me 2 more 	Main Church Office Close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Scripture Discuss 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Centering Prayer C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p 	Church Offices Closed	

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

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



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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

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**."*