

The Open Door



January
2026

From the Pastor...

A Theme for A New Year Together...

For centuries and even millennia, we Christians have looked at the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as finished stories that we are to read, remember, and reflect upon. The stories, we assume, have a finished quality to them. They happened centuries ago and bear witness to what our faith ancestors experienced; they are *their* experiences, in other words, NOT ours.

I have come to realize in recent years that this very perspective has everything to do with the utter impotence of Christianity in the modern world. Our children and grandchildren see no value in the repetitious reading of these old, old stories, particularly when they strike them as so improbable and even fanciful.

So, what I am going to ask us to consider together, as 2026 begins, is what if these stories were actually designed to inspire us to live into the on-going narrative of human history? What if these old, old stories are supposed to get us to examine the stories we are living, with an eye toward living a better story than the one we're in? For example, we find ourselves right now in America living a story based on fear – fear of the foreigner and the immigrant, fear of the other political party, fear of scarce resources. As I read the scriptures – and particularly the life and teachings of Jesus – I see people living out hospitality toward foreigners and extending generosity to one another. Thanks to the scriptural narrative, I see that as a superior story and approach to life than the fear-based story our culture is caught in. I am choosing, therefore, to live a better story.

As we enter 2026, I am hoping that we can learn to read and experience the transforming power of scripture by not relegating it to a collection of old, old stories we admire, but rather as an on-going story that we are invited into as full participants in God's on-going action in the world.

We get to choose the story we live. No matter how old we are, if we're still drawing breath, that means there are still blank pages in our life stories. What story do you want to live according to with what remains of your life?

2026
HAPPY NEW YEAR



CharleVOICES: “In a Pickle”

February 20, 2026
1st Congregational UCC

Call for Storytellers

Have you ever found yourself stuck, cornered, or caught in a situation with no easy way out?

“In A Pickle” invites true, personal stories about those moments when life left you brined in uncertainty - emotionally, morally, relationally, or hilariously.

What We’re Looking For:

- True, personal stories (no fiction)
- Honest moments of tension, humor, insight, or growth
- Stories that reveal something human and relatable

What to Know:

- Stories are told live on stage
- Five storytellers will be chosen
- Stories will be chosen to include a variety of tales
- Story length should be 8-10 minutes and told, not read from a page.

You don’t need to be a performer - if you’ve lived it, you can tell it. Contact Betty Wadland at (231) 330-5441 to submit a story idea, or for more information. Please be sure to leave a message.

From the Reaching Out Team...



Celebrating Our Outgoing Reaching Out Team Members Max Carthew, Linda Moore, and Bud Stout

As this year comes to a close, we pause to celebrate and express deep gratitude for three devoted members of our Reaching Out team whose terms of service are concluding: **Max Carthew, Linda Moore, and Bud Stout**. Their dedication, compassion, and quiet leadership have strengthened our church's mission to care for our neighbors—within our community and beyond.

Max Carthew has been a steady presence on the team, offering both energy and heart to every project. Reflecting on his years of service, Max shared:

"I have served our community through the RO team for a few years and met so many wonderful people working to fill the gaps in our society, especially those in need. I have received much more than I have given on this journey so I hope some of you will give a little of your time to serve or help these efforts. The work must go on. Carpe Diem."

Linda Moore has brought vision, initiative, and a deep commitment to justice—particularly through her leadership in launching efforts around affordable worker housing. Linda said:

"It's very rewarding to help people in the community become more aware of the need for workforce housing. Once they understand how it benefits all of us and brings much needed folks to Charlevoix, they will want to do what they can to make workforce housing projects happen!"

Bud Stout, who has served faithfully as treasurer, reflected on his journey with the team:

"When I received an invitation to become the treasurer of the Reaching Out team, I didn't know the members nor what the committee did, but that quickly changed as we took on the committee's existing responsibilities and commitments as well as began exploring future 'service' opportunities for our Church and Community. We soon became a cohesive group. Working with my associates has been a special treasure."

Through Reaching Out, I've come to know and feel the true thankfulness and appreciation of those agencies, people, and organizations both near and far we serve every day. They love us and we love them and you. I thank all of you for the opportunity to serve with you and for you. May we continue to expand our 'Love for our Neighbors' and the less fortunate: 'No Exceptions.'"

Max, Linda, and Bud have helped shape this ministry and enrich our church community.

If you also feel called to help meet needs in our community and beyond, we warmly invite you to consider joining the Reaching Out team. Whether you are drawn to hands-on service, community partnerships, or behind-the-scenes support, there is a place for your gifts.



Annual **CONGREGATIONAL** *Meeting*

immediately after service
to approve budget for 2026

JAN

25th

2026



*Opening the Doors of Possibility
1st Congregational Church*

Happy JANUARY Birthday

To the Following Participants:

Bret Stopher 1/6

Ginnie Schairbaum 1/13

Vince Chew 1/16

Molly Boyd 1/22

Best wishes for a Bright & Shiny Year Ahead!



JANUARY

MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
1/8 @ 9a

Reaching Out Team,
1/14 @ 9a

Church Council,
1/18 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,
1/25 @ 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...



Reaching Out Team: January - February Focus Area

Our Reaching Out Team has chosen to focus on housing scarcity in Charlevoix County because it is directly impacting our city, local businesses, and essential employers. Many workers and service providers are struggling to find stable, affordable housing—an urgent challenge that affects the well-being and long-term sustainability of our entire community.

Alongside outlining the problem, we will also share hopeful and innovative housing solutions, including intentional communities, which offer one promising way to help address and circumvent these challenges.



Theme Lead(s)

The theme will be led by Lisa Copass, with support from the Reaching Out Team.

Planned Activities

-Coffee & Conversation Guest Speaker

-We will welcome a guest speaker who is building an off-the-grid eco-village of self-sustaining, affordable cottages designed for community living. They will share insights into innovative housing solutions and the future of housing in our region.

-Lisa Copass will take us inside her journey of building a Tiny Village for Unhoused Youth, sharing inspiring success stories and the real impact this innovative project has made in the community.

-Ongoing Support: We will continue to support some of the developers building workforce housing, including; John Kurtz (who bought the Timms property on Garfield and Sheridan), David Anderson at 1st Baptist Church in Charlevoix, and CJ Rapp who is working with the counties to zone his land for an intentional community near Mancelona, MI.

-Community Call to Action — Expand Local Housing Options: We invite everyone to reflect on whether you have space that could help ease our community's housing shortage. This could include:

-Building a small backyard cottage (ADU) to rent

-Adding an apartment above or within a garage

-Renting out a spare room in your home

-Converting a home into a duplex with a separate entrance Small additions like these can make a meaningful impact on housing availability in Charlevoix County.

How You Can Get Involved

Participants are encouraged to:

-Attend the Coffee & Conversation speaker session

-Share information or leads on available housing for the resource database

-Explore whether your property could support an additional housing option

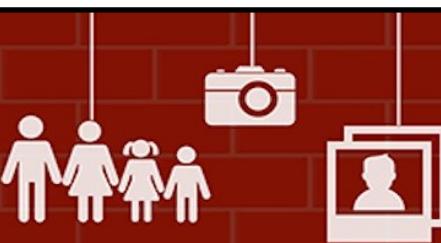
-Engage in conversations and invite others who care about the issue

To get involved, please reach out to Lisa Copass or any member of the Reaching Out team.

2026 Church Directories

We are updating the

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Once again we will be putting out new directories for our church participants. They will come in two forms: 1) A Participant Phone Directory (ALL participants - no photos will be included), and 2) a Participant Photo directory with only names and photos, no contact info.

Please take a moment to think about whether you have any updates to your information, such as new phone number, changed email address, or if you have a secondary address to add or update.

Also, this is a GREAT time to update your photo if you haven't in a while, or add a photo if you don't currently have one. We really need a new, current picture of everyone, so it actually looks like what you look like NOW. Only those people with updated, current photos will be included in the photo directory. Participant Contact Update forms are located on the table in Ransom Hall under the Reaching In Team board, and on the table outside the Sanctuary. Feel free to send your photo to the office at office@chxucc.org, or stop into the office Tues-Thur from 9a-3p and Stacey will take a photo, or scan one for you.

Thanks again for your help in making this coming years Directory the best ever!

Next Issue!

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

- *Upcoming events*
- *What to look forward to in the New Year at FCUCC!*



JANUARY VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

Jan. 4 **OPEN**
Jan. 11 ... **OPEN**
Jan. 18 ... **OPEN**
Jan. 25 ... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

Jan. 4 **Bruce & Joyce Herbert**
Jan. 11 ... **Colin Morris, Susan Warner, & Lisa Copass**
Jan. 18 ... **Suzanne Balter**
Jan. 25 ... **Potluck Collaboration**

LAY READERS

Jan. 4 **Suzanne Balter**
Jan. 11 ... **OPEN**
Jan. 18 ... **OPEN**
Jan. 25 ... **OPEN**



You're Invited!



On Sunday, January 4th, come celebrate Larry Minch's decades of loyal service as our Church Custodian.

You could make it extra special by either bringing a personal note or card for Larry, or tell a brief story you have about his service.

THANK YOU!!!



January 2026*



THU Jan 1	FRI 2	SAT 3
		Church Offices Closed
4 Church Office Closed for In-Person & Virtual Wors • 10:30am COMMUNION	5 Main Church Office Close • 6pm Products Pantry	6 • 10am Prayer Group 7 • 12pm Lunch & Learn: Fc • 9am Reaching In Team 8 9 Church Offices Closed • 12:30pm COA Grief Sup
11 In-Person & Virtual Wors	12 Main Church Office Close • 6pm Products Pantry	13 • 10am Prayer Group 14 • 9am Reaching Out Mee • 12pm Lunch & Learn: Fc
18 In-Person & Virtual Wors • 11:45am Church Counci	19 Main Church Office Close • 6pm Products Pantry	20 • 10am Prayer Group 21 • 12pm Lunch & Learn: Fc
25 In-Person & Virtual Wors • 9am Trustee Meeting • 11:30am CONGREGATI	26 Main Church Office Close • 6pm Products Pantry	27 • 10am Prayer Group 28 29 30 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!



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

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**."*