

The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



FROM THE PASTOR...

By the time this newsletter reaches your inbox, God willing, I will be in Coyolate, Guatemala with our 7-person team, building a kitchen and a couple of bathrooms on the end of a brand-new pre-school. (See the pictures adjacent to this article on the next page.)

This trip is the culmination of so many prayers, so much dedication, and a great deal of generosity by many of you in our church family. Our whole team is profoundly aware that we are only on this trip because of our church's vision to reach out and open the doors of our church more and more widely. Thank you!

While we're down here, I will have the opportunity to preach at the village church in Coyolate. (And I thought I'd get the week off from preaching.) The good news is my message will be translated into Spanish on the spot by a translator affiliated with Healthy Communities. The bad news is that my sermon will take twice as long, as I must pause every couple of sentences to let the translator catch up in Spanish. Our team will also be called upon to sing a couple songs to the villagers, and that may be the part of the trip I'm most nervous about, given that several of our team members can't carry a tune in a bucket. (I will not name names.) But the beautiful part about a team is that those same non-singers happen to be some of the most skilled construction folks I've ever seen. Not all of us have the same gifts and skill sets. Thank God for that!

We appreciate your faithful prayers, both while we are down here and traveling back home. You have been with us in a real and powerful way throughout this journey, and we have felt your support. We'll have much to share when we return. Keep up the great work, and thank you for making this long-time dream of establishing an international partnership in ministry come true.

(Cont'd on next page)

Happy St. Patrick's Day

From the Pastor (cont'd)



Welcome to Our New Council Member!



Our Church Council will be welcoming a new member in March! Wanda Stopher will be filling an unexpected vacancy on that team. She is a retired Mennonite pastor with a heart for peacemaking and bringing people together for tough but necessary conversations.

We are so excited to have Wanda join our Church Leadership!



One day in late 2023, our Reaching Out committee was getting together when Toby said he had received a rather unusual letter. A man who was in Marquette prison had written to us asking if we could provide some new or used work clothes and boots for his impending release. His name is John Howard and he said he had seen our live stream service and was drawn to our open and accepting style. His sister, Eloise, lived in Boyne City so he asked us to deliver the clothing there.

We all agreed that we had to answer the call as Jesus would. Max agreed to reach out to Eloise to make sure this was legit and Heather agreed to do the shopping for the items he had listed. We set aside a budget of \$200. Max met with the sister and it is hard to describe the look in her eyes when she understood what we were willing to do for this man we had never met.

John was in for armed robbery serving 23 years, so he would be getting out at the age of 58. He was supposed to be released in March 2024 but was given another 12 months for skipping his parole from a previous infraction in Ohio. John is currently in an Ohio facility expecting to go before the Ohio Parole Board in March of this year.

We have been in regular correspondence with John, and it is clear that he has found the teachings of Jesus to be a life-line. He has done much to improve his outlook and his skills, and his letters bear witness to the fact that he is a changed man. His goal is to be paroled to Michigan to his sister in Boyne City, to find a job and to serve the community in some way through our church.

To help secure his parole to Michigan, we have been able to find an employer in Charlevoix that is willing to give him a job in their manufacturing facility. We have a letter from the owner agreeing to interview John for a position they are trying to fill. In addition, Toby has written a letter to the Parole Board showing our solidarity with John and stating our willingness to help with his transition back to society. John feels very connected to our community and always signs his letters “your brother in Christ.”

We know the chances of John making a good life for himself after being cut off from society all these years are not good. It will take a lot of people lending a hand to make this work. I put myself in his shoes and wonder what I would feel coming back to the mainstream society. Simple acts of kindness make all the difference.

We are looking for a local place for John to live here in Charlevoix, so he can be close to his job. If you have any ideas or contacts that might have some very affordable housing for John this Spring, please let me know. We are looking at all options. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated. Please see me during Coffee Hour to learn more.

Time to Spring Forward!

TIME TO SPRING FORWARD. ARE YOU READY?

MARCH 9, 2025 AT 2AM

A Terrific Reaching In Opportunity!



Centering Prayer/Meditation Group

Feeling down? Stressed? Tired of winter yet? Come join the warmth of Divine Love and friendship in our new meditation/centering prayer format each Wednesday evening from 5:00 til 5:45 pm in our beautiful sanctuary. Relaxing piano sounds, candles, and guided imagery to help you connect and open to Divine love.

No need to rsvp or register. Feel free to just stop in!

Hosted by Shelley Fisher & Bill Wadland



MARCH VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

Mar 2 OPEN
Mar 9 ... OPEN
Mar 16 ... OPEN
Mar 23 ... OPEN
Mar. 30... OPEN

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

Mar 2 The Trubilowicz's
Mar 9 ... OPEN
Mar 16 ... The Ogden's
Mar 23 ... OPEN
Mar. 30 ... Carolyn Klender/
Ingrid Nedwick

LAY READERS

Mar 2 Alice Pletz-Miller
Mar 9 ... OPEN
Mar 16 ... OPEN
Mar 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 April...

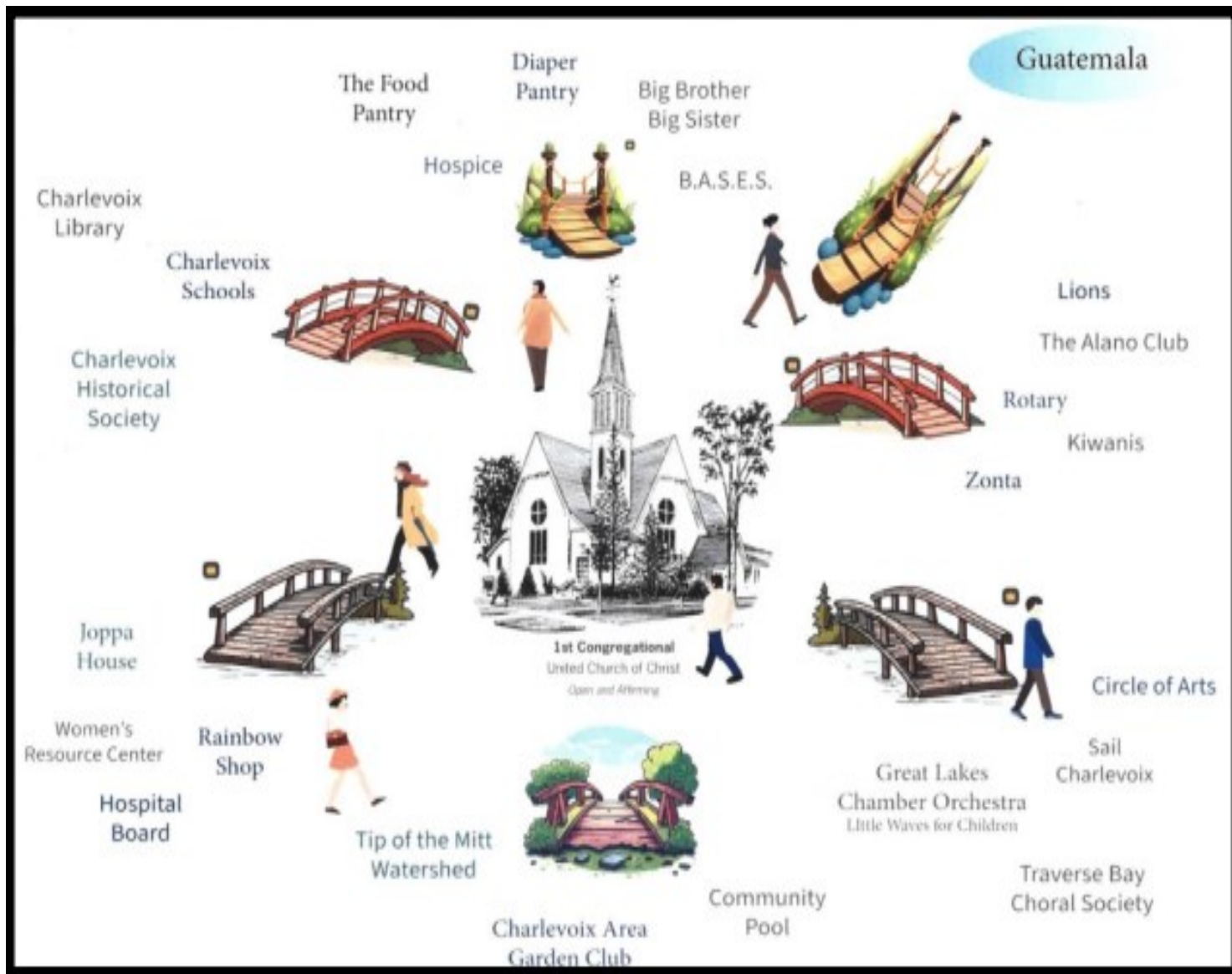
- *Info on upcoming events from Reaching Out and Reaching In*

From Reaching Out...

During the months of March and April, the Reaching Out Team will be focusing on the value of building bridges and partnerships with different organizations within the Charlevoix community. Partnering with effective service organizations to accomplish common goals is a part of our Mission. For example, the last two years we have worked with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to clean up our area beaches in celebration of Earth Day.

We know that many of you are involved doing volunteer work for worthy causes around town. We would like to invite you to share information about those organizations with the congregation during Coffee Hours of March and April. During those coffee hours, there will be a table set up with two or three of your groups represented. There will be literature to share and time for the congregation to talk with those of us already involved in these service groups.

If you would like to sign up to represent your organization, please contact Lani Ochs at laniochsrbp@gmail.com or Julie Geyer at jkgeyer@gmail.com



Free Concert: GLCO

GREAT LAKES
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Sunday Series



Free of charge Sunday recitals bring small music ensembles to venues in Charlevoix & Emmet counties.

Noteable Chamber Choir

March 9, 2025 | 4:00 PM

First Congregational Church Charlevoix



A musical journey that keeps us longing for home.

231-487-0010 | GLCORCHESTRA.ORG

Sunday Series is made possible through the generous support of Carolyn Klender

HAPPY *March* BIRTHDAY

TO THE FOLLOWING PARTICIPANTS:

John Hess 3/3 * Pam Smith 3/3 * Betty Wadland 3/4

Julie Geyer 3/7 * Karen Joy 3/10 * Carrie Minch 3/19

Mark Kage 3/25 * Scott Beatty 3/26 * Charlotte Koger 3/28

Mary Ann Ogden 3/29 * Steve Libert 3/31

WE WISH YOU ALL A LUCKY YEAR AHEAD!



MARCH

MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
3/4 @ 5P

Reaching Out Team,
3/12 @ 9a

Church Council,
3/16 @ 11:45a

Board of Trustees,
3/23 @ 11:45a

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

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

**March is
the best
time to
start again,
because if
the spring
can do it,
why can't
you?**

www.authenticalllydel.com

Just a Reminder...

George Davis will be leading our service on Sunday, March 2. He has recently completed and passed all of his required coursework to become an ordained Pastor.

Please be sure to offer your congratulations on this momentous occasion after the Service during Coffee Hour!

Toby will be out of the office for Spring Break from Thursday, March 20th until Saturday, March 29th.

March 2025*



SAT
Mar 1

2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<p>In-Person & Virtual Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30am COMMUNION 11:30am Coffee Hour 	<p>Main Church Office Closed</p> <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 	<p>Church Offices Closed</p>	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<p>In-Person & Virtual Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am Coffee Hour 4pm GLCO Concert 	<p>Main Church Office Closed</p> <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 	<p>Church Offices Closed</p>	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<p>In-Person & Virtual Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am Coffee Hour 11:45am Church Council 	<p>Main Church Office Closed</p> <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 	<p>Toby Out of Office</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am CMA Hours 11a-2p <p>Church Offices Closed</p>
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
<p>Toby Out of Office</p>						
<p>In-Person & Virtual Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 more 	<p>Main Church Office Closed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am NO Scripture Disc 11am NO CMA HOURS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Centering Prayer C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am NO CMA HOURS 	<p>Church Offices Closed</p>	
30	31	<p>*for more details, please go to the Calendar page on our website, www.CHXUCC.org</p>				
<p>In-Person & Virtual Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:30am Coffee Hour 	<p>Main Church Office Closed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Products Pantry 					

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



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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**."*