



The Open Door



**May
2026**

From the Pastor...

How can I begin to put into words the recent trip we took to Guatemala? It was truly profound and powerful for all three of us on the team.

For starters, the hospitality we received was nothing short of incredible. From being picked up immediately upon arrival from the airport to having three homecooked meals a day by Hilda (Gerber's mother) and Brenda (Hilda's helper), we were treated like kings. Our lodging was on the second floor of the community center and in the same compound of Hilda's home – the place where Gerber and his 3 siblings grew up. In other words, Gerber and his family have turned their own home and property into a community center to serve the most disadvantaged children in San Antonio. Now, that's hospitality!

After one of Brenda's delicious breakfasts, each day began with us transforming a metal framed shell of a tiny building into a bathroom and cleaning center for the kids. We hung heavy fiber board, mudded it in, covered it in a thin layer of concrete, and then painted it. We also installed two pedestal sinks and three commodes. (see pictures)

Our foreman for the entire project was Lorenzo – Gerber's adopted little brother. He is one of the kindest, funniest, and sweetest people you will ever meet, but his story, like the story of Guatemala itself, is both horribly tragic and powerfully redemptive. Both his parents were killed in the 30-year civil war which devastated the indigenous people of Guatemala and destroyed families throughout the country. Lorenzo was only 9 when he and his siblings began fending for themselves. Lorenzo was passed from foster family to foster family, until he was finally introduced to Hilda, who decided to bring Lorenzo into her family on a permanent basis.

For the last few years, he has been helping his "brother" Gerber get Healthy Communities up and running and changing lives in the process – including ours. In addition to heading up our construction process with kindness and love, he was also our driver, our laundry man, our photographer, and literally anything else we needed him to be. He is the consummate servant, and he is always smiling.

We didn't find out, until the latter part of the week, that Lorenzo, who is a 41-year-old father of 3, does all this while living in a tiny storage room in Hilda's house, with nothing but a tiny mattress on the floor and a few items of clothing.



From the Pastor (cont'd)...

At 3 in the afternoon Tuesday and Thursday, Lorenzo picked up 16 kids from the local school in San Antonio and brought them to the community center. Man, were they excited to arrive! They literally ran from the back of the pick-up truck to the playground, hugging their teachers and friends, and having the best part of their week.

We knocked off work when they arrived, so we could play soccer with them, watch them frolic on the trampoline, and help out at their various education stations – motor skills development, emotional development, and computer time. The center has 8-10 PC's, which the kids use. Prior to the center opening, these kids had never seen, much less used, an actual computer. They absolutely love them and are learning so much.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, when the center wasn't opened, I was taken to 3 different places to teach 3 different audiences how to better listen to their children and help them learn to express their emotions. I spoke to about 50 college students who were studying psychology, about 30 primary school teachers, and roughly 15 parents on each of the three days. Our discussions were rich, real, and helpful.

Our time in San Antonio was quite a bit different from last year in Coyolate. San Antonio is a much friendly climate – 70s and sunny with very little humidity. Our accommodations were much nicer than the guest house last year. This year we actually had hot showers, comfortable beds, and daily laundry service. We also really enjoyed being only 15 minutes away from the wonderful city of Antigua, instead of 2 hours away in Coyolate.

There is a great deal more work to be done in San Antonio, and we really hope to go back with a bigger team of 8 people this coming February. Gerber considers us among his most reliable partners, and we consider it a great honor to work with Healthy Communities. Hagen, Jeff, and I look forward to sharing our pictures and stories with all of you. In the meantime, be sure to visit the church website at www.chxucc.org to see the wonderful video/slideshow Lisa Copass compiled of our trip.

Finally, thanks to ALL of you for your generous support of this trip. Some gave money, some donated supplies, others prayed, and our incredible Reaching Out Team coordinated the entire project. What an amazing church family we have!



Guatemala Pics...



Working on the new restrooms for the community center.

Many hands make light work.

And yes, there will be doors installed for privacy. Those are on the way!



Psychology students that Toby spoke with about effective listening and nurturing emotional healthiness in their clients.

Gerber Perez and his sister, Mirna, organizing the community center donations.



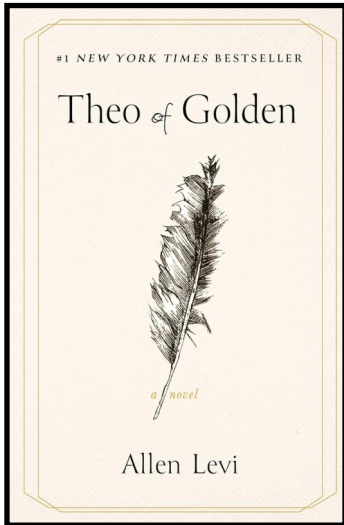
Hagen, Jeff, and Toby got to take in a soccer match with Gerber and his brother Lorenzo.

A picture of the volcano that the town of San Antonia is nestled up against. It smoked during the day and glowed hot fire at night!



From the Reaching In Team...

An Incredible Book Group Opportunity from Your Reaching In Team...



On the four Wednesdays in May, from 7 – 8:15 pm, we are hosting a discussion of one of the very best books of 2025. *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi is a highly acclaimed 2025 breakout novel, recognized as a top 20 book of the year by Book Browse and winner of their Best Debut Award. The novel, which highlights themes of kindness, stillness, and loving attention offered to others, has been a #1 New York Times bestseller and is praised for its optimistic, "most huggable" storytelling.

Toby, a voracious reader, has called *Theo of Golden* “the most powerful, thoughtful, and inspiring book I’ve read in over a decade – it’s exactly what we need during this era of unprecedented violence, anxiety, and despair.”

To participate in this uplifting journey, all you need to do is call or email Stacey at office@chxuucc.org to sign up, get yourself a copy of the book from Dockside Books or Amazon (paperback is \$14.98, Kindle is \$11.99), and have the first 94 pages (the Prologue thru Chapter 16) read by our first session on Wednesday, May 6 at 7 pm. This experience will be hosted online on Zoom, and Stacey will send you the link once you’ve signed up.

Don’t miss this incredible experience. It might just change your life!

Save the Dates!



Please be SURE to put all of the following important church family events on your calendars:

Thursday, May 14 – Red Cross Shelter Training for Volunteers – 11am – 1pm

Sunday, June 14 – Active Assailant Readiness Training – 11:30am - 12:30 pm

Sunday, July 19 – GLIO 1000 Event – 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Saturday, September 19 – Annual Celebration & Fundraiser – 4:00 -7:00 pm

From the Reaching Out Team...



Curious why there's a cot set up in Ransom Hall? Are committee meetings getting so long that naps are now part of the agenda? Thankfully, no!

The cot is actually a sample from a generous donation we recently received—part of our efforts to be prepared in case we're called upon to open our building as an emergency shelter. It's one small but important step in helping us serve our community when it matters most.

A sincere thank you to John Campbell for securing this wonderful donation of cots, sheets, and blankets. As you can see, the cots are sturdy yet compact for easy storage, and the blankets even come in familiar team colors. Go blue!

We're grateful for the ways our church continues to live out its mission of care, compassion, and readiness.

Safety Information Session: Active Assailant Preparedness

In today's world, places of worship are not immune from unexpected emergencies. While we all hope such situations never arise in our community, being prepared is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and care for one another.

On Sunday, June 14, 2026, during Coffee and Conversation, we will host an Active Assailant Preparedness Information Session led by Charlevoix Police Chief Jill McDonnell. This session will focus on simple, practical steps anyone can take to stay safe in the event that an assailant enters the church—emphasizing awareness, communication, and thoughtful response. It is designed to be informative, approachable, and appropriate for all comfort levels and abilities.

We understand that some may feel this type of topic is unnecessary or unsettling, especially in a place that feels as safe and familiar as our church. However, preparation is not about fear—it is about caring for one another. Much like fire drills or first aid education, this is simply another way we support the safety and well-being of our community.

Participation is encouraged but entirely voluntary. Whether you attend to learn something new or simply to better understand our safety planning, your presence helps strengthen our shared commitment to care and readiness.

We hope you will consider joining us.

Charlevoices
True Stories Told Live Event

WATERMARK

Stories when Water Meets a Moment in Life

Friday, May 15th

7:00 PM

(Doors open at 6:30)

1st Congregational, UCC
101 State Street, Charlevoix

Admission: Donation: **Sail Charlevoix Capital Fund**

This non-profit gives area children regardless of income the opportunity to experience the joy of wind and water.

Cash/checks payable to **Sail Charlevoix Capital Fund** or donate online at sailcharlevoix.org (comment box, Charlevoices)



GLIO 1000 Event...

Can You Imagine Circumnavigating Lake Michigan... on a Jet Ski???

Toby's dear friend and mentor Tom Dickelman is actually going to do that this July. He recently lost his sister Sue to Glioblastoma and has decided to honor her by doing something fun - and a little crazy - to raise money for the Malnati Brain Tumor Institute.



Tom has selected 14 ports around the great lake, and Charlevoix the Beautiful is one of them. He will be our special guest both in worship and at the Coffee and Conversation time to follow on Sunday, July 19. We want to throw a great party for him in our newly renovated garden area, under that sail tent with balloons, some food, and maybe even some live music.

With Venetian Fest kicking off, we're thinking of this as a wonderful outreach event, hoping to attract some of the passers-by on Park and State streets. The Reaching Out Team could really use some help pulling this party together, so please let Julie Geyer know if you are willing to help with food, set-up, decorations, or publicity.

For more information on Tom's journey, just Google www.glio1000.org.



MAY VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

May 3 **Denise Fate**
May 10 ... **OPEN**
May 17 ... **OPEN**
May 24 ... **OPEN**
May 31... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

May 3 **Kristen Ladd**
May 10 ... **Dave & Darlene Heine**
May 17 ... **NO C&C HOUR**
May 24 ... **Bud & Teri Stout**
May 31... **Potluck Collaboration**

LAY READERS

May 3 **OPEN**
May 10 ... **Denise Fate**
May 17 ... **Suzanne Balter**
May 24 ... **Darlene Heine**
May 31... **OPEN**



Next Issue!

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

- ***Outdoor Service Info***
- ***Reports from the Teams***



Becoming a Trusted Adult for Our Youth

In May and June, the Reaching Out Team will focus on youth in the greater Charlevoix County area.

A 2025 survey by the Charlevoix County Community Foundation Youth Action Committee - with input from 600 students ages 12-19 - highlighted a clear reality. Today's youth are navigating a complex mix of mental health challenges, constant technology use, economic uncertainty, global concerns, and identity challenges. It also revealed a significant gap - there is not yet a sufficiently robust support system to meet their needs during these uncertain times.

One message from the survey rose above the rest:

“Young people need "**Trusted Adults**" in their lives.

In the weeks ahead, we will provide opportunities to learn what it means to be a trusted adult, along with meaningful insights and practical resources - and most importantly, clear ways for you and our community to step into this role, because becoming a trusted adult doesn't require perfection - just a willingness to show up, listen, and be present in the lives of our youth.



WOMEN BUILD

MAY 4 - MAY 7

Time: 10am-2pm

Location: Alanson

Registration Deadline: April 29



No Experience Necessary!

Whether you've never picked up a hammer or you're a DIY pro, you're welcome here. We'll teach you everything you need to know.

What You'll Be Doing

Hands-on construction work based on project needs, which may include:

- Framing
- Painting and finishing work
- Site preparation
- Siding and exterior work

We Provide

- All tools and equipment
- Safety gear and training
- Lunch and refreshments
- Expert instruction and supervision

Sign up and build with Habitat!

SIGN UP! →



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Visit Our Website
www.northwestmihabitat.org



Our Locations
**1840 M 119, Petoskey
9385 N. Straits Hwy, Cheboygan**

happy **MAY** birthday

To the Following Participants:

John Howard 5/1 * Patricia Dilworth 5/4 *

Jennifer Carroll 5/6 * Sue Dixon 5/13 * Nancy Noggle 5/15

Linda Weller 5/16 * Bruce Herbert 5/22

Laura Ford 5/22 * Marge Merz 5/26 * Barb Wilson 5/29

Ted Dumbauld 5/29 * Mary Lee Campbell 5/29

Jan Anderson 5/29 * Greta Gappy 5/30 * Sharon Schultz 5/31

Best Wishes For A Bountiful Year Ahead!



MAY MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team, 5/7 @ 9a
Reaching Out Team, 5/13 @ 9a
Church Council, 5/17 @ 11:45a
Board of Trustees, 5/31 @ 9a

Reaching In Team meets on the 1st Thursday at 9a
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
(accept for this May)

Just a Reminder...



There will be NO
Coffee & Conversation
Hour on Sunday, May
17th due to a special
Reaching In Event.

GREAT LAKES
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



Sunday Series



Free of charge Sunday recitals bringing chamber music to venues in Charlevoix & Emmet counties.

Windover Piano Duo

May 17, 2026 | 4:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church, Harbor Springs



Ellen Kendall
Susan Wheatley

231-487-0010 | GLCORCHESTRA.ORG

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

Emergency Shelter Prep



Become a Trained Shelter Volunteer

We're pleased to share that the Red Cross will be offering *Shelter Fundamentals Training* on **Thursday, May 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Ransom Hall.**

This is a wonderful opportunity for anyone interested in supporting our church's role as a community shelter. All are welcome—and encouraged—to attend! By completing this training, you'll be prepared to serve as a volunteer and help staff the shelter should our building be activated, even if you're only able to take a shift or two.

A light lunch will be served. Reservations are required, so please contact the Church Office at **(231) 547-9122** if you plan to attend.

Having a team of trained volunteers ensures we can respond quickly and effectively when the need arises. We hope you'll consider being part of this important ministry of care and hospitality.



From Denise Cruz, Reaching In Grief Support Liaison...

FROM THE DESK OF ERIN GRAY, and the Munson Hospice Bereavement Team:

“Spring is about rebirth & new beginnings.

Consider signing up for a grief support class with Munson. Please call the team at 231-935-2053 or email at hospicebereavement@mhc.net for resources that support you during your grieving. You may be surprised how helpful this can be!

Also, the following dates are for their memorial butterfly releases this summer - August 6th, Charlevoix @ 3pm and August 7th, Traverse City @ 11am. Mark your calendar, registration available next month. I attended with a couple of our participants from church last year & was so moved by this heart filled event to honor your loved one(s) - truly memorable.”

If you should have any questions about this or need to talk about how you are feeling, please call me, Denise Cruz RN BSN, 248-961-2616. I am here for you!



May 2026



| | | | | | FRI May 1 | SAT 2 |
|---|--|---------------------|--|--------------------------|--|----------|
| | | | | | Church Offices Closed | |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| In-Person & Virtual Worship • 10:30am COMMUNION | Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry | • 10am Prayer Group | • 7pm BG: Theo of Golden | • 9am Reaching In Mtg | Church Offices Closed • 12:30pm COA Grief Sup | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| In-Person & Virtual Worship | Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry | • 10am Prayer Group | • 9am Reaching Out Mee • 7pm BG: Theo of Golden | • 11am Emergency Shelter | Church Offices Closed • 7pm CharleVOICES: Wa | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| In-Person & Virtual Worship • 11:45am Church Council | Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry | • 10am Prayer Group | • 7pm BG: Theo of Golden | | Church Offices Closed | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| In-Person & Virtual Worship | Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry | • 10am Prayer Group | • 7pm BG: Theo of Golden | | Church Offices Closed | |
| 31 | | | | | | |
| In-Person & Virtual Worship • 9am Trustee Meeting | | | | | | |

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



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Stacey Luoma, Office Manager

Lynette Webb, Childcare Supervisor

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(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**."*