



First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Newsletter for November 28, 2021

From Your Pastor...

There are many things I enjoy doing as your pastor. I preach, teach, administrate, work with ministry teams and individuals, and I do a ton of planning and preparation. But one of my favorite aspects of ministry has always been pastoral care. I truly enjoy and find deep meaning in being with people as they go through life's hardships: divorce, death of a loved one, a difficult health diagnosis, a job loss, or any of the other curve balls life can throw at us. God has given me certain gifts for these situations requiring pastoral care, and it was because of those gifts that chose to become a hospital chaplain before coming to serve here.

I mention all this because I want all of you to feel free to call me and let me know when you are going through a difficult time or life event. I welcome such calls. If they are of an emergency nature, call my cell phone day or night at 231-881-6734. If they are less urgent, simply call the church office, press #202, and you'll be forwarded to my personal, private voicemail, and I will get back to you as soon as I possibly can.

My experience in my first 16 months here is that this congregation may not be in the habit of letting its pastor know when the storms of life come calling. I know that some folks have the tendency to think that a pastor has more important or pressing things on his/her plate than your particular problems. Please don't think that way, at least not with me. I can't tell you how many times since I've been here that someone has gotten sick, been admitted to the hospital, had surgery, and been home a week before I even found out about it. I'd really like to be able to be more supportive of my church family, so please do your best to keep me posted as to what you are going through.

The other unintended consequence of keeping your struggles to yourself is that your larger church family – and particularly the Deacons or Reaching in Team – cannot offer you the support that will help you feel less alone in your time of hardship. This negative outcome has also happened a number of times in my relatively brief time here. We are a caring church family, but we need to be aware that something difficult is going on in your life in order to put that care into action.

In closing, it is completely up to you how you choose to handle the difficulties in your life, including keeping them to yourself if that is your desire. I just want you to know that I and your church family are here to be of service during such times and would count it a privilege to be with you during life's challenges. Thank you.

An Incredible Opportunity for Growth This January and February...

Several months ago, a good friend told me about a new streaming series on the life of Jesus entitled *The Chosen*, written and directed by Dallas Jenkins. Now I have a serious skepticism where TV and film depictions of Jesus are concerned. They make me cringe with embarrassment, usually because they are theologically shallow and grossly inaccurate historically, not to mention biblically. But then I watched *The Chosen* and never cringed once. Finally, I thought, a depiction of Jesus that is both biblically and historically accurate. More than that, *The Chosen* made me love Jesus more than I ever have and has inspired me to follow him with more passion and commitment than ever before. I believe that the very same thing will happen to you.

Therefore, on behalf of the Reaching-In Team of our church, I want to invite all of you to join me in an 8-week, video-based discussion of *The Chosen*. With the possible exception of the first session, you will be able to fully participate in this video-based experience from the comfort of your own living room. We'll meet on Sunday evenings from 7:00-8:30 pm via Zoom, and each week we will be discussing one episode of the series – there are a total of 8 in Season 1. I will be facilitating the discussions using a resource book provided by the filmmaker himself. Participants will watch one episode per week on their own, whenever your schedule allows, and then tune into the Sunday Zoom to discuss what we've watched with a "Zoomful" of people. Believe me when I tell you that you will be dying to talk with others about what you experienced in each episode. This study will be like nothing you have ever experienced before.

We are hoping to have the premier of the very first episode where we can actually gather to watch it together with popcorn and refreshments, and then have our first discussion immediately after, also in person. Those details are still being worked out.

For now, consider whether you are willing to set aside 8 Sunday nights from 7-8:30 for the purpose of growing in your faith. The Sundays will be January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and Feb 6, 20, and 27. (We'll take Super Bowl Sunday off on Feb 13) Remember that you can join us even if you are out of town or in another time zone! In fact, this video study would be a great way for your snowbirds to stay connected with your church family during the winter. Just email Toby at toby@chxucc.org if you are interested in participating.

* There is a possibility that there may be some cost for participating in this study of *The Chosen*. Initially, viewing *The Chosen* online was totally free, but recently it has moved to Amazon Prime and other streaming services with a cost attached - \$23 for all of Season One. That is still a bargain when you see how terrific this program is. I'll keep you posted. – Pastor Toby

2021 Cookie Walk

December 4, 2021



We are still in **urgent** need for cookie donations for our Cookie Walk on Saturday, December 4, 2021. Lots and lots of cookies and candies are needed. Currently, we have only 50 dozen committed. We sell over 500 dozen. It would be great if you could bake 9-10 dozen, but whatever you feel you can do will be appreciated. Bring your cookies to the church **by 1 pm** on Friday afternoon. There is freezer space available if you need to bring your cookies in early. Please fill out the form below and return it to the church office.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please call
Marty Trubilowicz 231-675-8850 or mtubitz@gmail.com

2021 CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK

I will bake _____ dozen cookies.

I will help set up tables, arrange cookie trays, etc. on
Friday afternoon, Dec 3, 1:00—3:00 p.m.

I will work Saturday morning arranging trays, cleaning
up, etc.

___ 8:00—10:00 a.m. OR ___ 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

I cannot bake, but will donate cash

(Make checks payable to First Congregational Church,
Note: "Cookie Walk" in the Memo Field)

I will put up posters around town at the end of November.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



2021 Charlevoix Christmas Project

For many years, the Community Christmas Project has served more than 250 families annually by providing food, gifts, and clothing for Christmas. We anticipate that we will have at least that many individuals/families in need this year, possibly many more. This project is supported by churches, businesses, and individuals in Charlevoix. Our church supports this project through our reaching out initiatives.

In 2020 during the pandemic, the committee still managed to meet the food and gift needs of Charlevoix families. This year we will offer families the opportunity to 'shop' at the Bethany Lutheran Church for gifts and clothing, as well as meeting their food needs. We ask families to be specific (ages and sizes of children, etc.) when they sign up so that we can meet as many of their requests as possible.

Our church, once again, is responsible for **SOCKS** of varied sizes and colors.

This week we will label a collection box and put it in front of the Church Office for socks. A particular need is for teen socks, and they like the shorter ankle variety. We will deliver them to the Lutheran Church (distribution site) after church on Dec. 12. Distribution will be Dec. 16-17.

We also need delivery people willing to deliver to those unable to pick up their food boxes. Deliveries will be made Thursday morning, December 16.

If you are willing to help, call Bill at 231-675-7551.

Organizers

Martha and Bill Trubilowicz

Lois Lewis

SCAM! Alert!

Discounted Stamp Ad Scams on Facebook

In light of the upcoming Holiday Season, we just wanted to make people aware of a scam that is going around Facebook and other internet sites right now. The scam is an add announcing “discounted” USPS stamps, such as a “100 Pack of Stamps” for only \$39.99. After speaking with a postal employee from the East Jordan Post Office, she confirmed that this is a scam, and that the USPS will never offer discounts on postage. She urged all customers to purchase their stamps either at the Post Office itself, on USPS.com, or a trusted local store. The Postal Service is working hard to take these sites down and investigate where they are coming from.

It was also mentioned that a lot of these scam ads come in emails that will look like they are from the USPS website, but are not. They are a “spoof,” which is to say that they are counterfeit sites. If you get an email offering discount postage stamps that looks like it is from the USPS, never click on the link in the email. Clicking on these links could lead you to a false site where your identity and payment information could be compromised.

So, in short, it’s better to be safe than sorry this season. Get your stamps from the post office or grocery store!



Christmas Poinsettia Sale News

We would like our church to continue its Christmas Poinsettia sales this year, however, we have hit a few hurdles. The first major one being that Charlevoix Florist is now under new ownership and has not reopened as of 11/23/21. This is where we usually purchase our plants. The second is we are in need of one or two persons to volunteer with plant pick-up and distribution once we do find a place. Our sale this year looks to be contingent on these two points. We need to know no later than Dec. 4 to be able to get order forms out and place our order before Dec. 12.

Please reach out to Stacey in the Church Office at 231-547-9122 should anyone have a suggestion on where to purchase poinsettia plants this year, or if one wishes to volunteer. Thanks in advance!



December 2021 Birthdays

We want to wish every single one of the following members a very Happy Birthday, and best wishes for a healthy year to come!

John Ochs	12/1	Lois Lewis	12/24
Lani Ochs	12/2	Greg Kitson	12/24
Vera McKown	12/5	J.C. Bascom	12/29
Dennis Joy	12/7	Roger Postmus	12/30
Vance Wood	12/13	Diane Picotte	12/30
Thomas Hanna	12/17	Charles Kiteley	12/30
Sherrel Bergman	12/23		

