



The Open Door



1st Congregational UCC

Opening the Doors of Possibility

An Open & Affirming Church



**September
2025**

FROM THE PASTOR...

As promised, in this article you will find everything you'll need to know about how the church will be managed in my absence. As I emphasized in my Aug 17 sermon, this sabbatical is NOT just for me; it's for all of you too! These two months will be filled with opportunities for each of you to step up and step out in faith, and I will be praying that each of you does exactly that. So here is what you can expect and count on in September and October at 1st Congregational:

Preaching Coverage for September and October -

9/7 – Sid Hall

9/14 – George Davis

9/21 – George Davis

9/28 – George Davis

10/5 – George Davis

10/12 – George Davis

10/19 – Tom Cook

10/26 – Alice Pletz-Miller

Please note that we really need a lay leader/reader on every one of these Sundays. That person would be responsible for doing the “Welcome” portion of the worship service to greet the preacher on behalf of the church. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the narthex.

We are also in need of someone to arrive early on each of these Sundays - @10 am – to greet the preacher as he/she arrives and help them get settled. Call Stacey if you can help with this, specifying which Sunday(s).

Coverage for All Groups and Committees –

All ministry teams (Council, Trustees, R.I., R.O.) Meet as usual, led by chairs

Tuesday Bible Discussion Group – self-led

CMA Tuesdays and Thursdays – meet as usual, led by Murphy Watts & Carolyn Klender, with as-needed assistance from Pastor Chip Sauer (CRC).
Appointments ARE required at this time.

From the Pastor (cont'd)...

Coverage for Pastoral Care Needs –

George Davis – ordained UCC pastor and professional nurse

Laura Ford – Women's Health Doc, significant background with grief/loss

Wanda Stopher – served 17 years as a Mennonite Pastor, current Council

Murphy Watts – served Friend of the Court serving families in crisis

- People may call whichever of these trained professionals they choose
- If someone were to pass away and the family wants/needs to have the service before I return, I recommend calling George Davis, Chip Sauer, or Tom Cook to see if they are available to officiate.
- I have left the folders I've made for all those who have made their desires known to me about their memorial services with Stacey.

Toby's Particular Prayer Requests During His Time Away –

For Eloise as she starts her senior year and wraps up her college applications.

I've never been away from her for more than 3 weeks in her life and will miss her horribly – and probably worry about her more than I should.

For Fergie, who is my constant companion 24-7-365, and for the wonderful folks who have stepped up to care for her in my absence. I don't want her to think that I've abandoned her.

For my physical health during all this travel. My orthopedic pain is significant, and my mobility has been severely compromised lately. I just want to be able to move freely – walking and biking - with minimal pain for these two months.

For my beloved church family – that you would thrive and discover how truly amazing you are, no matter who your pastor is or what country he/she is in.

Have an absolute blast while I'm away! Take stock of and use your incredible and varied gifts for each other and for the larger community - just like you always do! Know that I am missing you and praying for you daily. I'll leave you with this passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians, for this is exactly how I feel about you, my beloved church family:

"I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am confident of this: that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." - Philippians 1:3-6. Amen.

Centering Prayer...



Invitation to Plant Seeds of Prayer

We invite you in the spirit of 'Planting Seeds of Hope' in the coming year at 1st Congregational. Join us and experience our Centering/Meditative Prayer with us.

Every Thursday from 5:15 - 6:00 PM, we meet in front of our Sanctuary in a small circle for a self-reflective prayer experience, letting go of random, haphazard thoughts and feelings while welcoming in the calmness, love, and peace of the Holy Spirit. The session usually begins with reading scripture for the coming church service several times, setting the stage for self-reflection.

Consistent with 'Planting Seeds of Hope,' we will also be using a grounding, reflective exercise to begin our session which helps us connect with God's creation and ourselves as fertile ground for the manifestation of God's Word. As a talented musician, Shelley has added relaxing inductive music prior to centering in prayer which lasts for 20 minutes. By choosing a sacred word or phrase, one can stay focused, letting go of distractions to let in spiritual reflection and prayer. The prayer session ends, once again, with beautifully arranged healing music.

No signup is needed and the group is free to all those who attend. Please consider joining us on this adventure in prayer.

-Shelley Fisher and Bill Wadland

Next Issue!

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

- *Updates from our Teams*
- *Church Leadership Nominations & Annual Meeting*
- *Updates & photos from Toby's Sabbatical*



SEPTEMBER VOLUNTEERS

GREETERS

Sept 7 **Charlotte Koger**
Sept 14 ... **Denise Fate**
Sept 21 ... **OPEN**
Sept 28 ... **OPEN**

COFFEE & CONVERSATION HOSTS

Sept 7 **Dave & Darlene Heine**
Sept 14 ... **OPEN**
Sept 21 ... **Jim & Julie Fritz**
Sept 28 ... **OPEN**

LAY READERS

Sept 7 **Alice Pletz-Miller**
Sept 14 ... **OPEN**
Sept 21 ... **Denise Fate**
Sept 28 ... **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
By Appointment Only**

From the Music Director...



Choir rehearsals will only be held on September 4th and 25th. No rehearsals on the 11th and 18th due to Shelley being out of town.

Tour the Meadowlands in Alanson...

JOIN US!

Learn about the highly successful Northwest Michigan Habitat for Humanity firsthand. In the near future we may have a Habitat development in Charlevoix, and we can help! We will be touring the Meadowlands Development in Alanson on Thursday, September 18. For the tour, meet at church @ 8:00 am to carpool or drive yourself to the “Meadowlands” development in Alanson.

You can depart after the tour at 12:00 pm or stay for a Work Bee (please bring your own brown bag lunch and drink).

For those that stay for lunch and Work Bee, we will do inside cleanup or outdoor landscaping (no heavy lifting), depending on what the weather is like. We will depart by 3:00 pm.

There will be a representative of NW MI Habitat for Humanity in Ransom Hall during Coffee Hour to sign people up to attend. All sign-ups end September 14th. Please contact the Office at (231) 547-9122 for more information, and Stacey can sign you up before the 14th as well!

- The Reaching Out Team



From the Reaching Out Team...

Supporting Our Community in a Crisis

During the months of September and October, the Reaching Out team will be focusing on ways in which we can support our church community in a crisis. The March, 2025 ice storm might be a distant memory for some, but for those who had no heat or power for days, no way to prepare the food that was spoiling, no contact with friends or family, the memory might still be vivid. We hope to offer resources and implement some changes so our participants and neighbors feel safe, supported and connected.

PREPARING TO BE A PLACE OF SAFETY

We are excited to share that we are partnering with the American Red Cross to explore becoming an official emergency shelter. This would allow us to open our doors to the community during large-scale emergencies such as storms, extended power outages, or evacuations. Being a shelter is more than just providing space—it means offering comfort, care, and calm in a time of uncertainty.

BUILDING AN INTERNAL RESPONSE TEAM



American Red Cross

Emergencies don't always come in the form of a major disaster. Sometimes, they look like a family suddenly displaced by a fire or someone facing a crisis that requires immediate support. That's why we're forming an internal response team—a dedicated group prepared to respond to smaller-scale emergencies quickly and compassionately, helping our participants navigate unexpected situations with dignity and care.

Later this year, we'll be offering special training opportunities for participants through the Red Cross, including:

- Be Red Cross Ready – A practical program designed for older youth and adults, helping people understand, prepare for, and respond to disasters like fires, floods, and severe weather.
- Shelter Fundamentals – A hands-on introduction to working in emergency shelters, ideal for anyone interested in helping staff or support community shelters when they are activated.

These trainings will equip our community with real skills and confidence to take action when it's needed most.

STAYING CONNECTED: THE POWER OF CHECKING IN

In collaboration with the Reaching In Team, we are developing a thoughtful process for checking on each of our participants on a regular basis. These check-ins are about more than safety—they are about maintaining strong relationships, understanding evolving needs, and reminding everyone that they matter and are not alone.

LEARNING FROM INSPIRING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

To deepen our collective understanding of community response, we are honored to host Kyle Knight, Chief of Police in Harbor Springs, as a guest speaker on Sunday, Sept. 28th during coffee hour. Chief Knight will share the inspiring story of how he quietly led his town through the devastating ice storm earlier this year. His story of calm leadership, compassion, and teamwork is a moving example of what it means to serve a community well during difficult times.



GET READY, STAY READY—AND HAVE A LITTLE FUN

Finally, we will be offering practical tools and resources to help everyone stay informed and connected in the event of a crisis. And to keep things engaging, we're introducing Emergency Preparedness BINGO—a fun, interactive way to learn the essentials of emergency readiness. Complete your BINGO card for a chance to win useful prizes that can help you and your family be better prepared. Mark your calendar for October 12th during coffee hour.

OUR COMMITMENT MOVING FORWARD

As we look ahead, we know that preparation and connection are essential to resilience. Whether it's through official partnerships, internal planning, or simply checking in on someone who may be struggling, we are actively building a community that cares—not just in times of crisis, but every day.

Stay tuned for further announcements from your Reaching Out team.
Together, we are stronger—and together, we're ready.



Lisa Dixon Scholarship Fund News...



*Ailinn (seated) with (L to R):
John Dixon, Carissa Mullaney, Julie Geyer*

At our recent meeting, we were honored to hear from Ailinn Mullaney, this year's Lisa Dixon Scholarship recipient. Ailinn, age 14, attended with her mother, Carissa Mullaney, and John Dixon was also present to represent the Dixon family. Carissa shared a special connection to Lisa—her sister was in the same grade as Lisa during their school years.

Ailinn has been passionate about dance since she was three years old, studying at Crooked Tree Arts Center School of Ballet for the past 11 years. She now dances six days a week and also helps teach younger students. Thanks to the support of the Lisa Dixon Scholarship, Ailinn was able to attend the prestigious Pacific Northwest Ballet School in Seattle, one of the top five ballet programs in the country.

and was selected to join 28 students in her five-week class, along with 200–300 more students in the overall program. Dancers came from across the United States. Her roommate was originally from Australia. Each day included 3 ½ to 4 ½ hours of intensive training, with a focus on Balanchine Technique, known for its fast, dynamic movements—even down to hand placement with the “Balanchine Claw.”

Although the schedule was rigorous, Ailinn also enjoyed exploring Seattle, including a visit to the Space Needle. She hopes to attend another summer program next year and aspires to join a professional development program as she advances in her training.

You can see Ailinn perform locally at the Fall for Dance show at Harbor Springs High School in November. We are proud to support her talent and dedication through the Lisa Dixon Scholarship, which continues to inspire and uplift young people in our community.



*Ailinn giving her presentation to the
Reaching Out Team on August 13th.*

Happy *September* Birthday

To these fellow Participants:

Tim Watts 9/1 * Phil Schairbaum 9/2 * Meg Hargreaves 9/5

Margaret Benson 9/8 * Mark Greyerbiehl 9/12

Mary Bascom 9/19 * David Jones 9/23

Vicky Greyerbiehl 9/23 * Ellen Kendall 9/25

Stacey Luoma 9/27

Linda Copass 9/29 * Tom Schaperkottter 9/30

Wishing you all an exciting year ahead!



SEPTEMBER MEETING TIMES:

Reaching In Team,
9/4 @ 9a

Reaching Out Team,
9/10 @ 9a

Church Council,
9/21 @ 11:45

Board of Trustees,
9/28 @ 11:45a

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 11:45a

THOUGHT FOR THIS MONTH



**IF YOU ARE NOT
WILLING TO LEARN,
NO ONE CAN
HELP YOU.**

**IF YOU ARE
DETERMINED
TO LEARN,
NO ONE CAN
STOP YOU.**



JUST A REMINDER...



Stacey will be out of the office from Tues., Sept. 9 to Thurs, Sept. 11. Linda Weller has been kind enough to cover these days.

Stacey will be unable to answer emails or take phone calls from Sat, Sept. 6th to Sun., Sept. 14th. If there is something that needs to be taken care of, please bring it to Stacey in the office either by Sept. 4, or after Sept. 15.

September 2025*

	MON Sep 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6
	Toby on Sabbatical					
	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 10am Scripture Discuss • 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours		• 9am Reaching In Mtg 3 more	Church Offices Closed	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Toby on Sabbatical						
In-Person & Virtual Worship • 10:30am COMMUNION	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	Stacey Out of Office 2 more	• 9am Reaching Out Mee	3 more	Church Offices Closed • 12:30pm COA Grief Sup	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Toby on Sabbatical						
In-Person & Virtual Worship	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 10am Scripture Discuss • 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours		• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours 2 more	Church Offices Closed	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Toby on Sabbatical						
In-Person & Virtual Worship • 11:45am Church Council	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	Rainbow Shoppe Board Meeting 2 more		• 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours 2 more	Church Offices Closed	
28	29	30	<div><div>*for more details, please go to the Calendar page on our website, www.CHXUCC.org</div></div>			
Toby on Sabbatical						
In-Person & Virtual Worship 2 more	Main Church Office Closed • 6pm Products Pantry	• 10am Scripture Discuss • 11am 11a-2p CMA Hours				

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**."*