

First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
*Gaylord*

February 2018

We aim to embrace people at every age and every stage of life, and help them become the most loving version of themselves possible.

<a href="#">From Your Pastor.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Reaching In.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Reaching Out.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Kidz on a Mission.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Announcements.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Dec.Schedule, Birthday,Anniversari</a>	
<a href="#">es.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">December Calendar.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>

First Congregational United  
Church of Christ  
218 W. Second Street  
Gaylord, MI 49735  
989-732-5726  
[www.firstuccgaylord.org](http://www.firstuccgaylord.org)  
[Facebook](#)

Pastor: Toby Jones  
[pastor@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:pastor@firstuccgaylord.org)  
Cell: 231-881-6734  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday  
10:00 am - noon or by appointment

Moderator: Rokko Jans  
[rokko@alaricjans.com](mailto:rokko@alaricjans.com)

Communications Coordinator  
Jessica Benoit  
[office@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:office@firstuccgaylord.org)

Church Service: Sunday: 10:00 am

### From Your Pastor...

In a stroke of divine humor, the season of Lent in 2018 begins Valentine's Day with Ash Wednesday and ends on April Fools' Day - Easter Sunday. But all humor aside, Lent is and always has been a season of contemplation and meditation.

Contemplation and meditation are practices with which we American Christians are not particularly comfortable. They are spiritual disciplines that require us to do several things we're not naturally good at: slowing down, closing our mouths, quieting our over-active minds, and listening. In the language of our church family, these disciplines are at the heart of what we call "Reaching In."

In case any of us are harboring negative or fearful associations with contemplation or meditation, perhaps the following scientific facts might inspire us to open our minds a bit. Did you know that regular, silent meditation has been proven to do all of the following: increase your immune function, decrease pain, boost happiness, decrease both anxiety and stress, enhance your social connections, make you more compassionate, less lonely, and actually increase both brain function and production of grey matter? Still not convinced you should try meditating? Well, this spiritual discipline has also been proven to increase productivity, focus attention and thinking, improve memory, and increase creativity.

All of these benefits of meditation have been proven time and time again in clinical study after clinical study. The data is so compelling that mindfulness practices are now being taught in our schools, in our prisons, in our military, and even in some of our most successful businesses. So why not in our churches?

---

## **From Your Pastor Continued...**

Unfortunately, most Christians don't realize that the practices of mindfulness, meditation, and contemplation have deep, historic roots in ancient Christianity. And the reason we've lost track of our historical connection to them is that for hundreds of years now, Christian churches have set aside these silent practices in favor of more active, noisy, and verbal ones. So God has done what God always does when so-called religious people fail to use the gifts She gave us; She kept the practices alive and thriving in secular, non-religious organizations, with the result that many Christians now dismiss these quiet, reflective disciplines as "New Age," when, in fact, they all can be traced back directly to Jesus himself. I can't help but think of Jesus's famous line during his Palm Sunday procession into Jerusalem. As all his followers were crying out "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," the Pharisees told Jesus to silence his followers. Jesus replied, "Even if my followers were silent, the very stones would cry out." In my view, that is precisely what has happened with the practice of silent meditation and contemplation: the Church has stopped nurturing these practices, so other groups and organizations are now crying out about the value and importance of various silent practices.

For all of these reasons, your Reaching In team has decided to offer concrete, practical instruction in mindfulness and meditation in two upcoming opportunities. The first is at our third annual Lenten Lunch Study, beginning Wednesday, February 14 from noon to one in the Parish Hall. This six-week study will take place on six consecutive Wednesdays from 2/14 through 3/21 over the lunch hour. Soup and bread lunch will be provided, and we will keep to an hour, so that those who have to get back to work may do so. In addition, your Reaching In team will attempt to video tape these sessions and make them available through our website and Youtube channel for those who cannot attend the sessions or who may be out of town.

The second opportunity will come later in April, sometime during the weekend of April 13 and 14 during our second annual church-wide retreat. Details of that event will come your way in the March newsletter, but for now, please save the dates!

Make it your Lenten intention to both learn about and engage in the valuable practices of meditation and mindfulness. Not only will you be glad you did, but so will your doctor, your spouse, your family, your co-workers, and your God! See you Ash Wednesday!

---

## *From Your Reaching In Team...*

### **A Look at Our Lenten Study**

As Toby mentioned on page 1, the Reaching In team has planned an exciting and practical Lenten series from February 14 through March 21. This Wednesday luncheon series is open to all, so please encourage your spiritually minded friends to join us, being sure to let them know that even if the timing doesn't work out for them, they can still participate through our website and video sessions. Here is the week-by-week breakdown of the 6 sessions:

Feb 14 – Why Prayer has “Failed” Us in the New Millennium

Feb 21 – Mindfulness vs. Mindlessness

Feb 28 – Breathing Our Way to God

Mar 7 – Meta Meditation, Tonglen, & Developing Compassion

Mar 14 – Loving Kindness & Crawling into the Divine Lap

Mar 21 – Walking in Mindful Gratitude

*Each of these sessions will be presented in a stand-alone fashion, so that even if you can't make it to all the sessions, you can still have a meaningful experience whenever you do attend. Whether you are able to attend or not, you can still be a supportive member of our team by volunteering to provide one of our soup and bread lunches. There is a sign up sheet in the Parish Hall, or you can call Helen Mate if you're willing to help at 734-276-1251. Thank you!*

---

## **From Your Reaching Out Team...**

Thanks to EVERYONE for all the ways you are finding to participate in our two-month season of loving our homeless neighbors! Whether you've provided a meal at the Refuge, volunteered at the RV show, helped Tony Dockery-Fobar at a Friday Community Meal, or put some of your hard-earned money in the children's collections lately, you are making a difference! Special thanks goes to Vicky Rigney, the President of the Refuge Board, for spearheading so many of our positive efforts aimed at loving our brothers and sisters without shelter. This coming Sunday, February 4, our worship service will be led by Vicky and Kelly Korson, two of our town's leading advocates for our homeless neighbors, so you won't want to miss it!

Looking ahead to March and April, our Reaching Out focus will turn to At-Risk Children. Basically every problem an adult can have – from homelessness to addiction, from poverty to marital strife, and from unemployment to depression – creates what is known as an “At-Risk environment” for the children in that adult's care. These two months will allow us to explore what the needs are for kids in these environments and what we can do, both as individuals and as a congregation, to love these kids effectively. If you know anyone with particular expertise in this vital ministry, please let any of us on the Reaching Out team know.

---

## Kidz ON a MISSION...

The Kidz on a Mission class will again be sending cookies to college students. If anyone has a child that is in college, please get their address to Brenda Brummel by February 3. Call or text 810-623-1691 or email her at [brendabrummel@me.com](mailto:brendabrummel@me.com). Thank you!



---

## ANNOUNCEMENTS...

- The Second Annual Madrigal Dinner will be taking place on February 11. This year, the event will be held at the Grand Event Center, 620 S. Wisconsin, Gaylord. The evening will start at 5:00 with appetizers and be followed by a dinner prepared by our own Chef Aaron Hotelling and entertainment by the talented youth of our church. They will be joined by the infamous trio of Toby, Rokko, and Joanna. Tickets are \$20.00 and will be available on Sunday mornings or at One Main Financial (742 Edelweiss Pkwy) or by calling Brenda Brummel at 810-623-1691.
- If you are not able to get to the church service on Sunday morning, please remember that the sermons are available on our web site. <http://www.firstuccgaylord.org/index.php/the-sermons/>. Both an audio and written version of the sermon are on the site. We try to have them available by Wednesday of each week.
- Please note, March's UNA Committee Meetings will be held on March 3rd from 10am to 2:30pm.
- 
- The next book for the church book club is *Saving Simon* by Jon Katz. February meet time will be Thursday the 22nd at 9:45am in fellowship hall.

---

## *An Update from Vernon and Maryetta House...*

We are sending you a note to let you know that after a year of chemotherapy, Vernon is being put on a different route of treatment.

As of January 16th, he had a pump placed on him for 48 hours as part of a different kind of chemo. The pump was removed after 48 hours, then in 14 days, the same routine will be repeated.

He has been active, working in his shop on small projects, playing in pool in our basement with our children, grandchildren, and exercising in the hot tub every morning.

He has been deer hunting a lot - got a 9 pt buck. I went with him a lot. We played cards in the blind until the animals came in sight. It was fun watching them.

We have been advised to try and keep from being in crowds. We do miss the services and our church family.

May God Bless Everyone.

Our Best,

Vernon and Maryetta

*Let's be sure to remember the House's in our thoughts, prayers, and loving actions!*

---

## **What Your Pastor Has Been Reading...**

*All These Wonders: True Stories About Facing the Unknown* – Edited by Catherine Burns

If you are a fan of NPR's Moth Radio Hour, you'll love this inspiring collection of true stories written by the regular folks who experienced them. Each story is only 3-5 pages, so you might want to keep it in your bathroom. Wherever you keep it, you'll enjoy it!

*American War* – by Omar El Akkad

Set in the year 2075 in a very different America than the one we live in, this novel explores life when both coasts are underwater due to global warming, and a handful of southern states have seceded and formed their own sovereign nation. El Akkad imagines a second American Civil War through the eyes of a very poor family who is caught in the middle.

---

---

## From Your Communications Coordinator...

### **2018 Volunteers**

We are still in need of volunteers to help with Sunday duties. There are many weeks when we still need ushers and greeters, as well as liturgists and hosts/hostesses for coffee hour.

Please see me in the church office or email me if you have time in your schedule to help. Louanne has a signup calendar for coffee hours which reside in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you!

### **Calendars**

As many of you know, the church uses two electronic calendars. The calendar on the website ONLY displays church-related functions. The other calendar is for office use only. This second calendar is used to schedule the many non-church-related events we host throughout the year. I do not print this second calendar.

I am working hard to reconcile these calendars for 2018 but at times I may need your help! Your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, if you or anyone you know is need of the church, please contact me in the office to check availability. Thank you!

### **Newsletter**

For those wishing to have a paper copy of the newsletter, there are copies in fellowship hall. They are kept in the slotted wall next to my office door. I usually only print off three or four copies but if you are ever in need of more, please just ask. I'm happy to print off more for you!

### **Jessica's Schedule**

Tuesdays: 8am-2:30pm

Wednesdays: 9am-3pm

[office@firstucegaylord.org](mailto:office@firstucegaylord.org)



---

## February Schedule

DATE	LITURGIST	USHER/GREETER	COFFEE HOUR
February 4	Louanne Spearman	Doreen Dobosy	Rod & Sallie Anderson
February 11	Louanne Spearman	Roger Brummel	Dennis & KayLyn Jeakle
February 18	Louanne Spearman		Cathy Otto & Margaret
February 25	Louanne Spearman	NEEDED	The English Family and Vicky Rigney

### February Birthdays

6 Joanie Sietsema  
 7 Callie English  
 7 Evelyn Pratt  
 10 Margaret Hellenberg  
 18 Aysia House  
 27 Jay Anderson

### February Anniversaries

13 Roy & Cleveann Wolf  
 28 Jim & Vicky Rigney





# FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Bible Study, 11am Women's Fellowship, 12:15pm	2 Community Meal, 5pm	3
4 Reaching Out, 11:30am	5	6 Bulletin Deadline	7	8 Trustees, 9:30am Bible Study, 11am	9 Community Meal, 5pm	10
11	12	13 Bulletin Deadline	14 <b>Ash Wednesday</b> Lenten Study, 12pm  <b>Valentine's Day</b>	15 Bible Study, 11am Reaching In, 12:15pm	16 Community Meal, 5pm	17
18	19 Newsletter Deadline	20 Bulletin Deadline	21 Lenten Study, 12pm	22 Church Book Club, 9:45am Bible Study, 11am	23 Community Meal, 5pm	24
25	26	27 Bulletin Deadline	28 Lenten Study, 12pm			