

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

 July 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.

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Church of Christ
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Church Service: Sunday: 10:00 am

From Your Pastor...

Let me begin with a HUGE thanks to ALL of you who teamed up in the last 8 weeks to make a difference in the lives of women in need both near and far. The Women's Resource Center, The New Life Pregnancy Center, and C.A.R.E have all been reinvigorated by our incredible donations of time, talent, and resources. Well done!

July brings us to our final outreach theme for the 2017-18 year. Our love in these next two months will flow toward those struggling with addiction. Addictions have reached epidemic proportions in our country, and there is truly no limit to where and whom they can strike. Entire counties in Ohio, West Virginia, and other states have resorted to a state of emergency designation in hope of getting support and assistance in fighting the plague of opioids, prescription drugs, and other synthetic substances.

There was a time, perhaps in the 1960s, when drug use seemed to be a phase within adolescence. Clearly, those days of relatively tame experimentation are long gone. Drug and alcohol addiction now affects in-utero babies all the way up to octogenarians in nursing homes. In the past we also used to associate drug and alcohol abuse with poor, lower-class, urban dwellers or the poor rural folk who concocted their own moonshine. But nowadays, addicts are just as often rich, highly educated, and often successful...at least until the addiction gets the best of them.

To make all this even more complex, there are so many more things to which one can become addicted than there were 30 years ago: computers, smart phones, and anything with a screen, video games, pornography, and even simulated violence, all the emerging Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality headsets take all of the dangers of addiction to an even higher level of risk. I'm no prophet, but I'm fairly certain that there will be another 10-20 possible addictions in another 10 years.

From Your Pastor Continued...

What in the world is going on? What has happened to us and our world? As a parent of a 10-year-old, I am constantly on the lookout for some other lurking image, game, or device that may lure my daughter into the prison of addiction.

On the one hand, I'm sure that there have been all kinds of changes in our world, technological and otherwise, that have increased our addictive tendencies. But on the other, I'm fairly certain that the same basic things cause all addictions, no matter the substance or activity. We are a broken people – and not just some of us, ALL of us. We have flaws, weaknesses, and needs that we simply don't know how to manage in the healthiest of ways. My father struggled with depression and low self-esteem. Alcohol became his addiction. While I may have dodged the alcoholism bullet, I have my own set of issues that I continue to address in unhealthy and perhaps even addictive ways. But at the very core, both my father and I have a spiritual problem. I believe that all addiction is essentially spiritual in nature. We're like cars that have broken down on life's highway, and instead of getting to a mechanic who is fully familiar with the vehicle of our lives, we're settling for all manner of lesser, quicker fixes.

All the way back in 1939, an alcoholic by the name of Bill Wilson – or Bill W. – sat down and wrote what would eventually become the 12 Steps – a spiritual path toward recovery. In the 79 years since, millions upon millions of people – all ages, all races, all income levels, all nationalities, all education levels – have moved through their addiction and come out on the other side thanks to the spiritual power of these steps.

I first came upon the 12 Steps when I started attending Al-a-non meetings in attempt to deal with my father's addiction. I became even more impressed with them when I joined an ACOA – or Adult Children of Alcoholics – group in seminary. Yes, the study of the steps gave me a better understanding of my dad and his perilous journey, but I felt like the steps were equally applicable to me and the struggles in my own life, struggles that didn't have a particular name or label of addiction attached to them.

In my ministry in Harbor Springs, Michigan in early 2002, I began to write a series of sermons and Bible Studies entitled "What the Church Should Learn from A.A." I was convinced then – and I'm even more convinced now – that these 12 Steps have power for everyone – addicts and non-addicts alike. In the months of July and August, we will not only revisit these eternally powerful and relevant steps, but we will explore together how our family of faith can make a positive difference in the lives of addicts, their family members, and the incredible organizations and rehab centers that are putting these steps into practice. Please join us for this exciting and vitally necessary journey.

From Your Reaching In Team...

As we begin our next 8-week series aimed at helping us better love and serve the addicts in our lives, we offer to you one of the most powerful prayers ever written for your consideration throughout July and August.

Reinhold Niebuhr began writing the “Serenity Prayer” in the mid 1930s and put it in its final form by the early 1950s. While many of us are most familiar with its first sentence, the entire prayer is packed with power that we hope you will explore and benefit from in the coming summer months. Here it is:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, the sinful world as it is, not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen!*

So how might we use this prayer devotionally, to deepen our conscious contact and connection with God? There are many options. First, you could use individual lines of the prayer as breath prayers. For example, on the inbreath, say, “God grant me the serenity,” and on the outbreath say, “to accept the things I cannot change.”

You might also use the individual lines of the prayer as a starting point for some spiritual journaling. On one morning you could make a list of the things that frustrate you that you simply cannot change and pray over them, releasing them into God’s tender care. The next day you might make another list of things in your life you can change, people whose lives you can make a positive difference in, and then pray over the that list for God’s direction. A third list might include those situations or people where you’re simply not sure if you can make a difference or not, so pray over this list asking for discernment.

Lines like “Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time” are mantra-like in their ability to reshape our attitudes and mindsets. Imagine praying each morning, “Lord, help me to take this world as it is today, rather than as I would have it,” or “Lord, I trust you to make all things right today.”

Niebuhr’s prayer is filled with possibilities to draw us closer to God and to one another. Why not print it out and tape a copy to your refrigerator or your computer? Why not memorize it little by little, day by day? Like everything else we’re going to explore in these next two months, these wonderful tools addicts have found to draw closer to God and to live more healthy lives apply to every single one of us! Amen.

From Your Reaching Out Team...

As always, our team has to begin with a HUGE thank you to our entire church family for rallying together during May and June to make a significant difference in the lives of struggling women both near and far away. Your gifts to C.A.R.E., the organization that fights human trafficking and supports women like Luka Knight who are trying to escape it, were incredible. Similarly, the Women's Resource Center sent us a heartfelt thank-you note, chronicling the difference our gifts of toiletries, funds, and hours made in the lives of victims of domestic violence. Our two children's offerings to the New Life Pregnancy Center are being well used with local women in the midst of difficult pregnancies.

The remaining summer months will have us turning our loving attention to our brothers and sisters who are struggling with addiction. Did you know that one in every ten Americans over the age of 12 is addicted to either drugs or alcohol? That's equal to the entire population of Texas! But it's tricky to reach out in love to those struggling with this widespread disease because of the understandable privacy issues.

Still, if you or someone you know is in the throes of addiction or if you have a friend who is dealing with an addicted spouse or child, you will certainly want to help and support them somehow. If you are struggling to discern a way to reach out, please talk to Toby or to one of us confidentially, so we can work together to creatively and respectfully respond. Similarly, if you have a story that you are willing to share about the way addiction has affected your life or your family, we hope you will let us know that as well. Addiction is one of the most isolating maladies there is, and the more we can share our journeys, the less alone we all will feel.

Throughout the next 8 weeks, all our worship, songs, and prayers will be designed to deepen our sensitivity and compassion for addicts and their families. We'll even have the chance to hear testimonies and sermons from those who are walking the journey to sobriety one day at a time. Thank you for your willingness to take this important journey with us.

Looking Ahead to Next Year, our Reaching Out Team has been working with Toby to establish some themes or areas to focus our faith in action. As Toby has shared with us the exciting work he is doing with The Covergence Leadership Project, we have discerned together that the four themes that anchor his work with Brian McLaren may be equally useful to us beginning in September of 2018. Toby's cohort refers to these anchors as "The Four Great Loves" or "The Four P's." They are love of the **P**lanet, love of the **P**oor, love of **A**LL **P**eople, and love for **P**eace.

So what we're working on now in our ministry team meetings is arranging these 4 P's into 3 month segments – September – November, December –February, March – May, and June – August, much like we did this year with our 6 outreach themes. These four areas or loves are sufficiently broad and wide that we can comfortably fit much of what we're already doing into them, as we continue our commitment to making a positive difference in the world.

We're also working extremely hard to better coordinate our many offerings and benevolence giving projects, so that we are not having to pass the plate so many times in our efforts to help others. Stay tuned for a simplified and streamlined special offering schedule as October's annual meeting approaches.

The members of our very active Reaching Out Team are Roger Brummel, Margaret Hellenberg, Vicky Rigney, Louanne Spearman, Mona Viviano, and Chairman Jeff Kalember. Our pastor and moderator sit in as well. We're always happy to hear your ideas and feedback. Many thanks for being such a generous, caring congregation.

Reaching Out Continued...

As we enter this current theme on loving our addicted brothers and sisters, we want everyone to realize some particular challenges this theme presents to all of us and to see if you can help us. Anonymity is essential in recovery programs, as is not taking money from particular sources. As the team that coordinates our benevolences and special offerings, we want to raise some money that will somehow help people going through the titanic and expensive struggle of recovery, but we want to do so respectfully and in a way that respects the privacy and policy of those in recovery. If you have any experience with treatment centers, addiction counselors or particular local families in need of some assistance in getting a loved one necessary treatment, could you please contact our chairperson Jeff Kalember?

We will start by directing our upcoming Children's Offerings and other gifts in the next 8 weeks to Harbor Hall, a fantastic organization in Petoskey that serves addicts in a powerful and comprehensive way. We'll be hearing from Dan Thompson, their Spiritual Director, in worship soon and even meet one of the young men from Gaylord who has graduated from their program and is no in transitional housing.

Kidz ON a MISSION

Alpenfest Hot Dog Sale

The Kidz on a Mission will again be selling hot dogs during the Alpenfest Parade. Please stop by and enjoy a hot dog, popcorn, nachos, chips and/or a cold drink. Bo Leser has offered to be our cook and the kids will be happy to serve you!

Looking ahead... August Salad Luncheon

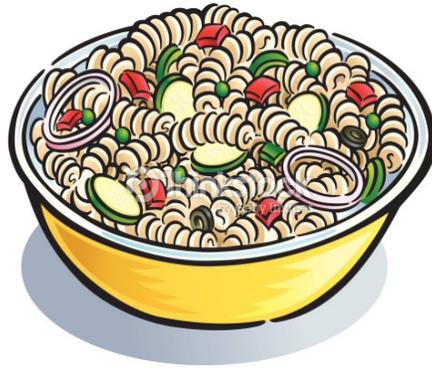
The August Salad Luncheon will be hosted by the Council and the Kidz on a Mission program at our church. Please bring your friends and neighbors to attend this monthly event. Proceeds will help fund the various travel expenses our

Kidz incur throughout the year!

Save the date! August 28th at 11:30am!

July Salad Luncheon

July's Salad Luncheon will be on Tuesday, July 24th. Our Reaching Out Team will host and the proceeds will go to Harbor Hall, a residential rehabilitation program for drug and alcohol users. It is located in Petoskey but serves a lot of Gaylord residents.



Celebrating Our 2018 Scholarship Recipients!

**The church awarded two scholarships this year to graduating seniors.
*Congratulations, Reese Jeakle and Jenna Andrews!***

Reese Jeakle, daughter of Dennis and KayLyn Jeakle is planning to attend Northern Michigan University. She graduated with honors from Gaylord High School, where some of her activities included sports, National Honor Society, Key Club, mentors, Student Council, and drama club. Although a fairly new participant at the Congregational Church, she has been a very active in Kidz on a Mission since Middle School. This included many trips to Cass and One Stop Shop, the Community Meal, Food Drive, participating in the church service, Relay for Life, a week long trip to a reservation in South Dakota as well as helping with numerable fund raisers.

Jenna Andrews, daughter of Mike and Laurie Andrews is in the five year program at Gaylord High School. She plans to transfer to Grand Valley State University and major in Elementary Education. Jenna also graduated from high school with honors. Some of her activities included sports, mentors and National Honor Society. Also, a recent participant at the Congregational Church, she has been active in Kidz on a Mission since Middle School. This included many trips to Cass and One Stop Shop, the Community Meal, Food Drive, participating in the church service, Relay for Life, a week long trip to a reservation in South Dakota as well as helping with numerable fund raisers.



What Your Pastor Has Been Reading...

The Zero Waste Home – by Bea Johnson

This non-fiction work is both inspiring and challenging. Bea Johnson manages a household of four and tracks the total waste she and her family generate in a 12-month period....It can all fit in a 20-ounce mason jar! This book explains how she has managed to take her family from two 40-gallon trash bags a week to a single mason jar in a year! She takes you through each room in her home, explaining how she arranges her household to minimize waste. She also takes you through her shopping habits in a way that is so logical and simple. My family is working through this book together. I pray that our church family will do the same. Our planet needs the message of this book to spread.

Breathing Underwater – by Richard Rohr

As you've heard in worship lately, this book has been instrumental in shaping the current 8-week series on addiction. Rohr walks us through each of the 12-steps and links them to the teachings of Jesus and other deep spiritual truths, emphasizing their tremendous power for all people, not just addicts.

More From Your Pastor...

More Tips for Loving the Planet...Add another R to the list!

We've all heard of **Reduce – Reuse – Recycle**, and while these are all helpful things to do as we seek to love, honor, and care for this amazing planet God has created, Bea Johnson, author of *Zero Waste Home*, says that the very first R on this list should be **REFUSE!**

The two things we'd like to challenge our church family to Refuse beginning this month are:

- 1) Junk Mail and
- 2) Single Use Plastics (SUP's).

What do you do when **junk mail** arrives? If you're like most people, you groan and toss it immediately in the recycle bin. But in so doing, you aren't doing the planet any good at all. A far better thing to do with it is take it over to your phone or your computer, find out the source and sender, call that source/sender and demand – yes, **DEMAND!** – to be removed permanently from their mailing list. It is our right, protected by the law, to refuse such mailings, just as it is with intrusive telemarketing phone calls. But we have to take steps to exercise that right. Work to never let another piece of junk mail into your home. Cut it off at its source and let your mail deliverer know that you are doing so!

Single Use Plastics are the cancer that is killing our environment. A huge percentage of what we buy at the grocer is packaged in single use plastics. Think of ground beef – a Styrofoam under layer wrapped in plastic wrap. Why not get your ground beef from the butcher in the deli section, specifically asking him/her to wrap it only in paper? **NO plastics, please!**

Thank you for taking these important steps to take better care of what belongs to God and represents our children's future!

JULY SCHEDULE

DATE	LITURGIST	USHER/GREETER	COFFEE HOUR
July 1	Helen Mate	Vicky Rigney	Helen Mate & Helen Crandall
July 8	Helen Mate	Don & Mardee Storing	Carol Leser, Donna Kofler
July 15	Helen Mate	NEEDED	Gloria House, Donna Kofler, & Mona Viviano
July 22	Helen Mate	Rod & Sallie Anderson	Margaret Hafner & David Henson, & Louanne Spearman
July 29	Helen Mate	Louanne Spearman & Evelyn Pratt	Chuck & Judy Falk, & Joel & Joanie Sietsema

July Birthdays

- 3 Joel Sietsema
- 4 Tony Fobar
- 4 Laura Hotelling
- 16 Lori Ferguson
- 16 Harrison Kalember
- 18 Whitney Rigney
- 21 Gloria House
- 23 Mardee Storing
- 26 Jackie Fry
- 31 Brianna Boughner



July Anniversaries

- 3 Roger & Brenda Brummel

JULY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Reaching Out, 11:30am	2	3 *Bulletin Deadline	4 Independence Day 	5 Bible Study, 11:00am	6 Community Meal, 5pm	7 UNA Meeting, 10:00am
8	9	10 *Bulletin Deadline	11	12 Trustees, 9:30am Bible Study, 11:00am	13 Community Meal, 5pm	14
15	16	17 *Bulletin Deadline	18 Church Book Club, 1:00pm	19 Bible Study, 11:00am Reaching In, 12:15pm Council, 4:15pm	20 Community Meal, 5pm	21
22	23 *Newsletter Deadline	24 Salad Luncheon, 11:30am *Bulletin Deadline	25	26 Bible Study, 11:00am	27 Community Meal, 5pm	28
29	30	31 *Bulletin Deadline				