

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

January, 2023

*Embracing people at every age and every stage of life, helping them
to become the most loving version of themselves possible.*

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Pastor's Column – January 2023

“Changing Habits”

It's another New Year! Happy New Year! With it comes all kinds of New [Year's](#) resolutions. Whether it's losing weight, saving more, cutting debt, taking better care of ourselves, eating dinner together every night...and on and on. Many New Year's resolutions last only a couple of weeks, or maybe through January. There [are](#) all kinds of research about why this is, but I often come down to the fact that most of the time it's because we have made our resolution too large. “I'm going to lose 50 pounds this year.” While possible, it seems too [big](#), and we give up early when our bodies don't [lose](#) weight as quickly as we believe they should.

We do the same thing with faith. “I'm going to read the whole Bible this year!” Then we calculate how many verses we'd have to read each day to get to that goal. Then we miss a day, or two, or five, or ten, because life gets in the way of reaching that lofty goal. Maybe we decide we need to meditate more. That is a great goal. But it's too ambiguous. So, we then decide that we will meditate 20 minutes a day. Then we miss a day, or two, or five, or ten. Feeling guilty, we just quit. Until January 2024 when we make a whole lot of resolutions again.

Resolutions in and of themselves are not a bad thing. It's great to want to improve your life, your health, your faith, your compassion, your family life, or whatever. The problem is that we make our resolutions almost impossible to achieve. Imagine yourself saying, “I'm going to climb Mount Everest.” So, you set out and start climbing the [mountain](#). How far do you think you'll go before you quit?

Right. Not very. Altitude sickness, the slope of the mountain, weather, inappropriate gear, you forgot to hire a guide, and a host of other reasons get in the way. We might work toward walking a mile in our own neighborhood before taking on such a huge mountain.

A similar idea might make your resolution go better this year. What if we just took our big goal and made it smaller? Sure, it takes longer, but what we're really trying to do is to build a new habit. It's not about reading the whole Bible (in the short term), but it is about reading some of the Bible (for example). What if we said we wanted to read a scripture three times a week instead of every day? We could still try for every [day and](#) know that some weeks we'll read each day for seven days, but others maybe only one day. Over time, we build the habit by setting our goal in smaller chunks. Specific, Measurable, Attainable. Our resolutions are often none of those things.

So this year, I invite you to grow your faith. Make a resolution, if you'd like, but don't make it impossible to achieve. Work toward building a new habit than reaching a certain destination. I've found it has worked for me in a couple of areas since I moved to Gaylord. There are lots of resources to help you along the way. Most of all, give yourself grace as life often gets in the way.

Change happens more slowly than we'd like. But it happens best when we work to change our habits, or methods, rather than completely doing a whole new thing all at once.

Blessings on a great New Year!

Pastor Greg

FROM FRIENDS TO FAMILY

Over the past month or so, [members of](#) our Reaching In and Reaching Out teams have been working on some sort of process, or ritual, that helps people know that they are now participants in the life of this congregation. We don't use the term "member" here as it has a lot of unfortunate connotations. Also, we know that people move in and out along the way as their life journey changes.

The truth is you already belong. There is no ritual or anything else required to be an active participant in the life of this church. However, some have expressed interest in a brief worship ritual, and they'd like to know more about this congregation and the United Church of Christ.

Our working group decided that we would host a meal for those interested on January 29, 2023, following worship. Anyone may come and several will get special invitations. We will conduct our ritual in worship sometime later this winter.

If you have questions, please see Pastor Greg, or a member of the Reaching In or Reaching Out teams.



HELLO January

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
1 VIRTUAL Worship	2 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA Reaching In 12 PM 6 PM Compasionate	3	4 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	5 11 AM Bible Study 12:15 Wmn's Fellowship 4 PM Choir	6 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	7
8 10 AM Worship	9 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	10	11 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	12 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	13 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	14 AA 3 PM
15 10 AM Worship	16 MLK Day 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 7 PM Reaching Out	17	18 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 11AM Trustees	19 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	20 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	21
22 10 AM Worship	23 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA NEWSLETTER FINAL- IZED & POSTED Stephanie Work- ing remotely	24	25 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 1PM Church Book Club	26 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	27 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	28
29 10 AM Worship <i>From Family to Friends meal after worship</i>	30 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	31	February 1 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	2 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	3 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	4

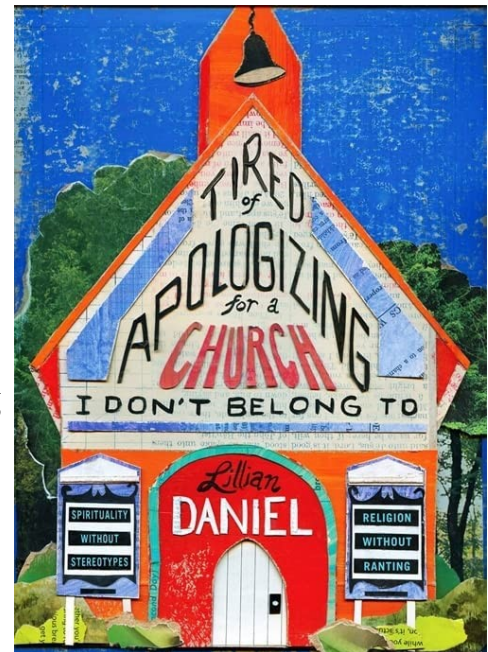
"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that there was in me
an invincible summer."



NEW BOOK STUDY TO BEGIN JANUARY 12

On Thursday night, just for January and February, you are invited to participate in an online book study of Rev. Lillian Daniel's *"I'm Tired of Apologizing for a Church I Don't Belong To"*. Rev. Daniel is the Conference Minister for the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ. She will be visiting our congregation in May 2023. The book is available for purchase through whatever platform you use. We no longer have a local bookstore, so you are invited to get your own copy. If you need help, please let Pastor Greg or Stephanie know and we'll get it for you.

The book is helpful for churches like ours and giving us language about how to talk about church in a culture that has experienced much hurt and judgment on the part of the Christian church. How is our church different? How is our faith expression different?



The book has fifteen chapters, so we'll try to do two a week if we can! We'll meet at 7:00 p.m. via zoom. Here's the link: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/88171572216>. Come when you can, join anytime. If you have questions, please speak with Pastor Greg.



With Love and Gratitude...

Dear Church Family:

Thank you all so much for the many well wishes, cards and gifts you shared with me and my family this Christmas. I treasure you and am overjoyed to be among you. Here's to a great 2023.

Love,

Pastor Greg



To all of you:

I am regularly bowled over by the love and kindness within our church family. We may be small, but we love fiercely and that means to world to me. I can't thank you enough for your daily caring gestures of appreciation and friendship, let alone the generosity you've shown throughout this holiday season.

With so much love,

Stephanie



BIRTHDAYS:

7 Diane House
9 Jill Brazelton
18 Joanna Morse
21 Larry Ward
21 Pastor Greg
22 Jeff Kalember
27 Rokko Jans

Christmas Caroling!



~ In Our Prayers ~
During the month of January,
the UNA is holding the Northport Trinity Church in prayer.

Joanie Sietsema and family– as they grieve Joel’s sudden passing.

Margaret Hellenberg and family– as they grieve John’s recent passing.

Bill Dely – as Maxine has been moved from Medilodge to her daughter’s in the Grand Rapids area for further recuperation.

Brenda Brummel – as she is now cancer-free, we share our prayers of thanks.

The English Family – as they grieve the loss of Joe’s mother and process Joe’s recent diagnosis with progressive aphasia.

Laura Bantens and her partner, Chris – as Chris is experiencing health issues and they are both encountering major life changes.

Sandra Soderberg – as she addresses ongoing health concerns.

Gloria House’s granddaughter, Madison Crawford – as she suffers from cataplexy in narcolepsy along with other neurological struggles. She is at home and adjusting to new medication which seems to be helping but is still in need of prayers.

Brad Derenzy—as he has continuing health struggles.

Jennifer (Crandall) Finnegan and family- as Jen’s husband and father-in-law are having health issues.

Ariah House – as she is finally home but still in need of prayers. She will be traveling to Grand Rapids for monthly infusions.

Margaret Hafner and her children – as they grieve the recent passing of Jennifer and Kevin’s father.

Prayer requests are received by the church office. Names will appear on the list for two months; please let the office know if this time needs to be extended, or if it is time to remove a name.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Food Pantry – is in need of a few more volunteers. Please contact Don Storing if interested.

Bible Study – at 11 AM on Thursdays. Zoom link is provided: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>

January Upcoming Dates to Remember

- ◇ *New Year's Day virtual service*
- ◇ Book study with Pastor Greg, starting on January 12th!

Looking Ahead:

- ◇ May 21st, Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel, Michigan Conference minister, visits.





2023 Flower Schedule

January: *Margaret Hafner and Dave Henson*

February: *Margaret Hellenberg*

March: *Jeannine Wambold*

April: *Cathy Otto*

May: *Bill and Maxine Dely*

June: *Joanie Sietsema*

July: *Helen Mate*

August: *Evelyn Pratt*

September: *Sallie Anderson*

October: *Vicky Rigney*

November: *Louanne Spearman*

December: *Christian Ed.*





5 for 5

from your Reaching Out Team

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Basic support for the Michigan Conference and National Settings.

Collected on an ongoing basis

Received to date: \$329

One Great Hour of Sharing

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic response.

Collected in March

Received to date: \$935

Strengthen the Church

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, young and young adult ministers within conferences.

Collected around Pentecost

Received to date: \$84 (2022)

Neighbors in Need

One third supports Council for American Indian Ministry and two-thirds is administered to Justice and Witness Ministers to support a variety projects. Due to Covid-19 the elected UCC officers have deemed this to be a priority.

Collected in October

Received to date: \$149 (2021)

Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired UCC ministers and lay employees and spouses.

Collected in December

Received to date: \$774 (2021)

In Addition, we gave \$521 for Blanket Sunday this year!

2022 Tornado Relief - \$646 (as of November)



Current Meeting Times

All are welcome to “attend” these meetings

Reaching In* will meet the first Monday of each month at noon:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84945686588>

Reaching Out will meet the third Monday of each month at 7 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83220896539>

Council will meet the after worship. Check monthly calendar for specific dates.:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85297662581>

Trustees will meet the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85470391561>

Bible Study meets Thursdays at 11am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>

*In October Reaching In will meet the 2nd Monday of the month.