

First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
*Gaylord*

 **March 2021**

*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  
218 W. Second Street  
Gaylord, MI 49735  
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Coordinator:** Jessica Benoit  
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**Church Service: Sunday, 10 am**  
*\*at this time, all services are being  
held virtually. Please visit our web-  
site.*

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Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

February 18, 2021

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Continued on next page ...

## The Reciprocity of the Universe

*The bloodline of God is connected to everything . . . shells on the ocean shore, the mushrooms growing in the forest, the trees stretching to the clouds, the tiniest speck of snow in the winter, and our dust-to-dustness—we are all connected and tethered to this sacred gift of creation. —Kaitlin B. Curtice, *Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God**

*In cultures that have kept alive the knowledge that we are all one, woven in the same fabric of life (what I referred to earlier this week as “the Great Chain of Being”), people honor the reciprocity of the universe through ritual and tradition. Botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Robin Wall Kimmerer elaborates on this teaching:*

The ceremonial giveaway is an echo of our oldest teachings.

Generosity is simultaneously a moral and a material imperative, especially among people who live close to the land and know its waves of plenty and scarcity. Where the well-being of one is linked to the well-being of all. Wealth among traditional people is measured by having enough to give away. Hoarding the gift, we become constipated with wealth, bloated with possessions, too heavy to join the dance. . . .

I don’t know the origin of the giveaway, but I think that we learned it from watching the plants, especially the berries who offer up their gifts all wrapped in red and blue. We may forget the teacher, but our language remembers: our word for the giveaway, *minidewak*, means “they give from the heart.” At the word’s center lives the word *min*. *Min* is a root word for *gift*, but it is also the word for *berry*. In the poetry of our language, might speaking of *minidewak* remind us to be as the berries?

The berries are always present at our ceremonies. They join us in a wooden bowl. One big bowl and one big spoon, which are passed around the circle, so that each person can taste the sweetness, remember the gifts, and say thank you. . . . The generosity of the earth is not an invitation to take it all. Every bowl has a bottom. When it’s empty, it’s empty. . . .

Continued on next page ...

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How do we refill the empty bowl? Is gratitude alone enough? Berries teach us otherwise. . . . The berries trust that we will uphold our end of the bargain and disperse their seeds to new places to grow. . . . They remind us that all flourishing is mutual. We need the berries and the berries need us. Their gifts multiply by our care for them, and dwindle from our neglect. We are bound in a covenant of reciprocity, a pact of mutual responsibility to sustain those who sustain us. And so the empty bowl is filled. . . .

The moral covenant of reciprocity calls us to honor our responsibilities for all we have been given, for all that we have taken. It's our turn now, long overdue. . . . Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and to dance for the renewal of the world.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions: 2013), 381, 382, 384.

**Image credit:** Warren K. Leffler, *Demonstrators sit, with their feet in the Reflecting Pool, during the March on Washington, 1963* (detail), photograph, public domain.

**Image inspiration:** *When we look at nature do we think of the cosmos? When we look at the cosmos does it bring nature to mind? We are intimately connected on micro and macro scales beyond our human capacity to understand. We sit together to rest our feet, in the midst of nature, cosmos and great shifts in consciousness.*

*This meditation is copyright 2021 from the Center for Action and Contemplation and is used by permission. Daily meditations can come to your email inbox. Go to [cac.org](http://cac.org) and find the Daily Devotion tab and sign up! You can always unsubscribe. The meditations are written by Father Richard Rohr. Also, Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* is available to borrow from Pastor Greg, if you're interested.*

## THE COMMUNITY NOTICES...

The other day, I was visiting a patient at Otsego Memorial Hospital. They attended here years ago, mostly in the summers, when their kids were little (maybe 40 years ago?). Anyway, as I've gotten to know them, we've chatted a lot about church, raising kids and his hospitalization. The patient is back home now, and I've seen him some since then. They told me the greatest story, and I've been asked to share it with the congregation.

While in the hospital, he mentioned to the staff person that the minister from the Congregational Church was coming to see him. The staff member, who is not a member of our church, said, “They are a small church, but they do more in this community than just about anybody!”

People are noticing what we do here, and they are grateful for it. Discipleship requires that we serve the world as much as we possibly can, without thanks or reward. And yet, it's nice to receive a "pat on the back" once in a while. I hope we can graciously receive a compliment from our community, and continue our active ministry in Gaylord and the surrounding area.

Thank you for all you do,

Pastor Greg



February 26, 2021

Dear Church Friends and Family,

Many of us, including Council Members, are anxious to resume Worship Services in person. We want to assure you that re-opening the church for in-person worship is a topic of discussion at each of our Council meetings. Among the issues we are examining are:

- 1) Making sure that whatever we decide, re-opening is consistent with our commitment to inclusion, so that anyone who wants to attend can attend safely.
- 2) Considering how and whether we would be able to modify our church infrastructure to extract air out of the church. Currently, we do not have that capability.
- 3) Investing in the cost of special filters for every air duct. This not only involves the expense of the filters (considerable), but would also require that the blower fan on our new furnace run almost constantly.
- 4) Investing in the cost of cleaning the church after every use, which would involve investing in a “fogger” device that uses a sanitizing chemical for our surfaces.
- 5) Social distancing, which we feel would be pretty easy to accomplish in our church with our current membership.
- 6) Universal masking for everyone in the church.
- 7) Analyzing state and county data and complying with all other state mandates for gatherings and CDC recommendations

All Council members are aware of the impact the pandemic has had on our society and on our congregation, specifically. As a social worker, I do not use the word “trauma” lightly; yet, there is no doubt that many of us have individually and collectively been traumatized by the impact of this disease. We may also find the new variants frightening, albeit in a different way, and this invites stress that isn’t related to a specific external threat, but still is perceived and interpreted by our body’s normal mechanical processes<sup>1</sup>. In “normal” times, we would usually turn to our church and our relationships with others in the church to find comfort and alleviate these stresses. This has not been possible over the past year, and we recognize that this has become stressful in and of itself.

On the positive side, the number of new infections has begun to decline in the new year. Vaccinations are occurring at an increasingly rapid pace, and it will not be long before the temperatures will invite us outdoors once again to recreate and meet in small groups. In addition, people of our congregation tell us they have been adhering to the state mandates and when they have met with others, they have engaged in social distancing and have been masked.

Our ability to purchase and use new technology for delivering live-streamed services has been a blessing during this tumultuous period. Still, we recognize that this “holy experiment” is no long-term substitute for gathering and worshipping in person, and we recognize that we are charged with the responsibility

**“We want to send a clear and strong message to congregations who are considering going back to meeting in person: We urge you to wait until ALL safety concerns have been addressed.”**

*United Church of Christ leadership*

of meeting our human needs while attending to diversity and accessibility. We must also take the church's role of community leader seriously, and trust in the resilience of the church.

We have taken a two-step approach to gathering and tracking data in our state and county. Though "herd immunity" will not likely be fully reached until vaccination rates exceed 75%, we feel that we can combine vaccination rate data with data on COVID cases per 100,000 population and the rates of positive tests to determine when we should re-open. Here are the guidelines we have been following, as recommended by the UCC:

UNSAFE TO GATHER	MAKE IT SAFER	SAFEST
Vaccination rates <50%	Vaccination rates 50-70+%	Vaccination rates 70-85+%
Viral Transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cases &gt;10/100K</li><li>• Positive Tests &gt;10%</li></ul>	Viral Transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cases 5-10/100K</li><li>• Positive Tests &lt;10%</li></ul>	Viral Transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cases &lt;1/100K</li><li>• Positive Tests &lt;5%</li></ul>

Here is the data we currently have for Otsego County:

**Vaccination rates:**

Otsego County (pop. 16 and older=20,008): 17.4% (1<sup>st</sup> dose: 4,325; 2<sup>nd</sup> dose 2,069).

**Daily Cases (per 100,000):**

Otsego County: 30.1

**Infection (Transmission) Rates:**

Otsego County: 1.09

**Positive Test Rates:**

Otsego County: 3.3%

You can see from this data that we are almost at the "safest" level! When our vaccination rates increase from the current rate of 17.4% to the 75% rate, we can fall into the "safest" range. Having said that, Council will continue discussing what makes sense for *our* congregation. As soon as any decisions have been made to alter our previous guidelines, we will be sure to inform you. Our next Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, by zoom. The link to that meeting can be found here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81455642087>

Please consider joining us and sharing your ideas and opportunities.

Blessings,

*Mischelle Stone, Moderator*

<sup>1</sup>How to heal the "mass trauma" of Covid-19. Retrieved from BBC.com 02/03/2021



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# ***JOIN US!***

## **BOOK & BIBLE STUDY WORSHIP EXPERIENCE**

### ***HOW WILL WE USE THE BOOK?***

It will provide our themes for worship from Jan. 31 – May 16, including special services between now and then.

In Bible Study, Thursday mornings at 11am following the theme used in worship.

In a book discussion group, Thursday evenings at 7pm following the theme used in worship. We hope to meet in person and via zoom in a hybrid-fashion.

*Readings each week will include 2-4 bible verses and 2-4 pages in book!*

*Discussion questions are included!*

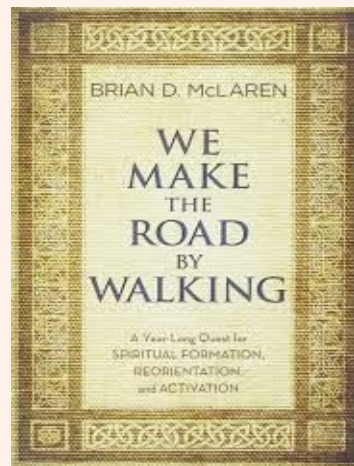
*Participate as your schedule allows!*

*Books are \$12.80*

*Please have exact change to reimburse church or checks may be made out to:*

*"First Congregational UCC Gaylord"*

**THERE ARE  
STILL BOOKS  
AVAILABLE!!!!**



**Zoom Link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83233232069?pwd=WlNmd3NlZVZSbnJFS3BVdEZnN0dtdz09>

**Meeting ID:** 832 3323 2069

**Passcode:** 447689

**Dial In:** 1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

FROM THE BACK COVER...

*"This book's fifty-two (plus a few) readings offer everything you need to explore what a difference an honest, living, growing faith can make in our world today. Organized around the traditional church year, these readings give an overview of the whole Bible and guide an individual or group of friends through a year of rich study, interactive learning, and personal growth.*

*If you're seeking a fresh way to experience and practice your faith, if you are a long-term Christian seeking a new vitality, or if you feel out of place in traditional church circles, this book will inspire and activate you in your spiritual journey.*

*Dare to venture off old maps into new, uncharted territory and discover how we make the road by walking."*



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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
REACHING OUT FEBUARY 15, 2021  
MEETING STARTED AT 7PM**

Present at meeting: Mona, Louanne, Greg (pastor) Vicky (note taker)

**Winter clothing** gathered over the last number of weeks will be taken to the high school and elementary schools in the next couple weeks.

**Scholarship** for the graduating seniors fund raiser. This will continue until the end of March.

**Pastor Greg** was pleased to tell us about the positive comments he is receiving from the Gaylord community. For a small church he is hearing how much we do in the community.

Elder and members we are not seeing at this time of pandemic quarantine was discussed with ideas shared.

Meeting ended at 7:30pm

Submitted by Vicky Rigney

Next meeting March 15 7PM



### **Report from Your Trustees – March 2021 Newsletter**

- As we begin a new year still abiding by pandemic restrictions, we continue to ask everyone to mail your contributions to our church office at 218 W. Second St. If you prefer the convenience of online donations, you can also contribute using the PayPal button on our website at [www.firstuccgaylord.org](http://www.firstuccgaylord.org).
- Our church budget for the current year – approved at our annual meeting last fall – calls for an average weekly income of \$1,775 from tithes and offerings. Through February 14<sup>th</sup>, our actual average weekly income was \$1,752. Thank you to all of our generous donors!
- During Calendar Year 2020, our church contributed \$2,700 to local and UCC special ministries! These contributions are a result of “special collections” which we sponsor on various Sundays as coordinated by our Reaching Out team. Mission recipients include the Food Pantry, Refuge, Community Meal, Our Church’s Wider Mission, Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, Church World Service Blanket Sunday, and Kidz on a Mission. Thank you, church family, for your generous support of these important mission initiatives!
- Live broadcast of our services began on Sunday, January 31. We have five trained operators thus far, and will rotate responsibility for handling the streaming of services from week to week. We appreciate your continued patience, as each person will have an initial learning curve. We also appreciate Brenda’s efforts to pre-record music in advance (thus assuring social distancing) and produce the excellent music videos incorporated in weekly services.
- In order to enhance audio quality, we planning to replace the old sound mixer which served the church for many years but is quite outdated. The cost of a new mixer was not part of our original project budget, but has been donated by a church family.
- We look forward the time when we can again worship together in person. Meanwhile, we are enormously grateful for your continued financial support.

<b>First Congregational UCC Gaylord</b>			
<b>Actual Compared to Budgeted Financials</b>			
<b>Through January 2021</b>			
	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Budget Year to Date</b>	<b>Actual Year to Date</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
<b>Operating Income</b>	<b>\$ 102,780</b>	<b>\$ 8,565</b>	<b>\$ 8,841</b>
<b>Ministries Income</b>		<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 1,038</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 102,780</b>	<b>\$ 8,565</b>	<b>\$ 9,879</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
<b>Personnel</b>	<b>\$ 71,230</b>	<b>\$ 5,936</b>	<b>\$ 5,735</b>
<b>Facility</b>	<b>\$ 20,730</b>	<b>\$ 1,728</b>	<b>\$ 2,165</b>
<b>Other Operating</b>	<b>\$ 8,185</b>	<b>\$ 682</b>	<b>\$ 1,225</b>
<b>Ministries</b>	<b>\$ 2,400</b>	<b>\$ 200</b>	<b>\$ 556</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 102,545</b>	<b>\$ 8,545</b>	<b>\$ 9,682</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 235</b>	<b>\$ 20</b>	<b>\$ 197</b>

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Shoutout to

[Brenda C Brummel](#)

and Kidz on a Mission for making my whole week with this lovely valentines surprise

♥ I love you all so much ♥

***Sofia was one of nine recipients of this year's Valentine cookies. Thanks to Helen Mate and Sallie Anderson for helping with the cookies!***



*The following was received from the Redford Brightmoor Initiative for the monies sent by Kidz on a Mission in lieu of their being able to make their annual trek to help with the One Stop even:*

Dear Brenda and Gaylord First UCC,

Thank you so very much for our generous donation for this year's One Stop Shop!! Your donation helped us purchase toys for nearly 1000 children! Let's hope and pray that we will be held to hold our annual holiday event in prson next year and you can make the trip down to Brightmoor once again.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season!

Thanks again, Hilary and Redford Brightmoor Initiative

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# **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*

### **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 April*

### **Strengthen the Church**

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

*Collected around Pentecost*

### **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*

### **Christmas Fund**

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

*Collected in December*

# SCHOLARSHIP FUND

## 2021

Each year, we enjoy honoring our graduates by offering The Scholarship Fund.

This year has been more difficult raising funds as we have not been able to have our usual fundraising events.

If this ministry offering speaks to your heart, donations will be accepted through at least March.

You may mail in your contribution to the church.

*Please put "Scholarship Fund" in memo line.*



*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9*

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## 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/86109266574>

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7913585725>

**Council** will meet the second Wednesday of each month at 7PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81455642087>

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

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09)  
[pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86536935740?pwd=aXN0enQ5ODZvWDRNoeXlUZEVFdE1OQT09)

This meeting requires passcode 452218





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## ~ In Our Prayers ~

During the month of March, the UNA is holding the Harrison church in prayer.

**Joanne Meldrum** (fondly nicknamed “Aunt JoJo” by Katie Amar-Fox over 20 years ago) died peacefully at Woodland Acres on Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>. Please keep her family and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

**The McMasters Family** – as they grieve the recent loss of Bob.

**Ariah House** – as she was taken to DeVos Children’s Hospital. She is suffering from severe balance issues and, as a result, broke her arm.

**The Family of Lorene Parshall** – as they grieve the loss of Lorene.

**Margaret Soller and Family** — as they grieve the recent loss of Margaret’s father.

**Brenda Brummel**—as she mourns the recent loss of her cousin, Jerry.

**Mardee Storing’s daughter, Lori** – as she has now been diagnosed with brain cancer. Please also keep Lori’s family in your prayers, as well as Mardee and Don.

**All of those working on the frontline to fight COVID-19**, those that are considered essential workers, those without jobs, those ill, and those affected by this pandemic in anyway.

*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.*



*Prayer Requests*

## An update on Ariah House:

As many of you know, Ariah was taken to DeVos Children’s Hospital in Grand Rapids in early February. Ariah is only nine years old and has spent the entire month between the hospital and Mary Free Bed to help regain some coordination and steady walking. At this time, she is recovering. Her doctors believe her condition is autoimmune related.

If you would like to send her a card or care package, please send to Terry and Diane’s address. They are hoping to have her home within 7-10 days.

Please keep the entire family in your thoughts, prayers,  
and showering of love.

**House Residence**

**5040 Sparr Rd**

**Gaylord, MI 49735**

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## BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

### *March Birthdays*

6 *Pete Amar*  
8 *Natassja English*  
11 *Eric Anderson*  
12 *Roger Brummel*  
12 *Kay Boughner*  
14 *Maryetta House*  
23 *John Hellenberg*  
27 *Carol Lienerth*  
30 *Ryan Anderson*

### *March Anniversaries*

13 *Russ (Bo) & Carol Leser*  
28 *Norm & Pat Dressel*





# March 2021

**Sun**

**Mon**

**Tue**

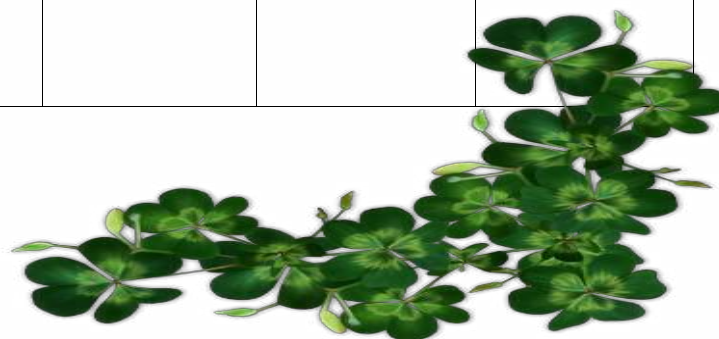
**Wed**

**Thu**

**Fri**

**Sat**

	1 Virtual Reaching In, Noon	2	3	4 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Women's Fellowship, 12:15pm Book Study,	5 Community Meal	6
7 Live Virtual Worship <b>Communion</b> Virtual Coffee Hour	8	9	10 Council, 7pm	11 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	12 Community Meal	13
14 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour <i>Daylight Savings</i>	15 Reaching Out, 7pm	16	17 Virtual Trustees, 11am Virtual Council, 7pm <i>St. Patrick's Day</i>	18 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	19 Community Meal	20
21 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	22	23	24 Church Book Club, 1pm	25 Virtual Bible Study, 11am Book Study, 7pm	26 Community Meal	27
28 Live Virtual Worship Virtual Coffee Hour	29	30	31			



*All Sundays will have virtual coffee hour at 11am unless otherwise notified, all are welcome!*