

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord**

March 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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Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-5726

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Pastor's Column – March 2023

“The Right Path”

I'm sure you all will be shocked that I have another story from hiking in the woods. Indeed, another hike, another story.

The other day I was out in the north section of the Shingle Mill Pathway in Pigeon River Country State Forest. Clearly, I was the only human who had walked on the path in some time. There were several inches of snow (more than I imagined!) and were it not for the blue blazes, a person may not have been aware that there was a path there.

Most interesting were the animal tracks that I encountered along the way. Sometimes they were right in line with the human trail, but much of the time they were not. It was like the animals had their own highway system. Someone with more knowledge than I could easily explain what made the tracks, how they travel and so on. But for me, I wondered what would happen if I followed the animal tracks rather than the human ones. It appeared that often their way was a short cut, but it wasn't obvious that their trail would cross the human one again. I really wanted to follow and see where their trails went. I guess I could have followed my own trail back to where I started if things went awry. Then again, I really didn't want to get lost out there.

The “trail system” got me to thinking about our pathways in life. All the time we come across pathways that go in a variety of directions. Some paths lead forward the same way we’re headed. Others break off to the right or the left, or maybe they just cross our path. No matter how pathways appear, we’re often left with the question, “should I continue going the way I am, or should I turn in another direction?” The way forward in life is not always clear. We’re tempted, often, to follow another’s pathway, just like I was tempted to follow the animal trails. They may lead us to where we want to go, but often there is a path that is ours, and a path that is someone else’s.

There are times we follow others, but also times that we are meant to be on our own path. Part of spirituality is discernment of how to move forward. Should I follow the “blue blazes” before me? Should I follow the path of another? Should I turn back? Should I make my own trail? All of these are important questions.

What I’m driving at is that each of us has a path that is our own. It may or may not intersect or follow someone else’s path. Often, though, we are afraid to take our own path. It’s easier just to follow someone else. And yet, God has set before each of us our unique contribution to the world, and a path that is ours. It’s not a big secret, and you don’t get in trouble if you get off the path once in a while. But time is well spent discerning where we are to go, how we are to get there, and what is ours to do.

I invite you to spend time doing whatever it is you like to do that gets you away from all distractions of life. While there, consider what path is for you. Where is God calling you next? Listen for the winds of the Holy Spirit. Then take a step, or many steps, and keep looking for signs for the path that is yours. And while you’re at it, take some time and enjoy the view.

“Faith is...the conviction of things unseen.”

Peace,

Pastor Greg

March

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
26 10 AM Worship	27 Stephanie Working Remotely	28	1 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	2 11 AM Bible Study 4-5 PM Choir 7-8 Book Study with Pastor Greg	3 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	4
5 10 AM Worship Council Mtg. 11 AM	6 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA Reaching In 12 PM	7	8 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 7 PM Council	9 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	10 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Communi- ty Meal	11 AA 3 PM Daylight Savings— Spring Forward @ bedtime! 
12 10 AM Worship	13 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA	14	15 6 AM Gaylord Grati- tude AA 11AM Trustees NEWSLETTER SUBMIS- SIONS DUE, PLS	16 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	17 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal 	18
19 10 AM Worship	20 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 7 PM Reaching Out FIRST DAY OF SPRING!	21	22 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 1PM Church Book Club	23 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	24 6 AM Gay- lord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal	25
26 10 AM Worship	27 NEWSLETTER FINALIZED & POSTED 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA Stephanie Working Remotely	28	29	30 11 AM Bible Study 4 PM Choir	31 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal	April 1

"The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created Spring."

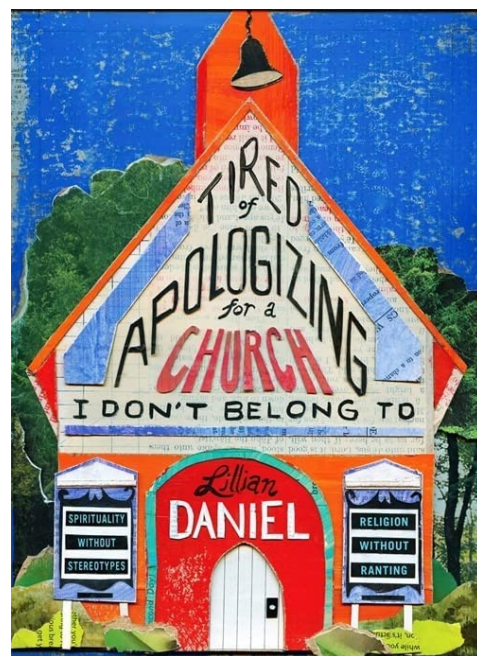
~Bernard Williams



BOOK STUDY CONTINUING THROUGH MARCH 2ND

On Thursday night 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.





From the desk of our Conference Minister

After the Shooting at Michigan State University

This Valentines Day, I do not send our 140 Michigan churches the sugary sentiments of a heart shaped box of chocolates but the prayers from my broken human heart after last night's shooting at Michigan State University. We had church members who could see the scene from where they were locked down in homes and churches. Last night, as I checked in on our local pastors, I knew they were checking in on their churches, communities, families, workers, students, first responders and the weary world around them.

For, as every pastor knows, when tragedy hits, our churches grow much larger than the membership rolls. Churches become centers of care for the whole community, in buildings at busy intersections, in online gatherings, or on prayer chains. When violence locks us down or sends us into the streets, the church has the chance to blast past its walls, when preachers realize that their most important sermon may be the one that is offered to the stranger at the grocery store who recognizes them and says, "Pastor, just answer me this. How can God let this happen?"

I've heard that question a lot lately, from people horrified by whatever picture of the world they receive in the news of their own choosing, but it's a question that we in the church have an ancient answer to. God does not let this happen. People do. It is people who let these things happen.

We saw it in the video of Tyre Nichols, killed by the brutality of human violence and the more devastating brutality of human indifference. We see it in the horror of the war in Ukraine, where, as in all wars, the poor pay the greatest price, while far away leaders philosophize to monetize their own safety. We see it in ourselves as a country, when the news of one school shooting after another becomes routine, in a culture drooling for violence as entertainment, but hardened to it in real life. We see it in ourselves as a nation of immature impulses and short attention spans, more interested in shooting balloons out of the sky than taking guns out of the hands of its own people. God does not allow that to happen. People do.

Yet somehow, despite the stakes, God, the great creator of all things, chose to create us with free will and mortal bodies. We could have been made to live forever as coddled infants, with our needs met, our decisions constrained and our capacity to harm the rest of creation minimized. Instead, we were created in the image of God, which means we have souls and bodies that were literally built for growth and change. Created with a limited time on earth, we were given the ability to choose between right and wrong, love or death, God or stuff, the care of all creation or the tedious worship of the self, all on a short journey through life whose purpose is to draw us closer to the one who gave us life to begin with.

As for the shooting in East Lansing, God does not let this happen. People do. It is God's people who let the worst things happen to ourselves and to one another, from the violent act of taking lives, to the violent inaction of cynical indifference. But it is also God's people who allow the most beautiful things to happen, from the courageous saving of lives, to the loving healing of broken spirits, to the humble repairing of the world from our own mistakes. This is what it means to follow Jesus, human and divine. Today, our Michigan pastors and churches are at the beating heart of it all.

Peace and Blessings,

The Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel



Used with permission.



It's Time to **SHARE** ...

“So let’s not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don’t give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all.”

Galatians 6:9-10 [The Message]

For over 70 years, the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering (OGHS)—known as Week of Compassion(WoC) in the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ—has been helping American and Canadian Christians bring God’s hope and healing to hurting people both in the U.S. and around the world. Since the closing years of World War II, OGHS has raised funds to support domestic and international development, fight poverty and its consequences, and bring aid and relief to communities torn by war or ravaged by natural disaster.

“Give a person a fish and you feed them for one day. Teach a person to fish and you feed them forever.”¹ The meaning of this phrase seems clear—take care of a need now or empower others to do for themselves.

While the Apostle Paul does not talk about fishing or hunger or food insecurity in his letter to the Galatians, he does talk about how Christians are to live: generously helping and caring for others.

In Paul’s day, more than half of the population lived at or below subsistence level, barely able to make ends meet. Many died prematurely due to malnutrition and ailments that resulted from lack of healthy and plentiful food. Most people—adults and children—experienced food insecurity.

Those who had money and power contributed to building roads and water systems, and hosted lavish banquets for their colleagues. Their public displays of generosity were often self-serving, though: the bigger and more public their acts of giving, the more they were esteemed in the eyes of those they wanted to impress. Acts of charity, on any scale to make a difference for those in need, were few and far between. Government safety nets were non-existent.

Paul understands that God raises the bar on community life—the care of the poor and vulnerable; the use of resources to benefit those who really need help; loving one’s neighbor; caring

generosity: making a place for all and using financial resources to help those who really need help. Community life means meeting immediate needs (giving fish) and working for long term progress (teaching to fish). Food security requires both.

Paul also understands that radical hospitality and generosity are tiring. The needs of people keep growing. The call to help and to share is insistent, urgent, unending, exhausting. Paul reminds the Galatians that their communities are different; they are shaped and sustained by God's Spirit. Their loving acts are responses to God's own loving acts towards each of them. God keeps on giving, and so should they.

Paul compares sacrificial, communal love to harvesting. So much is needed for a bountiful harvest, and anything can disrupt its outcome. Embedded in harvesting is fatigue, uncertainty, and anxiety—yet, the planting, pruning, and tending are done as one waits, in hope, for the outcome.

Paul encourages the Galatians, and us, to look at the bigger picture. Guided and strengthened by God's Spirit, we are called to work, plant, grow, and produce until the final harvest day—the harvest that marks the fulfillment of God's Reign, already started and yet to be completed in God's own time.

Perhaps, we grow weary because we do not know if our efforts truly make a difference. Will our dollars improve the devastating effects of climate change? Will our contributions feed all the hungry people of the world? How can we know if our gifts are worth it?

The One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering answers these questions. Your gifts help organizations confront food insecurity and hunger. OGHS partners with others to provide immediate aid to those affected by disasters, poverty, or fleeing conflict—providing food, water, shelter, and companionship during times of distress. Your dollars support soup kitchens and food pantries. OGHS shows up when people are in crisis. This offering provides “fish” when needed most.

In addition, your financial gifts enable the building (and rebuilding) of structures and processes that make a difference for the future, providing education and helping hands for long-term improvements.

OGHS gifts allow families to plant crops, produce fertilizers, and receive the physical seeds they need for planting. Contributions to OGHS allow women and men to learn practices of irrigation and sustainable farming techniques. OGHS enables partners to teach about food and nutrition, hygiene, waste management and environmental protection.

OGHS's programs for food security range from sponsoring gardens that supply food pantries in Indiana to crop diversification in Honduras and Nicaragua to renewable energy in Bosnia to irrigation techniques in Indonesia. Your dollars enable OGHS partners “to teach sisters and brothers how to fish”—here at home and overseas.

We cannot physically be in all the places that OGHS serves or even see all the results with our own eyes, but through your generous offerings and special gifts, you help promote the loving community that Paul advocates.

OGHS is YOUR reach into the world; working in partnership with people we will never meet, yet to whom we are connected. Your contributions are transforming lives for generations to come and are part of the harvest into which Paul invites us. Your gifts bring the Reign/Kindom of God closer to us all.

We can make a difference. We do make a difference. Your generosity makes all the difference in the world.

There is power in doing good and changing the lives of others. We cannot grow weary or quit—lives are at stake. God's Spirit energizes and re-energizes us when we get tired. God helps us to help others.

Food is life. Hunger is the denial of life. Fighting hunger is an affirmation of life. The need has never been greater. Let us continue this good work. Let us stay energized. Let us give generously. The opportunity is now. It's time to share.

Please give to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering that we will be taking throughout the month of March 2023. You can note OGHS on your check or envelope. Contributions to OGHS can be made online anytime, as well, by going to the church's website <https://www.firstuccgaylord.org/> and clicking the **PayPal Donate** button on the bottom left of the home page.

(Source is a PDF found on the UCC's national website, <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Sermon-Starter.pdf>)

GAYLORD

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



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ENROLLMENT
EXPRESS!!!**

Scan the QR Code



or visit

WWW.GAYLORDSCHOOLS.COM/ENROLLMENT



Computers / Laptops
are available to use at the
District Registrar's Office:
615 S Elm Ave., Gaylord MI



Paper
registration packets
are available upon request.


2023 - 2024

**Grades
K-12**

**OPEN REGISTRATION
for NEW STUDENTS!**

Questions?

Contact the GCS District Registrar:

 989-705-3027

 GCS.REGISTRAR@GAYLORD.K12.MI.US





Birthdays:

6 Pete Amar
8 Andrew Brazelton
8 Natassja English
11 Eric Anderson
11 Emily Brazelton
11 James Brazelton
12 Roger Brummel
12 Kay Boughner
14 Maryetta House
27 Carol Lienerth
30 Ryan Anderson

Anniversaries:

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

~ In Our Prayers ~
During the month of March,
the UNA is holding the Cadillac UCC in prayer.

Cindy Goller, Pastor Greg and family – as Cindy's dad has moved into an assisted living apartment.

The English Family – as they manage medical and family challenges.

Mischelle Stone and family as they grieve the passing of Mischelle's sister-in-law, Judy Bouwman.

Janet Holmes, cousin of Kay Boughner, as Janet has been released from the hospital and continues her recovery.

Andrew Short, Helen Crandall's grandson, who was seriously injured in a motorcycle crash.

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.

Cindy Goller's dear friend, Kaye as she was diagnosed with kidney cancer this week. She will be having surgery in the next several weeks.

Brad Derenzy—as he has been blessed with a bit of a reprieve from his illness.

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

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.



A Fundraiser to Consider



January 30, 2023

Dear Community Members,

You are invited to join us in a celebration of the talents of Gaylord Community Schools students on Thursday, March 16, 2023. This fun event will be held at Gaylord High School, 90 Livingston Blvd. Doors will open 6:30 PM, and dinner will be served at 6:30 PM.

Our evening will feature both the Gaylord High School Bands and Culinary Arts program. Come enjoy the musical skills and energy of our band members in their various chamber ensembles.

Gaylord Community Schools advanced Culinary Arts students will showcase their skills with an Italian Dinner Buffet. Our menu includes a choice of traditional meat lasagna or vegetable alfredo lasagna, salad with toppings, and garlic toast. For dessert, the students will treat us to Tiramisu!

Tickets are limited and only available through Friday March 3, 2023. They can be purchased at Bill Marsh Ford Gaylord, Isabella's Copper Pot, or the front office of Gaylord High School. Individual tickets cost \$25.00 or two for \$40.00.

Attached please find opportunities to support Gaylord High School Bands. This fundraiser will help offset the cost of new marching uniforms, the repair or replacement of school owned instruments, and other supplies needed throughout the school year. If you have any questions, please send band boosters an email at gaylordbandboosters@gmail.com or call me directly at 989-731-0969 x 1251.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

We hope to see you there,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Aaron Hotelling'.

Mr. Aaron Hotelling
Gaylord Community Schools Band Director
90 Livingston Blvd.
Gaylord, MI 49735



Kamp for a Kause's mission is to stand in solidarity with homeless youth by Kamping Out overnight on the Gaylord Community Field on Saturday, April 29th starting at 8 pm, concluding Sunday, April 30th at 8 am with a morning reflection and community partner breakfast to follow. Individuals, businesses, students, and families will have the opportunity to rally to raise funds through their very own peer-to-peer fundraising campaign by either forming an individual or team page. Businesses can also elect to simply sponsor the event through one of our annual partnership opportunities.

The event will be centered around experiencing and learning more about what it is like to either face homelessness or experience homelessness as a young person in Northern Lower Michigan. During the event, Kampers will hear from keynote speakers on an array of topics that youth face in regard to homelessness, young people who have overcome adversity through the help of KHYP and be able to stand in solidarity with those who have lost their lives to homelessness or who are currently homeless.

This event will benefit the next chapter of finding a physical home for The Karing Home Youth Project (KHYP) in Gaylord. This will allow KHYP to grow and evolve its mission of holistically walking alongside young people who are working to overcome adversity in the face of homelessness in Otsego County, MI.

Please learn more about the event in the attached press release. If your business or organization would like to get involved in Kamp for a Kause(K4AK), please see the K4AK Partnership Guide to learn more ways to make an impact for young people who face homelessness in Otsego County this spring with us!

This event is produced & managed by [Wohlfeil Events](#) and [989 Creative Group](#) on behalf of The Karing Home Youth Project.

Please direct any and all questions, comments, or suggestions to me either via email at cameron@thekaringhomeyouthproject.org or call/text KHYP at (989) 448-6654.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Food Pantry – needs a few more volunteers. Please contact Don Storing if interested.

Bible Study – 11 AM on Thursdays, but please keep an eye on your email for communication from Rokko. The Zoom link is provided: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>

Upcoming Dates to Remember

- ◇ Through March 2nd: “Tired of Apologizing For a Church I Don’t Belong To” Book study with Pastor Greg, every Thursday evening this month at 7 PM via Zoom. Contact Stephanie if you are in need of the Zoom link.
- ◇ March 11: Spring Forward at bedtime! Turn your clocks *ahead* an hour before bed Saturday evening.
- ◇ April 2, 2023: Palm Sunday
- ◇ April 9, 2023: Easter Sunday

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: *Mary Evans*

June: *Joanie Sietsema*

July: *Helen Mate*

August: *Evelyn Pratt*

September: *Sallie Anderson*

October: *Vicky Rigney*

November: *Louanne Spearman*

December: *Christian Ed.*



Report from Your Trustees

At their January meeting, Trustees reviewed church finances for the 2022 calendar year. Thanks to the generosity of our church participants, our weekly tithes and offerings totaled \$95,158, slightly exceeding our budgeted goal of \$95,000 for the year. In addition, modest savings in expenses (compared to budgeted expectations) allowed us to end the year with a positive net income of just over \$1,500. Good news to celebrate!

Although we held our formal dedication of pledges in November, it's not too late to turn in your pledge for the current year if you've not already done so. We have received a pledges totaling \$70,734 for the current year. This amount is \$8,000 below last year's pledge total, and represents 72% of our budgeted tithes/offerings for the current year. Drop your pledge in the collection plate or mail it to our church office at 218 W. Second St.

In addition to your generous tithes and offerings, our church family supports other ministry efforts through a variety of special collections and contributions. Throughout 2022, church participants contributed more than \$4,600 in support of special ministries ranging from Blanket Sunday to Neighbors in Need, Our Church's Wider Mission, the Refuge, Food Pantry, and more.

Thank you for the many ways in which you provide continued financial support of our vibrant church community.

This was submitted in February and I forgot to add it to the newsletter! So sorry!

~Stephanie



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: \$420

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 (2022)

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: \$255 (2022)

Christmas Fund

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

Collected in December

Received to date: \$565 (2022)

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





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/83640729481>

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/83432888287>

Bible Study meets Thursdays at 11am

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