

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord**

May 2023

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

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United Church of Christ**
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Pastor's Column – May 2023

For this month's column, I wanted to share with you the *Daily Meditation* from Father Richard Rohr and the Center for Action and Contemplation. It spoke to me, and I hope it does to you. This article is copyright Center for Action and Contemplation and is used by permission. To sign up for the *Daily Meditations* go to cac.org.

Be Resurrection

Matthew Fox is one of the primary contemporary theologians to articulate a renewed vision of the universal or cosmic Christ. Here, he focuses on the Resurrection's cosmic implications:

Who does not seek Resurrection? Who does not seek a full and fuller life? Did Jesus not promise, "I have come that you may have life, life in abundance" (John 10:10)? How am I Resurrection ... [and] Life for others?

To be Resurrection for another I need to be Resurrection for myself. That means I cannot dwell in [despair] and death and anger and oppression and submission and resentment and pain forever. I need to wake up, get up, rise up, put on life even when days are dark and my soul is down and shadows surround me everywhere.... I have to listen to the voice that says:

~Continued~

“Be resurrection.” ... “Be born again. And again. And again. Rise up and be counted. Rise up and imbibe the good news deeply—that death does not conquer, that life, not death, has the last word....”

Fox insists that resurrection carries both grace and responsibility:

Resurrection is a commitment to hope and being reborn. It is a commitment to creativity, to the Spirit who “makes all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Resurrection is the Spirit’s work. It is the life of the Spirit.

And what about Life? How am I Life? How living and alive am I? How much in love with life am I? Can anyone or any event separate me from my love of life? Paul the mystic asks (and then answers), “Who shall separate us from the love of God? Neither death nor life, height nor depth, neither present nor future” (Romans 8:35, 38). Is my curiosity alive? My gratitude? My mind? My imagination? My laughter and sense of humor? My creativity? My powers of generosity and compassion? My powers for continually generating and regenerating life?

Many mystics ... say, “God is life.” Thus to say, “I am fully alive and fully in love with life” means that I am feeling fully the God presence in me—I am in love with God who is Life; the living God. And to say “I am the Life” is to say “I am God,” or at least a part of God, a son or daughter of God, an expression, an offspring, a manifestation, an incarnation of God. Another Christ.

How are we doing? Are we growing in God-like-ness? In God action? In works of justice and compassion and healing and celebrating? To celebrate life is to celebrate God, to thank God for life, to worship. How are we doing in expressing the “sheer joy” of God (Aquinas) [1] as well as the justice of God?

Yes, I am, yes, we are, the Resurrection and the Life. We bring aliveness and rebirth and plenty of hope into the world, however [distressing] the news becomes. That is what it means to believe in Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. We become Resurrection and the Life. Christ rises anew.

Peace,

Pastor Greg



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 Reaching In 12 PM	2	3	4	5	6
7 Worship 10 AM	8 Pastor/Parish 1 PM	STEPHANIE WORKING REMOTELY			12 Community Meal 4 PM	13
14 Worship 10 AM Jason Peterman Baptism Mother's Day	15 Reaching Out 7 PM	16	17 Trustees 11 AM	18 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	19 Community Meal 4 PM	20
21 Worship 10 AM Conf. Minister, Lillian Daniel here visiting & preaching!	22	23 Salad Luncheon 11:00 AM	24 Church Book Club 1 PM	25 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	26 Community Meal 4 PM	27
28 Worship 10 AM	29 Memorial Day	30	31 Church Book Club 1 PM	June 1 Bible Study 11 AM Wmn's Fellowship 1 PM Choir 4 PM	2 Community Meal 4 PM	3
4 Worship 10 AM	5	6	7	8	9	10

A Spirituality of Nonviolence

Franciscan peacemakers Rosemary Lynch and Alain Richard have identified ten “commandments” for those seeking to live a spiritual life of nonviolence. They call it “The Decalogue for a Spirituality of Nonviolence”:

Active nonviolence calls us:

To learn to recognize and respect “*the sacred*” in every person, including in ourselves, and in every piece of Creation. . . .

To accept oneself deeply, “who I am” with all my gifts and richness, with all my limitations, errors, failings and weaknesses, and to realize that I am accepted by God. . . .

To recognize that what I resent, and perhaps even detest, in another, comes from my difficulty in admitting that this same reality lives also in me. . . .

To renounce dualism, the “we-they” mentality (Manicheism). This divides us into “good people/bad people” and allows us to demonize the adversary. It is the root of authoritarian and exclusivist behavior. It generates racism and makes possible conflicts and wars.

To face fear and to deal with it not mainly with courage but with love.

To understand and accept that the *New Creation*, the building up of the *Beloved Community* is always carried forward with others. It is never a “solo act.” . . .

~ Continued ~

To see ourselves as a part of the whole creation to which we foster a relationship of love, not of mastery, remembering that the destruction of our planet is a profoundly spiritual problem, not simply a scientific or technological one. *We are one.*

To be ready to suffer, perhaps even with joy, if we believe this will help liberate the *Divine* in others. This includes the acceptance of our place and moment in history with its trauma, with its ambiguities.

To be capable of celebration, of joy, when the presence of God has been accepted, and when it has not been to help discover and recognize this fact.

To slow down, to be patient, planting the seeds of love and forgiveness in our own hearts and in the hearts of those around us. Slowly we will grow in love, compassion and the capacity to forgive.

Blanket Sunday



Being a part of the miracle and blanketing the world in love doesn't stop when neighbors receive a warm blanket. For over 75 years, Church World Service has been helping people of faith bring God's hope and healing to people in the U.S. and around the world. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Through the generosity of CWS partner organizations, congregations and individual supporters, our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters. When our neighbors are in need, even \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way.



Please give to the Church World Service (CWS) Blankets program through the offering that we will be collecting on

May 14, 2023. You can note CWS Blanket program on your check or envelope. Contributions to the CWS Blanket program 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.

Be part of the *miracle*. Blanket the world with *love*.

From the desk of our Conference Minister

The mini article below was part of the conference newsletter. It doesn't appear that we can still contribute, but it *is* uplifting to see what the wider church is doing for our trans-youth. If you click the link below, you can read the many love notes posted in honor of Transgender Day of Visibility.

March 31st was Transgender Day of Visibility and we would like to take the day to shower trans-youth with messages of love.

Love Notes

Transgender Day of Visibility – March 31st, 2023

The response to Rev. Traci Blackmon's request for supportive love letters to God's beloved transgender youth has been phenomenal. Thank you for your sincere showing of support and love. Because of the outpouring of support you have shared and the ongoing need to tell transgender youth that are part of God's kingdom, the Love Letters for Transgender Day of Visibility will continue to be posted long after the 24 hours that was anticipated. If you have sent in a letter, it will be shared so that your words, prayers, and expressions of truly seeing these young people goes beyond Transgender Day of Visibility. If you have not yet sent one in, please do so as this project will continue. Lettersoflove@ucc.org



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Salad Luncheon Season!



Salad luncheons are back! Below are the dates and sponsorship for each. Watch for a sign-up list, if you would like to help!

MONTH	COMMITTEE	CHAIR
May 23, 2023	Women's Fellowship	Mona Viviano
June 27, 2023	Scholarship	Sallie Anderson Brenda Brummel
July 25, 2023	Council	Maggie Wallin
August 22, 2023	Reaching In	Sallie Anderson
September 26, 2023	Reaching Out	Louanne Spearman
October 24, 2023	Women's Fellowship	Mona Viviano



Birthdays:

4 Pat Sepura
8 Brenda Brummel
10 George Dunn
15 Norm Dressel
17 Lani English
17 Don Storing
22 Pat Dressel
24 Julia Chwatun
25 Mackenzie Fobar
26 Roy Wolf
31 Alaina Anderson

Anniversaries:

20 Rollie & Louanne Spearman
25 Pete Amar & Mary Fox

~ In Our Prayers ~

**During the month of May the UNA is holding the
Charlevoix First Congregational UCC in prayer.**

Caroline Compton – as she had major shoulder surgery on Friday, April 7 and is recovering at home.

Sallie Anderson and family —as they grieve the sudden passing of Rod.

Pat Kilbourn, a longtime friend of the church – as she is recovering from a fall.

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

Helen Crandall's family – prayers of celebration and thanks as a great-granddaughter has arrived to Amallia (Molly) Kassuba and Stanley Lamberies: Maylah Sue Lamberies born on 3/29/23; 7 pounds 8 ozs....all are doing WELL!

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 Madison is still in need of prayers.

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.



Prayer Requests

ANNOUNCEMENTS

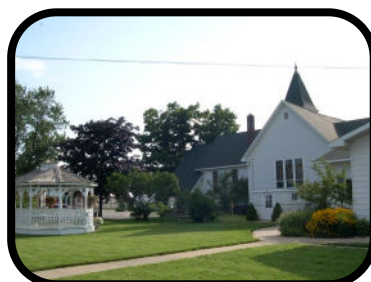
Directory – The directory is being updated. It will be finalized and posted by Tuesday, 5/2. To assure that your information is correct, please look at the version in this week's eblast. Let me know of any changes there might be. Thank you! ~Stephanie

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>

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.*





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: \$158

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: \$120

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 in 2022!





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>