



May, 2024

*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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Church Service: Sunday, 10 am



Pastor's Column – May 2024 “Taking a Risk”

During Lent, several of us studied the book *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord and Presence*, by Diana Butler Bass. I appreciated all those who participated and their thoughtful reactions to Dr. Bass' work. In her chapter she entitled, "Way", Dr. Bass writes several paragraphs on risk, and the risk that comes from following the way of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Bass writes, *Risk is hard. Some people love to risk--athletes, adventurers, artists, actors. Most of us, I suspect, favor a mix of risk and safety, sometimes choosing challenge and other times seeking conformity and comfort. Risk itself is complicated: on occasion we choose it, but sometimes it shows up like an unwelcome guest. I have been willing to risk, yet I have also sacrificed much for safety and tried to avoid challenging choices when possible. Yet as a young woman, when it came to faith, I had become risk-averse.*

I am more risk-averse than I like to admit. I want to fit in, be liked, and not rock the boat too much. But like Dr. Bass says, sometimes we need to choose risk, and sometimes it shows up like an unwanted guest. I'd say sometimes it's both.

Perhaps you have noticed that I have been using more and more inclusive language in our services and publications. This has nothing to do with being politically correct, but I'm not sure that there is such a thing. Instead, Jesus constantly pushes us toward being more inclusive. He did it throughout the gospel related to women and others who were left out, left behind, or even ignored. Most notably, he included in the first communion all 12 disciples, including the one who would betray him and the one who would deny him three times. That's a challenge for me. And yet, it's also a calling.

~Continued~

I'd been wrestling (again) with inclusive language for some time, but it hit me most directly on Easter Sunday, when again we're reminded that it was the women who had the greatest faith, and who listened most intently to Jesus and his teachings. At the same time, the language we use often marginalizes women when we worship. That doesn't make sense to me.

So, you will continue to hear me use more and more inclusive language. I'm not the language police, so I won't be running around correcting your language, or expecting you to do the same. However, I would encourage you to "sit" with those words that you find most uncomfortable. What is within you that needs God to be called "Father"? Why do we naturally refer to people as him, or as brother, but trip over ourselves when we use her, or sister?

I'm hoping that this begins conversations with you among yourselves, and with me, about how we use language and why we do what we do. We see ourselves as so inclusive, but sometimes we fail to see that our language can exclude, despite our intentions.

Again, I have no expectation that you'll do the same. But for me, I need to challenge myself in every way to be as inclusive -- and loving -- as I possibly can be.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Greg



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	6-7 AM Gratitude Group		1 6-7 AM Gratitude Group	2 Bible Study 11 AM Wmn's Fellowship 1 PM Choir 4 PM	3 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Community Meal 4 PM	4 Talking Circle, 7-9 PM
----- PASTOR GREG OUT-OF-OFFICE -----						
5 Worship 10 AM Pastor Greg out of office	6 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Reaching In 12 PM Fellowship Hall in use 2:30-4:30	7	8 6-7 AM Gratitude Group	9 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	10 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	11
12 Worship 10 AM 	13 6-7 AM Gratitude Group	14	15 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Trustees 7 PM	16 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	17 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle, 7 PM	18 Fellowship Hall in use 10 AM - 4 PM
19 Worship 10 AM Yard Clean-Up 11:15 AM	20 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Reaching Out 7 PM	21 Lunch Group at Crave, 12 PM	22 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Church Book Club 1 PM	23 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	24 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Community Meal Talking Circle, 7 PM	25
26 Worship 10 AM	27 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Memorial Day	28 Salad Luncheon 11:00 AM	29 6-7 AM Gratitude Group	30 Bible Study 11 AM Choir 4 PM	31 6-7 AM Gratitude Group Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle, 7 PM	June 1
2 Worship 10 AM	3	4	5	5		

It's Spring Cleaning time and good weather to be out shopping for more treasures at a **GARAGE SALE TO BENEFIT UP NORTH ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER CLOSET**

Saturday, May 18th – Collection of items to sell
10:00-4:00 at E Free Church

Friday, May 24th – Benefit Garage Sale
2308 Hickorywood Drive – 9:00-5:00

Volunteers and items to sell are needed
For more information, please call or text

219-242-5084



May Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays:

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

Anniversaries:

- 16 Mary & Jason Peterman
- 20 Rollie & Louanne Spearman
- 25 Pete Amar & Mary Fox



Mark your calendars!

**May 19th, After church
(11:15 AM) we plan to do our
annual spring yard work.
Please join us if you're
able!**

NEW SERMON SERIES TO START IN MAY

For years, I have wanted to preach a series on "The Beatitudes". Years ago, someone mentioned in a book (I think it was Fr. Richard Rohr) that no one preaches on those, and the church spends little time discussing The Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew's Gospel. I'm still working on what this series will look like, but it will be based on Fr. Rohr's book *Jesus' Alternative Plan: The Sermon on the Mount*. My goal is that we will begin to memorize the Beatitudes the same way we memorize the Ten Commandments.

We will share the Beatitudes each week in worship, concentrating on one at a time (I think). To get us thinking, what is different between "Thou Shalt Not..." and "Blessed are you when..."?

Maybe Jesus is trying to say something important to people of faith? Let's learn together.

Pastor Greg

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.



Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.



Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

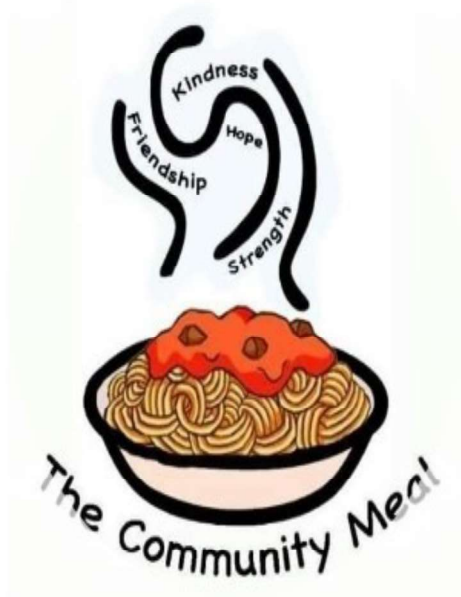


Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.



Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.





Our Community Meal as received notice we are a one of the many grant recipients from the Foundation Pass-Through fund. Our grant is a sustaining funded grant. I had letters of support from Mary and Jason Peterman, little Maddie Brown, Betty Moore, Matt Soderquist and Kevin Hooker accompanying the grant request. There is no doubt their support was a large part of our getting funded. The \$2500.00 will help insure the meal throughout the coming months. Tony continues to do an outstanding job recruiting groups and volunteers weekly.

Submitted by Cathy Otto

Blanket Sunday



Please give to the Church World Service (CWS) Blankets program through the offering that we will be collecting on May 12, 2024. 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

This Mother's Day
blanket the world in

love.



Salad Luncheon Season!



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

2024 Salad Luncheon Schedule

MONTH	COMMITTEE
May 28, 2024	Women's Fellowship
June 25, 2024	Scholarship
July 23, 2024	Council
August 27, 2024	Reaching In
September 24, 2024	Reaching Out
October 22, 2024	Women's Fellowship

~ *In Our Prayers* ~

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

Roger Brummel – as he is now home and recovering from pneumonia.

Brad Derenzy – as he has been discharged and is recovering at home.

Mona's niece Robin – as she has recently been hospitalized and is struggling with breast cancer. She is in need of our prayers.

Dear friends of Anna Kalember, Evan Debock and his fiancé Haley Robichaud – as, after many months of illness, Evan has been diagnosed with lung cancer and they're awaiting the next steps as medical bills are piling up and Evan is unable to work. They are in need of prayers.

Mona's niece Karen – as she has recently been hospitalized and is struggling with breast cancer. She is in need of our prayers.

Cathi Gatewood-Keim's cousin, Jacob – as he is suffering from stage 2 intestinal cancer, recovering from surgery, and awaiting further results for treatment options.

Sharon Bartone, sister of Paul Balliet and Aunt to Stephanie Kalember – as she continues to struggle with advanced Alzheimer's and has now been relocated to a memory care unit near her son.

Jim Boughner – as he is awaiting answers from testing regarding mobility issues.

Ariah House – (from Diane House) Ariah had her last in-hospital treatment in December 2023. She is doing great. I have to take her back to DeVos in March for the next step, providing she doesn't relapse. With this OMAS disease, there is a 50% - 75% chance of relapse. We are only going to focus on the wins. ☒ Keep the prayers coming. God Bless you all. We really miss our church families.

Stacy Wright, friend of Kathy Menkes – Stacy has been facing metastatic breast cancer. Meanwhile, Stacy's mother-in-law passed away recently.

Laura Bantens and family – For Laura's sister-in-law, Jasme, continued prayers as she has been enrolled in a MS drug study free of charge. The study will cover her for two years!

Gloria House's granddaughter, Alyssa Crawford, – Who has had her surgery, is recovering well, and will soon be returning to her preschool students.

Tom and Jenni Johnson – as Tom is now receiving chemo treatments for pancreatic cancer.

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

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.

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.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UCC GAYLORD
CELEBRATING

150
YEARS

21 JULY 2024

Save the date! July 21, 2024 We
will be Celebrating 150 years
Sunday Service 10:00 A.M.
Luncheon immediately following



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Spring Clean-Up - Weather permitting, Spring clean-up will take place on May 19th after worship.

Office hours – Please be aware that Pastor Greg will be out-of-state starting Thursday, April 25 through April 30. He will be out-of-office, but available by appointment May 1—May 6. Stephanie will be out-of-town April 28 through May 1.

“Shoe Some Love” campaign – The United Way is running a fundraiser and they need us to donate new or gently used pairs of shoes we no longer need. To pitch in clean out your closet and leave them in the collection box in Fellowship Hall or take them or to the United Way building on Fifth St. The fundraiser runs through July.

Lawn Care – We are in need of volunteers to help with lawn care. Volunteers take on a week at a time. There is a sign-up sheet in fellowship hall. See Pastor Greg or Dave Schopp if you are interested in helping.

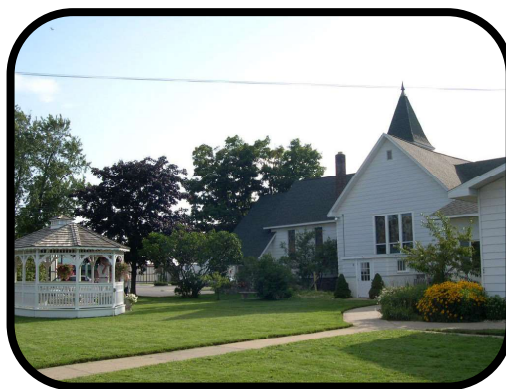
Join us for lunch! – a group of people from our church family meet for lunch on the third Tuesday of each month. Everyone is welcome! Please join us. The next scheduled lunch is May 21, 2024. Please sign up in Fellowship Hall so we can make the restaurant aware of how many people to expect.

Prayer Cards: In the pews, you will find prayer concern cards. When possible, to ensure accuracy in the bulletin and newsletter, please use the new cards.

Directory – If at any time you have changes, please forward them. You can access the most up-to-date directory via our weekly eblast or stop in the office for a copy. I appreciate your continued input.

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

Reaching Out meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83640729481>





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.*



From Your Finance Secretary:



“When choosing to share your gifts with the church through PayPal or Stripe, please send Jessica an email notifying her if you are donating to any special offerings. It’s come to our attention that the “memo” line in PayPal specifically is not working properly. Emailing Jessica will ensure the monies are assigned to their appropriate accounts.”

Jessica

finance@firstuccgaylord.org



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: \$262 (2024)

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: \$495 (2024)

Strengthen the Church

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

Collected around Pentecost

Received to date: \$75 (2023)

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: \$256 (2023)

Christmas Fund

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

Collected in December

Received to date: \$694 (2023)





Current Meeting Times

All are welcome to “attend” these meetings except where noted otherwise.

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 7:00 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83432888287>

Bible Study meets Thursdays at 11am

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