



# November, 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

218 W. Second Street  
Gaylord, MI 49735  
989-732-5726

[www.firstuccgaylord.org](http://www.firstuccgaylord.org)

**Pastor:** Rev. Greg Watling  
[pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org)

**Moderator:** Maggie Wallin  
[margaretwallin@msn.com](mailto:margaretwallin@msn.com)

**Finance:** Jessica Benoit  
[finance@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:finance@firstuccgaylord.org)

**Communications**

**Coordinator:**

Stephanie Kalember  
[office@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:office@firstuccgaylord.org)

**Church Service: Sunday, 10 am**



## Pastor's Column – November, 2024

### “Our Money Story”

I hope you decided to read this column, despite the fact that the title might make you a little nervous. Money is one of those things we need, but it certainly is one of those things we don't want to talk about. However, it was important enough to Jesus that he talked about our money more than most any other topic in our New Testament. He knew that money had power in our lives and we had better deal with it. In fact, we often think money has negative power (and it does), but more importantly, it has positive power. Money can control us, or we can control our money. But like most things, if we don't talk about it, then its power becomes even greater. We can be addicted to money just like we can anything else.

So, in November, we're going to talk about money. I hope to still see you in church! We're using materials put together by Sanctified Art. We have loved their material for Advent and Lent, so maybe they'll do a good job talking with us about money? Here's their introduction to the topic:

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame. Or a story that the church is dying and no longer relevant. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves? This theme invites us to discover and tell our money stories in light of God's money story of liberation and justice.

~Continued~

This series encourages us to transform our stewardship practices into more full expressions of who we are and what we believe.

This theme is intentionally direct—it invites us to name exactly what we’re talking about and not skirt around it. To speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But it’s time we reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story. Thinking about God’s money story should be liberating, inviting, and transformative.

This stewardship season, we invite you to remember, release, reimagine, and restore your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into.

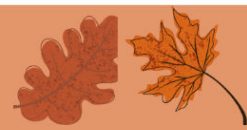
I hope that you will engage this series through the month of November and as you consider your stewardship to the church and to the world between now and Thanksgiving. As always, I look forward to talking with you about anything -- especially hard things -- when the time is right.

In Christ,

Pastor Greg



# November, 2024



SUNDAY

MONDAY

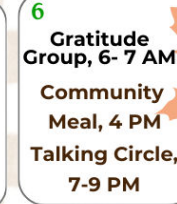
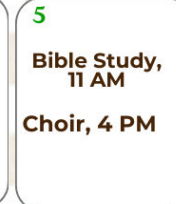
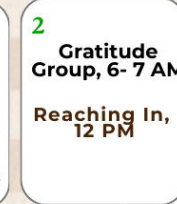
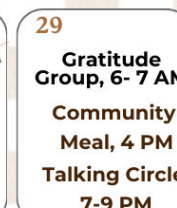
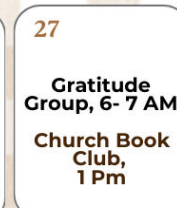
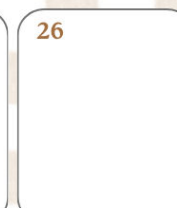
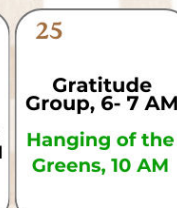
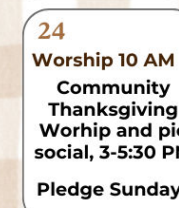
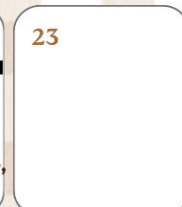
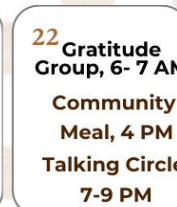
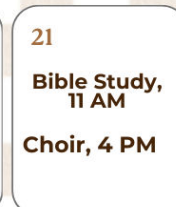
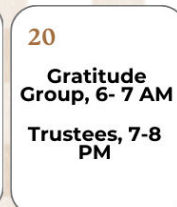
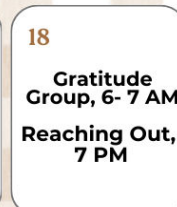
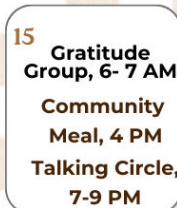
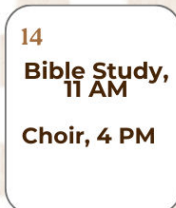
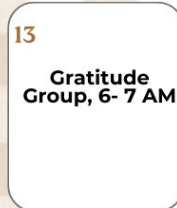
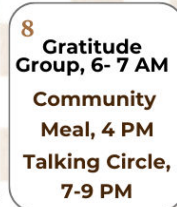
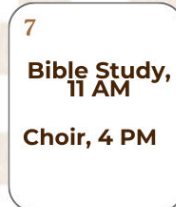
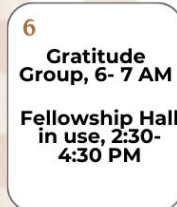
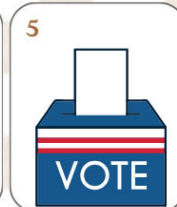
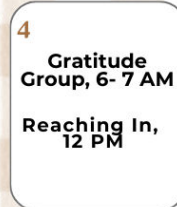
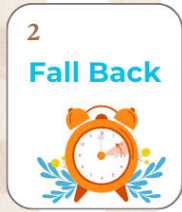
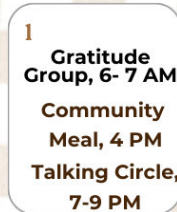
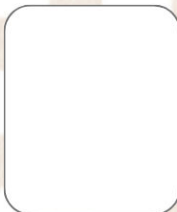
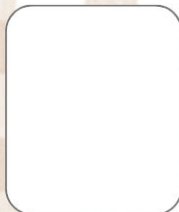
TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY







# *A Community Thanksgiving Service & Pie Social*

NOVEMBER 24 | 3:00 PM

**First Congregational UCC will host the community for a Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, November 24 at 3:00 pm in the sanctuary. A pie social will be held after the service in Fellowship Hall. Pies will be needed that day. A sign-up sheet will be available soon in Fellowship Hall. Any kind of pie is welcome, including store bought if you're not a baker.**

# Glenn Seven Allen is THE **AMERICAN TENOR**



An unforgettable  
evening of soaring  
music from  
classical to  
pop to  
Broadway,  
with a live  
orchestra.



**GREAT LAKES**  
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

**November 2**  
**7 pm**  
**Bay Harbor**

*Mr. Allen is currently a principal tenor with New York City Opera.  
He is proud to return to his beloved home state of Michigan to make his solo concert debut  
as THE AMERICAN TENOR.*





## Stewardship Season Begins November 3

Near the end of October, you will receive a letter and pledge card related to our upcoming Stewardship Campaign. In worship, we will use materials from Sanctified Arts to talk about our Money Story.

A reminder that pledge cards will be dedicated in worship November 24. However, they will be accepted before then in the Pledge Form Box in Fellowship Hall, or you are welcome to mail in your card.

Thank you for your gifts in 2024 and your pledges of support in 2025. Together, we impact lives in our community and beyond. Thank you for your time, talent and treasure offered in God's mission!



## **The Refuge In Otsego County and Karing Home Youth Project Partner to Raise Awareness and Support for the Homeless in Otsego County**

The Refuge in Otsego County (The Refuge) and the Karing Home Youth Project (KHYP), both non-profit organizations dedicated to serving the homeless in Otsego County, want you to have the opportunity to understand homelessness more personally.

The Refuge and KHYP are offering two micro-events in November designed to raise awareness and engage the community in discussions. These events include a “Sleep Out” on November 8 under the downtown Pavilion from 6 pm - midnight, and a “Town Hall” discussion on *homelessness in our community* at the Otsego Public Library on November 14 from 12:15 – 1:30 pm.

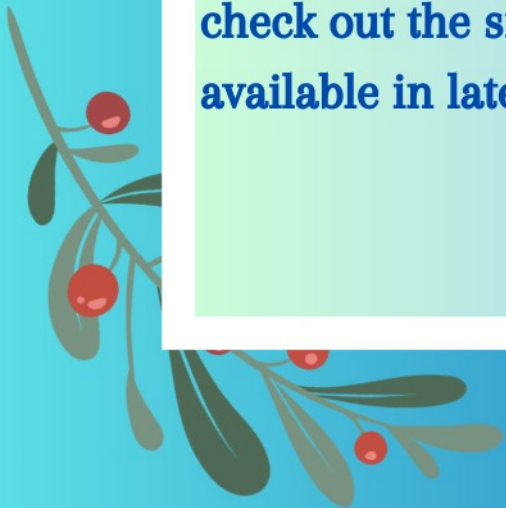
All ages can and are encouraged to participate. The “Sleep Out” provides the opportunity for you to walk in the shoes of a homeless person for a few hours – you are asked to arrive with just the warm clothes and supplies you can carry (no tents or camp chairs please). You will learn “hands on” how the homeless try to best survive in cold weather – receiving a cardboard box and newspaper to create your shelter. You will also have the opportunity to learn more about the everyday experiences of the homeless through stories and videos. Chairs will be available for those unable to stand. To be a part of this special event or ask any questions, please contact Sue Smith at 989-470-8020.

Please join with us on November 14 to take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about your community and the actual challenges faced daily in Otsego County. Our “Town Hall” will feature speakers from the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA), our local governmental housing agency, joined by organization representatives who will share the facts of homelessness here and now in our community. A light lunch will be provided. No need to make a reservation. Presentation will conclude by 1:30 pm. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sue Smith at 989-470-8020.



# Advent, 2024

**Believe it or not, Advent is right around the corner! We will need some volunteers to light the advent wreath in worship each Sunday in December and for Christmas Eve. Please check out the sign up sheet that will be available in late November in Fellowship Hall.**









# Hanging of the Greens

With the Community Thanksgiving Service being at our church on November 24, the Reaching In Committee elected to decorate for Christmas on Monday morning, November 25 at 10 a.m. We know that means several folks who have helped in the past will be unable as they will be working. Perhaps some others will help us set up the tree, hang the garland and all the other decorations. It shouldn't take more than an hour if several people help. Please come if you can for as long as you can!



## MICHIGAN CONFERENCE



*"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12*

October 4, 2024

Appeal for Basic Support of the Michigan Conference UCC

Dear First Congregational UCC, Gaylord,

As your Michigan Conference Minister, I want to thank you for your gift to the Basic Support of Our Church's Wider Mission in 2023 and to let you know what a difference those gifts make as you consider your gift for the year ahead. When your church gives to Basic Support, 90% stays here in Michigan allowing us to equip, empower, connect and celebrate the ministries of our unique United Church of Christ churches.

### Michigan Conference

#### Board of Directors

Rev. Liz Lammie  
President  
Rev. Dr. Diane Baker  
Moderator  
Rev. Shane Montoya  
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### Michigan Conference Staff

Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel  
Conference Minister  
Rev. Cheryl Burke  
Associate Conference Minister  
of Clergy Care & Formation  
Rev. Lawrence Richardson  
Associate Conference Minister  
of Church Vitality & Transition  
Rev. Colandra Nevenzel  
Area Conference Minister  
Lisa Soulliere  
Conference Administrator &  
Registrar  
Jenn Ringgold  
Director of Communications &  
Associate for Youth Ministry

Our approach to Conference Ministry is outward-focused which means meeting our churches where they are to see how we can help in these challenging times. I'm on the road preaching most weekends because there is no better way to connect with congregations and lay leaders than by being with you for worship and fellowship. The other six days of the week, amidst the countless behind-the-scenes interactions, phone calls and prayers we share, Associate Conference Minister Cheryl Burke supports 14 new Caring Clergy Groups with monthly participation of over 100 pastors and members-in-discernment. Associate Conference Minister Lawrence Richardson has consulted with more than 30 churches on visioning, conflict resolution, building use, and searches for new pastors.

**Celebrating:** It is a joy to recognize the sustaining presence of local churches with anniversaries, baptisms, communion, new members, and retirements. This year, our collective staff has participated in 6 installations, 5 ordinations, and over 90 visits to local churches!

**Connecting:** Knowing that most of our churches are time-strapped we keep challenging ourselves to find the best ways to engage and learn together, be it social media, a simplified website, a monthly Conference Minister message or the newsletter that now includes inspiring stories about Michigan churches.

**Empowering:** One of our top priorities is to respond to the questions you are asking. In Zoom lunches or at Vitality Day hosted in a local church, our programs range from practical to sublime. From budgets and bylaws to spiritual practices and preaching, to widening Christ's witness in an unjust world, we want you to feel supported and uplifted.

**Equipping:** We are honored to continue to resource UCC clergy and churches in Michigan. New this year, we have developed a unified online form to make applying for grants in the Michigan Conference easier and more transparent. Grants now include local church revitalization, growth and learning for clergy, new church starts, clergy assistance in a health crisis, disaster relief for local churches, and seminary scholarships.

As a church depends on pledges, we in the Michigan Conference rely on your Basic Support for most of our operating budget. We see the urgent realities to be dealt with but we also see fresh outbreaks of the Spirit in our midst. In our UCC covenant, freely chosen, church members give a percentage of income to their church, the church then shares a percentage of their operating budget as Basic Support with the Conference, and we then share 10% of that with the National setting. As you review your enclosed and personalized eleven-year report, please know how

much we appreciate your gifts. We ask that you review the information, plan to input current details into the data hub in January 2025, and prayerfully consider your annual contribution to Basic Support of our Church's Wider Mission as a congregation.

Thank you for your generous consideration and continued support.

Peace and Blessings,

Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel Conference Minister



September 26, 2024

First Congregational UCC of Gaylord  
218 W. 2nd Street  
Gaylord, MI 49735

Dear First Congregational Church Members,

Thank you so much for the very generous donation of money and school supplies towards our After School Child Care program here at Gaylord Community Schools. We truly appreciate your kindness in providing so many supplies for the large number of students enrolled in our program again this year. They will be thrilled about having these new supplies, and it is so sweet of Louanne Spearman to drop them off to us as well.

We are very excited about all of the students and the staff that are involved in our program, and it promises to be a wonderful year. Thank you again for helping our After School Child Care program for the 2024-2025 school year!

Most Sincerely,

*Karla R. Hawkins*

Director of Licensed Programs for GCS

GAYLORD COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
615 South Elm Avenue, Gaylord, MI 49735  
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[hawkinsk@gaylord.k12.mi.us](mailto:hawkinsk@gaylord.k12.mi.us)  
[www.gaylordschools.com](http://www.gaylordschools.com)



# Toys for Tots



**This year's Angel Tree will soon be in Fellowship Hall. Keep an eye out and get your angel for this year, if you are able!**

*Keep in mind that the turnaround time for returning gifts is pretty quick. This year, all angel gifts should be returned by December 8th.*

# RISE TOGETHER

**Maamwi gaabwedaa ji ne-nishing kina gego**

Let's rise together and bring an end to domestic abuse.  
Reach out, speak up, and support those affected.



**Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians**  
Survivor Outreach Services

Call Monday through Friday 8-5: 231-242-1620

24/7 StrongHearts Native Helpline: 1-844-762-8483

[ltbbodawa-nsn.gov](http://ltbbodawa-nsn.gov)



**Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan**  
Advocacy • Counseling • Support • Safe Home

24-Hour Help and Information Line:

231-347-0082 or 1-800-275-1995

[wrcnm.org](http://wrcnm.org)

Less than 1% of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Survivor Outreach Services Family Violence Prevention and Services Assistance Grant will be financing this project; total Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Grant: \$60,824; and 0% 50 non-federal sources utilized.

# Annual Meeting

**November 3, 2024**



**Our 2024 annual meeting will happen on November 3, 2024. The annual meeting packet will go out during the week of 10/24.**





## **The Refuge Homeless Shelter Facing Tough Budget Choices**

The Refuge, a 501(c) tax-exempt, non-profit organization established with the help of several local congregations, including First Congregational Church, provides temporary housing to the homeless in Otsego County during the winter months. Due to financial concerns this year, it will delay its opening until Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>. The shelter program would normally open October 1.

The Refuge is in its 12<sup>th</sup> season. Started as an organization using church facilities, the non-profit now provides temporary shelter at local hotels for homeless households in Otsego County during the cold winter months. Last year, 253 individuals, including 77 children, in 128 households received hope and temporary housing for more than 1400 nights. Working with local partners, the program helped 66% of its program participants into more permanent housing. Funding from congregations and individual members was key to being able to achieve this result. An even bigger challenge is expected this year.

Donations to help The Refuge may be sent to The Refuge, P.O. Box 44, Gaylord, MI 49734 or made by credit card online at [www.otsegorefuge.org](http://www.otsegorefuge.org).



## **The Refuge November Opportunities at a Glance**

The Refuge plans to have a Sleep Out fundraiser (A Night Without A Home) on November 8 in the evening, hopefully on the courthouse lawn (TBD). All ages are welcome to participate.

*The congregations are invited to approach their youth groups and general membership about “sleeping out” to help us all learn more about the real effects of homelessness. Participants are asked to collect funds by soliciting sponsors in an amount to cover 1 night of housing, currently \$67.*

The Refuge has agreed to hold a “town hall” Homelessness in Otsego County on November 14 at the Otsego County Library 12:15 – 1:15 pm. The event will include a speaker from NEMCSA to talk directly about homelessness in Otsego County. A second speaker has been invited to talk about current local community responses to homelessness.

*The congregations are invited to attend this event to learn more about our challenges.*

The Refuge has agreed to partner with the Otsego County Food Pantry for the Community Meal on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

*The congregations are encouraged to attend this free event from 4-6 pm at the First United Congregational Church.*

The Food Pantry has agreed to provide tours of their facility. No specific November date has yet been set.

*The congregations are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to tour the Otsego Food Pantry to learn more about their operations on behalf of those in need.*

The Refuge will approach local businesses/congregations to collect donations for The Refuge by displaying The Refuge’s church banks (14 available) during this fall campaign.

*The congregations are encouraged to set a goal of providing \$3,000 for The Refuge between October 1 and April 20, 2024 (Easter). The church banks are available for display at times appropriate for the congregation’s effort. They are encouraged to select the manner in which providing support works best for them and The Refuge will provide whatever support is needed.*

### **General Notes:**

The Refuge is committed to providing congregations with whatever written material or speakers are necessary to promote their efforts.

- *It is suggested that congregations might consider pursuing adding homelessness to their schedule of existing Bible study classes during this period.*
- *It is suggested that congregations invite a representative of The Refuge to speaker during worship services or to other congregation related groups as appropriate.*

# Annual Meeting, November 1-2, 2024



**Annual Meeting**  
**November 1-2, 2024**  
**Crystal Mountain**  
**Resort**  
**Thompsonville, MI**

## Two day event

- Worship
- Networking
- Learning
- Business
- Fellowship
- Rest
- Association Gathering
- Single rooms starting at \$149 per night
- Group accommodations starting at \$75 per person per night

Option to extend your stay



## United Church of Christ President & General Minister

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson will join us from 10.31.24 - 11.02.24 to be our keynote speaker for this Legacy Event. As we gather for worship on All Saints Day, we look forward to honoring our past, present, and future together.





## 2024 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.*

## ***~ In Our Prayers ~***

### ***During the month of November the UNA is holding Old Mission: Old Mission Congregational UCC prayer.***

Jim, Vicky Rigney's brother – as he recently had emergency heart surgery.

Stacy Wright – Stacy has been facing metastatic breast cancer. She has begun a new chemotherapy cycle. All prayers are appreciated.

Trish Jachym – Prayers for healing, as she is dealing with some health concerns.

Jason Peterman – as he is dealing with a variety of health issues.

Gloria House's granddaughter, Madison Crawford – as she suffers from cataplexy in narcolepsy along with other neurological struggles. Additionally, they have discovered that she has white blood cells in her

cornea, which results in pain and swelling. It will also affect her vision. She is still in need of our prayers.

Laura Bantens' partner, Chris Crumbaugh – continued prayers for Laura and Chris as they adapt to the new medical issues Chris is facing.

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.

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

*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.*



## *On Voting, from Michigan Conference UCC*

### **Power is in our vote. Know MI Voting Rights, GOTV and VOTE to PROTECT DEMOCRACY**

In these times of “alternative” facts competing with facts, “selective” history being taught in our schools, equity and Inclusiveness being examined and questioned, and voting rights being restricted rather than expanded, many of us on the United Church of Christ Detroit Metro Area Social Justice Team are concerned that the very future of our Democracy is at risk.

We believe that as people of faith we must stand-up for our Christian values of equality and equal rights for all people. We must be the voice of those who unfortunately are marginalized and have no voice in our society. We must ensure that all our children receive a good quality education that prepares them to take their place in our society and earn a living which can support them and their families.

The Fall 2024 Election is very important, not just for the Presidential Office, but for all offices which are to be filled. We believe that as Christians, it is our responsibility to work in coalitions with people of similar values in a non-partisan way to make plans to GET OUT THE VOTE and PRESERVE DEMOCRACY. And we can individually urge support and vote for those candidates who demonstrate these values, not just by what they say, but by their actions as well.

***But first we need to work to ensure that everyone gets registered to vote:***

To register to vote you must be • a United States citizen; • a Michigan resident at the time you register and a resident of your city or township for at least 30 days when you vote; • at least 18 years of age (when you vote); • and not currently serving a sentence in jail or prison (in jail awaiting trial or already served sentence can vote, just have to re-register). You can register up to the day of the election at your local clerk’s office.



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Raise Awareness and Support for the Homeless in Otsego County** - “Soup for Hope: A Meal In Their Shoes,” on Monday, October 28th, from 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM under the pavilion in downtown Gaylord. You are Invited!! ***See this week’s eblast for complete information.***

**Fall clean-up and Potluck** – After worship on October 27, will be our fall clean-up followed by the annual church potluck at about 11:45 AM. All are welcome to attend the potluck, whether you are able to help with clean-up or not.

**Annual Meeting** - Our 2024 annual meeting will happen on November 3, 2024.

**Snow Removal** – We are in need of people to help with the sidewalks throughout the winter. If you are interested in helping or have questions about what this work entails, please see Pastor Greg...

**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 Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Sign up in Fellowship Hall if you would like to attend.

**Salad Luncheon** – The next salad luncheon is Tuesday October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**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>





# 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: \$378 (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: \$329**

## **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)**

## **Blanket Sunday, 2024**

Received to date: \$936



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## 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>