

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord**

September 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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Pastor's Submission – September, 2023

"Walking Around Shining Like the Sun"

"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mind and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dawn of separateness...And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."

By now, you likely know that I have received a lot from our worship series on Daniel Cooperrider's book *Speak with the Earth and It Will Teach You*. I have been impacted most, so far, by the chapters about mountains. In the opening to Cooperrider's chapter, *Thinking Like a Mountain (The Climbing History of Christ)*, he shares the quote above (by Thomas Merton). It struck me as powerful, and I hope for you the same thing.

Most people I know walking around are a combination of ego, guilt, purpose, loss, hope, dread, and a whole bunch of other things.

~CONTINUED~

If you took a survey, I don't know that many people would think other people walking by them are "shining like the sun". Further, while some of us might think that of others, we would hesitate to say so about ourselves. In God's eyes, we are walking around shining like the sun! We are not separate and alien from one another like we've been told. We have some distinct characteristics, ideas, beliefs, hopes, dreams, and so on, but we are not alien to each other. In fact, we are far more alike than we seem to believe.

For many, this stems from our own feelings of inadequacy, that can come from a variety of sources. It is also possible that the hurts and disappointments along the pathway of life have led us to see others as not only other, but often we see them as opposed to us.

What would happen if we first saw ourselves as "shining like the sun"? In other words, if we saw ourselves from a positive vantage point. Could we then see others in a better light?

What would happen if we did?

Blessings,

Pastor Greg

Hello September

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

3

Worship 10 AM

4

Labor Day
Office Closed

5

6

7

Bible Study 11 AM
Choir 4 - 5 PM

8

Community Meal 4 PM

9

10

OUTDOOR
(weather permitting)
Worship 10 AM
PICNIC
in F. Hall!

Sunday School

11

Reaching In
12 PM
Compassionate
Friends
7-9 PM

12

13

14

Bible Study
11 AM
Choir 4 - 5 PM

15

Community Meal 4 PM
Rummage Sale



16

Rummage Sale



17

Worship 10 AM

18

Reaching Out
7 PM

19

20

Trustees
7 PM

21

Bible Study
11 AM
Choir 4 - 5 PM

22

Community Meal 4 PM

23

24

Worship 10 AM
Council 11 AM
CROP WALK
1:30 pm

25

Jesus and John
Wayne Book
discussion #1,
7-8 PM

26

Salad Luncheon
11:30 - 12:30

27

Church Book
Club 1 PM

28

Bible Study
11 AM
Choir 4 - 5 PM

29

Community Meal 4 PM

30

Vitality Day
(see Newsletter
article)

Oct. 1

Worship 10 AM

2

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Thirty-Four: God's Restoring Justice

Author and activist Shane Claiborne connects biblical justice with righteousness:

The word “justice” gets abused and misused. People demand “justice” all the time but have very different things in mind as they call for it. It has been so misrepresented that justice itself might do well to find some new lawyers; it needs better representation.

For starters, the word for “justice” in the Bible is the same word as “righteousness.” This overlap shows that the central concern of biblical justice was not “getting what you deserve”; rather, it was making right what was done wrong, restoring what had been destroyed, healing the wounds of an offensive act. It was about bringing balance and wholeness back to the community, which is why you often see scales as an icon for justice.

But the scales can be misleading, since it is not just about balance or even “eye for an eye” justice. Real justice goes much deeper. One of my friends who is a biblical scholar says the best contemporary translation for the ancient notion of “justice/righteousness” is “restorative justice.” [1]

Sister Mary Katherine Birge offers examples of ways Jesus enacted restorative justice:

The kingdom of God that Jesus taught, preached, and enacted during his ministry ... begins from a conviction that God's deepest hope for humanity—that we live with God and with one another in relationships that are just—is possible....

Jesus lives, teaches, preaches, and demonstrates to all who are willing to listen to him this same kingdom of God, the image of *shalom* [wholeness, harmony, and peace]. He makes the kingdom of God present every time he performs a miracle of healing (see Mark 1:29–31),

drives out evil spirits from someone they possess (see Matthew 9:32–34), and brings back to this life a person who has died (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:1–44). Through his own hospitality and openness to the alien and the enemy ... [and] to those who would put him to death ..., [Jesus] makes it possible for others to join him in building the kingdom of God, building *shalom*, in the present age....

This is the task of those who would follow Jesus: to live in just relationships with one another, to work at restoring to wholeness those people and relationships that they and others have broken, and to repair as best they can what cannot be restored. This practice of restoring and repairing relationships between people and God and among people themselves is not unlike that in which the contemporary practice of restorative justice engages. Like Jesus' own work .. to bring about the fullness of *shalom*, through the practice of right relationships and the healing of those people who are “broken,” restorative justice focuses on the present and future needs of the victim, the perpetrator, and society in order to repair what has been broken or stolen from the victim, to bring the perpetrator to acceptance of responsibility, and to mend the threads that hold society together.

[2]

1] Shane Claiborne, *Executing Grace: How the Death Penalty Killed Jesus and Why It's Killing Us* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2016), 249–250.

[2] Mary Katherine Birge, “Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and Restorative Justice,” in *Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice*, ed. Trudy D. Conway, David Matzko McCarthy, Vicki Schieber (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 104, 105–106.

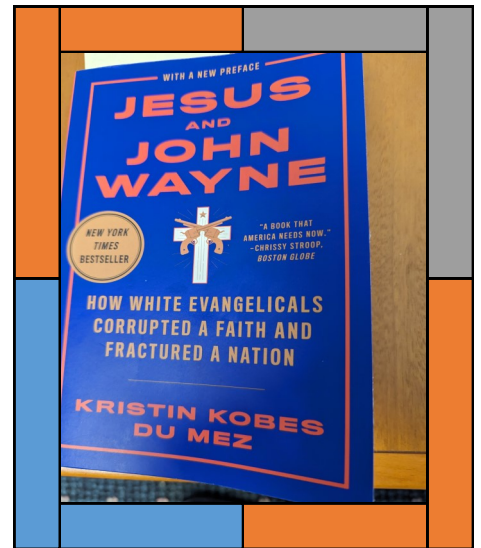
Image credit: A path from one week to the next—Taylor Wilson, *Isha* (detail), watercolor and cyanotype. Taylor Wilson, *Ruah* (detail), print. Izzy Spitz, *Chemistry of Self 3* (detail), digital oil pastels. Used with permission. [Click here to enlarge image.](#)

Book Discussions with Pastor Greg

Kristin Kobes Du Mez is a professor of history at Calvin University, Grand Rapids, and author of *A New Gospel for Women*. She has also written for many other publications.

Dr. Du Mez will be the keynote speaker at the Henry and Annabel Larzelere Memorial Lecture at Peoples Church, East Lansing on Sunday, November 12 from 1-3 pm. Anyone who would like to make the trip is welcome to this free lecture.

Our church will be discussing Dr. Du Mez newest book *Jesus and John Wayne* from 7-8 PM on four Mondays leading up to the lecture. You are welcome to the discussion group whether or not you attend the lecture. You can read the book at your own pace.

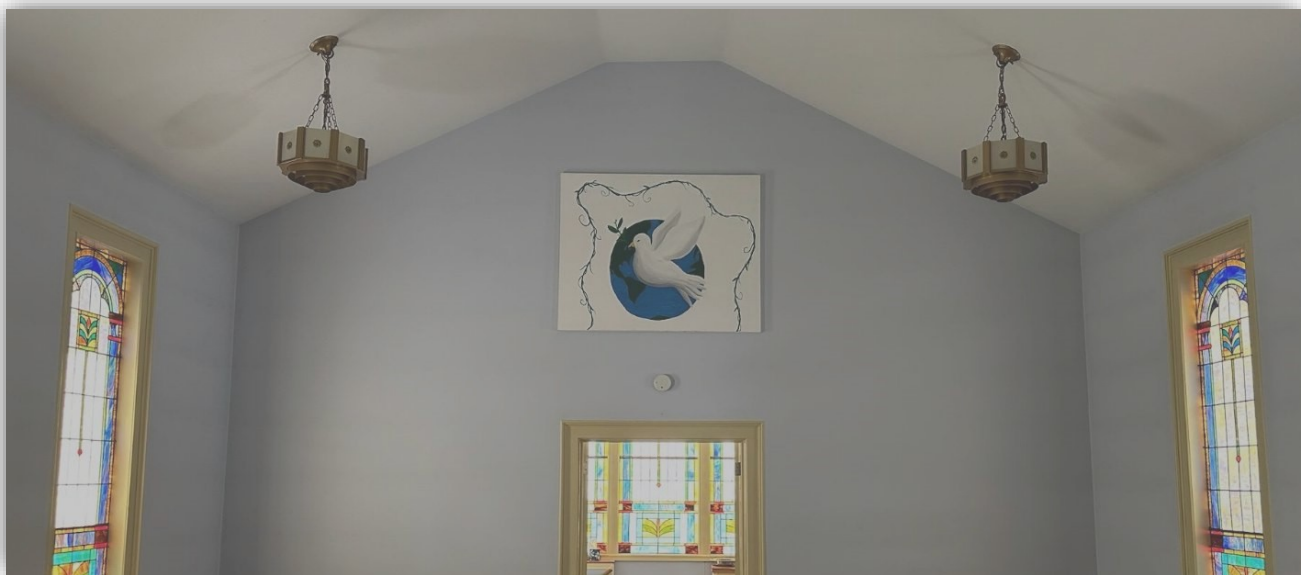


The meeting dates are:

- September 25th
 - October 9th
 - October 23rd
 - November 6th
-
-



Thank you to Council and, especially, Laura Hotelling for spearheading this! On Sunday, August 20, 2023, we dedicated a beautiful painting done by recent Gaylord High School graduate, Shannon Burke. This talented young woman's work will grace our sanctuary for years to come and we are very grateful!





MICHIGAN CONFERENCE
 UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

Vitality
Day
Sept 30, 2023

10:00am - 2:00pm
HYBRID EVENT
St. John's UCC
Owosso, MI



with author
Rev. G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Part-Time is PLENTY Event (in-person OR Zoom)

Research shows many congregations have cut costs dramatically and increased vitality at the same time. They do it by redesigning how pastors and laypeople work together. Join the Michigan Conference UCC as we engage in conversation with Rev. G. Jeffrey MacDonald to help equip local churches living into

Saturday September 20, 2023

10:00am - 2:00pm

St John's UCC Owosso, MI

[REGISTER HERE](#) for \$10.00

Some of our participants will be attending this event. If you have questions, see/contact Pastor Greg.

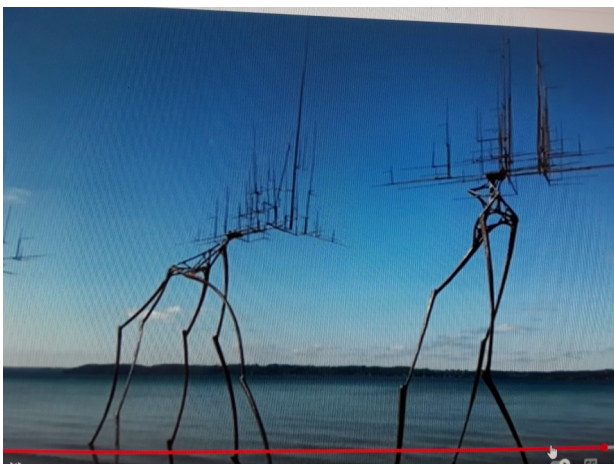
Women's Fellowship Out and About!



Women's Fellowship are planning a day trip to the Elk Rapids Sculpture Park on October 5th in lieu of their regular monthly meeting.

We will carpool over and will also find a scenic spot for lunch.

There will be a sign-up sheet on the credenza in Fellowship Hall.



The annual rummage sale is scheduled for *September 15th and 16th* in Fellowship Hall. Save your treasures and donate them to a good cause!



Karing Home Update



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2023
EVENT BEGINS 6 | DINNER SERVED 7
COCKTAIL HOUR SPONSORED BY SNOWBELT BREWING CO | 5:30
PAVILION ON COURT
DOWNTOWN GAYLORD, MI

PURCHASE TICKETS
AND DONATE HERE



RSVP ON
FACEBOOK



Outdoor Worship Schedule:

September 10, 2023

Things to keep in mind:

- All outdoor services are tentative and dependent on the weather.
- You should bring lawn chairs, but if you are unable, we will get a chair from Fellowship Hall for you.
- If you are able to help with set-up (speakers, mics, etc.), we would be very appreciative. Just let someone in the office know you would be willing to help.



This was sent to area businesses. It does mention adding "your name of business name," so I've included it here in case any of you would like to contribute to this new programming for children.



County of Otsego
Office Of The Sheriff

"Serving and Protecting Since 1872"

Matthew J. Nowicki
SHERIFF

Matthew D. Muladore
UNDERSHERIFF

Capt. Brian Webber
JAIL ADMINISTRATOR

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Dear Friend,

In a sincere effort to keep our young children safe, our office is continuing our commitment to child safety. Our office is now organizing our annual child safety and violence awareness education program with diversified materials, targeted for the children in our community.

Our office will coordinate and distribute over 2,825 pieces of educationally sound safety materials, geared toward preschool and elementary age children in our community. The diversified materials we have selected for our use are designed to reach each child's age level of learning. The materials selected are created and designed by the same organization we have worked with in the past. We have found the materials to be enthusiastically received by teachers and children alike. These materials are distributed through the Child Safety of America, Inc. The senior and adult drug awareness materials will also be included.

We need the support of concerned business, industrial, and professional leaders to keep our program ongoing and successful each year. This is the only program of this type our office will be conducting this year.

The material cost as follows: **25 children @ \$66.25, 50 children @ \$132.50, 75 children @ \$198.75, 100 children @ \$265.00, 200 children @ \$530.00, 300 children @ \$795.00, or 400 children @ \$1060.00.**

The line ad, **your name or business name**, will be placed on the prestige page of all child safety activity manuals the children receive. This is deductible as an advertising business expense only. *Your prompt remittance will assure your name on the materials the children take home.*

Please make your check payable to **CHILD SAFETY of AMERICA, INC.** and mail directly to my attention at the Otsego County Sheriff's Office. *Your purchase will be used exclusively in our community to help our children.*

Please accept my sincere thanks and appreciation for your time and consideration of this most worthwhile program for our youngsters. With the help of your caring hand, our office will do our best to keep our children safe from harm.

Yours in Safety, Service, and Prevention,

Matthew J. Nowicki, Sheriff
Otsego County Sheriff's Office

**Your response by October 2, 2023
So Proper Credit Can Be Given.**

CROP HUNGER WALK

ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME



888-CWS-CROP • CROPHUNGERWALK.ORG



BUILDING *global* RESILIENCE

The global impact of climate change is devastating the lives of people all over the world. By walking in the CROP Hunger Walk, you make a difference. As our climate changes, your steps equip farmers with the tools they need to be resilient.

In Indonesia, trusted methods of farming have become unfeasible. CWS is teaching new methods of sustainable farming like using organic compost as fertilizer and staggering the planting seasons for harvests throughout the year. Farmers can now grow enough food to support their families until the next growing season.

In Haiti, agricultural training sessions led by a local CWS partner taught people to farm in a way which fosters soil conservation and creates a source of income. Farmers learned to build rock walls and contour canals to diminish the force of the water descending onto their fields so soil would remain in place, protecting valuable crops.

Your steps are saving lives not only through new farming practices but also by giving access to clean water, protecting at-risk children, responding when disasters happen, and helping families find a safe home.

Together, we help families and individuals adapt and make the changes they need to improve their lives.

Together, we are building resilience.



\$15

Chickens for a family in Tanzania



\$25

A month of groceries for a refugee in Egypt



\$60

A sheep in Haiti



\$106

A share of a well in Cambodia



888-CWS-CROP • CROPHUNGERWALK.ORG



Our Local Crop Walk:

Our annual Crop Walk will be Sunday, September 24, 2023. We will be walking from Peace Lutheran Church, 3703 Old US 27 South, at 1:30 PM. It will be a fun walk along Otsego Lake for the benefit of our local Otsego County Food Pantry and Hunger throughout the US. Donation envelopes will be available at church — see Sallie or Helen C.

We hope you can join us, do your own walk, or sponsor us!

Thanks,

**Helen Crandall and
Sallie Anderson**