

# Still Speaking

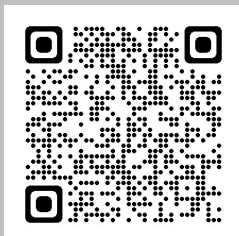
First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
Charlotte, Michigan

March 2023  
Volume 1  
Issue 3

Never place a  
period where God  
has placed a comma

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**SAVE THIS DATE: Sunday, APRIL 16, Noon to 2 pm**

The Congregational Spring Feast, a FREE, full course, scrumptious meal for the entire Charlotte Community, will be served on April 16, one week following Easter this year.

## Leaders and Staff of the Church

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***Still Speaking*** is the monthly newsletter distributed to members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Charlotte. We welcome inside and outside comments, creative writing, illustrative photos/art, and articles.

**Editor:** Editor@ucccharlotte.org

***Still Speaking*** monthly deadline is the 18th to inform us of intended articles. All articles are due on the 25th.



## Lenten Series – Learn about Your Church

Pastor Jody Betten



On three Wednesday evenings during Lent at 5:30 pm, we will gather in the Bess Fulton Room (downstairs) for a Soup Supper and a conversation **“Exploring Three Important Aspects of First Congregational United Church of Christ.”** (Yes, a catchier name might be more invitational!)

### March 1 – What is Progressive Christianity?

We'll explore the meaning of Progressive Christianity. From the website [progressivechristianity.org](http://progressivechristianity.org) “progressive Christianity is an open, intelligent and collaborative approach to the Christian tradition and the life and teachings of Jesus that create pathways into an authentic and relevant religious experience” that seeks to respond to the following questions;

Do you find more grace in the search for meaning than in absolute certainty, in the questions rather than in the answers?

Do you have religious interests and longings but cannot accept the beliefs and dogmas associated with traditional Christianity?

Are you repelled by claims that Christianity is the “only way”?

Do you find solace, meaning, or connection to the teachings and the path of Jesus of Nazareth?

Progressive Christianity believes that “Organized religion does not have to be irrelevant, ineffectual, or repressive.”

### March 22 – History and Mission of the United Church of Christ

Seminarians spend a week exploring the history and mission of the UCC; there is so much interesting information that makes up our past and future endeavors. This will be a crash course in the most important things (according to this UCC ordained minister!). Bring your knowledge and questions to share as we explore our brilliant denomination!

### March 29 – Organization of First Congregational UCC

I have learned so much about your rich history, traditions and ministry in my time among you! This will be another opportunity for you all to share what you know. We'll start with some basics and then wander (and wonder) about what makes you tick, what is the most interesting, what guides your path.

### Everyone is invited to attend.

These gatherings are not just for prospective new members. We will need some folks to volunteer to make a batch of soup or a salad or some sandwiches. We'll need some lively open minds to take in the info and discuss the implications for your time and place. Please join us!



## Faith and Reproductive Justice

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Reverend Chris Davies, Program Manager, United Church of Christ

My grandmother taught me how to be a Christian, and told me about marching for abortion rights prior to Roe v. Wade. She shared stories with me about how her advocacy for women's rights connected to her faith. She reached into her charismatic roots and pulled out the Jesus and Justice for which her faith and feminism had room.



Access to abortion is an issue divided by so many polarities. Stigma and the barriers between women and providers are making it harder and harder for women to access the information and care they need to make decisions that impact the whole of their lives. The United Church of Christ has been an advocate for women's rights and access to choice regarding abortion since before Roe v. Wade, with our first theological resolution in 1971. And as the conversation continues to evolve through feminism from a matter of access to care, to one of reproductive justice, the UCC has continued to affirm the need for choice in this climate of restrictions, powerfully proclaiming at our 17th General Synod: We deplore the willingness of many legislators, at all levels, to restrict the access of poor women to safe, comprehensive reproductive health care with a full range of options.

So when a local abortion provider in Cleveland, Preterm, asked me to serve on the board, I couldn't help but hold gratitude both for my grandmother and the church that has called me into faith and leadership. Preterm asked me to bring a faith perspective into their work, because often the only experience their patients and staff have with people of faith is through encounters with protestors who stand outside with signs telling them that God hates them.

There are many reasons that people seek out abortion care. Some patients are forced to make choices based on systems of oppression that do not give them the resources they need to start or grow their family as they are called, while others choose to remain child-free. Still others are survivors of trauma who do not want a living reminder of that trauma. Regardless of their circumstance, they must walk past signs that say that God hates them.

I believe there is nothing more aghast to the God (who demands that we always seek to serve those who are on the margins) than telling people in the midst of what can be one of the most difficult decisions of their life, that they are worthless. I believe God wants the choice of women to be informed by their faith, but also free of the structural circumstances that limit



women's spectrum of choice, be they lack of fair wages, affordable housing, healthcare, a healthy environment or a safe community in which to raise a child.

Like my grandmother and the women who have come before, I continue to ask: how can I continue to advocate for my faith and for access to abortion? Access to abortion is only part of reproductive justice. Alongside the women of color who have been on the forefront of this holistic work from its conception, alongside the feminists who have fought to establish and maintain clinics like Preterm, and alongside those of us who seek to connect to intersectional movements of oppression in all the work we do; God is pushing us into action, for the sake of bringing about the kin-dom on earth.



## March: Women's Equality and Reproductive Justice

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Excerpts from the United Church of Christ website

"There has been an objective gain in the quality of women's lives for those fortunate enough to have access to procreative choice. That millions upon millions of women as yet do not possess even the rudimentary conditions—moral or physical—for such choice is obvious. Our moral goal should be to struggle against those real barriers—poverty, racism, and anti-female cultural oppression—that prevent authentic choice from being a reality for every woman." Beverly Harrison, *Making the Connections*

Today we face a new landscape of abortion access in the United States.

On Friday, June 24, 2022 the Supreme Court issued a decision in the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, upholding a state ban and abandoning the right to abortion, effectively overturning the protections established in 1973 with *Roe v. Wade*. This decision paves the way for states across the country to pass more restrictive measures around access to reproductive healthcare, such as out and out bans on abortion, parental consent for minors, stringent regulations on abortion providers, and funding roadblocks. In 2021 there were more of these laws passed by states than any other year since 1973. The Guttmacher Institute provides state by state information on the status of current legislation.

Since before *Roe*, the United Church of Christ, in partnership with a multitude other faith groups, has fought tirelessly to protect a pregnant person's equal and fair access to abortion and family planning. This advocacy will not stop here.

For an up-to-date tracking of legislation state-by-state, please go to  
[www.guttmacher.org/state-legislation-tracker](http://www.guttmacher.org/state-legislation-tracker)



## The Red Dress Movement

Stephanie Tighe

### What is MMIW?

MMIW is an acronym for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

In North America there are thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women. According to the Department of Justice, native women are victims of murder more than 10 times the national average. In 2016 the data showed that there were over 5,712 missing MMIW in North America. The number has continued to grow since then.



84% of American Indian women have experienced violence in their life. Over 52% of them have experienced sexual assault.

Native women may be victimized because of the locations of the reservations, which may be in isolated areas. Traditionally these cases are not a priority for police departments/sheriff offices because of racism and discrimination.

The root causes of the MMIW injustice include colonization and historical trauma, racism, and sexual objectification of Indigenous women and girls.

Artist Jamie Black created the REDress Project in 2011 and it has continued to grow. It highlights the epidemic of violence against indigenous women. It consists of empty red dresses hanging to represent the missing and murdered. This exhibit has traveled around the United States and Canada.

To bring awareness to this issue, **Canada has declared May 5 as “Red Dress Day”** when people are encouraged to wear red. **Sometimes you may see a woman with a red hand print on her cheek, this also is in support of MMIW.**

This movement is becoming more well known. Currently a Netflix TV show, Three Pines, has a subplot about a missing Indigenous Woman and there is an art gallery on the show which has red dresses hanging. Missing Native Americans are also featured in another show “Alaska Daily” on ABC and Hulu.



## Pastor's Corner

Jody Betten

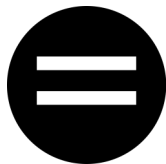
It's too bad that we need Black History Month, i.e. that we don't know the history of our country well enough to be able to identify the important events that created a system of racism, of inequality based on skin color, that affects us as black and white yet today.

It's too bad that we need a month to focus on the inequality of women in this country, that patriarchy is still alive and well.

It's too bad that normal is white and male, that everything is weighed against those norms. Have you ever seen anyone write or speak about the white doctor they are seeing? Or, the male lawyer they have employed? Rather, we mention the black doctor or the female lawyer, because that is out of the ordinary, not "normal."

So let's normalize describing people equally as a step toward normalizing our awareness of patriarchy and racism. Let's acknowledge the white plumber who will fix our leak and the male postal worker who delivers our mail. Because implicit in not using those descriptors is the notion that white and male is normal, the standard by which all others are measured.

Jesus said, "let your yes be yes and your no be no." Say what you mean and mean what you say. The disciples writing of their experience of living into the ways of Jesus said, "there is no slave or free, no male or female, no Jew or Gentile." The norms of society should not be based on one group having greater equality than another. Until that is so, we must work for it.



Still Speaking



March 2025

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## Spring Reads & Discussion

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Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice

### March Discussions

**Saturday, March 11**, 10 am, Discussion, Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans, by Rashawn Ray and Andre Perry, The Brookings Institution, from [brookings.edu/policy2020](https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020), Annex, LMR

**Saturday, March 26**, 10 am, Discussion, The Case for Reparations, by Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014, Annex, LMR

### Reparations

“Central to the idea of the American Dream lies an assumption that we all have an equal opportunity to generate the kind of wealth that brings meaning to the words ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ The American dream portends that with hard work, a person can own a home, start a business, and grow a nest egg for generations to draw on. This belief, however, has been defied repeatedly by the US government’s own decrees that denied wealth-building opportunities to Black Americans.”

Thus begins the article by Rashawn Ray, Rubenstein Fellow, and Andre Perry, Metropolitan Policy Fellow, “Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans.”

In the series of readings for March, 2023, this article and Ta-Nehisi Coates’s article in *The Atlantic*, **The Case for Reparations**, will explore the basis for reparations. Why is it that some people think reparations are important?

Near the end of Coates article he writes, “Something more than moral pressure calls America to reparations. We cannot escape our history. All of our solutions to the great problems of health care, education, housing, and economic inequality are troubled by what must go unspoken. ‘The reason Black people are so far behind now is not because of now,’ according to Clyde Ross quoted in the article. ‘It’s because of then.’

Join us for a consideration of this provocative issue on March 11 and March 25 at 10 am in the Annex Large Room. **The articles are available in the office or online with a Google search.**

## April Book Group

### **What Climate Justice Means and Why We Should Care** by Elizabeth Cripps

Saturday, April 15, 10 am, Discussion, Chapters 1 - 3, Annex LMR

Saturday, April 29, 10 am, Discussion, Chapters 4 - 6, Annex LMR

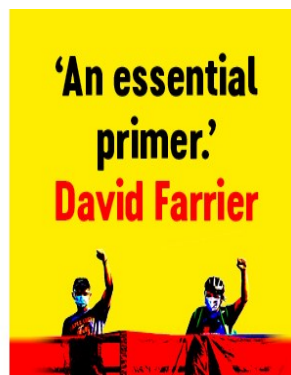
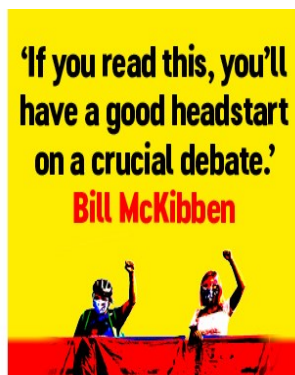
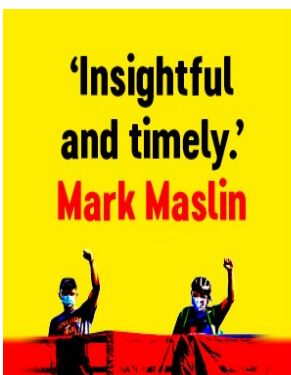
From the book cover:

"Climate change is happening. It's uprooting communities and cutting short lives. And it will only get worse. We owe it to our fellow humans to save them from escalating floods and wildfires, cyclones and spreading disease. We owe them climate justice.

In this passionate and pragmatic book, philosopher Elizabeth Cripps approaches climate justice not just as an abstract idea but as a critical goal that should motivate us all. Using clear reasoning and poignant examples, based on irrefutable science and uncontroversial moral concepts, she explores our obligations to each other, to future generation, and to the non-human world.

This book rejects all the common excuses for inaction, unravels the legacy of colonialism and racism, and makes the case for change now. It provides a blueprint for what climate justice would look like, dissects the Paris Agreement on climate change to show how far politicians have fallen short, and asks where we go from here.

As Cripps shows, climate justice transcends political affiliation and individual belief, making climate activism a moral obligation for us all."



If you would like us to order a book for you, please let Jody know by March 15. A used copy will be \$8 to \$9-ish.



## Women's Voices, Women's Visions

Poetry on a Monday

March 20, 7 pm - 8:30 pm, **Women's Voices, Women's Visions**

Please join us on March 20, when our sanctuary becomes the stage for 13 Michigan word artists coming together to perform their individual works, on topics ranging between motherhood, careers, emotions, grief, dreams, and hopes.

Chris Reist-Rush will be organizing the reception. Maria Davis will play instrumental music during the intermission. Jan Shall and Caryn Hansen will also be sharing from their works, while Pastor Jody Betten will be sharing from the writings of women around the world.

Headlining the event will be 3 gifted Capital Area poets:



**Mary Linda Fox**

Mary Fox, a Detroit-born poet, currently resides Portland, MI. She graduated from Michigan State University (BA) and Central Michigan University (MS.) She taught English and Writing for publication for 40 years at Fowler High School and in later years she simultaneously taught freshman writing at Lansing Community College for 13 years.

**Ruelaine Stokes**

Ruelaine has been a major force on the Lansing arts scene as a poet, spoken word artist, teacher, and coordinator of poetry and arts events. Her voice is wonderfully expressive and captures the dynamics, nuances of pacing and emotional color that bring a poem to life. Ruelaine has a BA in English literature from Stanford University, an MA in English literature from Michigan State University, and an MA in Teaching from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.



**Rosalie Sanara Petrouske**

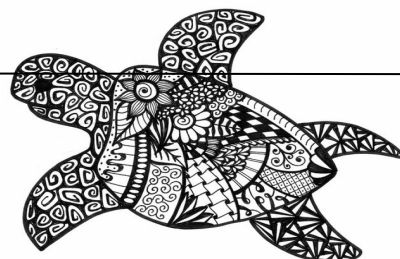
Rosalie is the Co-founder of Writing at the Ledges. She says that "poetry saved her." Her publications include Passages North, the Southern Poetry Review, Red Rock Review, American Nature Writing, and numerous others. In 2015, the Michigan Poet featured her poem, "New Year's Day," in a broadside. She has two poetry chapbooks, the most recent What We Keep from Finishing Line Press in 2016.





## Zentangle

Art Team



**Friday, March 24, 6:30 pm, Art Room**

Everyone is invited! All supplies are provided.

Zentangle is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns.

Through the Zentangle method of drawing, you can:

- Relax
- Focus
- Expand your imagination
- Trust your creativity
- Increase your awareness
- Respond confidently to the unexpected
- Discover the fun and healing in creative expression
- Have fun!



It may look simple, but there's a lot going on here. Learn a new process or expand what you already know. Create some Zentangle art in the company of friends.

*Life is an art form and each of us is an artist.*



## April Cooking Class in March!

Matt Slot and Amy Slot

**Friday, March 31, 6:30 pm**

To avoid Good Friday, the third and final cooking class of the spring will be on March 31st at 6:30pm. Matt and Amy Slot will teach how to make 2 different types of dessert bars: Dutch Almond Bars and Aleksandr Cake (a shortbread base covered with streusel, raspberry preserves, and glaze).

The sign up sheet is on the credenza in the Bess Fulton Room or the back of the Welcome Cards, and space is limited. Registration fee is \$25, to cover ingredients and supplies.





## Film Event: Kiss the Ground

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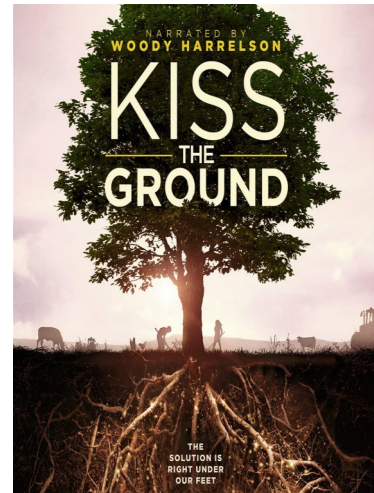
Ramona Kime

**Sunday, April 2, 11:30 am, Annex LMR**

In recognition of Earth Month in April, SEJ will be showing the inspirational documentary “Kiss the Ground”, narrated by Woody Harrelson. As a New York Times reviewer wrote: This film about climate change “inspires a rare feeling of hope”.

From the DVD cover:

“Kiss the Ground” unveils a game-changer: We can reverse global warming, and the Earth’s soil is the solution. By regenerating earth, we can completely and rapidly stabilize our planet’s climate, restore lost ecosystems, and create abundant food supplies. With epic footage shot on five continents, striking visuals from NASA and NOAA, and stunning animation, the documentary conveys this critical message through the voices of leading scientists, ecologists, and experts. As an urgent call to action in addressing the world’s climate crisis, “Kiss the Ground” artfully illustrates an accessible, relatively simple solution to humanity’s greatest challenge.



## Children’s Calendar

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Judy Johnson

### **NO Godly Play**

Sunday, March 12 and Sunday, March 19

### **YES Godly Play**

Sunday, March 5 and Sunday, March 26

Saturday, April 8 at 10:00 am we will host an **Easter Egg Hunt** on the Commons for our Godly Play students.

Sunday, May 7 is **Youth Sunday**. We’ll be celebrating our youth during the church service and coffee hour.





## UCC GMP Search Committee Makes Recommendation

Emma Brewer-Wallen, Search Committee Chair (excerpts)

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After a year-long search, the United Church of Christ Board's Search Committee for General Minister and President has made a historic choice. The committee will be recommending Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson to the UCCB this week as nominee for General Minister and President. If elected, she would be the first woman, and the first woman of African descent, to lead the denomination. Below is the letter to the wider church from Search Committee Chair, the Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin.

To all who love the United Church of Christ:

I am delighted to share that the Search Committee's recommendation for General Minister and President is Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. The committee was impressed by Rev. Thompson's pastoral presence and theological depth; bold vision for a decolonized Christianity and the United Church of Christ as a home for people with multiple religious belonging; dedication to collaborative leadership and bridge-building; and skill as a manager and administrator. Rev. Thompson is Jamaican and immigrated to the United States as a teenager with her parents. Her identities as Jamaican, an immigrant, and part of the African diaspora are central to her sense of self and approach to ministry.

Rev. Thompson currently serves as Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive for Global Ministries. She has served in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ since 2009, previously as Minister for Racial Justice and Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. Prior to joining National Setting staff, Rev. Thompson served on staff of the Florida Conference, as a church planter in Florida, and in family ministries in New York. Rev. Thompson is a highly skilled leader with experience in multiple settings of the United Church of Christ and ecumenically. She holds a Doctor of Ministry, with a dissertation in religious multiplicity among African Caribbean people, from Seattle University, a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary, and a Master of Public Administration from North Carolina Central University.

The role of General Minister and President is considerable in its breadth, and the Search Committee is confident in Rev. Thompson's capacity to serve. We found that she particularly shines in the following areas (read more at [www.ucc.org/search-and-call-gmp/](http://www.ucc.org/search-and-call-gmp/)):



### **Pastoral Presence and Theological Depth**

The Search Committee invited the finalist candidates to lead us in a time of worship, and Rev. Thompson shared a homily on Mark 9:24, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! She interpreted this for us as, “God, you’re possible, but this situation feels impossible,” illuminating the paradoxes found in much of what we as a church, nation, and world face right now. Throughout our time together, Rev. Thompson’s pastoral and non-anxious presence was a blessing.

Rev. Thompson described an experience of hearing God’s call repeatedly and in multiple forms — including through grappling with the spiritual dimensions of injustice and through experiences in nature, including on the Eno River in North Carolina. Her faith journey reflected experiences that members of the committee and others have in finding their way to the United Church of Christ after time spent in other traditions.

### **Bold Vision**

Rev. Thompson holds hope for revival rooted in her experience as Minister for Racial Justice, where she led the rollout and expansion of the Sacred Conversations on Race, her doctoral work focused on multiple-religious belonging.

She suggests that among people who might be seeking such a home are the “spiritual-but-not-religious,” families who are connected to multiple religious traditions, and people who follow teachings and practices of Christianity alongside another tradition.

Rev. Thompson also touched the committee deeply in her proclamation that we need to decolonize the church and its structures. She spoke with pastoral and prophetic truthfulness in naming that the U.S. is currently the largest colonizer globally and that the Church has been remiss in not yet owning our role and repenting.

### **Collaborative Leadership and Bridge-Building**

From her role as Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, Rev. Thompson has strong experience building, mending, and formalizing relationships with church bodies with whom the UCC shares history and values, including the United Church of Canada and Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico.

### **Manager and Administrator**

Rev. Thompson described a practice of leadership development that considers the big picture of the whole church, and those who are currently working for her, to help ensure that new and emerging leaders are prepared when opportunities to serve arise.

In addition to her aptitude as a manager, Rev. Thompson has demonstrated her savvy of the behind-the-scenes aspects of administration. Her experience overseeing several multi-million-

dollar budgets for Wider Church Ministries, General Synod, Global Ministries, and One Great Hour of Sharing prepares her to secure the financial strength of the UCC through sustainable, wise, and responsible fiscal management.

Assuming that her nomination is confirmed by the UCCB and that she is elected at General Synod, Rev. Thompson will vacate her current role as Associate General Minister and assume her new responsibilities as General Minister and President on Aug. 1, 2023.

The United Church of Christ Board will hear from Rev. Thompson at their meeting later this week, March 3-5. I ask for your prayers for Rev. Thompson as she shares her vision, and for the UCCB as they hear it, that this may be a time of fruitful discernment together about what the Church needs in this season.



## Will You Be My Valentine?

A Safe Space for the Sweetest, with Christine Terpening, IBYR Founder

On February 11, a Valentine Party offered to all LGBTQ+ youth and their allies was held at a secret location in Charlotte. Secret to ensure safety of all attendees, with hopes of a day when violence is not a concern. Although, publicly, the party was billed as hosted by I'll Be Your Rock, rural LGBTQ+ youth support, the heroes of the day were the kind people of the First Congregational Church of Charlotte.

With five queer youth in attendance, it may have seemed small, but according to I'll Be Your Rock, founder and president Christine Terpening, to those five kids, the party meant safety, acceptance and love. After all, IBYR started with one brave teen in attendance and has grown to helping a quickly growing multitude of LGBTQ+ youth across the state and soon, across the nation.

The Valentine Party was spearheaded by Deb Cogswell and many members of the congregation. In addition to pizza, pop, and lots of yummy treats, the kids and teens were treated to crafts and games that held their attention. "It was wonderful for me to see these wonderful kids interact with members of the congregation," said Terpening, "Their safe circle got quite a bit bigger today."





Two of the three attendees were regular IBYR youth, a third has attended outside functions of IBYR, and two new teens were introduced to this life changing, if not life saving organization. Party goers were treated to freebies such as t-shirts, sunglasses, and empowering buttons thanks to Happy Suz & Co. A favorite of the day was the generous gift from Deb Cogswell, homemade lap quilts to each kid that will remind them that there are those in the community who love and support them at all times.



I'll Be Your Rock, rural LGBTQ+ youth support, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that brings resources, love and support to rural communities where there has been little to none before. Based in Vermontville, Michigan, IBYR has chapters opening soon in Charlotte and Wellston, MI, and as far away as Livingston, Texas. "When I started this, I thought it would be a Vermontville and Nashville lifesaver. But, we quickly grew and before I knew it we had kids coming from Kalamazoo and Detroit to Vermontville for LGBTQ+ support. To Vermontville! Crazy... And a dream come true," Christine says.

It's important to note that many queer youth suffer from religious trauma. It may take a few tries to get kids to feel comfortable walking into a church to receive God's word without being shamed by its congregation. The First Congregational Church in Charlotte has made a big difference in changing the perception of church for many of IBYR's youth.

IBYR's number one barrier is financing. "I can reach so many kids if only we had the financial resources. I have people in multiple towns in multiple states wanting to have a chapter. The need is great in rural communities. How great it is that we have something that city kids are wanting to attend. Pretty great. It gives our small town kids a bigger community," Christine stated.



If you would like to be a "Rock" and donate to this worthy cause, you can check out their web-site at [www.illbeyourrock.org](http://www.illbeyourrock.org) where you'll find plenty of opportunities to donate and make a difference in the lives of rural LGBTQ+ kids.





## Mission Moment

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Mary Normand, Chair

As I write this we are gearing up for the Nordic Fire Festival. Baking and frosting the cookies has not been easy with the icy weather. I'll let you know how it went next month.

**The January/February RIP-Medical debt is going very well.** So far, we have had \$2457 donated. That, plus the \$1000 that Missions is donating will pay off \$345,700 in medical debt. That is amazing and I cannot thank you enough for your generosity.

**March 5 will be a loose change offering** to purchase books for the Summer Reading program. It's such an important project. Change or quiet bills/checks much appreciated.

**On March 23, we will be assembling spring shoe boxes.** We welcome any items for them that you would like to donate. The Dollar Tree is a good place to pick items up. Crayons, coloring books, books, small games, puzzles, toys are all appropriate. We also like small juice boxes and snack bags. Just place your items on the credenza in the Bess Fulton room. Thank you for your help in this project.

**The "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering is this month.** A video regarding it will be shown March 19 and donations will be collected March 26. You can give anytime though, by designating it on your donation.

**One Great Hour of Sharing®** is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within Wider Church Ministries.

**In April we will be collecting for the Land Bank Solar Project.** Please check the April newsletter for further information on what this is.

**May's Giving Tree will be white bags which are personal hygiene products.** These are distributed to EFCC, SIREN/Eaton, and Helping Hands.

Stay Tuned!



## Mostly Dead

Molly Baskette, lead minister First Church Berkeley UCC

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And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: “I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.” – Revelation 3:1-2 (NRSV)

Some of our churches, as Revelation puts it, have a name of being alive, but they are dead. Or rather, in the words of Miracle Max from *The Princess Bride*: they are only “mostly dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive.”

Coronavirus—and the adaptive challenges it continues to pose—laid bare the proximity to death of a lot of our faith communities. Some churches may be looking to the future and not seeing one at all. They just can’t make the changes needed to survive. They don’t have the know-how, or the money, or the will.

Some of our churches are dying despite having done everything “right.” But some of our churches are dying because of imperfect works in the eyes of God: neglecting hospitality or holding on to homophobia and other heresies. Some are afraid of innovation, afraid to confront bullies and old conflicts, or afraid to be truly vulnerable and real with the people next to them in the pews.

God sometimes corners us so that we have to change—our institutions and our selves. Along our slow path toward self-destruction, God takes us by the ankles and dangles us over the cliff upside down to remind us how desperately we actually want to live. God activates our immune system so that we will get our fight back.

Now is just such a moment for us, individually and collectively, as people of faith. We’re in full Lenten living. And here is the final exam for this semester, with only two questions:

Where are you feeling almost dead?

Where are you coming alive for the first time in years?

### **Prayer**

God, wake me up, wake up my church, and strengthen in us what is on the point of death. We long to live. Amen.

## When We Come Together . . .

**Sunday Worship**, 10 am In Person and on Facebook, @[ucc48813](https://www.facebook.com/ucc48813) and website: [ucccharlotte.org](http://ucccharlotte.org)

### Faith Groups

<b>Education Conversation</b>	Sundays, 8:00 am, Annex/Library	Jan Shall jmtshall@hotmail.com
<b>Godly Play (Children)</b>	Sundays, 10:10 am, Church/Floor 2	Sarah Cook scook@olivetcollege.edu
<b>Prayer Group</b>	1st & 3rd Thurs, 10:30 am, Pr. Rm.	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
<b>Prayer Shawls</b>	1st & 3rd Saturdays, 9 am, Lounge	Amy Krizek Mom_Krizek@hotmail.com
<b>Pub Theology</b>	2nd & 4th Thursday, 7 pm, Riedy's	Adam Droscha Adam.Droscha@gmail.com
<b>Tuesday Night Study</b>	Tuesdays, 6:30 pm, Annex/LMR	Curt Scott curtisjscott@hotmail.com

### Music

<b>Senior Choir</b>	Wednesdays, 7pm, Lounge, September—May	Ramona Kime Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
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### Committees and Groups

<b>Art Committee</b>	2nd & 4th Tuesday, 11 am	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
<b>Blanche Moyer</b>	2nd Monday, 6:30 pm	Judi Cates JudithCates68@gmail.com
<b>Commons Comm.</b>	Times Vary	Matt Slot MattSlot@gmail.com
<b>Communications</b>	3rd Monday, 6:30 pm, Annex/SMR	Curt Scott
<b>Social and Environmental Justice Committee</b>	2nd Sunday, 11:30 am	Ramona Kime Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
<b>Women's Fellowship</b>	As needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net



## Still Speaking

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

106 South Bostwick - Charlotte, MI 48813

office@uccCharlotte.org [www.ucccharlotte.org](http://www.ucccharlotte.org)

### Office Hours

Tues - Wed & Fri 9am - 2pm

517 543 1310

Worship Service 10 am



Find complete calendar on  
[uccCharlotte.org](http://uccCharlotte.org)

# March 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 5:30 Soup & Conversation 7 pm Choir Practice	<b>2</b> 10:30 am, Prayer Group, Prayer Room	<b>3</b> 6:30 First Friday Baking Class, BFR	<b>4</b> 9:30 Prayer Shawl, Lounge
<b>5</b> 11:30 Film Event The Secret Life of Bees, LMR	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 6:30 Tuesday Night Bible Study, Annex	<b>8</b> 7 pm, Choir Practice, Lounge	<b>9</b> 7 pm, Pub Theology, Reidy's Tavern	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 10 am Topic Discussion, Annex LMR
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 11:30 Art Team Mtg., Art Room 6:30 Tuesday Night Bible St.	<b>15</b> 7 pm, Choir Practice, Lounge	<b>16</b> 10:30 am, Prayer Group 6:30 Church Council, Annex	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 9:30 Prayer Shawl, Lounge
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 7 pm Women's Voices, Women's Visions, Poetry Reading	<b>21</b> 6:30 Tuesday Night Bible Study, Annex	<b>22</b> 5:30 Soup & Conversation 7 pm Choir Practice	<b>23</b> 7 pm, Pub Theology, Riedy's Tavern	<b>24</b> 6:30 Zentangle, Art Team, Art Room	<b>25</b> 10 am Topic Discussion, Annex LMR
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 11:30 Art Team Mtg, Art Room 6:30 Tuesday Night Bible St.	<b>29</b> 5:30 Soup & Conversation 7 pm Choir Practice	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 6:30 First Friday Baking Class, BFR	