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NOVEMBER 2022

Volume 95

Issue 11

'Tis the Season

The 86th Annual Bazaar and the Festival of Trees

Jody Betten

We know it's the holidays here at First Congregational UCC when the annual Bazaar Crafts from the Congregation and Luncheon is just days away! So many hours of planning, crafting, cooking, cajoling, baking, pricing, setting up, praying, and hoping are spent getting ready; it has to be successful!

Then it's the Festival of Trees. This is an extraordinary opportunity to bid on beautiful trees to decorate your home during the holiday season. A way to be festive and to do some good; for your donations will bless those less fortunate!

These events are part of how we, as God's people prepare for Christmas during the season of Advent. Advent, a special time of getting ready, of anticipating the celebration of the true meaning of Christmas, God's love coming into the world again and anew.

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Volunteer Spotlight

Connecting the Generations

Caryn Hansen with Mary Normand

Mary Normand's parents set the pattern for volunteering when she was young, dedicating time helping others through the Salvation Army, then serving as Women's Fellowship president for her mom and serving as church president for her dad and all of the smaller roles that led up to the larger roles. For a time, her father even served on the Cemetery board. They taught her to lead through serving.



It was Edna McDermid that recognized her desire to serve when Mary started attending First Congregational UCC. Today, Mary chairs the Missions Team, sits on the Church Council, is president of Women's Fellowship, co-chairs Harvest Feast, and co-chairs the Bazaar, but when Edna first asked her to help, it was simply to strip turkeys.

"I always liked to cook, but Edna taught me to cook for large groups."



It is for this reason that the flowers on the altar on each Harvest Feast Sunday are a dedication to Edna from Mary. Edna's influence carries over. It is Edna's famous slaw recipe that Mary makes for each large gathering where food is served. "Edna refused to share her recipe. Even when she got to a place where she couldn't cook for the church any more, she wouldn't share. But then one day, she shared it with me. There were tears in my eyes. I knew what a gift she had given me." She pauses before continuing with a smile, "I share it with everyone." Her blue eyes twinkle.

From stripping turkeys, Edna let Mary advance to making noodles, pinching pie crust edges, cleaning. It takes a team of 15 to 20 people to put on Harvest Feast, cooking, decorating, cleaning, serving. Mary manages the group. In reality, she developed skills for a whole new career, if she had chosen it, through volunteering.

Mary also makes cookies for Nordic Fest, cookies for the community concert on the old courthouse lawn, and cookies to reward people for donating to the turkey fund. But it isn't just Mary that gives in her home. Husband David grows all of the butternut squash Mary cooks at Harvest Feast.

Giving through volunteerism not only connects the generations, it also builds our family - at home, and in the church.

"Where did that delicious cranberry relish recipe come from, Mary?" I expected her to say Edna, but she didn't. It was Duffy Frost. Volunteering also creates wonderful stories to share.



What Causes Homelessness?

*from the National Alliance to End Homelessness
introduction written by Caryn Hansen*

November is Homeless awareness month.

With crisp, cold mornings and the joy of holidays near, it is natural for caring people to look around for the gaps in our community. It is in those gaps, the places where our hearts go, that we find mission. Collecting money to purchase winter coats, holding fund raisers for winter boots, filling brown bags with groceries, and using creativity in the form of dinners and bazaars to raise money for local charitable organizations are a few of the things we do. The roots are deeper than mere traditions.

The Social and Environmental Justice Committee encourages us to look deeper still, to examine the causes of homelessness. Through understanding, empathy grows. With empathy, love expands, and perhaps through our individual and groups choices, we can bring change.

When Housing is Out of Reach

The nation is currently facing one of the most severe affordable housing crises in history. Not surprisingly, those living in poverty are the most significantly affected.

In the 1970s, communities had plenty of affordable housing. That meant that when a family or individual experienced a crisis and lost housing, they could quickly find another place to live. But by the mid-1980s, the supply of low-cost housing had shrunk significantly. Since then, rents have continued to rise, and lower-income people in particular have experienced slow or stagnant wage growth.

Today, 8 million extremely low-income households pay at least half of their income toward housing, putting them at risk of housing instability and homelessness.

Income and Housing Affordability

Low-income households are typically unemployed or underemployed due to a number of factors, such as a challenging labor market, limited education, a gap in work history, a criminal record, unreliable transportation or unstable housing, poor health, or a disability.

For those who are low-income but employed, wages have been stagnant and have not kept pace with expensive housing costs. The typical American worker has seen little to no growth in his/her weekly wages over the past three decades. Too little income combined with the dwindling availability of low-cost housing leaves many people at risk for becoming homeless.

Connecting Homelessness and Health

An acute physical or behavioral health crisis or any long-term disabling condition may lead to homelessness; homelessness itself can exacerbate chronic medical conditions. A person can become chronically homeless when his or her health condition becomes disabling and stable housing is too difficult to maintain without help.

According to HUD, people living in shelters are more than twice as likely to have a disability compared to the general population. Conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and HIV/AIDS are found at high rates among the homeless population, sometimes three to six times higher than that of the general population.

People who have mental health and substance abuse disorders and who are homeless are more likely to have immediate, life-threatening physical illnesses and live in dangerous conditions. Also, more than 10% of people who seek substance abuse or mental health treatment in our public health system are homeless.

Escaping Violence

A domestic violence experience is common among youth, single adults, and families who become homeless. For many, it is the immediate cause of their homelessness. Survivors of domestic violence may turn to homeless service programs seeking a safe temporary place to stay after fleeing an abusive relationship. Others may turn to homeless service programs primarily because they lack the economic resources to secure or maintain housing after leaving an abusive relationship.

On a single night in 2019, homeless services providers had more than 48,000 beds set aside for survivors of domestic violence.

Impact of Racial Disparities

The most striking disparity can be found among African Americans, who represent 13% of the general population but account for 39% of people experiencing homelessness and more than 50% of homeless families with children. This imbalance has not improved over time.

Causes of Racial Disparities

From slavery to segregation, African Americans have been systemically denied rights and socioeconomic opportunities. Other minority groups, including Indigenous and Latinx people, share similar histories. The disproportionality in homelessness is a by-product of systemic inequity: the lingering effects of racism continue to perpetuate disparities in critical areas that impact rates of homelessness.

Poverty

Poverty, and particularly deep poverty, is a strong predictor of homelessness. Black and Latinx groups are overrepresented in poverty relative to their representation in the overall population, and are most likely to live in deep poverty.

Segregation/Rental Housing Discrimination

Redlining—systemic housing discrimination supported by the federal government decades ago—is a root cause of the current wealth gap between White households and households of color. Redlining discouraged economic investment, such as mortgage and business loans, in Black and Brown neighborhoods.

The effects are still with us today: African Americans still live disproportionately in concentrated poverty or in neighborhoods where they are regularly exposed to environmental toxins, and have limited access to quality care, services, nutritious food, and economic opportunities.

Incarceration

The racial disparity in incarceration rates has continuously worsened. The rate for African Americans has tripled between 1968 and 2016 and is more than six times the rate of White incarceration. These racial disparities are no accident. Black and Brown people are at far greater risk of being targeted, profiled, and arrested for minor offenses, especially in high poverty areas.

November Giving Tree

Did you know that the November Giving Tree are adult socks for our homeless neighbors? They will be given to Housing Services for distribution.

The implications of overcriminalization are far-reaching: A criminal history can keep people from successfully passing background checks to secure both housing and employment. People exiting jails and prisons often face significant problems in accessing safe and affordable housing, and their rate of homelessness is high.

Lack of access to quality health care

People of color are far more likely to lack health insurance than White people, especially in states without Medicaid expansion. Even with expansion, overall, about 30 million people are uninsured, with about half of them being people of color.

The lack of health insurance for people with chronic medical conditions and/or untreated serious mental illness can place them at risk of becoming homeless or being precariously housed. For example, people with mental health disabilities are vastly overrepresented in the population of people who experience homelessness. Of the more than 550,000 people in American who experienced homelessness on a given night in 2017, one in five had a behavioral health issue. While the rate of serious mental illness may not vary by race, studies show African Americans have more difficulty accessing treatment.

For more information, go to the website for the National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america). There you will find multiple solutions and policies that can help this national crisis.

November Film Event

John Oliver on Homelessness

Ramona Kime

Sunday, November 6, 11:30 am

Church Sanctuary



John Oliver's news reports "Last Week Tonight" focus on individual topics for each episode, going in depth in a way that regular news reports don't. For our November movie, we will show two episodes (25 minutes each): one on the rising costs of rent nationally, and one specifically about homelessness.

In his irreverent and comedic manner, John goes right to the heart of a serious issue. (Note: John sprinkles "f-bombs" throughout his reports. If his news reports were rated, they would probably be rated "R" for language.)



Joining us will be **Tracey Socey, volunteer coordinator from Siren/Eaton Shelter**. She'll talk with us about the homeless situation in our own community.

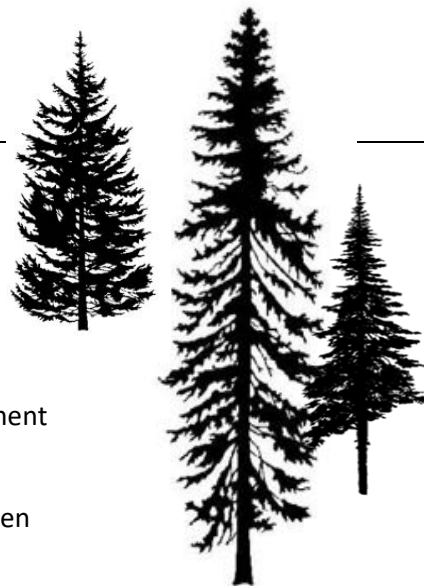
November Giving Tree

The November Giving Tree is Adult Socks.

These will be given to Housing Services for distribution.

For additional giving opportunities, please see Mission Moment by Mary Normand on p 22.

SEJ and Missions work to align goals and giving initiative when appropriate.



From the Desk of
Pastor Jody Betten

Season of Thanksgiving

"The best way to show my gratitude is to accept everything, even my problems, with joy." Mother Teresa



For me November is a time of intentionally renewing the practice of giving thanks. Maybe it's because the holiday falls in November. Maybe it's because it is a beautiful time of the year with the gift of the changes in colors. Maybe it's because there's time to hunker down and ruminate with shorter days and cooler weather.

I am grateful for many things; not the least of which is you! You are continually imagining what it means to be a resource of God's love in this community (think Harvest Feast, juice



boxes for kiddos, coat drive). You are intentionally asking about the future and how grow in sustainability (think stewardship and continuing upkeep of the building). You are assessing the ways you can extend your reach (think Mead Festival and Homecoming). You offer so many educational opportunities (think Dale's and Curt's class, League of Women Voters and Social and Environmental Justice movies). You care very deeply for one another (bringing food and checking in with those who are struggling or haven't been seen for a minute). **You are the Church!**

St Ignatius of Loyola, a Jesuit Priest of the late 15th Century, was instrumental in creating a discipline for regularly looking carefully at one's life with gratitude, for finding God in everything. Simply, each morning you ask the questions "What am I

most grateful for?” and “What am I least grateful for?” At the end of each day you ask the same two questions. “What am I most grateful for?” and “What am I least grateful for?”

This practice does two things; it creates a habit, a discipline of reflecting on one’s life with gratitude. And, it builds in a practice of attending to both the good and the so-called bad of one’s life. If you keep record of answers over time, you can look back and see a reflection of God’s presence in your life.

One word about the so-called bad stuff. The bad stuff, struggles and challenges in life, whether by accident or poor choices, are not a sign that God is not present or a punishment for some sin. Struggles just are. Life is filled with challenges at every turn. Being human means making the best choice in the moment but realizing later that it was a mistake. Or, even making a poor choice in the moment and having to live with the consequences. The better we can be with accepting those parts of life, the less judgement we bring to them, the more gratitude we can have for God’s presence in the midst of them, the more joy and peace we will have. That’s the practice.

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so-called bad stuff.
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Struggles just are.

I am filled with gratitude in this season. For good work to do, for a world filled with beauty and magic, for aging parents to care for, for a partner who sustains me, for children and grands who bring me joy, for friendships – new and sustaining, for opportunities to lament the pain and mourn the endings. I feel God’s presence keenly each day, in each moment that I pause to wonder.





Search Process for New Settled Pastor Begins

Amy Frost

The Reverend Cheryl Burke, Associate Conference Minister, Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, attended the Church Council Meeting on October 20 to talk about the Church's Search Process for a new Settled Pastor. She shared with us the broad brush strokes of the process; creating a Search Committee, revising our profile, interview candidates, and transitioning to a new pastor.

She also shared best practices for creating a Search Committee. You have input in this process. We are asking you to nominate up to 3 names to serve on the committee. Nominations are due by Sunday, November 6. You may share your ideas on the Welcome Card, by emailing the church office, or by writing names on paper and giving/sending them to the Church office. All nominations must be signed.

Following our By-laws, to serve, you must be a member.

From the UCC *Guide to Pastoral Search and Call*, these are the kind of people the UCC suggests serve on the committee.

"Search Committee Members should serve on our behalf with wisdom, maturity, and creativity. They should have relational and detail skills and a willingness to dedicate time to meetings; be compelled less by a personal agenda and more by a commitment to the future of the church. They should be 5-9 people who represent diverse ages, races, cultures, genders, life experiences, and perspectives present in the church."

In addition to the UCC suggestions, Cheryl reminded us that we should "Trust this person to have the best interest of the congregation in mind."

The following people are not eligible because they served on the Interim Search Committee: David Frost, Curt Scott, Jan Shall, Deanna Rendel, Dale Dodds.

When all nominations are collected the Council will consider the congregational nominations, the By-law requirements, and a balance of members to create the final committee. This will be done at our November Council meeting.

Please keep this process in your prayers.

Blue Christmas

Jody Betten

Sunday, December 11, 4 pm

No one wants to admit that they are “blue” during the holiday season; but the truth is that it is not an easy or joyous or happy time of the year for many people. For some, loved ones died during the previous year and will be missed during the rituals and celebrations of this significant time. For others, the expectations of the season defeat us; we can’t ever live up to the standards of the people around us or ourselves. There may be other reasons that serve to depress or sadden even the most jovial among us.



A Blue Christmas service is a time of worship, of coming into God’s presence together, a time when it’s okay to not be happy. It is a more quiet and reflective service where introspection and even tears are okay. Feelings of sadness and pain, grief and doubt can be expressed in a safe place. During this service, there will be in scripture and liturgy and prayer, a reminder that God is within us and among us especially when we are not experiencing what seems to be the normal joy of those around us.

This service of reflection and healing and acceptance will take place on Sunday, December 11 at 4pm in the Lounge. All are welcome to attend. Come as you are, no expectations. The service will also be live streamed for those who can’t come out; and will be recorded for watching at a later time when it feels appropriate.

If you have questions about this service or what to expect, please feel free to talk with Pastor Jody.

Education for Adults

Jody Betten

On Sunday, October 23, 8 of us gathered to talk about Adult Education in the Church. To a person, education has happened along the way for us as adults. Our learning has continued. In the church it has continued in classes that were taught, from the extraordinary teachers in our lives and through experiences that informed and changed us.

The questions we considered are; what were the circumstances of a transformational experience? What about that experience is important to carry over into the future of an adult education curriculum in the Church?

We hope to broaden our next conversation to include the teachers among us and to seek to understand what compelling subjects are not yet being addressed in our situation. Watch for details about that conversation.



Cresting the Wave

Why I Teach the Tuesday Night Class

Curt Scott

American Christianity is in a dark yet familiar place. The poison of Christian Nationalism has, once again, been injected into the veins of American Christianity and flows directly from political interests. Meanwhile, too few self-identifying Christians know enough about history, scripture or how their grandparents were forced to vanquish this specific evil *in the flesh* in 1945.

One should not be surprised to see pro-fascism political signs in church yards from Budapest to Boston to Brisbane. The Church has had an all too cozy relationship with totalitarianism since 325, in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus, no less, (and later, much later, Thomas Jefferson, et al).

I present the Tuesday Night Bible Study to make clearer what happened historically, socially and biblically over the past 3000 years. In doing so, wave patterns emerge of leaders of the faithful courting ancient evils, collapsing society and ultimately introducing the changes they specifically told people to fear.

First Congregational UCC has, as a church, stepped into a movement the United Church of Christ began leading a century ago, to move past royalty-centric theologies, doctrines, creeds, policies and missions as defined by 17th-thru-20th Century Protestantism, toward justice by Jesus' definition.

To dispel fear and confusion, I teach what humanity has learned, academically, about Jesus and scripture since 1960, because the source of misunderstanding is, remarkably, churches. Outside the sanctuary, Jesus got clearer. On Tuesday evenings, I let *actual* Jesus in and kick *empire* (*totalitarian, fascist, political, and mythical*) Jesus to the curb.

For 3000 years, during crests of the human wave, intelligent people argued that the point of faith is holding a common philosophy to improve common life, starting with teaching kids to be godly, meaning Informed, kind, wise, self-aware, and ethical.

Our ancestors wrote that peace, liberty and wisdom happen when all citizens participate fully in their society's abundance and woes—a rare thing. Historically speaking, all else is either tribalism or oligarchic capitalism with religion *having its back*.

The Bible chronicles 1500 years of historic pressures and human responses, both godly and

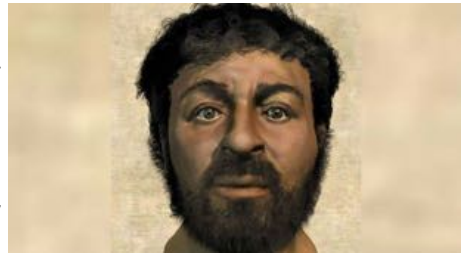
corrupt. Yet, cutting and pasting the Bible into a narrative that serves Caesars and preachers is what happened to Jesus, theologically, despite Jesus' warning about using the Lord's name in vain.

Nonetheless, it's not *church* without a coherent theology, based on actual events, real history and the Jesus who breathed, connected to known texts of ancient Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Latin writers. That's the gaping hole in Christianity today. Politicians have applied the usual plugs and sheep are nodding on cue. Without coherent theology based on previous eras and Christ-like concerns about ethics, morality and social justice, churches are merely clubs of like-minded bigots.

On Tuesday evenings, I attempt to remove 1600 years of political mold to get us to the next crest of the wave and the purpose and responsibility of faith in society as spiritual, physical and ethical balm. The church that tells the truth about the history of the church and Jesus, I believe, will be the enclave that not only survives the theological shift we are in, but heals the myriad broken by bad faith: the original job of Christians.

ACTUAL JESUS, November 15 – December 20

If one were to believe the noise of our time, there is a version of Jesus for every religion, individual church, political party, media mogul and thus, every American, thus giving spiritual cover to the compassionate, cruel and farcical. The Bible itself has at least 5 versions of Jesus, from which Christians seem comfortable with two: baby and God.



Add to all that, the version of Jesus from urns full of comparative writing from his time and people, dug out of the dirt since 1795 or so. **Jesus is more knowable now than any time in history**, even Jesus' time. Starting almost immediately after his death, millions have killed and died for mythical Jesus, some as recently as last weekend.

It seems a good time to know what is known about Actual Jesus.

Once there was a child, and his name was Yeshua, probably. He had opinions and stances on his world and was killed by the state for expressing them. He spoke to women like they had a brain – a first. Come meet him. After that, we'll talk about what became of his apparent intentions; and what we should think and do about the noise of our time

Shalom.

Election Season Study

Love Your Enemies:

How Decent People Can Save America from a Culture of Contempt

by Arthur C. Brooks (arthurbrooks.com)

Introduction written by Jody Betten

I had begun a sermon series during Lent of 2020 on this book when the pandemic hit. I pivoted and began to deal with issues related to the pandemic. But this book has been “in my back pocket” so to speak for these couple years.

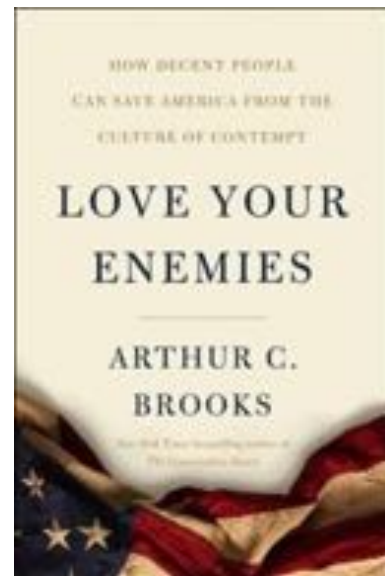
We’ve seen political discourse become more vitriolic during my lifetime for sure. Perhaps it ebbs and flows (where’s the historian among us?). Currently, it threatens to undo us as families, as communities, as a nation. I’ve not figured it out, but I believe that Brooks has an idea for how to think about who we are as people who differ in a way that can bridge the gaps instead of widening them.

About Our Author

Arthur C. Brooks is a Harvard professor, PhD social scientist, bestselling author, and a columnist for the Atlantic, who specializes in using the highest levels of science and philosophy to provide people with actionable strategies to live their best lives.

From Our Author

America has developed a “culture of contempt.” We increasingly view people who disagree with us not as merely incorrect or misguided, but as worthless. This is warping political discourse, tearing us apart as people, and even wrecking our health. But we can fight back. Drawing on ancient wisdom, cutting-edge behavioral science, and examples from history’s greatest leaders, Arthur Brooks shows how we can bridge national divides and make progress as a society, all while becoming happier and more effective people. *Love Your Enemies* is a guide to building a better country-but more than that, it is a roadmap to the happiness that comes when we choose to love



one another, despite our differences.

A Recommendation

Brooks is an economist who has spent his academic career researching happiness and charitable giving. His recent books have dealt with the idea of compassion and social healing. The message that Brooks comes back to is that having an ideological bias does not require despising the other side. In fact, this book highlights the reality that holding others in contempt is a recipe for continued discord and personal unhappiness. Brooks sets out in *Love Your Enemies* to show the science behind finding common cause and engaging in respectful dialogue. This is needed not just for personal happiness, but to help heal the bleeding wounds in the American civic culture.

Love Your Enemies is a timely, important discussion of a major problem of our day. This is a book that should be read by people on both sides of the political spectrum, because no one (besides the cable news networks and our global political adversaries) are really happy with the *status quo*. The best way out of the eternal cycle of bickering we are presently experiencing is for a critical mass of individuals to begin to adopt some of the principles Brooks outlines in this book.

Andrew J. Spencer, author, Christian Ethicist, reviewer, blog Ethics and Culture (<http://www.ethicsandculture.com/blog/2019/love-your-enemies-a-review>)

An Invitation

Now that we have your attention, we hope that you are able to please join us for two discussions on the book. We'll have hot coffee, hot tea, and quiet place to share.

Part One – Saturday, Nov 5, 10am, Church Library (Annex), Intro, and Chapters 1-4

Part Two – Saturday, Nov 19, 10am, Church Library (Annex), Chapters 5-8 and Conclusion

Where to find the book? If you are unable to find it locally, you might try online at World of Books or Thrifty Books.

Pastor Jody will also use the concepts from this book for her sermons on November 6 and 13, so even if you are unable to come the book discussion, you may find the read to be a deeper dive into this important topic.

We are God's Love in Action. May we find means to build bridges.

We are Invited!

Sandra Field, Art Committee Chair

The Art Team extends an invitation to everyone to come paint with them on Thursday, November 14 from 6:30 to 8:30.

Create a holiday memory in the company of friends.

For \$10, you receive a sanded, wooden bowling pin and the supplies you need to create a new holiday treasure - a snowman or a Santa.

Deadline to sign up is November 6. You can sign up in the Bess Fulton Room, on the back of the Welcome Card, or by contacting Sandra Field or Chris Reist-Rush.



Hanging of the Greens

Shirley Ripley

The annual tradition of Hanging of the Greens is a coming together to decorate our church in preparation for the season. This year, Hanging of the Greens will take place over two days, Sunday, November 20 and Monday, November 21.

Sunday directly following service, we will focus on the decorating the Sanctuary tree only with whatever time you can give.

We will start at 9:30 am on Monday, with a goal of being finished by 11am. We will place the outdoor wreaths and the balcony wreath and finish whatever is left of the tree.



Crafts from the Congregation 2022



86th Annual Holiday Bazaar

Friday, November 11, 9 am ■ 4:30 pm

Saturday, November 12, 9 am ■ 2 pm



Email: Office@uccCharlotte.org ■ 106 S Bostwick, Corner of Lawrence & Bostwick

🎀 Holiday Bazaar 🎀

Wooden, Quilted, and Sewn - Home Crafted Creations, Dried Floral
Country Kitchen, Home Baked Goods, Candies, Cookies, Jellies, & more!
Vintage Jewelry

LUNCHEON

Friday 11 am ■ 1:30 pm

Dine In or Carry Out

**Beef & Noodles, Hot Chicken Salad
AND**

Homemade Pies

Order Form

Next Page!

VETERAN'S SPECIAL

Free slice of pie with purchase of a meal!



<h1 style="text-align: center;">Holiday Bazaar Luncheon Menu</h1> <p>106 S Bostwick, Charlotte, MI ▪ 517.543.1310 ▪ Office@uccCharlotte.org</p>			LUNCH Friday, November 11 11 am - 1:30 pm
Dine In and Carry Out Only			
Quantity	Description	Unit Price	Total
	Entrees		
	Hot Chicken Salad (includes two sides)	\$10.00	
	Beef and Noodle Plate (includes two sides)	\$10.00	
	A la carte EXTRA Sides		
	Coleslaw	\$1.00	
	Homemade Raisin Bran Muffin (w/butter)	\$1.00	
	Homemade Crescent Roll (w/butter)	\$1.00	
	Cinnamon Apple Half	\$1.00	
	Pickled Beets	\$1.00	
	Pie Slice		
	Pecan	\$4.00	
	Apple	\$3.00	
	Blueberry	\$3.00	
	Cherry	\$3.00	
	Rhubarb	\$3.00	
	Strawberry/Rhubarb	\$3.00	
	Total		
Check <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/>			
Checks payable to: Women's Fellowship First Congregational UCC Thank you for your business!			



Annual Coat Fundraising Drive is underway!

Carol Yerkes

Children need warm coats to go to school. We have collected about \$600 so far. Plus, Meijer, a corporate benefactor has generously donated \$300.

In addition to monetary donations, gently used or new coats are also welcome.

Donations may be given at church with the designation "Coat Drive" or may be given to Bill or Carol Yerkes. The new coats purchased will be divided between Siren House and Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center.

Donations may be given until December 20. Qualifying children will receive the coats at no charge.

Festival of Trees

Amy Frost

The Festival will be in person Friday, November 25 from 5 to 8 pm and Saturday, November 26 from 10 am to 5 pm. Online bidding will be open through Sunday, November 27 at noon.

All proceeds benefit Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center's Winter Boots for Kids.

Set up times will be:

- Sunday, November 20 from noon to 4 pm
- Monday, November 21 from 5 pm to 7 pm
- Tuesday, November 22 from 5 pm to 7 pm
- Wednesday, November 23 from 10 am to 5 pm



All set up must be completed by Wednesday to allow for lighting and auction preparations.

We will need set up help during the above times and clean up help on November 27.

If you are donating a tree or other item for the Festival, please reach out to Amy Frost when you have your information. frosta@pennfield.net Follow us on facebook, [facebook.com/Festival-of-Trees-1472357846407366](https://www.facebook.com/Festival-of-Trees-1472357846407366), and share with friends.

See you there and bring a friend or two!

Communications Team Update

Matt Slot, Chair

It's that time of year again. The leaves are falling, there's a chill in the air, and the kitchen is bustling with the work of the Bazaar. The Communications Team has also been busy.



The New Website is Up and Running! If you haven't had a chance to visit the new website, please take a few minutes to do so. You can find it online at: ucccharlotte.org

You'll see bright pictures, a new church calendar, and easy access to the livestream and online giving portal. And we will continue to add new content over the next few months, including snippets of church life, news, and "Still Speaking" -- a place for learning and growing in faith through discussion and perspective.

We plan to gradually make the website the center of our online presence and access to news and information, making it easy to find the latest updates and documents you need. As always, you are encouraged to send feedback and suggestions to Matt Slot, and corrections to the church office.

Renaming Our Newsletter. I understand that change isn't always comfortable, but we've spent a lot of time thinking about the structure, format, and impact of the newsletter. As part of this process, we have narrowed down the suggestions to the following:

- First News
- Bostwick News
- Still Speaking
- The Comma

The next step of the process is yours: please vote on one of the names through the month of November. You can do this by filling out the back of the Welcome cards, sending an email to the church office, or by giving it directly to Matt Slot. At the end of November, we will select the most popular option, and begin the work to rebrand the newsletter in time for the January edition.

You are Welcome! We really want anyone and everyone to attend a Communications Team meeting, to offer your perspective or raise topics of concern. We meet at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of the month.



Mission Moment

Mary Normand, Chair

The Mission Moment article connects the dots regarding giving project around First Congregational UCC. Thank you for your generosity.

Giving Tree: Our September Giving Tree for Mitten Misfits was not as successful as would have liked so we voted to give them \$100 from our budget.

November is Homeless Awareness Month so we are collecting adult socks. In addition, the Mission Board is purchasing health kits that can be given to homeless individuals. These items will be divided between Eaton Furniture and Clothing Center, Mid Michigan Housing Services, and Helping Hands.

Neighbors in Need: We are collecting for this in November. Usually it is October but CROP Walk was at the same time so we moved it to November. You can give through your church envelope and just mark "NIN" on the live, or write a separate check with NIN on the memo line.

December, we will again be collecting hats, gloves, and mittens.

Winter Coat Project: This is still ongoing though December. So far, 20 coats have been purchased and donated. The cost for coats has increased just like everything else (\$25 - 30). Please help with this project if you are able.

Christmas families: So far we have two families. One is a mother with 2 children and the other is a mother with 3 children. We will have more details soon so folks can shop early and take advantage of the early sales.

The Mission Board needs YOU! We meet generally the third Sunday of the month. We would love to have new, fresh ideas. Our next meeting is November 20 at 11:30 in the large meeting room of the Annex. Please come and see what we are all about.

Stay Tuned.

Neighbors in Need

Jody Betten

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities with economic justice and living wage issues.

This is the story of one of the ministries that received a grant and how they found success with it in their communities.

Houston teens learn wage activism from working adults like them

This summer, with a grant from the United Church of Christ's Neighbors in Need offering, 24 high school students from an economically challenged Houston neighborhood learned about activism and carried out a local campaign for a \$15 minimum-wage law.

The idea came from the basic insight that many Houston residents find it hard to make ends meet, especially workers in fast-food and other service industries. The Rev. Darnell Fennell serves some of those people in both his callings. He is pastor of Just Love Church, affiliated with the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He also teaches high school social studies.

With a background in community organizing, Fennell knows people don't have to sit still for economic injustice. He knows the wider UCC feels the same, as seen in statements such as a 2017 General Synod resolution, "A More Just Economy: \$15 Minimum Wage, Living Wages and Job Creation." So he sought the NIN grant to introduce young people to local activists in the national Fight for \$15 wage campaign and involve them in learning by doing.

For more extensive information about Neighbors In Need or the NIN grant process, visit the NIN homepage or email nin@ucc.org.

Date: October 16, 2022

To: First Congregational United Church of Christ in Charlotte

Re: 30th Harvest Feast Turkey Dinner

Attn: Mary Normand, Chairperson

Message:

Today, we had participated in enjoying a very delicious meal from the Congregation.

It was a very nice way to celebrate your 30th year of this great dinner you have prepared.

We are fully aware, that many hours are spent, ahead of time, to prepare such a delicious meal.

All of the specific food items that were selected, were very fitting for a fall Harvest Dinner. The presentation of food was very colorful and enticing.

We truly appreciate your fine efforts and we, as members of the Charlotte community, make every effort to support your efforts in serving the community when the occasion arises.

The pandemic seems to continue to affect our families and loved ones. Take care and stay safe and keep healthy.

Warmest regards,

Fred & Jane Kracker

Gun Buy Back Organizers Send Thanks to First Congregational UCC for Sponsorship!

First Congregational UCC, Charlotte, provided partial sponsorship for the October 1st Gun Buy Back in Lansing, which was organized by the Advocacy Team of St. Michael's Episcopal Church.

The Buy Back was a huge success: 30 guns were collected, with 25 cars lining up to participate, half of which were in line before the event opened. After the money ran out, most people still chose to turn in their guns!

Plans are underway for another Gun Buy Back in 2023.

Harvest Feast - Thank you!

Mary Normand

Sending out a huge "Thank You" to everyone who participated in the 31st Annual Harvest Feast. Whether you helped with the dinner, donated toward the turkeys, and/or just enjoyed the dinner, it was very much appreciated. I was able to visit with people again this year, which I enjoy. There were folks who came to eat and sat and visited with their friends and families which was nice to see.





Worthless Servant

Mary Luti

"When you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless servants. We have done only what we ought to have done.'" – Luke 17:10 (ISV)

Most families in his remote mountain parish were mired in generational poverty. The church did what it could to help, sideways, never directly. You didn't expose people's need.

For thirty-two years, faithful as sunrise, he'd baptized them, married them, visited them when they let him in, which was seldom, buried them when they died too young, which was often.

He'd preached one message, that they were loved and should love one another. He doubted it got through. Not because they were bad or obtuse, but because daily life had their attention, too. It taught them something different.

When he retired, there was punch, a handshake with the deacon. No one said thank you or we'll miss you.

When he told his story to some seminarians a year later, they were aghast: They didn't thank you? After all those years? After all you did?

He expected that reaction. He'd complained in his own heart, too. He didn't think it wrong to expect thanks, a token of recognition. But in his serene moments, he realized he was content. It's OK, he told them. I just did what I was called to do.

And if that seems bleak or harsh or masochistic, maybe it is. But maybe it isn't. Maybe it's a kind of generosity.

Jesus was honest with us when he called us. He said that to be a disciple is to descend with him to the lowest places, empty of outcomes and gain, and to be there with him would be a grace enough.

Prayer

Jesus, discipleship's rewards are sometimes many. Sometimes few. May I follow you with or without them.

About the Author: *Mary Luti is a long time seminary educator and pastor, author of Teresa of Avila's Way and numerous articles, and founding member of The Daughters of Abraham, a national network of interfaith women's book groups. ucc.org/daily-devotional/worthless-servant/*

Leaders and Staff of the Church

Council President 3rd Thursday, 6:30 pm	Amy Frost	Frosta@pennfield.net
Vice President	Curt Scott	CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Church Clerk	Barbara Anderson	BarbaraF5543@icloud.com
Financial Secretary	Don Johnson	DonJohnson106@mac.com
Treasurer (Finance Team)	Kathie Cook	crkcook@hotmail.com
Endowment Team	Mike Fulton	mjfulton@sbcglobal.net
Congregation At-Large Representative	Mary Kohmuench	MTheoharis@gmail.com
Buildings and Grounds	David Frost	Black_ice@att.net
Business Team Leader	Bill Oatman	Oatman701@att.net
Education Team Leader 1st Sunday, 11:30 am	Judy Johnson	Johnsoj@ameritech.net
Mission Team Leader 3rd Sunday, 11:30 am	Mary Normand	DavidNormand@att.net
Worship Team Last Sunday, 11:30 am	Dennis Cates	DWCates55@yahoo.com

Staff

Minister	Pastor Jody Betten	Pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Director of Music	Ramona Kime	Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Student Intern	Adam Droscha	Adam.Droscha@gmail.com
Communications	Caryn Hansen	Office@ucccharlotte.org
Bookkeeper	Sher Brown	Office@ucccharlotte.org
Child Educator	Sarah Cook	SCook@olivetcollege.edu
Custodian	Rex Todd	Office@ucccharlotte.org

***The Chanticleer** is the monthly newsletter distributed to members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Charlotte. We welcome most comments and articles.*

***Editor:** Editor@ucccharlotte.org*

Chanticleer monthly deadline is the 18th to inform us of intended articles.

All articles are due on the 25th.

When We Come Together . . .

Sunday Worship: 10 am In Person and on Facebook, @ucc48813 and website: ucccharlotte.org

Faith Groups

Adult Bible Study	Sundays, 8:15 am, Annex/LMR	Dale Dodds vdd6@att.net, Sundays, 8:15 am
Contemplation, Meditation, Prayer	Sundays, 7:30 am, 8 am, 8:30 am	Adam Droscha Adam.Droscha@gmail.com
Godly Play (Children)	Sundays, 10:10 am, Church/Floor 2	Sarah Cook scook@olivetcollege.edu
Prayer Group	1st and 3rd Thurs, 10:30 am	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Prayer Shawls	1st & 3rd Saturdays, 9 am, Lounge	Amy Krizek Mom_Krizek@hotmail.com,
Pub Theology	2nd & 4th Thursday, 7 pm, Riedy's	Adam Droscha Adam.Droscha@gmail.com
Tuesday Night Study	Tuesdays, 6:30 pm, Annex	Curt Scott curtisjscott@hotmail.com

Music

Senior Choir	Wednesdays, 7pm, Lounge, September—May	Ramona Kime Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
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Committees and Groups

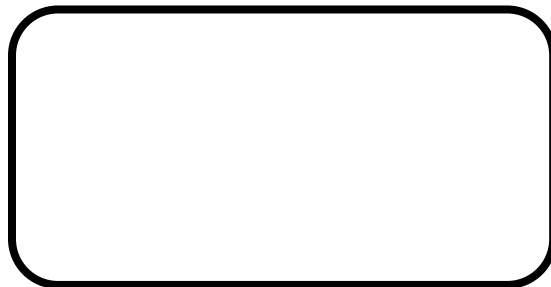
Art Committee	Mondays, 1 pm, once a month	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Blanche Moyer	2nd Monday, 6:30 pm	Judi Cates JudithCates68@gmail.com
Care Committee	1st Wednesday, 10 am	Pam Rinckey rinckey1@hotmail.com
Commons Comm.	Times Vary	Matt Slot MattSlot@gmail.com
Communications	3rd Monday, 6:30 pm, Annex/smr	Matt Slot
Personnel Committee	As needed	Terry Davis tdavis@msu.edu
Social and Environmental		
Justice Committee	2nd Sunday, 11:30 am	Ramona Kime Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Women's Group	As needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net Rachel Harvitt, rrharv4953@gmail.com



THE CHANTICLEER

First Congregational United Church of Christ –
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Office Hours
Tues - Wed & Fri 9am - 2pm
517 543 1310
Worship Service 10 am
Sunday In Person,
Facebook & YouTube



Some of the special days celebrated in November:

November is Homelessness Awareness Month. It is also National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) and Movember, a month to grow a mustache (a "Mo") to bring awareness to men's health issues.

November 1 - All Saints Day
November 2 - All Souls Day
November 1 and 2 - Day of the Dead
November 6 - Susan B. Anthony Day
November 11 - Veteran's Day
November 15 - Clean Out Your Refrigerator Day
November 24 - Thanksgiving

