

Still Speaking

First Congregational

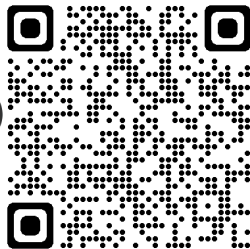
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

May 2024
Volume 2
Issue 5

Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

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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. We appreciate feedback; please send comments to the Editor @ Editor@uccCharlotte.org

Editor: Editor@ucccharlotte.org **Still Speaking** article deadline is the 25th of each month.

About the cover: 2-year-old Sequoia Englehart, youngest daughter of Morgan and Joy Englehart, turns 3 on May 15. Joy and Morgan recently shared that they are expecting a much hoped for sixth Englehart child as the invitro treatments for Morgan were successful. Due date: October 20, 2024 Photographer, Caryn Hansen



The Art of Becoming W.I.S.E.

Kate Durda, WISE Committee

The WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged) Congregation for Mental Health Resolution was adopted at the United Church of Christ General Synod in 2015. The United Church of Christ Mental Health Network then developed the WISE certification process.

They offer support and resources to our faith communities as needed through liaison, and other support.

We at First Congregational United Church of Christ of Charlotte are just beginning this exploration. A WISE congregation is one that engages in improving awareness and support for mental wellness overall. Our general purpose is to encourage our congregation to:

1. Recognize and accept the universality of mental health challenges in each of our lives,
2. Accept and become comfortable with our own and others' mental health challenges, including those with chronic and severe mental illness (this includes addressing internalized as well as societal stigma around mental health issues); and
3. Promote and engage in ways to live our commitment to be WISE about mental health and improve our health and well-being.



This issue affects each one of us! Mental health exists as a continuum: some may experience occasional or situational mental health challenges; some experience intermittent or moderate mental health challenges; while others experience severe or chronic mental illness.

(Source: <https://www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/mental-health-by-the-numbers/>)

We also are affected when our loved ones, extended family, or friends experience problems. Challenges include stressors of daily life (self and the world around us) such as loss, illness, relationship issues, caregiver demands, end-of-life issues, addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling) as well as experiences of depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and the more severe serious mental illnesses.

Any of these challenges can lead to feelings of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and more. The effect of these mental health challenges, left unaddressed, affect every aspect of our well-being.

Not sure if you pass the mental wellness check? Experiencing one or more of these symptoms on an on-going basis may be an early warning sign of a greater problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks

(source: <https://www.voasw.org/blog/what-is-mental-wellness-how-to-improve-it/>)

For those excited about social justice and how current systems and structures (including internalized and societal stigma) impact mental health, and as well as how our ‘pathology’ paradigm locks us in place, this is also a place for you! Much of our response to stressors and trauma is a normal, healthy reaction, allowing for survival. But when the ‘pathology’ paradigm tells us we must (and only) experience shame, self-blame, low esteem, judgement, and isolation regarding our emotional distress – we fail to thrive, or even to heal and move on from

the trauma.

It's clear that we could do much to improve our Mental Health, individually and societally. WISE hopes to explore together with you, the congregation, what our needs are and how to better address them.... through education, support groups, activities, dialog, and opening our hearts and minds to the need. Rosalynn Carter spoke of Mental health this way:

“A problem of this magnitude will not go away, and because it will not go away, and because of our spiritual commitments, we are compelled to take action.”

WISE will screen a video of the moving personal mental health story of Dr. Reverend Sarah Lund at 11:30 am on Sunday May 19, followed by a Panel Discussion that same evening at 6 pm. Both will be great opportunities for us to begin our focus on Mental Health.

Please plan on joining us for the presentations! Let's Talk!

Contact us if you would like to discuss WISE, have any questions and/or are interested in being involved! Contact anyone on the WISE committee: Pastor Adam Droscha, Stephanie Tighe, Kate Durda, Ramona Kime, Amy Slot, Brenda Wood, Judy Johnson. If you would like guidance or to discuss how to handle a personal mental health concern, please contact Judy Johnson or Stephanie Tighe.

- www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/mental-health-by-the-numbers/
- <https://www.voasw.org/blog/what-is-mental-wellness-how-to-improve-it/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/mental-health-stigma>

Poetry Corner



The Art of being Present, by Mary Oliver

The art of being present,
is not a mere act of existence,
but rather an **intentional immersion**,
in the **whisper of the wind**,
the **dance of sunlight on leaves**,
and the **rhythm of our own breath**

Self-Care Rituals, by Rupi Kaur

Self-care is not selfish,
it is the oxygen mask we put on
before assisting others,
the gentle touch we give ourselves,
in a world that demands toughness.

The Healing Power of Words, by Lang Leav

Words hold the power to mend,
to stitch the pieces of our broken hearts,
to lift us when we are down,
and ignite a fire within our souls.



Pastor's Corner

Pastor Adam Droscha, minister



Anne Mitchell, Brenda Wood converse with Pastor Adam Droscha after church while Kaiser peeks his head around the corner.

Mental Health IS Spiritual Health

In May, we as a church are observing Mental Health Awareness Month, a time when we can collectively treat mental and psychological health simply as health, acknowledge and advocate for better mental health resources, and de-stigmatize conversations around mental health and mental illness. Observing Mental Health Awareness Month as a church is also running parallel with our process of becoming a WISE congregation, a designation in the United Church of Christ that recognizes us as a church that prioritizes mental health conversations and needs. May is going to be a big, thematic month for us, and the phrase that keeps coming to my mind with May upon us is, 'mental health IS spiritual health.' That phrase may be controversial for some, but follow me for a minute here; to me, the logic is really quite simple.

As people of the Christian faith, we, in one way or another, believe and collectively agree that we are beings of soul, or spirit. We are not only physical or material creatures of instinct and survival, but we are reflective meaning making beings of existential purpose and import, and we are capable of feeling and appreciating love and beauty, loss and despair, good and evil. Furthermore, as people of faith, we ascribe a divine value to the soul or spirit that makes us capable of those qualities; we have soul and spirit because our God — our creator, our Origin, our loving and creative Mover — is also of soul and spirit in some way.

W.I.S.E.

Welcoming

Inclusive

Supportive

Engaged

Language and word choice can be tricky, but the more I dig into theological and spiritual studies, as well as psychological, psychoanalytic, and neurological studies, the more I am convinced that what generally religious and spiritual thinkers mean by soul, or spirit, and what generally non-religious and 'secular' thinkers mean by consciousness, are very nearly the same thing, especially as they relate to individual cognition, reflection, and experience of reality. (I may have just broken my own record for 'highest word count in one sentence' in that last line.) Again, language and word choice can be tricky; that postulation is more of a personal opinion on the matter of soul and consciousness than it is an expert analysis and argument.

But if it is true that ‘soul’ and ‘consciousness’ are, more or less, getting at the same thing — that which makes us reflective meaning makers capable of appreciating love and beauty, having a sense of right and wrong, feeling connected to others, etc. — I believe that it is important to locate them in the same place: the mind, or more precisely, the brain. I think a failure of modern religious thinking and teaching, especially in the



Euro-American West, is that it has often presented a disembodied idea of soul and spirit. We have so often thought of ourselves as spiritual beings with bodies, or spirits locked inside bodies we can't escape. Furthermore, western religious teaching has often made an implicit distinction between our minds and our souls, as though the thinking part of us is somehow different than the spirit part of us that God cares most about.

Yet what neuroscience shows is that the reflective, creative, and thinking part of us is also where the deep feeling, meaning making, and loving part of us is, which is the brain. And the brain is hardwired into our body, so our body is also participating in the deep feeling, the meaning making, and the loving. In short, the soul part of us IS the mind, consciousness part of us. While this loose methodology for synthesizing the religious and spiritual language with the vast fields of neuroscience and psychology won't win any awards today, I believe it can give us a few key takeaways as we step into Mental Health Awareness Month and our own process of becoming a WISE congregation.

- (1) Treat your spiritual health and mental health as intimately related and connected. If your spiritual life seems to be in distress, it's almost a certainty that you are in mental and psychological distress. Whether you are distressed by a mistake or a failure, a loss or a trauma, a personal moral failure or wrongdoing, or the state of the world around you, it is very likely taking a toll on your mental health. Don't try to pray or spiritualize your way out of deep distress; it may be time to seek professional help from someone who knows how brains work.
- (2) Embody your soul and your consciousness. Don't think of your soul and your consciousness as things (or a thing) that have nothing to do with your body; think of them as beautifully and intricately connected. If you're feeling anxious, work through some of the anxiety building up in your body through exercises like walking, gardening, swimming, and intentional breathing and movement. If you're feeling depressed, try getting out into the sunlight, talking to a trusted friend or loved one, prioritizing activities and hobbies you enjoy, watching or listening to a show or

comedian you know will make you laugh, or listening to uplifting music. The point is to recognize your emotions and mental state as sensations of your body, not just your spirit or mind.

- (3) De-stigmatize mental health and mental illness. If we as people of faith know that we should be recognizing each other's spiritual needs, we should also be recognizing each other's mental health needs. One way we can do that for each other, for our community, and for the world is through careful, thoughtful, and non-judgmental treatment of mental and emotional needs. Things such as depression, anxiety, emotional regulation disorders, or cognitive limitations, for a few examples, are not irregular, or taboo problems. They're actually very common experiences, and normalizing them is a way of being hospitable and humanizing.

Mental health is very complicated and layered. There are many factors to consider, and professional, expert insight is the best way to navigate and take account of those factors. But like any other complicated topic, we should not be attempting to become fast experts. Instead, we should be looking for the simple lessons, methods, and strategies we can apply to our lives to become healthier people and encourage others in their health as well.



Mission Moment

Mary Normand, Chair

Home and Business Expo: This was another positive presence for us. We had some good conversations, gave away over 100 books to kids, and gave out lots of goodies. Thank you to everyone who baked for us and/or manned the table those 2 days.

Giving Tree: In May we are supporting Holy Joe's Café. Please see Shirley Ripley's article where she explains what this is. We will have a loose change offering May 19 to support this and a coffee bar in the lounge before church.

In June our Giving Tree will be items for Housing Services. More on this later.

Strengthen the Church: We will be collecting these monies all of May. Be sure and mark your donation so Sher knows.



In a world where you can be anything – *Be Kind*

Stay tuned

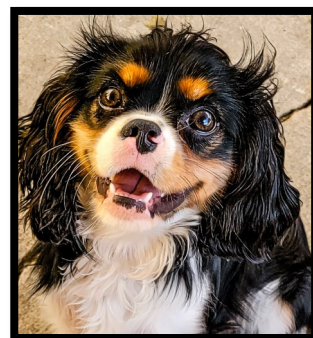
Conversation Starters

Match the picture with the description:

1. Comic book collector
2. Head of the Barry County Democratic Party
3. Peace Corps Volunteer
4. Flower Committee
5. Summer Greeter



Christina Bush



Bernie Frost



Lothar Koneitzko



Mary Roessler



Shirley Ripley and Diane Sowle



Picture 1: Scouts Troop 45, along with Ramona Kime, did a spring clean up on the Commons.
Picture 2: Our Church Wide Litter Pickup team performed a clean up of the blocks surrounding our neighborhood. Pictured are Don Johnson, Larry Taylor, Jan Shall, Pastor Adam Droscha, Ramona Kime, Judy Johnson, Deanna Rendel, Thuc Nguyen, Ron Field.

Summer



From the desk of Matt Slot

ON THE COMMONS

It's shaping up to be another great Summer on the Commons.

First off, the Infuse the Muse auction raised almost \$1000 for our summer programs. A big thank you to everyone who donated their items and talents, to those who generously bid, and to the volunteers who made it possible.

This year, we have again planned for 5 concerts, bringing back old favorites and meeting some new ones.

- **Tuesday, June 25** - Roaring Twenties Party Band
- **Saturday, July 13** - Charlotte Community Jazz Ensemble and Fresh Pict
- **Saturday, August 3** - John Nulf and Fabulous Oldies but Goodies
- **Saturday, August 21** - Two-Faced Wilson and the Rolling Hills
- **Saturday, September 21** - Harpists Dede and Acacia Potter and the Charlotte Acoustic Project



There will be stuff a trailer, the return of the Charlotte Cookie Challenge, labyrinth walks, and of course, outdoor Worship services starting the first Sunday in June.

This June will mark seven years since we broke ground on the property, and it continues to be a hub of activity for the church and the community. Come celebrate with us again this summer, and Find Yourself Here!



Tuesdays with a Pastor

10:00 am to 11:00 am

Join Pastor Adam Droscha from First Congregational United Church of Christ at Evelyn Bay Coffee Shop for conversation about faith, spirituality, and anything else that's on your mind.

These conversations are free-form and open to anyone regardless of religious affiliation.





Odds & Ends



CALLING ALL YOUTH

The Art Ministry is inviting our youth to submit their creativity in the forms of writings, paintings, colorings, or drawings as part of our summer exhibition in the annex.

We are looking forward to showcasing their talents. The submission deadline is May 25th. Entries can be put in a box located in the Annex library. Contact Judy Johnson or Amy Slot for more information.

GRADUATION SUNDAY

We are seeking information to honor all graduates. Adults, children, in between, to honor on Graduation Sunday in June. Due date: May 25.

Please send names, pictures, information to Editor@uccCharlotte.org



Spring Choir Concert

Wednesday, May 29, 7 pm

Please join us as we celebrate the end of the year with the choir, who goes into hiatus during the summer months.

Reception to follow.





Spring Clean-Up

May 18, 2024 9 AM – 2 PM

*****Registration Required*****

Location released upon completion of registration

Register online: <http://www.eatoncounty.org/913>

ELECTRONICS

Computer Accessories, CPU's, Printers, Fax Machines, Scanners, TVs, Cell Phones, Fans, Laptops, CD Players, Camcorders, Copiers, Small Kitchen Appliances, Hair Dryers, Curling Irons, Remote Control Items, Almost anything with a cord

****NO FREON CONTAINING ITEMS, LARGE APPLIANCES OR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT****

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Acids & Bases, Aerosols (no empty cans), Asphalt/Roofing Tar, Automotive Fluids, Cleaners, Polishes, Fluorescent Light Bulbs/Tubes, Fire Extinguishers, Flammables, Glues, Caulks, Flea Collars & Sprays, Mercury & Mercury-Containing Items, Oil-Based Paint, Stains, Varnishes, Paint Thinners, Wood Preservatives, Pool Chemicals, Solvents, Pesticides, Herbicides, Sharps (must be in a Puncture-Resistant Container)

****NO LATEX-BASED PAINTS, MEDICATIONS OR BATTERIES**

YARD WASTE

*****Leaves, Grass Clippings & Brush ***Less than 4' Long, No more than 2" thick*****

SCRAP METAL

*****No Freon Containing Items*** At least 80% Metal Content*****

PARTICIPANT RULES

1. Events are for private (non-commercial) residents of Eaton County.
2. **Registration is required.** Please provide 48-hour notice of cancellations. Limit of **Two** registrations per household.
3. Electronics: **NO** refrigerators, freezers, dehumidifiers, air conditioners, large appliances or exercise equipment will be accepted. **\$10 suggested donation per TV or monitor.**
4. Household Hazardous Waste: **NO** latex-based paints, medications or batteries will be accepted - please visit our website for disposal options.
5. For your safety and ours, you must remain in your vehicle for the duration of the event. Workers will retrieve your recyclables for you.



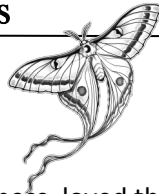
For questions, cancellation or volunteer information:
visit <http://www.eatoncounty.org/913/>
email Recycle@eatoncounty.org
or call (517) 543-3686





Night Sounds

Mary Roessler



My father, during long nights of wakefulness, loved the distant whistle of trains which returned him to his youth and free travel on the rails, to hobo camps where men shared their meager fare and sometimes robbed each other. He was poor, but his memories were rich, and he loved to share the stories of his youth.

A penny on the railroad track became a shiny copper disc the size of a quarter; skis formed from barrel staves sent him bumping and tumbling down the neighbor's hill; he churned butter till his arms ached as he waited for his mother's bread from the oven: hot, crusty loaves twice the size of the family Bible on which he was permitted to slather fresh butter and raspberry jam. And there, at the kitchen table, he sat wide-eyed, as she read their boarders' tea leaves, "You will take a long trip....." "Good news comes to you soon....."

Down the street lived Theed Little, the town drunk, who, it was said, guzzled perfume during Prohibition. In January, strong men cut thick chunks of ice from the lake to use in oak ice boxes throughout the summer.

Herring, salted and buried in the fall, was the family's sole source of protein in winter; apple slices were hung to dry on long strings in the attic for later use in sauce or pies; and he, the youngest son, rode by his mother's side when she took peaches, berries, eggs, the occasional chicken, to the farmers' market in Detroit.

His father, harsh and often out of work, left the family. His mother, small, sinewy, resourceful and brave, without a tooth in her mouth, never faltered. My father learned from her; and, decades later, my grandmother's blood still strong in my veins, I from him.

Like my father, I am a night listener. The sound I love is the spring peeper, whose reappearance around our pond each April fills the air with a jingling chorus of amorous calls: crescendo, decrescendo. They are bell-like harbingers of new life. I cannot explain my joy at hearing them. In the dark I smile and understand the haunting power of that long, lonely whistle in the night, the soulful pleasure of sound and remembrance.

The pleasure of sound, but for me this cacophonous trilling is merely sensory, empty of the wealth of memories evoked in my father by a train's nocturnal whistle. Still, I do not feel a pauper, for I have both: a sound that delights and a link to the past. And I, daughter of a youthful train-traveler, granddaughter of a resilient reader-of-tea-leaves, pond-song listener in the night, am enriched and grateful beyond measure.



When We Come Together . . .

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

Learning Opportunities	Meeting Times	Contact Person
Words and Tangents	Sun, 8 am, Annex/Library	Jan Shall, JanShall00@gmail.com
Godly Play	Sunday, 10:10 am	Sarah Cook, scook@uolivet.edu
Prayer Group	1st & 3rd Thur, 10:30 am Small Prayer Room	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd & 4th Thurs. 7 pm	Adam Droscha adam.droscha@uccCharlotte.org
Adult Bible Study	Tues, 6:30 pm, Wed. 11:30 am Annex Large Meeting Room	Curt Scott, CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Music		
Choir Practice	Wednesdays, 7 pm	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Wednesdays, 10 am	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com
Committees & Groups		
Art Ministry Committee	2nd & 4th Tuesday, 11 am 2nd & 4th Monday, 7 pm, Zoom	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Blanche Moyer	2nd Monday, 6:30 pm	Judi Cates, JudithCates68@gmail.com
Commons Committee	Times Vary	Matt Slot, MattSlot@gmail.com
Communications	3rd Monday, 6:30 pm, SMR	Amy Frost, frostamy58@gmail.com
Prayer Shawl	1st & 3rd Sat, 9:30 am, Lounge	Amy Krizek, Mom_Krizek@hotmail.com
Social & Environmental Justice Committee	2nd Sun, 11:30 am, Annex LMR	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Women's Fellowship	As Needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net
Men's Group	1st & 3rd Sat, 10 am, Annex LMR	Larry Taylor, LT1752@att.net



Still Speaking

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 106 South Bostwick - Charlotte, MI 48813
 office@uccCharlotte.org www.ucccharlotte.org

Office Hours
 Tues - Wed & Fri 9am - 2pm
 517 543 1310
 Worship Service 10 am

 Find us on
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Instagram



Full calendar details can be found
 at uccCharlotte.org

MAY 2024

Changes should be submitted to
office@uccCharlotte.org

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			9 am Care Com, Lib 10 Bell Choir, Sanc. 11:30 Bible Study 6 pm Soul Sisters 7 pm Choir Practice	2 10:30 Prayer Group, Church Small Prayer Room	3	4 9 am Prayer Shawl, 10 Men's Group, LMR 12:45 World Labyrinth Day Walk, Commons 1:30 Art Event, Art Rm
5 11:15 Mark Phillips - Community Mental Health on Mental Health Basics, BFR	6 5:30 Soul Sisters Support Group, Lib	7 6:30 Tuesday Night Class, Annex LMR	8 10 Bell Choir, Sanc. 11:30 Bible Study 6 pm Soul Sisters 7 pm Choir Practice	9 7 pm Pub Theology, Riedy's Pub	10	11
12 11:30 Social and Environmental Justice Meeting, Annex LMR	13 5:30 Soul Sisters Support Group, Lib	14 11:00 Art Team Meeting, Art Studio 6:30 Tuesday Night Class, Annex LMR	15 10 Bell Choir, Sanc. 11:30 Bible Study 6 pm Soul Sisters 7 pm Choir Practice	16 10:30 Prayer Group, Chur. sm prayer rm 6:30 Church Council Meeting, LMR	17	18 9 am Prayer Shawl, Church Lounge 9 am - 2 pm Recycle event, see page 12 10 am Men's Group
19 Pentecost Sunday 11:30 Film (40 min) 11:30 Mission Team 6 pm Panel Discuss.	20 5:30 Soul Sisters Support Group, Lib 6:30 Communica- tions Meeting, SMR	21 6:30 Tuesday Night Class, Annex LMR	22 10 Bell Choir, Sanc. 11:30 Bible Study 6 pm Soul Sisters 7 pm Choir Practice	23 7 pm Pub Theology, Riedy's Pub	24	25
26 11:30 Worship Team Meeting	27 5:30 Soul Sisters Support Group, Lib	28 11:00 Art Team Meeting, Art Studio 6:30 Tuesday Night Class, Annex LMR	29 10 Bell Choir, Sanc. 11:30 Bible Study 6 pm Soul Sisters 7 pm Choir Concert	30	31	