

Still Speaking

First Congregational

United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

January 2025

Volume 3

Issue 1

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:** "Baby Jesus" (Felix Englehart, son of Morgan and Joyana Englehart). Photo by J. Foster Photography. Baby Felix played Baby Jesus in the 2025 Family Christmas Pageant, Back to Bethlehem on December 29, 2024, organized by Kathie Cook.*



A Prayer for the World

~ By Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.

Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly.
So that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender or skin color.

Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness.
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.

And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.

Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.

And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven.

Amen.



Grace

~ By Ann Roskamp

Grace is the best Christmas gift we always get to give those who think differently than us, those who are our neighbors, our enemies, our families.

We get grace this Christmas and we get to give Grace this Christmas.

Grace isn't a soft, feeble gift, but the most robust transformative gift of all.

H.E.A.L.T.H.

~ By Lawrence Richardson

Helping hands and hearts make the world a better place.

Energy to sustain our efforts comes from our connection to the Spirit of God.

All we do with and for each other, when rooted in Christian love, yields good fruit.

Let us love one another deeply, courageously, and fiercely.

Taking risks for the Gospel alive in our hearts, homes, and communities.

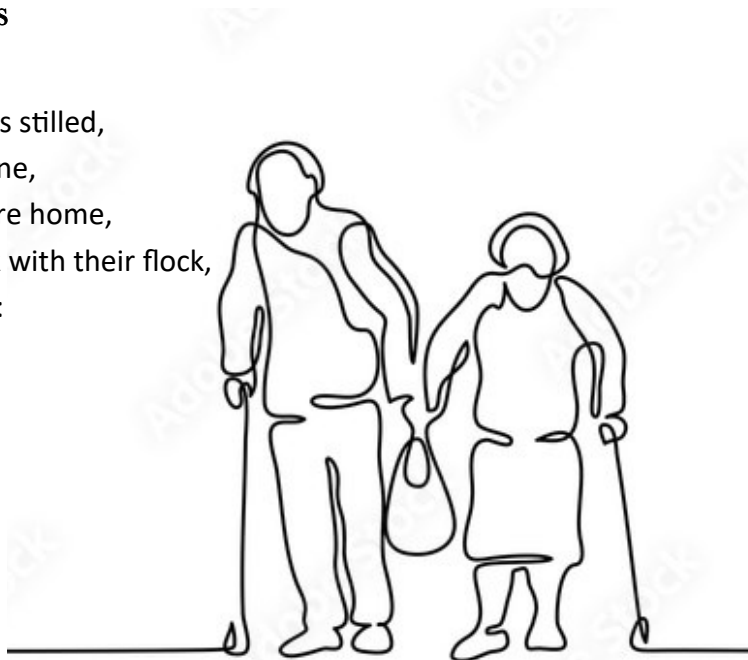
Holy One, bless us as we seek to love one another and be your church.

The Work of Christmas

~ By Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.



For Joy

~ By Jan Richardson

You can prepare
but still
it will come to you
by surprise

crossing through your doorway
calling your name in greeting
turning like a child
who quickens suddenly
within you

it will astonish you
how wide your heart
will open
in welcome

for the joy
that finds you
so ready
and still so
unprepared.

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

The UCC Manual on Ministry opens with prayer:

O Holy One, as we become an expression of your presence in our midst, we ask for your Spirit to be present in our discernment of your call in our lives. As your Church gathers, guide and strengthen us in the ways we serve your name with our gifts and passions. Throughout history, you have emboldened leaders in your effort to energize people to serve creation. May we sense your Spirit moving within our efforts to raise up and support leaders for your Church’s ongoing work in the world. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

The poems and verses on pages 3 to 5 were sent to us this season as part of their Christmas Blessing message by our United Church of Christ Michigan conference staff, **Rev. Lillian Daniel**, Michigan Conference Minister; **Rev. Cheryl Burke**, Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Care and Formation; **Rev. Lawrence Richardson**, Associate Conference Minister for Church Vitality and Transition; **Rev. Calandra Nevenzal**, Area Conference Minister for Legacy and Special Projects; **Jenn Ringgold**, Director of Communications and Program Associate for Youth Ministries; and **Lisa Soulliere**, Conference Administrator and Registrar.

’ Pastor’s Corner

Pastor Adam Droscha

New Year’s Gratitude

After writing several New Years columns during my days as a newspaper staff writer, and now of a year’s worth of pastor’s corner blurbs, I can say honestly that New Years messages are probably my least favorite columns to write.

I’m not a New Years scrooge by any means. I still feel those pangs of New Years optimism thinking of all there is to try and accomplish in the New Year, tallying my New Years goals, and day dreaming about the fun dates on the next year’s calendar. It’s not the New Year and its excitement that bothers me about New Years columns. It’s the expectation of writing something optimistic and profound that bothers. I started several versions of this column and was nauseated by my own writing every few minutes because each attempt was either despairingly cliché, or unsightly phony in its optimism.

I’m all out of profundity this New Years, if I ever had any. I’m not quite devoid of optimism yet, but it is only January. No, this New Years column is one of comfortably simple gratitude.

I am thankful this January for all of you. I am grateful for your hard work, your ceaseless determination, your big ideas, your enthusiasm, and your hearty spirit. I am grateful for your abundance of talents and gifts, your many contributions, and the delight with which you do each and every project in our church and community. My gratitude overflows and my heart is full.

My New Years message is a reflection back to you. My encouragement is a glad reciprocation of the encouragement you give me all of the time. Friends, we accomplished so much at First Congregational Church in 2024, and we gave so abundantly and joyfully to our home community. So often New Years makes us think of new beginnings, milestones, and what comes next, but my hope in 2025 is that we carry that same optimism and energy from our work in 2024. I’m optimistic that we will enjoy a continuation of the good work we’ve been doing.





Mission Moment

Mary Normand, Mission Board Chair

Our last Mission Board meeting of the year was December 15 and what a year it has been. When the annual church report comes out next month, please read the Mission Board report to see all that we accomplished this year.

Christmas Family: A family of six was adopted this year. All the tags were taken. Some folks wanted to donate and there were no tags left so for next year we are looking into gift cards that folks can purchase once all the tags are gone.

Winter Coat Project: 131 coats have been donated so far and \$1705 collected. This is better than last year. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Loads of Love: This program is growing here in Charlotte. It appears that there are enough churches and organizations to cover one each month which was the goal of Peace Lutheran Church when they started it. Our next one is January 18. A mini grant was approved to pay for this one. The Giving Tree for January is for Loads of Love. We will be passing out small boxes/canisters that folks can put their loose change in throughout the month and then collect them the end of the month, so start saving your change. Thank you to Blanche Moyer for donating \$200 to Loads of Love. We also received \$200 from Brenda Wood's insurance company a couple months ago. The folks we are serving are so grateful for the help. We also are still collecting adult books that we give away in addition to children's books.

Festival of Trees: This was another huge success this year. \$3188 was collected and given to EFCC to purchase winter boots for their clients. There were 59 entries this year and several folks wanting to donate next year. Thank you to Amy Frost, Jeannine Scott, David Frost, and Mary Kohmuench for all their hard work to see that this event happens.

From 2014 to now the Mission Board has donated \$13,610 from our restricted funds. This is in addition to our budgeted funds.

Our next meeting is January 19. Please come and join us and see what we're all about.

Stayed Tuned



As We Enter the New Year

Matt Slot, Council President 2024

Church Stewardship: A New Year, A New Opportunity to Serve

As the calendar turns to a new year, many of us are busy reflecting on the past and making plans for the future. In the church, this time of year marks a transition from the final stages of budget planning for the year ahead to renewing our commitments to leadership and service. While finances are often the focus at the end of the year, the beginning of the year brings a reminder that stewardship isn't just about money; it's about time, talents, and active participation in the life of the church.

If you're looking for a way to give back, consider dedicating just a few hours a month to participate within your church community. We're an active church, and there's a constant need for volunteers to offer what they can, which may include planning and organizing events, signing up for shifts or supplies, to simply lending a hand before or after a service.

What can I do?

At the Annual Meeting in January, we welcome those willing to serve as church officers and team leaders. These are important roles in the life of the church, both in how decisions are made and how things get done. Even if you are unsure what's involved in such a position, there are many long-serving leaders who would be more than happy to share or delegate with someone willing to learn.

While it may be the most visible place where we need volunteers, not everyone has the free time to commit to leadership. Many teams meet just once a month to review current needs and plan for upcoming events, and would welcome new members or just those curious about what they can do to help. Attendance doesn't mean commitment, but can be a way to provide input and offer suggestions. Church Council is another place where planning and participation is encouraged. The meetings are open to all, and a great way to learn about (and become involved in) the life of the church.

Perhaps you have a skill or interest that you're willing to share, such as art, music, cooking, teaching or technology. We welcome those of exceptional or modest talents to inspire and fulfill in whatever way they may feel comfortable. Even swinging a hammer or baking a casserole can be devotional exercises in the context of our church's ministry.

Finally, we need people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and contribute in small,

practical ways. Church services, mission opportunities, and social occasions offer a wide-range of opportunities to “fill in.” Sign-up sheets by the elevator or on the credenza in the fellowship room are a great way to find-a-need, meet-a-need, including things like providing flowers for the chancel, greeting for a Sunday service, or bringing supplies for the next community dinner.

Small acts have a large impact

We are a church that considers diversity a strength, and which recognizes that growth necessarily requires change. Many of us find that serving others is one of the most rewarding ways to live out our faith. When you volunteer, you’re not just fulfilling a need within the church. You’re becoming part of the larger story of the church’s mission and vision. As much as we welcome your financial support throughout the year, we also need those who are willing to “Be the Church.”



In Celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

Let’s Take a Trip - GRAAMA

Friday, January 17, 2025 2:00 pm

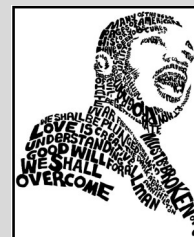
The mission of Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives (GRAAMA) is to collect and retell the rich colorful stories which compose the historic African American tapestry of living in Grand Rapids.

The cost is 5.00 per person. We are signed up for an MLK Day tour and lecture on racial inequality. We should be in the museum for about one hour. Our meal out and exact details about meeting up at the church to leave will be discussed between those who sign up.

"In Words and Song: Celebrating Black Voices"

Monday, January 20, 7:00 pm, Church Sanctuary

Mark your calendars for this Martin Luther King Day celebration. Additional details will be in the program insert, social media, and on the church calendar closer to the event.



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	Lexi Konietzko. akonietzko129@gmail.com
Devotional Bible Study	Mondays, 10 am and 4 pm	Adam Droscha, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
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
Coffee Hour with a Pastor	Evelyn Bay, Wednesday, 10 am	Pastor Droscha, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Music		
Choir Practice	Wednesdays, 7 pm	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Wednesdays, 4 pm	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 SMR	Larry Taylor, TaylorLT1752@att.net



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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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Office Hours
Monday to Thursday 9a - 2p
517 543 1310
Sunday Worship Service 10 am
In Person, Facebook, YouTube



Instagram



Find us on

Facebook



Calendar Highlights

January 5, Epiphany Sunday

January 5, 11 am Annual Meeting of Women's Fellowship - The entire church is encouraged to attend. This is the meeting where they decide where to appropriate money raised from the church bazaar.

January 6, 10 am Ungreening - putting away all of the greenery from the holidays

January 12, 11 am Pancake Breakfast

January 13, 5:30 pm Blanche Moyer Circle

January 17, Let's Take a Trip to GRAAMA (see page 9)

January 20, 7 pm A Celebration of Black Voices

January 26, 11 am Annual All Church Meeting

To see a full calendar of events, please:

- Check out our online calendar at www.uccCharlotte.org/calendar
- See the insert in the weekly program
- Subscribe to our weekly emails by sending an email to editor@uccCharlotte.org
- Check out our calendar of events on the bulletin boards around the church.
- Talk with Caryn Hansen or email her at editor@uccCharlotte.org for a paper copy