

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan
March 2025
Volume 2
Issue 3

Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

Still Speaking

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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:** "A Family that Grows Together" captured by Communications Editor, Caryn Hansen, as Mom Morgan Englehart cares for infant Felix Englehart, glancing up to check on her next older chicks, Sequoia (3), Sanayah (4), and Rylan (5).*



Pastor's Corner

Pastor Adam Droscha



Lent: The Spiritual Discipline of Making and Holding Space

I've been catching up with an old friend recently, someone who I haven't talked to in years. We've thanked each other a lot for active listening as we've shared some of the really heavy things that happened in our separate lives since we last saw and spoke to each other. The other day she thanked me for "holding space" so she could talk safely about the difficult things she's gone through. I responded that "holding space" is a spiritual discipline that I'm trying to practice better the older I get, especially now as a pastor.

My friend and I *held space* for each other because we *made space* for each other. We opened to the door for conversation, we gave each other our attention, and we listened and responded with grace and validation. Where there had not been space for each other in a long time, we made space. We made time, which meant redirecting some of our energies, attention, and activities. All of which happened between us after we had separate experiences of doing some de-cluttering in our lives.

'Holding space' and 'making space' might sound like pop-culture therapy, or self-helpy watered down spirituality. Those phrases send shudders down my spine depending on who's saying them and in what context. But their meaning and purpose can be helpful in relationships and spirituality. Like my friend and I did for each other, making space means de-cluttering, opening the floor, making time, and communicating that 'this is your time and space to occupy my attention and be heard.' Holding space is the next step; it's carefully tending to the space and time that was made, being present, and listening with grace and without judgment.

The effort to make and hold space is one example of why I think observing Lent is not only religiously important, but also incredibly relevant for our lives. In Lent we practice fasting, giving up vices and luxuries, and intentionality around almsgiving and charitable service. The 40 days of Lent reflects several stories and themes in the scriptures, but especially Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness during which he fasted. Lent for us, then, is our own season of spiritual de-cluttering, opening up time, and making space. What we do throughout Lent is hold space for what might come as a result of that de-cluttering, whether it's personal growth, a better use of time, a healthier prayer life, a new justice cause to tend to, or a renewed clarity in our relationship with God.

We can be terrible about making and holding space. There are so many things we feel that we must hold onto. None of us enjoys giving up comforts. We all prefer to be self-directed with our attention. In the modern day, there are a million activities, pursuits, hobbies, shows, events, phone apps, mediums, and more that can trap our attention. In our relationships, even with people we love and care about most, holding space to truly listen without an agenda, becoming defensive, or giving advice is very, very difficult. Letting go, clearing out, and opening a vacant space in our minds and lives for anything else, let alone God and others, is not something we're very good at societally and culturally.

Lent is not only a religious season where we give up one or two things, pray more, and build up to Easter. Lent is a season when we practice the spiritual discipline making and holding space. For all that we are and all that we're capable of, we're still finite beings. We can only do so many things, be so many places, and contain and retain so many things. Our attention is limited, as is our time and our interior space. If we want better things in our life — healthier relationships, new friendships, more just systems and communities, renewed connection with God — we have to de-clutter and make room for them. This article is not only your reminder, welcome, and invitation to Lent, it's an invitation to think of making and holding space in your life as important spiritual work. And like all spiritual disciplines and work, it may not be fun or comfortable, but what we gain will be to our benefit, if we take it seriously and tend to it.



March Giving Tree

Spring Box Supplies

Suggested items include card games, Play-Doh, jump ropes, sidewalk chalk, bubbles, balls, colored pencils, watercolor paints, small pads of paper, puzzles, etc. and snacks.

(psst... juice and crayons are not recommended)

Date Due: March 11



Outreach Moment

Mary Normand, Outreach Ministry Team

Please note we are now the Outreach Board previously known as the Mission Board

In the past we have financially supported two children through Global Ministries. One aged out of the system. We are actively working to have another child added.

Three more new winter coats were dropped off at the church. These will be taken to Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center as part of our winter coat project. Thank you to whoever dropped them off.



We don't have a final count of all the monies donated for our Loads of Love Giving Tree in January however in checks, paper money, and quarters, we had slightly over \$700. I just took a bucket of dimes, nickels, and pennies to the bank to be counted and it was \$159.86. We also have \$200 each from Brenda Wood's insurance company and Blanche Moyer. This should cover us for two more Loads of Love events. Our next one is May 10

By the time you read this we will have participated in the Nordic Fire Festival. More on how it went in next month's Still Speaking.

Spring Shoe Boxes: We will be assembling the boxes on March 12. Please have your donations to us by March 11. Items appreciated include small toys, balls, jump ropes, coloring books, books, games, markers, pencils, pencil sharpeners, puzzles, snacks. We have plenty of crayons. No juice boxes please.

One Great Hour of Sharing is officially March 30. Donations are appreciated all month. Be sure and mark it as One Great Hour of Sharing.

Looking ahead: The Home and Business Expo is April 12-13. We will again be accepting homemade cookies/snacks for give away. More on this as it gets closer.

In December I was watching a program put on by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Part of it was a play about Victor Hugo. He spent much of his life helping to feed those with food insecurity. He is quoted as saying "To Love is to Act." I personally feel this church shows a lot of love in this community.

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Caring Community

Judi Cates, Care Committee

The Care Committee has been working diligently to assure the members and friends are aware of any needs that might come up that they need assistance. We continue to call, send cards, visit, take folks to appointments and meet with Pastor Adam for any further pastoral support.



We are finding that many of the folks we see and assist do not have a name or number for family or support in case of concern or emergency. At our meeting in February we discussed how in the past we had a directory that listed our friends and members and a contact person who we might need to call.

Carol Yerkes has started calling folks that we would like to have a name and phone number in case where we need to speak with someone. This is not mandatory and the list will be confidential and used only as needed.

When contacted let Carol or anyone on Care Committee, please let them know if you would like to participate in this team.

Care Committee continues to support our church community in many ways. We encourage all our friends and members to reach out with a call or card when folks are lifted up in prayer on Sunday and who are on our prayer list. Folks really appreciate when they are remembered by others. A simple card is one way to show how they are cared for and missed when unable to attend church.



Current members of the Care Team include: Pam Rinckey, Chris Reist-Rush, Amy Krizek, Shirley Ripley, Stephanie Tighe, Judi Cates, and Pastor Adam.



Art Ministry Happenings

With input from Jan Shall, Stephanie Tighe, and Sandra Field

March 8, Saturday, 10 am to Noon
Acrylic and Watercolor Painting

In a time where we are surrounded by so much societal uncertainty, many find creativity to be a path to internal peace. If painting is something you find comforting, please join us. Feel free to bring your own supplies, but we may also have paints, brushes, and other materials to help.

March 22, Saturday, 1 pm to 4 pm
Art Extravaganza

There will be a number of creative opportunities at the 2025 Art Extravaganza. Jan Shall will be teaching wool felting. Sandra Field will provide a dye/marbling experience. Judy Johnson and Stephanie Tighe will teach a relaxing, free form Neurozentangle. Chris Reist-Rush and Amy Slot will help us create cards: cards for Easter, cards for family and friends, cards for the Care Community.

March 30, Sunday, 11:00 am
Grand Opening for the Artwork of Chris Fleischman

Chris Fleischman, the local artist who created the Peace Pillar on our east lawn using input from the entire congregation (<https://ucccharlotte.org/pillar-of-peace-project/>) will return with her own personal art show. We are excited. To celebrate, the Art Ministry Team is putting together a Charcuterie Luncheon for Nurturing Community following morning worship. We will gather in the Annex to view the showcase of this beloved and gifted artist.

April 19, Saturday, 10 am - 2 pm
Cozy Congregational Creators

Are you a creator? Or an artist? Bring your tools and work on your project in the open space of the Art Room (floor 2 of the church) in the company of other similarly minded people. We will be meeting once a month, on the third Saturday. We could take it outdoors in the summer. It's a 4-hour open time frame. People are encouraged to drop in or leave any time. To paraphrase the wise man, iron sharpens iron, so one artist encourages another. Good things happen when creativity gathers.



Men's Group Hosts Family Game Night

Larry "LT" Taylor, Men's Group Lead

Friday, March 21, 6 pm
Bess Fulton Room

The Men's Group will be hosting its first Family Game Night on Friday, March 21 at 6 pm. This is an opportunity for intermingling between one another and even between generations. People are encouraged to bring their favorite games and an appetizer to share. There is a sign-up sheet in the Bess Fulton Room and on the back of the Sunday Welcome Card, but this is only to help so people don't bring too many of the same dish to pass. It's okay to show up at the last minute if your schedule suddenly allows you to attend. All are encouraged to attend.

Scrabble, Clue, Chess, Monopoly, Risk, Uno, Euchre, Sorry, Trivial Pursuit, Exploding Kittens, oh, my! What will the favorite game of the evening be?



Healthy Lifestyle Class

Deb Cogswell, Church Life

Saturday, March 29, 11:00 am
Annex Large Meeting Room

Are you struggling with finding ways to be more healthy? We've got the support for you. Beginning in March, a new group is forming to discuss topics like healthy eating, exercise, the importance of sleep and more.

This is not about a specific diet plan or imposing a set of rules. Each of us are very different and have different needs. Some of our health needs depend on our age, gender or ethnicity. Others might have to do with where you are physically or emotionally in your life right now. We want to hear from you! What would you like to learn more about? How can we help you on your journey? How about a healthy cooking class or a recipe exchange? Maybe we could bring in a guest speaker or go on a field trip. Bring your thoughts and ideas. Our first gathering will be on Saturday March 29th 11 am in the Annex. At this time we will also discuss how we want to move forward and how often we would like to meet. For more information contact Deb Cogswell at 517-588-8275 cogswell2003@gmail.com or Mary Kohmuench at 973-897-9471 mhohmuench@sbcglobal.net.



Women’s Fellowship Holds 2nd Annual Appetizer Event

Judi Cates, Women’s Fellowship

The Progressive Appetizer was held on February 16. The table was full to overflowing with all of the appetizers people brought.

Approximately 40 people attended for food, fun and fellowship. Afterward, everyone went to the Bess Fulton Room where we had wonderful ice-cream sundaes with chocolate fudge, fresh strawberries, homemade rhubarb sauce and peanuts!



It was a great winter treat as we gathered with both new and old friends.

Thanks goes to Dairy Queen for the ice cream!

Thank you to everyone who came that made it such a special evening!



Acoustic Music Abounds in March at Evelyn Bay

Don Sovey, Congregational Member and Musician

Acoustic Music Saturdays at Evelyn Bay Coffee will kick off Charlotte’s love of acoustic music starting March 1 and going forward every Saturday of March. Live performances are planned for March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 featuring the region’s top musical talent. Each Saturday show starts at 2 pm with no charge for admission.

Acoustic music is that which primarily uses non-electric instruments. The music presented in March will include influences of Americana, country, folk, swing, Irish traditional dance, 20s, and easy listening.

The March entertainment lineup with each group starting at 2 pm is:

- **March 1** - FRENZ UNPLUGGED featuring Rat Pack, Swing & Great American Songbook with Don Sovey, Alexis Stark, Kat Jones and Don Sare
- **March 8** – 12th Street playing Irish Traditional Dance Music with Steve Rohs, Dave Dowling and John
- **March 15** – 100 Proof, a powerhouse acoustic duo featuring Morgan Englehart and Eric Strayer
- **March 22** – The Fabulous Heftones with fun 20s songs, vocal harmonies, and fancy uke featuring Brian and Lynn Hefferin
- **March 29** – Professional Harpists DeDe and Acacia Potter along with their outstanding harp students

Sponsors for Acoustic Music Saturdays include Michigan's Mercantile, Feighner Boat Lifts & Docks, ~~Balanced Health Chiropractic Center, Kane Heating and Ventilating Company, Falik~~ Family Dentistry, Evelyn Bay Coffee Company. In-kind support is appreciated from Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, First Congregational Church of Charlotte, and Eaton Area Senior Center.

Acoustic Music will continue this summer with the support of Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and other business sponsors at Concerts on the Square for the Charlotte Acoustic Music Fest 2025 on July 31. Performers at this event include:

- Harpists Deidreanna and Acacia Potter - 5 pm
- 100 Proof - 5:40 pm
- Acoustic Project - 6:30 pm

Charlotte's 29 festivals have just started this year with the highly popular Michigan Nordic Festival which expects attendance of over 26,000 festival goers. The Charlotte festivals take place every month of the year and feature 77 live performances.

Evelyn Bay is your coffee shop, located at 134 S. Cochran Avenue in Charlotte. Evelyn Bay Coffee Company has that local coffee house atmosphere and is close to home! Meet friends and enjoy a fresh selection of beverages and pastries. From homemade soups, tasty sandwiches, and ice cream treats, you are always sure to enjoy good value. The coffee shop is family owned and serves Michigan roasted coffee beans by Evelyn Bay Coffee Company.

The entertainers will welcome a free will offering for those feeling so moved. For information on the dining menu, coffee menu, events, specials and features, directions, call Evelyn Bay at (517) 543-9770.



Tips for Contacting Your Elected Officials

Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice

I think most people would agree that the political climate is very stressful right now. No matter what political party you are aligned with, there is much anxiety about what's happening or what may happen. But we need to remember that our elected officials are supposed to work for us, their constituents. It's their job to listen to us and respond to us!

So here are some nonpartisan tips for letting your elected officials know what you think about various issues. Or, if you'd like, you can sign up for occasional SEJ emails about upcoming issues/votes, and we will give you a possible script and the numbers of who to call. See me directly or email me at ramona.kime@gmail.com.

- Other than talking to your elected officials directly, such as at a townhall meeting or at their office, calling them is the best way to communicate with them. It's much more efficient than letters or emails which aren't always read by the legislators or their staffers.
- They only want to hear from their own constituents, so be sure to give your name and address when you call, simply to confirm that you live in their district.
- Keep your phone calls brief. Besides giving your name and address, tell them how you want them to vote on a certain issue, but then only give one or two more sentences, perhaps telling them about how that issue affects you. They won't listen to long explanations about why you feel a certain way.
- It's important to call your legislators even if they're from your own party. They need to know what their constituents think, no matter what side of the aisle they're on. Don't assume that they'll vote the way you want them to, just because they belong to your political party.
- Only call once per issue or bill. Staffers will tally the messages, indicating how many calls are "for" and how many are "against" a particular bill. They won't count your phone calls beyond your first one for any particular bill.
- Give positive feedback as well. If they voted the way you wanted them to, call them and thank them.

Below is the contact information for elected officials for the Charlotte area. If you don't live in

Charlotte, you can go to www.usa.gov/elected-officials to find out who represents you.

Federal

Senator Gary Peters
202-224-6221 (DC office)
517-377-1508 (Lansing office)

Senator Elissa Slotkin
202-224-4822 (DC office)

Congressman Tom Barrett
202-225-4872 (DC office)
517-993-0510 (Lansing office)

State

Senator Sarah Anthony
517-373-6960

Representative Angela Witwer
517-373-0822



The Local Scene - City Council

Curt Scott, Charlotte City Council

I ran for Charlotte City Council begrudgingly, and with good reason. The city was without a manager; and the interim manager, we slowly learned, was more actor than civil servant. The citizens generally thought otherwise and assaulted council for months on his behalf. More importantly, the Tea Party corruption that nearly bankrupted the town and secured its bad reputation was just the sauce that made finding and hiring a city manager difficult.

Week upon week the citizens showed up to yell at us, sometimes literally. It took a couple months for me to realize that they weren't yelling at us, specifically, but at the history of mismanagement that has plagued this city. They simply wanted their kids to move back home but Charlotte hadn't addressed housing since we built the houses some of those citizens grew up in.

After a few months of simply doing our jobs, hiring a great city manager and helping him hire department heads, peace has returned. My personal goal was to make competent governance fun and I think I achieved it. What started more than a year ago as hostility, bad blood and consternation at every turn, (during meeting that sometimes went more than 2:40 minutes) is now problem solving, laughter and one-hour meetings. Three new department heads are in place.

Last month, City Council welcomed a major auto supplier from Canada and Mexico to their first factory in the United States, in Charlotte's Combs Industrial Park. That, plus Michigan Can starting their assembly line this year means hundreds of jobs and hundreds of thousands of new dollars in the form of taxes and local spending. Building a strong, hyper-local Middle Class is the point. Next, we build houses so workers don't have to live elsewhere.

This past year, I was first assigned to the Charlotte Public Library board. There, I voted to expand their reach into the townships, and helped hire a new director before leaving for my next assignment: CARC, Charlotte's recreational coop system or lack thereof. I am member of City

Council's Housing Study team and City Manager Evaluation team, and participate in an ad hoc housing study committee run by fellow church member, Cooper Frost. Building entry level housing is where I intend to spend the bulk of my almost 4 years left.

The Charlotte Area Recreational Cooperative meets in the Annex at 5:30 on the second Thursday of each month. Connecting First Congregational to the city was part of the point. I don't know another way to move forward except to tether people to one another for the sake of all and hope that doing good, keeping peace to inducing prosperity catches on.



The Local Scene - School Board

Kate Durda, Charlotte School Board

I am a newly elected member of the Charlotte Public School Board, attending my first meeting in January, 2025. I look forward to serving Charlotte Public Schools and community. I highly value education and believe that a good education is vital to the success of individuals, communities and our country.

In addition to ongoing challenges to education, we currently face additional challenges, one of which is being considered is the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). If schools lose federal funding, states will face the challenge of attempting to compensate for the loss of those funds, if feasible. Even if not eliminated, educational funding and focus can be shifted and result in an extremely destructive impact on our students and country, including upon Special Education services, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Title 9, DEI, LGBTQIA, immigration, funding for public schools, etc. Historically, when states have more control, there is great variation across the country as to access and equality for all students.

In addition, here are three of the recent Executive Orders that will deeply impact our children, families and educational system.

14148--deals with immigration.

14191--deals with providing vouchers that use current education funding, not additional funding, for private schools including Christian schools.

14190--deals with ending radical indoctrination in K-12 schools (and what version of history will be allowed in the school curriculum).

It is all happening right now. It remains to be seen how we will navigate these changes. Anyone interested in our educational system is invited to attend our public board meetings, which occur on the 2nd Monday of every month, at 6:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be on March 10.

I welcome any input from you to help make CPS the best. Please call me (517.667.0694) or email me (KateDurda@gmail.com) with any comments, questions, or to arrange a meeting.

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	Sandra Field yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Mental & Spiritual Wellness Support Group	1st Thursday, 7 pm	Kate Durda, KateDurda@gmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd & 4th Thurs. 7 pm	Adam Droscha pastor@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
Church Life	1st Monday, 6:30 pm	Amy Frost, frostamy58@gmail.com
Communications	3rd Monday, 6:30 pm, SMR	Matt Slot, MattSlot@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	Mary Kohmuench, mtheoharis@gmail.com
Women's Fellowship	As Needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net
Men's Group	2nd & 4th Sat, 10 am, Annex LMR	Larry Taylor, TaylorLT1752@att.net



Still Speaking

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Monday to Thursday 9a - 2p
517 543 1310
Sunday Worship Service 10 am
In Person, Facebook, YouTube



Instagram



Find us on
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Calendar Highlights

- March 5, Ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service, 7 pm, St. John's Episcopal Church**
- March 6, Mental & Spiritual Wellness Support Group, 6:30 pm, Annex LMR**
- March 8, Watercolor or Acrylic Painting, 10 am to Noon, Church Art Room (floor 2)**
- March 12, Spring Box Assembly, 10 am, Bess Fulton Room**
- March 13, Pub Theology, 7 pm, Riedy's Tavern**
- March 21, Family Game Night with potluck appetizer table, 6 pm, Bess Fulton Room**
- March 22, Art Extravaganza, 1 pm to 4 pm, Church Art Room (floor 2)**
- March 27, Pub Theology, 7 pm, Riedy's Tavern**
- March 29, Healthy Lifestyle Class, 11 am, Annex Large Meeting Room**
- March 30, Grand Opening of Chris Fleischman Art Exhibit, 11 am, Annex**

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.