

## First Congregational

United Church of Christ  
Charlotte, Michigan

May 2025  
Volume 2  
Issue 5



Never place a  
period where God  
has placed a comma

## Still Speaking



## In This Issue

Pastor's Corner	3
Sorting Out Immigration	5
Outreach Moment	7
Church Renovation Project	8
Summer on the Commons	9
Spring Choir Concert	10
Top Secret: Ed Moore	10
Film Event: Crip Camp	11
Dessert Auction	12
Night Sounds, an Essay	13
In Celebration & Prayer	14
Meeting Times/Places	15
Calendar Highlights	16

## Leaders and Staff of the Church

<b>Council* President</b>	Bren Wood	BrnWdMI@gmail.com
<b>Vice President</b>	Stephanie Tighe	StephanieTighe@gmail.com
<b>Buildings and Grounds</b>	David Frost	black_ice@att.net
<b>Business Team</b>	Bill Oatman	Oatman701@att.net
<b>Care Community</b>	Pam Rinckey	rinckey1@hotmail.com
<b>Church Clerk</b>	Barbara Anderson	BarbaraF5543@icloud.com
<b>Church Life</b>	Amy Frost	FrostAmy58@gmail.com
<b>Endowment Team</b>	Mike Fulton	mjfulton@sbcglobal.net
<b>Education Team</b>	Diane Hudson	DianeKHudson@sbcglobal.net
<b>Financial Secretary</b>	Don Johnson	DonJohnson106@mac.com
<b>Outreach</b>	Mary Normand	DavidNormand@att.net
<b>Treasurer (Finance Team)</b>	Kathie Cook	crkfcCook@hotmail.com
<b>Worship Team</b>	Jeannine Scott	Scottj21@msu.edu
<b>*Church Council</b>	3rd Thursday, 6:30 pm	Annex Large Meeting Room

## Staff

<b>Minister</b>	Pastor Adam Droscha	Pastor@uccCharlotte.org
<b>Director of Music</b>	Ramona Kime	Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
<b>Communications</b>	Caryn Hansen	Editor@ucccharlotte.org
<b>Bookkeeper</b>	Sher Brown	Office@ucccharlotte.org
<b>Custodian</b>	Rex Todd	Office@ucccharlotte.org

**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](mailto:Editor@uccCharlotte.org)

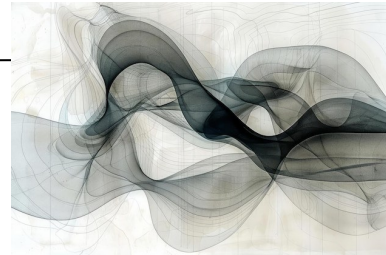
**Editor:** [Editor@ucccharlotte.org](mailto:Editor@ucccharlotte.org) **Still Speaking** article deadline is the 25th of each month.

**About the cover:** "And Now We Sing," Maria Davis sits with young Blake Carabajal during worship service. Building a safe space for all starts at the very beginning.



## Pastor's Corner

Pastor Adam Droscha



### The Holy Void: What Arrives After the Death of God

In so many faith traditions now and throughout history, Christians have acted as though we are left with something more, something extra after Jesus' death and resurrection, as if we gained something at the 'end' of the Jesus story. For many, the extra something — what is gained — after Jesus' death and resurrection is salvation, or eternal life with God in heaven when we die bodily death. After attaining salvation and eternal life through Jesus, many observe from the scriptures that we, those who believe in Jesus and accept him as our savior, receive the presence of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all believers as the new presence of God. Once we have the presence of the Holy Spirit, many would say that we are gifted with spiritual life, gifts, community, power, insight, and love. It's a beautiful interpretation of what is gained from Jesus' death and resurrection, but I think we miss a few things when we emphasize too much what we gain.

A few key events happen during and after the holy week stories, which should give us pause whenever we consider all that's gained in Jesus' death and resurrection. The first event that I want to highlight is when Jesus spoke on the cross, specifically when he said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" in Mark 15 and Matthew 27. As I've mentioned before, as academic and philosophical theology goes, I stand in the camp of radical theology. For radical theologians and theologians, this quote of Jesus is of central importance because it represents the moment when Jesus was separated from God ontologically, spiritually, materially, and psychologically. Jesus — God with us — was emptied of divinity; God was emptied and separated from God. To put a finer point on it, in his crucifixion and death, Jesus lost the very thing that Christians most associate with Jesus: divine life, presence, authority, and being.

The next event I want to highlight is Jesus' actual death, which also takes place in Mark 15 and Matthew 27. The texts say that Jesus made a loud cry, took his last breath, and he died, then the curtain the temple was torn from top to bottom. The curtain in the temple was the curtain that covered the Holy of Holies, which, in the ancient Jewish traditions, was where the presence of God supposedly resided. The theological interpretation of the tearing of the temple curtain is that God's presence no longer resides in the Holy of Holies; when one looks past the torn curtain, there is nothing, only empty space, only a void.

The third event(s) I'll highlight is Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. (I'm placing these events together because you don't really get one without the other; they're

interconnected, two parts of the same event.) The story goes, and orthodox Christianity teaches, that Jesus ascended to heaven after he was raised from the dead. Before he ascended, Jesus promised his followers the Holy Spirit, and not long after his ascension, the Holy Spirit arrived. This is a fascinating turn in the story. Even after Jesus was raised from the dead, the disciples still lost his bodily presence. The disciples didn't gain Jesus back forever in the way they had him before his death and resurrection; Jesus left a void. And what arrived to fill the void Jesus left? An immaterial Spirit. Spirits are immaterial by definition. A spirit is a presence without substance, an entity without being, a call or a voice without a sound. A spirit is not nothing, but it is 'no thing.'

And this is what I'm getting at by highlighting these events within the gospel story: there is a void — a Holy Void, one could say — that arrives through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus on the cross experienced, witnessed, and proclaimed that God had abandoned him. When Jesus died, the curtain covering the Holy of Holies was torn to reveal that there was nothing behind the curtain after all, and there never would be again. Jesus' disciples, even after he was raised from the dead, were ultimately left with his absence, and the Holy Spirit — the thing without thingness, the not present presence, the entity with no being — came to them. As bearers and participants in the gospel story, we are also bearers of this Holy Void.

"Void" language tends to have a strange affect on religious people, especially in western religious traditions. We often like to think of God and treat God as a conscious being similar to other conscious beings, or an object with substance out there (wherever 'there' is) among other objects of substance. We find comfort in thinking of God as present with us, speaking to us, guiding us, walking with us, and so on. The idea of God, or Spirit, as something that is void, empty, absent, or 'no thing' disturbs not only our religious and spiritual sensibilities but also the thousands of years of social and cultural conditioning that shaped those sensibilities.

I don't want to scare anyone here. Please, feel free and encouraged to continue praying, listening for the call of Christ in the world, finding comfort in the salvation Jesus promised, doing righteous acts in the name of Jesus, and serving "the least of these" as Jesus instructed. Remember, our conscious beliefs of faith are not as important as what our faith values and compels us to do. But be encouraged also to not fear void, absence, and vacancy in your faith. What is spiritual — formless and without being — always finds form and embodiment. What is essence always finds substance. The apostle Paul beautifully and poetically referred to the Church as "the body" of Christ. With that imagery in mind, perhaps we are called to create, manifest, and embody things like love, grace, peace, justice, and freedom. After Jesus' death and resurrection and the arrival of the Holy Spirit, we may be left with the Holy Void, but it's a void where the memories of the Jesus story, the call of the living Christ, and the cries of the victims of injustice echo and resound for us to hear and respond. The Holy Void requires something from us. The Holy Void may be 'no thing,' but that doesn't mean there's nothing for us to do.



## Sorting Out Immigrant Issues

---

Deanna Rendel and Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice

There's much focus on immigrants and immigration right now, and the information is often confusing. For example, Deanna is married to a Vietnamese man who was a refugee, then an immigrant, and is now a U.S. citizen.

So what's the difference between these labels? They are often used interchangeably, but there are legal differences.

An immigrant is a person who chooses to move to another country permanently, for any number of reasons. To become a documented (legal) immigrant in the U.S., individuals typically need to apply for a Green Card (lawful permanent residency). This involves filling out several forms and proving that one meets certain eligibility requirements.

A migrant is someone who moves from place to place, sometimes within his or her country or sometimes across borders, often for economic reasons such as seasonal work. Similar to immigrants, they were not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence, but rather are seeking better opportunities.

A refugee is a person who flees to another country. This can be for many reasons, including fear of persecution, threats due to religious or political beliefs, sexual identity, etc., or for the reality of climate change, causing them to no longer be able to provide for themselves and their families.

Many immigrants ultimately decide to become naturalized—that is, to become a U.S. citizen. To become a citizen, one must be 18 years old, of good moral character, be a permanent resident for five years, speak and write English, pass a test covering U.S. history and government, register for the military, and swear allegiance to the United States.

Unfortunately, there are many barriers for all of these various groups and at all stages of each process. (The ironic reality is that all of us in the U.S., except Native Peoples, have immigrant or refugee ancestors.) The U.S. has discriminated against many of these people by creating financial barriers (the application fee alone to become a citizen is \$725), and having complex paperwork and increasingly long waiting periods (the process to become a legal refugee takes

18-24 months). The current administration has also recently reinstated the harmful 'Remain in Mexico' policy which forces many asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their U.S. immigration court proceedings—often in dangerous conditions, without access to basic necessities.

Discrimination against these groups of people has been going on for many years, but unfortunately it is getting worse under the current administration. However, immigrants benefit society by boosting economic growth, filling labor shortages, and fostering innovation. They contribute to the tax base and increase economic productivity. Immigrants are more likely to start businesses than other residents, and fill critical jobs in healthcare, agriculture, and construction. They also enrich our cultural diversity. Even immigrants who are undocumented pay more in taxes than they use in benefits.

If you would like to learn more about the value of immigrants in our society and gain new perspectives on many of these misunderstood issues, our church's current book read sheds light on this very controversial topic. Pick up a copy in the office of "The Truth About Immigration: Why Successful Societies Welcome Newcomers."



## All Church Book Discussions

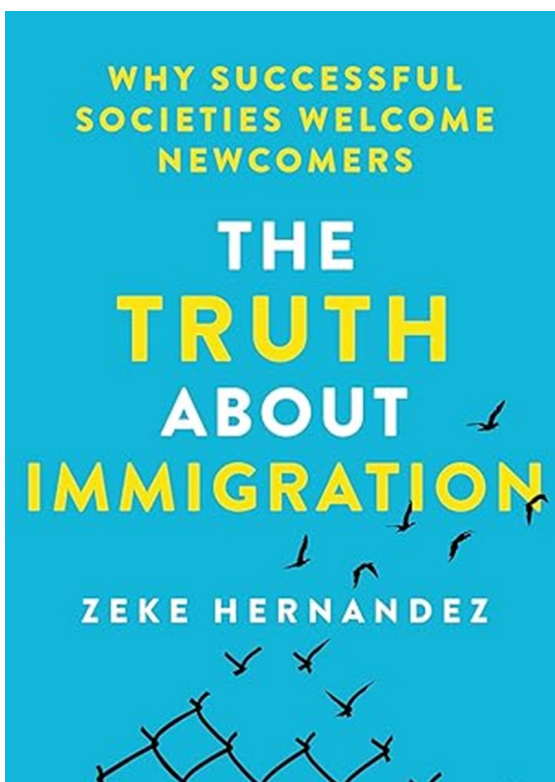
### **Saturday, May 3, Book Discussion**

Intro and Part 1, pages 1 to 129

### **Saturday, June 7, Book Discussion**

Part 2, pages 133-263

Wharton professor Zeke Hernandez draws from nearly 20 years of research to answer big questions about immigration. He combines moving personal stories with rigorous research to offer an accessible, apolitical, and evidence-based look at how newcomers affect our local communities and our nation.





## Outreach Moment

---

Mary Normand, Outreach Lead

Due to Easter being the third Sunday in April, we moved our meeting to the second Sunday and joined with the Social and Environmental Justice meeting, which was nice.

**Home and Business Expo** This went really well. We were out in the tent this year which we were a little worried about but it was good. There was a lot of traffic through there. We gave out lots of cookies, snacks, and children's books. We also had flyers about our concerts on the Commons, our cookie challenge, and our upcoming dessert auction to support ECFC. We had some good conversations too. We plan to be there again next year.

### GIVING TREE

**April:** As I write this we are still collecting nonperishable food and personal care items. I have a lot of bags in the annex and church.

**May:** We plan to have a loose change collection to help Housing Services and SIREN/Eaton. Outreach will give \$500 and challenge the members to match that.

**June:** This will be our dessert auction to help Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center with their finances. Chris Stanton will be our auctioneer. There will be light refreshments available.

**July:** We will be working on a project that involves swinging in Bennett Park. The goal is to purchase playground equipment for physically challenged kids at schools. More details coming soon.

**August:** Lawrence Avenue Methodist Church is sponsoring a community dinner on the first Wednesday of each month. We will try and help them with this project with financial support and/or collecting ingredients.

**Loads of Love:** Our next Loads of Love trip is May 10 at Quality Dairy Laundromat from 8-12. We will have children and adult books to give away too.

**Concert on the Square:** Outreach plans to be there again with our homemade ice cream sandwiches. We are waiting to hear from the Chamber of Commerce as to which Thursday we have been assigned.

**Strengthen the Church:** The fundraising opportunity is scheduled for June. We plan to publicize this more in the bulletin and weekly email. Ramona will write an article for Still Speaking to explain the different offerings we participate in.

Our next Outreach meeting is May 18.

*In a world where you can be anything, please BE KIND.* I feel this is more important now than it's ever been.

Stay Tuned



## Church Renovation Project

---

Bill Oatman, Renovation Team

At the 2023 annual business meeting, the congregation was challenged to update the Bess Fulton room as a means to raise money for operating expenses.

A renovation/rental team was formed to investigate potential changes to the room and the feasibility of using it for rentals. This is an adhoc committee that will exist for the length of the project. Current team members include David Frost, Larry Taylor, Mary Normand, Bill Oatman, Bren Wood.

Since that time we have made improvements in the kitchen and upgraded the electricity in the room. This committee has obtained various bids for upgrades in lighting, new ceiling, new floors, air conditioning, etc.

The council determined that we will continue to pursue renovations but not actively pursue outside rental business at this time.

The Renovation Team met with the design company Elevate Studio out of Grand Rapids on Monday evening March 31 to begin design plans. Once a design plan is developed, it will be reviewed by the Church Council before further action.

We will be meeting with Elevate Studio again in May for next steps.

For those who are interested in looking over a portfolio of their previous work with other churches, please check out their website at <https://elevatestudio.net/our-work/ministry>

Stay tuned and thank you for your support in this process.





---

# Summer

## ON THE COMMONS

---

Concert!

Saturday, May 17, 5 pm to 8 pm



Yard Sale on the Grass May 16 - 18

May 16 to 18 is Charlotte's City-Wide garage sale. We are allowing people to set up on our lawn for free (donations welcome). Each person gets a 10 x 10 space. We will provide a table for \$10. Additional details coming soon.



It's a Cookie Bake-Off! June 14

We are seeking a dozen cookie bakers. Win a prize perhaps and help raise money for programming. Taste all the cookies for \$5 and vote for fan favorite. See Amy Frost to sign up or sign up on the back of the welcome card.)

**Colossal Cookie  
Challenge**  
during  
**CHARLOTTE**  
**Celebrates**



Concert!

Saturday, June 28. 5 pm to 8 pm

**NIKKI HOLLAND**  
& The Dirty Elizabeths





## Spring Choir Concert

featuring the Senior Choir and the Celestial Bells

**Wed, May 28th at 7 PM**  
**Church Sanctuary**  
**Refreshments to follow**

Bring your friends and join our choirs as we perform favorite pieces from the last year. It will be a wonderful evening of beautiful and uplifting music, yummy treats, and “quality time” spent with our friends and church family!

Included in the concert will be favorite anthems and bell pieces from the last year, spanning a variety of genres and including a couple Christmas and Easter anthems. As a special treat, Alisa Miller will be playing viola on the beautiful piece, “Prayer Litany”, which uses the text from the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.



## TOP SECRET - Mail call for a Vietnam Vet

### Time Sensitive Note from Chris Reist-Rush:

Many will remember Ed Moor, a member here at church for many years; he moved South several years ago. Ed is an Army Vietnam Veteran. He and I (as his guardian) will be on a Talons Out Honor Flight on Saturday, May 17. We will be flying to Washington DC to view many sites throughout the city. On the flight back home, there will be a “Mail Call.”

What I am asking: Your help with letters and cards for Ed. Let’s make our vet feel appreciated.

PS No glitter.





## Film Event **Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution**

Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice

**Sunday, June 1, 11:30 AM**  
**Annex Large Meeting Room**

In the early 1970s, teenagers with disabilities faced a future shaped by isolation, discrimination and institutionalization. Camp Jened, a ramshackle camp "for the handi-capped", down the road from Woodstock, exploded those confines. Jened was their freewheeling Utopia, a place with summertime sports, smoking and make-out sessions awaiting everyone, and campers who felt fulfilled as human beings.



A revolution blossomed there, transforming the campers' lives and igniting a landmark movement. The campers' bonds endured as they migrated West to Berkeley, California—a promised land for a growing and diverse disability community—where friends from Camp Jened realized that disruption and unity might secure life-changing accessibility for millions. (Rated R for some language including sexual references.)

Co-directed by Emmy®-winning filmmaker Nicole Newnham and film mixer and former camper Jim LeBrecht, this joyous and exuberant documentary arrived in 2020, the same year as the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, at a time when the country's largest minority group still battled daily for the freedom to exist. Executive producers include former President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama.

### **Seeking Graduates!**

Did you graduate this year? Do you have a loved one that you would like to acknowledge who is graduating this year? Please drop a note (and a picture) to [editor@uccCharlotte.org](mailto:editor@uccCharlotte.org). Tell us who, what (degree), and where (from where did they graduate). If they are moving on to a new degree or a new career, please let us know that too. Information needed by May 25.



## Dessert Auction Fundraiser

---

Amy Frost, Outreach Team

**Friday, June 6, 6:30 pm**  
**Bess Fulton Room**

Imagine a table filled with scrumptious cakes, pies, and cookies all created by some of Charlotte's finest bakers. Imagine yourself walking out the door with some of these delicacies cradled in your arms.

This is not a dream. This is a Dessert Auction.

Join us on Friday June 6 at 6:30 pm to outbid your friends for your favorite dessert!

Famed auctioneer, Chris Stanton will help us raise money to support programming at Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center. You don't want buyer's remorse when you hear what your friends bought.

Light appetizers will be served while you enjoy the tantalizing sights and aromas of tasty treats.

Join us for an evening of deliciousness and help support an essential community organization. First Congregational United Church of Christ, 106 S. Bostwick, Charlotte

How can you help? Create a dessert to donate.

Not a baker? Sign up to provide an appetizer.

Come to the auction and bring a friend, and your wallet.

Questions? Contact the Outreach Team.

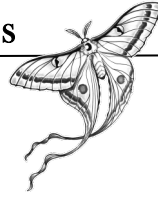
Watch for a sign up sheet soon or sign up on the back of the Welcome Card on Sunday morning!





## Night Sounds

Mary Roessler, Essayist



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	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, 6 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, Annex LMR	Curt Scott, CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Coffee Hour with a Pastor	Evelyn Bay, Wednesday, 10 am	Pastor Droscha, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Healthy Lifestyle Class	Last Sat of Month, 11am, LMR	Deb Cogswell, cogswell2003@gmail.com
<b>Music</b>		
Choir Practice	Wednesdays, 7 pm	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Wednesdays, 4 pm	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com
<b>Committees &amp; Groups</b>		
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

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

106 South Bostwick - Charlotte, MI 48813  
office@uccCharlotte.org [www.ucccharlotte.org](http://www.ucccharlotte.org)

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

**May 1 Mental and Spiritual Health Support Group**, 6 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room  
**May 3 Book Discussion**, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room (LRM)(see page 4)  
**May 3 World Labyrinth Day Walk**, 12:45 pm, Congregational Commons  
**May 4 Christine Terpening to speak on LGBTQ Youth Suicide**, 11 am, Bess Fulton Room  
**May 8 Pub Theology**, 7 pm, Riedy's Tavern and Pizza  
**May 10 Loads of Love**, 8 am to Noon, Quality Dairy Laundromat  
**May 8 Pub Theology**, 7 pm, Riedy's Tavern and Pizza  
**May 11 Mother's Day Picture Project**, before and after church, Church Lounge  
**May 12 Blanche Moyer Circle Dinner**, 5:30 pm, Bess Fulton Room  
**May 13 Art Team Meeting**, 11 am, Art Room (Church)  
**May 15 Church Council**, 6:30 pm, Annex LMR  
**May 16-17 City Wide Sale Days**, Congregational Commons  
**May 17 IBYR Parent to Parent Sale**, All Annex  
**May 17, Cozy Congregational Creators**, 10 am to 2 pm, Art Room (Church)  
**May 17 Concert, Fresh Pict**, 5 pm, Congregational Commons  
**May 22 Pub Theology**, 7 pm, Riedy's Tavern and Pizza  
**May 28 Spring Concert**, 7 pm, Church Sanctuary  
**May 31 Healthy Lifestyle Class**, 11 am, Annex LMR

Full calendar of events:  
[www.uccCharlotte.org/calendar](http://www.uccCharlotte.org/calendar)