



First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan
August 2025
Volume 2
Issue 78

Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

Still Speaking



In This Issue

Pastor's Corner	3
Outreach Moment	6
Summer on the Commons	7
An Invitation from SEJ	8
A Call to Prayer	8
Recycle-Palooza	9
In Celebration and Prayer	10
Meeting Times/Places	11
Calendar Highlights	12

Leaders and Staff of the Church

Council* President	Bren Wood	BrnWdMI@gmail.com
Vice President	Stephanie Tighe	StephanieTighe@gmail.com
Buildings and Grounds	David Frost	Black_ice@att.net
Business Team	Bill Oatman	Oatman701@att.net
Care Community	Pam Rinckey	Rinckey1@hotmail.com
Church Clerk	Barbara Anderson	BarbaraF5543@icloud.com
Church Life	Amy Frost	FrostAmy58@gmail.com
Endowment Team	Mike Fulton	Mjfulton@sbcglobal.net
Education Team	Diane Hudson	DianeKHudson@sbcglobal.net
Financial Secretary	Don Johnson	DonJohnson106@mac.com
Outreach	Mary Normand	DavidNormand@att.net
Soc. & Env. Justice Team	Mary Kohmuench	Mtheoharis@gmail.com
Treasurer (Finance Team)	Kathie Cook	Crkcook@hotmail.com
Worship Team	Jeannine Scott	Scottj21@msu.edu
*Church Council	3rd Thursday, 6:30 pm	Annex Large Meeting Room

Staff

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

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

About the cover: "Helen and Jeanne on the Commons" Helen Schneider and Jeanne Hudson after a Sunday service in our outdoor space. Photo by Caryn Hansen. July 13, 2025



Pastor's Corner

Pastor Adam Droscha

Resisting the Demand to be Well

It's always interesting to hear opinions about the United States from people who are not from here. The opinions are, of course, as numerous as there are people from other countries, but there are some consistent similarities and themes between opinions. Depending on who you talk to, you may hear something about how Americans are loud and brash, or we eat too much fried food in the U.S., or that Americans are obsessed with guns. (It's interesting at times to completely agree with opinions of the U.S., such as those, from outsiders.) One observation of the U.S. that I hadn't thought about until the last few years is our self-improvement culture.

Thinkers and commentators in a variety of fields observe, define, and critique our self-improvement culture in many ways. What I mean here by 'self-improvement culture' is the advertisement, commodification, and consumer economy we've built around personal betterment, which includes everything from physical, mental, financial, career, and home improvement, though it certainly doesn't end with those examples. We've all encountered self-improvement culture in one way or another, whether actively through our own endeavors to stick to that latest diet trend to lose some extra weight, or commit to that newest workout regimen, or passively through watching advertisements or listening to podcasts about taking your career to the next level, or trying that hobby you've always been interested in.



Self-improvement culture, as many of us know, touches more than money, careers, hobbies, or fitness. It touches psychological health and spirituality as well. Speaking from experience, you can find countless social media accounts dedicated to helping followers to improve on their mental health and spirituality, not to mention legions of self-help books within the

same categories. While the range of topics covered in such media and literature is vast, the corners dedicated to self-improvement are large and very convincing to people who feel stuck in their lives and circumstances.

You may be thinking by now, “Okay, so what? What does Adam have against self-improvement?” Well, truthfully, I have nothing against self-improvement, or personal growth and betterment. I wouldn’t be a pastor if I didn’t believe in some form of self-improvement through spiritual growth, soul work, healthy community, communal ritual, and so on. What I do take issue with is the commodification of self-improvement, especially when it starts touching into those areas that cannot be improved upon through consumer commodities, like spiritual growth, or mental health. The commodification and consumer economy of self-improvement culture is what many thinkers and commentators outside the U.S. observe about us, though many within the U.S. observe it as well.

Northern Irish philosopher and theologian, Peter Rollins, refers to this self-improvement culture as the “demand to be well,” or the “demand to enjoy”. The ‘demand to be happy’ comes to mind for me. Rollins has said that he observed a particularly pronounced version of self-improvement culture when he lived in Los Angeles for a few years. He also observed that people who participate in self-improvement culture – the demand to be well – weren’t any happier than the rest of us. Even those who had money, their best career, their best physique, the best car, the best technology, and who went to the best yoga practice, the nicest spiritual retreats were still just as miserable as anyone else.

Julie Reshe is a Ukrainian psychoanalyst who has developed her own framework within psychoanalysis called ‘negative psychoanalysis.’ In her work, Reshe critiques what she refers to as “positive psychology,” which includes narratives and frameworks in clinical settings, religious/spiritual literature and teaching, and pop culture that emphasize healing, treatment, growth, wellness, wholeness, and self-improvement in ways that assimilate subjects into society while treating things like depression and anxiety as pathologies within society. Reshe’s critique is that positive psychology has it backward. Instead, things like anxiety and depression are natural symptoms of trying to assimilate into society, which is fundamentally broken. Reshe would describe society and attempts to assimilate suffering people into it as the pathologies.

I was fortunate to hear presentations from both Reshe and Rollins at a church leader retreat last October. Rollins made the case that churches have the unique potential to be collectives, or communions where the demand to be well and the endless pursuit of self-improvement is disrupted. Or, to put it in Reshe’s framing, churches have the unique potential to disrupt the project of assimilating people into fundamentally broken systems.

I think there’s something really important for us, as individuals and as a church, to consider

here. Everywhere, I see churches and people of faith participating in enabling, promoting, and inevitably succumbing self-improvement culture and the demand to be well. This not only takes a toll on individuals, making many people feel as though they have to do more, consume more, and try harder, but it also commodifies spiritual growth and journeying, rituals and practices, and the life of faith. It turns things that are meant to be priceless into products. It also pathologizes failure and suffering, which are inevitable human realities and experiences.

What if we as a church and as ambassadors of the Jesus way embodied a different, more subversive way of being? What if instead of participating in the pursuit of exponential self-improvement (which is unattainable) we showed people they are worthy and loved no matter where they are on life's journey? What if we showed each other? What if instead of embodying the demand to be well in systems that are fundamentally broken we prophetically witnessed and named the brokenness, then helped others to become free?



Friends, I care about your self-improvement, whatever that looks like for you. May you be blessed in your endeavors, in so far as they are carefully discerned. But more so I care about your growth and maturity in faith, in spirit, existence, and relationship to your fellow humanity, and that cannot be commodified; those are not a matter of products, self-help books, or exponential improvement. My prayer and hope is that you are freed from the demand to be well, and invited instead in this communion of the Spirit to experience the fullness of your sacred humanity with all its blessings and failures, messiness and joy. We're all here, and you're welcome as you are.





Outreach Moment

Mary Normand, Outreach Team Chair

Giving Tree: Money from the loose change collection in May was finally distributed. Siren/Eaton and Housing Services were each given \$450.

The Methodist church has started offering a free Community dinner once a month. Our August Giving Tree is to check with them to see how we can help. I am meeting with Pastor John on August 4 and will report back to all of you after that. Watch the Sunday insert and Tuesday emails for follow up information.

Loads of Love: Our church's next Loads of Love is August 16. This is our last one for the year. If anyone would like to contribute funds toward this, it would be much appreciated.

For those of you not familiar with this program: Members of the church go to Quality Dairy Laundromat on our assigned Saturday morning and pay for laundry for anyone coming in, if they want us to. This has grown tremendously over the past couple of years. Our last one we spent over \$800.

CROP Walk is coming this fall. More on this later.

Festival of Trees: This will be here before we know it (November 28-30). Start thinking now about a theme for a tree you might want to donate.

Stay tuned



SUMMER ON THE COMMONS

Concert Series



In Concert LIVE
August 23 5 pm
The Rolling Hills
Bring a lawn chair
and a friend - we'll
meet you in the Commons!
Congregational Commons
128 South Bostwick Street
Charlotte, Michigan



**Jen Sygit
TRIO**
September 13
5 pm
Alex Teller
Opening
Congregational Commons
128 South Bostwick Street
Charlotte, Michigan
Bring a lawn chair
and a friend - we'll
meet you in the
Commons



An Invitation from the SEJ Team - Update

Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice Team

In the last several months, SEJ—the Social & Environmental Justice Team—is getting more involved with advocacy efforts and activism. A new ruling by the IRS now says that a church CAN campaign for a specific candidate without losing its tax-exempt status, as long as it's within the church's own walls. Many churches have already been doing that, but we've been careful NOT to do something as partisan as campaign for a specific candidate. So we have a little more freedom now, and we definitely can continue to be politically active (see note at the bottom)!

If any of you would like to join our protest on August 9th, or help us call our members of Congress, please email me at ramona.kime@gmail.com or see me at church, and I'll add you to our SEJ email list. You don't need to attend meetings, although we'd love to have you join us, but anything we can do together to help move our community and our country toward greater compassion is a positive step!

Note: Jesus was political, after all, in his challenging of the political structure and social norms of his time. He also taught love, compassion, and concern for the poor and marginalized, all of which are a call for social justice and economic equality. We are following Jesus when we fight for social justice!



People's Prayers for Peace

www.ucc.org/people-prayers-for-peace

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Phil. 4:6-7

Wars and conflicts continue to escalate around the world. Injustices and inequalities manifest as racism, discrimination, gender-based violence, economic disparities, and other issues. As a communal response to uplift these sorrows and support our neighbors near and far, General Minister and President, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson calls the church to a season of prayer. Prayer undergirds our witness, ministry, and advocacy as we work for peace and a just world for all.

This is an open invitation to anyone who feels called to offer a prayer to end violence in any manifestation, and to bring about peace. Share your prayers using the People's Prayers for Peace form at www.ucc.org/peoples-prayers-for-peace/. New prayers are published on this page daily. (Note: Publishing is at the discretion of the National Ministries of the United Church of Christ and prayers may be edited for content and length.)

Eaton County Department of Resource Recovery

Recycle-Palooza

Eaton County Residents Only (Non-Commercial)

August 9, 2025, 9 AM – 2 PM

Registration Required (limit 2 per household)

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

Charlotte Location released upon completion of registration

ELECTRONICS

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

NO FREON CONTAINING ITEMS, LARGE APPLIANCES OR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Acids & Bases, Aerosols, 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

TIRES

Passenger tires only, with or without rims. No oversized tires.

LIMIT 10 TIRES PER VEHICLE

Funding for Scrap Tire Collection made possible through a State of Michigan EGLE Scrap Tire Cleanup Grant



Scan to register or volunteer!

Questions? Contact Eaton County
Department of Resource Recovery
Email: Recycle@EatonCounty.Org
Phone: (517) 543-3686



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	Summer Hiatus	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	Summer Hiatus	Kate Durda, KateDurda@gmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd & 4th Thurs. 7 pm	Adam Droscha pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Adult Bible Study	Summer Hiatus	Curt Scott, CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Coffee Hour with a Pastor	Evelyn Bay, Tuesday, 10 am	Pastor Droscha, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Healthy Lifestyle Class	Summer Hiatus	Deb Cogswell, cogswell2003@gmail.com
Music		
Choir Practice	Summer Hiatus	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Summer Hiatus	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com
Committees & Groups		
Art Ministry Committee	Summer Hiatus	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Blanche Moyer	Summer Hiatus	Judi Cates, JudithCates68@gmail.com
Church Life	1st Monday, 6:30 pm	Amy Frost, frostamy58@gmail.com
Communications	Summer Hiatus	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 and 4th Saturday, 10 am	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

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

Full calendar of events: www.uccCharlotte.org/calendar

- August 2, Saturday, 9 am, **Prayer Shawl** meets in the Church Lounge - *Come yarn with us!*
- August 4, Monday, 10 am and 4 pm, **Devotional Bible Study**, Annex LRM - *Come grow with us!*
6:30 pm, **Church Life Meeting**, Annex Small Meeting Room - *Come plan with us!*
- August 5, Tuesday, 10 am, **Coffee Hour with a Pastor**, Evelyn Bay Coffee House, *Come sip with us!*
- August 6, Wednesday, 10 am, **Care Community**, Annex Library - *Come Care with us!*
- August 7, Thursday, 9 am, **Craft Brainstorming**, Annex Large Meeting Room - *Come plan with us!*
10:30 am, **Prayer Group**, Church Small Prayer Room - *Come pray with us!*
- August 9, Saturday, 10 am, **Men's Group**, Annex Large Meeting Room - *Come eat donuts with us!*
- August 11, Monday, 10 am and 4 pm, **Devotional Bible Study**, Annex LMR - *Come study with us!*
6 pm, **Building and Grounds Meeting**, Annex LMR - *Come build with us!*
- August 12, Tuesday, 10 am, **Coffee Hour with a Pastor**, Evelyn Bay Coffee House, *Come sip with us!*
- August 14, Thursday, 9 am, **Crafting for the Bazaar**, Church Art Room - *Come Create with us!*
7 pm, **Pub Theology**, Riedy's Pub, *Let's just eat, drink, and chat.*
- August 16, Saturday, 9 am, **Prayer Shawl** meets in the Church Lounge - *Come yarn with us!*
10 am to 2 pm, **Cozy Congregational Creators**, *Come create with us!*
- August 18, Monday, 10 am and 4 pm, **Devotional Bible Study**, Annex LRM - *Come grow with us!*
6:30 pm, **Communications Team Meeting** - *Come talk with us!*
- August 19, Tuesday, 10 am, **Coffee Hour with a Pastor**, Evelyn Bay Coffee House, *Come sip with us!*
- August 21, Thursday, 9 am, **Crafting for the Bazaar**, Church Art Room - *Come Create with us!*
10:30 am, **Prayer Group**, Church Small Prayer Room - *Come pray with us!*
6:30 pm, **Church Council Meeting**, Annex LMR - *Come Congregate with us!*
- August 23, Saturday, 10 am, **Men's Group**, Annex Large Meeting Room - *Come fellowship with us!*
5 pm, **Concert on the Commons, The Rolling Hills** - *Come chill with us!*
- August 25, Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm, **Cozy Congregational Creators** - *Come create with us!*
- August 26, Monday, 10 am and 4 pm, **Devotional Bible Study**, Annex LRM - *Come grow with us!*
- August 27, Wednesday, 7 pm, Choir Practice, Church Lounge - *Come make music with us!*
- August 28, Thursday, 9 am, **Crafting for the Bazaar**, Church Art Room - *Come Create with us!*
7 pm, **Pub Theology**, Riedy's Pub, *Let's just eat, drink, and chat.*