



First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan
December 2025
Volume 2
Issue 12

Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

In This Issue

About the Cover	2
Pastor's Corner	3
Outreach Moment	5
Giving Tree	5
Landmark Statement	6
Thanksgiving	8
Blue Christmas	9
Festival of Trees	10
Holiday Bazaar Wrap	12
I am Thankful, a poem	13
Celebration & Prayer	14
Youth Corner	14
Calendar Highlights	16

Still Speaking



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	CrkfcCook@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: George Falk and Michelle Labert cradle the lively Iris. The young people of our church may come on different Sundays (some weeks it's an all hands on deck or crickets), but they add much hope, love, and joy as we watch them grow. (Look for an article on the Slot "children" on page 14). The second picture is the jeweled Christmas tree created by our Buildings and Grounds Committee for Festival of Trees (article on page 10).



PASTOR'S CORNER

Pastor Adam Droscha

Hope Incarnate

Well, friends, it's Christmas time again and I don't know what to say. I'm short on words to explain that feeling of surprise I have in greater supply each passing year when the holidays arrive again. I know I'm not alone in that feeling. Didn't we just pack away the Christmas decorations a couple months ago? I could've sworn I just sent my last December Still Speaking article.

Time vortex daze isn't the only feeling that comes with the holiday season's return. (Really nailed that transition, didn't I?) Knowing the lot of you more intimately each year, I know how giddy some of you are at Christmas time. We put on a Christmas tree festival, for goodness' sake; there's obviously some sentimentality for the holidays in our church. For others there's the feelings of joy just at the prospect of spending time with family, holiday cheer aside. For others there's the opposite, those feelings of dread and chronic bother about spending extended time with family. And for some there's the sadness and grief about another holiday season without the loved ones who have passed, family and friends that are too far away to visit, or the traditions you can no longer enjoy. But there's another feeling I'm noticing that I think needs to be named this season, named and resisted, resisted and remedied: despair.

It's everywhere. It's in our political discourse, our conversations with friends, our thoughts about the future, the younger generations, and on and on. Despair is here and it's not without evidence. I won't spend the ink here to name every item on the Excel spreadsheet of current events and issues giving rise to our collective despair. You're all smart and informed; you can name them as well as I can.

The thing is that while the events and issues inciting this collective despair are frightening in and of themselves, the rise and pervasiveness of the despair is also terrifying on its own. It testifies that we are not only having a natural response to those compounding events and issues, but that we are also losing our hold on the things that can pull us out of despair. We're to such

a point where we're more familiar with an ongoing sense of despair, defeat, and disillusionment than joy, harmony, and the sublime.

Part of what I enjoy about the season of Advent is its incarnational character. For some the vocabulary of incarnate, incarnation, incarnating may be somewhat 'woo woo,' as contemporary critical commentary might put it. It smacks of manifestation, spiritualism, and other varieties of gentrified, watered down, esoteric new age mysticism. But Advent *is* about incarnation, and incarnation is, if you'll indulge me, thoroughly manifestative and mystical. Advent is the season celebrating and building anticipation for the incarnation of the Divine into the human, the Spirit into material, the eternal into the temporal. And the reason we light candles through the season of Advent is because a flame is the incarnation of energy and light from the dark, like the incarnation of peace from the darkness of violence, the incarnation of love from the darkness of hatred, the incarnation of joy from the darkness of sorrow, or the incarnation of hope from the darkness of despair.

Friends, I encourage you this Advent season to tend to those activities, practices, spaces, and relationships that incarnate hope, joy, love, and peace in you, but especially hope. As we lean into incarnating gratitude in the season of thanksgiving, practice incarnating hope this Advent season. With despair everywhere creeping into every open space and vacancy in our attention, fill your attention and your time with things – those lights – that incite hope, not as a way of being distracted from the events and issues raising despair, but so that we can incarnate the light of hope in the pervasive darkness of collective despair. My prayer is that the Spirit equips us to speak, activate, incarnate, and, dare I say, birth hope into our time, communities, relationships, and conversations. Go with hope, my friends.

Three Care Practices For Thriving Through Together

- 1. Embrace Your Beloved Self**
- 2. Befriend Elders and Learn from Our Ancestors**
- 3. Rest, Release, and Relax**

www.ucc.org/translivesmatter/



Outreach Moment

Mary Normand, Chair

Winter Coat Project: We are a little over half way to our goal. 60 coats have been purchased and 10, gently used, donated. This project generally goes to the end of December.

December Giving Tree: We are collecting hats, gloves, and mittens. These can be left in the Bess Fulton room or in the annex in the tub near the bathrooms.

Christmas Families: We adopt families from Housing Services and purchase items, they have requested for Christmas. This information will be available soon in the Bess Fulton room. We expect to have three families this year.



Christmas Fund: This is money that is collected in December and used to assist retired ministers with expenses they may not be able to pay. The official day is December 21, however, you can donate the entire month. Please designate on giving envelopes that the donation is for the Christmas Fund.

Loads of Love: Our next time to do Loads of Love is January 17. We have been approved for a mini grant to pay for this.

We voted to make a donation to The Birdfeeder to help them with this program. The Birdfeeder is a food bank located in Charlotte High School.

Wishing all of you a Blessed Christmas season.

Stay Tuned

Heads of Major American Religious Traditions Issue Landmark Statement Supporting Trans, Intersex and Nonbinary People

Boston, Mass. (November 12, 2025)

In November, the United Church of Christ joined the Unitarian Universalist Association and ten other religious denominations and traditions* issuing a landmark statement proclaiming that transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people are worthy of love, support, and protection. The feedback response has been powerful and inspiring.

Many joined this chorus of voices saying to transgender people, “You are holy. You are sacred. We love you. We support you, and we will protect you.”

The UCC’s sub-statement reads, “The United Church of Christ (UCC) celebrates the many diversities among us as a blessing of our Creator God and stands with those who are targeted by hate and injustice. In 2003, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ resolved ‘to take the lead in ending discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender persons and to actively counter public perceptions that view the Christian community as supporting such discrimination.’ Demonizing and dehumanizing treatment of transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse persons is anathema to the gospel of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In 2023, the UCC reaffirmed that transgender and nonbinary persons are beloved by God who bear ‘unique gifts and graces from the Divine for the life of the church and society.’ The UCC embraces the gifts and the very being of transgender and nonbinary persons as blessed children of God.”

To read the full combined statement, as well as the various churches’ sub statements, visit www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/interfaith-statement-trans-support OR on the following page.

* The denominations/organizations submitting the unified statement included: United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist Association, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, Union for Reform Judaism, The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM), Friends General Conference, Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), Reconstructing Judaism, The Episcopal Church, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Rabbinical Assembly.



To The American Public, Its Political Leaders, and Moral Teachers,

As heads of diverse religious traditions in the United States, our faiths call on us to proclaim that transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people deserve respect, love, and equal rights. During a time when our country is placing their lives under increasingly serious threat, there is a disgraceful misconception that all people of faith do not affirm the full spectrum of gender – a great many of us do. Let it be known instead that our beloveds are created in the image of God – Holy and whole.

Our religions vary, yet we share a fundamental belief across our traditions that all people hold infinite value and dignity, and we are morally compelled to care for those living under persecution. Our scriptures vary, but they share a common conviction. As we make justice our aim we must give voice to those who are silenced. Our shared values, held across many faiths, teach us that we are all children of God and that we must cultivate a discipline of hope, especially in difficult times. As such, we raise our voices in solidarity to unequivocally proclaim the holiness of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people, as well as the recognition of the entire spectrum of gender identity and expression.

Too many entrusted with positions of power are demonizing transgender people, blaming them for acts of violence, and criminalizing their very right to occupy space in our common life. The fear that many transgender children, their families, and their loved ones experience is unacceptable. The drive to limit the ways that transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people authentically live their lives – by limiting the medical care they receive, ignoring and sometimes provoking acts of violence against them, preventing them from traveling freely, or keeping them from participating in public activities — is a betrayal of our deeply held values as people of faith.

As a nation, we have often failed to live up to the ideals of equality and justice that safeguard the foundation of a free society. Yet throughout our history, in periods of great struggle and division, people of faith and good will have come forward to defend the very values that define American democracy. It is from that religious legacy that we speak today.

When people of faith and conscience stay silent in the face of oppression, we are all made less whole. When people of faith and conscience speak out against that which violates the sacred in its own name, we have the power to stay the hand of sin. Transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people are vulnerable today. Our faiths, our theologies, and our practices of prophetic witness call on us to say with one voice to transgender people among us: “You are holy. You are sacred. We love you. We support you, and we will protect you.”

Our transgender, intersex, and nonbinary beloveds offer a singular gift. They invite us to witness our broken world through the knowledge that, when we lead in truth and love, nothing is beyond transformation.



Thanksgiving in Community

Pastor Adam Droscha

On Sunday, November 23 our church joined our friends from St. John's Episcopal Church, Peace Lutheran Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, and Lawrence Avenue United Methodist Church for a combined Thanksgiving service. This well-attended service of thanksgiving and gratitude was hosted at Lawrence Avenue UMC and included hymns, liturgy, choir performances, and a generous donation of fresh vegetables, which was given to Helping Hands Food Pantry. The ministers



of each church led prayers and readings, and Rev. Wendy Brown of St. John's Episcopal provided message about the beauty of gratitude and sharing our resources. Following the service attendees shared a reception of beef and barley soup, as well as several variations on peasant pies. A big thank you to everyone from our church who attended the service, especially our choir that did an outstanding job, and our music director Ramona who took the lead on organizing music for the service.



Candlelight Service

Pastor Adam Droscha

Wednesday, December 24, 8:00 pm

On Christmas Eve at 8 p.m., we will host our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service to celebrate the coming of the light of Christ, God's loving presence incarnate among us. We will share scripture readings, sing hymns, enjoy music from our choirs, and enjoy the company of one another as we reflect on Christ's love that pierces the darkness. Please join us for this special occasion.





A Blue Christmas Service

Making Space for Healing & Hope During the Holidays

Pastor Adam Droscha

Blue Christmas Service **Sunday, December 14, 6 pm**

The Christmas season may be the most wonderful time of the year, full of merriment and joy, but for many it's also a time of grief and sadness. For some it's due to the loss of a loved one in the last year; for others it's a lost loved one from many years ago. Some are grieving difficult circumstances related to jobs, finances, health, illness, and an uncertain future, while others are grieving ruptures in relationships, people they can't be with this year, or loneliness. There are many reasons to feel heaviness and grief in otherwise joyous seasons.



In solidarity with those who grieve through the holidays, our church is hosting an ecumenical Blue Christmas on Sunday, December 14 at 6 pm. with our friends from St. John's Episcopal Church and Lawrence Avenue United Methodist Church. This Blue Christmas service aims to make space both for the circumstances we grieve and the hope we find in faith, community, and Christmas. We will sing hymns and recite scriptures of melancholy by candlelight, while also bearing each other's burdens with prayers of hope. There is no pain or grief that God does not see, and so we will gather around our own pain and grief with tears and encouraging words.

No matter who you are, or where you are on your journey of grief, you are welcome to this service. And if you are not experiencing the emotional burden of grief this holiday season, we hope you will consider attending to be a comfort and tender presence for those who are.



2025 Festival of Trees Wrap Up

Caryn Hansen, Communications Editor

Thank you 

With more than 60 individual entries, the 14th Annual Festival of Trees was the largest festival yet, raising around \$3800 to meet Eaton County's growing demand for children's winter boots. These funds will be turned over to the Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center for distribution to families in need during the Winter Warm-Up program.

Thank you to those who generously contributed through donations of time, talent, and resources. These entries and individuals, include **LT, Peggy, and Frankie** (Yum, Yum Tree, Fire Rescue on a Winter Night), **Cindy Wilbur** (A Little Bit of Pink, Christmas on My Mind, Mitten Door Hanging, Lighted Garland), **Amy Frost** (Chicka Chicka Christmas Tree, Christmas Tree Starter Kit, Christmas Card Holder x 2, Trees and Trees and Trees), **Dan Johnson** (Donna's Discount Emporium, Purple Sparkle, Snowy Night), sisters **Sharon Oatman** and **Sylvia Bittner** (Table Setting for Four, Merry Rex-Mas, I'm Dreaming of a Pink Christmas, Old Fashioned Christmas, Fire Breathing Books, Elf on the Shelf tree, O Seussmas Tree), **Deanna Rendell** (Spring Dream, Don't Give Up the Ship Quilt), **Mary Normand** (Tree and Table, Jim Shore Nativity, Noel Santa, Mauve and Silver Christmas, Maroon and Green Christmas, Cardinal Christmas, a Trio of Angels), **Jeanne Hudson** with Emily and Todd (Lego, etc., Golden, Glitter, and Angels), **Diane Sowle** (Repurpose Your Holidays, Gardener's Christmas, Southwest Christmas,), **Audrey Kepler** (Christmas Quilt, Christmas Green 1600 Quilt, Baby Quilt, Christmas Ornament, Potting Shed Quilt), **Carol Ranville** (Winter Cabin, Irish Christmas), **Jan Shall** (Cozy Christmas), **Chris Reist-Rush** (Christmas Snack Time), **Chris Bush** (No Time for Christmas), **Celee Marchek** (Outdoor Santa, Woodland Santa, Standing Santa), **Linda Williams** (Christmas Tree Wall Hanging Quilt), **Katy Shumaker** (Gifts by Mrs. Claus, Believe), **Nikki Rinckey** (The Seasons in Four Photos), **Patience Miller** (Santa Wall Hanging), the **Social and Environmental Justice Team** (Celebrating Immigration), **Rachel Orr** (Little Crafty Tree), **Cooper Frost** (Hello Winter Snow), **Friends of Chrystal** (Chrystal's Comforts of Home), **Boy Scout Troop 45** (Simple Spirit), **Audrey Keppler and Eleanor Beitelshes** (Hark the Herald Angels Sing), **Kathie Cook** (In a Christmas Mood), the **Outreach Team** (It's Snowing), **Deb Cogswell** (Have a Spooky Christmas), **Jeannine Scott and Alexis Allen** (All That Glitters), **Buildings and Grounds Team** (Jewelry Magic).

Thanks also go to Fresh Pict (**Patrick Dewitt, Maria Davis, and Kurt Young**) for bringing their musical talents to the stage on Saturday afternoon.







The 89th Annual Holiday Bazaar Wrap Up

Caryn Hansen, Communications Editor

The Holiday Bazaar is an “all hands on deck” affair consisting of Crafts from the Congregation, the Jewelry Store, the Country Kitchen, Conversation Café, the Family Dinner. It is headed by Women’s Fellowship, a group of women who industriously attend to behind the scenes work of the church, fixing funeral luncheons, purchasing new tables, service ware, replacing run down library chairs. In their quiet times, they sing, they make things, organize groups, and contemplate the movement of God in our community.

The contributors to making the 89th Annual Holiday Bazaar a success is almost an unknowable number. “Oh, Caryn, I don’t know. People just show up... I’m not sure how you even come up with a figure,” Mary Normand, overwhelmed with contemplating the ins and outs of anchoring the event to even a ballpark number and possibly leaving out someone’s contribution.

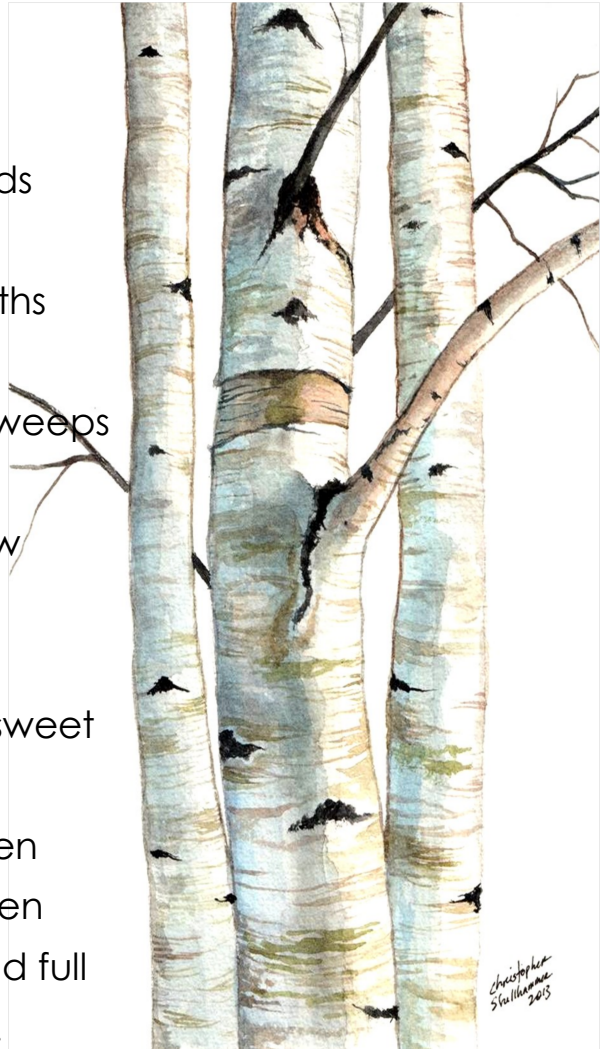
Pam Rinckey, Women’s Fellowship Treasurer, shares [in confidence], that the amount raised in this years event hovers somewhere above \$10,000 (gross), more than was raised in previous years. How to allocate the use of the funds will be determined at the Women’s Fellowship Annual meeting to be held following morning worship on Sunday, January 4, Epiphany Sunday. Women’s Fellowship extends an invitation to the entire congregation to attend the meeting, and share in the decision making that occurs during the event.

Thank you to all of those who contributed in big and small ways to make the Bazaar not only a success, but also a fun, cozy, industrious, teaching, learning, community experience.



I am thankful...

For rich abundance of the fields
And yields of harvest grain
For warmth of firelight on hearths
And quiet autumn rain
For pungent, tingling air that sweeps
Clear coolness on the land
For starlight on the muted snow
And golden leaves that glow
Like burnished chalices
For nodding wheat and bittersweet
And quiet sylvan beauty
For scent of pine and evergreen
And flowing river's sudden sheen
For earth's abundance rich and full
For life and all things beautiful.



Note: This is the poem read by Mary Roessler while she was liturgist on Sunday, November 23, 2025, before the Call to Worship. This was a poem she found on a greeting card while she was a university student. We searched for an author, but could not find one. The word “sylvan” (a new one to us) means “consisting of or associated with woods.”

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	Sun, 10:20 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	Unknown	Kate Durda, KateDurda@gmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd, 4th Thurs. 7 pm, Riedys	Adam Droscha pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Adult Bible Study	Tuesdays, 6 pm, LMR	Curt Scott, CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Coffee Hour with a Pastor	Evelyn Bay, Tuesday, 10 am	Pastor Droscha, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Healthy Lifestyle Class	Last Saturday, 10 am, LMR	Deb Cogswell, cogswell2003@gmail.com
Music		
Choir Practice	Wednesday, 7 pm, Lounge	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Wednesday, 4 pm, Sanctuary	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com
Committees & Groups		
Art Ministry Committee	2nd, 4th Tues, 11 am, Art Rm	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Blanche Moyer	2nd Monday, 5:15 pm, LMR	Judi Cates, JudithCates68@gmail.com
Church Life	Sept. 2nd Mon. 6:30, SMR	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	Diane Hudson, dianeHUDSON@sbcglobal.net
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

A full calendar of events can be found at
www.uccCharlotte.org/calendar

December 8 - Blanche Moyer Potluck Appetiser and White Elephant Gift Exchange, 1 pm, Bess Fulton Room

December 11 - Only meeting for Pub Theology in December, 7 pm, Reidy's Pub

December 14 - Blue Christmas Service, 6 pm, Church Sanctuary

December 16 - Annual Holiday Tea for the Art Team, 11 am, Church Art Room

December 18 - Church Council and Church Staff Christmas party, right after council at the Normand's

December 19 - Reports due for the annual report - leaders in the various groups need to send these to Caryn.

CarynHansen@uccCharlotte.org

December 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 8 pm, Sanctuary

December 28 - Christmas Pageant - the retelling of the Christmas story, 10 am, Sanctuary

December 29 - final day contributions will be credited to the 2025 budget year (bookkeeping note)

