



First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

February 2026
Volume 3
Issue 2

Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

,

still speaking



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"Shared Love"
By Jim Rush & Chris Reist

"Photography by Our Church Members" is the current art display on the Annex walls organized by our Art Ministry Team. Stop over to see it when you have a few minutes!

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*Church Council	3rd Thurs., 6:30 pm	Annex Large Meeting Room

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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. Article deadline is the 25th of each month.

About the cover: Pam Rinckey fills several roles in our congregation. We are especially grateful for her presence as the calming chair of our Care Community and her attentive eye for detail as treasurer for Women's Fellowship. We celebrate with her this month as her grandson Miles was recently accepted to the University of Michigan.

P A S T O R ' S P O S T

Pastor Adam Droscha

A Contemporary Music Service and the Common Vacancy in Mainline Churches

My undergraduate professors in my journalism classes and my graduate professors in seminary cited me many times for introductions that were too long. Unfortunately, their feedback never quite changed my writing habits. So I'm confessing now, friends, this is a long introduction. I beg your forgiveness.

A funny thing, to me, about being a pastor for almost two years is that it'll take six more until my years in pastoral leadership surpass those as music director and worship leader. I started leading worship music when I was in my youth group praise band, junior year of high school to be precise. There are about three years in that mix when I wasn't in a formal leadership role, though I was still playing in my alma mater's traveling praise band, playing in chapel band, and playing various instruments at my home church during the summers. I don't always start conversations about my higher education with this factoid, but I originally went to college to study sacred music, which I did for two years until I changed my major and turned my worship studies into a music minor. Right now I have more in common with Ramona's role in our church than I do with my predecessors and mentors, Jody and Bruce.

Being a music director and worship leader taught me many lessons, the first of which is that I don't want to do that work anymore. I had a lot of fun doing it and, at times, I really enjoyed the people and congregations I worked with. Musical worship is beautiful and necessary, and it will always be my starting point in music. I learned guitar, drums, and bass, not to mention band leadership and cooperation in church music settings from church musicians. Even so, traditional worship music is a hard game to lead when you don't play organ or piano, and the

contemporary music scene, where I did most of my directing/leading, has become so cringingly performative, not to mention consumeristic. That's only my aesthetic criticism. My theological criticism of contemporary worship culture could be a book and is much harsher. While my ministerial education and call took me down a different path, I hit my breaking point with leading worship music a few years ago. So, anyway, here's my case for starting a new monthly contemporary worship service at our church.

Beginning in my days as a music director/worship leader, through my seminary years when I studied a lot of history and sociological research about the American Church, into my master's thesis the basis of which is sociological research about the current religiosity/spirituality of America, until now as a pastor who reads many books and listens to many podcasts by researchers and scholars on the American church, I've spent a lot of time thinking (and writing) about modern day church culture and church services. In all of that, I've been comparing and contrasting mainline and evangelical protestant churches, both of which I've worked in. I made a decisive exit from evangelical theology and churches several years ago, but something stood out to me about many of those churches' musical worship: they were more willing than mainline protestant churches to change part, if not the whole, of their music presentation in order to reach new people, or, we could say, to reach the next generation of their churches. As a result, while declining church attendance and membership have affected American churches overall in recent decades, especially mainline churches with traditional worship services (like ours), evangelical churches with contemporary services are an exception to that decline. Not all of them have remained steady or increased attendance and membership, but the churches that have remained steady and grown notably



have this one significant aesthetic difference. Mainline churches like ours have largely refrained from making such changes, and while it's far from the only factor contributing to mainline denominations/churches' significant decline in recent decades, it is a factor to consider.

In consideration of that, I have proposed and begun planning a new contemporary music service for our church.

Now, in writing all of that I also want to acknowledge a few things. The first is, again, is that there are countless reasons why churches across the country are experiencing record low attendance and new membership; music/worship style is only one among many. The second is that I recognize that a new contemporary music service will not magically secure the future of our church; it is only one seed in the garden of planning and strategies we are cultivating in our church leadership to sustain our church in the future. The third is that my schema of ministry is not solely based on numbers in the pews; far from it. I am and always have been a quality over quantity guy; I'll take a church of our size that does the work of the gospel over a bigger church that's just a corporate consumerist clubhouse any day. My guide is always Matthew 22:37-40, and I think we can love more of our neighbors and our church can continue to do so in the future if we offer some newer music that appeals to wider audiences. The last acknowledgement, for now, (to put some minds at ease) is that our regular Sunday morning worship services are not changing. We'll continue to sing hymns and enjoy choir anthems as we always have. As we begin this new endeavor, the contemporary service will be once a month on a Sunday evening led by two new worship leaders who have already agreed to lead the contemporary music. My hope is to begin the service by or before the Easter season.

There are many other considerations, factors, and questions I could speak to, but for sake of time and space I won't attempt to address them all here. Please, feel welcome to ask me any questions you might have! We will, however, keep you posted with updates as we get closer to our rollout. For now, I am excited about this new opportunity and I hope we can share that excitement together. With more to come, and with grace and peace.

OUTREACH MOMENT

Mary Normand, Chair

Winter Coat Project This project has ended for this year (2025). A total of \$1700 was collected with \$1659 being spent. A total of 125 new/used coats were purchased/donated. Thank you to everyone who participated in this project.

Loads of Love We did the Loads of Love event on January 17. We were totally slammed. We spent \$914.25. The need seems to be getting bigger and bigger. We will be having a loose change collection, for Loads of Love, in March. If you are able, please consider donating to this project. Our next one in April 18. If you would like to help, please see me, or contact me at 517-231-6647 or davidnormand@att.net.

December Giving Tree We collected a total of 6 scarfs, 3 hat/glove combos, 77 hats, 29 pair of gloves, 2 packages of boys briefs, 6 pair of men's thermal socks, 4 pair of slipper socks, and 1 pair of boots. All children's hats and gloves will be given to the schools, adult hats, gloves, scarfs, and the socks are going to Helping Hands. The boots, briefs, and slipper socks will go to Eaton Clothing and Furniture Center.

Nordic Fire Festival This is scheduled for February 28 – March 1. We will be there on February 28 with our Viking hat cookies. I will be stirring them up on February 24. We will be rolling them out and baking on the February 28 at 10 and frosting them on the February 26 at 10 am. Please let me know if you can help on either February 25 or 26. This information will be on the Welcome card or you can catch me at church. We also need workers on the February 28 to man our booth. Times needed are: 8:15 am for set up, 9 am – Noon and Noon – 3 pm to work.

Spring Shoe Boxes (February Giving Tree) We will be assembling these on March 19. We will be collecting items for the boxes in February as our Giving Tree project. Items needed are coloring books, crayons, markers, glue, pencils, pencil sharpeners, puzzles, jump ropes, card games, small toys, snacks, anything that will fit in a shoe box.

Repair Fair We are looking into this as a possible fundraiser. If there are folks who are handy with a sewing machine or can do small appliance repair, please let Outreach know.

Our next meeting is February 15. If you want to know what we are about, please come. We meet in the large meeting room in the annex at 11:30 am.

*"When you are kind to others, it not only changes you,
it changes the world" Harold Kushner*

PROGRESSIVE APPETIZER

Amy Krizek, Women's Fellowship

Sunday, March 1, 5:30 pm, Starting in the Church Lounge

Adults, couples and singles are encouraged to join the fun evening of the tradition of Women's Fellowship's annual event, the "Progressive Appetizer." This year it is scheduled for Sunday, March 1, starting at 5:30pm in the Church Lounge. Participants bring a hearty appetizer to share to the lounge in the main church building. Plates and beverages are provided.

As a help for planning there will be a sign-up sheet in the Bess Fulton Room starting February 8. You can also use the back of your welcome card to indicate your intention to join in on this fun adult event. You may want to indicate on the sign-up sheet what type of appetizer you might be bringing so that we anticipate variety.

Dairy Queen Ice Cream sundaes at 8 pm are a provided dessert as we "progress" to the Bess Fulton Room on the lower level.

Mark your calendar and come join the fun!



JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE

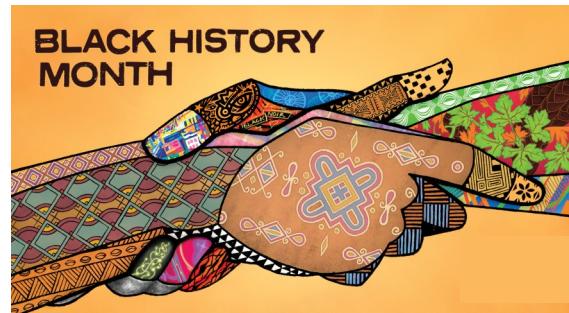
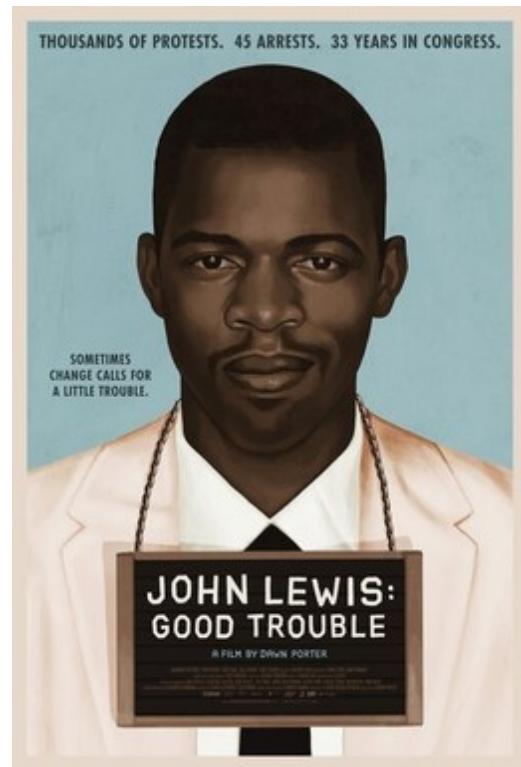
Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice Team

Sunday, February 8, 11:30 am, Sanctuary

In recognition of Black History Month, SEJ will be hosting a film showing of "John Lewis: Good Trouble." This film chronicles John Lewis's life and over 60 years of activism and legislative action on civil rights, voting rights, gun control, health care reform, and immigration. It explores his fight for justice from the Civil Rights Movement to his later legislative career, using interviews and archival footage to highlight his philosophy of engaging in "good trouble, necessary trouble." The phrase "good trouble" itself embodies Lewis's call to action for peaceful, disruptive protest against injustice, a legacy that continues to inspire activists today.

This film has won, or been nominated for, multiple awards for best historical documentary, including an Emmy, Critics' Choice Documentary Award, and an Image Award from the NAACP.

Pick up popcorn in the lounge during coffee hour, and join us in the sanctuary for an award-winning documentary of an inspirational advocate for equal rights.



MUSIC IN THE SANCTUARY

Kate Durda, WISE Team

A time of reflection and prayer

The WISE* committee is offering an hour of contemplative music for calming the mind and restoring the soul. You're invited also to join us for tea, conversation and connection after the music!

Friday, **February 6**, 6:00 to 7:00 pm Tea and conversation to follow

Thursday, **February 12**, 3:00 to 4:00 pm Tea and conversation to follow.

Monday, **February 23**, 1:00 to 2:00 pm Tea and conversation to follow

* The United Church of Christ adopted the WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for mental health covenant as a denomination in 2015 as part of our commitment to mental health justice. The Social and Environmental Justice Team at our church embraced it in 2024.

ODDS AND ENDS

With the recent closure of Reidy's Pub, **Pub Theology** will be changing locations starting this month. Because we only recently found out about the closure, the new location is still being discussed. Please watch the Sunday insert, online calendar, and weekly email.

February 13 **FREE Wine & Canvas Painting Class**, Annex Large Meeting Room. Registration needed by February 8 either via email to Sandra Field at yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com or by signing up on the back of the Welcome Card on Sunday.

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
Pub Theology	Unknown	Kate Durda, KateDurda@gmail.com
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, dianeudson@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



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

still speaking

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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Find us on
Facebook



Calendar Highlights

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

- February 2** Church Life Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room
- February 4** Care Community, 10 am, Annex Lounge
- February 5** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room (Church)
- February 6** Music in the Sanctuary, 6 pm, Sanctuary
- February 7** Prayer Shawl, 9 am, Church Lounge
- February 8** Film Event: John Lewis: Good Trouble, 11:30, Church Sanctuary
- February 10** Art Team Meeting, 11:00 am, Art Room
- February 12** Music in the Sanctuary, 3 pm, Sanctuary
- February 12** Pub Theology, 7 pm, NEW LOCATION TBA
- February 13** FREE Wine and Canvas Painting class, 6 pm, Annex LMR Register by 2/8, see details on page 9 (Odds & Ends)
- February 14** Men's Group, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- February 16** Communications Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Small Meeting Room
- February 19** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room (Church)
- February 19** Church Council, 1:30 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room
- February 21** Prayer Shawl, 9 am, Church Lounge
- February 21** Cozy Congregational Creators, 10 am, Art Room
- February 23** Music in the Sanctuary, 1 pm, Sanctuary
- February 26** Pub Theology, 7 pm, TBA
- February 28** Men's Group, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room