



First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

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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. Article deadline is the 15th of each month.

About the cover: The Evening Liturgy. Pentecost Sunday, May 24. Congregants are led through a hymn by John Nulf, Morgan Englehart and Sean Farmer during our first contemporary service.

PASTOR'S POST

Pastor Adam Droscha

Pride Month: "The Best Critique of the Old is the Embodiment of the New."

My good friend and former classmate from Northern Theological Seminary, Keri Ladouceur, is the executive director of the Post-Evangelical Collective. For last month's Still Speaking I wrote about my trip to Boston for the national gathering of the PEC, what it is, who goes, and what we do when we gather. (Check out that edition for a description of the PEC.) Keri often echoes a quote from Franciscan monk, Richard Rohr, which goes, "The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better," with her own amended version: "The best critique of the old is the embodiment of the new." In regard to the point above about who goes to PEC gatherings, she often says this at national gatherings, which includes many LGBTQ folks from affirming churches. Many of those people and those churches, as we know too well, have ugly stories of losing community, abuse, slander, and more. So those words – the best critique of the old is the embodiment of the new – have become a rallying cry to the joyful reimagining of what church, faith, and community can be. This is what I invite us to think about as a church this Pride month.

Many of us, in our church and beyond, are most familiar with churches and faith communities that are not LGBTQ affirming. That's a modest way of saying it; many of us are more familiar with churches that are loudly and proudly homophobic. Even in more 'moderate' churches there is an often unspoken but pervasive homophobia. We know where this comes from. In many cases it's plain-as-day bigotry resulting from fear, disgust, and ignorance of what and who someone doesn't know and doesn't understand. But what we know is also true is that otherwise well-meaning and kind people are ensconced in attitudes and assumptions inherited through culture, family, misinformation, religious tradition, narrow interpre-

tations of religious texts withdrawn from their contexts, and more, all of which is also true of the open bigotry types. Whether it is a problematic interpretation of a Bible verse, or a personal hatred, it all relies on what is inherited without question or challenge.

To expound further on this point, many of us carry stories of encountering such bigotry and apathy directly. Aside from the personal experiences of pain, trauma, abuse, and ostracization many in our small community carry, several of us also have stories of being cornered, questioned, dismissed, disparaged and chastised for belonging to a church that is LGBTQ affirming. While stories and experiences of that kind happen for a variety of reasons, one that I think is relevant characterization in the life of a church especially is the old vs new dynamic, familiarity vs unfamiliarity, comfort zone vs beyond comfort zone. To be clear, I am very aware that the problem of homophobia generally let alone that of religiously motivated and enabled homophobia cannot be reduced down to dynamics of old vs new; homophobia, like racism and xenophobia, is a deeply rooted psychological, sociocultural, and political issue that requires multifaceted and interdisciplinary solutions. But churches and religious communities generally are often good case studies in the psychology of old vs new, familiar vs unfamiliar.

Often, we prefer to think that we are entirely rational and conscious actors, reasoning our way through the world with sound logic and well-informed opinions. But there are parts of our brains and nervous systems whose whole purpose is to instinctually determine whether or not a new thing, person, situation, place, or encounter is safe or unsafe, good or bad. What neuroscientists and psychologists across areas of study find is that those default parts of brains wired for instinct, intuition, and gauging safety vs danger are doing just as much work in our physiology and the construction of our beliefs as the conscious, rational parts of our brains. And as social psychologists and philosophers have understood for a long time (though there is now ample data to back this up), this brain/nervous system wiring works in everything from our communities to our religious

and political beliefs, our relationships to the food we eat. When something feels familiar, even if it is toxic or has caused harm in the past, even if it goes against our logical constructions and beliefs, it will often feel safer than what is unfamiliar.

So, as an LGBTQ affirming church full of diverse sexualities, gender expressions, and non-hetero-normative cisgender relationships, we know that we are a faith community that directly challenges old attitudes, assumptions, paradigms, theologies, interpretations, and bigotries; we are unfamiliar, we are new. We are caught directly in neurophysiological crossroads in a significant way. While we know for some a dislike of who we are and what we represent is decisive bigotry, it's also true that for many if not most we pose the more fundamental conundrum of being new and unfamiliar. We already know the challenges that presents, but I think we're also presented with a beautiful opportunity and calling. What if instead of criticizing the old rigidly heteronormative and homophobic way of doing church with our words we chose to embody this new way with love and grace? What if instead of spending our precious energy condemning the old way we demonstrated the new with better action and behavior? What if instead of trying to change minds primarily with words and arguments we thought about inciting change in others through calmed nervous systems experiencing the unfamiliar as safe? What if our embodied acceptance, inclusion, diversity, and joy critiqued the old way better than any polemic we could construct?

Friends, may this Pride month be a call and invitation not only to embody the new way of being authentically and beautifully ourselves, but the new way of being church. Let us not only say with our words that churches can and should be LGBTQ affirming, but let us show that it is better, healthier, more loving, more lifegiving, and more Christlike to be LGBTQ affirming by living it out. Let's be invitational, demonstrating that this way of being a faith community, while unfamiliar to many, is in fact safe, edifying, and reflective of God's love. May our critique of the old be our embody of the new. Amen.

OUTREACH MOMENT

Mary Normand, Chair

Loads of Love Our last Loads of Love in April was much smaller. We spent \$577.25. We gave out several books. Our next one is August 15.

Home and Business Expo This went well. We saw and talked with many folks and gave away lots of books and goodies. We also received \$130 in donations for Loads of Love.

April Giving Tree We received 12 sleeping bags, 13 tents, and \$86 in cash. We will buy additional tents and sleeping bags with the cash donations. Thank you to everyone who helped with this Giving Tree.

Dessert Auction We raised \$5110 for Eaton Clothing and Furniture. A big thank you to everyone who participated in this event.

Strengthen the Church The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. We are gathering donations through the month of June; remember to mark what it is for.

Our next meeting would be June 21 however that is Father's Day so we are moving our meeting to June 28. Stay tuned!



WE CELEBRATE WITH PRIDE!

Ramona Kime, Social and Environmental Justice

As our church moves into June, we're excited to celebrate with our LGBTQ kindred! (Yes, we celebrate them all year, but we become more intentional and outward-facing during June.) We have a variety of Pride activities and events that we're planning or participating in, and we invite you to celebrate with us!

- **“Will and Harper” film showing:** Sun, June 7; 11:30 am: This powerful and often funny film documents the cross-country road trip that Will Ferrell took with his long-time good friend from Saturday Night Live, Harper, formerly known as Andrew. As Harper has transitioned to being female, she and Will use the road trip as a way to navigate this new chapter in their relationship.
- **Wildflower Wives Pride on the Farm:** Sat/Sun, June 13/14; 12-8 pm: SEJ is working with Church Life to organize a church booth at this Pride event, supporting our friends Sarah and Kim. SEJ has purchased LGBTQ books for young children and youth to give away.
- **Lansing Pride Festival:** Sat, June 27; 1-9 pm: Church Life is championing a church booth at this Pride event, which is an exciting first for our church! SEJ is supporting this event and will provide LGBTQ buttons and a button maker for those who wish to create their own buttons!
- **Pride service:** Sun, June 28: We celebrate our LGBTQ siblings during our church's own Pride service. Morgan Englehart and John Nulf will be providing the special music that day, and it will be a special treat to hear them again!
- **Vermontville Youth Pride:** Sat, Aug. 1: This will be our fourth year having a church booth at this event which primarily supports LGBTQ youth, many of whom don't get much support from home or in their church or school environments. SEJ will be giving away LGBTQ books to the children and youth, as well as letting them make their own statements using our button maker!

BUZZING FOR BAZAAR

Amy Krizek

“Crafts from the Congregation” is the official name for this event. Lovingly called “Bazaar” this is the 90th year and it is scheduled for Friday, November 6 and Saturday Nov. 7 with outtake viewing for church family that Sunday following worship. It may seem early but the title describes it all – we count on the congregation and friends of this church to donate toward its success.

If you

- do a craft (or many)
- garden or do canning
- have vintage costume jewelry to donate
- cook or bake
- NEW! -- have good items for Attic Treasure room

We need YOU! Contact Mary Normand or Amy Krizek (517-652-1579) for more information.

- ⇒ Craft sessions with many ideas have started on Thursday mornings in the annex large meeting rooms, 10am.
- ⇒ NOW is the time to make some extra Strawberry jam or freeze some of the rhubarb in season.
- ⇒ Your donations of grandma's or auntie's jewelry (or your own) repurposed jewelry is always appreciated.
- ⇒ AND, as a revival of the 80's bazaars, we will re-constitute Attic Treasures!! This is rummage sale space of good items (no clothes or magazines) that you are willing to donate. Repurposing to the max! Our antiques experts, the Fuhrs, are coordinating this for us and can be contacted for questions and storage of any items you can donate but don't have space to store until November (fuhrtrader@yahoo.com or 543-9460)

It takes a lot of work and people to put this event on and the money from the events fund several projects around the church as well as assist several other charitable agencies/projects in the community.

First planning meeting: Thursday, July 16. Mark your calendar. More details to follow.

(SOON TO BE) NEW & IMPROVED

Amy Krizek

What your Bazaar profits (and Endowment money) are doing for your church:

The third floor Sunday School and Handicap bathroom area is under construction. With Building and Ground support (thank you David Frost, Allen & Amy Krizek and Bren Wood) the sagging wall boards have been removed to reveal the walls as they were constructed in 1881.

Watch for the new and improved walls as they are installed and painted hopefully by the end of June.

In the short duration of construction, please use the elevator to reach the third floor for Art Team, Crafting, children's Sunday School. While the handicap bathroom is still functional, the path to that facility will be in the renovation and may be challenging.



COMMUNICATIONS MOMENT

Kaleigh Slot, Communications Editor

The Evening Liturgy

In celebration of Pentecost Sunday, May 24, we kicked off our new contemporary service, called The Evening Liturgy. This is a structured liturgical worship experience combined with contemporary worship music. The music is led by Morgan Englehart (vocals), John Nulf (piano, vocals), and Sean Farmer (drums).

With a mix of new songs and contemporary versions of traditional hymns, the congregation sang and swayed to the music.



Pastor Adam read a Pentecost story for the Children's message.

Join us for our next service of The Evening Liturgy on Sunday, June 14 at 6 pm.





Spring Choir Concert

On Wednesday, May 27, our Senior Choir and Celestial Bells put on a night of music for the congregation and played their favorite pieces from this past choir season. We also had a special solo piece featuring our Director of Music, Ramona Kime.



Stay tuned for a special summer performance from the Celestial Bells in August!

A SPRING STORY

Mary Roessler

***Pseudacris crucifer* (the spring peeper): God's melodic gift to humankind**

I heard it for the first time on April 13—the mating call of the spring peeper—and I smiled. I can't tell you why this trilling song delights me so. It's not associated with a happy, youthful memory like the whistle of a train heard at night is for my father. It's simply a sound—peeps resembling a

chorus of sleigh bells. But there it is, similar in a way, to my reaction to Pachelbel's Canon in D. It moves me. It reaches inside my soul and makes me happy. Such an extraordinary reaction caused by such a tiny creature!

How tiny? The spring peeper is the smallest and loudest frog—only an inch to an inch-and-a-half long and weighing about .15 of an ounce. It is brown or tan and lives in woodlands, marshes, and ponds. My pond is blessed with an abundance of them. A spring peeper lives about three years on average. It is able to survive Michigan winters by using a natural glucose which allows its heart to enter a natural state of protected dormancy.

When mating, the female peeper prefers larger males which tend to have faster and louder calls. "Satellite males" are not able to make mating calls, so they place themselves near large males, attempting to intercept females who are attracted by louder calls. Crafty little buggers! After mating, females lay up to 1500 eggs. Tadpoles transform into frogs within 45 to 90 days.

A remarkable fact about these remarkable little amphibians is that they can change skin color in 15 to 45 minutes. It's not because they're bored with their current color, as woman who dyes her hair black might be. Rather, it's to better camouflage themselves from predators.

I don't know if the spring peeper was aboard Noah's ark, but I rather doubt it. However, I think perhaps God concluded at some point that it would be good to have a little creature to delight us and to mark the spring equinox. Historically, the spring peeper evolved over millions of years, but it was officially documented and named in scientific literature beginning in 1838, just after Michigan became a state, so essentially it has been with us since the beginning.

I am thankful for many, many things, and one of them is this tiny melodic creature that captivates me, makes me smile, and, with my window open on spring nights, helps me fall asleep with its singing. For me, the song of the spring peeper is not simply a delight; it is a blessing.

When We Come Together . . .

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 Thurs, 10:30 am	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd/4th Thurs, Acapulco	Pastor 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

Music

Choir Practice	Summer Hiatus	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com
Bell Choir	Wednesdays, 4:30 pm	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com

Committees & Groups

Art Ministry Committee	Summer Hiatus	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Blanche Moyer	2nd Monday, 5:15 pm, LMR	Judi Cates, JudithCates68@gmail.com
Church Life	1st Monday 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 am, Lounge	Diane Hudson, dianehudson@sbcglobal.net
Social & Environmental Justice Committee	2nd Sun, 11:30 am, AnnexLMR	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

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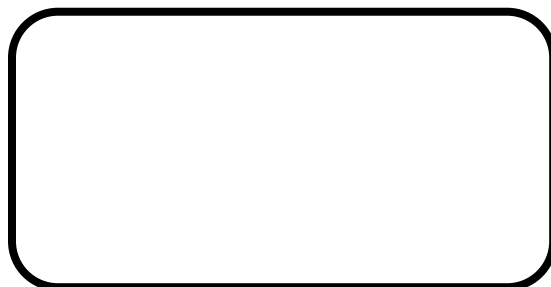
Office Hours
Monday to Thursday 9a - 2p
517 543 1310
Sunday Worship Service 10 am
In Person, Facebook, YouTube



Instagram



Find us on
Facebook



Calendar Highlights

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

- June 4** Crafting for Bazaar, Every Thursday, 10 am, Annex LMR
- June 4** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room
- June 6** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Annex Lounge
- June 7** Film Showing: Will & Harper, 11:30 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- June 11** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- June 13** Men's Group, 10 am, Annex Small Meeting Room
- June 13** Concert on the Commons (Fresh Pict, Baseline Band), 5 pm, Commons
- June 14** Social and Environmental Justice, 11:30 am. Annex LMR
- June 15** Communications Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Small Meeting Room
- June 18** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room
- June 18** Church Council Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room
- June 20** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Annex Lounge
- June 20** Cozy Congregational Creators, 10 am, Art Room
- June 21** Graduate Sunday, 10 am, Sanctuary
- June 21** Outreach Team, 11:30 am, Annex Library
- June 25** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- June 27** Men's Group, 10 am, Annex Small Meeting Room
- June 28** Pride Sunday, 10 am, Sanctuary
- July 1** Care Community, 10 am, Annex Library
- July 2** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room