



First Congregational

United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

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Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

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Still Speaking



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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 15th of each month.

About the cover: Saturday June 13, Summer on the Commons, children dash through bubbles and dance across the labyrinth during our first community concert of the summer.

PASTOR'S POST

Pastor Adam Droscha

Christ Consciousness Citizens

In the last decade or so I've been compelled by the teachings of Father Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and teacher of contemplative faith. Rohr's teaching is wide in its scope, ranging on everything from the personal ego work to navigating Enneagram types, Catholic social teaching to the message of the Old Testament prophets. One area of his work that has been influential on me is his teaching on Christ consciousness – how the teachings of Jesus go beyond mere religious assent or spiritual belief, but actually shape our consciousness into a new way of seeing and experiencing the world. Rohr teaches that contemplative faith and Christ consciousness draw us out of dualistic thinking like that of partisan politics, binary ideologies, or black and white religious dogma. In my master's program at Northern Theological Seminary, I became familiar with the work of theologian Stanley Hauerwas whose work is similarly wide ranging, though in different areas than Rohr and from a notably Protestant perspective. One area of Hauerwas' work is in Christian social ethics, especially in discipling Christians to navigate modern life and culture as distinctly Christ-like citizens, which in many cases, he argues, sets us at odds with common historical, ideological, economic, and political assumptions therein.

I think of the work of both of these theologians and Christian thought leaders as we observe the United States' semiquincentennial. All anniversaries are reflections on past and present – present informed by the past, and the history and narratives that connect them. As we reach this 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and our country's founding, we are reflecting on that event and all that followed, as well as the history and stories we tell about ourselves and how they

inform us today. Rohr and Hauerwas come to mind because their work, in light of events like the semiquincentennial, give us pause to ask: how are we Christ consciousness people in this history? How are we Christ-like citizens in this history? At this present moment, how are we Christ consciousness citizens as we arrive to this anniversary of our country? I think these are appropriately disruptive questions for us this 4th of July.

Starting with the United States' past and the history we know of it, I believe we are already uncomfortable as Christ consciousness citizens. Even if we believe that declaring independence from Great Britain, fighting a war to secure that independence, and establishing a new constitutionally grounded democratic republic was a just cause, it is surrounded by many years and events of injustice. Conquering and stealing land from indigenous Americans who many cases were not only displaced but murdered in great numbers, the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade, and most of a history in which women did not have equal rights are easy examples which problematize a reading of our history as Christ consciousness citizens. At the time I am writing this, The New York Times reports that ICE has arrested up to 10,000 immigrants within the last five days. In the last two years a conscious effort has been made through efforts of both federal and state governments to limit voting access for lawful citizens. In recent years the Christian nationalist movement has moved closer and closer to mainstream politics, encouraging and enabling such efforts as those mentioned above while white-washing the above historical examples, among others.

None of which is to ignore the history and many stories of justice and freedom of our country, let alone the freedoms and comforts many enjoy. We are blessed with many figures and examples of great courage, love, and liberation. Our history is complicated that way, as is our present. For us, dear congregation and followers of the Jesus way, it's doubly complicated. We are not only citizens of these United States, we are citizens of this invisible and upside kingdom of God. We are not only

readers and interpreters of a national history, we are readers and interpreters of a spiritual and religious history that began long before July 4th, 1776. We are not only United States conscious people, we are Christ consciousness people. I believe this identity requires us to see both dark and light parts of our history, to both recognize how far we've come and to call out regression, to both recognize our citizenship in the United States and to not be entirely comfortable with it.

Being Christ consciousness citizens should always disrupt our dualistic, binary, and black and white thinking not only about current issues, but about historical narratives we are most comfortable with. Being Christ consciousness citizens should challenge us to think not only about what is good and just for 'me,' but what is good and just for our neighbors, especially those on the economic and social margins. As a point about history and observing this anniversary, our Christ consciousness citizenship should challenge us to think about whether our historical narratives seriously consider what was just and unjust for all groups in the past. Importantly on this milestone holiday, being Christ consciousness citizens should challenge our sense of loyalty. Are we loyal to an idea of America and to citizenship to that end, or are we first, foremost, and foundationally loyal to loving God and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves?

I do not think that being a citizen of the United States and being a Christ consciousness citizens are inherently opposed; I don't think it's as simple as that. Nor do I think being an American is coterminous with being a Christian; that would be a problem of both identity and idolatry. I believe Christ consciousness illuminates a new way of being citizens in any country where we pray for our enemies and those who persecute us, we see the inherent worth and goodness of every person regardless of their status as citizens of one nation or another, and we see that God's love and communion in Christ transcends all historical narrative or national identities.

SUMMERTIME FUN

Amy Frost

The Concerts on the Commons are back for summer 2026! Fresh Pict kicked us off in style and Baseline band had the crowd up and dancing to a variety of familiar favorites! We hope you can join us for our next concerts, July 11 (John Nulf, Community Jazz Band) and August 8 (Open Mic Night, 100 Proof). At our upcoming concert we will have salty and sweet snacks for sale, cash please. We will be accepting donations of canned food at this month's concert.



We tried something new for Charlotte Celebrates this year: hosting a Kids' Creation Station. Kids could decorate cookies, explore with bubbles, and paint with monster trucks. It doesn't get much more fun than bubbles and unlimited sprinkles!



OUTREACH MOMENT

Mary Normand, Chair

Giving Tree:

June: We collected Eatran tokens and gas/food gift cards for folks stopping into the church office needing help. I do not have a final count on how much we collected. Some folks gave money, as of today we had \$165 which will go toward Eatran tokens. Thank you all for your generosity.

July: We will be collecting nonperishable food items in brown bags the entire month. Bags can be placed in the church or the Annex in the alcove by the bathrooms. Brown bags were handed out the first Sunday in July.

August: We will be building a pyramid of toilet paper in the front of the church to donate to Helping Hands. Let's see how high we can go!

Loads of Love: Our next (and last) Loads of Love is August 15. Loads of Love is a program where folks go to Quality Dairy Laundromat from 8-11 and pay for folks laundry. This has become a very much needed program as folks struggle with everyday expenses. Our church is there three times a year. There are three other churches plus two other groups that participate in the program. At this time, another group is there once each month.

Helping Hands has been in the process of having a large addition put onto their building. They are very close to having it totally funded. Outreach is giving them \$1000 to help them complete their funding.

Concert on the Square: Outreach is once again cosponsoring a concert on the Courthouse Square lawn. These happen on Thursday evenings. Ours is August 6 this year. We will be having our famous homemade ice cream sandwiches. We will be baking cookies and dipping ice cream on August 4 at 10am and assembling the sandwiches on August 5 at 11am. If you want to help with handing them out, we meet at the church at 6pm on the 6th.

Recently I was communicating, via email, with someone who has been coming to church, about one of our Giving Trees. I was thanking them for their donation and mentioned how Outreach works very hard to reach out into the community and help those we can. I indicated we have a very giving congregation that makes it possible for us to do all we do. Their response was: "I have witnessed the unity of those who attend and how each helps out in many different ways. The Presence is strong when I attend on Sundays. It is like a combination of power and peace, joy and true compassion and empathy for all. Thank you all for being who you are". We are doing good things here and folks recognize it.

Stayed Tuned
Mary Normand, Chair

THANK YOU!

Amy Frost, Church Life Chair

Volunteers—you hear us asking for volunteers frequently. Our church has a wide variety of events and all of them run on volunteers. Whether we are hosting something at church or reaching out into the community, we can't make it happen without people.

So, a huge THANK YOU to all of you who step up and volunteer. The weekend of June 13-14 is a great example. We had a wedding and reception, a concert on the Commons, and a booth at Pride on the Farm for two days, not to mention the evening worship service. Volunteers made all of these happen, some simultaneously. So, if you see a plea for volunteers and think, I wonder if I should sign up. The answer is yes, if you are able. As a bonus, you'll probably have a great time.

If you ever wonder why we participate so many activities outside the church, here are a few comments from the Pride on the Farm event:

"We've been thinking about church. We'd like to try yours."

"Mom, these folks are giving away books. I want to go to that church."

"We've seen the signs at your church. It feels good."

"These are great books, thank you for giving them away."

"You make us feel brave."

Let's keep tending our corner of the garden—together.



Watch for a new event on August 29. **Play Music on the Porch Day - Play for Peace.** We will be hosting a potluck at 5:30 (of course there is food) and then we will be singing at 7. Put it on your calendar and plan to bring friends. If you would like more info for this worldwide event, go to PlayMusicOnthePorchDay.com.

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	Summer Hiatus until Sept.	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	Summer Hiatus until end of July	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, Annex LMR	Mary Kohmuench, mtheoharis@gmail.com
Women's Fellowship	As Needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net
Men's Group	Summer Hiatus	Larry Taylor, TaylorLT1752@att.net



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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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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

- July 6** Church Life, 6:30 pm, Annex Small Meeting Room
- July 9** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex LMR
- July 9** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- July 11** Concert on the Commons (John Nulf, Community Jazz Band), 6 pm, Commons
- July 12** Outdoor Service, 10 am, Congregational Commons
- July 12** The Evening Liturgy, 6 pm, Sanctuary
- July 13** Blanche Moyer Circle, 5:15 pm, Bess Fulton Room
- July 15** Newsletter Submissions Deadline
- July 16** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex LMR
- July 16** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room
- July 16** Church Council Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room
- July 18** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Lounge
- July 20** Communications, 6:30 pm, Annex Small Meeting Room
- July 23** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex LMR
- July 23** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- July 26** Worship Team, 11:30 am, Annex Small Meeting Room
- July 26** The Evening Liturgy, 6 pm, Sanctuary
- July 30** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex LMR
- August 1** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Lounge