



First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Charlotte, Michigan

September 2026
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Never place a
period where God
has placed a comma

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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 at Editor@uccCharlotte.org. Submissions deadline is the 15th of each month.

About the cover: A view from the front of the sanctuary during the Evening Liturgy with our contemporary music directors Morgan Englehart and John Nulf leading the congregation in a song.

Read it Again
PASTOR'S POST

Pastor Adam Droscha

Our 'Be the Church' Rally

I dread making posterboards for anything; I always have. Even as a kid when I liked to draw and never shied away from an opportunity to have the spotlight, I hated making presentational posterboard displays. Whether it was for a junior high science fair project, or one of those insufferable history timeline presentations, inevitably several of my classmates' posterboards looked way cooler than mine, which really got under my skin especially after I had spent so much time writing, tracing, coloring, and aligning. I came to despise posterboard projects even more when I discovered later in life that many of my classmates' stunning posterboards were actually made by their parents.

And yet when we get to Rally Sunday every year, my heart softens. A sense of nostalgia springs up in me when I think about all of us gathering as a group around our important projects to share about what we do and why. It throws me back to those feelings of enchantment around a new school year. I even look forward to seeing the posterboard displays, knowing they look better than anything I could hope to come up with.

What really stands out to me about our Rally Sunday festivities every year is how it's a little, intentional celebration about the ways we embody our mission to 'be the church.' We're a creative church body with many ideas and methods for expressing ourselves, serving our community, becoming more hospitable, and living the common life together. When I look around the Bess Fulton room on Rally Sunday, I'm reminded of how life in Christ and life together is supposed to be dynamic and fun. It's too easy for church to become stale, stagnant, and stuck in one mode of expression. Churches both as institutions and bodies of faith should be alive and active in many ways.

I'm thankful that our church does not just talk about 'being the church.' I'm thankful that 'being the church' for us looks like having an art team, a team dedicated to social justice and activism, regular bar outings to talk about deep ideas and questions, a women's group that's been around for the better part of a century, a team dedicated to the care and welfare of our congregants, multiple Bible studies, and plenty more. And I'm grateful to all of you not just for these teams, or just for staying active and making our church look cool, or for your posterboards. I'm grateful to all of you for seriously and consistently and joyfully embodying the mission to 'be the church.'

THIRD HEAVEN; THE ESOTERIC WAY

Curt Scott



Homer's *Odyssey* has been one of the hottest movie tickets this summer. I know the book well thus I expect to wince at the movie. Besides being endlessly fantastical, the *Odyssey* is a cautionary tale about what happens when powerful men lose their minds: entire civilizations collapse. That's biblical truth.

For something like 50 years, knowing Homer and his book has helped me understand the Old Testament. In plain terms, Homer and Hesiod, and Isaiah, Amos and priestly authors of the Torah were near contemporaries: around 800 BCE. All are globally famous for doing nothing less than rekindling the art of language.

More importantly, both *Odyssey* and the early Torah sought the same cultural end: to bind a people through their ancient story, as best they knew it.

Neither work is historically true. Both were purposeful depictions of what two different ancient people thought they knew about their more ancient ancestors. Both works explain to children why their parents do and say what they do.

In the ancient world, everyone believed bushes speak and gods fly among the clouds. Ghosts intervene, chariots operate like helicopters and when you talk to a god, they answer, though rarely as wished. Physics was flexible.

Jesus defied physical reality just as a fisherman would expect, floating like Athena over the sea to rescue his beloved. He fixed a party by turning water into wine and willed dead guys to walk out of their own tombs, including himself. Dead Jesus floated through a closed door to let Thomas physically examine his crusty wounds.

After 14 years of preaching, Paul finally confessed it took being gobsmailed then taken to "the Third Heaven" by Jesus himself to change his evil ways. That was about twenty years after Thomas gave Jesus the finger. Revelation is about a banished man who, pulled across the veil, learns that linear time is not a thing over there. We still don't grasp the implications. Jesus' world was esoteric.

Around the birth of Protestantism, esoteric communications across that veil and interventions by saints became ludicrous, sinful notions to Protestants. Torture became the punishment for Christians, by Christians for mentioning that one has had an esoteric experience with God. The Body of Christ stopped listening because the answer was now an impossibility, at least until the Rapture of their own invention.

Esotericism ran for its life in the American Colonies. What happened to Paul was declared an offense to proper sensibilities, grounds for the noose and later the asylum. The first of God's saints tortured by colonial Christians for communicating with God (and knowing more about the bible than the preacher) was Anne Hutchinson.

The idea of praying while smearing mud on the eyes of a blind man, followed by the miracle of sight, by 1620, was anathema to Protestantism. Christians afterward read then forgot that Jesus not only instructed his disciples to keep up with the esoteric communications with God through mending God's people, but that there is nothing in the text that says they

didn't because they couldn't.

Miracles were a thing. Get over yourselves.

Early Christians wrote about their esoteric experiences. Many of the Gnostic Gospels illustrate the intensity of ancient faith and expectation, as does the Book of Revelation. If long-dead Jesus could whisper Paul into Third Heaven to see the damage he'd caused and to gain eternity, who wouldn't want to be next?

This fall I will offer glimpses into the world of talking bushes and informative ghosts, satyrs and other non-human entities quite real to early Christians. As always, I will take the occasional break from theology and history to highlight someone living who sounds a lot like Jesus.

Shalom,
Curt Scott

THANK YOU!

Sher Brown

Thank you to everyone who organized and gathered for my retirement party! I truly loved every minute of it. The food was delicious and, diabetic or not, I ate a bit of everything that was on those tables. I'm very happy that most everything was used for the funeral Saturday or church on Sunday. Everyone knows that the ladies of our church are all chefs living in one small town that share their skills at every event. I am sure everyone enjoyed every morsel. I have been blessed and I feel highly favored to have worked with such a giving congregation these many years.

I already miss everyone!

Grace,
Sher

OUTREACH MOMENT

Mary Normand, Chair

Giving Tree:

April: \$750 in donations to Justice League of Greater Lansing.

June: \$335 in gift cards were donated. \$180 in Eatran tokens were purchased. These will be used for folks stopping into the Church Office seeking help.

July: 42 bags of nonperishable food were collected and given to Helping Hands.

For the next few months:

September: CROP Walk.

October: Winter Coat Project.

November: Socks for the unhoused.

December: Christmas Families and hats, mittens, gloves.



Concert on the Square: The homemade ice cream sandwiches were well received and much appreciated by the folks at the concert.

Loads of Love: This was our last Loads of Love for the year. We spent \$499.25.

CROP Walk: The official day for this event is October 4, however we will be taking donations through the month of September as this month's Giving Tree will be collecting funds for CROP which will be directly benefiting Helping Hands, Siren Shelter, and St. Vincent DePaul food pantries. We also supported the popcorn sale from Cravings Gourmet Popcorn, located in Old Town Lansing. Half of their sales goes to CROP Walk.

Winter Coat Project: If you are cleaning out and have a gently used winter jacket or coat please consider donating it. If you see a good sale on coats, please consider purchasing one. ECFC particularly needs teen-age sizes and larger plus sizes.

Neighbors in Need: This is scheduled for October 4. Donations for this can be made the entire month of November.

Eaton Clothing and Furniture (ECFC) needs queen size sheets. If you have extra or if you come across a good sale, you might think of them.

Remember: To Love is to Act - Victor Hugo

Stay Tuned:

Mary Normand, Chair

50TH YEAR CELEBRATION

Judi Cates, Celestial Bells

Celestial Bells Handbell Choir

Our church Handbell Choir has been active since 1976. This is our 50th anniversary in 2026! What an amazing accomplishment for our Bell Choir. Yes, there have been times we did not ring for one reason or another, the last was during the years of Covid. But we came back!



Did you know a handbell is a tuned metal bell designed to be held by a handle and rung by moving the wrist so that an internal hinged clapper strikes the inside shell. Played in coordinated ensembles or "choirs," each musician typically controls two or three specific pitch notes to create collective harmony.

A little information about how we started. In 1976 the family and friends of Marie Ripley (*Mother-in-law of our Shirley Ripley*) purchased the first two octaves of Schulmerich handbells. It was our beginning of a long list of accomplishments, many directors and ringers. We started to outgrow our two octaves and embarked on a long journey to increase our technics, and we increased our set of handbells to five octaves of handbells and three octaves of hand chimes and a lovely windchime! We purchased handbell tables, foam for tables and table drapes.

In addition we were able to add refurbishment and re-tuning as well as

the equipment thanks to many generous people of our church.

Friends that purchased bells in honor of loved ones:

Shirley Ripley

Dennis and Judi Cates

George and Jeannette Field

Women's Fellowship

Chris and Howard Reist

Four Musical Mystery Dinner Theaters

In addition to the purchase of bells and equipment we have raised money and donations from many to have bells refurbished over the last 50 years.

We are thankful to all who continue to encourage us to ring and to all those who have been a "Ringer" over the years. It is the love of this congregation and community that we ring.

Sincerely,

Celestial Bell Choir

(Your friends, the ding-a-lings of the Celestial Bells)



CROP WALK

Deb Cogswell

It is time once again for the annual Charlotte CROP Walk for Hunger. This year's Walk will be on **October 4th** at Bennett Park.

For our September Giving Tree we are collecting funds for CROP which will directly benefit Helping Hands, Siren Shelter and St. Vincent DePaul food pantries.

You can make a donation by leaving it in the jar at the front of the Sanctuary or in the church office. For more information see Deb Cogswell. The need for food resources in our community is greatly needed this year. Thank you for your generous donation.

ART MINISTRY CORNER

Sandra Fields, Chair

The Art Ministry Team welcomes pastel artist Pat Bursch.

She is a mid-Michigan Artist who is known for her work with soft pastels in a variety of different subjects, themes and styles. Pat states that she is captivated by the beauty and wonder of life and that her personal style and technique is “painterly” and emotionally expressive and that this work is sometimes a combination of Realism and Surrealism. She says “My Surrealistic Art is an expression of what is going on in our society, whether it is environmental or social issues, human conditions, or spiritual or everyday experiences. I am moved to produce works that range from serious to humorous. I have a whimsical sense of humor, and it is expressed well in the surrealistic style.”



Pat does her own framing from cutting the glass to making her own frames which are finished to become part of the art piece. Pat's work has shown at the Cadillac Art Fair, Art Fest in Old Town, Lansing, Lansing Pride, and Burkley Art Bash.

Pat's work will be on display in the Church Annex from September through October. The public was invited to meet the Artist in person during a reception on August 30th in the Annex.



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 November 7 with opportunity for church family to shop 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
- cook or bake
- have vintage costume jewelry to donate
- have good used items for Attic Treasures



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

Craft sessions with planned ideas will be publicized, watch your emails. We will pickle beets and process butternut squash the later part of September, so kitchen help is welcomed, watch your emails. Jewelry donation boxes are placed in the Annex and Bess Fulton Room basement for your donations of grandma's or auntie's or your own repurposed jewelry.

An 'oldie but goodie' event in Bazaars past was the Attic Treasures room. We are bringing it back for the 90th year celebration. Our own antique vendors, Kathy and Fred Fuhr are coordinating it. If you have good used items to donate, drop them off in the old youth room, on the table and/or contact Kathy Fuhr at (517) 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 assisting several other charitable agencies/projects in the community.

CRAFTS FROM THE CONGREGATION

Amy Krizek

Friday, November 6th

9:00 am — 5:30 pm

Saturday, November 7th

9:00 am — 1:00 pm

**90th
Year!**

Holiday Bazaar

Crafts, Baked Goods, Vintage Jewelry, Attic Treasurers, Pies, Cookies, Pickled Beets & more

Conversation Café Friday, 9:30 am — 1 pm

Family Dinner 4:00 pm — 6:30 pm

WHAT YOU CAN DO IN SEPTEMBER:

Get Ready!

- **Start Crafting!** Your favorite crafts are a large part of our profit. Paint, sew, dry flowers, wood working, glass, felt, beads. If you need ideas, supplies or assistance, a crafty group meets Thursday mornings in the Annex large meeting room 9 am until noon. Just drop in! Tags for pricing available at the Bazaar display in the Bess Fulton Room and at Rally Sunday.
- **Donate Jewelry:** Your unwanted vintage or costume jewelry is a big seller at our Bazaar. Two drop boxes (shoe boxes covered in gold paper) are available in the annex and basement at church.
- **Attic Treasurers Collection:** Drop your good used items in the old youth room any time.
- **Food products:** Jams, jellies, pickles, and dried garden herbs are all great sellers at our bazaar. Be sure to make enough to donate to Bazaar.



STAY CONNECTED

Kaleigh Slot, Communications Editor

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*Watch Virtual
Worship*



*Join our Online
Community*



*Receive Event
Updates*

Want to receive weekly updates?

Accidentally unsubscribe?



**Scan the QR Code and fill out
the form to be added to our
email list!**



When We Come Together . . .

Sunday Worship, 10 am in person, on Facebook @ucc48813, and online at ucccharlotte.org

The Evening Liturgy, our contemporary worship service, 6 pm in person and online

Learning Opportunities	Meeting Times	Contact Person
Words and Tangents	Sun, 8 am, Annex/Library	Jan Shall, JanShall00@gmail.com
Godly Play	Sundays, 10:20 am	Lexi Konietzko, akonietzko129@gmail.com
Devotional Bible Study	Mondays, 10 am and 4 pm	Pastor Adam, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Prayer Group	1st /3rd Thurs, 10:30 am	Sandra Field, yourstrulycollection@hotmail.com
Pub Theology	2nd/4th Thurs, Acapulco	Pastor Adam, pastor@uccCharlotte.org
Adult Bible Study	Tuesdays, 6:30 pm, Annex LMR	Curt Scott, CurtisJScott@hotmail.com
Coffee Hour with a Pastor	Evelyn Bay, Tuesday, 10 am	Pastor Adam, pastor@uccCharlotte.org

Music

Bell Choir Rehearsal	Wednesdays, 4 pm, Sanctuary	Jenny Bohms, rjbohms@yahoo.com
Choir Rehearsal	Wednesdays, 7 pm, Lounge	Ramona Kime, Ramona.Kime@gmail.com

Committees & Groups

Art Ministry	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	1st Monday 6:30, Annex 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	2nd Sun, 11:30 am, LMR	Mary Kohmuench, mtheocharis@gmail.com
Women's Fellowship	As Needed	Mary Normand, DavidNormand@att.net
Men's Group	Hiatus	Larry Taylor, TaylorLT1752@att.net



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

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
106 South Bostwick - Charlotte, MI 48813
office@uccCharlotte.org www.ucccharlotte.org

Find us on
Facebook & Instagram



Calendar Highlights

- Sept 2** Care Community, 10 am, Annex Library
- Sept 3** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Sept 3** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room
- Sept 5** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Lounge
- Sept 8** Art Team, 11 am, Art Room
- Sept 10** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Sept 10** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- Sept 13** Rally Sunday, 11:30 am, Bess Fulton Room
- Sept 13** Social & Environmental Justice Team, 11:30 am, Annex LMR
- Sept 13** The Evening Liturgy, 6 pm, Sanctuary
- Sept 14** Blanche Moyer Circle, 5:15 pm, Bess Fulton Room
- Sept 15** **Newsletter Submissions Deadline**
- Sept 17** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Sept 17** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room
- Sept 17** Council Meeting, 6:30 pm, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Sept 19** Prayer Shawl Group, 9 am, Lounge
- Sept 19** Cozy Congregational Creators, 10 am, Art Room
- Sept 20** Outreach Team, 11:30 am, Annex Library
- Sept 21** Communications, 6:30 pm, Annex Small Meeting Room
- Sept 22** Art Team, 11 am, Art Room
- Sept 24** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Sept 24** Pub Theology, 7 pm, Acapulco Mexican Grill
- Sept 27** The Evening Liturgy, 6 pm, Sanctuary
- Oct 1** Crafting for Bazaar, 10 am, Annex Large Meeting Room
- Oct 1** Prayer Group, 10:30 am, Small Prayer Room

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