

February, 2025

Embracing people at every age and every stage of life, helping them to become the most loving version of themselves possible.

First Congregational United Church of Christ

218 W. Second Street
Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-5726

www.firstuccgaylord.org

Pastor: Rev. Greg Watling
pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org

Moderator: Maggie Wallin
margaretwallin@msn.com

Finance: Jessica Benoit
finance@firstuccgaylord.org

**Communications
Coordinator:**
Stephanie Kalember
office@firstuccgaylord.org

Church Service: Sunday, 10 am



Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Two: A Transforming Movement

The Vitality of Movements

Father Richard Rohr summarizes a pattern of five stages of change that have taken place in religious and cultural institutions. He calls these stages the "Five M's": human, movement, machine, monument, and memory.

It seems that many great things in history start with a single *human* being. □ If a person says something full of life that names reality well, the message often moves to the second stage of becoming a *movement*. □ That's the period of greatest energy. The church is at its greatest vitality as the "Jesus Movement," and the institution is merely the vehicle for that movement. No

single person can ever control the movement itself through any theology, doctrine, or dogma. We cannot control the blowing of the Spirit. The movement stage is always very exciting, creative, and also risky.

It's risky because God's movement in history is larger than any denomination, any culture, or any tradition's ability to verbalize it. We feel out of control in this stage, and yet why would anybody want it to be anything less? Would we respect and love a God that we could control? Would we really respect a church that presumed it could predict and contain God's actions? I don't think so, yet that's what so much immature religion seems to want—control over God by worshiping and talking about God “correctly.” So, we move rather quickly out and beyond the risky movement stage to the machine stage. This is predictable and understandable, even if unfortunate in some ways.

The institutional or *machine* stage of a movement will necessarily be a less-alive manifestation. This isn't bad, although it's always surprising for those who see church as an end in itself instead of merely a vehicle for the original vision. When we don't realize a machine's limited capacities, we try to make it into something more than it is. We make it a *monument*, a closed system operating inside of its own, often self-serving, logic. By then, it's very hard to take risks for God or for gospel values.

Eventually this monument and its maintenance and self-preservation become ends in themselves. It's easy just to step on board and worship at a monument without ever knowing why or longing for God ourselves. There's no hint of knowing that we are chosen and beloved by God, who invites us to an inner journey. In this state, religion is merely an excuse to remain unconscious, holding on to a *memory* of something that must once have been a great adventure. I'm afraid that Christianity is no longer life itself, but actually a substitute for life or, worse, an avoidance of life. The secret is to know how to keep in touch with the human and movement stages without being naïve about the necessity of some machines and the inevitability of those who love monuments. We must also be honest; all of us love monuments when they are monuments to our human, our movement, or our machine.

[Read this meditation on cac.org.](http://cac.org)

2025

February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><i>First Congregational UCC of Gaylord</i></p>				<p>Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study, 7 PM</p>	<p>Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM</p>	1
				<p>2 Worship 10 AM</p>	<p>3 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Reaching In @ noon</p>	4
<p>9 Worship 10 AM Snowbird Zoom!</p>	<p>10 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Fellows hip Hall in use 2:30 - 4:30 PM Reaching In @ noon</p>	11	<p>12 Trustees, 7 PM Ash Wednesday, Church open 5-6 PM</p>	<p>13 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study, 7 PM</p>	<p>14 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM</p>	15
<p>16 Worship 10 AM</p>	<p>17 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Reaching Out, 7 PM VIA ZOOM</p>	<p>18 Lunch Group, noon</p>	<p>19 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Trustees 7 PM VIA ZOOM</p>	<p>20 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study, 7 PM</p>	<p>21 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM</p>	22
<p>23 Worship 10 AM</p>	<p>24 Gratitude Group, 6 AM</p>	25	<p>26 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Church Book Club 1 PM</p>	<p>27 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study, 7 PM</p>	<p>28 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM</p>	

BOOK STUDY

BEGINNING

9

January

Thursday

7:00 PM

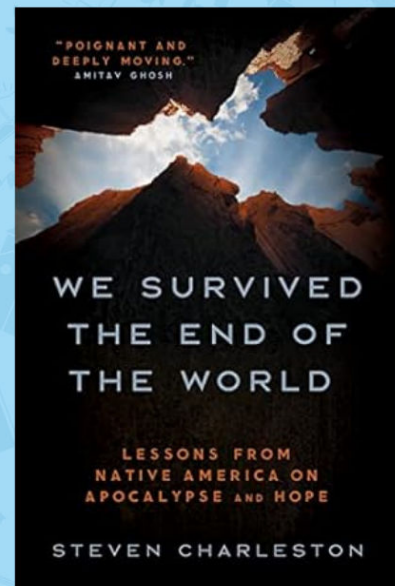
Several weeks ago, Pastor Greg introduced us to the book *We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope*, by Steven Charleston. Now, we get a chance to study the book ourselves! Beginning January 9, meeting each Thursday night for eight weeks at 7pm on Zoom.

Anyone is welcome to join whenever you can come. There is no need to be there every week. Mary Fox will help Pastor Greg facilitate the course.

Here's the link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8494](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84943982197)

[3982197](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84943982197)





THE REFUGUE

116 E. 5th St.
Gaylord, MI 49735
989.350.8231
www.otsegorefuge.org

December 31, 2024

Pastor Greg Watling
Gaylord First Congregational United Church
Of Christ
218 W. 2nd St.
Gaylord, MI 49735

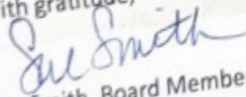
Dear Pastor Greg:

As you know, The Refuge is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization under the Internal Revenue Code dedicated to providing temporary emergency shelter to those in need in Otsego County. Your congregation's recent amazing gift of \$237 is already at work. Since opening October 28, we have provided more than 93 people, including 30 kids under 18, in 46 households, with 377 nights of safe, warm housing. Your member's continued generosity has helped to give these households the opportunity for real change in their lives. With the help of generous donors like you, we are hopeful to be able to help all who need our services before we close on June 1.

You have helped time and again to make possible our ability to serve homeless folks. Please share our gratitude with your members.

Please know you are all very much appreciated and accept our gratitude for your generosity and commitment to making Otsego County a caring and welcoming place for all our residents.

With gratitude,


Sue Smith, Board Member
The Refuge in Otsego County

**Gaylord Community Schools and the Gaylord Band Boosters
cordially invite you to the Third Annual**

Fundraising Dinner & Silent Auction Thursday, March 20, 2025

**This fun filled evening will feature musical entertainment
of the Gaylord High School chamber ensembles
and a dinner prepared by the GHS
Culinary Arts Department.**

Doors open at 5:30 PM, Dinner served at 6:30 PM

Tickets: \$25.00 per person and must be purchased in advance.

Tickets available through March 2nd, at
GHS front Office, 90 Livingston Blvd.

Table Sponsors, silent auction donations
and monetary donations are being
accepted.

All funds raised will go towards repair
or replacement of aging musical
instruments, uniforms and other
GCS band related needs.

Thanks to our generous sponsors & donors of
our 2023 and 2024 dinner, we reached
our goal and replaced the GHS
Marching band uniforms in Fall 2024!

Questions?

Contact: gaylordbandboosters@gmail.com

Or Amber at (989) 390-5019.

*The Gaylord Band Boosters are a
501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation*

GAYLORD BAND
BOOSTERS, INC.



Updated



Meeting Links

New Zoom Link for Trustees: Going forward, the long-term Zoom link for Trustees' meetings is this: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84006659065>

New Reaching Out meeting link: Like the Trustees' link, Zoom was persnickety this week and Reaching out has a new link going forward: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86904855449>

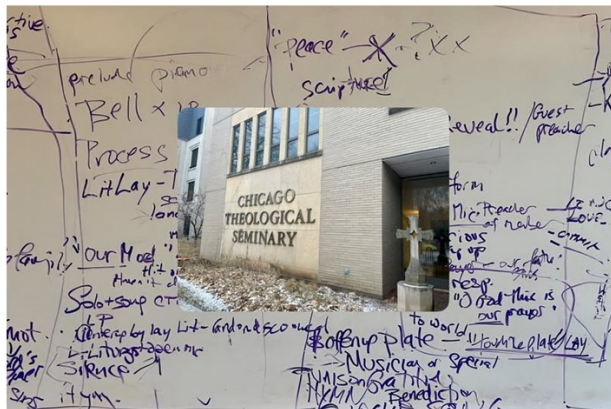


To care for the UCC pastors and churches in Michigan

[Having trouble viewing this email? Open this email as a webpage.](#)

My January Intensive

by Lillian Daniel
Michigan Conference Minister



This has been an intense January and it is not over yet. From the shifting of political power in this inflamed nation, burning houses in California, freezing roads in Michigan, to the fears of God’s precious children who see their immigration status threatened, their genders mocked, their economic lives ignored. In the midst of it all, we still stop to remember the Christian witness of Martin Luther King Jr, his timeless words and also his sacrifice, in systems of evil where words were as easily weaponized back then as they are today.

At times like this I go deeper with God, resisting my own temptation to ask for a few new words with which to speak my own truth to the people who already agree with me. Instead I dare to ask what gift the Church has to bring, as imperfect as we are and as imperfect as we have always been.

Earlier in January, as the cruel California fires were burning, I was in freezing cold Chicago teaching a weeklong January intensive course on the History, Polity and Theology of the United Church Christ at Chicago Theological Seminary.

This has been an intense January and it is not over yet. From the shifting of political power in this inflamed nation, burning houses in California, freezing roads in Michigan, to the fears of God's precious children who see their immigration status threatened, their genders mocked, their economic lives ignored. In the midst of it all, we still stop to remember the Christian witness of Martin Luther King Jr, his timeless words and also his sacrifice, in systems of evil where words were as easily weaponized back then as they are today.

At times like this I go deeper with God, resisting my own temptation to ask for a few new words with which to speak my own truth to the people who already agree with me. Instead I dare to ask what gift the Church has to bring, as imperfect as we are and as imperfect as we have always been.

Earlier in January, as the cruel California fires were burning, I was in freezing cold Chicago teaching a weeklong January intensive course on the History, Polity and Theology of the United Church Christ at Chicago Theological Seminary. Nowadays, almost all teaching at CTS happens online. Our class was the exception to the rule, meeting in person, in a classroom, all day for five days. For my enrolled students, whose street addresses ranged from East Coast Massachusetts to West Coast Washington, that week was their first time "on campus," their first time inside the beautiful building that was imaginatively designed for a future hybrid learning world that was about to come sooner than the architects predicted when the 2011 cornerstone was laid, in a pandemic we didn't see coming.

Against our will, and shocked into action, our seminaries and our churches learned that some of what we could do in person, we could also do online, when we try, when we commit and when we must. And we did. We sought to connect in circumstances where there was no connection before.

And in the year after, our churches tried to take that learning with us, leaning into the combination of onsite and online connection, with hybrid community as our new salvation. As a pastor, in that first post-pandemic year, I coveted Chicago Theological Seminary's high-tech facility furnished with desks and screens, podiums up front and plugs at every seat, futuristically designed to do it all, in person or online, the perfect hybrid school to teach a hybrid church synchronicity.

And yet earlier this cold January, as I taught in-person in the seminary's heavenly high tech classrooms, I learned that for most of the year the building stays shiny, clean and mostly unused by staff, students and teachers,

who instead work hard and faithfully from much weirder spaces like kitchen tables, the back wall of a messy bedroom, the fast food restaurant with wifi when the kids are hollering at home, or perhaps they have that coveted pristine home office with tastefully inoffensive art, where the camera is carefully angled by inches toward a carefully curated book collection but a good foot away from the cat's overflowing litter box. I learned that even the hybrid courses, officially offered both onsite and on zoom, will morph after a few weeks into being solely online when the Chicago students stop attending classes in person, and join the other students who are showing up from around the world online, and the seminary naturally leans into being the best mostly online seminary they can be.

At this same moment in history, in the same Chicago neighborhood, another seminary around the corner has decided to lean into a distinctive identity of being mostly in person, and another seminary around the corner leans into being hybrid in new ways, all of them competing for the shrinking number of students who are even remotely interested in leading a shrinking number of churches.

Here they are, in person for my January intensive, students who had cross-enrolled for the class from a variety of seminaries, online or in person learners, all of them reminding me of the distance people will travel, over icy Chicago roads, across dead seas and over spotty wifi, just to learn about Jesus and hang out with a few of his friends.

Speaking for myself, I think a hybrid of online and onsite is the hardest medium of all to pull off and I admire those who are able to do it. As a leader, it always requires more technology, money, equipment, planning and people power than I expect. Therefore, as a participant, given my low expectations and my capacity for self-pity, I am always sure that my group was the one left out, whether I was in person or online.

You can imagine how much I loved and cherished that week-long intensive and I wanted to enshrine it. Like the seminaries surrounding me that week, I longed to lean into my own momentary strength, my own way of being and declare it correct, grant-worthy and God's will. But it was spending a week with students from different seminaries and different ways of learning that called me back to humility.

The online degree that mystifies and repels one person may be a gate of life-changing possibility for another. And the online offerings that bring people together from across the country through the miracle of technology may not be the answer for the person who has been called to drop their nets and follow Jesus to live, eat and learn on faraway shores.

In times of crisis, human institutions like the seminaries in Chicago, like our local faith gatherings, will end up leaning into what they feel they do best, or at least passably well. My prayer is that our churches do that and more. I pray that against all odds, they keep seeking God's will for how they can reach God's people, and leave the question of how all the other people do it up to Jesus, who will show up when, where and how he chooses.

And as for the news that is obviously fake to the person who blocks it and is too offended to read it but still feels qualified to post online about it...That same news outlet may be what pulls a family together to stick close, stay warm and celebrate in a house where the price of groceries competes daily with the price of heat. This is not the moment for individual Christians to pray to God for the right words, or for a better argument and the perfect scriptural seasoning with which to adorn our own already long held opinions. This is a time to ask what God wants to see from the body of Christ.

If there's one spiritual gift that the world most needs to see in the Church right now, it's humility, in the presence of others.

The future of the universe does not depend upon all human beings coming to an agreement on the one right way to do things, and neither does the future of the church.

Thanks be to God.

**The Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel, Michigan Conference Minister
2025 Preaching Schedule & Worship Visits**

February 9, 2025 Preach - Plymouth UCC, Grand Rapids

February 16, 2025 Preach - St. John's UCC, Grand Rapids

February 23, 2025 Preach - Park Congregational UCC, Grand Rapids

[LINK TO 2025 DATES](#)

Local churches can invite the Conference Minister
for a scheduled visit by contacting lisa@michucc.org

Thank you to the Church
family for all the lovely
Get Well cards to George
and our family the many
nice visits and, of course
the prayers and tender
words.

George hopes to come
home on Sat. Dec. 11th and
continue to rest and get
stronger.

The prayers have
helped him to get back
home.

Love to all and, God Bless
The Duns



Snowbird Zoom Coffee Hour!



In December, we began hosting a zoom coffee hour so that we might all have the opportunity to stay in touch with our snowbirds and others who are unable to travel to church. Anyone can join! For those at the church, we will set up a computer in Fellowship Hall just as fellowship starts. Via that computer, people will and have a chance to check in with friends.

This will occur on the second of the month (starting December 8 through April 12) at about 11:15 AM Eastern Time.

The zoom link will always be: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81144435007>

We hope you'll join us! The link will be shared in the weekly eblast in case you misplace it or you can ask Stephanie to print the QR code below. If you're unsure of how to use the code, Stephanie can help with that too!



For easy-access to the link, scan the QR code to the right. Open the camera on your cell phone, center the image in your view finder, and a yellow text box will show. Touch that text and it will take you to the Zoom.

If you choose to access the Zoom on your phone, it may be a good idea to download the Zoom app before you scan the QR code.





Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays:

- 3 Alan Trendera**
- 5 DeLayni Brown**
- 6 Joanie Sietsema**
- 7 Callie English**
- 7 Evelyn Pratt**
- 10 Margaret Hellenberg**
- 18 Aysia House**
- 27 Jay Anderson**

Anniversaries:

- 28 Jim & Vicky Rigney**



2025 Flower Schedule

January: *Margaret Hafner and Dave Henson*

February: *Margaret Hellenberg*

March: *Jeannine Wambold*

April: *Cathy Otto*

May: *Mary Evans*

June: *Joanie Sietsema*

July: *Helen Mate*

August: *Evelyn Pratt*

September: *Sallie Anderson*

October: *Vicky Rigney*

November: *Louanne Spearman*

December: *Christian Ed.*



~ In Our Prayers ~

During the month of February the UNA is holding the First Congregational UCC in Old Mission Congregational Church in prayer.

Family and friends of Roy Wolf – as they grieve his recent passing.

Family and Friends of Stacy Wright – as they mourn her recent passing. Visitation is scheduled for Friday, 1/31/25, 7-9 PM. A Celebration of Life will be held in the Gornick Auditorium at Gaylord High School on Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 11 AM.

Rick Boughner – who is recovering from recent surgery for a detached retina.

Bruce Smith – husband of choir participant, Jackie Smith, who is recovering at home after being hospitalized for pneumonia.

Mary Peterman – as she undergoes some medical testing.

George Dunn – as he is recovering from recent surgery and has returned to McReynolds Hall.

Trish Jachym – Prayers for healing, as she is dealing with some health concerns and will be returning to her home soon.

Jason Peterman – as he is dealing with a variety of health issues.

Gloria House's granddaughter, Madison Crawford – as she suffers from cataplexy in narcolepsy along with other neurological struggles. **Laura Bantens' partner, Chris Crumbaugh** – continued prayers for Laura and Chris as they adapt to the new medical issues Chris is facing.

Ariah House – is in remission! She is doing great.

The English Family – as they manage medical and family challenges.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Zoom Link for Trustees: Going forward, the long-term Zoom link for Trustees' meetings is this: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84006659065>

New Reaching Out meeting link: Like the Trustees' link, Zoom was persnickety this week and Reaching out has a new link going forward: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86904855449>

Book Study: Several weeks ago, Pastor Greg introduced us to the book *We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope*, by Steven Charleston. Now, we get a chance to study the book ourselves! Beginning January 9, meeting each Thursday night for eight weeks at 7 pm on Zoom. Anyone is welcome to join whenever you can come. There is no need to be there every week. Mary

Fox will help Pastor Greg facilitate the course. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84943982197>

Snowbird Coffee Hour Zoom: The Snowbird coffee hour will take place the second Sunday of the month at 11:15 AM from through April 12th. The next snowbird coffee hour will be on January 13th. This Zoom link will not change. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81144435007>

Snow Removal – We need people to help with the sidewalks throughout the winter. If you are interested in helping or have questions about what this work entails, please see Pastor Greg.

Join us for lunch! – a group of people from our church family meet for lunch on the third Tuesday of each month. Everyone is welcome! Please join us. The next scheduled lunch is this Tuesday, February 18th. Sign up in Fellowship Hall if you would like to attend. Throughout the winter, the lunch group will cancel if Gaylord Schools is closed.

Prayer Cards: In the pews, you will find prayer concern cards. When possible, to ensure accuracy in the bulletin and newsletter, please use the new cards.

Directory – If at any time you have changes, please forward them. You can access the most up-to-date directory via our weekly eblast or stop in the office for a copy. I appreciate your continued input.

Food Pantry – needs a few more volunteers. Please contact Don Storing if interested.



5 for 5

from your Reaching Out Team

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Basic support for the Michigan Conference and National Settings.

Collected on an ongoing basis

Received to date: \$378 (2024)

One Great Hour of Sharing

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic response.

Collected in March

Received to date: \$495 (2024)

Strengthen the Church

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, young and young adult ministers within conferences.

Collected around Pentecost

Received to date: \$329

Neighbors in Need

One third supports Council for American Indian Ministry and two-thirds is administered to Justice and Witness Ministers to support a variety projects. Due to Covid-19 the elected UCC officers have deemed this to be a priority.

Collected in October

Received to date: \$256 (2023)

Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired UCC ministers and lay employees and spouses.

Collected in December

Received to date: \$694 (2023)

Blanket Sunday, 2024

Received to date: \$936





Current Meeting Times

All are welcome to “attend” these meetings except where noted otherwise.

Reaching In* will meet the first Monday of each month at noon:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84945686588>

Reaching Out will meet the third Monday of each month at 7 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83640729481>

Council will meet the after worship. Check monthly calendar for Specific dates.:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85297662581>

Trustees will meet the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83432888287>

Bible Study meets Thursdays at 11am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>