



# January, 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

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**Pastor:** Rev. Greg Watling  
[pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org](mailto:pastorg@firstuccgaylord.org)

**Moderator:** Maggie Wallin  
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**Communications  
Coordinator:**  
Stephanie Kalember  
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Church Service: Sunday, 10 am



## Pastor's Column – December 2024 "New Year Brings Change"

All kinds of things change each New Year, but one thing remains the same: God loves us and continues to lead us forward in ways we don't always plan or understand. This year, I hope that we are able to make some inroads toward a strategic plan to map out where we think we would like to go in the coming years. More on that later.

Meanwhile, we will have a staff change this year. Stephanie Kalember has let me know that she will not be able to continue as our Communications Coordinator. With Jeff's retirement, they have many plans and some of those get in the way of her work here. Stephanie writes:

*I love this job. I love the people; I love working for you; and I love the creativity that this work has afforded me. Unfortunately, Jeff's retirement has shifted my priorities and, as much as I enjoy being on this side of our church's day-to-day workings, it is unfair of me to try to balance our travel and family plans with my commitments here.*

We love Stephanie, too, and it has been a pleasure to work with her. Stephanie will be in the position until we find a new person, hopefully by June 1. The Council will keep you updated as we make progress.

Stephanie will still be active in our church the way she always has, including sharing her musical talent. We wish her well in this new phase of life and thank her for her service.

If you have questions, please speak with me.

In Christ,  
Pastor Greg

# January

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2025			1 Gratitude Group, 6 AM	2 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	3 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	4
5 Worship 10 AM	6 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Reaching In @ noon Pastor Parish, 1 PM	7	8 Gratitude Group, 6 AM	9 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study (Zoom), 7 PM	10 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	11
12 Worship 10 AM Snowbird Zoom, 11:15 AM Council Meeting after church	13 Gratitude Group, 6 AM	14	15 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Trustees, 7 PM Pastor Greg out of office through 1/29/25	16 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study (Zoom), 7 PM	17 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	18 GHS concert benefitting the arts
19 Worship 10 AM	20 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Reaching Out, 7 PM	21 Lunch Group - sign up in Fellowship Hall	22 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Church Book Club, 1 PM	23 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study (Zoom), 7 PM	24 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	25
26 Worship 10 AM	27 Gratitude Group, 6 AM	28	29 Gratitude Group, 6 AM	30 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM Book Study (Zoom), 7 PM Pastor Greg returns	31 Gratitude Group, 6 AM Community Meal, 4 PM Talking Circle, 7-9 PM	



Thank you to all who gave gifts, sent cards, and wished us well this Christmas season. You are a blessing to us and we are grateful.

With love,  
Cindy, Pastor Greg, and family.

Thank you so very much for all you are. I'm infinitely grateful for your cards, Christmas greetings, gifts, and always loving hearts. It is such a gift to be apart of this church family.

Love you all!  
Stephanie



## MICHIGAN CONFERENCE



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Annual Meeting  
October 3-4, 2025

Two Day Event

The Westin  
Southfield Detroit



## Merry Christmas with New Grant Opportunities



### Opportunities for Funding for Clergy and Churches

When the 2025 Budget was approved at the Annual Meeting of the Michigan Conference UCC, it included the creation of four new categories of grants for clergy and churches.

In addition to long standing Vital Growth and Small Town/Rural funding, the Michigan Conference UCC webpage for **Scholarships and Grants** has been updated to include Emergency Grants for Clergy and Churches, AND there is now specific grant money

available for Sabbatical, Technology and Community Outreach support.

All requests for funding require completion of a **Unified Grant Form**. Non-emergency grant applications will be reviewed twice a year with deadlines of March 15 and September 15. Funding will be distributed in early April and early October.

Emergency requests will be dealt with as they are received.



**Out of Office**  
*Pastor Greg will be away*  
*January 15th - 29th*

For emergencies, please be in touch with Rev. Pam Lenartowicz (St. Andrew Episcopal church pastor) at 989-858-6199. You may also call Pastor Greg, but for part of this time he will be out of state.

# BOOK STUDY

BEGINNING

9

January

Thursday

7:00 PM

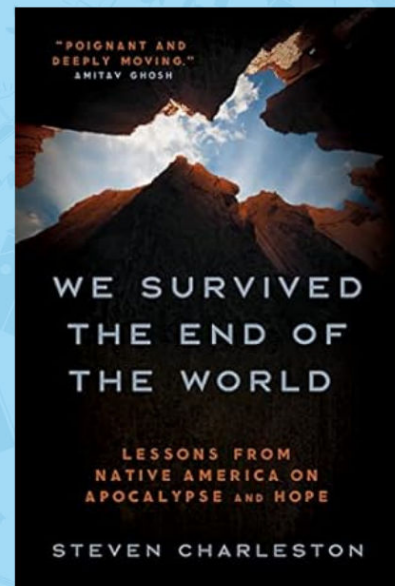
Several weeks ago, Pastor Greg introduced us to the book *We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope*, by Steven Charleston. Now, we get a chance to study the book ourselves! Beginning January 9, meeting each Thursday night for eight weeks at 7pm on Zoom.

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)



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# Celebrating A New ONA Church!



Please join us in welcoming First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Blanc, MI as a newly-certified Open and Affirming congregation! As ONA church #1900, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Blanc is now part of the largest and fastest-growing LGBTQ-affirming church movement in the world! We're proud of the congregation and grateful to the church's leadership for the hard work

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE



To care for the UCC clergy and churches in Michigan



**Christmas Blessings from your Conference Staff**

Dear Friends,

For my December Message this year, I have asked each of our staff members to share a special poem, inspirational quote or blessing for the season.

Mine is the poem, *The Work of Christmas* by Howard Thurman, which sweeps us through the Christmas Eve images and into the work that follows. Thurman refuses to allow the birth of Christ to get sugar-coated in sentimentality when in the second half of the poem, he calls us into the courageous work of the grown-up Jesus who risked it all, but leaves us with music.

I pray that amidst these offerings you will find something that blesses you, as you the churches of the Michigan Conference bless all of us.

Peace and Blessings,

**Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel**  
**Michigan Conference Minister**

There are more wishes and readings. To read them all, follow this link :  
<https://campaign.constantcontact.com/em/1103422986933/b490bf89-538b-4353-b7d6-136e1ea21453>





# 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:**

- 7 Diane House
- 9 Jill Brazelton
- 18 Joanna Morse
- 21 Larry Ward
- 21 Pastor Greg
- 22 Jeff Kalember
- 27 Rokko Jans



## 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 January the UNA is holding the  
Alpena [First](#) Congregational UCC in prayer*

### ~ In Our Prayers ~

**Mary Peterman** – as she undergoes some medical testing.

**George Dunn** – as he is recovering from recent surgery and is currently at McReynolds Hall.

**Jim, Vicky Rigney's brother** – as he recently had emergency heart surgery.

**Stacy Wright** – Stacy has been facing metastatic breast cancer. [She has begun a new chemotherapy cycle. All prayers are appreciated.](#)

**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. Additionally, they have discovered that she has white blood cells in her cornea, which results in pain and swelling. It will also affect her vision. She is still in need of our prayers.

**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.

*Prayer requests are received by the church office. Names will appear on the list for two months; please let the office know if this time needs to be extended, or if it is time to remove a name*



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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Snowbird Coffee Hour Zoom:** The Snowbird coffee hour will take place the second Sunday of the month at 11:15 AM from through April 12<sup>th</sup>. The next snowbird coffee hour will be on January 13<sup>th</sup>. This Zoom link will not change. <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81144435007>

**Estimate of Giving forms** – remaining forms can be turned in to the office.

**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, January 21<sup>st</sup>, at the Big Buck. 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.

**Reaching Out meeting link:** <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/83640729481>





# 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



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## 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>