



October, 2024

*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

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Pastor's Column – October, 2024

“Be Someone Else's Nourishing Media”

Lately, I've picked up reading for work again. There are a number of reasons for this that I'm happy to explain to you in person, but the short answer is that I was afraid. When I read, I get ideas. When I get ideas, I tend to share them with others in the hopes that something good comes from it. Reading has led me to invite congregations to see themselves differently, to change, and to embrace a future that they can not presently imagine. To be honest, that has had mixed results.

So, out of fear, I simply ignored doing something that is good for me and good for the congregation I serve. There are other positive benefits, but that, too, is too much for a short article.

Having said all of that, I have been reading a new book, *Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness*, by Jamil Zaki. I'm about halfway through it at this point, but just today I came across a great chapter, *Hell Isn't Other People*. It was a fantastic read that made me look at the world a bit

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differently. In short, Zaki is calling on us to be hopeful skeptics rather than the cynics most of us have become.

He cites crime data as an example of how we tend to think one thing is happening, but another truly is occurring. Most people believe crime is on the rise. The data simply doesn't support that notion. Those are facts and facts can sometimes help us not be so cynical. But it's what he said next that really got me thinking. (I'm not directly quoting Zaki, but giving you my take on what he said).

All our media, especially social media, but even the "click-bait" on our devices, lead us down a path that confirms what we already believe whether or not it's true. This is not based on age, social location, political preference, religious affiliation or anything else. It's based on being human in the world today. We've been led to believe that other people are the problem. You know, those people. And yet, consider everyone you know. In fact, I'd encourage you to pick the person you've known forever who likes the other presidential candidate, as this seems to be the most divisive issue in our culture.

How much do you know about why they like that person? Is it based on their Facebook posts, some email chain, something someone else told you, or what else? And if it is true that you are completely on the opposite end politically, where are you on everything else?

Do they treat people well? Do they care about some of the same things you care about, but see a totally different solution? Are they wrong about everything? Are they the epitome of evil? Is all their data inaccurate, and yours perfect (you might check your sources...both sides)?

What I'm getting at is that we are all being led down a pathway that has determined other people are horrible, and it's often based on one or two things about them. Now consider your best friend. Do you always agree? Do you always have the same solution to a problem? Are you always in lock-step about everything?

Someone is benefitting from our divisiveness, and they're making a lot of money off of it. No, it's not one person, or one political party, or one anything else. If Zaki is right, our whole economy (or much of it) is based on profiting off of our division. I encourage you to read the whole book and judge for yourself.

In the meantime, Zaki suggested an online newsletter that I'm going to try. It only comes once a week, it's non-profit. The best part is that while our Mainstream outlets tend to focus on people in power and the lengths they are willing to go to keep it, this one

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patterns itself on asset-framed news. How are people making a difference by concentrating on their assets, rather than their shortcomings or divisions. It's called *Reasons to Be Cheerful*. If you're interested, search the name, but put "magazine" after it to find the right source. Then read an article or two. Is it informed, well written, and does it give you a reason to be more cheerful? If so, great! If not, unsubscribe.

It all boils down to this: the pattern for determining the future of our church must not be based in shortcomings and problems. Instead, we must base our future on our assets. If you only read Zaki's chapter, *Hell Isn't Other People*, you'll have a clue the direction that I'd like to head.

In Christ,

Pastor Greg

October

Women's Fellowship
Color Tour

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

	Gratitude Group 6-7 AM	1	2 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM	3 Bible Study, 11 AM Wmn's Fellowship, 12:15 PM Choir, 4 PM	4 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	5
6 Worship 10 AM Fellowship Hall in use, 2:30 PM	7 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Reaching In, 12 PM Compassionate Friends, 7-9 PM	8	9 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Women's Fall color tour	10 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	11 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	12
13 Worship 10 AM	14 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM	15 Lunch Group @ Bob Evans, 12 pm	16 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Trustees, 7 pm	17 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	18 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	19
20 Worship 10 AM	21 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Reaching Out, 7 PM	22 Salad Luncheon, 11:30 AM	23 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Church Book Club, 1 Pm	24 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	25 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	26
27 Worship 10 AM Fall clean-up after service Fellowship Hall in use (Refuge) 2 PM	28 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Kitchen in use 8AM	29	30 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM	31 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	Nov. 1 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	2  Fall Back MI Conf. Meeting, 1st & 2nd
3 Worship 10 AM	4 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Reaching In, 12 PM	5	6 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM	7 Bible Study, 11 AM Choir, 4 PM	8 Gratitude Group 6-7 AM Community Meal 4 PM Talking Circle 7-9 PM	9

Pastor Greg Out of Office



During October, Pastor Greg will be in Mexico from the 9th—15th. During this period of time Pastor Megan Crouch from Peace Lutheran is available if you have a crisis.

Her number is 231-730-4127

New worship series continues through October 20th.

Our next sermon series will be "Radical Resilience". The theme originates from the *Daily Meditations* from the Center for Action and Contemplation (cac.org) as it is their theme for 2024. They are going deeper and further with the theme as they have a whole year, but we, too, will explore what Radical Resilience means to each of us.

In the words of Dean of Faculty at the Center for Action and Contemplation, Brian D. McLaren:

The word "radical" means going to the root, going to the depths, going beneath the surface... In fact, that is what contemplation really is: it's paying deep attention to the deep dimensions of life. So, radical resilience means radical, deep attention to the deepest roots of resilience. Resilience is the capacity to withstand and recover from hardship or difficulty. It has to do with the ability to spring back into shape after you've been beaten down or knocked over or bent over.

Here are the scriptures and themes into October related to our theme:

- ⇒ September 8 - Radical Resilience: "The Dance of Hope" Isaiah 40: 26-31 and Romans 15: 1-13
- ⇒ September 15 - Radical Resilience: "Strength in Weakness" 1 Corinthians 1: 26-28 and 2 Corinthians 12: 8-10
- ⇒ September 22 - Radical Resilience: "As a Village" Romans 12: 1-21 and Galatians 6: 1-10
- ⇒ September 29 - Radical Resilience: "Growing Through Adversity" Isaiah 38: 9-20 and Matthew 26: 36-46
- ⇒ October 6 - Radical Resilience: "To Live is to Change" Psalm 103: 1-14 and Matthew 4: 12-17
- ⇒ October 20 - Radical Resilience: "Spirituality is the Key" Matthew 6: 5-8 and Matthew 14: 13-21



IN SUPPORT OF
RECOVERY
MONTH

Recovery Support Donation Drive

During the Month of Sept 2024

*Members of the Otsego County Recovery
Community are hosting a food & personal supplies
Donation Drive.*

*To help individuals in early recovery that are transitioning back
into the community.*

EXAMPLES OF DONATION ITEMS

**Non-Perishable Food Items*

*New/Sealed Basic Sanitary Items, Shampoo/Conditioner, Razors,
Comfort items, Laundry Supplies, Toothbrushes/Paste, ETC.*

**Notepads/Pens, Craft Supplies*

**Gift cards*

*All Donations can be dropped off at the Pine Squirrel softball field
Sept 28th 12-4pm*

Annual Meeting

November 3, 2024



Our 2024 annual meeting will happen on November 3, 2024. The annual meeting packet will go out during the week of 10/13. Committee chairs and officers should send their annual reports to Stephanie by 10/11/24.



The Refuge Homeless Shelter Facing Tough Budget Choices

The Refuge, a 501(c) tax-exempt, non-profit organization established with the help of several local congregations, including First Congregational Church, provides temporary housing to the homeless in Otsego County during the winter months. Due to financial concerns this year, it will delay its opening until Monday, October 28th. The shelter program would normally open October 1.

The Refuge is in its 12th season. Started as an organization using church facilities, the non-profit now provides temporary shelter at local hotels for homeless households in Otsego County during the cold winter months. Last year, 253 individuals, including 77 children, in 128 households received hope and temporary housing for more than 1400 nights. Working with local partners, the program helped 66% of its program participants into more permanent housing. Funding from congregations and individual members was key to being able to achieve this result. An even bigger challenge is expected this year.

Donations to help The Refuge may be sent to The Refuge, P.O. Box 44, Gaylord, MI 49734 or made by credit card online at www.otsegorefuge.org.

Woman's Fall Color Tour



On October 9th, First UCC Gaylord's women will head north amidst the beautiful colors of fall to Wolverine where they will experience a quaint gnome village. The excursion will be followed by lunch in the area with details to be determined. Watch for a sign-up sheet when the date gets closer.



Salad Luncheon Season!



Salad luncheons are back! Below are the dates and sponsorship for each. Watch for a sign-up list each month, if you would like to help!

2024 Salad Luncheon Schedule

MONTH	COMMITTEE
May 28, 2024	Women's Fellowship
June 25, 2024	Scholarship
July 23, 2024	Reaching In
August 27, 2024	Council
September 24, 2024	Reaching Out
October 22, 2024	Women's Fellowship

Come, join us for a
Disability Learning Day Event

Saturday, October 5th, 9:30 to 3:00

Peace Lutheran Church, Gaylord, Michigan

**Disabilities impact
ALL of us!**

The keynote speaker is
Victoria White,
Program Director at
With Ministries.
Victoria will share ways
of including people with
varying disabilities in
worship, and best
practices for building a
sense of belonging.

You are also invited to attend two
(of three) offered workshops:

- *Biblical Perspective on Disability*
led by Bishop Craig Satterlee
- *Ministry with People with
Dementia*, led by Pastor Clay
Bates
- *Normalizing Neurodiversity
(autism, etc.) in Your Context*,
led by Victoria White.

There will be group
discussion time to
share struggles,
challenges or ideas
and strategies that
useful in your
context.

Please register at <https://www.mittensynod.org/news/disability-learning-day/>

Registration is \$20 and includes lunch and a free book or fidget toy,
but don't put it off, as registration closes Friday, September 27th.

For more information, contact Pastor Clay Bates at clayhbates@gmail.com.

This event has been generously supported by a member of our synod
who shares our passion for ministry with people with disabilities.

Annual Meeting, November 1-2, 2024



MICHIGAN CONFERENCE



Annual Meeting
November 1-2, 2024

Crystal Mountain
Resort

Thompsonville, MI

Two day event

- Worship
- Networking
- Learning
- Business
- Fellowship
- Rest
- Association Gathering
- Single rooms starting at \$149 per night
- Group accommodations starting at \$75 per person per night

Option to extend your stay



United Church of Christ President & General Minister

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson will join us from 10.31.24 - 11.02.24 to be our keynote speaker for this Legacy Event. As we gather for worship on All Saints Day, we look forward to honoring our past, present, and future together.



2024 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.*

During the month of October the UNA is holding the Northport, Trinity United Church of Christ in prayer.

Jim Rigney's sister, Mary – as she has been diagnosed with Lewy Body and may have just weeks left in life. She is in hospice care as of 9/18. Let's keep Jim, Vicky, Mary and their friends and family in our prayers.

Judy, a dear friend of Jeannine Wambold – as she grieves the passing of her husband Fred. Let's keep all of Judy and Fred's friends and family in our prayers.

Jeff and Stephanie Kalember and family – as they grieve the passing of Jeff's mom, Marian L. Kalember. A celebration of life will be held next summer in Marian's hometown of Bergland, MI.

Stacy Wright, friend of Kathy Menkes – Stacy has been facing metastatic breast cancer. She has begun a new chemotherapy cycle this week. All prayers are appreciated.

Trish Jachym – Prayers for healing, as she is dealing with some health concerns.

Maureen Derenzy and family – as they grieve Brad's recent passing.

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.

Gloria House's family – Prayers of joy as Gloria's granddaughter Chloe and her husband Ryan have welcomed a baby girl, Caylee Cook. Mom and baby are doing well!

Tom and Jenni Johnson – Tom has completed radiation and now awaits scans to see whether the tumor around his pancreas has reduced in size.

Jen and Sean Finnegan – Daughter and son-in-law of Helen Crandall. Sean is awaiting neurological test results for arterial blood flow in his brain. His activity level is extremely limited. Pray for diagnosis and treatment plan for this time.

Laura Bantens' partner, Chris Crumbaugh – continued prayers for Laura and Chris as they adapt to the new medical issues Chris is facing.

Ariah House – (from Diane House) Ariah had her last in-hospital treatment in December 2023. She is doing great. I have to take her back to DeVos in March for the next step, providing she doesn't relapse. With this OMAS disease, there is a 50% - 75% chance of relapse. We are only going to focus on the wins. 😊 Keep the prayers coming. God Bless you all. We really miss our church families.

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

On Voting, from Michigan Conference UCC

Power is in our vote. Know MI Voting Rights, GOTV and VOTE to PROTECT DEMOCRACY

In these times of “alternative” facts competing with facts, “selective” history being taught in our schools, equity and Inclusiveness being examined and questioned, and voting rights being restricted rather than expanded, many of us on the United Church of Christ Detroit Metro Area Social Justice Team are concerned that the very future of our Democracy is at risk.

We believe that as people of faith we must stand-up for our Christian values of equality and equal rights for all people. We must be the voice of those who unfortunately are marginalized and have no voice in our society. We must ensure that all our children receive a good quality education that prepares them to take their place in our society and earn a living which can support them and their families.

The Fall 2024 Election is very important, not just for the Presidential Office, but for all offices which are to be filled. We believe that as Christians, it is our responsibility to work in coalitions with people of similar values in a non-partisan way to make plans to GET OUT THE VOTE and PRESERVE DEMOCRACY. And we can individually urge support and vote for those candidates who demonstrate these values, not just by what they say, but by their actions as well.

But first we need to work to ensure that everyone gets registered to vote:

To register to vote you must be • a United States citizen; • a Michigan resident at the time you register and a resident of your city or township for at least 30 days when you vote; • at least 18 years of age (when you vote); • and not currently serving a sentence in jail or prison (in jail awaiting trial or already served sentence can vote, just have to re-register). You can register up to the day of the election at your local clerk’s office.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Snow Removal – We are in need of 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..

Crop Walk, 2024 is this Sunday! It will take place starting at the United Way building starting with registration at 1:00 PM. 25% of proceeds will go directly to the Otsego County food pantry. Please consider participating or donating.

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 Tuesday, October 15th. Sign up in Fellowship Hall if you would like to attend.

Salad Luncheon – The next salad luncheon is Tuesday, September 24th.

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://us02web.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





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>