

Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

432 Quarterline • Newaygo, MI 49337 • (231) 652-6624

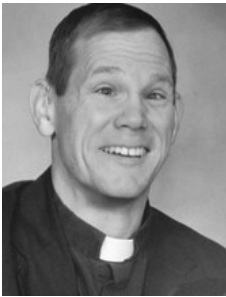
Jonathan Riedel, Pastor



The Churchmouse



August, 2020



Who's Included?

"But she answered, 'Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'" Mark 7:28 CEB

We humans have a peculiar habit of choosing sides. We compound this habit by declaring the side we are on to be righteous and healthy and then deeming the other side deficient and perhaps dangerous. We might even doubt their true humanity. This divisiveness does little to build common understanding, the heart of what holds human society together. At its worst, this leads to wars and genocide. At its best, relatively speaking, it prompts prejudice and levels of mutual distrust that threaten to erupt in violence. The majority of human history is made up of the results of this troubling tendency.

When I reflect on that wretched history, I am challenged and comforted by the work of my denomination, the United Church of Christ. Built on the foundations on the Christian ecumenical movement, it brought together two dissimilar churches and has, over the course of its time together, forged partnerships with the United Church of Canada, the Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Church of Germany, among others. It has encouraged the ordination of women and people of color. Best of all, it has welcomed and nurtured the gifts of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Spreading God's love by being inclusive has certainly sparked controversy and argument, yet it has also broadened the reach of God's love and has revealed ways to create a better community here on earth.

I know that some people will react negatively to what I just wrote. They will insist that my goal of inclusivity is too loose, that I am encouraging immorality, that I am promoting a life contrary to the life that God intends for us. Surely, God's realm is open to all sinners, all broken people, but only after they have turned away from their wrongful lives. They will lift up a select few scriptures to defend their point of view. I will argue against their point of view with another select quotes from the Bible and we will end our conversation in a testy draw. Barriers will be drawn; exclusions will be made. And Christianity will, once again, be a burning bridge rather than a gateway to a healing life.

Even Jesus struggled with this. The Jewish people, his clan, had often suffered under tyrannical foreign leaders and were often ridiculed and disenfranchised because of their unique faith. In turn,



they looked upon their neighbors with fear and trembling. Particularly disliked with their fellow Canaanites. Some of those people, fellow sufferers under the powers of empire, were of mixed blood, were political refugees, and still had the audacity to worship different gods and in different holy places than the Israelites who once lived where the Canaanites now were living. These people were viewed as unclean and unloved by God. By now reason other than by accident of birth and culture, they were rejected.

So a Canaanite woman approached Jesus to ask for healing for her ailing daughter. Jesus rebuffed her saying that he was here to save and to help only his own people. They were God's chosen children and only they deserved the bounty of God's richest treasures. Rather than slinking away in shame, this desperately determined woman talked back to Jesus. Jesus had called her 'a dog' unworthy of eating from God's bounty, but what kind of decent human would sweep his or her floor so thoroughly than a wandering dog could not find a crumb? Most people took enough pity on a hungry pet to make sure he or she was fed. Taken aback, Jesus marveled at her answer. He thought about it and granted her request. Her wit and sincerity must have made a deep impression upon him because, after his encounter with her, his ministry opened more and more to those outside Israelite circles. Gentiles. The sexual outcast. The general poor. The Zealot. The tax collector. All were welcome to bask in the light of God's love.

And the warmth of that love is why I chose to be inclusive in my sharing of God's love. Yes, GLBT folk have committed wrong and have hurt others, they have used their sexuality in destructive ways, and are just as crushed by poor choices and negativity as anyone else. But I want to emphasize the phrase "As anyone else"-no one has a claim to be the chief of all sinners. That sobriquet belongs to us all. God's transforming and healing love meets us where and who we are. It is God's aim to make us all to be the best of what God has created. If you are straight, you are called to be a model for straight people; if you are gay, God will inspire you to be all the good possibilities that gay love can hold. Though sexuality is complex and tied to our heredity and our environment, it is part of God's greatest creation. As long as we are led to faithful, non-manipulative, non-exploitative lives, as long as we allow our partners the freedom, the equality, the respect, and the mutuality that they are entitled to, and as long as we active seek the unitive and cooperative powers that sexuality provides for us, we will discover the heart of God in our sexuality just as powerfully as we can experience in our friendships, our family life, and our work relationships.

So all people are welcome in my congregation. Gay. Straight. Somewhere in between. Black. White. Asian. Latinx. Native American. Male. Female. Those trying to discover where they belong. Those certain about their beliefs. Those preoccupied by questions. Young. Old. And those who quit counting. Anyone who is seeking something deeper, something richer, something closer to the creative and to the healing. While we may diverse in our characteristics and our experiences, we share one thing in common. We are hungry for the feast of God. We are eager to take our seat at the table, to pass the plates, and to join in the joyous celebration. A celebration that invites us all, despite our differences, despite the barriers we love to cling to.

Jonathan D. Riedel
Pastor, Newaygo Congregational UCC

Thank You. . .

Thank you to all my church family for your prayers and cards. My cancer is in remission at this time. I am now suffering through some very painful lumbar fractures in my lower back so it will take time to heal. Please just keep your prayers coming.

Thanks, Gloria



August, 2020



Pick a Topic Sermons

Pastor would like to hear from you about which topics you would like Pastor Jon to feature during his *Pic a Topic* sermons. If you have a suggestion, you can call Pastor at 652-6624, or e-mail him at revjdriedel@gmail.com.

August Noon Classes

We will wrapping our Tuesday Noon Series on Liberation Theology with Queer Theology on August 04. The following Tuesday we will begin a short series on the Lessons from the Coronavirus. Here's a schedule:

8/11-What is Community?

8/18-What is our Responsibility to the World
Around Us?

8/25-Science and Religion, Not Science Vs.
Religion

If you want to join our conversation, dial 979-990-5000 then 283560#. Invite a friend.

Deadline for the September Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the **September Churchmouse** to the office by **Friday, August 28**.

You may e-mail information to:
[Churchmouse @ newaygoucc.org](mailto:Churchmouse@newaygoucc.org)
or leave a hard copy in the office.



Treasurer's Report

June 16, 2020 to
July 15, 2020

Income	Total Exp.
June 21 \$2,680.00	
June 28 1,050.00	
July 4 2,020.50	
July 11 1,640.00	
Total \$7,390.50	\$8,360.65

Difference (\$970.15)

Phillips Fund \$154,909.20

Family Fund 65,616.53

Thank you for your steadfast caring and giving.

Dawn Anderson, Treasurer

True North Weekend Power Pack

Our church is collecting donations to support TrueNorth's Weekend PowerPack program. This service provides weekend meals for students in Hesperia, Newaygo, and White Cloud as well as for those who attend the Career Tech Center. With the event of COVID they have provided meals for 520 different students, up considerably from an average of 223 students per week. Our support would ensure that these students will not go hungry when school is not in session. If you would like to donate to this program, send your check to the church with "Weekend PowerPack" written in the memo section. In this time of economic uncertainty, let us bring some comfort to hungry students in our communities.



Low-Income Housing Update

Dear Church Family,

With the pandemic and Bill's health, the low-income housing project was put on hold for a while.

We live in an area with a severe shortage of affordable housing. We've had families and individuals attend our church in the last two years who have struggled with finding a roof to put over their heads. How do we respond to this need?

Bill and the housing committee of our church were looking at donating land behind the church to build an 8-10 unit apartment building. What would it look like? How much would it cost? And, beyond, might such housing add new life to our church?

As you may know, Bill was working on this project pretty much right until the end. He had reached out to Mary, the architect, just a couple weeks before he passed away. He really wanted to see the project through to completion, and he was really the best person to do that.

That being said, there is some updated work and information to share.

Since that time of putting things on hold, the consultant, Lindsay Hager, who did the feasibility study, has a new job as vice president of the Fremont Area Community Foundation. When I called him to see just where the project stood, he said he would volunteer his time to help us complete the project and raise the money. (Please note that the project to date has cost the church nothing, but has been funded by interested members.)

When I contacted Mary, the architect, to see where her work on the project was, she had the estimates for site construction and building all done. Drawings and apartment layouts are done. She is at a point of contacting builders.

This is what Lindsay Hager said of the project at this point;

"The cost estimates from Mary are very helpful to define our fundraising needs. I will update the project pro forma and make that available for you and church representatives. We can then start to formulate a fund-raising plan for construction.

I suggest talking with several nonprofits or using a request for proposal (RFP) process to determine the best fit with the church. I know of several that would likely be interested including Dwelling Place, Big Rapids Housing Commission, TrueNorth, and others."

Please keep in mind that our church would donate the land ONLY. We would not be responsible for fundraising, building, or running the apartment complex.

People outside the church have approached Lindsay and are interested in helping with the building costs.

In a Zoom meeting on July 30, with Lindsay, Mary, the committee members, we will decide if the church might be willing to donate the land. With a positive response from the committee, Ken would then call a meeting for the congregation's formal vote about the land

Looking forward to your questions, insight, and virtual attendance at the next congregational meeting.

Jeanne
308-235-2274



REOPENING THE CHURCH DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC

“When is the church going to reopen?” is the question being asked. It is a very simple question with a very complicated answer. The best way to answer it is “we will reopen when it is safe to do so.” When that will be is yet to be determined. That might not be until a vaccine is developed.

We have a congregation with many people who would be very vulnerable to catching this virus. The health and safety of these people, and the entire congregation, is the top priority of the church’s leadership.

People have said that “I am not sick” and “I haven’t been around anyone that has been sick.” These are very misleading statements, since many of the people who have the virus are asymptomatic. It is not a disease you can tell someone has just by looking at them. Since this is a new virus, there are a lot of things about the virus that are not known. It has also been said “let’s open for those who want to come.” When we do reopen, it will be for everyone, not just for a select group.

Making the decision to reopen is like tracking the course of a hurricane. If you order a state to evacuate and the hurricane turns away, then people say “what a stupid move it was to evacuate.” But, if you don’t evacuate and the hurricane causes death and destruction, people ask, “why weren’t we ordered to evacuate?”

What it comes down to is making a decision that we can live with. Can we live with keeping the congregation safe by remaining closed? The answer is “yes.” Can we live with reopening too soon and having someone or many possibly getting sick or dying? Probably not.

At a later date, should it be determined to open before the development of a vaccine, and because of the ease in which the virus can spread, the following restrictions will need to be followed:

- Face coverings must be worn.
- Social distancing must be followed. (6 ft. apart and no personal contact between non-family members)
- No passing of the Peace of Christ or holding hands at end of service.
- No choir.
- No singing or responsive readings at all by congregation. No liturgists.
- No printed bulletins. Bibles and hymnals will be removed from the pews.
- No passing of communion elements or collection plate.
- Only one person in restrooms at a time. Restrooms to be cleaned after each use.
- No fellowship time after worship.
- No in person meetings or classes.
- All frequently touched surfaces to be sanitized following every service.
- In short, you will come in, worship, and leave.

Since we currently have a system that is working, although not perfectly, we are able to worship together. Therefore, unless there is a vaccine, effective treatment or other medical or scientific changes to indicate that it is safe to reopen, the NCUCC building will remain closed. During this time, we will continue to worship and conduct business by alternative methods. This policy will be reviewed at each upcoming Administration and Council meeting.

Approved by Administration July 2, 2020

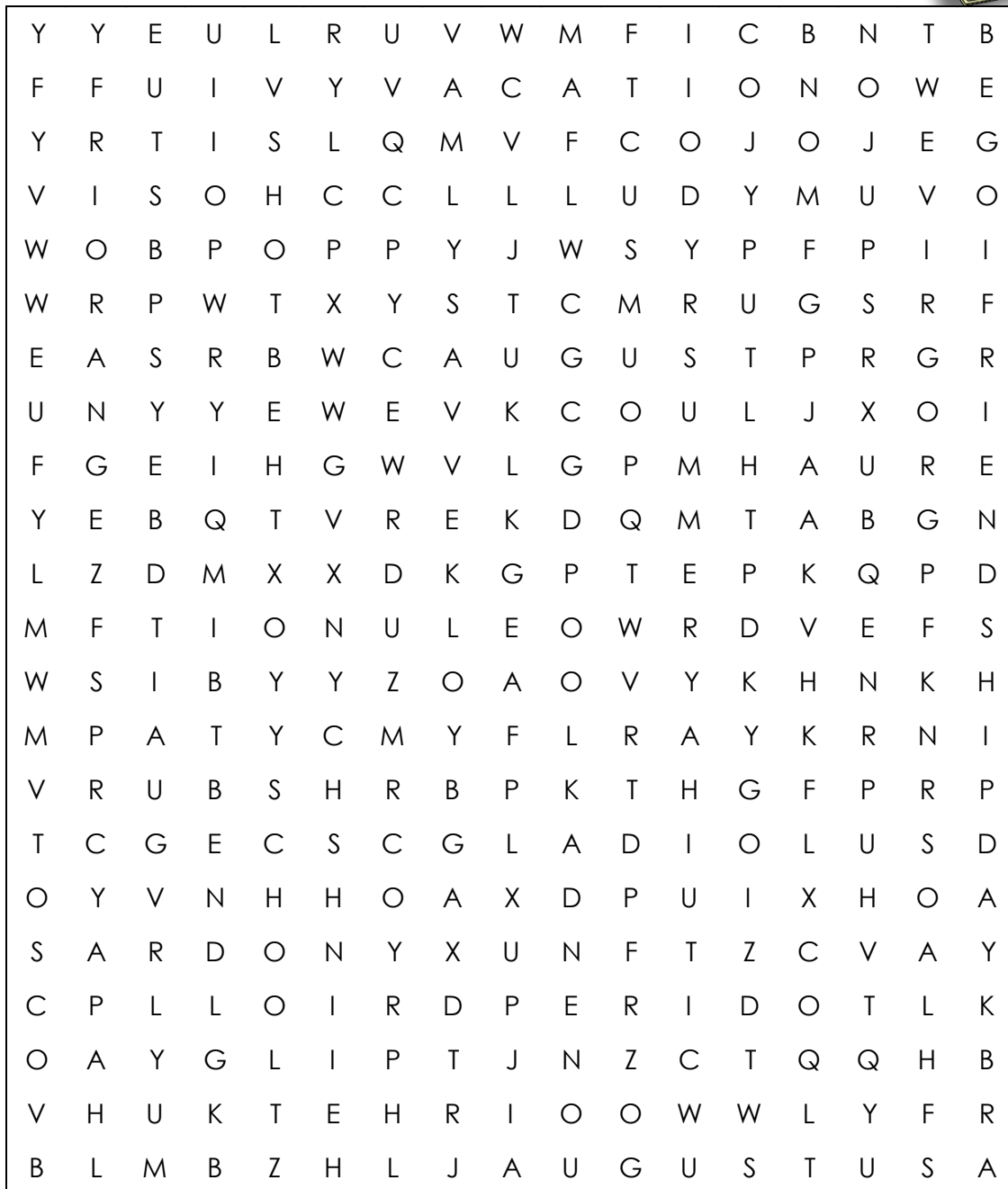
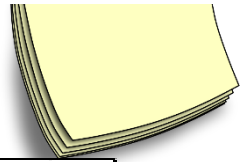
Approved and adopted by Council July 16, 2020

August, 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM	10	11	12	13 Worship & Pastoral Care 9:30 am via phone	14	15
16 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM	24	25	26	27	28	29



August Word Search



AUGUST
SUMMER
VACATION
SCHOOL
PERIDOT

AUGUSTUS
ORANGE
LEO
VIRGO
GLADIOLUS

FRIENDSHIP DAY
POPPY
HOT
POOL
SARDONYX



Church Services & Meetings

Sunday Services will be available on ZOOM at 10:00 am; on the phone also, at 10:00 am at 1-312-626-6799, followed by the ID number 870 2644 1449.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87026441449>

Meeting ID: 870 2644 1449

Join Zoom Meeting

July 19, 2020, 10:00 AM

July 26, 2020, 10:00 AM

August 2, 2020, 10:00 AM

August 9, 2020, 10:00 AM

August 16, 2020, 10:00 AM

August 23, 2020, 10:00 AM

August 30, 2020, 10:00 AM



Birthdays in August

2 - Sherry Losey
4 - Dawn Anderson
9 - Sue Johnson
9 - Ben Riedel
11 - Denise VanGessel
16 - Karen Veenstra

Anniversaries in August



6 - Greg & Nancy Myers
15 - Paul & Audrey Eno
27 - Allen & Sheila Raterink

August Worship Schedule on ZOOM

August 02 - Communion

"Jesus Asks A Question-Who Am I?"

Mark 8:27-28

August 09 - Jesus Asks A Question

Arrest and Trial

Matthew 26: 53-54, John 18: 23

August 16 - Jesus Asks A Question

The Cross

John 7: 19 and Matthew 27: 46

August 23 - Jesus Asks A Question

The Resurrection

John 20: 15 and Luke 24: 17-34

August 30 - Jesus Asks A Question

All The Questions

John 1: 38

