

Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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

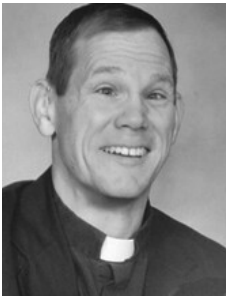
Jonathan Riedel, Pastor



The Churchmouse



April, 2021



Armenian Martyrs Day

"The Lord proclaims: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and wailing. It's Rachel crying for her children; she refuses to be consoled, because her children are no more.'"

Jeremiah 31:15 CEB

Jeremiah was waiting for a holocaust. The Babylonian armies had already seized the upper echelon of Judah's society and taken them into exile on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Only some of their descendants would return to their beloved Jordan River. Those who were left behind watched Jerusalem burn to the ground, the treasures from the Temple's Holy of Holies rendered into plunder, and their wheat fields and their orchards wrecked by marauding armies. Jeremiah saw all of this and wept. He heard the voice of ancestor Rachel weeping over the lost children, unable to be comforted because, in a destroyed and bereft landscape, they were all past the point of return.

Some time ago, I wrote about another remembrance day that happens in April: Holocaust Remembrance Day or Yom HaShoah. But then I glanced down the rows of dates and my eye happened upon the 24th of the month: Armenian Martyrs Day. I was embarrassed to discover that I knew little about why this holiday existed or even had anything beyond the vaguest of hints of who the Armenians were. I knew that they hailed from the Eastern European section of the Ottoman empire and many identified as Eastern Orthodox Catholics. Millions of Armenians lived in the Eastern part of what is now known as Turkey and many were successful businesspeople and bankers-the latter a profession forbidden to most Muslim Turks because of religious prohibitions against usury. Tensions had ratcheted up between these Christians and these Muslims because the rise of calls for the establishment of an independent Armenia. At the same time, similar independence movements arose in Turkish Greek and Assyrian communities as well. All three would face Turkish attempts to suppress rebellion and maintain control over a crumbling empire in the years leading up to and through the first world war.

It began as a deportation movement. Let us try to paint an extremely over-simplified panorama. Between 1914 and 1923, Turkish authorized the expulsion of all Armenians from various places in the



Ottoman Empire. 24 April 1915, now recognized as the remembrance day, is the starting date of the deportation of Armenian community and intellectual leaders from Constantinople to the Angora province, where most of them were put to death. This was followed by the murder and forced conscription into labor concentration camps of all able-bodied Armenian males, many of whom lost their lives building armaments and other supplies for Turkey's involvement in World War I. This was followed, in turn, by the deportation, via death march, of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Pushed forward by armed guards, given minimal nutrition and water, and subjected to rape and robbery, many of these folks were taken out into the Black and were left to drown. Other sections were driven into Syrian and left there to die of starvation and thirst. Approximately 1.5 million Armenians died in totals from this series of massacres. Turkey, to this day, has never officially acknowledged any culpability for them.

Raphael Lemkin, one of the twentieth century's preeminent human rights lawyers, invented a word to describe what Turkey had wrought. The word is distressingly common now: genocide. Genocide is a pre-planned and comprehensive extermination of a specific population within legal parameters, according to Lemkin. Sadly, it was not an art solely practiced by the Turks. Hitler admired the execution of the massacre so much that he used many of the same mechanisms to rid his lands of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, and other ethnic minorities. Cambodia, Somalia, China, Japan, the remnants of Yugoslavia, and even the United States (the treatment of the Native Americans) have all played at least a few hands of this sordid and evil practice. Many of these countries also have a difficult time taking any responsibility for the lives lost and families of victims rarely receive any compensation or legal satisfaction for their losses.

I think that we who follow the ways of Jesus need to do more than shake our heads in sorrow when we hear and read of these harrowing examples of humanity's inhumanity to humanity. As the followers of one who cruelly tried and executed, we need to remember and to stand with the victims, offering them safe harbor and legal refuge. As the disciples of the Great Teacher, we need to speak truth to power. We need to admit our ancestors' destruction of native populations as we condemn other countries' horrendous abuses of power and of their populations. We need to insist, even if it comes at an economic cost at times, that all the countries of our world own up to the massacres that have happened under their governments' watches. If we allow nations to pretend that these incidents did not happen, I worry that it will only give permission to those who come after us. Hitler himself reasoned that the Final Solution was something he could accomplish with impunity because, after all, "who remembered the Armenian massacre?"

So we are called as Christians to face difficult dates and hard facts. We do so because of Christ's willingness to face down evil and injustice, even under the pain of death. He did so not just to become a martyr, but because his words, his life, and his resurrection give us the clearest view of God's loving justice that will hold us to account and will give solace and peace to the suffering. As we remember those who died during Hitler's Holocaust, let us also remember the Armenians so their lives will never be in vain and so we may learn to stop this senseless sorrow.

The Rev. Jonathan D. Riedel-Pastor,
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ





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.

Tuesday Noon Phone Classes

We will be finishing up our phone series on the History books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our journey this month will take us through the collapse of Jerusalem, the exile in Babylon, and the return home. Who says that you can't go home again?

If you want to join us, call 1-978-990-5000 then 283560#. We always have a lively conversation. Here is a schedule of topics:

- 4/06 - Second Chronicles
- 4/13 - Ezra
- 4/20 - Nehemiah
- 4/27 - Esther



Treasurer's Report

**February 16, 2021 to
March 15, 2021**

| | Income | Total Exp. |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| February 23 | \$ 865.00 | |
| March 3 | 3,405.00 | |
| March 5 | 2,000.00 | |
| March 10 | 630.00 | |
| Total | \$6,900.00 | \$7,201.07 |

Difference **(\$301.07)**

Phillips Fund **\$180,765.63**

The fund has grown by 35% in the past fiscal year

Family Fund **76,160.08**

Same growth as Phillips Fund

There is much to be thankful for in this Lenten Season.

Dawn Anderson, Treasurer

CHRIST IS RISEN



Holy Week Services

4/1-Maundy Thursday-7 p.m. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86149424154>

or call 1-312-626-6799 and then 861 4942 4154#

Communion

John 13: 1-35

"Promises to Keep"

4/2 Good Friday-7 p.m. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88406975338>

or call 1-312-626-6799 and then 884 0697 5338#

Service of Chants and Stories

In Person Worship

At their March 18 meeting, the Council approved the starting of outdoor in-person worship, beginning Sunday, April 25.

Services will be held in front of the church and broadcast over the existing speakers attached to the building near the offices. You may sit under the covered walkway, or either on the sidewalk/-driveway or lawn in front of the tower.

Pastor Jon will be preaching from his office so that both in-person and online attendees can be accommodated. He will be outside for a time both before and after the service. As this is something new, please be patient as there may be some issues that will need to be worked out. Hopefully it won't take long to have things operating smoothly.

Although many in our church have been vaccinated, the original and variant viruses are still being spread throughout the area. Therefore, for the health and safety everyone, the following conditions **MUST** be followed:

- Mask wearing is required.
- Social distancing is to be maintained.
- Bring your own chairs.
- No physical contact between non family members allowed.
- Building will be open for the use of restrooms only. All other areas of the building are off limits.

We do not want to have to clean the entire building after each service. There will not be anything put in your mailboxes for you to check for.

This past year has been a long and challenging time for everyone. Hopefully, this step forward of having outdoor in-person worship will be the first step in returning to some sort of normalcy for the year ahead. For this to succeed and continue, the conditions listed above must be followed. Please do not jeopardize the forward progress we are making by not following them. If they are not followed, we will return to online services only, and we do not want to take that step backwards.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.
Church Council



Taking Care of Our Minds As We Come Out of the Pandemic

This has been a challenging year for all of us. We have had to adjust to new technologies, new ways of interacting with loved ones and strangers, and new models of conducting our personal business as well as the work of the church. Frankly, it has been overwhelming for many of us. Many mental health experts have reported a surge of people in crisis. Depression, anxiety, and addictive behavior are on the upswing. The isolation and the worry that the prevalence of the virus will be something we will be working through for many months ahead. Please know that your church family cares about you-all of you, including your mental health. The difficulties of the last year have made it hard to be there in person, but we are still available through the phone and through the computer. Pastor Jon is available at 231-652-6624 and 231-652-1990. He is willing to listen. He is, however, not a professional counselor, but is most willing to assist you in locating the help you need. There are also

many helplines that can respond quickly to any mental health emergencies. Here is a partial list: *911-if you are feeling suicidal*. Another resource is the National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-8255. This is available 24/7 *Newaygo County Mental Health-231-689-7330* or after hours 1-800-968-7330. *Forest View Hospital-1-800-940-8439* *Pine Rest-1-616-281-6382*

Most of these organizations have access to other helping agencies that can assist with other problems such as addiction, caregiver burnout, and developing better strategies to deal with stress. If you know of any group that has been helpful to you, please let Pastor Jon know and he will include it in an update. Take care of yourselves and blessings.

On the Mend

Rebekah Rathman-Wingrove, one of our frequent guest pastors, fell and broke her knee recently. She is home recovering from surgery. If you would like to send her a card, please send it to

973 Hamptons Ct. #7
Norton Shores MI 49441



April, 2021

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





Easter Story

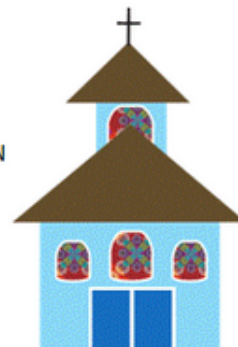
Word Search

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APOSTLES
 BETRAYAL
 CAVE
 CHURCH
 CROSS
 CROWN
 CRUCIFIXION
 DISCIPLES
 FAITH
 GOOD FRIDAY

JESUS CHRIST
 JUDAS
 LAMB
 LAST SUPPER
 LENT
 MARY
 MIRACLE
 PASSOVER
 PENANCE
 PENTECOST

PRAYER
 REDEMPTION
 REJOICE
 RESURRECTION
 RISEN
 SAVIOR
 SON
 THORNS
 TOMB



Deadline for the May Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the **May Churchmouse** to the office by

Wednesday, April 28.

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



Birthdays in April

4 - Tom Mee
5 - Maison Page
10 - Jose Hauser
21 - Bill Barends
25 - Gretchen Mee

Anniversaries in April

5 - Marty & Sherry Losey
30 - Don & Sue Cornell



April Worship Schedule on ZOOM

[https://us02webzoom.us/j/848 6469 9096#](https://us02webzoom.us/j/84864699096) or call 312 626-6799 then 848 6469-9096.

4/4 - Easter

Communion

Mark 16:1-8

Promise Forward

4/11 - Second Easter

Ask A Question Sunday

John 30:19-31

4/18 - Third Easter

Pick A Topic Sunday

4/25 - Fourth Easter

Enfolded

John 10:11-18

