

# Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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

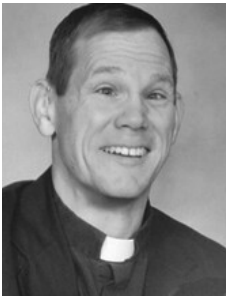
Jonathan Riedel, Pastor



## The Churchmouse



June, 2021



### How Do You Figure Out What To Preach About?

*"Then (Jesus) interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through the Prophets". Luke 24: 27*

I listen.

I roam down Facebook, read newspapers, watch the local news shows, overhear conversations, ask for questions, look at what people are going to the movies to watch, clicking onto Amazon to order, and thumping out their car doors as they drive past my house.

I keep collections of issues and unanswered questions that come up during board meetings, Adult Study Classes, and one on one visitations with the people in my congregation.

I know that I tend to talk more than I tend to listen. But preaching is not about hearing yourself talk. It is more about sharing what you have heard with others and with God.

I take little credit for the impact of my sermons. I've delivered what I thought were articulate, well-constructed talks and no one seemed to notice. I have also been distracted in the midst of one of my sermons by something that is going on, thrown away my notes, and addressed the Ghost in the Room. Those spontaneous, emotionally-wrought, and sometimes sloppy words are what people remember because I think God finds a way in through all my rigorous order and tortured words. What makes my words work is something that God pulls off, sometimes because of and sometimes despite my best efforts.

Take the line from the Gospel of Luke I quoted above. It is from one of Jesus' last earthly sermons. It happened after he was raised from the dead. Two of his disciples, unnamed here, are walking to a nearby town while trying to process what has happened to them during the week before. Jesus, unrecognized by them, joins them on their journey and asks them about what they are talking about. They wonder aloud to him why he hasn't heard about the one whose body was missing, the one who was supposed to be their Anointed One. He stops them and tells them they are being foolish. Then he goes through all of their sacred books, pointing out how the Anointed One's mission had been predicted by their greatest leader, Moses, had been carried through by the Prophet's words, and was



still coming true today. They are fascinated, but still unsure about who they are talking to. They stop at a place to rest and insist that he join them for dinner. As Jesus blesses and breaks the bread for them, they realize who he is. His actions, his words, his manner of speaking work together to open their eyes, their ears, and their hearts.

The Good Book also asks us to preach Jesus and him crucified. I would timidly add-and risen too. Jesus walks through our human history as a model, as a corrective, as challenge, and as a solace. He serves for me as an arrow pointing in direction to God. When I am uncertain about what God is up to and what God could possibly mean, I try to listen carefully to the Gospel story for some sort of clue. I cannot presume to know what Jesus would say and do in today's circumstance, but I am allowed to draw careful and fragile conclusions about what he did 2000 years ago. From there, I can link up parallels to what we and the world around talks about, struggles with, and avoids now. Those parallels, those questions, those delicate conclusions and where they all intersect form the heart of what I preach about. Because of all the interlacing connections I seldom repeat a sermon and I seldom take a sermon from one church to another. What I preach belongs to the place and the time I preach in. It belongs to that fleeting moment of encounter with the Eternal, something within the Spirit's control and not within mine.

So how do I figure out what to preach about? I listen and this is what I hear:

- Someone needs advice about how to do the right thing with their children, with their partner, with their business, and with their lives.
- Someone is grieving and in need of peace.
- Someone is tired of it all and wants a reason to take another step.
- Someone isn't sure of why they are here at all but is open to suggestions.
- Someone is hungry and looking for something to eat.
- Someone is trapped in addiction and trying to find a way out.
- Someone wants to hear the old, old story of Jesus' endless love.

I listen. I swallow hard. I pray for good words and, better yet, for a good heart. And then I speak. Working it out with fear and trembling, indeed.

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



## Outsiders in the Bible

We will be continuing our study of the Bible's outsiders, the ones left on the edge of the story. What were their perspectives? What do they have to tell us?

Join us at noon on Tuesdays to hear their tales. To join us, please call 978-990-5000 then 283560#.

Here is a schedule of topics:

6/01-Naaman  
6/08-The Women at the Well  
6/15-The Syro-Phoenician Woman  
6/22-The Roman Centurion  
6/29-The Ethiopian Eunuch





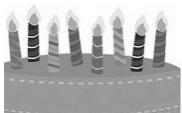
## Pick a Topic Sermons

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](mailto:revjdriedel@gmail.com).

## Prayers Over The Phone

Join us for our weekly mid-week prayer time. Each Wednesday at 7 p.m., we will gather over the phone to share our joys and concerns, to meditate, and to pray for one another.

To join us, dial 978-990-5000 then 283560#.



## Birthdays in June

5 - Deb Burton  
18 - Donna Edighoffer  
20 - Betty Bell  
21 - Sandy Purcell

## Anniversaries in June

3 - Dick & Gloria Winters  
8 - Don & Joyce Mead  
10 - Don & Miriam Strohpaal  
25 - Klaus & Debi Walter

## Deadline for the July Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the **July Churchmouse** to the office by **Friday, June 25.**

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



## Treasurer's Report

April 16, 2021 to  
May 15, 2021

	Income	Total Exp.
April 18	3,875.00	
April 26	2,260.00	
May 4	4,480.00	
May 8	2,720.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,335.00</b>	<b>\$11,901.61</b>

**Difference** **\$1,433.39**

**Phillips Fund** **\$182,475.63**

**Family Fund** **80,253.04**

Let us all be grateful for the blessings and bounty that we share for the programs of the church. We are alive and well and still caring and sharing.

Dawn Anderson, Treasurer

## Thank You. . .



A big Thank You to Jean Smith and Jim Sloan for spreading mulch and weeding around the church. Their hard work is much appreciated.

Thank You  
Rosemary Strohpaal

### Editor's Note:



This issue of *The Churchmouse* will be my last as Editor. I want to thank all who have contributed over the years, it has been a pleasure serving you.

—Dick



# June, 2021

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

## Pastoral Counseling Guide-

Pastor Jon is always available to listen and to pray with you. He is able and willing to help you plan your marriage, offer advice to life's smaller problems, and help you honor those who have died. He is, however, not a professional counselor and has limited resources to help you cope with long-standing personal problems and mental health issues. His role is that of triage-to assess which programs and counselors would be of the most help to you and to assist you so you can quickly get the proper professional guidance you need. This does not mean that he is not willing to talk to you. Grief, minor disagreements, and general blowing off of steam are

why pastors are here to listen. It is important, though, that you have the best assistance and the best wisdom when it comes to vexing difficulties. In this light, Pastor Jon is open to listening for one session, free to you. If the dilemma can be solved in that hour, blessings be to all. If the issues require more time than that, Pastor Jon will gladly refer you to appropriate resources and will help you in making the necessary appointments.

It is our prayer and aim to serve you in the best way possible and to make possible the greatest spiritual and psychological health for everyone. Thank you for your understanding.

