
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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Rev. Jonathan Riedel, Pastor

“THE CHURCHMOUSE”

August 2021

National Senior Citizens Day

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is found in the path of righteousness.” Proverbs 16:31 CEB

After his retirement from ministry in the Episcopal Church, Stan decided to go back to school. So he enrolled in an advanced degree in Anglican studies at Yale Divinity School. So he and his wife Ellen moved their belongings from the rectory into storage, saving what little furniture they needed for their studio apartment on campus. That apartment quickly became a gathering place for Stan’s fellow students. Though small, it reverberated hospitality. Both Stan and Ellen were excellent listeners, quick to provide refreshments, and reluctant to offer unnecessary advice. As an anxious and often doubt-tossed first year student, I am not surprised that I found my way to their wooden door down the long corridor.

I grew up in a family with many elders. My paternal grandparents were older when they had my father so they were both retired when I came around. I ate dinner and talked often with three of my great-grandparents. Though I tend to talk a great deal (a hazard and a benefit of my profession), I learned early on to listen carefully to the elderly. Gray hair was indeed a crown of glory. It meant you survived the Depression, a World War, and the fluctuations and the turmoil that was the Sixties. It suggested the possibility that you might have learned something, that your life experiences had given some clue to at least the questions that needed to be asked and to discern what was and what was not important. My experience with the elders was they had the best stories, sang the prettiest songs, and cooked the finest dinners (or at least knew where the best restaurants were). They were the ones who had the time to answer my questions and to watch the boats float down the Detroit River. Later I learned that yes, the elderly had flaws. They had tempers, prejudices, regrets, and misguided thinking. They also bore the weight of secrets that they could not bring themselves to talk about. My full realizations of those later truths has only struck me when I found myself in middle age. It takes having some gray hair to realize what price that glory cost and which mistakes can cause us many sleepless nights and torn hair roots.

The Bible recognizes the double edges of aging. On the one hand, one of the core beliefs that runs through the Hebrew Scriptures is the reciprocal nature of life. If you do well, it is because you have treated your God and your neighbors with kindness and justice. If your life is filled with misfortune, perhaps you have not chosen wisely. You have been unkind, stingy, and unjust. This so-called Deuteronomic principle is far too simple, but it provided a convenient way to explain the traps people find themselves in. Old age was a reward for living well in times when disease, war, and hardship often robbed people of their lives early. On the other hand, these

Scriptures also show the shadow side of age-its frailty, its flawed favoritism, and its foolishness. Blind Isaac being fooled by Jacob, David helplessly watching his conflicted family at war with each other, Ecclesiastes' vision of old age as a candle slowly burning itself to nothing, Eli's fatal ignorance when it came to his sons' behavior-all provide an all-too-human and somber assessment of the pitfalls of living too long. One of the most stunning aspects of the Bible for me is its abject honesty when it comes to our humanity-old age's crown of glory may be earned by making good choices, but the hair is gray because of the difficulty and the pain of those very choices.

Ronald Reagan, in 1988, designated the 21st of August Senior Citizens Day, a day to recognize the contributions and the needs of our older citizens. While I did not and do not to this day agree with Reagan politically on much of anything, I had much respect for how he acknowledged and accepted some of the limitations and challenges that came with his advancing age. As a long-time hearing aid wearer, I felt a deep sense of kinship with him when he wore his hearing aid publicly and proudly. He did after so many years of presidents hiding their weaknesses and their illnesses so they would not be perceived as weak-Wilson's stroke, Eisenhower's heart attacks, and FDR's paralysis were stories not fully disclosed until long after their deaths. I also found much to admire about his candidness about his encroaching and losing battle with dementia. He spoke realistically about his walk into the long sunset-his trouble with memory, his weakening body, and his sorrow over his inability to recognize those he loved the most. Such honesty was indeed touching and I am sure moved many of us to be candid with our own experiences of those lost to a disease once obliquely described as hardening of the arteries and whose sufferers often found themselves banished to nursing homes and back bedrooms. I wonder if the candor of a president talking about his losses brought light to a predicament we often left hidden. It is fitting that one of our oldest serving presidents was the one who made the proclamation-it was a tribute to one of the often overlooked backbones in our society, a society often marked by its obsession with novelty and youthful beauty. While youth can provide energy and creativity in life's course, it is often age that provides the framework and the guidance needed for its to run that course well.

One of my fondest memories of Stan is the hour he spent playing imaginary ball with the young son of one of his fellow students. The boy, wounded by his mother's recent divorce, was shy and angry. He often argued publicly with his mother and found most of the grown-ups around him too eager to correct him. Stan took a different tack. He pulled two empty paper bags out of his apartment and invited the boy to play catch. The boy inquired about the ball. Stan smiled and told him that it was invisible or could only be caught with the mind. He demonstrated by flipping his bag upward and then pulling it downward swiftly, snapping his finger against the bag's side to show that he had caught it. The boy caught on quickly and soon they were tossing their invisible quarry back and forth. We could also hear the boy telling Stan how his life was going. It was one of the first times I ever saw the boy smile.

During this month, may I learn something from Stan's wisdom. May I learn something from anyone who has lived long enough to learn something at all. Old age may indeed have its own glory and we would be wise to treasure and nurture it when we are in the presence of its glow.

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

What's Happening at NCUCC August 2021

Events, Anniversaries and Birthdays

Worship is in person and on ZOOM at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864699096>
or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 848 6469 9096

Pastor Jon's Tuesday noon class is in person. Will also be on ZOOM by request
or due to bad weather. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84229731057>
or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 842 2973 1057

Wednesday Night Prayer Time 7 pm. Call 978-990-5000 then 283560#

Su. 1: Worship 10 am w/Communion
"Women of the Bible-Mary"
Luke 1: 26-38

Mo. 2: Sherry L. b'day

Tu. 3: Noon Class "Ethnicity"

We. 4: Dawn A. b'day

Th. 5: Worship & Pastoral Care 1 pm
Circles 6-8 pm

Fr. 6: Greg & Nancy M. anniv.

Sa. 7:

Su. 8: Worship 10 am
"Women of the Bible- Mary Magdalene"
Luke 8: 2-7

Mo. 9: Sue J. b'day
Ben R. b'day

Tu. 10: Noon Class "Body"
Theresa V. b'day

We. 11: Denise V. b'day

Th. 12: Circles 6-8 pm

Fr. 13:

Sa. 14:

Su. 15: Worship 10 am
"Women of the Bible- Mary & Martha"
Luke 10: 38-42
Paul & Audrey E. anniv.

Mo. 16: Paul P. b'day
Karen V. b'day

Tu. 17: Noon Class "Behavior"

We. 18:

Th. 19: Circles 6-8 pm

Fr. 20: Paul & Anna P. anniv.

Sa. 21:

Su. 22: Worship 10 am
"Women of the Bible-
The Syrophoenician Woman"
Mark 7: 24-30

Mo. 23:

Tu. 24: Noon Class "Color"

We. 25:

Th. 26: Circles 6-8 pm

Fr. 27: Allen & Sheila R. anniv.

Sa. 28:

Su. 29: Worship 10 am
"Women of the Bible-Enodia and
Synteche"
Philippians 4: 1-3

Mo. 30:

Tu. 31: Noon Class "Class"

Members and friends in need of Prayers: Bill B., Bud S., Gloria W.

Deadline for information to be printed in the September newsletter is Thursday August 26.

Evening Prayer

On Wednesdays at 7 p.m.-we will join over the phone for a time of meditation and prayers for ourselves and others. To join us, dial 978-990-5000 then 283560#.

Tuesday Noon Class

We will be meeting in person and continuing our discussion of Ibram Kendi's book, HOW TO BE ANTI-RACIST. I promise you that the conversation will be stimulating and will help us meet the challenges of our ever-changing world. Here is a list of topics:

August 03-Ethnicity

August 10-Body

August 17-Behavior

August 24-Color

August 31-Class

School Supplies

Due to a surplus of supplies caused by most of last year's classes being online, we will not be collecting backpacks and school supplies for kids this year. After talking to educators we found there is a greater need for clothing items. The clothes will be kept at the school for emergency use. The following is a list of needed items: Both girls and boys sweat pants and underwear sizes 5-6, 7-8 & 10-12

(Also some 14-16 sweat pants occasionally needed)

Socks (youth large white to be gender neutral)

Crocs (no name brand in neutral colors)

There is a box in the hall near the mailboxes where you can put the items you have purchased.

You may also make a monetary donation and the items will be purchased for you. Please note "school clothes" on your check or envelope so the money goes to the right place.

Thank you for your support of this project.

Mission and Social Action

Yoga Class

Are you looking to age well? YOGA may be the answer for you! Yoga is so good at helping with our flexibility, strength, balance and overall good mental health. I have lead Yoga practice for the past 18 months with seniors in my Florida neighborhood via ZOOM. Some of these yoga students have said they quit going to their chiropractor after months of yoga class dedication. I can't guarantee that, but I am sure you will be pleasantly surprised with just how much you can do. You'll need a yoga mat, a towel to protect your knees, water and a hand towel for some of the movements.

Afraid of ZOOM? I can get you started and help you join us. Call Joyce Mead at 616-403-7550 if you are interested. Yoga sessions will be an hour twice a week. Remember they are geared toward senior participants. And with ZOOM you can turn off the video feature and practice privately. So call me soon and I'll answer any questions you may have. Thanks!

Open and Affirming

At the June 27, 2021 Annual Meeting, the congregation affirmed their commitment to becoming an Open and Affirming church by voting to proceed with the process.

Since this process may take up to two years to complete, the Administration and Council approved the Same Sex Marriage Policy written below that will be in effect until the Open and Affirming Process is completed.

Same Sex Marriage Policy

At our regularly scheduled meeting on July 15, 2021, we the Administration and Council of Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ, as we currently work through the Open and Affirming Process, and in lieu of having an official Open and Affirming designation, have voted to grant to our pastor, and any authorized guest pastor, permission to officiate at and to use the church building for, the purpose of performing same sex marriages.

Approved by Administration July 15, 2021

Approved by Council July 15, 2021

Worship

Since returning to in person worship, some parts of the worship service have remained the same and some things have changed. Now that we are using new technology to reach all who wish to worship with us, hopefully the changes have made worship services better. Whether you worship with us in person or on ZOOM (either phone in or by internet) we hope your worship experiences are good ones. If anyone has any ideas that you think might improve worship services, please let Pastor Jon or Ken know. We are open to your ideas and will look into them.

Treasurer's Report June 16 – July 15, 2021

Income:

June 21	\$2,220.00
June 28	\$1,260.00
July 4	\$2,068.00
<u>July 11</u>	<u>\$1,403.00</u>
Total	\$6,951.00

Expenses: \$6,942.37

Difference \$ 8.63

Phillips Fund \$186,300.66

Family Fund \$81,834.71

Thanks be to God for all the bounty he gives us so we can share in our Christian life to his glory.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer