
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

432 Quarterline Newaygo, MI 49337

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Rev. Jonathan Riedel, Pastor

“THE CHURCHMOUSE”

April 2022

Break The Silence Sunday

“Bring my sons from far away, and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name and whom I created for my glory, whom I have formed and made.” Isaiah 43:607 CEB

This is one of the conversations that is so hard to begin and it is also one that is difficult to carry through because the wash of pent-up memories and emotions always threatens to undo us. Every congregation we know contains victims of sexual abuse. An average of 321,500 people 12 and older are raped or sexually assaulted in the United States per year, an average of one assault every 73 seconds. Approximately 60,000 children are similarly assaulted per year as well. To put this all in the most glaring light, 1 out of every 6 women and 1 out of every 33 men will be sexually victimized in their lifetime. The perpetrators in the majority of these cases will be people well-known to them and will inflict their suffering in the comforts of the victims' homes. The average age of males when they are first assaulted is four, for females it is fourteen. All these statistics are drawn from Department of Justice files. Let me repeat the obvious-every congregation has victims of sexual abuse sitting in their pews, serving as volunteers, and even officiating as pastors. Their stories, however, often go unspoken, buried by years of societal discomfort and personal shame. These hidden tales haunt every inch of these people's lives, lives often spent searching desperately for healing and understanding.

We who follow Jesus are called to be Easter people. We are beseeched by God to pay attention to and to care for those who crawl through the broken and foggy roads of violence and sexual harm. We are asked to listen to what has happened to them, no matter how uncomfortable we might feel. To hear without prejudice, without burying their words with platitudes and unsolicited advice. To become aware of the helpful resources available in your greater communities so we can work with those who are suffering so they can find recompense and solace. To believe their stories even though they go against the public image projected by their accused perpetrators. Too often followers of Christ have chosen to side with the victimizers, not with the victims. We need to take seriously the task of reorienting our attention and affections to where God would want it to be. In that way, we can help lead people from the land of death, pain, and suffering to a place of healing and hope. Just as Jesus rose again to new life, we are called to be agents of resurrection.

On the 24th of April, a week after we celebrate Jesus' triumph over death, evil, and pointless suffering, my denomination celebrate Break The Silence Sunday. Though this Sunday shines a hard light on a difficult and fearsome subject, it does so with an Eastery hope. Because we believe that nothing is beyond the healing power of God, we invite people to tell their most hidden and arduous stories. Because we trust that stories make the awful something we can survive and even redeem, we listen. Because we believe that God's life through the

word of truth can set us free, we ask people to pull away victimizing fictions and destructive and convenient lies that do nothing to protect the most vulnerable and to the most to cover for those who have the most to hide. None of us can heal when the very source of the pain cannot be spoken. So, in the spirit of new and saving life, we break the silence so something new and good, whole and free of pain, can spring from freshly-turned dirt.

I have faced the hard privilege of listening to women and men tell their stories. They were filled with tears, both theirs and my own. They contained long silences and difficult questions, offered tenderly and hesitantly. I never think that I handle them well. I feel like an unwelcome guest stumbling into a room by accident. I always come away full of admiration for the speaker's courage. It is indeed a challenge to be strong enough to be vulnerable and open enough to spool out raw shards of memory without leaving him or herself a soul so shattered that he or she cannot figure out which piece goes where. I have squirmed as I have absorbed someone recounting a rape, ripped skin, blackened eyes, broken bones, and torn spirits. I still flinch when I recall the hushed-back anguish of their words. I know that I did not handle those conversations as well as I would have liked to. I am not sure that I was any help at all, but I stayed. I listened and I am glad I did. Their truth helped me become a better pastor. That, however, does not take any of their pain away.

Therefore let us mark this day by doing more than just listening to and helping the victims of sexual violence. Let us teach boys and men, (the perpetrators in most cases) that violence as a form of sexual gratification is always wrong and should be and will be punishable to the fullest extent of the law. Let us quit making excuses for men who behave in this way. No artistic ability, political savvy, or intellectual prowess can exonerate anyone who molests or assaults other people. May we do this not because we want to be politically correct or current in our morality, but because this is a real and productive way we can love those whom God has made and loved. So we should break the silence so that all of God's wounded children shall have their voices heard.

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

Tuesday Noon Adult Forum

Tuesday Noon Adult Forum-Biblical Holidays

The Bible is full of days of celebration. The Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures found ways to help celebrate what God had done for them, often describing traditions to help make our memories richer and to help us where God might be going from here. We meet on Tuesdays at noon in the church entry area for a time of discussion and discovery. Here is a schedule of topics"

4/05-Hanukkah

4/12-Purim

4/19-Pentecost

4/26-Easter

Evening Prayer

On Wednesdays at 7 pm we will join over the phone for a time of meditation and prayers for ourselves and others. To join us, dial 1- 978-990-5000 then 283560#.

What's Happening at NCUCC April 2022

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#

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| Fr. 1: | Fr. 15: Good Friday -7 p.m. |
| Sa. 2: | Candles, Songs, and Readings |
| Su. 3: Worship 10 am | Sa. 16: |
| Fifth Sunday of Lent | Su. 17: Worship 10 am w/Communion |
| "Stories We Could Tell" | Easter Sunday |
| Isaiah 43: 16-31 | "Stories We Could Tell" |
| "Something New" | Luke 24: 1-12 |
| Mo. 4: Tom M. b'day | "The Women" |
| Tu. 5: Noon class - Biblical Holidays- Hanukkah | Mo. 18: |
| Maison P. b'day | Tu. 19: Noon class - Biblical Holidays- Pentecost |
| Marty & Sherry L. anniv. | We. 20: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) |
| We. 6: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) | Th. 21: |
| Th. 7: Circles 6-8 pm | Fr. 22: |
| Fr. 8: | Sa. 23: |
| Sa. 9: | Su. 24: Worship 10 am |
| Su. 10: Worship 10 am | First Sunday of Easter |
| Palm/Passion Sunday | "Ask A Question Sunday" |
| "Stories We Could Tell" | John 20: 19-31 |
| Luke 19: 28-40 and Luke 22: 14-23:56 | Mo. 25: Gretchen M. b'day |
| "A Journey Through Holy Week" | Tu. 26: Noon class - Biblical Holidays- Easter |
| Jose H. b'day | We. 27: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) |
| Mo. 11: | Th. 28: |
| Tu. 12: Noon class - Biblical Holidays- Purim | Fr. 29: |
| We. 13: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) | Sa. 30: Don & Sue C. anniv. |
| Th. 14: Worship & Pastoral Care 11 am (phone) | |
| Maundy Thursday-7 p.m. | |
| Communion | |
| John 13: 1-17, 31-35 | |

Members and friends in need of Prayers: Joyce J., Allen R., Marilyn S., Carolyn S., Fred V., Gloria W.

Deadline for information to be printed in the April newsletter is Wednesday, April 27.

Open and Affirming

The Open and Affirming Committee is in the process of creating a covenant that declares our commitment to becoming an Open and Affirming church. The covenant will be voted on by the Administration Commission and Council at their May meetings. A vote of the congregation on the covenant and whether or not we will become an Open and Affirming church will be held at the Annual Meeting on June 26.

Maundy Thursday Service

NCUCC will be having a Maundy Thursday Service April 14 at 7 pm. The service will include communion. The service will be in person and also a live audio/visual feed is available on ZOOM using the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85397086507>

Those without internet access can receive an audio feed by using the following phone number and meeting ID: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 853 9708 6507

Good Friday Service

NCUCC will be having a Good Friday Service April 15 at 7 pm. The service will include candles, music and readings. The service will be in person and also a live audio/visual feed is available on ZOOM using the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86493096542>

Those without internet access can receive an audio feed by using the following phone number and meeting ID: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 864 9309 6542

Ways to Worship with Us

Here is a reminder of the different ways that our worship services are available to you.

- Everyone is welcome to attend our services in-person every Sunday at 10 am.
- You can also access a live audio/visual broadcast using ZOOM on your computer or smart phone by using the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864699096>
Those without internet access can call the following phone number and Meeting ID:
1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 848 6469 9096.
- If you would like to access the services on your own schedule, they are added to our website www.newaygoucc.org and Facebook page following each service.
- Links to Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve services are provided as needed.

Mission News

Mission and Social Action Community Outreach

Check out the bulletin board in the main hall to see how the church's outreach missions have been helping the community.

Outreach Distribution

Below is a breakdown of the amount of money used for outreach since January 2020.

\$6,582.42	Scholarships (college and camp)
\$77,245.00	from Memorial Fund to many agencies to help those in need
\$3,074.08	to UCC Outreach (OCWM, OGHS, Blanket Sunday, Christmas Fund/ formerly Veterans of the Cross)
\$15,000.00	from Phillips Fund to many agencies to help those in need
\$ 3,396.71	from Special Offerings (Food Pantry, Food Truck, Power Pack Lunch, etc.)
<u>\$ 3,229.54</u>	from Family Fund to help those in need
\$108,527.75	Total

Ukrainian Refugees

At their recent meeting, the Mission and Social Action Commission agreed to implement a special mission project to aid Ukrainian refugees.

There are many reliable agencies seeking relief funds. M&SA is researching which agency they feel will best use the collected funds. The agency they choose will be reported at a later date.

They will also be asking Council at their May meeting to determine a proposed amount up to which the Phillips Fund will match. The use of money from the Phillips Fund will need to be voted on by the congregation at the June 26 Annual Meeting.

Anyone who wishes to donate to this project may do so by writing "Ukraine" on their check or envelope.

Thank you for your support.

Mission and Social Action Commission

Treasurer's Report Feb. 16 – Mar. 15, 2022

Income

Feb 20	\$1,230.00
Feb 27	\$2,767.00
Mar 6	\$3,063.00
Mar 13	<u>\$535.00</u>
Total	\$7,595.00

Expenses: \$11,820.03

Difference: (-4,225.93)

Phillips Fund \$188,167.18

Family Fund \$80,553.43

Blessing to all as we travel through this Lenten Time.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer

Outline of 2022 Annual Meeting of Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

The 2022 Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, June 26 immediately following worship service. This is an outline of the items that will be voted on at the meeting so everyone has time to ask questions and consider how they wish to vote. Complete details will be published in the May newsletter and also in the Annual Report which will be available in early June.

Any member not able to attend the meeting in person may vote by proxy. Contact the office to request a proxy form.

The following items to be voted on are currently on the agenda:

#1. Election of officers and committee members

#2. Proposed By-Laws Revisions

The By-Laws state that there is to be a yearly review of the By-Laws. This has not happened the last few years. Due to a couple of computer crashes, some past changes were lost and not recorded on the official document on the office computer. Therefore, this year's update is quite extensive. Below is a brief description of the proposed revisions:

- Adding Member-at-Large to Administration, making Council membership 13.
- Administration and Council members may serve an unlimited number of one year terms.
- Mission and Social Action shall supervise and coordinate all mission projects and fund raisers for the church. Also prepare and present to the Council, a Phillips Fund budget for mission expenditures.
- Change the fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year. Annual meeting to change from June to January.
- Revise Article XI by removing description of Family Fund.
- Add Article XII "Special Funds" describing the Phillips Fund and Family Fund.
- Add Article XIII "Conflict Resolution" as advised by UCC Conference.

#3. Proposed 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Should the proposed By-Laws revisions pass, therefore changing the fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year, the proposed budget will be for the next 7 months.

#4. End pursuing Housing Project

We had three entities interested in the bidding process for the Housing Project. Each stated that the estimated cost for a low income housing project that size made it not feasible. Therefore, both Administration and Council have voted to no longer pursue the project. The congregation will have the final vote.

#5. Open and Affirming Covenant and becoming an Open and Affirming Church

The Open and Affirming Committee has created a covenant confirming the church's commitment to become an Open and Affirming Church. The Administration and Council will vote on accepting the covenant at their May meetings. The congregation will have the final vote.