
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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Rev. Jonathan Riedel, Pastor

“THE CHURCHMOUSE”

May 2022

National Decency Day

“Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.” Luke 6:31 CEB

Sometimes it pays to scroll through lists of the holidays scattered through the year. I happened across American National Decency Day, which is celebrated on May 14th. The name intrigued me so I explored further. It was established in 2017 in response to an increasingly toxic political and social climate. “The DECENCY movement represents a moment in the midst of the polarized atmosphere in which we find ourselves for all people to reclaim the tradition, practices and skills for civil discussion of our difference of opinion. Centering the focus on DECENCY marks a valuable opportunity for schools to reaffirm the standard of civil discussion for students of all ages and to talk through the practicalities of how to treat everyone with respect and master the art of listening,” said Lisa Cholnoky, founder of DECENCY. This involves remembering and teaching necessary skills for human relations: Active Listening (listening to hear what the other person is saying, not for what you wish to say in response), Better Understanding, and Compassion. It is her hope to prevail upon those who are grown up to work on becoming the best role models for future generations.

Though her proposal is couched in the language of modern transactional psychology, Cholnoky’s plea is one that would resonate with the seer I follow: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus took the time to listen to people’s true needs: their need to be fed, to be challenged, to be healed. He asked questions designed to provoke self-revelation and self-reflection as well as to probe what expectations people had for God. He told stories people could relate to not so much that they could be entertained but so they could be transformed by their consideration of other ways to live. Jesus gave his life not as an act of revenge or as an act of self-serving promotion, but as a final gift for the world for which he cared so deeply. It was a gift, girded by his Resurrection, that fulfilled his hope that new life, new possibilities, new realities could be forged despite our conflicts and our differences here on this earth now as well as in whatever life there is to come.

Though Jesus had much to say about what is necessary to transcend these barriers to building a better planet, nothing provides a better to do that than Jesus’ pithy suggestion to do to others what we would want them to do for us. I know that Jesus was not the first to suggest this maxim; the Hebrew Scriptures do as well. Moreover, versions of the same sentiment appear in the literature of every Major religion that possesses written documents. This consensus attests to the very fundamental nature of this core belief. If you want to be treated fairly and well, you need to treat others in the same way. In that way, you serve as both a model and an inspiration. You

also form a standard upon which a healthy relationship can be built. To put this at its most blunt, if you do not want to be abused, cheated, lied to, or thoroughly disrespected, you would do well not to do the same to anyone else. I would be naive to suggest that this will prevent everybody from doing something destructive to you, but at least you can be certain that you at least are not contributing something damaging to the interaction. Your not doing so will be noticed and may indeed suggest to others that there are alternatives to behaviors that do nothing but harm.

This rule of behavior, called the Golden Rule because of its simple and powerful value in preserving the best of human relationships, goes a long way in making decency possible. Treating people as you would like to be treated rests at the core of decency. If you want people to hear truly what you believe and what you feel, then you need to listen to what others are saying. If you want to be understood, you must make the effort to understand not just the words others are using, but which memories they are drawing upon and which hopes and dreams they are seeking. If you want your life and your heart to be treated with empathy and with a desire to encourage its growth and well-being, you need to look at your fellow beings with compassion and with an earnest willingness to wish the best for others. Yes, this is hard. It is easier to be dismissive and sarcastic. It takes little effort to make those you disagree with into villains who must be destroyed. The ease in doing both of these actions is why we are in our present predicament. If we wish to live in a more productive and peaceful world, we need to move beyond what is easy and focus instead on what is decent. Decency is hard at first, but, as with many difficult techniques, you can become more accustomed to it. You can become accustomed to it because you will appreciate the results. Most of us like to be treated well. They know how their well-being is connected to how well they can work with others. They are often, however, not sure if being kind is worth the effort. They are uncertain if the results will lead to anyone's joy. They need someone willing to take the first step, to show them if it is worth doing. Once assured, I suspect that many will follow the lead.

On this coming Decency Day, perhaps God is calling us to be decent to one another. It may not cut as deeply as loving one another, but it is a start. Start with something small. Engage someone you often argue with. Ask them their opinion. Ask, however, not in the spirit of refuting them but to understand why they believe what they believe. Ask them to share why their heart leads them that way. Ask questions and do not make assumptions. You may not end up agreeing with them, but you will come to a better understanding of why they feel the way they do. If you are truly brave, ask them to listen to you in turn. Invite their questions. You may start a conversation that will make a difference. And it is the accumulation of those conversations that builds for decent society and for a world where people will be treated with justice and kindness, one person at a time.

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

Memorial Sunday

On Sunday May 29, we celebrate the lives of those who have left us since the last Memorial Sunday. If you would like your loved one remembered during the service, please let Pastor Jon know by Sunday May 22.

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 May 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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| Su. 1: Worship 10 am
Third Sunday of Easter
Communion
"Easter in Acts: The Way Forward"
Acts 9: 1-20 | Mo. 16: Ken B. b'day |
| Mo. 2: | Tu. 17: Noon class – Movie: Le Grande Voyage
M&SA Meeting 4:15 pm
Marcia E. b'day |
| Tu. 3: Noon class – Movie: Le Grande Voyage
Charlie J. b'day | We. 18: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) |
| We. 4: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) | Th. 19: Council Meeting 10 am |
| Th. 5: Admin. Meeting 10 am
Circles 6-8 pm | Fr. 20: |
| Fr. 6: | Sa. 21: Allen R. b'day |
| Sa. 7: | Su. 22: Worship 10 am
Sixth Sunday of Easter
"Easter in Acts: Following"
Acts 16: 9-15 |
| Su. 8: Worship 10 am
Fourth Sunday of Easter
"Easter in Acts: Saving Love"
Acts 9: 36-43 | Mo. 23: |
| Mo. 9: | Tu. 24: Noon class – Movie: The Way |
| Tu. 10: Noon class - Movie: Le Grande Voyage | We. 25: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in)
JUNE NEWSLETTER DEADLINE |
| We. 11: Prayer Time 7 pm (phone-in) | Th. 26: Don C. b'day |
| Th. 12: W&PC Meeting 11 am (phone-in)
Circles 6-8 pm | Fr. 27: |
| Fr. 13: | Sa. 28: Jessica T. b'day
Julie O. b'day |
| Sa. 14: | Su. 29: Worship 10 am
Memorial Sunday Remembrance
Blessings for a Sabbatical
"Easter in Acts: Chains Broken"
Acts 16: 16-34 |
| Su. 15: Worship 10 am
Fifth Sunday of Easter
"Easter in Acts: Imagine"
Acts 11: 1-18
Stan M. b'day | Mo. 30: Office closed for Memorial Day
Clair S. b'day |
| | Tu. 31: Noon class – Movie: The Way |

Members and friends in need of Prayers: Joyce J., Allen R., Dorothy R., Ed R., Marilyn S., Carolyn S., Fred V., Karen V., Gloria W., Family of Steve, Family of Russell.

Deadline for information to be printed in the June newsletter is Wednesday, May 25

Open and Affirming

The Open and Affirming Committee has created 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.

Noon Forum-Movie of the Month-Le Grande Voyage/The Way

Our life of faith is indeed a journey. These two films are about journeys of the foot and the heart. The first features a bickering family heading for Mecca for the ultimate voyage in the life of a Muslim: a pilgrimage to Mecca. The second follows a mourning father completing a pilgrimage his late son took on the Way of St. James in Spain. Join us at noon on Tuesdays. Here is the schedule:

5/3-Le Grande Voyage

5/10-Le Grande Voyage

5/17-Le Grande Voyage

5/24-The Way

5/31-The Way

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.

Ukrainian Refugee Relief

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.

M&SA will also be asking Council at their May 19 meeting to approve 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.

Amount donated to date: \$1,928.00

Annual Meeting Information

After the May 5 Administration meeting, there will be a separate notification published that will have information explaining the items that will be voted on at the June 26 Annual Meeting. This will give everyone 7 weeks prior to the meeting to review the information. If anyone has any questions regarding any of this information, please contact the office or any council member. The answering of your questions before the meeting will allow the meeting to move along more smoothly.

The Annual Report will also be published in early June that will contain the same information as well as the minutes from last year's meeting, commission reports, etc.

Treasurer's Report Mar 16, 2022 – Apr 15, 2022

Income:

Mar 29	\$2,108.00
Mar 27	\$1,007.00
Apr 1	\$830.00
Apr 4	\$2,563.00
Apr 11	<u>\$911.00</u>
Total	\$7,419.00

Expenses: \$5,328.74

Difference: \$2090.26

Phillips Fund: \$164,720.63

Family Fund: \$80,937.43

Thank you so much for all the gifts, time and talent during this Easter time.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer