
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ



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Rev. Jonathan Riedel, Pastor

“An Open and Affirming Church”



“THE CHURCHMOUSE”

September 2022

World Migrant and Refugee Day

‘Then you should solemnly state before the Lord your God, “My father was a starving Aramean. He went down to Egypt, living as an immigrant there with few family members, but that is where he became a great nation, mighty and numerous” Deuteronomy 26: 5 CEB

As I was ending my time as the youth pastor at the Christ Church UCC in Kentucky, I was asked to help out with the refugee family we had sponsored. It was summer and child care had fallen through. Could I spend the day with Mirza, an active 5 year old boy, and his sister, Szanna, 12 and already the family’s translator. Their journey from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina was exhausting but necessary; their parents’ Christian-Muslim marriage had marked them for death. I decided to take them to the nearby Cincinnati Zoo. I packed lunch for three and picked up the two of them before their parents left for work. Mirza was in a grumpy mood. He found the English language frustrating and, now facing a day with another adult who knew no Bosnian, began yelling at me. His sister, embarrassed by his manner, berated him, translating for my benefit. I assured her that it was all right as I navigated through freeway traffic. It was turning into a long day.

We navigated through the entry gate and Mirza discovered the animals. He ran from exhibit to exhibit with his sister close behind telling him to slow down. I caught his attention by repeating the Bosnian name of each creature as he called them out. I kept smiling back at Szanna, who was mortified by his behavior. We paused for lunch at a picnic area. Mirza did not peanut butter and jelly but ate all of our apples. Szanna scolded him about his lack of gratitude while I kept reminding her not to worry so much. She had a little of her lunch so I suggested we continue our trek through the jungle world.

We arrived at an immersive jungle experiment. The air was thick and wet, the vegetation thick and hard to navigate, and the rise and call of animal noise disorienting and loud. Soon I felt someone’s arms wrapped around my left leg. Mirza’s eyes were filled with terror as I pulled him away to pick him up. We left quickly, Szanna close behind me trying to explain to me about the bombs that fell about their home not so very long ago. I felt terrible about what I had unknowingly subjected these children to and asked them if they were ready to do something else. Mirza fell asleep in the backseat as we drove to a nature preserve to take a quiet walk.

As we hiked, Szanna told me stories about her family back home. Both sets of grandparents remained in hiding in close proximity to the invading Serbian army. She told her that her mother’s mother spoke Russian and that was enough to make neighbors suspicious of her. She told me that she could reach the language if I ever needed

a translator. I wondered at the fragility, the riskiness of their lives in their homeland. The wrong language, the wrong marriage, even the wrong allegiances were enough to put them in enough peril to warrant the hard process of emigrating to another country.

I returned the children to their apartment after their parents had come home from shifts. The two of them insisted that I stay for dinner. Though our conversation was halting, dependent on Szana to convey what we were trying to say to each other, we managed to share a pleasant meal. I listened to their stories about their families. I told them about mine. What touched me the most was the depth of their gratitude. They were glad to be safe, glad to be comfortable, and glad to be able to have a conversation with someone who was willing to watch over their children.

That dinner happened almost 30 years ago. In the meantime, the circumstances have improved in these emigrants' homeland have improved. Yet many people still remain on the move because of political unrest and changing climate. In 2019, there were 26 million refugees. 2/3 of them came from just five countries: Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Less than a half a percent of these refugees are resettled. Most, eventually, have to return to their homelands, facing likely death or imprisonment, or remain in camps, awaiting treaty negotiations or regime change. Not all migrations are politically-motivated. The changing world economic situation and the legal quagmires that accompany them force many out on the road, looking for steady employment.

Christians are called to be involved in the just and practical resettlement and political resolution for our world's migrants and refugees. We do so because our own spiritual ancestors, Jesus' people, were refugees. They escaped Egypt's slavery, they endured exile in lands far from home, and they regained some semblance of a homeland only after years of prejudice and negotiations. Many of Jesus' stories are about people forced by economics and politics to be on the move constantly even in the lands of their births. The Good Samaritan is but one example. In their memory and for the good of following the ways of God's love, we are called to show mercy to those who are often at the mercy of heartless regimes and equally cold business practices.

September 26th marks World Migrant and Refugee Day. I am not certain how I will recognize the occasion But I can think of some good ways of doing so. I will make a donation to one of my the churches of my denominations that is caring for a family from Afghanistan. I will make a point of learning more about some of the countries whose people are on the road out. I will look beyond the headlines to see the 'why's behind the migrations. Most importantly, I will correct misconceptions and prejudices when I encounter them, No refugee's story is the same. No migration has the same causes. But all deserve to be heard and to be understood. And that listening, that understanding, is the first step to offering real and substantial solutions.

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

Evening Prayer

On Wednesdays at 7:00 pm Pastor Jon hosts, on a conference call, 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 September 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 7:00 pm. Call 978-990-5000 then 283560#

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| Th. 1: Pastor Jon back in the office
Administration 10 am
No Circles | Fr. 16: |
| Fr. 2: Brecken M. b'day | Sa. 17: |
| Sa. 3: | Su. 18: Worship 10 am
Just Peace Sunday
"Prayerful Living"
1 Timothy 2: 1-7
Barb G. b'day
Erika T. b'day |
| Su. 4: Worship w/Communion 10 am
"A New Identity"
Philemon
Trisha W-T. b'day | Mo. 19: |
| Mo. 5: Office Closed for Labor Day | Tu. 20: Noon Forum - Movie: "St Vincent" |
| Tu. 6: Noon Forum - Movie: "St Vincent" | We. 21: Prayer Time 7:00 pm (phone-in) |
| We. 7: Prayer Time 7:00 pm (phone-in)
Tom and Gretchen M. anniv. | Th. 22: No Circles |
| Th. 8: Circles 6-8 pm | Fr. 23: Andrew T. b'day |
| Fr. 9: Gloria W. b'day | Sa. 24: |
| Sa. 10: | Su. 25: Worship 10 am
Hymn Sing
"Surprising Investment"
Jeremiah 32: 1-3, 6-15
Wayne P. b'day |
| Su. 11: Worship 10 am
"Ask A Question Sunday"
I Timothy 1: 12-17 | Mo. 26: |
| Mo. 12: Worship & Pastoral Care 10 am (phone) | Tu. 27: Noon Forum - Movie: "St Vincent" |
| Tu. 13: Noon Forum - Movie: "St Vincent"
Mission & Social Action 4:15 pm
Paul H. b'day
Norma Jean P. b'day | We. 28: Prayer Time 7:00 pm (phone-in)
October NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
Greg M. b'day |
| We. 14: Prayer Time 7:00 pm (phone-in)
Ed and Dorothy R. anniv. | Th. 29: Circles 6-8 pm
Jim C. b'day
Amora M. b'day |
| Th. 15: Council 10 am
Circles 6-8 pm | Fr. 30: Elliana T. b'day |

Members and friends in need of Prayers: Cynthia J., Allen R., Dorothy R., Ed R., Marilyn S.,
Carolyn S., Fred V., Karen V., Gloria W., Donna, Nikki

Deadline for information to be printed in the October newsletter is Wednesday, Sept. 28

Noon Forum - Movie: St Vincent

What does it take to raise a child? Who are a child's best teachers? Do those teachers come in all sorts of characters and shapes? Join as we stroll through ST. Vincent, starring Bill Murray and Naomi Watts. This gentle comedy-drama helps us explore who really makes up our family.

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.

Trunk or Treat

We will be having Halloween "Trunk or Treat" again this year. Your donations of candy for this event will be much appreciated. Candy can be dropped off in the office.

Treasurer's Report Jul. 16 – Aug. 15, 2022

Income:

7/17/2022	\$ 929.00
7/24/2022	\$ 2,180.00
7/31/2022	\$ 748.00
8/7/2022	\$ 2,969.00
8/14/2022	<u>\$ 644.00</u>
Total	\$ 6,990.00

Expenses: \$ 4,647.77

Difference: \$ 2,342.23

Phillips Fund: \$164,580.55

Family Fund: \$ 70,790.62

Blessings to everyone for their work, their time, and their generosity.

Dawn Anderson

Treasurer

OPEN AND AFFIRMING COALITION



**OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION
Congregational UCC**

of Newaygo, MI
having entered into a covenant welcoming people
of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions into Christian community
is hereby recognized as an
Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ.

Andrew G. Long, Executive Director
Open and Affirming Coalition (UCC) of the United Church of Christ
June 26, 2022



**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

