

Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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

Jonathan Riedel, Pastor



“An Open and Affirming Church”

*No matter who you are,
no matter where you are on life’s journey,
you’re welcome here!*



The Churchmouse



January, 2023



Online Church

*“My plans aren’t your plans, nor are your ways my ways, says
the Lord.”*

Isaiah 55:8 CEBAAs

I was recovering from a minor bout with Co-Vid last summer, I decided to go to Sunday worship. I did not have the energy to drive to another church (I was on sabbatical so I could not attend my own) and I was reluctant to expose people to whatever remnant of the virus I possessed so I opened my laptop and began to search.

I scrolled through a list of local churches of my denomination. I had a good variety to choose from. I picked one that I had not visited before. My screen filled with a white, well-lit sanctuary with a simple brown altar abutted by a pulpit and a lectern. From the wideness of my view, I suspected that the camera was in the corner of the balcony. An open door next to the chancel invited me to gaze on a hallway that probably led to the offices and the Sunday School wing. In my imagination, I caught myself walking through that doorway and exploring whatever lay beyond. A voice interrupted my daydream and asked for my forgiveness for a poor internet connection. I must admit that I never imagined watching church online in the way that I would watch a YouTube video, let alone interacting with people through the wires and the algorithms that make up the internet. For me the church has always about physical presence. I can hear people shuffling people to and from their pews. I can smell their perfumes and their colognes. I can taste the blandness and the sourness of the communion wafer and grape juice. Finally, I can feel the pew cushions sink beneath me as well as the solidity of the wood supporting my back. These may not be essentials of worship-prayer and listening to a sermon are as ineffable as the air itself, but the physicality of a sanctuary adds a touch of reality

January, 2023



to something that could easily become an abstract. And yet, here I was murmuring the prayers from sheets of paper I had printed off ahead of time. I paid close attention to the reading of the Bible and to the sermon, taking notes on what I found most intriguing. I watched the lay readers walk from their seats to the lectern and back. I typed a note of thanks into the chat box. I even found myself singing along with the hymns-something that I seldom do when I worship in person because I am usually wearing a microphone. The technician running the online feed was careful to include me in the service. She responded to my note of thanks with a word of appreciation. She asked me where I was and how I had heard about the service. She encouraged me to come back to join another service. Though I was not physically present, though I could not feel someone shaking my hand and I could not feel the pressing of air by me as I stood talking to people in the hallway, somehow I felt as though I had been there. I have found myself recently tuning into a variety of my denomination's church services most Sunday evenings. I listen especially to a variety of pastors' sermons. I think of it as doing research, as learning different angles on the Bible we all share in common, and as borrowing ideas I find inspiring and promising. However, that is not the whole of the story. I watch because it has become part of my way of worshiping God. I find it hard to focus on being open to God while leading worship. Too many details distract-will the lay reader pronounce the hard words correctly, will we have enough servers and elements for communion, and will I miss a visitor afterwards and leave them feeling unwelcome? Sometimes leading worship is like being a stage manager for a play. You are more aware of the pieces than you are of the whole purpose of why you are gathered there. I am not suggesting that I find my prayers empty or the songs less than uplifting. I am admitting, though, that real worship only comes in fragmentary moments when I lead worship. So I find myself sitting as the sun sets waiting to worship. The computer screen commands my attention. I am surrounded by silence, broken only the mewling of my cat. I listen. I pray. I absorb the music. My body calms and I pay attention. It is here, thanks to the strange miracle of electronics and ethereal communication, I find myself waiting for God. Isaiah, in the midst of Israel's struggle through their exile in Babylon and their efforts to reconstruct their world after they returned home, reminded us now that our walk with God is always a mystery. We cannot predict anything about God except the capacity of God's love. And that boundless capacity will undoubtedly include people and situation that we cannot imagine and often do not desire.

We can make plans and we can plot our lives on our mental maps, but what we cannot do is coerce God to go along with them. God allows us our freedom, but God invites us to reorient ourselves to new directions and new relationships when we least expect them. And those new experiences will change us, will altar the way we will go. God does, not pull strings as a puppeteer might, but to urges us to grow and to prosper. The Exile and the Reconstruction made the people Israel more compassionate and more humble people and their example made Jesus possible. God does indeed work in ways we never expect. Just as I never expected to get much out of a computer-fed worship service. But I do. And I suspect that I will continue to do so. Rather than grouching about change and about how things used to be, maybe I should just give thanks to God. That is where all good gifts arise.

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



Annual Meeting



The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be after church on the 29th. We will be approving and installing church leaders and accepting the new budget as well as by-law revisions.



Pastor Jon and Ben would like to thank you for all the generosity shown to them during the past holiday season. You are a blessing to all.
Pastor Jon

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Mission & Social Action would like to thank our church family for their generosity of gifts and money for our Veterans at the Veterans Home in Grand Rapids. We were able to deliver over 80 hats, about 75 pairs of mittens, 30+ sweat shirts as well as socks. Our church elves also packaged up 130 bags of candy.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and God Bless each and everyone of you!
Miriam Strohpaul



January 2023,



Treasurer's Report

November 16, 2022 to
December 15, 2022

	Income	Total Exp.
November 22	\$ 690.00	
November 27	813.00	
December 4	2,969.00	
December 11	130.00	
Total	\$4,602.00	\$6,294.88
Difference		(-\$1,692.88)
Phillips Fund		\$166,223.00
Family Fund		\$ 71,347.92
Christmas Veterans Project	\$	375.00

Joy, Peace, Love, and God's Blessings during this Advent season.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer

Deadline for the February Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the **February Churchmouse** to the office by **Friday, January 27.**

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



The Gifts that Jesus Brings



The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Matthew 11:5 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Matthew 11:2-11 (NIV).

P F R A I S E D X P X G W O B
 R K P R I S O N T T U P O X O
 E S J E F N I B S U Q D O O A
 A D O F K O I I S B C N E O D
 C U H N G I R H E Y U L U A R
 H W N S R H M E F D R Z N F D
 E A M F C C C A D L E Z E T N
 D L M K R C E X L M D E W C I
 V K J A S D F L L C S W S Q S
 H B E S B B I E E D H E A R T
 E H L U I L A M E P H O N N I
 A Y Z I P G W H I P R B P X N
 R O N C N H H M I M G O Q A E
 D Y D X Q D I T A H I Y S M J
 A O Y K B B P H F L F E H Y E

BLIND	LAME	HEARD	DEAF	HEAR
GOOD	PREACHED	POOR	CHRIST	DEAD
RAISED	SEE	LEPROSY	PRISON	JOHN
NEWS	CURED	SIGHT	WALK	HEAR

ZOOM Information

Worship is in person and on ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864699096>
or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 8423 2973
1057

Pastor Jon's Tuesday noon class in person
& on ZOOM

Wednesday Night Prayer Time, 7:00 pm
Call 978-990-5000 then 283560#

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.

♦

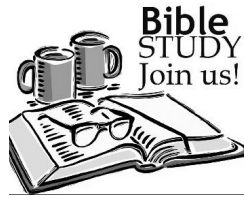
If you would like to access the services on your own schedule, they are added to our website www.newaygoucc.org and Facebook page following each service.

Links to Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve services are provided as needed.

Prayer Room/Chapel

Anyone who wishes to have a small quiet place to pray or meditate is welcome to use the room across from the nursery to do so.

The room is open during the secretary's office hours and on Sunday morning.



Tuesday Noon Forum Prayer Workshop

What is prayer? How long have people been praying? What kinds of prayers have they developed? What kinds of prayers work the best for you? Join us for our January Tuesday Noon Forum to explore these questions.

We will meet in person in the church entry area or, if weather does not permit in person meeting, online

*<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84229731057> or
phone 1-312-626-6799. ID 842 2973-1057.*

Here is a schedule of topics:

1/03 - Brainstorming

1/10 - What Does Prayer Aim to Do?

1/17 - Silent Prayer/Prayer Without Words






1/24 - Meditative Prayer

1/31 - Verbal Prayer

Wednesday Night Prayer

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

January, 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Watch Day Communion Psalm 148 "Counting"	2	3 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	4 7:00 Prayer	5	6	7
8 Worship Svc. 10 am Baptism of Christ Celebration of Opening & Af- firming	9 Worship & Pastoral Care 10am Pastor's Office & on Phone	10 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	11 7:00 Prayer	12	13	14
15 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & Zoom ZOOM	16	17 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	18 7:00 Prayer	19	20	21
22 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM	23	24 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	25 7:00 Prayer	26	27	28
29 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM Annual Meeting	30	31 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	28 7:00 Prayer	29	30	31



BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

F Y O D P S U B Z E R O C L H
W Z E L W I Y L L I H C I Z G
S D E O A B E A S T D B M C N
Y I I C R S I R C O O L R P I
D C B I N C H T C O I E E E L
Y I S E A P P I T I K A H N L
A K G L R B V S V E N K T E I
R R G I G I E N I E R G O T H
C O Y H R E A L U R R Q P R C
T U R T S F L N O M C Y Y A E
I Y T S L E E T Y W B M H T N
C P N T F R O S T Y Z I Y I O
D P I H I O R A L O P E N N B
V I W J G N I Z E E R F R G R
G N I T I B G Y W O N S W O Y

WORD LIST

ARCTIC	BRISK	FREEZING	NIPPY	SHIVERY
BELOW ZERO	CHILLY	FRIGID	NUMBING	SIBERIAN
BITING	COLD	FROSTY	PENETRATING	SLEETY
BITTER	COOL	GLACIAL	PIERCING	SNOWY
BLEAK	CRISP	HYPOTHERMIC	POLAR	SUBZERO
BONE-CHILLING	CUTTING	ICY	RAW	WINTRY

Smile Awhile. . .

1. Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
2. What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.
3. Writing my name in cursive is my signature move.
4. Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? Swarm.
5. If you're bad at haggling, you'll end up paying the price.
6. Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
7. I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.
9. Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
10. How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? A buccaneer.
11. I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
12. My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.
13. I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.



Birthdays in January

- 1 - Dorothy R.
- 2 - Dave T.
Jacob H.
- 4 - Judy C.
Kathy M.
- 9 - Joyce M.
- 12 - Mack A.
- 15 - Nancy C.
George P.
- 16 - Anna P.
- 23 - Deb W.
- 26 - Don M.
- 27 - Klaus W.

Anniversaries in January

- 11 - Mark & Beth F.
- 27 - Fred & Karen V.

January Worship Schedule on ZOOM

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

01/01 - Watch Day

Communion
Psalm 148
Counting

01/08 - Baptism of Christ

The Celebration of Our Open
& Affirming Covenant
The Rev. Ruth Fitzgald - Grand
West Area Conference Minister,
guest preacher

01/15 - Ask A Question Sunday

John 1:29-42

01/22 - Ecumenical Sunday

Matthew 4:12/23
The Great Religions Quiz

01/29 - Health & Human Services Sun.

Matthew 5:1-12
The Vision Beautiful

