

Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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Jonalthan Riedel, Pastor

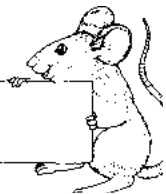


“An Open and Affirming Church”

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



The Churchmouse



September, 2023



Buildings

“Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.”

Hebrews 3: 4 CEBI

I was stopped on a street corner in a town in Oregon where I served a church. He was a musician in one of the non-denominational churches that worshiped in the local community center. They had a monthly rent to pay and were exploring other options. So he asked me a direct question. As pastor of a church with a building, would I recommend purchasing one? I thought for a moment and then cautioned him not to buy a building. While there are many advantages of having your own space, in this time of dwindling resources and inconsistent interest in attending church, the expense of maintaining physical property could quickly become the focal point of church life, to the exclusion of mission and outreach. After some years of consideration, I still stand by what I said then. Please do not misunderstand. I have worshiped in white-painted meeting houses with clear windows, Gothic stone cathedrals with high ceilings and Tiffany stained glass, near the gill slits in a Presbyterian church designed to resemble a giant fish, and while marveling in the red sandstone of Sedona in a small room built to match its surroundings. My own congregation worships in a low wooden and cinder block structure with enough windows to bring in the forests around us. Human beings have invested much beauty and effort into their places of honoring the God who made all possible. In many ways, places of worship represent the height of the human artistic endeavor. I personally believe that it is one small gesture we can offer as thanks. So it is not for any personal dislike of the physical that prompted my words of discouragement. I spent the summer of 2023 looking at church buildings throughout Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. Big or small, stone or wood, surrounded by traffic or corn, I discovered many share the same challenges. Much of a church's budget goes to maintaining



buildings that are simply not used as much as they used to be. Some have cut back on pastoral support in order to keep their worship space in order. In times past, many churches supplemented their income by renting out to outside groups. Now, the internet and the plethora of empty buildings that occupy many small towns have rendered that revenue stream obsolete. Time and energy constraints make in-house care of these monoliths difficult. Repairs, when they come, are often expensive and dispiriting. I wonder sometimes if all the efforts we place in our worship spaces might be spent better in mission and outreach. After all, Jesus talked about how he had no place to lay his head and reflected on how Christ's kingdom was not of this world. Many congregations are sitting in their half-empty palaces and reminiscing about the good old days. The contrast between the two images could not be more drastic and revealing. It is not a surprise that many churches have become more creative in the ways they worship. Some have sold their aging buildings and found rental space elsewhere. Others have encouraged other small and struggling churches to share their sanctuaries, each maintaining their identities but sharing utility bills. Others have rented out their empty Sunday School rooms for city and county offices, saving only the sanctuary for themselves. One of the most unique building use I have encountered was how a small Episcopal church on Maui reacted to a major church fire. They built a small pole barn for offices and classrooms and worshiped in the stone ruins. The palm trees and crisp beaches provides more beauty than most stained glass windows ever could. I suspect that as demographics continue to shift and as online worship becomes more commonplace, churches are in for some challenging discussion about the stewardship of their buildings. I also will safely bet that many innovative and surprising models of doing church will emerge, with and without any church buildings in sight. We need to welcome these conversations although I appreciate the grief of those very much attached to the spaces their parents and grandparents gathered. We love our things and the memories they invoke. The loss of the physical always encourage that we will forget those beloved saints and what they did. May we, however, have the bravery to look beyond our grief long enough to see why our beloved built those buildings in the first place. To serve the community. To feed the hungry and to shelter the lonely. To provide a place of peace and solace. To remind all of us that anything we build is our attempt to imitate the Master Building, who cares for all of creation. That Master Builder is still at work. God still inspires our imitation. Perhaps we will recover our quest to find God in natural settings. Maybe we will find thin places in our city corners, in our secular meeting halls, and in our houses where God breaks through. By chance we will build temples where people of all faiths or none will find a safe place to pray and to reflect. I know that I have not even begun to exhaust the options available to this master architect. I only have to keep my eyes and heart open wide enough to see God's work appear. And that place of encountering God could be any place, in any weather, and among the most interesting assortment of people and their swirling masses of buildings and open spaces. All touched by God's fingerprints.

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

Noon Forum on Tuesdays *Gender Revolution*

We will meet in the main Sunday School Room on the Tuesdays in September to view and to discuss the film GENDER REVOLUTION. This documentary explores the lives and experiences of gender non-binary children and adults. We know this is an area of great concern and controversy so we want to allow considerable time for discussion and honest sharing of feelings. So come with your question as we explore this topic.

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/184864699096>
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.



Treasurer's Report

June 16, 2023 to
July 15, 2023

	Income	Total Exp.
June 18	\$ 894.00	
June 25	1,0271.00	
July 2	3,689.00	
July 9	1,251.00	
Total	\$6,861.00	\$6,802.09
Difference		58.02
Phillips Fund		\$155,998.38
Family Fund		\$ 74,441.27

Our work and outreach continues each and every day. Thanks be to God.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer

Wednesday Night Prayer

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

Deadline for the October Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the October

Churchmouse to the office by **Wednesday, September 27** You may e-mail information to:

Churchmouse@newaygoucc.org
or leave a hard copy in the office.

Museba School/Church Update



Pastor Kiboko Kiboko and his wife Pastor Betty Kiboko left Iowa for the Democratic Republic of Congo on July 31. They visited Museba Village for ten days and reported back about the progress there. Our church has been a part of this progress.

An impediment to some of the progress has been three recent murders in the village; one killing of a village member and the murder of a Chinese couple. The surrounding area is very rich in minerals, especially cobalt, and the Chinese are making claims to some of this mineral wealth. The Chinese are also releasing some of their jailed criminals from crowded prisons into the Congo. The villagers are nervous about these developments. While we don't know the stories behind these murders, the villagers have been shaken by them. They told the Kibokos that their presence in the village made them feel hopeful.

One specific area of progress has been a second well. The first well was a blessing, but there were a couple thousand people using it. The second well makes accessing clean water much easier. You will see a picture of Pastor Betty trying out the pump handle of the well. The well is in almost constant use, but it allows people easy access to clean water, rather than walking great and unsafe distances to the river which has less clean water..




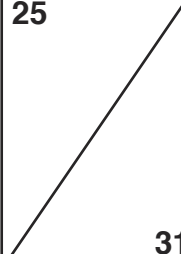

The school and church continue to function well. They are hoping to add more grades soon. The church is full on Sundays. Our donation has helped pay the salary of Pastor Nannette, who continues her seminary schooling as she leads the church. Her salary is \$130 per month. She is committed to staying in this rural area when she finishes seminary. She was raised in a near-by village and is the first in her family to attend higher education.

Pastor Betty contracted malaria while visiting Musebe, but she was able to start immediate treatment and is feeling better.

Pastor Kiboko said that one of the next goals is to build a medical clinic in the village, as villagers have to travel many miles to receive medical treatment.

Recently the Nancy Carlson family, Fritz, Mitzi, and Max, contributed \$500 to Museba School/Church/Village project. After hearing of the project, they were sure their mother would have been pleased. Their contribution was matched by friends of the family for a total of \$1000. Altogether, our church has sent over \$5000 to the Museba project, truly supporting "the least of these" and spreading hope in a world we can't even imagine living in. Thank you.

September, 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	4 Labor Day	5 Noon Class 	6 7 pm Prayer	7	8	9
10 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	11 Worship & Pastoral Care in office and on Phone	12 Noon Class 	13 4:00 Mission & Social Action Narthex 7:00 Prayer	14	15	16
17 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	18	19 Noon Class 	20 7:00 Prayer	21	22	23
24 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom 30	25  31	26 Noon Class 	27 7:00 Prayer	28	29	30

Anniversaries in September

7 - Tom & Gretchen Mee
14 - Ed & Dorothy Ranger

Birthday's in September

4 - Trisha Winters Trzeciak
9 - Gloria Winters
13 - Paul Herbert
13 - Norma Jean Petz
18 - Barb Getz
23 - Andrew Thompson
25 - Wayne Porter
28 - Greg Myers
30 Ellianna Thompson

Thank You. . .

Thank You to all those that so willingly jumped in to help with all the preparations we needed to do to get the sanctuary and fellowship hall ready for Nancy's funeral. Your help and giving of your time made this task go so quickly and smoothly.

A special thank you to all the kitchen crew who helped with the prep work and helped serve the food.

All the help we received from each and every one of you made this celebration for our dear friend Nancy go smoothly. I am sure Nancy was thankful and appreciative for all of you who helped.

Thank You, and our appreciation to you all. We could not have done it without you.

Blessings,
Dorothy & Gloria

Trick or Treat will soon be here

NCUCC will again be hosting our Annual Trunk or Treat. We will be in need of candy donations for this Community Outreach. All donations are greatly appreciated. Candy Donations can be placed in the office.

Thank You,
Gloria

September Worship Schedule on ZOOM

Worship is in person and on ZOOM at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/184864699096> or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 848 6469 9096

September 03-Communion

Exodus 3: 1-15
"Who-Me?"

September 10-Ask A Question Sunday

Exodus 12: 1-14

September 17-Just Peace Sunday

"Road to Freedom"
Exodus 14: 19-31

September 24-"Wilderness Tension"

Exodus 16: 2-15

