

# Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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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



**November, 2023**



### ***The Necessity of Thanksgiving***

*“Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.”*

I Thessalonians 5: 18 CEB

I believe it was Anne Lamott who suggested that there are only three basic prayers: Help Me, Thank You, and Wow. These three are intimately connected to one another. We are grateful for the help we receive. We are thankful for those moments of awe that strike our lives unaware. We are overwhelmed by the kindness and care demonstrated by our our often cruel and careless world, so much so we cannot help but murmur ‘wow’. If we are the praying sort, our conversations with God revolve around endless refrains of these words, ricocheting off each other. Imperfect pray-er that I am, I cannot say that my own rise above these essential ingredients. Then again, why should they? Within these words, lie the heart of humanity. We need those feelings of dependency, gratitude, and wonder to keep our wits and our capacities as the creatures God created us to be. I suspect that this is what the ancient theologians were referring when they discussed the image of God within us all. Our ability to connect, through our thankfulness, our realization that we are not in this lone, and our gift of curiosity, is what enables us to do the best that we can do. Forgetting those parts of us is what leads to our most self-destructive and malignant instincts. In this season of thanksgiving, I want to focus on the thank you aspect. Gratitude has preoccupied me for a while now; I even offered an extended adult study class on the topic earlier this year for my church and I am sure that I bored some people with my obsession. Gratitude seems a part of the good manners that we are either lamenting or insisting upon; every ‘please’, after all, should be followed up with a ‘thank you’. I have heard people express such enthusiasm when I send them a thank you note after all gift, something my mother instilled in me by making sure that the first stocking stuffer I pulled out on Christmas was a



back of note cards with those very words emblazoned in their fronts. These are the same people who complain when they see people, in their words, take and take without seeming to show any care about how their actions affect other people. No aptitude for gratitude, so to speak. They may have a point. This leads to wondering about how essential thank you's are to life. The Apostle Paul, in his first of probably many letters to the churches in the harbor town of Thessaloniki, insisted that God expected God's followers to be grateful in all occasions because that was best for them. This is an audacious demand. It is hard to be grateful when someone you love died prematurely, when you have lost your source of income, when you have been rejected by someone you considered a friend, or when life seems intent on grinding you into pieces. Surely anger, sorrow, and resentment might be more appropriate. Paul does not deny that, but he wonders if those emotions are enough to get us through our trauma. Human beings have a bad habit of sticking ourselves to fear, anger, and sorrow. And, much as what happens when an animal falls into a tar pit, we cannot extricate ourselves from them easily. Those feelings, if not dealt with, will suck the life out of us and out of others. This is where Paul's insistence may come in handy. We may be gutted by grief, but perhaps healing might come by recalling the joy we shared with those we have lost and feeling a deep sense of gratitude. That gratitude in turn might urge us to break through our self-isolation enough to let other people in. Gratitude might also help us to appreciate the lessons learned from bad relationships and job losses. Perhaps we may learn enough not to make the same errors and lapses of good judgments again. And what of those lives and occasions where nothing seems to go right? How can gratitude possibly help us there? I wonder if the answers to those very relevant questions lies in another question: "what other workable options do we have? Bitterness, cynicism, and ever-escalating might be understandable, satisfying, and even enjoyable, but where do these options go? Do they help us find relationships that heal? Do they rectify our situation? Do they heal our losses? Most of the time, no, they do not. They might simply make things worse.

As hard as it might be, maybe some glimmer of gratitude might be one of the creative and positive options we have left in those situations. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who survived the horrors of Auschwitz, wrote that the one human freedom that cannot be removed is the ability to choose your attitude toward any situation. This is where gratitude might enter the picture. Now, it is impossible and inhumane to suggest that there is anything worthy of gratitude about the death camps, but Frankl himself realized that what helped him survive was his gratefulness for his wife, who he supposed survived. Others expressed thankfulness for food and for breathing. As unbearably horrific as the circumstances were, the difference between life and death might have been due to how you chose to approach the horribleness of these circumstances. While I am not suggesting that putting on a happy face would suffice, but it is equally true, as Frankl noted in his book *MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING*, that bitterness and anger only carried you so far. Those who nurtured those emotions, as he recalled in his moving recollections of what happened after the camps were liberated, were either eaten alive by during their captivity or afterwards found themselves wondering aimlessly with no one left to hate and no purpose left to fulfill. Frankl himself discovered that his wife was dead. He wandered for awhile until he discovered himself in a field of golden wheat. He fell to his knees in wonder. My God, you have met me in time and space were the only words that flowed through his heart at that moment. It was that moment, though, that he slowly found his way back to some semblance of health. In this moment of awe, he found some meaning in his life and some reason to continue. It has certainly inspired me over the years. I must admit that I am grateful to Frankl for his story and for his insights. I wonder now what role gratitude might play in his moment in that wheat field. Gratitude for being alive, gratitude for the memories that kept him going in the horrors of the camp, and gratitude for the legacy to keep those memories and those insights alive. I think that is part of why Paul, also



facing horrors looming over his life, offered the advice. Gratitude is necessary for good living. It will get us through many horrible things. It is a good gift to use. And so I shall.

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



## 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.

## 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](http://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.

## Wednesday Night Prayer

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

## Annual Thanksgiving Eve Worship

On Tuesday, November 21, at 7 p.m., we will have our Annual Thanksgiving Eve Worship. We will celebrate our gratitude to God with stories and songs. Here is the Zoom link if you would like to join us online.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87658580294>

## Noon Forum on Tuesdays

### *A Look at Evil and Other Hot Topics*

We will meet in the main Sunday School room at noon each Tuesday for a time of lively discussion and learning. For the first three Tuesdays we will look at the two major views of evil within our Christian tradition and how we can put them together in a way that really works. The last Tuesday we will focus on a topic that speaks to your most pressing concerns. Stay tuned for what that might be. Here is a schedule of what we will be talking about:

November 07 - Evil: The Augustinian Model

November 14 - Evil: The Irenaean Model

November 21 - Evil: A Composite View: Evil in  
Humanity and Nature

November 28 - Hot Topics

## Thank You. . .

A very special Thank You to all my loving and caring Church Family. Your prayers, cards, phone calls and food have been a tremendous help for me during this painful time.

I had encountered several new back fractures that have given me a great deal of pain. Your loving kindness has helped get me thru all this.

Blessings,  
Gloria

\* \* \* \* \*

A great big Thank YOU goes out to all those who donated candy for our Trunk or Treat this year. Your generosity is greatly appreciated by all the kids who came to visit us at our Trunk or Treat.

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## Needed Unused Christmas Cards

The Open and Affirming Committee has chosen as our next Community Service Project to give Christmas Cards this year to all the residents of the Newaygo Medical Care Facility and Transitional Health Facility. Many of these folks have no family and are forgotten. We would love to give each of them a little cheer and let them know they are thought of and loved.

If you have any extra cards laying around and would like to donate them to help us with this project we would greatly appreciate it. You can give them to Gloria. Put them in my mailbox, drop them in the office or put them in the mailbox outside my office door.

Thank you  
Gloria and the ONA Committee



## Treasurer's Report

September 16, 2023 to  
October, 2023

	Income	Total Exp.
September 16	\$ 339.00	
September 24	789.00	
October 2	3,809.00	
October 9	1,004.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,941.00</b>	<b>\$5,804.09</b>
<b>Difference</b>		<b>136.91</b>
<b>Phillips Fund</b>		<b>\$151,690.30</b>
<b>Family Fund</b>		<b>\$ 71,677.75</b>

Happy Fall to everyone. Don't forget Trunk or Treat and all the fun. Thank you to all who give so generously and to those who work so hard to keep us on the track of doing God's work.





Dawn Anderson Treasurer

## Deadline for the December Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the December **Churchmouse** to the office by **Tuesday, November 28** You may e-mail information to:  
Churchmouse@newaygoucc.org  
or leave a hard copy in the office.



# November, 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
<b>5</b> Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom		<b>7</b> Noon Class 	<b>8</b> 7 pm Prayer		10	11
<b>12</b> Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	<b>13</b> Worship & Pastoral Care 10 a.m. in Pastor's Office	<b>14</b> Noon Class 	<b>15</b> 7:00 Prayer		17	18
<b>19</b> Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom		<b>21</b> Noon Class  Thanksgiving Eve Worship 7 pm	<b>22</b> 7:00 Prayer	<b>23</b> Thanksgiving Office Closed	24	25
<b>26</b> Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom  30		<b>28</b> Noon Class 	<b>29</b> 7:00 Prayer	30		



# The Ten Commandments

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:1-3



Based on Exodus 20:1-17 (NIV)

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

SABBATH	NAME	MURDER	LIVE	HOUSE
WIFE	FALSE	REMEMBER	DAY	IDOL
COVET	WORSHIP	MOTHER	LONG	FATHER
LORD	NEIGHBOR	DONKEY	SEVENTH	STEAL
MISUSE	HONOR	ADULTERY	TESTIMONY	HOLY

## Anniversaries in November

12 - Jose & Nancy Hauser

## Birthday's in November

6 - Nancy Myers

13 - Donald Hills

19 - Jim Sloan



### Year after Year, Your Gift Brings Joy

The Advent season of waiting and watching is also a season of preparing. Our generosity prepares the way for hope, peace, justice, and community. United Church of Christ retirede clergy, servants of the church have spent lifetimes baptizing and blessing, teaching andk preaching, marrying and burying, comforting and empowering God's people. Now through the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross, we have the opportunity to sustain and empower them.

Our gifts of gratitude and love bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the sorrowful, and deep love to those who have ministered in God's love for so long,. By giving generously to the Christmas Fund, we will help retired clergy, church staff and their families to pay bills, maintain health insurance, and meet emergency needs. Year after year, our gifts make a difference, easing the anxiety of constant financial worries.

Last year, the Christmas Fund, administered by the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ, provided over \$1.6 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Please give as generously as you are able this year!

The Christmas Fund is collected at the Christmas Eve Service. If you are unable to attend the service and wish to contribute, you can send a check to the church. Please indicate on the check that it is for the Christmas Fund.

Thank you for your contributions.

### November 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

#### November 5 -Communion

Matthew 23:1-12

**"Partners"**

#### November 12 - Ask A Question Sunday

**Stewardship Sunday**

"Matthew 25:1-13"

#### November 19 - Thanksgiving Sunday

Matthew 25:14-30

**"Be Extravagant"**

#### November 26 —Reign of Christ Sunday

Matthew 25:31-46

**"Compassion Rules"**