



# Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

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*Jonathan Reidel, 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

- JUNE 2024 -



## Pride

*"I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth."*

Genesis 9:13 CEBL

Last year I was sitting at my church's table at Newaygo's first Pride festival, surrounded by people waiting in line for their turn at the food truck and listening to children insisting on their turn on the slide in sand-bound playground behind me. I was handing out bags of candy and church information to people passing by. Many people reacted with surprise. They asked us if we were a church. Noting a few Christian protesters across the street, one shook her head and said she had never heard of a Christian who did not hate her. While I wanted to tone down her language-surely, they merely disliked a part of her behavior, not her very being-I stopped short. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between disapproval and rejection. It is difficult to reject essential parts of people without rejecting their humanity. Again and again, I assured them of their welcome and asked them to consider that God does love them for who they are. A few thanked me for being there. In the uneasiness I feel as I reflect on my experience, I see the conundrum well: what does LGBT+ pride have to do with God's loving promise? A little background needs to be mentioned. My church is open and affirming-we welcome all to fellowship regardless of race, sexuality, or gender. My church family is well aware of how challenging and divisive this issue has been for the church and for the world as a whole. The church as always had an uneasy relationship with sexuality. From advocating celibacy at many points in its existence to insisting on arranged marriages that often diminished what choices women had before them to siding with laws that forbid people of different races and ethnicities to marry, and to lynching and burning at the stake those that questioned customary ways of expressing sexuality, the church has often struggled to find a healthy way to deal with that aspect of humanity. This is not to say that the faith has not fostered wonderful relationships and has offered healing and solace to those injured by sexual violence because it has. It also rightly points out that sex can become an addiction and a form of idolatry if it takes the place of God. This is true regardless of one's orientation. I am glad that churches care about children's welfare, the health of women who have been victims of sex trafficking, and have asked serious questions about our society's obsession with youth and beauty. That is necessary. The church should always been a voice for the voiceless. The church does its best work when it speaks for those not included and advocates for what is healing in a way that helps the person, one of God's creation, reach their full potential. Many churches are very uncomfortable with this. They worry that good ethics and good behavior will be thrown out in the name of trendiness. They worry that sex is such a powerful force that it will lead people to do damaging things. Still more worry that unless sex is carefully controlled it will lead to God's eternal wrath. God has limited



patience with us and we dare not take chances. All of these people want to do the right thing. They, for the most part, care very deeply. They are afraid that sex outside of these traditional models is bound to be destructive because that is what their reading of the Bible tells them. Anything beyond that reading violates an essential relationship-the one they have with God, without which nothing loving or positive is possible. There is an honesty in this discomfort. It is a recognition of human brokenness, the very real possibility of human beings making poor and selfish choices. This is the reasoning behind recent efforts by some churches to reclaim the rainbow symbol. In their view, the rainbow arose from God's promise never to destroy humanity again after a great flood. Noah and his family, along with two creatures of every kind, were the only survivors of a catastrophic flood brought on by human wickedness. God's patience had been exhausted and God's mercy spent into slender threads. The rainbow, perhaps, is there as a reminder to God as well as to us. With human frailness and poor judgment being more than likely, God would need the bow to snap like a cosmic rubber band to remind Godself of the promise of creation underneath all the damage.

Yet as with all stories, another reading also emerges. A flood emerges destroying the known world. People die. Civilizations are destroyed. Meaning is lost. Blame and recrimination abounds. This surely must be someone's fault. Poor choices ruin worlds, don't they? Otherwise what does all this pain mean? In this chaos, God speaks. God pulls. God offers opportunities. God gives light in a hopeless darkness. God reassures with a rainbow containing the full colors of the universe that there is something worth holding up, worth cleaning off, and worth protecting. Many churches have spoken against Pride events as though they were yet another example of human arrogance. They want to insist on the meaning of the rainbow as one of promise, not of pride. After some consideration, I agree. What we celebrate in all color and the dazzle and the multi-faceted costumes of a Pride event is a promise. It is a reflection, as the psalmist suggests, that all human beings are fearfully and wonderfully made, that God is mindful of human beings because there are little less than the angels. They are sparks of God's color, however mired by dust and anger. They are worth treasuring, worth accepting, and worth nurturing so they can reach their full, God-given potential. They are children of promise as we all are. The rainbow is not merely outside in the sky, but within the intricacies of the human soul. We are all here to be reminders of God's promise-the promise that creativity is stronger than destruction, that compassion is more powerful than hate, and that perfect love casts out all fear. I would rather, as a pastor, sit in the midst of the costumes, the colors, and the booming disco soundtrack. I would rather smell funnel cakes and freshly-made french fries. I would rather get into active discussions with community organizers and businesses who want to build an accepting and healing Newaygo. I am aware of human brokenness. It haunts everyone's life and it is what we struggle, with grace, against. Yet I believe that God has kept God's promise. God has given us the tools to mend breaches, to pull together long-time enemies, and to rescue the forgotten, the despised, and the neglected. We can fixate on the brokenness and angrily decry a changing and often uncaring world or we can seek out the rainbow promise where we see it.

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

## Candy Donations



We will again be filling bags with candy to hand out with our Church Information for the Pride Gathering in Newaygo on Saturday, June 29th.

Candy donations for these bags is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,  
Your Open and Affirming Committee



# Unto the Least of These

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' " Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

Based on Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)



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

|          |          |         |        |          |
|----------|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| CLOTHED  | SHEPHERD | HUNGRY  | KING   | STRANGER |
| LEAST    | BLESSED  | THRONE  | SICK   | EAT      |
| GLORY    | LIFE     | ANGELS  | DRINK  | THIRSTY  |
| BROTHERS | FATHER   | ETERNAL | PRISON | COME     |

## Tuesday Summer Film Series

### COTOLAY

This summer we will be looking at two films dedicated to the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis, often referred to as little Jesus because of the intensity of his commitment to follow in Jesus's footsteps, has inspired many films. The first of our summer series is based on a legend of how Francis brought his movement to Spain. This subtitled film tells the story of how Francis changed a village through the life of the boy Cotolay and vanquished a much-feared wolf without resorting to violence. This is suitable for all ages. We will be showing the film at noon on Tuesdays in the main Sunday School room. We will watch it in four evenly-divided parts and will leave aside some time for conversation.

## Wednesday Night Prayer

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

## Deadline for the July Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the June **Churchmouse** to the office by **Friday, June 28**

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

## 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.

## Newaygo PRIDE Festival

We will be attending and greeting people at the second annual Newaygo PRIDE Festival. We would be most appreciative of the donation of bags of candy that we can distribute with our new brochures. We would also welcome any volunteers who would like to share our inclusive welcome. Please contact the church office for more information. The Festival will take place in Brooks Park from 5 to 8 pm..on June 29th.



# June, 2024

| Sunday   | Monday  | Tuesday  | Wednesday                | Thursday  | Friday    | Saturday  |
|--|---|--|--------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|
|  |   |  |                          |   |           | 1         |
| <b>2</b><br>Worship Svc.<br>10 am<br>In person, phone<br>& Zoom<br><br>Cong. Meeting<br>after Service        | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b><br>Noon Class<br>  | <b>5</b><br>7 pm Prayer  | <b>6</b><br>Meal for NA<br>Chapter<br>6:30 pm<br>Fellowship Hall  | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>9</b><br>Worship Svc.<br>10 am<br>In person, phone<br>& Zoom  | <b>10</b><br>10 am<br>Worship &<br>Pastoral Care<br>in office & on<br>phone | <b>11</b><br>Noon Class<br>  | <b>12</b><br>7:00 Prayer | <b>13</b>   | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> |
| <b>16</b><br>Worship Svc.<br>10 am<br>In person, phone<br>& Zoom<br><br><b>Father's Day</b><br><br>Cong. Mtg | <b>17</b>   | <b>18</b><br>Noon Class<br>   | <b>19</b><br>7:00 Prayer | <b>20</b><br><b>Church Board<br/>                     of Directors</b><br>1 p.m.<br>in Main Sunday<br>School Room | <b>21</b> | <b>22</b> |
| <b>23</b><br>Worship Svc.<br>10 am<br>In person, phone<br>& Zoom<br><br>30                                   | <b>24</b>   | <b>25</b><br>Noon Class<br><br><br><b>Churchmouse<br/>                     Deadline</b> | <b>26</b><br>7:00 Prayer | <b>27</b>   | <b>28</b> | <b>29</b> |







5 - Deb Burton  
 20 - Betty Bell  
 21 - Sandy Purcell

### Anniversaries in June

3 - Dick & Gloria Winters  
 8 - Don & Joyce Mead

## Thank You . . .

We can't thank our church family enough for all the help give during Mom's funeral. Thank you to everyone who set up, served food, picked up food, and cleaned up.

Thank you to Ken for working on the program and for creating the slide presentation. Thank you to Ruth, Linnea and Sue for the beautiful music. Thank you to Sherry for planting the memorial tree and butterfly bush.

The cards and phone calls have helped us in a difficult time.

Thank you to Pastor Jon for being supportive and visiting Mom during her last days.

Thank you to Shelia H. for making sure Reggie got to rest in peace with Mom.

Mom loved you all very much.

The family of Norma Jean



## June 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

**June 2 - Communion**

*Why Did Jesus Tell Stories?*

Mark 4:10-12

**June 16 - The Summer Series - *The Stories of Jesus***

*The Weeds*

Mark 4:26-29

**June 9 - The Summer Series - *The Stories of Jesus***

*What Gets Planted?*

Mark 4:1-23

**June 23 - The Summer Series - *The Stories of Jesus***

*God is Tiny*

Mark 4:30-32

**June 30 - The Summer Series - *The Stories of Jesus***

*Lost Sheep*

Matthew 18:10-14

