

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
PO Box 892
Cadillac, MI 49601

“The Tie that Binds”

April 2018

Newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC
Cadillac, MI

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Church service is Sunday morning 10:30 a.m.
Childcare available.

The church is open on **Mondays and Wednesdays** from 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

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Is there such a thing as a “Congregational Spirituality”

by Daniel Kidder-McQuown, Senior Minister of Arbor Grove Congregational Church



The history and polity of Congregationalism are well known in our tradition. For those who want to learn more (laity and clergy), there is an excellent online course available through the NACCC website, and many other opportunities for further learning. But when we talk about the experience of being Congregational, this is perhaps a whole different subject. There are many aspects of our churches that make us like other traditions. Like most Protestants, we have strong traditions of worship: music, preaching of the Word, fellowship, et al. But is there something in



our tradition that makes the experience of being Congregational truly unique? Experience is the realm of spirituality, not necessarily theology. What I’m asking is whether sitting in the pews, or board meetings, or fellowship hour in a Congregational church offers something a person would not find elsewhere? Other traditions can point to such experiences: Catholic members can point to the Eucharist, Methodists to their hymnology, Quakers to their silence, etc. And while I have always heard Congregationalists point to their history and polity as unique, I’ve always wondered if the spiritual experience is unique. What can a Congregationalist point to that is truly different, in terms of their experience? I do not have the answer to this question; my input here is only seed for future exploration. However, I strongly believe more conversations and study about the subject would be helpful. The question of Congregational spirituality is important for at least two good reasons. First, an exploration of answers to this question will help us understand our members and friends more deeply. Second, because in today’s marketing world, it helps to further clarify our niche. In a recent sermon over Thanksgiving at Arbor Grove Congregational Church, I proposed two distinct spiritual characteristics of the experience of being Congregational, the second contingent on the first. Based on Jewish and Calvinist understanding of being chosen as whole people (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:14-15), I talked about how the Congregational Way can be experienced in a way that makes our kind of “church” unlike any other tradition. Because of our history and polity, Congregationalists at their best practice a radical egalitarian, democratic, and holistic religion. At our best, everyone has an equal say over the church, and everyone puts the whole (the corporate) over their individual (or individual family) desires. This inclusion and empowerment can have a dramatic effect on one’s spirituality. The feeling of truly being part of a whole – not a lesser or greater, not an individual fragment, but a genuinely valued equal member of the covenant – can be transformative. As I said in my sermon, appeals to unity are something found in all Christian churches. But Congregationalists offer an experience of empowerment as members that is quite unlike other traditions. The second unique spiritual experience that I propose is freedom. This experience is based on – comes from – the first experience of being valued as part of the whole. I was ordained at a 300-year-old Congregational church in Rhode Island, and now serve a relatively young (69 years) congregation in Michigan. I have always been a scholar of history, appreciating and teaching about our roots. One of the things that attracted me to Congregationalism was how our focus on corporate, egalitarian membership naturally led to our leadership in freedom movements in American history. In the past, Congregationalists believed that since they received “the light of life” (e.g., John 8:12) from God, duty was to bring this light into the world’s darkness – especially in matters of oppression, social injustice, poverty, literacy, corruption, and others. This light didn’t belong to them only; it was to be shared with all. It was the idea that the church – as a center of one’s civic life (e.g., “Meetinghouse”) – should naturally empower others for freedom. This spirit of freedom – corporate, civic, egalitarian – was the inspiration behind so many Congregationalist-inspired movements, like the American Revolution, abolition, Washington Gladden and the workers’ rights movement, and the ordinations of the first woman in America, first African-American, and first member of the LGBT community. Such advocacy and social action was all about bringing the freedom of the Gospel into people’s lives who needed it the most. It was a fire that burned for a long time within our Congregational churches. Because members felt free – as equal members of a whole – they naturally wanted the same for their brothers and sisters in need. I have used past tense in describing Congregational spirituality, and that was intentional. I believe our tradition may need to re-discover these, in the face of our modern era. In my recent Thanksgiving sermon with Arbor Grove, I argued that Congregationalism, like other “mainline” Christian traditions, has been facing a 50-year storm. This storm has severely challenged the faith as seen in our dwindling memberships, aging congregations, loss of appeal to the younger generations, and the church losing relevancy as a center of civic life. The response I propose is a rediscovery of our uniquely Congregational spirituality. While

American society becomes increasingly focused on individuals and partisan disunity, Congregationalists need to stand out. We need to re-discover, re-ignite our spirit of radical, empowering egalitarian church. While people increasingly come to church with a “What can the church do for me and my family?” we need to teach “What can I do for the body of Christ?” While our social fabric in America becomes more divided, we need to offer our Congregational Way at its best. Like the Congregationalists who helped build a “United States,” perhaps our tradition is needed more than ever. And it starts in each of our fellowships. As for freedom, I see Congregationalists and most mainline churches responding in one of two ways. Some of our churches continue with a bunker mentality, and let the storms of society rage around us, hoping they will blow over. For these congregations, they largely avoid talking about “sensitive” or “divisive” issues – need I mention what those issues are? Meanwhile, these same congregations wonder why an “All Are Welcome” on the church sign is not enough to bring people back to church. Imagine our ancestors in Congregational faith avoiding issues like our churches do today. Would mission work, democracy, abolition, suffrage, and Civil Rights have happened if we had avoided these issues in our congregations? “Freedom” movements are all around us, just waiting for us to get involved. And there are plenty of these movements (e.g., fighting human trafficking) which everyone can agree on. Freedom for all is not a partisan value; it is a Gospel value. The other way some of our churches seem to be responding to the storm is “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” Some Congregational churches have decided to mirror American society, including its focus on individual customer satisfaction and trends. I have no problem with this approach, except the effect it has had on our Congregational theological tradition. It seems many churches have given in to individualistic theology. Salvation of the individual is taught, but salvation of the world and our social responsibility is diminished or dismissed. Because of this individual focus, Congregationalists seem to have forfeited their role as a movement and their authority in the civic realm. Imagine our ancestors saying churches have no role in politics? Ha! A re-discovery of spiritual “freedom,” based in our corporate, congregational way, will naturally help us to stand out in our world. In the past, Congregationalists paved the way for what we love about America; we can do so again! There you have it – two initial answers to the question, “Is there such a thing as a Congregational spirituality?” As I said, I hope this article stimulates more conversation, response, and perhaps a celebration and re-discovery of our experience as people of God. I look forward to your thoughts!

Rev. Daniel Kidder-McQuown has been senior minister of Arbor Grove Congregational Church in Jackson, Michigan since 2015. He was ordained in 2000, and has served as a church pastor, hospital chaplain, and college chaplain in the past. His Master of Divinity degree is from Princeton Theological Seminary. Daniel is originally from Springfield, Illinois. Reproduced with permission from Rev Daniel.



**“The Young and The Wise”- Don Lakin in church with great grandson Max.
Photo by Linda Baynes**

HOLY WEEK

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

On Thursday March 29 at 7pm, there will be a candlelight service of Tenebrae, with communion.



HAPPENINGS IN APRIL



EASTER BREAKFAST

There will be an Easter Breakfast on Sunday April 1 at 9am, followed by an Easter egg hunt for the children.

Please note that there will be no communion and no Fellowship Hour on Easter Sunday.

SPRING CLEANUP

It's time again to wield the brooms and dusters! Join us on Saturday April 21 10:00am-1:00pm
There will be a pizza lunch. Yay!



NEW MEMBERS

We have some new members joining the church on Sunday April 22. If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak to Rev John Doud.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY

The word “transgender” – or trans – is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to us at birth. Although the word “transgender” and our modern definition of it only came into use in the late 20th century, people who would fit under this definition have existed in every culture throughout recorded history.

International Transgender Day of Visibility is honored every year on March 31 and is a time to celebrate transgender people around the globe and the courage it takes to live openly and authentically, while also raising awareness around the discrimination trans people still face.

A transgender awareness film “The Trans List”, will be shown on **Tuesday, April 3rd at 6:00pm** in Fellowship Hall. Food will be provided and there will be a discussion following the film.

Our church will be celebrating Transgender Day of Visibility on **Sunday, April 8th**. The speaker at our 10:30am service will be Robert Crowe, spouse of Rabbi Arnie Sleutelberg. (Some of us met Rabbi Arnie in November when he and Reverend John Doud held an Interfaith Dialogue.) Here is Robert’s bio:

From British Choir Girl to American Bar Mitzvah Boy: A Journey.

Robert Crowe, pictured below, was born in the UK in 1968. He was raised as a girl within the faith of the Church of England, the daughter of a vicar. Robert is now a resident of the U.S.A. He is Jewish, a teacher in a small private school, married to Rabbi Arnie Sleutelberg and has trained as a speaker for University of Michigan’s ‘Speaker’s Bureau’. He loves to be physically active in the great outdoors. Robert will be sharing his personal story and discussing how society is rapidly changing its understanding of gender identity.



PANCAKE BRUNCH

There will be two fundraiser pancake brunches this year: Spring and Fall.

Come and enjoy a hearty breakfast on **Saturday April 14th between 10am and noon!**

All donations go to the Stehouwer Free Clinic, who help people in need in our community.

All are welcome!

PANCAKE BRUNCH

SATURDAY April 14, 2018

10AM-12PM

First Congregational Church UCC

200 Harris Street, Cadillac, MI



MOVIES FOR THE MIND

“An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power” Sunday April 22nd. Doors open 5pm, movie at 5:30pm:



Movies for the Mind

"Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions." - William O. Douglas, Supreme Court Justice



Won't you join this Earth Day conversation?

Movie for the Mind offers thought-provoking and honest documentaries touching on issues of the body, mind, and spirit. From socially-conscious themes to environmental and political matters, MftM presents films from a wide variety of sources, including independent filmmakers, with messages that matter. Films presented have won major awards at festivals ranging from Sundance to Berlin.

When: Sunday, April 22, 2018 - doors open at 5:00pm. Movie begins at 5:30pm.

Where: First Congregational Church Fellowship Hall - 200 E. Harris St
(Across from the Cadillac Post Office)

Cost: Donation.

Film snacks: Bring your own beverage, and any additional movie snacks you would like. Popcorn will be available for purchase.

What to bring: If you want to be really comfortable, bring your own seating (lawn chair, pillow, blanket, etc.) Some folding chairs and tables will be set up, but moving to more comfortable arrangements is recommended.

What to expect: A film that often entertains, and certainly makes you think. When the film concludes we have an opportunity for people to share their perspectives and reflections on the movie.

an inconvenient sequel
TRUTH TO POWER



Feature Film

A decade after *An Inconvenient Truth* brought the climate crisis into the heart of popular culture, comes the riveting and rousing follow-up that shows just how close we are to a real energy revolution. Former Vice President Al Gore continues his tireless fight, traveling around the world training an army of climate champions and influencing international climate policy.

Cameras follow him behind the scenes — in moments both private and public, funny and poignant — as he pursues the inspirational idea that while the stakes have never been higher, the perils of climate change can be overcome with human ingenuity and passion.

LOOKING AHEAD:



ECUMENICAL WEEKEND

Our next Ecumenical weekend will start on **Friday May 11 at 6:30pm** at Temple Beth El (311 Beth El Way) in Traverse City.

On **Sunday May 13**, Rabbi Arnie will be here at First Congregational's 10:30am service. May seems a better time to do this exchange than November, when the evenings can be dark and inclement. Here are some photos from November's Ecumenical weekend:

COMMUNITY THE WIDER UCC

COMMUNITY GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

March 30 at 7:00pm "Stations of the Cross"

At First Baptist Church of Cadillac, 125 Stimson Street
Sponsored by the Cadillac Area Ministerial Association

UCC Women of Michigan – The Gathering

June 8-10 at Kettunen Center, Tustin

The theme of the retreat is "Worth of a Woman".

The GATHERING is a weekend of retreat, renewal, relaxation, and recharging. There will be Friday evening entertainment and vespers. Saturday's activities give you many opportunities to either stay busy or simply enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Kettunen Center. Sunday offers a Sunday school class and a very meaningful worship service. The keynote speaker this year is Rev. Denise Griebler. Denise is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. She is a pastor, human rights and social justice activist, retreat leader and potter, living in Detroit, Michigan.

Open to all women from Michigan UCC congregations.

Registration forms are available in Fellowship Hall, and at www.michucc.org/images/The_Gathering_2018.pdf

UCC MICHIGAN CONFERENCE "Festival of Faith"

Festival of Faith A Day of Service - Gospel in Action . See details on www.MichUCC.org.

Saturday April 21, 2018 8:30 – 2:00

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

THANK YOU!

To Penny, Marie, Diane, Rachel and Carol for hosting the CAMA Lenten Breakfast on March 7. The hearty bakes were much enjoyed by our visitors, thanks to these ladies arriving for a VERY early morning start! The newly-tuned piano sounded great, and the singing was enthusiastic.

Extra food was taken to shut-ins and a local shelter.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MARCH 19, 2018 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING—Marie Linn

Reflection: We have a highly diverse congregation. Let us be gentle with one another.

Our Spring church clean up day is Saturday April 21, 2018. Come help us make our building shine. There will be a pizza lunch.

Our grant process is moving forward. Thank you Penny Phelps, Ed Goldman, and John Doud.

For the safety of our church family and guests the SEXTONS will be locking the church doors at the beginning of the worship service. If for some reason you are late, knock loudly on the front door. Someone will let you in. Thank you for understanding and helping keep each other safe.

If you are interested in sitting on a church committee, please let Marie Linn know. A new committee list will be posted shortly.

2018 Missions – - Jan.: Our Church's Wider Mission, Feb.: After 26 Project, March: One Great Hour of Sharing, April: Love, INC, May: Strengthen the Church, June: New Hope Shelter, July: Back Pack Program, August: Shepherd's Table, Sept.: Feeding America, Oct.: Neighbors in Need, Nov.: Salvation Army, Dec.: Christmas Fund

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE FOR APRIL

Date	Greeters/ Ushers	Liturgist	Fellowship Hour	Sexton	Preacher
1	Karma Chapo & Donna Debney	Karma Chapo	EASTER breakfast: Angie & Tim Brugger	Sara Keinath	John Doud
8	Tom & Diane Jobson	Tom Jobson	ONA Committee	Tom Jobson	Robert Crowe/ John Doud
15	Don and Nancy Liebau	Charlotte Barfield	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	Bob LeVand	Linda Baynes
22	Charlotte Barfield & Sue Wachowski	Ralph Annis	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	Sara Keinath	John Doud
29	Carol and Jerry Nilsson	Sue Wachowski	<i>Volunteers needed</i>	Marie Linn	John Doud

APRIL 2018 CHURCH CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 EASTER SUNDAY 9AM EASTER BREAKFAST & EASTER EGG HUNT Choir 9:30am Worship 10:30am (NO Communion) (no Fellowship Hour)	2 Office 10:30am-1pm	3 6pm FILM (Transgender theme)	4 Office 10:30am- 1pm Choir 7:00pm	5	6	7
8 Choir 9:30am Worship 10:30am - Transgender Day of Visibility	9 Office 10:30am-1pm	10	11 Office 10:30am- 1pm Choir 7:00pm	12	13	14 10am- 12pm PANCAKE BRUNCH
15 Choir 9:30am Worship 10:30am	16 Office 10:30am-1pm	17	18 Office 10:30am- 1pm Choir 7:00pm	19	20	21 10am-1pm SPRING CLEANUP
22 EARTH DAY Choir 9:30am Worship 10:30am - NEW MEMBERS 5PM MOVIE "AN INCONVENIENT SEQUEL"	23 Office 10:30am-1pm Board of Trustees 6:30pm	24	25 Office 10:30am- 1pm Choir 7:00pm	26	27	28
29 Worship 10:30am	30 Office 10:30am-1pm	<i>April's Mission: Love INC</i>				

NON-CHURCH ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE IN THE CHURCH BUILDING:

Jazzercise: 8:30am: Tue, Thu, Fri, Sat; 5:45pm: Mon, Wed, Thu; 4:30: Wed. **Symphony Board:** 7pm first Monday of the month