

THE MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER JULY 2022



First Congregational Church UCC
412 4th Street Manistee Mi



From The Pastor

Dear Friends,

Earlier this week I was lamenting to some clergy friends that I was at a loss for what to say in the monthly pastors article for the Newsletter. I got a wide range of mostly unhelpful suggestions; leave it blank and tell everyone it's written in invisible ink, a photo essay of a day in the life of a church bat, a bible related word search, or a color by number. And while those would have been fun, they were not what we were looking for. But then someone shared a quote that was particularly powerful for them, and that got me thinking.

"When I was young, a friend use to tell me 'I love you on purpose'.

During these years, at war with myself, anxious, and dealing with compounded trauma...someone loving me on purpose meant the world to me.

I hope someone loves you on purpose today. I truly do."

This got me thinking as well, what does it mean to love someone on purpose? To do anything on purpose means to do so with intention, deliberately, willfully or by design. To love someone on purpose I suppose means your love didn't come out of happenstance, convenience or proximity, but because you set out to love them.

I imagine that this is the kind of love that God has for, the intentional and by design on purpose kind. God doesn't just love us when it's easy, or when we have earned it, but loves us when we falter, loves us when forget to pray, loves us when we do the complete wrong thing.

Even more importantly God loves us when we don't have the energy or the desire to love ourselves. God loves us on purpose. When we read the Gospels we can see a lot of examples of Jesus doing this as well, the woman at the well, who had to gather water when no one else was around, Zacchaeus who was so hated by his community, Peter who denied him and Judas who betrayed him, and so many more Jesus loved them on purpose, knowing they were not going to always get it right, knowing they were not always good people, knowing they were not without their faults and he loved them unconditionally, and with intention.

So I suppose this is the challenge for us. To learn to love one another and even ourselves on purpose. It is without a doubt significantly easier to love the people who are like us, who act like us, think like us, but God doesn't call on us to take the easy road. We too should put our very best effort into loving everyone, on purpose. So here is what I suggest, for all of us myself included, try it. In small steps, but instead of just saying I love you, tell the people you love that you love them on purpose. Let them know that you love with intention, that you love deliberately. Try saying it to yourself in the mirror, which believe me will feel strange. And each time you say it, think about what it means, think about what it takes to love on purpose, to love with intention. It's a tall order but I think we can do it, and I think it might just make all the difference.

Blessings , Pastor Liz

Worship Team

Keeping Informed! We are looking for your help to make important church announcements as well as prayers and concerns during our church service. Our goal is to keep everyone informed and involved. Currently our pastor makes all of the announcements shared with her before the service time. This will not change. If you have anything important to share with the congregation, we now have clip boards in the upper narthex for you to add last minute announcements and prayers and concerns. It is still best to get this information to Pastor Liz prior to the service. Thank you for your help on this and we are interested in hearing from you with additional suggestions.

Bring a friend to church. Share the beauty of our sanctuary and the warmth of our congregation.

Thank you.

Nanci Swenson and Joanne Cotugno

Crafts

The craft group is busy and with many different projects. We are making gnome ornaments,

pet mats, ornaments in different languages, to name a few.

If anyone has some white yarn lying around they want to donate, the craft group could use some for a current project they are working on.

We meet on Wednesday 9-12 if you can stop in for a while to help.

Everyone is Welcome!

July Birthdays

July 1- Anna Huizinga

July 4- Mary Beth Kennedy

July 6- Kate Somsel

July 12- Marcia Vande Vusse

July 14- Jill Wallace

July 16- Bill Mason

July 18- Noah Germanese

July 21- Julie Matthews

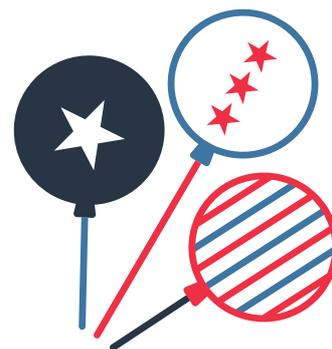
July 26 Eleanor Scarlata

July 28- John Helge

July 29- Lauren Maycock

July 30- Kirsten Amstutz

- Jane Kendall



Happy Anniversary

July 1- Chris and Abby Huizinga

July 2- Sarah and John Helge

July 4- Bill and Mary Beth Kennedy

July 13- Eric and Meredith Rose

July 17- Bill and Sally Mason

July 18- David and Sandy Turk

Moderator's Musings

It took a while, but it looks like summer has finally arrived. Hard to believe that we needed to wear sweaters and coats in June, but the crisp cool weather was certainly upon us. Now we are looking forward to celebrating the 4th of July with family, friends, and fireworks! The pristine blue water and sugar sand beaches of Lake Michigan are waiting for you all.

We have had a lot to celebrate at church also! We were blessed to have Rev Dr. Stephanie Wiener lead us in worship the two Sundays that Pastor Liz was on a well-deserved vacation. We also had the first Family Funday after church that provided us with opportunities to explore more about our faith and fellowship as a multi-generational congregation. We thank our Faith Formation Team for their work to set this up. Another reason to celebrate was the very successful used book, puzzle, and game sale that raised \$750 to help support the Sanctuary Project. Sandy Turk and her team really put on a great sale with a huge selection of great books to choose from. These dollars will all go toward the current \$20,000 matching gift challenge that is in progress. We are almost half-way there and when we hit that target we will be able to pay back \$70,000 of the \$75,000 we borrowed from our long-term funds. Please continue to spread the word to family and friends to help us reach our goals.

After what was about a 10 year hiatus we were also able to celebrate the graduation from Manistee High School of several of our youth. Due to the pandemic shutdown in 2020 Manistee High School Salutatorian Eleanor Scarlata did not have the opportunity to have a graduation ceremony or to be recognized by this congregation as she most certainly deserved. We are pleased to report that Eleanor is currently enrolled at Michigan State University majoring in Veterinary Science. Her brother Evan Scarlata graduated from MHS in this recent class of 2022 joining Anna Huizenga and MHS Valedictorian Solana Postma. Evan and Anna will be attending West Shore Community College and Solana will be studying at Johns Hopkins. We look forward to hearing more about the future accomplishments of these four young people.

I hope you take some time to notice the work that has been done by the group that calls themselves the "Garden Angels" outside our building. They have rejuvenated the landscape plantings and helped to improve our curb appeal. There are many opportunities to be of service to this church. Do not hesitate to let me know how YOU would like to become more engaged.

See YOU in Church!

John Helge.

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Governing Board Meeting

The Governing Board met on June 26th, minutes were not available at the time of printing for this newsletter.

Fellowship

The Fellowship team is so happy that many of you are staying after church and socializing with one another. If anyone has thoughts about hosting, Stu or I would be more than happy to talk to you or help in any way. A big thank to all who have helped in any way. - Stu and Mary

Outreach

July Monthly Mission: VFW



This month we will once again be helping the VFW to care for some newly planted trees. Groups of 2 or 3 are needed to go to the VFW and water some baby trees.

Sandy Turk will be happy to answer any questions you might have about this volunteer opportunity.

Please sign up in the fellowship hall.

Tech Support Needed

Our amazing tech guy will be out of worship on August 7th. If you would like to help make sure the live stream happens that Sunday please talk to Joe or Pastor Liz.

Thank you!



Rummage Sale!

Rummage Sale coming in August!
Start saving the treasures you're ready to part with, clothing, household goods, toys, small appliances etc. You can bring them to church as you find things you'd like to donate. We'll store the items in the same room as the books. As we acquire items, we'll need sorters, so there isn't much to do on the day of the sale. Let Sandy Turk know if you're interested in helping out!

Please Sign Up!

In the Fellowship Hall there are 3 sign up sheets! Something for everyone to get involved. You can host coffee hour (ask Mary or Stu if you need help!) You can sign up to greet and hand out bulletins on Sunday Morning! We are also looking for people who would like to help lead worship by reading scripture (sometimes called a liturgist).

Pastor Liz will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Faith Formation Report

When I was growing up my mom did not waste time messing around, waiting for us to find a path, discover our purpose, or work our feelings out on our own. She had four daughters. There was never going to be enough time. Sure, some of my sisters found their passions early, but I've always been a late bloomer.

Finding a place to serve, a group to join, a passion to exercise never came easy so my mom often found places for me. For sometime she would drop me off at Mary the Secretary's home to dust the shelves & sweep the floors as Mary, who suffered with Type One Diabetes most of her life, sat close by and listened to me ramble away as only middle school kids can do.

In high school she often volunteered my time to assist in helping clean a few homes of women in our church, especially Winnie, our church's patron saint of candy, as there was never a time when we weren't at church and Winnie wasn't passing out hard candies to all the kids. Winnie would always have chocolate fudge waiting on the kitchen counter for our time together after we spent hours, sometimes days together, helping sorting memories from slow accumulation from the days when her home was shared by her partner & children, all of whom had either passed on or moved away.

Those years of wiping down counters, mopping floors, sharing memories, moving boxes, & dusting shelves have been some of the memorable moments of childhood. Hours spent in the company of women decades older than I, many who have since passed on, who were interested in not only listening to me sort out my adolescent angst but also willing to share stories of how they became the women they were at that time. I hung on every word, and to this day I can look back at many of these conversations as the foundation of my Christian faith.

Our children need your presence.
We need your stories.

This is one of the reasons Faith Formation is slowly developing ways in which we can connect with one another, across generations, in prayer, service, celebration, and learning. One opportunity we would love to have you join us for is on the second Sunday of each month after church from 11:30-12:30 (Next one: July 10th). In our Adult Gathering (located in the Parlor) we will be discussing our way through 1 Corinthians, as our kids gather together for a short lesson & activity. We are always looking for adults interested in sharing their time with our kids through an activity and/or lesson. If you're curious what that would look like or are interested in participating and have questions, please see Pastor Liz or Jess Rozga-DeBoni.

Coming this fall we look forward to coming together as a community, across generations, for a book club centered around books that have been banned. If you have a suggestion of books to read, are interested in participating, or would like to help spread the word, please see Pastor Liz or Jess Rozga-DeBoni.

Our children knowing our congregation members, across generations, is how our collective faith grows. It's how the Gospel reminds us that we are not only loved but also part of something much greater than ourselves. Coming together in faith, with trust, is how we learn how to care for one another and work out our Christian faith, it's how the body of Christ stays connected long after doubts have passed, counters have been wiped down, stories have been shared, trash has been placed on the curb, and fudge has been set on the table for all to share.

-Jessica Rozga

Family Faith Formation



Second Sunday of Each Month

11:30-12:30

Family Faith Formation!

Please plan to join us on July 10th for the next family faith formation event.

After Coffee Hour there will be two faith formation activities to choose from. Jessica will lead a discussion on First Corinthians in the Parlor and Pastor Liz will lead the young and young at heart in a lesson and fun activity. Every one is welcome!

Office Hours

Deb will be in the office Tuesday-Thursday from 9am-Noon

Pastor Liz will be in the office as much as possible Tuesday-Thursday. If you need to contact her when she is out of office, her email remains the best option, or call her home phone.

Reminder: During office hours please use the door bell so that Deb can buzz you in from her desk. the keypad lock is only for use when Deb isn't in the building.

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United Church of Christ
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