



# BRANCHES



A Publication of **Muskegon County Cooperating Churches**  
Convening the Community of Faith  
to serve the needs of the people of Muskegon County for over 70 years.

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120 W. Apple Avenue, Muskegon 49440  
Phone: 231-727-6000      E-mail: [office.mccc@frontier.com](mailto:office.mccc@frontier.com)

**Office Closed Temporarily-call or email and we will return your call or respond to your email.**  
**MCCC** is a non-profit ecumenical organization serving all faith congregations in Muskegon County

## What's Happening at Cooperating Churches?

### MCCC Board for 2020

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St. Gregory's Episcopal Church

### Membership Drive

**Letter in this issue**

**Membership Partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Information listed on page 4.**

### Recovery Congregations:

**Educational Opportunities**

**Support and Resources**

**Call us. 231-727-6000.**

### Mobile Food Pantries:

**Monthly Schedules on our website**

**Opportunities to host mobiles at your church.**

**All you need is a parking lot and 20 to 25**

**Volunteers.**

**Call us. 231-727-6000.**



*Earnings by Tom Wagner*



July-August 2020

### Marching in Gratitude

Muskegon's Black Lives Matter march this past Pentecost Sunday was the largest demonstration I have ever witnessed during my 30 plus years in this area. Some reports estimated the gathering up to as many as 1,000 people. That in itself was rather remarkable following nearly two months of physical distancing. That figure doesn't include people who drove by on Apple Avenue offering support. A full throated public appeal for justice in the aftermath of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and too many others over the years was and continues to be necessary.

I attended two events that day. Prior to the demonstration at the court house, there was a hastily organized prayer meeting at Hackley Park attended by a couple hundred people. I greatly appreciate that a couple of pastors took the initiative to create an opportunity for integrated public prayer prior to protest. It helped that the pastors made a point to make contact with the organizers of the main event to avoid any misunderstandings about their purpose. I'm sure it contributed to the success of the day. I also have great appreciation for the leaders who organized the larger event at the court house. Group discipline can be difficult to manage in large crowds. In light of the epidemic participants were asked to wear masks and maintain physical distance. Most people did wear masks, though the distancing was a bit of a challenge. The organizers were wise to schedule a specific time to end the event. Though there were a few hangers on into the early evening, the vast majority of participants departed at the prescribed hour. I was a bit annoyed with the way Grand Rapids media focused on those who remained, appearing to anticipate violence to break out if they just waited long enough. Sheriff Poulin acted in good faith, addressing the crowd very respectfully with only four or five uniformed deputies on hand not wearing riot gear. It was an example of good community policing.

Marching with our fellow citizens of color can be a meaningful act of love and solidarity. Public actions and declarations can help change public opinion and in turn public policy. Crises often motivate us to action. Yet too often we become distracted as the news cycle moves on, and issues of racial justice get ignored until another crisis erupts. True change does not happen until it becomes part of our daily walk. We may publicly proclaim our faith at our baptism, but that commitment has to make a difference in our daily living for the rest of our lives. For many of us of European ancestry our commitment to racial justice may need to start with listening more to our black sisters and brothers and talking less. We have to be willing to lay down our white privilege. I march as an act of solidarity, but also with a sense of gratitude.

The nonviolent strategies used by the Civil Rights Movement, in addition to making significant changes in American society, breathed new life into the peace witness of the Historic Peace Churches (Mennonites, Friends and Brethren among a few others). It helped move many of us from a quietist sectarian form of pacifism (traditionally called "nonresistance") to more active civic engagement. The quietism of particularly the Mennonites and Brethren likely can be traced to the combination of persecution and lack of access to authorities in their native continental Europe. Though early Quakers also experienced persecution in England, some of their leaders had access to Oliver Cromwell during the Commonwealth period and the Stuarts following the Restoration. The nonviolent values of these groups came primarily from reading the teachings of Jesus. Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas K. Gandhi also drew directly from those teachings, and of course they were also in conversation with other faith traditions and each other. Though a few American academics and a few religious pacifists were paying attention to Gandhi's work during his lifetime, it was really the African-American Church that introduced his ideas to the American public. Many traditionalists still shy away from nonviolent resistance. Others of us recognize this kind of civic engagement for peace and justice as a continuation of the

In Romans 12 Paul wrote about living a life transformed by the God’s mercy, not molded by the values of the larger society. He gave concrete advice on how to live as part of a faith community and in connection to the larger world. The final verse (v. 21) sums it up, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Tom Wagner is a former pastor in the Church of the Brethren (Dunker) and serves Muskegon County Cooperating Churches as clerk and archivist. He can be contacted at gleanertw@hotmail.com

Membership letter

**Muskegon County Cooperating Churches**

*"Moved by the love of Christ, we seek reconciliation and justice for all, reaching across barriers that divide to alleviate poverty, both spiritual and physical."*  
120 W. Apple Ave. Muskegon, MI 49440 Phone: 231-727-6000

March 10, 2020

Dear Partner in Building the Beloved Community,

Please keep Muskegon County Cooperating Churches as an outreach priority in your life and community by paying membership dues today.

**MCCC membership is a bargain – only \$50 (Organizations) \$25 (individuals), annually,** which can be paid as a lump sum or in installments. You may also take advantage of a discounted Muskegon Chamber of Commerce membership of \$75 by being a member of MCCC. If interested call our office and we can set this up.

For an MCCC membership, you are entitled to:

- \*The Directory of Muskegon County Churches & Religious Organizations, updated periodically. (If you have not received the latest (2019) edition please contact us.)
- \*Six issues annually of the MCCC Newsletter, BRANCHES, for as many people as would like to receive it from your congregation. You have the option of hard copy or email versions of the newsletter.
- \*Partnership in an organization which values both ecumenical and interfaith work in our community, supporting Christian community worship experiences, and various interfaith events, including the annual Shoah (Holocaust) memorial service.
- \*An annual voice in the work of Muskegon County Cooperating Churches.

**The Chamber membership can offer you much more.**

This is an exciting time to be involved with Muskegon County Cooperating Churches. We have several projects which will inform and involve the faith community; such as the Mobile Food Pantries, Recovery Congregations, the Family Faith Fellowship Fair, and Peace and Justice events.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send your membership contribution today.

Thank you!

Paul Emick, President  
Muskegon County Cooperating Churches

\*\*\*\*\*  
Please remove this section and send it in with your contribution. Thank you.

Organization (Individual) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches Annual Membership Contribution: \$50.00 (or more)

*Muskegon County Cooperating Churches (MCCC) is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization.*

### Save the Date



### 2020 Crop Hunger Walk

Muskegon CROP Walk planned for Oct. 4, 2020.

Tim Breed will be this year's coordinator.

Would you like to have a membership with the Chamber of Commerce for a discount? All you have to do is contact our office and ask. If you pay for a membership with the Muskegon County Cooperating Churches for \$50 you can also apply for a membership with the Chamber of Commerce for \$75. It is a wonderful offer and a huge savings. Plus, you get two annual memberships to two great organizations. Just call us for an application.



Muskegon County Cooperating Churches would love to hear from you. If you have something you would like to share, please e-mail us at: office.mccc@frontier.com or send it to us in the mail. Please include pictures and/or your organizational logo. Information is due into the office no later than August 21 if it is to be included in the next September-October issue.

# THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

We would not exist without your generous support. Contributions have been received during the last 2 months from the following individuals, churches and organizations.

Port City Church is gathering for Sunday services outside at Heritage Landing through the rest of the summer! We meet at 11:00 a.m. There are trams to transport people from the parking lots off site. We hope you will join us!



**Ashley Schnotala**  
Director of Operations  
231.767.5246 | [weareportcity.com](http://weareportcity.com)  
Reach. Restore. Release

- Martha Giacobassi
- Bill Page
- First Congregational Church, UCC
- Sacred Heart Church
- First Presbyterian Church
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- Church of the Brethren