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BRANCHES



Muskegon County Cooperating Churches
120 W Apple Avenue
Muskegon MI 49440

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

June, July, August 2022

Volume 41, Issue 2

A Publication of **Muskegon County Cooperating Churches**
Convening the Community of Faith
To serve the needs of the people of Muskegon County for more than 75 years

Welcome to a new issue of BRANCHES! If you have info you'd like considered for publication, please send it to druidgriffin@aol.com by August 24, 2022.

News from MCCC

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches held its Annual Meeting on January 31, 2022 via Zoom. The budget for 2022 was approved, the actions of the board during the past year were ratified, and this past year's accomplishments were celebrated. New board members the Rev. Jared Rider from Church of God, United and Ms. Georgia Moss from Phillip Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church were welcomed.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Board chose officers for 2022:

President: Paul Emick, Prince of Peace Catholic Church

Vice President: Rev. Cindy Barnum-Steggeda, 1st Congregational Church, UCC

Clerk: Brother Tom Wagner, Church of the Brethren

Treasurer: Rev. Timothy VanderHaar, First Congregational Church, UCC

Volunteer Program Coordinator: Rev. Lily Marx, St. Gregory's Episcopal Church

The **Peace and Justice** Committee of MCCC meets via Zoom at 11:00 am on the 2nd Thursday of each month. If you would like more information or the Zoom link, please contact Lily Marx at marxlily@yahoo.com

MCCC 2nd Annual Family Fun Fair Saturday, August 6

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches presents the **2nd Annual Family Fun Fair** Saturday, August 6 from 10:30 am – 2:00 PM in Hackley Park in downtown Muskegon.

We invite YOU to participate – buy a booth for \$50 by contacting Lily Marx at 231-670-5911 or emailing marxlily@yahoo.com.

You can use your space to promote your Faith Organization or your No-Profit Organization. You can also provide fun, informative, or moneymaking activities such as: games, bounce house, dunk tank, worship tents, free food, hand crafted sale items, information tables, face painting or present music and/or dance.

Be creative! – choose activities which best represent your organization.

Tom Wagner, “Gleanings”

Micah 6:1-8, “Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly” This passage from the prophet **Micah** is quite familiar to me, particularly v. 8.



The Church of the Brethren summarized the verse for our “**Goals for the [19]80s**” in the phrase: “**Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly.**” It frequently appeared in denominational literature and even made its way to T-shirts and coffee mugs from Brethren Press. I had considerable exposure to the theme during the decade that included my final years of college, an archival internship at the denominational offices and seminary studies. I recall the imperatives primarily used as rationale for peace & justice advocacy and service ministries. Much of this was during the height of **U.S. interference in Central American civil wars**. I had older college friends helping rescue Salvadorians in U.N. refugee camps along the Honduran border. In the States, congregations were encouraged to offer their meetinghouses as **sanctuary** for Central American refugees. At the time, the Reagan Administration refused to recognize their claims for asylum. Some of us risked legal trouble by providing **transportation and shelter** to refugees on their way to sanctuary sites. Some of us followed a **legal route**, volunteering with a program that bailed out vetted refugees from an INS prison in Texas, prepared them for interviews with the Canadian consulate in Atlanta for **resettlement in Canada**. INS refunded the bail once the refugees crossed the Canadian border. The organization then recycled the bail for more refugees. Some of us had ties to both underground and over-ground movements.

In the Hebrew Bible or **TANAKH**, Micah appears among **the Prophets** (Neviim), the second of three major divisions of the sacred text. Jewish tradition divides this group into the Former Prophets (Joshua through Kings) and the **Latter Prophets** (Isaiah through Malachi, excluding Daniel). Micah is part of a further subdivision of 12 short prophetic books collectively known as **The Twelve**. Christian tradition, following the book arrangement in the **Septuagint** (LXX)—the 2nd century B.C.E. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible—places the prophets at the end of the Old Testament. The 4th century C.E. African bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) was the first to refer to The Twelve as “**The Minor Prophets**” due to their relative brevity compared to the much larger works of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The designation has stuck.

Micah was active between the **late 8th century and early 7th century B.C.E in Judah**. He was roughly contemporary with Isaiah, living in the fertile foothills southwest of Jerusalem, near the border with Philistia, in the **rural village of Moresheth**. This country preacher **denounced capital city elites** who used their power and wealth to **displace traditional small landholders** through dishonest business practices, abetted by religious leaders willing to legitimate the power structure. Micah likely saw firsthand examples of dispossession among his neighbors. On the international scene, the **Assyrian Empire** was on the move. The Northern Kingdom of **Israel** first became a tributary state of Assyria in 841 B.C.E. By **722 B.C.E.** Assyria completely absorbed the kingdom, destroyed its capital Samaria and deported much of the population. **Judah** became a vassal state to Assyria much later in **732 B.C.E.** and became subject to frequent invasions. Micah was well aware that the invaders would eventually sweep through his home area on their way to Jerusalem. However, the final invasion and destruction of Jerusalem he warned about came much later in **586 B.C.E.** under the **Babylonians**, as the consequence of the ruling class’ corruption and injustice. While Micah pronounces some rather harsh judgments, his text also includes messages of **hope**. **Micah 4:1-4** speaks of a time of peace when weapons of war will be repurposed as **agricultural tools**. **Micah 5:2** looks forward to a **future Davidic king** who will arise

from the humble village of **Bethlehem**. The Gospel of Matthew much later applied the passage to the **birth of Jesus**.

In our Chapter 6 reading, **YHWH issues summons for a lawsuit against** Judah's leaders before the **mountains, hills and even the foundations of the earth** (vv.1-2). The natural world participates in the proceedings. In v. 3 YHWH begins by asking the people, "**What wrong have I done you? What hardship have I caused you?**" **daring them to "Testify against me!"** (Jewish Publication Society) God then recites a short list **acts of salvation** performed from the escape from Egyptian slavery, through the wilderness years and early settlement in Canaan. The defendants respond in vv. 6-7 asking what ritual **sacrifices** would satisfy YHWH's claims. The proposed offers **become more extravagant in each line**: year old calves, thousands of rams or 10,000 rivers of oil. The proposals likely serve as commentary on how the wealthy think they can buy their way out of trouble. It also raises the prior question how they got their wealth. While **child sacrifice** was known as a fertility rite among neighboring peoples, it likely is listed here for **shock effect**. Micah responds, YHWH has already revealed the **requirements: to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God**. The verse summarizes the **Torah**. Centuries later Jesus of Nazareth summarized the teachings of the Law (Torah) and prophets in the command to **love both God and neighbor** (Matt. 22:34-40 and parallels). Both summaries are a reminder that our relationships to each other are central to our relationship with the divine.

Brother Tom Wagner serves MCCC as clerk and is a former pastor for the Church of the Brethren
(This is an excerpt from a longer sermon.

The full text is available at <https://harboruu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/BrotherTomsService.pdf>

Lebanon Lutheran Church Celebrates 150 Years!

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches is pleased to recognize
Lebanon Lutheran Church for 150 years of faithful service to the Whitehall and Montague communities.

Sign Up for MCCC's Weekly BLASTS

Get weekly updates from Muskegon County Cooperating Churches! MCCC does a weekly email "Blast" every Thursday for the next week. Get the latest information, direct to your inbox! Email the office at office.mccc@frontier.com and sign up for the "BLASTS" today!

Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk Team Captains' Rally August 25

The congregational and/or organizational team captains for this year's Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk will gather Thursday, August 25, 7:00 pm at Central United Methodist Church, 1011 Second Street in downtown Muskegon. Be part of this great work to help feed hungry people both here in Muskegon County and around the world. Get supplies and learn about this project, which has already raised over \$1 million dollars to help our neighbors.

SAVE the Date! The 42nd Annual Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk will be Sunday, October 2, 2022.
For details, email muskegoncropwalk@gmail.com

MLK Unity Breakfast June 10

The 25th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast on Friday, June. 10, 2022 will see a move of the event to the VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center, in downtown Muskegon. In addition the event will move to a half day conference format with back to back breakout sessions following the keynote address. The keynote address by Donna Brazile, a Washington DC political strategist and regular national news contribute will provide a comprehensive picture of what's going on in our nation's capital. For more information, please contact dan.rinsema-sybenga@muskegoncc.edu.

Juneteenth Celebrations!

Juneteenth Celebration Weekend June 17-19 Mona Lake Park

Free food and fun activities. Sponsored by the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, United Way of the Lakeshore, the Rotary Club of Muskegon, and many other community organizations and businesses.

Contact Jennifer Ross at 231-903-9981 or email junteencelebrationmh@gmail.com

Juneteenth Celebration June 18 1:00 – 4:00 pm

“A Day of Remembrance” will take place at the Loftis Youth and Community Dream Center, 2301 Sixth Street in Muskegon Heights.

Westshore Christian Academy, at that location, will be open for tours and registration.

Hackley Community Care will provide information about and tours of their mobile dental unit.

Muskegon County's vaccine unit will provide free COVID testing & shots.

The Supper House will be providing free meals – serving until the food is gone

Freedom Now!**Christian Science Lecture June 18, 2:00 PM**

The speaker is Patricia Woodard, CS. This lecture will be held at the Muskegon Museum of Art, 296 W Webster Avenue in Muskegon. “A fresh perspective on God and God's creation brings healing now, just as it did in Jesus' time. Talk about freedom!”

Contact 231-722-7704 for more information.

Feeding America Training Event in Muskegon Aug. 23

Does your congregation or organization do Mobile Food Pantries, or are you interested in learning how to? This training session is for you! Each group doing mobile food pantries must have folks officially certified by Feeding America periodically. Here is your chance to get this training in Muskegon. The training will be hosted by Feeding America, and will be held at First Congregational Church, U.C.C., 1201 Jefferson.

First Congregational Church, U.C.C. has installed a new air filtration system to ensure everyone's health.

To register, please contact Kasey Rose at MCCC, at office.mccc@frontier.com

Beautify the Heights! June 18, July 16, August 20

Come help beautify our community! This event will be held every 3rd Saturday during the summer. Clean-ups will be held from 8 am – 2 pm, at different locations throughout the city.

Loaves of Grace Food Pantry Dates

Loaves of Grace Food Pantry will distribute food June 11 & 25, July 9 & 23, August 13 & 27, and September 10 & 24. Loaves of Grace Food Pantry is located at and serves from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at 1050 Southern Avenue.

1M Project Community Picnic July 23rd in Hackley Park

1MProject is sponsoring a community picnic on Saturday, July 23rd in Hackley Park in downtown Muskegon. They plan to offer free food, live music, a street bike performance with Ride4life, a kids play area, and many giveaways. If your congregation would like to be part of this event, contact Jen DeBrot at 231-215-6894 or visit 1MProject.org.

Opioid Summit Tuesday, August 2

An **Opioid Summit** will take place in Muskegon on Tuesday, August 2, from 8:00 am – 3:30 pm. “Addiction kNOw More” is sponsored by the Muskegon County Opioid Task Force. Want a way to make an impact on your community or get the word out about your most recent organization projects, while ALSO being able to learn about the effects and harms of addiction in Muskegon County? Come and host a booth at the 2022 Opioid Task Force Summit and have the opportunity to be involved in your community, grow yourself, and help your organization get publicity about the special programs or resources you are able to offer.

CEUs are available for attendees For details, contact Lia Mayerski at 231-724-1263 or email mayerskil@co.muskegon.mi.us

Summer Reading at the Library!

Summer Reading Programs start at all area libraries June 13!

Check out what’s happening at your favorite library this summer!

Hackley Public Library www.hackleylibrary.org

Muskegon Area District Libraries www.madl.org

100 Years of the NAACP in Muskegon

Are you looking for an interesting and educational program idea? “Black History” happens all year long. To learn more about the Black experience in Muskegon, take a look at this great 33 minute film on YouTube, produced by Branch #3147 of the NAACP, about its work through the years. Some

familiar faces, including 2 Muskegon County Cooperating Churches board members, are interviewed about their experiences. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOyv8ZdEXPI>