



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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BRANCHES is published 4 times a year by **Muskegon County Cooperating Churches (MCCC)**
120 W. Apple Avenue, Muskegon 49440

MCCC is a non-profit ecumenical organization serving all faith congregations in Muskegon County

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What's Happening at Cooperating Churches?

Changes are in the Air

The Branches, which has been published 6 times a year, is now going to be a quarterly publication. The reason? We now have our Weekly Blasts published by Mailchimp every Thursday. These include all the goings on in the community that might interest the people in our faith organizations. Also, in the future, Branches will feature more stories and programs directly related to Muskegon County Cooperating Churches. If you are not getting the weekly blasts and would like to, please help us put you into our data-base. Send us a request in an email. If you would like us to advertise your activities please send information to marxlily@yahoo.com or office.mccc@frontier.com the week before the Thursday before the activity is happening.

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Gleanings by Tom Wagner



Finding Our Place in the World

Spring is taking her time making her presence known. Looking out the window, the most visible change is that the new blades of grass have over taken last winter's thatch in the pasture. In the woods, much of the understory brush has begun to unfurl its leaves. Though buds are swelling up in the canopy, they hesitate to expose themselves fully. Garlic shoots from cloves planted last fall stand straight and tall. Rhubarb has sprouted. It will not be long until asparagus begins to emerge. Beyond the garden, we anticipate the arrival of morels.

Creation awakens from its winter slumber, beckoning us to become better acquainted. I respond to that invitation by cultivating the earth, foraging wild edibles and scouring our woodlot for fuel. Occasionally I do take some leisure moments in the woods with my grandsons. Knowing our surroundings well helps us to work in partnership with the land on which we live. We need nature preserves, spaces reserved for a little wilderness in our midst. These places can grant us insight into how local networks of soil, watersheds, plants and animals have worked together for ages. That said, I generally think of my relationship to nature in terms of conservation—the wise use of natural resources. Too often in the past, our culture has taken an extractive approach even toward renewable resources. Fur and lumber are good examples of past local industries that exhausted the sources of their wealth. Sustainability requires following nature's lead—follow nature's lead—learning to live within the limits of seasons, life cycles and biological communities. Even small-scale activities like gardening require attention to local conditions. Over a lifetime I've had to adapt in moves from the limestone soils of southeastern Pennsylvania, to blue clay in northeastern Indiana and finally to the sands of west Michigan.

Lately I have been thinking of another relationship—the human communities who have been connected to this land long before I got here. A few weeks ago, a friend from Indiana asked if I knew of any documentation of interactions between Dunker settlers and the Potawatomi. He had noticed that his local congregation organized in 1838, the same year that Potawatomi were forced to leave northern Indiana for eastern Kansas on the Trail of Death. Though I didn't know of any first person accounts, I was able to give him a few leads. His query was of particular interest since I had at least two ancestral couples who settled nearby and helped found neighboring congregations. While my ancestors and their co-religionists played no direct role in negotiations or removal, they bore some responsibility as beneficiaries of those actions. A few months earlier, I had completed a family history that included notes on settler and Native American relations during the previous century in colonial Pennsylvania. While that earlier relationship was generally friendly, the longer colonial period was more complicated. William Penn's sons were less honorable in their dealings with native peoples than their father was. In addition, disagreements among colonial officials resulted in inconsistent policies. Even Penn's original contacts with the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) need some reexamination. I have no doubt that both parties entered negotiations with the best of intentions. However, they came with very different philosophies of land use and ownership. Lenape leaders thought they were agreeing merely to allow these newcomers to share their homeland as neighbors. Penn made a very European assumption that he was also gaining title to the real estate. Throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries, the Lenape were gradually displaced to western Pennsylvania, the Ohio River Valley and eventually west of the Mississippi. Though none of us were living at the time, how today do we as descendants and beneficiaries of that encroachment and genocide make amends to the descendants of the dispossessed?

As we approach Pentecost, I will be pondering these thoughts. The birthday of the church (*ecclesia*) was a multilingual and multicultural event. It was a moment of signs and wonders. It was an opportunity for dreams and visions among the old and young, men and women—a time to re-imagine the world—repair divisions. While the Spirit remains somewhat mysterious to us, it can free and empower us to live together, fully sharing the gifts of God's creation.

Tom Wagner is a former pastor in the Church of the Brethren (Dunker) and serves MCCC as clerk and archivist.



Muskegon County Cooperating Churches would love to hear from you. If you have something you would like to share, please e-mail us at: marxlily@yahoo.com or office.mccc@frontier.com or send it to us in the mail. Please include pictures and/or your organizational logo.

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

April 26, 2021

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.)
- *Four 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.
- *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 initiatives.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send your membership contribution today or click on the donation button.

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.



HACKLEY
Public Library

316 W Webster Ave * Muskegon MI 49440 * p 231-722-8000 * f 231-726-4724 * www.hackleylibrary.org

All Hackley Public Library virtual programs are FREE to enjoy.

May:

Mental Health Month Series – Multiple dates in May

Virtual Programs

For more details, visit hackleylibrary.org or HPL's Facebook page!

Mindful Movement – Yin Yoga class

Mental Health Q&A – Depression & Anxiety

Springtime: Letting go to Grow – Art Therapy

Music Therapy and Well-Being

Super Sleuths Needed! – May 20 at 3 pm

Virtual Program

Don't miss a mystery that will knock your socks off! For more details to come on this virtual event, visit hackleylibrary.org or HPL's Facebook page!

June:

Taking Better Pictures – June 1 at 6 pm

Enjoy a virtual photography class with Hackley Library in June! More details are coming – stay tuned and check back at hackleylibrary.org or HPL's Facebook page!

Things That Go “Who” in the Night – June 22 at 3 pm

Virtual Program

This virtual program will highlight several common owl species and show participants how they can encourage them to live in their backyard! Join us virtually to meet and learn about these wonderful animals!

Hackley Public Library's Summer Reading Program

June 14 – August 14

HPL's annual Summer Reading Program is around the corner! This ongoing program is fun for ALL AGES to enjoy. In addition to reading, there will be fun activities to complete, and cool prizes that you can win! More details will be available soon – check back at hackleylibrary.org or HPL's Facebook page!

Mobile Food Pantry

To schedule a Mobile Food Pantry in your neighborhood—call us—727-6000.

We arrange mobiles for the county churches, schools, and faith organizations. We need 30 days advanced notice. You will need a large paved parking lot and 20 volunteers. The prices are as follows:

5000 lbs. of food=\$595 and feeds 100 families
7500 lbs. of food=\$725 and feeds 150 families
10,000 lbs. of food=\$875 and feeds 200 families

We are specifically looking to schedule mobiles in the outlying areas of the county (north and east).

If you would like to sponsor a mobile and do not have the funds we may be able to subsidize a mobile at your address.

We also offer a trailer filled with tables, gloves, registration forms, and a team to show you how to run a mobile. The cost for this is a mere \$35.00. Just request it when you request the mobile.

Recovery Congregations

This program has been in existence for two years. It is based on a state-wide program out of Tennessee. We have a handful of churches committed to helping people in recovery from substance addictions. The program has three goals:

1. To disseminate information to the churches regarding resources for those struggling with substance use disorder.
2. To provide educational programs on addiction and recovery.
3. To provide more support group experiences in the county for those in need of recovery support.

If your church is interested in learning more about this program please email Lily Marx at marxlily@yahoo.com

These are the current members of Muskegon County Cooperating Churches. If you are interested in becoming a member see the membership letter on page 3.

2021 Member List (so far in 2021)

Muskegon Church of the Brethren
Church of God Muskegon
Community Radio

First Church of Christ Scientist
First Congregational, UCC
First Presbyterian
Forest Park Covenant
Fruitport Congregational, UCC
Lake Harbor United Methodist
Love N Grace Healing Centers
Mt. Zion, COGIC

New Bethel Baptist Evangelistic
Sacred Heart Catholic
St. Gregory's Episcopal

Julie Ayers William Paulson
William Boelkins Gary and Mary Jean Silvis
Barbara Davis Joseph Singerling
Dale T. Ertzinger Donald and Maryanne Swick
Patricia Groeneveld Thomas Tuori
Don Holtrop Phyllis Wahlberg
Randy and Evelyn Kunish
Phil Overlund Nancy Waters
Rev. Bobbie Overton
Bill Page



Peace and Justice Committee

This is a committee of MCCC-developed to assist the community, and the churches of the community, in peace and justice initiatives. We aim to educate, organize, develop programs, and be visible and present to all issues and concerns that center around peace and justice, Issues which call for our voices and our action.

**Muskegon County Cooperating Churches Resolution
from the Peace and Justice Committee**

We the Muskegon County Cooperating Churches, an entity representing the love and compassion of God, resolve to encourage and support members and friends as we adopt three guiding principles as we move forward into this new phase of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

1. We resolve to love God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.
2. We Affirm All truth is God’s truth. We urge everyone to do their best to use the most current guidelines from the scientific and medical communities about masking, vaccination, and physical distancing as individuals and congregations make decisions about corporate worship and public events. We encourage each decision to be made based on what is best for our neighbor and community as we follow resolution 1.
3. We recognize that loving our neighbor means taking into consideration what is best for the most vulnerable among us. As we have resolved to feed our neighbor, we also resolve to extend love and charity by our words, actions, and behavior.

The most up to date information about our situation locally can be found at <https://www.co.muskegon.mi.us/1611/Coronavirus>

Respectfully submitted by: Tim Vander Haar, Cindy Barnum-Steggerda, Lily Marx, John Parker, and Delores Cole



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

Church of the Brethren

St Gregory’s Episcopal Church

Peggy Jensen

First Church of Christ Scientist

Love N Grace Healing Centers

Nancy Waters

First Congregational, UCC

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

William Boelkins

First Presbyterian Church

Phil Okerlund

Julie Ayers

Fruitport Congregational, UCC

[Donate](#)

Patricia Groeneveld