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BRANCHES



Muskegon County Cooperating Churches
120 W Apple Avenue
Muskegon MI 49440

September, October, November 2022

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Convening the Community of Faith

To serve the needs of the people of Muskegon County for more than 75 years

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches is located at 120 W. Apple Avenue, Muskegon, MI 49440

You can contact us at 231-727-6000 or office.mccc@frontier.com

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 November 22, 2022.

News from MCCC

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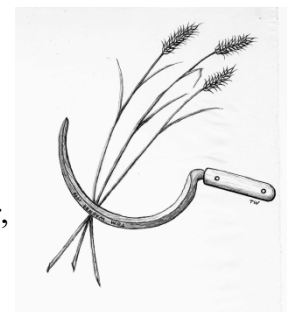
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Rev. Lily Marx
St. Gregory's Episcopal

On Saturday, August 6, 2022, Muskegon County Cooperating Churches held its second **Family Faith Fellowship Fair**. The first one was held in 2019, yet due to the pandemic it had to be postponed for two years before being reintroduced. While it is an opportunity for MCCC to raise funds for its general budget, it also serves as a time for the churches and faith organizations to promote themselves, sell items to do their own fundraising, and it is a time of great fellowship. We provide space for each organization in Hackley Park for the day along with a hot dog stand and stage acts. This year the theme was peace and justice and there were children's books on peace and justice given away to some lucky youngsters. Participating were thirteen churches, and several non-profits and other faith organizations. We hope to grow this number in the future. This might be an event that you would like to participate in next summer. We will be promoting it in the spring. Look for the information at that time.

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

Gleanings by Tom Wagner Sept., Oct., Nov. 2022
Counting the Cost

As I write, we are in the flush season of the year. There is a certain ease about walking through the garden and picking fresh ingredients for our meals. The bounty can be overwhelming. Tomatoes particularly appear determined to overrun our kitchen. However, as I scan the surrounding pasture and woodlands, golden rod in full bloom and a few orange tinged leaves on the maples remind me that this abundance is fleeting. Winter is coming. Now is the moment to prepare for leaner times.



Recently I have been meditating on Luke 14:25-33, which appears among the Common Lectionary readings in early September. There was a time I thought the passage more appropriate to Lent. However, as I recall the readings during the first half of the liturgical calendar (from Advent to Pentecost) focus on the life of Christ and the second half focus on the life of the church, the given placement seems more fitting. Jesus' words are not about his own passion, but of the hardships his followers will face.

The passage begins with large crowds accompanying Jesus on the road. It follows an episode where he had dined with a group of Pharisees, during which he healed a man on the Sabbath, spoke about inviting the poor to their dinner parties and told The Parable of the Great Supper. Those narratives reflect hospitality of God to be imitated. Perhaps it was that sense of divine generosity in Jesus' teachings that drew the crowd. In our reading, Jesus turns to the crowd and gives them a frank assessment of what it takes to be a disciple, not just for a season, but also for the long haul. The temptation would be to take advantage of this wave of popularity—making grand promises, whipping up emotions or preying on common fears and prejudices. His comments clearly were not shaped by polls, focus groups or public relations consultants. No, he intended to cool public enthusiasm, encouraging folks to consider soberly the cost of following in his steps. It is a warning that a disciple likely will be required to give up give up those things most dear, including family ties and even life itself. I suspect the breaking of family relationships was more threatening in a culture where multiple generation households were common than they are to contemporary American readers. The last point is given added emphasis by mentioning the instrument Rome commonly used to execute insurrectionists—the cross.

This passage was formative for my 18th century spiritual ancestors. The reality of its message was impressed upon them not only by their familiarity with histories of the early church and the 16th century Anabaptists, but also by their own experiences with confiscation of goods, banishment, imprisonment and torture. In such a context, the practice of delaying baptism until adulthood may have been even more appropriate. Indeed, the phrase “count the cost” (v. 28) took on an imperative voice in Dunker baptismal instruction. The theme has become less prominent as my faith community gradually assimilated into the surrounding society. As 21st century Christians living in the United States (I'm speaking here in a broad ecumenical sense), most of us face few threats of persecution. At least up until recently, court cases concerning freedom of practice and non-establishment have generally amounted to boundary disputes. That said; I am aware of a growing movement by some to use fears of religious persecution to further a white nationalist agenda. It is a distressing development.

I would suggest Jesus' warning in this passage remains relevant. From a context much like our own, German Confessing Church martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) stated the challenge starkly in *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937), “Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise godfearing and happy life, but meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When he calls a man, he bids him come and die...only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ.” (p. 99)

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

United Way Day of Caring

This year's event will run on September 9th from 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM but will have flexible schedule options available. If your workplace or team needs to start later in the day, or needs to have a project run until 5:00 PM, we can make sure that happens!

United Way provides breakfast & lunch for all volunteers. We also make sure that all materials are at your site ready to go once you get there. All we need is you!

Sponsorship opportunities and leadership opportunities are available. Please reach out to Dominique Bunker, Community Engagement Director, if you have any questions about how your team can be involved or anything else about Day of Caring - (231) 332-4006 or dominique@unitedwaylakeshore.org

Muskegon Latino Festival

The Muskegon Latino Festival will be taking place on Saturday, September 10, from 2 pm - 10 pm in Hackley Park, 350 W. Webster Avenue, in downtown Muskegon.

This event is filled with great Latin food, entertainment, and fun! Come see what Muskegon's rich and vibrant Latino community can offer.

Veterans Resource Deployment with Stand Down

The second annual Resource and Action Fair for Veterans of all branches of the military and their dependents will take place September 9, 2022 from 9 am – 1 pm at the VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center, located at 460 W. Western Avenue in downtown Muskegon.

This free event for veterans and their dependents will feature dozens of organizations who offer veteran assistance services and programs like equine therapy, service dogs, financial assistance, healthcare, Stand Down, and more.

TASTE & SEE 2022

TASTE & SEE 2022 is a progressive dinner tour and fundraiser through Muskegon's Core-City Neighborhoods. It will take place Monday, September 12 beginning at 5 pm. Guests get to see firsthand the great things happening in Muskegon and meet the neighbors who are making the difference, with food provided by downtown's premier establishments.

For more details, a list of providers, and ticket information please visit Community enCompass' Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/communityencompass>

How to Make a Zine!

Tuesday, September 20 from 5:30 - 6:30 at Hackley Library, 316 W. Webster Avenue in downtown Muskegon.

Whether you are creative or not, YOU CAN MAKE ZINES!

Zines are basically homemade booklets. They are a low stakes way to express yourself, show your creativity, tell your family history, show your art, talk about what makes you most excited about life, display your photography, showcase your poetry, or a myriad of other things!

Join us on Tuesday, September 20th from 5:30-6:30 to learn how to make a zine. All supplies will be provided so all you have to bring are yourself, your ideas, and an open mind to explore the possibilities!

West MI Voices: Zine Launch Party

Friday, October 7 from 5:00 - 7:00 at Hackley Library, 316 W. Webster Avenue in downtown Muskegon.

Come to the library on Friday, October 7 from 5-7 pm to celebrate the official launch of *West Michigan Voices*, Michigan's first community-based zine collection! There will be door prizes and opportunities to learn how to tell your own story through the art of zine making. Light refreshments will be served as supplies last.

2 PM Worship Services for Hunters at Church of God, United

Church of God, United invites hunters to afternoon worship services every Sunday at 2 pm October through January. The church is located at 1630 Harvey Street in Muskegon.

These services are open to all hunters – no matter their denomination- to give them an opportunity to both provide for their families and still attend church. For many, hunting has become an essential way of putting food on the table.

All area congregations are invited to be part of these services – through preaching, with worship teams, or helping in the service. The hope is that this service will become a community service, bringing the churches together to be in service to and for the community.

If you would like to be part of these services, please contact Pastor Jared Rider at pastordaddycotn@gmail.com or *Coffeepastor* on Facebook/Messenger.

Muskegon Area CROP Hunger Walk October 2

The excitement is building for the 2022 Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk, taking place on Sunday, Oct 2 at Central United Methodist Church in Muskegon. For more than 40 years, this annual event has raised money in support of hunger relief programs in our community and around the world through Church World Services.

We encourage you to join us for our Walk in the downtown Muskegon area. We have all of the details on our website: muskegoncropwalk.com Or, you can contact us by email at muskegoncropwalk@gmail.com Or you can call 231-260-1141.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of friends and neighbors who need our support. Locally, our efforts help fund the Community enCompass McLaughlin GROWS Farm, Mission for Area People (MAP)'s Healthy Choice Pantry, and the Saturday Breakfast at First Congregational Church, U.C.C. Thank you!



Special thanks to our sponsors: Lamar Outdoor Advertising, Nichols, Preferred Auto Dealerships, and Trophy House who help make our work possible!

Muskegon Community Resource Fair

Friday, October 21 - 9 am – 5 pm at Hackley Library, 316 W. Webster Avenue in downtown Muskegon.

Housing options, childcare, healthcare, higher education, job searching, mental healthcare, massage, and everything in between. There are so many resources available in Muskegon County for every area of life and we want to share them with you! Stop by Hackley Public Library anytime between 9 and 5 on Friday, October 21 and put together a personalized bag of information to connect you with people, organizations, and diverse care options in our community!

Livability Lab Happening October 11

“The Community Comes Together to Create positive Change” The third session of the Livability Lab will take place on Tuesday, October 11 from 7:30 am – 4 pm at the Folkert Community Hub, 640 Seminole in Norton Shores, 49441. For details and registration info, and to learn more about the Livability Lab, please visit livabilitylab.com.

Blue Christmas Service at Church of God, United

Blue Christmas Service is a special service for those that have experienced loss in the last year. Church of God, United will be hosting one on December 4, 2022 at 6 pm. The church is located at 1630 Harvey Street.

In the events of the past 2 years, this service will be a great benefit for our community.

In an effort and desire to see this be a community service, if there are any pastors or churches that would like to be a part of this service, please contact Pastor Jared Rider at pastordaddycotn@gmail.com or Coffeehousepastor on facebook/messenger.

Saturday Breakfast Back at First Congregational Church, U.C.C.

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ is once again serving Saturday Breakfast – although on only one Saturday a month. Breakfast is served from 9 – 10:30 am.

Upcoming Breakfast dates are: September 24, October 15, and November 19.

First Congregational Church, UCC also hosts a mobile food pantry one Saturday a month on the following dates: September 10, October 1, November 15, and December 3.

First Congregational Church is located at 1201 Jefferson Street in downtown Muskegon.