

# The Outlook

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Volume 124 Issue 12

## BEARING FRUIT TOGETHER

Juanita Joiner



I've been thinking a lot this past month about church and the sermons Rob has preached. Because of my duties in the church office, I know way ahead what the scripture and hymns will be and of course, the sermon titles. I love the package that he wraps up for us each Sunday. It's all connected as it should be. This past week when I was in the sanctuary doing the hymn boards, I sat down and looked at each of the hymns and even opened the Bible and scanned his text for the sermon. I guess that was a habit I did when I served as church organist for many years. I've never been able to separate music and the spoken word. As I left that day and walked towards the office, it was a different hymn than what we were scheduled to sing that filled my head. It was the hymn, Abide With Me. But like I sometimes will do, I changed the pronoun. I was singing Abide With Us. As I opened the doors to leave the sanctuary, my eyes fell on our "I Am the Vine" banner in the Narthex. Just that morning I had read a devotional based on the scripture found in John 15 and I couldn't get over how this banner and the banner I'm working on are so related. I need to share some of that devotional with each of you...and like me, maybe you too will sit on the bench across from it and recall some of these thoughts.

"I can't imagine a more counter-cultural and challenging vision of the Christian life than the one Jesus offers in this Gospel. "I am the vine, and you are the branches," he tells his disciples. "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me, you can do nothing" [John 15:4-5]. If those words aren't blunt enough, he continues: "Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned". Burned?

We are meant to be tangled up together. We are meant to live lives of profound interdependence, growing into, around, and out of each other. We cause pain and loss when we hold ourselves apart, because the fate of each individual branch affects the vine as a whole. In this metaphor, dependence is not a matter of personal morality or preference; it's a matter of life and death....

If God is the vine grower, Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches, what should we do? We have only one task: to abide. To tarry, to stay, to cling, to remain, to depend, to rely, to persevere, to commit. To hang in there for the long haul. To make ourselves at home.

But "abide" is a tricky word. Passive on the one hand, and active on the other. To abide is to stay rooted in place. But it is also to grow and change. It's a vulnerable-making verb: if we abide, we'll get pruned. It's a risky verb: if we abide, we'll bear fruit that others will see and taste. It's a humbling verb: if we abide, we'll have to accept nourishment that is not of our own making. It's a communal verb; if we abide, we will have to coexist with our fellow branches.

I can't imagine that there was ever a time when Jesus's followers found the metaphor of the vine easy to apply in daily life. But it's especially challenging to do so now. We live in bitterly divided times. We have good reasons to be cautious and self-protective, even within the church. It's hard in our self-promoting culture to confess that we are lost and lifeless on our own. That our glory lies in surrender, not self-sufficiency....

If only we would consent to see reality as it truly is. "I *am* the vine," Jesus tells his disciples. "You *are* the branches." It's a done deal. Whether we like it or not, our lives are bound up in God's and in each other's. The only true life we will live in this world is the life we consent to live in relationship, messy and entangled though it might be. The only fruit worth sharing with the world is the fruit we'll produce together."

As I stood up from recalling these thoughts, I saw the "new" banner that I am making for US superimposed on the old banner. A banner that will SPEAK. A banner that will SHOW how we are CONNECTED and how because of the many years we have ABIDED TOGETHER and ALLOWED ourselves to GROW, ACCEPT, CHANGE, and REMAIN OPEN to what the church really is and needs to become...only than can we COEXIST WITH OUR FELLOW BRANCHES. It's then that the banner, "We Are The Church Together" will speak to each heart, will recall that special hymn, and yes, even remind us of a sermon or two that came from the heart of someone who believes in US and in OUR church. Thank you Rob for opening our hearts to the call for CUMC.

## Mission Possible for December 2024

**Dec. 3 — Mission of the Month**  
HAPPI

**Dec. 8 — Local Mission**  
United Way Children's Books

**Dec. 15— Helping Hand Fund**

**Dec. 22 — Hunger/UMCOR**  
Heifer International

**Dec. 29 — Fifth Sunday**  
African University

### Monthly Pantry Donation

Toilet Paper for MAP Food Pantry

## Mission Accomplished October 2024

### Mission of the Month

World Wide Communion \$540.00

### Local Mission

Volunteers in Mission \$310.00

### Helping Hand Fund

\$124.31

### Hunger/UMCOR

Blanket/Tool Sunday \$525.00

### Pantry

Kleenex for Bunker \$65.00

We also had 16 boxes donated.

**Reminder...**mission offerings can be given any time during the month even though we list our offerings by the week.

## Our Christmas Eve Offering will go to Immigration Law & Justice Michigan



Immigration Law & Justice Michigan provides free immigration legal services to low-income immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Let's give "HOPE" to our world.



"Creating safe spaces for growth and community in Christ."

## REPORTS FROM TWO NEW TEAMS

### Beyond the Walls Team (former Partner Possibilities) Our focus will be on Love, Justice, and Service

We have 3 Team Members and are looking for 2-3 more. If you are interested, please contact the Church Office or talk to us in church. We want to coordinate our efforts in the Church and community and also communicate with the other teams as well. *~Keith and Liz Krol*

#### Our Current Actions

Emergency Dinner Bags – delivered to CUMC, Kids' Food Basket, and 1M: June and October

We have had initial discussions with three outside groups or organizations that we could possibly work with. We have come up some new ideas and will discuss these with the team and brainstorm other ideas.

#### Possibilities

We also are looking to connect with other churches and non-churched individuals to volunteer for the mission projects or events.

#### Dates planned

Packing day: December 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 — Parish Hall

Team Meeting: December 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 — Conference Room

### Mix and Match Team



As part of the Leadership Council's plan to involve others in "doing", 4 new teams have recently been launched. The Mix and Match Team was born out of the need to be more welcoming to all, especially visitors, and to help all who wish to become more involved in the life and ministry of Central.

Our "M & M" Team consists of Jodie, Randy, Eric, Valerie, Kay, Katie, and Julie, with Pastor Rob as our advisor. Currently, we're off and running in designing and implementing a new look and purpose for our Connection Card, (soon to be called the Care Card). We redesigned it with an emphasis on making it functional. The new Care Card will be rolled out soon, and will be one of the early uses of our new logo!

In addition, we are strategizing on ways for you to help make our church more visible in our community. Coming in January we will launch the latest version of Central UMC tote bags and other items, using the new logo. This will also let us welcome new guests in style.

We thank Connie, the coordinator of the church's marketing campaign, for her help and guidance with these projects. *~Katie Cotton and Julie Husted*

The devotional shared on page one of the Outlook was published on 11/13/24 by Richard Rohr's Daily Mediation.

Thoughts were by Author, Debie Thomas from her book *Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ*.

### Worship at Central

Available online: **LIVE**

<https://www.facebook.com/muskegoncentralumc>

And on our YouTube Channel: **LATER IN THE DAY**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZUQe2i7Fzi\\_tcwwSG7Ednw/videos?view=2&flow=grid](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZUQe2i7Fzi_tcwwSG7Ednw/videos?view=2&flow=grid)

# Central Cares

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 — Gary Doig
- 5 — Mary Duram, Kay Fairfield
- 8 — Marcy Cooke
- 11 — Heather Warner
- 14 — Katie Cotton
- 22 — Tommie Thomas, Josiah Youngquist
- 24 — Jack Cooke
- 29 — Gaylord Stanton, Dexter Larabee
- 30 — Julie McKeen
- 31 — Christine Twork



## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 23 — Brad & Katie Cotton (1983)
- 31 — Douglas Clarke & Cathy Brubaker-Clarke (1983)

### Share their grief:

- ♥ Family and friends of **Barbara VanWestrienen** who passed away on October 1. Barbara was a member of our church and dear friend to Sue Zack. Her memorial service was held at CUMC on November 9. Prayers for her family as they continue to adjust to their loss.

### Share their joy:

- ♥ Congratulations to Steve and Kelsee Brozek on the birth of their son, Rhys Harold Borzek born November 16 and weighing in at 6lbs, 13oz. This special child of God is the grandson of Jim and Liz Johnson and great-grandson of Bill and Erika Paulson. Welcome Rhys! (Pronounced Reese).



### Church Office Hours

Our regular office hours at the church.  
Tuesday — Thursday 9 a.m. — 2 p.m.

## DECEMBER CALENDAR

- 1 — Worship 9:30 a.m. (In-Person & Virtual)  
Going Deeper 5 p.m. (Conference Room)
- 2 — Joy Bells 5:30 p.m. (Choir Room)  
Women's Ensemble 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)
- 3 — Staff Mtg. 11:00 a.m. (Conference Room)
- 4 — Beyond the Walls Team packing bags (Parish Hall)
- 5 — Blood Drive 11 a.m. (Lower Level)
- 6 — Supper House 3:45 p.m. (Temple UMC)
- 8 — Worship 9:30 a.m. (In-Person & Virtual)  
Call To Prayer 11 a.m. (Conference Room)  
Mix & Match Team Mtg. 11 a.m. (Library)
- 9 — Joy Bells 5:30 p.m. (Choir Room)  
Women's Ensemble 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)
- 11 — Beyond the Walls Team Mtg. 11 a.m. (Conference Room.)
- 12 — Romeo's 8:30 a.m. (Carmen's Café)  
Juliet's 9:00 a.m. (Cherokee Restaurant)
- 15 — Worship 9:30 a.m. (In-Person & Virtual)
- 16 — Mobile Food Pantry 4:30 p.m. (CUMC Parking Lot)  
Joy Bells 5:30 p.m. (Choir Room)  
Women's Ensemble 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)
- 17 — Outlook Deadline 8 a.m.  
Book Club 10 a.m. (Jean Anderson's home)  
Building Team Mtg. 11 a.m. (Conference Room)
- 19 — Volunteer at Kids' Food Basket 9:30 a.m. (1537 S. Getty)  
Blood Drive 11:00 a.m. (Lower Level)
- 22 — Worship 9:30 a.m. (In-Person & Virtual)  
Call To Prayer 11:00 a.m. (Conference Room)
- 23 — Joy Bells 5:30 p.m. (Choir Room)  
Women's Ensemble 6:30 p.m. (Sanctuary)
- 24 — Christmas Eve Service 10:30 p.m. (In-Person & Virtual)
- 25 — Merry Christmas
- 29 — Informal Worship 9:30 a.m. in Chapel (In-Person only)

#### Please make note:

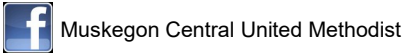
Our Church Office will be closed December 24, 25, 26.  
The office will be open on New Years Eve and January 2  
but closed on January 1.

### Special Request:

- ♥ Please keep Connie in the church office updated on any of the prayer requests you have made on behalf of your friends and family.
- ♥ **Where to send important information!**  
**Please send to all addresses.**
- ♥ Juanita Joiner for the Newsletter:  
jjoiner@muskegoncentralumc.org
- ♥ Connie Jones for the Church Calendar:  
connie@muskegoncentralumc.org

# Central United Methodist Church

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For faster and more  
convenient giving.



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Have news for the Outlook? See page 3 for submission addresses. Next Outlook deadline is **December 17**. Thank you!

## NOVEMBER MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

It was a chilly, rainy night for November's Mobile Food Truck. But in spite of the weather, we had many, many cars and quite a few walk-ups. CUMC volunteers this month were Pastor Rob, Kip and Tammie, Colin, Jenny, and Sally. As you can see in these pictures, there was a lot of food distributed to the people in our neighborhood. In each of the boxes/bags they found potatoes, rice, macaroni, cottage cheese, cheese, chicken, canned fruit, baked goods, and fresh celery.

What a blessing to see smiles of gratitude and hear words of thanks from our clients. The workers also received a special reminder that it's never too early to start our children helping with such a good cause. There were two very special little girls who rolled up their sleeves and worked alongside Sally. The mother of these precious girls was also volunteering.



We think more than  
food was given out  
that rainy night.



**"Showers of Blessings"  
filled our CUMC parking lot.**