

Welcome to the  
November 2024 Newsletter  
of  
The United Church of Big Rapids



120 S. State St.  
Big Rapids, MI 49307  
(231) 796-7124  
(231) 527-9567

Sunday Morning Worship Service - 9:30 a.m.

# The United Church

120 S. State St., Big Rapids, MI 49307

(231 796-7124 or (231) 527-9567 [secretary@unitedchurchbr.org](mailto:secretary@unitedchurchbr.org)



From  
*Pastor  
Devon*

If it weren't for the dark mornings and evenings, the unceasing political ads and robocalls, and the chilly mornings, I would have a hard time believing that we are heading into November. Time flies when you're having fun...and that is what I am most grateful for as I write this little newsletter article. In the last few weeks, I have been initiated into the world of The United Church: attending meetings, gathering for book study and pub theology, connecting with some of our leaders, and worshiping on Sundays. My favorite part though, are those moments when you tell me a bit about your lives, and I get to know more about what makes you who you are. In my mind I think of the church as a giant puzzle, each one of you a differently shaped piece that is necessary to make the whole thing complete. I hope you feel like an important piece of the United Church puzzle...because you are!

November is often the month we focus on gratitude, generosity, and stewardship. You will have an opportunity to reflect on the importance of this community and how you support it with your prayers, your gifts, and your service. I am eager to hear about your connection to this church, what brings you back, and what you dream about for the future of our faith community.

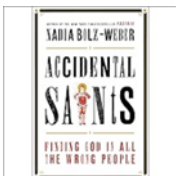
There is one specific thing I want to ask of you this month. As we head into Advent, is there someone that you might invite to attend worship or another event? Are there persons you used to sit next to in the pews that you haven't seen in a while that you/we might send a note to? How can we reach out to our neighbors and friends to welcome them? There is something very special about what we do together, and I know there are people out there that may make our "puzzle" even more interesting and beautiful than it already is.

Thank you for welcoming my family so well, we feel richly blessed to be on this journey with you. While I know my time in the office is limited, please feel free to reach out to me. It is a bit like learning to dance together and while we may step on each other's toes, we are going to have fun in the process.

Be blessed, friends.

Pastor Devon

## Dates to Remember



### **Accidental Saints Study**

Focusing on Chapters 9-19 (the rest of the book).

November 12<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm in the Parlor.

**Pub Theology** *different brews*  *different views*  
7pm @ Crankers **PUB THEOLOGY**  
November 19th BEER, CONVERSATION & GOD  
all perspectives welcome

## Pastor Devon's Contact Information

If you need to contact Pastor Devon, you may contact her by phone for pastoral care needs at 231-629-2302. You may also reach out via email: devonherrell@gmail.com. Pastor Devon does have another full time job, so in-person meeting time is limited. She plans to be in the office on Thursdays from 9:00 am—11:45 am. You may contact the church office to set up an appointment.



## November 2024 - Moderator's Message



What a beautiful fall that we have had! Lots of sun with some needed rain along the way. It has been great that we have had so many pastors, both active and retired, who have stepped up to help with pulpit supply for our United Church for nearly 2 years as we search for a pastor, who could come to our church to help in our mission. As Moderator, I am happy that Rev. Devon Herrell has agreed to be our provisional pastor as we work on a schedule that fits her other employment. Rev. Herrell, will bring some new insights and ideas to our church mission as we move forward. Just last week, she introduced a book study and 20 people signed up. The church group will be reading, "Accidental Saints - Finding God in All the Wrong People."

Our congregation celebrated the life of Yvone Kilbourne, with Rev. Herrell officiating. Yvonne was a long-time member of the United Church as well as our Parish Nurse. The funeral service took place last week, with her family and friends from the church and local community in attendance. Several family members spoke at the church about her life and the importance of the United Church in her life.

As we move forward towards the holiday season, there are many activities that the church will be involved in. We need your involvement and input as we continue our journey. Please review these activities and help where and when you can: supporting the DHHS coat drive, Project Starburst Red Tag Project, Toys for Tots program, possibility of a church sponsored blood drive, the collection of purses and jewelry for the GFWC sale to support WISE. If we all try to do what we can to help the church, local organizations and individuals in need of assistance, then we are doing what Christians do to help others in their time of need.

God bless all of you and your families!

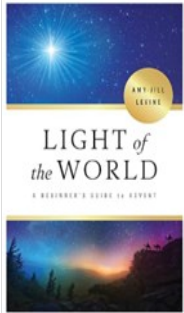
Marshall Henry, Moderator

***The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held after worship on Sunday, December 1st.*** Members are asked to participate! The meeting will be short and does need a quorum of members to attend.

Thank you!!



## Advent begins on December 1!!



Tuesdays at 7pm  
December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>

You can order the book on Amazon for \$10.29

"Light of the World" by Amy Jill-Levine

### ADVENT BOOK STUDY

Advent devotional booklets will be available on the table in the narthex towards the end of the November.



**Readers Wanted for Advent Candle Lighting!  
Sundays December 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and Christmas Eve 24<sup>th</sup> @7pm.**

**If you are willing to read, please let Julie know!**



*Plan ahead and join us for  
Worship on  
Christmas Eve at 7:00 pm!*

The Spiritual Life Commission will be decorating the church for the Advent season on Saturday, December 7 beginning at 9:00 am. Help is needed for many areas. Someone comfortable to climb a ladder would be helpful.



In anticipation of our decorating day, the Spiritual Life Commission will be taking orders for poinsettias on November 17 and 24 after worship. To order your flowers, complete the form on the last page of the newsletter, return the order form and \$10 per plant to the church office or give to the Spiritual Life member after worship.



Don't forget to "fall back"  
on  
November 3!!







## What Might Generosity Look Like for You?

By Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson

When I was a first-year student at Union Theological Seminary in New York, I had world renowned theologian Dr. James Cone as my professor for Systematic Theology. In our first class I remember him saying: "We all do theology. Theology is God-talk." A theology of money is God-talk about money.

Conversations about money are taboo in our society. We reluctantly talk about the cost of items we purchase; we are hushed in our conversations about money; and silent in discussing our investments or what we earn. Money is a topic which creates discomfort for many, with most not knowing how to ask for what is needed or what is owed. If our conversations about money are challenging, then finding our way to God-talk on the subject could be even more challenging.

Such a theology starts with how we understand God present and with us in our lives and in the world around us. The prophet Malachi puts before us a theology of money that says God will bless what is given. The blessing is on the giver and on what is given. The tithe in this case is the expectation of giving. God is present blessing what is given back to God for use in the house of God. Malachi resonates an expectation one will give back to God regularly and in line with the expectations of the religious order of his day. This is one way to think about money and how we give. There are others.

A theology of money continues with a clear eyed understanding of how much money we have. If I am giving a portion of what I have, then I should be knowledgeable about what my financial obligations are, including my desire to give in supporting the mission and ministries of the church.

Whether investing, spending, or giving we should pay attention to what we have, in order to give from what we have a tenth, or another fraction, or amount of our choosing. When we give value and meaning to what we have, we give from abundance rather than from scarcity, from knowledge rather than fear.

### CONSIDER YOUR PLEDGE AS A PERCENT OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

Annual Income	Monthly Income	2%	3%	4%	5%	10%
20,000	1,667	33	50	67	83	167
25,000	2,083	42	63	83	104	208
30,000	2,500	50	75	100	125	250
35,000	2,917	58	88	117	146	292
40,000	3,333	67	100	133	167	333
45,000	3,750	75	113	150	188	375
50,000	4,167	83	125	167	208	417
60,000	5,000	100	150	200	250	500
75,000	6,250	125	188	250	313	625
100,000	8,333	167	250	333	417	833
125,000	10,417	208	313	417	521	1042
150,000	12,500	250	375	500	625	1250
200,000	16,667	333	500	667	833	1667

*Pledge cards are available in the sanctuary or you may print the one on the last page of the newsletter and return it to the church office in an envelope marked "Treasurer."*

\*On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of annual income to charity would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in our community.



## Project Starburst – Keeping the Pantry Filled!

Project Starburst would like to thank the United Church members for their continued support of the pantry on a regular basis and are thankful for their participation in the “keep the pantry filled” project. The demand from families needing assistance continues including both returning families and new ones.

September was instant potatoes month and once again the church members were so generous with donations of 18 packages of instant potatoes, 2 boxes of scalloped potatoes, 3 packages of ramen, 1 peanut butter and jelly, 4 cans of soup, 1 package of pasta, 2 boxes of kleenex, 1 pack of trash bags and some single use utensils.



Instant rice packets are being collected for October. An update will be provided next month but the bin is filling and the generosity continues!

And the “Give to the Pantry” program has identified **stuffing mixes** as the “food of the month” for November. Stuffing makes a nice addition to any meal and wonderful to include with every order. So as demand increases, so does the need.

### MISSION/SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION:

The Mission/Social Action Commission currently meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 4:00 pm in the church parlor. Our meetings are open, and anyone interested in the work of the commission is invited to attend. Virtual attendance can be arranged by letting the commission chair, Dee Van Horn (email: [deevanhorn44@gmail.com](mailto:deevanhorn44@gmail.com)) no later than the Friday before the scheduled meeting.



Some member updates:

- ◆ Nancy Burmeister has a new address at The Brook in Big Rapids. She appreciates your prayers and visits!
- ◆ Chuck Achterhof was home and then re-admitted to Grand Rapids. Please keep him and Kay in your prayers.
- ◆ From Alice and Jim Bandstra: “We are filled with gratitude for all the support we have received from our UCBR family. Thank you for the prayers, cards, emails, and everything. Jim is making steady progress and came home on Wednesday, the 30th. Things are looking good!”



If you have any updates on any UCBR friends and family, please let the church office know so we can keep our congregation praying for all good things!

From the Mission Commission

The Mission Commission continues to support the local organizations/charities that carry out our mission to help the members of our community who face food insecurity, the need for safe and affordable housing, safety in their day to day lives within the community (whether it be from personal crisis or from voices of discrimination). We encourage all of our Church members to support these organizations in whatever way they can; whether it be through financial donations, support of specific events or as volunteers. Your commission members encourage you to visit the links below for each organization to learn more about them and their needs.

Project Starburst - <https://projectstarburst.org/>

Our Brother's Keeper - <https://www.obkshelter.org/>

WISE - <https://wiseagainstviolence.org/>

Mecosta County Habitat For Humanity - <https://mecostahabitat.org/>

Pride Big Rapids - <https://www.pridebigrapids.org/>



### From the Governing Board

We are sure you notice that each Sunday a member of the Governing Board serves as "Elder in Charge" for the service. As much as each of them enjoys this activity, there are months when it has been difficult to fill all of the slots due to vacations and other personal events. So the Board members are happy to announce that they welcome members of the congregation to share this duty with them. Now named "Member in Charge," all members of the congregation are encouraged to share this responsibility. If you are interested in participating, please contact Moderator, Marshall Henry.



And, as a reminder, the Governing Board meets once a month on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:45 pm in the Parlor. The meetings are open to any member of the congregation who would like to attend.

**The  
Church  
Office**  
  
**Will Be  
Closed:**

The church office will be closed on Tuesday, November 5th so Julie can work for the City on the Election.

Also closed on Thursday, November 28 in celebration of Thanksgiving.



What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?

# THE UNITED CHURCH

The United Church of Big Rapids  
is an  
Open and Affirming (UCC) and a More Light Church (PC-USA)

Thanks to the hard work of our O&A Implementation team and many others in our church family, our church is recognized by both denominations as an inclusive church!

<https://openandaffirming.org/ona/>



<https://mlp.org/>



**MORE LIGHT**  
PRESBYTERIANS

You can click on the links above to get more information about what this means to the "outside world." Thank you to all who live out the words in our O & A Covenant!

Date	Name
11/3	Jim Bandstra
11/10	Nancy Burmeister
11/11	Terri Cook
11/14	Raia Ducat
11/22	Sue Boitos
11/22	Paul Heidemann
11/23	Diann Bradley
11/27	Bill Burmeister
11/27	Jaylah Lewis
11/29	Kyle Rouech
11/30	Joyce Kinser



## Thank You!

Thank you to the many volunteers that help make The United Church a welcoming place for all! Your efforts do not go unnoticed! We're so thankful for the help & time given to the Church to spread God's love.

Want to host coffee hour after worship or provide altar flowers on Sunday morning? Check the sign up sheets on the hallway bulletin board for available dates. No training or experience needed!



Altar Flowers

Remember that you may access our monthly events calendar online from our website, [www.unitedchurchbr.org](http://www.unitedchurchbr.org). The calendar is kept up-to-date. If you have questions or would like an item added to the calendar, please contact the church office.





## Service Volunteers for November

Thank you for volunteering to serve on Sundays! If you see some empty spaces & would like to volunteer, contact the church office. If you'd like to volunteer in future months, let us know - we'd love to have you!

A special thanks to our hard-working media team - Amy Buse, Jaylah Lewis, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay, and Paul Heidemann who make sure we can all see and hear the service, in the sanctuary and through the livestream and radio broadcasts.

There are spaces available on the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board to provide flowers or to provide coffee after worship during Fellowship time.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Liturgist</u>	<u>Member in Charge</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Fellowship Time Host</u>	<u>Sound Board</u>	<u>Ushers</u>
11/3	Kathleen Keys Singh			Megan & Roger Vajda	Mike Rinehart	Julie Kysela, Don Stephen, Paul Challender
11/10	Kari Clark				Mike Rinehart	Don Stephen, Alice Dean, Melanie Henry
11/17	Susan H. Grant				Mike Rinehart	Jane Grzybowski, Don Olree, Melanie Henry
11/24	Dee Van Horn				Randy Vance	Jane Grzybowski, Paul Challender, Marge Panches

We also would like to thank the Spiritual Life Commission for all they do to make our worship meaningful each Sunday.



### Joys/Concerns Form Available

On the Cards of Caring table there are some half sheet forms that say "Joys/Concerns." This form is to let you inform the church of any prayer requests or joys that we may be able to share during Sunday morning worship. You may share your own or someone else's (with their permission, of course.) The office can also arrange for a visit or a call from Pastor Devon, if you desire. You are important to us all and we want to help celebrate your joys or listen/act when there is a problem. Please reach out!!



Don't forget to sign the friendship pad in the pew on Sunday morning! Encourage any visitors to add their name and address as well. If someone is interested in becoming a member of the church - have them contact the church office!



The United Church of Big Rapids is a union of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ. It is a congregation that worships together, seeks opportunities to serve others, encourages one another to grow in intellect and spirit, strives for social justice, and fully embraces Jesus' call to love one another as God loves us.



Because we believe God's whole creation is good, blessed, and sacred, we are an open and affirming community of faith. We celebrate persons of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities, and economic circumstances.

As valued members of this congregation all persons are invited to equally participate in the full life of the church - worship, sacraments, ministry, fellowship, leadership, responsibilities, sorrows, blessings, and the continued presence of Jesus Christ.

### *Our Vision and Mission Statements*

*Our vision is to honor all children of God through following the ways of Jesus Christ.*

*Our mission is to celebrate all creation as an active presence in our community, engaging in transformational worship and nurturing families and relationships, as we learn to foster more justice and love in ourselves and our community.*

### Contacting the Church

The church office is open and staffed Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm.

Messages & emails are checked every day.

**231-527-9567**

Leave a message if no one answers, your call will be returned as soon as possible.

You can also reach the church office via e-mail:

**Secretary@unitedchurchbr.org**

You can also see videos and keep up with us on:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/UnitedChurch](http://www.facebook.com/UnitedChurch)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/@unitedchurchbigrapids.com](http://www.youtube.com/@unitedchurchbigrapids.com)

Sunday morning worship (9:30 am) is live streamed on YouTube with a link on our Facebook page and also broadcast live on WWBR-FM, 100.9.

### The Spiritual Life Commission

will be taking orders for poinsettias on November 17 and 24 to decorate the sanctuary on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24. To order your flowers, complete this form, include payment and deliver it to the church office. Deadline is November 25.

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Or

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please order \_\_\_\_\_ Poinsettia(s) at \$10.00 each

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Deliver my flowers to a shut-in after the Christmas Eve Service

\_\_\_\_\_ I will pick up my flowers after the Christmas Eve Service

For **CHURCH RECORDS** Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_  
(for office use)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each  week  month beginning \_\_\_\_\_

for an annual total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(date and year)

I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by giving notice to the church officer.

I would like to talk with someone about including the church or church-related institution in my will.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Imagine Together**

For **YOUR RECORDS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

With others in my congregation, I commit myself to give in proportion to what I have for the ministries of the church and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

I plan to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ beginning \_\_\_\_\_  
(date and year)

Each  week  month

Annual Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

