

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



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

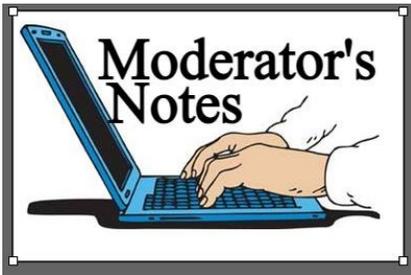
Sunday Morning Worship Service - 9:30 a.m.

The United Church

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

(231) 796-7124 or (231) 527-9567 secretary@unitedchurchbr.org

SEPTEMBER



Moderator's Message - September 2024

How is everyone enjoying the summer of 2024. I hope you have had some time to take a vacation, or at least taking some time off of work. Our outdoor picnic in July had great weather, fellowship, good food and beverages. It was a great day to be with family and friends on the bank of the "longest cool" river in the state of Michigan. Can anyone tell me what the longest river is in Michigan??

Our search committee has continued their search and has made progress recently in the short term. They will have an announcement very soon. Thank goodness that we have been blessed with some very good, retired pastors / clergy that have given us good pulpit supply over the last 1 ½ years. As the Moderator of our Governing Board and at the present time; overseeing the weekly pulpit supply, it can be a difficult task to accomplish. As members, you can give yourself a "pat on the back". Your dedication to this church, positive attitude, friendliness, and welcoming posture has made my job easier. I always thank our visiting clergy every Sunday and I know many of you do also! The retired clergy enjoy coming to our church, because of YOU!

I also wish to thank every member and friend of the United Church who have contributed part of their income to sustain our mission work that takes place on a daily, monthly or annual basis. Many of you contribute your time, energy, enthusiasm, and ideas to help sustain our worship, mission work, support of local activities and other organizations in and around Big Rapids. As a proud church that is involved in our community, I ask that you continue to support our church in the best way you can!

God Bless All of You - Marshall Henry, Moderator

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE GOVERNING BOARD AND THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

As the Search Committee continues its quest to find a settled, full time Pastor, we have been offered a gift from a dear friend of the United Church, Pastor Devon Herrell. Pastor Herrell is interested in furnishing us pastoral support on a part time basis to provide some strength and continuity while we continue our search. Since she already has a full time job, she will have limited hours to work with us. Her primary responsibility will be to plan and lead worship. In addition to leading worship, she is also very interested in using some of her time and talents to provide pastoral care and educational programming.

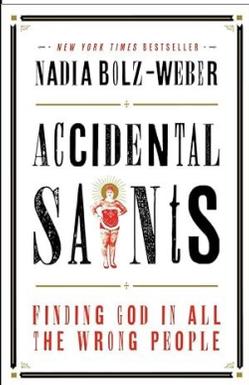
We encourage everyone to participate in the upcoming programming opportunities as we move forward together with Pastor Herrell. Obviously, this is a work in process and the details will emerge once she joins our Ministry Team, but we are very excited about having her considerable talents available to us. Pastor Herrell will start her journey with us around the middle of September and is tentatively scheduled to work until the end of the year. She will be looking for suggestions and volunteers to assist her as she determines how best to provide support to our Church. Please join us in welcoming Pastor Devon Herrell to our Ministry Team!!



Rev. Dr. Devon Herrell is an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church, currently serving as a corporate chaplain for Tyson foods in Allendale. Devon resides in Big Rapids with her partner, Laura and daughter Lucy, two cats: Ramen and Noodle, and a dog, Mochi. She is a lover of people, coffee, and spending as much time enjoying the outdoors as possible. She received her Master of Divinity from Emory University and her Doctor of Ministry from Claremont School of Theology. Faith development, meditative practices, and helping people make space to grow in relationship with the Holy are all the parts of ministry she enjoys the most.

Hi Friends! I am excited for the opportunity to journey with you for the next few months. Let's have some fun together! My chaplaincy job is full-time so my time will be a bit limited for in-person conversations. Starting September 26th, I plan to be in the office from 8a-12pm on Thursdays and can be available by phone for pastoral care needs anytime (231-649-2302). My hope is to provide a little bit of pastoral support while the search team continues connecting with potential full-time Pastor candidates. I look forward to getting to know you further!

In addition to a few office hours I am hoping to start two small-group gatherings this fall and would love your input. Rather than meet weekly, we thought meeting once a month for a time of conversation/study would be most fruitful. Our October 15th conversation will focus on the book *Accidental Saints*, by Naida Bolz-Weber. We will meet at the church at 7pm in the parlor. You can utilize the link below to purchase the book on Amazon for \$12. If you want to participate and need a book just let me know.



[Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People: Bolz-Weber, Naida: 9781601427564: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781601427564)

The other "class" I am excited about isn't really a class, it's a time to meet up, get to know one another, and discuss all things spiritual and life. We will meet at Cranker's on September 24th at 7pm. The hope is to meet once a month and for you to invite some friends!

If you have any questions just let me know. Hope to see you there!



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.

July was mac and cheese month and once again the church members were so generous with total donations of 40 boxes of mac & cheese, 3 jars of peanut butter, 1 jar of relish, 1 ramen noodle, and 2 jellies. Elbow noodles are being collected for August. An update will be provided next month but the bin is filling and the generosity continues!

The “Give to the Pantry” program has identified **instant potatoes** as the “food of the month” for September. Instant potatoes are an easy filler and wonderful to include with every order. So as demand increases, so does the need.



A HUGE THANK YOU FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The church members outdid themselves again this year with donations of school supplies for Project Starburst to provide to families coming to the pantry. Donations included backpacks along with lots and lots of supplies – notebooks, pens, pencils, glue sticks, crayons, colored pencils – and on and on. The list of “required” items for the children to bring to school can be very long and for some items, costly. So the families that come to Starburst really appreciate the availability of items to complete their lists.



Distribution of supplies began the middle of August and will continue until they are gone. Once again – A HUGE THANK YOU – to our generous church members who help bring joy to children in our community.



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) no later than the Friday before the scheduled meeting.

MISSION
&
SOCIAL ACTION



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/>



Dates to Remember

- **September 7** – WISE 5K Fun Run & Walk – see wiseagainstviolence.org for more information.
- **September 14** – Double Match Days for Meijer Simply Give for Project Starburst
- **September 21** - Fall Adopt-a-Highway event - see Susan H. Grant for additional information.

It's Time for Meijer Simply Give

The Meijer Simply Give program for Project Starburst will continue through Saturday, September 28, 2024. A Double Day will be held on Saturday, September 14th. A \$10 donation to Simply Give on that day will equal \$30! Cards are available at the Meijer store. Demand for services continues to grow. Together, we can be a source of hope and compassion for our neighbors in need. Thank you for your ongoing support



ATTENTION UCBR ECO-ACTIVISTS!!

Our Fall Adopt-a-Highway event is scheduled for Saturday, September 21st, beginning at 9:00 am. We will meet at the Church to review the safety video; form teams and pick up our gear and then head out to the Highway to clean up our assigned portion of God's creation. As with any task, many hands make light work, so please invite friends to join us for this worthwhile event. We are usually done by noon. If you have any questions, please let me know. Contact: Susan H Grant at: adonaldgrant73@gmail.com

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY



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.

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 a pastor, 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!!



Friendship pads are back in the pews!!



On Sunday morning, we'd like to invite you to sign in on the friendship pad that is in the pew that you were here. Invite any guests in your row to sign in as well. If you're the last one to sign, if you could remove the page and put it in the offering plate on your way out—that would be great!

We want to be able to keep track of our visitors and their contact information so we can invite them back again!!

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	Date	Couple	Years
9/7	Alice Bandstra	9/4	Al & Donna Miller	59
9/12	Carolyn Chipman	9/13	Stan & Julie Kysela	44
9/17	Cathy Archer	9/18	Dustin & Tessa Helsel	3
9/17	Betty Goldammer	9/19	Richard & Sue Boitos	43
9/21	Dennis McHugh	9/23	Bob & Jan Cassidy	29
9/22	Kari Clark			
9/22	Maxine McKay			
9/25	Dustin Helsel			



The church office will be closed on
Monday, September 2nd
in observance of the Labor Day holiday.



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. 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 September

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!

<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>
9/1	Susan H. Grant		Aaron Rewas & Erin Dumond		Mike Rinehart	Judy Tressler, Don Stephen, Julie Kysela
9/8	Sue Glatz				Susan H. Grant	Paul Challender, Jane Grzybowski
9/15	Jim Bandstra				Kerri Rouech & Peter McHugh	Maxine McKay, Melanie Henry, Marshall Henry
9/22	Kathleen Keys Singh		Susan H. Grant		Peter McHugh Trish McHugh	Paul Challender, Jane Grzybowski, Don Olree
9/29	Dee Van Horn				Peter McHugh Trish McHugh	Maxine McKay, Paul Challender

A special thanks to our hard-working media team - Amy Buse, Jaylah Lewis, 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.



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



Heart for Home is committed to connecting Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship children with supportive and healing homes for respite care. We strive to recruit, prepare, and support FAK respite homes before, during, and after by being honest, open-minded, and listening to families' needs and concerns in order to connect them with resources to be successful.



HEART FOR HOME
FOSTER CARE RESPITE SERVICES

We are looking for interested parties to become licensed. I am available to meet and chat about the process and answer any questions. I am available at alittle@heartforhome.me or 231-580-4749.

Amanda Little



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

YouTube: 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.