

# BRANCHES

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to serve the needs of the people of Muskegon County for over 70 years.

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**Hours may vary depending on the work load, please call first.**

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

## **MCCC Board for 2017**

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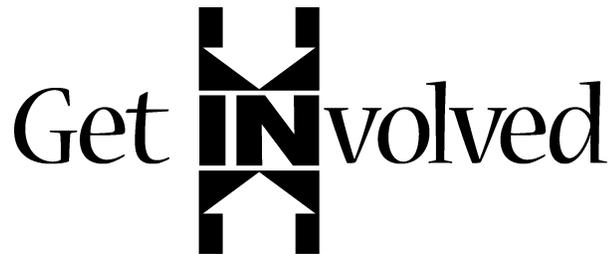
Unity of Muskegon Church

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Muskegon Church of the Brethren



MCCC is trying to become more involved in special areas of interest within the community. We have several committees that we would like to have input from you, the residents of Muskegon County.

We would like to open up our committees to others that could bring more insight and, hopefully, more diversity to our organization.

Areas that we are looking to pursue in 2017 include: By-Law Revisions; Peace & Justice; Mobile Pantry Trucks; and Fundraisers.

In our By-Laws, should we change the wording to be more inclusive in who we serve? Should we change our name? These are just a few of the items that need to be addressed.

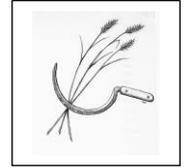
Peace & Justice is an area that is in need of more input from our constituents and member churches. There is a commission currently in Muskegon County – can we join it? Are there things we can work on within our own membership?

Fundraisers are always a problem. When should the date be? What do we do to raise funds – food – activities, etc.?

Mobile Pantry Trucks – There is a need for more education on working on these trucks, preparing the paperwork, and getting more trucks in the area.

If you would be willing to serve on one of our committees, please contact the office at 231-727-6000 or e-mail [muskegoncooperatingchurches.com](mailto:muskegoncooperatingchurches.com). We look forward to hearing from many of you.

"Gleanings" by Tom Wagner



### LOOKING DEEPER

More empty canning jars than full ones now occupy the pantry shelves. Firewood has dwindled from a full shed of five cords down to slightly over a single cord; sufficient to get us through the remainder of cold weather. Usually the late winter landscape is still blanketed with snow. Yet the view out my window today consists primarily of dormant vegetation, mud and more mud. The scene resembles spring, but not all things are aligned to start the growing season. We'll likely continue to have frosts until May. That gives us time to consider how well food and fuel supplies got us through the winter, and decide whether to continue past practices or pursue new methods. Beyond gardening, cutting wood and animal husbandry, it may be a good opportunity to ponder the broader direction of our lives in relationship to our commitments and values.

During the spring of 1967 the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. urged Americans to change the direction of our policies in Vietnam. Though he already had been questioning the war effort for two years, the media only began to take notice after he delivered his "Beyond Vietnam" speech at New York's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967-- exactly one year prior to his assassination. It was likely the most controversial speech of his career, yet Congressman John Lewis has suggested it was his most important, perhaps even greater than the "I Have a Dream" speech. Many of King's colleagues and friends had advised against making such a prophetic statement. Some worried it would inflict irreparable harm to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's reputation and finances. Others thought it would end access to allies in the Johnson Administration. Still others couldn't understand the larger connection King was making between nonviolence and human rights. King admitted early on that he had to deliver a difficult message, yet he was encouraged by the significant number of religious leaders choosing to place conscience above conformity.

The civil rights leader listed several reasons why he had to become more vocal. Among them was his recognition that the war increasingly diverted treasure and talent away from domestic poverty programs. As a matter of consistency King could not remain silent about the administration's use of lethal force abroad and continue to preach nonviolence at home. Also as both a Nobel laureate and minister of the gospel, he understood peace to be his business. Much of King's remarks recounted the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, as he imagined a Vietnamese peasant might have seen it. We had supported French efforts to re-colonize South East Asia for the first nine years following World War II. We interfered with the 1954 Geneva Talks so as to prevent reunification. We backed repressive regimes in Saigon. Then we put boots on the ground and bombers in the air. We displaced people, killed their crops and poisoned their land and water. No wonder they might consider the Americans at best "strange liberators". King went on to suggest initial steps to end the conflict, starting with an end to the bombing and a unilateral cease fire. He encouraged protest too. However, he then made what was likely his most important point: "*The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit....*" Too often there has been a pattern of using some level of military aid or presence, particularly in Third World countries, to protect our economic interests abroad. We need a revolution of values, choosing the needs of people over things. "*When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.*" The choice remains between "nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation."

The gospel reading for the first Sunday of Lent is the Temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). Following his baptism and prior to the beginning of his ministry, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. I've generally thought of that forty day and night fast and the following dialogue with the

devil as a time in which Jesus discerned the character of his ministry. Each temptation presented an option for carrying out his messianic mission. In each case he was presented with a choice of how to use power. While we might easily think of turning stones into bread as a way for Jesus to meet his personal need, the larger issue may have been whether he would care for people's needs out of compassion, or use it as a tool to rally the masses. In response to the temptation to leap from the top of the temple, Jesus chose the route of messianic secret over public spectacle. Finally, in rejecting Satan's mountaintop bargain, Jesus declared his allegiance to God's will, though it would lead to the cross; rejecting the use of lethal force either in armed insurrection against Rome or even creation of his own empire. Means are as important as ends. Are we willing to follow in his steps?

*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](mailto:gleanertw@hotmail.com).*



### From the Editor

The next *BRANCHES* will cover the months of May & June. If you have something you would like to have included, please e-mail to us at [staff@cooperatingchurches.com](mailto:staff@cooperatingchurches.com) or send it via snail mail. Please include a logo for your organization. Remember, I am unable to copy anything that is in a PDF format. The information is due into the office no later than April 20<sup>th</sup> to be included in the next issue. If you no longer wish to receive *BRANCHES*, please let the office know and we will remove your name and address from our file.



FRAUENTHAL  
CENTER

There are a number of events happening at the Frauenthal Center in Muskegon during the month of March and April. Some include: Masterworks "Classical Music for Everyone" on March 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm; West Michigan Student Showcase on March 15 & 16 at 7pm; Stacey Kent, an award winning jazz singer, on March 17 at 7:30pm; "1964" Beatles Tribute on March 18 at 7:30pm; "Much Ado About Nothing" presented by the Pigeon Creek Shakespeare Company on March 28-31; Author Shan Koyczan on April 13 at 7pm; North Muskegon POPS 2017 on April 20-21 by the North Muskegon Choirs at 7:30pm; and POPS "Great Ladies of Swing" with singer Dee Daniels and the West Michigan Symphony on April 28 at 7:30pm. For more information on each event and the costs involved check out [www.frauenthal.org](http://www.frauenthal.org) or call 231-722-9750.



Would you like to be more hands-on when it comes to the food on your table? Maybe you want to join together with your neighbors and save money by growing produce together. Whether you already know you have a green thumb or want to see if you do, there is a gardening workshop series just for you! McLaughlin Grows and Coalition for Community Development are partnering this spring to guide our neighbors through the perils of pests, the trials of tomato growing, and the secrets of soils, all while trading stories with our friends and neighbors who join us for this free offering. The sessions will also include refreshments and opportunities to qualify for raised beds and even gardening coaches! The sessions are scheduled to take place on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:30pm at Covenant Community Reformed Church, 134 E. Barney, Muskegon Hts., with additional opportunities throughout the summer in multiple locations to come together for sharing stories and receiving help. If you or your group is interested in finding out more or registering for these sessions, contact Hilary at: [healthyheights14@gmail.com](mailto:healthyheights14@gmail.com).

### *Natural Joy Learning Center*

Classes will be held on Saturdays April 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 from 10am-Noon on Buddhist Wisdom. In this course, the learner will be presented with traditional Buddhist teachings. There will be class discussion on the meaning and practice of the teachings. The class will compare the Buddhist paradigm with western culture and western thought. On the same dates, but from 1pm-4pm, a Volunteer Training Academy will be held. You will learn skills that will take you through any volunteer opportunity. In this course, you will learn to teach anyone to read, to tutor math, to be able to lead fun activities, and tell good stories. Each class will be held at Unit of Muskegon, 2052 Bourdon St., Muskegon, MI 49441. Payment is by free will donation at the class meetings. All sessions will be taught by Rev. Diane Stark, an educator and ordained minister, who is out to empower young and old alike with new skills that make life richer and more rewarding.



The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies is presenting "SALAM Neighbor" on Monday, March 20, 2017 at 1pm & 6pm. Salam Neighbor is an award-winning film and campaign to connect the world to refugees. Immerse into the life of a Syrian refugee through the journey of Chris and Zach as the first filmmakers allowed to be registered and given a tent inside of a refugee camp. The presentation will be at Muskegon Community College, Stevenson Center Room 1200. Following each showing there will be a brief Q&A session with filmmaker Chris Temple via Skype.

**SHOAH COMMEMORATION 2017**

Mark your calendar for the Shoah Commemoration 2017 on April 23, 24, & 25. Renata Laxova will be the speaker on "A Life Lived in Hope." The commemoration service on April 23 is at 3:30pm at Samuel Lutheran Church, 8<sup>th</sup> St. & Muskegon Avenue; Conversations on a Life Lived is April 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1206 Whitehall Rd. in North Muskegon and April 25 at 12:30pm at West Shore Community College in Ludington.

**Are you ready for 30 Days of Peace Muskegon?**

2017 is our fourth year of grass root relationship building, collaboration and cooperation. While September sounds like a long time from today, now is the time to gather your voices and visions to plan your activities and events, and develop your promotion, advertising, marketing and media strategies to involve the community in the practice of non-violence.

Peace Makers are invited to make a difference by extending the hospitality of global citizenship through inclusive activities and events. Creating opportunities to meet new people, make new friends, and open doors to better understanding is central to cultivate respectful coexistence.

For clarification, the Community Calendar Coordinator is a full time volunteer position to develop a communications network and bridge the gaps of information sharing. The Coordinator is accountable to Muskegon County Cooperating Churches for financial oversight and activity reporting for public access. All donations and proceeds are dedicated to the mutual benefit of office products, postage, design and printing, licensing, fiduciary fees, signage, internet maintenance, public facility rentals, an upcoming music video and interactive web page.

The phrase "It takes a village" is not a cliché, it is truth. Like stone soup, your contribution is valued and appreciated. Get involved by contacting the Coordinator, Kryssis Diane Bjork, at [kryssisbjork@comcast.net](mailto:kryssisbjork@comcast.net), phone 231-747-8138, or visit us at 30 Days of Peace Muskegon on Facebook and join the Group Page for timely updates and gentle reminders.

# THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

**We would not exist without your generous support.** Contributions have been received during the last 2 months from the following individuals: Karen Cheatham, Lynne Gordon & Jack Kennedy, Bill & Loyce Page, Tim VanderHaar, Nancy Waters, Joe Whalen, and Kenneth Yonker. Congregations: First Congregational UCC, Forest Park Covenant, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Prince of Peace, Sacred Heart, and Stewards in Action.



March 10	7:30pm	Masterworks Concert "Classical Music", Frauenthal, see pg. 3
March 12	2:00am	Daylight Saving Time Begins – set clocks ahead 1 hour
March 15-16	7:00pm	WM Student Showcase, Frauenthal, see pg. 3
March 17	7:30pm	Stacey Kent, Frauenthal, see pg. 3
March 18	7:30pm	"1964" Beatles Tribute, Frauenthal, see pg. 3
March 20	1pm & 6pm	SALAM Neighbor presented by CHGS at MCC, see pg. 4
March 23	5:00pm	MCCC Board of Directors' Meeting at Catholic Charities Bldg.
March 28-31		"Much Ado About Nothing", Frauenthal, see pg. 3
April 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29	10am	"Buddhist Wisdom" presented by Natural Joy Learning, see pg. 4
April 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29	1:00pm	Volunteer Training Academy, by Natural Joy Learning, see pg.4
April 9		Palm Sunday
April 16		Easter Sunday
April 13	7:00pm	Author Shane Koyczan, Frauenthal, see pg. 3
April 20-21	7:30pm	North Muskegon Popes 2017, Frauenthal, see pg. 3
April 20	5:00pm	Last Day for May-June Branches articles
April 23	3:30pm	Shoah Commemoration, Samuel Lutheran Church, see pg. 5
April 24	6:30pm	Conversations on a Life Lived, First Evangelical Lutheran, see pg. 5
April 25	12:30pm	"A Life Lived in Hope" at West Shore Community College, see pg. 5
April 27	5:00pm	MCCC Board of Directors' Meeting at Catholic Charities Bldg.
April 28	7:30pm	POPS "Great Ladies of Swing" at Frauenthal, see pg. 3