

BRANCHES

A Publication of **Muskegon County Cooperating Churches**
Convening the Community of Faith
to serve the needs of the people of Muskegon County for over 70 years.

Vol. 36, No. 5

September-October Issue

2017

BRANCHES is published 6 times a year by

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches (MCCC) 1095 Third St., Suite 10, Muskegon, MI 49441-1976
Phone: 231-727-6000 Fax: 231-727-0841 **E-mail:** staff@cooperatingchurches.com

Office Hours: Monday & Thursday 9am-4pm Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday Closed
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

NEW PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Muskegon County Cooperating Churches is delighted to announce the appointment of the Reverend Lily E. Marx to the position of Program Coordinator. She will begin her tenure with the organization on September 1, 2017. Muskegon County Cooperating Churches is Muskegon County's oldest and most diverse ecumenical organization which celebrates our oneness in Jesus Christ, respects the diversity within the faith community, and works cooperatively with current denominational and faith structures. MCCC traces its origin to the Muskegon County Council of Churches formed on May 26th, 1941. It grew out of informal discussions among downtown clergy. Over the past 75 years it has evolved into a group who discerns the needs of the community and creates programs to meet those needs. MCCC has actively participated in and created various programs within the community; programs which are educational, worship centered, informational, and provide networking opportunities. Its purpose has been to sustain the faith community's connectiveness for the benefit of the people of Muskegon. MCCC's mission statement sums it up nicely: "Moved by the love of Christ, we seek reconciliation and justice for all, reaching across barriers that divide, to alleviate poverty, both spiritual and physical."

The excitement over the appointment of the Rev. Lily Marx has much to do with what she brings to the table. She has worked in the Juvenile Justice System for the past 30

years, working in the field, as well as in administrative positions. During her career with the courts she has developed and run successful programs. She has a skill set that include, not only administration and program development, but also include networking, policy and grant writing. She has been an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church in the greater Muskegon area for the past 12 years. Because of this vocation, she has already established some very important relationships within the faith community. She was recently ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church and will also be in the position of Priest-in-Charge at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Norton Shores. This part-time position will dovetail nicely with the MCCC's Coordinator position.

The Board of MCCC is committed to being true to the purpose it has served throughout its history. At all times, especially in the climate in which we find ourselves in this country and in this world today,

MCCC Board for 2017

MCCC Board Members

Lucinda Barnum-Steggerda – Vice President

First Congregational UCC

Delores L. Cole

Mt. Zion COGIC

Judy Clark-Ochs – Emerita Member

First Congregational UCC

Paul Emick - President

Prince of Peace

Douglas Hughes

William/Hughes Attorneys

Rev. Jane Mountain

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Jack Otteren

Mobile Pantry Worker

Rev. John Parker

Mt. Herman Zion Baptist Church

Rev. Diane Stark

Unity of Muskegon Church

Rev. Tim VanderHaar - Treasurer

First Congregational UCC

Thomas Wagner - Clerk

Muskegon Church of the Brethren

MCCC's desire is to seek out and refine the fulfillment of its mission to the people of Muskegon County. Opportunities abound and the board is committed to pursuing those opportunities. The addition of Rev. Lily Marx offers a fortuity toward an expanded and desired future of the Muskegon County Cooperating Churches.

Rev. Marx will be taking over for retiring MCCC Program Coordinator Patricia Stressman, The board of directors is grateful for Pat's faithful service to the organization during the past five years.

"Gleanings" by Tom Wagner



Community in the Concrete

Many years ago a dear friend bought a parcel of land in the northern part of the county at a bargain price. On the property stood a modest cinder block house and a couple of wooden out buildings. However, the house had stood abandoned for about 30 years, requiring extensive renovation. My friend striped the building down to the bare cinder block walls, which were still sturdy and plumb. One of the decisions she made was not to replace the standard wooden joists and sub-flooring, but simply pour a cement slab. The complication in that plan was an old wooden bridge over a creek a few feet in from where the driveway met the gravel road. While the bridge was easily strong enough to bear cars and even heavily loaded pick-up trucks, it clearly could not manage the tonnage of a cement truck.

Her solution was to throw a party. She invited family and friends to bring wheelbarrows and haul cement about 140 feet from a truck parked on the opposite side of the bridge to the house. More skilled volunteers would stay inside the house shoveling and troweling the wet concrete. She would supply food and beverages. So on a crisp fall morning about a couple dozen of us showed up with half a dozen wheelbarrows. Once the cement truck showed up, we lined up with our wheelbarrows, wheeling loads of wet concrete to the house. It helped that we had more able bodied workers than wheelbarrows so that folks could take a rest between loads. Indeed, what could have been a strenuous chore became a serendipitous game—in tag team style. As one person had emptied his or her load, a fresh volunteer would grab the empty wheelbarrow and head back to the truck. Everyone involved in the project was amazed at how quickly we completed the task.

I grew up hearing that it is nearly impossible to be Christian on our own. It really does require the support of a community. In my faith tradition we spoke of it as “mutual aid”, a phrase applied to both spiritual and physical need. Jesus’ early message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17) was itself an invitation to community. The invitation may have been issued to individuals, but it was and is a call to a life together. Repentance, or the changes needed to enter that new life aren’t always easy. It helps to have examples and encouragement of others. And it takes a lifetime of practice. When the burden seems too heavy, others can help us carry the load.

As summer turns to fall, many of us are returning home from vacation travels. Breaks from routine are good for us, but now comes time to get back to school, work, etc. In many of our congregations pews have been a bit empty for a few months. As we come together again, perhaps we can rededicate ourselves to a shared life—not only a life of gathered worship, study and prayer, but also a life that puts flesh and bone on our values in the world beyond our stained glass sanctuaries. When I recall that long ago cement pour, I often think of it as a glimpse of the beloved community—a place where those in need receive relief and encouragement, the strong remember the communal and divine sources of their strength and love binds us together into a whole greater than the sum of our parts. This is indeed community in the concrete.

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



From the Editor

The next *BRANCHES* will cover the months of November & December. If you have something you would like to have included, please e-mail to us at 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 October 20th 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.

COMMUNITY
REMEMBRANCE

HARBOR
HOSPICE

The 4th Annual Community Remembrance at the Heritage Memorial Garden located in downtown Muskegon Thursday, September 21st beginning at 6pm is a program encompassing beautiful music, readings and bulbs planted to help individuals and families in our community to both mourn the dear and honor the life of a loved one. Pam Babbitt developed the beautiful garden in honor of her late husband; a haven located in downtown Muskegon and an incredible representation of love that remains even after a person dies. An RSVP is kindly appreciated. Please call 231-728-3442 or 800-497-9559 for more details.

“The Promise” by Karen Cheatham

A novella about the power of love and what it means to keep your word, *The Promise* by Karen Cheatham explores the idea that good things can happen to good people, and that anything is possible if you have faith in the Lord. The narrative follows a woman named Luella Mae White, who grew up in terrible poverty and suffered cruel abuse. Luella persists through her hardships, determined to succeed and build a life of love and happiness for herself, finding strength through her Christian beliefs. The story is told as a modern day parable where a woman who has little finds power within herself to persevere and bring love and kindness to all those around her, even though the same is not always given to her in return. Coming in around only sixty pages, *The Promise* is not a very long book, yet it still packs an emotional punch as the content within these pages will keep readers engrossed in the story. With a heavy focus on religion, Christian values, and the comfort a close relationship with God can give, it is sure to appeal to those who find strength in the Lord. Nevertheless, it also has the ability to appeal to those who might not be as spiritual or religious. To request your copy of *The Promise*, contact kcheathm@aol.com or call 231-728-5490. For more information and the cost of the book visit www.stewardsinaction.com.

LUMBER RIVER QUARTET IN CONCERT



Lumber River Quartet will be coming to the First Congregational Church C.C.C. at 3212 Pontaluna Road in Fruitport to share their ministry in song on Saturday, September 23rd at 6:30pm. The group's southern gospel style, upbeat performances, and humor have been encouraging and a blessing to people all across the US and Canada. The group has sung in auditoriums, on radio and television, on gospel cruise ships, and in many, many churches across the land. Light refreshments will be available before the concert, beginning at 6:00pm. No tickets are necessary; however, a free will offering will be taken. You can check them out at www.lumberriverministries.com. You can also look them up on Facebook. For directions or information, please call 231-329-1477.



FRAUENTHAL
CENTER

AN EVENING WITH REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Muskegon Community College's *Center for Experiential Learning* in partnership with Rev. Stephon Ferguson will present a 75-minute program featuring the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. **7:00-8:30pm Thursday, October 5 at the Frauenthal Center, 425 West Western Ave., Muskegon.**

The presentation will feature an in-character interview discussing the life of Dr. King. Rev. Ferguson will lead a narrated talk with visuals outlining Dr. King's life. He will be accompanied in performance by MCC History Professor, George Maniates posing topical interview questions guiding the presentation toward a meaningful learning experience for guests of all ages.

The event is offered at no charge, but tickets are required. Tickets will be available at the Frauenthal Box Office beginning 8/21/2017. Contact Kurt Troutman for further information or even a presentation about the project. kurt.troutman@muskegoncc.edu or phone him at 231-286-3075.

Muskegon area faith communities and individuals are strongly encouraged to provide financial support for this worthy project. Please send your check or money order to "**Foundation for MCC**" with a note on the bottom designating that the gift is for "MLK." Please send your gifts to: Att. Amy Swope, foundation Director, Foundation for Muskegon Community College, 221 S. Quarterline Dr., Ste. 400, Muskegon, MI 49442.



CROP Hunger Walk

BE the Difference for Hungry People

The 38th Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk happens Sunday, October 1, beginning at 1pm. (Registration opens at 12:30pm.)

Meet at Central United Methodist Church, 1011 Second Street in downtown Muskegon. We raise money to fight hunger both globally and locally. Globally, we work thru Church World Service in 57 countries.

Locally, our Walk benefits 4 Muskegon hunger-fighting agencies: AgeWell Services' Meals-On-Wheels program, Community enCompass's McLaughlin Grows Community Garden, Mission For Area People (MAP)'s Healthy Choice Pantry, and the Saturday Breakfast at First Congregational UCC.

We have a special incentive this year. A donor will share a matching gift of \$250.00 for every youth group that raises \$250.00.

For more details, to register on line, or to donate, visit www.muskegoncrophungerwalk.org or call Delphine Hogston at 231-215-9110.



BARBERSHOP SHOW

The West Shore Chorus of Sweet Adelines presents "Remember When...", Saturday, September 30th at 7pm at the Fruitport Middle School Auditorium, 3113 E. Pontaluna Rd., Fruitport featuring The Four Man Fishin' Tackle Choir. Tickets are available in advance or at the door. Call 616-402-6089 or e-mail musicedSarah@gmail.com for more information or to purchase tickets.



Community
enCompass

You are invited to the 6th Annual "TASTE & SEE" sponsored by Community encompass on Monday, September 25 beginning at 5pm. This is a progressive dinner & tour through our downtown neighborhoods. Experience the work God is doing in Downtown Muskegon neighborhoods. You can register for the event at www.communityencompass.org/taste-see. For more information and the cost of the tickets, please contact them 231-728-3117.



COMMUNITY QUIET DAY & LABYRINTH WALK

The community of St. Paul’s opens its doors, warmly welcoming all to join in this time of shared silence during the Community Quiet Day and Labyrinth Walk on Saturday, September 9, 2017 from 10am-3pm. Guided Centering Prayer will be offered at 10:45 and 1:30 in the sanctuary. A simple lunch will be served from Noon to 1pm. Refreshments will be available throughout the day. There is no charge and reservations are not needed.

WOMEN WARRIORS w/ADELE GRAY, PROPHETESS

Women are invited to attend a revival with Adele Gray, Prophetess on Saturday, September 2 and Sunday, September 3 at 7pm at River of Life Church, 1520 E. Broadway, Norton Shores. The Women Warriors will be meeting on Saturday, September 2nd from 10am-Noon. Check out www.adelegrayministries.com for more information.



We would not exist without your generous support. Contributions have been received during the last 2 months from the following individuals: Lawrence & Julie Ayers, Winifred Cross, Tom Tuori, and James & Nancy Waters. Congregations: First Congregational UCC, and Sacred Heart.



September 2	10am-Noon	Women Warriors at River of Life Church, see pg. 6
September 2	7pm	Revival in Michigan with Adele Gray at River of Life, see pg. 6
September 3	7pm	Revival in Michigan with Adele Gray at River of Life, see pg. 6
September 9	10am-3pm	Community Quiet Walk & Labyrinth at St. Paul’s, see pg. 6
September 16		Unity Prayer Breakfast at the Holiday Inn – contact 722-6765 Mt. Zion COGIC for more information & tickets
September 21	6pm	Community Remembrance at Heritage Memorial Garden, see pg. 3
September 23	6:30pm	Lumber River Quartet at First Congregational of Fruitport, see pg. 4
September 25	5pm	Taste & See w/Community enCompass, see pg. 5
September 28	5pm	MCCC Board of Directors’ Meeting, Catholic Charities Bldg.
September 30	7pm	Barbershop Show w/Sweet Adelines & The 4-Man Fishin’ Tackle Choir at Fruitport MS Auditorium, see pg. 5
October 1	1pm	38 th Annual Muskegon CROP Hunger Walk, see pg. 5
October 5	7-8:30pm	Evening with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., see pg. 4
October 20	5pm	Last Day for articles for BRANCHES
October 26	5pm	MCCC Board of Directors’ Meeting, Catholic Charities Bldg.