

# 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. 3**

**May-June Issue**

**2017**

**BRANCHES** is published 6 times a year by

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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

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There will be a conference for all agencies that work with Feeding America on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am-Noon at First Congregational UCC, 1201 Jefferson in Muskegon.

There will be a focus on partnership. Their keynote speaker will be Kenneth R. Estelle, Chief Operating Officer of Feeding America West Michigan. Other areas that will be addressed include: Food Safety Required Training; Volunteers – How to Recruit and Retain; Grant Requirements and Report; Civil Rights Training; and an Evaluation/Drawing for agency credit.

The training sessions are a requirement of Feeding America for all organization that hold mobile food pantries or have a local food pantry. Please register your agency at [FeedWM.org/agencies/conference2017](http://FeedWM.org/agencies/conference2017). If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Watson in Agency Relations at [NancyW@FeedW.org](mailto:NancyW@FeedW.org) or 616-432-6967.

It is imperative that your organization/agency be represented at this important annual meeting to be sure that you have the correct forms for reporting as well as learning about any new requirements.



Save the afternoon of July 16<sup>th</sup> for MCCC's Annual Fundraiser.  
More information will be sent out soon! It's going to be a chicken barbecue dinner!!!!

"Gleanings" by Tom Wagner



### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

From a distance, the treetops seem coated with a velvety blend of maroon and green of partially open buds. Below, the underbrush foliage has fully unfurled, splashing bright green throughout the woodland understory. There are also a few sprays of flowering trees in bloom. Spring has arrived in earnest and with it increased outdoor activity. In our household that especially turns our attention toward garden preparation and cutting firewood. Though there is work to be done, we get to both observe and participate in the earth's seasonal transformation.

Our Grandson Ben is now 19 months old. We often get to see him a couple times a week while our daughter is at work. Admittedly Lois ends up with the lion's share of the responsibility, since I am away at work until mid-afternoon most weekdays. My primary role when I come home is to distract him so she can accomplish other tasks. During cold weather reading stories or playing with blocks captured his attention only so long. Since Ben learned to walk he has liked to keep moving. I could get him to slow down a few moments to watch birds at the feeders out the front window. As we observed their movements, I pointed to and named the various species. Alternatively we looked out the back window to watch the chickens and get a glimpse of the goats. At night fall we have a ritual in which Ben helps me close the drapes. As we close them, he bids the wild birds and chickens, "Night, night". Occasionally this winter I would bundle him up and take him to the barn to visit with the goats and chickens up close. The frequency of those visits has increased with the arrival of warmer weather. Ben points to the back door as soon as I get home from work, indicating it's time to do afternoon chores. He watches as I give the goats their hay and collect eggs from the chickens. Here too I narrate a bit as I do chores, repeating the names of the animals and what they are eating. Sometimes I slip in some German words and phrases in to these lessons. These days our outdoor activity usually concludes with a quick wheel barrow ride around the yard. I look forward to longer walks in the woods and through the fields as spring warms into summer and Ben becomes steadier on his feet.

We are getting to know each other. It is the beginning of what I hope will be a long conversation. Of course, Ben's communication skills are still a bit limited, so far making that conversation somewhat one-sided. For now he will observe, listen and learn. Gradually he will understand the give and take of dialogue, making his own contributions. Then I can listen and learn about his thoughts and experiences. Another way of looking at it is that this isn't a new conversation at all. Rather, we are just some of the newer participants in something that started generations before either of us was born. My grandparents and great-grandparents told me stories from their childhoods and beyond, introducing me to a network of relationships with people I never met, but whose names and personalities became very familiar to me. My job is to pass on those stories, along with my own. Eventually I will hear Ben tell stories, adding a new layer of family lore and relationships in the world.

In addition to social relationships, it is important to understand our place in the created world. Ben will early on know where his food comes from. He will learn that we get milk from the goats and eggs from the chickens. Sometimes the chickens themselves become food. Vegetables come from the garden and apples from the orchard. We even forage in the woods for berries and mushrooms. Later he will learn the rhythms of seasonal change and cycles of birth and death. If he listens carefully to his elders and closely observes creation, he may come to understand we are members of a web of life which includes everything from soil microbes to weather patterns. When I think of that relationship, I still think in terms of what we use to call conservation—"the wise use of natural resources". It can be a way of

living within the means of creation, mindful of its limits. Like our social relationships, there is a time to speak and a time to listen. Those who would extract resources without sufficient concern about the consequences maybe like those who constantly speak, and even in silence prepare their next response without truly listening. They look to technical fixes to correct problems rather than avoid the damage. It is time to sit quietly and listen carefully, learning to read the pages of each leaf and blade of grass. As Dunker Elder H.C. Early said many years ago, "The land is not ours; it is only entrusted to us for a season."

*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 July & August. 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 June 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.



Come to the Prayer Breakfast at Maranatha's Family Life Center, 4759 Lake Harbor Rd on Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:45-8:30am. Speaker is The Honorable Gregory Pittman, Muskegon County Judge with featured soloist Joshua Anderson from New Beginnings Church. For reservations call 231-733-2742 or 231-744-4765. At Noon there are two prayer rallies – Downtown Muskegon County Building, 8990 Terrace for more information call 231-744-4765; and Muskegon Heights Rowan Park, Broadway & Baker Streets for more information call 616-405-0410. The "Evening Prayer Cry" at the Living Word Church, 1551 Wood Street, Muskegon will be held at 7:00pm. For more information call 231-728-2800, ext. 14. There is also a youth event on Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:45-8:15pm at Central Youth Center, 2620 McLaughlin Ave., Muskegon for Middle/High School & College students. For more information call Pastor Jim Keck at 231-206-1990 or Pastor Raymond at 231-206-3667.



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.

### *Natural Joy Learning Center*

Classes will be held on Saturdays June 3, 10, 17, 24 & July 1 from 10am-Noon on The Arc of Human History. In this course, the students will discover the theory of Spiral Dynamics as it shows up in the timeline of changing adaptations to the environment. A "Big History" of the breakthroughs for human survival and progress, this course gives a meaningful backbone for further knowledge. Participants will be given a list of the significant influences in the "arc of human history," and their dates. On the same dates, but from 1pm-4pm, Master Games Degree: Be a Gamesmeister will be held. Earn a Master of Games Degree by learning to teach four games, learning to participate in 12 games, and learning the dynamics of social play. Frank Aycox, author of "Games We Should Play in School," was a social worker who discovered the power of social play to create cohesive group dynamics. Anyone can learn his secrets, which led to the dissolution of gang violence in Philadelphia. Get ready to move beyond war games to a new kind of play that allows the players to engage cooperatively and form positive relationships. Each class will be held at Unity 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 Y's Club – 2017 – 54<sup>th</sup> Annual White Elephant Sale will be held on May 19 & 20 from 9am-5pm. The sale takes place at 640 Seminole Road (Folkert Community Hub) in Norton Shores. If you have saleable merchandise, call 231-727-9900 for a pick up.



### A GRAND DIALOGUE IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Grand Dialogue is an association of colleges, universities, and related organization exploring the relationship between science and religion. The annual conference will be held on Saturday, May 13, 2017 at Hager Auditorium, Grand Valley State University, Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences, 301 Michigan Street NE, Grand Rapids beginning with registration at 9am. Scott A. Davison, Ph. D. is a professor of philosophy at Morehead State University. He will be speaking on “Science, Faith, and Answers to Prayer.” The conference is free and open to the public. There is a cost for an option lunch with advance registration. For more information and to register for the conference and the lunch, visit [www.GrandDialogue.org](http://www.GrandDialogue.org) or call 616-331-5702. Grand Dialogue is a program of the Kaufman Interfaith Institute.



Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network is excited to announce that the Outreach Committee has taken on the role as the local facilitator of the 2017 Michigan Health & Hygiene Donation Drive for the Homeless. This is a statewide initiative where communities are collecting general hygiene, menstrual hygiene, and sexual health products to provide for those who are homeless or at-risk of being homeless in our area. The collection is taking place from Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup> through Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. Containers are located at several drug stores within the area. Items needed include: soap, shampoo, toilet paper, toothbrush, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, Band-Aids, first-aid products, antiseptic wipes, tampons, menstrual cups, panty-liners, menstrual wipes and condoms. For more information contact Michael Ramsey at the McClees Clinic, 1700 Clinton St., Muskegon. Phone is 231-728-5663.



FRAUENTHAL  
CENTER

Activities at the Frauenthal Center include: May 4-7 “Mary Poppins” presented by Muskegon Civic Theatre; Sika Dance Recital on May 13 at 6pm, Author Timothy Egan as part of the MMA exhibition, “Edward Curtis: The North American Indian at 7:30pm on May 17<sup>th</sup>; Masterworks “Rachmaninoff No. 3” with Olga Kern at 7:30pm on May 19<sup>th</sup>; American Salute Concert, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 10am; The Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant June 13-17 and the Barton Organ Concert on June 25 at 3pm. For more information call 231-722-9750.

# 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: Harry & Lori Arthur, Lawrence & Julie Ayers, Alfred Dabrowski, Lynn Gordon & Jack Kennedy, Dan Leaver, Bill & Loyce Page, Erika Paulson, and James & Nancy Waters. Congregations: Christ Temple Apostolic, Church of the Living God, Crestwood United Methodist, First Congregational UCC, First Presbyterian Church, Fruitport Congregational UCC, Greater Harvest Baptist Church, Lake Harbor United Methodist Church, Lebanon Lutheran Church, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Zion COGIC, Muskegon Church of the Brethren, Port City Church, Redeeming Life Ministries, Sacred Heart, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and Unity Church of Muskegon.



April 24-May 5		Donation Drive for Health & Hygiene, see pg. 5
May 2	6:30-8:30pm	McLaughlin Grows Gardening Sessions, see pg. 4
May 3	6:45-8:15pm	National Day of Prayer Youth Event at Central Youth Center, pg.3
May 4	6:45-8:30am	National Day of Prayer Breakfast at Maranatha, see pg. 3
	Noon	Two National Day of Prayer Rallies, see pg. 3
	7:00pm	"Evening Prayer Cry" at Living Word Church, see pg. 3
May 4-7		"Mary Poppins" at Frauenthal, see pg. 5
May 5	8:30-Noon	Feeding American WM Conference at 1 <sup>st</sup> Cong'l, see pg. 1
May 9	6:30-8:30pm	McLaughlin Grows Gardening Sessions, see pg. 4
May 13	9:00am	Grand Dialogue at Hager Auditorium, see pg. 5
May 13	6:00pm	Sika Dance Recital at Frauenthal, see pg. 5
May 16	6:45-8:30	McLaughlin Grows Gardening Sessions, see pg. 4
May 17	7:30pm	Author Timothy Egan at Frauenthal, see pg. 5
May 19	7:30pm	"Rachmaninoff No. 3" at the Fruaenthal, see pg. 5
May 19 & 20	9am-5pm	The Y's Club White Elephant Sale, see pg. 4
May 25	5:00pm	MCCC Board of Directors' Meeting, Catholic Charities Bldg.
May 29	10:00am	American Salute Concert at Frauenthal, see pg. 5
June 3	10am-Noon	The Arc of Human History, see pg. 4
	1:00-4:00pm	Master Games Degree, see pg. 4
June 10	10am-Noon	The Arc of Human History, see pg. 4
	1:00-4:00pm	Master Games Degree, see pg. 4
June 13-17		Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant at Frauenthal, see pg. 5
June 17	10am-Noon	The Arc of Human History, see pg. 4
	1:00-4:00pm	Master Games Degree, see pg. 4
June 20	5:00pm	Last Day for Information for July-August BRANCHES
June 22	5:00pm	MCCC Board of Directors' Meeting, Catholic Charities Bldg.
June 24	10am-Noon	The Arc of Human History, see pg. 4
	1:00-4:00pm	Master Games Degree, see pg. 4
June 25	3:00pm	Barton Organ Concert at Frauenthal, see pg. 5