

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

November 2020

Pastor

Rev. Arik Borstad

Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

Barb Habecker

Moderator

Roy Dreger

Vice-Moderator

Nancy Franks

Co-Chairs, Christian Education

Kelsey Veliconia

Renee Dornan

Chair, Deacons

Diana Goode

Chair, Outreach

Nancy Franks

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From the Pastor's Pen

November is upon us, and with it marks the final push in a year that many of us would rather soon forget. Normally I love these last two months of the year, as they contain my favorite seasons and holidays; but this year I can't help but enter into these final weeks with an impending sense of dread. Anxiety hangs in the air, palpable and thick, as we brace ourselves over what is to come.

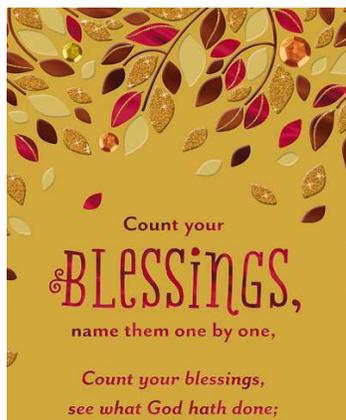
Where in most years, this month would be one to be celebrated; but this year November brings with it a far different tone. Our nation faces its most divisive political election in recent history, while the pandemic in our country begins to spiral out of control. The weather, once comforting and warm, turns colder and it forces us to begin to board ourselves up inside our homes for what promises to be a very long and cold winter.

Even Thanksgiving, once a favorite holiday, will take on a different tone this year. There will be empty seats at our tables and traditions left undone as we are forced to face these last major holidays with the reality of the pandemic weighing heavily on us with no end in sight. To be sure, these last few weeks are going to be difficult for many of us for countless reasons.

However, it is precisely because of the circumstances we find ourselves facing now, that the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas are more important than ever before. Thanksgiving, at its origin, was a celebration of the pilgrims' triumph over impossible odds, surviving a harsh new world because of the mercy and generosity of the indigenous people that lived here and reached out a helping hand. Even Christmas, at its core, is a story about light overcoming darkness, as God sent a child into a world consumed with selfishness and greed to offer us the gift of hope and life.

You see, while these last two holidays will be difficult for us, I also believe we have never before had the opportunity to embrace what these holidays are all about. For Thanksgiving, we have a chance to celebrate our triumphs and successes in the midst of the ruins of a tumultuous year as we count the numerous blessings that still surround us in spite of all that has taken place. For Christmas, we have a chance to cling on to the light of hope that drives away the encroaching despair, reminding us, once again, of the promise given to us in the birth of a child.

My friends, I know this year has been hard and unrelenting. I know many of us are burdened by our anxieties and fears over what is to come.



Yet it is my hope that we take the opportunity presented to us to reevaluate where our priorities lie in life, as we remember and reconnect with what this season is truly about.

We will make it through this time of darkness, friends. *The blessings that surround us are more numerous than the fears and worries we carry with us.* May our Thanksgiving tables be filled not with food, but with gratitude for what God has done for us as we make this final push into these last few weeks of the year. Never forget that you are loved not only by God but also by your faith family who remains here for you no matter what comes next.

Advent and Christmas plans: I know there have been a lot of questions regarding what the church is planning on doing as we look ahead to the Advent and Christmas season. Unfortunately, with the way the Coronavirus continues to run rampant in Ohio that might not even be our decision to make. That being said, our council met and made some preliminary decisions for what we are *hoping* to happen for Advent and Christmas.

As far as Advent goes, we will be continuing to worship online as well as conduct Sunday school virtually through Zoom. However on **Christmas Eve** we are hoping to do socially distanced in person services every hour at 6 pm, 7 pm, 8 pm, and 9 pm for 20 minutes each. Each service will contain:

- Christmas organ music
- A pre-recorded song from the choir
- Communion (which will be prepackaged and taken with you to your seat when you enter)
- A scripture reading
- Candlelight as we *hum* "Silent Night" before departing, as singing is still strongly discouraged by the CDC

In addition, we will also be having a big virtual worship celebration on Christmas Eve that will premiere at 10 pm on Facebook and on our website. That service will include many songs, carols, special guests, a play, and a sermon (among many other elements).

If you are interested in attending our in-person mini-services on Christmas Eve, **you**

MUST reserve a spot beforehand by calling our office and letting us know. We expect at least some of the services to reach our safe distance capacity so it is first-come, first-served. Additionally, masks will be required at the in-person services and you will be assigned seating. You must wait in your car until the glass doors open ten minutes before the service begins and leave immediately at the conclusion of worship so we may disinfect and clean the sanctuary before the next service begins.

More details will come with next month's newsletter, but if you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Arik

Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

Karen and I went camping recently. We thought we would go "leaf peeping" to catch fall colors and relax a little. Being that we were in northern Pennsylvania in the fall, the weather was cool so we had campfires when possible. S'mores and campfire pies..yummm! Campfire pies are also known by names such as mountain pies, pudgie pies, hobo pies, toasties and other more regional names, but they are all basically the same. But, I digress.

The last campfire we had was built up somewhat strangely as the wood being sold for campfires tended to be rather green and hard to get going. At one point the wood kind of fell apart and the pieces became separated. The result was four or five pieces that were smoldering more than burning, so I heaped them back together and gave them some additional air and the whole thing blazed back into life! That was more like it; a fire that you could warm up by.

It struck me that this somewhat represents the way in which volunteer activities and work get done. Put a bunch of people together; warm the passions for the project and, presto! The project gets done thanks to many people working together.

This is also true for the way funding the church works - many people contributing what they can to keep the church functioning. No

one person is depended upon, or responsible for, the entire amount. The goal is reached by the individual passion that is reflected in each member's contribution. Once they are all together they give life to the church.

I know this is a strange time and we are not certain about how it will all turn out, but one thing is certain, ***we need to keep the fire burning until things are back to "normal"*** however that may present itself. So, please reflect on your ability to help keep the fire burning as you prepare your pledge cards. It's become a cliché, but we really are all in this together.

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Sometimes it is the small things in life that make all the difference in the world. It's those unexpected moments that make you smile. For me, one of those unexpected moments happens each Sunday morning at 11:00. I turn on my computer and click on Zoom and there are 12-14 smiling, sometimes silly (thank you Mikey Feigi), faces looking back at me. Welcome to 2020 virtual Sunday School! I decided midway through the summer that making a video and pushing it out there each Sunday morning was not something I enjoyed doing. It was the easiest way to "do Sunday School" but it did not connect me with the kids and that bothered me. So I decided to try virtual, live Sunday School. For the last eight weeks we have been gathering together and learning about the Beatitudes. Each Sunday we climb to the mountaintop to hear another part of the Sermon on the Mount story. It has been far more work than I anticipated but oh so worth it! I could not be more blessed to work with such amazing kids and their parents who also have a family component to work on each week. They make me smile! They are truly a blessing to have at our church!

Which leads me to what is next up...Advent, virtual style! I am using a friend Andra Moran's (and her friend Suzanne Castle's) newly written Advent resources called "An Unexpected Gift" as my inspiration for developing my own Advent curriculum for

Sunday School. This will definitely be a more hands-on family oriented Sunday School learning about the meaning of each Sunday in Advent with the Advent wreath being our center of focus. We will immerse ourselves learning about "Hope, Peace, Joy and Love." Along with our Sunday lessons will be activities for families to do at other times.

I have added an outreach component with the family Advent calendar. As the families read about a small part of the Christmas story



each day on their calendar, they open the flap to see what food item to add to their "Advent" box. As we near Christmas, we will collect the filled boxes and deliver them to those in need. If you

would like to do your own box/bag, **the list of food supplies is listed later in this newsletter.** Just grab a Christmas Marc's bag and fill it with the food items listed. We are collecting all filled bags/boxes on Sunday, December 20. Share the joys of Christmas by sharing with others!

During **Advent** we will be lighting a candle each week on the **Advent wreath** during Sunday's virtual worship. To make it more interactive and meaningful, why not build your own Advent wreath to light a candle each Sunday during the service? Here are a few simple ways to do it!



1. Floating candle wreath: Five small glass cylinders filled $\frac{3}{4}$ with water. Add food coloring to make purple water in three of them and pink in one. Leave one with clear water. The clear one goes in the middle of a round or square area (a mirror would be perfect to set them on or a board) and then around the center candle is purple, purple, pink, purple. Add a floating candle to each and some evergreen around the bottom.

2. Evergreen wreath: Get a fake evergreen wreath (small would be ideal) and any embellishments you want to decorate your wreath. Add four small battery operated candles around the wreath and sit a tall one in the middle.

3. Cake pan Advent wreath: (this is the one our families are making). Using an 8 or 9 inch round cake pan, fill the bottom with sand or pebbles. Add fresh or fake evergreens, eucalyptus, boxwood, reindeer moss and small pinecones. Add four small battery operated candles around the circle and a tall candle in the middle. Again, you can add any embellishments you like. We are sitting our candles in small clear plastic dishes that we have Modge Podge with purple or pink tissue paper. (Except for the cake pans, I got almost everything at Dollar Tree!)

4. 99 cent Advent wreath: Place four individual birthday candles in modeling clay. Put in a circle and add a battery operated tea light in the center. You would need matches to light this one!

5. Your own design: Get creative and design your own! I love empty soup cans filled with sand and a battery operated candle on the top are simple and easy. Add the words **Hope, Peace and Love** on purple paper (one to each of three cans) and **Joy** on pink paper. On the 5th one on white paper "**He is born!**" Add to side of can.

Share your creations with us on Facebook or send to me at mandmk2@oh.rr.com so I can share with others!

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Frost is on the pumpkins but lucky enough, the sun is sending its warming rays to highlight the colorful foliage on trees and bushes, raising the temps while we scurry around to beat the deadline of yard maintenance before the really cold winds start to blow.

Thank you for your generosity to Neighbors in Need. As you well know, we can make a difference together; and family, you can always be counted on to do your best.

Let's fill up Community Care's empty shelves during the month of November. Just add your donation on the "other" line on your offering envelope and mark it Community Care food drive. Thank you in advance!

Thank you for selecting an ornament off our giving tree in October. Remember: do not wrap the gifts this year. Place them in a plastic bag and attach the ornament that contains the client number and gift request on it. Return the bagged gift(s) to the church on either November 15 or 22 between noon and 2 p.m. As you drive through the parking lot, Outreach members will accept your bags for the children. There will be joy in many households because of your love and generosity this Christmas!

Thanksgiving blessings to all from all of us: Edie Phillips, Becky Williams, Barb Zinsmeister, Ann Olesen, Jane Woravka, Jerry Henson, Skip & Linda Spayd, and Nancy Franks.

If you would like to join our committee, please contact any one of us. We would be honored to have you along as we journey together in Jesus' name.

Believe in the Lord, your God. Believe in yourself. Believe you can do many good things with God's help.

Deacons' Desk – Kathy Pero

Happy November! I just love the fall weather and beautiful nature hikes with my family. As I reflect on the love of my family, I want to share my journey with raising a son. As many of you know, parenting Grayson is so much different from parenting Mackenzie. I often say, "I have to be two steps ahead of Grayson and predict his next moves." That way - I can keep up with his creative train of thoughts and have the supplies and safety goggles ready. His latest endeavor since August has been to learn how to survive outside with "no cheats." He has spent many hours in our backyard building shelters to sleep under, stone and brick ovens to cook his food, and making "tools" with rocks and branches. He finally earned his prize possession...his own pocket knife and survival kit. When I took him camping last weekend at Findley State park, he slept under the stars and canopy (because rain was in the forecast). We learned how to go geocaching and found our first treasure! He is HOOKED!

November is a great month to reconnect with family members, a time to take a pause, bake a pie, and play Monopoly or Scrabble (again!). I think of our church family often. I know when we get back together in the fellowship hall, it will be an AWESOME event!

More from the Deacons

Sanctuary Christmas Decoration Schedule:

The church will be decorated for Christmas on Saturday, November 28 between 9 am and 2 pm. If you and/or your family would like to help, please call Diana Goode at 328-5297 or the church office at 327-2921 to give the items you want to decorate at the time listed on the chart below. All members will be required to wear a mask and have temperature checked. Times must be followed to ensure COVID protocol is followed. At 9 am on November 28 the Deacons will put up the new vestments, crèche table and cloth, Christmas tree table, cloth and extension cords. We will also set out items for decorating.

Time	What	Who
9-9:15 am	Hang wreaths on front doors & door leading to Sunday school wing	
9:30-10 am	Place wreaths & candles on window ledges in sanctuary	
10:15-11 am	Assemble Christmas tree	
11:15-noon	Decorate the tree	
12:15-12:45 pm	Set up Advent wreath & Christ candle	
1-1:30 pm	Set up nativity	
1:45-2 pm	Decorate communion table	Nancy Franks

Christmas Ornament Exchange: Missing your church family? Give a little then receive a little. Since we can't be together, share a little Christmas spirit! There will be a drive-thru Christmas ornament exchange on December 6 from noon to 2 pm in the church parking

lot. Those who would like to participate should bring up an ornament with a message attached for a fellow church member and then receive an ornament from another member.

Virtual Auction Fundraiser: Plans are in the works for a virtual fundraiser to take place in February. Items are needed for the auction. Just as we had done for the organ auction fundraiser, we would like to have items that show your talents, and/or themed baskets, or items to create baskets. We would like to know what you plan on providing for the auction items by December 12. Please call the church office with your donation. We would like to have a picture of the items by January 15. Further details will be in the next newsletter.

Trustees' Turn – Chris Dlugosz

Autumn is here with its signs all around us. The weather has become cooler, the leaves have begun to change, and pumpkins have popped up all over the place. A happy addition to this particular season has been the play of the Browns! I actually find myself enjoying watching them! Along with the Browns, the Ohio State Buckeyes football team began play on October 24! If you couldn't already tell, we are a big football family and the fall weekends are some of our favorite times of the year. With everything that has gone on this past year, I am appreciating our weekend football more than ever.

Although football is number one in our house, I am appreciative of everyone who has tried to bring some normalcy as we navigate this new world we are in. Baseball and basketball fans got to enjoy their pastime. People are starting to try and dine out, if only once in a while and in a very different environment. Businesses are battling to get by. Kids have never been so happy to be back at school; I've heard it with my own ears. All around me I see signs of effort. I see people doing their best and trying to make the most of everything. I, for one, appreciate that approach.

The body uses nutrients, including protein, better if they are spread evenly throughout the day. Scientists estimate that the body can utilize only about 30 grams of protein at one time.

How much protein do I need? The right amount of protein for any individual depends on many factors--age, muscle mass, activity level, state of health, and sex. Recommended Daily Amounts (RDA) for an adult male is about 56 grams per day. An adult female needs about 46 grams per day. If she is pregnant or breastfeeding she needs 71 grams per day. Teen boys need 52 grams and teen girls need 46 grams. School age children need 19-34 grams and babies need 10.

Misleading protein bars or drinks. Some ads recommend older adults consume protein-rich drinks. Replacing a meal with a high-protein bar or drink will not improve your immune function or help preserve muscles. Without calories from other foods, the protein in these bars or drinks is used for energy instead of being used to make antibodies and muscles. Therefore, always eat a protein bar or drink with other foods. Make sure to get your seasonal flu shot and stay healthy!



Wanted: Tall bookcase for the church's archive room. Please contact the church office if you have a bookcase you would like to donate.

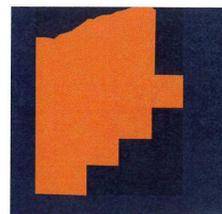
- 11/2 Arik Borstad
- 11/5 Susan Dornan
- 11/6 Ric Sasse
- 11/8 Dave Ireland
- 11/11 Andrew Ireland
- 11/14 Paul Wolanski
- 11/16 Keith Schoonover
- 11/17 Millie Anderson
- 11/18 Yung Do
- 11/24 Tracy Smoker



11/28 Yung & Annie Do



We wish The Smoker Family (Matt, Tracy, Jillian & Sebastian) the best of luck as they move to Pennsylvania in November. We will miss your smiling faces but you will always be part of our First Congregational Church family!

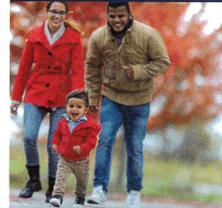


FLU SHOT CLINICS

FOR FAMILIES & CHILDREN

ages 6 months through 15 years

- **Monday, Nov. 2, 3 - 7 p.m.**
Lorain County Fairgrounds,
23000 Fairgrounds Rd. in Wellington
- **Saturday, Nov. 7, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**
Lorain County Community College in the
Ewing Activities Center, 1005 Abbe Rd. N in Elyria
- **Monday, Nov. 9, 3 - 7 p.m.**
Lorain High School, 2600 Ashland Ave. in Lorain



DRIVE-THRU FOR ADULTS

ages 16 years and older

- **Monday, Nov. 2, 3 - 7 p.m.**
Oberlin Fire Department,
430 S Main St. in Oberlin
- **Saturday, Nov. 7, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**
Elyria Fire Department Station No. 2,
330 E Broad St. in Elyria
- **Monday, Nov. 9, 3 - 7 p.m.**
Lorain Central Service Complex
2132 West Park Dr. in Lorain



No cost.

Flu shots paid for by CARES Act funding through the Lorain County Commissioners.

Wear a face covering and a short-sleeved shirt.

For more information, visit LorainCountyHealth.com

or call 440.294.2266



Advent Calendar

Post this calendar on your refrigerator so you can mark off each day that you put the items in your Advent box/bag.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
November 29 1st Sunday of Advent Box of cereal	November 30 Jar of peanut butter & jar of jelly/jam	December 1 Box of stuffing mix	December 2 Boxed potatoes	December 3 2 boxes of mac & cheese	December 4 Can of fruit	December 5 Can of tomatoes
December 6 2nd Sunday of Advent Can of tuna	December 7 Can of tomato sauce	December 8 Box of brownie mix	December 9 Jar of applesauce	December 10 Can of sweet potatoes	December 11 Can of cranberry sauce	December 12 2 cans of green beans
December 13 3rd Sunday of Advent Box of crackers	December 14 Box of white rice	December 15 Box of oatmeal	December 16 Box of pasta & jar/can of spaghetti sauce	December 17 Can of chicken noodle & tomato soup	December 18 Package of noodles	December 19 Can of corn
December 20 4th Sunday of Advent Box of Hamburger Helper	December 21 Send 2 Christmas cards	December 22 Watch a Christmas movie	December 23 Call someone to wish them a Merry Christmas	December 24 Leave a Christmas message for a neighbor	December 25 Merry Christmas!	