

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

March 2021

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From the Pastor's Pen

One year. It has been one whole year since we last worshipped in person as a faith community. Anniversary grief is a very real thing, and it becomes intensified when there is little else for us to focus on. For many of us this last year seems to have gone on indefinitely, yet it also has felt like it has vanished before our very eyes. Yet here we are, one year later, and it seems as though the immediate danger is starting to wane. The end, as improbable as it might once have seemed, is finally in sight. And after the year we have been through, it can be hard not to find ourselves surrounded by the regrets and grief that we have endured.

However, it is precisely in this moment, a year after we have retreated into isolation, that I want us to remember how much we have to be grateful for in our lives. Even in the midst of a pandemic when we have been quarantined to our homes, there is still so much around us for which we should give thanks. That's why this Lenten season we are encouraging every single person to participate in our church-wide activity of creating our gratitude jars. All it takes is a jar (or a box) and strips of blank paper. Each day write something that you are thankful for – make sure it is something different each day – and by the time Easter arrives, your jar will be overflowing with forty things that you are grateful for even now. Then once we return in person, we will create a paper chain of gratitude that will be displayed in the church tangibly reminding us that there are far more blessings around us than we may first perceive.

I'm not asking for us to brush over our grief or to refuse to acknowledge the damage and pain that has been caused by this last year. In America alone over half a million people have lost their lives to the pandemic. To put that in perspective, it would be equivalent to the entire city of Atlanta disappearing all at once. However, while we will certainly take time to process and grieve what we have been through, for now I believe it serves us best to focus on the good things that surround us each and every day.

So, my friends, let us not forget how truly blessed we are. We have made it thus far and we must remain vigilant as the finish line begins to appear far off in the horizon. Let us take this season of lent to remember how blessed we truly are.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Arik



Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

We are in the Lenten season, a time to reflect on the life of Jesus and his sacrifice for us, a solemn time of introspection. But amid the solemnity there are occasions for joy.

Of course, there is St. Patrick's Day, but did you know there is a St. David's Day? You might if you are Welsh. St. David is the patron saint of Wales and he is celebrated on March 1, the anniversary of his death in the year 589. It is claimed he lived on a diet of leeks and water, so the Welsh celebrate by wearing leeks and daffodils (the national flower). Some cities and towns in Wales hold parades, just like St. Patrick's Day celebrations elsewhere.

But there are also other holidays to enjoy. Consider March 19, National Let's Laugh Day, a good time to use laughter as a stress reliever. A poll showed 96% of Americans enjoy making others laugh so you can use this day as an opportunity to help others relieve the stress of pandemic isolation by making them laugh.

March 20 is International Day of Happiness. Started in 2013 by the nonprofit group Action for Happiness and sponsored by the United Nations, its goal is to promote happiness and sustainable development worldwide. In 2017 they joined, believe it or not, with the Smurfs to promote their goals of ending poverty, reducing inequality and protecting the planet. It has been reported that happy people are less likely to get colds, so there is a health benefit to celebrating happiness.

March 21 is Harmony Day as well as National Common Courtesy Day. Harmony Day was started in Australia as a time to promote understanding other cultures. It has spread to other countries since then. National Common Courtesy Day involves doing the simple things that help others get through their day. Doing something for others has also been shown to benefit your health.

There are other holidays within the Lenten period such as National Something on a Stick Day on March 28 (think corn dogs or popsicles) or, a favorite of many I'm sure, National Oreo Cookie Day on March 6. The Oreo was invented in 1912 and since then has become a national favorite cookie.

So, while Lent is indeed solemn, a time for reflection and preparation for Easter, happiness and laughter (and just maybe an Oreo) provide pathways for us to interact with others while we remember the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. Plus, it is healthy!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

It is official...with the celebration of Mardi Gras in our virtual Sunday School on Valentine's Day, it has been **ONE YEAR** of faith formation with our kids virtually. There have been only four times in the last 365 days that they have met practicing "social distancing." That was for the Easter Egg Hunt, Blessing of the Backpacks, Trunk or Treat, and a movie night in Fellowship Hall. I have learned **SO MUCH** in these 365 days. I now know how to ZOOM, incorporate materials that were not intended for virtual learning, gather all the materials students might need for three or more weeks at a time and do "porch drops," do gingerbread house making virtually, as well as orchestrate things like car parades and outreach activities!

Boy has this year evolved! PLAN ONE was videotaping a 15-20 minute Bible lesson through spring and summer. One thing I know is that just videotaping a lesson and putting it out there and hoping someone watches it does not work. (Lots of people watched it but not always the audience it was intended for!) I needed to see the kids and interact with them as much as they needed to see and interact with me. That led to PLAN TWO which was a "one school house/one size fits all" virtual zoom lesson on Sunday morning. We tried that through 12 weeks of the Beatitudes and Advent. It was wonderful for the younger kids but keeping the older kids involved was challenging. It was also **A LOT** of work on my part! However, I thank them profusely for hanging in with that type of situation! Ever evolving, we are now into PLAN THREE which entails running **TWO** virtual lessons simultaneously! The younger kids through 2nd grade work with me and the older kids are working with a team of Heather Smith/Kathy Pero and Kris/Kurt Dornan. A huge shout out goes to Susan Dornan for getting the second

group online each Sunday. We are using the Sunday School curriculum that we had purchased for last spring and never got to use. It is still a lot of planning and executing but I am seeing a much better fit for all of our kids. A big shout out to families who have to get their kids on two Zoom lessons at the same time and for the parents who are there each Sunday to support their younger ones. I could not do it without their support. It is still more work than ever needed for onsite learning and there are still porch drops on a regular basis but being able to focus on different age groups instead of one big group has made a huge difference!

So, what are our plans through Easter...On **Saturday, March 13** we will have a socially distanced family movie night in Fellowship Hall. It will begin at 7 p.m. Each family needs to bring their own chairs and blankets to sit on and any snack they want to munch on! Masks will be required except when eating and all socially distancing procedures will be in place.

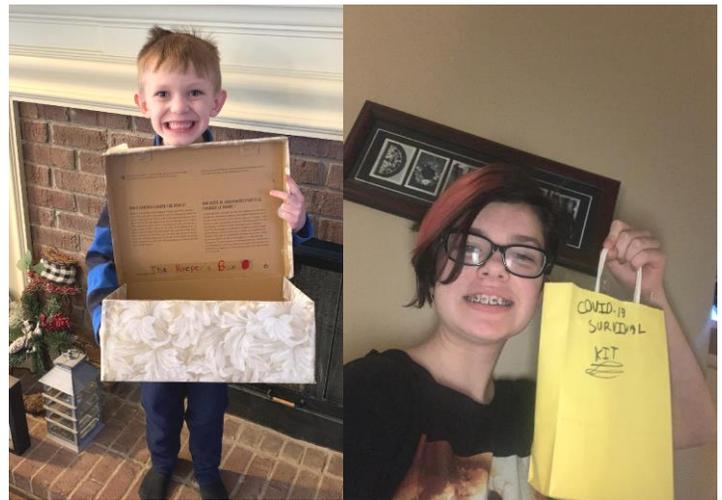
On **Saturday, March 27** at 2:00 p.m. we will have our annual Easter Egg Hunt/Easter stations for our kids through 4th grade. A letter with directions for what supplies to bring, and other information will go out to parents soon. This is open to our church families only due to social distancing protocols. If you do not receive an email and instructions, please reach out to me if your family would like to attend. **I am in need of prewrapped Easter candy to fill the eggs. If anyone in the congregation is willing to purchase a few bags, please drop it off to the church office on Tuesday mornings or contact me for pick up by March 15.**

Just a reminder that we are collecting **school supplies for Lotts Creek** as our Lenten Outreach project. Lotts Creek is a settlement school in the hollers of Kentucky that we have supported for many years. You can drop off any and all school supplies to the church office on Tuesdays from 9 -noon, send me a text or email and I will come pick up your donations, or give a monetary donation and I will purchase the needed supplies. We are in need of all donations by Easter Sunday. Supplies will be delivered to

Lotts Creek sometime after Easter. (Items needed: pencils, crayons, notebooks, loose leaf wide lined paper, glue sticks, glue, and magic markers.)



And finally...a shout out to Beth Dornan! As a school service project, she made Pandemic Relief Supply bags that were delivered to some of our congregation members along with Mardi Gras cupcakes I had made on Valentine's Day. And...**CONGRATULATIONS** to Chase Dornan who is the "Keeper of the Alleluias!"



Outreach Committee News – Excerpts from report on Community Care by Diane Feigi

North Ridgeville Community Care's mission is to care for the less fortunate of North Ridgeville, Ohio to the best of their ability based on resources made available to them. Our church has proudly assisted Community Care in many ways from their beginning. Here is a brief summary on how Community Care assisted others in 2020.

The agency served 700-800 people in 2020. However, 8.5% of North Ridgeville residents live at or below the poverty line and thus Community Care could actually be serving another 2,000 people. Since the pandemic began in early 2020, 60 new family units were being served by NRCC. In late October Community Care worked with the city's water department to pay \$25,000 in water costs as many customers had not been able to pay their water bill since March.

They served 216 children and 86 seniors through the use of wish lists, gift checks, and distributions during Christmas. A "store" was adapted so that parents could "shop" for free gifts for their children. Over 700 people were provided with food as well as an extra two weeks of food while Community Care was closed during the pandemic.

In 2021 the agency projects it will serve 150 families through financial need like utilities at approximately \$300 per client per year. An additional \$24,000 is budgeted for food costs for the clients.

Through your donations to Outreach, our church was able to donate \$3,200 to Community Care in 2020. Thank you for your continued support!!!



Deacons' Desk – Karen Dreger

Service

In the history of our church, the oldest organization that promoted its interests and activities was the Ladies Benevolent Society. This was organized on February 1, 1849 as the Ridgeville Sewing Society. Their constitution began: *"Whereas, we are bound to promote the expansion of science, morality and welfare of humanity, and especially to be liberal to the poor..."* They made shirts and knitted socks. In 1850 the society purchased and circulated books for a library. It helped to meet the expenses of the church and parsonage. They held their first fair, a bazaar, on December 23, 1858 at the Terrell home. The proceeds were used to purchase a melodeon for the church.

A point in time, LBS 1917-1921, from the secretary's book. They had many committees: church work, home missionary, sewing, social, parlor and kitchen, temperance, home poor, nominating and lookout (membership). They had 42 members, with an average attendance of 22. They had no meetings between October 8 and November 20, 1919 due to a flu pandemic. Interesting excerpts:

- ❖ 1893-Voted to purchase curtain for south window of Church. For several years \$5.00 was given several times a year to a family where father had died and left small children.
- ❖ 1899-Had apron sale in Town Hall and took in \$18.16; voted to furnish milk for a family as long as Mother needed it and also each member took an article of food to pack a box for same family.
- ❖ 1917-Parlor and kitchen committee purchased an elbow for the heater stove and cookstove, percolator for coffee, 2 ladles for dipping wicks and oil for the oil stove, 2 bread knives and a teakettle. Also bought and tacked netting on church windows. Mrs. C. T. Winckles, Chairman
- ❖ 1919-Kitchen committee purchased a new oil stove \$23.85 and cook stove range \$52. Reference to influenza epidemic donation(s) to French relief. For several years supported Schaufler Missionary Training School-sent jars of fruit, secondhand clothing.
- ❖ 1921-Motion to send a barrel of secondhand clothing to Colored Normal School in Lexington, Kentucky. Various companies contacted the LBS to sell their products such as magazines, chocolate, rust remover and extracts.

We know these things about our past because many people kept detailed records of committee meetings, financial records, records of marriages, baptisms and membership. It would be good for the church to continue with like records for future generations to understand where we come from and how we served.

Trustees' Turn – Chris Dlugosz

We are through February and into March and what a winter it has been! If you are like me, you are craving the warmth that comes in April and May. This March is also unique as it marks one year since the world was turned upside down. I never imagined it would go this long, but here we are. Reflecting back on the uncertainty of last year helps me to appreciate the progress we are making towards getting back to normalcy. It has been encouraging seeing my in-laws get their vaccinations. I was

happy to be one of the teachers to start mine and hopefully help get our kids back in school full time everywhere. I am looking forward to seeing the progress we make over the next month.

The warmth and sunshine of April will be here soon. It always makes me smile when I hear the first birds returning when I wake up for work those first few weeks of spring. I look forward to that sound this year more than any year I can remember.



Parish Nurse's Notes – Karen Dreger

Hope is on the horizon. However, we cannot lose focus. Until enough people are vaccinated, the risks remain unchanged. The most important factor in preventing spread of COVID-19 is **you**. We must all work together to stop the spread by masking up and limiting close contact with others. The science says masks protect both you and others if properly used. Assume COVID-19 is all around you. Forty percent of infected people will never have symptoms, but they can still spread the virus.

You can get the support you need by staying up to date. Contact the Ohio Department of Health with any questions about COVID-19 by calling them at 1-833-427-5634 or logging on to **coronavirus.ohio.gov**. You can also sign up for email updates on regulations and guidance from Gov. DeWine at www.governor.ohio.gov or listen to the updates on the Ohio Channel. Older adults can get support by calling 1-866-243-5678 for information on local services and support (such as food assistance programs). If you have access to the internet you can also go to **www.aging.ohio.gov/FindServices**.

To help reduce feelings of isolation, receive a

free, daily check-in phone call, and have a friendly chat you can visit **www.aging.ohio.gov** and click on the **“Staying Connected Service”** box. If you would prefer to connect by phone, the number is 1-833-632-2428.

Your mental health is a priority, not a luxury: exercise each day, call a loved one, try to eat balanced meals, and prioritize sleep. If you are struggling with loneliness, sadness or depression, reach out for support from your circle, your medical provider, a church member or call the 24/7 toll-free **Ohio CareLine** at 1-800-720-9616. The Ohio CareLine can provide support from behavioral health professionals. Please stay safe my friends.



- 3/2 Mikey Feigi
- 3/2 Nema Saleem-Green
- 3/4 Vonnie Packard
- 3/7 Jane Woravka
- 3/8 Amy Eaton
- 3/16 Barb Tobin
- 3/21 Allison Borstad
- 3/25 Jamie Schupbach
- 3/25 Dominic Truskot
- 3/27 Jim Yost
- 3/30 Arden Dlugosz
- 3/31 Grayson Pero-Luter

- 3/7 Larry & Karen Mytnick
- 3/11 Joe & Dolores Pesch
- 3/20 Eric & Carol Diekman





From March 1 through 8 pm on March 14 go to the First Congregational UCC Facebook Silent Auction Event to add your bid in the comment section of the item you are interested in and check back often to see if you need to up your bid! Items up for bid can also be viewed on our website www.fccalive.org.

[Facebook.com/firstconguccnr](https://www.facebook.com/firstconguccnr)

NOTE: If you DO NOT have a Facebook account but would still like to bid on an item of interest, call Diana at 440-328-5297 to discuss bid by proxy. (You would give her a call with the interested item and the details of the bid you wish to make. She would then make the bid(s) on your behalf.)

Silent Auction Rules

- 1) All bidders must be 21 & over.
- 2) CASH or CHECK ONLY. Payable at pickup.
- 3) Winners must pick up their items in person on designated dates.
- 4) Bidding will close promptly at 8 pm EST on March 14.
- 5) Administrator's decision will be final.
- 6) Winners will be notified via Facebook message or phone call.

BID NOW & BID OFTEN

Crazy Hat Bingo Night!

March 19 6-7 PM

Join our church family for a fun BINGO night adventure! We will mail you five bingo cards for each member of your family. On March 19 at 6 pm, join the live church ZOOM meeting! The Pero/Miller family will be the bingo callers for the games! (there are five different bingo games-- not just numbers!) If you don't have a computer, you can also join with the Zoom phone connection. We will give you complete instruction on how to join us for the fun night!

BYOS&H (Bring your own Snacks and Hats) You will also need your own bingo chips or a marker/pen will work as well. This is a free event for all family and friends of the North Ridgeville UCC! Bingo cards will be mailed out by March 12.

Please contact the church office if you would like bingo cards sent to you 440-327-2921 or secretary@fccalive.org.

(Cards will only be mailed to those who request them.)