

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

June 2021

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Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

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Paul Wolanski

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Linda Matis

From the Pastor's Pen

With June upon us we have entered a time when the Ohio mask mandate and social distancing guidelines have been officially lifted. For all those who have given us their patience and trust during this process, you have my utmost thanks. While we are still not out of the proverbial woods yet, I am pleased to say that the congregation has done a terrific job in navigating these incredibly difficult times and now we have come out on the other side.

With the mask mandate and social distancing requirements no longer in effect, we will no longer be needing people to reserve their spot for weekly worship; but we do ask that **if you have not been vaccinated, for your own sake and for the sake of our children, please wear a mask** during worship. We also strongly encourage everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated as soon as possible. We won't be checking vaccination cards or anything of the sort, so we will be going on an honor system.

As we begin to transition back into a time of relative normalcy, please do not forget the lessons we have learned over the past year. Let us not take for granted those small moments of connection we make with the people around us. Let us cherish every handshake and hug, mindful of the times when physical contact was beyond our reach. As we move forward into the summer, let us give thanks that the world is coming back to life once more.

Please see detailed worship service procedure update later in this newsletter.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Arik

Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

Proverbs 18:21 *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."*
A current definition of "woke" from the Oxford dictionary is to be "alert to injustice in society, especially racism". Likewise, being "politically correct", or "PC", is defined as being sensitive to multicultural issues and not wanting to be inconsiderate of others, much in the way you would want others to respect you. Why have these words somehow become weaponized and divisive? The way these terms are used in some cases seems to indicate that being aware of social injustice or being considerate of others are



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somehow bad things. Does this mean that ignoring the problems of others and being rude are qualities to be applauded? Similarly, saying what is on your mind has somehow become a virtue. Speaking without any thought as to how it is going to affect others is something you can find during any elementary school recess. Why this is seen as being something adults should emulate has me puzzled. I just don't get it. I would think that if we are following what our faith teaches us, we would be concerned about others, and our words and actions would reflect that concern. I imagine that being "woke" and "PC" is harder than having to consider the effects our words and actions might have on those around us, but I believe it is an effort worth making. It is not that we should not speak our minds, only that we consider how we do it.

It can be hard work following Jesus, and we shouldn't think that we are going to somehow magically change the world. But we can make life better for those around us by being more aware. *"When words are both true and kind, they can change our world."* – Buddha

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

As we enter what is traditionally the start of summer, I think I hear a collective sigh from families and friends as this school year finally comes to a close. It has been a very long year with many twists and turns, but somehow, we managed to move forward. It is now June and things are changing again, hopefully in a positive way! Some of us have returned to worshipping in the sanctuary while others continue to worship online. Our children are back in Sunday School and plans are already in the works for fall. But it is the noise, the laughter, the singing, and the people stopping at my office door on Sunday mornings with heartfelt greetings that makes me sigh with JOY the most. It will take time before we are all comfortable returning but hopefully that day will come sooner rather than later! I cannot wait until we are all making a JOYFUL noise together again!

In the interlude, we will continue to plan for summer and fall. First up is a trip for two of our youth, Kris Dornan and me to Lotts Creek to help get their school ready for the return of students in the fall. Thank you to all who bought popcorn and/or gave donations for this trip. We will continue to take monetary donations to support the costs of us going through the end of June. Please send it to the church office or put it in the offering plate and mark it "Lotts Creek trip".

We are also starting to plan for a large confirmation class this fall! Information about confirmation will be sent to all of our young adults in seventh grade through high school near the end of July.

Finally, CONGRATULATIONS to Emily Williams on receiving her Bachelor's Degree and Stephanie Matis who received her Master's Degree, both from Cleveland State! And at the other end, CONGRATULATIONS to Ella, Chase, Matt and Cate who graduated from kindergarten! Don't blink because they will be high school seniors before we know it! Happy Summer!



Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

June is here and we are well on our way to normal church business as we knew it before the pandemic arrived in 2020. Thank you to our staff for holding things together, especially Pastor Arik, and our Christian Ed director Mary Karlovec who continued with programming in spite of the confusing atmosphere of the times. We all have had a part in this victory and with God's guidance and mercy, we will persevere!!

The Strengthen the Church collection happened in May and if you missed it, you can still contribute in the next couple of weeks. We thank you for your consideration of this one of five special UCC collections to help sustain and build new congregations across the country.

It was our pleasure to extend \$250 towards the Lotts Creek mission trip which some of our youth are attending while taking school-related materials to our affiliate in Hazzard, KY in June. May God bless this trip in safety, with eye-opening experiences, and happy, fulfilled

memories of having done something good for those needing some assistance in their quest for education. Thank you, congregation, because your contributions help Outreach reach beyond our community to places we have yet to visit and get to know better.

The Outreach committee really enjoyed working with the Deacons for our Muffins for Moms gift handout. Together we were able to celebrate moms in our congregation in a special way. We are going to do a similar celebration for our dads on Father's Day.

The Vitalant (formerly LifeShare) blood drive is coming in mid September. Be sure to allow eight weeks between giving life-saving blood. We will need your offering on Sunday, September 12 so don't donate blood after July 4 to be eligible for our blood drive. A donation bus will be at the church to comfortably and gratefully receive your gift of whole blood. They tell me it has been a real effort to fill the need in the community.

Thank you to our committee, especially to Barb and Brian Zinsmeister, whose bakery-owner friend volunteered to make and donate the muffins for Mother's Day. Barb and Brian packed and wrapped the treats. Kris Dornan read our special Mother's Day poem at the end of the worship service. Thank you to all in my absence.

Happy Father's Day to our church family of dads!

Dr. Dornan's Corner – Kurt Dornan

Are COVID vaccinations safe? As a physician, this is likely the number 1 question I am getting in the office right now. I thought I would take a little time to give the most up-to-date information on vaccine safety.

According to April 30, 2021 CDC information, over 245 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been given since December 14. The results thus far have been reassuring, with the common side effects like swelling, redness and pain at injection site, fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain, nausea, and chills. **Serious safety problems are RARE!** To date, only two serious types of

health problems have been seen with this vaccination:

1) Anaphylaxis: A severe allergic reaction. This is why you are asked to stay for 15-30 minutes after your shot, as there are medicines available to treat this if it would occur.

2) Thrombosis (blood clot) after the Johnson and Johnson vaccination. This is **extremely rare**, occurring at a rate of only 7 per 1 MILLION vaccinated women between ages 18-49. For those women 50 years and older and men of all ages, this adverse event is even more rare.

My take home message is this – GET VACCINATED!!



COVID-19 vaccine clinics

Walk-in, or make an appointment for a shorter wait time and guaranteed vaccine. All COVID-19 vaccines are offered at no cost. People with limited internet access can make

appointments by phone, in English and Spanish. Dial 211 to be connected to an appointment scheduling partner. We encourage the use of vsafe.cdc.gov to monitor any side effects.

Pfizer (ages 12+)

June 8, 2 - 6 p.m. at Lorain County Public Health, 9880 S Murray Ridge Rd, Elyria

Follow directions to register: <https://armorvax-app.azurewebsites.net/Home/Invitation?code=SSG-WPR> or download the app for iPhone or Android and use the clinic code: SSG-WPR

June 15, 2 - 6 p.m. at Lorain County Public Health, 9880 S Murray Ridge Rd, Elyria

Follow directions to register: <https://armorvax-app.azurewebsites.net/Home/Invitation?code=IT9-V36> or download the app for iPhone or Android and use the clinic code: IT9-V36

Moderna (ages 18+)

June 5, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Elyria High School, 601 Middle Ave, Elyria

Go to: <https://armorvax-app.azurewebsites.net/Home/Invitation?code=QGG-R75> App Code: QGG-R75

June 5, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Lorain High School, 2600 Ashland Ave, Lorain

Go to: <https://armorvax-app.azurewebsites.net/Home/Invitation?code=LF3-35E> App Code: LF3-35E

June 19, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Lorain County Public Health, 9880 S Murray Ridge Rd, Elyria
Follow directions to register: <https://armorvax-app.azurewebsites.net/Home/Invitation?code=NDP-6R5> or download the app for iPhone or Android and use the clinic code: NDP-6R5

Trustees' Turn – Chris Dlugosz

Welcome to summer! As I sit and type this, it is a beautiful 75 degree day and I am ready to be outside! Summer is finally here, and it feels amazing!

We would like to thank Jack Fitts for his service as our board chairman. His leadership, knowledge, and sense of humor are a welcome addition to any committee. We would also like to welcome Paul Wolanski as the new Trustee's chairman. We are ready to support you anyway we can.

The trustees are off and running. Paul, Jon, and I spent a morning cleaning out the undercroft to get ready for some much needed renovations. We are still looking for a good company to work on our front doors, but we will get there. Jack will be working on installing the elevator entrance ramp. Paul is looking into evaluations for the big maple tree to determine its fate. Bruce will be painting our back doors shortly.

It has been a while, but First Congregational UCC is out of hibernation and ready to get moving...and it feels great!!

Music Notes – Barb Habecker

I have been working with several wonderful, dedicated, and talented people in the music program this past year. We met in person during the first part of 2020, went to recording hymns and special music with just Pastor Arik and me, then joined by others wanting to do duets, until eight choir members joined us to record hymns and special music for the rest of the year. When we started having in-person services they joined me in having regularly scheduled choir practices. As



of three Sundays ago we had 12 members singing. We were joined one Sunday by the bell choir playing, and two of those members joined us in the choir. We have had seven members of the bell choir come back. I have watched with great pleasure as members felt comfortable to join in our music ministry. I cannot thank these people enough for their dedication and support. Their love, talent, and joy of sharing their God given talents to enhance our worship services has made my heart swell with pride. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. I look forward to having many of these people join me in the choir loft over the summer to continue bringing special music to our services. I have thanked everyone repeatedly, and if I have to do it again, I will probably cry. And that's not always pretty. God bless you all.

Parish Nurse's Notes – Karen Dreger

As I look out our window into the backyard, I see our trees, their bright green leaves blowing in the wind, branches swaying. We are blessed with acres of trees, and woods that our grandchildren love to explore. The trees provide welcome shade on hot summer days. Our house will easily be 5-10 degrees cooler than places without tree shade. Our trees support a variety of creatures. There are birds like woodpeckers (4 kinds), nuthatches, orioles, turkeys and hummingbirds; also, raccoons, deer, opossum, and squirrels. The trees are a welcome respite from the stress of daily life.

Trees symbolize wisdom, stability, shelter, growth, and renewal. There are trees alive today that were alive in the time of Moses. Other than people, trees are mentioned more than any other creation in the Bible. There is a tree on the first page of Genesis and on the last page of Revelation. The large maple tree on the east lawn of the church near the roadway has been there as long as I can remember. It can be seen in old church photos. The tree was so beautiful in the fall! It hasn't looked well the past few years. It makes me sad to see it failing.

Trees have a positive effect on our health. Studies have shown that spending short

amounts of time in forests seems to benefit our immune systems. Trees seem to help our heart health by lowering blood pressure, cortisol levels, and sympathetic nervous system activity (which is related to stress). Studies suggest the practice of "forest bathing" (deliberately spending time among the woods) can help us deal with the stress and strains of urban living. Enjoy summer among the trees.

"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees"
Revelation 7:3

6/3 Madeleine Packard
6/4 Leo Borstad
6/5 Lynne Petroff
6/5 Stephanie Matis
6/9 Millie Gilly
6/15 Liz Wolanski
6/16 Barb Zinsmeister
6/17 Ben Dornan
6/19 Carol Scharmann
6/21 Beth Malinich
6/24 Ed Connolly
6/29 Charlotte Dornan



6/2 Dale & Becky Williams
6/20 Tim & Beth Malinich
6/21 John & Lynne Petroff
6/23 Greg & Paula Dudek
6/26 Evan & Kate Harrold
6/27 Roy & Karen Dreger



Women's Book Club: Here is the listing for the upcoming books and dates all meeting at the church at 7:00pm.

June 21: And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie

July 19: Making Faces by Amy Harmon

Aug. 16: The Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate

Sept. 20: The Giver of Stars by Jojo Moyes



Upcoming changes for worship beginning in June

- ❖ Non-vaccinated people (including children) are asked to continue to wear masks during worship, while fully vaccinated people have the option to be mask-less.
- ❖ The west side of the sanctuary (the right side as you face the altar) will continue to be taped off for socially distanced seating, for those who will still be masked and practice social distancing.
- ❖ The east side of the sanctuary (the left side as you face the altar) will not be taped off and will be for those who do not need/want to wear masks.
- ❖ RSVPs will no longer be required for worship, however if your family is planning on having kids attend Sunday School, it would be great to let Mary know by Friday afternoon.
- ❖ Prayer cards will be returning to worship and will be found on the table as you come in. If you'd like a prayer included for our prayer time, write the prayer down and the deacons will collect them during our second hymn.
- ❖ You may bring your own pillow or cushion for the pews if you find the hard wood to be too uncomfortable.
- ❖ During young person's time, the children will be invited to come forward to the front of the sanctuary. They must wear masks if they come forward.
- ❖ Pastor Arik will be moving down away from the pulpit to preach, so if you would like to remain socially distanced, consider sitting toward the middle or back of the sanctuary.

**If it is not listed in the changes above, assume that the practice will continue to be the same as it has been during the pandemic (i.e., communion, offering, no passing of microphone, no passing of the peace or fellowship hour, etc.)*