

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

December 2021

Interim Minister

Rev. Tony Clark

Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

Barb Habecker

Moderator

Roy Dreger

Vice-Moderator

Nancy Franks

Co-Chairs, Christian Education

Kelsey Styr

Renee Dornan

Chair, Deacons

Kathy Pero

Chair, Outreach

Nancy Franks

Chair, Trustees

Paul Wolanski

Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

From the Pastor's Pen

Happy Advent! This is the season of waiting, preparation and opening our hearts to receive the Christ into our midst. It is the time to turn from one year toward the next, from what was to what will be. We wait in hope for the time when God's reign will come on earth, when justice will truly be for all, and our world will run on unity rather than division. It is not just a child for whom we wait; it is the return of the Messiah, the Christ, the light of the world, who is to usher in God's reign with our help.

As we look toward the future with anticipation and hope, I wonder what First Congregational Church's future will look like. As we wait for the return of Christ, I wonder how FCC will work to usher in God's reign of justice and peace. In what ways must we live so that when Christ returns, we will be recognized as ones who belong to him?

One of the things we will continue is being loving, welcoming people who gather in this church to worship together through prayer and music, service, and silence. In order to do that, to have a church to come to and have staff to assist your spiritual growth, it takes dedication, passion, and perseverance. It takes hope that this church will continue and desire to bring that about. To see the light of Christ coming, even through the tumult of the material world we live in, that is faith.

Faith has brought FCC this far, to 200 years of active ministry in this place. As we look to a new year, we are looking toward a year of celebration. And we are looking at a budget that is balanced only through a \$20,000 grant from the Living Water Association, of which FCC is part. This grant is intended to boost my salary so that I can work $\frac{3}{4}$ time. It is an affirmation of your location and ministry, and it will give us a chance to live into our faith that FCC will survive long



after each of us has gone on. The grant is only possible to receive for one or two years; and in that time we will be working to balance the budget through members' gifts and other revenue sources.

On November 21, Thanksgiving Sunday, I challenged the people present to \$200 for the 200th. If 50 people could give an extra \$200 over the year, we would raise \$10,000, and that would go a very long way toward showing the Association that you have faith in FCC. The kids will also be challenged to each bring in 200 coins, and Mary will be getting information out about this to parents and kids soon. If you would like to be part of the \$200 for the 200th, you can call the church office for more information.

As we look 200 years in the eye, I wonder if those early settlers had faith that this church would long outlast them. As we look Christmas and the New Year in the eye, I wonder if you, the current congregation, has faith that this church will long outlast you. If so, now is the time to live into that faith so that what we offer today will be available to support the ministry of the future.

Blessings on your Advent preparations, and may the light of Christ guide you home to the faith and to FCC.

Peace,
Pastor Tony

Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

Santa Claus doesn't look old to me anymore. That not only dates me, it says something about how, and to an extent why, I feel the way I do about Christmas. As a child I remember laying in front of the black and white TV watching Mr. Jing-a-ling (on Halle's seventh floor) and other Christmas

shows. (In spite of my mother's warning that I would ruin my eyes, I lay close to the TV partly because the screen was so small.) Oh yes, and October was for Halloween, November was the month for Thanksgiving, and December was reserved for Christmas.

Christmas had a special feel to it, a kind of childish understanding of the nature and wonder of the holiday, in many ways a better realization of the reason for the holiday. For one thing, I wasn't that old so there was a connection that one loses with age. Another reason was that as a child my Christmas giving was tied to what I made at school or Sunday School. I wasn't as concerned with the buying of Christmas. And besides, my 25 cents a week allowance, of which 10 cents was expected to go to the church offering, didn't go that far, even in the 1950's. What remained was just the sweet anticipation of the season.

I know that what was, will remain in the past. The present is different and the future probably more so. The hurry of the season to buy the "right" present can become a burden that interferes with our enjoyment of the season. And yet, I know that the gifting that occupies so much of our time is, at least in part, one of the ways we find to try and tell people how much we love them. Sometimes words just aren't enough.

While gift giving is often thought of as something coming from a store, there is the gifting of time. Time gifted to the decorating of the church. Time gifted to the music and activities that complement the services and life of our family of faith. Time gifted to listening to the sometimes frantic chatter of children. Time gifted to ourselves in the quiet of a church service. Since the giving of gifts is such an important part of

the way we show our love, we should remember the love we have for our church. It would seem reasonable to give a gift to the place that provides us with the knowledge of the reason we celebrate.

May the Lord bless you and those you hold in your heart as we celebrate His gift to us. Merry Christmas!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

As I am writing this the confirmands have just returned from visiting Holy Name Catholic Church in Cleveland. What a beautiful old building and a wonderful experience for our youth! Our youth were warmly welcomed by their church family. It was a special Sunday mass as two young ladies made their First Communion which added to the experience. Driving back to North Ridgeville in the snow also added to the experience! In January, we plan on visiting the Maltz Museum in Beachwood to learn about the story of how Cleveland became an important mecca for Jewish immigrants. A visit to a Jewish Temple, a Mosque in Parma, and other possible visits are also on the agenda for our confirmands to learn about the other religions of the world.

Advent is upon us and I am excited that we are back in the church to celebrate this important season. Our focus in Sunday School will be the Jesse Tree. Each family will have the symbol/bible verse to add each day to their tree. We will follow the lectionary to learn about the four Sundays of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, too. Since Christmas is on a Saturday, **there will be NO Sunday School on December 26** as we know that many families will continue to enjoy the holidays with family and friends.

On Sunday, December 12 we will return to our annual gingerbread house building extravaganza after church. Families are asked to bring a bagged lunch to eat after the worship service and we will begin decorating our houses at about noon. **Families must sign up by December 5** so that enough supplies are on hand. The cost is \$5.00 per house and must be paid with the registration. Registration forms can be found in the *Messenger* and were distributed to families in November. Due to Covid restrictions, this event is open only to our church families/Sunday School participants this year. If you have any questions, please see me!



As we come to the end of 2021, I am so grateful to everyone in the congregation who has supported the children, youth, and families of our church this year. You truly are the meaning of the word “family.” To the parents of the children and youth of our church, thank you for supporting me with having your kids online for Sunday School for much of the last 18 months. And finally to the Christian Education Board for supporting me in so many ways, from helping to make projects as well as making “special” deliveries especially the gingerbread nativity scenes last year.

Merry Christmas and blessings in 2022!

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Welcome, Pastor Tony, just in time for Advent and other Christmas festivities. The meet and greet reception was well attended by well-wishing church members, many of our “first time back since Covid” members who came for the joyous occasion. Thank you to the church family members who

brought wonderful munchies to enjoy and the church family members who helped serve and tidy the kitchen afterwards. Everything worked out fabulously with all of your assistance.

The Giving Tree had all of the ornaments taken by generous Christmas elves and the gifts were returned and taken to Community Care to be distributed to the families. Thank you for making this the best Christmas ever for your waiting child. As you give, you also receive by feeling glad that you participated.

Santa's Helpers (our own Outreach elves) help make a family of nine feel loved all year long with birthday and holiday gift giving. With your help we filled a Christmas sack with presents and goodies for them all. We want to bring love and joy into their home along with the hope for our Savior's birth for all mankind.

Empty shelves at Community Care need constant refilling. With over 100 families to help feed, the shelves don't stay full for long. Please be as generous with food donations as you are able all year long. You will find boxes marked "Community Care" in the Sunday school wing, in the narthex, and downstairs in fellowship hall.

The Christmas Fund collection at Christmas is to supplement retired clergy and other staff members in need. Not all retirement funds cover retirees' incomes. They spent their lives working for the church and its needs. Let us make sure they are covered in their time of need. God bless your giving for this special request.

Wishing you and yours a blessed Christmas and New Year from the Outreach Team!



Deacons' Desk – Kurt Dornan

Dr. Dornan's Corner: As we near the Holiday Season, we look forward to a time where we can spend time with family and friends. It has been a very rough 20 months, and I know that there are many of us that are quite tired of dealing with the pandemic. However, this is not the time for us to let our guard down. The best information we have right now on COVID-19 is that our immunity begins to wane between six and eight months after our final vaccination (second of Pfizer/Moderna, or first of J & J). I would urge all in our church family to get a COVID booster if it has been six months since your last shot. It is quite easy to get; most pharmacies are offering this for free. It is also safe to get this and your influenza vaccination at the same time! My recommendation is that your booster should match the vaccine you initially received, but it is SAFE and REASONABLE to get whatever booster is easiest to schedule. This means, you could get a Pfizer booster if you received a Moderna or J & J vaccination, or a Moderna booster if you received Pfizer or J & J vaccination.

I am always available to answer any questions you have about COVID-19 and vaccination. Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving!!

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

Hello, my friends in faith! We had a very informative meeting with Andy Culbertson from Giesel Heating and Cooling concerning the aging HVAC system we currently have for the sanctuary. The estimate to upgrade and replace these units approaches \$20,000.00 and we will keep

you updated after our December 7th meeting as to our plan of action.

We have concluded our stewardship campaign. The Trustees spoke on two occasions to the Congregation. We highlighted both the affection that we have for the church and its members, and the need to keep the church financially secure during these unprecedented times. Thank you all for your pledges and support.

Finally, we would like to welcome our interim Pastor Tony. I have faith he will help guide us through the next phase of our long and storied 200 year history.



12/4	Roy Dreger	12/28	Chris & Kari Dlugosz
12/6	Larry Mytnick		
12/8	Jack Fitts		
12/12	Kinzer Habecker		
12/15	Carol Schubert		
12/20	Betty Fitts		
12/22	Jerry Henson		
12/24	Diane Feigi		



Women's Book Club

Upcoming books: All meetings at church at 7:00 pm

December 20: Still Life by Louise Penny

January 17: Origin by Dan Brown

February 21: Space Between Us by Thrity Umrigar

Help Needed

- Serve your church by **becoming a member of one of the church boards**. Ask any board or council member for more information!
- Interested in **servicing on the settled pastor search committee**? Contact a member of the church council.
- **Are you technologically savvy?** Would you like to help with livestreaming/recording worship services and posting them online? If so, please contact the church office.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	2 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	3 Craft show set up 6-8 pm	4 Craft show 9 am-4 pm AA Couples 6 pm
5 2 nd Sunday of Advent Outreach 9:30 am Worship service 10:30 Communion AA Men 7:30 pm	6 AA Women 7 pm	7 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	8 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	9 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	10 AA Couples 6 pm	11 AA Couples 6 pm
12 3 rd Sunday of Advent Worship service 10:30 Gingerbread house making noon Set up for music fest Music Festival 7 pm w/reception after	13 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	14 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	15 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	17 AA Couples 6 pm	18 AA Couples 6 pm
19 4 th Sunday of Advent Worship service 10:30 AA Men 7:30 pm	20 Book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	21 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	22 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	23 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	24 Christmas Eve Service 7 pm OFFICE CLOSED	25 Christmas AA Couples 6 pm
26 Worship service 10:30 AA Men 7:30 pm	27 OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 7 pm	28 OFFICE CLOSED AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	29 OFFICE CLOSED Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	30 OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	31 New Year's Eve OFFICE CLOSED	



Come Join Us!
Sunday, December 12

We will be building graham cracker gingerbread houses. Bring a bagged lunch to eat after the worship service. At noon we will begin to assemble our houses. The cost to build each house is \$5.00.

RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST
and you must register by December 5.

Gingerbread House Building Registration

Name: _____

Number of houses: _____ x \$5.00 each = _____
(amount enclosed)

Please make checks payable to First Congregational UCC

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Christmas Music Festival

Sunday, December 12 at 7:00 p.m.

CONCERT INCLUDES:
Community Christmas carol singing
First Congregational Church choir
First Congregational Church bell choir
FCC children's chime choir
Soloist Ivra Jackson
and more!

Reception with light refreshments to follow
Free will offering accepted

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