

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

January 2022

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 Styrt
Renee Dornan

Chair, Deacons
Kathy Pero

Chair, Outreach
Nancy Franks

Chair, Trustees
Paul Wolanski

Treasurer, Secretary
Linda Matis

From the Pastor's Pen

We are entering a new year, 2022, when First Congregational Church will celebrate its 200th anniversary. I am excited to see how this next year plays out and how we honor tradition while preparing for what is next for FCC. Two hundred years is testament to the strength and surety of this congregation. Two hundred years is approximately 10 generations of Congregationalists in North Ridgeville. Many of you can trace several generations back as members of this church, and I wonder what your ancestors would want us to know today. I'm looking forward to learning about them as we celebrate their vision of faith in this place.

I'm also interested in finding out your vision of faith beyond our 200th anniversary celebration. What sense of mission, service, worship, and education will guide you into the next period of time? What do we glean out of the last 200 years to take forward into the next 200? What kind of leadership will be necessary to bring your visions and dreams into fruition? What kind of relationship will you seek with your next pastor in order to thrive in our wild, weird world?

As the celebrations take off, as we collect \$200 for the 200th to go toward paying a pastor's salary without the aid of the Living Water Association, we will need to be in discernment about ministry of FCC and how professional clergy are part of that work. As we move toward developing a Search Committee and a Church Profile, I encourage you to begin thinking about what you expect from a pastor. What kind of authority do you expect from a pastor? How will the pastor assist in holding the vision of ministry at FCC? How do you want the pastor to call you back to the vision when you stray from it?

UCC pastor and church leadership author, Anthony Robinson, writes that pastoral leadership is "mobilizing a congregation ... to engage its own most pressing problems and deepest challenges". He notes that "The future belongs to congregations that call and

ANNUAL MEETING
to hear the annual reports of the boards & approve the final budget for 2022
SUNDAY, JANUARY 23
in the sanctuary immediately following the worship service

empower pastors who are leaders, and then also call and prepare governing boards that provide effective policy direction and leadership.” Robinson understands that churches that continue to thrive will need a mutuality between a visionary pastor and an empowered Church Council in order to forge a way through these next years. This is a very odd relationship—hiring someone to tell you the truth in love, to remind you of your vision, and to hold you to it. It’s not really natural to hire someone whose primary job is to not only comfort you when you are afflicted but also to afflict you when you are too comfortable. This last—afflicting the comfortable—requires humility on both sides, both to give feedback in love and receive it in the spirit it was meant.

May 2022 bless each of us with hope and faith in God’s promised future.

Pastor Tony

Anthony B. Robinson, *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 84, 96.

ATTN: Board Chairpersons! Annual reports for 2021 must be in the church office by January 10.

Moderator’s Moment – Roy Dreger

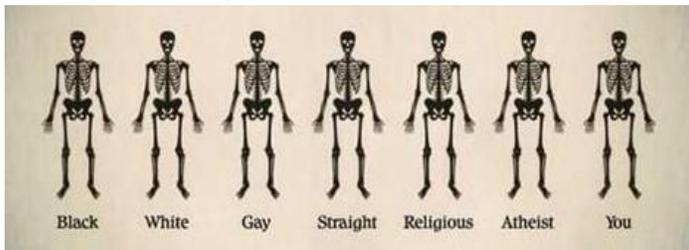
I sometimes get writer’s block, and perhaps especially at this time of year. It is in the middle of December and Christmas celebrations are going on, which makes it difficult for me to write an article about January. At times like these I often look to the calendar and check the holidays for the month. The most notable in January, after New Year’s Day, is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday. Today there is a heightened sense of racial tension. Sociologists have defined race as a human invention that we use to name those that do not resemble

us. There is no biological basis for racial classification, it is purely a human construct. Since it is a human idea, maybe it would be better if we used the term human when talking about others. We could say “there is a human with darker skin than me”, or “there is a human that is light skinned”. However, being totally blind to what makes others individual does a great disservice to them and may be contrary to how they see themselves. Identifiers that are particular to someone can be important for many reasons, including to that person’s own sense of identity.

In police work trying to locate someone for whatever reason requires specific, detailed descriptions. The way someone or something looks is as important for identifying them as it is for eliminating them. For example, following an armed robbery of a nearby bank, the first radio description was of a particular make car, specific color pattern and year, with two male occupants headed west. A vehicle perfectly matching that description with two occupants pulled from the westbound interstate several cars ahead of me. It was far enough ahead that I was unable to tell anything about the occupants, but there was enough of a match to warrant checking it out. I radioed that I was pulling over a matching vehicle and was unsure about the occupants. By the time I caught up and stopped the car several other police cars had responded. As I walked up to the car, I could tell this was not the wanted vehicle. I think it took about ten minutes or so to calm the elderly couple inside and tell them, in detail, why there had been so many police cars around them...and officers...with guns drawn. The couple were very gracious and

understanding. Like I said, identifiers can be important.

January 17, 2022 is the day we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his work in helping us toward the understanding that we are all just humans, even though we might look different one from another. So, from one human to another, Happy New Year!



Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Happy 200th birthday year to our church! As we begin to prepare for the celebrations later this year, we will take time each month to share with our children in Sunday School the wonderful history of our church. As we learn about our history, a timeline will be constructed along the walls of the Sunday School wing to share these historic events.

As we begin the new year, our children 3rd grade and above will be doing something different in Sunday School: a book study with the book **Wonder** by RJ Palacio. **Wonder** is a “brutally powerful story of a 10-year-old boy named August



Pullman, who has a facial anomaly. He is an ordinary kid who plays Xbox, is obsessed with Star Wars, but despite the 27 operations done for his face, he will never look normal. It is

the story of the beauty all around us if we just take the time to look beyond what we see.” There is also a book for the younger children called **We’re All Wonders** that we will be using with the younger children as

we continue with learning about kindness and bucket fillers. I encourage you to get a copy from the library and read along with the kids. We are trying to formulate a time when the adults can gather to discuss the book, too. When we have completed our book study, there will be a movie night to watch the movie which was made in 2017.

The confirmands are going to be very busy this month. On Sunday, January 16 they will be traveling to the Maltz Museum in Beachwood to learn about the Jewish influence in the Cleveland area. This is an amazing museum and always a highlight of confirmation. We will be leaving the church around 11 am and not returning until after 5 pm. On Friday, January 28 we will be traveling to the Park Synagogue on the east side as we worship with their congregation. More info is coming to parents in an email.

Finally, in conjunction with our 200th anniversary, the children/youth in Sunday School will be collecting “200 coins for 200 years.” On Sunday, January 9 a mason jar will be coming home with each child/youth to collect 200 coins to support our church’s future. Instructions will be with the jar that comes home. Students will be returning the jars to church on Sunday, March 6.

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Greetings to you, church family, as we head into the new year. Together we have reached out to so many lives to make a positive impact in spite of the dark clouds of uncertainty on the horizon. God is with us! Have faith!

Neighbors in Need donations keep trickling in and that’s a good thing. The total collected will be revealed soon as well as the total given to The Christmas Fund. The Living Water Association thanks you for

your generosity on behalf of the retired clergy and associates' fund.

We are looking forward to the new year with much anticipation. Our committee plans on having a rummage sale on May 21. Please save your gently used items for this money-making all church event. Hold on to them for now...we will let you know when we are accepting donations closer to the event. We are also planning to invite the One World Shop to our church for some pre-Mother's Day gift buying in April. They always bring unique items our way so don't miss it. Mark your calendar for June 19 as Outreach will be sponsoring a Father's Day pancake brunch after the worship service. Let's make this a big free will offering money maker!

Our sunshine program is going well. We've heard back from some of you and it's so rewarding for all of us. Let's keep the ties that bind us together on the upswing. Good news is great for keeping us all smiling!!

Remember to keep Community Care in your prayers and on your shopping list for food items to share, such as: spaghetti sauce and pasta, peanut butter, jams and jellies, canned veggies, fruits, and tuna, boxed bacon, potatoes, rice, and macaroni and cheese, luncheon snacks, J-ello and puddings, and personal items used daily. Bring items to church and place in the collection boxes up and down stairs. We'll see that they get to Community Care pronto! Thank you in advance.

We would enjoy adding your name to our list of busy elves, aka Outreach members, who meet monthly before church services on the first Sunday at 9:30 a.m. We meet, plan, and complete our projects while enjoying each other's comments and ideas.

Won't YOU join us? Just contact one of the Outreach committee members or drop a note in our mail slot by the back doors in fellowship hall.

Food for thought: Let's put our best foot forward for the Lord and make something happen for the good of all. We can do it with God's help.

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SOS: Does anyone have any information on the whereabouts of Carol and Sonny Schubert? We have attempted to contact them via USPS and telephone and have had no success. Please contact the office with any information. Thank you!  
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Deacons' Desk – Kathy Pero

Happy New Year from our Deacon team! As we look back at 2021, let's remember all of the smiles. What made you smile in 2021? Was it a sunny day in June? Visiting with friends over lunch or dinner? Playing games with grandchildren or neighbors? Perhaps you smiled at church when the choir sang or the children did something cute on the steps? I encourage you to reflect on 2021 and find the times when you were happy inside.

Our deacon team is here for you. Please let us know if you need anything! If you are interested in joining our team, we would love to have you! Our meetings are after the service on the last Sunday of each month. We wish everyone a safe and healthy 2022!

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

Hello again my family in faith! Thank you for your generous pledges for 2022! I hope you had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

COVID-19 IS STILL HERE. YOUR ACTIONS STILL MATTER.



Wear a mask



Wash your hands



Practice social distancing

Viruses constantly change through mutation and sometimes these mutations result in a new variant of the virus. Some variants emerge and disappear while others persist. New variants will continue to emerge.

The CDC and other public health organizations recommend wearing masks indoors to protect yourself and others, even if you are fully vaccinated.



BIRTHDAYS
THIS MONTH

- 1/3 Charis Meehan
- 1/4 Evan Harrold
- 1/5 Nancy Findlay
- 1/7 Dale Williams
- 1/8 Karen Dreger
- 1/12 Karen Veliconia
- 1/13 Joe Pesch
- 1/18 Pete Veliconia
- 1/19 Marge Baker
- 1/25 Beth Dornan



ONLINE AUCTION

VIRTUAL AUCTION FUNDRAISER

Plans are in the works for a **2nd annual virtual auction** to take place **February 13-19**. Items are needed for the auction. Just like last year, we would like to have items that show your talents, themed baskets, like new or new items, gift cards, or items to create baskets. We need to know what you plan on providing as auction items **by January 5**. Please call Diana Goode (440-328-5297) or the church office with your donation. We would like to have a picture of the items **by January 14** to prepare the site and also to include in the auction catalog for the February newsletter.

As with last year's auction, the auction will be hosted on the church's Facebook page two weeks prior to bidding opening to preview the auction items and to **SHARE! SHARE! SHARE!** with family and friends on Facebook! Your help is needed to make this a successful fundraiser!

Bidding will be open the week of February 13-19. Your bid will be made in the comments section under the item you would like. Don't forget that you should check back often.

NOTE: If you do not have a Facebook account but would like to bid on items, you can have someone else or Diana put in bids for you.

Since 2009 you have entrusted me to be the church's treasurer. I take the responsibilities that come along with the position very seriously. Most times I have enjoyed it even with all the extra work it takes. (And in case you didn't know, this is a fully volunteer position = no pay.) Since September 2020 I have had a second job to supplement my income since the pandemic cut back my hours and pay as the secretary. Between the two jobs, I just don't have the time to be the treasurer any longer. Therefore, we need someone new to step up and take over the treasurer position. If you would be interested, please come and see me and I can explain the position and what it entails. Thank you for trusting me to handle the church's money for the past 13 years! -- Linda Matis



Women's Book Club

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

January 17: Origin by Dan Brown

February 21: Space Between Us by Thrity Umrigar



Children's Chime Choir – Charlotte Dornan, Ben Dornan,



Bell Choir – Shirley Sunyak, Valerie Arnold, Kiki Witter, Barb Habecker, Vicki Driestadt, Amy Kibler, Patty Eberl



Duet – Kelsey Styr, Jenn Anderson



Bell Choir – Kathy Boyd, Pastor Tony Clark, Roy Dreger



Chancel Choir – Krista O'Neill, Karen Dreger, Kiki Witter, Ivra Jackson, Kelsey Styr, Jenn Anderson, Pat Kyle, Patty Eberl, Amy Kibler, Pat Scott, Pastor Tony Clark, Alan Willcox, Jerry Henson, Jack Fitts, Roy Dreger

Christmas Music Festival



A huge THANK YOU to Barb Habecker, our music director, and to all the participants!!!