

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

May 2022

Interim Minister
Rev. Tony Clark

Director, Christian Education
Mary Karlovec

Music Director
Barb Habecker

Moderator
Roy Dreger

Vice-Moderator
Nancy Franks

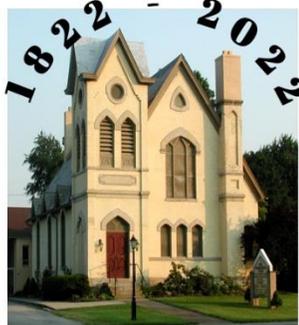
Co-Chairs, Christian Education
Kelsey Styrt
Renee Dornan

Chair, Deacons

Chair, Outreach
Nancy Franks

Chair, Trustees
Paul Wolanski

Treasurer, Secretary
Linda Matis



First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

*Sharing Faith, Hope and Love with all
for 200 years*

From the Interim Minister

This is a six-month report to you; I began ministry with you in November 2021. We have had two worship services where kids and families are not only welcomed, they are invited to participate in all parts of the worship. The report from the Christian Education Board is that these are well received. We have been naming our gratuities in worship, which brings forward the intentionality to thank God for our blessings. A Financial Task Force has given a draft report to the Board of Trustees recommending a division of the financial tasks, giving stronger checks and balances than currently present, and making the job of the treasurer more manageable; this report will make its way to the Church Council and then out to the entire Congregation. We have managed snowstorms on Sundays, low water flow (that has been corrected), and waves of the pandemic. We celebrated Christmas and Easter together and we are now turning to celebrate the 200th anniversary.

Financial revenue continues to be a concern and there does not appear to be any increase in gifts to cover the \$20,000 grant from the Association to support a pastor's salary. Although the grant could be renewed next year, without a fuller response from the Congregation, my recommendation to the Association will be to reduce the amount by half or not renew it at all. My recommendation to Church Council and Search Committee will be that FCC can only afford a 1/2-time pastor rather than the 3/4 time I am serving or the full time that Pastor Arik served.

I have challenged you to \$200 for the 200th, asking for 50 individuals to give an extra \$200 this year. The Church Council has decided to set this money aside to be used for the next pastor's salary package. While the kids in Sunday school are working on 200 coins for the 200th, the income from adults for this challenge is nowhere

near the \$10,000 that is expected north \$3300+ for the first 1/3 of the year.

There is a repeated refrain from church leaders that it is difficult to get volunteers to serve in leadership roles. Those of you who have stepped up this last year: THANK YOU!!! This includes an almost complete turn-over in the Board of Trustees. There are some 30 positions to fill in the structure that is present. This is a huge number for a congregation that is worshipping less than 100 people on a given Sunday, and many of the church's leaders are filling multiple roles. Perhaps you're all tapped out. Perhaps a leaner structure would suit you better. Perhaps you see long-term leaders doing a great job and you think you can let them do the work. Perhaps the term limits named in the By-Laws are merely suggestions in your mind. Perhaps you wonder if FCC has a future that you want to participate in. Perhaps your ministry is beyond the structure of First Congregational, in which case, it might be appropriate to name that and celebrate your outside ministry.

If any of these are the actual foundation of the perceived problem of low participation, it will take the leadership of a strong visionary pastor with the experience in leading a church through change to bring FCC to a place of growth. In today's world for a forward-facing visionary ministry, I recommend that the pastor—or another designee--becomes the Head of Staff who will empower the staff to assist the congregation in bringing the vision to fruition. It is unlikely that a 1/2 time pastor would have the time or energy for such work.

As we move out of the crisis brought on by COVID, it is clear that this virus will

be with us for the foreseeable future. COVID changed the Church and we, the Church, will have to learn how to live into this new reality. The future of the Church will be an integrative experience between on-line technology and in-person gatherings. We can mourn the loss of many things due to COVID and one of those may just be Church as we knew it. Will we feel safe to hug and shake hands any time soon? Will we ever let go of the masks we've been collecting for two years? Can immunocompromised people connect to the church that has no online worship? Has the recent movement toward participation in liturgy swung back to a placid passive observation of a few people performing worship for us? How can we incorporate music—especially congregational singing—into an online format? One thing is certain: there is no normal that we can go back to and we know that God is with us as we try new things—especially through the failures of attempted ideas that follow any great upheaval.

I think FCC has the right formula to succeed and grow. There are families and children here. There are multiple generations worshipping together. There is an active outreach and service spirit here. The church is surrounded by new and new-ish housing developments and the church is visible from a major artery through the area. FCC is the progressive faith standout in an otherwise theologically conserving area. The work is doable if you are committed to it.

If you have questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peace,
Pastor Tony

Pastoral Search Committee Update

The Search Committee has been formed consisting of Kris Dornan, Diana Goode, Matt Karlovec, Betty Fitts, Liz Wolanski, Vonnie Packard, and Jack Fitts. Nayiri Karjian, the Living Water Association General Minister, met with the Search Committee to give guidance on the process to find a new minister. The first order of business the Committee is working on is development of a survey for members to complete. The answers from this survey will be used to complete the church profile that is part of our church package posted for the minister search. The church profile will also be the guide the Search Committee will use in finding a minister to fit our congregation. **So please watch for the survey to come out in the near future and please complete the survey in its entirety.**

One thing that the Search Committee will definitely need to keep in mind is whether First Congregational Church can afford a full-time minister or if we need to consider a 3/4, 1/2, or 1/4-time minister. A 3/4-time minister would be 30-35 hours per week. A 1/2-time minister would be 20-25 hours per week. A 1/4-time minister would be 10-15 hours per week.

If you have any questions about the search process, please do not hesitate to ask one of the committee members.

Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

I recently reread an essay where the writer was on his porch one morning as his neighbor was leaving for work. The neighbor started waving their arms around and doing a dance of sorts. Apparently, the neighbor had walked into a spider's web and was trying to get it off. The writer speculated that the neighbor, who had rushed into their house, was going to go to

great lengths to ensure that the spider had not landed on them. The human reaction was not surprising, but then the author went on to speculate on how the spider might react after spending all night weaving its web (assuming it survived the initial contact). Does the spider tell his friends how fate dealt it a bad hand by having its web destroyed? Does it brag and say things to other spiders like "You should have seen the one that got away"? Does it speculate on what it would have done with this large thing if it had caught it? What, the author wondered, did the other side of the story look like?

Perhaps this essay was written not merely to amuse but, just maybe, it was meant to make us think about the benefits of looking past the obvious and try to see things from a point of view other than our own. I don't think seeing something from another point of view means that we agree or endorse that viewpoint. I do think that it might help us understand others better. It might also help us to know how to talk with others and possibly help us communicate better. That said, I prefer to not talk to spiders. Not sure I want to understand them either.

On a different topic, Mother's Day is coming up and you might want to think about how your mom might feel about you remembering her. Or *not* remembering her. Also coming up is Memorial Day and this is a good time to remember those in service to our country and their families. Some of our service men and women have suffered from their experiences and their families and loved ones suffer with them so it is important to remember all of them.

I did try to consider others as I wrote this; I hope I did okay.

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Over the last few weeks, I have been thinking a lot about the lessons we have done about Bucket Fillers and the books Wonder and We're All Wonders. I have watched the kids grow in their understanding of kindness, love, and empathy and the straits they have to exemplify them. In our church life, we talk about gratitude and what that looks like to each of us.

So... **What Is Gratitude?** Gratitude is one of many positive emotions. It's about focusing on what's good in our lives and being thankful for the things we have. Gratitude is **pausing to notice and appreciate** the things that we often take for granted, like having a place to live, food, clean water, friends, and family. It's taking a moment to reflect on how fortunate we are when something good happens — whether it's a small thing or a big thing. We can use lots of words to describe feelings of gratitude: We might say we feel thankful, lucky, fortunate, humbled, or blessed.

So why does gratitude matter?

Gratitude doesn't just *feel* good. Making a habit of gratitude can also *be good for us*. Like other positive emotions, feeling grateful on a regular basis can have a big effect on our lives. (<https://kidshealth.org/>) So as we begin the month of May, stop and pause each day to notice and appreciate the things you often take for granted. Start a Bucket Filler journal of gratitude. I can tell you with 100% certainty that I have learned from our young people that even the littlest things can fill your bucket.

Just a few reminders...

- The last Sunday of Sunday School will be May 29. Summer Sunday School for pre-school children through second grade

will begin June 12. I am looking for adults to help teach the lessons for the summer Sundays. A sign-up sheet is outside my office.

- As of now, four youth and three adults will be heading to Lotts Creek from June 17-24. We are still accepting donations to support this trip. Notate on your envelope donation that it is for Lotts Creek. Thank you for your support!

Finally, some words of thanks. First, a big thank you for the candy donated for the Easter Egg Hunt. Even though we had to reschedule until after Easter, the kids loved it!

Second, to all the children and youth who met the 200 coins for 200 years challenge! The coins were presented at the May 1st kick off 200th anniversary worship service.

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Welcome to May and the promise of flowers and trees in bloom, birds singing their joy of arriving safely to start their new families, and church life is alive and abundant once again as, we too, have put away the old and have started anew. Let us be thankful for our abundance and pray for guidance and good health as we move forward for Christ and Church.

Our Community Care special family received a spring tote filled with a variety of new books from our Christian Ed department (thank you, Mary) and a BIG basket of Easter games, puzzles, munchies, stuffed animals, toys, cards, etc. and a gift certificate for Easter dinner from our Outreach Easter bunnies. Thank you, church family, for making this possible for a family who could use a helping hand.

We are having a **dine and donate fundraiser at Texas Roadhouse** located at 245 Market Drive in Elyria on **Tuesday, June 28 from 4-8 pm**. They will welcome you with your dine and donate flyer so we can earn 10% back to our church for just enjoying a meal there. Mark your calendars now so you don't miss it!

Thank you for attending the One World Shop boutique on May 1. All the proceeds help the third world artisans create the unique gift items you got to shop for. We are hoping you enjoyed the experience and will come again if we have it next year. Let us know if you'd like them back.

The all-church rummage sale is **Saturday, May 21 from 9 am to 2 pm**. Bring your gently used items in the week of **May 15 between 9 am and noon or on Wednesday, May 18 between 6 and 8 pm**, and put them in the undercroft area



(downstairs back hallway). Place the items against the outer walls leaving a pathway down the middle to access the

stairs at the end of the hallway. **Set up will be on Friday, May 20 beginning at 9 am**. Come dressed for work; lunch will be available for our volunteers. No sales on Friday. Come for the comradery and fellowship. Any questions, call Nancy at 440-327-9647. Thank you!

Strengthen the Church is our May special 5 for 5 offering to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission). You will find inserts in your bulletins to fill you in on the mission being talked about and find yourself wanting to support the work involved with a generous contribution. This

collection is for the month of May only. Hear more during the mission moments. Thank you!

Remember our Community Care pantry with donations of a variety of canned food items, boxed or wrapped dry food items, paper products, etc....you know what folks need. Drop them in the boxes marked Community Care in fellowship hall, by the front doors in the narthex, or in the Sunday school wing by the elevator. Thank you in advance!

Mark your calendar for our celebration of Father's Day on June 19. After church Outreach is having a Father's Day brunch. We know you will enjoy the food offerings and the fellowship. Please plan to attend.

Take stock of your life...then thank the Lord for giving you everything you need. Amen.

Dr. Dornan's Corner – Kurt Dornan

Even though it may not feel much like it yet, Spring is here and it's time to work on losing that weight we gained over the holiday season and work on getting healthy! A lot of patients ask me, "how do I get started on an exercise program?" The answer isn't the same for everyone, but for most anyone in our congregation, I would suggest the following for anyone who wants to start a simple aerobic exercise and hasn't done much in the past:

- Brisk walking (this means enough pace so that you can talk to someone, but too winded to sing)
- Aim for 20-30 minutes, three days per week.
- For those who have difficulty walking, it is also reasonable to swing arms back and forth (or try to move in a pool) for the same amount of time, same intensity, for three days per week.

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

Hello, my family is Christ! Three important things this month:

1. Spring clean up, Saturday May 28 starting at 9 am. Last year we had a great turn out and we were done by noon. Although scheduled by the Trustees, this is definitely a full congregation event. All are welcome. Many hands make light lifting. The Church will look great for the 200 year Anniversary Celebration in June!
2. Trustees will be pursuing other ways of generating revenue from hall rentals and upgrading our fee schedules for non-members weddings and the like.
3. Please continue to meet your pledges and on time if possible. Paying our monthly expenses is easier when the flow of income is what we were anticipating. Thank you!

- 5/1 Shirley Sunyak
- 5/5 Megan O'Neill
- 5/5 Lily Schutz
- 5/9 Maynard Ickes
- 5/13 Chris Dlugosz
- 5/15 Regenia Comerford
- 5/15 Kate Harrold
- 5/20 Cathleen Karlovec
- 5/21 Bob Olesen
- 5/26 Dean Lipperman
- 5/30 Sue Mays
- 5/31 Sallie Sasse
- 5/15 Jack & Betty Fitts
- 5/23 John & Valerie Arnold



The last two years have told a remarkable story about the resilience of our churches and their leaders.

This has been hard.

Leaders are tired.

Leaders are anxious.

Leaders are beleaguered.

Leaders are traumatized.

But every day, and in countless ways, leaders in the church demonstrate the power of faith in the risen Christ as they embody the spirit of Paul himself who wrote that we will 'rejoice in all circumstances' and 'we do not grieve as those who have no hope.'

Two years into this pandemic, we struggle to name a more devastating season through which we have all lived. And yet still we see signs of life and resilience and ingenuity and growth and enduring hope.

Our churches remain strong in the Lord.

All that we do to Strengthen Our Churches extends the kingdom of God. Preaching the gospel is our collective calling. Even a raging global pandemic cannot suppress either our desire or ability to preach that gospel, nor the Spirit's ability to change lives when we do. Won't you please help sustain the mission of the risen Christ, and Strengthen the Church with your offering of love, prayer, and generosity?

Excerpt from letter promoting Strengthen the Church by John C. Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Outreach 9 am One World Shop 10a-2p Worship 10:30 am Communion 200th Anniv. Kick off w/ Rev. David Long-Higgins AA Men 7:30 pm	2 AA Women 7 pm	3 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	4 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	5 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	6 Swiss Steak Dinner prep 6 pm AA Couples 6 pm	7 Swiss Steak Dinner  AA Couples 6 pm
8 Worship 10:30 am  AA Men 7:30 pm	9 AA Women 7 pm	10 Council 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	11 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	12 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	13 AA Couples 6 pm	14 AA Couples 6 pm
15 Worship 10:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due Rummage sale drop off 9a-noon AA Women 7 pm	17 Rummage sale drop off 9a-noon AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	18 Rummage sale drop off 9a-noon Rummage sale drop off 6-8 pm Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	19 Rummage sale drop off 9a-noon AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	20 Rummage Sale set up 9 am AA Couples 6 pm	21 Rummage Sale 9a-2p AA Couples 6 pm
22 Worship 10:30 am Girl Scouts 3 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	23 AA Women 7 pm	24 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	25 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	26 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	27 AA Couples 6 pm	28 Spring Clean Up 9a AA Couples 6 pm
29 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	30 OFFICE CLOSED  MEMORIAL DAY <small>REMEMBER AND HONOR</small> AA Women 7 pm	31 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm				