

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

September 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



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From the Interim Minister

Prior to the Council meetings, we are reading and discussing the publication, *a sure foundation*, which looks at churches' relations with pastors. As we talked about evaluating the church ministry, what came up was the recognition that FCC has difficulty sharing faith experiences and emotions with each other. This is pretty normal for many congregations; however, we acknowledged that without sharing experiences of God's presence—or apparent absence—in our lives, the church seems to be lacking something that speaks to the vitality of a congregation.

What is a vital church? One author¹ lists these five spiritual practices that define vital congregations: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. There are other things I might add to the list, like discerning God's will as a community of faith, offering healing through hope, sharing the faith with those around, and understanding and promoting diversity in the congregation. None of these reflect the church's membership or money. All of them are spiritual practices that focus the church's ministry on God. All of them require interactive participation in the faith. What attributes do you think define a vital church?

"Vital" has two basic connotations: absolutely essential and vibrantly alive. I believe that First Congregational Church is absolutely essential to North Ridgeville, which needs a progressive religious voice that affirms LGBTQ people into all levels of participation in the church. I also see FCC as a congregation full of activity, full of energy, full of life. God is active here, and an essential function of the church is to notice, name, and normalize the presence of God. In this era when church has moved from the center of the

¹ Robert Schnasse, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), cited in Gil Rendle, *Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), p.211.

culture to a place on the margins, when schools and other public institutions do not teach the basics of our faith, when churches have been under fire for their hypocrisy and corruption, when evangelical Christianity has the monopoly on the public conversation on faith, a large piece of mainline church's vitally important work is to teach people to be comfortable in sharing God's presence and activity with others. This kind of faith expression is difficult to teach in worship. The best way to learn this is through small groups of 8-12 people that intentionally commit to deepen their faith together. These groups might meet for a fixed time like six or more weeks or they might be established to go long-term. What sets these gatherings apart from friends chatting is the intentionality to focus on God and bring the conversation back to God when it wanders, which may need a facilitator to monitor that commitment. Small groups will thrive when the entire congregation values this type of faith development.

When was the last time that you participated in a group that intentionally reflected on God's presence in your life? What effect did it have on the congregation? As always, if you'd like to talk about this or anything else, feel free to reach out to me.

Peace,
Pastor Tony

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Dear friends and members of First Congregational Church:

After much prayer and conversation, I have discerned that I will be leaving as your Interim Minister when my contract is up in November. I have informed Council, and they, along with

the Association General Minister, will decide what comes next for you.

Interim ministries are always intended to be temporary, to hold the faith community in nurturing care while a long-term settled pastor is called. Interims are times to release a former pastor and prepare for the next one. In some ways interim time is like the season of Advent, the liturgical season that leads to Christmas and the revelation that the Christ is among us. Advent is a between-time liturgical season, just like an interim. In Advent we wait, we get ready, and we hear the promises from God that there is a new day and a new leader that will bring justice and peace to the world. In interims there is waiting, preparation, and the dawning of a new day and new ministry. An interim is like John the Baptist, who arises out of the tradition and points the people toward the new priest and prophet to come after him. Like John the Baptist, I can say that I am not the one who will be your leader; the one who follows me is who you seek. It is appropriate that I started just before Advent last year and will wrap my time with you prior to this coming Advent.

The next few months may go by quickly, yet I hope I have time to offer my gratitude to you for your healing, hospitality, and hope. Your presence in North Ridgeville is truly needed. It heartens me to know that our beloved United Church of Christ has a long-established congregation here that is poised to step out from its 200 years of service to face into the future, where God will be waiting for you.

Blessings,  
Pastor Tony

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Moderator's Moment – Roy Dreger

As I write this, the anniversary dinner is several weeks away. I hope everyone can attend this celebration of our life as a congregation. Celebrating our past is certainly worthwhile; there is much to celebrate even as we move forward.

Meals have long played a role in the life of Christians. Meals were a time for nourishment, but just as important, they were a time for fellowship. The early agape feasts, or love feasts, were communal meals where everyone was welcome, not just Christians. It was after these meals that early Christians started celebrating Christ's message of love with what we now call communion, a symbol reminding us of Christ's Last Supper, as well as his death and sacrifice. The meals themselves were not solemn occasions, but true celebrations. These meals are mentioned several times in the New Testament, including Jude 1:12 where the term "love feast" is used. Several denominations still celebrate these love feasts; perhaps most notably the Moravians, although their celebrations do not include communion.

If you examine the church's anniversary dinner, it is really a combination of looking back and looking ahead. We celebrate all those people and moments in time that have helped to define what we have become; at the same time we are now, ourselves, contributing to the definition of the future us. So, please come to this feast of love and belonging if you can.

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Welcome to September! It is a busy month with lots of special events happening! I encourage you to mark your calendar and be a part of these events!

First up is "Round-Up Sunday" on **September 11!** This is traditionally the Sunday the children and youth gather to begin a new Sunday School year! We will be going on a scavenger hunt to find clues to what our theme is this fall! I am still in need of Sunday School teachers for the 2nd/3rd graders! It is no more than twice a month for each team. If you are interested in helping, see me. We are still in need of one more person to rotate once a month in the nursery. If there are no wee ones on your Sunday, you can join in worship. This is the last Sunday the confirmation youth will be meeting as a class.

Speaking of Confirmation, please join us the following Sunday, **September 18** as four of our youth are confirmed in the church. Please wear **RED** and **WHITE** to support our confirmands. This will be a wonderful, uplifting service with communion. Following worship, please join us in Fellowship Hall for a special coffee hour honoring our four confirmands: Abby Anderson, Ben Dornan, Beth Dornan, and Claire Wolanski.

Finally, Sunday, September 25 is the 200th anniversary luncheon! There is more information in the Messenger about it. PLEASE plan on joining us and supporting the church as we celebrate 200 years!

Upcoming in October:

October 9: Blessing of the Pets
October 23: Trunk or Treat 6:00-7:30



Finally, some very special THANK YOU'S:

- Shirley Sunyak for making the Confirmation stoles
- Heather Smith, Kris Dornan, and Kurt Dornan for taking the lead with the

Confirmation class. I could not have done it without you!

- The members of the CE Board who put in many hours getting the Sunday School rooms ready as well as supporting our “Welcome to the Neighborhood “event!



It's POPCORN Time!

The youth are selling limited kinds of popcorn (same company as in the Spring) to jumpstart their fundraising efforts to help with housing for a special family in Lotts Creek! (This was on the agenda BEFORE the floods.) You can purchase it and take it home any Sunday before or after church!

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Welcome to the OUTREACH information board. We are searching for persons who would be interested in joining our committee. We meet the first Sunday of every month, unless told otherwise, at 9:00 am in a classroom upstairs. Please contact one of our members listed below. We will be happy to have you join us for a meeting so you can get a feeling of the direction in which we are going. We welcome new ideas and individual perspectives. We do have an explanation letter on what this committee does, so if you would like to review one, we'll be happy to accommodate, just call 440-327-9647 and request a copy.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for attending TEXAS ROADHOUSE FUNDRAISER; and although we didn't make much on the event, for lack of attendees and 10% pay back, we did enjoy the atmosphere and delicious food. (close to \$79 raised).

Yours truly has worked on the \$200 for 200 years and the COLLECTION GAUGE to see our congregational contributions increase on the thermometer and I must admit, it's NOT MOVING UP VERY FAST! We need to try harder to move the scale. November will be here before you blink your eye....we will NEED to arrange financially to pay Pastor Tony or a replacement to fill our pulpit as Pastor Tony's contract is coming to an end in November 2022. Please find the means to donate an additional \$200 above your initial pledge amount to save our church as we know it today. Our future depends on it !!

This year's BLOOD DRIVE is being done DIY so you can request the date best suited for your schedules. The drive is being done during August and September so please call Vitalant Blood Bank at 1-877-258-4825 to make an appointment in Elyria during August and September or at your convenience. Blood is desperately needed!! The operator will give you all the information you'll need. Be sure to eat and drink water before and after you donate. Bring a list of your meds and a photo ID. THANK YOU FOR SAVING SOMEONE'S LIFE!

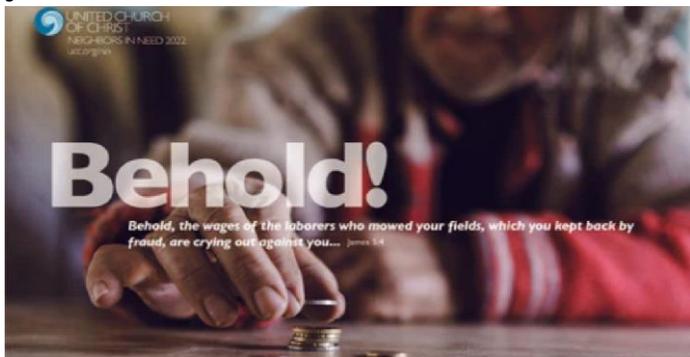
We will try to have a fundraiser toward the beginning of September. We tried Fiesta Habanero in Avon but they have not set up a program for it; however, they will be doing them in the near future. We will attempt another source.

Through your support of the Board of Outreach you have helped to support Community Care's summer lunch program, which will be continuing during the Fall and Winter months as well. The Governor has okayed funding for it, but our lunches are a lot healthier for the children so we will

continue to support what Community Care suggests.

OUTREACH IS HERE TO SERVE. WE ARE: Edie Phillips, Jane Woravka, Nancy Franks, Becky Williams, Barb Zinsmeister, Skip & Linda Spayd. Please call any one of our members...We are all in the Church Directory. THANK YOU for considering our committee to serve on. We will be happy to send you an outline of what our committee is all about ...phone 440-327-9647...ask for OUTREACH OUTLINE of CHURCH ACTIVITIES/INVOLVEMENT.

We have sent out cards and made phone calls to home bound members and will continue to keep in touch with them. If you know of someone who would like to hear from us, please contact one of our above members and tell us about that person. Bet they would love to hear from you, too!



NEIGHBORS IN NEED

The Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. The NIN offering will be collected through the

beginning of October. Check your bulletins for offering envelopes.

Deacons' Desk / Dr. Dornan's Corner – Kurt Dornan, MD

Monkeypox – Should I be worried?

My quick answer is no, but a little bit of information goes a long way. Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by a virus that is similar to smallpox. It is Milder than smallpox and RARELY fatal. However, it can cause more illness in children and elderly, as well as those who are on medication to suppress their immune system. Symptoms can be similar to the flu, including fever, rash, headache, muscle aches, back ache, fatigue, chills, swollen lymph nodes. It generally appears as a rash that can look like a pimple, can occur anywhere on body. Monkeypox is NOT as contagious as COVID-19. It can only be spread from direct contact with someone, like kissing, cuddling, or intimacy. Those of us who are old enough to have been vaccinated against smallpox are unlikely to get this. If for any reason you would contract Monkeypox, there are treatments that can be used, or vaccines that can be given if you are at high risk of exposure.

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

Hello, my family in Christ. I almost forgot to write my column this month. The Corn Fest kept us very busy last mid-August. A special thanks to longtime First Congregational United Church of Christ member Harry Berg for supplying us with a place to build and store our Award-Winning Float. Thanks to all who helped build, disassemble, and participate in the

parade. We looked great for our 200 year anniversary!

Trustees are currently working on getting estimates for parking lot reseal and repainting since it was last done in 2015. Hopefully we can do that in the fall. The funding for this project will come out of the capital improvement funds, which is where your donations to “general capital” go and are set aside for such a project. Also we will be planting, most likely, an oak tree to replace the maple that we had to remove from the front side of the church. Oaks are much stronger, more durable, and should be around for the 300 year anniversary, long after most of us are gone.

Thank you for reading and take care!



BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

- 9/2 Sandy Gast
- 9/2 Cady Kyser
- 9/2 Mackenzie Pero-Luter
- 9/6 Deb Arrigo
- 9/7 Ella Eaton
- 9/7 Becky Williams
- 9/9 Jo Ann Griswold
- 9/10 Jody Millar
- 9/13 Rhys Kyser
- 9/17 Linda Matis
- 9/17 Vi Elrod
- 9/21 Kari Dlugosz
- 9/23 Mary Ireland
- 9/24 Holly Hengartner
- 9/26 Kris Dornan
- 9/26 Kurt Dornan
- 9/26 Brenda Schutz
- 9/29 Karen Mytnick

Women's Book Club: Upcoming books are as follows. All gatherings are at the church at 7 pm unless noted. (If it is hot, we will meet in the sanctuary.)

September 19: The Water Keeper by Charles Martin (on Krista's patio room at 6:30 pm BYOB and snack to share)

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The Lions Club of North Ridgeville is hosting a citywide Food Drive to benefit Community Care on Saturday, September 17, 2021. We are asking for your help to collect non-perishable food items to help those in need in our community. Some of the most needed items are **peanut**

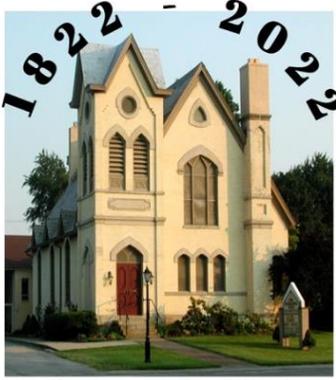
**butter, jelly, tuna, pasta, spaghetti sauce, and macaroni and cheese, as well as toiletries or essentials.** Items can be brought to the church through Sunday, **September 11.** A collection box will be in the Christian Ed hallway.

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Music Notes – Barb Habecker



Greetings everyone! If you would like to be in the chancel choir, just let me know. Everyone will be pleased to have you join us, and I will be truly blessed to have everyone back again. (It gets really lonely up in the choir loft.) I also would like to invite you to be a part of our bell choir. We will be meeting on **Wednesday nights beginning September 7** an hour before chancel choir. So, bells at 6:30 and chancel choir at 7:30. I will put a sign-up sheet on the wall outside the chancel choir room for you to write your name, phone number, and email if you would like to join the bells. We need you in both choirs. You know, when you sing - or play - you pray twice. Yep, you do.



**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**
*Sharing Faith, Hope and Love with all
for 200 years*

A Moment in History #13

In 1900 the church installed a pipe organ, the gift of Judge Stephenson Burke of Cleveland, a former North Ridgeville boy. He gave \$1,000 and the remaining \$350 was given by the Ladies Benevolent Society (LBS) and the Christian Endeavor Society. The organ, built by George S. Hutchings and Co. of Boston, was located in the front of the sanctuary with the pipes in the alcove currently defined by the arch containing the cross. There was no electricity at the time of installation and the bellows had to be pumped by hand, usually by the boys of the church. One of those boys was Cliff Salisbury, a longtime member and later the husband of Gladys Salisbury. They are the parents of Mary Karlovec, our Christian Education Director.

According to records held by the Western Reserve Historical Society, in 1909 the church had an Ultra class or Plus Ultra class. The object of this bible study class was to gain a more thorough knowledge of the bible.

In 1911 a basement was added to the sanctuary and dedicated as the undercroft. This was a great asset as a Sunday school room, a place for social events, and a place to serve meals to the public. In 1914 the "Mary Martha window" in the southeast corner of the sanctuary was given to the church by Mrs. James Paddock in memory of her husband and son, Harvey M. Paddock.

On January 12, 1915, the church was incorporated as provided for by the laws of the State of Ohio. Also, about this time the horse sheds to the rear of the church were torn down to make room for more cars.

A Moment in History #14

The 1920s saw growth in the city. A new school was built in the center of town that housed all 12 grades (the recently torn down Middle School). A three-room school, Fields Elementary School, was also built at this time and all 10 one-room schoolhouses were sold. The decade saw new businesses started including Ridge Tool Company in 1923, J.P Diederich Greenhouse in 1925, and Worchester Hatchery in 1926.

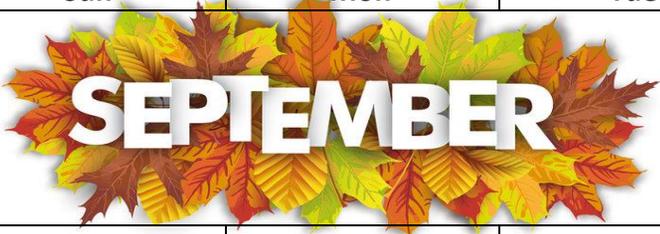
In the 1920s longtime member H.G. Stacy made an investigation of titles and found that a conveyance made in 1842 from Ebenezer Porter and his wife apparently covered only the westerly half of the land on which the church edifice was located. When this was discovered, Mr. and Mrs. Alvah B. Knapp, who owned and lived in the home on the east side of the church, very graciously executed a quit claim deed to cover the defect. The church had occupied and utilized the entire parcel from very early times.

In 1920 electricity was installed and the organ was electrified. The building was renovated and redecorated in 1922 in honor of the church's 100th anniversary. The renovations included window repairs along with the enlarging of the pipe organ. The cost of \$2,500 was met with gifts from the members and from the Ladies Benevolent Society.

In 1929 Dr. and Mrs. Morgan purchased and installed the communion cup holders and the offering envelope holders that are on the back of the pews. These holders are still in use today.

**HALL
FOR RENT**

(440) 327-2921

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	2	3 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
4 Worship 10:30 am Communion AA Men 7:30 pm	5 Labor Day – OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 7 pm	6 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	7 Linda off – jury duty Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	8 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	9	10 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
11 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Sunday school begins AA Men 7:30 pm	12 AA Women 7 pm	13 Council 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	14 Linda off – jury duty Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	15 200 th Anniversary meeting 7 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due	17 Beckman/Hauser wedding 3 pm AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
18 Worship 10:30 am Confirmation Communion Reception after svc. AA Men 7:30 pm	19 Women’s Book Club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	20 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	21 Linda off – jury duty Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	22 UCC Heartland Conf. Annual Gathering AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	23 UCC Heartland Conf. Annual Gathering	24 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
25 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am ? 200 th Anniversary Luncheon 1-5 @ Tom’s Country Place AA Men 7:30 pm	26 AA Women 7 pm	27 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	28 Linda off – jury duty Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	29 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	30	