

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

December 2022

Bridge Minister

Rev. Patty Humphress

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

From the Bridge Minister

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:30-31a

It is such a great joy for me to be serving North Ridgeville UCC for this period of time. Already I have met some wonderful people and I know the church is filled with a desire to keep community and praise God!

I wanted to give you my perspective on the purpose of the church. Jesus said it so well. It is about LOVE. If you speak to anyone in the churches I have served in the past, he or she would tell you that is my primary message, because that was and is Jesus' message. What that means, I think, for all of us who profess to be believers, is that we guard our tongues and avoid saying anything harmful. It is a hard calling, and often we slip, but if we can remember Jesus' message of love, perhaps we can achieve that equilibrium more often.

Another aspect of living love is living with a grateful heart. Even when we experience hardships, grief, and disappointment, we are still beloved children of God, and for this we can give thanks. Even when it seems we don't have a bright future, we can remember God's claim on us – we are God's!

As we enter this time of Holy Expectancy, I invite you to open your hearts. Recall the blessings God has richly bestowed upon YOU, and respond accordingly. If you have a little extra time, do something in Jesus' name. If you have a few extra dollars, give extravagantly in Jesus' name. If you are feeling your expanded heart, lit by the flame of Jesus' unending love for you, call or write someone who could use some uplifting words.

May you be a beacon for all, so they will know you're a Christian by your love.

Peace and Light,
Pastor Patty

Merry Christmas

May the Lord Jesus fill your
life with eternal joy and never
ending happiness.



First Congregational Church
Christmas Music Festival

Sunday, December 11 at 7 p.m.

Concert will include community Christmas carol singing, First Congregational Church choir, FCC bell choir, bell choir skit, and more!

Reception with light refreshments to follow.

Free will offering accepted.

Come and share the joyous music of the holiday season!



We invite you to come to worship on Sunday, December 18 as we have our final celebration of the 200th anniversary year of First Congregational Church!

We will have recaps of key moments from the 200 years, special music including a hammer dulcimer, and a reception following the service.

Join us as we remember the past and move on to the next 200 years!

Living Water Association Annual Meeting News – Pastor Patty

On Saturday, November 12, I attended the Living Water Association Annual Meeting via Zoom. The Keynote Speaker was Rev. John Dorhauer who is the

General Minister and president of the United Church of Christ. His role was to talk about the general church in the post-modern world. He brought up three points which I think are pretty key to the structure of the future church, and how to ensure the church thrives in the future.

How do we reach younger people? How do we engage younger people? Unless a person was raised in the church, it is very difficult for her or him to step into a building like First Congregational UCC in North Ridgeville or any other older-looking church. I invite you to look around the church and see ways in which you feel that it is inviting and ways that might be improved. Look at your church with fresh eyes.

And this is what Rev. Dorhauer says are three non-negotiables for post-modern worshipers, which is another way to say non-traditional or younger worshipers:

1. Post-modern worshipers desire an authentic spiritual encounter with the sacred.
2. Post-modern worshipers desire a means of using their gifts and talents to make the world a better place.
3. Post-modern worshipers desire an authentic community that they can trust.

In order to do this, we must move from stagnancy to creativity, nostalgia to adaptability, anxiety to trust, and weariness to compassion.

You can put your own spin on this, but basically, it's not your parents' church that younger folks are looking for. They are looking for a way to be involved in a community that they can trust will make a difference in the world. That's not just one annual mission trip but engagement with a community that allows them to live their faith.

As you ponder this and all the ways that you are looking into the future as your search committee seeks a settled pastor, I invite you to explore ways in which this church can become receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things. There are numerous resources on the Living Water Association website (livingwaterone.org) under “local church” and “church vitality resources”. These resources are free of charge and yours for the taking.

May God’s light continue to shine brightly through your discernment process.



Moderator’s Moment – Roy Dreger

The ad was for a Christmas tree ornament – a green pickle. Doesn't that just SCREAM Christmas? Well, actually, the ad said it yodeled! Even better! Sometimes, I just have to laugh at the attempts made to “sell” Christmas.

I know that I have mentioned that the excitement and wonder of the very young at Christmas time can be infectious. Our sons, having grown up and having families of their own, continue to experience that feeling, or have experienced it. Me? I miss it, but I have “shifted” my source of wonder to the Christmas story.

For me as a (much) older adult than when our family was young, some traditions have evolved that give me my Christmas feeling. Some carols that are sung help to bring back feelings that remind me of those long-ago times. The decorations in the sanctuary and the Christmas Eve services ending with a circle of candles while singing *Silent Night* are traditions that have mostly

taken the place of the feelings of those Christmas mornings with their “unbridled avarice”; mostly, but not entirely. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

I guess that it is because I'm at peace with the traditions that have evolved. The hustle and bustle and the frantic times that surrounded those older Christmases made it hard to actually sit back and relish those times. I've told our children to relax and enjoy the fleeting period when children are young in the hope that they will, at long last, listen to my advice and do what I wish now that I have been able to do so.

So, coming back to that pickle (remember that yodeling pickle?) that I talked about at the first. Things that are sold aren't the part of Christmas that completes the season for me, and I doubt that it is for you, either. In the end it is the memories; memories, and love for, and by, those we hold close to our hearts.

May you have a blessed and joyous Christmas!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Advent greeting! Advent is my favorite time at our church! I love the beauty of the decorated sanctuary, the music but most of all, the feeling of hope, peace, joy and love! These are the qualities that make our church the special place that it is!

This year, the Board of Christian Education has worked tirelessly to find ways to encourage families to partake of activities/events as an avenue for returning to their pre-Covid participation. We have also focused on targeting new neighborhoods with invitations to our events. We hope with the continued focus on these two groups we can help our church

to grow. If you know of someone we haven't seen in a while or have neighbors that may be looking for a church family, invite them to worship or one of the many Christian Education events. It only takes a spark...

82 percent
of people are likely to attend church
if invited
by a friend or relative.

Upcoming events for December:

Each Sunday during Advent, after the Children's Time, the children/youth will depart to the Educational Wing where they will be rotating through centers focused on that Sunday's Advent theme. This includes the first Sunday of December which is normally All Church Sunday.

Our tradition of building gingerbread houses continues on **December 11** after worship.



Bring a snack or small lunch to eat after worship. We will begin building houses at about noon in Fellowship Hall. **All reservations and money must be turned in by December 5.** No late reservations will be accepted. The cost is \$5.00 per house.

There is no Sunday School on Christmas Day or New Year's Day. On Sunday, January 8, we will be in church until Children's time at which time children/youth will gather in the Educational Wing to participate in Epiphany activities.

Finally, a very special THANK YOU to all of the members/friends of the congregation who generously support the Christian Education programming at First Congregational UCC. We could not do it without you!

Blessings for 2023!

Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

Greetings to everyone during this hope-filled season of Advent. Let us prepare for the coming of the Christ Child with anticipation and joy.

The Thanksgiving food collection for Community Care was generously received with bags of meal fixings and money - \$150 for turkeys plus \$150 for Christmas hams. Thank you for your generosity.

Our dine to donate fundraiser at Applebee's was an enjoyable experience with good food and great conversation among our church attendees and netted \$129.77 back to the church for our effort.

Thanks to you, the farewell reception for Pastor Tony went well as we bid him farewell and God's blessing in the future. Helping were Regenia Comerford, Jane Woravka, Karen Dreger, Lynne Petroff, Paula Dudek, Karen Farmer, Mary Karlovec, Shirley Sunyak, Bruce and Jo Ann Griswold. (If I missed anyone, I apologize!) You were all fabulous!!

The Hospitality with a Heart community outreach meals will not resume unless we can find a chairperson to coordinate the meals and workers. Do you know anyone who would like to serve the church in this way? Maybe it's you!

The Giving Tree with all of it's gift wishes was up last month for you to choose a child to brighten their holiday.



Unwrapped gifts are due back to the church on or before Sunday, December 4. Thank you, Barb Zinsmeister, for writing out the requests, to Sandy Chalkwater for hanging the ornaments on the tree, and ALL OF YOU who have helped make Christmas special for these children.

We enter the new year with two more members on our Outreach team: Karen Farmer and Pat Kyle. Welcome to our merry Christmas elf community. We'll be putting our Christmas bag of goodies together at our meeting on December 4 for our church's special family.

Deacons' Desk – Karen Dreger

December is a beautiful time of year, I'm sure you will agree. Outdoor lights and decorations abound. Some yards are totally full of inflatables and other figures. Our sanctuary is especially beautiful at Christmas time with wreaths hung, the advent candles, the tree, and the manger scene.

At one time we had an exterior Christmas display that was a prize winner. I found the letter dated December 28, 1956 from The Chronicle Telegram congratulating (then) Rev. Ralph Chapman, and writing that a plaque had been ordered. The letter went on to say, "When it arrives and is suitably engraved it will be delivered so it can be displayed in the church." There is also supposed to be a photograph of the display taken by The Chronicle Telegram. I haven't been able to find the plaque or the picture or anyone who remembers this. I was only seven years old at that time.

I wish everyone a joyous Christmas. Take care of yourself and each other. Pray for peace.

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

Thank you all for your attentiveness and your kind words of support. I believe our stewardship campaign this year was a success in reaching out to the Congregation not only financially, but emotionally, to convey why pledges are so important. I am both hopeful and confident that our

financial security will go a long way toward attracting new members and a new settled pastor. God Bless!



Women's Book Club: All gatherings are at the church at 7 pm unless noted.

Dec. 19: Christmas by Accident by Camron Wright

Jan. 16: Puzzle or game night



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



Diane G. Perry (nee Morris), age 68, of Grafton, passed away peacefully after a short illness, Wednesday, October 5, 2022, at her home. She was born in Elyria, raised in North Ridgeville, and a longtime Grafton resident. She was a Deacon at First Congregational Church in North Ridgeville. Diane enjoyed gardening, baking, birding, traveling, and spending time with her grandchildren. She is survived by her children Joshua Perry of Grafton, Rachel (Rick) Ward of West Palm Beach, FL., Seth (Shannon) Perry of Grafton; grandchildren Allison, Isaac, Haydn, Travis, Killian; siblings Rick Morris, Deb Arrigo, and Chuck Morris. She was preceded in death by her husband Robert in 2016; parents Charles and Florence Morris. The family will celebrate her life in private.





Sallie Ann Sasse, born May 31, 1944, died peacefully in Avon, Ohio on November 4, 2022 at the age of 78. Sallie, born and raised in Reading, PA loved traveling home to visit family and friends. She graduated with honors from Reading High School in 1962, going on to study nursing at Cedar Crest

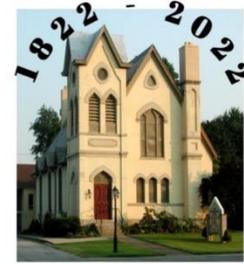
College. Sallie graduated top three of her class achieving honors with distinction from Cornell School of Nursing in New York, NY in 1966. She then moved to Colorado Springs, CO to pursue a career in public health management. She later met her Army husband Fredric W. Sasse and they were married in 1971. This began her next career as a military wife and mother transferring the family to North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and then back to Ohio like many military families often do.

Sallie devoted her time to her family and community over the many years of her life. Her hobbies were many, including replicating trendy recipes from the Food Network, rescuing stray cats and animals, and supporting her grandchildren's school and athletic activities. She and her family loved to travel and the warm beaches of the Caribbean were frequently visited over the years, especially if there was a casino. Because most of all, Sallie's favorite place to be was sitting in the first seat of a high stakes blackjack table playing one on one with the dealer. It is safe to say she was very good at taking their money.

Sallie was preceded in death by her parents Pearl and Irwin Bright, her sister Susan Smith, as well as her many cats and dog she owned over the years. She is survived by her husband Fredric, her daughter Jenefer, son-in-law Bryan, and grandchildren Paige, Mia, Porter and Foster.

In lieu of a traditional memorial service, Sallie's family will host a private Celebration of Life in January. At a later date, Sallie will be buried with her husband with full military rights at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery in Rittman, Ohio.

Although her heart of this world may have failed, her spirit will always remain stubbornly strong. She loved windchimes, so as you go forward in life, if you hear one chiming in the breeze, please pause, smile, and remember Sallie and everything that is good in our wonderful world.



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

A Moment in History #19

The Reverend Ralph Chapman resigned in November 1960 to accept a call to The First Congregational Church of Bellvue, Ohio. The Rev. Aaron Downs served as interim pastor.

In January 1961, at the congregational meeting, a resolution to become part of the United Church of Christ was voted on and passed 100%. In March 1961, the congregation voted to build a new parsonage to replace the one built in 1880. The old parsonage, which was sold, was located next to the Orr family farm on Center Ridge Road west of the church. The new parsonage was built on a 1 ½ acre site directly behind the church property. The construction began after a successful fund pledge campaign. The Whitcomb family again made a substantial gift toward financing the home. The cost of the new parsonage was \$25,000. The first occupants of the new parsonage would be Rev. Gene F. Wilson, his wife Jeanette, and their four children.

Rev. Wilson was installed as pastor and teacher on November 16, 1961. A service of dedication of the new parsonage was held on May 20, 1962. Under Rev. Wilson the church undertook in 1964 a study of its spiritual and physical needs. The junior high youth fellowship group met at 4 p.m. on Sundays and averaged 14 in attendance. A couples club was formed and met the second Sunday of the month with about 30 members attending. Attendance in Sunday School was over 200 children.

In 1964 the church paid tribute to Mr. Frank Whitcomb and his wife Clara for their membership of 50 years and their many contributions in support of the church. The Fellowship Hall was renamed the Whitcomb Fellowship Hall and a plaque was hung in their honor. The plaque is still hanging in the hall.

When Rev. Wilson left in September 1964 to accept a call to a Huntington, Indiana church, the self-study was continued under the leadership of the Rev. Robert Peters who was called in 1965. On

February 21, 1965 Rev. Peters preached a sermon and after the service the congregation voted unanimously to have him serve as pastor. Rev. Peters was married with one child and one on the way.

In 1965 the last payment on the mortgage of the parsonage was made by a generous gift from Mr. Whitcomb. The congregation watched and sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" while Frank Whitcomb touched a match to the mortgage.

A Moment in History #20

In 1965 and 1966 the church was renovated and redecorated, including exterior work and the painting of the sanctuary. For \$375 the east entrance into the lobby was closed. Chancel design was discussed and new hymnals were purchased (125 plus choir). For \$2 each, members could have their names or dedications put in them.

In 1966 G.E. and Otilie B. Lasch's house and property east of the church were purchased for \$25,000. The house would be used for Christian education purposes for several years. There were 70 pupils and 12 adults in six classes that used the house, as well as a Girl Scout troop of about 30 girls and two leaders who used it during the week.

The "Lasch House" was built in 1857 by Alton Henry Mooers (1830-1909) who operated the Ridgeville Chair Works located to the rear and east of the home from 1859 until about 1910. Mr. Mooers wife was Arlette Terrell Mooers, the daughter of Wyllys Terrell, Jr. After Alton Mooers death, a family named Oakes bought the house and by 1920 it was operated as "The Inn of the Four Chimneys" or "The Four Chimneys Inn". The Lasch family purchased the property from Alvah Knapps and owned it from the 1930s until the church purchased it in 1966.

Rev. Peters resigned in April 1966 to accept a position with Case Western Reserve University and was replaced by Rev. Harold Wiley Freer, a graduate of the University of Southern California and the Union Theological Seminary located in New York City. Rev. Freer was born in Cleveland and graduated from the Cleveland Public School System. The Freers had two children, Arthur and Deirdre.

In August 1969, a special meeting was held where the building committee covered preliminary architectural plans for a church addition as well as

the feasibility of continued use of the Lasch house. Mrs. June Yost, Church School Superintendent, reported that due to a lack of classrooms she had scheduled double sessions for fall. Grades 4-12 met at 9:45 a.m. and ages 3 years to 3rd grade met during regular service hours. A crib room was also available. Because of safety concerns at the Lasch House annex, only three lower-level rooms could be used for classes.

A building fund campaign was started in October 1969 but had only raised \$26,000 from 73 pledges over a three-year period, not enough to begin building. An anonymous donor then pledged \$30,000 over a three-year period so building could start. The congregation authorized the building committee to borrow from Elyria Savings and Trust Bank or The Western Reserve Association, Board of Homeland Ministries, the money necessary to begin the building.

A Moment in History #21

During the annual meeting in January 1970, June Yost, superintendent of the Sunday School, voiced concern over the issue of safety of the Annex, also known as the Lasch House. The upstairs classrooms could not be used, among other issues, and the cost to renovate the property was prohibitive. In September 1970, the decision was made to sell the house but keep the land. The house was offered free to anyone who would move it, but there was no interest and the house was demolished in 1971, the trustees deciding that this was preferable to continuing to pay taxes on it.

The new classrooms in the addition that was started in 1969 were dedicated on September 27, 1970 during the regular Sunday morning service. IN the afternoon a reception was held where guest could tour the eight new classrooms, additional bathroom facilities, a relocated pastor's study, and the relocated stairwell.

In 1972 the decorating committee purchased pew cushion materials for \$500 and started a project to provide cushions for all the pews. According to church records, Mrs. Daniel Thomas voluntarily made the cushions in 1973. Also in 1973, Rev. Harold Wiley Freer, our pastor at the time, exchanged pulpits with Dr. Clifford Hill of London England for four Sundays. Dr. Hill, his wife and three

children stayed at Rev. Freer's home in Westlake, Ohio.

Rev. Freer was 66 years old but he was very active and innovative. One Sunday, to illustrate his sermon on forgiveness, he gave a dramatic monologue dressed as the prophet Hosea, whose wife "ran away with a traveling salesman". On another Sunday, Rev. Freer preached on the parable of the four soils with the assistance of 20 youth from the Pilgrim Fellowship group. This creative service required four acts and 13 scenes. He also led youth groups on tours of Washington, D.C. in 1970, Montreal Canada in 1972, and Michigan in 1973.

In January 1974 there were 214 active members. All new drain tile was laid and Jack Fitts made drawings of the location of the drain tiles, gas and water lines. The parsonage was professionally cleaned and ready to rent. The Board of Missions and Social Action endorsed and gave publicity to the school bond issue. Letters were sent to members of the Ohio House and Senate on such bills as increased speed limits for trucks, welfare programs, and the Head Start Program. The board protected the drastic curtailment of welfare and poverty programs, programs which had been started under President Johnson.

Rev. Ivan Morrin, 51 years old, became pastor of First Congregational UCC in November 1975. His primary concern in ministry was Christian Education and youth work. He and his wife, Nell, had two children. He was an avid stamp collector and photographer of nature, especially birds. A baptismal font was purchased in 1978 while Rev. Morrin was pastor.

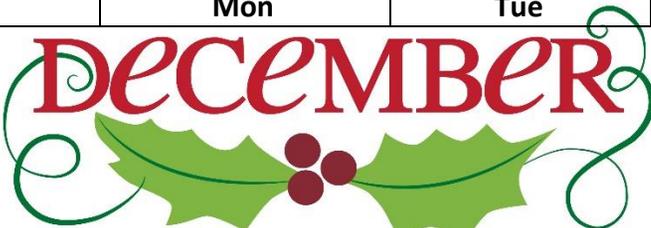
In 1975 altar cloths were purchased to match the lectern and pulpit cloths. LES ordered plates with a picture of the church on them to sell to the congregation. Major improvements to the parsonage were made and a concrete pad was poured for a storage shed. Also at this time, an alms basin was purchased by the Salisbury family.



December Events at First Congregational Church

Dec. 3	Craft show, 9 am – 4 pm
Dec. 4	Second Sunday of Advent
Dec. 11	Third Sunday of Advent
Dec. 11	Gingerbread house decorating
Dec. 11	Christmas music festival, 7 pm
Dec. 18	Fourth Sunday of Advent
Dec. 18	200 th anniversary worship service
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve service, 8 pm
Dec. 25	Christmas service, 10:30 am

The office will be closed on
December 23, 26, 27 & 28.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	2 Craft show set up 6-8 pm	3 Craft show 9a - 4p AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
4 2nd Sunday of Advent Outreach 9 am Communion Worship 10:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	5 AA Women 7 pm	6 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	7 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	8 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	9	10 Hall rented 1-4 pm (Rush) AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
11 3rd Sunday of Advent Worship 10:30 am Gingerbread houses noon Music Festival 7 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	12 Search comm. 6:30 AA Women 7 pm	13 Council 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	14 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	15 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due	17 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
18 4th Sunday of Advent 200 th Anniv. service Worship 10:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	19 Women's book club 7 AA Women 7 pm	20 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	21 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	22 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24 Christmas Eve service 8 pm AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
25 Christmas Worship 10:30 am <i>Pr. Patty last day</i> AA Men 7:30 pm	26 OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 7 pm	27 OFFICE CLOSED AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	28 OFFICE CLOSED	29 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	30 Hall rented 5:30-8:30 pm (McCarrick)	31 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm