

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

February 2023

Bridge Interim Minister

Rev. Chris Nichols

Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

Barb Habecker

Moderator

Kris Dornan

Vice-Moderator

Diana Goode

Co-Chairs, Christian Education

Renee Dornan

Kelsey Styr

Chair, Deacons

Chair, Outreach

Nancy Franks

Chair, Trustees

Paul Wolanski

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Linda Matis



From the Interim Minister

First, I must say how pleased I am to be with you as your new bridge pastor. I look forward to getting to know you in the wonderful ministry we will share over the next few months.

I try to know names, but one of the first ways that I know people in a church is by where they sit. Do you have a favorite place to sit in the sanctuary? You know, your seat? We all do. I'm not completely sure I understand the psychology behind that, but I do it, too. Even when I'm a visitor to churches, I almost always head for the same area in the room. I do it when I arrive at meetings. I'll admit it; I'm uncomfortable anywhere else. Must be some kind of primal, territorial thing. Or just a deeply held, unexplainable OCD-type habit.

If you have been with the church for a while, many years possibly, you might recall someone who sat in "your" seat before you did. When we try to identify each other, we might say, "You know, the one who sits on the left side, third row from the back, toward the window."

Maybe it's in our church DNA. In the old New England congregations I've served, it was easy to find out who sat in what seat, present and past. There was a seating chart! Church members paid yearly rent for their pews. Maybe you've seen them: pews with doors and/or numbers. The center seats were the most expensive; the first and last rows were free (anybody could sit there. Gee, I wonder why!). If you rented a pew for the year, it was literally your family's seat (in the oldest churches, you actually owned your pew with a deed, permanently). This was one way the church raised support, along with donations of corn, firewood, etc., to the pastor. Toward the end of the 1800's, churches began to experiment with confidential giving and pledging. But hey, don't forget – that's my seat!

I like to imagine Jesus as a visitor. When he walks into the room, where does he sit? He is risen, so he can sit anywhere he wants, right? If he keeps visiting, he probably moves around the room, trying out different seats. At some point, he will likely sit next to you. How do you feel about that? Anything you'd like to talk about? What do you think he would ask about you, about our church?

Sometimes when I'm thinking (maybe a little too critically!) about church traditions, I wonder, this seating habit of ours, is it really what Jesus, the head of the church, had in mind? But more than that... I remember seeing a poster – a picture of Jesus. He was sitting in a church pew much like one of ours. You know



him - long brown hair, white toga-type outfit, sandals. He was leaning to one side, fast asleep, his head on the shoulder of the person next to him. That sends a particular message to me, of course.

Final thoughts....The work of the church is mainly outside our walls. Inside, we are preparing for the people who sit in these seats when we are gone. Remember, we are creating a legacy of faith and mission for those who follow us.

See you soon,

Christopher Nichols, Bridge Pastor

From the Pulpit

For the next several weeks, the sermon theme will be "Starting Fresh". The interim time between pastors is always a good time for a church to do some self-examination – to think in a new way about who we are and what we do as believing Christians. For this series, we will use Paul's letter to the Galatians. Next up – a series called "Just Trust" as we begin Lent.

1/29: Starting Fresh #2: Standing Firm & Letting Go

We all make mistakes. Our faith allows us to stand firm in the forgiveness God offers in Christ and move on. Based on Galatians 2:11-16.

2/5: Starting Fresh #3: Broken Walls

God's love can't be contained. Faith in Christ breaks down barriers – and makes us one. Based on Galatians 3:23-29.

2/12: Starting Fresh #4: Free to Live

How to live well together. Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Based on Galatians 5:1, 13-25.

2/19: Starting Fresh #5: God's Pit Crew

You've got a job! God calls every Christian (and every church) to particular ministries. Based on Galatians 6:1-10.

2/26: Just Trust #1: Instant Satisfaction

Facing temptation; Jesus is tempted but trusts God. Trusting God for what? How does trusting God help when struggles come? Based on Luke 4:1-13.

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Blessings to all! I want to thank you, the church, for having faith in me as your new moderator! If you don't know me quite yet, I want to share a bit about me and my faith!

Although I grew up in many different protestant denominations, I always felt that the message of Jesus' love rang true. I was very blessed to have God-fearing parents who made it a priority for us to grow in our faith through church attendance, Sunday school, and truly caring for others. I never felt that Christianity was forced on us....but through my lifetime, I've seen the impact that forced religion can have on others. For that reason, I always felt most comfortable in churches where God loves you wherever you are on your own spiritual path. Having a father who is a lay minister has always been a blessing to me, someone who is always there to talk about the mysteries of faith, and someone who always ends up making me feel better about things.

Our spiritual path does not always run straight forward, and there were many times in my life that faith and belief has been tested, and I honestly feel that faith not tested is not true faith. As I've grown older, some of the beliefs that I took at face value ended up looking differently through the mirror of experience. Through those trials, I've learned to be much more open and affirming which definitely rings true in my own feelings. You may start to pick up why I feel so strongly about our church. It is that place that has become a second family to me and my crew and a place where our own path and place on our spiritual journey is something to appreciate, as well as a church that has taken the position to be Open and Affirming and showing that no one is outside of God's love and care.

To be a bit more revealing about myself, I have to admit that I've felt a calling to ministry, and I definitely feel comfort and strength when I have the chance to help lead worship, honestly hearing my own father's voice in my own. I'm honestly not sure where that calling is going to take me right now, but I do know that I'm very happy taking a leadership role in this church and doing what I can to help grow each other as we all strive to become the people God wants us to be in his Son's image.

I can't stop here though without acknowledging a pillar of our church, someone who has held the position I now hold for a LONG time, someone who does without expecting a return, and someone whose heart is always full and spilling over to help others....Roy Dreger. I'm lucky to have Roy

as a mentor in this role, and I don't think I could find anybody better in terms of personality and knowledge to learn from. Thank you, Roy!

I also have to recognize Diana Goode for not only being a close friend, a fellow peer on the Search Committee, but someone who has agreed to be my vice-moderator. I honestly don't think I could have agreed to do this unless I had Diana's backing. Thank you, Diana!

All I ask is for you to bear with me as I try to fill the extremely LARGE shoes that Roy has left. Thank you all for being my friends, and my family.



Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

The Board of Christian Education's January meeting resulted in many exciting event and program ideas for 2023. We hope that everyone in the congregation will participate in these events/programs **AND** invite neighbors and friends to be a part of our church hospitality.

First up is our CHILI COOK-OFF/MARDI GRAS celebration on Sunday, February 12 immediately following church. Not only is this one of our more

popular events, it is a great fundraiser for the youth/adults who will be going to Lotts Creek this summer on our annual mission trip. We will sample the chili entries and vote for the "Ladle Award" winner. We are still in need of chili entries for this event; the sign-up sheet is in the hallway outside the CE office. There will also be chicken noodle soup for those who would prefer soup. Drinks, crackers, and corn muffins will round out the menu. The cost is \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for kids ages 5-12; kids under 5 are free. Money will be paid at the door the day of the event. We will also celebrate Mardi Gras (a week early) at the event. There will be our traditional pancake races and cupcakes. One lucky person will be chosen "Keeper of the Alleluias!" Plan on joining us for this fun event!

The Lotts Creek mission group is planning several fundraisers over the next few months.



Several people have asked if they can support a youth/adult with a monetary donation for the cost of the trip. The cost is \$350 per person. Please see Mary if you are interested in this option. We are also planning four or five mini fundraisers between now and June, the Chili Cook-off being the first one. We are also looking at a Sunday morning car wash, selling Easter candy or braided bread for Easter, a cookie walk, an Adopt a Youth (with adult support) for light yard clean up, dog walking, help cleaning out your garage, babysitting, or other ideas you have!

Along this line, **we are sponsoring a night at Clague Playhouse on Saturday, June 3.** We have bought out the house so we have 80 tickets to sell. We did a similar event before Covid and everyone had a great time. Cost and more information will be coming in the March Messenger, but mark your calendars now and save the date!

Another idea we are floating around is purchasing a plot or two at the N.R. Community Gardens on Chestnut Ridge Road. We were thinking that if we could find enough people willing to support this project by helping plant/weed/water the plot(s), we could grow vegetables to donate to people in need in the community; and if we had 2 plots, we could grow cabbage to be utilized for the cabbage rolls sale in the fall. We would need at least 8-10 people willing to help plant and then weed and water throughout the summer. If you are willing to help (family participation is encouraged), sign up on the board outside my office by February 15.



On February 24 and 25, Heather Smith and I will be attending a curriculum workshop sponsored by the Faith Formation Committee of the Heartland Conference. I and other faith formation directors have been advocating since Covid began that the curriculums available for Sunday School/youth and even confirmation classes are not always conducive for churches of our size and are cost prohibitive. I am excited to hear the presentations and hopefully find a curriculum that is a good fit for our church.

Finally, I am looking for someone(s) who is/are willing to take the old computers that are in my office to the Lorain County Recycling Center in Elyria on South Abbe Road. We need to get them

out of the office and disposed of. There are also two TV's at my house (they are on the second floor - one is old and heavier) that need to go, too, if someone wants to make one trip and help me out!



Outreach Committee News – Nancy Franks

What if we approached the bible as if it contained ancient letters we had discovered in a cave on Lake Erie's coastline? Each letter contained dialog between people from various places across the continents, between oceans and countries, some of which we've never heard of? Would we take the time and interest to investigate them? You'd find love stories, tales of war, deceit, unrest, tenderness, power, jealousy, and so much more, just like stories of people today and, believe it or not, just like the people of Jesus' time. Each chapter of the bible can have the same effect on us if we take time and the interest to read it. Stop and get to know who Jesus really is and what he's trying to tell us in all the stories he shared with his disciples and with us because the stories are timeless. A good Lenten lesson...let your teacher know what you find out.

Members of the Outreach board have been sending out cards and letters to many of you in our congregation to enjoy and share with others you know. I have been blessed with some of them and found they have had a profound impact on my feelings about our congregation. I've found you to be kind, caring, and actually interested in my life and how you might make a difference in it. Without that note of concern, I would have never known that. THANK YOU. And I'm going to send a note or two to others myself. I'm inspired to make a difference.

Thank you to Jerry Henson for delivering all the food items and Christmas gifts from the giving tree, and to our Outreach Christmas elves who, with the leadership of Barb Zinsmeister, kept us all on track to sharing another Merry Christmas with those in need.

We are preparing for a busy new year so be sure to follow our newsletter each month for what is coming next. Dine and donate coming up in the future. Look for more information soon.

Thank you to our great committee: Becky, Jane, Skip, Linda, Barb, Edie, Karen, Pat and Nancy.

Deacons' Desk – Valerie Arnold

Write a Haiku. This is a perfect activity for Valentine's Day—or any day, really. Invite your family to express their feelings for each other in a haiku. A haiku is a specific type of poem that contains three lines and 17 syllables. There are 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the third. They're fun to write and can be as creative as you can dream up.

Here's an example, family dinner style:

I love you because
you make my favorite dinner
and you make it fun

Trustees' Turn – Paul Wolanski

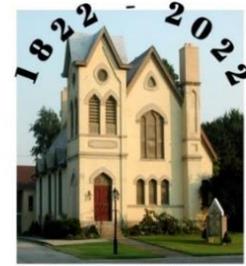
Hello, my Family in Christ. Mostly good news! The parking lot reseal and the roof repairs are finished. As of December 31, 2022, (not a final figure), we as a congregation were only \$ 1,383.42 in the red. Since we were approximately \$10,000.00 down in November, this was a remarkable rally. However, in 2023, please try to stay current on your pledges. It is helpful for financial purposes to have the money to play bills as we go month to month. Thank you!

The person who was originally going to audit the church's financial records for 2022 was unable to perform the work. Luckily, thanks to Krista O'Neill, we have found a backup.

Lastly, Jo Ann Griswold, who has been a fabulous employee over the last six years, has decided to vacate her cleaning position within the next few months to enjoy her personal time and her soon-to-be grandbaby. If anyone in the congregation or anyone you know is interested in a 5 hour-a-week paid position, please contact me. Bruce Griswold has decided to continue on in his custodial and groundskeeping position. Thank you, Jo Ann and Bruce!

Birthdays & Anniversaries

2/9	Mary Karlovec	2/18	Nancy Franks
2/12	Renee Dornan	2/19	Claire Wolanski
2/15	Harry Berg	2/25	Shirley McVeigh
2/17	Bob Elliott	2/26	Henry Schutz
2/18	Abby Anderson	2/28	Daryl vonBenken
2/1	Bill & Regenia Comerford		
2/4	Jamie & Beckie Schupbach		



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

A Moment in History #24

The 1990s were busy. Pastor Richard Thewlis served from 1990-1993 and Pastor Judith Tisserand served from 1994-2000.

In 1994 the Winckles Room was redecorated by a committee led by Bob and Juanita Schmittgen and Bob and Evelyn Elliott. Also, about this time, Christian Education was promotion an AIDS awareness program and talking with parents. Linda Pierce was Christian Ed Director in 1995. Sessions were held where adults were encouraged to preview curriculum to be offered children early in 1996. It was learned that our church was the only church in Ohio offering "Confirming Persons: Saving Lives". Pastor Judith was being asked by other pastors how we were handling this sensitive topic. In 1998 classes were held for adults and youth in 5th grade and above. A December 15, 1999 article appeared in the *Press Light* in which Pastor Judith said it was the 3rd year the church held the course, and the first year in which it was open to the public 3rd grade and above.

Some of the activities during this decade included Earth Day Awareness, Family Banner Making, Clown Sunday, our first float in the Corn Festival parade, and our first Safe Halloween. The church celebrated its 175th anniversary with a play and dinner at the Holiday Inn in Elyria. Of course, there were also the Swiss steak dinners, the crafts shows, and vacation bible schools.

There were repairs and improvements throughout the 1990s. Some of these were a new gas line from the street to the kitchen, roof repairs, and a speaker put in the crib room so that the service could be heard by those watching the little ones. Church members tore up the old floor in Fellowship Hall and put down a new one as well as painted the walls and replaced the drapes. A new



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

February 20: The Dark Hours by Michael Connelly

March 20: The Librarian of Crooked Lane by C.J Archer



Happy New Year! We're excited to share with you the impact your clothing shed made over the last year...

- 44,147 pounds of clothing were donated to your shed in 2022
- This was enough to clothe an estimated 8,132 people all over the world.
- Based on this volume of clothing, your organization received \$1,765.89.

Thank you so much for everything you, your volunteers, and your communities do to support the clothing shed program!

(One-half of the money received goes to the Discretionary Outreach Fund and the other is being held in reserve in the Hospitality with a Heart Fund for when we resume the community outreach meals.)

sound system was installed in the sanctuary and new countertops were installed in the kitchen.

After years studying the best way to make our church handicap accessible, the Trustees presented a plan in 1998 for an elevator-type lift that would allow access from the parking lot to both ground and second floor levels. A ramp was put in the hallway leading to the sanctuary and the restrooms were made ADA compliant. The congregation was asked to pay ahead on the capital campaign pledge and members of the congregation started work on the housing for the lift.

There was a service of celebration and dedication of the handicap lift on October 10, 1999 led by Pastor Judith Tisserand. A worship ribbon was cut by Ralph Fitts (father of Jack Fitts), an education ribbon was cut by Joseph Congrove, a fellowship ribbon was cut by Gladys Salisbury (mother of Mary Karlovec), and a service ribbon was cut by Edward Connolly.

Swiss Steak Dinner

*Treat yourself to a home cooked meal...
Dinner includes salad, rolls, Swiss steak,
mashed potatoes & gravy, corn,
green beans, pie, and beverage.*

Saturday,
March 11, 2023

Serving Times:
4:30 pm
6:00 pm

**SEATING IS
LIMITED!!**

RESERVATIONS /
PRE-SALE TICKETS
ONLY by MARCH 4
For reservations or to
purchase tickets,
call the church office at
440-327-2921

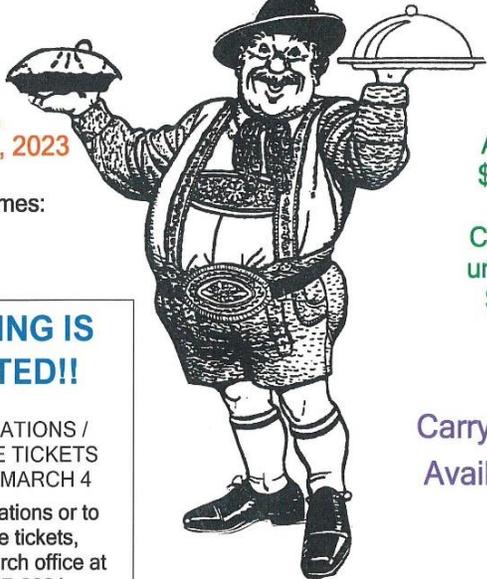


Sharing faith, hope, and love for 200 years

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

36363 Center Ridge Rd., North Ridgeville, OH 44039
440-327-2921 ~ www.fccalive.org



Adults
\$15.00

Children
under 12
\$7.00

Carry Outs
Available!



CHILI COOK OFF & MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12
FOLLOWING THE WORSHIP SERVICE
(approx. 11:30 am)

Support the 2023 mission trip to
Lotts Creek Community in Kentucky

\$5.00 for adults
\$3.00 for kids ages 5-12
Free for kids under 5

Your ticket will get you up to three tastings of chili,
crackers, corn muffins, drink.
(There will be chicken noodle soup for those who would prefer soup.)



We will also celebrate Mardi Gras (a week early)
with our traditional pancake races and cupcakes with one
holding a special prize!! One lucky person will be chosen
"Keeper of the Alleluias!"

**VOTE FOR
YOUR FAVORITE CHILI!!**



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	4 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
5 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am 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 4-H 7 pm	9 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	10	11 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
12 Worship 10:30 am Chili cook off/Mardi Gras Coffee hour AA Men 7:30 pm	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	18 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
19 Worship 10:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	20 OFFICE CLOSED Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	21 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	22 Ash Wednesday svc. 4-H 7 pm ??	23 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	24	25 AA Women 9 am AA Couples 6 pm
26 1 st Sunday in Lent Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	27 AA Women 7 pm	28 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm				