







Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity

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Church of Akron
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NEXT CHRONICLE
Deadline: January 18
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Editor: Kasey Kalchert



Beloved friends,

As the year begins to draw to a close, I am so very grateful that the season of Advent lies ahead. For in Advent we in the Church are reminded that we are called to wait and watch for the coming of the Christ, for the one who entered the world so unexpectedly in a stable one starry night all those thousands of years ago. Indeed, our waiting and our watching assume a posture of preparation for the promised coming of God’s special gift to the world. It was a promise for a particular time. It is a promise for our time. It is a promise for all time.

The final verse of the hauntingly beautiful carol, *O Holy Night*, reminds us so poignantly of the qualities of the One for whom we continually watch and wait and prepare:

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name.

Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,
His power and glory evermore proclaim.
His power and glory evermore proclaim.

At this time, and throughout the New Year that lies ahead, we are called to proclaim the power and glory of the One whose law is love and whose gospel is peace, who shatters the chains of the enslaved, who puts an end to oppression. This is the cause of our hope, joy, love, and peace during Advent. This is the foundation of our faith in the God who created the world and sustains it with an abundance of love, mercy, and grace.

Sisters and brothers, my prayer for each of you during Advent, Christmastide, and Epiphany, is that your watching and waiting will not be in vain. I pray that you will see the light of Christ breaking into the world and that you will reflect it back out into world with blessed effects for you and all who are touched by your precious lives.

Steven and I wish you a merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years. We are so grateful to be on this adventure of watching and waiting with you.

Grace and peace,

Nanette

Keeping You Informed

First Church is a very busy place, and I want to do everything that I can from my position as Moderator to keep our members and friends informed. So here we go:

Governing Board – Over the last several months the staff, led by Janis Worley and Debbie Riley, and the Building & Grounds Board have been actively researching and developing policies for building use, creating a Building Request form and a Building Use Agreement, which includes food pricing and fees for the various parts of the building. This has been a need for years.

The new procedures were adopted unanimously by the Governing Board at the October meeting. In short, these procedures define the terms by which an organization may use our building and the charges these groups may expect to pay. They also define the fees members will pay and which fees are waived. Anyone may request the documents by contacting the Congregational Life Coordinator, Kasey Kalchert, or find them on the website.

A **REMINDER** that your Governing Board's meeting minutes are posted in the first floor hallway across from the restrooms. A big "thank you" goes to board Secretary, Sue Yoder, for posting the minutes every month.

I also want to acknowledge how the members of the Board stepped up to be helpers in the Church School and support our Safe Church Policy – can you donate just one Sunday of your time to be a support person in the church school? You can sign up to help on the Google doc. For more information, contact Kasey Kalchert in the church office.

A **Congregational Meeting** will be held on **January 6** following the 11am worship service to discuss and approve the 2019 First Church budget. More information will be presented to the congregation prior to the meeting. A big shout out to Stewardship-Finance Board-chair, Bob Renner, Treasurer, Curt Clemons, and the entire board for their diligent work to facilitate First Church ministry.

As of this writing, the **2018 Loyalty Stewardship Campaign** pledge total is \$188,566. This compares to \$220,161 at a similar point last year. If you have not completed your pledge, please try to do so before the end of the calendar year – forms are available in the church office.

We encourage people to make their gifts online through the church's website: <http://www.akronfcc.org/support/donate/> - it's easy and one receives a confirmation immediately.

Food Justice BHAG progress – Almost a year ago, the Governing Board approved entering into collaboration with the Summit Food Coalition and their Kitchen Connect program to rent our commercial kitchen to fledgling entrepreneurs. I am pleased to report that we have our first entrepreneur, cheesecake connoisseur Michele Discenzo,

Breakfast With Santa

Breakfast with Santa is Saturday, December 8. Children and adults alike are invited to First Church for a pancake breakfast and a morning of fun activities, including meeting Santa Claus. Breakfast is served from 9-11am.

We are seeking elf volunteers to help in the kitchen, serve, and clean up at this event. Any interested holiday elves, can contact Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator, or sign up in the church office! Thank you!



Call to a Special Congregational Meeting for the 2019 Budget

First Congregational Church will hold a specially called meeting on January 6 in the Meetinghouse, immediately following the 11am worship service.

The purpose of this meeting is to vote on the 2019 budget.

A minimum of 64 members must be present to have a quorum during voting.

We are looking forward to your presence and participation.

Moderator updates continued

who will provide samples and opportunities to purchase her wares over the holidays. This program also bleeds into our ...

Community Development BHAG progress – Our neighbor congregation at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church hosted a workshop on November 17 to discuss the concepts around community development. Several of our members attended the workshop – but since the Chronicle deadline occurred before the workshop, I cannot tell you what we learned!

Congregational Life BHAG progress – 864 Groups are being formed and all members and friends of First Church are invited – and indeed, encouraged – to sign up and get involved. They are fun and involve eating. It's all good! See page 8 for more details.

Staff Kudos - Finally, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I want to gratefully acknowledge our entire, very capable First Church staff and the fantastic job they are doing of working with the members of the church in facilitating and expanding our many ministries and generally making the church a more efficient organization. When you see them, please take a moment to say "THANK YOU!"

Submitted by Larry Becker, Moderator

Welcome New Staff Members!

We are pleased to introduce two new staff members who will be joining us in the coming season:

Greg Petusky – AV Technician

Greg Petusky was raised in Niles, Ohio before moving to the Akron area with his family about 9 years ago. He studied for a degree in Broadcast Engineering at Cleveland State University. Greg has worked in the audio/visual field while employed with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and more recently with the University of Akron Audio/Visual Services department, doing sound, and producing movies and commercials. In addition to his passion for all things tech, Greg is a multi-talented musician who plays several instruments, and he enjoys photography and cooking. Greg is looking forward to using his years of experience to help First Church communicate our message to both our members and the greater community.

Antigone Lowery – Associate Minister

Antigone is a motivated pastor who is passionate about discipleship and making disciples. Her love for God and the church is rooted in her experience as a youth ministry student and teacher, and she cares deeply about ministering to people of all ages and from all walks of life. She is driven by a deep desire to love and serve others the way that Jesus did, with authenticity and selflessness.



In addition to her love for the local church, Antigone is passionate about ministering to those in the Armed Forces and currently serves as an Army Reserve Chaplain. It was in the military where her desire to share the love of God with service members and their families was amplified, and she believes that it also increased her desire to serve the local church.

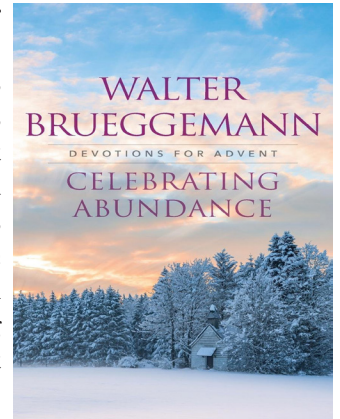
Antigone earned a Bachelor of Arts from Judson University in 2012 and Master of Divinity with honors from Alliance Theological Seminary in May 2018. Antigone is currently in the process of becoming an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ. After graduating from seminary, Antigone served as the Transitional Minister for the United Church of Spring Valley in Spring Valley, New York where she was responsible for preaching, pastoral care, and other administrative concerns. She has also served as a youth ministry leader and led AWANA programs for middle school and high school aged students.

Along with her younger sister, Antigone grew up in Denton, Texas, a suburb just north of Dallas-Fort Worth. There, she developed a love for tennis which she also played competitively in college.

First Church Reads Advent Devotional

This Advent season we will be reading Walter Brueggemann's *Celebrating Abundance*, a collection of daily devotionals for Advent compiled by Richard Floyd.

Floyd writes in the introduction: "Advent is a time for telling the truth – the truth of our weariness and our anxiety, yes, but also the truth of the relentless generosity of God, which opens up futures that seem to be shut down. Walter Brueggemann is a persistent truth-teller, and his sermons invite us to consider the newness and abundance of God that is always already breaking into our settled lives. If Advent is also a time for waking up, consider Walter an indefatigable alarm clock."



Walter Brueggemann is William Marcellus McPheeters Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary. An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, he is the author of dozens of books. Copies of *Celebrating Abundance* are available from the church office for a donation of \$10, or may be sourced from your favorite bookseller.

Get Social!

First Church is on social media and you can help promote our many great ministries and missions online. Have you "liked" our Facebook page? You can find us at [FCCofAkron](#). We will keep you up-to-date with the latest news and events, so be sure to visit our page. Prefer Twitter? Follow [1stChurchAkron](#).



New Staff continued

In her free time, Antigone enjoys spending time with friends, attending sporting events, and CrossFit.

Antigone comes to First Church eager to learn, eager to serve, and most of all eager to love everyone that she encounters.

Antigone will begin the Associate Minister position on Monday, January 14, 2019. In this newly created full-time position, Antigone will shepherd our ministry to children and youth, extend visitation to our elder homebound members, and assist the Senior Minister with general ministry functions. Contact antigone.lowery@akronfcc.org

Christmas Offering

The Board of Christian Outreach has selected Mason Community Learning Center to be the recipient of this year's annual Special Christmas Offering. First Church has been helping Mason for sixteen years. Our outreach program has evolved into a multifaceted community ministry. First Church annually provides Christmas for approximately 20 families through the family sponsorship program. Math tutoring for fourth grade students in need is available on Wednesday mornings. Monies received from this offering in the past purchased nine smart boards as well as a Chromebook cart for teacher and student use. This year, our goal is to reserve funds for future purchases of instructional, educational, and/or computer programs that will benefit the Mason schoolchildren. The Mason CLC staff and administration will determine the expenditure of these funds.

Early in December, you will receive My Christmas Offering letter and envelope for this specific contribution. On Sundays through December, you can place your envelope into the offering plate during worship or drop it off in the church office at your convenience. Please write "Christmas Offering" on the memo line or on the envelope.

Thank you for your continuing support of Mason Community Learning Center and all of First Church's outreach programs.

December Mission of the Month

Mason Community Learning Center

The Outreach Board has selected Mason Community Learning Center as the December Mission of the Month. Please consider making a monetary donation to help and continue the Mason initiative. Your donation will help provide funds for future purchases of instructional, educational, and/or computer programs that will benefit the learning experiences of the Mason schoolchildren. Mason CLC staff and administration will determine the designation of the funds for specific items. Please indicate Mason CLC on the memo line of your check or use the Mission of the Month envelope provided in your pew. Thank you for your continued support of the Mason Outreach Program.

Mission of the Month Updates

Our October Mission of the Month, Neighbors in Need, received a combined donation, collected from the congregation and the Outreach Board contribution, totaling at \$600! Thank you for your support!



Christmas at Mason CLC

If you are participating in the Mason CLC Family Sponsorship, please make sure to return your gifts to the church office by December 2.

This year, the First Church congregation is helping to provide Christmas to approximately 20 Mason families! Thank you for your support!

Ecuador Scholarship Program

For over 25 years, the generous donations from the First Church congregation have provided funding to give many indigenous Ecuadorian students the opportunity to attend high school or university. This year, we would like to pay the tuition for one university student (\$800) and four high school students (\$350 each.)

If you'd like to contribute, please make your check to First Church with "Ecuador" written on the memo line. The recipients of these scholarships are most appreciative of the support they receive from us. In the past, Sponsors have received letters of thanks, written in Spanish and translated by Agneta Solomon.

January Mission of the Month

First Glance

The Outreach Board has selected First Glance as the January Mission of the Month. First Glance is a youth center that operates in Akron's Kenmore community. Their programs are designed for students in grades 6-12 and for young adults, ages 18 to 29. Activities can include recreation nights, young adult programs, assistance programs, and Teen Mom and Young Mom programs. If you would like to contribute, please make your check payable to First Church with "First Glance" written on the memo line. Thank you for your donation.

Holiday Worship Highlights

Advent Lunch and Workshop

Sunday, December 2, is the First Sunday of Advent and Communion Sunday with worship services at both 9:30 and 11am. At the 11am service, Organist and Choir Director, Julie Lehman, will be welcoming guest string musicians from the University of Akron for a special music Sunday. Following the 11am worship service, there will be crafts available for children in Fellowship Hall arranged by the CE Board / Teaching Team and a luncheon of Sloppy Joe sandwiches for participants. Please sign up in the church office or contact Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator.

Second Sunday in Advent

On December 9, Kathy Johnson will offer her musical leadership along with Pastor Nanette in the 9:30am worship service in the Upper Room. At the 11am service, we'll be blessed with the sounds of the Handbell Choir directed by Christine Allison in addition to our Chancel Choir.

Wassail Sunday

On the Third Sunday of Advent, December 16, we will worship together at 9:30am and 11am and after each service have the opportunity to enjoy a cup of non-alcoholic wassail. This traditional hot mulled cider and spiced-tea drink will be served by Don and Beth Cooper, using the Nowels family recipe.



Service of Hope and Healing

The festive season is not always a joyous time for those of us who are grieving or who are struggling to make sense of our world and life experiences. On Wednesday, December 19, at 7:30pm in the Chapel, you are invited to enter into a comforting and honest space that makes room for those who need a time apart, those who may be wrestling amidst all the holiday cheer.

Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant

On Sunday, December 23, the 9:30am service in the Upper Room will celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent with Dave and friends offering music and an uplifting message from Pastor Nanette. During the 11am service in the Meetinghouse, attendees of all ages are invited to pick up a costume as they enter and participate in our annual Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant. A telling of the birth story that brings the hope and joy of Christmas to life in our midst!



Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols

Celebrate with us on Monday, December 24, at 8pm in the Meetinghouse as we join together in song and scriptures, and end the service lighting candles and singing Silent Night.

Carols, Candles, and Communion

This magical service on Monday, December 24, at 11:30pm in the hushed Meetinghouse is a moving way to usher in Christmas Day to the sounds of *O Holy Night*.

First Sunday after Christmas

Sunday, December 30, with services at 9:30am & 11am.

Festival of Epiphany

On Sunday, January 6, at 9:30 and 11am we'll celebrate the revelation and confirmation of the magi and the light revealed to us all in the babe of Bethlehem. After the 11am worship service, members of the congregation are asked to gather for a Congregational Meeting, see page 2 for more information.

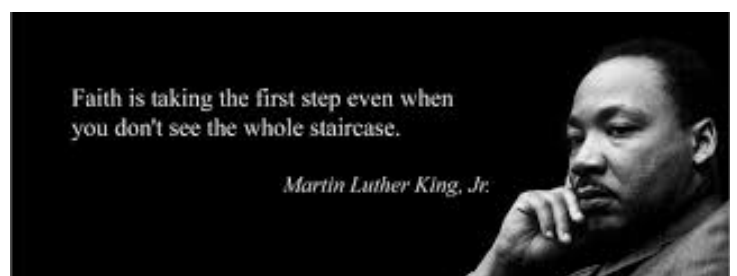
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration

Sunday, January 20, with services at 9:30am & 11am.

Join us for special services this morning honoring the legacy of Dr. King.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday, January 27, with services at 9:30am & 11am.



Wednesday Fellowship & Faith Enrichment

Holiday Reminder!

The last day of Wednesday programming is December 12. No programs will be held on December 19, December 26, or January 2, 2019. Programs will commence again on January 9, 2019.

Wednesday Evening Dinner

A delicious dinner and dessert is available in Fellowship Hall at 6pm. The cost of dinner is \$8 per meal, either paid in advance or at the door. Reservations are required. Please sign up in the church office by 2pm on the Monday prior.

Movie Group

If you enjoy thought-provoking, insightful, and entertaining cinema, grab your ticket for Wednesday Night at the Movies at 6:45pm, with discussion to follow. Contact Bernie Babb with any questions at 330.687.0823.

We hope you will join us for a fun evening in the 2nd floor Theatre Room!

Join us for three short films on Dec. 5

Final Show: A woman who has lived a long life full of love and loss has to decide, based on all she has learned, who to take along to eternity.

The Bake Shop Ghost: A deceased baker haunts the inhabitants of her bakery until they can prove their worth.

The Happiness Machine: This documentary focuses on an inventor from rural Iowa and explores what it means to pass on the gift of place.

Join us for a feature film on Dec. 12

Slipaway: When a homeless young musician moves into a sailboat with a spirited elderly widow, the two must overcome their differences and haunting pasts to unlock each other's dreams.

Join us for three short films on Jan. 9

A Journey Around the World: 12-year-old Canadian singer and Guinness record-holder, Capri Everitt, embarks on a unique journey with her family to 80 countries in efforts to raise money and awareness for orphaned and abandoned children around the world.

Alex, Listen to Your Heart: Alex has given up on love completely, however one day his heart calls him using a public phone to convince him otherwise.

One Small Step: The story of Luna, a Chinese American girl who dreams of becoming an astronaut.

Join us for a feature film on Jan. 16

After Words: A librarian who has lost her job and is suicidal decides to take a final trip to Costa Rica before swallowing a bottle of pills. Once there, she meets a younger man, a vibrant tour guide who takes her to all the beautiful places and becomes intrigued by her aloof intellectualism. He works hard to draw her out, to embrace the Costa Rican motto, "Pura Vida." An unusual but lovely romantic relationship evolves.

Join us for three short films on Jan. 23

The Reason to Live: A documentary about Ron Kemp, an optimistic musician, reveals how music has transformed his life from his troubled past and why he can't give up playing music.

Echoes of You: An aspiring classical pianist finds his greatest fulfillment in an unlikely place.

Rise and Shine: Who cooks breakfast in your family? Four families reveal the simmering secrets behind the most important meal of the day in this documentary.

Join us for a feature film on Jan. 30

Lovely Still: 78-year-old Robert Malone has been alone his whole life. A week before Christmas, a new mysterious woman moves in across the street and teaches him that love conquers all.



Wednesday Faith Enrichment

On Wednesdays there are two meaningful opportunities to have conversation and fellowship with others who are seeking to understand their faith and our Christian traditions in light of daily life.

Join Pastor Nanette in the Library from 10:45am-noon each week for discussion and bible study and from 6:45-8pm in the Conference Room for discussion and often DVD-based resources. You can attend as you are able – come for one week when you are able or every week for a season. While there is value in getting to know others in the group as we engage the journey of faith together, the sessions can stand alone, so you're always welcome!



The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance presents this certificate with sincere thanksgiving to



First Congregational Church of Akron
United Church of Christ
Akron, Ohio

For its generous and faithful support of the 2017 Christmas Fund with gifts totaling \$1,069

Brian R. Bodager

Brian R. Bodager
President and CEO
The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ, Inc.

Krista L. Betz

The Rev. Krista L. Betz
Director, Ministerial Assistance
The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ, Inc.

Thank you!

The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance presented the First Church congregation with a certificate to say thank you for your generous support of the 2017 Christmas Fund.

Food Pantry Updates

The Food Pantry is in need of several items this season, including empty 15oz jars (such as peanut butter jars) for laundry detergent, dish soap, toothpaste, shampoo, body wash, cat food, used pots and pans, dinnerware, cutlery, and kitchen utensils. All donations can be dropped off at the church office. Thank you so much!

Volunteers needed for Walmart pickup!

Every Saturday, volunteers pick up donated produce for the Food Pantry from the Walmart on Arlington Road. At least two more volunteers with large vehicles with enough space to carry 15 boxes are needed! Pickup begins at 8am and typically finishes at 9:30am. Please contact Darren Jones-Baker at djonesbaker@neo.rr.com for details.

Canaan Sales

Food products from the Holy Land will be in the Fellowship Hall on December 2 and December 16, before and after the 11am worship service. If you have questions or are looking for particular items, please contact Carolyn Durway at spicewood@neo.rr.com.

Parish Nurse Ministry

Blood pressure and diabetes checks will be available on December 16 and January 20 from 10am to 1pm in the Conference Room.

Sunday Mornings for Children and Youth

9am-11am: Early morning childcare (ages 4-7) is available on the 2nd floor until we transition to Church School with 11am worship.

9am-12:15pm: Nursery care (infants and toddlers ages 3 and under) is available on the 2nd floor.

9:30am Worship: Children and youth are invited to attend worship with their families. There is an activity carpet available in the worship space.

11am Worship: Children and youth are welcome to attend worship with their families. The Family Room at the rear of the Meetinghouse is also available for your use and is equipped with toys, toddler furniture, a changing table, a rocking chair, and has access to a restroom. Following the Children's Message, children from Pre-K through the 8th grade are invited to accompany our volunteer teachers to Church School for a fun and engaging experience. On Communion Sundays, children begin the service in Church School and return to worship to receive Communion with their families.



Holiday Office Closures

The church office will be closed on December 25, 26, and 27 for the Christmas holiday.

The church office will be closed on January 1 and January 2 for the New Year holiday.

The church office will be closed on January 21 in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Guess Who?

Can you tell which First Church staff member this baby grew up to be?

If you think you know, email Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator, at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org. A prize will be awarded to the first person to guess correctly. Good luck!

Last month's picture was of Julie Lehman. Special shoutout to Karen Bruno, who was the first to guess correctly!



Seasonal Recipes from the Archives

Over the years, First Church has published many recipe books. Each month we'll share a recipe from the archive celebrating the submissions made by church members.

Biggs' Dinner Rolls

Originally Submitted by Prince Biggs

Ingredients:

1 quart of milk, scalded

6 oz. dried yeast blocks, softened with water

6 eggs

1 cup of sugar

3 sticks of butter, melted

2 teaspoon of salt

24-25 cups of flour

Directions:

In a mixer, combine eggs, butter, sugar, and salt. After the milk is scalded, add 1 quart of water to make the mixture lukewarm. Add the mixture to the mixer. Add dissolved yeast mixture. Start adding flour, one cup at a time. The mixture will have a tacky consistency, but not be very stiff. Put it on the stove to rise, 30-35 minutes. Brush a cupcake pan with butter. Roll out the dough with a biscuit cutter and let it rise again. Carefully put the trays into the oven and let it sit for 5-10 minutes, then turn the oven up to 400°. Do not preheat and bake for 15-20 minutes. Brush with melted butter after the rolls have cooled for 10 minutes.



Kitchen Connect Entrepreneurs



In collaboration with the Summit Food Coalition and Kitchen Connect, First Church has opened its kitchen doors to aspiring entrepreneurs. On December 2, our first partner, cheesecake connoisseur Michele Discenzo, will be in the Fellowship Hall, where you will have the opportunity

to meet her, taste samples and even order cheesecake for the holiday season. To contact Michele, you can email divinecheesecakes1@gmail.com or call 330.907.0793.

Leadership on Main

On November 14, Pastor Nanette served as Moderator at the Leadership Akron event featuring a conversation with Eric Nelson, Director of SWAG, Students With A Goal.

Strengthening Community

864 Groups are here!

What the heck is an 864? Easy answer: 8 people meeting 4 times in 6 months.

Why are we doing this? We, as members and friends of First Church, are a community of faith – followers of Christ. Strengthening our community means forming new relationships and deepening the ones we already have. Spending time together in small groups, having the opportunity for more intimate conversations, is one way to do that.

How do they work? First, you sign up to participate. You can sign up in the church office, at a sign up table in the fellowship hall or through the church website www.akronfcc.org. Our team will create the groups. Each group arranges to meet four times between February 1 and June 1. How and exactly when is up to each group to decide. Want to meet for breakfast or brunch? Perhaps lunch or dinner? Make it a potluck in someone's home or eat out? Or maybe a picnic? Each of the four get-togethers can be the same or different – it's up to each group.

Who can participate? *Everyone!* We are not limiting participation in any way. We do, however, encourage sensitivity to each other's circumstances – parents needing a babysitter, mobility restrictions, some who may not be able to host in their homes, others who cannot afford the cost of a meal out or who cannot drive at night, to name just a few.

The goal is to meet new people – friends we haven't yet met – and to deepen existing relationships as we live into our welcome and value others in our community. Everyone has a story. This is an opportunity to hear them.

Questions? Contact Julie & Bill Brandy (wtjabrandy@att.net), Kellie Ramirez (musicusgeekus@gmail.com) or Chris & Larry Becker (lasrrybecker2900@yahoo.com.)

What Will Be Your Legacy?

Legacy Giving, or Planned Giving, is a way to support a non-profit through a will or other form of donation. Gifts can be made over time in cash, or in non-cash assets such as stocks, life insurance policies or retirement accounts. Gifts can also be made after you have passed away. Planned gifts given while you are still alive allow you to receive tax benefits, plus you can help detail where the money will be spent.

If First Church has made a difference in your life, please consider it in your estate planning. If you are considering a donation, or have already included First Church in your plans, please contact Janis Worley, Finance and Operations Manager, at janis.worley@akronfcc.org. Your legacy is important, make sure it is a positive and purposeful one!

First Church Concert Series

Paul Kovac's Big 'Grass Band is the next event in the First Church Free Music Series. Join us on January 17 from 7-9pm in the Meetinghouse. this event is free and open to the public.

Who is the Big 'Grass Band?

The Big 'Grass Band is made up of seasoned players, with decades of experience successfully presenting Bluegrass to knowledgeable audiences and to those hearing this kind of music for the first time. The band features Paul Kovac on banjo and vocals, David Mayfield on mandolin and vocals, Bill Lestock on the fiddle, Ron Bonkowski on guitar and vocals, and Andrew Bonnis on bass.



Next in the Concert Series

The Akron Big Band

Thursday, February 21, 2019, 7:00pm - 9:00pm.

Learn more at www.theakronbigband.com

Celtic Rush

Thursday, March 7, 2019, 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Learn more at www.celticrush.com

The Akron Pops Orchestra

Thursday, May 16, 2019, 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Learn more at www.akronpops.org/concerts



University of Akron Symphony Orchestra

Directed by Guy Bordo, the University of Akron Symphony Orchestra will be performing at First Church on December 6. The concert will begin at 7:30pm in the Meetinghouse. Selections will include *Prelude to Hansel and Gretel* by Humperdinck, Copland's *Our Town*, *In the Steppes of Central Asia* composed by Borodin, and Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9*.

The concert is free and open to the public - be sure to tell your friends and family. Freewill donations will be graciously accepted in support of the First Church Music Fund.

The orchestra will back at First Church for another performance on Thursday, February 7 at 7:30pm.

Sacred Harp

The NE Ohio Sacred Harp Singers invite you to join us for an afternoon of early American hymns. The group meets the first Sunday of the month from 2pm-4pm in the Chapel. All are welcome to come join us, either to sing or to enjoy the songs. A freewill offering is graciously accepted. For more information, please contact Corey Sees at coreysees@gmail.com.

Arts at Holy Trinity

Our friends at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church are hosting the St. Sebastian Parish Choir on December 7 at 7:30pm. You'll be able to hear the story of Christmas from Bible readings, choral anthems, and congregational hymns that move us through the Advent season. Music leaders include adult and youth choirs, a brass ensemble, handbell choirs, and instrumentalists. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, please visit holytrinityakron.org.

Love Truck

The Love Truck will serve a meal on Saturday, December 1 and Saturday, December 29 from 4:30-5:30pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nathan Walder for more information at the.lovetruck@yahoo.com.

With Sincerest Thanks

Dear Friends at First Congregational Church,

We are so excited to be new members at your church! [In August,] we celebrated our son Asher's baptism along with his adoption finalization. Rev. Pitt attended and led the service, which was such a blessing. We want to thank you for the beautiful blanket you gave to Asher! It will certainly be a favorite of his and I pray that he feels your prayers, support, and love when he surrounds himself in it. Thank you! *Love, Sarah, Andrew, and Asher Courtney*

On behalf of the Mason Christmas Outreach Program, Mina Riazi, Emily Mosconi, Linda Hultz, and I extend a HUGE THANK YOU To First Church members and friends who: 1) adopted Mason families and provided wonderful Christmas gifts to the children in those families; 2) selected ornaments from our Christmas trees in Fellowship Hall to help make a special wish come true for our beautiful Mason children and/or: 3) made a donation to be used in our Mason Christmas Program. Our mission would not be successful without YOU! We are truly a blessed church community. THANK YOU!

We wish you and the people special to your heart a very Happy New Year! *Maggie Grigsby*

Howard and I would like to express our deepest appreciation to all the Food Train participants that kept us well fed with delicious meals during the early weeks following my shoulder replacement surgery. It helped us tremendously during a very difficult time. And many thanks to all for the many cards that meant so much. You are truly First Church angels! *Sue and Howard Tolley*

On November 30, I am moving to Madison, OH. I send my love and blessings to all. Thank you for the meal train, it helped so much. *Peace, George Kostan*

Congratulations

Congratulations to Michael and Cynthia Bof, on the birth of their son, Alfred Henry Bof on November 11. Ron and Pam Bof are Alfred's proud grandparents.

Our sincerest congratulations to Elizabeth Edwards and Nick Fonte on their wedding. The ceremony will be held at First Church on December 14, with Pastor Nanette officiating.

Worship Flowers

First Church requests donations of worship flowers for the following dates Jan 6, 13, and 20. Feb 24, and March 3, 10, and 24.

If you would like to honor, celebrate, or remember a loved one on one of these dates, please contact Patty Durkos at 330.253.5109 x110.



In Our Prayers

Duane Angel, Jake and Terri Cook, Chuck Cunningham, Joanna and Jim Gartner, Barbara Hansford, George Kostan, Joanne Mazzaferro, Margaret Maurer, Donald Menickie, Lee Pritchard, Bill Rodefer, Lola Rothmann, Agneta Solomon, Sue Tolley, Art Wallach, and Doug Weyrick.

In Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy goes to Terri and Jake Cook on the death of their son, Ryan on November 8. Please keep the Cook family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. A memorial service for Ryan will be held on December 29 at First Church, with Pastor Nanette officiating.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Roberts family as they mourn the death of Lewis Roberts. Lew passed away on November 18 at the age of 91.

First Church is hosting a memorial service on December 15 for Jan Kostan. The service will begin at 1pm in the Meetinghouse with Pastor Nanette officiating.

Earth Saving Ideas

So many times we are unsure what to do with Christmas trees after the ornaments are packed away and the celebrations have finished. Did you know that Summit MetroParks recycles Christmas trees? Since the 1970s, they have repurposed over 2,000 trees as mulch or landscaping compost. From December 26 through January 31, you can take your tree to any of the below MetroPark locations. Be sure to clear the tree of any decoration before dropping it off.

Visitors should look for the small signs that identify the drop-off locations:

- Firestone Metro Park
- Furnace Run Metro Park
- Goodyear Heights Metro Park / Main Entrance
- Nimisila Reservoir Metro Park
- Sand Run Metro Park
- Silver Creek Metro Park



Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)				
October 2018 - Final				
	October	YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget
INCOME				
2018 Loyalty Campaign	14588	198636	208325	95.35%
Non-pledge Income	4630	35330	37498	94.22%
Special Ministries-incl. Spec. Offer.	2108	27101	37160	72.93%
Endowment, Sprows Trust, Pollock	46418	457077	457742	99.85%
Other Income	9854	30189	22934	131.63%
TOTAL	77598	748333	763659	97.99%
EXPENSES				
Total Admin. & Support	2654	48361	57181	84.58%
Total Mission	6483	66379	81913	81.04%
Food Service Expense	1310	23973	22824	105.03%
Personnel	29548	326491	402986	81.02%
Property Expenses	28908	235722	254179	92.74%
TOTAL	68903	700926	819083	85.57%
* All Boards, Pastoral Care & Special Ministries				

Wifi Update

In October, First Church significantly upgraded our Wifi system so that it is now available throughout the entire building. To access it, select the "FIRSTCHURCH-GUEST" network, and then answer "Yes" to the disclaimer form. No password needed! Feel free to use the Wifi to post comments or photos about First Church to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, and don't forget to tag us! Help spread the word about the amazing things happening here!



Pew Cards

In today's more technological world, many people choose to make their contributions to the church by establishing recurring charges to their credit card, or through the First Church online donation portal. This means that on Sundays they are not able to participate with others in the congregation when the offering is given. Not anymore! We created an online giving card, printed in bright green paper, that has been placed in the envelope holder on the back of every pew. If you are one that donates online, simply take one of the green pew cards and place it in the offering as a symbol of your financial participation.



LED Lighting Outdoors!

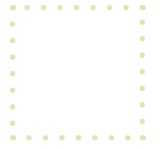
Now that it gets dark so much earlier, some of you may have noticed how well lit the exterior of First Church is now! The LED lighting project switched out and upgraded many of our exterior floodlights, to provide brighter lighting covering larger areas. Drive by some evening and see our new look!

Books for PB&J

The PB&J Program would appreciate new or gently used books for the children at Mason CLC, grades K-6, again this year. The younger children enjoy picture books, but the older children want chapter books. It would be helpful if the chapter books were at a low reading level, as many students are below grade level in reading. We will collect books until May 1. Please bring books to the church office.

Thank you for your continued support of the Mason schoolchildren.





Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Welcome

First Congregational Church of Akron unconditionally affirms all people as we live out our call to follow Jesus Christ and his teaching of inclusive love.

We welcome people of every race, age, nationality, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family circumstance, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, or spiritual background. We invite all who are seeking God's presence in their lives to participate fully in our church life, ministry, and leadership.

We strive to be a safe place, free from the fear of judgment, where wounds can heal, differences are cherished, and inclusivity is intentional. We commit ourselves to the struggle against injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred, in order to foster a world of peace and wholeness.

God loves you. Christ invites you. We embrace and celebrate you.