

## CHURCH TRADITIONS

### *In the Sunset of the Year*

In the October 1998 edition of *The First Chronicle*, an article titled “*In the Sunset of the Year*” shared a moving reflection on the lives of Frank H. Mason and his wife, May. The article’s final paragraph recounts a tradition tied to their legacy.

Traditions are the heartbeats of a community, linking us to the values and vision of those who came before us. However, for traditions to thrive, they must be more than just habits we hold onto. Their meaning and relevance need to be shared and celebrated with new generations. Frank H. Mason’s legacy extends beyond his contributions to our church’s physical structure and social life. His compassion for his community inspired the naming of Mason Elementary School, which first opened in 1913 and continues to serve Akron’s children today. In 1910, when school medical inspections were suspended due to funding shortages, Mr. Mason personally financed visiting nurses to ensure the health of Akron’s students. This legacy of care resonates in our church’s ongoing partnership with Mason CLC, where we collect winter coats for every student and pack groceries to feed families over the weekend. These acts of service, rooted in Mason’s spirit of generosity, extend his impact into the present day.

### *Honoring Tradition Through Connection*

By sharing the histories and meanings behind our cherished practices, we bridge the gap between past and present, creating opportunities for **all** to engage with them meaningfully. Traditions, like the hymn sung each All Saints Sunday, become richer when their stories are known. They remind us that we are part of something larger than ourselves – a community built on faith, generosity, and shared purpose.

As we navigate the changes facing our congregation, let us commit to telling these stories. Let us invite everyone to see how old traditions inspire new acts of faith and how the legacy of figures like Frank H. Mason continues to shape who we are and what we do. Together, we can honor the past while building a future that welcomes all to join in the journey.

### *In The Sunset of the Year*

Frank H. Mason came to Akron at age 27 in 1879. He went to work at B.F. Goodrich and eventually became Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors. He earned the title of “philanthropist” and made many contributions to the Akron area.

Frank and May Mason were active members of First Church, joining the church in 1887. Mrs. Mason headed the committee to select the organ for the new church in 1908 and, for services to the Women’s Association, was named their honorary president in 1928 following her death in 1926.

The Masons were major contributors to the building of the Parish House in 1916 which became the social center for church activities. Probably to the surprise of many present church members, bowling alleys were located in the basement, a gymnasium for basketball was on the first floor and rooms for scouts were on the second floor. They also financed a major renovation and rebuilding of the organ with a dedication recital held on October 21, 1926 for a standing-room-only crowd. Frank died at age 79 on July 10, 1931.

Each year, on a late Sunday in Indian summer, before the last golden and russet leaves have fallen from the trees on Union Street, the choir sings an old hymn arranged by Burton Garlinghouse, a distinguished former music director of the church. Its simple words call to our minds Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Mason, whose lives were built into First Church for half a century, and all other former members, without whom the development of this church would never have been possible.

“Praise the Lord of field and forest  
For His glory draweth near  
He is in His holy temple  
In the sunset of the year.”



**Interweaving  
Sacred Prayers  
Collaborative**

Women’s Interfaith Spiritual  
Heritage (WISH)  
and  
Akron Area Interfaith Council are  
asking you to  
SAVE THE DATES:

Wednesday, April 2, 6pm - 8pm  
Saturday, April 26, 2pm - 4pm  
Thursday, May 8, 6pm - 8pm  
Contact for more information:  
neowish2020@gmail.com

A community activated art event is planned to interweave different faith groups in the Akron area. Attendees will bring a covered dish to share, and meaningful fabric scraps (like dad’s old shirt, grandmother’s tablecloth). Attendees will intermingle, share a meal and interweave their fabric strips into a group tapestry. We will register 50 people per event. Event to be held at Summit Artspace.

More detailed information is on its way!

## FONDLY REMEMBERING

As we reflect on our church's rich history, we are reminded of the many ministers and moments that have shaped our journey. This edition, we feature Rev. John Milton Phillips. In the rich history of AkronFCC, Rev. John Milton Phillips stands out as a man of intellect, resilience, and compassion. Serving as pastor from 1927 to 1930, his time with us may have been brief, but his impact is still worth reflecting on today.

Born in Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1889, Rev. Phillips began his journey in ministry early, becoming a licensed minister in 1910 while pursuing his bachelor's degree at Illinois College. His academic path then led him to New England, where he attended the Boston University School of Theology and studied philosophy at Harvard. These formative years laid the foundation for a ministry focused on thoughtful engagement with societal issues, which would define his time at AkronFCC.

Rev. Phillips brought a deep commitment to addressing pressing concerns of his time, including international peace, the dangers of armament programs, and the complexities of human nature in conflict. His sermons, marked by their timeless relevance, reflect a dedication to guiding his congregation through both spiritual growth and worldly challenges. His tenure at AkronFCC was not without personal trials. In 1929, he faced a serious health crisis, requiring two surgeries and a prolonged recovery. Despite this, he returned to the pulpit with unwavering dedication, expressing profound gratitude for the kindness and support shown to him and his family by the church community. "It is impossible to tell you how much this friendship and concern meant to us," he wrote, embodying the mutual care that defines our congregation.

In 1930, Rev. Phillips and his family returned to New England, where he accepted a call to the historic Centre Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut. Even after his departure, he maintained a connection to AkronFCC, joining us in 1934 for our Centennial anniversary celebration.

Rev. Phillips' story reminds us of the enduring importance of thoughtful leadership, resilience in the face of adversity, and the strength of community. As we honor his legacy, let us be inspired to continue his work of faith, reflection, and service.



**Rev. John Milton Phillips**  
First Congregational Church  
Minister 1927 - 1930

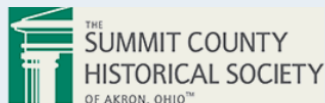
## 2025 WOMAN OF THE YEAR RECIPIENT



The Summit County Historical Society has announced seven recipients of 2025 Woman of the Year awards. The Woman of the Year awards are part of the historical society's Women's History Project. Area residents nominate local women for the awards and a committee reviews applicants, selecting recipients based on their community efforts and occupational contributions.

Congratulations to AkronFCC's very own, Margaret Maurer! Margaret will be presented with the Faith Award on March 12 at the Women's History Project luncheon.

Previous AkronFCC recipients include: Sarah Vradenburg,, 2024, and Janis Worley, 2022



## SPECIAL SERVICE

Mark your calendars for a meaningful and inspiring morning at AkronFCC on Sunday, February 23. We'll hold a **combined service at 10am**, welcoming guest preacher Geoffrey Black, who will also share a special presentation at 11 AM exploring the significance of African American Monuments.



During the service, AkronFCC will be honored with a miniature Sojourner Truth Statue, crafted by renowned artist Woodrow Nash. This replica commemorates our sponsorship of the larger statue unveiled last summer at Akron's Sojourner Truth's Legacy Plaza.

We hope you'll join us as we come together to reflect, learn, and celebrate our shared history and the path ahead.

## SALAD SUNDAYS

Every second Sunday of the month, our Fellowship Hall transforms into a delightful gathering space, thanks to the wonderful contributions of our church community. Organized by Christine Allison, "Salad Sundays" have quickly become a cherished tradition, offering a time to



connect, share, and enjoy delicious salads and treats prepared by members of the congregation. We are so grateful to all who have shared their culinary creations and hospitality to make these Sundays truly memorable. If you haven't had the chance to experience Salad Sunday yet, we warmly invite you to stick around after the service next month! It's a wonderful opportunity to enjoy great food, lively conversation, and the joy of community. Thank you to everyone who makes Salad Sundays possible—you are a blessing to us all!

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## SILVER LINING LUNCHEON

**Wed February 26  
noon-2pm**

Senior and retired members are invited to attend. The event includes a hot lunch and short musical program.

RSVP [events@akronfcc.org](mailto:events@akronfcc.org)



ROLL on out on Friday February 21 from 7-9pm and enjoy a family fun evening of gaming with the Membership Board. Bring your favorite board game and a snack to share. Plenty of games of all kinds will be available in the Fellowship Hall.



## Mardi Gras Pancake Breakfast

Join us on Sunday, March 3, for a Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Membership Board! Before our **combined 10am Mardi Gras worship service**, come enjoy a delicious, free breakfast beginning at 8:45 AM in the Fellowship Hall. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather in community, share a meal, and celebrate together before worship. Everyone is welcome, but we kindly ask that you sign up in advance so we can plan accordingly.

We also need volunteers to help make this event a success! If you're available to set up, cook, serve, or clean up, we'd love to have your help. Sign-up sheets are available in the Fellowship Hall, or you can contact the church office at 330.253.5109 x112 or [admin@akronfcc.org](mailto:admin@akronfcc.org) to lend a hand.

Let's come together for a morning of food, fellowship, and fun—we look forward to seeing you there!

## Breakfast with the Bunny

On Saturday, April 5 we will host our annual Breakfast with the Bunny in the Fellowship Hall. This event is free and open to the public so invite your "peeps" and plan to join us from 9am - 11am.



We are "on the hunt" for volunteers to help setup, cook, serve, and cleanup. Contact Julie at [childrensministry@akronfcc.org](mailto:childrensministry@akronfcc.org) with any questions.



**ASH WEDNESDAY** March 5  
Service at 6:30pm

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AKRON

## Your Church Needs You

The heart of any church isn't just the building—it's the people. It's the community coming together, serving one another, and making worship a warm, welcoming, and meaningful experience for everyone. From greeting visitors with a smile to helping with Sunday morning tasks, there are so many ways to make a difference. Here are some opportunities to get involved:

- Be an Usher: Assist with offering and communion.
- Read During Services: Share your voice by reading announcements or scripture—materials are provided ahead of time.
- Make Coffee: Help brew the coffee that fuels our fellowship!
- Greeters: Welcome visitors, offer directions, and ensure everyone feels at home.

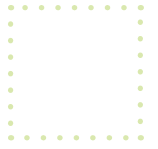
Volunteering doesn't have to be a weekly commitment—just one or two Sundays a month can make a big difference! When we all pitch in, we save on hiring costs and become better stewards of our church's resources. Ready to help? Contact the church office at 330.253.5109 x112 or [admin@akrongcc.org](mailto:admin@akrongcc.org) to let us know where you'd like to lend a hand.



## Easter Candy Donation Request

Help make this year's Easter Egg Hunt extra sweet! We're collecting bags of wrapped candy to fill the eggs for the big event. Donations can be dropped off at the church office anytime during office hours.

Thank you for your generosity and for bringing joy to the kids in our church and community this Easter!



This past Christmas Eve, our Meetinghouse glowed with the soft light of candles and the joyful sounds of worship. The candlelight and communion service brought us together to celebrate the birth of Christ, featuring beautiful music from both the Handbell Choir and Chancel Choir. Their melodies lifted our spirits and reminded us of the hope and peace found in the Christmas story.

The celebration continued on Sunday, December 29, with a festive Carol Sing service. Together, we sang beloved carols that have shaped generations of faith, filling the church with the joy and warmth of community.

Thank you to everyone who made these services possible—our choirs, musicians, worship leaders, and all who joined in the celebration. These moments remind us that the light of Christ shines brightly, not only on Christmas but throughout the year.