

A VIEW FROM ABOVE

The past few months at AkronFCC have been full of meaningful moments, faithful decisions, and joyful connection. A photo taken recently by one of our members, Chris Godard, shows three Goodyear blimps soaring over our church, a rare sight and a fitting symbol for the season we're in. Like those blimps charting their course overhead, we've experienced a transition in leadership that's guided us steadily forward: saying goodbye to Pastor Bobby, walking with Pastor Jeff during his faithful interim ministry, and now joyfully welcoming Rev. R. Brooke Baker as our new settled Senior Minister.

In this edition of The Chronicle, we take a look back at all that's happened—worship and celebration on Laity Sunday, the annual church picnic, the restoration vote for the Meetinghouse dome, and the vibrant Boards and Ministry Fair that brought so many together. As we look ahead to fall, there is much to be excited about. Take a moment to catch up on recent highlights and see what's coming next as we continue to grow in faith and community—together.



AKRONFCC'S NEW SETTLED SENIOR MINISTER



After many months of faithful discernment, the Search and Call Committee was thrilled to present Rev. R. Brooke Baker as the candidate for our next settled Senior Minister. On Sunday, June 1, the congregation overwhelmingly voted to call her to this role.

Pastor Brooke comes to AkronFCC after serving for seven years as Senior Pastor at Church of the Redeemer UCC in Westlake, Ohio. Before ministry, she spent 18 years working as a music therapist with Hospice of the Western Reserve. She holds a Master of Divinity from Lexington Theological Seminary.

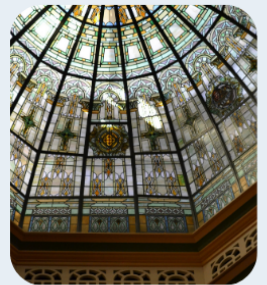
Pastor Brooke and her fiancé, Colleen Cusick, are planning to be married in 2026. Their daughter, Em, is currently studying neuroscience at Michigan State University. Their family also includes a dog, Bella, and a cat, Whiskers. In her free time, Pastor Brooke enjoys live music, theater, and discovering new restaurants.

We look forward to the gifts and leadership Pastor Brooke will bring to AkronFCC in this new season. September 7 will be Pastor Brooke's first official Sunday. **We will hold one 10am combined service** followed by a welcome reception in the Fellowship Hall.



SPRING CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Spring Congregational Meeting was held on Sunday, May 18. Voting for new Board Members and the budget occurred as did the approval of the domed roof restoration that houses the beautiful stained glass in the ceiling of the Meetinghouse.



Following the meeting we blessed our newly built garden ramp, which will provide easy and ADA-accessible access to our garden.

Afterwards everyone gathered in the Fellowship Hall to enjoy an ice cream treat and fellowship.



STEELIN' THE SHOW



On Palm Sunday, the joyful rhythm of steelpan drums filled our sanctuary thanks to a dedicated group of church members who began rehearsing together in February. With guidance and lots of heart, these musicians brought an energetic and uplifting spirit to our worship, and their performance was a true highlight of the day! A big thank you to those who sponsored the participants. Your generosity made this unique offering possible. We are so grateful for the time, talent, and support that came together to create such a memorable celebration.



25 - 26 CONCERT SERIES: MUSIC@AKRONFCC

We're excited to welcome back the Music@AkronFCC Concert Series! Our new Events Manager, Alex Morris, is hard at work booking a full calendar of performances that celebrate local talent and build community through music and the arts.

The first concert in the series is the *Concert for Peace*, set for Sunday, September 21 at 7pm in the Meetinghouse. The concert will feature local musicians, poets, and a keynote speaker. There will be a social hour prior to the concert at 6pm. There will be a closed bar at the social hour.



Tickets for this event cost \$10 online (\$9 online for 5 or more) and \$15 at the door. Note: This inaugural concert is ticketed. Most upcoming concerts will be free to attend.

Visit akronfcc.org/concert-series for updates on this and future performances.

INBOX TOO FULL? TRY THIS!

We get it—life's full. That's why we're making it easier to stay connected! Get quick updates and reminders right on your phone. Just text START to 87447 and you're in! Texting allows us to:

- Share upcoming services & events
- Send last-minute reminders
- Check in with volunteers or small groups



A LOOK BACK AT THE ANNUAL TEA

Thanks to everyone who joined us for this year's Annual Tea! We had a great turnout, and it was clear people were enjoying themselves – catching up with friends, playing a few games, and of course, having some excellent food and tea.



The Alice in Wonderland theme added a little extra fun to the afternoon, and Ernie's Catering came through with a delicious spread. We handed out a few prizes and kept things relaxed and lighthearted.



It was a joy to see so many familiar faces and to welcome a few new ones, too. Events like this remind us how good it is just to be together.

BOARDS AND MINISTRIES FAIR RECAP

In June, the Membership Board hosted a Boards and Ministry Fair—and it was a hit! The idea was simple: bring together representatives from our church boards and ministries, give them space to share what they're all about, and invite the congregation to come learn more. It wasn't a formal recruiting event, but a great way for people to ask questions, find out what different groups do, and hopefully consider getting involved.

Each group brought a little something to showcase their work: pamphlets, photos, info sheets, and creative displays. And yes, there were snacks!

If you missed it, good news: the Membership Board is planning to hold another fair on Sunday, September 14, including a few more groups that couldn't participate the first time. It'll also give Pastor Brooke a chance to explore the ministries and boards that make AkronFCC what it is and to meet the people behind the scenes who help it all run.



ARSIS HANDBELL ENSEMBLE RINGS IN A GREAT NIGHT



In early July we were lucky to be a stop on the Arsis Handbell Ensemble's U.S. tour, and what a treat it was. Over 100 people packed into the Upper Room to hear their incredible performance, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In the audience was none other than AkronFCC's very own Bell Choir Director, Christine Allison.

The evening came together thanks in large part to Alex Morris, our Events Manager, who did a fantastic job organizing the visit and spreading the word to neighboring churches and community groups. It was one of those special nights where music, hospitality, and community all came together—definitely one to remember!



Arsis director, Aivar Mäe and AkronFCC Bell Choir Director, Christine Allison

COVER TO COVER

June 29 was a special one around here—what we called “Cover to Cover” Sunday. Things kicked off with pastries and prayer blanket-making before worship (our first “cover”), followed by a book signing and reading with none

other than Rev. Jeff Nelson—AkronFCC's very own author of *The Unintentional Interim* (our second “cover”). After the service, folks stuck around for refreshments, and good conversation. The prayer blankets we made will be blessed on August 10 before finding their way to folks who could use a little warmth and encouragement.



ANOTHER ANNUAL PICNIC, IN THE BOOKS

Somewhat sunny skies, grilled goodies, and a great crowd made this year's church picnic a hit! Held on July 20, the event brought together people of all ages for food, fellowship, and a bit of fun. Hats off to the Membership Board for organizing the day, and a big thank you to Larry Becker and Chip Houghton for working the grill and keeping the burgers and dogs coming. Attendees brought an impressive spread of sides and desserts to share—no one went home hungry. The new ramp made access easier for everyone, and the sunshine showing up right on cue didn't hurt either. All in all, a great afternoon of connection and community..



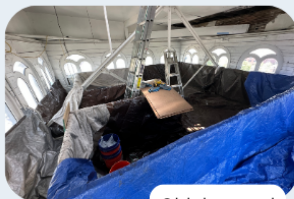
DOMES PROGRESS

The damaged area has been repaired. The next stage is the new roof and copper work

A structure was built above the dome to protect it while work is being done.



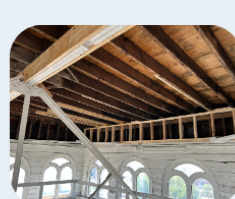
Tarps were spread over stairs and in hallways to protect the carpet during set up & clean up



Old damaged wood/framing was removed.



Workers in protective gear. They worked in extreme heat with no ventilation.



New beams and framing were installed and the structure was reinforced.



FAREWELL PASTOR BOBBY



On Sunday, May 4, 2025, exactly four years to the day since he first joined us, the First Congregational Church of Akron bid a heartfelt and tearful farewell to Rev. Bobby Burtt. What began as a call to serve as Acting Associate Minister on May 4, 2021, grew into a full and vibrant ministry as our Associate Minister of Children and Young Families. Over those four years, Pastor Bobby's presence became a beloved and essential part of our church's life, and their departure leaves us full of gratitude, memory, and love.

Our farewell celebration on May 4 was both joyful and emotional, filled with meaning and community. Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins, Heartland Conference Minister of the United Church of Christ, preached at both the 9am Upper Room Gathering and the 11am Meetinghouse Gathering, while our Interim Senior Minister, Rev. Jeff Jackson, led us through the services. A Liturgy of Farewell was shared at each gathering, honoring the sacredness of this transition and the many lives Pastor Bobby has touched. Both services were well attended, full of laughter and tears, storytelling and deep spiritual connection.

After the early service, a small reception offered space for warm goodbyes. Following the second service, the congregation gathered around a delicious pasta bar and celebratory cake. There were hugs, shared memories, photos snapped, and blessings offered.

During their time with us, Pastor Bobby walked with children and families through milestones both big and small – from baptisms and confirmations to Amplified Youth sleepovers and lock-ins, Breakfast with the Bunny and Santa, and unforgettable trips to Cedar Point. They led countless "Thoughts for the Young," preached with heart and humor, and offered a steady, listening presence in times of grief and loss.



We also rejoiced with Pastor Bobby through major moments in their own journey of faith and call. Together we celebrated their Ecclesiastical Council and, later, surrounded them with love during their Ordination to Ministry, a moment marked by joy, affirmation, and a truly fabulous party, just as Bobby would have it.



Throughout it all, Pastor Bobby has been known for their deep love of the church family, their stylish flair, their irrepressible humor, and their unwavering commitment to making God's love known – especially to the youngest and most vulnerable among us.

As they steps forward into the next chapter of their ministry, we send them with our prayers, our gratitude, and the sure knowledge that wherever they goes, they carries the spirit of AkronFCC and the love of a congregation forever blessed by their presence.

FONDLY REMEMBERING OUR MINISTERS

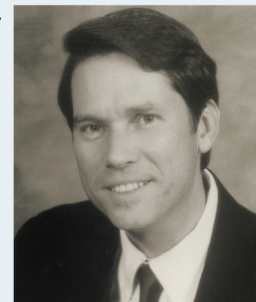
As we reflect on our church's rich history, we are reminded of the many ministers and moments that have shaped our journey. This edition, we feature the Rev. Dr. Dwight E. Mexcur.

The Rev. Dr. Dwight E. Mexcur was called to serve First Congregational Church of Akron on February 2, 1997, following the retirement of Dr. Gabe L. Campbell in 1995. A native of Swanzey, New Hampshire, Dr. Mexcur came to AkronFCC from First Congregational Church of Hampton, New Hampshire, where he had served as senior pastor.

His earlier ministry included service to congregations in both New England and Florida.

Dr. Mexcur held a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Gordon College (1974), a Master of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (1977), and a Doctor of Ministry from Hartford Theological Seminary (1977).

He concluded his ministry at AkronFCC in December 1998 for personal reasons.



Rev. Dr. Dwight Mexcur
First Congregational Church
Minister 1997 - 1998

STEWARDSHIP/FINANCE REPORT (UNAUDITED)

First Congregational Church of Akron		2024-2025 FINAL		
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	\$ DIFF	% DIFF
INCOME				
Offerings Income	\$143,914	\$220,000	-\$76,086	-34.6%
Unrestricted Grant/Fdn Income	\$6,808	\$5,000	\$1,808	36.2%
Designated Income	\$20,000	\$122,000	-\$102,000	-83.6%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$776,752	\$740,655	\$36,097	4.9%
Other Income	\$36,155	\$35,500	\$655	1.8%
TOTAL	\$983,628	\$1,123,155	-\$139,527	-12.4%
EXPENSES				
Loan Expense	\$21,433	\$46,142	\$24,709	53.5%
Membership Board	\$1,424	\$2,725	\$1,301	47.8%
Governing Board	\$6,631	\$4,500	-\$2,131	-47.4%
Congregational & Community Care Ministry	\$76,257	\$92,850	\$16,593	17.9%
Worship & Music	\$25,003	\$28,830	\$3,827	13.3%
Christian Education	\$17,004	\$13,000	-\$4,004	-30.8%
Development	\$230	\$200	-\$30	-15.2%
Food Service Expense	\$27,003	\$13,000	-\$14,003	-107.7%
Personnel	\$530,578	\$604,158	\$73,580	12.2%
Other Admin Expense	\$37,112	\$37,400	\$288	0.8%
Media Relations/Marketing	\$14,597	\$16,900	\$2,303	13.6%
Maintenance & Supplies	\$99,494	\$125,500	\$26,006	20.7%
Real Estate	\$92,979	\$86,250	-\$6,729	-7.8%
Utilities	\$52,373	\$51,700	-\$673	-1.3%
TOTAL	\$1,002,118	\$1,123,155	\$121,037	10.8%
Net Income/Loss	-\$18,490	\$0	-\$18,490	

SUPPORT AKRONFCC

Supporting First Church through pledge donations or Sunday offerings help to offset the annual operating costs of the church. Consider making a donation, or setting up a recurring donation, to support a ministry that is near and dear to your heart.

- Discretionary Assistance Fund
- Endowment
- Feeding Hope Food Pantry
- Mason Community Learning Center Fund
- Mason PB&J Fund
- Garden Improvement Program
- Music Fund



FROM PARTIES TO MEETINGS, WE'VE GOT ROOM FOR YOU

AkronFCC has always been a hub for community events, both public and private. If you or an organization you know of needs a space for an event, consider directing them to akronfcc.org/rentals to learn more about our facility. Also, non-profits will get 50% off of room fees automatically!



Did you know that members of AkronFCC can hold their events at the church for free*? If you have a birthday party, wedding, conference, or other gathering and need a space, members are able to book a room for free. Reach out to events@akronfcc.org with any questions, or jumpstart the process by filling out the building request form at akronfcc.org/rentals. *Room fee is waived. Other fees may apply.



THANK YOU, CHORUS FOR A CAUSE!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Christine Allison, director of Chorus for a Cause, and every talented member of the choir for gracing AkronFCC with their incredible performance.



What a gift it was to host such an inspiring group! Our community is so grateful for your artistry, energy, and generous spirit. Your commitment to using your voices to uplift others, and to support vital causes like Whispering Grace Horses, truly moved us. Thank you for sharing your talents and hearts with us!



UP NEXT!



Pull out your planner or open that calendar app! Here are the upcoming events and gatherings you won't want to miss at AkronFCC.



Back to School Supply Drive starts **Sunday, July 27** and runs through **Sunday, August 10**. Check out the back of this edition of the First Chronicle for details.



Blessing of the Blankets, **Sunday, August 10**. The blankets that were made in June will be blessed at both services.



Blessing of the Backpacks, **Sunday, August 17**. At the close of the supply drive we will stuff the backpacks in preparation to have them blessed.



All are invited after both services on **Sunday, August 17** to enjoy fellowship and make signs to be carried in the Akron Pride Festival March on Saturday, August 23 at 10am!



Bakers' Sunday and blanket making on **August 17**. While you're enjoying some delicious treats we invite you to jump in and help make new blankets.



Akron Pride 2025 - **Saturday, August 23**. Sign up to be part of AkronFCC pride team. We need help with set up, manning the booth, and clean up.



We will hold ONE COMBINED 10am service on **Sunday, August 31**. Come join us as we say farewell and thank you to Interim Senior Minister, Pastor Jeff.



For this fifth Sunday, we'll welcome Hearts for Music, a "Special Needs Orchestra for Special People"



Reverend Elena Larssen, the Transitional Association General Minister for the UCC Living Water Association, will be our guest preacher.



Sunday, September 7: One combined 10am service as we welcome Rev. R. Brooke Baker for her first official Sunday as our settled Senior Minister. Reception to follow.



Sunday, September 14: One combined 10am service followed by our Annual Fall Congregational Meeting.



Sunday, September 14: All are invited to our Boards and Ministry Fair in the Fellowship Hall immediately after the Fall Congregational Meeting.



Concert for Peace **September 21, 2025**, Social Hour: 6:00 PM, Concert: 7:00 PM. Hosted by Indivisible Akron, this concert will include local musicians, poets, and a keynote speaker!



Press Play Orchestra **September 27, 2025, 7:30 PM** This concert is free and open to the public. A freewill offering will be taken. More info to come.

STAY IN THE KNOW

Want to keep up with everything happening at AkronFCC? Check out our always-updated calendar at akronfcc.org/calendar. You'll also find upcoming events in each Friday's email—don't miss out!

EVERYONE IS INVITED!

CHASE Starbucks Big Brothers Big Sisters

BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT

BACKPACK GIVEAWAY • SCHOOL SUPPLIES • LAPTOP RAFFLE • FUN

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7
12PM - 6PM

HOUSE THREE THIRTY
532 W MARKET ST AKRON, OH 44303

I PROMISE HEALTH QUARTERS
527 W MARKET ST AKRON, OH 44303

SPONSORED BY

ALL IN T Mobile SportClips Target

EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT EMPOWERED Early Learning Academy

Help Support Our Organization!

SHOP ACME & EARN 5% CASH BACK

IT'S EASY!

Save your Acme Fresh Market receipts dated August 1, 2025 – February 15, 2026 to help us raise money!

Earn 5% Community Cash Back on these Participating Brands:

ACME Fresh Market food club TopCare. tippy toes simply done CISCLO Sweet P's

Paws Happy Life WIDE AWAKE PURE HARMONY. THAT'S SMART! Cape Covellet Over the Top

AkronFCC participates in Acme's Community Cash Back program, where non-profits can earn up to 5% back on grocery purchases. Please leave your receipts in the church office in the designated box, to support AkronFCC.

POP TABS FOR A CAUSE

We collect aluminum pop tabs year-round to support the Ronald McDonald House and the families they serve. Every tab adds up to help provide comfort and care during difficult times. You can drop yours off anytime, there's a collection box in the church office. Thanks for making a small gesture with a big impact!



THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Unfortunately, scam emails are on the rise again. Some may look like they're coming from Pastor Jeff or other church members, often asking for gift cards, money, or urgent favors. Please remember:



- Check the sender's email address—official church emails will always come from @akronfcc.org.
- Be cautious of urgent or vague messages, especially those asking for money or personal information.
- When in doubt, don't reply—call the church office directly.

We're keeping an eye on it, but your vigilance helps protect our community!

FEEDING HOPE FOOD PANTRY: HOW YOU CAN HELP

Looking for a meaningful way to serve our community? The Feeding Hope Food Pantry has several volunteer opportunities—whether you're available once a week or once a month.

We need helping hands:



- Monday mornings to unload the truck
- Monday evenings and Tuesday mornings to assist during pantry hours
- Fridays and Saturdays for donation pickups from partners like Panera and Giant Eagle

If in-person volunteering doesn't fit your schedule, you can still support the pantry by donating non-perishable food, household goods, or personal care items. Monetary donations are also welcome through akronfcc.org/give.

August Focus Items:

- Razors (men's & women's)
- Shaving cream (travel size)
- Body wash

Your support makes a real difference. Thank you!



ANNUAL MEETING & COAT DRIVE

Mark your calendars! On Sunday, September 14, we'll hold one combined worship service at 10am, followed immediately by our Annual Fall Congregational Meeting. After the meeting, stick around for the Boards & Ministries Fair, hosted by the Membership



Board—it's a great opportunity to learn more about the work happening across our church and how you can get involved.



As part of our ongoing partnership with Mason CLC, we're encouraging everyone attending the meeting to bring a new children's winter coat (sizes 4T-XL) to donate. Coats can also be dropped off at the church office before or after the meeting. The coat giveaway will take place in early October. Let's help keep Akron kids warm this winter!



BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE



It's that time of year again—backpacks, pencils, folders, and all things school-related. We're excited to kick off our Back to School Supply Drive to support students at Mason Elementary. From July 27 to August 10, we're collecting supplies to help make sure every child starts the school year feeling confident and prepared.



You'll find a donation box in the church office during the week and in the hallway outside the office on Sunday mornings—right near the entrance so it's easy to drop things off.

We'll bless all the backpacks during worship on Sunday, August 17, before delivering them to Mason. Thank you for your continued generosity and support—it makes a real difference for these kids and their families.

SCHOOL SUPPLY SHOPPING LIST

- ☐ BACKPACK (NO WHEELS)
- ☐ KID'S SCISSORS
- ☐ 24 CT. BOX CRAYOLA CRAYONS
- ☐ ELMER'S GLUE STICKS
- ☐ 4OZ BOTTLE ELMER'S WHITE GLUE
- ☐ #2 PENCILS
- ☐ CRAYOLA COLORED PENCILS
- ☐ PINK ERASERS