

CHRONICLE

2026

First Congregational Church of Akron

I am coming to realize that the United Church of Christ (UCC) is a new idea for some people who have been members here for a long time. There is some fear surrounding the loss of the congregation having a voice in decisions. The greatest defense against fear is knowledge, so here is a little UCC history that might be helpful.

The UCC is the combination of five strains:

- Evangelical Synod of North America, a 19th-century German-American church
- Reformed Church in the United States, churches of German and Swiss heritage in Pennsylvania
- Congregational Churches of the English Reformation with Puritan New England roots
- Christian Church with American frontier beginnings
- Afro-Christian Convention, beginning out of chattel slavery

The Evangelical and Reformed churches united on June 26, 1934 to become the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Many people hear "evangelical" and assume it meant then, what it does now. That is not true. Then, it meant sharing the Good News with people in the newly formed United States, having seen the destruction of Germany during WWI. Many Evangelical churches were in Missouri and the Reformed churches were in Pennsylvania and the surrounding area.

The Congregational Churches were made up of Pilgrims and Puritans, primarily in the New England area and the Christians churches began in Kentucky with Barton and Stone. These two denominations were concerned for freedom of religious expression and local autonomy. They united on June 17, 1931.

The Afro-Christian Convention was formed in 1892 and the Black Congregationalists were formed in 1950. When the discussion came up to join with the UCC, the founders gathered and decided to not remain as a separate Convention, but even then did not have a voice in the joining to form the UCC. It was only at the 2023 Synod that they were recognized as a valuable strain of the UCC's tradition.

The UCC was formed on June 25, 1957 out of a combination of these five groups. All of these groups shared a strong commitment under Christ to the freedom of religious expression. They combined strong European ties, early colonial roots, and the vitality of the American frontier church. In their uniting, a church that valued the free congregational tradition was strengthened by one that remained faithful to the liturgical tradition of Reformed church worship and to catechetical teaching.*

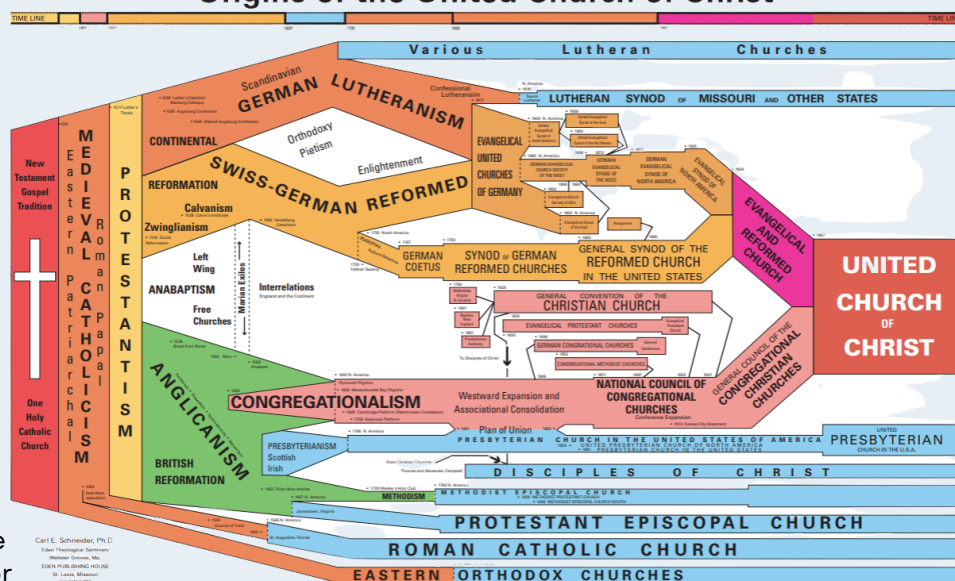
Whew, so that's a lot of history! But the thing I want to point out is that the UCC did not ask Congregational Christian churches to acquiesce their independence. Even today, decisions that are made at the UCC General Synod – now held every three years – are not mandates. Each congregation decides whether they will adopt the resolutions that are passed. Just as each congregation gets to choose whether they are Open and Affirming, each congregation gets to choose whether they will adopt decisions made by the wider church.

Blessings,

Pastor Brooke

Pastor Brooke Baker

Origins of the United Church of Christ



Scan for an interactive chart

BEHIND THE MUSIC: A WORD FROM THE PRAISE BAND

By Praise Band Co-Leader, Hannah Pyett

Happy New Year, everyone! In this installment of our "Meet the Praise Band" series, we're introducing Hannah (me), one of our praise band co-leaders. We hope you have been enjoying getting to know each of us as individuals. Next month we will highlight Michael, our amazing drummer!



What instruments do you play and what's your role in the praise band?

I play my voice, guitar, and piano! I'm one of the vocalists as well as the co-leader!

How long have you been a part of the praise band?

I've been part of the praise band since June 2024, and it's been such a meaningful journey already.

What's your favorite song to lead in worship?

One of my favorite songs to lead is Way Maker. The lyric "Even when I can't see it, You're working" is especially meaningful to me. It reminds me that God is still present and active, even when life feels confusing, heavy, or filled with grief. That promise of hope and provision speaks deeply to my faith.

What does worship mean to you personally?

For me, worship is so much more than singing songs on Sunday morning. It's about living out the sacred call to love and justice in our everyday lives. Music is one way we express worship, but how we treat others and care for the world is just as important.

What's your favorite food?

My favorite food is my mom's lasagna.

Do you have a favorite pastime or hobby outside of music?

I love reading, hiking, spending time with my family, and writing my own music. As a board-certified music therapist and worship leader, music is both my profession and my passion, so it's important to me to also experience music simply as joy and creative expression.

What do you hope the congregation experiences during worship?

I hope the congregation feels welcomed, safe, and reminded that they are deeply loved exactly as they are.



FOOD PANTRY REQUESTS



Thank you for supporting the Feeding Hope Food Pantry!

To ensure all donations are safe, useful, and respectful to those we serve, please note the following guidelines:

FOOD DONATIONS

We cannot accept food with a "best used by" date prior to 2024.



FREE SHELF ITEMS

- Please donate items that are clean, usable, and in good condition.
- Broken, dirty, or unusable items cannot be accepted—please dispose of these at home.

NO CLOTHING, PLEASE

- We are unable to accept clothing donations.



JANUARY FOCUS ITEMS

- Men's and women's deodorant
 - Body wash
 - Body lotion

Thank you for helping us care well for our neighbors and for honoring these guidelines.

EVENT AND MEETING SPACE

Hosting a meeting and need a space? Throwing a birthday party, baby shower or other event and need a room? Would you like to offer food? Don't forget to consider the facilities at AkronFCC! We have a variety of meeting spaces available for groups of all sizes. Larger meetings held in the Meetinghouse have the capability of being recorded or livestreamed. Other meeting spaces have presentation equipment to suit all needs, including projectors, televisions, flip charts, and hybrid meeting capabilities. Rooms can be configured to the style best suited for your use, and don't forget that AkronFCC is an ADA-accessible facility with lots of free parking! Food service options, through our partnership with Ernie's Catering, are also available, including coffee-service only, boxed meals to-go, or hot or cold meal choices. As always, there is no room charge for AkronFCC members, boards or committees. Outside non-profit organizations will receive 50% off of room fees when renting. Contact Events Manager, Alex Morris, at events@akronfcc.org to schedule your next event!

FINANCE REPORT

Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru November, 2025

	November	November YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME				
Offerings Income	\$10,153	\$70,577	\$75,000	94.1%
Unrestricted Grant Income	\$3	\$122	\$2,498	4.9%
Designated Income	\$2,083	\$12,500	\$61,572	20.3%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$60,946	\$395,514	\$373,182	106.0%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$627	\$10,940	\$19,996	54.7%
Other Income	\$0	\$15,955	\$2,598	614.1%
TOTAL	\$73,812	\$505,609	\$534,846	94.5%
EXPENSES				
Loan Expense	\$2,628	\$15,851	\$15,750	100.6%
Membership Board	\$0	\$0	\$1,128	0.0%
Governing Board	\$3,500	\$3,545	\$5,500	64.5%
Food Pantry	\$5,593	\$30,463	\$27,502	110.8%
Congregational Care	\$1,067	\$7,809	\$8,313	93.9%
Worship & Music	\$478	\$9,117	\$11,162	81.7%
Christian Education	\$0	\$402	\$2,844	14.1%
Development Team	\$117	\$286	\$250	114.5%
Food Service Expense	\$1,447	\$9,267	\$6,502	142.5%
Personnel	\$32,224	\$234,285	\$291,446	80.4%
Other Admin Expense	\$3,347	\$33,297	\$34,196	97.4%
Media Relations/Marketing	\$618	\$5,944	\$5,184	114.7%
Maintenance/Insurance/Utilities	\$11,525	\$112,654	\$116,920	96.4%
TOTAL	\$62,545	\$462,920	\$526,697	87.9%
Net Income/Loss	\$11,267	\$42,690	\$8,149	523.9%

HOW DO YOU SUPPORT AKRONFCC?

Giving back comes in many forms within a church community. And in these recent times of uncertainty, it's crucial to show support where and how it's needed. Consider these options:

Be faithful and attend worship - Coming together builds our sense of community and belonging.

Pray for your church and its pastors and leaders - Whether it is praying in church or at home, prayer unites all of us.

Invite People - How did just 12 people make Christianity as big as it is today? By inviting people! Reach out to your friends, neighbors and family members to see if they'll join you on Sundays or at church events.

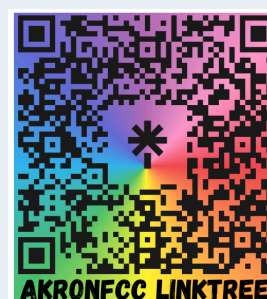
Stay Grateful - In the midst of a global pandemic, it's important now more than ever to have a grateful heart and to be generous and give grace to others.

Donate - Be sure to keep giving financially to the church. An easy way to do this is by setting up a recurring donation, or put together a planned gift, designate AkronFCC as an insurance beneficiary, or many other options. Contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at finance@Akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111 for more information.

SUPPORT AKRONFCC

Supporting AkronFCC 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 CLC Fund
Mason PB&J Fund
Garden Improvement Program
Music Fund



BREAKFAST WITH SANTA 2025

What a wonderful morning it was at our annual Breakfast with Santa! Thanks to the generosity and hard work of many, the event was a tremendous success, welcoming 192 guests and supported by 25 dedicated volunteers.



Families enjoyed a hearty breakfast of pancakes and sausage, along with plenty of hot cocoa, while children wrote letters to Santa and filled the room with color and creativity. The energy, laughter, and sense of welcome were felt throughout the building.

This event would not have been possible without our volunteers, who cooked, set up, served, cleaned up, welcomed visitors, and handled countless details behind the scenes. Their time and care made a meaningful impact on our community and helped create a joyful, memorable experience for all who attended.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in making Breakfast with Santa such a success. It truly took all of us—and it showed.



MINISTRY OF THE MONTH - ENDOWMENT BOARD

By Endowment Board Chair, Cheri Xeros

I'm Cheri Xeros, Chair of the Endowment Board since 2022. Before this role, I served as Secretary on the Stewardship & Finance Board. I've been a member of First Congregational Church of Akron for fifteen years, through most stages of life. I first came to First Church with my boyfriend (now husband) as we searched for a place to worship together. We kept building our faith here and, before long, we were the family at the early service with a toddler and newborn twins in tow. These days, our three boys are in every activity imaginable, often on Sunday mornings, and even when life is busy, I find myself looking out my office window on Market Street, admiring our church's dome, and feeling grateful for this community.



This has been a dynamic few years for the Endowment Board. Through consistent, thoughtful stewardship and strategic planning, the Endowment Fund has continued to grow. We reviewed our investment approach, affirmed our commitment to disciplined risk management, and ensured the portfolio remains positioned for long-term sustainability. Our work is grounded in a simple aim: safeguarding the church's financial foundation so ministries can flourish today and for generations to come.

The Board explored socially responsible investment options in depth. We examined whether moving to a traditional money manager model would offer meaningful benefits compared to our current, lower cost approach. After weighing potential customization against a substantial increase in annual fees, we reached consensus to stay the course with our current model, one that has delivered strong performance.

Looking ahead, we're excited about what's possible. The Endowment Board is a place for people who care about the intersection of faith, stewardship, and impact, people who enjoy asking good questions, studying options, and making recommendations that help our church thrive. If you're curious about how we sustain First Church's legacy, and how careful financial stewardship multiplies ministry, we'd love for you to learn more about the Board's work and consider getting involved.

On behalf of the Endowment Board, we wish everyone a joyful and blessed Christmas season. May your holidays be filled with peace, hope, and the warmth of our wonderful community.

Merry Christmas!

Cheri R. Xeros

Cheri Xeros
Chair, Endowment Board

BAPTISM REMEMBRANCE

On January 11, we will celebrate the Baptism of Jesus during both worship services and invite you to remember your own baptism. For many of us, baptism is something we do not personally remember, yet it remains a profound marker of God's grace and our place in the community of faith.

This service offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the the promises of baptism—God's enduring love and our call to live as Christ's people in the world. We hope you will join us for this special day in worship.



SAVE THE DATE

Please save the date for a joyful and significant moment in the life of First Congregational Church of Akron. On February 8 at 3:00 PM, we will gather to celebrate the installation of Pastor Brooke as our Senior Minister.

Representatives from the Living Water Association, Ohio Northeast, of the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ will join us to officially install Pastor Brooke into this role. This service marks an important milestone in our shared ministry and in the ongoing life of our congregation.



A reception will follow in Fellowship Hall, and all are warmly invited to attend this special celebration.

We hope you will join us for this meaningful and joyful occasion.

PRAYER LIST

Have you asked to be placed on the prayer list and find yourself no longer in need of specific prayer? Have you asked that someone else be placed on the list and they are no longer in need of those specific prayers? Beginning Sunday, February 1, all names will be removed, except for those families who have experienced a death within the last 3 months. Moving forward, a person will be left on the list for a month and then removed, unless the office is contacted. This allows Pastor Brooke to be able to pray weekly for the names on the list. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Brooke.



WINTER WEATHER NOTIFICATIONS

As we move into the winter months, there may be times when we need to cancel worship services or close the building due to severe weather. Should that happen, we'll share updates through several channels to keep everyone informed.

Closures and cancellations will be posted on the homepage of our website at akronfcc.org and on the church voicemail. You can also find updates through local media, including Spectrum Local News 1, News Channel 5, WKYC TV (which also reaches Cleveland radio stations and WVIZ PBS), Akron News Now WAKR radio, and WOIO/WUAB Channels 19 and 43.

The quickest ways to receive updates, however, is through our text alert system or subscribing to our social media. If you haven't signed up yet, now is a great time to do so—winter has a way of keeping us on our toes.



MUSIC APPRECIATION SUNDAY

We are extremely fortunate to have such gifted musicians at First Congregational Church of Akron UCC who lead us in worship week after week. From our Chancel and Handbell choirs to Praise Band and those who played our Steel Drums, their talents enrich our services and deepen our shared experience of worship.



On Sunday, **January 30**, we will celebrate Music Appreciation Sunday during a **combined 10:00am** service. This will be an opportunity to express our gratitude for the many musicians who offer their time, skill, and spirit.

Please plan to join us as we give thanks for these dedicated individuals and the vital role music plays in the life of our congregation.



Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON UCC
292 E Market
Akron, OH 44308
AkronFCC

Two Great Events January 18th & 25th



The 47th Annual
Dr. Martin Luther King Coalition
Celebration Committee
Sunday, January 18, 2026, 4 pm
First Congregational Church
292 East Market Street, Akron

Guest Speaker
Pastor Vincent Peterson
Providence Baptist Church

For Info: 330.322.6933



Akron Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition
and Centenary United Methodist Church
Sunday January 25, 2026, 3:30 pm
First United Methodist Church
263 E. Mill Street Akron Ohio 44308
Free Admission, Love offering
to support our Students

JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



Office Closed

Office Closed

Food Pantry Load In 8am

4

5



6

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10

One Service 10am
Baker's Sunday 11am

AA 12pm
Men's Lunch 12pm
B&G Board 5:15pm
Food Pantry 6:30pm

Food Pantry 9am
Bible Study 11:30am
Staff Meeting 1pm

Faith Enrichment 9am
AA 11am
Bell Choir 5:30pm

AA 11am
MLK Committee 5:30pm

AA 10am
PB & J 11:30am

Food Pantry Load In 8am

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17

Upper Room Service 9am
Meetinghouse Service 11am
Second Sunday Salad 12pm
LGBTQ Comm. Night 5pm

AA 12pm
Men's Lunch 12pm
S&F Board 5:30pm
Indivisible Akron 6pm
Food Pantry 6:30pm

Food Pantry 9am
Bible Study 11:30am
Staff Meeting 1pm
BINGO 6pm
Membership Bd 7pm

Faith Enrichment 9am
AA 11am
Bell Choir 5:30pm
SSOULE 6pm

Tuff Stuff 8:45am
PB&J 11:30am
AA 11am
Nominating Board 7pm
PFLAG 7pm

Foster Grandparents 9am
AA 10am

Food Pantry Load In 8am



18



19

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24

MLK Sunday 9am
Upper Room Service 9am
Meetinghouse Service 11am
Bakers Sunday 12pm
MLK Service 4pm

MLK Day Office Closed
AA 12pm
Food Pantry 6:30pm

Food Pantry 9am
Bible Study 11:30am
Staff Meeting 1pm
HR Board 6pm

Faith Enrichment 9am
AA 11am
Bell Choir 5:30pm

AA 11am

AA 10am
PB & J 11:30am

Food Pantry Load In 8am
League of Women Voters 10am

25

26

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One Service 10am

AA 12pm
Men's Lunch 12pm
Food Pantry 6:30pm
Governing Board 6:30pm

Food Pantry 9am
Bible Study 11:30am
Staff Meeting 1pm

Faith Enrichment 9am
AA 11am
Bell Choir 5:30pm

AA 11am

Foster Grandparents 9am
AA 10am
PB&J 11:30am

Food Pantry Load In 8am