NO. 10

CHRONICLE

2026

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Why **do** you pledge to the ministries of the church? Why **don't** you pledge to the church? Stewardship season is an opportunity to enter into a season of deep spiritual alignment – an honest, hopeful exploration of how our practices, priorities, and resources reveal what truly claims our hearts. Perhaps you have consistently supported the church with your resources, but have never pledged. Why not take the next step and claim that commitment?

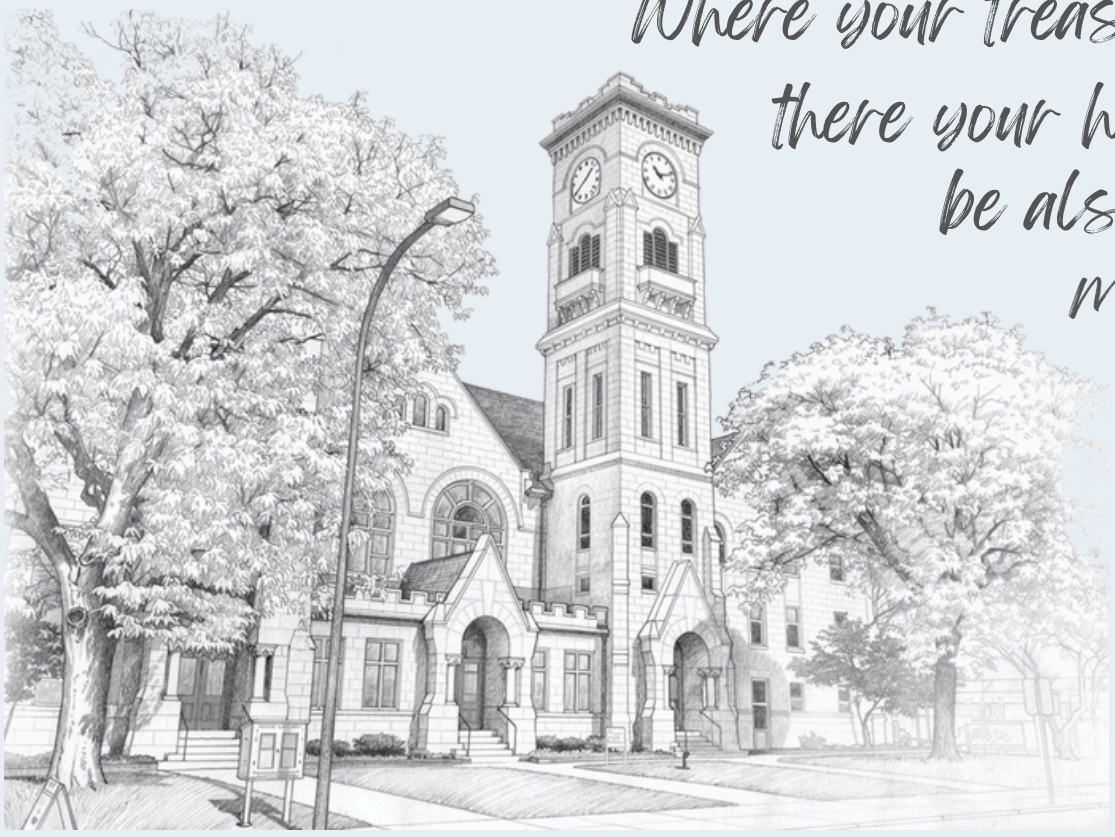
Also remember that pledging is not only about financially supporting this congregation but also supporting it with your time. Perhaps it's an opportunity to recommit to attending worship on Sundays. Maybe you have always wanted to join the usher group; now is your chance. Each of those things represent how your practices and priorities truly claim your heart.

Stewardship season is often not people's favorite time of the year and it's not always the pastor's favorite time of the year either – until I'm reminded what stewardship provides us. It reminds us of God's quiet, faithful presence; it allows God to transform, heal, and renew our hearts; and it provides us with an opportunity to practice a generosity that is not performative, but rooted, joyful, and Spirit-led.

As we spend time this month focusing on stewardship, I encourage you to view it as a spiritual practice that draws you nearer to God. Because "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

Blessings,

Pastor Brooke





Rev. R. Brooke Baker

YOUR GIFT, AT WORK: WHERE THE MONEY GOES



By Janis Worley
Finance & Operations Manager

Every so often, someone quietly asks me a question I think a lot of people wonder but don't always say out loud: Does my gift actually matter?

I understand the hesitation. Maybe you're not sure how much you can give. Maybe you look at your own budget and think what you could offer feels small next to the church's needs. Maybe you've never quite known where the money goes once it leaves the plate or the online giving form. I want to share the answer to that question, with numbers, because I think the answer will surprise you.

The Food Pantry Ministry - $55,000 this year

This is the largest ministry we support financially, and it's also the most visible need in our community. Every bag of groceries, every can on the shelf, every family that walks through that door and walks out with what they need for the week – that's funded by gifts like yours. It's not an abstract line item. It's dinner on a table tonight somewhere in our community.

PB&J Ministry - $16,000 this year

Every Friday during the school year, 156 kids leave school with a bag quietly packed with food to get them through the weekend. Many of them rely on school meals during the week, and without this program, the weekend is a gap. $16,000 sounds like a big number until you realize what it buys: two full days of food security, every week, for 156 children, for an entire school year. Broken down, that's a little over $100 per child for nine months of weekend meals.

Mason CLC Ministry - over $4,000 this year

Every student at Mason CLC receives a new winter coat before the cold sets in. Every single one. No child is left out, no child has to wonder if they'll be warm walking to school in January. That's what $4,000 does - it means one school, in our community, doesn't have a single kid without a coat this winter.

So does your gift matter?

Here's the honest math: these three ministries alone cost roughly $75,000 this year. That number isn't carried by a few large gifts – it's carried by all of us, together, in amounts large and small. If your gift is $10 a week, that's real food on real tables. If it's $50 a month, that's real coats on real kids. There is no gift too small to be part of that $75,000, because that number is made of gifts like yours.

So, the next time you wonder whether your gift counts, I hope you'll think of a pantry shelf, a Friday backpack, a coat on a cold morning. That's where it goes. That's what it does.

If you have questions about how to set up a recurring donation, or would like more information, please reach out to Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at finance@akronfcc.org.

Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)
Actual Thru Aug, 2026

		Aug	Aug YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME					
Offerings Income		$8,763	$36,133	$42,500	85.0%
Unrestricted Grant Income		$2	$6	$1,250	0.5%
Designated Income		$1,667	$5,000	$31,463	15.9%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock		$70,991	$199,206	$197,321	101.0%
Rental and Food Service Income		$3,384	$9,246	$7,500	123.3%
Other Income		$5,359	$5,359	$1,250	428.7%
	TOTAL	$90,166	$254,950	$281,284	90.6%
EXPENSES					
Loan Expense		$2,577	$7,749	$7,645	101.4%
Membership Board		$0	$133	$775	17.1%
Governing Board		$0	-$10	$1,250	-0.8%
Food Pantry		$3,148	$10,215	$11,094	92.1%
Congregational Care		$301	$383	$3,240	11.8%
Worship & Music		$1,264	$3,878	$3,795	102.2%
Christian Education		$0	$1,595	$1,627	98.0%
Development Team		$0	$0	$0	0.0%
Food Service Expense		$908	$2,230	$2,500	89.2%
Personnel		$35,902	$126,289	$160,666	78.6%
Other Admin Expense		$1,404	$3,664	$9,970	36.8%
Media Relations/Marketing		$1,135	$1,851	$4,063	45.5%
Maintenance/Insurance/Utilities		$20,999	$50,709	$66,469	76.3%
	TOTAL	$67,638	$208,686	$273,094	76.4%
Net Income/Loss		$22,527	$46,264	$8,190	564.9%

Supporting AkronFCC UCC 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
Music Fund

Scan Here for Everything AkronFCC UCC

TIPS FOR ENGAGING MORE DEEPLY IN WORSHIP



Hannah Pyett
Praise Band Co-Leader

Reflections from Your Worship Leader

I spend a lot of time thinking about songs. This probably isn't surprising. Music fills most of my week. As a worship leader, part of my job is choosing the words we will put into our mouths at the 9am service on Sunday morning. I think about what we might need to sing together as a congregation. I think about the strange and beautiful thing that happens when a room full of people, with different stories, different struggles, different questions, takes a deep breath and sings the same words together. Some Sundays those words come easily. Other Sundays, they don't. Sometimes we sing about the goodness of God while carrying our grief. We sing about peace while watching a world at war. We sing about hope when we aren't feeling particularly hopeful. And maybe that's part of why we keep singing. Not because the songs magically make everything okay, but because they remind us of the kind of people we are trying to become. During the rest of my week, music takes on a different role. As a music therapist, I spend much of my time in schools, sitting alongside kids and using music to communicate, connect, regulate, express emotions, build confidence, and sometimes simply create a space where a child can show up exactly as they are. These two parts of my life may look very different, but lately I've realized how much they shape one another. On Sunday, I sing about making room at the table. During the week, I get to practice what making room actually looks like. Sometimes love looks like slowing down enough to really listen to a child. Sometimes grace looks like recognizing that participation doesn't have to look the same for everyone. Sometimes welcome means meeting someone in their way of communicating instead of expecting them to communicate in mine. Sometimes peace looks less like meeting some goal or objective and more like helping an overwhelmed child find a moment of safety in the middle of a difficult day. And sometimes the holiest thing I can do is simply notice the person in front of me and meet them where they are. I think my work has taught me that the things we sing about on Sunday rarely look dramatic when we actually live them out. Grace can be ordinary. Peace can happen in a classroom. Love can look like paying attention. We sing some pretty big things together on Sunday mornings. What happens to those words after the last song? Because eventually the final chord fades. The microphones get turned off. The instruments go back into their cases. We gather our coats and coffee cups and head out the doors. And then Monday comes. And perhaps that's where worship gets really interesting.

SHALOM, SALAAM, PEACE



Women Exploring the Common Threads of Our Faith Traditions

What do women of different faith traditions have in common? What can we learn from one another?

Join WISH (Women's Interfaith Spiritual Heritage) and the Islamic Society of Akron and Kent (ISAK) for an afternoon of conversation exploring faith, shared values and the experiences that connect us across religious traditions.

Through face-to-face conversation, a diverse panel of women will share their perspectives and stories, creating an opportunity to listen, learn and discover common ground.

Sunday, October 18 • 3:00 PM
Alpha Phi Alpha Founders Hall
662 Wolf Ledges Parkway, Akron
Moderator: Liz Piatt, Ph.D.

FREE • WALK-INS WELCOME
Registration encouraged due to limited seating and refreshments.
REGISTER: isak.org/CommonThreads



MOMENT WITH THE MODERATOR

Where did the summer go? I am sure it was all too fast for everyone. The combined summer service was so nice to have everyone worship together. We are blessed by so many great facets of our music department who shared their gifts with us.

Don't continue to blink as the calendar days fly off. In October, a Mason Coat drive will be held. The Christmas Offering plan is to provide for Mason. Then a spring drive to assist Mason.

A Leadership Retreat for all current and incoming members of boards will be held November 14 as we adjust to reverting back to a calendar fiscal year.



The Congregational Meeting will be on 11/22/2026. The Governing Board is still reviewing some impactful items that may be placed on the agenda. Stay tuned.

Again, this is an exciting time as we shape the life of our church and community. We have phenomenal opportunities ahead and looking forward to the great things this congregation can accomplish.

Best regards,

Victoria E. White

Tori White
Moderator

DISABILITY AWARENESS: SEEING THE PERSON

September is Disability Awareness Month, a time to recognize the experiences of people with disabilities and to think about what accessibility and inclusion really mean.

When we hear “accessibility,” many of us think first about physical things: ramps, accessible parking, elevators, restrooms and hearing assistance. Those things matter. But some of the barriers people with disabilities encounter aren't physical at all.

They can show up in the assumptions we make about what someone can or cannot do, the way we speak to them, or the decisions we make on their behalf.

A disability also doesn't tell us everything about a person. Someone may need considerable assistance in one area of life and be remarkably independent in another. They may need help with a complicated decision while still having very definite opinions about what they want. And, like the rest of us, they may sometimes make choices others don't agree with.

That can be especially difficult when we care deeply about someone. We want to protect them from disappointment, poor decisions and the consequences of mistakes. But we don't usually deny other adults the opportunity to make choices simply because we think we know better. People with disabilities deserve that same dignity.

Respect doesn't mean assuming someone can do everything on their own. It also doesn't mean assuming they can't. Sometimes the harder thing is recognizing where help is needed without deciding for someone what they need, what they should want, or what is best for them.

Perhaps that is part of what Disability Awareness Month gives us an opportunity to consider. Awareness isn't only about noticing barriers or making accommodations. It is also about noticing when our own assumptions become a barrier. A disability may affect what someone can do or how they do it, but it doesn't give the rest of us ownership of their choices, their voice or their life.

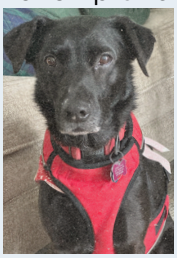
That seems particularly important for a church community. At AkronFCC, we talk about being a place where people are welcome. Genuine welcome means making room for people to participate, contribute, worship, build relationships and be themselves. Sometimes that requires a physical accommodation. Sometimes it simply means taking the time to see the person rather than making assumptions about them.



BLESSING OF THE PETS

On Saturday, October 3, Pastor Brooke will be at One of a Kind Pet Rescue to offer individual blessings for the cats and dogs who bring so much joy, companionship and occasional chaos into our lives.





Stop by anytime between 10am and 11am for a blessing and a little celebration of our beloved pets.





Please keep all pets on leashes or in carriers.





One of a Kind Pet Rescue
1929 W. Market St., Akron

PASTORAL SUPPORT TEAM

The role of this team is not to make decisions for the church, replace the Governing Board, or take the place of other committees and ministries. Rather, they are here to help maintain a healthy relationship between our pastor and our congregation. Sometimes that may mean listening, sometimes offering another perspective, sometimes encouraging communication, and sometimes simply being there to support Pastor Brooke.

Members are: Ruth Ann Allison, Karen Babri, Marian Carlson and Nancy Jenkins

The team also provides a confidential place to bring concerns or questions about the pastor/congregation relationship. If a member of the congregation has a concern that they feel needs to be addressed, one of the Pastoral Support Team members is available to listen and help determine the appropriate way to move forward. They are not here to take sides or to solve every problem, but to encourage honest, respectful and healthy communication.

LGBTQ+ GROUP MEETUP

The AkronFCC LGBTQ+ Group is heading to Heritage Farm's Pumpkin Pandemonium on Sunday, October 11! Join us for an afternoon of pumpkins, fall fun and whatever other autumn mischief we find along the way.



We'll meet on site at 3:00 PM. Let us know you're coming so we can keep an eye out for you!

Sunday, October 11 • 3:00–7:00 PM
Heritage Farm
6050 Riverview Rd., Peninsula

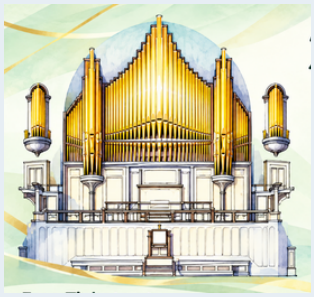
RSVP: lgbtq@akronfcc.org



20TH ANNIVERSARY ORGAN RESTORATION CONCERT CELEBRATION

The 20th Anniversary Organ Restoration Celebration will be held on October 4, 2026, 4PM. The concert is free and open to everyone. There will be light refreshments afterwards in the Fellowship Hall.

Valerie Thorson, AkronFCC's organist when the organ was restored in 2006, returns to the Meetinghouse with George Pope (flute) and Dave Aberth (baritone) for a concert celebrating the 20th anniversary. Local Composer Nancy Daley has composed the opening piece specifically for this occasion.



ASSIST WITH WEDDINGS

We're looking for AkronFCC members who would enjoy helping couples celebrate their wedding day here at the church. Wedding facilitators help keep rehearsals and ceremonies on schedule, coordinate the processional, assist with hospitality and handle the behind-the-scenes details that help everything run smoothly.

This is a paid opportunity, and you don't need to be a wedding expert to help. If you're organized, calm under pressure and enjoy helping people, we'd love to hear from you.

Interested? Contact Alex at events@akronfcc.org

CHRONICLE
First Congregational Church of Akron UCC
292 E Market St.
Akron, OH 44308



Upper Room Worship 9am
Meetinghouse Worship 11am

October 2026

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AKRON UCC
AkronFCC

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
NOTE: Italicized events are private rentals by individuals or outside organizations; all other others are church activities, (including worship and meetings) or public events. *Event times and dates are subject to change.*				1 AA 12pm Living the Legacy 6pm	2 AA 10am PB&J 11:30am	3 Food Pantry Load In 8am Pet Blessing 10:30-11:30am *Birthday Party Rental* 1pm
4  *World Communion Sunday* Upper Room Worship 9am Meetinghouse Worship 11am Bakers Sunday 12pm Music Concert 4pm Reception to follow	5 *BLOC U* 11am AA 12pm *AAIC* 5pm B&G 5:15pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	6 Food Pantry 9am *Bible Study* 11:30am *HR Board* 6pm	7 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm *Bell Choir* 5:30pm	8 AA 12pm	9 AA 10am PB&J 11:30am	10 Food Pantry Load In 8am *Freedom BLOC 9am* *DAR 9am*
11 Upper Room Worship 9am Meetinghouse Worship 11am Second Salad Sunday 12pm LGBTQ+ Comm. Group 3pm	12  OFFICE CLOSED AA 12 pm *Indivisible Akron* 6pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	13 Food Pantry 9am *Bible Study* 11:30am *Staff Meeting* 1:30pm *All About Oz* 6pm Membership Bd 7pm	14 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm *Bell Choir* 5:30pm SSOULE 6pm	15 *Tuff Stuff* 8:45am AA 12pm PFLAG 7pm	16 AA 10am PB&J 11:30am *Wedding Rehearsal* 5:30pm	17 Food Pantry Load In 8am *Wedding Rental 3:30pm* *Birthday Rental 5pm*
18 Upper Room Worship 9am Brooks Berndt Pres 10:15am Meetinghouse Worship 11am Bakers Sunday 12pm	19 AA 12 pm S&F Board 5:30pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	20 Food Pantry 9am *Bible Study* 11:30am *Staff Meeting* 1pm *HR Board* 6pm	21 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm Bell Choir 5:30pm	22 *Master Gardeners All Day* AA 12pm	23 *Master Gardeners All Day* AA 10am PB&J 11:30am *Wedding Rehearsal* 5pm	24 Food Pantry Load In 8am *Freedom BLOC* 9am *Wedding Rental 1pm*
25 Upper Room Worship 9am Meetinghouse Worship 11am *Retirement Party Rental* 2pm *Birthday Party Rental* 2pm	26 *Kitchen Rental* 11:45am AA 12 pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Governing Board 6:30pm	27 Food Pantry 9am *Bible Study* 11:30am *Staff Meeting* 1pm	28 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm Silver Lining Lunch 12pm Bell Choir 5:30pm	29 AA 12pm	30 *Foster Grandparents* 9am AA 10am PB&J 11:30am	