

# CHRONICLE

2026

First Congregational Church of Akron

## PASTOR'S COLUMN

By Rev. R Brooke Baker

Spring has sprung! Or at least as it does in Northeast Ohio – in fits and starts. There are days I have rushed things a bit and worn a pair of sandals, and there are days that I have pulled my turtlenecks and fleece back out. I have lived here long enough to know that nothing is guaranteed – perhaps ever – but warmer weather usually can't be counted upon until mid-to-late May. Until then, we appreciate the periodic warm days.

Yet through it all, those early spring flowers remain hardy! There are daffodils that have shown their heads but know to stay tightly closed until the next warm day. I look at some on my way to and from the lower lot at the church on a regular basis. I was recently asked how I connect with the Divine, and my answer was to notice the small things in nature: the sun breaking through the clouds in glorious ways or the crocus poking up through the ground, strong and sturdy. The resilience of life is all around us – and within us.

We are preparing for Holy Week as I write this, and I am reminded of that message of resilience in our faith story. Jesus demonstrated resilience throughout his ministry, and this congregation has demonstrated resilience as well. You have remained strong and faithful through transitions over the last couple of years. Perhaps you have been waiting to make sure that the “warmth” is here to stay before returning to worship; it is not going anywhere, so come back! For those of you who have never left, pause and appreciate the new life that is around us – in our pews, in our programming, in our resilience. Take a moment to pause and notice the small – and large – things this congregation has done!

Come for the palms, come for the meal of remembrance, come for the solemnity of the crucifixion, and then come for the new life that emerges as followers of Jesus! There is new life at First Congregational Church of Akron UCC – come and bring someone with you to share it!

Blessings,

Pastor Brooke Baker



## HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

**Maundy Thursday | April 2, 2026 | 6:00 PM | Upper Room**

We gather in an intimate setting to remember the night Jesus shared the table with his friends. A very light repast—bread, cheese, and simple fare—will be served as we reflect on the meal before the cross.

**Good Friday | April 3, 2026 | 7:00 PM | Chapel | Tenebrae Service**

Through Scripture, silence, and the gradual dimming of the lights, we contemplate the depth and meaning of Christ's sacrifice.

**Easter Sunday Sunrise Service | April 5, 2026 | 6:15 AM | Worship in the Garden**

We greet the dawn with a simple celebration of the Resurrection. Bring a lawn chair to worship and watch the sun come up as we gather around a warm fire.

**Easter Sunday 10:00 AM | Worship in the Meetinghouse**

We'll celebrate with a combined Easter worship service in the Meetinghouse, including communion. Together we'll share in scripture, hymns, and joyful music from our Chancel Choir and brass ensemble—and mark the joyful return of the Alleluias in a special and meaningful way.

## MINISTRY FOCUS: PB&J

The Mason Community Learning Center serves students who experience food insecurity. Each week during the school year, Mason CLC receives 156 packed bags of food from our PB&J Ministry.

This ministry is made possible by a core group of twenty-three dedicated volunteers. If you can see yourself helping in any part of the process, we would love for you to say yes!

- Each week during the school year, an Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank order is placed, usually on Tuesday.
- Emails are sent to volunteers on Wednesdays.
- The menu for the week's food bags is determined on Wednesday or Thursday.
- Fridays (usually) are our action days! Four to six volunteers pick up the Foodbank order at 11:00 AM.
- Three volunteers arrive at the church around 10:45 AM to pull cases of food from shelving units and place them on tables in the Chapel.
- Around 11:15 AM, additional volunteers arrive to open cases, break down boxes, pack bags, and load them into cars.
- When the Foodbank crew arrives with our order, we unload their vehicles and restock the shelves.
- Finally, eight to ten volunteers deliver the 156 bags to Mason for distribution.

Could we use more help? Absolutely! Our current volunteers generously give their time, but like all of us, they have busy lives—family commitments, travel, appointments, and more—which can make availability a challenge.

So far this year, more than 13,000 pounds of food have been moved through this effort. Extra hands are always welcome—men and women, young and old. If you have a couple of hours to spare on Fridays, please consider reaching out to Chris and Sue Godard or call the church office at 330.253.5109 x112 to be connected.



*PB&J Coordinator  
Sue Godard*

## MAKING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY

As many of you know, this is a full and active season in the life of our church. While we continue the search for an Associate Pastor, much of the day-to-day pastoral work remains with Pastor Brooke. At the same time, our building is anything but quiet during the week—with the Food Pantry, community groups, and volunteers faithfully carrying out ministry in every corner.

This vibrant activity is a gift, but it also makes it difficult to find uninterrupted time for the focused work that ministry requires. Each week involves thoughtful preparation: selecting hymns and scripture, planning Faith Enrichment, writing prayers and reflections, and crafting sermons—alongside meetings, visits, and ongoing communication.

To help create space for this essential work, Pastor Brooke will be setting aside Mondays as a dedicated Study Day. On Mondays, she will be working from home, focusing on preparation for the week ahead.

Pastor Brooke also wants to be clear: she genuinely wants to hear from you. Your needs, concerns, and joys matter, and she does not want anyone to hesitate to reach out out of concern that she is “too busy.” Creating this dedicated time helps ensure that when she is available, she can be fully present and attentive, rather than pulled in multiple directions.

As part of supporting a healthy rhythm of ministry, we also ask for your help in how and when you reach out. While pastoral care does include being available in times of true emergency, many needs can wait until the next day. If something arises outside of normal business hours that is not urgent, please consider sending an email or contacting the office the following day. This allows Pastor Brooke to receive and respond thoughtfully when she is in a position to give your concern her full attention.

She will remain available for urgent needs. For all requests, please contact the church office at 330.253.5109 x.112 or email [pastor@akronfcc.org](mailto:pastor@akronfcc.org). While responses may not always come the same day, your message will be received and returned as soon as possible.

Thank you for helping support this rhythm of ministry by honoring this time. It allows Pastor Brooke to serve the congregation with care, intention, and the attention it deserves.

## AV MINISTRY

Our Sunday services rely on a dedicated AV team working behind the scenes to make our technology run smoothly. We're currently looking for volunteers to help out for both our 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM services to help manage sound, slides, and livestream elements that allow our congregation to fully engage in worship. This role plays a key part in creating a meaningful and distraction-free experience for everyone in attendance.

No prior experience is required; we are happy to train anyone willing to learn. If you're dependable, attentive, and open to picking up new skills, you can make a real difference. That said, if you do have a background in audio production, video, or tech support, your experience would be an incredible asset to the team.

Volunteering can be flexible; whether you can serve once a month or more regularly, your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

If you're interested in getting involved or would like to learn more, please reach out to [av@akronfcc.org](mailto:av@akronfcc.org).

# FINANCE REPORT

## Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru February, 2026

	February	February YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>				
Offerings Income	\$21,291	\$131,249	\$112,500	116.7%
Unrestricted Grant Income	\$7	\$3,632	\$3,749	96.9%
Designated Income	\$2,083	\$18,750	\$92,358	20.3%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$89,748	\$617,734	\$559,770	110.4%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$3,523	\$21,317	\$29,998	71.1%
Other Income	\$19,417	\$43,480	\$4,099	1060.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$136,070</b>	<b>\$836,162</b>	<b>\$802,474</b>	<b>104.2%</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>				
Loan Expense	\$2,612	\$23,703	\$23,625	100.3%
Membership Board	\$0	\$463	\$1,539	30.1%
Governing Board	\$0	\$4,045	\$6,250	64.7%
Food Pantry	\$3,305	\$44,783	\$41,251	108.6%
Congregational Care	\$1,641	\$12,762	\$13,794	92.5%
Worship & Music	\$2,439	\$18,474	\$19,531	94.6%
Christian Education	\$83	\$485	\$4,272	11.3%
Development Team	\$0	\$316	\$250	126.3%
Food Service Expense	\$2,159	\$20,822	\$9,751	213.5%
Personnel	\$36,078	\$358,868	\$446,241	80.4%
Other Admin Expense	\$3,653	\$39,581	\$42,263	93.7%
Media Relations/Marketing	\$463	\$10,367	\$11,038	93.9%
Maintenance/Insurance/Utilities	\$37,128	\$205,578	\$182,297	112.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$89,561</b>	<b>\$740,246</b>	<b>\$802,102</b>	<b>92.3%</b>
Net Income/Loss	\$46,509	\$95,916	\$372	25783.9%

## A GIFT THAT LIVES ON: REMEMBERING OUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

By Finance and Operations Manager, Janis Worley



Throughout the years, First Congregational Church of Akron UCC has been a place of welcome, worship, and belonging for so many. It is where we have gathered in times of joy and sorrow, where we have grown in faith, and where deep and lasting friendships have taken root. The ministry that happens within and beyond these walls is a testament to the generosity and faithfulness of those who came before us, and we have the opportunity to extend that same gift to the generations that will follow.

One of the most meaningful ways to express your love for this congregation is by including AkronFCC in your will or estate plan. A planned gift, no matter the size, is a powerful expression of faith and an enduring investment in the future of our shared community.

When making a bequest, you have two options. You may choose to leave your gift undesignated, allowing the church to direct the funds toward the greatest area of need at that time. Alternatively, you may wish to leave a designated gift, directing your bequest toward a specific ministry, program, or purpose that is close to your heart.

If you choose to designate your gift for a specific purpose, we encourage you to meet with Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley ahead of time to clearly document your intentions. This conversation ensures that your wishes will be honored and that your gift will be used exactly as you envision. It is a simple step that makes a tremendous difference.

The seeds planted by those who loved this church before us continue to bear fruit today. May we, in turn, plant seeds that will nourish and sustain this beloved community for years to come. To make an appointment with Janis Worley please email [finance@akronfcc.org](mailto:finance@akronfcc.org) or call 330.253.5109 x111.



# Chronicle

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

## MARDI GRAS 2026 AT AKRONFCC UCC

Mardi Gras Celebration at AkronFCC

Our congregation embraced the spirit of Mardi Gras with a joyful and vibrant worship service filled with music, color, and community. Members arrived dressed in festive purple, gold, and green—some even donning beads—to mark the occasion in style.

The service featured lively music from a jazz band, setting a celebratory tone that carried throughout the morning. Following worship, the fellowship continued with plenty of laughter, conversation, and, of course, delicious cake that quickly became a crowd favorite.



A highlight of the day was the crowning of our very first Mardi Gras King, Bruce Summers, adding a memorable and lighthearted touch to an already meaningful celebration.

It was a wonderful reminder of the joy found in gathering together—not just in worship, but in shared moments of fun and connection.

# April 2026

NOTE: *Italicized events are private rentals by individuals or outside organizations; all other others are church activities, (including worship and meetings) or public events.*

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	 2 AA 10am Maundy Thursday Service 6pm	 3 AA 10am OFFICE CLOSED @ 1pm Good Friday Service 7pm	4  Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Freedom BLOC</i> 11am
 5 Easter Sunrise Service 6:15am Easter Worship Service 10am Bakers Sunday 11am	6 OFFICE CLOSED AA 12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	7 Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm	8 Faith Enrichment 9am <i>Howard Reception</i> 10am AA 12pm Bell Choir 5:30pm SSOULE 6pm	9 AA 11am MLK Committee 5:30pm	10 AA 10am PB&J 11:30am	Food Pantry Load In 8am
12 Upper Room Service 9am Meetinghouse Service 11am Second Sunday Salads 12pm LGBTQ+ Comm. Night 5pm	13 AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm Indivisible Akron 6pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	14 Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm BINGO 6pm Membership Board 7pm	15 Faith Enrichment 9am AA 12pm Bell Choir 5:30pm	16 <i>Tuff Stuff</i> 8:45am AA 11am Nominating Bd 7pm PFLAG 7pm	17 AA 10am PB & J 11:30am	18 Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Freedom BLOC</i> 11am
19 Upper Room Service 9am Meetinghouse Service 11am Bakers Sunday 12pm	20 AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm S&F Board 5:30pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	21 Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm HR Board 6pm	22 Faith Enrichment 9am AA 11am Bell Choir 5:30pm	23 AA 11am	24 <i>Foster Grandparents</i> 9am AA 10am PB & J 11:30am	25 Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>FH Rental</i> 1pm-2pm Oikos Jazz Concert 4pm
26 Upper Room Service 9am Meetinghouse Service 11am PFLAG Board Mtg. 2pm	27 AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm UA Orchestra Rehearsal 3pm - 5pm Governing Bd 6:30pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	28 Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm Metro Chorus Rehearsal 5pm - 9:30pm	29 Faith Enrichment 9am AA 11am UA Orchestra Rehearsal 3pm - 5pm Bell Choir 5:30pm	30 AA 11am UA Orchestra Rehearsal 3pm - 5pm		