

CHRONICLE

2026

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC

PASTOR'S COLUMN



Happy Pride Month! I am so happy to be serving a congregation that lives out Jesus' directive to love! On June 28, Open and Affirming Sunday, we will celebrate ten years of AkronFCC UCC deciding to be Open and Affirming (ONA). We were the first church in the United Church of Christ (UCC) to vote to become ONA in Akron. We are the 1,387th church to become ONA in the UCC.

One of the things that makes me proud to serve this congregation is the way in which you live out your covenant. Last fall, we invited other UCC congregations who are ONA to join us in our monthly LGBTQ+ gatherings and we found out that we were unique in having a group like this. This is one way in which we live out our covenant out loud.

We also live out our covenant by being welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. I was once asked (about another congregation), "Would I feel comfortable kissing my wife during the passing of the peace?" I can confidently say that I - and anyone else who might visit - would be comfortable offering a quick kiss to their spouse, in the same way that a heterosexual couple would be accepted.

During worship, we celebrate various months/days throughout the year that lift up God's people: MLK Day, Black History Month, Veteran's Day, Pride Month. We are celebrating the unique ways God has created us and to express gratitude for sacrifices made; but our main focus is always to praise God. It is why, on patriotic holidays, we do not raise up our own country, because that becomes a slippery slope of worshipping our country rather than God.

So AkronFCC UCC, keep living out your covenant and be proud of the way you spread God's love in the world!

Blessings,

Pastor Brooke

Pastor Brooke Baker



DID YOU KNOW...PRIDE MONTH

- Pride Month takes place every June to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City. What began as a series of spontaneous protests against police brutality at a gay bar has evolved into a global movement celebrating LGBTQ+ culture, visibility, and equal rights.
- The Term "Pride": Activist Craig Schoonmaker coined the word "Pride" in 1970, noting that while marginalized people have historically had little power in the world, anyone can possess personal pride to spark change.
- The iconic rainbow flag was created in 1978 by San Francisco artist and activist Gilbert Baker. The original eight-color design represented different facets of the movement, such as life, healing, and spirit.
- The U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states on June 26, 2015. This was a monumental moment for the LGBTQIA+ community. The Court's ruling means that states can no longer deny same-sex marriages and must recognize their unions. Love wins!
- In June 1999, President Clinton issued a proclamation declaring the month as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month in recognition of the anniversary of Stonewall. In June 2009, President Obama issued a proclamation declaring June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month and formally recognized the many contributions made by LGBTQ+ Americans.

INCLUSION IS IN THE DETAILS

At First Congregational Church of Akron, we often say, “Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” We believe those words matter, and we work hard to make sure they are more than simply a slogan.

We are proud to be a church that openly and affirmingly welcomes all people, including our LGBTQ+ siblings in Christ. We believe the Church is strongest when all people are seen, valued, respected, and invited fully into the life of the congregation. That welcome shapes our worship, our ministries, our outreach, and the ways we care for one another.

Many expressions of inclusion are easy to notice. Our building includes ramps, elevators, accessible entrances, and spaces designed to help people move comfortably throughout our historic church. These things matter because every person deserves to participate fully in the life of the church.

But inclusion is also found in the quieter details—things many people may never notice because they are simply working in the background.

When we create bulletins, newsletters, slides, social media posts, and other communications, we try to do so with everyone in mind. That means choosing fonts that are easier to read, using colors with strong contrast, and making sure text is large enough to be accessible for as many people as possible. It means thinking carefully about how information is organized and presented so that it is clear and usable.

It also means including descriptions for images and photographs in our digital materials. Many people do not realize that screen readers used by individuals with visual impairments rely on those descriptions to communicate what is shown in an image. A simple sentence describing a photograph can help ensure that someone is included in the full story being told.

Accessibility and inclusion are not about checking boxes or meeting minimum standards. They are ways of honoring the dignity of every person and recognizing that the Body of Christ includes people with different experiences, backgrounds, abilities, identities, and needs.

The work of inclusion is ongoing, and we know we will not always do it perfectly. Still, we remain committed to learning, improving, listening, and paying attention to the details that help people feel genuinely welcomed.

Sometimes hospitality looks like coffee hour and a warm greeting at the door. Sometimes it looks like a ramp, readable fonts, thoughtful spacing, or a few carefully written words behind a photograph. All of it matters.



DO THE WORK: ANTI-RACISM WORKSHOP SERIES

First Congregational Church of Akron has long been committed to building a more just, compassionate, and inclusive community. This summer, our partners at Indivisible Akron, will provide an opportunity for learning, reflection, and growth through, *Do the Work*, a six-session workshop series based on the book *Do the Work! An Anti-Racist Activity Book* by W. Kamau Bell and Kate Schatz.

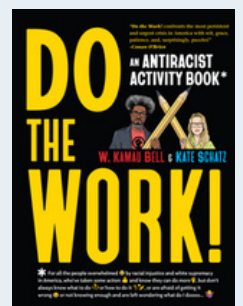
Participants will work through the book together, sharing insights and discussing what they learn from the exercises. The workshop is designed for anyone who wants a better way to understand the systems that shape our society and explore ways to become a more effective advocate for equity and justice.

Sessions will be held at First Congregational Church of Akron from 10:00 a.m. to Noon on alternating Saturdays beginning June 13 and continuing through August 22. While participants are encouraged to engage with the workbook, organizers note that attendance at every session is not required.

As a congregation that values justice, inclusion, and lifelong learning, we are grateful to partner with organizations like Indivisible Akron that help create opportunities for meaningful community dialogue.

Whether you are already involved in social justice work or are simply looking for a place to begin, this workshop offers a welcoming space to learn, listen, and grow.

Participants will need to purchase their own copy of *Do the Work! An Anti-Racist Activity Book*. Registration information is available through Indivisible Akron. For additional details, visit Indivisible Akron's website, indivisibleakron.org



FINANCE REPORT

Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru April, 2026

	April	April YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
<u>INCOME</u>				
Offerings Income	\$10,197	\$157,575	\$137,500	114.6%
Unrestricted Grant Income	\$272	\$3,908	\$4,583	85.3%
Designated Income	\$2,083	\$22,917	\$112,882	20.3%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$61,148	\$740,030	\$684,162	108.2%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$2,399	\$27,346	\$36,666	74.6%
Other Income	\$90	\$43,690	\$5,083	859.5%
TOTAL	\$76,188	\$995,466	\$980,876	101.5%
<u>EXPENSES</u>				
Loan Expense	\$2,600	\$28,909	\$28,875	100.1%
Membership Board	\$171	\$634	\$1,813	35.0%
Governing Board	\$0	\$4,045	\$7,750	52.2%
Food Pantry	\$2,430	\$49,104	\$50,417	97.4%
Congregational Care	\$4,082	\$19,312	\$23,148	83.4%
Worship & Music	\$1,956	\$25,414	\$24,377	104.3%
Christian Education	\$9,444	\$9,929	\$9,724	102.1%
Development Team	\$0	\$316	\$250	126.3%
Food Service Expense	\$1,573	\$24,205	\$11,917	203.1%
Personnel	\$35,554	\$436,347	\$535,233	81.5%
Other Admin Expense	\$2,325	\$43,467	\$47,641	91.2%
Media Relations/Marketing	\$1,244	\$12,685	\$16,094	78.8%
Maintenance/Insurance/Utilities	\$15,250	\$237,475	\$224,756	105.7%
TOTAL	\$76,628	\$891,842	\$981,995	90.8%
Net Income/Loss	-\$440	\$103,623	-\$1,119	-9260.4%

MEET & GREETINGS WITH PASTOR BROOKE COMING SOON

Since arriving at AkronFCC last September, Pastor Brooke has jumped right into the life of the church. Between getting settled, leading worship, and guiding us through Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, her first several months have been wonderfully busy.

Now that some of those major seasons are behind us, Pastor Brooke is looking forward to spending time getting to know members in a more personal setting.

In the coming weeks, we will be offering a series of small-group Meet & Greets hosted by members of the Membership Board at various locations. These gatherings will provide an opportunity for conversation, questions, and fellowship as Pastor Brooke continues building relationships throughout the congregation.

Watch your email for sign-up information and additional details. We hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity to connect with Pastor Brooke and with one another.

PERIOD PRODUCT DRIVE

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our recent Period Product Drive in partnership with the Junior League of Akron. Your generosity will help ensure that individuals and families of Akron and those who visit our Feeding Hope Food Pantry have access to essential hygiene products that are too often overlooked.

We are especially grateful to the Junior League of Akron for their ongoing commitment to addressing period poverty in our community. For several years, the League has supplied period products to our food pantry, helping us meet an important need for many of our clients. Their dedication has made a real difference in the lives of countless people throughout Greater Akron.

While our collection drive has ended, the need goes on throughout the year. Donations are always welcome and can be dropped off at the church along with our other food pantry contributions.



MIDYEAR GIVING: STAYING FAITHFUL TO OUR COMMITMENTS

By Finance & Operations Manager, Janis Worley

Can you believe we're already approaching the halfway point of the year? As summer arrives and schedules shift, we want to take a moment to gently remind our congregation of the generous pledge commitments so many of you made at the end of last year – and to encourage you to check in on how you're doing.

Your faithful giving makes everything we do together possible. The summer months are no exception! Whether you give weekly, monthly, or on another schedule, your continued generosity during this season is just as vital as ever.

When you make your donation, remember that you can designate your gift to the specific ministry or area that is closest to your heart:

- Mason CLC Students – supporting the children and families we serve
- PB&J Food Backpack Program – sending kids home on Fridays with bags of food
- Food Pantry – nourishing neighbors in need right here in our community
- Music Fund – sustaining the music that lifts our worship
- Minister's Discretionary Fund – assisting those who are in dire need
- General Church Operations – keeping the lights on and the doors open for all we do

Of course, giving comes in many forms! There are wonderful ways to support the life of our church beyond a financial gift:

- Donate warm winter coats for Mason CLC students (now is a great time to buy on sale!)
- Purchase our church honey – straight from our own hives!
- Donate school supplies in late summer to help students start the year ready to learn
- Collect pop tabs to benefit our local Ronald McDonald House
- Save your Acme receipts beginning August 1 – a simple way to give that costs you nothing extra
- Volunteer your time – there is always a place for willing hands and open hearts

No matter how you choose to give, whether it be financially, physically, or through your time, please know that every gift matters deeply. Together, we are the hands and feet of this community, and your generosity makes it all possible.

Questions about your pledge or how to make a designated gift? Please don't hesitate to reach out to the Finance & Operations Manager Janis Worley at finance@akronfcc.org.

BEHIND THE MUSIC: WHEN WORSHIP IS HARD

By Praise Band Co-Leader, Hannah Pyett



There are some Sundays where the music comes easy. My heart swells and the words feel true. Other Sundays, it's different. I sing words of God's faithfulness, while thinking of the mothers who are raising

their children in places of fear and uncertainty. I think of the unfairness of it all. I think of the next day where I will be sending my child to school with a quick hug and prayer for his safety in a country where school shootings have become all too common. I think of the people who wonder if they will have enough to eat while billionaires are taking flights on private jets that hurt our environment. I think of greed, war, and inequality. And I carry my own grief, stress, and sadness, feeling the weight of it bearing down on me. And still, I come.

Sometimes the songs don't quite fit what we're feeling. The words about joy and goodness can feel distant when the world feels anything but. In these moments, worship is hard. Not because we've lost faith, but because we are paying attention. But maybe worship isn't only what happens when we're singing together on Sunday morning. Maybe it's also found in the quiet, ordinary moments we live through the rest of the week. Maybe it's in rocking a baby with tenderness. In taking extra time to sit with someone who feels forgotten. In volunteering at the food pantry. In listening, really listening, to the stories of someone who has been waiting far too long to be heard. Maybe those moments are their own kind of liturgy. Moments of mercy. Moments of presence. Moments where love shows up in small, steady ways. We may not always feel the "goodness of God" in the way we expect or hope for. But that doesn't mean God is absent. We believe God meets us right there: in the mundane, in the questions, in the quiet acts of care, and even in the suffering we don't fully understand.

So if you find yourself on a Sunday when worship feels hard, you are not alone. Maybe your worship, in this season, looks less like singing and more like showing up. Maybe it looks like holding space, offering kindness, or simply being present. Or maybe it looks like letting people love you and show up for you the way you need. Because worship isn't just the songs we sing. It's the lives we live, the love we give, and the ways we continue to show up for God and for one another, even when it's hard.



A BUILDING FULL OF LIFE

One of the great blessings of First Congregational Church of Akron UCC is that our building is rarely quiet.

Of course, Sunday mornings remain at the heart of who we are as a congregation, but throughout the week our halls, meeting rooms, kitchen, and sanctuary continue to welcome people from across the community. Support groups, community organizations, baby showers, concerts, meetings, outreach programs, celebrations, and gatherings of all kinds bring new faces through our doors every week.

There is something especially meaningful about hearing visitors talk about the building itself. Many people tell us they have driven past the church for years—sometimes decades—and always wondered what it looked like inside. Almost without fail, they walk in and say the same thing: it is every bit as beautiful inside as it is outside.

For a building that is more than 115 years old, that is no small thing.

This church has been lovingly cared for by generations of members who gave faithfully not only to support ministry, but also to maintain and preserve the building itself. Through regular tithes, memorial gifts, special donations, repair projects, and countless volunteer hours, people invested in this space long before many of us arrived here. Today, that care continues to bear fruit.

While rental income certainly helps support the ongoing ministry and operation of the church, the value of opening our doors goes far beyond finances. Our building has become a gathering place for the wider community—a place where people celebrate milestones, find support, build relationships, and experience hospitality.

In many ways, that is exactly what this building was always meant to be: not simply a structure to admire from the outside, but a living space filled with people, purpose, and connection.

Every event, every meeting, every gathering is another reminder that this church continues to serve not only its congregation, but also its neighbors. And after more than a century, that is something truly worth celebrating.



PRAYERS & SUPPORT NEEDED

Earlier this week, our gardener, Duane, and our Cleaning and Hospitality staff member, Joy, were involved in a serious pedestrian accident. As they begin the road to recovery, we ask that you keep both of them in your prayers.

Many of you know Duane through his faithful care of our church gardens and outdoor spaces. Thanks to his hard work, the grounds around our church continue to be a welcoming and beautiful part of our ministry. While Duane recovers, we could use some help keeping those areas maintained.

If you are willing to assist with light gardening tasks such as weeding, trimming, watering, or occasional mowing in the garden area, please contact Janis Worley, our Finance and Operations Manager in the church office at finance@akronfcc.org or call the church and dial extension 111. Whether you can help once or on a more regular basis, any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Many have asked how they can give support. Cards for Joy & Duane may be dropped off at the church office. Those wishing to contact Duane directly can find his information in Breeze. Because of the extensive injuries Duane has sustained he will miss work for the next 4-6 weeks, at least. If you would like to make a donation to help assist him with some expenses, you can do so by check, noting in the memo line “Assistance for Duane”.

Thank you for surrounding both Duane and Joy with your prayers, support, and care during this time.

ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

Mark your calendar for July 12 and plan to attend the church picnic. More details and sign-ups will become available soon. Keep an eye on the *In the Loop* weekly email for more information.

NEW MEMBER CLASS

Curious about membership or joining AkronFCC UCC in membership? Meet with Pastor Brooke on Sunday, June 14, after a single 10am worship service to learn about the church and what it means to be a member. There's no obligation to join if you attend. Come to learn more!

STARK PRIDE

Our LGBTQ+ Group will be carpooling to Stark Pride on Saturday, June 13. All are welcome! Contact lgbtq@akronfcc.org for meeting time and details.

GUSTELY/DURWAY SCHOLARSHIP

Applications for the Gustely/ Durway scholarship are being accepted through June 15 for \$1,000 scholarships open to students in any field of study. Visit our website, akronfcc.org and navigate to the Ministries tab. The first item will be information about the scholarship including the application.

AkronFCC UCC Annual Tea

Birds, Bees, & Tea, Please!

Saturday, June 13 at 11am
\$5 per person

Join us for our Annual Tea! This charming afternoon is open to everyone, so grab a friend and come enjoy a relaxing time of fellowship together. We'll have tea, a light lunch, a few games, and plenty of good conversation.

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Cash _____

Check _____

Online _____

Questions contact admin@akronfcc.org.

June 2026

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	AA Men's Lunch 12pm B&G Board Mtg. 5:15pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm	Faith Enrichment 9am AA 12pm	AA 11am	AA <i>Rehearsal</i> 10am 2:30pm	Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Wedding Ceremony</i> 1pm <i>Wedding Reception</i> - 8pm
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Summer Combined Worship Service 10am Bakers Sunday 12pm	AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm B&G Board 5:15pm <i>Indivisible Akron</i> 6pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm BINGO 6pm Membership Board 7pm	Faith Enrichment 9am AA 12pm SSOULE 6pm	AA 11am	AA 10am	Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Indivisible Akron</i> 9am Tea Party 11am
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Summer Combined Worship Service 10am New Member Class 11am	Shower Bus 8am AA 12pm Men's Lunch 12pm S&F Board Mtg. 5:13pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm HR Board Mtg. 6pm	Faith Enrichment 9am AA 12pm	AA 11am PLFAG 7pm	 Juneteenth OFFICE CLOSED 10am	Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Kintsugi Opening</i> 12pm
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Summer Combined Worship Service 10am Bakers Sunday 12pm	AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm	Faith Enrichment 9am AA 11am	AA 11am	Foster Grandparents 9am AA 10am	Food Pantry Load In 8am <i>Indivisible Akron</i> 9am
28	29	30				
 ONA SUNDAY Summer Combined Worship Service 10am	AA 12 pm Men's Lunch 12 pm Governing Boar 6:30pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	Food Pantry 9am <i>Bible Study</i> 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm			 NOTE: <i>Italicized events are private rentals by individuals or outside organizations; all other others are church activities, (including worship and meetings) or public events.</i>	 PRIDE MONTH


Event times and dates are subject to change.