

CHRONICLE

2026

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC

PASTOR'S COLUMN

One year – we have been together one year this month. Some of you I feel like I know pretty well and others of you I'm still getting to know. Some of you I have sat at the hospital with. Some of you I have planned funerals with. Some of you I have celebrated the birth of a new baby with. Some of you I have served on boards with. Some of you I have broken bread with. Some of you I have walked in Pride events with. Some of you have come to me, and I have listened.

Listening is such an important part of a relationship and is a skill that always needs tweaking. Listening provides information to the other person. Listening allows the person talking to be validated and heard. Listening requires two people – one person to speak and another person to listen. One cannot listen alone. Listening can alleviate tensions and prevent conflict from happening in the first place.

I hope I have been clear through my actions and through my words that I am here to listen. I am here to listen to your grief, to your joy, to your fears, and to your challenges. Those challenges include challenging things within the church. Hopefully you will come to see me more than just to voice what you are unhappy about, but my door is open for those things. Listening allows me to learn things. Listening allows us to see opportunities. Listening allows me to get to know you as a person better and AkronFCC better.

I have been here one year, but I still know there is a lot to learn. One way I learn is by listening. My door is open and I'm ready to listen.

Blessings,

Pastor Brooke

Pastor Brooke Baker



Artwork: "Blue Interior" by Dianne Gardner.
Used with permission of the artist.

A SWEET REQUEST

It's that time of year when the Sunday Bakers teams are forming – and you are invited to join in the fun. Sunday Bakers provides sweet and savory treats for after church on the first and third Sundays each month from September through May. You don't have to actually bake because purchased treats are always welcome, but if you love to bake, this is your chance. If you are interested, contact Margaret Maurer at mbmaurer@kent.edu.

Sunday Bakers is also looking for someone to pilot the third Sunday each month. This person reminds team members each month that their Sunday is approaching by sending out an email. Then on Sunday morning they come in ½ hour early to greet and thank all the team members and to ensure that things are set up. Right after church, the whole team helps with last-minute setup and then clears the leftovers to the kitchen. There is lots of comradery and support. If you like to connect with people and thank them, then this is the role for you!

EXCITING CHANGES ARE COMING TO OUR PARKING LOTS!

About two years ago, First Congregational Church of Akron purchased two parking lots from the University of Akron – great additions located just west of our building, alongside the garden and bordering College Street. As part of that purchase, we agreed to let the University continue parking their security vehicles there for three years while we planned our next steps.

Now, as that lease winds down, we're excited to share how we're making these new lots easy and convenient to access from our main property!

The most natural route runs through our lower parking lot, across a section of the First United Methodist Church of Akron's lot, and into our newly acquired spaces. To make that happen, we've been working hard behind the scenes – and we're thrilled to say the pieces are falling into place.

We began by reaching out to our wonderful neighbors at First United Methodist Church of Akron about the section of their lot that runs alongside our building. Together, we worked out a long-term lease agreement that gives us the use of those spaces. In exchange, we will be resealing and restriping their lot – and the new striping will let traffic flow smoothly and directly from our lower lot right into our new parking areas.

We've also relocated our dumpsters closer to the building, opening up a clear, straight driving path through our lot and into the newly available spaces on the Methodist lot. Once the lease work is complete, our final step will be removing the chain link fence currently blocking access to those lots and doing some simple ground work to smooth the transition from the Methodist lot to the gravel University lots.

Here's where things stand:

- ✓ Lease signed with First United Methodist Church of Akron
- ✓ Dumpsters relocated
- ➡ Resealing/restriping on our lots: Friday, September 25
- ➡ Resealing/restriping on First United Methodist Church of Akron's lot: Saturday, October 10

While we're resealing our upper and lower lots, we're also making a couple of thoughtful updates to improve accessibility. The handicapped space currently near the building (by the air conditioning units) will become a no parking/loading zone, and, to meet accessibility spacing requirements, our handicapped spaces will move from the center of the upper lot to a row along the south side. This gives every vehicle the proper room needed for safe, easy loading and unloading.

We're grateful for your patience as this work comes together, and we can't wait for you to enjoy the improved, more convenient parking! If you have any questions, please reach out to Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at finance@akronfcc.org.



By Janis Worley
Finance & Operations
Manager

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

	July	July YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME				
Offerings Income	\$17,750	\$27,370	\$28,333	96.6%
Unrestricted Grant Income	\$2	\$4	\$833	0.5%
Designated Income	\$1,667	\$3,333	\$20,975	15.9%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$64,107	\$128,214	\$131,547	97.5%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$2,937	\$6,903	\$5,100	135.4%
Other Income	\$0	\$0	\$833	0.0%
TOTAL	\$86,462	\$165,825	\$187,623	88.4%
EXPENSES				
Loan Expense	\$2,583	\$5,172	\$5,068	102.1%
Membership Board	\$133	\$133	\$400	33.1%
Governing Board	\$53	-\$10	\$833	-1.2%
Food Pantry	\$6,547	\$7,067	\$5,847	120.9%
Congregational Care	\$82	\$82	\$812	10.1%
Worship & Music	\$1,851	\$2,614	\$1,691	154.6%
Christian Education	\$0	\$1,595	\$1,280	124.6%
Development Team	\$0	\$0	\$0	#DIV/0!
Food Service Expense	\$1,690	\$2,362	\$1,667	141.7%
Personnel	\$57,367	\$90,387	\$114,276	79.1%
Other Admin Expense	\$1,270	\$2,260	\$5,474	41.3%
Media Relations/Marketing	\$716	\$716	\$2,030	35.3%
Maintenance/Insurance/Utilities	\$19,894	\$29,519	\$39,588	74.6%
TOTAL	\$92,184	\$141,898	\$178,966	79.3%
Net Income/Loss	-\$5,722	\$23,927	\$8,657	276.4%

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

Reflections from Your Worship Leader

I think sometimes we make worship harder than it needs to be. We wonder if we're doing it right. Should I close my eyes? Raise my hands? Sing louder? Should I feel something right now? Everyone else seems to know the words. Everyone else seems moved. Meanwhile, I'm thinking about the grocery list, the child who kept me awake half the night, or the week waiting for me when I leave. But perhaps the first step toward deeper worship isn't trying harder. Perhaps it's simply being present.



Hannah Pyett
Praise Band Co-Leader

Bring your whole self.

You don't need to leave your questions at the door. You don't need to pretend the week was easier than it was. You don't even need to be certain about every word you sing. Bring your joy and your doubt. Bring your gratitude and your grief. Bring the part of you that believes fiercely and the part that whispers, "God, are you really here?" There is room for all of it.

Pay attention to the words.

It's easy to sing a familiar song on autopilot. So every once in a while, notice what you're actually saying. Maybe one line feels like a prayer. Maybe another feels like a promise you desperately want to believe. And maybe there is a line you can't quite sing today. That's okay too. Worship doesn't require us to abandon honesty. Sometimes engaging deeply means allowing ourselves to wrestle with the words rather than simply repeating them.

Let the community sing for you.

There may be Sundays when you don't have a song in you. On those mornings, listen. Listen to the person behind you who is enthusiastically singing a slightly different note. Listen to the person who has sung this hymn through decades of joy and loss. Let their voices carry you for a little while. There is something sacred about a community singing together because we have chosen to show up beside one another anyway.

Try something new.

Sing louder. Sing softer. Close your eyes. Open them and look around the room. Clap. Move. Sit quietly. There is no secret combination of posture and volume that unlocks God's presence. Sometimes engaging more deeply simply means breaking out of our routine long enough to notice where we are and whom we are with. And then, when the music stops, keep worshiping. Take it with you into the parking lot and out into the world. Because worship was never meant to stay inside a sanctuary. Because we know that worship at its heart is how we as imperfect people, show up beside one another.

And somewhere in the middle of all us imperfect people, imperfect notes, complicated beliefs, questions, joys, sorrows, and hopes, we trust that God also shows up and meets us there. Maybe deeper worship doesn't begin with doing more. Maybe it begins with showing up and paying attention. Come as you are. There is room for you in the song.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AT AKRONFCC UCC

By Communications & Events Manager, Alex Morris

The 26-27 Music@AkronFCC Concert Series has been funded in its entirety by a generous, anonymous donation. Not only has this donation allowed us to continue our new concert series into a second year, but it has allowed us to support talented musicians and local ensembles as they fulfill their own missions.

The first concert is on September 19 at 7:30 pm. Join the Video Game Symphony's newest offshoot ensemble, The Video Game Jazz Band. Even if you aren't familiar with video games, the music is enjoyable all on its own, even out of context. The first 50 RSVPs will receive catered refreshments generously provided by a volunteer from the ensemble who used to run their own catering business.

All concerts in the series are free (instructions on how to get free tickets for the May 2027 concert will be given closer to then). More information and the links to reserve your seat for the concerts can be found at www.akronfcc.org/concert-series.



Akron

We had a great time at Akron Pride on Saturday, August 22! The 10th anniversary celebration brought a big crowd to downtown Akron, and there was plenty of music, color, dancing, food, laughter—and a little rain thrown in for good measure.

Our AkronFCC UCC booth stayed busy throughout the day. Lots of people stopped by to chat, learn a little about the church, and pick up one of our Pride friendship bracelets. And, of course, there was popcorn! Our bags invited everyone to “Come see what’s poppin’!” along with information about the church.

Pride 2026



It was great to see so many familiar faces and to meet people who had never heard of AkronFCC UCC. Pride is always a good reminder that being a welcoming church isn’t just something we say—it’s something we get to put into practice by showing up, meeting people where they are and letting them know there’s a place for them here.



Pastor Brooke took the church’s welcome beyond our booth, making stops along the parade route to offer glitter blessings.



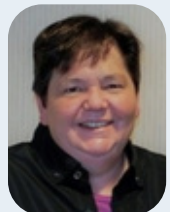
Thank you to everyone who helped make our booth happen, everyone who stopped by to visit, and everyone who represented AkronFCC UCC throughout the day. We’re already looking forward to next year!



“WELCOME HOME”

Join us on Sunday, September 13, as we kick off the new program year! Worship will be at 10 a.m. in the Meetinghouse, followed by an Ice Cream Social in the Fellowship Hall. Come worship with us and stay for a sweet treat!

UCC PRESENTATION



After our final summer combined service at 10 a.m. on Sunday, September 20, Rev. Karen Bruno will give a presentation on the history of the United Church of Christ. Mark your calendar and plan to join us!

SUMMER WORSHIP WRAP-UP

After enjoying a summer of blending our 9 a.m. contemporary and 11 a.m. traditional services into one combined service, we will return to our regular worship schedule on Sunday, September 27.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the surveys about the combined service. Your feedback gave us a great deal of insight and helps us keep a pulse on the congregation. It will also help guide our planning for future special combined services.

POP TABS & ACME RECEIPTS

Your everyday recyclables can make a difference! Bring your pop tabs and ACME receipts to the church office whenever you have them.



Pop tabs are collected and recycled to raise funds for the Ronald McDonald House, while your ACME receipts help support



AkronFCC UCC through the Acme Community Cashback program. It may seem like a small thing, but when we all pitch in, those little contributions really add up!

NEW OFFICE HOURS

New church office hours will be:

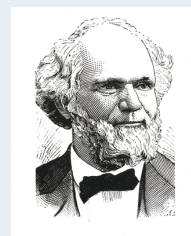
- Monday – Thursday 9am – 5pm
- Fridays 8am – 4pm.

If you are in a group after hours and you cannot remember your code to get in the building, please call the church office or contact your group organizer.

A LITTLE OF OUR HISTORY WORTH KNOWING

You never know what you might learn from a Google alert!

A recent Akron Beacon Journal article highlighted the story of Rev. Isaac Jennings, an early pastor of our church, as part of its America 250 series. Rev. Isaac Jennings played a major role in creating the public school system we know today.



When Jennings arrived in Akron, education looked very different. In 1846, there were nearly 700 children of school age in Akron, but only about half were attending school. There were small district schools, private schools and even classes being held in the back room of a house. Families who could afford it paid for their children's education.

Jennings believed Akron could do better. In May 1846, he was named chairman of a citizens' committee charged with looking at the town's schools and figuring out how they could be improved. He spent the next several months gathering information, visiting other communities to see how their schools operated and developing a plan for Akron.

The resulting Akron School Plan called for one school district for the entire town, schools in different parts of the community, a standardized system of grades and an elected school board. Most importantly, it called for schools to be available to all children and supported through taxation rather than tuition. The citizens of Akron approved the plan, and the Ohio Legislature turned it into law in 1847.

Jennings didn't stay in Akron for long. He left in 1847, shortly after marrying Sophia Day, and went on to serve churches in Connecticut and Vermont. But his work here left a lasting mark. Akron Public Schools still has a Jennings Community Learning Center named in his honor, and he is often referred to as the father and founder of Akron's public school system.

It's pretty remarkable to think that someone who once stood in our pulpit was also helping shape the future of education in Akron.

COATS FOR MASON CLC

We collect new and gently used coats for the children at Mason CLC throughout the year. As cooler weather approaches, we're making one last push to fill our coat closet before our Coat Blessing in October. After the blessing, the coats will be delivered to Mason CLC to help keep local children warm this winter.

FOCUS ITEMS

September Donation Focus - Razors, Body Lotion and Hand Sanitizer. We are especially in need of suitcases with wheels.



CHRONICLE

First Congregational Church of Akron UCC

292 E Market St.
Akron, OH 44308



A Star Spangled Singapalooza
A sing-a-long celebration of America

A CHORUS FOR A CAUSE
Harmony Ringers

Sunday, Sept. 20, 2026 4:00PM
Faith United Methodist Church
North Canton

Sunday, Sept. 27, 2026 4:00PM
St. Barbara's Catholic Church
Massillon, OH
Raffle at St. Barbara's starting at 3:15 PM

Donation Appreciated
Proceeds to benefit Greensburg Bed Brigade



MUSIC @AkronFCC

2026

- 19 SEP** VIDEO GAME JAZZ VIDEO GAME SYMPHONY FREE ENSEMBLE
Sep. 19, 2026 | 7:30 PM
- 04 OCT** ORGAN & FLUTE THORSON & POPE
Oct. 4, 2026 | 4:00 PM
- 06 NOV** MAX JOHNSON TRIO JAZZ
Nov. 6, 2026 | 7:30 PM
- 06 DEC** 'TIS THE SEASON OAKRON CHOIRS
Dec. 6, 2026 | 6:00 PM
- 20 FEB** CLEVELAND REPERTORY ORCHESTRA
Feb. 20, 2027 | 7:00 PM
- MID MAR** JONAS KHALIL, GUITAR
Date TBD | Time TBD
- 10 APR** CLE CONCIERTO SCOTTISH BAROQUE
April 10, 2027 | 6:00 PM
- 01 MAY** SUMMIT CHORAL SOCIETY
May 1, 2027 | 4:00 & 7:00 PM | Paid Tickets
4 PM: Children's Chorus
7 PM: Metropolitan Chorus

TENTATIVE

RESERVE YOUR TICKETS akronfcc.org/concert-series
All Concerts at 292 E Market St | Akron, OH 44308 | 330.253.5109

September 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON UCC
Akron FCC

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

<i>NOTE: Italicized events are private rentals by individuals or outside organizations; all other others are church activities, (including worship and meetings) or public events.</i> <i>Event times and dates are subject to change.</i>		1 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> Food Pantry 9am Bible Study 11:30am Assoc. Pr. Search 7pm	2 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> AA 12pm	3 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> AA 12pm Living the Legacy 6pm	4 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> AA 10am	5 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> Food Pantry Load In 8am UA Choir Retreat All Day
6 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> Summer Combined 10am Bakers Sunday 11am	7  AA 12pm B&G 5:15pm	8 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> Food Pantry 9am Bible Study 11:30am All About Oz 6pm Membership Bd 7pm	9 <i>Pastor Brooke out for Continuing Education*</i> Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm SSOULE 6pm	10 AA 12pm Staff Meeting 1pm Gospel Choir Awards 6pm	11 AA 10am	12 Food Pantry Load In 8am Freedom BLOC 9am UA Choir Retreat 9:30am Kintsugi Meeting 10am
13 New Program Church Year "You Are Home!" Combined Worship 10am Ice Cream Social 11am LGBTQ+ Comm. Group 5pm	14 AA 12pm Endowment Board 5pm Indivisible Akron 6pm Food Pantry 6:30pm VGS Band Rehearsal 7pm	15 Food Pantry 9am Bible Study 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm HR Board 6pm	16 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm	17 Tuff Stuff 8:45am AA 12pm PFLAG 7pm	18 Foster Grandparents 9am AA 10am UA Choir Retreat 4:30pm	19 Food Pantry Load In 8am Wedding 8am-1pm VGS Jazz Concert 7:30pm
20 Combined Worship 10am History of UCC Presentation & Special Bakers & Salad Sunday 11am	21 Shower Bus 9am AA 12pm S&F Board 5:30pm Food Pantry 6:30pm	22 Food Pantry 9am Bible Study 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm HR Board 6pm	23 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm	24 AA 12pm	25 AA 10am	26 Food Pantry Load In 8am Indivisible Akron 9am Kintsugi Meeting 10am Party Rental 10am
27 Upper Room Worship 9am Meetinghouse Worship 11am	28 AA 12pm Food Pantry 6:30pm Governing Board 6:30pm	29 Food Pantry 9am Bible Study 11:30am Staff Meeting 1pm	30 Faith Enrichment 10:45am AA 12pm			<i>*During Pastor Brooke's absences, please continue to contact the church with any pastoral concerns or emergencies. Pastoral care will be available.</i>