

September 2023 • Number 3



Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ • Fostering Justice • Celebrating Diversity



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

— Founded 1833 —





Annual Meeting 2023

We can all feel the change of the season coming. Area schools are now largely in session, and the weather is cooling. With the end of summer on the horizon, the First Church program year is set to begin as we gather together on Community Celebration Sunday. This year, the celebration will be this Sunday, September 10. We will come together for a single combined worship service at 10am in the Meetinghouse, which will be followed by the 2023 Annual Meeting.

After reflecting on the year that was, we move to the future with information about First Church's 190th Anniversary Celebrations. With events planned throughout the fall and into 2024, we will celebrate the church's history and future. If you are unable to join us in person, please use this [Zoom link](#).

One of the major events of the past year has been the pursuit of the land parcels adjacent to our Feed My Sheep Garden that are owned by the University of Akron. After the congregation approved the purchase during the semi-annual meeting in May, the Property Purchase Team, with guidance by Pastor Nanette, has been at work with our realtor and lawyer to negotiate a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the University. I am happy to report that last week, as Moderator of First Church, I signed this agreement. This is a big step in the process and we can now affirmatively say that we are under contract to purchase the property. An anticipated closing for the sale is expected to be completed closer to the end of the calendar year. We will discuss these and other plans for the coming program year at this Sunday's Annual Meeting.

At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting, we will fellowship together on the front lawn (or in Fellowship Hall, if the weather is inclement) and enjoy an Ice Cream Social!

I look forward to seeing you all there as we celebrate our 190th year at the First Congregational Church in Akron!

Submitted by Kevin Kowalski, Moderator

Get Social!

First Church is on social media! Have you "liked" our Facebook page? You can find us at **FirstChurchAkron**. We will keep you up-to-date with the latest news and events, so be sure to visit our page. Prefer Twitter? Follow **1stChurchAkron**.

Sundays for Children & Youth

FAITH ADVENTURES OPEN HOUSE

Join Children's Faith Adventures on Sunday, September 17, during the 11am Festival service for our annual Welcome Back Party. Parents/Guardians and their children are invited to join us after the *Thoughts for the Young* in the service. There will be crafts, games, time to get to know other families, meet the volunteers, and a whole lot of fun for all. Parents/Guardians, please plan on filling out registration forms for your children. If you would like to fill them out in advance, please visit <https://bit.ly/CFA2023REG>. If you have any questions, please contact Bobby at 330.780.8122 (call/text), 330.253.5109 x101 (church office), or bobby.burt@akronfcc.org.

INFANT AND TODDLER ROOM

Families are welcome to either join or leave their children with our team of dedicated staff, Brooke Cross and Juniper Glazier. The room is open on the 2nd floor from 8:45am until 12:15pm each Sunday and provides care for infants and toddlers (6mo-4yrs) and the children of choir members and staff of all ages.

9AM CELEBRATE SERVICE

Children are invited to worship with their families in this casual and relaxed service. The Family Prayground in the rear of the sanctuary offers toys, coloring pages, and crafts.

11AM FESTIVAL SERVICE

Every week children are invited to join the Faith Adventures volunteers and Bobby for faith-centered fun. The Family Room is always open in the rear of the Meetinghouse and crafts are provided in the foyer for families who prefer to worship together.

Volunteer with Faith Adventures

Do you like working with youth and children? Do you want to help young people grow in their faith while growing in your faith as well? Do you remember the people who positively affected and encouraged your faith? Encouraging the children in our midst is a precious and sacred opportunity.

Being a Faith Adventures Guide is a great way to do that! This is not an every-Sunday commitment either, volunteers can sign up for one or two Sundays a month, or even as a substitute. Let's be a church that helps our youngest members grow in their faith and know the love of God!

A volunteer meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13, at 6pm in person and on Zoom. If you are interested, please contact Bobby at 330.780.8122 (call/text), 330.253.5109 x101 (church office), or bobby.burt@akronfcc.org.



Community Celebration Sunday

Come together, at the end of the summer and the beginning of the program year, for a morning of fellowship and community on Sunday, September 10.

We will hold one combined worship service at 10am followed by our 2023 Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social on the front lawn (or Fellowship Hall if the weather is inclement). All are invited to attend and share this opportunity to celebrate the year and look ahead together.

Blessing of the Animals

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 6PM

Bring your pet to church as we bless and celebrate them and the beauty and diversity of God's creation. You're also welcome to bring a photograph or memento of an animal that is important to you. All God's creatures are welcome!

Season of Creation

Each year from September to October 4, the Christian family unites to pray and respond together to the cry of Creation: the ecumenical family around the world unites to listen and care for our common home.

As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common call to care for creation. We are co-creatures and part of all that God has made. Our wellbeing is interwoven with the wellbeing of the Earth.

This year we will unite around the theme "Let Justice and Peace Flow" with the symbol of A Mighty River.

Through prayer, practical advocacy, and sustainable actions, this 2023 Season of Creation can prophetically renew our ecumenical unity and care for our common home. We invite you to join this special season and be part of this mighty movement for justice and peace.

Visit www.seasonofcreation.org to learn more.

May we journey together in communion as the People of God to let justice and peace flow!



Narrative Lectionary on Sundays

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) offers preachers and churches a three-year cycle of weekly readings used to varying degrees by the vast majority of mainline Protestant churches in Canada and the United States, including ours since Senior Minister Rev. Nanette Pitt arrived with us in 2015.

The RCL, first published in 1992, was produced by The Consultation on Common Texts (CCT). At the time the RCL was compiled, the CCT was composed of representatives from a wide variety of denominations including the United Church of Christ.

Having used the RCL for a number of years, beginning this September Pastor Nanette plans to use the Narrative Lectionary. The Narrative Lectionary is a four-year cycle of readings. On the Sundays from September through May each year the texts follow the sweep of the biblical story, from Creation through the early Christian church.

Initiated by Profs. Rolf Jacobson and Craig Koester of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, in 2010, in partnership with congregations across North America, this lection of biblical texts shows the breadth and variety of voices within scripture. It invites people to hear the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the prophets, Jesus, and Paul. Listening to the many different voices within Scripture enriches preaching and the life of faith.

Though the Revised Common Lectionary has united the church in its reading of scripture and has given much-needed structure, it doesn't present scripture — especially the Hebrew Bible — in a way that helps people to become fluent in the first language of faith. The Narrative Lectionary is an attempt to do just that.

The scripture passages selected for the Narrative Lectionary lead well to the proclamation of what God is doing. The stories tell of hope and disappointment, suffering and redemption. In all these varied contexts, we find God dealing with the complexities of human life. Stories from the gospels differ each year, avoiding repetition and highlighting what is distinctive about each gospel's telling of the story of Jesus.

The liturgical Church Year helped to shape the flow of the Narrative Lectionary. Hebrew Bible readings move through the story of God's dealings with Israel and culminate in Advent with the prophets who speak of longing and hope. Readings from the gospels fit the movement from Christmas and Epiphany to the Transfiguration, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week and Easter. Selections from the book of Acts and Paul's letters trace the outward movement of the resurrection message, culminating on Pentecost with readings focusing on the Spirit. In the summer, the Narrative Lectionary suggests texts along a variety of themes to suit local contexts and avoid repetition.

Listen along this program year as we delve into the Narrative Lectionary and engage the sacred text of our faith.

FOOD JUSTICE

Garden Party Potluck & Blessing

The Feed My Sheep Garden Crew — Jamie, Duane, and Shelley — would like to welcome the whole First Church community to a potluck on Tuesday, September 19, from 12:30-3:00pm in the Feed My Sheep Garden.

We'll be providing some salsas and dips made from produce grown on site, as well as offering some dishes made using produce that people may not have previously tried. For each dish, we will have a recipe card, and everyone will be welcome to snap a photo of the recipe for their own use. If you are able, please bring a dish to share for the potluck. If you are not, still come. All are welcome!

Before we share the meal together, we'll bless the garden and give thanks with a bell ringing so bring your bell along — a dinner bell and sleigh bell — any and all bells are welcome as we celebrate and bless the bounty of the garden.

After lunch on the same day, we'll be planting beds of garlic, and would welcome some extra hands to get the job done.

This is a great opportunity for fellowship, learning about the garden, and tasting some delicious foods.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

Submitted by Shelley Semelsberger, Garden Manager

Food Pantry Saturday Support

Want to help support the food pantry but can't make it on Mondays or Tuesdays during the day? Consider offering much needed assistance with the food pick up on Saturday morning from an area WalMart. This is a great way for families to help out and for children to learn the value of volunteerism.

Volunteers pick up the donated produce and bakery items on Saturday morning (approx. 8:30am) and then bring the bags and boxes of food to the church to store in the Food Pantry. Volunteers are scheduled on a rotational basis, so you would not need to volunteer every Saturday. This is an important source of food for the food pantry because all the food is free and often not items that can be procured from the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. If you want to make a difference and support this food justice ministry with Saturday morning food pick ups, please contact food.pantry@akronfcc.org.

A Future With Hope

Our congregation stands as a beacon of hope, welcome, and joyful hospitality in the Akron community. We are able to bless our community with our various ministries, with our special worship services, our heavenly music, and with an open door to all because of the annual financial support provided by our membership.

We invite you to join in giving thanks for all the resources — spiritual, theological, physical, and financial — that support First Church's indispensable work. We ask that you prayerfully consider the blessings First Church brings to you and

to our community and support this work with a pledged offering. You can drop a giving card off when attending Sunday worship, or mail it in to 292 E Market Street, Akron OH 44308. If you need a giving card or have any questions please reach out to Finance and Operations Manager, Janis Worley, at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111.

Submitted by Diann Shields and Kevin Kowalski, Campaign Chairs

Silver Lining Luncheon

Join us as we celebrate the fall season together with our church family at the Silver Lining Luncheon on Wednesday, October 11 from noon to 2pm. All retirees are welcome.

This free luncheon event will be held in Fellowship Hall and will include a short musical program from the Barbershop group Keyed Up Quartet which includes our very own Denny Conrad. Reach out and bring a church friend — it is a great opportunity to visit, catch up, or make new connections.

Please RSVP to communications@akronfcc.org or Janis Worley at 330.253.5109 x111 so we have an accurate count for catering purposes.





Anniversary Celebration Service

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 10AM

On All Saints Sunday, we will hold one special combined worship service to celebrate our 190th Anniversary since it is the Sunday closest to the date of First Church's date of incorporation on November 3, 1833, and also a fitting Sunday to remember the saints of the church both past, present, and future.

Let's reach out to friends and acquaintances associated with First Church to invite them to celebrate the occasion and attend worship with us. The service will be followed by a reception in Fellowship Hall for all to enjoy!

Dave Lieberth History Talk

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 11AM

Local historian and civic leader, Dave Lieberth, will be our guest speaker offering and exploration of the intersections between First Church and Akron's history over the past 200 years.

The city of Akron will celebrate its 200th birthday in 2025, having been founded just eight years before First Church, Akron's oldest church. Dave Lieberth who is a former Deputy Mayor of Akron serves as the volunteer Executive Secretary of Akron's Bicentennial Commission.

Members of the church and public are invited to join us for this informative talk which will be followed by a sit-down luncheon (goodwill donations kindly accepted) for the first 50 registrants. Please RSVP to communications@akronfcc.org or Janis Worley at 330.253.5109 x111 so we have an accurate count for catering purposes.

Celebrating Our Anniversary

This year marks First Church's 190th year since our founding in 1833! First Church is Akron's oldest congregation, now located in our fifth Meetinghouse in the city. We look forward to celebrating this historic birthday together as we anticipate and prepare for our bicentennial in 2033.

A dedicated team is hard at work planning events to commemorate this historic event with various ways for you to engage and enjoy the festivities.

The team consists of Terri Cook, Jay Hershey, Jen Kowalski, Margaret Maurer, Kellie Ramirez (chair), Sarah Vradenburg, and Rev. Nanette Pitt.

Read more here and stay tuned for details about a special anniversary all-church service project and 190th special flair and bling! We look forward to celebrating with you this year!

Open House & Building Tours

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2PM

A variety of tours and talks will be offered through the course of the afternoon beginning at 2pm. Nooks & Crannies tours, General Facility tours, Stained Glass Window tours, Organ tours, Belltower tours, and virtual options on screen in Fellowship Hall for those with limited mobility. Join informative and experienced tour guides, including Todd Brown and Sarah Vradenburg, to learn more about the architecture and history of our facility. Please bring a plate of cookies to share as we welcome other members and friends.

Sharing Our Memories

Through the course of this next program year, each month in worship we'll hear from members of the church as they share favorite memories of First Church and their time as part of the church, whether longtime members or new friends. Speakers will include AJ Abbott, Karen Bruno, Diann Shields, Toby Liechty-Clifford, and Sid Foster.

If you would like to share a memory, either in person one Sunday, in writing for the Chronicle newsletter, or through a video recording, please contact Terri Cook.

Twelfth Night Concert

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 2024

Save the date on your calendar and plan to join First Church for a special anniversary concert on Twelfth Night 2024. Twelve days after Christmas, this date has long been a special celebration in various countries and cultures.

An opportunity for merry-making and either a celebration at the close of Christmastide or the start of the Carnival season, the holiday brings light and laughter in the new year and mid-winter. It is a jovial and joyous opportunity for fun and fellowship so plan to join for a special musical tribute.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Our Ministry for Youth & Children

This fall our Associate Minister for Young Adults and Families with Children Bobby Burttt will be shifting his work hours so he can be more available to visit and connect with families after hours and on weekends.

We are blessed to be in a season where we are able to offer specialized pastoral ministry to our youth and children and hope that the families of the church will take advantage of Bobby's availability and support. Invite Bobby to your child's sports match or play, to have an ice cream or pizza or play in the park!

Often we wonder and worry whether our children will form positive associations with the church, whether they will develop a sense of faith that can be an anchor in life's inevitable tumult. This can't happen if they don't know people at church and know that they are recognized and supported by the church. This starts with relationship for children and youth, as surely as it does for adults. Help your child begin to form positive associations with the church by getting to know Associate Minister Bobby.

It has to go further, though. We know that while the ministers are amongst the most easily recognizable people in the church, the "church" is *all* of us! Statistics show members need at least four meaningful connections and relationships in order to develop a sense of belonging and integrate themselves fully into a church community.

As the members and friends who make up First Church today, the opportunity is ours – to share our focus, time, and talent, getting to know especially our younger members. Introduce yourself to a family with youth and children, learn their names, support our church's parents, and check in with their children building a supportive friendship. Volunteer with our Sunday Faith Adventures or Youth programs.

If you would like to learn more or sign up to volunteer, please reach out to Bobby at 330.780.8122 (call/text), 330.253.5109 x101 (church office), or bobby.burttt@akronfcc.org.

Amplified Youth

Youth in grades 6-12 can join Bobby and other youth from around the Akron Area for Amplified Youth on the third Saturday of each month. Events will begin at 5:30pm and last until 7:30pm, unless otherwise noted. Our next event will be on September 16.

Youth will gather at the church for pizza and games at 5:30pm. The group will then make their way down to Canal Park to watch a RubberDucks Game.

The game will cost \$20/youth. If your youth does not want to watch the game, you can pick them up from Bobby at 7pm in front of Canal Park. RSVP by contacting Bobby at 330.780.8122 (call/text), 330.253.5109 x101 (church office), or bobby.burttt@akronfcc.org.

Confirmation Class

Do you have questions about why your parents or grandparents choose to go to church every Sunday? Do you question if anything in Christianity is even real? Do you think the Church is antiquated and in need of reform? Are you confused as to why the word "church" isn't capitalized in the first question but is capitalized in the third question?

If you answered yes to any of these questions and are in grades 8-12, then Confirmation Class is for you. Starting October 15, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month Bobby will be hosting a Confirmation Class at 12pm. Parents are invited to attend this first session with their youth as we go over the class schedules as well as what will be required of youth, their families, and how the First Church community will be rallying around our youth as they undertake this journey. Classes will last until the beginning of May when youth will have the opportunity to choose to become church members and, if they weren't prior, be baptized.

If you have any questions, would like to discuss Confirmation Class more, or want to register, contact Bobby.





Fall Fellowship Nights

This fall, beginning tonight Wednesday, September 6, we are hosting small group fellowship opportunities each week at church from 6:30-8pm. These are open to everyone and you're welcome to bring a brown bag dinner for yourself or perhaps a snack to share with others; coffee and tea will be available.

Do you enjoy playing Euchre? Want to learn? Join Nancy Jenkins, Sara Schwendeman, and Samara Peddle in Fellowship Hall each week for Bower Power Euchre group.

Planning some winter knitting or crochet projects? Want to learn? Join Pastor Nanette and bring your hand/needle craft in the Library each Wednesday evening for Fiber Friends!

New Testament Bible Study

Join guest facilitator and theologian, Rev. Dr. Steven Savides, on Wednesday mornings this fall, from September 6 – November 15, for a New Testament Bible Study. The group will meet from 10:45am-noon each Wednesday in the library.

Join us for a meaningful opportunity to connect with fellow members and gain insights on our faith tradition while exploring faith and life through discussion and study. All are welcome!

Inquirers' Gatherings

Have you been getting to know First Church and are considering getting more involved? Do you have questions about our faith tradition and church? Been attending worship and want to consider joining? This is the perfect time to attend our two-part Inquirers' Gatherings! We'll meet on Sunday, October 15 and 22, at noon in the Conference Room.

Participants will have an opportunity to meet one another and members of the Membership Board and go on a tour of the building. The sessions will cover the basics of the Congregational faith tradition, First Church's history, structure, and wider church affiliations. Childcare is available with advance request. Those who wish to and who have had the chance to get to know the church by participating for the past year will have the opportunity to covenant in membership on Sunday, November 5, at the 10am service.

Thank You...

Dear First Church,

Thank you to my First Church family for all the love and support you have shown both Ron and I over the years.

Nanette's funeral service was beautiful, the cards, cookies, flowers and especially being there to celebrate his life with us was such a blessing.

Love from the Bof family

Dear Pastors Nanette, Bobby, and our First Church family, Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to attend MMADD Camp this summer. I had such a great week and made good friends and it was definitely a highlight of my summer. Already looking forward to next summer.

Elijah M.

Dear Nanette, Bobby and First Church members,

Thank you so much for giving Macie the opportunity to go to MADD camp at Temple Hills. Macie told me she had the best time of her life. Thanks for being so wonderful. P.S. "It takes a village to raise a child." - African Proverb.

Sincerely, Marian C.

Our Condolences

Condolence notices shared in News & Notes since our last edition.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to First Church member, Nathan Hawk, who unexpectedly lost his father, Aaron, on Sunday, August 6, 2023.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to Glenn Baughman and family. Madeline died peacefully at the Village of St Edward on Thursday, April 20, 2023.

We extend heartfelt condolences to Ruth Ann and Christine Allison. Ruth Ann's mother, Ruth Hartman, passed away on Monday, April 10, 2023.

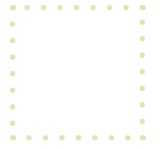
We extend heartfelt condolences to Ed Wickline and Kathy Johnson. Ed's mother, Glada Wickline, passed away on Sunday, March 19, 2023. She was 100 years old.

In Our Prayers

We offer daily prayers of thanksgiving and lament for ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors near and far. Within our community, we pray this week for Meg M., Jay H., Gail W., Logan K., Karen D., Jim G., Laurel B., Ray Y., Art and Lee W., Barbara S., Bill and Elizabeth F., Karen F., Mildred A., Scott S., Pamela R., Solomon C., Philip P., Adam L., Sarah H., Cathy B., and Rick and Bonnie J.

Have any questions or want a name added? Please email nanette.pitt@akronfcc.org.

Share your news of graduations, births, or losses in the Chronicle by email to communications@akronfcc.org.



Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Welcome

First Congregational Church of Akron unconditionally affirms all people as we live out our call to follow Jesus Christ and his teaching of inclusive love.

We welcome people of every race, age, nationality, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family circumstance, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, or spiritual background. We invite all who are seeking God's presence in their lives to participate fully in our church life, ministry, and leadership.

We strive to be a safe place, free from the fear of judgment, where wounds can heal, differences are cherished, and inclusivity is intentional. We commit ourselves to the struggle against injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred, in order to foster a world of peace and wholeness.

God loves you. Christ invites you. We embrace and celebrate you.