



WINTER 2022 • Number 10

# Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH OF AKRON

*Rooted in Christ • Fostering Justice • Celebrating Diversity*



Dear Beloved,

Christmas is coming! Never mind the British or winter, *Christmas* is coming!

As I recently dusted off my nativity ornaments, it struck me that this is one of the times in the Christian calendar when we celebrate the often-rare moments when our faith becomes tangible. At Christmas, we celebrate our faith becoming real in the person of Jesus Christ, a baby in a manger. At Christmas, we are reminded that our faith can suddenly, surprisingly, even mysteriously, manifest.

A member shared with me after a recent Sunday service, how the sermon had reminded her of a quote in the Upper Room daily devotional. As we were standing in the corridor outside the main office where the copies sit on the table (reminder: they're freely available there for all), she flipped through one and showed me the reflection from November 18 which begins: "The following was written on a wall during the Holocaust by an unknown author: 'I believe in the sun even when it is not shining, I

believe in love even when I cannot feel it, I believe in God even when he is silent.'"

Christianity invites us to a life of faith. Faith, according to Hebrews 11:1, is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith in what is unseen is the space we, believers and seekers, most often find ourselves in and that we have to contend with in a world that often, by contrast, seems all too real.

Christmas is a time for us to reset our sense of reality. To claim and celebrate the things that are eternally real, like love and faith, and to remember the times when our faith is as tangible as a baby in our arms, a teacher on the mount, and a savior beyond the empty tomb.

Christmas is coming! I look forward to preparing with you through Advent and celebrating together!

*Nanette*

# Advent of the Savior

FAITH ENRICHMENT

NOVEMBER 30, 2022 - DECEMBER 14, 2022

This Advent bible study works backward through the story of the birth of Jesus, looking at key passages from various characters' points of view. There are two options each week: Wednesday mornings (10:45am-noon) in the Library or in the Conference Room on Wednesday evenings for soup and conversation (6:45pm-8:00pm). To learn more about this series and other exciting opportunities visit our website: <https://www.akronfcc.org/faith-enrich>.



## Service of Hope and Healing

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2022, 7:30PM

Those who are grieving or struggling to make sense of the world and their life experiences are invited to enter into a comforting and honest space in the Meetinghouse for our Service of Hope & Healing. This service makes room for those who need a time apart, as well as those who may be wrestling amidst all the holiday cheer.



# ADVENT



## Advent Worship

This year's Advent themes help us prepare for the season of Celebration and enter fully into the Christmas spirit. Join us as we build toward the special occasion, together in worship, fellowship, and service.

### DECEMBER 4 - WEEK 2: PEACE-EXPECTING

On this Communion Sunday, after each service, we will gather in Fellowship Hall to decorate cookies that you can keep for yourself or give as a gift. Being the first Sunday of the month, the Sunday Bakers will provide treats for coffee hour.

### DECEMBER 11 - WEEK 3: JOY-EARTHING

Follow your nose and the scent of clove and spice to Fellowship Hall after each worship service on December 11 to enjoy a warm cup of traditional alcohol-free wassail.

### DECEMBER 18 - WEEK 4: LOVE-BIRTHING

Following a regular Advent Celebrate service at 9am, at the 11am Festival service, attendees of all ages are invited to pick up a costume as they enter the Meetinghouse and participate in the Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant as we celebrate its return following the pandemic.

This traditional telling of the birth story brings the hope of the nativity to life in the midst of the gathered community as we form a tableau around the manger through the course of the service. No rehearsal is necessary, come as you are!





# Christmas

## Christmas Eve

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2022**

There are three opportunities to celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas Eve. There is sure to be a service for everyone, so read on to learn what is in store!

### **FAMILY CELEBRATE SERVICE, 5PM**

This 45-minute service is ideally suited for families with young children and youth who are looking to celebrate in ways that appeal both to those who are young in age and young at heart! This worship will be led by our youth, ministers, and Celebrate musicians.

### **SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS, 8PM**

This traditional service tells the story of Christ's birth through scripture and song. Let the voices of readers, guest instrumentalists, organ, handbells, and choir lift your spirits as we listen and sing carols. The service will be led by our ministers and our Organist and Choir Director, Julie Lehman. Worship will conclude with *Silent Night* by candle light.

### **CAROLS, CANDLES, & COMMUNION, 11PM**

This late-night service offers a more reflective opportunity for worship with communion, candle lighting, and carols, including the favorite, *O Holy Night*. An ideal service for anyone who is looking to round out a busy festive season or who tries to avoid holiday hype.



## Holly Jolly Drive-Thru

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2022, 7PM - 8:30PM**

Load your children, grandchildren, niblings, and any other beloved young humans in your vehicle and come out and get into the holiday spirit! Our Holly Jolly Drive-Thru combines the lights, the songs, and the joy of being in community. Children will get to experience beautiful decorations, delicious snacks, learn fun trivia, and will even get to receive cool prizes at all the vehicle stations! If you would like to help make the night special by volunteering, please reach out to Membership Board chairperson, Jess Kenepf, [jesrep109@gmail.com](mailto:jesrep109@gmail.com).

## Christmas Day

**ONE SERVICE, 10AM**

Sunday is Christmas day so we will gather for one Celebrate-style service at 10am. All are invited to attend to celebrate the day.



Membership Board chairperson Jess Kenepf poses with Santa who made an appearance at last year's Holly Jolly Drive-Thru. Santa will be present again this year!

## New Year's Day

**ONE SERVICE, 10AM**

Welcome in the New Year with one Festival-style service. You are welcome to attend in your pajamas as we sing our way into 2023 in this meaningful opportunity to start a new year.

## Festival of Epiphany

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 9AM & 11AM**

This year, we will celebrate Communion on Epiphany Sunday at both worship services as we acknowledge the power and purpose of the Christ-child who we remember was revealed to the world on Epiphany Sunday.

# Winter Worship

## Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Sunday

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 9AM & 11AM

Each year, we celebrate the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and remember, with the perspective of hindsight, the call to continue the work of seeking justice and bringing healing in our world. Join us at our 9am and 11am worship services for a special, commemorative worship service through message and music.

## MLK Coalition Evening Celebration

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 4PM

First Church will once again host the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Day Coalition's Annual Celebration on Sunday, January 15, at 4pm. The coalition began hosting their event in 1979 and so it is one of, if not the, oldest MLK commemorative event in the country. While President Ronald Reagan signed the observance into law in 1983, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was first observed as a U.S. federal holiday in 1986. The coalition brings together many of the Black churches in Akron and so First Church's participation in the event is one of solidarity and witness.

When First Church called Pastor Nanette to shepherd the congregation in 2015, we asked her for her vision of diversity, and expressed our desire to continue to be an urban church offering real ministry to our neighbors and friends.

Representing this vision and ideal, Nanette has intentionally built meaningful community relationships in Akron and now serves on the coalition committee. First Church hosted the annual celebration in 2022 and will do so again this coming year.

Please save the date and plan to attend the event so that we might continue to build relationships with our neighbors as we live into our values. If you are able to volunteer as a host, please RSVP to Congregational Life Coordinator Samantha Drewniak, [samantha.drewniak@akronfcc.org](mailto:samantha.drewniak@akronfcc.org), 330.253.5109 x112 (office), 330.353.8084 (office cell).

## Upper Room Worship

9AM CELEBRATE WORSHIP PLANS MOVE BACK UPSTAIRS

Many of our community members who attend the 9am Celebrate service on Sundays have been longing to see the service return to the Upper Room since in person worship resumed last year.

The Upper Room is, for nearly all of those who attended prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the space they associate with the service. Its form and function are a large part of why many first felt comfortable attending and calling First Church home. For this reason, we plan to move the Celebrate service back to the Upper Room beginning on January 8, 2023, and I welcome your input on this plan.

The Upper Room is not fitted for live streaming so moving back upstairs will mean the Celebrate service would only be an in-person worship experience. Those wanting to join First Church in real time online or watch later would need to attend the 11am Festival service.

Each week's sermon will also be available on our YouTube channel (to watch without having to view an entire service).

Some of the regular Celebrate service musicians, Kellie, Brian, and Mike, perform at a 9am Celebrate service in 2019. We are excited to hear them back upstairs!

While prayerfully weighing the question of returning upstairs, I have also consulted with the Buildings & Grounds Board, the musicians, and staff. It would cost approximately \$10,000 to equip the Upper Room for livestreaming. The Meetinghouse is now fully equipped for live streaming and we routinely host additional events in this space that benefit from that technology. It is unlikely that we would host such events in the Upper Room in the foreseeable future. Hence, prioritizing both of our worship services equally and equitably, it seems responsible stewardship supports a recommendation to forgo streaming and move the Celebrate service back to the Upper Room. Again, I welcome hearing your thoughts on this plan.

*Submitted by Nanette Pitt, Senior Minister*



# Children's Ministries

## Winter Childcare Update

### FOR CHILDCARE AND CHILDREN'S FAITH ADVENTURES

December is a special month in our tradition as we once again ready our hearts and minds for the coming of the Christ Child into the world. On some occasions over the next month, it will be important for your children to be in worship with the whole congregation. Here are the upcoming services that we are encouraging you to have your children remain with you for the duration of the service, as well as a few Sundays when childcare will not be available:

#### DECEMBER 4

Childcare and Children's Faith Adventures both available as usual.

#### DECEMBER 11

Childcare and Children's Faith Adventures both available as usual.

#### DECEMBER 18

Childcare available, there will be no Children's Faith Adventures.

#### DECEMBER 25 (CHRISTMAS DAY)

There will be no Childcare or Children's Faith Adventures.

#### JANUARY 1, 2023

Childcare available, there will be no Children's Faith Adventures.



## Cookie Decorating Workshop

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022**

Join us in Fellowship Hall following both the 9am and 11am worship services as we come together to decorate delicious cookies that have been pre-baked for us by our Food Service Manager, Debbie Riley. These cookies would make awesome gifts for a loved one, a special evening snack, or could even be given to the church so that we might distribute them to homebound members of our congregation. We hope you will join us for some fun and exciting cookie decorating!

## Youth Sundays

### YOUTH PARTICIPATION LEADING SELECT SERVICES

First Church youth are invited to help lead Sunday worship services in a number of ways including offering the scripture readings, lighting the worship candles, offering a prayer, greeting attendees, and handing out bulletins. The first Youth Sunday is the 5pm Christmas Eve service on Saturday, December 24. The next are MLK Sunday on January 15, Mardi Gras Sunday on February 19, and Maundy Thursday worship on April 6. Contact Bobby Burt, Associate Minister for Young Adults and Families with Children, [bobby.burt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burt@akronfcc.org), to learn more and volunteer.



## Amplified Youth Opportunities

Our first Amplified Youth Group met on November 19 to make tacos and watch *Disenchanted* in the Upper Room. We even had time for dress up and freeze tag; everyone had a ton of fun! All youth from 6th Grade to 12th Grade are invited to attend

Here are the Amplified Youth Opportunities for December and January:

#### **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2022, 5PM - 7PM**

December's gathering will be a BBQ and BYOB: Bring Your Own Board Game or Bring Your Own Bestie! So come out and join us here at First Church as we play board games, make friends, and connect in our Christian Community.

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2023, 5PM - 7PM**

Youth from 6th Grade to 12th Grade are invited to come together here at First Church Akron, and sing like no one is listening... even though we all will be listening. This month, we will be gathering in the Upper Room for a special Karaoke Cafe. This dynamic and diverse group of youth gather together on the 3rd Saturday of every month for time together sharing food, making friendship and having fun.

## New Staff

Over the past few months, you may have seen a few new faces at First Church. Here are the official introductions!



### COURTLAND ASHBY

Courtland Ashby joined First Church as a Food Service and Cleaning Assistant to assist Debbie Riley with catering in the kitchen and with facility cleaning both inside and outside the building. Courtland brings five years of experience cleaning and removing toxic substances and other impurities from objects and work environments. Courtland is ready to bring this expertise to First Church, helping coworkers and the community of the church with any issues.



### SAMANTHA DREWNIAK

Samantha moved to the Akron-Canton area in 2020 to be closer to her family. She joins us after working in patient services and administration in a local hospital system. Her prior experience is in customer service and human resources in a variety of settings. In her role as Congregational Life Coordinator, Samantha will work alongside our Senior Minister to ensure the smooth functioning of the programmatic life of the congregation, enhancing the ability of members of the community to engage.

Samantha has three children: two school aged and one in her last year of college. She also shares a bonus daughter with her fiancé, Michael. When not at work, Samantha enjoys going on cruises, crafting, reading, and doing yoga.



### HAILEY OBLISK

Born and raised in Massillon, Ohio, Hailey Oblisk is a current sophomore at Kent State University earning a Bachelor's degree in Digital Media. She graduated from Washington High School with Honors in 2018. As one of the founding members of her high school's Gay Straight Alliance, Hailey is passionate about advocating for LGBT rights. "I'm honored to be joining such an accepting community. First Church fills me with hope for the future". Hailey joins Kayla Dukes and team leader, Alex Morris, who make it possible for the community to participate remotely.



# Winter Events

## Trivia and Chili Cook-Off

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2023 6PM - 8PM

Join us in Fellowship Hall as we host a Chili Cook-Off and Trivia Night that will be fun for all types of families. Whip up your favorite chili recipe and any fixings you need to kick off a long weekend with your First Church family. We will follow up the chili cook-off with some trivia fun. You won't want to miss all the fun and excitement!

## Pub Theology for Young Adults

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2023, 5PM - 7PM

Any and all young adults are welcome to grab a drink and/or a bite to eat with Bobby as we begin to gather on the 4th Sunday of every month at the Mustard Seed Cafe to form connections and discuss topics that are important to younger people in the church.

## Silver Lining Luncheon

FEBRUARY 15, 2023, 12PM

Our first Silver Lining Luncheon for retirees on October 26, 2022, was a hit and we're already planning for the next. Save the date for February 15, 2023. The event will be a time for the senior members of First Church to gather together – catch up with long-time friends and make some new ones. In the new year, the church will begin circulating invitations and will encourage you to bring your friends along. Members and non-members are welcome!

Judy Young and Karen Babri enjoy a wonderful lunch provided by Food Service Coordinator, Debbie Riley, at the Silver Lining Luncheon on October 26.





## Mason Coat Closet

This past fall, First Church collected coats to donate to the children at Mason CLC. In order to get the coats to the children in early October before the cold weather set in, coats needed to be purchased in September. Buying coats that early was difficult, as many stores did not yet have them in stock but if they did, they were only available at full price.

To give donors the chance to purchase from a bigger selection, and to be able to take advantage of end-of-season pricing, we are asking you to begin shopping now for our 2023 coat drive! All donated coats will be put into the First Church Mason CLC Coat Closet so that we have them in-hand and ready to distribute early in the fall. And, to make things even easier, you may purchase any winter coat within the size range 5T to Adult small to donate.

We are also accepting hats, gloves, and mittens! You can drop your donations off in the church office or have your order shipped directly to the church (292 E Market St, Akron, OH 44308). Thank you for supporting this reimagined initiative!

## LGBT+ Night

The next two LGBT+ Community Nights are outlined below. Each evening will begin with a bible study at 5pm followed by an activity around 6pm.

### DECEMBER 11 – COLOSSIANS 2:1-7

Bible Study followed by a lasagna dinner and board games (food provided, bring a game to share).

### JANUARY 8 – COLOSSIANS 2:8-3:4

Bible Study followed by a baked potato bar (potatoes and toppings provided, bring desserts and drinks to share).

Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are invited to attend and can come for one or both sections of the evening. All gatherings start at facilitator Tevin's home: 84 Burton Ave Apt 3, Akron.

Please email facilitators Brenda Waddell and Tevin Tietje, [lgbt@akronfcc.org](mailto:lgbt@akronfcc.org), with any questions.



## Food Pantry Choice Update

A new family came to the Food Pantry on November 15. The mother said she didn't want to provide an address or a phone number – she was "hiding." It seems that she and her daughter had escaped an abusive relationship and she was frightened that she might be found if she provided that information.

The volunteer working the intake process said "we can help." Our new friend was registered as "homeless" and she was accompanied into the pantry by a shopping assistant, chose the food and personal items she needed, and left grateful, appreciative, and anonymous.

*Ministry takes many forms*

What makes this special is that the pantry not only met the family's needs based on the food choices they were able to make but the choice model also created relationship. It is not an uncommon story.

Food Pantry volunteer Curtice Taylor helps bag a client's groceries after they've made their way through the pantry.

This outreach has grown from 43 clients to 54 to 63 (including both Tuesday morning and Monday evening's distributions) in the three weeks since the ministry returned to using the choice concept. 216 individuals are in those 63 families served on November 14 – that is the true measure of the IMPACT the Food Pantry makes.

For more information or to volunteer, contact one of the team leaders – Laura Bishop, Larry Becker, Clay & Debbie Canfield, Chip Houghton, Kellie Ramirez, or Sue Yoder.

### EVERYONE CAN HELP BY DONATING:

- 1 or 2.5 gallon zipper freezer bags
- Reusable canvas/plastic sacks
- Used roller suitcases or duffle bags
- Toilet paper
- Shaving cream, shampoo
- Dish detergent
- Toothpaste
- Men and women's deodorant

## Opportunities to Serve

As 2022 winds down, the Nominating Board is gearing up for what looks to be an exciting opportunity for members and friends to serve the community by participating in the life of First Church. Have you wondered how events come together or how the church operates “behind the scenes?” We know that everyone has special skills, interests, and talents that could be very helpful, and we hope you will get involved. It’s a good way to be more active in our wonderful church, serve the wider community – and to get to know other members, too! We will be looking for candidates for the following boards:

### **BUILDING AND GROUNDS BOARD**

Oversees the maintenance and operation of First Church’s building, land, and property.

### **GOVERNING BOARD**

Each year we elect lay representatives as the officers and at-large members of our Governing Board.

### **MEMBERSHIP BOARD**

Recruits new members, organizes new member orientations, and organizes new member welcome events. It also helps coordinate and provide volunteers for special social activities, such as Breakfast with Santa and all church picnics.

### **NOMINATING BOARD**

Recruits members to serve on the various boards of the church. Nominates church officers and candidates for board positions for church member approval at the yearly congregational meeting in May.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES BOARD**

Oversees staffing policies and human resource matters.

### **STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE BOARD**

Handles the financial affairs of the church, including budgeting, planning, and communicating to keep members informed of First Church’s financial well-being.

After the holidays, you will receive a letter from the Nominating Board with a list of all of next year’s opportunities, and we ask that you will take a moment to consider the areas in which you may have an interest in participating.

Boards typically meet once a month (not a huge time commitment) and most are conducted virtually. For those who are still not quite comfortable returning in person, you can still be a part of our process and get to see your fellow members! The term of serving on a board is two (2) program years beginning in June, 2023 to May, 2025.

If you have any questions or would like to let us know that you would like to be considered, please feel free to reach out in-person, text or phone to Nominating Board Chair Nancy Jenkins, 330.603.2168 or Vice-Chair Larry Becker, 330.696.6709.

## First Church in the Community

First Church members have been active in the community representing the values of our faith and church. Here’s an update of some of the goings on!

### **RALLY FOR THE ARTS – CATAAC SPONSORSHIP**

First Church offered a \$250 sponsorship for the October Rally for the Arts fundraiser hosted by the Center for Applied Theatre and Active Culture (CATAAC). First Church member, Amber Keaton, is a board member of CATAAC, a non-profit that aims to establish a forum for community engagement and educational outreach through collaboration with emerging and established artists. They engage in the creation, production and presentation of a diverse array of theatre, music, dance, and exhibitions that affirms the intrinsic value of all cultures and explores the transformative power of the arts for the greater Akron community.

### **NAACP FREEDOM FUND GALA**

Members, pictured below, attended the Akron NAACP Freedom Fund Gala at the John S. Knight Center on November 6, 2022 in support of “The Power of Community.”



Members of First Church at the NAACP Freedom Fund Gala. Front row, left to right: Hubert Clayton, Rev. Nanette Pitt, Elizabeth Fesler. Back row: Margaret Maurer, Nanci Self, Andrés and Peter Weiss, and First Church friend Nancy Garrett.

### **FOSTER GRANDPARENTS CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST**

The Summit County Foster Grandparents support program, run by Community Action and administrator, Jacqueline Ricks, has met every month at First Church for many years. The program, which is grant funded, has run out of funding for this year so the First Church Governing Board has approved a grant to enable the group to host their end-of-year Christmas drive-thru breakfast. The event is scheduled for Monday, December 12, in our parking lot. Attendees will receive a warm to-go breakfast, prepared by our staff, as well as gift baskets of donated items from Community Action and area service providers.



# Witnessing In the World

During the pandemic, First Church was fortunate enough to have the resources to push forward a number of large capital improvement projects to make our building and grounds safer, more efficient, and even more beautiful a place to worship. It was also decided to share our surplus of resources in the form of monetary donations to both local and distant causes that are near and dear to our congregation. After voting to approve a \$25,000 donation to the Sojourner Truth Project here in Akron, which aims to create a space for local residents and those passing through a place to enjoy Akron's history with Sojourner Truth, the Governing Board, in response to another call from members, approved a second philanthropic opportunity resulting in over \$33,000 to help fund World Central Kitchen's work in Ukraine!

## WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN

Founded in 2010 by Chef José Andrés, World Central Kitchen (WCK) is a nonprofit organization that is first to the frontlines providing fresh meals in response to crises, while working to build resilient food systems with locally led solutions. When disaster strikes, WCK's Relief Team mobilizes to cook and serve meals to people in need. By partnering with organizations on the ground and activating a network of local restaurants, food trucks, or emergency kitchens, WCK serves comforting meals to survivors of disasters quickly and effectively – more than 200 million nourishing meals around the world so far.

Working at a 24-hour pedestrian border crossing in southern Poland, WCK began serving hot, nourishing meals within hours of the initial Ukrainian invasion, and quickly grew their response mobilizing teams of cooks in Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, and Germany. With more people returning to Ukraine, WCK is focusing its efforts to provide hundreds of thousands of fresh meals and tens of thousands of food kits each day.

## HOW FIRST CHURCH MADE AN IMPACT

The Governing Board committed \$20,000 to World Central Kitchen. With a \$5,000 match offered, First Church members and friends donated enough to meet the match and then some. In total, First Church sent a donation of \$33,348.50 to World Central Kitchen to support their ongoing efforts!



# A Warm Welcome

On October 30, and again on November 20, we were blessed to welcome a total of four new members into the First Church membership. More Inquirers' Gatherings will be planned for next spring, and we hope you will attend to learn more and consider joining in membership.

Help us in welcoming our newest members:



## JEFF & ANDREA NELSON

Jeff and Andrea are transferring to First Church from Grace UCC in Uniontown. Andrea is a college professor and a Nurse Practitioner. Jeff is a Minister for Ministerial Calls and Transitions for the UCC National Office. Together they both enjoy karate, reading and spending time with their children Wesley and

Harper. Andrea also enjoys painting, singing, watching movies. Jeff also enjoys writing and playing guitar.



## HANNAH PYETT

Hannah regularly attends the 9am Celebrate service, but joined at 11am. She is a board-certified music therapist and enjoys making music, volunteering at the food pantry, working with dementia patients and individuals with developmental disabilities, creating therapeutic

music programming, playing board games, walking in nature, and reading.



## DIANNE SHIREY

Dianne is a retired, ordained minister of the UCC. She enjoys reading, writing, walking the Metro Parks, and CVNP. Dianne particularly enjoys the writings of those who write about nature, the environment, and theology, like Robin Kimmerer.



## MIKE BONE

Michael (Mike) Bone joined First Church in membership on October 30 at the 11am Festival service. Mike is a UCC Minister and will soon be starting a 6-month ministry as Bridge Pastor of Grace UCC in Uniontown. Mike enjoys reading theology and philosophy, and walking with his

beloved wife, Billie, and their Shih Tzu, T-Long.

# Birthdays

## DECEMBER

- 4 Don Cooper
- 4 Laura Hugill
- 4 David Leonard
- 5 Karen Flanders-Schweizer
- 5 Rachel Roberts
- 6 Jan Hamilton
- 6 Nancy Nierman-Baker
- 7 Rod McGregor
- 8 JoAnne Dawson
- 8 Elaine Deering
- 8 Carrie Petersen
- 10 Sarah Clemons
- 10 Victoria White
- 12 Tracey Lynn
- 12 Cherie Vaughan
- 13 Joanna Gartner
- 18 Melanie Messmore
- 19 Karen Elgin
- 19 Diann Shields
- 23 Mike Desposito
- 23 Dorothy Thomas
- 24 Antigone Pearson
- 27 Dorothy Montgomery
- 28 Sue Tolley
- 30 Stephan Collins
- 30 Phil Long

## JANUARY

- 1 Cecil Larabee
- 2 Jennifer Kowalski
- 3 Walter Houghton
- 7 Stephen Fazzino
- 9 Bill Babcox
- 9 Robert Funk
- 10 Stephanie Corbin
- 11 Julia Brandy
- 12 Barbara Eby
- 13 Michael Yi-Howard
- 15 Sam Corbin, II
- 18 Janice Moore
- 19 Larry Becker
- 19 Ashlee James
- 20 Mike Ledger
- 20 Linda Marston
- 20 Joanne Mazzaferro
- 20 Judy Mills
- 20 Rick Weigand
- 22 Andrew Courtney
- 23 Paul DiMascio
- 26 Donna Davis
- 27 Joanne Brink
- 27 Linda Houghton
- 30 Kari Ledger

# Stewardship & Finance Report

## UNAUDITED

		<u>October</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>% to</u>
	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>YTD</u>
	Pledge Income	\$6,733	\$35,114	\$43,250	81.2%
	Non-pledge Income	\$5,103	\$42,540	\$55,000	77.3%
	Grant Income	\$56,166	\$306,571	\$30,985	989.4%
	Special Ministries	\$700	\$6,658	\$7,322	90.9%
	Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$52,962	\$251,151	\$267,305	94.0%
	Other Income	\$1,160	-\$5,738	\$13,863	-41.4%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$122,824</b>	<b>\$636,296</b>	<b>\$417,725</b>	<b>152.3%</b>
	<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>				
	Membership Board	\$374	\$963	\$2,215	43.5%
	Governing Board	\$36,349	\$37,526	\$5,030	746.1%
	Cong. & Comm.				
	Care Ministry	\$3,201	\$15,142	\$26,848	56.4%
	Worship & Music	\$1,616	\$5,169	\$8,602	60.1%
	Christian Education	\$20	\$87	\$5,320	1.6%
	Development	\$99	\$99	\$0	0.0%
	Food Service Expense	\$856	\$4,725	\$5,074	93.1%
	Personnel	\$40,671	\$216,512	\$241,839	89.5%
	Other Admin Expense	\$2,123	\$12,593	\$14,667	85.9%
	Media Relations/Marketing	\$1,363	\$6,436	\$7,870	81.8%
	Maintenance & Supplies	\$739	\$304,183	\$200,457	151.7%
	Real Estate	\$4,585	\$25,288	\$33,373	75.8%
	Utilities	\$3,009	\$17,316	\$17,265	100.3%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$95,004</b>	<b>\$646,041</b>	<b>\$568,559</b>	<b>113.6%</b>
	<b>Net Income/Loss</b>	<b>\$27,820</b>	<b>-\$9,744</b>	<b>-\$150,835</b>	<b>6.5%</b>



## Year End Giving

Giving is welcomed and appreciated by non-profit organizations at any time of year. But there are several personal financial advantages to giving at the end of the year. One strategy is known as “bunching”. If, on an annual basis, your charitable giving falls below the standard deduction (\$12,950 for single filers or \$25,900 for married couples filing jointly), but if doubled would be higher than the standard deduction, consider bunching two years of donations together into one. This way the first year you could take advantage of a higher deduction than the standard, versus having two years at the standard deduction. Another strategy is by satisfying an IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Whether itemizing deductions or taking the standard deduction, individuals age 70½ and older can direct up to \$100,000 per year from their traditional IRAs to operating charities through QCDs. The QCD can be used to satisfy all or part of the donor’s RMD for 2022 and is not considered taxable income for the donor. It’s important to note that two individuals who submit tax returns with married filing jointly status each qualify for an annual QCD of up to \$100,000. If you have any questions about making your donation to First Church or would like to learn more, please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111.

## Congratulations

Our warmest congratulations to Toby and Keith Liechty-Clifford for having their home showcased on the Sugar Plum Tour.

The Sugar Plum Tour originally was founded in Fall of 2000 to raise money to establish the Gay Community Endowment Fund. To help jump start their fundraising, GCEF partnered with Eric Jones of Jones Group Interiors in December of 2002. To date, GCEF has raised more than \$2 million and dispersed more than \$630,000 in LGBTQ+ specific grants. Their vision of creating and sustaining spaces and programs that empower and connect LGBTQ+ continue to be a vital part of the fund's mission in the Greater Akron area.

You can purchase tickets to this year's showcase online: <https://www.sugarplumtour.org/tickets>

## In Gratitude

I was recently a patient at Akron General Hospital for 6 days. The nurse presented me with one of your Pop-Pop's Blankets. It was the fall pumpkin one. What an uplifting surprise. Thank you so much.

*Sincerely, Grace Emmert*

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Rice-A-Roni drive for Open M's holiday basket initiative. We easily hit our 200-box goal!

Thank you very much for Sunday's Thanksgiving meal. It took a great deal of planning, shopping, cooking, setting up, communicating, etc., etc. It was a good meal and from my observation, everyone enjoyed it and enjoyed being together. Good job!

## In Sympathy

Our deepest condolences to Pam Bof and the family of **Ron Bof** who passed away on November 5. A service was held at Ferfolia Funeral Home on November 14 at 4pm.

**Joanne Mazzaferro** passed away on November 28 after a few weeks of in-home hospice care. Please keep those in her life in your thoughts.

**Margaret Nowels Canady** passed away in late November. She was a long-time member of First Church, since 1955.

## In Our Prayers

Trusting in God's unfailing love for each and every person, we offer to God expressions of joy and concern in prayer. In our First Church community, we pray for Larry R, Karen D., Jim G., Laurel B., Ray Y., Andrew C., Art and Lee W., Barbara S., Bill F., Karen F., and Mildred A

*If you have questions about those listed or would like a name added to the prayer list, please email Associate Minister Bobby Burtt at [bobby.burtt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burtt@akronfcc.org).*

## Seasonal Recipes from the Archives

Over the years, First Church has published many recipe books. Each month, we'll share a recipe from the archive, celebrating the submissions made by church members.

### Overnight French Toast

Submitted by Linda Moore

#### Ingredients:

- 1 8-oz french bread loaf (cut into 1-inch pieces)
- 6 lg eggs
- 1.5 C milk
- 1.5 C half-and-half
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/8 tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg

#### Topping:

- 1 stick melted butter
- 1 C brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp dark Karo syrup
- 1 C chopped pecans (optional)

#### Directions:

- Heavily butter a 9x9-in. pan. Fill to top with bread.
- Mix ingredients, pour over bread. Cover, refrigerate overnight. Mix topping ingredients, pour over bread just prior to baking. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes uncovered.



**988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**

## Suicide Prevention

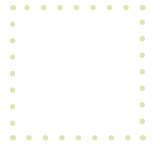
### KNOW THE SIGNS AS SEASONAL DEPRESSION SETS IN

Winter brings many joys but it also brings a wave of seasonal depression. We hope you'll watch the video linked below to learn how to spot signs of depression and thoughts of suicide to help you keep your loved ones safe.

<https://bit.ly/Know-The-Steps>

## Donate the Easy Way

For every purchase you make on Amazon, a percentage will be donated to First Church on your behalf (and at no cost to you!) if you simply take a few steps. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/34-0714664> to link your account to First Church. Then go ahead and shop! For future orders, go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) when you log in, and then your order will qualify for the automatic donation. We appreciate your support!



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## Upcoming Services & Events!

### Holly Jolly Drive-Thru

December 9, 7pm

### Service of Hope & Healing

December 21, 7:30pm

### Christmas Eve Services

December 24, 5pm, 8pm, & 11pm

### Christmas Day

December 25, one service, 10am

### New Year's Day

January 1, one service, 10am

### Epiphany Sunday

January 8, 9am & 11am

### MLK Sunday – January 15

Services at 9am & 11am  
Special MLK Event at 4pm

