Dear friends,

The Christmas and holiday season brought us all, I hope, some joy. It also brought many a measure of sadness with five Memorial Services in just the last six weeks of 2018.

In the midst of life’s loss and sadness, I have been reminded of the persistent blessing of church life. I have seen you offer one another comfort countless times and ways.

Death and mourning are undeniably part of our lives. We experience grief because of the love we share with one another. Over and over, I learn from the wise and brave people in our congregation that the choice we have in the face of our mortality is to affirm – even with tears in our eyes – the love we have received and have been blessed to give. Kahlil Gibran wrote in *On Joy and Sorrow*: “When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.”

Beloved, there are times in our lives when we all do and should weep. Here in the church we comfort one another and provide constancy and normalcy, reminding each other of the hope and the promises of faith when we cannot hold them ourselves. Here in the church we celebrate and practice always the Love that we emulate, cherish, mourn, and celebrate in every stage of life.

A headstone in Ireland reads: “Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.” Thank you for being a part of this community of love of which the memory will never fade!

In faith,

Nanette
Onward and Upward – First Church On The Move

Good things are happening at the church in 2019 and it is only just begun.

Budget adopted at the Congregational Meeting – many thanks to the Stewardship-Finance Board, capably led by chair Bob Renner and treasurer Curt Clemons, on their hard work to develop a budget showing a small surplus and bringing it to the congregation. The highlight is the allocation of $142,000 to address many deferred maintenance items that have built up over several years and identified thanks to the Building & Grounds Board.

Loyalty Campaign Update -- $211,804 has been pledged thus far to support 2019 ministries. $241,000 was budgeted for this income line in the budget. If you have not yet completed your pledge, please consider picking up a form in the church office and giving it to Patty Durkos, our Administrative and Financial Assistant.

Associate Minister Antigoné Lowery -- Antigoné joined the staff on January 14 (see her welcome letter on page 3.) Among her first orders of business is to establish relationships with the members and friends of the church. So please take some time to seek her out and introduce yourself. Please wear your nametag on Sundays – that’ll be a big help for everyone!

Church School Needs Volunteers -- More children are showing up in the church school and we need helpers. The church has enlisted some wonderful teachers for the classes, but we need a second adult in each of the three (3) classrooms on Sunday. There is nothing for the helper to prepare – just show up, love the children and be present for them. For access to the sign-up sheet, please contact Kasey Kalchert. This is an important ministry and I pray that we can show our youngest how much we care.

Annual Meeting News -- The Annual Meeting is in four months. The Nominating Board is charged with filling a slate of officers and Board nominees to present to the congregation at that meeting. When they come and visit with you, let them know where your interest and passion lies to help them find the place for you to serve. The Boards are where ministry begins at the church. Get involved and make a difference by contacting Kellie Ramirez, the Nominating chair, at musicusgeekus@gmail.com.

864 Groups -- 864 Groups are forming and you still have time to sign up to discover friends you haven’t met yet. Eight (8) people, meeting four (4) times in six (6) months. The church has done this before and people said that it’s fun, not a big time commitment, and builds new and lasting relationships. Sign up in the office, online or call Chris Becker at 330.665.4746 for more information.

Sunday Mornings

9am-11am: Early Morning Childcare for age 4-7 is available on the 2nd floor from 9am until we transition to Church School with 11am worship.

9am-12:15pm: Nursery care (infants and toddlers ages 3 and under) is available on the 2nd floor.

9:30am Celebrate Worship: Children and youth are invited to attend worship with their families. There is an activity carpet available in the worship space.

11am Festival Worship: Children and youth are welcome to attend worship with their families. The Family Room at the rear of the Meetinghouse is also available for your use and is equipped with toys, toddler furniture, a changing table, a rocking chair, and has access to a restroom. Following the Children’s Message, children from Pre-K through the 8th grade are invited to accompany our volunteer teachers to Church School for a fun and engaging experience.

Winter Potluck

Be sure to join us on February 10 for a Winter Potluck following each service. After the 9:30am service, the potluck will be held in the Upper Room and following the 11am worship, it will be held in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring your favorite chili or soup to share as we warm our bellies and our hearts in fellowship!

Winter Weather Closures

Closing information can be heard on iAlert WKYC TV3, WEWS TV5 and WTAM 1100 AM radio and will be posted to our church website www.akronfcc.org and Facebook page.

Get Social!

First Church is on social media! Have you “liked” our Facebook page? You can find us at FCCofAkron. We will keep you up-to-date with the latest news and events, so be sure to visit our page. Prefer Twitter? Follow 1stChurchAkron.
Food Pantry: A Year in Review

Thank you to all the Food Pantry volunteers who gave their time, energy, and talents in 2018! Volunteer tasks were scheduled for Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Additional volunteer activities also happened on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. In 2018, 109 volunteers gave over 5,200 hours to this ministry. Out of the 109 volunteers, 65 were new in 2018. 32 of the 109 volunteers were people that had received food from the Food Pantry. The 5,200 hours does not include time spent by people who purchased or obtained items that were donated to be used in the Food Pantry. Thanks to those who helped in that way!

Some volunteers have helped the Food Pantry for many years. Their continued support and experience are greatly appreciated. Additional volunteers are always welcomed and needed to continue the Food Pantry’s mission. If you may be interested, please be sure to email us for more information at food.pantry@akronfcc.org or contact the church office at 330.253.5109.

In 2018, the Food Pantry provided 100,600 meals to members of the community who visited the Food Pantry and were income eligible to receive food assistance based upon current federal poverty guidelines. That was an increase over 2017, when we provided food for 70,000 meals. The meals number is based upon giving a 3 day supply of food for each person in a household. There was a 44% increase in the number of people that visited the Food Pantry in 2018.

In July, the Food Pantry started participating in a pilot of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank’s Agency Direct Retail Pickup Program as part of Feeding America’s Food Rescue Program. In this program, volunteers picked up donated items from the Walmart on Arlington Road each Saturday morning. Items were brought to the Food Pantry, sorted into the appropriate reporting category, weighed, placed in storage, and the pounds received reported to the Foodbank. There were 12,786 pounds of items received from Walmart at no charge in 2018 through this program. 9,944 pounds of that was produce along with 1,565 pounds of bakery items and 1,036 pounds of meat. A big thanks to Darren Jones-Baker for coordinating the Walmart pickup.

The Food Pantry’s participation in the Foodbank Walmart pickup program resulted in a sizable grant being received from the Walmart Foundation. This grant provided the Food Pantry with a new double door commercial 48 cubic foot capacity refrigerator, slanted wire shelving units with bins that were used to display produce, and industrial storage shelving.

Thanks to the Feed My Sheep Garden, who brought 1,208 pounds of fresh produce to the Food Pantry in 2018! The produce was very nicely displayed and well received. That, along with the additional items picked up from Walmart and received from the Foodbank, enabled the Food Pantry to distribute even more food. So, with the formula used by Feeding America and the Foodbank of 1.2 pounds per meal, we are now giving a 4 day supply of food per person.

Margaret Maurer found a nonprofit in Kent called Recycle Pots and Pans that has enabled the Food Pantry to obtain and distribute pots, pans, and kitchenware to individuals receiving food, if volunteers determined a need. A special thanks goes to Marsha McGregor for handling the collection, organization, and distribution of the pots, pans, and kitchen utensils.

Ann Snyder suggested the Food Pantry provide birthday bags containing cake mix, frosting, and a few other items to celebrate a child’s birthday. Now, when a parent receives food during a child’s birthday month, they also receive a birthday bag.

The Food Pantry made 77 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) referrals to the Foodbank as part of reducing the meal gap in 2018. The meal gap is the difference between the number of meals needed by members of the community and the number of meals they can access. When a referral is made, the Foodbank contacts people, gathers their information, and submits their SNAP application to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. If approved, people may then receive an Ohio Direction Card which may be credited with a modest monthly benefit that can be used to purchase food at grocery stores or farmers’ markets.

Continued on page 4. See FOOD PANTRY
South Street Ministries

February Mission of the Month

The Outreach Board has selected South Street Ministries as the February Mission of the Month. South Street Ministries (SSM) is a ministry in the South Akron and Summit Lake area that is committed to the physical, socio-economic, and spiritual well-being of this neighborhood. Founded in 1997 by Duane and Lisa Crabbs, SSM has offered programming, ministry, and shared life with people in this area. It reaches across racial, economic, cultural and religious barriers for the enrichment of the community.

Major programs include RICH KIDS After School Club, where youth are assisted with homework and tutoring, RICH KIDS Summer Camp, Bike Shop, Open Gym Basketball, and South Street Reentry Services, which helps men and women redirect their lives in coming home from prisons and institutions. The Front Porch Cafe, located in the Front Porch Building at 798 Grant Street, functions as an employee training center.

If you would like to contribute to this mission, please make your check payable to First Church and write SSM on the memo line. Thank you for your donation.

Mission of the Month Updates

Open M Christmas Baskets

YOU are absolutely wonderful! Every time we ask, First Congregational comes through! Open M is near and dear to our hearts. We asked for 210 rolls of paper towels to help fill Christmas boxes. YOU brought in more than 300 rolls of towels. Thank you so very much.

Sue and Chris Godard

December Mission of the Month

Thank you for your December contributions! We collected a total of $600 for the December Mission of the Month, Mason CLC. Our Christmas Offering totaled over $7,000 and was also designated to Mason CLC. Thank you!

January Mission of the Month

Our January Mission of the Month, First Glance, received a total of $759, collected from Sunday offering in addition to a contribution from the Outreach Board. Thank you for your support!

FOOD PANTRY (continued from page 3)

The Food Pantry had flyers available about clothing provided by Trinity UCC in North Hill. Brenda Waddell, one of First Church’s members who works at Trinity, reported a 28% increase in people visiting for clothing since the flyers became available and that Trinity is looking for more volunteers to help keep up with the increased demand.

People received almost 1,000 Akron Street Cards from the Food Pantry in 2018. Akron Street Cards are a guide to resources in the community published by Akron Public Schools Project RISE. Along with Street Cards, 2-1-1 cards were also distributed. The 2-1-1 service helps connect people with services available in Summit County.

While the number of people that visited the Food Pantry for food increased in 2018 and the amount of food they received also increased, we expect the Food Pantry’s expenses to remain below what was budgeted in 2018. Grant funding of $10,789 received through the Foodbank was a big help in keeping costs down. Many thanks go to Chip Houghton for his diligence in placing Foodbank orders that included large quantities of no charge or low cost items when they were available. Although the storage of the large quantities presented a challenge, it did help keep the Food Pantry’s expenses down.

The Food Pantry received baked goods that were donated each week by Panera in Montrose and Giant Eagle in Stow. Food Pantry volunteers made the pickups at Panera and another group of volunteers from Bethany UCC in Cuyahoga Falls and Stow UCC made the Giant Eagle pickups.

Operation of the Food Pantry is made possible by the financial support of members and friends of First Church. Thank you!

Clay and Debra Canfield
Expanding Tradition: Holy Week & Maundy Thursday

The first Christians or “followers of the Way” as they were known, observed only one special occasion each year: Jesus’ resurrection or what we now call “Easter.” In time, the first liturgical season morphed into being. It was a season of preparation for this holy day and it became the practice of many Christians, especially since Easter Sunday was the favored time for baptism, to observe a period of prayerful anticipation. The Lenten practices we still observe today emerged out of our early Christian forebears’ desire to retrace the events of the days leading up to Jesus’ resurrection as a way of deepening their spiritual experience and appreciation of this mysterious event that is the crux of our faith. A variety of services and vigils were therefore birthed on the days directly preceding Easter Sunday.

The Gospels tell us that days before Jesus’ resurrection, he instructed the disciples to find a home in which they could observe the Passover. At the meal, Jesus did and said some remarkable things. He served the first Communion, even to those he knew would betray or deny him; he washed the feet of the disciples; and, in light of this act of immense servitude, he gave them the new commandment: “…that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). This is the first part of the narrative that leads on to the garden of Gethsemane, the prison of Pontius Pilot, Golgotha, and the deep silence of the grave that is answered by the joy of Easter morning and the awe of Jesus’ resurrection.

This year at First Church, we plan to expand on our recent practices so that we too might more fully enter into the arc of the Holy Week experience, taking the time to step through each event or part as a way of preparing to more deeply appreciate Easter and also our own journey as people of faith.

The plan is for us to engage in all of our usual Holy Week observances – including reading scripture as the lights dim in tenebrae tradition and placing our prayers at the foot of the cross to hear them nailed to it – on the evening of Good Friday.

This year on Maundy Thursday (“Maundy” meaning “new commandment”), we will gather early in the evening for a service in the style of dinner church – gathered around tables in small groups, sharing a meal together and serving Communion with relaxed live music and space for conversation.

Continued on page 7. See HOLY WEEK
**Wednesdays at First Church**

Wednesdays offer great opportunities for fellowship, exploration, relaxation, conversation, and faith formation at First Church.

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**Wednesday Morning Faith Enrichment**

Join Pastor Nanette for *Minors with a Major Message* – a study of the minor prophets of the Hebrew bible on Wednesdays from 10:45am-noon in the library. You’re welcome to attend all sessions or drop in as you're able.

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**Wednesday Evening Dinner**

A delicious dinner and dessert is available in Fellowship Hall at 6pm. The cost of dinner is $8 per meal, either paid in advance or at the door. Reservations are required. Please sign up in the church office by 2pm on the Monday prior.

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**Wednesday Evening Faith Enrichment**

Over the next 7 weeks, join Associate Minister Antigone Lowery for a discussion on how to enhance and vitalize our relationships with others and with God using the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study, fasting, and celebration. Utilizing Richard Fosters work, *The Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, we will learn the benefit of practicing the spiritual disciplines in our day-to-day lives, while also discovering ways to develop and nurture our use of the spiritual disciplines over time. The intent of this study of the spiritual disciplines is not to change us overnight, but instead to help us begin to see ourselves more as God sees us—as people with value and importance. As Foster puts it, “The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that [God] can transform us” (Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 7). Please join us in discovering how the spiritual disciplines can help to transform us!

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**Wednesday Night at the Movies**

If you enjoy thought-provoking, insightful, and entertaining cinema, grab your ticket for Wednesday Night at the Movies at 6:45pm, with discussion to follow. Contact Bernie Babb with any questions at 330.687.0823. We hope you will join us for a fun evening in the 2nd floor Theatre Room!

**February 6, 2019 -- Three short films**

*The Eleven O’Clock*: A delusional psychiatric patient believes he is actually the psychiatrist. As they each attempt to treat each other, the session gets hilariously out of control.

*After I Saw You*: An animated film based on a poem by Leah Pearlman that asks “What if every love story was meant to be?”

*Saving Santa*: A smart and sensitive young girl, still coping with the recent death of her mother, finds comfort in helping a destitute man, who bears a striking resemblance to Santa Claus.

**February 13, 2019 -- a feature film**

*After Words*: Marcia Gay Harden stars as a woman who attempts to escape her mid-life crisis by traveling to Costa Rica. There she meets a younger man, who takes her on an unexpected journey filled with adventure and romance.

**February 20, 2019 -- Three short films**

*My Paintbrush Bites*: A man battling reclusion and a racehorse on the brink of death save each other in unexpected ways.

*Lost in Aroncore*: After Audrey returns home from college under mysterious circumstances, her little sister Lucy must reconnect using their shared love of childhood fantasy stories.

*A Conversation*: An English professor wakes up in a Chinese hospital with a frightening condition: she can no longer speak her native language, Chinese. She has no way to communication until she encounters Kelly, an ex-pat thief.

**February 27, 2019 -- A feature film**

*Old Fashioned*: Clay Walsh, the lonely owner of an antique shop in a small Midwestern town, is drawn out of his shell by Amber, a free-spirited woman with a restless soul who drifts into his life and finds herself surprisingly drawn to his strong faith and noble ideas.
Patches of Godlight

Did you know that the Prayer Blanket Ministry also includes small prayer patches? These 7” squares of material come from the four corners that are cut away when the Prayer Blanket is made. Two thicknesses are stitched together and fringed, and are blessed with prayers along with the blankets. They can easily travel with you wherever you go – be it daily errands, work or vacation. The name, “Patches of Godlight” came from a quote by C.S. Lewis:

“We – or at least I – shall not be able to adore God on the highest occasions if we have learned no habit of doing so on the lowest. At best, our faith and reason will tell us that He is adorable, but we shall not have found Him so, not have 'tasted and seen'. Any patch of sunlight in a wood will show you something about the sun which you could never get from reading books on astronomy. These pure and spontaneous pleasures are ‘patches of Godlight’ in the woods of experience.”

Look for the Patches of Godlight basket on the table in front of the office and pick up one today for you or a loved one. The Prayer Blankets ministry meets on the second and third Tuesday of each month in the Fellowship Hall.

Inquirer’s Gatherings

The Membership Board and Pastor Nanette will host two informational Inquirer’s Gatherings on March 17 and 24 for any who would like to learn more about First Church and who may be considering covenanting in membership. The sessions are from 12:15-1:30pm in the Upper Room. For more information, please contact Membership Board co-chairs, Kari Ledger and Logan Báez.

New Member Sunday

Save the date! New members will join the church on Sunday, April 7, during both services. Please join us to welcome them to the congregation!

Church School Volunteers

Are you interested in helping out in the church school? We need additional support people for our teachers! Please contact Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator, at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org for more information.

Do You Need a Nametag?

The Membership Board encourages everyone to wear their nametags so that we can greet one another by name with a warm welcome. If you need to request a new nametag, there is a sign-up sheet in the office.

Akron Swing Club

The Akron Swing Club will be meeting in First Church’s Fellowship Hall on February 16 at 7pm. The cost of the event is $10 per person or $25 per family, with two adults and two children attending. Members of the congregation are welcome to attend; no experience is necessary to join the fun!

Looking Good!

Have you seen our new photo displays? In the main office hallway, we now have on display many photos from the life of First Church. These photos will continue to change throughout the year, so be sure to take a look as you pass by!

Market Street Entrance

Have you noticed how pretty our Market Street entrance is? With our new LED spotlights, plus some landscaping work to clear the view, our crosses now make a beautiful statement!
How First Church Continues Its Justice and Peace Ministry

Are you aware that Pastor Nanette is often called upon to speak or advocate at vigils or other local events on behalf of underserved groups? Did you know that she is currently serving on the Akron Civil Rights Commission on behalf of the church? These are just two examples of how First Church works to support justice and peace movements throughout our community.

Recently, three of our staff, Pastor Nanette and two other staff members, each gave 5+ hours of their time to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Majors Award ceremony. First Church provided the staff members’ time, the church facilities and supplies, at no cost to the hosting organization as our support for their worthy cause. However, this generosity on our part did not come without a cost. First Church incurred expenses for salaries, cleaning supplies, food and other materials to host this group. Those costs are all carried by our general operating budget.

This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that First Church has stepped forward to support groups such as theirs, and we happily do so at our own expense when a group’s mission is in alignment with ours. So, next time you are looking to support Justice and Peace initiatives, consider donating to our general operating budget. That is just one of many ways to help support those causes as well as many others!

Bereavement Support

Starting Tuesday, April 2, Rev. Karen Bruno, Chaplain of SouthernCare Hospice Services and member of this church, is facilitating a bereavement support group here at First Church called Grief Work, Healing from Loss.

The group will meet weekly on Tuesday mornings from 10am to 12pm in the Small Dining Room. These meetings build on each other, so attendance to all 7 is crucial for the goal of taking the next step in the healing journey. Please note that the group will also have some non-church members in attendance.

If you are interested, contact Karen at 330.329.9277 or karen.bruno@southerncareinc.com. Pre-registration is required as space is limited.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Honors Awards Ceremony

Mothers on a Mission, an organization created to be an outlet for women from all walks of life to unite and establish a unique sisterhood that will foster a sense of community and family recently held the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Majors Awards at First Church. These awards were created to honor and celebrate those committed to the cause of justice while also demonstrating the core values of kindness, compassion, humility, integrity, and faithfulness of the beloved community in which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of and for which he gave his life. First Church was one of several honorees recognized at their event, and we are grateful for their appreciation of the work we strive to do in the Akron community.

In the Community

February 6, 2019

Food Justice, Race, and Grassroots Empowerment

Bus tour: Exploring Grassroots Food Access and Activism in Akron
2:30-4:30 pm, 2/6 RSVP behrman@uakron.edu

Community roundtable dialogue, Student Union room 335, 2/6, at 8 pm, Join a community discussion exploring ways to promote food justice in the Akron area
Guest speaker: Ashanté Reese
Assistant Professor, Spelman College,
When Justice is Not Loud: Quiet Food Refusals in Washington, D.C.
Student Union Theatre, 2/6, 7 pm, free and open to the public

Sponsored by The Women’s Studies Program co-sponsored by an EXL Center Student-Driven Initiative

Event Series:
We Are Charleston

Head to the Main branch of the Akron-Summit County Library on February 16 for a discussion of We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel with Dr. Bernard E. Powers, Jr., Professor Emeritus of History at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

This event is presented in cooperation with the Akron Area Interfaith Council. Dr. Powers will discuss the June 2015 murder of nine members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston and also the origins and nature of the AME denomination.

Without this understanding, we cannot fully grasp the meaning of what happened and why “Mother Emanuel” was the killer’s target.

The discussion begins at 2pm at the Main Library located at 60 South High Street in Akron.
Lay Reader Opportunities

Are you interested in becoming a lay reader or scripture reader at the 11am worship service? Please contact Kasey Kalchert at the church office at 330.253.5109 or at kasey.kalachert@akronfcc.org

Game Night & Pasta Potluck

Membership Board is hosting a Game Night on Friday, March 22. Join us from 6-8pm in the Fellowship Hall for a BYOP: bring your own pasta dish to share with the group! Don’t forget your favorite game! Please sign up in the church office. Questions? Contact Membership Board co-chairs, Kari Ledger and Logan Báez.

Parish Nurse Ministry

Blood pressure and diabetes checks will be available on February 17 from 10am to 1pm in the Conference Room.

Mardi Gras Sunday

You’re invited to a Mardi Gras pancake breakfast at First Church on Sunday, March 3 at 9:30am in the Fellowship Hall! We will only be holding one service this day at 11am. Childcare and Church School will begin at their normal times.

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.

Hallelujah Soup

Submitted by Phyllis Berry

Ingredients

- 1/2 pound of bacon
- 2 large onions
- 4 medium potatoes
- 5 cups of heated chicken broth
- 1/3 cup of cold water
- 2 tablespoons of cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of sage
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- 1 small jar of red pimento
- Fresh parsley for garnish

Directions: Dice the bacon and brown it until crisp in a large, heavy soup pot. Drain the bacon on a paper towel. Peel and slice the potatoes into cubes and slice the onions. Add them with the hot broth to the pot. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender. Blend the cornstarch, water, salt, sugar, and pepper together. Add about 1/2 cup of the soup stock to the cornstarch mixture. Stir until smooth and mix into soup. Serve hot, with a dab of butter and sprinkle of sage. Garnish with parsley and red pimento.

Sermon Recordings Available

Did you miss a Sunday service and still want to hear the Word? You can listen online at akronfcc.org or request a CD copy of the sermon. To request a copy, please see the form in the sign-up sheet binder in the front office. You will be notified when your copy is available for pick-up.

Love Truck

The Love Truck will serve a meal on Saturday, February 23 from 4:30-5:30pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nathan Walder for more information at the lovetruck@yahoo.com.

Governning Board Meeting

The Governing Board will be meeting on Monday, February 25 at 6:30pm in the Conference Room. Members of the congregation are welcome to attend.

Church Directory

Do you need a copy of the church directory? You can get it online anytime and to learn more about it, just visit http://www.akronfcc.org/connect/directory/.

Address changed?

If you have any contact or address updates, please contact Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator, to ensure our directory stays up to date! Thank you!
Worship Flowers
First Church requests donations of worship flowers for the following dates: February 24, March 10, 24, and 31. If you would like to honor, celebrate, or remember a loved one on one of these dates, please contact Patty Durkos at 330.253.5109 x110 to place an order.

Sunday Parking at Church
Please remember the upper parking lot nearest to the church building is reserved for disabled drivers on Sundays and the lower lot for those who have mobility challenges.

Hearing Assistance Devices
If you are in need of a hearing assistance device for the 11am worship service, please stop by the church office. Our devices can connect with the users personal hearing aid or we can provide an earphone. Please return the devices to the office immediately following worship each week.

Congratulations!
Congratulations to the Carlson family on their newest addition! Stella Grace was born to Abby Carlson on January 12.

Congratulations to Curt and Deann Clemons on the birth of their first grandchild. John Curtis (Jack) was born to Jessie Clemons Niemiec and Alex Niemiec on January 19.

Please join us in thanking Patty Durkos, our Administrative & Financial Assistant, for 30 years of service at First Church! We are so grateful for her dedication over the years!

In Sympathy
Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Kay Hibbard, who passed away on January 16. Kay was a longtime member of First Church, having joined the congregation in 1955. Calling hours were held at Billows in Fairlawn on January 24.

We extend our sympathies to the family and friends of former First Church member Rich Perrin who passed away unexpectedly in his home on January 19. Condolences may be sent to Julia Zeber’s attention: 347 N. Hawkins Ave, Akron 44313.

In Our Prayers

Dear First Church,
Thank you for all of your assistance and kind expression of sympathy.
Sincerely, The Noel Family

Dear Church family,
Thanks so very much for the flowers you provided for Ryan’s memorial service. They were a beautiful reminder of the love and support we’ve received from First Church.

Much love, Terri & Jake Cook

Dear First Church Family,
Thank you so very much for the flowers. The church family was a big part of our dad’s past. Both him and our mom loved everyone dearly!

Sincerely, The Donald Family

To the members of Church,
Thank you so much for your generosity in allowing our Future Story women to use your garden, as well as your donation of $600. Your kindness allows us to give the women in our programs the opportunity to grow and take steps to create a better life for themselves. Because of the blessings we receive from people like you, we are able to continue our mission to serve these women. Thank you again, so much.

Sincerely, Yvette M. McMillan, Director, Women’s Division and Hannah Pellegrino-Culver, Assistant to the Director, Women’s Division

To the members of First Church,
Thank you for your contribution to the Akron Pride Festival 2018. It would not have been possible without you!

Love + Pride, Akron Pride Festival Steering Committee
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First Church Free Music Series

The Akron Big Band will be performing at First Church on Thursday February 21, from 7pm-9pm in the Fellowship Hall. You will have the opportunity to sit and watch or dance to the music! The concert is free and open to the public, so spread the word to your friends and neighbors! A freewill donation will be accepted to support the First Church Music Fund, which helps make events like these possible.

Who is the Akron Big Band?

For over 50 years, the Akron Big Band has entertained audiences with musical styles that include favorites like Big Band music, swing, Lindy hop, and foxtrot, with inspiration from acts like Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Duke Wellington, and more!

Sacred Harp

The NE Ohio Sacred Harp Singers invite you to join us for an afternoon hymns! The group will meet on February 3 of every month from 2pm-4pm in the Chapel. All are welcome to attend. A freewill offering is accepted. Please contact Corey Sees for more information at coreysees@gmail.com

UA Symphony Orchestra

Join us on Thursday, February 7 from 7:30pm - 9:00pm in the Meetinghouse to hear the University of Akron Symphony Orchestra!

Directed by Dr. Guy Bordo, the Symphony Orchestra will be performing selections from Rossini’s Overture to La Gazza Ladra, Dello Joio-Air for Strings, Avni-Largo for Strings, Faure-Pelleas and Melisande Suite, Chaminade-Concertino for Flute and Orchestra, and Christopher Theofanidis’ Rainbow Body.

A freewill offering will be accepted at this concert. It is free and open to the public.

2019 Trinity Concert Series

You are cordially invited to the first concert in the 2019 Trinity Concert Series featuring the Jack Schantz Jazz Quartet, members of which are on the jazz faculty at the University of Akron, on Sunday, February 3, at 4pm at Trinity United Church of Christ, 215 High Street in Wadsworth. A free-will offering will be accepted.

Hear the Handbell Choir

The First Church Handbell Choir will be performing on February 24 at the 11am worship. Be sure to join us to hear their beautiful sound fill our hearts during Sunday service.

Breakfast with the Bunny

Save the date! On April 6, we will host our annual Breakfast with the Bunny in the Fellowship Hall. This event is free and open to the public; please invite your favorite “peeps” to attend! From 9am-11am, we will be serving a pancake sausage breakfast while children can meet the Easter bunny!

We are seeking volunteers to help! If you are interested, please contact Paula Speight or Kasey Kalchert, at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org.

Next in the Concert Series

Celtic Rush

Thursday, March 7, 2019, 7pm-9pm
Learn more at www.celticrush.com

The Akron Pops Orchestra

Thursday, May 16, 2019, 7pm-9pm
Learn more at www.akronpops.org/concerts

Guess Who?

The little girl in this picture is currently a member of the First Church staff. Can you figure out who she is?

If you think you know, email Kasey Kalchert, Congregational Life Coordinator, at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org. Good luck!

Last month’s picture was of Russ Gaippe!
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.*