Dear beloved First Church community,

It’s fascinating to think – when you actually take time to ponder it – that we in the Church are proclaimed to be, above all, an Easter people. We’re not an Ordinary Time people, a Maundy Thursday people, a Good Friday people, or a Holy Saturday people. We’re not even a Christmas, Epiphany, or Pentecost people. The liturgical year reminds us that we live through all of these seasons: times of mundane ordinariness, expectation and joy, injustice, terror, pain, and quiet grief. But as an Easter people, we live through the times and seasons of life as a people of unquenchable hope: even the hope of resurrection and transformation not just at some future date, but in the living present.

It is this sense of hope that calls us together to remember our mortality as we did on Ash Wednesday, that calls us together in Holy Week, as we remember the awful events of Jesus’ betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and death. It is this sense of hope that calls us together each Sunday – each mini Easter – to remember the God who loves the world so very much. Indeed, it is this sense of hope for resurrection and transformation that bids us to gather on Easter to celebrate the great mystery that God’s love is more powerful than the grave, more powerful than injustice, more powerful than human rulers, more powerful than our greatest fears.

So come, beloved friends, and undertake a holy privilege of remembrance and reflection, of earnest seeking and longing, and of discovering again the reality of God’s love and life, here and now in the living present. Come, and be an Easter people.

Grace and peace,

Nanette
**Annual Meeting on May 5: Be There Or Be Square**

There is a lot going on at First Church. The purpose of this month's article is to summarize two of the highlights – and to urge everyone to put the church's *Annual Meeting, Sunday, May 5 following the 11am worship service* on your calendar now, so that you can get more details and offer your comments.

**Organizational Consultants**

To help strengthen and unify our congregation as we move forward towards upcoming challenges, such as revising our governance and leadership structures, we have engaged the services of consultants from the Case Western Reserve University Community Innovation Network.

Consultants bring value to an organization because they are more concerned with the process rather than the outcome. They are unbiased and bring wide experience gleaned from working with many organizations, and thus are able to see things to which we are blind. They see the forest rather than just the trees.

The Community Innovation Network will be working with us for the next six months to help us assess any issues within our congregation that need to be addressed and to create increased understanding between members who hold different points of view. They will be listening widely to members of our congregation through the use of surveys, interviews and focus groups. They will use their skills to deepen the quality of our communication and create agreements that will value everyone in our congregation.

When the listening process is complete, the consultants will make recommendations, which will be made available to all church members, for how we can pursue balanced growth and mission development in the years ahead.

You will learn more about Dr. Mark Chupp and Kathleen McDonnell as they begin their work. A small, diverse working group will be formed to support this work.

**HVAC Project** (Heating, ventilation and air conditioning)

Under the inspired leadership of the Building and Grounds Board (B&G), Karpinski Engineering has completed a study of the church’s entire heating and cooling state of affairs. The study was originally undertaken because one of the boilers heating the 1908 building, and the two story addition, was installed in 1958 and has been in operation for over sixty years, with a second boiler installed in the early 1990s. Perhaps, reasoned the B&G Board, it was time to examine our overall HVAC situation.

There is a significant opportunity for funding through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In addition to the possibility of receiving anywhere from $50,000 - $250,000, selected congregations will also receive training, planning grants, and pro-bono consulting services to make sure projects are well-planned and capital campaigns are successful.

As a result of the good work done by B&G and Karpinski, the church is in a position to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Fund for Sacred Spaces. After careful review, a select number of congregations will be invited by the Fund to complete a full application.

First Church is well positioned to submit. The Fund for Sacred Spaces is looking for congregations that have NATIONAL/REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE, demonstrate COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, have a PROJECT SCOPE & NEED beyond the internal capacity of the organization, show FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN READINESS, and is a HEALTHY CONGREGATION.

These are just two of the dynamic issues that will be presented and discussed at the *Annual Meeting, Sunday, May 5 following the 11am worship service*. A full agenda will be sent to all members in early April, which will include Nominating Board’s presentation of the new slate of officers and Board members.

As always, please contact me at 330.696.6709 or via email at Larrybecker2900@yahoo.com, or come see me at church with any questions that you may have.

*Submitted by Larry Becker, Moderator*

**Annual Meeting 2019**

Absentee ballots for the Annual Meeting will become available on April 5.

Annual Report submissions are due on April 8. Please make your submissions to Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org.

The Annual report will become available on April 28, 2019. The Annual Meeting will be held on May 5, 2019, following the 11am worship in the Meetinghouse.

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**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.
Breakfast with the Bunny

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 and sausage breakfast while children can meet the Easter bunny! Children will also receive a complimentary photo with the Bunny himself.

New this year, GASP, a local Akron nonprofit, will be attending. Committed to keeping neighborhood children safe, GASP will be offering free fingerprinting services to all the children in attendance.

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

First Church Reads This Lent

For too long Lent has been thought of as a season of self-sacrifice and discipline that sounds to many Christians like a list of spiritual chores. Lenten disciplines become the spiritual equivalent of New Year’s resolutions. These promises are easily made and often quickly broken, leaving us feeling like we do not measure up to what we should be.

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul joyfully turns to spiritual practices that draw him closer to God amid persecution and imprisonment. These practices keep Paul connected to a sense of God’s power and presence. Joy flows from Paul and becomes a vital part of his relationship with God and others.

Join us this Lent in reading Because of This I Rejoice. The accompanying study questions will form the basis of exploration and discussion for our Wednesday Faith Enrichment led by Associate Minister Antigoné Lowery from 10:45am-noon and 6:45-8pm, or can be used for personal reflection. Copies are available from the church office for a suggested donation of $12 or may be purchased for Kindle online or sourced from your favorite bookseller.

Easter Egg Hunt

Please consider donating bags of individually wrapped candy for the hunt, immediately following each service on Easter Sunday. They can be dropped off at the church office before April 14. Any extra candy will be donated to the Food Pantry. Thank you!

Holy Week & Easter Services

Palm Sunday, April 14
9:30am Celebrate Worship in the Upper Room
11am Festival Worship in the Meetinghouse with a Palm Processional by the children and Chancel Choir

Maundy Thursday, April 18
6pm in Fellowship Hall
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. This intergenerational service focuses on Jesus’ New Commandment accompanied by a reenactment of foot washing that attendees can observe or participate in, as they choose.

Good Friday, April 19
9am – noon Chapel open for prayer and meditation
12pm Scripture reading and organ music in the Chapel
7:30pm Traditional Tenebrae Worship in the Meetinghouse

Easter Sunday, April 21
9:30am Worship in the Meetinghouse
A lighthearted and relaxed service followed by an Easter Egg Hunt for children (toddlers – grade 4)
11am Worship in the Meetinghouse
Uplifting Festival Worship followed by an Easter Egg Hunt for children (toddlers – grade 4)

New Children’s Activity Boxes

Activity boxes are located in a basket outside of the Upper Room and are available for children to use during worship service. Inside these boxes are various activities, to include fun activity books, crayons/colored pencils, and puzzle games. Upon the conclusion of worship service, please return the box back to the basket outside of the Upper Room so that others may use them. Thanks, and we hope that your children enjoy them!

Sermon recordings

Sermon recordings available. Did you miss a Sunday service and still want to hear the Word? You can listen to a recording online at www.akronfcc.org or order a CD copy. To request a copy, please see the form in the sign-up sheet binder in the front office and we will notify you when it is ready.
Springtime in the Garden

How does a gardener know that spring has arrived?
When the garlic plants and asparagus stalks peek out above the soil.
When the seed orders start arriving on the doorstep.
When the first spring peas start to come up.
When we bust out our t-shirts on the first 55 degree day.
When the cover crop has died back and turned into a nutrient-rich mulch.
When the trays of seedlings begin lining up under the grow lights.
When we put our t-shirts away again for a few more snowstorms.

And this gardener’s favorite way to tell that spring has arrived: when the Feed My Sheep Garden crew comes out of hibernation and starts preparing for the new growing season! We are so excited to get started on what we are sure will be another successful season, with a few announcements to start.

First, due to the well-deserved retirement of the Haven of Rest Women’s Division Director, Yvette McMillan, the Future Story garden program will not continue this year. Let’s Grow Akron has hired Future Story graduate Jamie Mutnansky to serve on the Feed My Sheep Garden crew and continue to grow her market gardening skills.

Second, Let’s Grow Akron and First Congregational Church are partnering to host a plant sale fund-raiser this Memorial Day weekend. We will be selling annual vegetable, herb, and flower seedlings, all started right here in the First Church basement, for planting in your home garden or community garden. Please save the dates of May 25 and 26 to come out and get your seedlings, ask your gardening questions, and celebrate the start of the season with us. The sale will be held here at First Church from 9am to 3pm on both days.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Garden Manager again this season! If you are interested in volunteering with us, the garden open hours are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings from 8am to 12pm. Please contact me at sam@letsgrowakron.org with any questions.

Submitted by Sam Phillips, Garden Manager

PB&J Program Receives Grant

The Akron Community Foundation recently presented a check to First Church for $1,500 in support of our Peanut Butter & Jelly Program. The program provides nutritional weekend meals for 50 pupils at Mason CLC. Volunteers from First Church pack bags of food weekly on Fridays.

Program volunteers are Elizabeth Fesler, Chris and Sue Godard, Mary Ann Gray, Jennifer Gray, Chip and Linda Houghton, Becky Moore, Sally and Dave Oneacre, Sally Reed, and Beth and Cal Robertson. Volunteer activities include picking up the food from the Akron-Canton Food Bank, deciding on a menu, and packing and delivering the bags to Mason CLC.

Thank you so much to our volunteers for their hard work each week! If you are interested in learning more about the PB&J program, please contact Elizabeth Fesler.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity of Summit County seeks the help of First Church volunteers in a variety of projects, including home building, repairs, and deconstruction. If you are interested in helping locally, please contact Elizabeth Fesler. “It is in shelter that we empower.”

Immigration Forum

On Thursday, April 25, First Church is hosting the Akron Interfaith Immigrant Advocacy from 6:30-8:30pm in the Fellowship Hall. The topic of the roundtable discussion is “The Immigration Journey to America.” The event is free and open to the public, with a light dinner served. Anyone with a passion or interest in current immigration issues is encouraged to attend. Please RSVP to Kasey Kalchert by Monday, April 22.
Special Easter Offering

The Board of Christian Outreach has continued the tradition of selecting the Food Pantry as the recipient of our annual special Easter Offering. Please consider giving an Easter gift to help sustain this mission in your community.

A special Easter Offering letter will be arriving in your mailbox soon. Checks may be written to First Church with “Food Pantry” written on the memo line. Thank you!

Mason Coupon Collection

Another of our fund raising projects is coming to a close. As of the end of this school year, Tyson is ending the A+ program.

If you have any Tyson coupons or bag strips you have saved, please bring them to the church and put them in our box tops container before May 26th. We hope to have enough for the final turn in. These are worth 24 cents each. Thank you.

Submitted by your Mason CLC Team

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.

Hot Ham Buns

Submitted by Liz Burgese

Ingredients:
- ½ cup of butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons of onion, grated
- 2 tablespoons of prepared mustard
- 1 tablespoon of poppy seeds
- 1 teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce
- 12 whole grain sandwich buns
- 12 slices of Swiss cheese
- 12 slices of boiled/baked ham

Directions:
Mix first five ingredients and spread on both sides of the buns. Add a slice of cheese and ham to each. Wrap in aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

Easter Flowers 2019

Flowers are $9 per plant. Please return your completed form with payment to the church office by April 7, 2019

In memory of:

In honor of:

Honoriums and memorials will be listed in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

Please be sure to pick up your flowers after the 11am Easter Sunday service on April 21 -- or on April 23 when the church reopens.

Ordered by: _______________________________ Phone: _______________________________

*Please make your checks to First Church with “Easter flowers” on the memo line.
Wednesdays at First Church
Wednesdays offer great opportunities for fellowship, exploration, relaxation, conversation, and faith formation at First Church.

Evening Dinner
A delicious dinner with dessert will be served in the 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.

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!

April 3 - Three short films
Looking at the Stars: In a world built on sight and sound, these inspiring young women are chasing their dream to become the first exceptional ballet troupe for blind dancers. A documentary.

Elwood Takes a Lover: Long suspecting that her husband, Elwood, had feelings for another in his youth, Hannah sets out to reunite him with his unrequited love before she succumbs to cancer.

Match: A lonely sock finds his match at the laundromat.

April 10- A feature film
Another Time: When Eric realizes he can go back in time to get the girl of his dreams, will he ultimately choose love or saving the life of the friend who sent him back? (Content advisory: strong language.)

April 24 - Three short films
Hey, FiBi: A happy couple’s relationship falls apart when their digital assistant starts making plans of her own.

The Best and the Loneliest Days: A Chinese college student in the US has a dream in English and begins to worry that she is losing touch with her heritage, so she plans a big Chinese New Year’s Party, but things don’t go exactly as planned.

Dear Kimberly: On his last day of work, a hopeless romantic writes a love letter to his office crush.

Faith Enrichment
Join Associate Minister Antigone Lowery for the Parables of Jesus, a Faith Enrichment bible study each Wednesday from April 24 – May 29. There are two sessions each week: 10:45am-noon and 6:45-8pm. You are welcome to attend as you are able, all or one or more weeks of the series. Though the parables Jesus told were uncomplicated and simple on the surface, they were and continue to be packed with the recognition that life and relationships can be tough. In the same way, the parables offer us the understanding that there is great beauty to be found and experienced in our connection and relationship with God and with others. Each week, we will discuss a parable and it helps us better comprehend Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God, and how it can help us through some of the challenges and struggles we face in our lives. If you have ever wondered if the parables are still relevant for the church today, or if you simply desire to better understand them, this is the perfect study for you!

Men’s Lunch Bunch
The Men’s Lunch Bunch meets on Mondays at noon for lunch and discussion on the Great Courses video series on early civilizations and development. All the men of the church are invited to attend. Cost of the meal is $7. Please sign up in the church office. For more information, please contact Howard Tolley at 330.867.1469.

Women’s Spiritual Journey
On the first and third Monday of the month, Linda Peshina and Jamie Brink host Women’s Spiritual Journey in the small dining room at 12pm. Come join the discussion! Lunch will be served at the cost of $7 or you are welcome to bring your own. For more information, contact Linda Peshina at 330.606.5874.

Guess Who?
Do you recognize the baby in this photo? She’s one of your First Church staff members!

If you think you know who is in the picture, email your guess to Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org. Good luck!

Darren Jones-Baker was featured last month! Congratulations to all those who guessed correctly!
Sunday Mornings

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

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

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

llam 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.

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 llam worship service, please stop by the church office. Our devices can connect with the user’s personal hearing aid or we can provide an earphone. We ask that users return the devices to the office immediately following worship each week.

Kitchen Connect Partnership

First Church is excited to announce our newest Kitchen Connect partnership with SMYRNA Mediterranean Morsels, a home-based food business that offers ready to eat foods from Mediterranean cuisines, like Lebanese, Turkish, Greek, Italian, Balkans, and Middle Eastern. The favorite items from the menu include lentil soup, stuffed grape leaves, and baklava. SMYRNA Mediterranean Morsels is continuously working to add new menu items. Currently, SMYRNA Mediterranean Morsels sells at two indoor farmers’ markets in Kent and Akron, and hopes to expand more this summer.

All of the delicious foods are prepared fresh by Huri Mutlu, who has been cooking home recipes for over 20 years. Learn more on their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/smyrnamorsels/.

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!

Joining Sunday

Join us on Sunday, April 7 as we welcome new members to the congregation.

Canaan Sales

Food products from the Holy Land will be in the Fellowship Hall on April 14 before and after the 11am worship service. If you have questions or are looking for particular items, please contact Carolyn Durway at spicewood@neo.rr.com.

Love Truck

The Love Truck will serve a meal on Saturday, April 27 from 4:30pm-5:30pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nathan Walder for more information at the lovetruck@yahoo.com.

Spring Cleaning

The Building and Grounds Board will be holding a Spring clean up day on April 27. Please come join us as we spruce up the church yard for springtime. The day begins at 9am and should last until 12pm.

Hymn Sing Sunday

On Sunday, April 28, at our llam worship service, we’ll be holding a spring hymn sing. Please email requests for your favorite hymns to our Organist and Choir Director, Julie Lehman, and to Pastor Nanette (julie.lehman@akronfcc.org, nanette.pitt@akronfcc.org). Please include both the hymn title and tune name, if you know it or have a preference. This service will allow us to celebrate and share our rich tradition of hymnody with one another. Please submit your favorites by April 14.

Parish Nurse Ministry

Blood pressure and diabetes checks will be available on April 28 from 10am - 1pm in the Conference Room.
Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Feb-19

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**EXPENSES**

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* All Boards, Pastoral Care & Special Ministries

In Our Prayers


In Sympathy

Our deepest sympathies are with Linda Sayre and her family as they mourn the passing of her father, Leland Pritchard. Lee was a long time member of First Church. A memorial service will be held at First Church on April 3 at noon, with Pastor Nanette officiating.

Our sympathy and prayers are with Karen Ballard on the passing of her mother, who died on March 26. A memorial service was held in South Carolina.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Chelsea and Andy Weyand on the baptism of their daughter, Halle Ann Weyand, on March 17.

Worship Flowers

First Church requests donations of worship flowers for the following dates: April 28, May 5, 12, 19, and 26 and through the summer.

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.

Thank you

We are so grateful for you, First Congregational Church! This generous gift ministers to us as staff as we pour out to our neighbors. Thank you for remembering us!

Eric Harmon, South Street Ministries

Thanks Nanette and Antigoné (so nice to meet you!) We had a wonderful time sharing and connecting!

Simply, Joe Tucker and South Street Ministries

Dear First Church,

Your gift has inspired a child! Because of you, kids in Greater Akron have a positive, safe place to learn and grow with caring adults. Your gift helps them to achieve their dreams for the future and allows them to enjoy each day more fully. Your recent donation will help Boys & Girls Club of the Western Reserve achieve our mission of inspiring and enabling all young people, especially those who need us most, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.

Best regards, Colette Taylor, Director of Community Engagement
Nominating Board Proposal

Dear friends,

First Church is such a special community! For a staggering 186 years, our church has been recognized as a source of abundant service in Akron, ministering to many people in an inordinate amount of ways. This takes a lot of time, talent, and passion from our members and friends.

For over 50 years, the Nominating board has been tasked with recruiting you to serve on church boards and committees as we strive to carry out the missions we all hold dear.

Such a privilege allows us to learn more about you, what you’re enthusiastic about, and the gifts you graciously share.

What we have discovered over the past several years, especially this one, is that there is very little interest in sitting on boards and going to meetings. Rather, our members want to volunteer doing more tangible activities and have exciting ideas for new projects! When the Nominating board considered who we might ask to serve, we also found that many board responsibilities overlap with other lay leader and/or staff responsibilities.

For example, the Christian Education board is currently made up of board members, as well as the Church School teaching team, and our Associate Minister Antigoné. They are already working together so our children enjoy rich, fun lessons of faith, and doing an amazing job!

There are also many of you who are burnt out from serving multiple terms on multiple boards. The amount of groups, the number of members in them, and 2 to 3 year terms outlined in our bylaws are no longer sustainable.

Recognizing the need for a structure that empowers you to live more fully into our Bedrock Beliefs, Core Values, and Bold Goals / Big Hairy Audacious Goals, the Nominating Board is recommending practical updates so we can better engage in Christ’s service for the 2019-2020 program year. This shift, unanimously endorsed by the Governing Board and Pastor Nanette, will ensure that our many ministries continue and also provide opportunities for us to grow in faith and service together.

The recommendation includes a pause of the Christian Education, Diaconate, Media Relations and Marketing, Music, and Outreach boards. We are immensely grateful for those who have dedicated themselves to serving on those boards and committees. The ministry of each group will continue to exist and the budgets of each will continue to support that ministry overseen, as they currently are, by the Stewardship & Finance Board and Treasurer. The Nominating proposal also includes the creation of a Care Team, Communion Coordinating Team, Development Team, and Fellowship Team, providing support to maintain and grow our current missions with help from our eager staff. There will still be plenty of opportunity for you to be involved!

Part of the proposal will include temporary rewording in two sections of our bylaws. Opportunities to review and discuss these will be available ahead of our Annual Meeting on May 5. You are also always welcome to speak with any of us to learn more. Please thoughtfully consider and pray about these important recommendations, and vote accordingly at our Annual Meeting on May 5. We look forward to seeing you there!

Submitted by the Nominating Board: Julie Brandy, Kevin Kowalski, Kellie Ramirez (Chair), and Susan Wilson

Sound Minds Ministry

Sound Minds, a musical memory program for Alzheimer’s and dementia patients, became an Outreach ministry of First Church last summer. Currently, Sound Minds serves residents of 5 local memory care facilities.

The program is based on research demonstrating that musical memories are the last to leave the brain and many patients, even those in advanced stages of memory loss, may have highly positive verbal, physical, and emotional responses to music they once loved. For many people, this beloved music from the distant past triggers long forgotten memories and brings enthusiasm and joy back to patients. It also helps with Sundowner’s Syndrome and with the agitation and anxiety that is so common among this group.

We currently have a real need for more volunteers in this program, specifically to work at either Rockynol on West Market or Greenville, located on Massillon Road in Uniontown. We ask for a commitment of only one or two hours a week. If you like more information about volunteering at either of these facilities, please contact Bernie and Susan Babb at sbabb731@gmail.com or 330.687.0823.
Empowering Epilepsy Yoga

Join Empowering Epilepsy for the next Akron Support Group with Empowering Epilepsy Yoga on April 17 from 7pm-9pm at the Fairlawn Kiwanis Community Center. Meet others who understand epilepsy, learn strategies to manage your seizures and make new friends. From 8pm-9pm enjoy Empowering Epilepsy Restorative Yoga to help reduce stress. This yoga is personalized to each and anyone is welcome to participate.

Wear comfortable clothing. All yoga supplies will be provided. This event is free. For more information, contact Leigh Goldie, Empowering Epilepsy Founder, at 440.248.6158 or empoweringepilepsy.org.

First Church Core Values

Acceptance: First Church seeks to be a safe place where all are welcomed regardless of human or social distinction. Having been accepted as we are, we are open to others.

Spirituality: First Church seeks greater understanding and connection, individually and collectively, with God and with one another.

Community: First Church seeks to unite individuals and families into a network of fellowship and compassion within the congregation and beyond. We view Family as a form of Community and Fellowship as an expression of Community.

First Church Bedrock Beliefs

God is Love: We believe that God extends unconditional acceptance, forgiveness, concern and care to all.

Mission: We believe God is the cause and mission is the effect. We receive God’s love and extend that love to others, in word and deed, within and beyond the congregation.

Spiritual Growth: We believe that faith is not static but dynamic. We seek, through prayer, study, worship, service and life experience to deepen and broaden our individual and collective understandings of, and reliance upon, God.

Worship: We believe that through worship, whether in personal devotional time or within the gathered community, we connect with God. The acts of worship bring us comfort, challenge and courage to discover, nurture and live out our individual and corporate spirituality.

Walk of Heroes

On April 26, the Rape Crisis Center of Summit and Medina Counties are holding Walk of Heroes from 6pm-8pm at the University of Akron Field House. Come as you are, or dress as your favorite superhero for an evening of supporting survivors of sexual violence in our community. You can create a team at http://tinyurl.com/rccwoh19. Contact Sarah Krieger 216.402.5212 or sarahk@scmcbws.org for more information about the event.

Volunteer with Summit County

Many seniors in Summit County are unable to manage their own affairs and the Summit County Probation Court is seeking Volunteer Guardians to advocate for them and ensure that their personal and safety interests are being met. To qualify, you must be at least 21 years old to complete an application and background check. Training is provided. The program is a collaboration of community social services that includes Summit County Probation Court, Summit County Public Health, the Department of Job & Family Services, and the ADM Board and the Summit County DD Board. For more information, please visit www.volunteer guardian.com or contact Julie Falter, Volunteer Recruiter with Summit County, at vgpsummit@gmail.com or 330.703.5970.

Community Blood Drive

Holy Trinity will be hosting a Blood Drive with American Red Cross on Tuesday, April 30, 2019 from 12pm-6pm. If you would like to participate, you can make an appointment at RedCrossBlood.org and enter “Trinity” for the Sponsor Code.

OR call 1-800-Red Cross (1-800-733-2767). Walk-ins are also welcome as schedule permits.

For more information on the drive or to volunteer please contact Deacon Ruth Anderson at ruth.anderson@holytrinityakron.org.
**First Church Free Music Series**

The Akron Pops Orchestra will be performing at First Church on Thursday May 16, from 7pm-9pm in the Meetinghouse. The concert is free and open to the public, so spread the word to your friends and neighbors! A freewill offering will be accepted to support the First Church Music Fund, which helps make events like these possible.

**The Akron Pops Orchestra**

Under the direction of Mr. Kristan Crane, the Akron Pops Orchestra is an all-volunteer group of 55 talented musicians dedicated to sharing the gift of music with our local community. The Pops performs a wide variety of musical genres including: light classical, waltzes, marches, as well as selections from Broadway musicals and Hollywood movies. Originally known as the Doctor's Orchestra founded in 1926 by Akron area physicians, today the Pops musicians come from all walks of life.

Learn more at www.akronpops.org/concerts.

**UA Symphony Orchestra**

Join us on Thursday, May 2 at 7:30pm in the Meetinghouse to hear the University of Akron Symphony Orchestra!

Directed by Dr. Guy Bordo, the Symphony Orchestra will be performing selections from *Bruch-Violin Concerto No.1*, with guest musician Andrés Cárdenes on violin, and Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 5*.

Tickets are available for this event at the EJ Thomas Hall Box offices. UASO Kulas Concert tickets are priced at $12 for General Admission, $6 for non-UA Students, free for Students with Zip Cards. However, First Church members can pick up a voucher good for up to two tickets and will be admitted at the door with a mention of their membership.

A freewill offering will be accepted at this concert.

**Sacred Harp**

The NE Ohio Sacred Harp Singers invite you to join us for some afternoon hymns! The group will meet on April 7 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.

**Tuesday Musical at First Church**

You are invited to share music and refreshments with Tuesday Musical during the April Members Program on Tuesday, April 9, at 1pm at First Church.

The performers include the St. Cecilia Choral Society and a young student from Brahm's Allegro, Tuesday Musical’s junior music club.

St. Cecilia Choral Society, or the Saints as they are known, formed in 1921 as an auxiliary to Tuesday Musical. Members include composers, semi-professional singers and church soloists, private voice teachers, retired school and music teachers, members of Tuesday Musical, and current or former members of an array of choirs in our region.

Reservations are suggested: 330.761.3460 or info@tuesdaymusical.org.

**Hear the Handbell Choir**

The First Church Handbell Choir will be performing on Easter Sunday, April 21, at the 11am worship service. Be sure to join us to hear their beautiful sound fill our hearts during Sunday service.

**Seeking Volunteers**

We are seeking bakers to help us host the Akron Pops Orchestra on May 16. We are looking to assemble trays of cheese and crackers, veggies and dip, and other light snacks for the musicians after the concert. We would need several trays and a variety of baked goods; there are 55 musicians in the group. If you would be willing to lend your culinary talents, please contact Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org for more information. Thank you!
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.