Beloved,

We all know the biblical edict from Proverbs to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, rather than leaning on our own understanding, but how many of us are intentional in our efforts to build trust within community?

Trust doesn’t come automatically and like a plant that requires soil, water, and sunlight, trust requires certain conditions in order to flourish. Moreover, as surely as our delicate ecosystem needs plant life, our church (why our very *life* as Christians) needs trust in order to survive and thrive.

Like cogs in a large industrial machine without oil, without trust our life together is a grind punctuated by the occasional screech. A machination instead of a smooth flowing and well-oiled system that edifies the design and purpose not only of every cog but of their combined motion.

Our church requires trust in order for us to reach our primary goal of worshipping God in all aspects of life and, in so doing, to live our best life as disciples. This requires collective harmony as much as it does an individual goodwill that extends both to one another now as well as those who are still arriving with us. Trust truly becomes the oil or balm required for this and trust can only take root in a relationship if our desire to be in that relationship supersedes all else.

Beloved, I ask you to look once again, truly and honestly, at your neighbors at First Church and contemplate once more your desire to live out your faith in this community. Let the goodwill and love in our church take root in your heart so that trust may be cultivated and restored and our work of glorifying God may blossom even more fully as we join together, trusting.

Grace and peace.

Nanette
Jesus as Change Agent

Jesus' personal ministry on Earth occurred 2000 years ago and yet, here we are still talking about it today. If that's not God in action, I don't know what is. The reason is that Jesus Christ was an agent of change. His teachings created a movement that is alive and well, operating in each of us and in our church.

The 185th Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Akron takes place on Sunday, May 5, following the 11am worship service. As you have hopefully already seen and read, the Nominating Board is proposing a significant change. If not, it can be found on the church's website: http://www.akronfcc.org/annualmeeting2019/

I urge all members of First Church to attend this important meeting. If you are not able to join us, please obtain an Absentee ballot from the church office and make your voice heard.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines progress as “a forward or onward movement (as to an objective or to a goal)” and also as “gradual betterment.” Think about it – without change there can be no progress.

I believe that we are all smarter together than we are alone. I believe that God is working in and through ALL OF US. And I believe that how we interact as a Christian community, respecting one another's thoughts and opinions, is how God will put His plan for us, as a Faith Community, into action.

So let's talk about change at the annual meeting. Open up, be vulnerable, trust your church family, speak your mind. We may get more people involved, we may do more ministry and we may do more good. If it works, we keep it. If it doesn't, we can always try something else.

There are 613 laws in the Jewish Bible. When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus boiled it down to just two: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Trust that God is in the midst of this and that things are unfolding as they are meant to unfold.

Submitted by: Larry Becker, Moderator

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 IstChurchAkron.

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

11am 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.

Annual Meeting 2019

The Annual Meeting will be held on May 5, 2019, following the 11am worship in the Meetinghouse. The congregation will vote on the Nominating board’s latest proposal as well as elect new Board members. A quorum of member votes is needed. For your reference, you will find copies of the Agenda with minutes from previous congregational meetings and Absentee ballots for those unable to attend available in the church office or at http://www.akronfcc.org/annualmeeting2019/.

Welcome New Members!

Sunday, April 7, was New Member Sunday. Join us in welcoming our new members to the church family!

Michael Chaney
Michael is a teacher. He enjoys playing chess, gardening, reading and swimming.

Sally and David Oneacre
Sally is a retired renal dietitian. She sings in a barbershop style choir.
David is a retired branch manager of a plastic distribution company. David enjoys playing basketball, cooking and reading in his spare time.

Parish Nurse Ministry

Blood pressure and diabetes checks will be available on May 19 from 10am - 1pm in the Conference Room.
**Wednesdays at First Church**

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

**Faith Enrichment**

Join Associate Minister Antigoné Lowery for the Parables of Jesus, a Faith Enrichment Bible study each Wednesday through 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 to help 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!

**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. The last dinner of the program year will be held on May 8.

**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!

**May 1 - A feature film**

*Our Souls at Night*: Jane Fonda and Robert Redford star as Adele Moore and Louis Waters, a widow and a widower who’ve lived next to each other for years. The pair have almost no relationship, but all changes when Addie tries to make a connection with her neighbor.

**May 8: A feature film**

*The Healer*: A young man discovers that he suddenly has the gift of healing, but isn’t ready to accept his new reality until a teenage girl with terminal cancer unexpectedly shows him the way.

**The 5S Process**

This year, the First Church staff has given a new meaning to spring cleaning! Across the building, the 5S style of organization has helped us to organize spaces to create a more efficient workspace and eliminate waste.

The 5S method was developed in Japan and features a, you guessed it, 5 step process of Japanese terms: Seiri, Seiton, Seis, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke. Translated, these words are: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain, which also proves to be the hardest step to maintain!

You may have noticed a difference in the front office already as we apply these ideals. We hope to continue the process to keep our building organized and to further enrich our ministries to the community.

**Church Holiday Hours**

In recognition of Memorial Day, the church will be closed on May 27, 2019.

**Calling all Graduates!**

We are making plans to honor our graduates during worship on Sunday, June 10. If you are graduating from high school or college this year, please contact Patty Durkos at 330.253.5109 or by email: patty.durkos@akronfcc.org.

**Akron Swing Club**

The Akron Swing Club will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall on May 18 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!

**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!

Kasey Kalchert was featured last month!

Congratulations to all those who guessed correctly!
May Garden Updates

If you peek out the windows of the conference room or glance over as you pass by on Market Street, you will notice more and more life in the Feed My Sheep Garden. A relatively warm and wet April enabled our early crops to get a head start. Unfortunately, this good growing weather does not discriminate against weeds or a cover crop that was supposed to die over the winter! So you may also notice the garden crew painstakingly weeding entire beds as we learn yet again the most basic rule of gardening: what works for one gardener is not guaranteed to work for anyone else. We can and do learn a lot from books, research, and sharing tips with other gardeners, but each garden is so unique with so many diverse factors that the only way to really know for sure is to try it out.

And try we shall! This season, we are trying out a new vertical growing method for strawberries using donated pallets. This will free up 120 square feet of garden space for more annual vegetables, as well as hopefully producing healthier plants with higher yields. Look for the pallets to be installed in the next month or so.

Please mark your calendar for our upcoming plant sale fundraiser! The sale will be Memorial Day Weekend, May 25 & 26, from 9am-3pm both days, in First Church’s upper parking lot. We will have annual vegetable, herb, and flower seedlings, as well as select perennial pollinator plants, all grown right here in the First Church basement. Pick up your garden seedlings for a yard work day on Saturday or after church on Sunday and enjoy tours of the Feed My Sheep Garden, children’s activities, live music, and personalized advice for your home or community garden. Proceeds benefit the Feed My Sheep Garden and Let’s Grow Akron. Additionally, volunteers are needed both days to help transport plants, assist customers with plants, and at checkout. Please contact Sam (sam@letsgrowakron.org) with any questions or if you are interested in volunteering at the event.

Submitted by Sam Phillips, Garden Manager

Love Truck

On April 27, Love Truck served approximately 100 people. The Summit County Health Department provided free Hepatitis A vaccines and clothing, blankets, and soap were given to those attended, free of charge.

Love Truck is serving again on Saturday, May 25 from 4:30pm-5:30pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nathan Walder for more information at the.lovetruck@yahoo.com.

YMCA CATCH Program

Do you love kids? Would you be available to read to or with youngsters this summer one morning a week for about an hour? Tana Alexander is a member of the CATCH program of the YMCA, and is looking for volunteers for ten weeks this summer beginning in the middle of June.

All you need to do is bring books you think are appropriate for 7-8 year olds each week and engage the students. Last summer, Tana introduced sign language and songs into her offerings, which was a big success! Volunteers can can plan their time to fit their reading group best. There is a vetting process that must be done, including being fingerprinted, which the YMCA covers. So time is of the essence!

If you are interested or know of someone who might be, please contact Tana immediately. She can be reached via phone at 330.836.8576. Thank you!

AAIC Hunger Walk

The Akron Area Interfaith Council invites you, your family and friends, and your fellow congregants to join us on Sunday, May 5, for the 10th Annual Fairlawn Hunger Walk at the Unitarian Universalist Church at 3300 Morewood Road in Fairlawn. All proceeds from the walk will be donated to the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. Registration begins at 2pm and the walk begins at 3pm. Join us for food and fellowship after the walk. Please sign up in the church office or contact Antigone Lowery at 330.780.8122.

ADA Doors Installed

Thanks to the generosity and guidance of Jay Hultz, First Church now has ADA-compliant entry doors by the Chapel. These doors open when the push paddle is activated, but only when the doors have been unlocked. During evening or weekend hours when the church is closed, these push paddles will not activate and open the door. If you have any questions or concerns about their operation, please contact the church office.
Thank you...

Nanette,
I didn't know a place like this could exist. I haven't been to church in a decade. As a gay man, I never felt I could be a part, but felt my welcome here. You have a voice that reaches to and touches people. Thank you.

Name withheld

Thank you so much for the beautiful flowers. They were very much appreciated.

Sincerely, the Redfern Family

Dear First Church,
Thank you for always thinking about and praying for my grandpa. The flowers, prayer blanket, cards, visits, and newsletters always brightened his days. When socializing became quite difficult, it was nice to know he was not forgotten. Thank you for your constant and unwavering support.

Love. Kelley Sayre, Lee Pritchard's granddaughter

To the Prayer Blanket ministry,
Although you are all unknown to me, rest assured that your kindness and Christian love for others is well known. David and I loved the blanket and I keep it on me every night since his passing. He grabbed onto the “God's Patch of Light” and it will be buried with him. He felt the blessings and prayers that came with it and had it on his bed constantly. Again, my heartfelt thanks.

Bonnie L. Fleming, wife of David Fleming

Dear Food Pantry Volunteers,
Thank you so much for your beautifully organized food pantry. You are a tremendous blessing to our family.

Sincerely, the Grimaldis

Congratulations

Joanna and Jim Gartner are pleased to celebrate the arrival of their first grandchild: Cailey Marie, born weighing 6lbs 5oz, on Monday, April 8, 2019, to Kathleen Gartner and Caleb Rusu. Congratulations to the whole family!

Building Safety & Security

In April, Facility Maintenance Coordinator Russ Gaippe led the staff in fire safety training, which included how to operate fire extinguishers, locations of extinguishers, location of the fire alarm pulls, and more. This was the first step of a multi-part plan, led by Russ and Janis Worley, Finance & Operations Manager, to develop protocols and train the staff in the areas of fire, police, EMS, first aid, and other building security procedures. As the protocols are further developed and put into place, training will expand to include other membership roles in the church, as well as short trainings added to an occasional Sunday service. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Janis Worley at janis.worley@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.

Baklava

Submitted by Chris Becker

Ingredients:
- 3 pounds of ground almonds or walnuts
- 2 cups of sugar
- Sprinkle of cinnamon
- 1 pound of phyllo dough, thawed according to package directions
- 1 pound of butter, melted

Syrup:
- 3 cups of sugar
- 1 cup of honey
- ½ of a fresh lemon, including the peel
- 3 cups of water
- 1 tablespoon of vanilla

Directions:
Mix together nuts, sugar, cinnamon. Put one-third of the dough on a cookie sheet. Brush with about one-third of the butter. Cover with half of the nut mixture. Layer again with the second-third of dough and butter. Spread of the rest of the nuts. Top with the rest of the phyllo and butter. Slice in both directions on the diagonal to cut into diamond shapes. Bake at 350° for 1 hour to 90 minutes, until browned.

To make the syrup: Combine ingredients in a saucepan and boil until it becomes a syrupy consistency. Cool syrup and pour (remove the lemon) over the baklava when it comes out of the oven.
# Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

**March 2019 - FINAL**

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* All Boards, Pastoral Care & Special Ministries

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### Easter and Holy Week

Easter and Holy Week activities included various events and activities for the community. The images show participants enjoying crafts and games, indicating a lively and enjoyable Easter celebration.
**First Church 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.

**Soprano Recital**

On Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at 2pm, First Church is hosting Akron-native Gabrielle Haigh. Fresh from her appearance as Rosalinde in “Die Fledermaus” in Weimar, Germany, and featured as a soloist on the newly released recording of Handel’s “Joseph and His Brethren” by Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, soprano Gabrielle Haigh will present a recital of passionate and descriptive art songs and arias by Henry Purcell, Richard Strauss, Alban Berg, Georges Bizet, Ottorino Respighi, Samuel Barber, and Johann Strauss II. Collaborating with Ms. Haigh will be renowned local pianist Randall Fusco. The event is free and the congregation is invited to attend. Freewill donations will be gratefully accepted at the door. For further information, please visit www.gabriellehaigh.com.

**Seeking Bakers!**

We are seeking bakers to help us provide snacks as we host the 55 members of the Akron Pops Orchestra on Thursday, May 16. We are seeking both sweet and savory items. If you are interested in helping, please contact Kasey Kalchert in the church office. Thank you!

**UA Symphony Orchestra**

The last performance of UASO in the 2018-19 year will be on May 2 in the Meetinghouse at 7:30pm. Due to the addition of a guest musician at this event, admission will be charged. First Church members will be allowed admission free of charge at the door with the mention of our congregation or with a voucher, available in the church office. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

**Hear the Handbell Choir**

The First Church Handbell Choir will be performing on Sunday, May 19, at the 11am worship service. Be sure to join us to hear their beautiful sound fill our hearts during Sunday service.

**Sacred Harp**

The NE Ohio Sacred Harp Singers invite you to join us for some afternoon hymns! The group will meet on May 5 from 2pm-4pm in the Chapel. All are welcome to attend. Please contact Corey Sees for more information at coreysees@gmail.com.

**Soprano Recital**

On Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at 2pm, First Church is hosting Akron-native Gabrielle Haigh. Fresh from her appearance as Rosalinde in “Die Fledermaus” in Weimar, Germany, and featured as a soloist on the newly released recording of Handel’s “Joseph and His Brethren” by Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, soprano Gabrielle Haigh will present a recital of passionate and descriptive art songs and arias by Henry Purcell, Richard Strauss, Alban Berg, Georges Bizet, Ottorino Respighi, Samuel Barber, and Johann Strauss II. Collaborating with Ms. Haigh will be renowned local pianist Randall Fusco. The event is free and the congregation is invited to attend. Freewill donations will be gratefully accepted at the door. For further information, please visit www.gabriellehaigh.com.

**Cleveland Chamber Choir**

The Cleveland Chamber Choir is returning to First Church for a spring concert: The Personal Muse: Music of the Cleveland Composers Guild and Women Composers. The event features a pre-concert lecture by Charles Edward McGuire, PhD, at 2:15pm with the concert to begin at 3pm. Tickets available at the door or at clevelandchamberchoir.org. Prices are $25 for adults, $15 for seniors (62+), $5 for college students, and youth under the age of 18 are free.
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.