



FEBRUARY 2020 • Number 1

Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Dear friends,

Over the past few months I started hosting a series of small gatherings for members in the hope that we can get to know one another better. Since we often only see one another for worship, study, service, or meetings, these gatherings provide an unstructured opportunity for newer and longer-term members to learn a bit more about each other's lives and faith journeys. If you haven't received an invitation yet, keep your eye on the mailbox!

It has been an enormous blessing to hear the testimonies of what drew many of you to First Church and, perhaps more profoundly, what keeps you engaged in this community. We all know that the church isn't a place for perfect people. Practicing the grace and love necessary to live this out can, itself, be a test of our faith. The deep appreciation that our members have for the congregation's diversity and commitment to our common values is the reason we have remained a light on a hilltop and a blessing to so many.

These are challenging times, however. We are living at a point in history where despite our desire for unity and peace, we live in an increasingly fractured and acrimonious society. In times such as these, we do well to embrace Paul's exhortation not to conform to the patterns of this world (Rom. 12:2). Instead, let's allow our faith to light a different path, to bring us into the fullness of all that the light of Christ has to offer. The author of the bracingly honest book of Job reminds us: "With God are wisdom and strength; God has counsel and understanding ... God uncovers the deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light" (Job 12:13, 22). Our commitment to follow Jesus Christ is not a decision made once in our lives, but a commitment to live into that decision each and every day, knowing that those who follow the light of the world "...will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Together, First Church, let's continue to be a light on the hilltop, living into our covenant: "I commit to be a disciple of Christ and to show his love. I will actively serve Christ's church, wherever I may be, with grace, joy and enthusiasm."

In faith,

Nanette

Meeting Outcomes & Updates

At the January 12 Congregational Meeting the 5-month budget recommended by the Stewardship-Finance and Governing Boards was overwhelmingly adopted by the congregation.

The budget is tight, with a small \$7,000 surplus anticipated. However, that depends on the members of the congregation who have as yet not submitted a pledge doing so – that line is short about \$20,000 at this time.

So, if you love the church and support the many ministries that require funding, please complete a pledge form and send it to the church by following this link on the Donate page of the website: <http://www.akronfcc.org/support/donate>

Speaking of the 5-month budget, First Church will host a **Special Congregational Budget Meeting** on Sunday, May 17 to elect officers and Board members for the 2020-21 program/fiscal year (which will run from June 1, 2020-May 31, 2021) and to approve the new 12 month budget.

Thus, it would be most helpful if members would consider extending their financial commitment through May 2021.

Janis Worley and Russ Gaippe presented a very informative report on the state of the church's emergency preparedness which included comments on indoor and outdoor signage, where fire extinguishers/first aid kits are located and updates to the church security system.

Further information will continue to be presented at future meetings to keep members and friends who attend the church's worship services and various weekly ministries in the loop.

The final item on the agenda was comments from the Working Group on producing the report from the survey that the consultants conducted late last spring. There was an enormous amount of data collected because the congregation responded magnificently and thus, it has turned out to be a more complicated and difficult report to produce. The Working Group is committed to finishing the task and will most certainly provide the congregation with the information as soon as the report is completed.

If you have comments or questions, please contact Pastor Nanette or moderator Larry Becker: larrybecker2900@yahoo.com.

Submitted by Larry Becker, Moderator



Don't Put Off Writing that Will!

Everyone, regardless of age or wealth, needs a legal will. The most important reason behind making a will is to decide who gets your property when you die. Without a will, state laws determine how your property will be distributed, and may not provide for your loved ones the way you would prefer. For parents of minor children, a will also gives you the ability to specify who will become legal guardians of your children upon your passing.

A will is not only the best way to take care of your future, it is also an incredible way to leave a lasting legacy with the causes and organizations that have made a huge impact on you, your loved ones, and your community. First Church and its ministries are committed to remaining a guiding force and support system in the greater Akron community, and a gift in your will can help us continue that mission.

Why not make 2020 the year you write that will? Visit FreeWill.com, an online website that will walk you step by step through creating a will. In about 20-25 minutes time, you will have a will that is ready to be notarized and put away for safe-keeping. If you would rather work directly with an attorney, going through the FreeWill.com process will give you an excellent start on documenting your wishes, which will save you time and money with an attorney.

If you have any further questions, please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111.

Governing Board Meeting

The Governing Board will be meeting on Monday, February 24 at 6:30pm in the Conference Room. All members of the congregation are invited to attend these open meetings and hear the discussions among church leadership. Meeting minutes are posted in the main hallway and copies of prior minutes can be obtained from the church office.

The members of the 2019-2020 Governing Board are:

Larry Becker, Moderator

DeAnn Clemons, Vice Moderator

Curt Clemons, Treasurer

Jennifer Kowalski, Secretary

Reverend Nanette Pitt, Senior Minister (ex-officio)

Ruth Ann Allison, Member At Large

Laura Bishop, Member At Large

Jay Hershey, Member At Large

Logan Baez, Membership Board Chair

Denny Conrad, Building & Grounds Chair

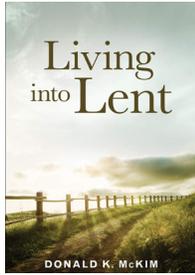
Kellie Ramirez, Nominating Board Chair

Bob Renner, Stewardship & Finance Board Chair

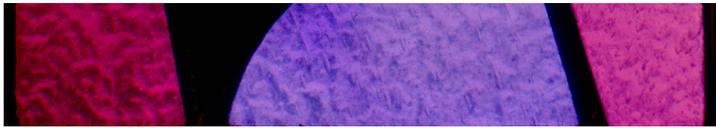
Sue Yoder, Human Resource Board Chair

First Church Reads this Lent

The Lenten journey is a shared journey — Christians join with others along the way of faith, following Jesus and seeking to live out the will and purpose of God. *Living into Lent*, written by noted theologian, educator, and author Donald K. McKim, sets aside time during the Lenten season for readers to reflect on their Christian identities, listen to God's Word and will, and engage in practices that deepen the Christian experience through discipleship.



Copies of the book will be available in the church office after February 15 for a suggested donation of \$10 or may be purchased for Kindle online or sourced from your favorite bookseller.



Guest Preacher: February 9

On Sunday, February 9, in both worship services we'll be joined by guest preacher Rev. Michael Anthony Howard. The focus text for the day is Matthew 5:1-13, *Being a Church for the World*. Michael, his partner Zion, and daughter, Joey, are members of First Church. Michael is a teacher, a spiritual entrepreneur, creative placemaker, community organizer, and progressive Christian leader from the wooded knobs of the Kentucky countryside. He serves as the Minister of Faith in Action at Living Water Association, ONE (Ohio NorthEast) for the Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ and also serves on the Summit County Eviction Taskforce and the board of Nazareth Housing.

Labyrinth Walk

The next presentation of the Labyrinth will be Thursday, February 13. The doors open at 6pm, with the first walk beginning at 6:30pm. The last walk will begin at 7:30pm, with the lights coming back up at 8pm. The room is handicapped accessible and there is a wooden finger tool for individuals in wheelchairs or with difficulty walking. Music will be provided by local Akron artist Jim Ballard. Music offers a more spiritual significance for the participant.



Facilitators are available for consultation through the evening. For more information or to arrange for a presentation, contact Nancy Nierman-Baker at 330.618.4412.

Submitted by Nancy Nierman-Baker, Labyrinth Facilitator

Lent IS A TIME TO
GROW
CLOSER TO JESUS

Mardi Gras Sunday

You're invited to a Mardi Gras pancake and sausage breakfast on Sunday, February 23 at 9:30am in the Fellowship Hall. Food service will be from 9:30-10:30am. Volunteers are needed to help cook, serve, and clean up after breakfast. If you are interested in helping, please contact Kasey Kalchert: kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org.

After breakfast the whole community will gather for one combined worship service at 11am featuring the music of local Akron jazz artists, Tom Lehman, Theron Brown, and friends. Join us for this celebratory service that prepares our hearts and minds to transition into the reflective season of Lent ahead.

During the service, children and youth are invited to join volunteers in the back of the Meetinghouse to create a Mardi Gras-themed craft! If you can volunteer to help, please contact Associate Minister Antigone: antigone.lowery@akronfcc.org.



Remembrance & Recommitment

Wednesday, February 26, 7:30pm, Chapel

Our Ash Wednesday Service of Remembrance and Recommitment marks the beginning of the season of Lent, the period of 40 days leading to Easter Sunday. Beginning Lent with this service deepens the journey into one's own spirituality and experience of this most important time in the Church. The service includes the imposition of ashes, along with quiet, contemplative music, and an affirming message. All are welcome. Childcare will be available.



February Mission of the Month

VANTAGE Aging's mission is to promote a positive perspective on aging. It is a non-profit located here in Akron. For 45 years, VANTAGE Aging, has promoted successful aging by providing programs to support the needs of older adults wishing to age in place and live independently with dignity.

Retired and senior adults wishing to give back to the community can remain active with the agency's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), where volunteer educators support job-seeking community members. The Job Club is designed to help Summit County residents build skills and confidence by working with the volunteer mentors. The ultimate goal is to help these individuals find gainful employment through activities such as resume workshops and peer-to-peer counseling. With support from your Mission of the Month contributions, VANTAGE plans to recruit 60 individuals for Job Club, and it anticipates that 30 or more of them will find work throughout their participation in the club.

RSVP is among many other programs that VANTAGE offers, including Behavioral Health Solutions and Meals on Wheels.

On Sunday, February 16, Dawn Moeglin, the Senior Director of Community Engagement at VANTAGE Aging, Inc will be at the 11am service to share the great work of this organization in the community. You will have the opportunity to meet her and ask questions in the Fellowship Hall following worship.



Mission of the Month Updates

The December Mission of the Month, Mason CLC, received a combined donation totaling \$6758.52! Thank you for your generosity to the Akron community!

Thanks for your generosity!

Thank you so much for your continued support of Open M and our "For the Love of Children Program." Your generous donations provided pork and beans to our community's hungry families. Thanks again and have a blessed and joyous holiday season.

From, the Open M Staff

Thank you First Church family for your most kind and generous gift to Minority Behavioral Health Group. Your wonderful donation will provide financial and moral support as we continue to fulfill our mission.

Sincerely, Jeffery A. Dennis, Chief Executive Officer

PB&J Receives Grant!

The PBJ Ministry applied to the Akron Community Foundation for a grant to purchase food from the Akron-Canton Foodbank. We are pleased to announce that we were selected and will receive \$2000. We now will be able to continue sending weekly bags of food home with fifty-five Mason CLC schoolchildren.

Seeking Book Donations

The PBJ Ministry is in need of new or gently used books for grades K-6. Not only have we been able to send books home with those children in the PBJ Program, but we also have been able to let any child that wants a book select one as they leave school for the weekend. Thank you!



Submitted by Mary Ann Gray, PBJ Coordinator

Love Truck Community Dinner

The next service will be on Saturday, February 29 from 4-6:30pm. If you are unable to volunteer, but would like to contribute, the Love Truck is accepting donations of food, either prepared or specific ingredients. Cash donations are



always welcome too. For more on the ministry, visit www.thelovetruck.org or contact Tiffany Thorne at 330.592.0282.

THE LOVE TRUCK Sweets needed!

Would you please be sweet and donate a dessert that can be served at the Love Truck dinner? The desserts can be store-bought or homemade and can be dropped off at First Church during the week before the next serving on Saturday, February 29. Please drop donations at the church on the Thursday or Friday before. Thank you!



Seeking Food Pantry Volunteers

The Feeding Hope Food Pantry needs volunteers for the evening distribution, which is on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month. Helpers are needed in several areas and would work 6pm-8pm. Come as you are able, as frequently as you are able! If you have questions, please call the church office at 330.253.5109 or email food.pantry@akronfcc.org for more information. Thank you!

Soul Armor Yoga

Join Karen Scott for Soul Armor Yoga on the second and fourth Tuesdays in the Fellowship Hall at 6pm. Come as you are and connect with yourself, your breath and your body in a yoga class that meets you where you are. Questions? Contact Karen at kscott8356@sbcglobal.net / 440.371.9927.



Empowering Epilepsy
Change The Conversation

Please join us for our Empowering Epilepsy Support Group with
EMPOWERING EPILEPSY YOGA
in Akron at the
Fairlawn Kiwanis Community Center
3486 S. Smith Rd.
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.

Meet others who understand epilepsy, learn strategies to manage your or your family members' seizures and make new friends. Food will be provided and the event is free. Wear comfortable clothing and it is suggested that you do not eat anything after 4:15 p.m. that day.

MEETING DATES:
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT Leigh Goldie • 440-248-6158 • leigh@empoweringepilepsy.org
VISIT - [HTTP://EMPOWERINGEPILEPSY.ORG](http://EMPOWERINGEPILEPSY.ORG) OR WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EMPOWERINGEPILEPSY

If you, or someone you know, is living with Epilepsy and you have any questions, please contact Tana Alexander at 330.836.8576 MsTA1950@aol.com.

Build in Style

Habitat for Humanity of Summit County is hosting the 5th annual Build in Style Purse & Accessory Party on May 28. In preparation for this fundraiser, First Church is holding a collection for gently-used purses, jewelry, and women's shoes. This event will directly benefit the HFHSC homeownership program as well as help to raise awareness and funds for other local programs. In February, there will be a collection bin in the front office. Please consider donating if you can!



Inquirers' Gatherings

Would you like to learn more about our church and branch of the Christian faith tradition? The Membership Board and Pastor Nanette will host two informational Inquirers' Gatherings on February 16 and 23 in the Upper Room from 12:15-1:30pm. These sessions are for any one who would like to learn more about First Church and who may be considering covenanting in membership. For more information, please contact Membership Board chair, Logan Báez.

WELCOME

Our Youth on Sunday Mornings

Church School for children and youth in grades pre-K through grade 8 is still underway at First Church and we invite you to get connected!

Currently, our children and youth are working through the Holy Moly curriculum and reviewing stories about Jesus and how he cared for people on the margins. These lessons help to challenge and encourage our children and youth to consider how they, too, can show care and love to those around them. Participation in Church School, monthly Sunday Funday, and other youth programming is a great way to stay connected in the lives our children and youth at First Church, and we encourage you to consider getting involved! For more information, please contact Associate Minister Antigone Lowery: antigone.lowery@akronfcc.org.

Childcare for infants and toddlers is on the 2nd floor Nursery and Village, beginning at 9am every Sunday until after the 11am worship service.

During the 9:30am service in the Upper Room, youth are invited to attend worship with their families. There is an activity carpet available in the worship space and activity packs are available.

At the 11am service, 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. Activity packs are also available in the front foyer.

FEBRUARY 2: Communion Sunday
FEBRUARY 9: Church School classes
FEBRUARY 16: Sunday Funday!
FEBRUARY 23: Mardi Gras Sunday

Time with Tots

Families with children ages 3 and under are invited to Time with Tots, which will be held in the Education Wing on February 8 from 9am-10am.

This time is designed to allow the formation of relationships and connections with those who are going through similar experiences. During the February meeting, we will also be making a special craft that both children and adults can enjoy! Breakfast will also be served, so please feel free to reach out to Associate Minister Antigone Lowery (antigone.lowery@akronfcc.org) or Kasey Kalchert (kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org) if you or your child(ren) have any allergies. If you plan to attend, please be sure to RSVP and invite a friend!

Emergency Preparedness

At our Congregational Meeting on January 12, we heard an update on **emergency preparedness** at First Church. This marks the beginning of a phase in our ongoing safety and security work that includes the whole congregation – sharing information and offering trainings.

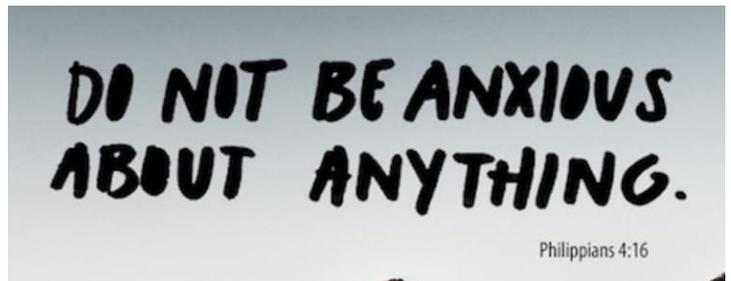
Safety, security, and emergency preparedness routinely needs attention over the life of a church community, not out of a sense of fear or reactivity, but as a part of our hospitality ministry - a living out of our welcome for all and of our desire to create safe space for all of our members and guests.

Since mid-2018, when our Finance and Operations Manager, Janis Worley, joined the staff, she and our Facility Maintenance Coordinator, Russ Gaippe, have been **working behind the scenes** on emergency preparedness. I am very grateful for their ongoing efforts as well as those of our Building & Grounds Board, and am pleased to share a summary of the points Janis and Russ covered recently both as a reminder and to inform anyone who was unable to attend the meeting. If you have **questions** at any point, please feel free to reach out to either Janis (janis.worley@akronfcc.org) or Russ (russ.gaippe@akronfcc.org)

This recent training focused on **fire safety**. Russ and Janis will visit with us again to cover various other emergency preparedness scenarios. While the more extreme and violent scenarios are often where our minds go first, I encourage us all to remember that statistically speaking many other scenarios, including a medical emergency, are far more likely and require protocols we're all aware of. Janis and Russ will be meeting with our ushers and lay leaders this winter and we plan to offer First-Aid/CPR trainings in 2020 for leaders and interested members.

In all circumstances, please remember:

- If you see something threatening, **go ahead and call 911**. Don't assume someone else will do it and rest assured, in the case of an emergency, it's alright for numerous calls to be made.
- If you happen to get hurt on the church premises (if you fall or get cut or something of that nature), or **witness an injury occur**, please contact Janis to document those situations.
- First Church has joined with other faith communities in declaring our worship spaces and campuses **gun-free zones**. Police officers are exempt from the rule that carrying firearms into the church is prohibited. No one else may carry a firearm onto the First Church premises. We provide sanctuary on our grounds as a gun-free zone and people on our property are offered a safe place to worship God, find tranquility for prayer, and interact peacefully with others for fellowship, learning, working, and meeting. God calls us to live out the gospel by seeking reconciliation and building God's reign on earth, urging people to put down weapons and honor the value of human life.



Fire Safety:

- **Awareness:** we ask that you be aware of your surroundings and know where the nearest exits are, should the fire alarm sound or an emergency occur. All exits are marked and exit route maps are posted in each room. All rooms with first aid kits, fire extinguishers, and the AED Defibrillator have signage. Please note these locations.
- **Emergency Meeting Point:** if the alarm sounds, we ask everyone to exit in an orderly manner and meet up on the sidewalk between our lower lot and the Methodist Church parking lot, next door. This will allow us to know that we have all safely exited the building.
- **Children:** the Childcare Workers and Church School volunteers are aware of these plans and will take care of the children in the event of an emergency. Please plan to meet them at the Emergency Meeting Point.
- **Extinguishers:** please take note of the location of all 39 fire extinguishers throughout the building and know that they are checked regularly.
- **First-Aid Kits / AED:** Larger first-aid kits have been placed in the Meetinghouse Family Room, the kitchen, front office Break Room and Upper Room. Smaller kits have also been placed throughout the building. The AED Defibrillator is located in the main hallway outside the front office. All are marked with signage.

In addition to the items included above, additional work has been happening behind the scenes to attend to safety and security at our church. This includes adding door locks to various rooms, numbering rooms in the building, updating our security camera system, as well as our fire and burglar alarm panels, trimming the large trees just outside our main entrances to prevent injury from falling limbs, re-pouring the sidewalk and stairs leading from the Chapel to the lower parking lot to a safer slope and adding an additional handrail, re-laying the patio as the uneven and missing bricks were a hazard, adding new exterior signage and, with the generous support of Jay and Linda Hultz, installing ADA openers to the Chapel entrance to make our building more accessible.

Again, my gratitude to our staff and lay leaders for helping us create an environment that is welcoming and safe for all. If you have questions at any point, please feel free to reach out to either Russ or Janis.

Submitted by: Rev. Nanette Pitt, Senior Minister

Bible Study for Men*

You are warmly invited to join Rev. Steven Savides for a thematic exploration of the scriptures on the first Saturday of each month. You'll meet over breakfast in Fellowship Hall from 7:30 to 9am.

The theme for February 1 is *The Commandment to Love* with a focus scripture: John 15: 12-17.

Participants are encouraged to read the focus scriptures before the meeting, to bring a Bible (any translation will do), and to be prepared for a journey through scripture aimed at providing both perspective and depth.

Please RSVP to Kasey Kalchert: kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org

**The designation "men" is meant to create a space in which all who identify as male or who embrace a masculine identity can feel welcome and find fellowship.*

Wednesday Community Dinners

When our Wednesday programs are offered, we also offer a dinner in Fellowship Hall. The meal will be served at 6pm with a suggested donation of \$8 per person. Please make reservations for each week's dinner online or in the church office by noon each Monday.

The dinners provide a wonderful opportunity to gather with other members in fellowship. Hope to see you there!

Night at the Movies

If you enjoy thought-provoking, insightful, and entertaining cinema, grab your free ticket for Wednesday Night at the Movies at 6:45pm, with discussion to follow. Each week's showing and conversation are facilitated by Bernie Babb. Visitors and new attendees are always welcome. Please contact Bernie with any questions at 330.687.0823. We hope you will join us for a fun evening in the 2nd floor Theatre Room!

February 5 - three short films:

Le Grand Bain: Mia, 30 years old and newly divorced, moves into a small studio by herself. Feeling lost, she stumbles upon her true calling.

Ruby: Len and Ruby are celebrating their Ruby wedding anniversary. Len has a history of odd and outlandish gifts. Ruby hopes that this year will be different and he'll arrange something "nice and normal" for once.

Grounded: Stephanie is a ticket agent who follows the rules, until the sight of a powerless young mother confronted by the bureaucracy reminds Stephanie what means the most to her: her humanity and her will to fight.

To learn more about these movies or what we will watch this month, please visit www.akronfcc.org/explore-learn/groups/movies



Faith Enrichment

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

10:45am-noon in the Library through February 19

Join Pastor Antigone in the Library on Wednesday mornings from 10:45am-12pm for the continuation of the 7- week study *Pursuing Hope*. For some of us, change can seem scary and quite uncomfortable. At the root of change and our sometimes avoidance of it is fear, but God has not called us to be a people of fear — God has called us to be a people of hope. In this study, we are exploring how biblical figures such as John the Baptist and Sarah, the mother of Isaac, choose hope over fear in order to experience the fullness of what God has for them and their lives. Previous attendance is not required to attend these sessions.

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

6:45-8pm in the Conference Room through February 19

From 6:45-8pm each Wednesday evening, Pastor Nanette is offering a study of the book of Acts. Formally known as the Acts of the Apostles this text, written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, tells of the formation of the early church and its spread through the Roman Empire. Often held up as the gold standard for Christian community, the book offers rich insight into God's purposes through Jesus Christ and the varied responses to and challenges of that Good News. Come and join the conversation as we explore this ancient text both in its time and our own. Previous attendance is not required to participate!



No Groups or Dinner, Feb 26

On Ash Wednesday, we will gather for worship in the evening at 7:30pm (see page 3 for more details) and will not host either morning or evening bible study groups, community dinner, or the Night at the Movies group.

PROTECTING OUR PLANET STARTS WITH YOU



BIKE MORE DRIVE LESS



reduce REUSE recycle

Cut down on what you throw away. Follow the three "R's" to conserve natural resources and landfill space.

choose sustainable



Learn how to make smart seafood choices at www.FishWatch.gov.

Trees provide food and oxygen. They help save energy, clean the air, and help combat climate change.



PLANT A TREE



EDUCATE

When you further your own education, you can help others understand the importance and value of our natural resources.

CONSERVE WATER



The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater that eventually end up in the ocean.



Buy less plastic and bring a reusable shopping bag.



Don't send chemicals into our waterways.

Choose nontoxic chemicals in the home and office.



Volunteer!

Volunteer for cleanups in your community. You can get involved in protecting your watershed too!



Long-lasting light bulbs - ARE A - BRIGHT IDEA

Energy efficient light bulbs reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also flip the light switch off when you leave the room!



Staff Office Relocation

Associate Minister Antigone Lowery's office has moved from the 2nd Floor Education Wing to the main office. Antigone's office is now located between the Congregational Life Coordinator and Finance and Operations Manager offices in the main suite on the first floor. Her phone number and email remain the same: 330.253.5109 ext. 101 / antigone.lowery@akronfcc.org.

Weather Closures

Church Winter Weather 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.



Meet Our Newest Staff Person

Meet Rachele Demastus, our new Childcare Worker in the Village and Nursery on Sunday mornings and for special events. She started at the end of December 2019. Originally from Columbiana county, Rachele is currently in her last semester at the University of Akron before student-teaching in the fall. Her major is Early Childhood Education + Dual Intervention Specialist. After graduation, she plans to teach for a year or two before pursuing her Masters degree to become a Speech Pathologist. A fun fact about Rachele is that she has a great niece, who is 9 months old, and she loves to show her off! Please join us in extending a warm welcome!



Worship Flowers

First Church requests donations of worship flowers for the 11am service. If you would like to honor, celebrate, or remember a loved one, please contact Kasey Kalchert at 330.253.5109 x112 to see which dates are available. Order forms are available in the office.



Seeking Lay Readers

Would you be interested to read scripture at the 11am worship service? For more information, or to sign up, please contact Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 ext 112.

Parish Nurse

The Parish Nurse Team will be available for the monthly blood pressure and diabetes checks in the Conference Room on Sunday, February 16 between 10:30am and 1pm.

Podcast Discussion Group

All are invited to a new fellowship opportunity!

When: Thursday, February 27, 7pm

Where: Market District Portage Crossing Upstairs Cafe
2687 State Road Cuyahoga Falls, OH, 44223

Join us for thought-provoking discussion in this new group. It follows the same concept as a book club, but instead of having to find time to read a book, all you have to do is listen to the selected free podcast and show up ready to discuss (and socialize). The vision is for this to be a participant-led group, in which we take turns choosing dates/venues, picking podcast episodes and leading discussion. The plan is also to have food, drink and fun at our meetings.

The first podcast will be *This American Life Episode 644: Random Acts of History*.

It can be accessed online for free at <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/644/random-acts-of-history>

Or, you can find it via the This American Life app or podcast app on your mobile device.

If you have any questions, or are interested in the group but can't make the first meeting, please contact Courtney Zimmerman at cpfint@gmail.com

Coming Out Christian

Spread the word and join us as we rethink God's love toward LGBTQ+ Christians in this support group.

In a safe space, members of the LGBTQ+ community can come together to explore Christianity and the possibility of understanding faith in new ways as we reclaim and explore our faith journeys. The group meets on the second Sunday of each month in the First Church Chapel from 6-7pm. All ages are welcome.



Women's Spiritual Journey

The Women's Spiritual Journey meets on the first and third Mondays of each month for lunch and discussion. This group of retired women welcomes you to join them. A meal can be purchased from the kitchen for \$8 or you're welcome to bring your own. Please contact Linda Peshina with any questions at 330.606.5874.

Men's Lunch Bunch

A small group of retired men in the church gather each week for lunch, conversation, and a documentary. New comers are welcome. On Mondays, a hot lunch is served, starting at 11:45 am. The program is a continuation of the excellent Great Courses series about colonial America. For additional information, contact Howard Tolley at 330.867.1469.

Contem-PAINT

On Sunday, February 2 all are invited to join Amber Cullen in the 2nd Floor Art Room for Contem-PAINT. From 4-6pm, this is a space designed for you to get creative! Contem-PAINT is the first Sunday of each month. For more information, or to RSVP, contact Amber at ambercullenart@gmail.com/330.310.0406.



First Church Care Team

Are you passionate about caring for others? Are you looking for an opportunity to get more involved at First Church? Consider participating in the Congregational Care Team!

Whether you are someone who enjoys cooking and providing meals or prefer the simple joy of showing care by sending cards to homebound members, we invite you to prayerfully consider how your participation and support of the Congregational Care Team can further connect us all in the life of the church.

To learn more, join Associate Minister Antigone Lowery and others for a short informational meeting about the Care Team on Sunday, February 9 in the Conference Room.



The Bible and the book *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond will guide conversations about housing issues in Akron.

We will meet the fourth Tuesday of every month at
Cascade Village YMCA, 210 E. North St., Akron, OH 44304
All meetings are from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| September 24, 2019 | January 28, 2020 | April 28, 2020 |
| October 22, 2019 | February 25, 2020 | May 26, 2020 |
| November 26, 2019 | March 24, 2020 | |

REGISTER AT <https://akronhousingdiscussion.eventbrite.com>

The eight session study is a joint effort of the
ast Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ.



To learn more about the ways that members of the First Church community have been engaging in this conversation and are becoming involved in housing advocacy in Akron, contact First Church member Margaret Maurer.

UA Symphony Orchestra

Join us on Thursday, February 6, for a performance of the University of Akron Symphony Orchestra. The concert will be held in our historic Meetinghouse, starting at 7:30pm. Conducted by Dr. Guy Bordo, the orchestra will play selections from Sibelius' *Karelia Overture*, Delius' *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, Holst's Jupiter from *The Planets*, Hovhanness' *Psalm and Fugue*, and Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances*. The concert is free and open to the public.



Save the Date! Zydeco Kings!

We are hosting a special Music Event on Friday, March 20, featuring the Zydeco Kings. The concert is at 7pm in the Meetinghouse. It's free and open to the public so invite your friends and family along!

The Zydeco Kings are a mixture of old school rhythm & blues infused with the spirit of New Orleans, steeped in gumbo boogie woogie, a dash Caribbean soul, rollicking piano, accordion, guitar, saxophone, bass, drums and of course, some rubboard. As you can tell, the Zydeco Kings celebrate the music of Louisiana. So come out on Friday, March 20, for an evening of rollicking fun at First Church.

We are seeking ushers and hosts for the event. Please contact Kasey Kalchert if you would be available to volunteer as we welcome the public into our building.



Breakfast with the Bunny

Save the date! On March 28, 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.



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.

Double Chocolate Cheesecake

Submitted by Betsy Pence

Ingredients:

- 2 cups finely crushed chocolate wafer cookie crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- 7 tablespoons of melted butter
- ¼ teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1 ½ cup sugar
- 2 (8 oz) packages of cream cheese
- 6 tablespoons of cocoa
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 eggs
- 2 pints sour cream

Topping:

- 1 (3 oz) package of cream cheese
- ½ cup of whipping cream
- ¼ cup of confectioner's sugar
- 1 (1oz) pieces of semi-sweet chocolate

Directions:

In a 9-inch spring-form pan, blend chocolate crumbs, ¼ cup of sugar, melted butter and cinnamon. With a spoon, press over bottom and up sides. In a separate bowl, beat softened cream cheese until smooth. Add 1 ½ cups of sugar, cocoa, vanilla, and eggs - one at a time. Beat in sour cream. Pour into prepared crust and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour and 20 minutes, or until the edge is set and dull in color while an area about 4 inches in diameter in the center is still glossy. Remove from oven and cool. Cover and chill thoroughly.

Topping:

Cream 3 ounces of cream cheese until soft, then gradually add whipping cream and beat until mixture is of consistency of whipped cream. Fold in confectioner's sugar. Cover and chill until ready to serve.

At serving time, pile cream topping in the center of the cake. Grate chocolate and sprinkle over cream.



Pop Tabs to Help Families

Did you know the Ronald McDonald House of Akron turns pop tabs into cash to help support operations of the House and to provide services for families? Collect your pop tabs and help families who have sick children at Akron Children's Hospital! Drop your tabs off anytime in the church office. Thank you!



Thank you!

Thank you, First Church for your love, support and prayers throughout 2019 as our wife and mother, Kathy Berg, battled pancreatic cancer, including and ending with the meal trains and putting on a memorial service that Kathy designed herself with the help of Rev. Nanette's special Wednesday night classes from a few years back. Kathy gave so much of her time, treasure and talent to First Church and so seeing the First Church family come together to honor her wishes in celebrating her life in our beautiful church is a memory for all that attended to cherish. Thank you First Church!

Ed Berg, Susan Berg Herman and Theresa Arist

Thank you all so very much for attending my retirement reception & for the beautiful clock and monetary gift. It has been a pleasure serving the congregation. I will miss each and every one of you. May God continue to bless all of you.

With love, Patty Durkos

Dear sacred friends,

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU for sending the HALO nurse to visit my wife at Akron General Cleveland Clinic hospital. Judith Young is a definite Godsend and the prayer blanket is a refreshing drink of life quenching nectar like water on parched, dried earth.

I find it hard to express in words how grateful I am for your kindness. It is a long drawn out struggle with not a lot of hope in sight. Judith's words and insight from her experiences were a tremendous comfort and blessing. Once again, thank you so much.

Love, Raymond A. Herdina

Thank you for your church's gift to support the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship. As a result of generosity of our community, 2 students were able to receive an award in the amount of \$1500 each.

Sincerely, Cazzell M. Smith, Sr., MLK Scholarship Coalition



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**.

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.

In Our Prayers

Mildred Andrews, Marilyn Bednar-Kasarda, Margaret Civitello-Poole, Jessica Fox, Barbara Hansford, George Kostan, Betty Speight, Wanda Tettelbach, Art Wallach, and Doug Weyrick.

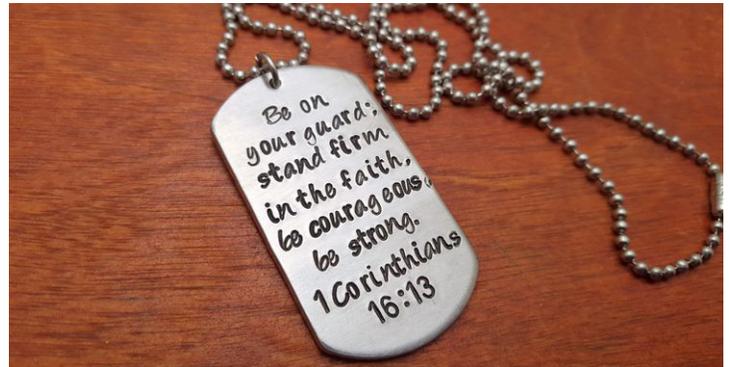
In Sympathy

Our sympathy and prayers are with the Corbin family, on the passing of First Church member, Geraldine (Gerry) Corbin on December 11, 2019. Gerry is Sam Corbin's mother and, therefore, Stephanie Corbin's mother-in-law and Sam and Sarah's grandma.

The service was held December 18 at Hopkins Lawver Funeral Home, with Pastor Nanette and Antigone officiating.

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.



Thank you for your service

We remember all veterans and service members who are serving our country at home or abroad this past holiday season, including:

Jacob Browning, 1st Lieutenant and Black Hawk Pilot in the US Army, Fort Riley, KS

Mary Beth Clemons, Captain and Chief of Adverse Actions in the Air Force, Joint Base Andrews

Nevan McCann, 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force, Fairchild Air Force Base

Rachel Pearson, Linguist and Sergeant US Army, Fort Gordon, GA

Rae Ann Smith YNC (AW/SW), retired Navy

Derek Tietje, CPRL, US Marine, Kuwait

Rev. Andrew Courtney, Chaplain and Captain, Ohio Army National Guard

Antigone Lowery, 1st Lieutenant and Chaplain, US Army Reserve



Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Event Highlights

Bible Study for Men*

Saturday, February 1, 7:30-9:30am, Fellowship Hall

Be sure to RSVP for the February meeting! More information can be found on page 7.

Time with Tots

Saturday, February 8, 9-10am, Village and Nursery

Families with children ages 3 and under are invited. Find more information on page 5.

Labyrinth Walk

Thursday, February 13, 6:30-8pm, Fellowship Hall

More information can be found on page 3.



Mardi Gras Sunday

Sunday, February 23

There is ONE worship at 11am on Mardi Gras Sunday! Join us for this celebration with guest musicians. More information on page 3.

Ash Wednesday Services

Wednesday, February 26, 7:30pm, Chapel

Begin Lent with our Ash Wednesday service. More information on page 3.

Podcast Discussion Group

Thursday, February 27, 7pm

Check out this new Fellowship opportunity. More information is on page 9.