



FEBRUARY 2021 • Number 1

Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Beloved,

Even as increasing numbers are vaccinated, many of us are burned out after these many months of the pandemic.

This is an apt way for us to approach this year's Lenten season. The season begins with the observation of Ash Wednesday, an occasion that recognizes the frailty of our humanity within the context of God's unfailing love. This year we will celebrate Ash Wednesday remotely and also have an opportunity for a drive through imposition of ashes. If you would like to come down to church for a blessing, Rev. Antigoné and I will be here in the parking lot between 8:30 and 9am as well as from noon until 1pm.

In the midst of all of the various pressures we face, my faith is constantly renewed by the thought of God's faithfulness and what God has done for us in the past, creating new life and inspiring growth, even in parched places. In my sermons this Lent, I will focus on imagination and I hope you will join me as we consider all that is possible in God.

As we hold this inbetween time of Lent, recognizing and honoring our fatigue, brokenness, and need while also yearning for God's renewal, I share Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem *Worn Out* (opposite). February is, of course, Black History month and an apt time for us to listen for the voices insight, remember the continuing struggle, and reaffirm our commitment to compassion and ally-ship.

Blessings,

Nanette

Worn Out by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1913)

You bid me hold my peace
And dry my fruitless tears,
Forgetting that I bear
A pain beyond my years.

You say that I should smile
And drive the gloom away;
I would, but sun and smiles
Have left my life's dark day.

All time seems cold and void,
And naught but tears remain;
Life's music beats for me
A melancholy strain.

I used at first to hope,
But hope is past and, gone;
And now without a ray
My cheerless life drags on.

Like to an ash-stained hearth
When all its fires are spent;
Like to an autumn wood
By storm winds rudely shent,—

So sadly goes my heart,
Unclothed of hope and peace;
It asks not joy again,
But only seeks release.

imagine

WHAT IS POSSIBLE LENT 2021



Ashes To Go

On February 17, Ash Wednesday, all of our members and friends are invited to stop by the church for "ashes to go!" If you would like to participate, please pull your car into the Upper Lot on Union Street from 8:30-9am OR from 12pm-1pm to receive ashes and an Ash Wednesday blessing from Pastor Nanette and Pastor Antigoné. Please plan to wear a mask when interacting with the pastors to ensure we're following pandemic safety procedures.

Ash Wednesday Worship

First Church will be hosting an online Ash Wednesday worship service on Wednesday, February 17 at 7pm. We invite you to watch online either on our website (www.akronfcc.org/live) or live on Facebook (www.facebook.com/fccofakron). If you do not have a Facebook account, you are still able to access our page - it is public to everyone, even without an account! Be sure to join us as we prepare our journey into the Lenten season.



Get Social

First Church is on social media! You can follow us on Instagram (@firstchurchakron) or Twitter (@1stChurchAkron) or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron). Be sure to check out our posts about special events, announcements and more!

Sundays in the Season of Lent

FEBRUARY 21 THROUGH MARCH 28, 9:30 & 11AM

Online worship during the season of Lent offers a meaningful opportunity for reflection and renewal. In 2021 our theme is **Imagine What Is Possible**.

Each week's 9:30am Celebrate service is available on zoom (register to attend at <https://bit.ly/AkronFirstChurch>) or on www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron.

The 11am Festival service can be viewed online on our website at www.akronfcc.org/live or www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron. Both services are available on the church website for later viewing at your convenience.

Did you know?

Lent and Ash Wednesday are parts of the Christian tradition that add value to our experience of our faith. While we have, in recent decades, started observing these occasions here at First Church, not all parts of the Christian church do. Here are some fun facts about Ash Wednesday and Lent from different traditions around the globe:

- Ash Wednesday isn't mentioned in the bible! The book of Daniel mentions the use of ashes to repent for sins, and scholars believe these texts explain how Ash Wednesday came to be.
- Christians didn't begin to recognize Ash Wednesday until around the 11th century- it wasn't a mainstream practice in the United States until the 1970s!
- The ashes used are often recycled! Our ashes are made from palm fronds of past Palm Sunday celebrations.
- Some churches have rules about what foods can be eaten on Ash Wednesday and some Christians fast the entire day, consuming only water and bread.
- In Iceland, Ash Wednesday celebrations are similar to those at Halloween. Children wear costumes and go around neighborhoods, singing for candy!

Source: Facts drawn from a 2019 blog post by Michele Debczak on MentalFloss.com



Feeding Hope Food Pantry

The Feeding Hope Food Pantry has been blessed, since January 2017, by the leadership of Clay and Deb Canfield. In that time, they continued building upon the foundation laid by the scores of prior volunteers as well as the previous coordinator, Rita Thomas, and founder Juanita Donald. Deb and Clay's gifts and vision also advanced the ministry in significant ways, growing its capacity and deepening the impact of its ministry to each client and their family.

Now they are handing off to a new team who will share leadership by coordinating the various aspects of this vital ministry. This team is already in place and working well with our dedicated core of volunteers.

- » Chip Houghton coordinates Monday deliveries, inventory, and purchasing.
- » Kellie Ramirez and Laura Bishop coordinate Monday evening pre-packing shifts.
- » Larry Becker coordinates distribution on Tuesday mornings.
- » Sue Yoder is the liaison with the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank.

We extend grateful thanks to these new coordinators who are stepping in to offer leadership in this next season and we offer our deep appreciation and gratitude to Clay and Deb Canfield for all that they have offered over the past four years. We look forward to being able to fully acknowledge their commitment and contribution when we are gathered together in person once more.

The contact for the various areas of the food pantry ministry continues to be food.pantry@akronfcc.org

Many thanks to all of the Feeding Hope Food Pantry volunteers, who keep this ministry going and help those in need.

Mission of the Month

A committee of church members and church leadership has selected the Mission of the Month organizations through June 2022. Keep an eye on church communications each month to learn about their respective missions and work in the community.

Open M is the February 2021 Mission of the Month

Opportunity Parish Ecumenical Neighborhood Ministry (OPEN M) is a vibrant and highly effective organization that serves more than 10,000 unique individuals annually with education, food, employment, and social and health services. All of these services are intended to break the cycle of poverty and improve the health of the community, one family at a time. Funds from Mission of the Month will be used for repairs to equipment in OPEN M's food pantry, which is critical to continue serving those in need of food in the Akron community.

You can make a contribution at www.akronfcc.org/donate or mail a check to the church office (292 E. Market St, Akron, 44308) with "Open M" on the memo line. Thanks!

SMALL GROUPS

Youth Night

Attention First Church youth! Whether you are in elementary, middle school or high school, we invite you to join Pastor Antigoné and the Speight Family for a virtual youth event featuring the witty word association game, Trophies! If you have a competitive spirit and enjoy a good laugh, this game is sure to be one you'll enjoy. Parents and guardians are welcome to join too! Youth Night will be held in congruence with Evening Faith Enrichment on February 3, so register at <https://bit.ly/WedPMFE>, even if you are planning to attend Youth Night. Once you arrive in the meeting space, the groups will be separated into their respective meetings.

Time with Tots Gathering

First Church invites parents and guardians to join their toddler-aged children for our monthly Time with Tots gathering on February 13 at 8am. February's gathering will be a perfect opportunity to fellowship with other First Church families and will feature a fun memory game for the children! The group will meet on zoom and you can register to attend at <https://bit.ly/TimewithTots>. As always, we look forward to connecting with you and your family!



Contem-PAINT Starts Again!

Starting on February 7, join Amber Cullen for the revival of the wonderfully creative and welcoming small group opportunity – Contem-PAINT! The group will meet on zoom on the first Sunday of each month from 4-6pm. Please register to attend at <http://bit.ly/contemPAINT>

Each session, you are invited to set up your own station in your own space and then the group will create together online! For more information contact Amber either by phone or email (see the church directory). Remember all are welcome in this group, whether you've been told you are talented or the very opposite! You can come create.



Saturday Morning Bible Study

Designed for those who identify with the masculine arc of the gender spectrum, this study led by Steven Savides invites participants to engage in interpretation of biblical texts as a primary source of Christian theology. The group meets on the first and third Saturday of the month at 8am. In February, the group is meeting on February 6 and February 20. Please register to attend at <https://bit.ly/SatAMBible>.

Faith Enrichment

Though the season of Lent, beginning on Wednesday, February 24, our pastors will continue to offer bible study and faith enrichment each week. The morning session will be held online from 10:45am until noon and the evening session from 7-8:30pm.

Come and experience an opportunity for fellowship as we share our ideas and insights together and grow in faith.

For Wednesday mornings register here: <https://bit.ly/WedAMFE> and for Wednesday evenings, click to register here <https://bit.ly/WedPMFE>

Coming Out Christian

On the second and fourth Sundays of the month, from 6-7pm, members of the LGBTQ+ community come together online to explore Christianity and the possibility of understanding faith in new ways as we reclaim and explore our faith journeys. Join us as we rethink God's love toward LGBTQ+ Christians! If you would like to join the discussion, please register at <https://bit.ly/ComingOutChristian>. The group will meet on February 14 and February 21. All ages are welcome!



Nominating process

Please save the date for the Semi-Annual* meeting to be held on Sunday, May 16, when a new slate of church officers and board members will be voted on by the congregation. The Nominating Board is looking for volunteers! The current boards consist of Building & Grounds, Human Resources, Membership, Nominating, and Stewardship & Finance. We are also looking for delegates for the UCC and NACCC annual meetings. These teams are pivotal in continuing our ministries and missions and are a wonderful opportunity to serve the church in a meaningful way. For the foreseeable future, board meetings are held online on zoom. Current church membership is not required to serve; however, only church members can be voted as chairperson. Terms are two years for all boards, except for Human Resources, which is three years.

The Nominating Board has already begun making calls and sending emails to build this year's slate. If you are interested in serving or learning more about a particular board, please contact Nominating Board chair, Kellie Ramirez (see the church directory).

*Time and venue for the Semi-Annual meeting is to be determined.

Respectfully submitted, Kellie Ramirez, Nominating Board chair

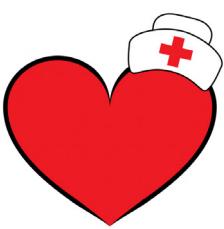


Ministry Team Meeting

Join us for a Ministry Team meeting on Thursday, February 18 at 6:30pm on zoom. You can register to attend here: <http://bit.ly/MinistryRoundtable>

Parish Nurse Check-Ins

Join our Parish Nurse team coordinators for a time of connection. Judy Young and Terri Cook will be hosting online Parish Nurse check-ins, but instead of checking your heart rate and vitals, the focus will be on your wellbeing offering a time for friendly connection during the isolation. The first session will be held on zoom on Thursday, February 18 at 10:30am. Please register at <http://bit.ly/ParishNurseCheck-In>. We hope to see you there!



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.

Old Time Beef Stew

- Submitted by Gladys I. Gustely

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons fat
- 2 pounds of beef chuck
- 1 large onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 4 cups of boiling water
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon of pepper
- ½ teaspoon of paprika
- 1-2 bay leaves
- Dash of allspice
- Dash of cloves
- Carrots
- Potatoes
- 1 jar of small onions

Directions:

- Heat fat in a Dutch oven; add the beef chuck (cut into 1½ inch cubes) and brown on all sides. Keep turning with tongs- this should take about 20 minutes. Slice onion, add a clove of garlic on a toothpick; add boiling water and remaining ingredients, minus veggies. Cover and simmer for about 2 hours, stirring now and then. When half-done, add carrots, potatoes, and small onions. Combine and cook until vegetables are done. Remove garlic and bay leaf.
- Gravy: pour ½ cup of cold water into a shaker. Add ¼ cup flour and shake hard to blend. Add to your juice and stir until thickened. Serve gravy and vegetables separately.



Church Directory

Have you downloaded the app for Instant Church Directory? It gives you access to our membership directory on your smart phone or tablet. You can also view it on a desktop computer at <https://members.instantchurchdirectory.com/> Simply log in with the email you've provided to First Church to gain access. Please note the church office doesn't have a record of member passwords; you can reset at your own discretion on the login page to Instant Church Directory. Questions? Contact Kasey Kalchert in the church office (kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org) / 330.253.5109 ext 112)

Add to our Collection!

First Church is looking to broaden our collection of fine, framed wall art. Do you have framed canvases, special paintings, textiles or other collectibles that need a new home? There is no restriction on size or style, but we are limiting our request to artistic items that can be hung on a wall. If you can provide any details about the work, such as title, artist, medium, age or value, that would be greatly appreciated but not required. Broadening our collection will permit us greater flexibility to rotate displays, add beauty to our facility, and will provide our guests, when we are able to open the building again, the opportunity to view some amazing talent! Please reach out to Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org to discuss a donation. All donations will become the property of First Church, and will be recognized with an in-kind donation receipt for tax purposes if requested. Thank you!



New Staff Member Welcome

Alexander Morris joined the First Church staff in December 2020 as an A/V Tech. Alex comes to First Church with previous audio tech experience at Hollywood Gaming at Mahoning Valley and Zone Entertainment. He currently holds a Bachelor's of Music Composition and a Master's of Music Technology. In addition to his employment at First Church, Alex is also an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Akron. He brings a wealth of experience and creative skills to our live streaming and audio services. We're blessed to have him join the team here; when our building reopens after the pandemic, please be sure to extend your welcome to him!



Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru November, 2020

	November	November YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME				
Pledge Income	\$9,510	\$77,828	\$93,121	83.6%
Non-pledge Income	\$4,908	\$36,348	\$30,000	121.2%
Grant Income	\$3,500	\$19,000	\$39,000	48.7%
Food Pantry	\$2,525	\$11,865	\$15,887	74.7%
Other Special Ministries	\$35	\$4,842	\$3,997	121.1%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$48,445	\$282,486	\$295,649	95.5%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$1,122	\$5,601	\$2,000	280.0%
Other Income	\$58,635	\$82,643	\$6,925	1193.4%
TOTAL	\$128,680	\$520,613	\$486,578	107.0%
EXPENSES				
Personnel	\$29,708	\$212,736	\$251,533	84.6%
Admin and Mktg	\$4,420	\$17,075	\$24,902	68.6%
Membership Board	\$0	\$0	\$830	0.0%
Governing Board	\$0	\$5,048	\$6,500	77.7%
Food Pantry	\$1,409	\$7,977	\$21,000	38.0%
Other Special Ministries	\$323	\$10,547	\$12,232	86.2%
Congregational Care	\$177	\$605	\$3,115	19.4%
Music	\$496	\$5,006	\$12,225	40.9%
Fellowship Team	\$0	\$0	\$320	0.0%
Christian Education	\$0	\$268	\$3,706	7.2%
Development Team	\$0	\$79	\$300	26.3%
Food Service Expense	\$297	\$1,396	\$1,250	111.7%
Property Expense	\$12,379	\$126,859	\$145,082	87.4%
TOTAL	\$49,209	\$387,595	\$482,996	80.2%
Net Income/Loss	\$79,471	\$133,017	\$3,582	3713.3%



With Gratitude

To Nanette and congregation,

The flowers you sent to us are so beautiful. It fills us with joy to be remembered.

Love, Bill and Elizabeth Fesler

Dear Pastors and all,

Bless you and thank you for all you do, for so many, in such a challenging time.

Love, Nanci Self and Stephan Collins

Dear First Church,

On behalf of the members of the Akron Board of Education, I would like to thank you for your generous donation.

Your donation of 290 coats and 290 hats and gloves will be used by the Mason Community Learning Center in support of distribution to the student body.

Support such as yours enhances the education of our students and we thank you for making a difference. We are honored that you have chosen to support the Akron Public Schools.

Sincerely, Ryan Pendleton, Akron Public Schools CFO/Treasurer

Dear First Church family,

Thank you for your expressions of support and understanding as our family changed this new year. We appreciate you!

Warmly, Nanette Pitt and Steven Savides

First Church,

We are so grateful for the continual generosity exhibited by your congregation. The youth at Boys & Girls Clubs certainly benefit from the gifts received - impacting their health & wellness, academic achievements, and social emotional development. Thank you for raising awareness of the need in our community. We appreciate all you do to help and guide the members of our community.

With gratitude, Colette Taylor, BGCNEO Regional Director, Akron

Dear friends,

On behalf of the Good Neighbors organization and those we serve, thank you for your financial contribution and continued support.

Sincerely, Debra K. Foss, Good Neighbors, Inc. Treasurer / Administrative Assistant

First Church,

Thanks to your church for all that you do. The ladies in the kitchen have prepared lovely meals for us. A member of your congregation made my Christmas special. Thanks to her!

From, "Grandma" Carol Jones, Foster Grandparents

In Our Prayers

As we pass the anniversary of the first COVID-19 cases and as the pandemic peaks in the United States, we lift up in prayer all those who are suffering, whether it be physically, emotionally, or mentally. We pray for all who are wrestling to meet their basic needs this winter and especially those who are isolated and alone.

Trusting in God's unfailing love for each and every person, we offer to God expressions of joy and concern in prayer. In our First Church community, we pray for: Mildred A., Debra C., Bill F., Barbara H., George K., Joan L., Helen L., Margaret P., Patty N., Betty S., Art W., Betty W., and Doug W.

If you would like a name added to our prayer list, please email kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org or speak with a pastor.

In Sympathy

Longtime First Church member Pat Sites passed from this life into the next on December 11, 2020. Her family is planning to host a memorial service for Pat later this year, when it is safe to gather together again.

On January 26, 2021, member Carol Johnson passed on from this life to her eternal home. Her husband, Newton, shared that she passed peacefully. Carol's family is planning a memorial service once we are gathering in person again.

Tim Duncan, who was a friend to First Church, passed away on December 29, 2020. Tim was a beloved member of the Akron community and known to us through the Thursday AA program, which First Church has hosted for many years.



Amazon Smile

Do you shop on Amazon? If so, your purchases can benefit First Church through Amazon Smile. Simply log in at www.smile.amazon.com with your Amazon account information, pick First Congregational Church of Akron as your charity, and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases! This donation is no cost to you!



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

292 East Market St.
Akron, OH 44308

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Now Streaming

Sunday Worship Services

JOIN WORSHIP FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE!

At 9:30am on Sundays join us for zoom worship. Register to attend at <https://bit.ly/AkronFirstChurch> or watch live on www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron.

At 11am, join online worship, hosted in our historic Meetinghouse. You can watch online on our website at www.akronfcc.org/live or watch live on www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron.

Worship materials including children bulletins and the weekly News and Notes announcements are available for download at www.akronfcc.org/live

The Lenten Season at First Church

Ashes to Go

Our pastors will be giving out “ashes to go” in the Upper Parking Lot on Ash Wednesday, February 17. Learn more on page 2.

Ash Wednesday Worship

At 7pm on February 17, we’re hosting an online Ash Wednesday service. You can watch on our website at www.akronfcc.org/live or watch live on www.facebook.com/FCCofAkron

Lent at First Church

Learn more about how First Church is observing Lent in 2021 on page 2.

*Do everything in
love*

1 Corinthians 16:14