



MARCH 2021 • Number 2

Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity



Dear Beloved,

This winter has been a particularly harsh one with winter storms and snowfall adding to the isolation we all continue to experience. At the same time, good news beckons as more and more people are able to access the COVID-19 vaccine.

Our experience of Lent in 2021, during a pandemic that is now a year old, echoes and amplifies much of our experience. While Lent is supposed to be a season of introspection and quiet contemplation, of acknowledging shortcomings and the frailty of our humanity, it is always observed in relationship to what comes after - the promise of Easter Sunday.

Hope is always on the horizon in the Christian faith. Ours is a tradition of perpetual hope, even in the darkest of hours. Lent assures us that our faith is never meant to minimize or deny our struggles, even as we are encouraged to anticipate and to speak the good news.

Good news is certainly what we hope for, what we long for, and what we need right now. Good news is beginning to dawn like the frail rays of sunshine that creep out over the horizon at dawn, harbingers of the day yet to come.

I encourage you to embrace all that Lent has to offer this year. As a way for us to honor the experience of this past year with all of its struggles and as a way to remind ourselves of the strength of our faith.

I encourage you to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are able to and to continue to protect yourself afterwards by social distancing and wearing a mask.

As we look toward the future and prepare for our in-person regathering, I encourage you to consider serving on the ad hoc team that will support this when it is feasible, first by reviewing our policy and then by assisting at our in-person regathering events. If you would like to serve in this way, please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111.

As always, I am grateful that as a church community we've remained unified and resilient through this pandemic. In our online worship together, our online small groups and faith enrichment, and our food justice ministries. In all we are blessed to be a blessing! Thank you for being a part of this, together,

Nanette

Database Congregant Portal

We are thrilled to introduce the new Congregant Portal!

In 2020, First Church changed membership and giving tracking systems. The new database is up and running, and we are very pleased with the advantages that the system provides.

Technology is ever-changing, and our system has recently rolled out some new updates that allow you more direct and flexible options for making or tracking your donations. The new system is called the Blackbaud Congregant Portal.

What does the portal do for you? First, it allows you to directly update your contact information (address, phone and email) to help us keep up to date. You are even able to add your photo! The Congregant Portal also allows you to give one-time or recurring gifts, you can save a payment method to make future giving quick and easy, and you can view details about previous online or in-person giving.

The enrollment in the new Congregant Portal begins with the church office emailing you an invitation to join the portal. You will need to accept the invitation to create your account. Please use the email address we have on file for you here in the church office so that the system recognizes you. You will then receive a 6-digit code by email to confirm your email address. Create a password and you are ready to go. Don't forget to bookmark the homepage so you can easily find it later!

If you have any questions, or need assistance when you receive your portal invitation, please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111.



Feed My Sheep Garden

The 2021 growing season will begin on March 1, 2021, when Sam Phillips, Duane Husted, Jamie Mutnansky and our partners at Let's Grow Akron will head back in to begin preparing to plant this year's crop of seeds.

The space First Church provides in our partnership with Let's Grow Akron is a blessing not only to our Feed My Sheep Garden but to every Akron area garden that Let's Grow Akron supports since ALL of the seedlings are started and grown in our Parish Hall basement.

Highlights for this year's garden season include the 3rd Annual Plant Sale which will be held in May. Stay tuned for more news and opportunities to be involved. Reach out to Garden Manager Sam Phillips at any point to learn more: sam@letsgrowakron.org.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Workshop

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 12-2PM, ON ZOOM

Suicide is ranked tenth in leading causes of death in the USA, according to a 2019 study done by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicidal thoughts and attempts are more frequent in individuals who are disconnected from family or community supports and often result from a combination of risk factors such as violence, abuse, and hopelessness, in addition to social isolation. While the topic of suicide is still stigmatized and not openly discussed, it is a reality which affects many individuals and families.

In an effort to help equip individuals and families with the knowledge and skills necessary to intervene with those at risk for suicide, we invite you to join Rev. Antigone Pearson and Rev. Andrew Courtney for a Suicide and Awareness Prevention workshop on Saturday, March 27, from 12-2pm. The event will be hosted on zoom by First Church of Akron. Details for the event can be found at www.akronfcc.org/suicide.

Rev. Antigone Pearson serves as Associate Minister at First Church of Akron and is also a United States Army Reserve Chaplain. First Church member, Rev. Andrew Courtney, has served multiple parishes, and now serves as an Ohio Army National Guard Chaplain. Both are ordained ministers in the United Church of Christ.



Support While You Shop Amazon

Do you shop on Amazon? If so, your purchases can benefit First Church through the Amazon Smile program at no extra cost to you!

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 as a donation to First Church! This donation adds no cost to you or your purchase and it's a quick and easy way to make a difference here at church.



Sundays in the Season of Lent

SUNDAYS THROUGH MARCH 28, 9:30 & 11AM

Online worship during the season of Lent offers a meaningful opportunity for reflection and renewal. In 2021 our worship 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.

Daylight Savings Time

A reminder that on Sunday, March 14, we spring ahead by one hour. A sure and welcome sign that Spring is coming!

Great Outdoors App

Do you love to hike? Do you have family or friends that worry about you when you are off on your own? Cairn can help you with that and more!

The Cairn app for smartphones can help you record and save your track, as well as download maps and trail information (including trail distance, elevation gain and travel ETA). If you are really in the wild (where cell phone service is often spotty) Cairn can provide you with a map showing the nearest cell coverage to your location in the outdoors. Other features include a way for those at home to track your location, and alerts when your return is overdue.

The Cairn app also provides your safety contacts recommendations on how and when to contact search and rescue. This app is free, with optional fee-based upgrades depending on your needs.

Lent Faith Enrichment

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

Join Antigone on zoom each week from 10:45am-noon, February 24–March 24, for a 5-week study titled *Lent in the Liturgical Calendar*. Each week, we will use Scripture and other resources to follow the timeline of events leading up to the death and Resurrection of Jesus. As Theologian Don E. Saliers once observed, “Lent is a double journey – a journey together (and alone) toward the mystery of God’s redemptive embrace in the death and resurrection of Christ. At the same time, it is a journey into the depths of our humanity.” Together, we’ll begin to see the beauty and mystery of Lent with fresh eyes and open our hearts to experience the fullness of life and ministry of Jesus which continues through each of us! Register here: <https://bit.ly/WedAMFE>

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

Join Pastor Nanette on Wednesday evenings through March 24, from 7-8:30pm, to explore Jesus within his historical context. Using the scholarship of preeminent theologian John Dominic Crossan, shared in short DVD lectures, the group will discuss the context, meaning, and symbolism of aspects of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth – a man within an empire. Of the series, Joerg Rieger writes: “At a time when much of Christianity has tamed the gospel and turned to shallow feel-good messages, John Dominic Crossan presents us with what really matters: the challenge of Jesus. Instead of the meek and gentle savior, Crossan introduces us to a Jesus who is not afraid to embody peace and justice, and who provides real alternatives for life in both church and world. This is a Jesus who will grab the attention of those in the churches who hope for more, as well as those who have been disappointed by organized religion, inspiring all of us.”

Come and experience an opportunity for meaningful fellowship as we share our ideas and insights together and grow in faith. Register here: <https://bit.ly/WedPMFE>



Holy Week – Save the Dates

PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 9:30 AND 11AM

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 7PM

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 7PM

EASTER SUNDAY IN-PERSON SUNRISE SERVICE, 6:30AM

EASTER SUNDAY CELEBRATE WORSHIP, 9:30AM

EASTER SUNDAY FESTIVAL WORSHIP, 11AM

Earth-Saving Idea: Cruelty Free

When you purchase beauty and some personal hygiene products, you can look out for the label markers below and avoid using products that have been tested on animals which is always a harmful and usually cruel process.

It is important to do a little research online too though as there are no legal definitions for these terms and some companies may apply such claims solely to their finished cosmetic products while relying on raw material suppliers or contract laboratories to perform their animal testing. Still others may use raw materials that were tested on animals years ago when they were first introduced, basing their “cruelty-free” claims on the fact that the materials or products are not currently tested on animals.



Special Easter Offering

FEEDING HOPE FOOD PANTRY

As in year's past, our special Easter offering will benefit the Feeding Hope Food Pantry. What is different in 2021 is the length and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time when more people than ever before are in need of assistance and many local pantries were closing at the height of the shutdown, our food pantry has remained open each and every week (barring one storm day), providing basic supplies to our neighbors.

Building upon the improvements made in the food pantry in 2019 and 2020, including the allocation of new storage space and the installation of a walk-in freezer, the pantry now needs to replace multiple aging and non-repairable fridges that house dairy and fresh produce each week.

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 “Feeding Hope Food Pantry” on the memo line. Thanks!





Parish Nurse Check-Ins

Join our Parish Nurse team 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 next session will be held on zoom on Thursday, March 18 at 5pm. You can register at <https://bit.ly/ParishNurseCheck-In>. Please note that if you have already registered, you do not need to register again. We hope to see you there!



Virtual Youth Night

Are you someone who has a good eye for finding things that are hard to see? Perhaps you enjoy Where's Waldo or I Spy? If so, you are sure to enjoy this month's featured game, "Where's Bernie?" Whether you are an elementary, middle school or high school student, we invite you to join Pastor Antigoné and others online on Wednesday, March 3, 7-8pm, for an evening of fun and fellowship! Parents and guardians are welcome to join, too! Register here <https://bit.ly/WedPMFE> at the same link as Wednesday evening faith enrichment, as the group runs concurrently in a separate breakout room.

Contem-PAINT

On March 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 <https://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.

Time with Tots

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 8-9AM

First Church invites parents and guardians to join their toddler aged children in March for our monthly Time with Tots gathering. The March gathering will be a perfect opportunity to fellowship with other First Church families and will feature a fun team-building exercise for the whole family! The gathering will continue to be held on Zoom and registration details can be found on the First Church website. As always, we look forward to connecting with you and your family during our monthly Time with Tots gathering!

Saturday Morning Bible Study

This small group meets on the first and third Saturday of the month from 8-9am (March 6 and 20). Led by Steven Savides, the group is designed for those who identify with the masculine arc of the gender spectrum. Together members fellowship, pray together, and delve into the interpretation of biblical texts as a primary source of Christian theology and practice. The experience is authentic and intense as it welcomes questions, doubts, and struggles of real-world faith. Please register to attend at <https://bit.ly/SatAMBible>.

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 group this month on March 14 and 28, please register at <https://bit.ly/ComingOutChristian>.



Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)				
Actual Thru January, 2021				
	January	January YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME				
Pledge Income	\$7,597	\$103,966	\$124,161	83.7%
Non-pledge Income	\$10,814	\$58,825	\$40,000	147.1%
Grant Income	\$0	\$7,000	\$52,000	13.5%
Food Pantry	\$1,275	\$16,265	\$21,182	76.8%
Other Special Ministries	\$110	\$85,814	\$5,329	1610.2%
Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$46,808	\$377,663	\$394,198	95.8%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$0	\$8,845	\$2,667	331.7%
Other Income	\$0	\$82,674	\$9,233	895.4%
TOTAL	\$66,604	\$741,051	\$648,771	114.2%
EXPENSES				
Personnel	\$34,841	\$281,276	\$335,377	83.9%
Admin and Mktg	\$4,848	\$25,322	\$33,203	76.3%
Membership Board	-\$12	-\$12	\$1,257	-0.9%
Governing Board	\$0	\$5,048	\$7,667	65.8%
Food Pantry	\$1,220	\$11,182	\$28,000	39.9%
Other Special Ministries	\$0	\$11,964	\$14,509	82.5%
Congregational Care	\$35	\$901	\$4,153	21.7%
Music	\$1,310	\$10,090	\$16,467	61.3%
Fellowship Team	-\$24	-\$24	\$360	-6.7%
Christian Education	\$0	\$268	\$4,566	5.9%
Development Team	\$0	\$79	\$400	19.8%
Food Service Expense	\$157	\$2,154	\$1,667	129.2%
Property Expense	\$21,979	\$236,432	\$194,731	121.4%
TOTAL	\$64,355	\$584,680	\$642,357	91.0%
Net Income/Loss	\$2,249	\$156,371	\$6,414	2437.9%

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!

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.

Chronicle Submission Deadline

To submit information for the April edition of the Chronicle newsletter, please email communications@akronfcc.org. The deadline for the April 2021 issue is Monday, March 15.

Budget Process for 2021-2022

The Stewardship & Finance Board is launching the budgeting process for the 2021-2022 First Church program year. Submissions are due from Boards and Ministry Team facilitators by Tuesday, March 9. please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley at janis.worley@akronfcc.org or 330.253.5109 x111. The budget will be presented to the congregation for approval at its Semi-Annual Meeting on May 16, 2021.



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., Chris B., Phyllis B., Bill F., Barbara H., George K., Joan L., Rod M., Chuck M., Margaret P., Patty N., Betty S., Art W., Betty W., and Doug W.

If you have any questions about those listed or would like a name added to our prayer list, please email Associate Minister Rev. Antigone Pearson at antigone.pearson@akronfcc.org.

In Sympathy

Our condolences and prayers are with Patty and Dana Noel on the passing of Patty's mother and First Church member, Helen Lombard, who passed away on Thursday, January 28, 2021.



With Gratitude

A special thanks to Paula Speight for making our communion bread for worship on the first Sunday of each month. It is a homebaked blessing and we thank you for this act of love!

A warm word of thanks to all who continue to offer their time during the cold winter months to maintain the ministry of the Feeding Hope Food Pantry especially during the pandemic.

Dear First Church

Warm and special thanks to you for all the considerate things you do.

Thank you for the tremendous effort and church resources you devoted to the Prayers for the Pandemic program. It was beautifully produced and deeply meaningful. We hope to continue to collaborate for the advancement of Akron.

From, Judy DiNardo, Akron Area Interfaith Council Treasurer

Freezing Women,

Thank you for giving me ashes today (especially for coming out when you were already done for that hour). I appreciate you.

Love and Prayers, Chris M.

Congratulations

To **Brenda Waddell** who has been hired as Associate for Pastoral Care at the Bath Church. During and now following her graduation from Methodist Theological School in Ohio in 2020, we continue to support Brenda on her journey towards ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ and will be praying for her as she embarks on this new chapter with Bath.

To **Steven Savides** who continues to progress through his PhD program at the University of Notre Dame and is now an instructor of record offering a class this semester entitled *Christian Perspectives on War, Peace, and Revolution*.

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.

Lemon Cake

Submitted by Phyllis Berry & Frances Crawford,
in memory of June Hibbard

Ingredients:

- 1 small package of lemon jello
- 1 cup of hot water
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup of salad oil
- 1 package of lemon cake mix

Topping:

- 2 cups of sifted powdered sugar
- ½ cup of lemon juice

Directions:

- Dissolve jello into one cup of hot water. Cool.
- Beat the eggs with salad oil. Add jello and lemon cake mix and blend. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes, or until done, in a 10 x 13 pan. Remove from the oven and immediately punch holes with a 2-tined fork all through.
- Topping: Mix powdered sugar and lemon juice. Poor into holes. Serve with Cool Whip or ice cream.





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292 East Market St.
Akron, OH 44308



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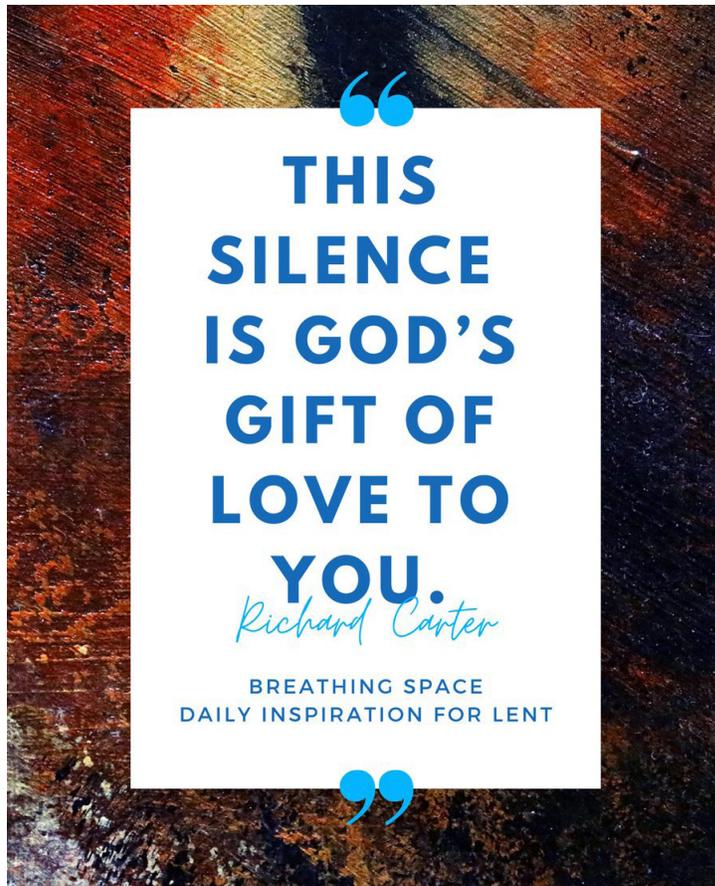
Now Streaming Sunday Worship Services

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



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**THIS
SILENCE
IS GOD'S
GIFT OF
LOVE TO
YOU.**

Richard Carter

BREATHING SPACE
DAILY INSPIRATION FOR LENT

