

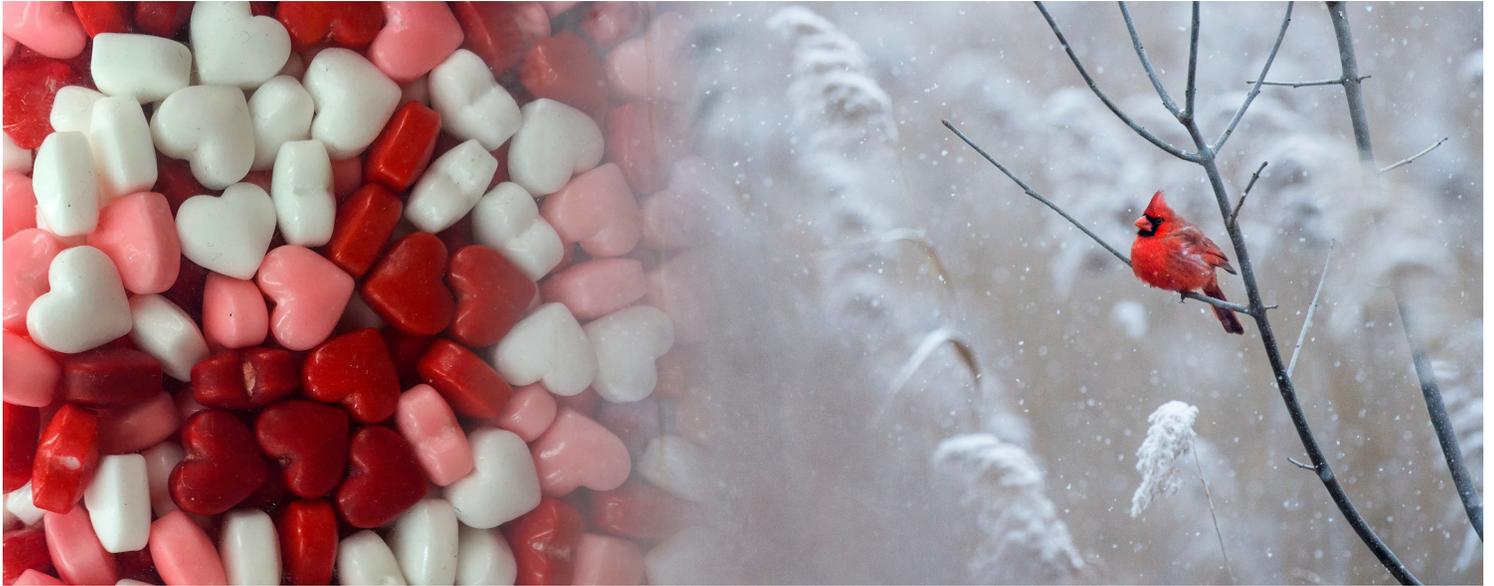


FEBRUARY 2022 • Number 1

# Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH OF AKRON

*Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity*



Dear friends,

This time of year, we yearn for the shift from winter into spring even as we cherish the warmth of family, friendship – and perhaps most of all in February – love.

As we continue to make our way through the pandemic, this unprecedented time in history, there is so much more that adds to our burden of stress. Often the darker, winter months after the holidays seem to propel us towards melancholy and, even, depression. The Christian faith, developed so long before the advent of electricity, does not help us in this regard. Christians have, as Barbara Brown Taylor notes, “used ‘darkness’ as a synonym for sin, ignorance, spiritual blindness, and death.” This is problematic on a theological level, creating a false dichotomy between light and dark, tucking “...all the sinister stuff into the dark, identifying God with the sunny part and leaving you to deal with the rest on your own time.”

Truthfully though, God is as much the creator of the stars of night, as of the day. The dark hours are a gift woven into the ebb and flow of our lives that allow for refuge and rest. Winter is a time, not just of dormancy, but of retreat and rekindling, renewal and rebirth.

Quote Source: Barbara Brown Taylor,  
*Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Decker Edge, 2015

The night is a time for dreams, when new ideas can begin to take root waiting for the dawn of a new season. The American poet Theodore Roethke wrote: “In a dark time, the eye begins to see.”

I invite you to join me this season in embracing the darker months while watching for the signs of life and light, using the darker hours to reorient and renew, reflect and rebuild. Join me on Sunday mornings as we look to sage advice from around the world in our series *Wisdom for a Wary World* at both our 9am and 11am worship services. Through these winter days, through this pandemic, through our connection here at First Church, may we all begin, as Roethke suggests, to truly see.

Wishing you God’s peace and every blessing,

*Nanette*

## IN THIS EDITION...

LEARNING “CHURCH” AGAIN  
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR LENTEN DEVOTIONAL  
13TH ANNUAL AAIC HUNGER WALK INFORMATION  
YOUTH GROUP UPDATE AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

## February Game Night

Join members and friends for an evening of board games in Fellowship Hall on Friday, February 25, beginning at 6pm.

There will be plenty of options at various tables so that people can spread out and have as much physical distance as they need.

You are welcome to bring your favorite game along or just come as you are – there will be plenty of options available. Bring your family or friends along too. All are welcome!

Join the Membership Board and other members and friends for a relaxing time of fellowship at First Church this winter.

## Check Out Our Books

Thanks to a donation from the Stalnaker family, the First Church library was renovated in 2019 and is now a great meeting space for small groups. When the renovation was complete, First Church curated the book collection to focus on appropriate holdings for a church library. We have many books on spirituality, as well as selections dealing with topics of our times such as race, addiction, grief, and LGBTQIA+ concerns.

The library also contains many children's books, especially ones dealing with divorce and the death of loved ones among other challenging topics. Church member and author Karen Leggett-Abouraya recently donated two children's books that she has written, *Malala Yousafzai* and *Hands Around the Library*, to help expand our collection. We are excited for everyone to begin using our (your!) library and can't wait to share the amazing content we have collected. Please stop by the church the next time you are nearby and check out a book or two!

If you are interested in making a donation to help us add more books to our collection, please contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley, [janis.worley@akronfcc.org](mailto:janis.worley@akronfcc.org), 330.253.5109 x111.



Celebrate Black History Month this February – read Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, or Langston Hughes, book to watch *The Color Purple* at the Weathervane, support minority-owned businesses, attend an NAACP event. Be the change you want to see in the world and visit with a historically black church.

## Cookbook Update

Our new cookbook, *Return to the Garden of Eat'n*, will be accepting its last recipes on February 17, 2022 so the Cookbook Committee will have time to get everything to the publisher for proofing and printing before our Semi-Annual Meeting in May.

It is the hope of the Cookbook Committee that you will take part by submitting your favorite family recipes. This cookbook represents the life and legacy of First Church, a community of believers that has been worshiping, eating, and celebrating together for 189 years. A legacy and life that you are a part of and that you continue to help us co-create as we move boldly and lovingly into the future.

The cookbook committee is also hoping to use this as a fundraiser that will help further the cause of Food Justice in the Akron area. If you would like to submit a recipe, please go to [typensave.com](http://typensave.com), then use the login button in the upper-right corner of the screen with the following login information:

**Username:** FCCAkron

**Password:** cucumber519

If you have questions, please contact Acting Associate Minister Bobby, [bobby.burt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burt@akronfcc.org), 330.780.8122.



## February Mission of the Month

Our February 2022 Mission of the Month is Falls Cancer Club, Inc. The club's mission is to help cancer patients residing in Cuyahoga Falls with prescription, doctor, hospital, and lab bills. The club is run entirely by volunteers and all funds for its services are raised through events held throughout the year. The next fundraiser event is a Battle of the Badges basketball game between local police and firefighters, scheduled for April 29. Check out their website for more information, <https://www.fallscancerclub.org/>.

All funds collected in February designated to our Mission of the Month program will be used by this organization to directly pay off these cancer-related bills for their patients.

# Return to In-Person Worship

February 13, 2022!



Join us for our return to in-person worship  
or continue to join us online at [bit.ly/First-Church-YouTube](https://bit.ly/First-Church-YouTube)



## Learning “Church” Again

### WHO KNEW GOING TO CHURCH NEEDED PRACTICE?

Remember all the reasons that drew you to First Church? Before you even set a foot across the threshold?

Your life may be vastly different from that at this point, however, there are still reasons to stay engaged.

There are others, especially in this time of upheaval and change, experiencing similar moments and who join us each week looking to make a connection, looking to make sense of life and faith, together with others like you.

If you recall your first time attending, you’ll remember that it began after you shifted from yearning to find a church to deciding “okay, *this* Sunday!” You probably had to find our address and think about how long it would take to get there, wake up early enough to dress, feed the family, let the dog out, and get to church on time!

Did you have other things you could be doing that particular morning? You bet you did! Yet you decided to lay those things aside that morning and all the many mornings since, to be a part of creating community.

When you are venturing out again in this pandemic, seeing friends and going to the grocery store, you are probably ready to return to in-person worship but you might think...

*I just don't like wearing masks.*

*I've started doing other things with my Sunday mornings so I can't come in person now.*

*We'll attend in person after Easter or maybe next summer.*

*I'm sure we'll be back, we just don't know when.*

When the time is right, make that shift like you first did and come on down to church! Set Sunday mornings aside to come together with your First Church family for worship; praising God, fellowshiping with friends, and welcoming new seekers to be a part with us on this wonderful journey.

## Winter Messages To Inspire

Join us this February for a sermon series drawing on wisdom from around the globe to warm the heart and renew the spirit.

Beginning again on Sunday, February 13, we will worship each week in person in the Meetinghouse at 9am and 11am.

To join remotely, visit our YouTube channel. No account is necessary, just visit <https://bit.ly/First-Church-YouTube> to watch worship live or at a later time.



## Submit Lenten Devotionals

### SHARE YOUR REFLECTIONS FOR THIS YEAR'S BOOKLET

The season of Lent begins in early March, so we are inviting submissions before February 20 on our theme *Cultivating and Letting Go* to be included in our First Church for-members, by-members daily devotional. Submissions are welcome from everyone in the community: members and friends, old and young. Each submission should be a maximum of 200 words and can include material from other sources – a poem, etc.

Lent is a season of spiritual gardening, of inviting God to unearth in us what lies fallow, what needs to be tended, and even what needs to die for new life to emerge. This year, consider sharing a reflection from your life, your perspective, or your experience about a time when there was *Cultivating and Letting Go* in your life or, perhaps, what you hope to cultivate and/or let go of this Lent. Send your submission to Alex Morris, [alex.morris@akronfcc.org](mailto:alex.morris@akronfcc.org)



#### FAITH ENRICHMENT CONTINUES ON WEDNESDAYS

Both of our current Faith Enrichment offerings continue through February 23. Join at 10:45am with Acting Associate Minister Bobby Burt for the *El Roi: God Who Sees Me* series and at 6:45pm for *Scripture Engagement* with Sara Schwendeman and Pastor Nanette Pitt.

#### UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

After the current series are over we will take a week off. Then, beginning March 9, we will continue with a Lenten Faith Enrichment Series. This time around, the content will be the same at both the 10:45am and 6:45pm sessions, so join whichever works best for you!

## Valentines Day Thought

Valentine's Day is an opportunity to show others our love. We give candy, flowers, and gifts to friends and loved ones. It is literally a sweet day, with sentiment and real sweets. It is good to show love to those we love and to love our enemies as well. Jesus says in Matthew 22:39, "love your neighbor as yourself." We know that it's preceded by another greater commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

So, we are commanded to love our neighbor and ourselves, but the greatest commandment is to love God. On Valentine's Day, a day dedicated to love, we might ask ourselves, "do we want to give a token of our love to God? And if so, what would we give?"

Throughout the Hebrew bible, God asks the people to give their hearts. God is likened to a lover who has been rejected when the people forget God and the commandments. God is our lover? The Word of God says, "we love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19). There are many messages of love, many valentines, which we might have missed in God's letter to us. It says, God loves people with a steadfast love, God loves us freely, God exults over us with singing, and "you are precious in my sight and honored, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4). Take time today to give Almighty God, your Heavenly Maker, a precious valentine of love: your heart and your devotion.

Mary Atwood, adapted



#### FAITH FORMATION YOUTH GROUPS

In January, our youth groups took a break so that we could celebrate and memorialize the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. here at First Church. While our time together was missed, it was for the best as our first big snowstorm moved in and made quite the mess of our roads that evening. As we move into February, I am excited to let you know that our monthly Youth Groups are back on the table and we will be joining together for fun and fellowship on February 20 here at First Church. The times are as follows:

**Sprout (2yr olds-2nd Grade): 4:30pm-5:15pm**

**Grow (5th Grade-9th Grade): 5:30pm-6:15pm**

As always, 3rd and 4th graders are welcome to attend either of the groups based on parental discretion as to which fits best. I can't wait to see you all later this month and to hear about all of your winter adventures!

## Giving Our Soles A Rest

Since June, I have been leading a series of hikes throughout the Summit Metro Parks called Sole Searching. This event gave us time together in nature and fellowship. To say that it has been a blessing to me would be an understatement. I have enjoyed, more than anything, getting to experience the wonders and beauty of nature with each and every one of you who came out. I hope that time was a blessing to you as well. However, like all good things, this too must come to an end. With winter fully settled in and snow up to our knees, I think it is time that we take a load off our feet and relax in the coming winter months.

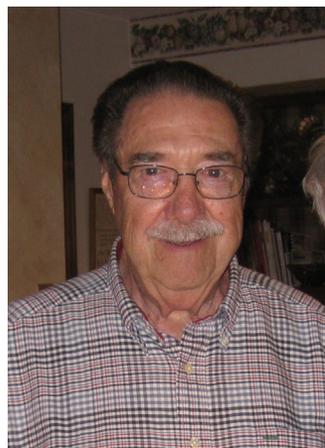
I want to give a big thank you to everyone who came out and made Sole Searching a success. While our group may not have always been robust in numbers, it was always robust in spirit and care. Until warmer days are afoot, so long to Sole Searching.

If you have any questions regarding the above events or the First Church children and youth ministries in general, please contact Acting Associate Minister Bobby, [bobby.burt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burt@akronfcc.org), 330.780.8122.

# An Official Welcome to Ray

## RAY YOUNG COVENANTED WITH US LAST YEAR

Ray has always supported Judy with her church affiliation and recently (finally!) decided to become an official



member of the First Church community. First Church's "no religious strings attached", the open and affirming policy, and "all are welcome" values parallel his own.

Ray and Judy Young have been married for 60 years and have lived in Green for 45 years. Ray spent most of his career in medical sales and management. After retiring, he discovered his talents with woodworking. In truth, he is a

master in wood turning which requires great skill. He is a post Korean War Army veteran and most enjoyed his time serving our country when he played baseball entertaining the troops.

## INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE OR JOINING?

Our next series of Inquirers' Gatherings will be held on Sunday, May 1 and 8, 2022 with a Joining Sunday opportunity on May 15, 2022. Save the date to learn more

# Akron Area Interfaith Council

First Church has long been a member of the Akron Area Interfaith Council (AAIC) which exists to initiate, coordinate, and enable effective interfaith responses to the social, moral, ethical, and cultural issues of our community and to promote freedom of religion, equality, and understanding. Each member organization is represented at the council's monthly meetings and on their various working groups. We



are grateful to First Church member Elizabeth Fesler for her years of service as one of First Church's representatives and, along with Elizabeth, are eager to find an additional person to serve as a liaison in this important community ministry.

The AAIC vision is to create a strong network of faith communities that collaborate to make our city a haven for all. This is a goal worth of our support! You can learn more about the AAIC at [www.akroninterfaith.org](http://www.akroninterfaith.org) or [www.facebook.com/akroninterfaith](https://www.facebook.com/akroninterfaith). The AAIC meets each month in person at a local member house of worship with an option for online participation. If you are interested in getting involved as a First Church liaison, please contact Bobby Burt [bobby.burt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burt@akronfcc.org), 330.780.8122.

## THE 13TH ANNUAL AAIC HUNGER WALK

**When:** Sunday, May 1, 2022, 2pm

**Where:** The Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron  
3300 Morewood Rd, Fairlawn, OH, 44333

The Akron Area Interfaith Council will be holding the 13th Annual Hunger Walk in person. This event raises money to support the Akron Canton Regional Foodbank.

In the coming weeks, more information will become available at First Church as the call goes out for First Church walkers and supporters of this important fundraiser for the organization that supports our Feeding Hope Food Pantry and PB&J Ministry Team.

## Never Miss Another Game

Here's an app that will help you to listen to all the live news, sports, music, podcasts, and radio you love, from around the world—all on the TuneIn app. TuneIn brings you 24/7 news from local, national, and global sources, including CNN, MSNBC, NPR, and BBC. Sports lover? Listen to live NFL, NHL, and college games anywhere you go, plus local, national, and global sports talk stations. Get instant gametime notifications and customized listening when you pick your teams on the app too! Even Music and podcast lovers are set – stream over 100,000 AM, FM and internet radio stations from 197 countries!

## 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.

### Chocolate Canal Mud Pie

Submitted by Sue Tolley

#### Ingredients:

- 3 eggs
- 2/3 c sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/3 c margarine or butter
- 1 c light corn syrup
- 2 T brandy
- 2 c pecan halves
- 1 1/2 c semi-sweet chocolate chips
- Single-crust pie pastry
- Chocolate Sauce
- Whipped Cream



*Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a bowl, beat together eggs, sugar, salt, butter, syrup, and brandy. Stir in nuts and chocolate chips. Pour mixture into pastry-lined pan and bake for 50 minutes, or until filling is set and pastry is lightly browned. Cool. Serve with chocolate sauce and whipped cream.*

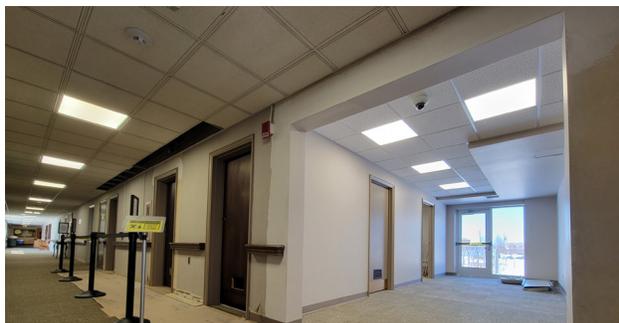
# February Birthdays

## Stewardship/Finance Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru December, 2021

		December	December YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
<b>February 1</b> Roy Hartz					
<b>February 2</b> Margaret Maurer Donnell Shoffner	<b>INCOME</b>				
	Pledge Income	\$8,826	\$55,438	\$99,167	55.9%
	Non-pledge Income	\$8,885	\$66,922	\$54,227	123.4%
	Grant Income	\$0	\$3,500	\$1,167	300.0%
<b>February 4</b> Amanda-Joyce Abbott	Food Pantry	\$3,342	\$17,752	\$16,917	104.9%
	Other Special Ministries	\$10,575	\$80,544	\$3,383	2380.6%
<b>February 5</b> Betty Stalnaker Ting Guo	Endowment, Sprowls Trust, Pollock	\$48,045	\$341,989	\$352,941	96.9%
	Rental and Food Service Income	\$2,596	\$13,201	\$15,167	87.0%
	Other Income	\$0	\$9,067	\$11,929	76.0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$82,268</b>	<b>\$588,413</b>	<b>\$554,898</b>	<b>106.0%</b>
<b>February 6</b> Stan Wallace	<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	Personnel	\$40,326	\$274,407	\$320,636	85.6%
<b>February 7</b> John Renner	Admin and Mktg	\$4,860	\$32,093	\$30,683	104.6%
	Membership Board	\$697	\$5,183	\$5,568	93.1%
<b>February 9</b> Larry Reed Gail Willmott Jay Hultz	Governing Board	\$50	\$4,298	\$5,542	77.5%
	Food Pantry	\$2,051	\$4,399	\$13,271	33.1%
	Other Special Ministries	\$502	\$4,694	\$7,545	62.2%
	Congregational Care	\$511	\$3,253	\$4,083	79.7%
<b>February 10</b> Ruth Ann Allison	Worship	\$3,278	\$17,400	\$16,366	106.3%
	Fellowship Team	\$0	\$160	\$350	45.6%
<b>February 11</b> Kara Ashley Nanette Pitt	Christian Education	\$144	\$1,136	\$4,215	27.0%
	Development Team	\$0	\$231	\$117	197.8%
	Food Service Expense	\$2,116	\$7,567	\$7,000	108.1%
<b>February 12</b> Bill Mitchell	Property Expense	\$123,899	\$310,606	\$285,325	108.9%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$178,434</b>	<b>\$665,426</b>	<b>\$700,701</b>	<b>95.0%</b>
<b>February 13</b> John Mosconi Paul Burford	Net Income/Loss	-\$96,165	-\$77,013	-\$145,803	52.8%

- February 13**  
John Mosconi  
Paul Burford
- February 18**  
Nancy Jackson
- February 24**  
Bob Renner
- February 25**  
Tonya Akers
- February 26**  
Casey Ahern  
Sandy DiMascio  
Charlotte Estafen



Top Left: A stage has been installed, leveling out the floor in the Meetinghouse where our musicians perform.  
Bottom Left: The ADA compliant restrooms and the new hallway to the garden are almost finished.  
Right: The AV Desk has been installed. This standing desk will allow the technicians to better support worship.

# Password Security

While most everyone knows the basics of password security, many of us brush off that advice because it seems too complicated or it feels like we just don't have the time. We use the same password across different websites and we use passwords that are easy for others to figure out. However, passwords are just as important as other tools we use to verify our identity like driver's licenses, social security cards, and passports. See listed below a few tips on password security.

**Length.** The best passwords are at least 12 characters long and contain letters, numbers, and symbols. You can keep it simple by creating a short sentence that's easy for you to remember, like *summerismyfavorite*season. Then, add numbers and symbols to the mix (websites may require special characters anyway): *Summeri\$myfav0riteseason*.

**Use different passwords for different accounts.** The importance of this tip can't be emphasized enough. If you use the same password across all or many of your accounts, a breach renders them all vulnerable. Just as you use different keys to protect different places, use different passwords to protect important accounts.

**Don't take the bait.** Unfortunately, most malicious hackers don't have to work very hard to get access to passwords; they trick people into giving them up. One common way they do this is by calling and pretending to be a representative from somewhere you are a customer at and convincing you to give them private information. Another way is by sending an email under similar pretenses. No company or organization should EVER ask you for your password. If they do, disengage from the conversation immediately.

**Remember to log off.** Computers and devices are smart - sometimes too smart - and unless you log out, your account may remain logged in indefinitely, allowing others easy access. While it's convenient to not have to log in every time on our own devices, it's important to weigh that convenience with the risk of what might happen if your device falls into the wrong hands. If you're concerned you may have stayed logged in to an account by mistake, some online services like Facebook and Gmail allow you to see the devices you're currently logged in on and give you the option of logging out of them remotely.



## In Gratitude

What a pleasant surprise to come home and find the gift bag from our church. First Church is the best...

*Thank You,  
Crickett and Michael W.*

Thank you so much for the generous donation of a beautiful prayer blanket that my husband received while at Akron General Hospital. It was a wonderful reminder that, no matter what our circumstances are, God is always with us and will never forsake us. Unfortunately, Henry passed away after only a 7-week battle with cancer. We are grief stricken, but also comforted by God's peace.

*God Bless You All,  
Cindy Z.*

**To First Church,**

Thank you for all the creative and loving ways you continue to serve and support the church community and beyond during the pandemic.

*Theresa A.*

**A Simple 'Thank You' Doesn't Seem Like Enough**

There's a growing gratitude that won't ever end. May your kindness and good deeds always come back to you.

*With Heartfelt Gratitude and Appreciation,  
The MLK Coalition Committee*

**Pastor Nanette,**

Thank you so much for opening First Church for the MLK celebration and for hosting this event. It's a great way for you to connect with community leaders and for the church to show community support. The music and the speaker were high energy - wow!

*Martha V.*

## In Sympathy

We offer our heartfelt condolences to Ellsworth and the family of Margaret Civitello-Poole who passed away on December 24, 2021. A Memorial Service was held on January 15 at First Church.

## In Our Prayers

Trusting in God's unfailing love for each and every person, we offer to God expressions of joy and concern in prayer. In our church community, we pray for Jay H., Ron and Pam B., Andrew C., Art W., Barbara S., Betty S., Bill F., Callahan H., Duane P., Karen F., Mildred A., and Antigone P.

*If you have any questions about those listed, if you would like to add a name, or if you would like to share a celebration or condolence with the wider First Church community, please email Acting Associate Minister, Bobby Burt, at [bobby.burt@akronfcc.org](mailto:bobby.burt@akronfcc.org).*



*Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity*



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**Beginning in May, we will only be distributing the newsletter digitally. If you would still prefer to have a physical copy mailed to you, please let us know!**



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