



MAY 2022 • Number 4

Chronicle

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF AKRON

Rooted in Christ · Fostering Justice · Celebrating Diversity

Dear Beloved,

It has been wonderful, as the world bursts into bloom around us, to welcome a resurgence of activity and engagement here at church. While we are not out of the woods entirely yet and remain appropriately cautious, depending on our personal risk factors, the pandemic has receded enough that we are able to engage once again.

This was evident both on Easter Sunday and this past week for our Earth Day Celebration – a combined worship service at 10am, followed by a reception to mark our seven years of ministry together.

They say time flies when you're having fun and that is certainly testament to all we have achieved together since I arrived at First Church in 2015. In September this year, I will begin my eighth year of ministry with you and I am excited to see where God will take us in the future. On Sunday, in keeping with our New Creation Easter theme, the gospel text led us to focus on how we might create community in the coming season. I lifted up the values of authenticity, presence, vulnerability, honesty, and trust. I believe we are called to be a place where people come together, where we are our authentic selves sharing our vulnerabilities and not expecting perfection from one another but bearing with one another through life's difficult times. When we are willing to have the tough conversations and hold one another's questions and doubts, we build trust and resiliency. Change is inevitable yet often uncomfortable so having trusting not only in one another but also in God, enables us to follow Christ and anticipate the Spirit's transformation of us on our path of discipleship.

The future ahead of us demands a different understanding of "church" – one in which we assess strength as vitality using metrics focused on our in - and outreach, our impact, and the quality of our relationships. Our covenant invites this sense and I invite you to read it prayerfully again today.

My heart is full to bursting as I reflect on your affirmations from the recent reception. Thank you for your expressions of gratitude – the cards, flowers, and

gifts. Thank you to the team who planned the event: Jim Gartner, Sue Yoder, Julie Brandy, Toby Liechty-Clifford, Kellie Ramirez, Sarah Vradenburg, and Tori White. And to all those who offered support including: Tana Alexander, Deb Anderson, Lee Andrews, Bill Brandy, Todd Brown & Mickey Shah, JoAnne Dawson, Linda & Sid Foster, Linda & Chip Houghton, Darren Jones-Baker, Matt Kalgreen, Keith Liechty-Clifford, Alex Morris, Debbie Riley, Mickey Shah, Tevin Tietje, and Janis Worley.

I told a few people on the day – any celebration of my ministry is a celebration of the church since the life of pastor and church body are yoked in mutuality. So congratulations First Church! And thank you!

In gratitude and love,

Nanette

NEW MEMBERS' COVENANT

In the presence of God and this congregation, I enter into covenant with the members of the First Congregational Church of Akron. I proclaim my intent to become a faithful member of this congregation, giving of myself, believing and trusting in the Spirit of Christ. 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.

CONGREGATION'S RESPOSIVE COVENANT

We then, members of First Church, welcome you to this household of faith. We offer to share with you the hopes and labors and joys of this church of Christ. We promise to walk with you in Christian love. We welcome you to a part with us in the blessings and promises of God's Covenant, to a place in the duties, privileges and glories of God's great church, and to the fellowship of that multitude which no person can number. God grant that we may be prepared through this earthly fellowship for the perfect fellowship of our heavenly home.

Semi-Annual Meeting

MAY 19, 2022 7:30PM, VIRTUAL ONLY

Our 2022 Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom on Thursday, May 19, at 7:30pm. If you do not have internet access, please contact Congregational Life Coordinator Alex, alex.morris@akronfcc.org, 330.253.5109 x112. Register for the meeting at <https://bit.ly/2022-Semi-Annual>. You can download the meeting's agenda and other pertinent documents at <https://www.akronfcc.org/semi-ann-2022/>.

Members will be voting on:

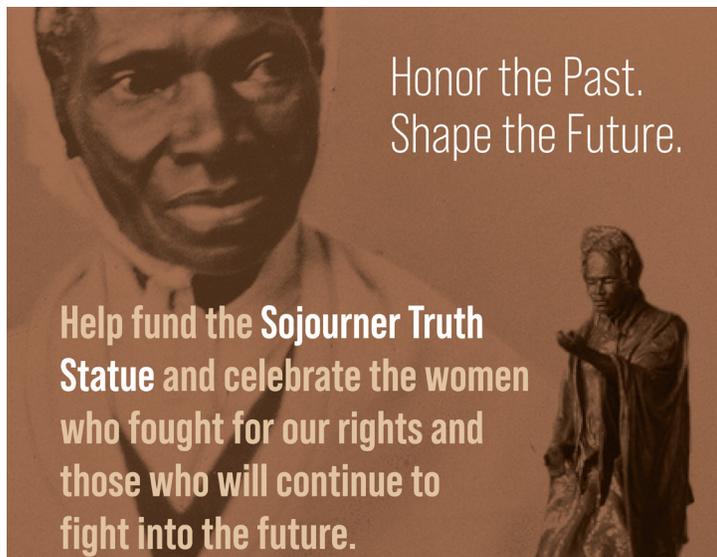
1. Slate of Board members and Church Officers
2. Budget for the 2022-2023 fiscal and program year
3. Proposal to offer \$25,000 sponsorship for the Sojourner Truth Statue in Akron

If you are unable to attend and are a member, you may request an absentee ballot from the church office. Please return completed absentee ballots by 5pm on May 18. We encourage all members of the church to register and attend the congregational meeting so we can achieve a quorum. As a Congregational church, quorum is required in order for the congregation to vote and make decisions. Please register soon so we can continue to move our ministries and mission forward as we transition smoothly to a new church program year. Thank you!

Submitted by Jim Gartner and Sue Yoder

SOJOURNER TRUTH STATUE SPONSORSHIP

Join for an important presentation via Zoom ahead of the Semi-Annual Meeting on Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 7:30pm (please register in advance at <https://bit.ly/Sponsor-Truth-Statue>) about the Sojourner Truth Project and the Governing Board's proposal that First Church offer sponsorship. Members of the Sojourner Truth Project committee who will be offering this presentation include Towanda Mullins, Leianne Neff Heppner, Lisa King, and First Church member Margaret Maurer.



Akron Parks Week

As a proud sponsor, the Living Water Association, Ohio NorthEast, United Church of Christ invites you to celebrate this year's Akron Parks Week. The celebration will take place at Elizabeth Park (40 E Lods St.) from 12pm-4pm. Food trucks from International Jerk and Jenuine Cuisines will be on-site as well as 4 Bros and a Sis Lemonade Stand. Live music from Red Rose Panic will be showcased from 1pm-3pm. Admission is free. Bring a chair or a blanket, plant a tree, and enjoy some live music!

The rain date is set for Sunday, May 15, from 12pm-4pm. To register for tree planting, landscaping and mulching, general park clean-up, or garden/food forest clean-up, please visit <https://www.akronparks.org>.



Current Opportunities

SINGING AND SIGHING ON WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

The Psalms are rich in variety and have been used throughout time and memorials to help people connect more deeply with their faith and with God. Come join Bobby Wednesdays from 10:45am-12pm through May 25 as we step into the psalms to discuss our joys, pains, and tribulations.

THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith by Marcus Borg will form the basis for our Wednesday evening Faith Enrichment with Nanette from 6:30-8pm each week through May 25 over a simple dinner of soup and bread. Advance reading is recommended. Purchase the book from your preferred book seller.

THE CHOSEN - A VIRUTAL FAITH ENRICHMENT GROUP

Sunday evenings we'll continue to offer a virtual opportunity from 7-8pm to discuss *The Chosen*. Register at https://bit.ly/Discuss_The_Chosen and watch the episodes in advance at https://bit.ly/Watch_The_Chosen.

Spring Into Worship

This Spring, in the Easter season we will focus in worship on Faithful Homes – a series to celebrate and strengthen our relationships at home with one another and with God.

Our homes are places of refuge, relaxation, and rest so it's vital we are intentional in making them spaces that support and encourage our spirituality. This series with Nanette and Bobby delves into these ideas and offers practical tips and reflections for all types of families. Join us each week in person in the Meetinghouse at 9am and 11am. While physical distancing and masks are no longer required, there is plenty of room for those who prefer or need to take additional precautions. To participate remotely, live or at a later time, visit our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/firstchurchakron>.

MAY 1: OPEN HOMES

Join us for Communion this Sunday at both the Celebrate and Festival worship services.

MAY 8: LISTENING HOMES

These Mother's Day worship services offer each of us an opportunity to celebrate the people who have offered us a mothering-spirit, who have shaped and blessed us throughout our lives.

MAY 15: ANCHORED HOMES

In both worship services this morning, we will welcome new members into fellowship. At the Festival service at 11am, the Handbell Choir bless and edify our worship experience.

MAY 22: ACCEPTING HOMES

This sixth Sunday of Easter will be our Chancel Choir's final Sunday as a full compliment for the program year. Let's celebrate and thank them for their gifts as we anticipate their return in the fall.

MAY 29: HEAVENLY HOMES

Our holiday weekend worship follows the commemoration of Ascension Day and we'll consider its meaning and the reminder that we look beyond earthly power to the power of the Most High.

JUNE 5: PENTECOST SUNDAY

At Pentecost, when Jesus' followers were blessed with the gift of the Holy spirit, we believe they became the church, empowered and equipped to live out their mission. Each year we celebrate that first Pentecost and God's constant presence with us through the Spirit and the gathered community. Festival worship this year will feature our Handbell Choir, directed by Christine Allison. We encourage you to wear red to both of this morning's celebratory services!

Spring Tea Reminder

MAY 7, 2022, 11AM-1PM

Bring a special friend and join us for a fun spring tea party! You will enjoy a delicious selection of finger sandwiches and desserts, a few table games, and time to catch up with each other and with friends. No age restrictions for this event – everyone is welcome.

Tickets are \$5 per person. Make your reservations now by contacting Congregational Life Coordinator Alex Morris at alex.morris@akronfcc.org or buy your ticket online at <https://www.akronfcc.org/donate>.

Have a group of six or more friends and want to make sure you are all at the same table? Reserve a table for only \$10 more!

Derby Party

MAY 7, 2022, 6PM

It's time to talk Derby! Please join us to celebrate a southern tradition. Don't forget your hats and bowties before joining on May 7 at 6PM for cocktails, southern fare, and the greatest two minutes in sports! Bring a southern dish, appetizer, or dessert to share.

This event is hosted by the Membership Board and will happen at 286 S Rose Blvd, Akron, OH 44278. If you have any questions, please contact Membership Board Chair Toby Liechty-Clifford.

The Fellowship Hall set for the Maundy Thursday Dinner Worship Service on April 14 during Holy Week. This tradition, started in 2019, will continue next year!

Inquirers' Gatherings & Joining Sunday

LEARN MORE ABOUT FIRST CHURCH

On May 15, we will be welcoming new members into the congregation. If you would like to explore becoming a member, or maybe just learn about First Church, please join us at noon on Sunday May 1 and Sunday May 8 for our two-part Inquirers' Gatherings. On May 1, we'll cover the basics of the Congregational faith tradition and First Church's wider church affiliations. Participants will have an opportunity to meet one another and go on a nooks-and-crannies tour of the building. The following Sunday, May 8, you'll learn more of First Church's history, how we function, and what God is calling us to do and be in the world around us. These will occur in person in the Upper Room.

Those who wish to will then have the opportunity to covenant in membership on Sunday, May 15, either of the 9am Celebrate or 11am Festival worship services.



Children's Ministries

Faith Formation Youth Groups

A YEAR-END CELEBRATION

As we draw nearer to the Semi-Annual Meeting, and with the end of the school year just around the corner, we are preparing to shift into our summer programming. This program year there have been so many fun opportunities for us to come together as a community with our children. We have enjoyed Sunday Children's Time, Youth Nights, and other events along the way. Thank you for all of your support and participation.

As we look forward to this summer with activities like summer camp and maybe even a day camp event here at First Church (teaser alert!), it's important that we not forget our final Youth Night in May before we break for summer.

Some of the children of our congregation were able to take advantage of the beautiful weather following our Senior Minister Recognition event on April 24



Our last Youth Night will be Sunday, May 15, 2022 at 4:30pm. We will gather in the garden (weather permitting) for a cookout, activities, and recognition of this year's volunteers. All children (aged 2-18) and their families are invited to join us in celebrating the wonderful year we have had as we anticipate all the promise the future holds. We hope to see you there!

LGBTQIA+ Support and Care



On Sunday evenings twice each month, from 6-7pm, members of the LGBTQIA+ community meet together in person 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 LGBTQIA+ Christians!

Please email facilitators Brenda Waddell and Tevin Tietje, cochristian@akronfcc.org, with any questions.

Recognition Recap

SEVEN YEARS OF SERVICE

On April 24, the First Church community gathered to lift up and celebrate the good works and accomplishments that have occurred since Senior Minister Nanette Pitt was called here in 2015.



Moderator Jim Gartner shared many of Pastor Nanette's achievements during the past seven years, and Vice Moderator Sue Yoder assisted with the reading of the Commendation received from Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive, and the Proclamation received from Daniel Horrigan, Mayor, City of Akron. Guests enjoyed viewing a video presentation created by Kellie Ramirez, containing many photos of activities and projects, as well as the well-wishes from many members and families. Pastor Nanette was presented with gifts from the congregation, as she shared her thanks and appreciation for the love and support that she has received during her tenure. It

was a joyous opportunity for our members new and old to meet and fellowship in person once again, while enjoying a delicious lunch.





Plant Sale and Makers' Market

SPRING PLANT SALE

The fourth annual Spring Plant Sale Fundraiser is fast approaching on May 21 and 22 at First Church! This fundraiser benefits the operation of the Feed My Sheep Garden. United Disability Services (UDS) volunteers and volunteers from the First Church community have been hard at work alongside the Feed My Sheep Garden crew to start seeds and tend seedlings. The sale includes vegetable garden seedlings, perennials, house plants, seeds, and more. Online preordering is available May 1 - 14 at <https://www.letsgrowakron.org>. Pick up orders and shop in person on May 21 and 22 at First Church.

MAKERS' MARKET

Additionally, on May 21 only, we will be hosting a Makers' Market where local business owners will be able to sell their products. The vendor fee is \$25 which includes space and a table. If you or someone you know are interested in selling your products at this market, or have any questions, let us know by contacting church@akronfcc.org.

4TH ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISER PLANT SALE

Bingo Night Thanks

First Church's first Bingo Night was a success thanks to the membership board and everyone who was able to attend. There were lots of laughs, plenty of fellowship, and hopefully a spark to make this an annual event.

May Mission of the Month

 Akron Area YMCA is our May Mission of the Month. The Akron Area YMCA was founded in 1870. Strengthening community is their cause. Every day, the Y works side by side with its neighbors to ensure that everyone regardless of age, income, or background has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. Areas of focus include youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. If you would like to add to our collective donation, designate a check or cash to our May Mission of the Month. You can also donate online at <https://www.akronfcc.org/donate>.



Garden Update

The Feed My Sheep Garden is bursting with life this May: the new life of annual vegetable seedlings germinating indoors under careful conditions, cold-hardy crops direct seeded in March and April, and the perennial plants which go dormant in the winter to be renewed each year. Rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries, and herbs such as thyme, oregano, lavender, and sage are among the edible perennial crops harvested from the garden in the spring for the Feeding Hope Food Pantry. These early crops help take the edge off the long wait for a summer garden tomato.

The seedlings destined for the plant sale begin to sprout because of the hard work of the garden crew who work every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday

Interested in getting involved? Volunteers are needed preparing for the Plant Sale and during the event (May 21 and 22), as well as throughout the gardening season. No experience necessary. Please contact sam@letsgrowakron.org or reach out to the First Church Office to join us!

Submitted by Sam Phillips, Garden Manager

May Birthdays

May 5
 Joe Black
May 7
 Duane Husted
 Howard Tolley
May 9
 Anna Weyrick
May 10
 Mark Hornak
May 11
 Sue Godard
May 14
 Linda Hultz
 Patty Noel
 Anita Rayburn
May 15
 Tiffani Akers
 Ann Snyder
May 16
 Jim Gartner
May 17
 Jamie Boyd
May 19
 Chris Becker
May 21
 Ed Wickline
May 22
 DeAnn Clemons
 Kevin Speight
May 23
 Margaret Canady
May 25
 Arthur Wallach
May 26
 Jay Hershey
 Jim Peshina
May 27
 Mary Ann Gray
 Matt Petras
 Jayne Stahr
May 28
 Katie Gamby
May 30
 Chelsea Weyand
May 31
 Ron Bof
 Chris Godard

March Financial Report (unaudited)

Actual Thru March, 2022

	March	March YTD	YTD Budget	Percent to Budget YTD
INCOME				
Pledge Income	\$7,586	\$82,685	\$141,667	58.4%
Non-pledge Income	\$8,203	\$102,000	\$77,468	131.7%
Grant Income	\$19,567	\$218,239	\$3,750	5819.7%
Food Pantry	\$2,092	\$23,877	\$24,167	98.8%
Other Special Ministries	\$615	\$3,315	\$2,750	120.5%
Endowment, Sparrows Trust, Pollock	\$48,045	\$480,688	\$504,202	95.3%
Rental and Food Service Income	\$1,101	\$16,442	\$21,667	75.9%
Other Income	\$160	-\$1,659	\$17,042	-9.7%
TOTAL	\$87,369	\$925,587	\$792,711	116.8%
EXPENSES				
Personnel	\$36,510	\$380,941	\$458,051	83.2%
Admin and Mktg	\$4,374	\$42,261	\$43,833	96.4%
Membership Board	\$250	\$5,853	\$5,833	100.3%
Governing Board	\$63	\$4,412	\$6,417	68.8%
Food Pantry	\$319	\$5,699	\$18,958	30.1%
Other Special Ministries	\$378	\$7,414	\$11,325	65.5%
Congregational Care	\$180	\$3,965	\$5,833	68.0%
Worship	\$3,630	\$28,433	\$23,883	119.1%
Fellowship Team	\$0	\$160	\$500	31.9%
Christian Education	\$38	\$1,175	\$5,593	21.0%
Development Team	\$0	\$231	\$167	138.4%
Food Service Expense	\$1,381	\$9,587	\$10,000	95.9%
Property Expense	\$34,689	\$454,054	\$409,250	110.9%
TOTAL	\$81,812	\$944,184	\$999,644	94.5%
Net Income/Loss	\$5,557	-\$18,597	-\$206,933	9.0%

Hearing Assistance Available

First Church now has a hearing loop in the Meetinghouse covering the lower seating area, the chancel, and the choir loft. This hearing loop will help those with hearing loss hear our services better. If you have a T-Coil equipped hearing aid, please switch your hearing device to the T setting. For those without hearing aids, wireless headsets are also available.

When you arrive for Sunday worship, or any event in the Meetinghouse, please see one of our AV techs at the back of the Meetinghouse for assistance with our new hearing assistance system.

A special thank you to the Building and Grounds board for approving a reallocation of funds which allowed this project to move forward.

The First Church Bell Choir performs *Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing* conducted by Christine Allison at the 11am Easter Festival Worship Service on April 17



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.

Butterscotch Sticky Rolls

Submitted by Grace Work

Ingredients:

Dough:

1 c water

1 egg

2 T margarine

2 1/2 tsp yeast

3 1/4 c bread flour

1/4 c sugar

1 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

Topping:

1 box butterscotch pudding

1 stick margarine

1 tsp cinnamon

3/4 c brown sugar, packed

Directions:

Grease a 10x15 inch cake pan. Make dough in bread machine. Set oven to 375 degrees. When ready, remove uncooked dough and roll into long cylinder. Cut into 20 1-inch slices. Cover bottom of greased pan with pecan halves if desired. Lay slices on top of pecans. Sprinkle slices with the dry butterscotch pudding mix. In saucepan, mix remaining topping ingredients and bring to boil then remove from heat. Pour over dough slices.

Let rise 25 minutes. Bake for 20-25 minutes.



THANK YOU.

In Gratitude

Thank you to everyone who donated candy for the Easter egg hunt on April 17 and everyone who helped stuff the eggs and manage the event itself. We couldn't have done it without you!

Dear First Church Staff,

On behalf of my entire family, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your help in preparing and hosting my sister's memorial service. The church and all staff and pastors were so very kind and welcoming! I appreciate all the work in planning and implementing a beautiful service and meal. Indeed, it's like coming home!

With heartfelt appreciation,

Jeanine Carroll

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 First Church community, we pray for Judy H., Nina R., Jake C., Ray Y., Sue T., Lisa K., Pam R., Shelby S., Maya P., Jay H., Ron and Pam B., Andrew C., Art and Lee W., Barbara S., Betty S., Bill F., Callahan H., Karen F., Mildred A., and Antigone P.

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

Charitable Giving Priorities

Priorities come in all different sizes from what do I need to accomplish today to what do I want to do with my life? But somewhere among your "big picture" priorities, everyone needs to stop and consider their charitable giving. Yes, your priorities – rent/mortgage, insurance, utilities, food, and clothing – should be calculated first, but you shouldn't let your charitable giving be an afterthought.

Start by deciding what type of charitable giver you want to be – would you rather support many organizations with small gifts or focus a few with larger gifts? Then, think about the types of causes that speak to you – do you care for homeless animals, feel strongly about needing research for a disease that plagued a loved one, want to support causes for the young or the elderly, or feel passionate about your spiritual home and what it is doing for the community? Now, identify the organizations that target the causes you believe in, and decide how you will be giving them support.

Never feel that your donation is too small to count! Every donation is important, and will help bring that organization one step closer to their goal. In years where you have been blessed with more to give, you can bless those causes as well at that time. If you have the opportunity to give a larger amount while you are alive, or through an estate gift or life insurance payout after you die, speak to a member of the cause you would like to gift about ways to designate your donation to make the most impact.

Supporting First Church through your charitable giving supports our priorities – the people who inquire, create and inspire, the place where we come together as a community and welcome others to learn and grow, and our future, where we teach the next generation about the blessings and beauty of God. Contact Finance and Operations Manager Janis Worley, janis.worley@akronfcc.org, 330.253.5109x111, to learn more about the giving opportunities at First Church.



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Celebrating Easter In Person Once Again!

