

The Messenger

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

December 2023

Bridge Interim Minister
Pastor Patty Humphress

Director, Christian Education
Mary Karlovec

Music Director
Barb Habecker

Moderator
Kris Dornan

Vice-Moderator
Diana Goode

Co-Chairs, Christian Education
Renee Dornan
Kelsey Styrt

Chair, Deacons

Chair, Outreach

Chair, Trustees
Paul Wolanski

Treasurer, Secretary
Linda Matis

From the Bridge Minister

“The best way to show my gratitude is to accept everything, even my problems, with joy.” ~ Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa, who wrote of her gratitude, was of Albanian descent and felt the call of God when she was 12 years old. She devoted herself to working among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. Her primary task was to love and care for those persons nobody was prepared to look after. She had no funds and said she depended on Divine Providence. During her lifetime, Mother Teresa became the world’s most recognizable symbol of selfless charity. (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/biographical/>) What a wonderful thing to be remembered for!

This season can be very stressful for some, for many, for most. It seems like there are so many things that need to be done in order to make this Christmas *the* “perfect” Christmas. It may sound trite, but as your pastor, I remind you that Jesus is the Reason for the Season. We can prepare all the right gifts, all the right food, all the right social engagements and decorations and Christmas cards and..., but if we have not prepared our hearts to receive the Christ child, born anew, then we are overloading ourselves with unnecessary stress and unbelievable commercialism.

I am delighted to be with you again this Advent season. A lot has changed in this past year for many of you, but one thing remains constant: God’s love for you. As we go through our time of thankfulness, know that I am grateful for you and the many ways you continue to carry Christ’s light into the world.

As we go through our time of preparation for the coming of God’s Son, I invite you to participate in worship each Sunday morning, to attend worship on Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m., and to find ways to be grateful in all things, so that you may know true joy.



We cannot all be Mother Teresa, but we can remember to share the light of Christ with those we meet, especially those who look like they have experienced Black Friday shopping ten times too many this year.

May you be blessed by your sharing, and less-stressed by your loving.

Peace,
Pastor Patty

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

As you are reading this, you are probably already aware that we are overjoyed that we have a seated pastor in place. I cannot wait for you to get to know Pastor Kearstin as I have in these next few weeks and months. In that spirit, I want to share a prayer for our new Pastor that I adapted from an open letter found on EnjoyingtheJourney.org:

Dear Pastor (Kearstin),

The last two years have been full of challenges that none of us have ever faced and few of us could have imagined. The physical, emotional, and spiritual toll has been great on so many. In retrospect, I feel that all of this was purposeful to prepare us for the transformation that I see at hand with our church moving forward and you in place as our pastor!

I believe that God will use you to comfort those who have lost loved ones, encourage the discouraged, counsel those seeking direction, and preach and teach the Word of God. Through this time, you have no doubt had your own fears and questions – and still have been faithful.

Thank you for modeling for us what it means to minister “in season, out of season”. Thank you for loving Jesus and loving our church. Thank you for your

capability that will point us to Christ when nothing else makes sense. Thank you for being hopeful when many only want to despair. Thank you for staying true to your call.

The Lord is with you and it is our privilege to serve God with you moving forward. We love you. Many are praying for you. Thank you for being my pastor,

A grateful church
member with Love,
Kris Dornan

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

The season of Advent...a time of waiting yet a season that for many of us always seems to become a stressful time of the year! This year, I hope that you take the time each day to enjoy “the waiting.” Again, this year, I will have 12 Advent bags available for the adults who would like to spend some time each day reflecting on the Advent season. There is a daily reflection journal, two Advent calendars with scriptures and one calendar for coloring each day, a prayer cube, an LED candle, and other supplies to help you along the journey. They will be available on December 3. If you would like one, there is a sign-up sheet outside the CE office. Families with children in grades 5 and younger will be receiving an Advent calendar with the traditional boxes to open to countdown the days until Christmas. Along with this is a sticker manger scene to add to each day. It is my hope that families take the time each day (even if it is only 5 minutes) to use the symbols and Bible verses to discuss as a family the Advent story.

On December 3 and 10 we will have regular Sunday School programming following young person's time in worship.

On **December 17** we invite those families who are interested to join us on a field trip to the **Botanical Gardens in Cleveland** for "FROST-An Ice Capped Garden Experience!" The cost for adults is \$26 and children 3-12 years is \$18 (if non-members of the Botanical Gardens) and \$12 adults and children \$9 (if member of the Gardens). Those under 3 are free! More information about this event can be found on the Botanical Garden website. We will leave the church at 11:30 am so bring a snack to eat as we travel to Cleveland. If your family is interested in going, reservations and fees must be turned in to me no later than December 10 so we can make our reservations. The gardens are open until 5 so you can explore as long as you want! Sunday School will be available that Sunday after young person's time as one group for those in grade 6 and below. There will be no Sunday School on December 24 or December 31.

Our youth will be painting two of the Sunday School rooms in January. If you have drop cloths, expertise in painting, rollers, paint brushes, or just want to help, the youth will be painting January 14 and January 28 during worship time. Just remember, many hands make light work!

THANK YOU to everyone who has supported the Clangy Change collection the first Sunday of each month. In 2023, the money collected has supported Community Care, the youth mission trip, the Colors+ center, the Easter and Christmas homebound projects, back to school supplies for Community Care, birthday bags, youth painting project, and Lotts Creek Community School. A small monthly outreach project that has had a HUGE impact on so many lives!

Finally, as we close out 2023, I cannot THANK the CE Board enough for their hard work and support this year. They made my two months off for surgery so much easier, supported the work of Christian Education at First Congregational and continuously gave of their time and talents. A special thank you to Millie Gilly as she leaves the board this year; she truly is an asset we will miss!

Merry Christmas and may 2024 be bright for our church!

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WANTED! Do you have a favorite Christmas cookie you bake? I am looking for nine bakers to donate a dozen of their favorite Christmas cookies to help fill the cookie boxes for our homebound members' stockings! I need them by Sunday, December 17! See me if you would be willing to donate a dozen!

### **Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer**

As a child, I looked forward to the after-Christmas classroom "Show & Tell" every year to show off my favorite Christmas gifts. The teachers always asked, "What did you receive this year?" The students' answers were always prefaced with, "I got...I got...I got..." The teachers never asked, "What did you GIVE this Christmas?" We are not born knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive. We learn that secret through a special kind of giving that is motivated by unselfish love, a giving straight from the heart.

The Community Care Giving Tree is up & provides a wonderful opportunity for you to GIVE this month. Our church has been asked to provide gifts for 25 children. **Unwrapped** gifts are due back at church **by Sunday, December 10.**

The Outreach Committee welcomed new committee member, Louise Barker, at the November meeting and we look forward to working with her. Here are some ways that our committee is GIVING this month: In addition to our usual \$100 monthly donation to Community Care, the committee voted to contribute an additional \$200 for food for Christmas dinners. We will also provide \$275 in Christmas gifts cards for our Community Care family. We voted to donate \$140 to Heifer International to cover the cost of a goat and a flock of chickens, as well.

We will continue celebrating the birthdays of our Community Care family in 2024 by providing a “birthday bag” containing cake mix, frosting, candles, etc., plus a \$25 gift or gift card for each of the seven children.

To be loved is the happiness of receiving; to love in return is the joy in giving. Together we can change, “I got...I got...I got...” to “I GAVE...I GAVE...I GAVE!” Merry Christmas, Lord!

### **Deacons’ Desk – Valerie Arnold** **Advent Sundays**

The Deacons are reaching out to families to light the Advent candles this season. I thought it might be nice to refresh our memories of what the candles symbolize.

The four candles of Advent represent the Sundays of Advent, and they respectively symbolize hope, peace, joy and love. The fifth candle we light on Christmas Eve during the evening service represents the birth of Jesus; this candle, when added to the Advent wreath, is white and larger than the other candles and is placed in the center of the wreath.

Advent candle Sundays, names, and colors

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent: Dec. 3 – Hope – Prophecy Candle – purple
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent: Dec. 10 – Peace – Bethlehem Candle – purple
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent: Dec. 17 – Joy – Shepherd’s Candle – pink
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent: Dec. 24 – Love – A Angel’s Candle – purple
- Christmas Eve: Dec 24 – Christ candle – white

The wreath is to remind us of both the immortality of our souls and God’s promise of everlasting life to us through Christ. The three purple candles represent penance, and the pink represents joy. Merry Christmas, everyone!

### **Trustees’ Turn – Paul Wolanski**

Hello, my family in Christ. Our new exterior mobile sign is up, and it looks great! Thank you to our donors and congregation for the finance. Thank you, Jack, for the purchase. Thank you, Roy and Jack, for the installation.

Cheetah Floors did an amazing job stripping and waxing the floors in Fellowship Hall, the kitchen, and bathrooms. Thank you, Linda, for keeping such great records and knowing who to call.

Thank you, congregation, for your amazing pledges for the upcoming year. Please turn them in if you have not already.

Finally, as I step down as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank Jack Fitts, Jon Eaton, Daryl VonBenken, Jamie Schupbach, and Linda Matis for your contributions and dedication over the last few years. Thank you, congregation, for allowing me to be Chairman. It was both an honor and a privilege.



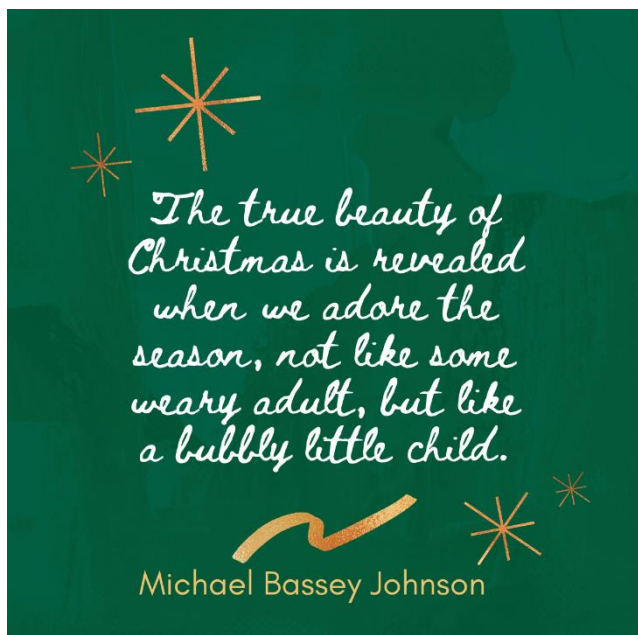
**Women's Book Club:** All gatherings are at the church at 7 pm unless noted.  
 December 18: The Christmas Bookshop by Jenny Colgan

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

- |       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| 12/4  | Roy Dreger           |
| 12/6  | Larry Mytnick        |
| 12/8  | Jack Fitts           |
| 12/12 | Kinzer Habecker      |
| 12/20 | Betty Fitts          |
| 12/22 | Jerry Henson         |
| 12/24 | Diane Feigi          |
| 12/26 | Lori Comerford       |
| 12/28 | Chris & Kari Dlugosz |

### Greeters

- |         |                                |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| Dec. 3  | Paula Dudek, Vonnie Packard    |
| Dec. 10 | Linda Matis, Paul Wolanski     |
| Dec. 17 | Lynne Petroff, Paula Dudek     |
| Dec. 24 | Regenia Comerford, Diana Goode |
| Dec. 31 | Paula Dudek, Vonnie Packard    |



| Sun                                                                                                                                                                                       | Mon                                                                        | Tue                                                                                          | Wed                                               | Thu                                               | Fri                                               | Sat                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                          |                                                                            |                                                                                              |                                                   |                                                   | <b>1</b><br>Craft show set up<br>6-8 pm           | <b>2</b><br>Craft show 9 am –<br>4 pm<br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>AA Couples 6 pm     |
| <b>3</b><br><b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent</b><br>Outreach 8:30 am @ Blue Sky<br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Communion<br>Deacons after worship svc.<br>Fellowship hour<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm | <b>4</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                              | <b>5</b><br>CE 6:30 pm @<br>Wolfey's<br>Trustees 7 pm<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8:30 pm | <b>6</b><br>Bell choir 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm   | <b>7</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm  | <b>8</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>  | <b>9</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>AA Couples 6 pm  |
| <b>10</b><br><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent</b><br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour<br>Holiday Music Festival 7 pm<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                           | <b>11</b><br>Council 7 pm<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                             | <b>12</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8:30 pm                                             | <b>13</b><br>Bell choir 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm  | <b>14</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | <b>15</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> | <b>16</b><br>Newsletter articles<br>due<br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>AA Couples 6 pm   |
| <b>17</b><br><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent</b><br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                          | <b>18</b><br>Women's book club<br>7 pm<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                | <b>19</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8:30 pm                                             | <b>20</b><br>Bell choir 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm  | <b>21</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | <b>22</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> | <b>23</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>AA Couples 6 pm |
| <b>24</b><br><b>Christmas Eve</b><br>Worship services 10:30 am & 7<br>pm<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                                            | <b>25</b><br><b>Christmas</b><br><b>OFFICE CLOSED</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm | <b>26</b><br><b>OFFICE CLOSED</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8:30 pm                     | <b>27</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> | <b>28</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | <b>29</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> | <b>30</b><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>AA Couples 6 pm |
| <b>31</b><br><b>New Year's Eve</b><br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                                           |                                                                            |                                                                                              |                                                   |                                                   |                                                   |                                                                                   |

