

The Community Messenger

September 2025

Erica Extemporaneous

When we gather as a congregation, as people of faith, to worship, our sanctuary is suffused with many things. Praise and prayer, song and silence, the Word and the world, coming together and creating an atmosphere that invites us to offer, before God and one another, both all that weighs heavily on our hearts and those things that fill us with joy impossible to contain. As someone called to lead worship, to choreograph, if you will, the components in such a way to best facilitate our work together, I particularly appreciate the song and the silence. They complement one another, making space to truly listen and hear what might not be said. In these moments, perhaps more so than any others, I feel able to worship authentically.

Recently, Rebecca played a beautiful piano piece for the offertory. It was quiet and understated, vaguely familiar while I couldn't quite place it, until I heard the gentle echo and filled in the words in the recesses of my mind: "Kum ba Yah, my Lord, Kum ba Yah.

"Kum ba Yah" is an African American spiritual thought to originate with the Gullah culture of the South Carolina and Georgia coast. It calls upon God to "come by here," offering hope and healing to all who stand in need. In my experience, this song has a tendency to be a bit divisive. There are many folks quite fond of it; its gentle cadence and plaintive plea can be comforting, an invitation to center one's self within God's grace. There are just as many folks who mock its simplicity, deriding it as sentimental claptrap.

When I was visiting schools with Master of Divinity programs, I always asked about the culture of the program. A weathered professor rather snidely informed me, "Well, we certainly don't sit around singing Kum ba Yah!" I did not end up attending that particular university, for a variety of reasons. But I assure you that my education was far more comprehensive than this gentleman intimated it might be.

"Someone's crying, Lord. Come by here." Wipe away their tears. Absorb a measure of their sadness, their anxiety, their anger. Come by here, Lord. Someone needs you. We all need you.

"Someone's singing, Lord. Come by here." Hear their song of praise, of thanksgiving, of sorrow, of joy. Someone is lifting up your name. Hear their voice, receive our gratitude. Come by here, Lord. Someone needs you. We all need you.

"Someone's praying, Lord. Come by here." Someone has opened their heart and mind, desperate to be filled with your grace, your peace, your presence. Come by here, Lord. Someone needs you. We all need you.

During my second year of the M. Div program at the University of Chicago, at the end of the day, just before retiring for the night, I would steal away to the Chapel of the Holy Grail for a time of prayer. (A benefit of living at Disciples Divinity House... a chapel just steps away from where we slept, and

studied, and shared meals.) I lit a small votive candle, training my gaze on the flame, fixing my focus. When there was nothing left to pray, nothing left to say, I sang ever so softly, “Kum ba Yah, my Lord, Kum ba Yah.” Sometimes tears filled my eyes. Sometimes joy filled my heart. Sometimes my shoulders sagged with the weight of all I was carrying. The refrain continues to echo. “... O Lord, come by here.”

I wonder... do you hear it, too?



Take good care,

Erica

Greetings from Gabby!

John Howland and I had so much fun at the Ice Cream Social last month. It was so special to see so many friends, old and new. And guess what? There's something else special that has been planned and we just can't wait! On September 7, 2025, we will celebrate Grandparents' Day. We hope that lots of our friends from the Learning Center will be there, too... along with their parents and grandparents. The Celebration Band will be there with special music. Since school will have started for everyone, we will bless everyone's backpacks and books. After worship, we will have Smokey's Autumn Festival... hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill and all of the goodies the grownups will bring for our potluck lunch. And then... carnival games and fun for everyone! You won't want to miss it!!



Your friends,
Gabby and John Howland



PEANUTS x American Red Cross

A little goes a long way.
Give blood.

Blood Drive

Howland Community Church
198 Niles-Cortland Rd., Warren, OH 44484

Tuesday, September 2, 2025
9:00am - 2:00pm

From the Open and Affirming Committee

The stone over our church's front door is inscribed "A House of Prayer for All People." HCC has welcomed all who are seeking a place of worship for almost 200 years. In light of this, some may question why a committee has been formed to explore HCC becoming "Open and Affirming."

Our openness to "all people" has traditionally been a passive role. Those who sought us out were warmly welcomed. But others who might have found a church home here were not actively sought after. We have done very little advertising to publicize our hospitality.

Many people are reluctant to attend churches for fear of how they may be received. This is especially true of the LGBTQA+ community, the Recovery community, and other marginalized groups. One of our committee members mentioned that many of their friends would never go to a church that didn't display a Pride flag.

Therefore, we hope to publicly name ourselves as an "Open and Affirming" congregation through a process of self-examination and education. One of the first steps in this process is to learn more about our present worship attendees. We will be offering you an opportunity to sit down one to one with a committee member and tell us more about yourself. We look forward to talking with you.

Respectfully, Alan Purdum

Grandparent's Day Word Search

Q J S B J L P R W V O Q L W L S A X L Z D D U A
 Q H Q R E V E E M I T T S E B C O T M L N V R H
 J S Y F G G J I X N T K W Y J X F V J X D R C L
 L N V L B W G M G I B M T P P F W H A U Q G C V
 L Z W I P G I E P Q N B R R W S E Z H Z X L K W
 L E I R J Y A R K J O X Q R D E D Y Q S J L B G
 G W Q E S X W N V K A J O K M I J P S A J P R W
 Q G R A N D P A A U N Y L E H K E A A O L C Z G
 Z Q G R K K F B H W S O M U A O H U G S H A V E
 K E Z X U B W I Z W V O M S T O R I E S E N D F
 R V T S A Z C O P I R U T M B C X J V P J D D V
 Q W J N R Z Q B N I G D O Q F Q X R Z R V Y A X
 A Z P K V V E G E L K K J P V T X C U Y H A U N
 S M Q F I S E S V M N T Z H W M C I B D C S F A
 G M N Z O R C M Q Y Y R Q F U K O J E A D A F F
 Y R M B I Z I B H O J F J K A G X M R O C H J D
 F K P O T C A O H G W F Q Y A L P I D E X W F D
 M H E C E Y E L T Z A K C H R R N H I N X R M E
 G I G X J V L O F J B U A J M G A Q J G A M C B
 Z N D U N W Y I S O A S F U L P K E P I V R T Z
 H N E F A S C K O I C J H P P R W Y L K P I G R
 D B L Z B L K K V X S R J Y F S E Q Y W U Q Z P
 W N S B T Q S H M O G C W G I O W R M H X O L M
 K V A H S B O F D R G B W Z L J C G E X C O L A

BEST TIME EVER BOOKS CANDY CARING COOKIES GRANDMOM
 GRANDPA HAPPY HUGS LAUGH LOVING MEMORIES PLAY
 STORIES TOYS

The new school year has begun for our HCC Learning Center and they have created an Amazon Wishlist to assist with Back to School supplies for the teachers and little ones. If you wish to donate, please scan the QR code to be directed to their wishlist. In addition, if you prefer to make a monetary donation, you may do so through the church office. Thank you in advance for your generosity with this endeavor!



HCC Learning Center's Back to School Wishlist

198 NILES CORTLAND RD SE
WARREN, OH 44484




330-856-7218

Diaconate and Elders' Schedules – September

Date	Elder	Diaconate Sanctuary (All Month)	Diaconate Kitchen (All Month)
September 7	Jeffrey Morrison	Becky Philbin -Captain	Sanctuary Linda Raphoon
September 14	Dawn Adgate	Linda Raphoon	
September 21	Sarah Sanders	Krystal Moison	JHR Jane Walters
September 28	Barb Layfield	Dan Moison	

News from the Official Board

The following actions were taken at the August meeting of the HCC Official Board:

1. At the recommendation of the Trustees, after consulting with the Finance Committee and the Endowment Board, the Board endorsed the expenditure of \$21,000 from the Endowment Fund to replace the air-conditioning units for the John Howland Room and Robert Taylor Chapel. **The final approval for this expense will be decided by a vote of the Congregation following worship on Sunday, September 14, 2025.**
2. A Tech Committee was formed to address issues with the church's Wi-Fi and computer systems.
3. After a very positive first meeting, the Open and Affirming Committee will continue leading the congregation toward a vote to become an Open and Affirming Congregation. More information will be forthcoming, and questions or concerns may be directed to Alan Purdum.

OPERATION SHOELEATHER

OPERATION SHOELEATHER WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL! Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to purchase forty \$25 gift cards. When I delivered these cards to the Salvation Army, their director told me that several families had called to ask about receiving some assistance with shoes. Forty children are smiling tonight because of your charitability.



Linda Hitmar



Card/Game Night

Come share in the fun! The Card/Game Club will be meeting on **Thursday, September 11 at 7pm in the John Howland Room.** Hope to see you there!

Lectionary for September 2025

September 7, 2025

Jeremiah 18:1-11
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Psalm 1
Philemon 121
Luke 14:25-33

September 14, 2025

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28
Exodus 32:7-14
Psalm 14
Psalm 51:1-10
1 Timothy 1:12-17
Luke 15:1-10

September 21, 2025

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1
Amos 8:4-7
Psalm 79:1-9
Psalm 113
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Luke 16:1-13

September 28, 2025

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 615
Amos 6:1a, 4-7
Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16
Psalm 146
1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31



CLIENT CHOICE FOOD PANTRY

Our September food pantry is scheduled for Friday the 19th, between the hours of 3-5 pm. We expect to have a food delivery on Thursday, the 18th and would appreciate some assistance with unloading, and stocking shelves. Our exact time won't be known until one week prior. We've had a somewhat smaller than usual number of families coming in during the summer, but we expect those numbers to increase this fall. **PLEASE CONTINUE TO BRING IN YOUR EMPTY EGG CARTONS.** You may place them in the basket near the office entrance. Many thanks~Linda Hitmar

Thank you

The Moison family wishes to express their heartfelt thanks for the thoughts, prayers, cards, service and luncheon honoring the life of Daniel G. Moison, Sr. The outpouring of kindness was greatly appreciated.

Operating Fund

	July Activity	YTD Balance	Budget YTD
Income	\$19,127.69	\$161,304.93	\$158,653.00
Expenses	\$21,097.15	\$162,970.27	\$158,409.00
Difference	-\$1,969.46	-\$1665.34	\$244.00

September - HCC Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 LABOR DAY Office Closed 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	2 6 PM Trustees	3	4	5	6 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
7 10 AM Worship GRANDPARENT'S DAY & SMOKEY'S AUTUMN FESTIVAL	8 6 PM Open & Affirming Comm. 7 PM Elders 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	9	10 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	11 7PM Card/Game Club (JHR)	12	13 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
14 10 AM Worship CONGREGATIONAL MEETING Noisy Coin Offering	15 6:30 PM Finance 7 PM Official Board 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	16	17 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	18 6-8 PM Girl Scouts (NH)	19 3-5 PM Client Choice Food Pantry	20 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
21 10 AM Worship	22 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	23	24 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	25	26	27 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)
28 10 AM Worship	29 7 PM Boy Scouts (NH)	30	27 1 PM Women's Group (JHR)	28 6-8 PM Girl Scouts (NH)	29	30 11 AM – 12:30 PM Free Fellowship Meal (SH) 1 PM NA (NH) 6 PM AA (NH)

September Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dylan Bickerstaff	2	Daniel Moison II	14	Judi Matyas	24
Tracy & Becky Vandegrift	2	Walker Francis	14	Nate Rollison	26
Mark & Amy Waid	2	Robbie Talkington	16	Nicole Lewis	27
Jay Christy	3	Hank & Kathy Kalmar	20	Jacqueline Morrison	28
Debbie Williams	7	Dave Yeropoli	21	Terry Garlock	29
Hank Kalmar	11	Linda Raphoon	22		
Cookie Jones	13	Ellen Cufu	24		

Please note: If you fail to see your birthday/anniversary listed, please contact the church office at 330-856-3628 so that we may update our information. Thank you!



HOWLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH
 198 Niles Cortland Rd. S.E.
 Warren, Ohio 44484

WE'RE ON THE WEB:
 HOWLANDCOMMUNITYCHURCH.ORG

E-mail: hccced@gmail.com

Phone: 330-856-3628

Fax: 330-856-4496

September

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 PERMIT No. 163
 Youngstown, OH

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Reverend Erica L. Brown, Senior Minister
 Andrew Purdum, Director of Music
 Rebecca Shelton, Organist
 Minta Pitts, Custodian
 Diane Andrews, Office Coordinator
 Alan Purdum, Chair of the Congregation
 Sarah Sanders, Vice-Chair of the Congregation

The Community Messenger is the monthly newsletter of the **Howland Community Church** (affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Church of Christ, and the International Council of Community Churches). Our church is “**A House of Prayer for All People.**” We offer Sunday School for children and a fellowship gathering after Worship. Communion is served every Sunday.

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

