

The Messenger

April 2025

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

Minister

Rev. Kearstin Bailey
PastorFCCNR@gmail.com

Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

Barb Habecker

Moderator

Kris Dornan

Vice-Moderator

Diana Goode

Co-Chairs, Christian Education

Renee Dornan
Kelsey Styrt

Acting Chair, Deacons

Karen Dreger

Acting Chair, Outreach

Edie Phillips

Co-Chairs, Trustees

Roy Dreger
Jack Fitts

Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

I've been thinking a lot about words over the last month. Which probably isn't surprising since I'm a pastor and I spend a lot of time reading, writing, and trying to get the phrasing of things juuuust right. There's a lot of research out there about how the words that we use have an enormous impact on the realities that we live in. And so, as we head into April and prepare for the Easter season of resurrection, I wonder what things we've maybe written off with our words when what they really need is space to resurrect?

For example, many white mainline Protestant churches loudly bemoan the fact that "the church is dying." But what if instead of dying, the church of today is trying to transform and resurrect into something new, and we keep killing it off with our set narrative and words of decline. After all, the church universal is not dying — churches in South America and Africa are growing at astounding rates. Churches here in the US that lean more evangelical and pentecostal are gaining new members all the time.

I wonder if the church is trying to tell us something and we're just too set in our own stories and language to really notice what's happening. Folks say "the church is dying" and yet we welcomed six incredible new members into our folds just last month. "The church is dying" but when we have bible studies, 30% of the folks who come are community members outside of FCC who are just interested in what we're talking about. "The church is dying" but when we put on events that are open to the community (like the Easter Egg Hunt or Trunk-or-Treat), people show up in droves and we're amazed at the numbers!

So as we edge closer to Easter and the joyful news of the resurrection, I encourage you to think about the stories we tell about the church and the language that we use to tell them, whether that's "The church is dying" or something else. Are those stories even true, or have we just been telling them for so long that it's become second nature to us? Maybe it's time to let go of the language that's holding us back and make space for what Spirit is calling us to in this season of our life together.

After all, we are resurrection people :)



Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Lenten Greetings, church family! As we await a big change of seasons here in the Cleveland area (Come on, Spring!!), we are actively in a big church season, that of Lent!

Historically for me, I seem to remember most conversations I've had on the topic revolve around what we would like to give up for the season. I can't share much myself because, honestly, I'm not the best follow-through person with giving up things (food, etc.). However, as I believe Pastor Kearstin has mentioned, the focus of Lent is how you can make a bit more time for God in your lives.

For someone who is challenged in giving things up, I am lifted by the fact that I can focus on how I can give more in my spiritual life without beating myself up. If you are like me, take these thoughts and blessings to heart! Focus on more God, instead of less (fill in the blank).

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Spring has sprung and with it lots is happening in Christian Education! On Sunday, April 6 we are sponsoring a **Cake Walk** during coffee hour to support our youth and adults going to Lotts Creek on their annual mission trip this summer. Come join the fun and you may be going home with a delicious cake or bakery item. Thank you, Sandy Chalkwater for organizing this **FUN** fundraiser and everyone who has volunteered to donate a cake or bakery item!

On Saturday, April 12 from 3-4:30 pm we will have our annual **Easter Egg Hunt!** We have opened this event up to our community but we are asking for people to register online so we have enough supplies on hand. Our limit will be

75 participants as space and supplies needed must be considered. So make sure you check out the church website for registration.



There will be three egg hunts based on ages:

3:10-3:20 ages 5 and under

3:30-3:40 kindergarten through 2nd grade

3:50-4:00 3rd grade through age 12

(Times are approximate.)

There will be crafts available for kids to do while they wait for their egg hunt.

A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who has donated **individually wrapped candy** (must fit into the plastic egg). We have 1000 eggs to fill so we are still in need of candy! You can drop it off in the container in my office until April 1. We also need **volunteers** to help on the day of the event from 2:30-4:30. We need adults to oversee the craft tables, help with parking, and the egg hunt. There is a sign-up sheet outside my office. Please consider volunteering!

Clangy change for March supported the **birthday bags** for Community Care. I was able to build 12 bags with the clangy change; and through many people's generous support, many more have been delivered to my office. If you are building a birthday bag or two, they need to be delivered to my office by April 1. Again, a **HUGE THANK YOU** for supporting this outreach project.

Our April **clangy change** collection will support purchasing supplies for our shut-ins Easter bags. The bags will be ready by Palm Sunday. If you are willing to deliver one or two bags, please see me. Our shut-ins love getting our treats but REALLY love the visits from our church members.

Just a reminder that there is no Sunday School on Easter Sunday but materials will be available for children to work on in worship. The nursery will be available for our "littles."

Happy Easter!



Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

Even as I watch the snow falling this morning (written March 6), faith assures me that beneath the frozen earth, the dormant but still living roots are waiting for the warmth of the sun

to return to life. The long winter is only a pause for resting and God's promise of eternal life will soon be evident in the resurrection of blades of grass, flowers, and the leaves of trees. I wait with great anticipation for the promise of Spring.

Sharing His promise with others is the mission of the Outreach Committee. We are donating \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance this month. We are putting together an Easter basket of small toys, candy, and a \$50 gift card for our Community Care family, as well as providing birthday bags containing cake mix, frosting, candles, paper plates, napkins, cups, decorations, and a small gift for two of the children with April birthdays.

We have arranged for **One World Shop** to once again bring its mobile store to our fellowship hall on Sunday, April 27 in time for some Mother's Day shopping. We have also scheduled a "**Dine to Donate**" event at the Avon Applebee's for Thursday, June 5. Fifteen percent of our meal checks will be donated to our church to support the youth mission trip to Lotts Creek. Flyers to present at the restaurant will be available closer to the date. This promises to be a fun and, hopefully, profitable event!

Christ proclaimed that first Easter, "I am the Resurrection." May we, like the leaves that reach for the light, reach for You and the promise of Easter.

Deacons' Desk – Linda Matis

In March we welcomed six new members into the membership First Congregational Church. Since spring is a time of new growth, the timing seems so appropriate with spring arriving shortly thereafter. It was a joyous day and we are so glad to have them be "officially" part of our church family!! You can read a little about each of them later in this newsletter.

With six new members in our community now is a great time to remind everyone to **wear your nametags** during worship services. It will make it easier for everyone to recognize and

greet one another without having to awkwardly say, "Hello....you!"

This is another busy time of the year for the Board of Deacons. Besides working with Pastor Kearstin on the new members' service, we also had a very meaningful Ash Wednesday service, and are getting ready for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and two services on Easter Sunday. We have also been working on some ideas for special speakers during coffee hour (such as mental health, dementia, health and safety) and some creative worship ideas (such as who/what/where is the mission work of the UCC/FCC?). If you have any ideas for either special speakers or creative worship, please contact a member of the Deacons or Pastor Kearstin.

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

The trustees did not have a quorum for the March meeting so anything that required a vote could not be motioned on. However, that did not stop the three of us that did attend from talking about things.

The first thing I want to mention is that fellowship hall (actually, its name is Whitcomb Hall) has been painted. There is a lingering "new paint" smell which will be around for a while; however, it looks much better. Thanks to Linda for dealing with the painters. Without her we might still be waiting for the painting to be started and the curtains to be put up. A HUGE thank you goes out to Pat Kyle whose generous donation made the renovation project possible.

We are, as of this writing, still without a custodian. Please, if you know of someone who might be looking for a part-time job, let them know about this position. It is not one that Linda or I have in our job description and the added burden makes it difficult to accomplish other things that need attention. Thanks once again go out to Linda and her family for their help in setting up for coffee



hours, the Swiss Steak Dinner, and other activities, and also to George Beers and Denise Speer for volunteering to help with the trash. As a side note, because of the added time necessary to do the custodial work, the Ring cameras have not yet been mounted.

There is no need for new carpet in Linda's office to replace the old, torn carpet thanks to the Anderson family. They will be donating some plank flooring and Bill Anderson will be doing the work at some point in the future putting it down. Many thanks to Jenn and Bill for their donation of time and materials. If you have already donated to the carpet fund, perhaps you would like to put your donation towards having the floor in fellowship hall professionally cleaned and waxed. Due to the need for additional paint, the work came in over the amount originally quoted, so the remaining funds that we were going to use to have the floor done won't go as far as we thought. And those carpet donations would help to offset the cost of floor cleaning and waxing. If you would rather have your donation go to some other fund or program, please let us know so that we can transfer your donation, otherwise it will be used for the fellowship hall floor. Either way, if you made a donation towards carpeting, please let us know what you want done with it.

Speaking of carpet, Krista O'Neill and her son Tim have volunteered their time and equipment to clean the carpet in the nursery. Even if the stains on the carpet are set and won't clean up, they will at least be clean stains!

As always, thank you for your faithful financial support of your church!

GREETERS

April	
6	Paul Wolanski, Millie Gilly
13	Paula Dudek, Sara Bowman
20	Lynne Petroff, Jane Woravka
27	George Beers, Diana Goode
May	
4	Teri Loy, Millie Gilly
11	Paul Wolanski, Paula Dudek
18	Sara Bowman, Lynne Petroff
25	Jane Woravka, George Beers

NURSERY

April	
6	Nancy Findlay
13	Millie Gilly
20	Denise Speer
27	Lynne Petroff



Birthdays & Anniversaries

4/1	Krista O'Neill
4/4	Tim O'Neill
4/8	Paula Dudek
4/15	Catherine Craigs
4/15	Beckie Schupbach
4/15	Heather Smith
4/16	John Petroff
4/18	Cate Dornan
4/18	Matt Dornan
4/22	Nellie Carr
4/23	Brian Zinsmeister
4/30	June Yost

4/15 Andy & Shirley Sunyak

4/28 Jim & June Yost

Women's Book Club: All gatherings are at the church at 7 p.m. unless noted otherwise.

April 21: The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult

May 19: Then She Was Gone by Lisa Jewell



"Set it and forget it!"

You may remember that tagline from Ron

Popeil and Ronco's Showtime Rotisserie infomercial in the late 1990's. Now you can "set

it and forget it" with your online giving! Create an account, set up your recurring giving, and you don't have to worry about remembering to bring or send in your weekly/monthly donation. It's easy to do but if you run into any problems, contact Linda or Pastor Kearstin and they will help you "set it and forget it".

Scan the QR code to go to the First Congregational Church Tithely Giving page!



Tithely Giving is an easy-to-use platform that will allow you to give online and on your phone. You can make both one-time and recurring gifts, give with a credit/debit card or ACH transaction, and even Cover the Fees (which will help your gift go even farther!) Your financial partnership helps us to grow as a vibrant and diverse community, with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity! Thank you for your generosity!



CJ Frank grew up Lutheran and, after some intentional time away from church life, he felt a nudge from Spirit to find a faith community that better aligned with his morals and values. After attending a UCC church in Oberlin, CJ realized that he needed a community a little closer to home. FCC is just a quick 5-minute drive for him, so he decided to give us a try. CJ's first Sunday

here was Pajama Sunday back in January and with that kind of introduction to the church, he realized he was right where he was meant to be.

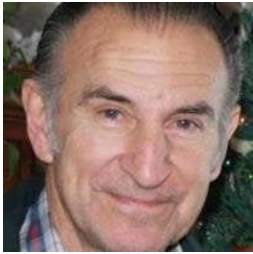
Kaylee and Hanna Neumeister have an eight-year-old daughter, **Aleah**, and they recently moved back home to Ohio from North Carolina to be closer to their families. When they moved back to Ohio, they wanted to find a church that not only accepted their family, but that also felt like a family. FCC was recommended to them by others (they saw the article about us in the Chronicle Telegram last year) and they couldn't be happier here. A few things that bring their family joy include being outside, watching movies, going out for ice cream, and spending time with all of their extended family. Outside of their hobbies, Kaylee is a chemical engineer at Sherwin Williams and Hanna is a kindergarten teacher.

Michael and Melissa Moyseenko met in Bryan, Ohio when Michael was in his second year of teaching and Melissa was living in her home town for a gap year. They bonded over their love of music, theatre, and high fantasy movies and television. They soon moved to Akron for Melissa to pursue her master's degree in arts administration, where they also got engaged during a production of "Into the Woods" in which Melissa was playing Cinderella and Michael was playing Cinderella's Prince. Michael got a job as Avon High School's Choir Director so they packed up and moved to Avon where they also got their first dog together, Coda. They soon welcomed **Charlotte Marie** into their family and moved to North Ridgeville. After attending a nondenominational church for most of their time in Avon, they decided it was time to find a community that better aligned with their personal values. Melissa saw that an old sorority sister from her undergrad was going to be moving to the area to be the pastor of a UCC congregation and they thought they would check it out. They immediately felt welcomed and comfortable with the First Congregational

community (especially Charlotte who was running and dancing up and down the aisles by their second visit). They are so thankful to have found an open and affirming spiritual community to raise their growing family with.

Did you know **Ki Ki Witter**'s given name is actually Naomi? Yes indeed! Ki Ki is a nickname that she uses with family and friends, and she goes by Naomi in professional situations and when meeting new folks. Ki Ki was born and raised in Lorain and after college, she and her husband moved to Wisconsin. Ki Ki has three children: a daughter in Wisconsin, a daughter in California, and a son in Michigan. Ki Ki and her spouse divorced when the kids were grown and in 2018 she moved back to Ohio after 45 years away to care for her mother, who was living alone with dementia. Her professional background as a nurse allowed her to care for her mother well in the last years of her life. Ki Ki ultimately decided to make North Ridgeville her permanent home mainly due to how welcoming the community here at First Congregational has been with her. She looks forward to continuing her journey with FCC and changing her status from "permanent visitor" to "member."

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Lawrence "Larry" W. Mytnick, age 82, of North Ridgeville, passed away peacefully on Monday, March 10, 2025, at Danbury North Ridgeville. He was born in Cleveland and had been a proud resident of North Ridgeville since 1966. Larry was a dedicated member of First Congregational Church. Larry enjoyed a variety of activities, including fishing, golfing, bowling, and camping. He also found joy in coaching Little League and was a passionate Cleveland sports fan. Above all, Larry cherished spending time with his family. He is survived by his loving wife of 61 years and high school sweetheart, Karen; children Larry (Patty) Mytnick, Mike (Jolynn) Mytnick, and

Kelley (Danny) Feierabend, all of North Ridgeville; grandchildren Johnny, Michelle (Chris), David, Michael, Cierra (Cory), Matthew, and Macey; as well as five great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his siblings Donna Brown, Daniel (Bonnie) Mytnick, and Gail (Sam) Capasso; many nieces, nephews, and extended family. Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Theodore and Irene Mytnick.



## Holy Week

Palm Sunday – April 13

Service at 10:30 am

Maundy Thursday – April 17

Service at 7:00 pm

Easter Sunday – April 20

Early service at 8:00 am

Followed by Easter breakfast

Easter service at 10:30 am

Join us for a fun and delicious  
**CAKEWALK** to benefit our youth!

April 6th in Fellowship Hall  
following worship

Ticket Prices (available for purchase  
at the door):  
\$1.00 each  
\$5.00 for 7 for participants  
\$5.00 for 10 for bakers/doners

Sign-up sheet located outside of  
Mary's office

Proceeds will benefit  
our youth on their  
mission trip to Lotts  
Creek this summer



| Sun                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Mon                                                             | Tue                                                                                    | Wed                                                                                             | Thu                                                                                      | Fri                                                     | Sat                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                 | <b>1</b><br><b>CE 7 pm</b><br><b>Trustees 7 pm</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm | <b>2</b><br><b>Handbells 6:30 pm</b><br><b>Choir 7:30 pm</b>                                    | <b>3</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                         | <b>4</b><br><br>                                        | <b>5</b><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                 |                                                                                        |                                                                                                 | Pr. Kearstin Global Ministries Mtg. Cleveland                                            |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>6</b> <b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent</b><br><b>Outreach 9 am</b><br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Communion</b><br><b>Clangy change collection</b><br><b>Cake Walk</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                        | <b>7</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                   | <b>8</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                           | <b>9</b><br><b>Handbells 6:30 pm</b><br><b>Choir 7:30 pm</b><br><br>4-H 7 pm                    | <b>10</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                        | <b>11</b><br><br>                                       | <b>12</b><br><b>Easter egg hunt &amp; crafts 3-4:30 pm</b><br><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p |
| <b>13</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b><br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Fellowship hour</b><br><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                             | <b>14</b><br><b>Council 7 pm</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm           | <b>15</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                          | <b>16</b><br><b>Newsletter articles due</b><br><b>Handbells 6:30 pm</b><br><b>Choir 7:30 pm</b> | <b>17</b><br><b>Maundy Thursday Service 7 pm</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | <b>18</b><br><b>Good Friday</b><br><b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> | <b>19</b><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>20</b> <b>Easter</b><br><b>Worship 8 am &amp; 10:30 am</b><br><b>Easter breakfast after 8 am service</b><br><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm | <b>21</b><br><b>Women's book club 7 pm</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm | <b>22</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                          | <b>23</b><br><b>Handbells 6:30 pm</b><br><b>Choir 7:30 pm</b><br><br>4-H 7 pm                   | <b>24</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                        | <b>25</b><br><br>                                       | <b>26</b><br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>27</b><br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>One World Shop 11a-1p</b><br><b>Fellowship hour</b><br><b>Deacons 11:30 am</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                          | <b>28</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                  | <b>29</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                          | <b>30</b><br><b>Handbells 6:30 pm</b><br><b>Choir 7:30 pm</b>                                   |     |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                |