

The Messenger

July 2025

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

Minister

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Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

Music Director

Barb Habecker

Moderator

Kris Dornan

Vice-Moderator

Diana Goode

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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)

Each Sunday, after the sermon and the prayers of the people, we as a church offer up our monetary gifts to the life of the church. Many members and regular visitors fill out a pledge card for the year so that we can budget the ministries of the church accordingly. Some folks toss in whatever spare change they have, or whatever excess they have in their wallet from dinner last night. We cherish these sacred offerings of your money; it's a testament to the trust we have in one another that you donate each week and you know that we will steward your financial gifts well to care for our community and the wider world.

But did you know that there are a number of other ways to support the ongoing work of FCC in the community? Don't get me wrong; we are always thrilled to receive financial gifts! However, there are so many other ways to uplift our ministry together. Let's go through a few of them.

1. Perhaps you're a creative soul, and you've noticed our colorful banners in the sanctuary and you've been wondering lately how you could add your own flair to worship. Check in with the **Deacons** committee, led by **Karen Dreger**. They're the folks who help decorate the sanctuary and always make sure that our fabrics are the right color for the liturgical season. Maybe you have a lovely flower garden and you could bring in a bouquet for the altar, or you've been wanting to make a large banner for the wall, or you'd like to help "zhuzh"-up a creative display for the front of the sanctuary. Let Karen know the gifts and talents that you bring to the table, and we can think creatively about how to bring them to life in our shared worship space!
2. Maybe you're a handy person who's noticed a few small things around the church that have made you wonder, "Why haven't they just fixed that / installed that / etc.?" It's likely because we're at capacity right now, but we would love your help! Check in with the **Trustees** committee, led by **Roy Dreger**, and they can get you sorted by matching your DIY skills with our needs. Some current examples: We'd love to get a changing table installed in the all-gender restroom outside the sanctuary, and it would be fantastic to get a few cameras



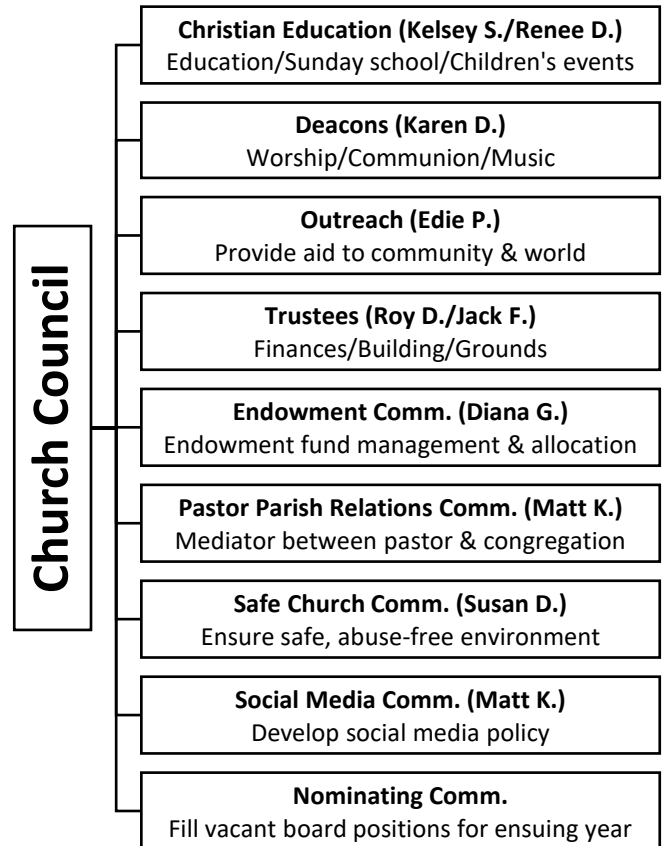
installed at the entrances to the church. If these are in your wheelhouse, let our trustees know!

3. Possibly, you've seen a larger need and you would like to gift the church a service, like someone to plant native flowers in our flowerbeds, or to tidy up or refinish something in particular. Incredible! Let the **Trustees**, led by **Roy**, know what you're thinking. They'll talk about it as a committee and make sure that your generous gift will be well-used and then help you get everything all set up and scheduled!
4. Perhaps you're a social butterfly who is well-connected in the community, and you have ideas for how we can better connect with a festival or event, or for new fundraisers to support our ministry. Wonderful! Talk to someone on the church **Council**, led by **Kris Dornan**, and they can point you in the right direction. Likely, you'll be invited to come to a council meeting to talk through your idea and then you'll be encouraged to run with it, maybe supported by a church committee if that's helpful.

One of the things I adore most about the UCC is our non-hierarchical structure. By that I mean that, as a denomination and as a local church, we are much more concerned with creatively working together as Spirit leads us, rather than trying to enforce a top-down leadership model. Anyone at FCC can start an initiative, plan an event, or ideate on how we can best show up for the wider community. If God is calling you to something in particular, we want to support you in exploring that!

As always, if you ever want to chat about God's presence in your life and what They might be calling you to in this particular season, I would love to sit down with you. :)

Every Blessing,
Pastor Kearstin



Summer Series: Spiritual Practices Beyond the Church

Over the summer months, Pastor Kearstin will be exploring spiritual meaning-making systems through a progressive Christian lens. Have you ever been curious about how Human Design, astrology, or tarot might compliment your faith? Let's explore it together!

Human Design 102 will take place on Tuesday, July 8 at 7 pm at the church. The folks who gathered for the Human Design 101 workshop last month loved it so much that they asked to dive in a little deeper. This workshop will be all about the basics of the 9 centers in Human Design and will build on what we learned at the first workshop in June. RSVP at <https://partiful.com/e/hqWC1sL7Vci5Gt0Qkcas>

Tarot 101 will take place on Friday, July 25 at 7 pm at the church. This workshop is for anybody who has ever been curious about tarot, folks who might be hesitant, or those who have a lot of questions! Pastor Kearstin will cover the

basics: what's in a deck, the overarching story of the tarot, how tarot can be used as a Christian discernment practice, and more. There will be time for Q & A and exploring some of Pastor Kearstin's tarot decks. RSVP at

<https://partiful.com/e/ObXBehamwPJhYfKTrJxU>

Astrology 101 will take place on Friday, August 1 at 7 pm at the church. If you've ever looked up at the moon, or a meteor shower, or a constellation and felt a sense of awe — this is for you. We'll start with the basics of Hellenistic astrology, learning about how it connects to Christianity, what the signs of the Zodiac mean, and what the planets symbolize. This workshop will help us swim in the cosmic waters of creation with more care and attention. RSVP at <https://partiful.com/e/yAeat3Y6Ma35SOKmXAdk>

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

I thought I'd spend a few moments this month to give an in-depth perspective on Lotts Creek, a community our youth (and myself) have had the privilege to support for many, MANY years!

Lotts Creek is an area that you may not even find on many maps. It's hidden in the mountains of Kentucky, probably 40-50 miles away from modern civilization. It's an area where there are many in need, but those people will give what they have and give it with a smile on their face. It's an area that has faced devastating impacts on their community through mining of materials in the mountains. It's sort of a double-edged sword....mining brings jobs but also brings severe impacts to the environment. Even though mining of coal, etc., has waned, mining of rare earth materials is on the horizon and future of the community.

The history of the area is very exciting and informative. The "hollers" of the area were historically occupied by male dominated workforce, where women were supposed to be uneducated and meant for child rearing only. Enter Alice Sloan, a woman who came to the

area with a plan to educate the young, and primarily women, which was unheard of and unwelcome in many of the areas. Her strength and determination to change the area were even the stories that movies were made of. Her relative Alice Whitaker took that baton and until just recently, (Alice Whitaker passed within the last few months), was a force that helped put the community, the school, and the area on the map.

This year, when we arrived, we were faced with an unknown status, and unknown future on how the area will respond to the loss of an icon. We pray and hope that we can continue to work to support a community that is still in constant need of support and love. Keep the Lotts Creek community in your thoughts and prayer, and we will look forward to sharing our 2025 Lotts Creek experience with you, our church family, in July!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

As you read this, six of us are just returning from our mission trip to Lotts Creek. Many, *many* thanks to everyone who supported this trip. We will be sharing with you our thoughts and adventures from our time in Lotts Creek during worship on July 13. A huge thank you to Kris Dornan for his support, time and talents while accompanying me on this trip. Driving a 15-passenger van on the winding roads of Kentucky is an experience in itself!

Our June clanging change was used to buy peanut butter and jelly to support Community Care this summer. I delivered 35 jars of peanut butter and 30 jars of jelly to them in the second week of June. Our next clanging change Sunday is **July 6**. Our funds will support **Fido's Companion**

Rescue. Fido's Companion is a non-profit organization dedicated to rescuing sick, injured, and elderly dogs who would otherwise face euthanasia. One of the organization's most cherished efforts is its



palliative care program, which provides over 35 dogs the chance to live out their lives in loving foster homes. Fido's Companion covers all medical expenses, food, and other necessities for these dogs, ensuring they receive the comfort and dignity they deserve in their final years. Our clanging change offerings are truly making a BIG difference!

I am looking for volunteers for summer nursery care. If you are willing to donate your time for a Sunday in July or August, there is a sign-up sheet on the nursery door. I am also looking for Sunday School teachers for the '25-'26 school year. The



curriculum is very user friendly, and the kids really enjoy it. We are in need of teachers to job share on a rotation for the following classrooms:

- **Preschool-kindergarten:** *2 teachers needed*
- **Grades 1-3:** *2 teachers needed*
- **Grades 4-6:** *2 teachers needed*
- **Youth (grade 7 & up):** *1-2 teachers needed*

Please see me with your questions and willingness to be a teacher and share God's story!

Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

Have you ever caught yourself "doomscrolling" through social media posts, finding evidence that the world we live in is only one of darkness, ignorance, cruelty and despair? It can be overwhelming and so paralyzing that we feel our light being extinguished even though, as Christians, the Bible tells us that we are "a light of them who are in darkness." The world is so vast and our lamp seems so small when we focus only on the darkness around us. We can, however, light some small part of it.

The Outreach Committee is shining some light on the world this month by providing \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance. We also voted to donate an extra \$100 to Community Care's summer children's lunch

program. In addition, we allocated \$300 for our youth mission trip to Lotts Creek and \$100 for the Lorain County Free Clinic's programs.

We wish to thank all of you who supported the One World Shop mobile store in April. We received a thank you note from the shop, indicating that it made \$600 in sales that day! We are also grateful for your participation in our Dine to Donate event at Applebee's in June. We received a check for \$227.27 and all of the monies will go towards the cost of the youth mission trip to Lotts Creek.

Light your lamps. Let God send you in a new direction today. Meet someone at the crossroads of his or her life. Make the world a brighter place.

Deacons' Desk – Ben Dornan

From the chili cook-off to the cake walk, these were some great fundraisers for our church. The funds from these events have specifically been raised for our annual youth mission trip to rural Lotts Creek, Kentucky. It has been an honor to have been on this trip for four years (going on 5); and no matter how many times you go, it is still a humbling and inspiring experience like no other. Whether it is meeting new friends or seeing the old ones, whether it is doing work on houses or going to the beach, Lotts Creek is incredible. I am thankful to be able to participate in this experience, and I am truly grateful for and blessed by the people who fund this wonderful trip. As the mission trip begins on June 20 (this was written in mid-June), please keep us, our peers, and our new confirmands in your prayers.

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

First of all, I want to thank all those who participated in the clean-up day. Paul Wolanski arrived an hour early so that some of the trimming was out of the way before people started to work on cleaning out the beds,

planting and mulching. Thank you, Paul! I know that there was an unfortunate conflict with the Pride Parade, but I thought participation was still good and I think it looks really nice. I just hope that Mother Nature helps it stay that way! I also want to thank Jack Fitts for doing the mowing and Stephanie Matis for the gardening she has done.

Since there aren't a lot of new items to tell you about, I thought I would write about something that has me really worried: ***the budget***. I know that the stewardship campaign is months away, but I am concerned that you, the congregation, may not be aware that the grant money from the Living Water Association is ending. (We will receive the last of three payments in October of this year.) We will need to cover that lost revenue, and there aren't any easy answers.

Along with the lack of grant money, there are increased costs in keeping the lights on as the cost of utilities have gone up. The church's insurance increased this past year by 27% and I imagine that it will continue to go up. Since we have very little outside income, the task of continuing the work of the church comes down to its members.

Could we do without any of the programs we currently fund? How many people would we lose if there were no music to enhance the service? How many members would we lose if there were no Christian education program? How many future members that are now in the classrooms would we lose? Would a part-time minister work? Would you be in favor of a merger with another, more financially stable church? How about we do our own housekeeping, with volunteers from the congregation? Would you be willing to take time? None of these have worked before and there is no reason to believe the outcome would be any different now.



I think these are reasonable questions to ask ourselves; and by asking them now, it gives us time to consider what we as individuals can do. This is not meant to scare anyone; it is meant to inform everyone of the financial situation we are facing.

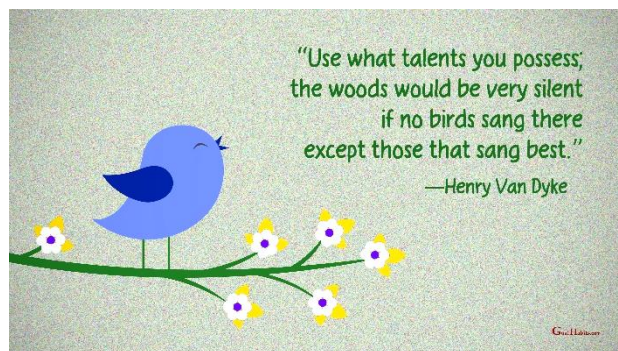
In the meantime, there is something that everyone can do that will help this year's budget: we can make sure our pledges are current. It is a simple thing, yet one that is easy to overlook so thank you to all for contributing what you can.

By the way, I hate talking about money, probably as much as you hate hearing about it.

Music Notes – Barb Habecker

Greetings! I have thoroughly enjoyed working with both of the choirs this past year. This congregation has a wealth of talented singers and ringers. Their dedication is amazing. God has given them this gift, and they are using it to express their love of Him through music.

Hearing the men sing on Mother's Day and the women sing on Father's Day makes me aware that there are many of you who could join us if God is calling you to do so. We, in both the chancel and handbell choir, would accept you gratefully and graciously. Not one of us is a professional nor do we claim to be! If you feel called to join us, we will welcome you and give you any help you think you need. Both choirs will be starting up again with a picnic on August 27 and rehearsals beginning on Wednesday, September 3 at 6:30 (handbells) and 7:30 (chancel) p.m.





During the summer, many families travel or go on vacations. School is out, and normal weekly rhythms are disrupted. Overall, church attendance drops in the summer, and there is also a general decrease in engagement. Statistics from the Unstuck Group indicate that summer attendance falls by 23% in June and a whopping 34% in July.

As attendance falls, so does giving. For many people, giving is tied to their regular attendance and involvement in church activities. When this routine is interrupted during the summer months, it results in a decrease in giving. And this drop in giving creates real challenges for us. It's tough to budget when you're not sure how much money will be coming in, and this can make it difficult to plan for events or ministries that require funding.

In case you're not clear, **recurring giving using our online giving platform Tithely allows automated, scheduled donations set by you. The contributions are made automatically at regular intervals, such as weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly and even if you don't attend on a given Sunday.**

Giving is an act of worship, a way to honor God and demonstrate our trust in Him as our provider (Proverbs 3:9-10). Recurring giving is one way of faithfully stewarding the resources you've been given. It's not a command by any means, but it is a specific way to fulfill stewardship commands and orient your life toward generosity.

Join the others who have set up their recurring online giving! It's easy to do (honest!) and then you don't have to worry about bringing or sending your offering each week/month or writing a check. It really is easy to do; but if you run into any problems, contact

Linda or Pastor Kearstin and they will help you get set up! Your financial partnership helps us to grow as a vibrant and diverse community, with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity!

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!)

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



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

July 21: Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman

August 18: The Silver Ladies of Penny Lane by Dee MacDonald

September 15: The Devil's Food Cake Murder by Joanne Fluke

GREETERS

July	
6	Diana Goode, Teri Loy
13	Karen Farmer, Paul Wolanski
20	Millie Gilly, Paula Dudek
27	Sara Bowman, Jane Woravka
August	
3	George Beers, Diana Goode

Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 7/6 Joan Bier
- 7/6 Dahlia Wolanski
- 7/9 Jon Eaton
- 7/14 Bob Karlovec
- 7/15 Edie Phillips
- 7/15 Jenn Anderson
- 7/18 Liam Styrt
- 7/23 Sarah Brooks
- 7/24 Barb Habecker
- 7/25 Diana Goode
- 7/25 Andrea Summer
- 7/3 Bob & Nancy Franks
- 7/10 Matt & Cathleen Karlovec
- 7/12 Kurt & Renee Dornan
- 7/18 Bob & Mary Karlovec
- 7/21 Brian & Barb Zinsmeister
- 7/28 Vitaliy & Kelsey Styrt



Please join us & represent First Congregational Church in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the North Ridgeville Corn Festival!

Grande Parade
Sunday, August 10
Step off is 1:30 pm

We will need people to walk with us, hold signs, & pass out candy/goodies.
 More info to come in July.

Worship & Picnic in the Park

Sunday, August 17

Worship at 11 am with picnic following
until 2 pm

North Ridgeville South Central Park pavilion #1
located at east end of Rt. 83 park entrance parking lot

Hamburgers & hot dogs provided!



Bring a dish to share
(salads, sides, fruit, chips & dip, dessert, etc.)

Pavilion is handicap accessible & located next to restrooms.

Park amenities:

- ✓ Fishing lake (no license required)
- ✓ Splash pad
- ✓ Playground
- ✓ Walking trail
- ✓ Basketball courts
- ✓ Pickleball/tennis courts

Enjoy a wonderful day of fun, food & fellowship with church family & friends!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	2	3 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	4 Independence Day OFFICE CLOSED 	5 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
	6 Worship 10:30 am Communion Clangy change collection Fellowship hour (Outreach) AA Men 7:30 pm	7 Emergency Preparedness Task Force 6:30 pm AA Women 7 pm	8 Human Design 102 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	9 <div>Pr. Kearstin at General Synod 7/9-7/16</div> 4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)	10 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	11 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
13 No Pr. Kearstin Worship 10:30 am Lotts Creek recap Fellowship hour? Hall rented 2-5 pm (Kyser)	14 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	15 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	16 Newsletter articles due <div>Pr. Kearstin at General Synod 7/9-7/16</div>	17 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	18 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm	19 Hall rented 1-4 pm (Staffiero)
20 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	21 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	22 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	23 4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)	24 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	25 Tarot 101 7 pm	26 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
27 Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour & UCC Global Relations workshop (Deacons) AA Men 7:30 pm	28 AA Women 7 pm	29 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	30	31 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm		