

# The Messenger

July 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

## Minister

Rev. Kearstin Bailey  
[PastorFCCNR@gmail.com](mailto: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 Styr

## Chair, Deacons

## Chair, Outreach

Edie Phillips

## Co-Chairs, Trustees

Roy Dreger  
Jack Fitts

## Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

## **From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)**

Over the last decade, Christian Nationalism has become one of the most dangerous forces shaping politics, law, and culture in the US. In simple terms, Christian Nationalism is a political ideology that tries to fuse Christian identity with civic and national life — using an explicitly narrow, literalistic, and life-harming interpretation of Christian values. Why on earth are we talking about this now? Well, dear ones, because with the celebration of America's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this month, Christian Nationalism is going to be on center stage — and I want you to be able to recognize it. I want you to be rooted in a Christianity that is expansive, merciful, and loving; one that does not seek to dominate but to understand, one that doesn't try to legislate difference but rather draws the circle wider for all.

The United Church of Christ's General Minister and President, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, spoke on the topic last year at a gathering with German church partners. She reminded folks that while the movement calls itself "Christian," it does not actually "rest in the tenets of the Christian faith." In fact, it completely ignores Jesus' second commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

Folks speaking on behalf of Christian Nationalism often cloak themselves in flags and hold giant crosses, dressing in the symbols of our faith and wielding them as weapons against folks who don't align with their narrow view of what the world "should" look like. They claim that they are protecting faith and personal religious beliefs; but by seeking to enshrine their narrow worldview into law, they are actually attempting to force one religious ideology onto everyone — and that is dangerous and antithetical to the movement of Jesus Christ, dear ones.

As Christians, I encourage us all to be wary of any movement that prioritizes control over compassion and exclusion over justice. In the UCC, we know that God created all Their Beloveds in glorious diversity, and that difference is to be celebrated rather than feared. Our denomination has a long history of educating ourselves and speaking out prophetically; during the founding of our country, we spoke out against British rule, and later we demanded the abolition of slavery.



a just  
world  
for all  
[ucc.org](http://ucc.org)

During this month, we can continue that tradition of education by learning the signs of Christian Nationalism and challenging misinformation (especially online) so that we can defend religious freedom, democracy, and human dignity for all.

Remember, dear ones, our scripture calls us to welcome the stranger, care for the sick and oppressed, practice peace and non-violence, and love one another in practical ways. We are called to be disciples of Jesus, citizens of God, identified not with a particular political party but instead with a world-changing movement of embodied love, mercy, and justice.

May it be so, this month and every other!

Every blessing,  
Pastor Kearstin

### **Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan**

Summer greetings, Church! How do you typically show up in meetings or discussions? Do you prefer to lead the conversation? Do you like to propose new ideas? Do you ask for others' opinions, or do you feel like you need to keep the group focused and centered on the goal? On the other hand, do you prefer to remain silent, wait for the right moment, or sometimes even wait until the next day, or the next week to speak after careful consideration? Do you think there is a right or wrong answer?

I tend to feel like every option here can be important in every situation....effective teams are built on different personalities, and great conversations and meetings happen because there are different elements brought by different people.

That said, there are studies that show there is an important trait that leads to more success than others...and that's versatility. In this case, it means that you are very aware of others' tension and the other voices in the room. Do you define success by saying what you wanted to say going into the meeting, or succeed by saying what's needed at the right time based on how you perceive the situation and the group? High versatility is the latter. I

hope this helps you understand yourself a bit better.

### **Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec**

With the onset of July, we are in the second half of the year 2026. A lot has happened in the life of the church and the second half will be no exception.

As the Messenger reaches you, Kris Dornan and I will just be returning from our mission trip to Lotts Creek. One Sunday this summer we will share with you our stories and adventures with 18 other adults, both young and old. But for now I want to thank everyone who has supported our trip through your donations. With the funds from the cake walk, we have \$151 to support purchasing supplies we might need for the projects we are assigned. THANK YOU, Sandy Chalkwater, for organizing it and the cake bakers for their donations! With the funds from the Dine to Donate, the Outreach Board, and other donations from individuals, almost all the costs for Kris and I to attend have been covered. This is truly a testament to our congregation's willingness to support outreach mission work not only in our community but across the nation. My heart is filled with thanks and gratitude to all of you!

In the month of June, our clangy change donations were \$63. We will be using these funds to purchase PB&J for Community Care during the summer months. For the month of July, our clangy change collection will be utilized to purchase treats for the North Ridgeville First Responders. Two years ago we did a similar clangy change and the First Responders were overwhelmed with gratitude for their "snack boxes."

I know that September is two months away but please mark your calendar for **Sunday, September 13**. It is officially the first Sunday of Fall Sunday School. If you would like to help with Sunday School, we are looking for teachers and volunteers for the nursery. Teaching Sunday School or volunteering in the nursery is an important way you can give back to the church. Please consider volunteering for this important mission.

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

I am thinking about friendships today as I mourn the loss of one of my best friends of 55 years this past week. It was a friendship that grew sweeter as the years passed and I'm so very grateful for the many wonderful experiences we shared. It was one of those true, meaningful relationships that almost seem preordained, as if we were both searching until, at last, we met. Our relationship with God is much the same – He loved and knew us before we knew Him and he offers us eternal friendship.

The Outreach Committee offered its hand in friendship to our community in several ways recently. We are continuing to collect items for children's lunches throughout the summer for Community Care's summer lunch program.

**Items needed include individual serving cups of applesauce, pudding, fruit, Jello, Goldfish crackers, peanut butter crackers, snack bags of chips, as well as jars of peanut butter and jelly.** We appreciate the generous contributions already donated by the congregation for this mission. We provided \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance, as well as \$200 to support our church mission to Lotts Creek. The funds earned at our Dine to Donate event at Red Robin (\$251.49) also benefitted the Lotts Creek mission trip. We sponsored the UCC Strengthen the Church campaign throughout June, and wish to thank all of you who supported the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing program with \$546 in donations.

Billy Graham said, "Friends are like the hands of God reaching out to us here on earth." May you reach out your hands to others that they might know the love of God.

### **Deacons' Desk – Linda Matis**

We have all heard the saying "walk a mile in someone else's shoes". It means we shouldn't judge someone unless we understand their circumstances. You really never know what someone is going through – physically, emotionally or spiritually – by looking at them. I

have gotten a full dose of this reality during my hand surgery recovery.

Having my dominant hand basically unusable is a challenge I dare anyone to try...even for an hour. (I apologize to all the "lefties" living in a right-handed majority world. Scissors really are right- and left-handed!!!) There is so much we take for granted as "able bodied" people. Opening your pill bottles, tying your shoes, cutting your food...all things that I can't do or struggle with by not having use of both hands. So maybe next time you see someone struggling with something you may think of as a simple task, don't judge them and maybe offer them a little help. Even if they say no, you at least know you tried.

### **Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger**

The Trustees would like to thank all those who helped with the clean-up day (not to be confused with the clean-out day). A special thank you to Laura Mould at Don Mould's Plantation and Garden Center for the donation of the three yards of mulch that was spread, as well as to the 4-H members and their families who helped. Now it's time to maintain all that work!

At the last meeting the Trustees discussed "Project Uplift", the addition of a new entryway and lift at the front of the sanctuary. Jon Eaton looked into crowd sourcing as a means of providing a source of additional funding and came up with five possible web sites. We need to explore them more fully to ensure that the one we pick meets both our needs as well as our values. While we agree that the project is important, we came to the conclusion that in order for that project to be successful, we need to make sure that the existing elevator is reliable. Unfortunately, that means replacing it. I met with a representative from Ohio Elevator who looked at what we have and she mentioned a few issues that will need to be addressed. I am only going to mention two: the replacement unit is wider than the existing unit, and the doors need to be changed in order to meet ADA requirements. I inquired about possibly rebuilding the current elevator, however, our model is not made anymore and

parts are hard to impossible to find. UPDATE: While meeting with a contractor and his lift supplier for an estimate on the construction at the front, the lift representative said his company had just done a job at a church with a similar set-up (as our existing elevator) and it cost about \$52,000.00.

We have received a very generous donation earmarked for the purchase of a new digital sign. This provides seed money toward getting a new sign. With donations from the congregation, this seems very doable. Studies have shown that a new sign can increase visitor attendance by as much as 30 percent.

The Trustees are not meeting in July due to members having vacations and other obligations, so further information will most likely not be available before August. In the meantime, thank you for keeping your pledges up to date!

**Pastor Parish Committee:** Did you know there is a group of church members who serve as a support group for the pastor and as a liaison between the pastor and the congregation? One of the committee's responsibilities is to let the pastor know what people in the church are thinking and to give a framework for dealing with conflict creatively. Members of the Pastor Parish Committee are: Kris Dornan, Diana Goode, Cathleen Karlovec, Matt Karlovec, and Liz Wolanski. Please feel free to contact any of them to openly and honestly communicate your feelings and thoughts. Or there are comment cans in the sanctuary and narthex if you would like to contact them that way.

**Worship at Independence Village:** Come enjoy a shortened worship service at Independence Village in Avon Lake on Sunday, July 19 at 2 pm. We'll praise God through song and scripture and then have a time of fellowship with the residents, including Linda Spayd and Vonnie Packard!

**Tarot Group at FCC:** Happening Tuesday, July 21 at 7:00 pm upstairs in the high school room. We're going to deep dive into the first 8 cards of the Major Arcana this month, layering up all the

learning we've gathered over the last year. RSVP here so we know how many folks to expect: <https://bit.ly/4uTzb26>

**Hope Through Faith:** FCC community member James Fletcher has written a book! Hope Through Faith: Jesus Christ of Nazareth the Healer is available on Amazon and James is generously splitting the proceeds between FCC and The Turn (a nonprofit in North Olmsted). In the coming months, James will do a workshop on his book during fellowship time one Sunday, so make sure to get a copy if you'd like to check it out in advance! You can purchase a copy here: <https://amzn.to/40UgRt0>



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

**July 20:** The Correspondent by Virginia Evans

**August 17:** Theo of Golden by Allen Levi

~~~~~  
**GREETERS**

| June |                             |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 5    | Diana Goode, George Beers   |
| 12   | Paul Wolanski, Millie Gilly |
| 19   | Teri Loy, Karen Farmer      |
| 26   | Jane Woravka, Paula Dudek   |



|      |                          |
|------|--------------------------|
| 7/6  | Joan Bier                |
| 7/6  | Dahlia Wolanski          |
| 7/9  | Jon Eaton                |
| 7/14 | Bob Karlovec             |
| 7/15 | Eddie Phillips           |
| 7/15 | Jenn Anderson            |
| 7/18 | Liam Styrt               |
| 7/24 | Barb Habecker            |
| 7/25 | Diana Goode              |
| 7/25 | Andrea Summer            |
| 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   |

| Sun                                                                                                                               | Mon                                                                | Tue                                                         | Wed                            | Thu                                                                          | Fri                       | Sat                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                  |                                                                    |                                                             | 1                              | 2<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                    | 3<br><b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> | 4<br><b>Independence Day</b><br><br><br><br>AA Women 9 am |
| 5<br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Communion &amp; clanging</b><br><b>change</b><br><b>Fellowship hour?</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm | 6<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                             | 7<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                       | 8<br><br>4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)  | 9<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                    | 10                        | 11<br><br>AA Women 9 am                                                                                                                      |
| 12<br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Fellowship hour?</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                    | 13<br><b>Council 7 pm</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm                     | 14<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                      | 15                             | 16<br><b>Newsletter articles due</b><br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | 17                        | 18<br><br>AA Women 9 am                                                                                                                      |
| 19<br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Fellowship hour?</b><br><b>Independence Village</b><br><b>svc. 2 pm</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm | 20<br><b>Women's book club</b><br><b>7 pm</b><br><br>AA Women 7 pm | 21<br><b>Tarot 7 pm</b><br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm | 22<br><br>4-H 7 pm (rain loc.) | 23<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                   | 24                        | 25<br><br>AA Women 9 am                                                                                                                      |
| 26<br><b>Worship 10:30 am</b><br><b>Deacons 11:30 am</b><br><b>Fellowship hour?</b><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                         | 27<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                            | 28<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                      | 29                             | 30<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm                                   | 31                        |                                                                                                                                              |