

# The Messenger

May 2025

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 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 year around Easter, I hear at least one person pushing the narrative that, “The Jews killed Jesus!” Now, this is not true, and, in a time of rising anti-Jewish sentiment, I want to talk through why that is. In our Gospels during the passion narrative, there is a scene where a crowd (that includes Jewish leaders) calls for the Roman governor to crucify Jesus. The thing is — the crowd doesn’t have the power to make that decision. Pilot, the governor, does; he could choose to let Jesus go, especially since he thinks that Jesus is innocent. But we know that Pilot doesn’t let Jesus go, and that’s because he’s afraid that the people are going to rally around Jesus and cause a riot, which would then bring Pilot’s Roman bosses down hard on him. Pastor Sarah TevisTownes teaches that, due to political pressure, Pilot chooses violence and control over integrity and justice.

Now you may be wondering, “Okay sure, but don’t we hear in the Gospel stories about Jewish leaders who wanted Jesus gone?” Yes, absolutely, and some of them did want Jesus gone! But some of those leaders were actually installed by Rome to keep order in Jerusalem as a way to keep watch (and control) over the Jewish community. Here again, their main worry was that Jesus’ message of radical love and welcome would stir up the Jewish community enough to draw the notice of Roman authorities, who would then respond with violence. Many ordinary Jewish folks, teachers in the temple, and Jewish leaders (including some Pharisees) were on Jesus’ side and agreed with his message of inclusion and justice.

It’s also important to remember that all the stories we have in our Bibles were written by authors with their own biases and agendas. For example, the Gospel of John is explicitly hostile to the Jewish community, using “the Jews” as a literary shorthand to talk about “the antithesis of Jesus’ message,” which creates an us vs. them binary in the text. Many scholars think this was important to the author of John because the Gospel was written in a time when early Jesus-followers were distancing themselves from other faiths (like Judaism), and so this us vs. them back and forth helped the community draw boundaries for themselves as they worked to become a separate religion.



In modern times, the hostile rhetoric from John has been used to promote anti-semitism and anti-Jewish Christian movements.

So, did the Jews kill Jesus? No, the Roman Empire killed Jesus. Our scriptures tell their stories from a particular perspective, with a particular bias, but ultimately it didn't matter what Jewish leaders said; the only one with the power in the Passion narrative to kill or save Jesus was Pilate, the Roman governor...and he chose to kill Jesus.

In this Easter season of resurrection, let us leave behind the stories and hostilities that harm our siblings in faith. We can talk about the injustice of Jesus' death without attacking Jesus' fellow Jews. Because remember, Jesus was a Jewish man, steeped in his faith, deeply committed to his God, and influenced by all his Jewish ancestors before him — and we give thanks for that!

### **First Congregational Church Goals for 2025**

As part of our yearly visioning, the church council came up with nine goals for 2025. Some of them are large-scale projects, while others are quick to-do's that will help us embody being a vibrant and diverse community with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity. Each month at our council meetings we review these goals and make any updates or plans to work toward completing them. Below are those goals and where we are so far this year.


#### **1. Get comprehensive quotes for upgrades to the sound system and A/V system**

- a) We are utilizing two new wireless microphones during worship to help with the sound on the livestream.
- b) Pastor Kearstin met with an A/V person (and friend of Michael Moyseenko) regarding upgrades to our sound system.

#### **2. Implement "5 Minutes of Kindness" on a monthly basis and use it in our communications on Sunday morning and in social media**

- a) Each Sunday we are joyfully sharing the many kindnesses we have seen and experienced each week and Pastor Kearstin

will be working toward sharing those on our social media.

-  **3. Have an active QR code for online giving**
  - a) Completed and being utilized for giving and paying for special events.
- 4. Bring a practical lens to continued bible study opportunities**
  - a) Pastor Kearstin hosted a bible study on love in February and held a deathcare discussion after worship in March.
  - b) Have an idea for a bible study? Let Pastor Kearstin know!
- 5. Host four creative worship experiences (guest speakers, all songs, other ideas)**
  - a) Beth Dornan will speak on climate justice in May (she recently attended a student ecology summit in California).
  - b) The UCC's Global Relations Minister, East Asia and the Pacific, will hold a workshop in July.
  - c) Pastor Kearstin is working with Global Ministries on setting up another speaker possibly in June.
- 6. Have an in-person presence at four community events (setting up a church booth at a festival, etc.)**
  - a) Participating in North Ridgeville's Discover the Ridge event with our Junk in the Trunk on May 17.
  - b) Participating in North Ridgeville's Holiday on the Ridge event with our Craft Show on December 6.
  - c) Mercy McCloskey is organizing a fall flea market and antique appraisal event in October.
  - d) Corn Festival in August-possibly a booth or a float in the parade
  - e) Considering hosting a health fair and organizing a Church World Service Crop Walk.
- 7. Create and implement a communication strategy and social media policy**
  - a) Matt Karlovec is heading up the social media committee; they are going to be working on setting up our branding guidelines and a social media policy.
-  **8. Host a new non-profit in our space during the week**

- a) A new non-profit called Three C Club (whose mission is to support children whose lives have been affected by a loved one's addiction) will be holding their weekly meetings at the church beginning in September.

#### 9. **Recruit folks to our music ministry**

- a) We are blessed by Nicole Brooks sharing her talent with us in the choir.
- b) Barb and the members of the handbell and chancel choirs would happily welcome any new members! (Practices are on Wednesdays at 6:30 & 7:30 pm & Sundays at 10 am from September through May.)

Nine goals. Twelve months. Over a hundred members. There's no doubt we can accomplish these things if we work together as a church community. Is the Spirit calling you to use your gifts to help us complete these goals?? No matter what skills you have, we want to help you light up the world with your gifts. We are a chosen family of faith, a hodgepodge group of incredible folks who come together to praise God and work for love and justice in the world — and it's time that we boldly share this good news far and wide with the world.

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

Beloved Church Family, we made it through another Cleveland winter!!

We've talked a lot this year about our yearly goals, and one of the things you've noticed as a goal, and now as part of our Sunday worship is the 5 minutes of kindness!

Many of you, like me, balance church leadership, families, and our 9-5 work. I'm writing at this moment as I sit in my work's headquarter location in Milwaukee, WI. It's been a great few days here, and I think most of that revolves around being face to face with people that I work with. There is no substitute for making time to build relationships with our peers; and although COVID impacted much of our daily lives, I've come back to the fact that being face to face with someone is such a good way to build relationship with them, allowing ourselves to be present not only in what we look

like and sound like (virtual meetings), but with body language and non-verbal cues. As I get older, I appreciate the opportunity to share the human experience with others, and learn why people behave the way they do, learn how to ask questions, and learn how to better listen to people in many different ways. I think this type of fellowship is key to not only providing 5 minutes of kindness to others but be in a way to receive that kindness from others.

What I ask of you today, beloveds, is to appreciate the aspects of our lives that allow us to fellowship with others, and in that way allow us to be that kindness that we love for ourselves and share it with others.



Be the  
reason  
someone  
smiles  
today.

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

On behalf of the Board of Christian Education, **THANK YOU** for your support this Lenten season! Your support allowed us to deliver 51 birthday bags to Community Care as well as fill 10 Easter bags (from our clanky change offering) and deliver them to some of our church members who are currently homebound. Thank you to those who volunteered to deliver the Easter bags. Our homebound love getting a treat but more importantly appreciate a visit from a friendly face. I delivered one bag and had a delightful conversation that lasted an hour and a half. I am working on an idea of how we can make this an intentional ongoing project so our homebound see familiar and not so familiar church members more often. If you have any suggestions, please feel free to give them to anyone on the Board of Christian Education.

And then there was the Easter Egg Hunt. Again, our congregation responded with not only candy to fill 1500 Easter eggs but manpower the day of the event. Special thanks to Roy and Karen Dreger, George Beers, Ben and Kurt Dornan, Millie Gilly, Matt and Cathleen

Karlovec, Cathleen's parents Joe and Molly Trovato (they came for a visit and jumped in to help), Sandy's aunt, my friends Julie Zsygray and Becky Kovacs, the CE board, and anyone else who I missed. It truly took a village to make this event happen. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

And a side note about the Easter Egg hunt...as I was putting things away right after we finished the event, I was moving a box to put a tote where this box was sitting. I realized the box was not empty. As I opened it, I gasped because it was filled with eggs! It was the first box the senior high youth filled and got misplaced in my room. So instead of emptying them all out, I decided that 75 kindergarteners at my school, many of which I serve, would love to have an Easter Egg Hunt. So on the last day of school before spring break, you all were there in spirit as the squeals and smiles on the playground made 75 little people very happy!

Saturday, May 17 is our second annual **"Junk in the Trunk"** sponsored by CE with the support of the Outreach Committee. Please consider supporting this event by reserving a space or volunteering to help. More information is found in this newsletter. Proceeds will support the approximately six youth and three adults going to Lotts Creek in June.



51 birthday bags headed to Community Care

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

When I was a child, my grandmother would gather all of the leftovers from the

refrigerator on a Saturday night, combine them in her trusty cast-iron skillet with a few additional spices, and make her "poor man's casserole." Put together, those ordinary, rather tasteless, ingredients took on the flavor of the others, complementing each other and resulting in a savory, delicious dish.

How true of life, I thought today as I stared into my own refrigerator, trying to envision something tasty from what I found in it. Like my grandmother's dish, each of us contributes our little ordinary gifts and talents. By sharing them with the gifts and talents of others, we are able to blend them into something extraordinary.

The Outreach Committee is sharing our gifts and talents in several ways this month. We are supporting the work of our local Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance organizations with a donation of \$100 each. In addition, we are sending \$150 to Lotts Creek, KY to help with cleanup from the severe flood damage experienced there recently. We also voted to send \$100 to World Central Kitchen, which is always one of the first groups on the ground when an area is in dire need of a temporary food source. We grieve with Greg and Paula Dudek as they mourn the loss of Greg's sister and provided a \$50 gift card for their use.

The One World Shop will bring its mobile store to our church on Sunday, April 27. You will have the opportunity to purchase some wonderful fair-trade items, supporting artisans living in poverty around the world. The Outreach Committee will also host fellowship hour that day.

Finally, the committee is sponsoring our **June 5 Dine to Donate** event at the Avon Applebee's to help fund our youth mission trip to Lotts Creek. Flyers to present at the restaurant will be made available later in May.

Dear Lord, remind us how, through our blended efforts, we become one in Your service, making a dish worthy for Your table.



### **Deacons' Desk – Paula Dudek**

It's good to see our congregation growing and blooming just as everything in nature. Please continue to introduce yourself to the newer members and visitors (and wear your name tags!) It's great to be a part of a warm and caring Christian family.

Sometimes we get burned out doing things for all of the activities in the life of our church. If we weren't busy, our church would not be thriving. Try to take time daily to meditate and/or pray. Have faith in what will be.

### **Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger**

The work on fellowship hall is almost done. I say "almost" because the floor is set to be stripped, cleaned and sealed on May 2 but all the painting is done and the window treatments are up and looking good. I want to give another thank you to Pat Kyle for her donation which paid for all of this!

Bill and Jenn Anderson have solved the issue of replacing the carpeting in Linda's office. They are having new flooring installed at their home and Bill has said he would put some of the current planks they are removing in Linda's office. Thank you, Bill and Jen! On a related note, the donations for new carpeting that aren't needed now have been put toward the floor work in fellowship hall with the approval of the donors and we thank them as well.

The mower is ready for the lawn that is growing as the weather warms. Jack Fitts has seen to getting the mower serviced and has offered to do the mowing as well. Thank you, Jack! Also, Krista O'Neill and her son Tim cleaned the carpet in the nursery so that it will be sanitary for the little ones and a big thank you goes to them as well.

You have just read about some members who have donated time and talents in ways that benefit the entire congregation. I want to mention that these are only some of the members who have donated time, talent and

money for the benefit of the entire congregation, and your church would not be as nice without them.

In keeping with the theme of members working for the benefit of all, Jon Eaton has volunteered to look into the cost and feasibility of putting an awning over the outside entrance to the elevator. If I were waiting for the elevator and it was raining or snowing, I know I would appreciate some shelter. And speaking of those with mobility issues, Mercy McCloskey is going to be exploring the possibility of grant money for a second point of entry/exit. Until such time as we can actually do something, Jon Eaton is looking into some type of emergency evacuation device as well.

We are still looking for a custodian, but Stephanie Matis has said she will take the job until the position can be otherwise filled. A great big thank you goes out to her as well (especially from a certain senior citizen).

Now that you have read about people that are working to make your church a bit better in so many ways, maybe there is something you could contribute as well.



## GREETERS

| May  |                            |
|------|----------------------------|
| 4    | Teri Loy, Millie Gilly     |
| 11   | Paul Wolanski, Paula Dudek |
| 18   | Sara Bowman, Lynne Petroff |
| 25   | Jane Woravka, George Beers |
| June |                            |
| 1    | Diana Goode, Teri Loy      |
| 8    | Karen Farmer, Millie Gilly |
| 15   | Paul Wolanski, Paula Dudek |
| 22   | Sara Bowman, Lynne Petroff |
| 29   | Jane Woravka, George Beers |

## NURSERY

| May  |                 |
|------|-----------------|
| 4    | Shirley Sunyak  |
| 11   | Linda Matis     |
| 18   | Nancy Findlay   |
| 25   | Millie Gilly    |
| June |                 |
| 1    | Denise Speer    |
| 8    | Shirley Sunyak  |
| 15   | Linda Matis     |
| 22   | Karen Veliconia |
| 29   | Mary Karlovec   |

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

|      |                              |
|------|------------------------------|
| 5/1  | Shirley Sunyak               |
| 5/5  | Megan O'Neill                |
| 5/5  | Lily Schutz                  |
| 5/8  | Melissa Moyseenko            |
| 5/9  | Maynard Ickes                |
| 5/15 | Regenia Comerford            |
| 5/15 | Kate Harrold                 |
| 5/19 | Alan Willcox                 |
| 5/20 | Cathleen Karlovec            |
| 5/21 | Bob Olesen                   |
| 5/15 | Jack & Betty Fitts (60 yrs!) |
| 5/23 | John & Valerie Arnold        |

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

**May 19:** Then She Was Gone by Lisa Jewell

**June 16:** Mad Honey by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan

**July 21:** Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman



**Join the 12 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 honestly 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! Thank you for your generosity!

**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!)

# JUNK IN THE TRUNK

FLEA MARKET &  
RUMMAGE SALE  
ROLLED INTO ONE!

SATURDAY  
**MAY**  
**17**

10 AM -  
2 PM



Interested in  
selling? Contact  
the church at  
440-327-2921.



**First Congregational Church**

United Church of Christ  
36363 Center Ridge, North Ridgeville, Ohio

Proceeds benefit the 2025 youth mission trip

## Junk in the Trunk

Flea Market / Rummage Sale

**Saturday, May 17**

**10 am to 2 pm**

(No set up before 8:30 am)

Rain or Shine

- Cost is \$20 for one seller area consisting of two parking spaces – one space for your vehicle and an adjoining empty space for your “junk”
- 8 ft. table rental - \$5.00 per table
- You may not use more than 3 feet of the parking lot in front of your vehicle so that people can get around each space safely
- Proceeds from space rentals benefit the youth mission trip
- Complete reservation form and return with payment by May 10

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle: \_\_\_\_\_ Car/SUV/Minivan \_\_\_\_\_ Pick up truck

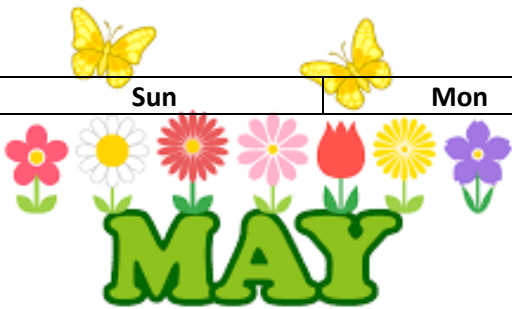
\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 per seller area \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 per table

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to First Congregational Church.



Scan the QR code to pay through our online giving platform. Select “other” as the fund and enter the total amount due.

| Sun                                                                                                                                                                  | Mon                                                                                                                     | Tue                                                               | Wed                                                      | Thu                                        | Fri                                                | Sat                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                      |                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |                                                          | 1<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm  | 2<br><b>Fellowship hall<br/>floor work all day</b> | 3<br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                   |
| 4<br>Outreach 9 am<br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Communion<br>Clangy change collection<br>Fellowship hour & family<br>game day<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                        | 5<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                                                                                  | 6<br>CE 7 pm<br>Trustees 7 pm<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm | 7<br>Handbells 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm                  | 8<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm  | 9                                                  | 10<br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                  |
| 11<br>Mother's Day<br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour<br><br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm | 12<br>Council 7 pm<br><br>AA Women 7 pm                                                                                 | 13<br><br>AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                            | 14<br>Handbells 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm<br><br>4-H 7 pm | 15<br><br>AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm | 16<br>Newsletter articles<br>due                   | 17<br>Junk in the Trunk<br>10 am – 2 pm<br><div>Pr. Kearstin - CT</div><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p |
| 18<br><b>No Pr. Kearstin – Carla<br/>Valles</b><br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour                                                                               | 19<br>Women's book club<br>7 pm                                                                                         | 20                                                                | 21<br>Handbells 6:30 pm<br>Choir 7:30 pm                 | 22                                         | 23                                                 | 24                                                                                                               |
| Pr. Kearstin UCC Preaching Camp CT                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |                                                          |                                            |                                                    |                                                                                                                  |
| Linda vacation 5/19-5/30                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |                                                          |                                            |                                                    |                                                                                                                  |
| AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                                                                                                       | AA Women 7 pm                                                                                                           | AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                      |                                                          | AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm           |                                                    | AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                            |
| 25<br>Worship 10:30 am<br>Fellowship hour<br>Deacons 11:30 am<br><br>AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                                  | 26<br>Memorial Day <br>OFFICE CLOSED | 27                                                                | 28                                                       | 29                                         | 30                                                 | 31<br><br>AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                  |
| Linda vacation 5/19-5/30                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |                                                          |                                            |                                                    |                                                                                                                  |
| AA Men 7:30 pm                                                                                                                                                       | AA Women 7 pm                                                                                                           | AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm                                      | 4-H 7 pm                                                 | AA Women 6 pm<br>Al-Anon 7:30 pm           |                                                    | AA Women 9 am<br>Couples Recovery 6 p                                                                            |