

The Messenger

October 2025

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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Jack Fitts

Treasurer, Secretary

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From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

In a time when politicians and pundits are quick to use “Christian” talking points to push their harmful rhetoric, it feels important that we, as a church, name what we see clearly and kindly. The artist Lori Hetteen recently wrote this poem that has captured my attention and been on a loop in my mind. Lori writes:

Prisoners pen scriptures,
[Sex workers] are heroes,
And every face resembles holiness.
The feet of peasants are washed by the king,
And law bows down to love.
Outsiders are insiders,
And the door is not open but torn clean from its hinges.
This is the room that God built.

Each time I watch the news and I hear hateful words, the normalization of bullying, and a disdain for the oppressed, I am reminded that truly following Jesus will never look like exclusion. Following Jesus will never look like bigotry. It will never look like violence or racism or misogyny. Following Jesus will never look like lording power over others or dehumanizing people. If the “faith” that a person professes produces bad fruit, harmful fruit, hateful fruit — then dear friends, it is not faith in Jesus at all, but rather faith to the idols of power and control.

When the world feels overwhelming, remind yourself of these simple truths. The fruits of the Spirit are always life-giving. They always help us draw the circle wider, rather than finding ways to be exclusionary. Our faith always calls us to move forward in love and to err on the side of abundant generosity. May we continue to practice this transformative faith of ours, seeing holiness in every face and tearing the doors that separate us clean off their hinges.

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment. Care for the poor.
Forgive often. **Reject racism.**
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.

Tarot as Christian Discernment: happening **Friday October 10 at 7:00 pm** in the fellowship hall. This monthly gathering is for anybody who has ever been curious about tarot, folks who might be interested but hesitant, or those who have a lot of questions! Pastor Kearstin will begin with a portion of teaching on a tarot topic, then we will explore how the topic of the week shows up in the art from various tarot decks, and we'll end with some individual and group guided tarot readings. There will be plenty of time for Q & A, learning about one another's decks, and getting to know ourselves and one another on a deeper level. RSVP here so we know how many tables to set up in the fellowship hall!

<https://partiful.com/e/Qoa6DglW0gpLpHu1kLGn>



Family Game Day: Mark your calendars for **October 12** for another fun-filled family game day! After fellowship hour we will break out the games for some good-natured competition and fellowship. It's a great way to get to know your church family members.

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Happy fall church family! I know a song I love and have had the pleasure of singing for the congregation is "You're the Only Jesus". If I had to sum up this song in one statement, it means that we are sometimes the only window in which someone else may experience God/faith/deeper meaning of life. This is a great thing, and also a big opportunity for us to share God's grace with others. Is there someone in your life that you may be uniquely positioned to provide that glimpse of holiness to? I pray that if so, you are blessed with the right words, or right touch or right song to use in that moment.

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Fall programming is in full swing and it is wonderful to have the kids back at Sunday School! Our theme this year is **"Little Hands and Small Acts Can Change the World"**. This theme comes from Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." The Sunday School kids and youth will be doing random acts of kindness throughout the Sunday School year. We have already chalked hearts in the parking lot for adults to find when leaving worship and another Sunday they gave free hugs and high fives to people leaving worship! If you have an idea for a random act of kindness, do not hesitate to share it with me! Be on the lookout for other random acts of kindness coming to a church near you!

The clanky change collection on the first Sunday of every month will be a part of our church community sharing acts of kindness. For October, clanky change given will go toward Autism Awareness. In September, we collected \$126 to purchase new books for the children at Lotts Creek. THANK YOU!

October means it is Trunk or Treat time! Come join us on Sunday, October 26 from 4-5 pm for this annual fun-filled event! Bring your friends and neighbors.



There will be crafts, too! In order for this to be a "spooktacular" event, we need trunks and treats. Last year we had over 25 cars. If you are willing to bring your car trunk (decorated or not) and pass out candy, please let me know and/or sign up outside my office. We ask that you have your car at the church by 3:45 so we are ready to go at 4:00.

Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

I woke this morning to a glorious day, the first yellow leaves of impending Autumn gracing

the tree outside my window and the cool temperature that promises the end of the heat of Summer. Silently singing "This Is the Day (That the Lord Has Made)," I asked myself what I wanted to do with this beautiful day that God has handed me. Watching a bee make its way from flower to flower in my garden, I thought, just for today I can BE content with what I have and BE willing to share it; BE loyal to my friends and BE tolerant of those I disagree with; BE charitable to those in need and BE frugal with my own demands.

The Outreach Committee is using these blessed days God has given us to provide \$100 each to Community Care, Neighborhood Alliance and the Native American Heritage Association this month. Through the month of October, we will be collecting knit hats, gloves, mittens, scarves and socks to help those in need stay warm through the coming winter months. We are also planning a fun "Thanksgiving Dinner in a Bag" Ingathering for November, with details to come for the congregation to participate in collecting the items needed.

What will you do with this day God has handed to you? Hopefully, BE wise enough to know that only God is truly wise. BE foolish enough to believe that all things are possible. BE strong enough to face adversity and BE weak enough to seek God's help.



Collection now through October 12

Rarely have I seen a church without some form of ministry that helps feed people. From community meals to food pantries, churches across the country make sure people have enough to eat. But I always wondered, wouldn't it be better if none of these services had to exist. What if everyone simply had enough to eat?

Our churches share compassion by not only providing for the basic needs of our neighbors but also asking deeper questions of why these inequalities exist in the first place. Our immediate call to alleviate the suffering of those around us is paired with a prophetic witness calling for systemic reform.

All congregations in the United Church of Christ are invited to take part in the Neighbors in Need offering to address just this. Two thirds of the offering support justice and witness ministries of the United Church of Christ with one third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Your gifts directly fund the Neighbors in Need grant program. This grant, for UCC congregations and partners, offers funding for both direct service and advocacy projects.

Thank you for your generosity!

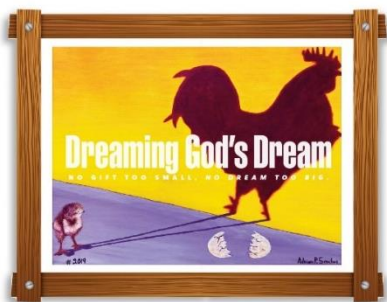
The Rev. Rachel McDonald works for the National Ministries of the UCC as Generosity Officer, OCWM and Special Mission Offerings. The four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ are One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and the Christmas Fund. Together they demonstrate a commitment to building a just world for all. To learn more, go to https://www.ucc.org/ocwm_special-support/

Deacons' Desk – Paula Dudek

Galatians 6:9-10 says "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time if we do not give up. So then whenever we have an opportunity let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith."

Whether being on a board, a Sunday school teacher, or volunteering to help with fundraisers or luncheons, we become weary by all the busy-ness. The busy-ness is what helps our church and faith grow. So we can take some time off but when the next project comes along, we are right back doing good and not giving up on our faith or our church family. Even if the results are not immediate, they will come in God's time.

Trustees' Turn – UCC Stewardship Resources



The Church as Innkeeper

*"All humanity are our neighbors."
St. Augustine of Hippo*

The familiar Parable of the Good Samaritan tells the story of the Priest and the Levite who walked past a person in the ditch and the Good Samaritan who stopped to help. We often overlook another character in the story: the innkeeper. The Good Samaritan brought the wounded person to the inn, where the innkeeper nursed them to health until the Good Samaritan returned.

Saint Augustine, reflecting on this parable, highlights the unique role of the innkeeper, who provided a place where healing could happen. What would it mean to understand our congregation as an "inn" for Good Samaritan work? Can we see our community as a place where healing happens? The innkeeper's role included managing resources, ensuring the inn's readiness, and extending mercy and help—roles we mirror when we care for one another and open ourselves up to caring for those in our community.

Focusing on the innkeeper can also challenge the ways we operate our building. Having a building is not the point of church. Rather, the building serves as a tool of our ministry. A church facility matters only because it can facilitate our mission.

Your gifts to our congregation help us provide a place of healing in our community, an "inn", where Good Samaritan ministry can happen.

Consider how the First Congregational Church "inn" has made an impact in your lives and how it can made an impact in other's lives as we move forward in this stewardship season. **We can only "keep the inn open" if we have help from YOU!**

Blessing - of the - ANIMALS



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26

10:30 AM

SOUTH CENTRAL PARK PAVILION #1

at the east end of the South Central Park
parking lot off of Route 83

*(Same place we had our picnic and
worship service in August)*

(No worship service at the church on this day.)



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

October 20: The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman

November 17: Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone by Benjamin Stevenson (note: book club acknowledges this is not a very nice title. It's a mystery.)

December 15: Comfort and Joy by Kristin Hannah

Birthdays & Anniversaries

10/1 Elizabeth Feigi
 10/6 Ronda Van Den Bossche
 10/7 Lynne Lipperman
 10/8 Pat Kyle
 10/9 Chase Dornan
 10/10 James Fletcher
 10/11 Jennie Vulcan
 10/11 Nate Schupbach
 10/20 Louise Barker
 10/20 Dreama Stamper
 10/26 Matt Karlovec
 10/2 Kinzer & Barb Habecker
 10/11 Dean & Lynne Lipperman
 10/12 Ryan & Holly Hengartner
 10/18 Mike & Joan Bier
 10/18 Paul & Liz Wolanski

GREETERS

October	
5	Paula Dudek, Sara Bowman
12	Jane Woravka, George Beers
19	Diana Goode, Karen Farmer
26	Teri Loy, Paul Wolanski

The family of Shirley A. McVeigh, age 83, of North Ridgeville is saddened to announce her passing on September 15, 2025. Shirley was born February 25, 1942 in Elyria to her loving parents Robert and Dorothy (nee Squires) McVeigh. She graduated from North Ridgeville High School and was a member of the National Honor Society. She started work as a secretary at General Industries and married her High School sweetheart, Jerry Hales, in 1962 and they had a daughter, Dawn and a son Mark. They belonged to the Lions Club and enjoyed dancing to Big Bands and Square Dancing. She was a member of the North Ridgeville Congregational Church her entire life and lived her entire life in



North Ridgeville. In her younger years she was a homemaker, helping in the family business (Hales Florist and Greenhouse) and enjoyed being involved in community care in North Ridgeville with her sisters-in-law. She also enjoyed baking, sewing, gardening and freezing the fruit from their trees and canning vegetables from the garden that was planted by Jerry and her father on their property on Stoney Ridge. She retired as an Assistant Administrator at Invacare Corp in Elyria in 2012 after 32 years of service. She loved vacations at Linwood, Vermilion and being by the lake and camping, traveling to her favorite Bar Harbor, Maine and traveling several times to Grand Marais, Michigan with her sister's family and grandson Matthew. Also, she enjoyed attending all her grandchildren's sporting events. Her favorite was taking her grandchildren on weekend trips camping to the state parks, to Washington, DC and any fun place. She was a dedicated parent and a loving spouse filling our lives with warmth and kindness.

Shirley is survived by her daughter, Dawn (Hales) (John) Alpine and son, Mark (Coleen) Hales, grandchildren Nathan (Katelyn) Alpine, Matthew Alpine, Kyle Alpine, Katelin (Michael) Wilmitch and Kendra Hales, 4 great grandchildren, sister Barbara Shively (Steve deceased) of Dayton, OH and brother James (Gay) McVeigh of North Ridgeville, several nieces and nephews and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, brother-in-law, Steve Shively and nephew Jason Shively, ex-husband, Jerry Hales and special cousin, Thomas Hutchison.



Regenia Comerford (nee Hill), age 84, of North Ridgeville, passed away on September 17, 2025, at The Avenue in North Ridgeville. Born in Spring City, Tennessee, she had been a resident of North Ridgeville since 1964. She worked as a cashier for Pick-N-Pay and IGA for many years in North Ridgeville. Regenia was a member of First Congregational United Church of Christ in North Ridgeville where she was a moderator, member and past chairperson of the



Deacons Board for several years. She was a longtime volunteer and director for North Ridgeville Community Care, past PTU President of St. Peter School and helped organize the St. Peter Chicken BBQ and Christmas Craft show. She was also a member and past president of the North Ridgeville Arts Council. She enjoyed coaching North Ridgeville City Baseball for several years and received the "Mr. Baseball Award." Regenia also coached for CYO Basketball in the 1970's.

Survivors include her husband of 61 years, William, daughters, Lisa Armario of North Ridgeville, Lynn (Bret) Maiers of Kelly's Island, Lori Comerford of North Ridgeville, grandchildren, Vanessa, Kyle and Logan Armario, Taylar Chrosniak, great grandchildren, Ashlyn, Brontley, Jackson, Kaden, Breyton and Beckett, brothers, Jessie Hill of Georgia, Ernest (Linda) Hill of Soddy Daisy, Tennessee, sister, Shirley (Rev. Mel) Yeich of Boerne, Texas and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Elsie Hill, sister, Della Henderson, brother-in-law, Tom Henderson, sister-in-law, Betty Hill, son-in-law, Jim Armario and grandson, Joseph Kelly. Memorial contributions may be made to North Ridgeville Community Care

at www.nrcommcare.org



Grieving? Me too: Our church has experienced the loss of four very special and impactful members in a short period of time. We are all grieving these losses. While some of these losses may affect you more than others, know that we are a loving church family that always provides support and care in difficult times. Reach out to one another. Share memories and stories of those we have lost. Lend a shoulder for someone to cry on if they need it. Deep breathe with one another. Comfort one another.

While grief is a difficult and painful process, it can also be an opportunity for growth and transformation. By acknowledging and working through their emotions, individuals can develop greater resilience, compassion, and self-awareness.

Grief is a universal human experience that impacts people from all walks of life. Spirituality and religion can offer comfort, support, and a sense of meaning in the face of loss, particularly when mourning traumatic deaths and navigating the loss of family members. While every individual's experience with grief is unique, there are common threads that unite us in our shared humanity. By exploring the different facets of grief and growth from diverse spiritual and religious perspectives, we can find comfort and support in the midst of our pain.

Whether it is through attending religious services, participating in rituals and practices, or seeking out support from spiritual leaders and counselors, spirituality and religion can provide a sense of hope and stability during difficult times. However, it is important to remember that grief is a process that takes time and patience and that *it is okay to seek help* when needed. By working through our emotions and seeking out support, we can find a path forward and facilitate growth through loss and grief.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	2 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	3 Wedding rehearsal (2:30 pm decorate, 4:30 pm rehearsal)	4 Wedding 3:30 pm (musicians 1:00, groom 1:45, bride 2:30, vow exchange 2:45) AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6p
5 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am World Communion Clangy change collection Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	6 AA Women 7 pm	7 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	8 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	9 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	10 Tarot 7 pm	11 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6p
12 Worship 10:30 am Harm Reduction Family games AA Men 7:30 pm	13 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	14 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	15 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	17 Pastor Parish meeting 6 pm @ Matt Karlovec's	18 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6p
19 Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour? Independence Village svc. 2p AA Men 7:30 pm	20 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	21 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	22 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	23 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	24	25 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6p
26 Blessing of the Pets worship 10:30 am @ South Central Park pavilion #1 Deacons 11:30 am Trunk or Treat 4-5 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	27 AA Women 7 pm	28 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	29 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	30 AA Women 6 pm Al Anon 7:30 pm	31 	