

The Messenger

June 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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Chair, Outreach

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Roy Dreger
Jack Fitts

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From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

Since the end of 2025, we've been having intentional conversations about the Future of FCC. We've done sticker voting in the sanctuary and had a number of opportunities for small group discussions and larger group sharing. From these conversations, one theme really sticks out — folks yearn for us to double down on what we do well (extravagant hospitality, accessible spaces and events, and meaningful community connections) and be extra loud about it. As Kinzer Habecker said during one of our meetings, "The church doesn't do enough to market itself [...] If you don't blow your own horn, you can't play in the band."

The mainline protestant churches that are thriving in today's cultural climate are the ones who are unabashed about what God is calling them to do. When I was first interviewing to be your pastor, I asked around to other clergy in the area to see how they would describe FCC and what they told me has stuck: "First Congregational? Oh yea, they're aggressively friendly. You'll love it."

In thinking about the Future of FCC, we've come to a time of rest and reflection. Over the summer, I ask that we all think about our extravagant hospitality, accessible spaces and events, and meaningful community connections — and dream about how we can do these things bigger and better! And, in order to focus in on these, what might we need to let go of, or press pause on? Let the summer months encourage you to bask in the warmth of this community and think creatively about how we can draw the circle wider and let even more folks know about our ministry.

I firmly believe that FCC is a unique Christian community in North Ridgeville, and the ministry that we do is quite literally life-saving. I can't wait to see what kind of magic we make as we lean even further into God's calling.



Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Hello, Church Family. I've been blessed to hear a few stories recently on how some of our new members found out about our church, and what made them choose us. You may ask why I chose this church and I'm happy to share that story. As with many younger adults, we were looking for a place for our three children, a place where they felt welcome, and a place where we could be spiritually filled. I believe we had noticed the large "yellow" church a few times as we travelled through the town and decided to visit after we had poor experiences with other churches in the area...places that didn't feel comfortable to us.

I think we've told many of our members that Christian Education, and explicitly Mary Karlovec, was the primary reason we decided to choose FCC. Our kids were welcomed, taught and loved by the CE leadership, and then we felt very cared for by the entire church community. It really did feel like a family to us, a place where we could be ourselves, and at the same time be fed.

Being a preacher's kid in a household where our churches were more on the conservative side, I have to admit that initially the progressive nature and ideals of FCC were different for me. However, now after at least 10 years of attending our church, I couldn't be more changed for the better on how this church impacted my own belief structure and how I see God moving in my and my family's life. God is still speaking, and I believe our church will be critical to how North Ridgeville grows and matures over the next 10 years plus!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

It is hard to believe that another Sunday School year is over and summer is here! Sunday mornings with our children would not happen without the dedicated support of our teachers.

Special thanks to Jenn Anderson, Sandy Chalkwater, Kelsey Styrt, Renee Dornan (lead teachers) and Holly Hengartner and Heather Smith for jumping in when needed. Please thank them for all they do to support our children/youth. Our summer schedule begins on June 7. The nursery playroom will be available during worship for our children ages 4 and under during the summer. Age level learning packets will be available in worship for those children ages 5 and up. Fall Sunday School programming will begin on September 13.

A HUGE PLEA! We currently have four adults who have volunteered their time to supervise the nursery on Sunday morning. We need 2-4 more adults to step up and volunteer their time for this important ministry! It would only be once every 4-6 weeks depending on the number of volunteers. If you cannot commit to serving on a board but want to support our faith community, this is a perfect opportunity to help. We have many young families/visitors that we need to support in our congregation! PLEASE give the gift of your time on Sunday mornings!

On Sunday, June 14 during worship we will celebrate five youth who are graduating from high school this year. Abby Anderson and Cady Kyser are graduating from Elyria Catholic, Ian Kyser is graduating from Elyria High School, and Claire Wolanski and Ethan Crevda are graduating from North Ridgeville High School. Please join us in honoring their accomplishments during worship and coffee hour afterwards.



From June 19 through 26 I will be with some of my favorite church people from around northern Ohio on a mission trip to Lotts Creek, Kentucky. This will be very different this year as we do not have our high school youth going with us (there are 1-2 college age students going). But as my son Matt always says "Different is

good.” So this year I get to do some of the projects I have never gotten to work on before due to supervising the youth, which excites me! If you still would like to donate to the cost of the trip, I would greatly appreciate it. Also please keep our team in your prayers. Thank you!

Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

Have you ever found yourself so overwhelmed that you suddenly felt frozen, out of energy and unable to complete tasks and make decisions? For me, that leads to procrastination, which steals not only my time but my ability to be productive. Has anybody ever served God or others in doing things *tomorrow*? It is what we do today that counts because *if we do one small thing for someone somewhere, we help everyone everywhere*.

The Outreach Committee is doing many small things this month to make a difference in our community and beyond. In addition to our monthly \$100 donations to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance, we voted to give \$100 to the Lorain County Free Clinic.

Our May/June in-gathering collection is to support Community Care’s summer lunch program for children in need in our community who are home for the summer and not able to get free school lunches. **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 thank you so much for your generous donations of pasta and sauce last month for Community Care. They deeply appreciate our support.

Our “Dine to Donate” event at the Avon Commons Red Robin restaurant is on Thursday, June 18. You may dine at any time that day

between 11 am and 9 pm. We hope you are able to participate in this event, the proceeds of which



will support Mary Karlovec’s participation in the Lotts Creek mission. Flyers to present at the restaurant for a 20% donation to our church are available at church, later in this newsletter, or you may photograph the flyer on the narthex and sanctuary tables with your cell phone and present the photo at the restaurant to receive credit for the fundraiser.

We are collecting for the UCC Strengthen the Church campaign through June 14. Among other things, the monies collected support UCC conferences, establishing new churches and youth ministry. Use the special envelope in the bulletins on June 7 and 14 or mark your donation “Strengthen the Church”.

A local knitting group called “The Skein Gang” is making items for babies as well as blankets and items needed at hospitals, shelters, nursing homes, etc. If you have yarn that you don’t need anymore, please bring it to church and we will pass it on to the group.

Whether it’s supporting Community Care, the Lotts Creek mission, Dine to Donate, The Skein Gang or Strengthen the Church, you have the opportunity to do something *today* that counts. Is God calling you? Walk toward Him TODAY!

Deacons’ Desk – Dr. Kurt Dornan

Understanding the Recent Hantavirus Concerns

You may have heard recent news reports about a hantavirus outbreak connected to a cruise ship in early May 2026. While headlines can sound alarming, health experts emphasize that this situation poses very little risk to the general public, especially here in the United States.

[\[cdc.gov\]](https://www.cdc.gov/), [\[usnews.com\]](https://www.usnews.com/)

What is Hantavirus? Hantavirus is a rare virus carried by rodents, such as mice and rats. People can become infected when they breathe in tiny particles from rodent droppings, urine, or saliva—especially in enclosed spaces like sheds, barns, attics, or cabins. [\[cdc.gov\]](#), [\[fox5ny.com\]](#) In North America, hantavirus can cause a serious illness called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), which affects the lungs. Although it can be severe, it is important to remember that cases are very uncommon. [\[cdc.gov\]](#)

Why Is It in the News? Recently, a cluster of cases was identified among passengers on a cruise ship traveling in the Atlantic Ocean. A small number of people became ill, and sadly, several deaths were reported. [\[usnews.com\]](#) This situation gained attention because the strain involved (called the Andes virus) is unusual—it's one of the only types of hantavirus that can sometimes spread between people. Even so, experts stress that this kind of transmission is rare and requires close contact. [\[columbiadoctors.org\]](#)

Should We Be Worried? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the overall risk to the public remains extremely low. [\[cdc.gov\]](#) Health authorities are carefully monitoring those who may have been exposed, and there are no confirmed widespread cases in the U.S. related to this event. [\[usatoday.com\]](#)

It's also important to note that hantavirus does not spread easily like COVID-19 or the flu, which makes large outbreaks very unlikely. [\[wusf.org\]](#)

Symptoms to Know: Early symptoms can look similar to the flu and may include:

- Fever and fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Headaches or chills
- Nausea or stomach discomfort

In more serious cases, people may develop coughing and shortness of breath, as the lungs become affected. [\[fox5ny.com\]](#)

Anyone experiencing these symptoms after possible rodent exposure should seek medical care promptly.

Simple Steps for Prevention

The best protection is practical and straightforward:

- Avoid contact with rodent droppings or nests
- Ventilate enclosed spaces before cleaning
- Use gloves and disinfectants when cleaning areas with possible rodent activity
- Seal up holes in homes or outbuildings to keep rodents out

These measures greatly reduce already low risk. [\[health.sto...dicine.edu\]](#)

A Faithful Perspective: Times like this remind us how quickly concern can spread—but also how important it is to respond with calm, wisdom, and care for one another. While we stay informed and take sensible precautions, we can also rest in God's peace rather than fear.

Let us continue to keep those affected in our prayers and trust that, with knowledge and compassion, we can navigate uncertainties together.

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

May is not quite half over, and the church is in need of some not so minor repairs. The 28-year-old elevator needs repairs that are estimated to run over \$7,000, otherwise it could malfunction while being used. If we had an alternative entrance/exit for mobility challenged members ("Project Uplift"), repairing the existing elevator would not be so critical. Alternatively, if we replaced the elevator with a new one, "Project Uplift" while still needed, could be

worked on at a more relaxed pace that would also allow for checking into additional sources of funding.

The backflow preventer on the main water line was found to be bad during a recent inspection and needed to be replaced at a cost of about \$1,400. There is another backflow device for the boiler, but it checked okay. These devices prevent water that might have impurities from returning to the city water supply and possibly contaminating it and are required to be installed and working by law.

The slate roof over the sanctuary has been needing some repairs since fall and we were waiting for the company to schedule the work. The repairs were finally completed mid-May. Water leaking in and damaging the ceiling creates extra repairs (and additional expenses). The slate roof cannot be walked on, so a lift must be rented and that cost is passed on to the church. The estimate for this repair is also over \$7,000.

I really love this old church and the way it looks. As one of Karen's brothers said, "It looks like a church *should* look"; but it comes at a cost. Our sanctuary was built 150 years ago this year and repairing and improving old buildings often leads to more work than you planned on. I am telling you this to let you know how important keeping your pledge up to date. I know that I sometimes get into "doom and gloom" messaging, and I don't really want to write that way. But I often worry about our finances, and I want to convey to you, the congregation, the need for your pledge to be current.

On a lighter note, the clean out project has been completed thanks to Keith Schoonover financing a dumpster. This removal of unused and/or unusable items was needed as it constituted a fire and safety hazard. Thanks also to Linda Matis for providing the impetus needed to get this off the ground and see it through. Thanks also to all those who

volunteered their time to collect and load everything.

And as always, I thank everyone for their financial support of your church.



New FCCNR Merchandise: Inspired by a vintage FCC sign recently posted by the North Ridgeville Historical Society, we have new shirts and tote bags to help you share your FCC love far and wide! T-Shirts come in fun tie dye colors (perfect for walking in the Pride march) as well as solid colors, and there are a variety of sizes of canvas bags. You can purchase whatever you'd like and it will ship directly to you!

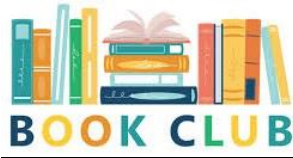
<https://www.bonfire.com/store/fcc-north-ridgeville/>

Cleveland Pride in June: We're already preparing to walk in the Cleveland Pride March on Saturday, June 6 at 11 am! Sign up on the sheet in the sanctuary to let us know you'll be coming. Strollers, wagons, and wheelchairs are all welcome!

Pastor Kearstin Out of Office: Pastor Kearstin will be out of the office from June 23-27 at Preaching Camp in Connecticut.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Worship planning mtg. 11 am AA Women 7 pm	2 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	3	4 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	5	6 Pride in the CLE march 11 am downtown Cleve. AA Women 9 am
Linda off - surgery						
7 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Communion & clanging change Fellowship hour? Hall rental (Goode) 1:30-6 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	8 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	9 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	10 4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)	11 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	12	13 AA Women 9 am
Linda off - surgery						
14 Worship 10:30 am Graduate recognition Fellowship hour AA Men 7:30 pm	15 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	16 Newsletter articles due AA 1 st Step 8 pm	17	18 Dine & Donate Red Robin Avon Commons Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	19 Girl Scouts ceremony 5-7 pm in fellowship hall	20 Hall rental (Goode) 4-8 pm AA Women 9 am
21 Father's Day Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	22 AA Women 7 pm	23 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	24 4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)	25 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	26	27 Hall rental (Mandoke) 12-5 pm AA Women 9 am
Pastor Kearstin preaching camp						
28 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	29 AA Women 7 pm	30 AA 1 st Step 8 pm				





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

June 15: We Were the Lucky Ones by Georgia Hunter

July 20: The Correspondent by Virginia Evans

August 17: Theo of Golden by Allen Levi

GREETERS

June	
7	George Beers, Paul Wolanski
14	Teri Loy, Millie Gilly
21	Karen Farmer, Jane Woravka
28	Paula Dudek, Sara Bowman



- 6/5 Stephanie Matis
- Lynne Petroff
- 6/9 Millie Gilly
- 6/15 Liz Wolanski
- 6/16 Barb Zinsmeister
- 6/17 Ben Dornan
- 6/19 Carol Scharmman
- 6/29 Charlotte Dornan
- 6/2 Dale & Becky Williams
- 6/21 John & Lynne Petroff
- 6/23 Greg & Paula Dudek
- 6/27 Roy & Karen Dreger

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Show this flyer or simply mention the fundraiser to your server to have your sales counted.

FUNDRAISER DETAILS
35858 Detroit Rd., Avon, OH 44011
June 18, 2026*

If ordering online, please follow these instructions:

- 1 Start your order at redrobin.com/order and select the restaurant above.
- 2 In the menu, go to the category labeled "Fundraisers (To-Go Only)" and click on that item.
- 3 Click the "add" button, and then "add to bag."
- 4 Add your meal items and check out.
- 5 Arrive at Red Robin, come in, say hi, grab your food and be on your way! If your location has curbside pick-up, we can bring it to your car too!

*Fundraiser during restaurant operating hours. Visit redrobin.com and find this location to view hours. Donation based on all eligible net dine-in and to-go food sales only. Excludes sales from catering (at select locations), 3rd party ordering and delivery sites, alcohol, gift cards, retail, tax and gratuity. Offer void if flyer is distributed in or near the restaurant during fundraiser day & hours.