

# The Messenger

May 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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

In a sermon at the start of spring, I encouraged folks to pick a growing plant in their lives to watch and pay extra attention to during this season. This is an exercise that one of my professors assigned us in seminary, and the small, daily noticing of the plant life around me has enriched my life in numerous ways.

Over the last month or so, I've heard from many of you that this practice has been transformative in unexpected ways. One matriarch excitedly texted me that one of her beloved plants bloomed for the first time in *years*, and she likes to think that it's partly because of all the extra attention she's been showing it lately. A parent reached out and told me that they had shared this "sermon homework" with their children, and now every morning the kiddos rush outside to greet a particular tree in the front yard; they tell the tree how strong it's growing and give it hugs and love.

The concept of witnessing is a central theme in the New Testament — various versions of the Greek word **μάρτυς (martus)** are found 181 times throughout the gospels and other books. The stories of Jesus, the narratives of the Apostles and later letters from Paul, place a large emphasis on bearing witness to the work of God, Christ, and Spirit in the world and then sharing that witness with others (often called the Good News).

You see, the act of paying attention to the creation around us is sacred and holy work, dear ones. In scripture, Jesus calls the disciples and crowds to be witnesses to his work in the world, and to go forth and share what they have witnessed with others, so that the whole community might be transformed by Christ's tender and loving ministry.

When we pay attention to the people, and the plants, around us, we are following in this ancient tradition of witness. Sure, it might feel minor ("Pastor Kearstin, I'm literally just glancing out my window and looking at a tulip.. what's the big deal?") — but this small ritual actually helps us practice holding space for bigger acts of witness. By practicing slowing down and paying attention, we gradually increase our tolerance for stillness and focus, and that allows us to be more present and witness other areas of our lives.

For those of you who have been spending time with a plant, keep it up.



For those who have been forgetful, know that it's never too late to begin. And for those who may have scoffed at the idea, know that it is grounded in a deeply biblical tradition and it is incredibly important — there's a reason why witness is talked about 181 times!

Every blessing,  
Pastor Kearstin

PS: Please keep sending me pictures and stories of the plants that you're paying attention to this spring! I absolutely adore seeing the nature that you're drawn to!

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

Happy Spring! Sometimes I forget how long the Lenten season is compared to Advent and the last week feels like a sprint to the finish line! On Palm Sunday we had a beautiful day for an Easter Egg Hunt. Approximately 50 kiddos joined us for the crafts and egg hunt. We received many comments from those from the community about how welcoming our hunt is especially for those with diverse learning needs. A huge thank you to those who supervised a craft or supported kids during the egg hunt. A **BIG THANK YOU** to our church family for the candy donations! We filled 1800 eggs! We thought we had used them all for the hunt but forgot we had held back a bag in case we had a few late arrivals. But as they were not needed, I made a phone call to Carla Valles who works in a special needs classroom, and the nine students in that classroom had a delightful egg hunt in the school courtyard the last day before spring break! Community outreach happening in two ways!

On Good Friday, Paula Dudek and I walked in the annual North Ridgeville Cross Walk. I would love next year to see more people from our church join us! Two services on Easter Sunday with breakfast in between brought the Lenten season to a close for me... Alleluia! Christ has Risen!

Clangy change collected in March filled 10 Easter baskets for some of our homebound or in need of a special "We are thinking about YOU!" Special thanks to Paula Dudek for helping me deliver the baskets. I have to tell you that I was a little disappointed that no one else volunteered to deliver a basket or two, but it actually became a blessing in disguise for me! I LOVED every minute visiting and talking to our homebound. It took me three days to get seven baskets delivered because my average visit was 45 minutes!

Clangy change collected in April was earmarked for treat bags for the residents of Independent Village. The 50 treat bags were delivered to them at the worship service on April 19. Clangy change collected in May will support purchasing gifts for our high school graduates in June. We will be honoring four graduates on Sunday, June 14 during the worship service.

The clangy change monthly collection makes a difference! In the first 4 months of 2026, we have supported four very important outreach projects that we would not have been able to do without all of your monetary change! You have given over \$430 in four months to support these special projects that reach across not only our own congregation but the community! THANK YOU!

In June I will be traveling to Lotts Creek for the annual work project supported by several UCC congregations across western and northern Ohio. This year will look a little different than in the previous few years as the makeup of the group is mostly adults with a couple graduating high school seniors. Every 4-5 years the makeup of the group goes through a transition as our youth who have gone 3-4 years in a row are either graduating, working, taking summer classes, or have other reasons for not going. Sometimes there is a large influx of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders taking their place but this year is the exception to the rule. It will definitely look a little different but it is also a great time for the adults to get to work in the hollers as well as

look at ways to change or add to the experience for future years. If there is any adult who wants to do the Lotts Creek work project with me, there may be a few openings. It is an 8-day trip from Friday, June 19 to Friday, June 26. The cost is approximately \$400 plus travel expenses. See me for details.

If there is anyone who would like to donate towards my costs for the trip, please see me. It would be most appreciated. We have not done any fundraising to support the trip this year. Along with the cost of the trip, traditionally churches provide funds to help support purchasing the supplies, etc. needed to support the work we do there.

Finally, just a reminder...the last day for Sunday School is May 31. One of my favorite sayings is "To teach is to touch a heart forever!" My forever heartfelt THANKS to: Jenn Anderson, Sandy Chalkwater, Kelsey Styrt, Renee Dornan, and Heather Smith for touching the hearts of our kiddos and youth this Sunday School year! I could not do it without you!

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

Memories can be wonderful things. May is a month of memories, a sweet interlude between an often stormy and uncertain early Spring and the wrath of Summer's heat-to-come. We pause to remember our mothers and other women who shaped our lives on Mother's Day, those who sacrificed themselves for our freedom on Memorial Day, and, as graduations draw near, our childhood school years and the friendships we forged through those years.

The Outreach Board created some wonderful memories for our Community Care adopted family with an Easter basket filled with toys, candy and a gift card for them to enjoy. We voted to donate \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance, as well as \$200 to World Central Kitchen. We wish to thank the congregation for its generous donations of pasta and sauce to benefit Community Care. Genesis

House expressed its gratitude for all of the personal hygiene products collected from our church.

We have planned a **Dine to Donate** event for **Thursday, June 18** at the Avon Commons **Red Robin** restaurant. Red Robin will donate 20% of all the dine-in and to-go food sales that day to our church. Fundraiser flyers needed to present at the restaurant will be available at church closer to June 18. You can even photograph the flyer on display in the narthex with your smartphone to share with friends and neighbors. A flyer photo may be presented at the restaurant in lieu of a paper flyer for our church to receive credit for the sale.

We hope that everyone will participate to support our mission work and as we pause to remember the past, may we remember, too, that today is important. What we say, what we think, and what we do in God's name will remain forever.

### **Deacons' Desk – Paula Dudek**

Matthew 5:3-12: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all manner of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad: for your reward is great in heaven: for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger**

At the trustees meeting in April we talked about the **spring clean-up day on May 30** this year. Jon Eaton is checking to see which business has the best price on the three yards of mulch we will need, and Linda volunteered to purchase the flowers. It's not too early to mark your calendars for this church activity. This year's clean-up does not conflict with the Pride march (June 6) so we hope to see you all on May 30!

The largest part of the meeting was spent in discussion with the Endowment Committee on the means necessary to fund a future front entry/exit for those with mobility issues. We really need an additional entryway. The elevator is old and not always reliable; and if it stops working completely, there are some of our congregation that would not be able to attend the service (or leave if they were inside when it quit). The proposed entry would be where the original east entry was. If you have ever looked at the old pictures of the church, you may have noticed an entrance on the east side of the bell tower that had a canopy over it. This was the entryway originally designed to be used by the ladies as they exited their buggy; that was the reason for the large stone landing in front of this door. The doorway was dismantled in about 1965 and was situated where a stone cross is currently located on the exterior. You will be receiving a letter from the trustees in the future with more information about the project and how we are hoping to fund it. We are currently waiting for more information in order to present you with the most accurate picture of what our goal will look like. In the meantime, your donations are what keeps the doors open and we, as always, appreciate your continued support.

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

Warm Spring greetings, Church Family. Resurrection, renewal...just a few terms that are

important to us as a church family this time of year. The buds of the trees, the warm breezes, and the colorful plant life are a joy to observe. I'd like to think of this as also an inward ask as well...what parts of our life could benefit from a renewal, from growth, from care and feeding? What flowers can we produce by looking inward? I will keep you in prayer as you thoughtfully consider these things!



**Tarot Group at FCC:** Happening **Friday, May 15 at 7:00 pm** in the fellowship hall. We'll pay special attention to the Court cards this month, exploring all 16 cards across the suits. RSVP here so we know how many tables to set up in the fellowship hall: <https://bit.ly/4sRjDLh>



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

**May 18:** The Fox Wife by Yangsze Choo

**June 15:** We Were the Lucky Ones by Georgia Hunter

### **GREETERS**

May	
<b>3</b>	Diana Goode, Teri Loy
<b>10</b>	George Beers, Paul Wolanski
<b>17</b>	Karen Farmer,
<b>24</b>	Jane Woravka, Paula Dudek
<b>31</b>	Sara Bowman, Diana Goode



Check out  
our new  
FCCNR  
merch!

First Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ

**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/>

## 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 Kate Harrold
- 5/19 Alan Willcox
- 5/20 Cathleen Karlovec
- 5/15 Jack & Betty Fitts
- 5/23 John & Valerie Arnold

## Church CLEAN UP



Help us clean up and clean out!  
Let's make our church a cleaner, safer  
space for everyone.

Friday, May 8  
and  
Saturday, May 9



This is a different clean up day than the outside spring clean up on May 30. During this "clean out", we will be purging and cleaning out broken, damaged, unusable, unneeded things. Depending on how much help we get, we plan to work on the undercroft (basement), the maintenance shed, and the custodial area. Please let Linda know if you will be available either of those days and able to help out. Approx. times are late morning through evening on May 8 and morning until 1-ish on Saturday.

We're officially registered for the

**Pride in the CLE**

march on Saturday June 6!

**Want to walk in the march? Let us know!**

*The march is approximately 1-mile long  
and all are welcome--wagons,  
wheelchairs, strollers, leashed dogs, &  
non-church members.*

LOVE IS LOVE



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 AA Women 9 am
3 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Communion & clagy change Grant research meeting AA Men 7:30 pm	4 AA Women 7 pm	5 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm	6 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6-7:30p	7 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	8 Clean up & clean out dumpster	9 AA Women 9 am
10 Mother's Day Worship 10:30 am New members Fellowship hour/new members reception AA Men 7:30 pm	11 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	12 AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm	13 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	14 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	15 Tarot 7 pm	16 Newsletter articles due AA Women 9 am
17 Worship 10:30 am Handbells Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	18 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	19 AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm	20 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	21 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	22 Pastor Parish meeting 6 pm @ Matt Karlovec's	23 AA Women 9 am
24 Pentecost – wear red Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	25 Memorial Day OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 7 pm	26 AA 1 <sup>st</sup> Step 8 pm	27 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	28 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	29 Pastor Kearstin off	30 Spring clean up 9 am AA Women 9 am
31 Pr. Kearstin off Worship 10:30 am Last Sunday school Deacons 11:30 am Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	<p><b>Coming in June:</b>          6/6: Pride in the CLE march          6/14: Graduating seniors recognition          6/18: Dine &amp; Donate at Red Robin in Avon Commons</p>					

