

The Messenger

October 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

The United Church of Christ as a denomination is diverse. Across the country our churches worship in more than 45 languages; the pews are filled with mostly white folks, but there are entire congregations that are Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latine, and Pacific Islander. People in our churches are across the spectrum theologically, politically, economically, and age-wise. From the very beginning of our journey as the UCC, nearly 70 years ago, we have always prioritized unity over uniformity; we are a faith tradition that believes that our many diversities are gifts from God, and they help us understand the *imago dei* (the very image of God) more fully.

We, at First Congregational Church UCC, are also diverse. Walking into our sanctuary on a Sunday morning, you might see a number of folks who look familiar to you, who seem quite similar. Let me assure you, though, that FCC's diversity is broad. We have folks here who are immigrants, or children of immigrants; people who speak multiple languages and have lived in other parts of the country and world. Our members and visitors come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, and we have a wide variety of education levels and professional specialties. When it comes to our faith, we are in different places too — some people have home altars that they use for prayer, others like daily devotionals, and for some, a walk in the woods is their ideal form of worship and prayer.

Like our denomination, we at FCC believe that the presence of diversity is necessary in order to more fully experience and understand the divine. As the world around us changes and we make decisions about how we will change to meet the current needs of our communities, we need everyone's voices at the table helping us discern our way forward. UCC General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, said it well, "The church must continue to be diverse with intentions to be more welcoming than we currently are. We are a big tent, the world an even bigger one. How we choose to embrace the unity that is possible in the church and in the world is up to us." I look forward to continuing this sacred journey with you, dear ones, in an ever-evolving world.

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin



Orange Slip Update: Kris Dornan, Moderator

Future of FCC:



Thank you all again for giving us feedback on what you feel is the most important part of pastoral duties. We did this was because we are planning for next year and do not have the budget to appropriately compensate our pastor.

We are blessed to have a pastor who wants to stay with us knowing our financial situation and has offered to help us. Help means that we can keep our pastor and not put additional load on a problematic budget for next year.

We, as council, as your leaders of the church, in consultation with our pastor have decided to consider a 3/4-time pastorship for the 2027 calendar year. In the U.S. 40% of UCC and DOC (Disciples of Christ) pastors are part-time, so this is not a unique situation. We are saying this now because we will have work to do to determine what that looks like from a Sunday worship perspective against liturgical calendars, the impacts on staff, church duties, and workings of the church.

If you have any questions on the finances or the future of First Congregational Church, please feel free to reach out to any member of Council. We are here for your feedback and questions as we move forward.

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Warm fall greetings, Church! If you remember last month's *Moderator's Moment*, I took the opportunity to give thanks for our Congregational church's structure, one that allows us to decide how we function, how we show up in our community, and how we want to worship. In this month's *Moment*, I'm going to build off of that, but in a way that does empower, but also dictates how we have to act as an administrative function to our church.

As a timely subject, we know that church finances are a concern especially as we plan our

budget for 2027. As a Congregational church, we do not have anyone outside of our walls to dictate how we spend our money, or how we drive offering and tithing to our church. However, it does fall to all of us as our church's congregation to decide upon how we save, spend, and allocate our finances. To do that, you need to be informed, and you need to be aware of what our financial conditions are. The only way we can truly ensure that you know where we stand is to have the option to discuss these issues (like money) during Sunday worship. Sometimes this is not what we'd like to discuss during worship, but as a Congregational church, we all have to be aware of the goings-on of the church, because nothing happens at our church without the blessing and votes of you as our congregation.

What a blessing we share that we get to decide, but also what a charge that is to us to be aware, to be present, to give feedback, and ultimately be part of the decisions that shape our church.

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

It seems like we just started our summer programming and suddenly fall programming is here! September 13 was the start of our Sunday School programming for the '26-'27 season. Our curriculum for fall centers around the Creation Story for our preschool through 3rd graders. Our 4th through 7th graders are doing a book study of the book *Blended* by Sharon Draper. Special thanks to Jenn Anderson and Sandy Chalkwater (PreK-K), and Kelsey Styrt and Heather O'Connell (4th-7th) for volunteering to lead these groups of kiddos. I am currently teaching grades 1-3 but would love to have someone(s) step in to take over this wonderful group of kids so I am free on Sunday mornings to oversee the safety and programming of the entire Sunday School. See me if you'd like to help out!

Our nursery this season finally has a full complement of volunteers! Huge thanks to Linda Matis, Diana Goode, Shirley Sunyak and

Sandra Halstead for covering the nursery and Karen Veliconia (the 5th Sunday months). It truly does take a village to support our kiddos!

From October 6 through 8, I will be at the Great Lakes United Church Educators (GLAUCE) retreat at the Waycross Camp and Retreat Center in Morgantown, Indiana. I am excited to be able to attend this year as the topic centers around those who are identified as neurodivergent and how we can support them in the faith setting. As you may or may not know, my educational background is in supporting children with special needs in the school setting. I am really excited to learn techniques for supporting neurodivergent children as well as adults in the faith setting.

On **Sunday, October 25 from 4-5 pm**, we will be hosting our annual **TRUNK OR TREAT** in the church parking lot. We are in need of **LOTS OF TRUNKS with treats (nothing with nuts, please)**



for the kids from the community to visit. Please consider signing up for this fun event. Sign-up sheets are on the tables at the front and back of the sanctuary. We ask that those participating be in place by 3:45 pm. Please invite family and friends to come for this safe, fun event. There will be several fun crafts set up in fellowship hall, too!

Finally, **SAVE THE DATE** for our **Advent workshop** on Sunday, November 22 after worship! More information will be in the November *Messenger* and weekly bulletins!



Outreach Board News – Karen Farmer

Once again, my favorite month of October has arrived! I anxiously await the heat of summer to dissipate and for a world, ablaze with color, to arrive to restore my spirit. It reminds me that God is “the light of the world” and that His light is reflected in the beauty around me.

The Outreach Board strives to reflect God’s light in its mission work. In addition to our monthly \$100 donations to both Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance, we voted to collect items needed by Neighborhood Alliance for its emergency shelter as our October in-gathering. Did you know that it runs the only shelter in Lorain County that offers emergency housing for men, women and children 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year? We are collecting diapers (ALL sizes), pull-up training pants, shaving cream and razors (men and women), shampoo and conditioner (men, women and children), bath towels and washcloths (new), unscented baby wipes, hand and body lotion, and body wash and deodorant (men and women) throughout the month of October.

We are hosting a **Dine-to-Donate** event at the North Ridgeville **Culver’s** restaurant on Lorain Road the week after Thanksgiving on Tuesday, December 1 from 4 to 8 pm to help fund future mission projects. We need a few people willing to take food to customers that night. If you’re willing to help in this way or by sitting at a table to promote our church by answering questions and handing out church brochures, please let the church office or someone on Outreach know. Culver’s will give us 10% of ALL dine-in and take-out sales that night and not just sales made by church affiliated customers, so we’re hoping for a great turnout!

This month we are supporting the UCC Neighbors in Need’s “Walk in Love” campaign and hope that you will contribute to this important UCC mission which supports ministries of justice and compassion in the U.S.

We wish to thank you for your many contributions to our “Minestrone Soup-in-a-Bag” meals for Community Care’s food pantry in September. The meals were greatly appreciated.

God has reflected His light in our lives. May we strive to roll back the darkness for others through our words and deeds.

Deacons' Desk – KiKi Witter

With temperatures finally showing signs of moderating, my thoughts have been focusing on the coming fall. For me, it arrives later than I'm used to seeing, lasting longer with much more vibrant colors. (Think winter snowstorms beginning before Halloween...whether that's location or climate change is debatable.)

This time of year always makes me think of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 which says, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven..."; or for seniors like me a recording from The Byrds, "Turn, Turn, Turn" (so VERY popular with those Catholic Nuns!) one of the few pop songs taken nearly entirely from the Bible. These verses encompass the entirety of our human experience - from the simple change of summer activities to the set schedules of the academic calendar to events that are largely outside our control, i.e. severe weather, car accidents, etc. We can choose to take care of ourselves and that's "all I can handle" or be true followers of Christ and look out for our neighbors and help when we see a need and be a good person.

We currently have a campaign to perform 250 acts of kindness in 2026. I'm sure that all of us have performed many acts of kindness on a daily basis that we may consider too small to count, for example leaving your Aldi cart without taking your quarter, giving a friend a hug when you know they're going through a difficult time, and just listening to them vent. In short, behaving like those nuns of my youth would say, "Do what Jesus would do." This is a congregation of exceptionally kind people, something that is reflected in one of the choir's favorite songs, "Love Grows Here"

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

The Trustees got more bad news about the state of our finances at the September meeting. Our expenses were over \$13,000 more than our income and collections were down. Not a good way to start a Trustee's

meeting. We talked about the upcoming stewardship campaign as we kept the current situation in mind. There will be a congregational letter coming out shortly that discusses the stewardship campaign. The Trustees will be presenting stewardship moments during church in late October and early November. Pledges will be due by November 9 with the Congregational Meeting on November 15, so mark your calendar and keep these dates in mind.

The elevator is constantly having problems and should be replaced. We have one quote of about \$43,000 for the lift itself; but the work necessary to get things ready for an install is additional, and that cost won't be known until the plans are accepted. We have another quote coming shortly and I suspect it will be similar in cost.

There was talk about updating the hall rental conditions, but in the end we decided to keep them as is. Following this, since we posted signs welcoming service animals, we talked about the need for a policy governing service animals. Several ideas were put forward and Linda Matis volunteered to try to make them into a cohesive policy which will be posted by the doorways.

Just a reminder that it's your pledge money that keeps the church alive and well, so thank you for keeping your pledge current.



Women's Book Club: 7 pm at the church
October 19: The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon
November 16: The Calamity Club by Kathryn Stockett (may be more difficult to get so reserve early)
December 21: The Deal of a Lifetime: holiday novella by Fredrik Backman
January 18: The Boxcar Librarian by Brianna Labuskes

GREETERS

September	
27	Jane Woravka, Paula Dudek
October	
4	Sara Bowman, Diana Goode
11	George Beers, Paul Wolanski
18	Teri Loy, Millie Gilly
25	Jane Woravka, _____

NURSERY

September	
27	Diana Goode
October	
4	Sandra Halstead
11	Shirley Sunyak
18	(worship @ park)
25	Linda Matis



- 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
- 10/20 Dreama Stamper
- 10/26 Matt Karlovec

- 10/2 Kinzer & Barb Habecker (70 yrs!)
- 10/11 Dean & Lynne Lipperman
- 10/12 Ryan & Holly Hengartner
- 10/18 Paul & Liz Wolanski
- 10/18 Mike & Joan Bier

Tell your family,
friends, neighbors!

FRAUD PREVENTION SEMINAR

Mark your calendar for October 4! Sara Markle from Fifth Third Bank will present a fraud prevention/scam spotting seminar in fellowship hall at 11:45 a.m.

Snacks provided!

**Important info for all ages especially
going into the holiday season!**

**Sign up to be "a trunk" on one
of the sheets at the church or
by contacting the office!**



TRUNK OR TREAT

October 25
4 p.m. - 5 p.m.

FOR AGES 12 & UNDER
CHILDREN MUST BE
ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT



JOIN US FOR FUN,
CANDY & CRAFTS!





First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				Barb off		
				Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm		AA Women 9 am
4 Barb off – Lynne L. Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Neighbors in Need World Communion Clangy change Fraud prevention seminar AA Men 7:30 pm	5	6 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm Mary at GLAUCE	7 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	8	9	10 Hall rented (Davidson) 12-4 pm AA Women 9 am
	AA Women 7 pm	AA 1 st Step 8 pm	Three C Club 6 pm 4-H 7 pm	AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	Three C Club game night 6-8 pm	
11 Worship 10:30 am Harm Reduction Sunday Neighbors in Need AA Men 7:30 pm	12 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	13 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	14 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm	15 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	16 Newsletter articles due	17 AA Women 9 am
18 Blessing of the Animals Worship @ So. Central Park 10:30 am AA Men 7:30 pm	19 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	20 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	21 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm	22 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	23	24 AA Women 9 am
25 Worship 10:30 am Stewardship begins Deacons 11:30 am New member class Fellowship hour? Trunk or Treat 4-5 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	26 AA Women 7 pm	27 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	28 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm	29 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	30	31  AA Women 9 am