

The Messenger

April 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

Minister

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Director, Christian Education

Mary Karlovec

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Chair, Deacons

Chair, Outreach

Edie Phillips

Co-Chairs, Trustees

Roy Dreger
Jack Fitts

Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

One of my favorite hymns has always been “Here I Am, Lord,” written by Dan Schutte in 1981. It’s based on scripture from Samuel and Isaiah, and the hymn follows a dialogue between God and the singer. God speaks of Their power and love for creation, and we, the singers, respond by promising to embody God’s love and serve those around us. It’s incredibly beautiful and a wonderful reminder of how we can practically live out our faith — we listen for God’s call and then respond!

Sometimes, though, we respond and get all ready for action, and then things shift. Maybe the need of God’s people changes, or our own abilities change. Recently, for me, it was spending immense time and energy preparing to show up for our church partners in Palestine only to have the US government bomb a school in Iran and reignite a volatile situation that has made it too unsafe for us to travel.

That’s right: our church leadership delegation to Palestine and Israel has been cancelled due to current events. This is an immense privilege to have: to be able to stay home and stay safe when tens of thousands of Palestinians are without homes and safety .

Even though I will not be traveling in person to support our Christian, Jewish, and Muslim partners, FCC will continue to accept donations that will be sent on to Global Ministries through the month of April, and 100% of the money donated will be shared with the 14 global church partners we work with in the area, including organizations that provide psychological support for children, support Palestinian refugees with healthcare needs , and document human rights violations. You can donate online and choose “Pastor Kearstin’s Mission Trip” from the dropdown menu, or you can support these partners via a cash or check donation with “Pastor Kearstin’s Mission Trip” written as the fund.

Remember, while our group of church leaders has the choice to cancel the trip and not risk our lives in this new international conflict, Palestinian’s are stuck there — without water or medical care, and many without electricity. Even though we can no longer show up physically, we can still show up



financially. In the midst of this ongoing genocide, God is calling out to us to help our fellow humans. We have the opportunity to say, "Here I Am, Lord."

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

Holy Week Schedule

Handicap Accessible + All are welcome!

Palm Sunday - March 29
Service 10:30 am
Easter Egg Hunt and Crafts 12:30 pm (ages 12 & under)

Maundy Thursday - April 2
Service 7:00 pm

Good Friday - April 3
Cross Walk 12:00 pm So. Central Park Gazebo

Easter - April 5
Services 8:00 am and 10:30 am
Easter Breakfast between Services

To share faith, hope & love with all
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
36363 Center Ridge Rd., North Ridgeville, OH 44039
440-327-2921 ~ www.fccalive.org

April 12th Q & A Service: The Easter season can be a little hectic for church leaders, so Pastor Kearstin will be hosting a Question & Answer service on the Sunday after Easter. Now is the time to start submitting questions! Maybe you want to know more details on a super weird story in scripture, or you have a question about Pastor Kearstin's spiritual practices? Perhaps your kiddo recently asked you a question about God that had you stumped, and you'd love to hear what someone else has to say? Send your questions to Linda in the office at (secretary@fccalive.org) and we'll get them compiled for the April 12th service.

Worship at Independence Village: Come enjoy a shortened worship service at Independence Village in Avon Lake on Sunday **April 19 at 2 pm**. We'll praise God through song and scripture and then have a time of fellowship with the residents.

Emergency Response Team Training: If you volunteered to be on the Emergency Response

or Medical Response Team, make sure you come to our training on Sunday **April 12 at 12 pm**, after worship. Members of the Emergency Preparedness Task Force will guide you through their recent report and train you on how to respond calmly and safely in all kinds of situations. You'll also learn about the important safety equipment found around the church, like fire extinguishers and blankets, a stair chair to use in case the elevator is out, and more.

Tarot Group at FCC: Happening **Friday April 17 at 7:00 pm** in the fellowship hall. We'll pay special attention to the Wands this month, exploring all 14 cards in the suit. RSVP here so we know how many tables to set up in the fellowship hall: <https://bit.ly/4buHb37>

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Happy Spring, Church Family! I've been reminded recently how important it is that we have friends, that we have community, that we have fellowship with others. I believe we were not meant to struggle alone. Are you dealing with something today that seems too difficult to deal with alone? I pray for you and I pray that you have someone to share that burden with, or perhaps there is someone in our congregation that can help. There is power in community, and there is power in prayer! Believe it!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Joyous Easter! As I write this, we are feverishly filling hundreds of Easter eggs for the Easter egg hunt happening after the service on March 29. A HUGE thank you to the congregation for providing the candy needed to fill the eggs. We hopefully will have over 1,000 eggs filled for the hunt this year. A big thanks to Holly Chalkwater, Sandy Chalkwater and Matt Karlovec for helping me fill the eggs. Pictures will be posted on our Facebook page and in next month's Messenger.

In March, we collected \$112 in clanging change to support filling Easter baskets for our home bound. Ten baskets are being delivered by church members so that our home bound have them before Easter. Our youngest kiddos made very special bunny cards to add to the baskets to brighten their day! We added a twist this year and made an extra basket for someone to win to give to a friend or family member they wanted to brighten their day for this Easter season. We gave out raffle tickets to win Easter basket #11 to anyone who donated to our clanging change offering. And the winner is....Teri Ireland Loy! Congratulations, Teri!

Just a reminder that April's clanging change will not be collected until *April 12* due to Easter being the first Sunday of the month. April's clanging change will go towards making small goodie bags to take to the Independent Village when we visit in April.

We are still in desperate need of people to volunteer in the nursery. **PLEASE consider this important ministry to the church and volunteer.** We cannot support this VERY critical ministry without your help. Talk to any CE member to volunteer!

On **Sunday, April 26** the Board of Christian Education is sponsoring a **Ladies (Young and Old) Tea, Cookies and Craft Event**



from 2:00-4:00 pm. This event will be limited to 50 people (we will have a waitlist). See more information about this fun

event and the registration form later in the Messenger. The registration deadline for this event is April 18 so don't wait! ***For this event we need small/medium flat back buttons (colorful colors) for one of the craft projects. We also need 12 – three-tiered cookie stands. If you have one we can borrow for the tea, please let me know.***

Outreach Board News – Karen Farmer

I am always filled with wonder at this time of year. Seeing life returning as Spring arrives fills me with such joy. Something deep inside me responds to the flames of hope and faith kindled by God's promise of new life and I feel renewed.

Sharing His promise with others is the mission of the Outreach Board. We are donating \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance this month. We put together an Easter basket of small toys, candy and a \$100 gift card for our Community Care family, as well as providing birthday bags containing cake mix, frosting, candles, paper plates, napkins, cups, decorations and \$25 gift cards for two of the children with April birthdays.

The committee wishes to thank everyone for their **donations of pasta and pasta sauce** for Community Care (****continuing through the month of April****), as well as your support of UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing in March. We collected \$273 this year! The One World Shop is not able to bring its mobile shop to our church in April, but we're hoping that we will be able to host the shop later in the year. And we will make a decision at our next meeting about scheduling a Dine to Donate event sometime soon.

May you be filled with wonder and feel God's presence in the coming of Spring and accept, with gladness, His promise of eternal life.

Deacons' Desk – Linda Matis

According to our Bylaws, "The Board of Deacons shall cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual interests of the church and community. They shall assist in the preparation and administration of the ordinances (communion), in caring for the poor, the sick, and the grieving. They shall oversee the receiving of the offering. They shall call upon visitors and new members, introduce new families into the life of the church, and maintain

a spirit of fellowship within the church. They shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in case of a temporary vacancy or the absence of the Pastor. They shall have responsibility relating to admission and termination of membership as provided for in the constitution.

The Board of Deacons with the Pastor shall recommend to Church Council the time, place, and order of all regularly scheduled and special services of worship. The Board of Deacons shall coordinate the music programs of the church with the assistance of the Pastor and the Music Director(s)."

In other words, the Deacons are responsible for ensuring worship services run as smoothly as possible. A lot of times you will see us moving about during the services as we lock the glass doors after the service begins for safety reasons, change microphone batteries that die mid-service, relight or replace candles on the altar, and much more.

The Board of Deacons is currently operating without an official chairperson or leader; we are all pitching in during board meetings, and Paula Dudek and I attend monthly worship planning meetings with Pastor Kearstin and other staff members.

Being a Deacon is a labor of love and we enjoy serving our church. If you would be interested in joining the Board of Deacons, please reach out to me or Pastor Kearstin.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

You may have noticed that the piano in the sanctuary has a piece of plywood underneath it. That wood and the piece of wood against the wall in the entryway are there in an attempt to protect the sanctuary carpet when moving the piano (when the handbells play). It is one idea among several aimed at preventing

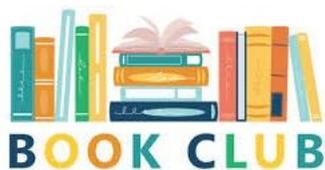
the carpet from rolling up and creating "waves" that might cause damage to the carpet, or more importantly, to prevent someone from losing their balance due to an uneven surface. We haven't moved the piano as of this writing, but we will soon and it will be interesting to see how this works out. The trustees are open to any ideas you might have that would help to save the carpet.

The portable sign has been repaired, sort of, and anchored better. We will see how it holds up to the winds that spring can bring. The real answer is a new permanent digital sign that can change wording and toggle between messages. This would also create better "curb appeal" that would attract more attention, and possibly visitors, but it would also be expensive.

These are some of the more visible items that are being dealt with by the trustees. There are some hidden ones such as the pieces of slate you see in the lawn and parking lot that mean that the **sanctuary roof needs work...again**. And speaking of the **parking lot**, it **should be sealed** to prevent it from needing more extensive repair. The **maintenance shed** in the back of the parking lot **needs** some of the **walls repaired or replaced**, something you won't see unless you look around the perimeter of the shed. **Drains for the downspouts** are clogged and **need to be cleaned**. But in the meantime, and to prevent the basement from flooding, there are pipes directing the flow to the sidewalk. And speaking of the **sidewalk**, to eliminate the unevenness it **needs to be replaced**, and that is not as cheap as replacing a regular sidewalk because it abuts the parking lot and needs more than the normal amount of concrete. Oh, and not to be forgotten, the **sanctuary could use better lighting**.

These are just some of the things I see that need to be worked on, but they can't come out of the budget as the budget is currently operating at a deficit. I realize that these issues cannot be done all at one time, they need to be done as money and time dictate. Money that we

don't have; and we are running out of time to make some of the repairs to prevent more costly maintenance. Please think about this as you keep your pledge current. Thank you.



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

April 20: My Friends: A Novel by Fredrik Backman

May 18: The Fox Wife by Yangsze Choo

June 15: We Were the Lucky Ones by Georgia Hunter



- 4/1 Krista O'Neill
- 4/4 Tim O'Neill
- 4/8 Paula Dudek
- 4/15 Heather Smith
- 4/16 John Petroff
- 4/18 Cate Dornan
- 4/18 Matt Dornan
- 4/22 Nellie Carr
- 4/23 Brian Zinsmeister
- 4/30 June Yost

- 4/15 Andy & Shirley Sunyak
- 4/25 Bob & Linda Matis
- 4/28 Jim & June Yost

GREETERS

March	
29	Sara Bowman, George Beers
April	
5	Paul Wolanski, Millie Gilly
12	Karen Farmer, Diana Goode
19	Teri Loy, Jane Woravka
26	Paula Dudek, Sara Bowman

Hope Through Faith: FCC community member James Fletcher has written a book! Hope through Faith: Jesus Christ of Nazareth the Healer is available on Amazon and James is donating the proceeds to FCC and The Turn (a nonprofit in North Olmsted). In the coming months, James will do a workshop on his book during fellowship time one Sunday, so make sure to get a copy if you'd like to check it out in advance! You can purchase a copy here: <https://amzn.to/40UgRt0>

Swiss Steak Dinner Recap – Diana Goode

This year's Swiss Steak Dinner netted \$3,493.79. **THANK YOU** to all who donated their time, talents and treasures to make this event a success. We can be a force to get things done!



I want to share a couple stories with you related to the Swiss Steak Dinner. I think they show how one event can make a difference, how each one of us can make a difference.

With some of our volunteers unable to work their shifts due to illness, I reached out by text to Linda's husband, Bob, to see if he would help in the kitchen. Shortly after I sent the texts to his numbers, I received a phone call from a man asking what the text was all about, some Swiss Steak Dinner. He informed me that the one number I texted was his grandson's, a student at University of Cincinnati. His grandson had forwarded the text to him as his name was Bob and he loved a good Swiss Steak Dinner. I explained that I was in charge of the dinner at First Congregational North Ridgeville and trying to reach my brother-in-law. He said he used to come to NR regularly for Rotary events and knew that some of NR Rotarians went to our church. He goes to the First Congregational Church in Hudson. He's 88 years old and has been known to drive a ways for a good meal. He loves Swiss Steak and hadn't had any since his wife passed away nine years ago. He wished

us good luck and suggested he may call for a ticket. What a joy in this coincidence!

Secondly, near the end of the second seating, a lady probably in her 60's came to pick up two dinners. As Mary was putting her order together, Noah (Shirley Sunyak's grandson) is rattling off the pie selections to her. She makes her selections and as Noah turns to go get the pie, he yells to Karen Veliconia down the hallway, "I need one blueberry and one?" He turns around and says, "Mary, what was the other one?" She tells him peach. He says, "Thank you, Mary. I am getting tired and hungry so I am starting to not remember." Mary told him not to

worry because she could see he was getting tired. So off he goes down the hall to get the pies. Mary tells the lady, "Thank you for being patient waiting for your pie." She looks at Mary, smiles, and says, "No, thank you for showing acceptance of everyone. You made my day!" Noah came out with the pie bag and told the lady that he was sorry he forgot what her second pie piece was and that it took so long. The lady looked at him and said, "You did a wonderful job making sure I got the right pie pieces. Thank you, young man."

A SPECIAL THANK YOU, ALSO, TO LINDA AND BOB!



You Are Cordially Invited To
The Ladies (Young & Old)

Tea, Cookies & Craft



in Fellowship Hall
Sunday, April 26
2:00-4:00 PM

Cost: \$15: ages 13 and older

\$10: ages 12 and under

Reservations **must** be made by April 18

Limited to 50 participants!

We will start with our tea party and games and then do a special shadow box craft for those ages 13 and older with a special craft or two for those ages 12 and younger.



Name(s) _____

of ADULT tickets _____ x \$15 = _____

of CHILD tickets _____ x \$10 = _____

TOTAL _____

Please make checks payable to First Congregational UCC.



Scan the QR code to pay online at our online giving platform Tithe.ly. Select "Other" for the fund. We will confirm your reservation via email.

Deadline for reservations is April 18!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
			1 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	2 Maundy Thursday Service 7 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	3 Good Friday OFFICE CLOSED Cross walk 12 pm at South Central Park gazebo	4 AA Women 9 am	
5 Easter Worship 8 & 10:30 am Easter breakfast between services No Sunday school 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 Three C Club 6-7:30p	Pastor Kearstin on vacation 4/7-4/11		9 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	10 AA Women 9 am
12 Worship 10:30 am Communion Clangy change Fellowship hour? Emergency response training 12 pm 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 Three C Club 6-7:30p	16 Newsletter articles due AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	17 Tarot 7 pm	18 AA Women 9 am	
19 Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour? Independence Village svc. 2 pm 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 4-H 7 pm Three C Club 6-7:30p	23 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	24 AA Women 9 am	25 Kalamazoo Ringers concert 4 pm at North Eaton Christian Church AA Women 9 am	
26 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Mother's Day craft & tea 2-4 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 Three C Club 6-7:30p	30 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm			