

The Messenger

March 2025

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

Minister

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Acting Chair, Deacons

Karen Dreger

Acting Chair, Outreach

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Co-Chairs, Trustees

Roy Dreger
Jack Fitts

Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

Happy March, beloveds! We begin the month in the Christian liturgical season of Epiphany, celebrating the divinity of Christ. The season began with the appearance of the Wise Ones in Bethlehem (back in January) and ends with numerous stories of the miracles of Jesus. On March 5, Ash Wednesday, we enter the liturgical season of Lent — a season focused on Jesus's time in the desert and the part of the gospels that leads up to his eventual death and resurrection on Easter.

For the 40 days of Lent, many folks lean into ascetic practices like the Desert Mothers and Fathers of old, giving up something during Lent to better focus on God. In modern times, people often choose to *add* something into their daily routine instead, as a way of connecting to God through intentional generosity. No matter how you mark the season, I hope you take the time to discern a meaningful routine for these 40 days and that you feel the presence of God holding you close.

To support you through Lent, we have a number of things happening in the life of the church. First is the **Ash Wednesday service** on **March 5**. We'll gather for a **simple meal of soup and bread at 6 pm** like we did last year, though with a few extra tables and chairs (since we had a huge turnout!). Following the meal at **7 pm**, we'll have a brief **Ash Wednesday service** that will include the ritual of wearing ashes on our foreheads. It's typically a somber service, but I find it to be incredibly meaningful.

For the first Sunday of Lent, **March 9**, we will welcome **six new members** to FCC(!) and celebrate their joining with fellowship time. On the second Sunday of Lent, **March 16**, we'll spend fellowship time in **conversation about holistic deathcare**. I've created a free resource that we'll walk through and it will help us all think about our end-of-life wishes in a supportive community environment. The following week, on the third Sunday of Lent, **March 23**, we will gather for a **potluck** during fellowship time after the service and then spend an hour or so playing **games** together. Lent can be an intense season, so these community events are intentionally meant to nourish you, body and soul, in this desert-focused liturgical season.



As always, First Congregational Church UCC is a vibrant and diverse community, with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity. All of our worship services and community events are open to everyone, no matter your race, age, ethnicity, ability, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family structure, or economic circumstances. In a politically divisive time, our intentionally inclusive community is needed now more than ever. If you know of a neighbor, friend, or relative who could use some support and love, please feel free to invite them to experience FCC with you. Our scriptures tell us again and again that community care is sacred and holy, from the story of Ruth and Naomi to Jesus calling his followers to journey with him across the countryside. May we embody this care in all of our relationships.

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

Warm greetings, Beloveds! March is here, so at least the calendar says we are closer to Spring than it feels outside!

Speaking of warmth, it is a warmth of friendship that is most often noted amongst our visitors and our new members...definitely felt by our family when we started coming here many years ago. Sometimes, we take our greatest strengths for granted, so please take heart in noting that the care and kindness that you provide goes a long way to reach our community, and it is a unique and wonderful strength indeed.

One of the goals we've set for 2025 is Five Minutes of Kindness. It is one way that the warmth that we naturally provide can be captured and passed along. Whether it's anonymously providing money, paying a dining bill, or the small moments of pause that allow us to refocus negative energies into quietness or pleasantness. We want to keep these moments

in mind, and please share them with each other for our mutual benefit!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

March starts off with the youth **CHILI COOK-OFF** on **March 2** immediately after church. We are in need of people to make a pot of their own famous chili to enter in the competition. The winner of the Chili Cook-off not only will have bragging rights but receive this year's "Golden Ladle!" Please sign up your entry on the sheet outside of my office. Assorted breads/muffins, drinks, and our Alleluia cupcakes will round out the menu. Tickets (for sale the day of the event) are \$6.00 for ages 12 and up, \$4.00 for ages 4-under 12, and 3 and under is free. Please come and join the fun and support the youth and adults going on the mission trip.

Our **clangy change** for March will support our annual **BIRTHDAY BAGS** for Community Care. As part of our Lenten outreach last year, we were able to build 60 birthday bags! Again this year, we are asking for your support on Clangy Change Sunday but also in building extra birthday bags. Each birthday bag (a gift bag with handles) should contain the following:

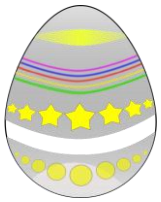
- Cake mix
- Container of frosting
- Birthday candles
- Birthday napkins and paper plates

You can add anything else like – a birthday banner, hats, noise makers etc. – but NOT required. All birthday bags need to be returned to my office by March 30. Thank you for your support!

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. I have Lenten journals available outside my office in a basket if you would like one for use during Lent. Please feel free to take one if you would like to journal each day during the 40 Days of Lent. Also, there will be weekly coloring



pages if you want to just spend some quiet time each week reflecting and praying. Feel free to check out the basket each week for new coloring pages!



SAVE THE DATE!
Easter Egg Hunt!
Saturday, April 12
3:00-4:30 PM
More info in April Messenger

Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

God the Father is our Guiding Light. We need never travel too far to see His bright glow. It is just a breath-of-prayer away. The Outreach Committee is following His light and spreading His message of love in many ways this month. We are sponsoring a “Pack the Pantry” campaign, collecting non-perishable foods for the Lorain County Office on Aging’s food pantry through March 9. Please drop your donations in the bins in the Sunday school hallway next to the elevator. We are also donating \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance. In addition, we are sending \$200 to the Christian Appalachian Project to support those still recovering from the unprecedented, devastating flooding last year.

We hope that our congregation is able to generously support The UCC’s One Great Hour of Sharing campaign during the month of March. The committee is looking into the “Justice 100” campaign sponsored by The Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC as a possible program to support its efforts in protecting the LGBTQ+ community. We are hoping to have the One World Shop bring its pop-up store to our church in April as a way to contribute to its mission, as well. We are also planning another “Dine to Donate” at Applebee’s on June 5 to provide additional funding for our own church programs.

Father, thank You for Your always-shining light. May each of us reflect it and share its light with those around us.

Dr. Dornan’s Corner – Kurt Dornan

A lot of you may be hearing news about the avian flu, or “bird flu.” This illness mostly affects egg laying chickens and has resulted in about 15% of our egg laying chickens to be euthanized, which has resulted in egg prices going way up! It is important to remember that bird flu can be transmitted from ill chickens to people but generally it is not spread from person to person. Also, if eggs are cooked properly, you CANNOT contract bird flu from eggs.

Trustees’ Turn – Roy Dreger

The trustees learned more about the Tithely program at the February meeting. Not only can the congregation use it for their pledges, but Swiss Steak Dinner tickets can be purchased on Tithely. Also, to bring us even more up to date, Linda informed us that the church now has the ability to pay vendors online through our bank’s online bill pay, as well as the ability for direct deposit of employees’ paychecks, if they prefer.

Jon Eaton brought in some Ring doorbell cameras to be used to monitor the entryways, and we thank Jon and Amy for their generous gift. They will be installed shortly and hopefully provide some peace of mind for staff members when they are working alone.

Linda met with the painters since our last meeting and I am pleased to announce that the painting of Fellowship (Whitcomb) Hall should be done by the end of February (scheduled for February 26-28 – subject to change should problems arise). Linda already has the new drapes and rods, and they are stored in her office. There are many things that have to be moved and/or repaired prior to the painting. (Next time you are in the hall, take a look around and you will see what I mean.)

Speaking of Linda and her office, there is still a need for new carpeting in the office. The trustees would like to be able to get this done

without going into the budget. So, if you are able, donations for new carpeting are more than welcome.

Also, we are still in need of a person to fill the custodian's position. If you know of someone that would like to make some extra money, please let them know of this opening. It consists of five hours a week in the winter and nine hours in summer to allow for yard work.

Speaking of yard work, the annual spring cleaning is set for the morning of June 7, so please add this to your calendar. While this consists primarily of working outdoors around the flower beds, if there is something inside that you feel needs to be addressed, you are more than welcome to do that instead!

As always, the trustees thank you for your continued financial support. We could literally do nothing without it. Thank you.



**Join us as we welcome our new First
Congregational Church members
Sunday, March 9
Reception to follow**



Potluck & Family Games

Sunday, March 23

after the worship service

**Bring a dish to share based on the
first letter of your last name:**

A-F: salads/sides G-O: main dishes

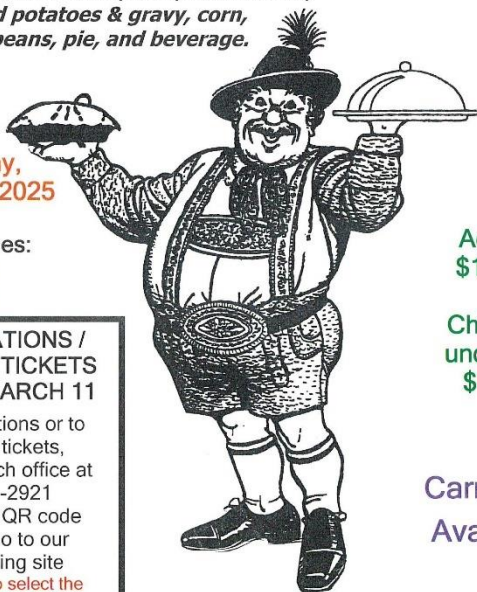
P-Z: desserts

After the potluck we will head up to the Sunday school rooms for family-friendly games. Feel free to bring your favorite game or an extra deck of cards with you!

Swiss Steak Dinner

Treat yourself to a home cooked meal...

*Dinner includes salad, rolls, Swiss steak,
mashed potatoes & gravy, corn,
green beans, pie, and beverage.*



**Saturday,
March 15, 2025**

**Serving Times:
4:30 pm
6:00 pm**

**Adults
\$15.00**

**Children
under 12
\$7.00**

**RESERVATIONS /
PRE-SALE TICKETS
ONLY by MARCH 11**

For reservations or to
purchase tickets,
call the church office at
440-327-2921
or scan the QR code
below to go to our
online giving site
(make sure to select the
correct dinner time)



**Carry Outs
Available!**



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.fccolive.org

Handicap accessible



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

March 17: Clock Dance by Anne Tyler

April 21: The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult

May 19: Then She Was Gone by Lisa Jewell



Holistic Deathcare Conversation

'Tis the season
(of Lent) to join
us after the

worship service during fellowship time for a conversation on deathcare on Sunday, March 16. Lent reminds us that we are made of dust, and to dust we shall return. Pastor Kearstin will have copies of her Holistic Deathcare Planning Guide available and we'll take some time to think about end-of-life wishes and memorial plans. It's never too early to start thinking about the end. This conversation will be casual and nourishing, not scary and depressing.

GREETERS

March	
2	Paul Wolanski, Millie Gilly
9	Paula Dudek, Sara Bowman
16	Lynne Petroff, Jane Woravka
23	George Beers, Diana Goode
30	Karen Farmer, Linda Matis

NURSERY SCHEDULE

March	
2	Denise Speer
9	Shirley Sunyak
16	Linda Matis
23	Karen Veliconia
30	Mary Karlovec

NR Community Care Soup for the Spirit

April 26, 2025

Doors open at 6 pm
Ticket includes dinner & 2
drink tickets.

VFW – 6805 Lear Nagle, N.R.
Visit www.nrcommcare.org
to purchase tickets.



Birthdays & Anniversaries

3/2 Mikey Feigi
3/2 Nema Saleem-Green
3/4 Vonnie Packard
3/7 Jane Woravka
3/8 Amy Eaton
3/16 Barb vonBenken
3/25 Jamie Schupbach
3/27 Jim Yost
3/7 Larry & Karen Mytnick

**ONLINE
GIVING**
now available

***"Set it and
forget it!"***










You may
remember
that tagline
from Ron

Popeil and Ronco's Showtime Rotisserie infomercial in the late 1990's. Now you can "set it and forget it" with your online giving! Create an account, set up your recurring giving, and you don't have to worry about remembering to bring or send in your weekly/monthly donation. It's easy to do but if you run into any problems, contact Linda or Pastor Kearstin and they will help you "set it and forget it".

**Scan the QR code to go to the First
Congregational Church Tithely Giving page!**



Tithely Giving is an easy-to-use platform that will allow you to give online and on your phone. You can make both one-time and recurring gifts, give with a credit/debit card or ACH transaction, and even Cover the Fees (which will help your gift go even farther!) Your financial partnership helps us to grow as a vibrant and diverse community, with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity! Thank you for your generosity!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6pm
2 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Communion Clangy change collection <u>Chili Cook Off & Lenten activities</u> AA Men 7:30 pm	3 AA Women 7 pm	4 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	5 <u>Ash Wednesday</u> <u>Soup supper 6 pm</u> <u>Service 7 pm</u> 	6 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	7 <div>  </div>	8 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6pm
9 1st Sunday in Lent Worship 10:30 am <u>Reception of New Members</u> Fellowship hour AA Men 7:30 pm	10 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	11 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	12 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	13 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	14 Swiss Steak Dinner prep 6 pm	15 <u>Swiss Steak Dinner</u> Prep 9 am Dinner 4:30 & 6 pm Couples Recovery 6pm
16 2nd Sunday in Lent Worship 10:30 am <u>Holistic Deathcare Discussion</u> <u>during fellowship hour</u> AA Men anniv. 6:30 pm	17 Women's Book Club 7 pm  AA Women 7 pm	18 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	19 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	20 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	21 	22 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6pm
23 3rd Sunday in Lent Worship 10:30 am <u>Church potluck and family games</u> <u>after service</u> AA Men 7:30 pm	24 AA Women 7 pm	25 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	26 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm 4-H 7 pm	27 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	28 	29 Hall rental 12-5 pm (Bly) AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6pm
30 4th Sunday in Lent Worship 10:30 am Deacons mtg. Fellowship hour Independence Village svc. 2 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	31 AA Women 7 pm	<div>      </div>				