

The Messenger

September 2026

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

Did you know that next year is the 70th anniversary of the United Church of Christ as a denomination? The national setting of the church has been preparing for this celebration for years; and since the UCC headquarters are here in Cleveland, 2027 will see many UCC events happening in our part of the country! It's gotten me thinking about UCC history lately; namely, the five streams of religious traditions that came together to form the UCC all those years ago: Congregationalists (that's what FCC was!), Christian churches, the Afro-Christian convention, Evangelicals, and Reformed churches. For this month, let's explore the history of our ancestors in faith — the Congregational churches.

Congregational churches dominated religious life in New England and were the decedents of the early religious folks who settled here in the United States, the Puritans. Given their geographic location and how politics evolved in the United States, the Congregational church tended to resist centralized leadership but was also deeply entrenched in the political culture of New England and the founding powers that created modern American institutions. The Congregational church was politically active in its idealism, seeking to build a better country by speaking prophetically against racist injustices in their times.

Did you know that more than a hundred years before the Declaration of Independence, early Congregationalists wrote The Cambridge Platform (1647) to govern their life together in a living document rooted in theology and biblical wisdom? The constitutions in many UCC churches today are rooted in this radical document and continue to make models of shared leadership in community possible.

Dear ones, our faith history is rich with ordinary folks doing their best to love God and love their neighbor, from the migratory matriarchs and patriarchs in the Hebrew Bible to the Apostles in the New Testament, and even the anti-racist Congregationalists who demanded better for their black siblings in early American history.

One of the things I love most about our denomination is that we're not afraid to try new things; we are a denomination of firsts: the first to ordain a



Black man, a woman, a gay man, etc. In each generation, the people who make up the UCC have come together to commit themselves to radical welcome and drawing the circle wider. I look forward to experiencing how our community at FCC continues to live out this important calling in the world.

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

September greetings, church! I was reminded again this week on how unique our church is compared to other churches/denominations. As a Congregational church, it uniquely means that all church activities/functions are done by the will of the congregation! As someone who grew up as a member of many different congregations, it was common practice for a governing body, a deacon, or the church at large to appoint new pastors, change activities of the church, and lead the church into new directions in general. At First Congregational Church, **we** decide! We have the unique ability to make our church what we want it to be and decide on how to get it there. AMEN!

Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Welcome to the start of Fall Christian Education programming at First Congregational! The Board of Christian Ed has spent the summer months preparing to welcome everyone back on Sunday, September 13 with our traditional **"Roundup Sunday!"** Through games, songs, crafts and a special snack, our youth will gather together to renew friendships and hopefully

meet new friends. Feel free to "round up" your neighbors, friends and family to join us on September 13. CE will be sponsoring coffee hour after

worship too so everyone can welcome each other "home." Please plan on joining us!



Parents will be receiving a letter in the mail with important information about CE fall programming, an emergency information form, as well as a media release form that we are required to have on file for each child/youth. Please fill out these forms and **return them on the first Sunday of Sunday school.**

After much conversation, the Board of Christian Education is returning to the "every Sunday" model of Sunday school. We have found that we have a more consistent group of kids in Sunday school every Sunday rather than having a "family Sunday" the first Sunday of the month as part of the programming. Another reason is the curriculum that we use is costly and lectionary based. Many lessons were either not taught because of the loss of a Sunday each month or did not align with the lectionary/special Sunday celebrations. This caused a lot of reworking lessons and confusion. But most importantly, our youth will be more consistent on Sunday mornings!

Our nursery is growing and we need your help! We need four adults who are willing to oversee the nursery once every fourth week. Currently we have only two who are willing to volunteer their time. PLEASE volunteer your time and talents. The only requirements are a love of overseeing our youngest church members and a background check. If you don't have a background check on file, the CE Board will pay the cost to have it completed.

Finally, a **HUGE THANK YOU** for your support of the clanky change collection in August. We were able to deliver more than 55 boxes of Crayola crayons, dozens of colored pencils, glue sticks, bottles of glue, and pencils to Community Care.

The **clanky change** collection in **September** is for a very special person. Our church lawn does not miraculously get mowed each week. With Jack no longer able to volunteer to do it, the Board of Trustees went looking for someone they were willing to pay each week to do the job. Bruce, our former

custodian, was asked, gladly stepped up to the plate, and has been mowing the church lawn each week. He is out there on very hot days, smoky days and everything in between with a smile on his face. However, Bruce has steadfastly refused to be paid. So, on September 6 our clangy change offering will be going to Bruce as a **THANK YOU** for generously taking his time to make our church grounds look welcoming. So please consider filling our clangy



change buckets in September! If you are not going to be in worship that Sunday (it is Labor Day weekend) and would like to make a donation, make sure you get it into the church office by September 7 and mark it

"September clangy change".

Looking ahead to October...

- The October 4th clangy change collection will support one of our local animal shelters.
- On October 18 we will worship at South Central Park with the Blessing of the Animals.
- October 25 is TRUNK OR TREAT from 4-5 p.m. We will need lots of trunks!!!

Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

As Labor Day approaches, I am reminded that the Bible tells us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20) and "faith worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). But, as we strive to accomplish works of charity in His name, I remember, too, that no matter what I accomplish, "without love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

In love, the Outreach Committee is providing \$100 each this month to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance for their programs that benefit those in need in our community. We collected school supplies (Elmer's glue/glue sticks, 24-count boxes of Crayola crayons and #2 Ticonderoga pencils) as our August in-gathering. We are deeply grateful for your generous donations to support this Community Care Back-to-School program.

We have set aside funds to meet our monthly obligations to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance for the remainder of the year (\$800), as well as \$125 for our "adopted" family's Christmas basket. We hope that more funds will be made available to us so that we can do more good works this year. We are exploring possible fund raisers to be able to fund more missions.

So, motivated by love, what are you and I going to do today? My prayer is: *Search me, O God, that every single work of my hands be one of the heart.*

Deacons' Desk – Beth Dornan

With the beginning of the new school year, it is beneficial not only for students but adults to take this time to reset and take the opportunity to correct old habits and renew old routines. Back to school can be an exciting, yet also frightening time; so what better time than now to pray for peace and encouragement. School offers a new challenge every day for students, and all must remember to act as God would and live out their faith. For older students, as they search for their identity, it is up to the church community to show them that they are always accepted here. While the majority of our church community is long graduated, there is still lots you can pray for the children and young adults entering school.

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

The trustees meeting started with the bad news that (at that time) the finances were more than \$18,000 in the red. This is very discouraging and does not allow for many maintenance items needed to be done, things such as sealing the parking lot. The upkeep of the property cannot be kept current when the financial status is in this condition; and the farther out of shape things get financially, the costlier the repair or the replacement will be. Be aware that donations for items such as the

elevator replacement or a new sign only go towards those projects and are completely separate from the income from pledges. Pledge money designated for "operating" is used to run the day-to-day operations of the church.

On a more positive note, the inventory of the contents of the church has been completed. This was done as a photo inventory showing what we have instead of listing the items separately on paper. To do the inventory on paper would take a long time and be rather bulky. With photos, the entire inventory fits on a small memory card or flash drive for storage.

As a side note, did you know there are several file cabinets containing music at the back of Mary's office? A larger choir could do justice to many of the pieces in storage, but with only the "Firehouse Five" plus one or two additional voices, they would not sound as they should. (This is my way of sneaking in a plug for more choir members.)

The trustees talked about a couple of different sources of funding such as crowd sourcing. We started thinking about this a while ago and if you are not familiar with the term, it basically means putting the need on the internet as a way for individuals to donate to the church. This reaches individuals outside as well as inside our congregation and makes it possible to get funds from sources that otherwise would not know about the church or a specific financial need. Not everyone that reads about it will want to contribute; but those that do will have a way to donate. We also discussed selling advertising space in the bulletin and newsletter, but we are not comfortable with the concept. How do you feel about it? Let a trustee know so that we have some idea how the congregation feels about this issue.

As always, know that the trustees appreciate your continuing financial support of the church.

Handbell & Chancel Choirs Return in

September: Do you love music? Did God give you that special gift of music and you want to let it out in some way? Sharing that gift with the congregation is a perfect way to do just that! Don't worry if you are not a trained musician or singer; none of us are. We simply enjoy sharing the gift of music that God has given us. We are welcoming, patient, and willing to help if you need it. Practices are on Wednesday evenings (**beginning on Sept. 2**) with the handbells at 6:30 p.m. and the chancel choir immediately afterward at 7:30 p.m. Both choirs need new members. We would love for you to join us!

GREETERS

September	
6	Diana Goode, George Beers
13	Paul Wolanski, Teri Loy
20	Millie Gilly, Karen Farmer
27	Jane Woravka, Paula Dudek



9/7	Becky Williams	9/7	Ella Eaton
9/8	Heather O'Connell	9/10	Jody Millar
9/13	Janein Casson	9/14	George Beers
9/17	Linda Matis	9/17	Vi Elrod
9/23	Mary Ireland	9/24	Rosemary Fletcher
9/26	Kris Dornan	9/26	Kurt Dornan
9/26	Brenda Schutz	9/28	Kearstin Bailey



Women's Book Club: 7 pm at the church

September 21: Dinosaurs by Lydia Millet

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)

LGBTQ+ 101 WORKSHOP



First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ



First Congregational Church UCC in North Ridgeville is excited to announce that we'll be hosting an **LGBTQ+ 101 workshop** with LGBTQ+ Lorain County on **Sunday, September 27** after worship at 11:45 a.m.! The workshop will last about 90 minutes, and light refreshments will be served. This is a **FREE** workshop for the wider community and donations will be accepted.

This training will include a general introduction to the LGBTQ+ community and will provide the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ+ identities, the differences between gender identity, gender expression and orientation, language and terminology, and some best practices for inclusivity. The goal of this training is to help give folks a better awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and how to be an effective ally. It is also a safe space to ask questions and get resources for further education.

This event is open to the public, so please invite anyone in your circles who might be interested and share the info far and wide! You can **RSVP** at <https://bit.ly/4ipiubZ> or by scanning the QR code below.



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!

LORAIN COUNTY LAUNCHES COUNTYWIDE PULL-TAB Challenge

TO SUPPORT THE RONALD McDONALD HOUSE

A little tab can make a big difference!

TURNING A SMALL ITEM INTO A BIG IMPACT

The Lorain County Solid Waste Management District, in partnership with the Keep Lorain County Beautiful Advisory Board, is turning an everyday item into an opportunity to make a difference.

JOIN THE COUNTYWIDE CHALLENGE!

By saving aluminum pull tabs from beverage cans, participants will help support families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. Residents, along with all local fire, EMS, and police departments are invited to join in this friendly countywide competition to see who can collect the most tabs.

WHY PULL TABS?

Aluminum pull tabs can be recycled, and proceeds will benefit Ronald McDonald House programs that provide support, comfort, and resources to families with seriously ill or injured children.

“Pull tab collection is an easy way for the Lorain County community to help a small item make a big impact,” said Thomas Patrick III, Director of the Lorain Solid Waste Management District. “We encourage residents, businesses, schools, civic organizations, fire departments, and police departments to join the fun. Save your tabs and help support families in their time of need!”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Chris Hevener at chevener@loraincounty.us or by calling (440) 329-5440.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Participants have until
12/30/2026
to turn in their pull tabs.

Tabs, placed in a clean container, can be dropped off at local police, fire and EMS stations, or can be brought to:

540 South Abbe Road
Elyria, OH 44035

SHARE THE FUN!
Be sure to share the fun by inviting family, friends, coworkers, classrooms, businesses or other organizations to participate.

KEEP LORAIN COUNTY BEAUTIFUL
KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

Lorain County Solid Waste Management District

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 CE 7 pm Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	2 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	3 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	4 <i>Linda off</i> <i>Pastor Kearstin off</i>	5 AA Women 9 am
6 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Communion / clangy change New member class Fellowship hour? AA Men 7:30 pm	7 Labor Day OFFICE CLOSED AA Women 7 pm	8 Sunday school teacher information session 6:30 pm AA 1 st Step 8 pm	9 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm 4-H 7 pm (rain loc.)	10 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	11 Pastor Kearstin off 	12 AA Women 9 am
13 Carla Valles preaching Worship 10:30 am Sunday school begins Fellowship hour Pastor Kearstin off AA Men 7:30 pm	14 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	15 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	16 Newsletter articles due Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm	17 Girl Scouts 5 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	18	19 AA Women 9 am
20 Worship 10:30 am Handbell choir skit Fellowship hour? Independence Village svc. 2 pm AA Men 7:30 pm	21 Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	22 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	23 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm	24 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	25	26 AA Women 9 am
27 Worship 10:30 am Deacons 11:30 am LGBTQ+ 101 workshop 11:45 am AA Men 7:30 pm	28 <i>Pastor Kearstin off</i> AA Women 7 pm	29 AA 1 st Step 8 pm	30 Bell choir 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Three C Club 6 pm			