

The Messenger

February 2025

The monthly newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC of North Ridgeville

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Kelsey Styrt

Acting Chair, Deacons

Karen Dreger

Acting Chair, Outreach

Edie Phillips

Co-Chairs, Trustees

Roy Dreger

Jack Fitts

Treasurer, Secretary

Linda Matis

From the Pastor – Pastor Kearstin (she/her)

Have you ever gone to talk about First Congregational Church and struggled to describe our community clearly and succinctly? Yes, we say that “Love grows here” and we have incredible Sunday school programming and our community meals are out of this world – but how do you bring all of that together in just one sentence? Especially when, as a congregation, we’re doing our best to adapt to the needs of the world and the calling of a still-speaking God?

Each year our church council has a retreat day where we spend three hours praying, talking about FCC, listening for the movement of the Spirit, and dreaming about the future of our community. Through that process, we create a mission statement for the year and a handful of goals that will help us live out this mission. This mission statement helps guide our programming and planning, and it also provides a quick elevator-pitch that you can share with others!

For 2025 we are intentionally focused on being a vibrant and diverse community, with a forward-thinking and inclusive approach to Christianity. The first Sunday of 2025 was family Sunday when our young people stayed in the service and participated in helping lead the service. Because it was Epiphany, Mary Karlovec passed out glowstick stars to everyone; and to connect with the clanky change donations, we invited folks to wear their pajamas (since the clanky change collection was going towards pajamas for Blessing House). When I looked out at y’all from the front of the sanctuary, I saw a community that is already vibrant and diverse, forwarding thinking and inclusive. We had teens in shark pajamas helping distribute communion and little ones gasping when they learned that FCC’s advent wreath used to hang from the ceiling. We are already living out our mission statement for the year – our work moving forward is to sink more deeply into it.

Our family Sunday services, on the first Sunday of the month, are often a little more unstructured than other services; as I plan them, I intentionally leave a little room for the Spirit and for our youth to bring their own creative energy. For folks who aren’t used to spending time with a gaggle of young children, this worship experience may be a little out of their comfort zone...but

GOD IS LOVE

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God"

1 John 4:7

www.mindonjesus.com

that's okay! In scripture, it's often the uncomfortable or unexpected moments that end up transforming us the most, like Moses at the burning bush or Jonah running away from God only to be swallowed up by a whale. Unlike Moses and Jonah, though, we experience the glorious chaos of family Sundays together, in community. We have one another for support. We're not in it alone.

So the next time you're talking to someone about FCC, I hope you tell them about our focus for 2025! Tell them about our family Sundays and how we leave a little room for the Spirit, so you never know what might happen! Tell them that we're already vibrant, but we want to shine even brighter. Talk about how we're diverse in some ways, and we're intentional in growing diversity in other ways. You can say that we're rooted in tradition but are always looking to the future and what God is calling us to. Tell them that we're already inclusive, but we want to keep drawing the circle wider. And then **invite them into this vision!** If they're nodding along, **invite them to service.** Ask if they would like to come along to bible study, in-person or online. Tell them about upcoming community events and see if they'd like to ride along with you. Because if we're going to live into this mission for 2025, **we've got to start proclaiming it loudly and inviting folks on the journey with us!**

Every blessing,
Pastor Kearstin

Moderator's Moment – Kris Dornan

A pleasant greeting of warmth and care to you, beloveds, as we battle through this time of year that feels long and cold.

I am honestly writing this moment as the presidential inauguration is concluding, on a day also representing the life and message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a man of faith who dreamed of a day where there was unity. We are in the midst of a deeply divided nation

politically. You may be like me, a person who rarely touches on political issues because of a want for love to be a unifying love, a sharing of love and of hope and of one all accepting of backgrounds, creeds, and abilities, and yes political beliefs as well. It's not always easy, and at the same time trying to be respectful and loving to those who have and will share strong political beliefs that may differ from our own. In all, I pray to a God in control, a Christ whose life represented a truth and template for our own living, and a Holy Spirit who intercedes.

As we all live in a country in a new administration, I pray for unity; I pray that we, as the Christ that some may never see, live and act as Christ would to a community as part of a nation that above all, can benefit by unity.



February Bible Study

If you've ever been in love, whether that's platonic friendship love or romantic love or anything in between, you know how dramatic it can sometimes be. Things can feel larger than life, your adoration feels monumental, and you would do anything to show the person how much you care. In our sacred scriptures, there are many stories showcasing love of all kinds. For our bible study series this month, we're going to explore dramatic acts of love in scripture and talk about our own experiences of love.

The class will meet on Tuesdays, February 11 and the 18th. There will be two cohorts for class: an in-person group who will meet at the church at 11 am, and an online group who will gather on Google Meet at 7 pm. We would LOVE for you to join us!



Christian Education Corner – Mary Karlovec

Recently, someone from a Facebook group of Christian Ministry leaders asked for simple outreach ideas for their youth to be involved monthly. I shared our clangy change idea and it was a huge hit! Several youth leaders thanked me for the idea and were going to give it a try! I have said it before and want to share again that last year we raised a little over \$1,200 in clangy change! That money supported 12 outreach projects that we would not have been able to do without the support of the congregation. On behalf of the children and youth of our church, **THANK YOU!**

We started our 2025 clangy change outreach on a positive note! In January our clangy change offering brought in \$142 to purchase pj's, and there were donations of 15 pair of pajamas for Blessing House! What a wonderful outreach ministry our congregation supports.

Clangy change for February will go to North Ridgeville Schools to help pay down student lunch debts that many students accrue due to lack of funds.

Believe it or not, Lent begins in about a month (March 5) with Mardi Gras on March 4.

As traditionally just before Lent, our **annual Chili Cook Off fundraiser will be Sunday, March 2 immediately after church.** We will need people to enter their favorite chili in this competitive

event. **The sign-up sheet for chili entries is outside my office.** The congregation will vote for the best chili and the winner will receive this year's Golden Ladle! Besides chili, muffins and crackers, we will have our Alleluia cupcakes. Someone will get the "special" cupcake and will become the 2025 "Keeper of the Alleluias" until Easter. Since this is an all-church family Sunday, there will be Lenten activities for everyone to do after the chili cook off. **The cost for lunch is \$6.00 for anyone over the age of 12, \$4.00 for**



children ages 4-12, and 3 and under is free.

Come join us!

I am in need of clean plastic peanut butter jars with lids (smaller size) or other plastic jars with lids that are about that size for an upcoming project. If you have any to donate, I need them by March 1. Thank you!

Finally, I am asking for prayers and good vibes as Matt, my brother and I travel by car (Cathleen will be flying) to Jacksonville, Florida from February 5-12. Our family has been asked to speak at an encephalitis conference at the Mayo Clinic on February 9.

Doctors, other medical personnel, survivors, and caregivers from all over the world will be attending this event. We have been asked to share the story of Matt's journey, his struggles and successes, and how his life has changed. One of the areas that they want us to address is his support system, from family/friends to his doctors/medical teams and his faith community. Our session will be from 10:00 -11:00 am on Sunday, February 9 so know we will be thinking of you and lifting all of you up for your love and support of Matt, Cathleen, and the rest of our family. This congregation has played a HUGE role in where Matt is today! You ALL are truly a blessing to our family!



Outreach Committee News – Karen Farmer

Valentine's Day is a day that reminds us that love is worthy of celebration. We need not ask God for more love than He has given us through His Son and our daily blessings. How do we thank Him, praise Him, and share what He has placed in our hearts? By expressing His love through giving to others, our hearts become "valentines" and love grows when it's shared.

The Outreach Committee is sharing His love through donating \$100 each to Community Care and Neighborhood Alliance this month, as

well as providing \$200 to World Central Kitchen to help with its efforts to feed displaced residents of the horrific California wildfires.

Barb is researching the Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC's "Justice 100" campaign as a possible program to support. We will once again support the One World Shop by having its mobile store at our church in April. We are planning a campaign for October to collect warm socks, hats, gloves, and scarves for Neighborhood Alliance.

We are also considering hosting some church fundraisers this year. Possible ideas discussed were a taco dinner, Junk in the Trunk, and Dine to Donate. I am looking into a Dine to Donate event. We are also considering having a booth at the North Ridgeville Corn Festival to draw attention to our church and its programs.

The committee continues to contact our shut-ins and voted to provide \$50 Visa cards to church members who lose a close loved one, rather than sending flowers.

God's love is unlimited and asks no valentine in return. He has given us "valentine hearts" to share. Its giving says, "I love you." May you share yours today.



Deacons' Desk – Karen Dreger

February brings us to the end of our first year with Pastor Kearstin as our pastor. I feel as if this year went very fast; maybe because we were so busy. I'll have to admit that I was a little anxious in the beginning. But, no worries; Pastor Kearstin was a delight for deacons to work with. We shared our history of our church services and answered questions. Pastor Kearstin listened and had some ideas and suggestions for us. We learned from each other and got to know each other better as the year progressed. I believe we have become more energized.

It's been a joy for the deacons to serve with Pastor Kearstin. You can share in this joy by joining the deacons. We take turns serving

Sundays and meet once a month after church. If you are thinking about it and want more information, please see any deacon: Karen Dreger, Paula Dudek, Kurt Dornan, or Linda Matis. Ben and Beth Dornan have joined us for 2025. Welcome, Ben and Beth!

Happy Valentine's Day! Share your love.

Trustees' Turn – Roy Dreger

We welcome Mercy McCloskey to the Board of Trustees and look forward to her insight and ideas as we navigate 2025. It can take a while to "get" the financial picture; and if you want to try it yourself, just look at the financial pages on the annual report for the church.

Jon Eaton has concluded his research on security cameras for the east side and rear entryway to fellowship (Whitcomb) hall. His recommendation is the Nest doorbell camera which can be accessed via a smartphone. This should help to provide a layer of security whenever anyone is in the building alone, and the trustees thank Jon for his research.

In preparation for the spring and summer months (which seem a long way off at this time of year), Jack Fitts is going to make arrangements to have the lawn mower serviced. It may seem early, but the shop that works on our brand of mower gets really busy come spring. Thank you for taking care of this, Jack.

We are in need of a few things. Linda's office needs new flooring, as the current carpet is frayed and torn and currently is held together in places with tape. If you would like to contribute to this project, just put your contribution in an envelope marked "carpet" and put it in the offering plate. We would like to do this without using funds from the budget.

Another thing we need is a custodian. If you are interested, or know someone that is interested, in a five hour a week job (more in the summer to allow for lawn care), please contact

one of the trustees or Linda. In the meantime, perhaps **you are able to help out** in some way. Perhaps you could use a snow shovel to clear the walk and entryways after it snows, or maybe you could put the trash cans out on Monday or bring them in on Tuesday, or both. There are other small jobs that could be done to **help out**, and this is true even when we do have a custodian. Just another way for you to be a part of your church.

All the things we do are made possible by your continued contributions, monetary as well as physical. Thank you!



Have an idea for a fundraiser or a community event that you'd like to share? Contact any member of the church council! We welcome all ideas and would love to discuss it with you!!



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

February 17: The Housemaid by Freida McFadden

Birthdays & Anniversaries

2/9	Mary Karlovec
2/12	Renee Dornan
2/15	Harry Berg
2/18	Abby Anderson
2/18	Nancy Franks
2/19	Claire Wolanski
2/24	Eliana Styrt
2/25	Shirley McVeigh
2/26	Henry Schutz
2/28	Daryl vonBenken

2/1 Bill & Regenia Comerford
2/4 Jamie & Beckie Schupbach

GREETERS

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

NURSERY SCHEDULE

February 2	Shirley Sunyak
February 9	Linda Matis
February 16	Nancy Findlay
February 23	Millie Gilly

Swiss Steak Dinner

Treat yourself to a home cooked meal...

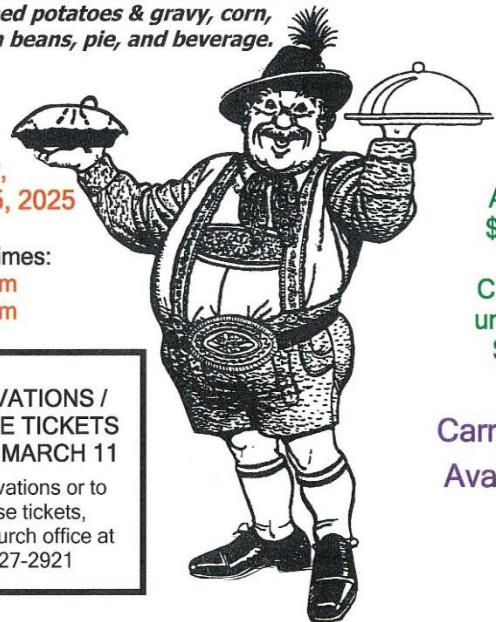
Dinner includes salad, rolls, Swiss steak, mashed potatoes & gravy, corn, green beans, pie, and beverage.

Saturday,
March 15, 2025

Serving Times:
4:30 pm
6:00 pm

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

For reservations or to
purchase tickets,
call the church office at
440-327-2921



Adults
\$15.00

Children
under 12
\$7.00

**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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
2 Outreach 9 am Worship 10:30 am Communion Clangy change collection Fellowship hour CE meeting after service AA Men 7:30 pm	3 AA Women 7 pm	4 Trustees 7 pm AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	5 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	6 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	7 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm	8 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
9 Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour New members class after service AA Men 7:30 pm	10 Council 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	11 Bible study 11 am @ church; 7 pm on Google Meet AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	12 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm Al Anon anniv. 5 pm AA women 6 pm (up)	13 Al Anon anniv. 5 pm AA women 6 pm (up)	14 	15 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
16 Worship 10:30 am Fellowship hour Service at Independence Village 2 pm Newsletter articles due AA Men 7:30 pm	17 Presidents' Day OFFICE CLOSED Women's book club 7 pm AA Women 7 pm	18 Bible study 11 am @ church; 7 pm on Google Meet AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	19 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	20 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	21 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm	22 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm
23 Worship 10:30 am Deacons after service Fellowship hour AA Men 7:30 pm	24 AA Women 7 pm	25 AA 1 st Step 8:30 pm	26 Handbells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	27 AA Women 6 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm	28 AA Women 9 am Couples Recovery 6 pm	