

PATHWAYS

August 2017

*You show me the path of life. In your presence there is
fullness of joy...Psalm 16:11*



First Christian Church of Stow, 3493 Darrow Road, Stow, Ohio 44224
www.firstchristianstow.org

Coming Up

Mark your calendars for these events

Back to School Supplies Collection

Due on August 7

Lists of Supplies are available in the Gathering Area.

Rummage Sale

Saturday, August 19 ~ 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Come to volunteer or find 'new to you' treasures!

Save these Dates

Welcome Sunday

September 10

We will return to our regular hours
with a breakfast potluck during the Sunday School Hour at 9:30.

Women's Retreat

September 22, 23, 24 at Chautauqua Institute



From the
Pastor's
Desk

A favorite quote of mine is from Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, and religious writer Soren Kierkegaard, who said, *"The most painful state of being is remembering the future, particularly the one you can never have."*

Since my father's death on July 10th this quote has become even more prevalent in my mind and heart than ever before, particularly as my family and I look toward a future that does not include him with us in this world. I think about my son, and wonder if he will have any memory of his Grandpa, while wondering just how much my daughter will remember of him. I think about Dad's birthday next month, and all the holidays. I think, and wonder about the future that my family and I will never have, and realize on a new level, how right Kierkegaard truly was. It is so very painful. And my heart breaks all over again.

Then in the midst of that painful state of being I remember something else. Not a future that will never come, but rather a future that has already been promised and assured through God our Creator and Christ Jesus our Savior. I remember John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that God gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."* I remember what Jesus came to teach and show and do and promise. I remember that our faith tells us, and assures us, that this life is not all we have, and that death never ever gets to have the last word. And though I still grieve and cry and miss my father with a depth I never could have imagined, I have clung to these promises of hope and new life.

I have known before, yet I have come to experience now, that we are never fully prepared for the death of a loved one. Even if we know for weeks, months, or even years their passing from this life to life eternal is coming, we are never ready for it. But what I have known before, but have now experienced, is that God knows the depth of our loss, having gone through tremendous loss as well, and God always responds with grace, and peace, and hope. Even in the midst of such immense, unthinkable loss, we are not lost, because of Christ Jesus. And because of Christ Jesus we are blessed with the chance to remember a future that will be. A future where the scriptures proclaim in the book of Revelation, *"God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."*

On behalf of my family, we cannot thank you enough for your outpouring of prayers and support. Thank you for the cards, flowers, food, emails, text messages,

Facebook postings, Connection Card notes, words of condolences, and hugs. Thank you for your presence at the calling hours and the funeral. Thank you for asking me how I am doing, and how my mother is doing. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for me and my family in this time of grief. It is all a gift that we are blessed by, and dependent upon.

May we all take a moment to reflect on the blessings of family and friends, and look toward the promised future we have through Christ Jesus, while also embracing the holy blessing of the present we have right now.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Back to School

The World Outreach Team is collecting items for Back to School. Each year Good Neighbors sponsors this project to help children with their back to school needs. There is a list available. The first weekend in August is the **tax-free** weekend for back-to-school supplies purchases. Many stores further support this savings by offering sales for that weekend. Please, if you can, consider donating to this worthy cause.

Attention ! Attention ! **Rummage Sale Planned**

Our annual rummage sale is August 19. You may bring in your donations of past loved treasures now to the lower level of the church. All items are welcome. The final day we will accept your donations is August 17, 2017.

August 14-18 we will be setting up and pricing items. Help is needed every day from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. and from 5 – 7 p.m.

The Rummage Sale is from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on August 19. We need lots of helpers that day.

For more information or to volunteer to help, call Sue Vaughn at 330-245-9471. Or stop in during any of those hours and we can put you to work. See you there.

Youth Group Canoe Trip Down the Mighty Cuyahoga!

The summer may be winding down with back to school looking closer than anyone wants, so let's make sure we grab as much summer fun as we can—this time in the form of a canoe trip down the mighty Cuyahoga River!

We will try out the newly established Burning River Adventures right here in our own community on Wednesday, August 9th. We will meet at Water Works Park at noon, get bussed up to our put in spot, and paddle back to Water Works by around 2:30 p.m. Cost is just \$15 per person. See Jonathan for more details and information.

Drama in Ministry: Thank You!

I'd like to thank everyone who planned and participated in the Summer Drama Workshops. We had fun, and we put a human face on "Love in Action."

Many thanks to Julie, Lynn, and Elise for all your time and energy that went into planning the workshops and writing the drama used in Sunday morning worship. I have enjoyed working and creating with you!

Thanks to Gabe Lorenz for your ideas, and for turning those ideas into a workshop about the history of musical theatre and why we tell stories. And thanks to Julie for teaching us about improvisation, acting, and using a script—all with lots of energy, patience, and humor!

Thanks to everyone who participated. We appreciate the talent, time, and effort you contributed! You put your whole selves into it and led a faithful, meaningful time of worship on Sunday.

In Christ,
Cheryl

"WOW GOD"

Thank you to all who volunteered, donated and prayed for VBS this year. It was a fun and awesome time showing children that they were "created by God and built for a purpose".

~ Anna and Richelle



Family Promise

We will be assisting Firestone Park the week of September 10th. Volunteers are needed. Please see Ann Halpin.

Also, Family Promise is always in need of secondhand stoves and refrigerators. Other items they need right now include cleaning supplies, powder laundry detergent, sheets, towels and coffee. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry.

Thank You!

It was a lovely evening to spend at the ballpark!

We thank the more than 80 people who came out to enjoy the game. We had a lot of fun, enjoyed the beautiful fireworks, and we WON!

Pancake Breakfast Thank You!

It was another successful pancake breakfast for our church and for our community. Hundreds people were served on July 4th, which means well over a thousand pancakes were flipped and served up. Such an undertaking is no small matter and so a huge and immense "THANK YOU!!" is extended to each and every person who contributed in whatever way to making our 4th of July Pancake Breakfast the outstanding achievement that it was. A special thank you is extended to all the Boy Scouts and their leaders for their presence, participation, and work. Also, a special thank you is extended to all who donated contributions for our water give-away, and to those who helped give away that water.

In all, First Christian Church was an immense presence to our community on the 4th of July, and it is because of the hard work and faithful efforts of so many that made it possible. Thank you all.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Make History

Below is an article from the Christian Century that ran late last month after our denomination's General Assembly, where we as a church elected Teresa Hord Owens as our new General Minister and President. This was a historic vote, not just in the life of our church and denomination, but throughout the entire Christian Church body around the world.

Disciples of Christ elect first woman of color to lead a mainline denomination

Celeste Kennel-Shank, *The Christian Century*

Despite all the talk of mainline decline, Teresa Hord Owens, the first woman of color to be the top executive of a mainline denomination, is not in survival mode. "The life that we will find is continuing to be relevant to a society that deeply needs to see hope," she said.

The Indianapolis-based Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) elected Owens, a descendant of one of Indiana's oldest free settlements of African Americans, as its general minister and president on July 9. The denomination, which has 600,000 members in the United States and Canada, has been led for 12 years by Sharon Watkins, who at her election in 2005 was the first woman to be top executive of a mainline body.

Sitting in her office as dean of students at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Owens, 57, who is also senior minister of First Christian Church of Downers Grove, Illinois, looked ahead to her six-year term.

Her particular role is to lead people in efforts where they can agree, especially given the Christian Church's history of making room for "widely divergent viewpoints concerning 'non-essentials,'" as denominational literature puts it.

The Disciples have had conflict over LGBTQ inclusion, though a previous General Assembly passed a resolution in favor of it. She noted that the calls she has received have not been about her views on Black Lives Matter, but about sexuality and politics. She emphasized that her desire is to care for the vulnerable, not to align theology and politics.

"We're disciples of Christ, not of any particular ideology," she said. Further, since denominational polity lacks emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy and places high value on congregational discernment, "we have no hammer to lay down."

She noted that her congregation displays banners with the motto, "In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things love." Unity, she clarifies, isn't consensus, including in scriptural interpretation. Owens stressed the importance of biblical literacy: wrestling with the text in the pews as well as the pulpit.

"The church really does have to be able to hold all those things in tension and be able to take a stand when it needs to, and keep calling people to account on that issue of love—that cuts through a lot of disagreements about what's essential and nonessential," she said. "Unity is not possible if love isn't right up there with it."

The assembly theme "One," based on John 17, "is not calling us to some kind of kumbaya moment." Rather, she hopes that the Disciples can witness to the world about the gospel of Christ while navigating differences and taking responsibility for the way one person's positions can harm others. "Our desire to be right can keep us from being faithful to the ministry we say we're all called to," she said.

Before becoming a pastor in her early forties, she worked in the corporate world, including as an informational technology consultant. That background, as well as experience as a university administrator, helps her to see the dynamics of how people work together, which complements seminary training.

“My professional experience has been to walk in, do a lot of listening,” she said, “thinking about where the organization says it wants to be.”

She also looks forward to mentoring future leaders as she builds on the work Watkins did. “Sharon has wanted to be sure that the church is not bound by its existing structures, to free it up to really do mission,” Owens said.

Watkins has also increased the Disciples ecumenical involvement, which Owens plans to continue, especially collaborating on issues such as racism and health care.

Watkins, 63, currently serves as chair of the board of the National Council of Churches. She has brought to that role her experience in discerning which parts of church tradition are crucial and which parts may be left behind.

“The call for ecumenical Christians is to share that gospel in a way that’s meaningful, and to not be weighed down by the things that are beloved but not useful for mission in this time,” she said. “We’re living in a time now when our neighbors don’t know that God is a god of love, that we are called to be people of love, to work for the common good, to work for justice.”

Part of her focus with the Disciples was “working hard on being a pro-reconciling, antiracist church,” an effort that will continue.

It included an audit of the denomination’s governance documents for racist language. Officials learned that words or phrasing don’t have to be clearly hateful to reflect an unconscious superiority or dependence on one cultural perspective.

Working on such awareness in a denominational setting reaches some people who wouldn’t have encountered it.

“We’ve been able to push that antiracism work deeper in the church and reach some people who otherwise wouldn’t have raised their hands to volunteer,” she said.

Being the first woman to be top executive of a mainline denomination was “mostly advantage,” Watkins said.

“My speaking up interrupted the flow, not in a bad way, but just for a beat, for people to look at how they were doing things,” she said.

Watkins was the first woman to be selected to preach at the National Prayer Service in Washington, D.C., the day after a presidential inauguration, having been invited by President Barack Obama. She later served a term on President Obama’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

While Watkins takes a sabbatical and discerns her next ministry position, she’s pleased to pass her role with the Disciples on to another woman, saying, “I’m glad that the first time around didn’t make us think we couldn’t do it again.”

Why FCC Stow? **Summer 2017**

In an effort to “*be the church*,” we are making an intentional journey over this summer to consider why we are part of *this church*—by putting and keeping “Our Story” at the forefront of our vision and our call to be the church. We are doing this by sharing with one another our responses to the focus and title of this project: “*Why FCC Stow?*”

We are encouraging each one of us to take some time to bring into perspective our stories of our church by considering the following questions...

- 1. Why are you are part of First Christian Church of Stow?**
- 2. How does God feed your soul through this church?**
- 3. How has this church impacted your life and/or the life of your family?**
- 4. What is an “Aha” moment or story that gives explanation and meaning to your relationship with FCC Stow?**
- 5. What would you say to someone if they asked you, “*Why do you go to FCC Stow?*”**

You are invited to answer the questions directly, or to simply use them to get you thinking and crafting your response to “*Why FCC Stow?*” Then each and every one will have a chance to share their response to “*Why FCC Stow?*” in whatever manner they are comfortable. Some of the ways could include: sharing them as a part of Sunday worship, perhaps through a special and new component within the worship service, sermon, or video. Or, with your permission, your response will be shared in the Pathways Newsletter, or via special email blasts, and/or they will be posted to our church’s Facebook and Twitter profiles.

All of this is an effort for us to hear again, or maybe for the first time, the life-impacting blessings God has brought to our lives through this church. It is to keep our story front and center, so that we, and especially others, will come to know that God is at work in our lives and in our church.

Save these Dates!

Cleveland Christian Home Undie Sunday is August 6. We are collecting new boys’ and men’s underwear for the boys at Cleveland Christian Home. They need boxers,briefs and undershirts in sizes toddler through 3X.

Welcome Sunday is Sunday, September 10. On that special Sunday we will return to regular hours: 8:30 Service in Chapel, 9:30 Sunday School (breakfast), and 10:45 Service in Main Sanctuary. To help celebrate on this day, the Christian Education Team will host a breakfast potluck. Be sure to mark your calendars!

The *Disciples Fellowship Retreat* will be held at Camp Christian from September 1 to 3. This is a wonderful opportunity for the adults to enjoy Camp Christian while enjoying a time away with God. We hope you can be there!

The *Women’s Retreat* will be held in Chautauqua, New York, on September 22, 23, and 24. Please keep in mind that one of the houses is scheduled to be rebuilt soon, so next year the retreat will be elsewhere. Be sure to enjoy the Chautauqua Institute and Lake this fall.