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PATHWAYS

AUGUST 2020

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

Find us on Social
Media @FCCStow!



Virtual Relay for Life

August 10

There are still way you can support Relay for Life
and the First Christian Church relay team.

Loaves and Fishes

August 16, 4-6 pm

Church Family Fun Night

Sunday, August 23, 7-8p.m.

ZOOM Meetings

Elders	Monday, August 17, 7 p.m.
Stewardship	Wednesday, August 19, 7 p.m.
Governing Board	Monday, August 24, 7 p.m.

FROM THE PASTOR



It hasn't exactly been the summer we wanted, has it? Then again, it hasn't exactly been the year we wanted, or even expected, has it? Can you even remember all the way back to January? Can you remember the Super Bowl? Remember

how exciting it was to count down the days until catchers and pitchers reported for Spring Training? Can you remember when we didn't know the words "coronavirus" and "COVID-19"? For me, it seems like eons ago, but then it also seems just like yesterday.

It's been hard. Really hard. And still it all goes on and on, drifting from one hard circumstance to another, leaving us to once again, and still again, figure out how we will manage it all. It makes me think of that classic line Christians like to lean into in times like these, "God will never give you more than you." Which is then aptly, and sarcastically, followed by, "I just wish God didn't think I could handle so much!" But if you know me, then you know this kind of statement doesn't sit well with me. It implies God is the one giving us this 2020 mess we are in, which I don't believe. What I actually believe is God is the one who is giving us the way through this 2020 mess we are in. Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor of Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City says it better, saying, "It's not that God won't give you more than you can handle, but that God will help you handle all that you've been given." This approach gives a better perspective of how God works and acts in the world.

Still though, we are left wondering, what is that way through God is giving us? That is the question we all keep asking, isn't it? Understandably so too, because it seems like we have been getting nowhere fast, things ever declining and getting worse. (Although it was pretty cool to see Summit County back in the orange the other day, right?!) So how is God giving us a way through all of this? I'm glad you asked, because I wanted to share with you what I read the other day by the Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church who reminds us of God's way through, not only in this difficult time, but in all our difficult times. Curry writes,

"As our seasons of life in the COVID-19 world continue to turn, we are called to continue to be creative, to risk, to love. We are called to ask, "What would unselfish, sacrificial love do?"

What would love do? Love is the community praying together, in ways old and new. Love finds a path in this new normal to build church communities around being in relationship with God. Love supports Christians in spiritual practices. Prayer, meditation, study. Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest.

What would love do? Love calls us to care for our neighbors, for our enemies. Love calls us to attend to those in prison, to those who are homeless, to those in poverty, to children, to immigrants and refugees. Love calls us to be in relationship with those with whom we disagree.

What would love do? Love calls us to be gentle with ourselves, to forgive our own mistakes, to take seriously the Sabbath. Love calls us to be in love with God, to cultivate a loving relationship with God, to spend time with God, to be still and know that God is God."

This, I believe, is the way through. To see the world as God sees it—a place in desperate need of love upon love upon love. Because right now there are parents and teachers and school administrations and staffs trying to figure out how to do a hard thing, and they need our love. Right now there are scientists and politicians trying to figure out how to do a hard thing, and they need our love. Right now there are unemployed workers trying to do a hard thing, and they need our love. Right now there are people who are begging for their voices to be heard instead of being silenced, and they need our love. Right now there are front line workers and first responders who are putting themselves at risk for our safety and well-being, and they need our love. Right now there are people who are isolated and alone, and they need our love.

No, this is not the summer or the year any of us wanted or could even imagine. But it can be the time when we lean into the truth that God is present, God is at work to make things good, and that goodness comes through the love of God shared by those who love God and depend on God's love.

So when we wonder how we will get through this hard time, let us tell ourselves not some cliché slogan, but let us remember the truth: Love will show us the way through.

Your pastor and friend,
Jonathan



from the Music Department

Last Sunday, I sang an old gospel song, I Will Sing of My Redeemer. Like many old songs and hymns that have stood the test of time, it was written by a wonderful, faithful Christian. Philip P.

Bliss was born in 1838, in a log cabin in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania. The family later moved to Kinsman, Ohio and then back to Pennsylvania. He married Lucy Young before he turned 20, became a music teacher, song writer, and gospel singer. He wrote many songs including *Almost Persuaded*, *Man of Sorrows*, *Wonderful Words of Life*, *Hallelujah! 'Tis Done!*, *Let The Lower Lights Be Burning*, *The Light of The World is Jesus*, and *Whosoever Will May Come*. His hymns were sung in huge tents and revival services world-wide. He worked closely with the evangelist, D.L. Moody. Someone once said of his hymns, "There is enough gospel in almost any one of them to lead a troubled soul to Christ; these songs were born in the closet, and at the foot of the cross." Bliss wrote words AND the music for most of his songs.

In 1876 when Bliss was just 38, he and his wife boarded a train from Pennsylvania bound for Chicago, to join D.L. Moody in one of his gospel crusades. During the night near Ashtabula, Ohio, as the train was crossing a rail trestle, the bridge collapsed, sending the cars into the deep ravine below. Bliss was thrown free but his wife was still inside. As he watched, the cars began to burn. Bliss ran back inside to find his wife. Neither escaped. Somehow his trunk was found later, undamaged. Inside were the words to the hymn, *I Will Sing of My Redeemer*. He had not written a tune for the lyrics so later James McGranahan set the words to music. This song was one of the first ever recorded by Thomas Alva Edison.

*I will sing of my Redeemer, and His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered, from the curse, to set me free.*

*I will tell the wondrous story, how my lost estate to save,
In His boundless love and mercy, He the ransom freely gave.*

*I will praise my dear Redeemer, His triumphant power I'll tell;
How the victory He giveth over sin, and death, and hell.*

*I will sing of my Redeemer, and His heavenly love to me;
He from death to life hath brought me, Son of God, with Him to be.*

Chorus:

*Sing, O sing of my Redeemer! With His blood He purchased me;
On the cross He sealed my pardon- paid the debt, and made me free.*

Thank You's

With Much Thanks and Appreciation

It looked like it would be our first 4th of July without a parade since coming to Stow. But thanks to so many of you, the 4th of July 2020 still featured a grand old parade! And it was by far our most favorite yet!

From all of us, we want to thank all of you who came out for and were part of the 4th of July reverse parade that came by our home. It filled our spirit's with much joy and gratitude to see our church family take time to decorate cars, fill bags with pancake and breakfast goodies, and come see us on what was starting out as a rather melancholy day because of what was not able to happen. But you all made it happen, and it filled us with more joy than words can express. So from all of us, thank you for such an incredible blessing.

Together in Christ,
Jonathan, Julie, Violet, and A.J.

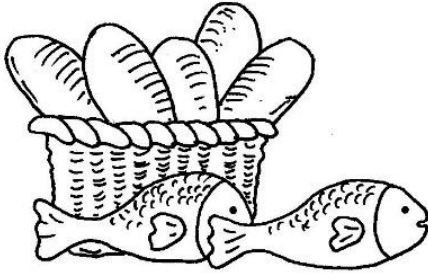
Dear Church Family

We want to thank you for your prayers and cards at the unexpected death of my dad. He was just a month shy of 87 years young. And, it's already been over a month. There's no way to ever prepare for this experience and I wouldn't wish it upon anyone.

For those of you who knew Andy Long you know how important our church was in his life. He became a member in 1953 and was a part of many projects through the years. He served as deacon, trustee, elder and board during that time.

Although we have not scheduled a celebration of his life, we will. We'll wait long enough for a time when we can gather, laugh, remember, eat and maybe even play!

Andrea Long Drews & Family
Sandy Long



Loaves and Fishes

Our drive through food distribution will be August 16th 4-6 p.m at the lower door. We will be providing in a to go container pasta, salad, a roll, a cookie and a water for anyone who needs a meal. Vineyard Church in Cuyahoga Falls is passing out flyers with their food distributions for

August so we are anticipating a crowd. Helpers are always needed and greatly appreciated.



Bulldog Bags Collections

Donations needed:

August : Mac and Cheese Cups
(microwavable) Due August 9

September: Bars of Soap – full size,
unscented Due September 16
Thanks for your generous support.

The Nest Preschool

The Nest is considering adding a school age program for children in grades kindergarten-3rd to support families that need a place for their children to complete online learning. Children must be enrolled in their local school district's online program or be able to engage in their remote learning plan if the schools are closed. If you are interested, please complete the survey below.

<https://forms.gle/AaCifRymbZCg6MJA6>

ATTENTION ACME SHOPPERS **2020 Acme Community Cash Back program will soon be starting.**

Start saving your receipts Aug. 6 thru Dec. 28th. Unfortunately, you won't be able to drop the receipts off in the gathering room as we always have, however, we are asking that you keep them somewhere safe and we will announce a drop off date later in the year. Or you can always send them to me. Remember we only need the very bottom of the receipt which shows the date and the amount of the cashback money earned.

We will receive 5% of that amount.

No amount is too small !

Money earned is divided between the two guilds and used to do the work of the church.

Thank you so much,
Rae Howard

Its Not To Late To Give to

Relay for Life –

First Christian Church Team

Although Relay for Life is going virtual this year on August 10, there are still way you can support Relay for Life and the First Christian Church relay team. There are really 4 ways you can give.

1. Buy a purple bulb and "Light Up the Town" for \$15. The purple bulb will shine from your home and show you support Relay for Life. And purple is the color of Relay for Life.
2. Purchase a "Let Hope Fly" garden flag to show your support for \$15.
3. Buy a Flock of Flamingos to surprise your friends on their special day or surprise them on a random date. Cost is \$30 for a random date and \$50 for a specific date.
4. You can always Donate specifically to our relay team by going to Relay for Life Stow Munroe Falls, Find our FFC team and donate.

If you have any questions call Susan Naylor at 330-554-5969 or Janice McCreight at 330-814-3826

Work projects continue around our church

Even though we are not able to have in-person worship, maintaining our property is still a must. We have had a great response from people willing to do the weekly chores of mowing, trimming bushes, string trimming, pulling weeds and general upkeep of the outside of our building. Others have cleaned and painted storage areas. Shelves were built to help store and distribute items for Bulldog Bags.

A work day to clean the garage with help from church members and Boy Scouts was very successful. The flag pole has new rope and 2 new flags. Trees have been trimmed, roof repairs have been made and an A/C unit replaced - all as a result of wind damage.

Thank you to all who have given your time and dedication to keep First Christian Church looking great.

“Anxious To Talk About It”

A book study starting September 3rd

Last year during a Church-Chat it was discussed how we could faithfully respond to the struggles and unrest unfolding in our society. Among the brainstorming ideas that came directly from you the congregation were: Look at oneself/Introspection; Keep Talking-Keep Listening-Approach with curiosity; and Listen! And so in the spirit of what you the congregation implored and encouraged, we will be offering a book study that will lead us to do all of these practices by studying the book: *“Anxious To Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism”* by Carolyn B. Helsel

This six week book study will be done via Zoom on Thursday evenings, and will also include an online message board for ongoing discussion. We will utilize a discussion guide developed by the author for churches and small groups. Look for more information later this month. In the meantime look for this book on Amazon or on ChalicePress.com.

Donation of Chairs

Our Fellowship Hall now has some more comfortable padded chairs. Danny Reiman is the principle of SCOPE Academy in Springfield Township. His school had 70 padded chairs they were no longer using. He made arrangements for those chairs to be donated to our church. Thank you, Danny, for thinking of us. This will make our dinners and meetings in Fellowship Hall a little softer.

Church Family Fun Night Sunday, August 23, 7-8p.m.

Our Church Family Fun Nights in June and July were great successes so let's round out the summer with one more!

On **Sunday, August 23rd, from 7-8p.m.** in the lower level parking lot we will gather, socially distant of course, to play a spirited game of... well the Membership Team is still working on what game we will play, but rest assured it will be so much fun!

This is intended to be a simple gathering, for folks to come and be together to have some fun, see and say hello to our church family and friends and make some much needed connections with one another. Masks and social distancing will be necessary. If you need a mask, the church can provide you with one. Please bring your own chair, beverages, and snacks.

Update! Subscribe To The First Christian Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUgm9zCA8RaUQM6YYaP5Ulg>

77. That's how many subscribers we have on YouTube. 77. That is 5 more than we had last month, but it is still 23 short of the 100 subscribers we need to make more options available that will make it easier for our church to be found on YouTube.

And while I know each of you reading of already subscribed, how about we invite family and friends to subscribe too!? You could forward them the email with the link to this issue of the Pathways, and invite them to see what your church is doing, and then kindly ask them to subscribe to our YouTube channel and check us out some Sunday for worship! It's so easy!

Guidelines for Returning to In-Person Church Services

FCC Elders and Pastor

Everyone wants to know: When will in-person church services start again? The Elders and pastor continue to wrestle with this question while seeking to honor our traditions, worship in the way to which we have been accustomed, all the while keeping everyone safe.

After lengthy discussions and prayer over the past several months we have decided to be guided by the Ohio Public Health Advisory System and its status for Summit County. This information is available to all on the coronavirus.ohio.gov website:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system/> The website also has a Summary of Alert Indicators and a Risk Level Guidelines. These explain how each county's level is assigned and how each level should affect our actions. The data is updated weekly on Thursdays.

There are four levels of increasing severity: Level 1: Yellow; Level 2: Orange; Level 3: Red; Level 4: Purple. Summit County currently is in a Red Level 3. Using these levels, the Elders and Jonathan have decided to have four different service "status conditions" linked to the Summit County level. We will use the following criteria to guide us as to when and how we will return to in-person services. (See explanation of "status conditions.")

- If Summit County is in the Orange, Red, or Purple level FCC Stow services will be in Status Condition 4.
- If Summit County is in the Yellow level for four consecutive weeks FCC Stow services will be Status Condition 3.
- If Summit County is in the Yellow level for eight consecutive weeks FCC Stow services will be Status Condition 2.

Using this system will bring a measure of stability to our church life. During this pandemic everything seems to change every day and no one knows what tomorrow. Now at least we'll know about our services. If the Ohio Department of Public Health declares the COVID-19 crisis over or if there is a safe and effective vaccine available to the public FCC Stow services will be in Status Condition 1.

With these guidelines in place the Elders will turn our efforts to improving and enhancing the spiritual life of our church within the limitations imposed on us by the COVID-19 Pandemic. You can expect to hear more about this in the coming weeks.

It is ever the aim of the Elders and Pastor to provide opportunities to give praise to God while drawing closer to the Divine, and doing so in a manner that keeps everyone safe, healthy, and well. And while we are constantly praying for this global health crisis to end, and we all can be together again, we will continue to be guided by God and the wisdom imbued by God through those who are working hard to keep our community safe.

As always please contact Jonathan or any of the Elders if you have any questions about these guidelines for returning to in person worship.

Status Condition Explanations and Breakdown

Status Condition 4

Status Condition 4 consists of streaming and recording services with only the people needed to present the service in the church. (What we are currently doing.)

Status Condition 3

Status Condition 3 consists of Status Condition 4 with the addition of a non-participating congregation of up to 20 families or individuals. Those who attend must agree to abide by these conditions:

- Be seated by an Elder or Deacon.
- Maintain a 6 foot distance from others while in the building.
- Do not shake hands or hug one another.
- All those over the age of 4 are required to wear a mask
- Families seated together based on social distancing protocols.
- Children will remain with their families throughout the service.
- Bulletins will not be available.
- Singing will be limited to one person on the chancel.
- Use of either personal or disposable communion elements.
- Offering to be dropped in the baskets in the back of the sanctuary.

Congregation activities are limited to the following:

- Praying
- Listening to the sermon
- Children's Sermon (staying seated)
- Watching the screens
- Verbally responding to the Lay Leader's Peace Message

The following activities will **not** occur:

- Hugging and other physical contact
- Sharing of common items such as offering plates and communion trays
- Singing
- Junior Church
- Coffee Hour
- Receiving Line

Status Condition 2

Status Condition 2 is the same as Status Condition 3 with attendance increasing to 35 families or individuals.

Status Condition 1

Status Condition 1 is the resumption of normal church service activities subject to certain modifications based on lessons learned during the pandemic.

For Status Conditions 1-3, the Elders will implement a sign up system in order to make sure we maintain social distance. This does leave room for walk up worshippers.