



PATHWAYS

JULY 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!



From the Elders:

HELLO First Christian Family!!!

I still love saying that; I just wish it was in person with you on a Sunday morning. I write to give you an update from the Elders on when and how we might open church back up to services. This remains a very difficult topic to navigate during the Pandemic, and the Elders do not it take lightly.

The Elders have been meeting regularly, at least every other week, if not every week since the end of March. We have discussed protocols we need to have in place for your safety, and the timing for coming back. We listened to national leaders and our state Governor DeWine and have read countless articles put out with guidelines from the government and medical advisors. We are also looking at businesses, churches, and especially hospitals recommendations that are starting to open back up. We have also looked at how the Coronavirus is trending throughout the country, and within our state. Early on, we were following the recommendations of our government leaders and medical advisors. As businesses and some churches are now starting back up we have been thinking maybe it is time for us to consider opening as well.

Hopefully you recently received a survey from the Elders to get a feel for when our congregation might be ready to come back to church. We did the survey to help direct our thoughts into what the rest of the congregation wants. We truly do appreciate the responses received on such short notice, but as we have all seen, situations and data changes quickly during the Pandemic. It was apparent that the majority of our church family is still having reservations in coming back to in-person worship, for personal health reasons, or ability to enforce the protocols. The Protocols we have chosen are included in the Pathways. We also asked on a timing basis of a "Phase 1 vs. Phase 2" approach, Phase 1 starting back to church within a couple of weeks, and then Phase 2 which would follow. The main difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 are the number of congregational members we could have in church. It also seems that more of you want to come back, but have picked Phase 2, a little later. With the recent surge in Coronavirus within the United States, Phase 1 is more likely to start in early August. Phase 2 would follow, with timing based on how the U. S. and Ohio are trending with the Coronavirus. We will tend to err on the side of caution and safety, but most importantly faithfully as Christians.

If you have any questions, concerns, or overall input to what we are doing please feel free to contact myself, Jonathan or any of the Elders. We don't pretend to know everything so we will always be glad to have input from you.

Faithfully Yours in Christ

Jim Hindel

Chair of Elders

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FROM THE PASTOR



While growing up I would frequently hear my mother use the old adage, *“This too shall pass.”* (She actually still says it today!) It’s one of those phrases that sound biblical but in reality it’s not. It has some mythological connection to

King Solomon, but it’s not within any text regarding him. It was, however, employed in a speech by Abraham Lincoln before he became president: *“It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: ‘And this, too, shall pass away.’ How much it expresses. How chastening in the hour of pride. How consoling in the depths of affliction.”*

My mother mostly used this phrase in hard times, and so lately I have been saying it to myself, with greater frequency the longer this global health crisis goes on. *“This too shall pass.” “This too shall pass.” “This too shall pass.”*

Admittedly though, I started adding the words of the Psalmist who is known to repeatedly say, *“How long O Lord?”* The most well-known use of this phrase is found in Psalm 13, where we read, *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?”* (Psalm 13:1-3)

This too shall pass. But how long is it going to take? That is what I keep saying and thinking. This is my constant and consistent prayer. And I imagine some version of it has been yours too.

It was in considering the whole *“how long?”* question that it occurred to me we have had in 2020 more online worship than in-person worship. Then when I counted it up I discovered we have had significantly more online worship than in-person worship, 15-10 actually. It was yet another stark reminder that this global health crisis is really taking a toll—on the world, our country, our state, our community, our families, and it’s taking a toll on us individually, myself included.

Still though, *this too shall pass. But how long?* It’s hard to say of course, but it will not be any sooner if we all don’t do everything we can to help this come to pass. Which is what myself and the Elders are striving to do in regards to church, especially worship.

The Elders and I have met again and again and again. We made our monthly meetings into twice-a-month meetings. Then we made them into weekly meetings. (Note, all meetings are via Zoom.) We prayed and talked and discussed and read and discussed more and prayed more. And we began to sense that perhaps God was answering our question, *“How long O Lord?”* and that the answer was *“Soon.”*

Then we met again, and it was clear, God was saying, *“It’s going to be a little while longer.”*

We heard God’s voice through our prayers and through our discernment. And we heard God’s voice through your voices—the input you have shared directly to me and the Elders and through the survey put out to the church. And for it all, we give thanks because we know there is no *“one size fits all”* plan for reopening churches, and that each church must discern God’s direction for them. We cannot and will not reopen the church until we are certain we can do so safely and with safety protocols that can be implemented successfully and consistently. When that time comes, and rest assured it will come, God will make it clear to us, and God will equip us with everything we need to make it all happen.

No, this is not easy. We are going to have to keep telling ourselves a little while longer, *“This too shall pass.”* But when we add in the *“How long O Lord”* part of that prayer, let us hold fast to the end of Psalm 13 where we read, *“But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because the Lord has dealt bountifully with me.”*

God is still working. And God’s work is always for good. So as we pray *“How long...”* let us trust, let us rejoice, let us sing. For God is with us and blessing us...no matter how long it takes to pass.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Update from the Stewardship Team

Financial Giving From the Congregation

We won't close the financial books for June for a couple more days but I wanted to provide a status of where we are currently with our congregational giving.

The Congregational Giving budget amount is \$22,384 per month. For the month of June we are below that amount by \$3,612, we have received \$18,772.

Our expenses are also lower than budgeted right now. so we are doing ok financially. It is not unusual for giving to be lower in the summer months, but if you personally are feeling financially stable and would like to make an additional gift to the church above your normal giving, that would definitely be appreciated. Any increases will help position us to be able to increase the outreach assistance we can provide to our community, both local and globally.

Here is the information:

2020	June	May	April	YTD
Budget	\$ 22,384	\$ 22,384	\$ 22,384	\$ 134,304
Actual	\$ 18,772	\$ 20,503	\$ 23,869	\$ 120,057
Actual - Budget	\$ (3,612)	\$ (1,881)	\$ 1,485	\$ (14,247)

As a reminder, we have a link on the church website with information about electronic giving options. As always, if you have any questions please let us know and we can help. We can also provide envelopes/stamps for those who prefer to mail, and you can also drop off any envelopes in our secure mail box at the church.

Sunday Sermons and Pastoral Prayers Available By Snail Mail

If you or someone you know would like printed copies of the Sunday sermons and pastoral prayers sent via snail mail please let the church office know. We will be glad to mail copies to anyone who would enjoy reading the pastor's message.

Also note that all sermons and prayer are also available on our church website, and videos of weekly worship services are always available at our church's Facebook page and YouTube Channel.

Virtual Camp Christian Camps and Conferences

Even though camps at Camp Christian this summer have been canceled camp will still go on! Virtually! The directors and counselors have done an incredible job of brainstorming, sharing resources, and coming up with creative alternatives so that camp can still happen! Using a virtual-camp portal, we will be sharing in camp songs, lessons, quest groups, keynotes, evening vespers services, and even hoe-downs and talent shows!

The camp schedule is as follows: CYF Conference: July 5-11; Chi Rho: July 12-18; Jr. Camp (Ribbit & Otter): July 19-25; Advance Conference: July 26-August 2.

Programming for each camp will include videos, music, and documents that will be available for you to use and view at your leisure, or even after the week is done. However, some of the activities will be held at specific times and dates (i.e. a zoom small group gathering or cabin meeting) so it will still be important to be available for your specific week of programming.

To be a part of a camp send an email to Regional Program Director, Rev. Alan Dicken at: adicken@ccinoh.org with the following information: Camper Name, grade the camper just completed, email address that is best to send log-in information for the virtual camp portal.

When you send in that information, you will be registered on the virtual-camp portal. You will be sent an email to confirm your log-in information so that you can take part in the activities. You will also get a follow up email from the director(s) of your particular week to welcome you to your specific week of online programming.

We know it will not be the same as being at Camp Christian, but we also know the spirit of Camp Christian is the Holy Spirit and the ministry of Camp is not tied to the place, but tied to our hearts and our spirits of love and compassion. In that spirit, we hope to see you all this summer.

If there are any questions or if you need help with any part of this process, please reach out to Jonathan.

At Home Vacation Bible School
Heroes of the Bible

Drive up VBS packet pick up:
Sunday July 12th 12-2

Packets include Bible Stories, Crafts
and Snacks

for each day of the week July 13-17th.

A VBS video will be available each day
on our Facebook and Youtube pages.

Post photos and videos during at home vbs with
#fccstowVBS

Church Work Night

Tuesday, July 7th, 6:30 p.m.

There are always a number of projects that need attention around the church, and so to address some of those the Trustees will host a Church Work Night on Tuesday, July 7th at 6:30 p.m. Much of this night will consist of hauling items to the dumpster from various locations around the church, along with tending to various yard and grounds needs. We will make sure we maintain social-distance during this work night, and masks will be highly encouraged. We hope you make plans to lend a hand!

Christian Education
Youth Group Flea Market

Saturday August 1

8am – 2pm

(lower level of the church parking lot)



“Yellow butterflies look like flowers flying through the warm summer air.” – Andrea Willis

Zoom Coffee Fellowship

Sunday, July 12th

On **Sunday, July 12th**, right after **worship** we will hold another Virtual Zoom Coffee Fellowship. An email will be sent out to all those we have email addresses for with a link to join the coffee fellowship. All you have to do is click the link and it will do the rest. You won't have to linger long, you'll have to supply your own coffee and treats, but it will be a chance to see some familiar faces and say hello to your church family. Hope to see you at our Zoom Coffee Fellowship!

Church Family Fun Night

Sunday, June 12th, 7-8p.m.

Our Church Family Fun Night in June was a great success so let's do it again in July!

On **Sunday, July 12th**, from **7-8p.m.** in the lower level parking lot we will gather, socially distant of course, to play a spirited game of Pictionary! (Come see if Jonathan can say anything in less than a minute using no words!)

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. Please bring your own chair, beverages, and snacks.

Chalice FC Intra-Squad Scrimmage

Sunday, July 19th, 7-8p.m.

Location TBD

We're getting the band team back together! It's summer time and there is no baseball to be found (except replays of Tribe wins, which is actually pretty cool), so let's make some diamond fun of our own by having a Chalice FC Intra-Squad scrimmage of softball or kickball.

Take Note!! This will **NOT** be an uber-competitive game. This will be a simple time of fun-filled, low impact, injury free, easy going, and laid back good times.

Please text or email Jonathan your RSVP for this game. Kiddos are welcome to play too! (If their parents say its ok of course!) Please text or email Jonathan your RSVP for this game.

Relay for Life Update

First Christian Church Relay For Life Relay for Life is going to be done virtually this year and will be coming from Stow City Hall. It will all be online August 15th from 2:00pm -10:00 pm on the Relay for Life Facebook page. There will be different things like videos, bands, speakers, and a survivor's car parade to watch online. Exact times are still in the planning stages, so more information will follow via the Pathways as it becomes available. Stow Sentry will be running weekly articles with updates also.

If you would like to make a donation or purchase a luminaria, you can do so thru the American Cancer Society Relay for Life website page, for First Christian Church Relay Team.

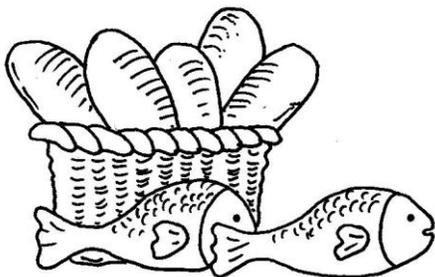
Any questions please contact Janice McCreight or Sue Naylor.

Subscribe To The First Christian Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUqm9zCA8RaUQM6YYaP5UIg>

72. That's how many subscribers we have on YouTube. 72. We need 28 more to get to 100 and that will make more options available to us and it will make it easier for our church to be found on YouTube. So why not, right now, click on the link above, and "subscribe" to our church's YouTube channel. It only takes a single click. It does not cost a cent. It is simply and easy but will give the church a broader opportunity to get people connected to our services and ministries.

And while you're there, check out some of the past videos of fun times and events at the church. It will do your heart good to see all those familiar faces—especially those little ones!



Loaves and Fishes

The Loaves and Fishes meal will be July 19th 4-6 p.m. We will be serving a choice of sloppy joe, hot dog or coney dog with picnic side items. The meals will be distributed in the turn around on the lower lot.

Masks are required. Let us know if you can help!

Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity Committee

Stow-Munroe Falls Schools
and Communities

The Stow Munroe Falls School District, along with the Cities of Stow and Munroe Falls has recently formed the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, Committee* which is intended to be a school/community initiative that will actively address the issue of racism, its root causes, and its presence in our schools and communities. This committee is made up of area school teachers, faculty, staff and Board of Education members; along with city mayors, police officers, and local clergy. And I am glad to share with you that I have been invited to be part of this committee.

To date, the larger committee has met twice, while leadership of the committee has met even more. At the latest meeting we broke into small groups and were led to consider and brainstorm ideas of how diversity, equity, inclusivity, and anti-racism could be promoted and implemented into ten different aspects of school and community life.

I am excited and honored to be part of this committee, not just as a pastor, but also as a community member and as a parent of two children in the school system. I will share more with you about the work of this committee as we continue to meet and work. The next meeting is set for Friday, July 10th. I invite you to hold in your prayers the work of this committee.

Sincerely,
Jonathan

The sun does not shine for a few trees and flowers, but for the wide world's joy.

Henry Ward Beecher

Share and Invite: Worship on Facebook and YouTube

As we continue to live into this new normal of stay-at-home orders and social distancing, we are grateful for the opportunity to still gather together for Sunday morning worship via Facebook Live and on YouTube. We have seen our regular church family at these virtual worship service, but we have seen folks from all across the state and country. So let's keep this going and share and invite more and more of our family and friends to join and check us out. It is as easy as clicking that share button on your computer as you surf through your Facebook feed, or by forwarding the email with the link to the YouTube service! (Oh, and don't forget to subscribe to our YouTube channel!)



Bulldog Boxes

Donations needed: Brownie mix is our scheduled summer donation to Bulldogs. Both in JUNE and JULY. A list of monthly items will be coming soon to support Bulldog Bags school year program. Thanks for your generous support.

July Event Calendar

Church Work Night	July 7, 6:30 pm
Coffee Fellowship via Zoom	July 12, after worship
VBS Packet Pick-Up	July 12, 12 – 2 pm
Loaves and Fishes	July 19, 4 - 6 pm
Chalice FC Intra-Squad	July 19, 7 - 8 pm
Virtual Camp Christian	
<i>CYF</i>	<i>July 5 – 11</i>
<i>Chi Rho</i>	<i>July 12 – 18</i>
<i>Jr. Camp</i>	<i>July 19 – 25</i>
<i>Advance Conference</i>	<i>July 26 – Aug. 2</i>

First Christian Church Survey

Recently the Elders of the church sent out a survey to all members (who we have email addresses for) and

invited you to take a few minutes and answer its questions in an effort to help us continue to discern how we might move forward with any in-person worship services. We wish to thank everyone who took the time to respond. For those who did not get the survey, or did not have a chance to respond, we have included the survey in this issue of the Pathways. Feel free to copy and paste the survey and respond via email to Jonathan, or if you wish to remain anonymous please print a hard copy and snail mail it to the church. Your voice and input is greatly appreciated.

Together in Christ,
The Elders of First Christian Church

“In every crisis, doubt or confusion, take the higher path - the path of compassion, courage, understanding and love.”

~Amit Ray
Nonviolence: The Transforming Power

Coming up in August

Youth Group Flea Market August 1
Relay for Life August 15





At-Home Vacation Bible School Activities

**Drive-Up VBS Packet Pickup
Sunday July 12 11:30am-1pm**

Packets include bible stories, crafts & snacks for each day the week of July 13-17! In addition to these activities a VBS video will be available each day on our @FCCStow Facebook page and YouTube Channel!

Post photos and videos of your family during At-Home VBS with #FCCStowVBS. We will share these on our social media pages and during Sunday Worship!

Are you interested in volunteering to be a part of our At-Home VBS videos?
Contact Anna & Richelle or send us a Facebook message @FCCStow.

First Christian Church of Stow / 3493 Darrow Rd, Stow
christianed@firstchristianstow.org / www.firstchristianstow.org / Facebook @FCCStow



First Christian Church of Stow

Return to In-Person Worship Survey

Greetings! The elders have been prayerfully considering how and when to begin in-person worship services, since we began our online services in March. We will continue to err on the side of caution and ensure the health and well-being of all members while providing options that meet everyone's spiritual needs. Please read through the phased approach and protocol below before answering seven quick questions. Thank you for your input on this important topic!

Phase 1 (Being considered for mid-August)

A maximum of 15 family units will be invited to sit in pews for service. Families will sign up on a first-come, first-served basis via a Sign-Up Genius link. All outlined protocol will be required.

Phase 2 (based on the success and interest in Phase 1)

A maximum of 25 family units will be invited to sit in pews for service. Families will sign up on a first-come, first served basis via a Sign-Up Genius link. All outlined protocol will be required.

Protocols we will require for your safety

- Anyone exhibiting symptoms as cited by the CDC are asked to remain at home.
- Social distancing will be observed at all times.
- Protective masks will be required by everyone over the age of 2.
- Children will remain with families.
- All required information will be shown on the screens. (No bulletins)
- Singing will be limited to one person on the chancel.
- Bring your own communion elements.
- Offering will not be collected during the service. Baskets will be available in the narthex.
- There will be no reception line following worship.
- The sanctuary, bathrooms and entrance area will be cleaned and sanitized before each service.

Questions

1. Are you currently watching the Sunday worship service via Facebook Live or YouTube?

Yes, via Facebook Live ----- Yes, via YouTube ----- No

2. After reading the phased approach & protocol, would you sign up to attend in-person worship service during phase 1?

Yes ----- No

3. After reading the phased approach & protocol, would you sign up to attend in-person worship service during phase 2?

Yes ----- No

4. Are you comfortable complying with the protocol outlined above? If no, please explain (open field)

Yes ----- No (please tell us why, below)

5. What are your concerns with returning to an in-person worship service?

6. Given the detail shared above, when do you think you'd be willing to return to an in-person worship service?

7. Anything else you'd like to share with the Elders as they consider these decisions?