

PATHWAYS

JUNE 2020

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

Psalm 16:11

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The Church Never Closed **FCC Stow Elders and Pastor**

It's been 10 weeks since we began online worship via Facebook Live and YouTube. 10 weeks. And truthfully, it might be another ten weeks of online worship. It may even be more. All of us hope and pray it will be less, but we also have to be prepared for it being longer. We the Elders and Pastor meet twice a month to continue conversations around this matter and all of its logistics.

Nevertheless, whether we are meeting in person for worship, or meet online, one truth remains... ***the Church has never been closed.***

For the past ten weeks we have very been much open, tending to the essentials of being church: offering the chance to draw closer to the divine through worship, feeding the hungry, supporting our community, praying for and assisting those in our midst who are ill, providing ways to give back to God a portion of what God has given us, and being a church family no matter the distance between us. And all of you have responded faithfully.

Still there has been a lot of talk, and angst, and debate, and anger, and vitriol shared and spread and spewed about “shutting down” “being shut-down” “opening up” “restarting” “essential” “nonessential” and all the other buzz words and terms that have been used. As we have all seen, it has been ugly, and much of it has been politicized by both sides of the isle, and even in the courts. Without question, the Church has been used as a pawn in these political and partisan games that are being played out in the media and across social media platforms. But First Christian Church of Stow will not allow ourselves to get drawn into such games. It is our aim and focus to be the church God is calling us to be, no matter what that means.

We are continuing to suspend in-person worship to keep people safe—and not just our congregation. We are doing it to keep everyone safe because when the church comes together to do what we do—greet, hug, sing, and so forth—there is a level of interaction that is deemed high risk, which makes for a broader possibility that those who go to church could later spread the virus when going out for groceries, medical appointments, and the like. However, we feel there is the opportunity to still be a church that can safely come together in ways that are low-risk for those who chose to come. For example, after a one month hiatus, Loaves and Fishes came back with a revamped method that saw its normal output nearly tripled. Additionally, there is a consensus that an outdoor social gathering of church folk could be managed with low risk, but still with a lot of fun. (See below for information about how this is going to be done.)

We have suspended in-person worship gatherings because it is the right, faithful, and safe thing to do, but we are ***not*** closed. We have never been closed, nor will we ever close. The Church has been, is, and will always be essential because God is still calling it to fulfill its ministry. And with God's help we are going to figure out just how we can get the job done.

Church Family Fun Night **Sunday, June 14th 7-8p.m.**

It is summer time during a global pandemic which means we need to follow a set of guidelines to help slow the spread of the coronavirus. A recent NPR article broke down activities and the risks associated with, and cited that small outdoor gatherings where folks brought their own chairs and food and wore masks and remained socially distant that the risk of spreading the virus would be low.

So, with that understanding, if you are so inclined you are invited to a Church Family Fun Night on Sunday, June 14th from 7p.m. to 8 p.m. in the newly refinished church parking lot. More details on the logistics of the evening will be shared as they come together, but we can say now that we will keep folks socially distanced from one another (families will of course be together), masks will be highly encouraged, and we will gather for just one hour so as to cut down on the need for bathroom uses (although restroom access will be available.) Please also plan to bring your own snacks and beverages as none will be provided.

This is intended to be a simple gathering, with some fun socially distant friendly games. Come to join in the games, or come to just see and say hello to folks from your church family!



It's no surprise the phrase and hashtag, #2020IsWeird has gone viral. Admittedly there have been many other superlatives used to describe 2020 beyond it just being weird, but this is a church and family publication so I'll just leave it as "weird"

and let you decide whether or not you want to Google descriptors of 2020. I suspect your imagination will suffice though. But among them all, 2020 is indeed weird. It's not what any of us expected for the famed "2020 Vision" that the start of this optometrist play on words and image was so perfectly set up to be.

None of us could foresee a global pandemic that would fast-track online worship and no in-person gatherings. None of us could imagine a summer without graduation ceremonies and parties, our ice cream social, our 4th of July Pancake Breakfast, a night with the Akron Rubber Ducks, and an online take-home Vacation Bible School. Throw in murder hornets and the 17 year return of the cicadas and preachers start getting email requests for more sermons from the book of Revelation.

So, yeah. 2020 is weird. And now it's summer time—the best time of the year if you ask me—but we are required to stay socially distant from one another and wear masks when we do go out in order to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Which is exceedingly hard, not just because it has been months since we've started having to do it, but more so because God created us to live in community. We are meant to be around others, which means social isolation will inevitably take a toll on our psychological health. So what are we to do?

First, and foremost, it is critically important we take seriously the recommended procedures to prevent health care systems from getting overloaded which can ultimately lead to more deaths. This means of course to stay home as much as possible, do social distancing, wear a mask when you do go out, and follow all the guidelines we have been hearing about for the past two and a half months.

After that, we do need to tend to our physical and psychological health and well-being because as I mentioned above, this staying at home, as great as being home can be, has its downside. Samantha Tidball, pastor in Nashville, Tennessee calls this time "The Great Pause." As a result, people are spending more time at home and some have more time on their hands than they know what to do with.

Tidball address the issues surrounding "the great pause" and writes in her blog saying, *"During this time of quarantine, it's as if someone hit the pause button for most of society. The days are blending together and boredom is hitting some people harder than others. Since we have not collectively experienced anything like this pandemic in our*

lifetime, it's easy to feel anxious from the unknowns and worries over loss of life, jobs and normalcy. It's also not unusual to experience boredom. Still, boredom isn't necessarily a bad feeling. Many psychologists claim boredom is necessary for our brains to generate creative solutions to problems or serve as an artistic outlet for our anxiety. On one hand, boredom can cause trouble when we feel tempted to become apathetic or complacent. But on the other, boredom can lead to incredible ingenuity or creative expressions of our humanity that bring glory to God. For example, Isaac Newton came up with his greatest discoveries after being sent home from Cambridge University in order to stay safe during the bubonic plague. The year he spent at home was known as his 'year of wonders' during which he discovered important theories about gravity, optics and calculus."

Now I assure you, the closest I will get to calculus is typing the word just now. But this time of wonder can be whatever we chose. So what if instead of #2020IsWeird, it was more like #2020IsFullOfWonder? Or maybe, #2020PauseFeedsMySpirit? Or maybe #2020IsFullOfDiscovery? We don't need to discover important ground breaking theories about the cosmos or invent new forms of mathematics, nor do we need to write the great American Novel. (Although Violet and I are working on what will no doubt be a best seller children's book about a goose on a roof, inspired by an actual goose on the roof of one of our church Elders.)

So let's be intentional to make room for some self-care, or maybe some Lenten-like introspection where we step before God in intentional ways. Perhaps we can learn to love others better during this time, be a better neighbor, or start a new hobby. Or maybe we start a new spiritual practice—perhaps where we write down things we are grateful for, then choose one to pray about and give thanks for.

Whatever we do during this unique time, it can be an opportunity to explore the good things God is doing even in the midst of a time when it's hard to see much good happening. May such choices help us all have a great summer.

Together in Christ,
Jonathan

Meetings In June

Even though we cannot gather in person, church leaders are still meeting. And you and your teams and ministry groups can too! The Elders and Governing Board have all done, as well as the church choir.

The following meetings are set to happen in the Month of June:

1. The **Elders** of the church will meet on **Monday, June 8th** at 7p.m. via Zoom.
2. The **Governing Board** of the church will meet on **Tuesday, June 9th** at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Please note the DAY change for the Governing Board—it will meet on TUESDAY, June 9th. The Elders want to gather the day before so as to have an up-to-date report for the Governing Board.

If any other group or ministry team wishes to have a Zoom meeting, please let Jonathan know and he can help get it set up.

Subscribe To The First Christian Church YouTube Channel

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

Ever wonder what are the saddest words are on YouTube? They might just be: *"This channel doesn't feature any other channels."*

That's what is shown on the First Christian Church Stow YouTube page because we have not yet reached the necessary 100 subscribers to be given a dedicated URL address for our church. So why not, right now, click on or go to the link above, and "subscribe" to our church's YouTube channel. It only takes a single click, and we assure you it does not cost a cent, and you will not be flooded with junk mail. It is simply and easy, but will give the church a broader opportunity to get people connected to the church on the internet!

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!

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!)

Loaves and Fishes

The Loaves and Fishes meal on June 21, 4-6 pm will be a Father's Day picnic.

We will grill hamburgers and hotdogs and add some sides. These will be distributed in the turn around on the lower level. We need grillmasters, assemblers and people to pass them out to the cars. Masks are still necessary. Please let us know if you can help!

Parking Lot Project Complete!

We are excited to report that the parking lot project is complete and everything looks great! Special thanks to the Trustees and Stewardship Team for their work in making this happen. And we are especially grateful to Jim Hindel and Rick Lloyd who oversaw the project work from beginning to end.

Poor People's Campaign Virtual Invitation

From the Christian Church In Ohio Reconciliation Commission

In February, the Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation Ministries of the Christian Church in Ohio encouraged all Ohio Disciples to plan to be present in Washington, DC this summer for the Poor People's Assembly and Moral March! Although we have seen many events cancelled or postponed due to Covid-19, we are encouraged by the now-virtual gathering of the Poor People's Campaign: *A National Call for Moral Revival!*

From the website of the Poor People's Campaign:

"On June 20th, we will hold the largest digital and social media gathering of poor and low-wealth people, moral and religious leaders, advocates, and people of conscience in this nation's history. A global pandemic is exposing even more the already existing crisis of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy and militarism, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. On June 20, the 140 million poor and low-income people across this nation will be heard!"

We hope to see everyone sign-up here <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/june2020/> and join in participating in this online event that will help unite people of various faiths from all over the country as we continue to advocate and work for racial justice!

Sincerely,
Reconciliation Commission,
Christian Church In Ohio

Update from the Stewardship Team Financial Giving From the Congregation

We won't close the financial books for May for another week 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 May (so far) we are under that amount by approximately \$5,000, we have received \$17,306. We are not surprised by this dip, even though April was a very good month. We are all dealing with much uncertainty!

Here is the information:

2020	April	May	YTD
Budget	\$ 22,384	\$ 22,384	\$ 111,820
Actual	\$ 23,772	\$ 17,306	\$ 98,089
Actual - Budget	\$ 1,388	\$ (5,078)	\$ (13,831)

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.

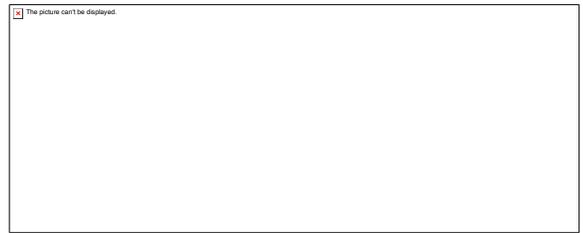
Update On Paycheck Protection Plan Loan

As we communicated through a congregational email in early May, we applied for and were approved for the SBA Paycheck Protection Plan Loan, which is supported by stimulus funds. We have received those funds and will be using them for May and June payroll and utilities. We will then provide the necessary documentation about the usage to request that the loan will be forgiven. Based on our research and the SBA information, we have every expectation that the forgiveness request will be approved. Please let us know if you have any questions about that process!

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.



2020 Graduate Recognition

While the CoVid 19 Pandemic has interrupted many of the regularly scheduled activities for our Graduating Seniors, we want to be sure that their church families recognize and honor their achievement. It seems especially important this year. Please notify the office or Richelle and Anna of any high school or college graduates this year. We will recognize them one Sunday in June.

Zoom Coffee Fellowship Sunday, June 7th

Admit it. Online worship is good, and it's fun to post comments and watch Jonathan try to pull off an engaging children's sermon, but there is still just a little something missing, right?! Coffee Fellowship! Ok, there are a ton more things missing but coffee fellowship after worship is one of them for sure. So we are going to do something to help fill that void.

On **Sunday, June 7th, right after worship ends** we will hold a 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 meatballs and cheesy poofs, but Jonathan promises not to drop any guised hints to send in your offering, and 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 Campus Work Projects

Rick Lloyd, Trustee and Elder

The following is a list of Trustee Outside projects needing completed, many weekly, some just one time. Jim Hindel and I have been doing most of these projects for the past two years, but now Jim needs to take care of Lindsey after her surgery and won't be able to help at church for a couple months. We are grateful for John McCreight and Mike Deiwert stepping in to help with the mowing. Since we will not be having an organized work day we found it easier to split the mowing and trimming jobs and do them independently based on our schedule and weather.

Please look over the following list to see if there is something you would be willing to help out with.

Mowing: Front yard, Piano house to fire pit, Williamson Rd. To fire pit, south of building inside white fence, east side by gym.

String trimming: Both sides of white fence, hill along north side of driveway, ditch and around stumps Williamson Rd., around piano house and garage.

Outside cleanup and maintenance: Plant flowerbed NE corner of sanctuary * Trim bushes high boxes by front door ramp * Weed and trim bushes south side of nursery * Weed and trim bushes by Jr. church room (lower doors) * Level drain pipe in garden by Jr. church room * Weed and trim front gardens * Remove stump to below ground level front yard by white fence * Cut and stack large limbs that are on the ground by fire pit (chainsaw needed)

Outside Painting Doors: SW sanctuary, elevator, NW sanctuary, NE sanctuary, Metal beams and posts over ramp by front door.

At this time we don't feel we can call on a full workday. Most of these are items that can be completed individually. If you feel comfortable working with another person or small group that is your choice.

The church does have a lawn tractor, push mower, battery string trimmer and limited yard tools. We also have painting supplies. Other than that we have been providing our own tools. Please let me know if you are able to do any of these project so I can check them off the list. Thank you for anything you can do to help maintain our church property.

Please contact me if you can take on any of these tasks and/or before you take them on to insure they have not yet been completed. (330-752-3412 or rlloyd05@att.net)

Green Chair Fund Raiser

For CampChristian

Christian hurch in Ohio

Camp Christian Committee

The green Adirondack chairs at Camp Christian have become almost a tradition at Camp. The conversations and fellowship that happens around the circles of these chairs during the summer is regularly listed as a favorite amongst Campers.

Every summer the campers express a desire for more green chair circles. With this in mind, the Camp Christian Committee has put together a fundraiser to include the whole region as we provide chairs for the campers while raising needed funds for camp. We are want to obtain sponsors for 20 chairs that would ultimately remain at camp. We will also take orders for up to 25 additional chairs that people can buy for their own use. Sponsored chairs staying at camp would include a dedication plate on them with wording chosen by the sponsor.

Our plan is to make 45 chairs (20 to stay at camp, the other 25 going to peoples' homes) and to raise \$10,000. The funds raised will go to Camp Operations (repairs, general maintenance, utilities, kitchen needs, and supporting staff members).

Online orders to sponsor or purchase chairs may be placed now by heading over to the Christian Church in Ohio website: www.ccinoh.org. Credit cards are accepted.

If you have questions, please reach out to the Camp Christian Committee at mycampchristian@gmail.com or contact Rev. Chad Delaney at pastormccc@gmail.com.

Walk For The Kids

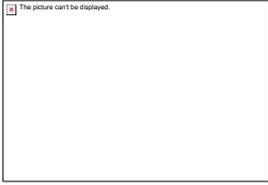
The Walk For The Kids that supports Cleveland Christian Home has been amended to a Virtual Walk now through June 15th. You can support this walk in a variety of ways - including

--Mail a donation to the Church marked Walk For The Kids . We will apply them to a member who is a registered walker.

--Register and walk yourself. (They would like a minimum of \$100 per individual/team.) Registered walkers get a tshirt! You may walk wherever you like for whatever length of walk you choose.(There is a \$30 registration fee.)

Because this walk was so important to her we are dedicating it to the memory of **Margaret Fisher**. Please be generous!

from the Music Department



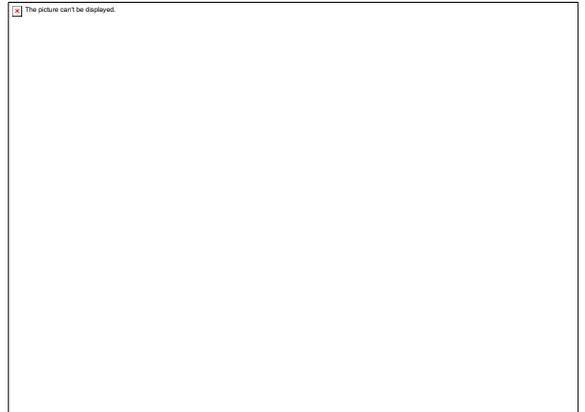
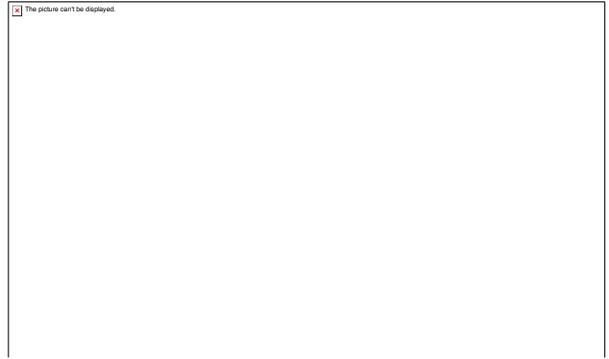
Hello everyone,

What a couple of months we have had! With the fallout of the pandemic, our church has had to adapt and do things that are not necessarily comfortable, i.e. preach to a camera, sing to an empty sanctuary, use unusual food items for the communion elements, or work from home. We (the staff) miss seeing you on a weekly basis, and we wonder how much longer we will have to continue this way.

On the other hand, there are always “silver linings” if you look for them. I am sure the choir does not miss my corny jokes at Thursday night rehearsals. Jonathan can deliver his children’s message without the normal feedback. Jim Hindel can shout, “Good Morning First Christian Church!” without hearing groans from the congregation. Who am I kidding? Even the silver linings do not make up for the human interaction that God intends us to have as a body in Christ. The fellowship of believers is supposed to be up close and personal. Let us pray we get back to “normal” soon.

With the recent passing of my mother-in-law (**not** from the coronavirus), we have been busy getting her house ready to put on the market. Janice has been going through all her mother’s things, many of them bringing back memories of meaningful occasions, family members long forgotten, and simple expressions of love and joy. These are “beautiful treasures” as Janice likes to call them. Here’s hoping that each of us can find the beautiful treasures of each and every day, in this world turned topsy-turvy.

Blessings on all our church family,
Chuck



Bulldog Boxes

The trustees approved a new room for Bulldogs. It’s the far closet in the gym. Donated lumber and labor was used to build shelves in April. All meets Food Banks requirements. The room is perfect and well needed space for them. They are THRILLED!!!! Needless to say.

Table Set up: the week before, tables will be set up in the gym on Thursday evening for the scheduled summer dates. The square formation as previously done works well and will need 4 tables along the wall for storing the packed boxes waiting for pick up .

Donations needed: Brownie mix is our scheduled summer donation to Bulldogs. Both in JUNE and JULY. Once they announce their needs for the 2020-21 school year donations, we will provide a monthly list for you.

What a great community organization we are associated to. They are so appreciative of our efforts and generosity.



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