



First Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
Stow, OH

3493 Darrow Road, Stow, Ohio 44224  
330.688.4450  
www.firstchristianstow.org

## PATHWAYS

MAY 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!



*During this most unusual time while we cannot  
gather together in the same room, we still have  
important dates and events to share with you.*

### National Day of Prayer

May 7, noon

### Virtual 5K for Kids

May 10 – June 15

### Parking Lot Resurfacing

May 14 – 15

### Loaves and Fishes

May 17, 4-6 pm

More information on all these events inside this newsletter

#### Meetings-Meetings! Who Wants To Meet?

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 May:

- The **Elders** of the church will meet on **Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>** at 7p.m. via Zoom.
- The **Governing Board** of the church will meet on **Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>** at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Please note the DAY change for the Governing Board—it will meet on TUESDAY, May 12<sup>th</sup>. The Elders have asked that they 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.

# FROM THE PASTOR



***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.***

***He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.***

The familiar 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm reminds us God is always with us, leading us, and providing for all our needs. Add in the image of being in green pastures and beside quiet waters and the calming impact goes deeper as we all long for the day when we can be out about without the specter of a virus looming over us. It has been, and it continues to be, my prayer that even in the midst of the pandemic-stress brought on by this global health crisis, that you are able to grasp hold of the peace that passes all understanding, that we are in the care of the Shepherd who is always at work to restore our souls.

Still though, I get it. This is still really, really hard, which is why this entire Psalm becomes so incredibly important.

***Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil; for you are with me;***

***Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.***

We are deep within a dimly lit valley, and though we know we have the comfort of God's almighty rod and staff to give us the protection and comfort we want and need, we are still yearning for the valley to end and the green pastures and still waters to be restored.

***You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;***

Yet the Psalmist reminds us that even in the midst of our enemies—in this case a global pandemic—we are able to live abundant life with God. It's hard to see this, but our faith leads us to this truth even when we can't see. The danger that lurks though, when we cannot see, is that we begin to think we are on our own and we have to find our own path out of the valley. Which is where I worry many are starting to find themselves.

What I have been fearful of happening seems to be starting. We are not an idle people. As one friend recently shared with me, *"I was made to be in motion."* This is such a true statement for many of us, and this shelter in place, stay-at-home order has been hard because we are made to be in motion, we are designed to be in community with others, to see, and touch and simply be together. Add in we know there

are economic ramifications that are starting to really show their impact right here in our own community. We simply are ready for this to all be over, and some of us are deciding on our own it's over and it's time for life as we know it to resume. And I get it. But what always happens when we leave God's path for our own path? Where do we always end up? Lost. Vulnerable. Alone. Like a sheep without a shepherd.

***You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.***

***Surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow me all the days of my life  
and I shall dwell in the house of  
the Lord  
my whole life long.***

This global health crisis is not God's will for the world. God's will is always about us being found, being safe, being in God's everlasting care where the blessings of God overflow our cups. It is why God sent to us Jesus, to be the shepherd we need, the shepherd who will lead us through the dim valleys of life into those green pastures and beside those still waters where we are able to see and embrace the blessings that make our cups overflow. This day is surely coming. I cannot say when or even if it will be sooner than later. But I do know it is coming.

So as we traverse this dim valley, let us stay close to our good shepherd who will lead us through. Let us be fully aware of the enemy in our midst, and act and live accordingly, know that we can have a role in extending the comfort of God's almighty rod and staff to others by doing what we can to keep one another safe, healthy and well.

For when we do such, then we help God in leading all of God's children to green pastures and still waters where souls are restored.

Your Pastor and Friend,  
Jonathan

## **A Meditation for These Trouble Times**

**Tom Safford, Elder**

*And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them.*

*And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.*

*~1 John 3:23-24*

Just as in all times, we are to follow these two great commandments. The same is true for these troubled times, only they have given us the opportunity to follow the two great commandments in new and different ways. Although we are not in the same physical space we are united spiritually every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. when we worship and glorify the Lord. We may miss the physical closeness with each other but we are just as close to the Lord as we ever were while in our sanctuary. The church has left the building.

But how can we follow the second great commandment? How can we love our neighbors when being together is dangerous to all we meet? We can love our neighbors by choosing to do our individual part to keep them safe from Covid-19. We can choose to maintain social distance; we can choose to wash our hands; we can choose to wear face coverings.

In these trouble times these are the ways we can fulfill and follow the word of the Lord and abide with him. They are not easy, nor are they what we want to do. We want to be with others, embrace them, celebrate joys, and comfort sorrows in ways we are accustomed to doing. But these troubled times call upon us to love in ways that fulfill the commandments while also, still, keeping others safe and healthy. It's not how we want, but it is how we must love one another in these troubled times.

## **Loaves and Fishes Returns!**

**Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 4-6 p.m.**

After a hiatus last month, Loaves and Fishes will be back in full swing on Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> from 4-6 p.m. with a carry-out/boxed dinner that will feature a sub sandwich, fruit cup, potato salad, chips, a cookie and a bottle of water. More information will be available in the coming weeks with more details on how you can help with this important outreach endeavor.

## **National Day of Prayer** **Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, Noon**

Mark your calendars for The National Day of prayer which is set for Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. National Day of Prayer is an annual day of observance held on the first Thursday of May, designated by the United States Congress when citizens are asked to turn to God in and meditation.

While this day is traditionally observed by a Stow Clergy and Rotary sponsored prayer breakfast at Stow-Glenn, due to the current global health crisis that event has been cancelled. But no matter where we are, we can all still be together in prayer.

A few clergy will join with Stow Mayor John Pribonic on this National Day of Prayer at noon, socially distanced around the flag pole at City Hall, to join together in a time of prayer for our community, our first responders, our local, state, and national governing bodies, and for the entire world. Please join with these faith leaders, wherever you may be, in this time of prayer.

## **With Deepest Condolences**

**Dolly Neaffer**

We are saddened to share the news that after a long health struggle, Dolly Neaffer went home to our Lord on Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. She will be deeply missed by her children Dolinda, Ross, and Ron, as well as by her grandchildren Carlye, Andrew, Anthony, and Kaedyn among them—all of whom Dolly deeply loved without condition.

Please keep the family in your prayers as they grieve this tremendous loss, particularly during such a hard time to lose a loved one. Because of the ongoing health crisis, the family could only gather together for a brief time of remembrance at Redmon's Funeral Home, followed by a graveside service of committal at Crown Hill Cemetery. When we are able to gather together again, a celebration of life for Dolly will be scheduled.

**Update on Summer Camps and Conferences**  
**at Camp Christian**  
**Regional Office,**  
**Christian Church in Ohio**

For 70 years the summers at Camp Christian have been the highlight of the year for so many people. It's abundantly clear from all of the messages of prayers and support we received over the last few weeks, as well as the number of RSVPs for our modified summer programming that Camp still holds an important place in the hearts and minds of the people of Ohio. The love and passion that so many show for Camp Christian is a great blessing. This has been, and continues to be an amazing and beloved community.

This is an update that we had hoped to never have to write. It is with broken hearts that we share with you the decision to not open Camp Christian for the 2020 summer season.

For the past month, the Regional Staff, Camp Christian Committee, Regional Treasurer and Regional Moderator have been in prayer and discernment. We have all been meeting regularly to discuss and plan for the possibilities of camp this summer. In monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic and following the latest health and safety information from the Governor's recommendations, we have determined that it simply will not be possible for us to safely or effectively open Camp Christian this summer.

A number of factors went into this decision, including the logistics of being able to purchase enough food, keeping camp clean, being able to have access to cleaning, safety, and medical supplies (so many of which are now being rightly prioritized by hospitals and medical centers), and enforcing safe social distancing practices for the youth and young people who would attend our summer programs. Above all, the health and safety of our campers has been our focus and our mission and with that in mind, we have decided to close Camp Christian for summer 2020.

To be clear, it is still the intention of the Ohio Region to have Camp next summer. This is not a permanent closure of Camp Christian. Although we will still need to do some fundraising and we may still need to adjust some of our logistics and health protocols between now and then, we will be working diligently this entire year to provide the safest and best camp season in 2021.

We are deeply saddened and grieving this loss. We know that many of us have been praying for a different outcome. We know that many of us have already suffered so many losses in the past couple of months, and to lose time at Camp too can feel unbearable to some. Please know that although we feel this is the right and responsible path forward, that does not mean that it is not a difficult and disheartening path forward as well.

In the coming weeks, the Directors and Officers of our various camps and conferences will meet virtually to begin

discussions on alternative programming options we will be able to offer in the coming months. By the end of May, we will share with the Region what programming will be provided so that we may still find ways to fellowship together this summer. We cannot replace the green chair circles, the warm glow of the torch, or the ringing of the bell, but the Holy Spirit is still moving in Ohio and the billions of stars that we see in the night sky at Camp Christian are still shining.

We know that it has been difficult for many of us to hold on to hope in this strange season of our lives. Many of us are mourning now, and that is okay. Our God is with us in our grief. And when we are ready, God will move with us in hope and new possibility, finding ways forward through this camping season and the next. Ultimately, our God is a God of hope.

Our God of hope helped us receive over 450 RSVPs for our modified camp program when we set a goal of 400. Our God of hope helps us to imagine alternative programming opportunities that would have been impossible even 10 years ago. Our God of hope helps us to work together with Directors, Officers, Faculty, ADs, Counselors, and Staff to be able to connect with young people in contemporary and creative ways. Our God of hope helps us to know in our hearts that the mission of Building Beloved Community can never be cancelled or delayed, but springs forth like water from a rock in what feels like a desert season in our lives.

We are eternally grateful for your prayers and your passion for Camp Christian. Together we will move forward in healthy and faithful ways so that generations of people will continue to come to know the love of God through Christ at Camp.

If you have any concerns or questions, please reach out to Regional Program Director Rev. Alan Dicken at [adicken@ccinoh.org](mailto:adicken@ccinoh.org).  
Love and Blessings,  
Regional Staff  
Regional Moderator  
Camp Christian Committee

## **Cleveland Christian Home Walk & Run To Fight Against Child Abuse and Neglect!**

Greetings from the Cleveland Christian Home. We hope that each of you is in good health, and is staying safe during this crisis. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we are unable to have our 5Ks for Kids event that was originally scheduled for May 30, 2020 at South Mastic Metroparks. We are sad we can't all be together to enjoy the spirit of love, support, and friendly competition, but in order to follow social distancing practices and the new guidelines, we have come up with the Virtual 5K for Kids with our presenting sponsor National Automotive Experts!

This will allow for all participants of all ages to be able to support the kids of CCH and in a way that they feel comfortable in doing so. How the event works is that between the days of May 10, 2020 and June 15, 2020 we ask that you complete the 5K. Once Cleveland Christian Home receives your [registration](#), you will be sent a registration packet containing your t-shirt and bib. You can register as an Individual, a Family, or as a Team. You then pick the place—a park or parking lot, a street in your neighborhood, or even your home on a treadmill to complete the 5K (3.1 miles)! But, please be safe and wear a mask when out and about.

There is a [pledge sheet](#) where we are encouraging participants to ask their friends and family to support not only them in their race to the finish, but the kids of CCH. We have prizes for the top fundraisers.

We want to be able to cheer people on so we ask that you post photos of yourself, your family, or your team to social media tagging us and using the hashtags #GetMovinGetHappy and #5KForKids.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please don't hesitate to reach out to our development team. Deanna Baber, Development Assistant at [dbaber@cchome.org](mailto:dbaber@cchome.org) or our Chief Development Officer, Judith Mansour at [jmansour@cchome.org](mailto:jmansour@cchome.org)

Thank you again and we look forward to cheering you on!

## **Parking Lot Project May14-15, 2020**

You'll recall a parking lot resurfacing project was presented to, and approved by the congregation in January, before the COVID-19 health crisis broke. After that approval the church signed a contract agreement with Cardinal Paving, a local small business, to have our parking lot resurfaced this spring. Prior to this vote, the Stewardship Team identified the means in which this project could be fully supported through already existing church funds. After lengthy discussion about this project in light of the COVID-19 health crisis, the Stewardship Team, with input and support from the Elders, made the decision to proceed with this important project. Factors that helped influence this decision included that the funds earmarked for use are from restricted accounts designated for projects such as this, and that we would be supporting a local small business working hard to stay open and pay their employees, that it would be good and faithful and right to proceed with the parking lot project as planned.

We are excited to share that the parking lot will be resurfaced over the course of two days, on Thursday and Friday, May 14 - 15. Access to the parking lot and church will be greatly diminished, which can be considered a blessing since this is a perfect time for this inconvenience. And it will be a great blessing to Cardinal Pavement, its owners and employees.

If you have any questions about the project, or have further inquiries you'd like to make, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us.

**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, clink 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!)

**RELAY FOR LIFE**

This year’s Relay For Life has been rescheduled to Saturday, August 15, 10 am to 10pm, at Stow-Glen Retirement Village. Due to the Corona Virus, we won’t be doing fundraisers at the church for now.

If you would like to help with the fight against cancer, you can go to Relay For Life website ([secure.acsevents.org](https://secure.acsevents.org)) , search for “First Christian Church Stow”, and join our team or make a donation. Thank you for your continued support. We will keep you posted with any updates.

**Zoom! Zoom!**

Even though we can’t be together in person, we can span the distance between us via Zoom!

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client, and mobile app that allows users to meet online, with our without video.

Our church now has a Zoom account allowing us to have online meetings and gatherings with Jonathan one on one, or as a group. Want to check in with someone, let’s zoom! Want to have morning coffee (or an afternoon coffee) with Jonathan and some others from the church, let’s zoom! A “meeting” will be set-up on the church’s end for a day and time that works for you and others, and then an email invite will be sent to you with instructions, meeting ID, and password—everything you’ll need to Zoom!

Please email, call, or text Jonathan or leave a message on the church voicemail and someone will be in touch to get things set up with. Let’s Zoom together!

**Stewardship Team Update –  
Financial Giving from the  
Congregation**

As I write this there are still a few more days of April and this is one of the sunny days! We won’t close the financial books for April 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 April we have surpassed that, we have received \$23,772. This is great news! For the first 3 months our giving was below the budgeted amount, so the year to date totals still show the giving below the budget but the generosity shown in April has reduced that deficit. Here is the information:

<b>2020</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>YTD</b>
<b>Budget</b>	\$ 22,384	\$ 89,536
<b>Actual</b>	\$ 23,772	\$ 80,686
<b>Actual - Budget</b>	\$ 1,388	\$ (8,850)
<b>Actual as % of Budget</b>	106%	90%

We will be sending out giving statements the first week of May, and any questions about those can be directed to Lisa Roseman.



### **from the Music Department**

“Abide with Me” is one of the best-loved English hymns of the past 150 years. We see this both in its enduring usage in churches today and in its ongoing appearances in modern culture (for example, in the [opening ceremony](#) of the 2012 Summer Olympics).

What about the hymn has made it so well loved? The words, of course, have a lot to do with it. Each verse ends in the plea “abide with me,” making the hymn a sustained call for God’s personal presence in every stage and condition of life. The hymn resonates deeply with the hearts of those who feel their need of God.

The author of the hymn, Henry Francis Lyte, was an Anglican priest and vicar of All Saints Church in Brixham, England. He was also a published poet and accomplished hymnwriter who also penned “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken” and “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven.”. For most of his life Lyte suffered from poor health, and he would regularly travel abroad for relief, as was the tradition in that day. Nevertheless, he developed tuberculosis and, at the age of 54, came near to the end of his life. His daughter, Anna Maria Maxwell Hogg, recounts the story of how “Abide with Me” came out of that context.

“The summer was passing away, and the month of September (that month in which he was once more to quit his native land) arrived, and each day seemed to have a special value as being one day nearer his departure. His family were surprised and almost alarmed at his announcing his intention of preaching once more to his people. His weakness and the possible danger attending the effort, were urged to prevent it, but in vain. “It was better”, as he used to say often playfully, when in comparative health, “to wear out than to rust out”. He felt that he should be enabled to fulfil his wish, and feared not for the result. His expectation was well founded. He did preach, and amid the breathless attention of his hearers, gave them a sermon on the Holy Communion. . . . In the evening of the same day he placed in the hands of a near and dear relative the little hymn, ‘Abide with Me’, with an air of his own composing, adapted to the words.” ([A Dictionary of Hymnology, Vol. 1](#))

Just weeks later, while on holiday in Nice, France, Henry Lyte went to be with Jesus. It was November 20th, 1847.

Not many hymns have dramatic stories behind them. This one is not all that dramatic; but knowing that it was written by a man who was very near death at a relatively young age helps us feel its weight and sobriety all the more.

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?  
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Source:  
<https://www.challies.com/articles/hymn-stories-abide-with-me/>

### **With Grateful Hearts**

On behalf of the entire staff, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have shared your encouragement, gratitude, kind words, and support for the work being done to bring our worship services to your homes each Sunday. Thank you for each note, email, text message, comment, hearts, and thumbs-up! They mean so much to us that you are there and that you are enjoying the services and finding them meaningful and uplifting.

So on behalf of myself, Chuck, Andrea, Anna, Richelle, Kathy, and our Elder Lay Leaders thank you for your words, prayers and encouragement. It means so much to us.

And special thanks to Bill Stewart, Bill and Cora Dowey for their work and support on the sound and technical ingenuity that has been set up to make these streaming services look and sound great!