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PATHWAYS

MARCH 2021

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

Find us on Social
Media @FCCStow!



Sketti N Skits 2021!!

Sunday, March 7 at 5 p.m. via Facebook Live!

Don't miss this long-time First Christian Church of Stow annual Talent and Variety Show! Sketti N Skits will be livestreamed on Sunday, March 7th at 5 p.m. Still time to get your video submitted! See inside for details!

Governing Board, Monday, March 8th, 7 p.m.

The Governing Board will meet via Zoom.

Daylight Savings Time Begins! Spring Ahead, March 14th!

It's that time again—time to Spring ahead one hour on Sunday, March 14th.

Don't forget or you'll be late for church!

(But if you do, that's ok. You can catch up on YouTube!)

Youth Group March 14th and 28th

The Youth Group will meet on Sundays, March 14th and 28th.

Watch your text messages for more information!

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry March 21, 4-6p.m.

Free monthly dinner! Drive-Thru/Carry Out, 4-6 p.m.

This will also time will also include the +pantry food distribution.

See inside this issue for more information.

Stow Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 27, 10am-1pm

Silver Springs Park, 5238 Young Rd., Stow

Look for more details and how you can help

our church's involvement in this community event!

Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on March 28th, followed by Maundy Thursday on April 1st, Good Friday on April 2nd, and Easter Sunday on April 4th.

Keep an eye out for more details and our Holy Week schedule.

More information on all these events and so much more inside this newsletter

FROM THE PASTOR



Are we just going to let March come back into our lives after what it did the last time it was here?!

I had to laugh at the hijinks of this statement when I read it on someone's social media platform the other day. It was a year ago when all "*this*" began. A year ago in March when the world as we knew it would change forever. A year ago in March when the slow burn of anxiety riddled fear began to take its hold on our spirits and our days. A year ago in March when the homeschooling started and the livestreaming of worship began. A year ago in March when we were told that this might go on as long as... wait for it...August. A year ago in March when...you fill in the blanks because you know as well as I do that a year ago in March everything changed.

So yeah, I chortled when I read, *Are we just going to let March come back into our lives after what it did the last time it was here?!* Because the answer ought to be, *No Way!* No way would we ever let anyone back into our lives after wreaking the sort of havoc and chaos March did a year ago. Not even the most sincere "*I'm so sorry, I'll never do it again, I'm changed*" speech would ever convince even the most compassionate and empathetic among us to offer up a second chance. But here we are nonetheless, letting March march back into our lives.

March is always a hard month for me. Other than the bright spot on the 22nd when my family and I celebrate the birth of my big brother, the rest of the month always feels like a Jekyll and Hyde kind of liminal place for me. *OMG it's so cold! Hey, the sun is out! Ugh! It's snowing again. What? It's 49 degrees?!* Yes, I will drive home from church with all the windows down while listening to the sweet summer island sounds of American Steel! (Shout out to FCC Stow's very own incomparable, always summer in his heart, Mike Kostenski, and his band.) *But wait, there's a chance of more snow again because, you know, it's getting close to Easter. Ugh!* Everything changes, yet some things stay the same.

March becomes a calendar manifestation of the restlessness, struggle, and Jekyll and Hyde spirit I bring to the season of Lent. Some days I am flying high with God's spirit and nothing is going to bring me down. And then some days, well...it snows even when the sun is out. That's about how it has been for all of us since last March, and here we are, once again letting it come back around.

It's been a year. Yes, that's an understatement, but it's true. It has been a year that we will never forget, no matter how hard we try and no matter how much we want to. It has been a year when everything changed. Everything has changed, except one thing. God's constant and abiding presence. That is the one thing that hasn't changed, and the one thing that will never change. And thanks be to God.

This March will be completely encompassed by the season of Lent. Not a new revelation or even a new occurrence, but it is one I have noted this year. And just as the saying goes, March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lion, this March comes in with the dimness of early Lent, and goes out right as we get to the dimmest of moments in the season of Lent—only to be opened up ever so slowly and methodically and elusively as we tip into April with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday—taking us to the moment when we are once again reminded that everything we once knew is changed forever. And thanks be to God.

Resurrection is coming. That is what I keep telling myself, and I hope and pray it is what you keep telling yourself. Resurrection is coming as we continue to do our part to stay safe, healthy, and well through wearing masks and social distancing. Resurrection is coming with each shot in an arm. Resurrection is coming with continued vigilance to stay patient and not give up. And resurrection is of course coming when we arrive at the empty tomb on Easter morning.

This is where I go back to find my center, to find my resolve, to find again the faith that slips from my grasp when I let the world thoughts creep back into my spirit.

So let us, as Paul tells us, keep fighting the good fight as we stare the lion of March in the face, with the faith that though we may not be done with this fight, resurrection and new life is surely coming.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Sketti N Skits 2021!!

Sunday, March 7 at 5 p.m. via Facebook Live!

It's happening! Virtually at least. On Sunday, March 7th we will have our annual, not-to-be-missed, fun and hilarious "Sketti N Skits!" live streamed on Facebook Live!

Though we can't be together in person to share in the hilarity of this fun night, we can still "gather" near and far and join in on the talents, the not-talents, the laughs, and the joys that only Sketti N Skits can provide!

And there is still time to submit your acts and performances or even just your "shout-outs" to your church family to say hello and let everyone see your smiling face! You can record and send your video to christianed@firstchristianstow.org, or you can contact Anna, Richelle, or Jonathan to come to the church where you can perform and we will record your act for you.

Acts can be short and sweet, or more involved and elaborate. Got a joke you want to share or a poem you want to read—perfect! Got a song you want to perform, or a musical piece you want to present—fantastic! Or, just give that shout out to your church family! We all want to see all of us! It will be just the kind of carefree fun time we all need! So get those acts and performances recorded and submitted because without them it will just be Jonathan singing Camp songs—and as much as we all love Camp songs, nobody wants to see or hear that kind of performance!

Youth Group Meetings and, Events Frivolity!

The Youth Group will meet in March on Sundays March 14th and 28th. We will meet at the church on the 14th for a regular Youth Group meeting from 11:30 to 1 p.m. where we will talk about what it means to go on a "*Lenten Journey*." And then we will play the newly invented "*footbasketball!*"

Also during this meeting we will discuss what kind of special outing we will aim to do on Sunday March 28th. Pack a lunch and join us for the fun and frivolity of Youth Group this month!

from the Music Department



Well, it looks like a few changes to the way we worship, that is, a change in opportunities to

worship, is coming the first Sunday of the month! Most of us have heard Jonathan tell us what to expect and how to get "on board" if we choose to worship in person in the sanctuary beginning March 7. I won't go over the details except to point out that music opportunities will be limited to pretty much the same as we have been doing over the last year. I will continue to post the lyrics to hymns and songs in the online bulletin so you can sing them at home. And of course, if you worship in person, you may be asked to not sing or to simply hum along as I "lead" the congregation. I know it is not particularly satisfying to worship God this way. We can only hope and pray that this does not last much longer.

It is vitally important that we continue to worship God, whether from home, or in the pew. God is sovereign in all things and this pandemic doesn't give us an excuse to stop or take a break from that worship. If we believe He loves us, then we are to love Him and be faithful in all things.

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24

Blessings to all,
Chuck

Prayer Vigil

Date and Time to be Announced

The Apostle Paul calls for us to “*pray without ceasing.*” He didn’t mean we have to be on our knees or kneeling before a chancel 24/7, but rather that we are open to God’s presence with us at all times, and that a prayerful life is what ought to lead us in our daily lives.

As we continue to focus on the essentials of being church, we are mindful that being a church of prayer is among those essentials.

It won’t be difficult to come up with matters to lift in prayer, but some themes and focuses to pray about could include: Essentials for our members and community, healing for those in need, peace for those feeling restless, hope for those feeling hopeless, comfort for those feeling alone, gratefulness for God’s constant and abiding presence.

Let us join our hearts and minds and spirits together, no matter the distance between us, and go to God in prayer in these uncertain times.

Holy Week

Sunday, March 28-Sunday April 4, 2021

The days we are in may be hard and full of uncertainty...but Easter is coming. There may be difficult news, and still long projections of when all this global health crisis will be over...but Easter is coming. We may not know much about what is yet to come but we do know...Easter is coming.

As we continue to make our way through the wilderness wandering of the Lenten season, we do so with an eye toward the holiest week of the Christian Year. From Palm Sunday when we celebrate Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to the confusion, sorrow, and fear of Maundy Thursday; to the agony of Good Friday; to the bewilderment of Holy Saturday; to the unimaginable joy of Easter Morning, we are experience the fullness of life and its roller coaster ways in just eight short days.

Plans are being made now to celebrate and honor these holy days so watch your email and weekly bulletin announcements for more information on how and when you can enter into the holiness of Holy Week.

Nothing, not life or death, not virus or social distancing can keep this great and glorious day of resurrection from coming. So let us look to this great and glorious day, and plan to gather together from our homes, or maybe if you are comfortable in-person, and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because no matter what...Easter is coming!

Week(s) of Compassion!

“Let Love Flow”

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty, shade from the sun, shelter from the wind, For the Compassionate One guides them, takes them to the best springs.

~ Isaiah 49:10 (The Message)

Though our Weeks of Compassion focus was in February, there is still time to get your gift in to the church to be included in this year’s offering and help our church reach again its goal of \$2,000. (This offering is over and above our general fund giving.)

Please prayerfully consider how you can support this vitally important ministry because our individual offerings matter. Gifts to Week of Compassion multiply a thousand times over, enabling the Church as one body to achieve significant change in the world. We are one in Christ Jesus, and our many gifts together, make a world of difference.

For more information check out the Week of Compassion website at www.weekofcompassion.org

Grow Group

Wednesday, 7 p.m. via Zoom March 10th, 17th, and 24th

Looking for some human interaction, good conversation, and further your faith formation? Then look no further than the Wednesday Night Grow Group! After two successful book studies the group has evolved to watching video shorts at the beginning of the meeting, and following it with lively, faith based discussion that is both challenging and fun while being a safe space for all to share and be heard.

A Zoom link will be shared with anyone who would like to join the group for these faith based discussions aimed to help us all broaden our perspectives, heightened our awareness, and deepen our faith through thoughtful, attention-grabbing, fun, amusing, and meaningful conversation. Contact the church office or Jonathan to get yourself on the grow group email list.

Sabbatical Update

As you all know, I applied for and was awarded a Lilly Clergy Renewal Program grant in 2019 to be used for a four month sabbatical during the Summer of 2020. Then in March 2020 those plans were upended by the coronavirus global health crisis. Fortunately the good people of the Lily Clergy Renewal Program extended to its award recipients the opportunity to reschedule their sabbatical plans. Seeing the writing on the wall, the decision was made with my wife Julie, as well as in consultation with the Elders, to postpone my sabbatical until summer of 2021, with the hope that life as we know it would be back to normal.

However, life as we know it is not as back to normal as we had hoped it would be a year later. And because it is not, the good people of the Lily Clergy Renewal Program once again extended to its award recipients the opportunity to reschedule their sabbatical plans. When this opportunity was extended, I once again talked with Julie, and the Elders, and we all again saw the value of yet again postponing my sabbatical for another year because though we are getting closer and closer to this pandemic coming under control, there remains the need to stay vigilant in our efforts to keep ourselves, and one another, safe, healthy, and well. So I will be postponing my sabbatical until Summer 2022.

Please be assured, I feel good about this decision. Yes, there is a level of disappointment, but those feelings are quickly dispelled by the truth that I know in my heart this is the good, right, and faithful decision for me, my family, and our church. Also, it is once again simply a postponement and not a cancelation. I remain certain God will still use this sabbatical for the renewal we all want and need, but until that time I know God will continue to bless us and equip us for being the church we are called to be in these uncertain times. And I am exceedingly confident that with all of us, and God's faithful guidance and help, we will continue to be made stronger and more closely knit together than ever before.

Each of you and your families remain in my prayers, praying God keeps you all safe, healthy, and well.

Together in Christ,
Jonathan

Stow Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 27th, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Stow Community Parks and Recreation Department will hold a community Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 27 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Silver Springs Park, 5238 Young Rd in Stow. This free event will be socially distanced and masks will be worn.

Details are still being worked out, but families will sign up for a time frame and report to the starting location at the park. The starting times will be staggered to keep social distancing in place.

Participants will receive clues to get to a total of 8 stations in the park. Each station will be staffed by a church group or organization. When the kids get to the station the church or organization will present a colored plastic Easter Egg and treat. When the kids have retrieved all eggs they will end their hunt at the City's Tent and receive a bag full of goodies to add to their hunt findings!

The hosting group would supply the treat and the City will supply the colored eggs. They are estimating 120+ families will sign up, which could be over 300 kids to supply treats to. So we need your help! Much like our annual Trunk or Treat event, we need your donations of wrapped treats or a monetary donation to help defray the costs of our participation in this event.

Also, we will need help staffing our location on the day of the event. If you are interested in helping with this part, please reach out to Anna and Richelle.

Camp Christian Summer 2021

**Rev. Alan Dicken, Regional Program Director,
Christian Church in Ohio
*Camps Are Happening!***

Dear Ohio Region,

Thank you so much for your patience as we have worked on the plans and details surrounding Camp Christian this summer. We sent an update at the end of 2020, asking you to plan on having Camp and we have been hard at work to make sure that we can safely have our summer programming this year! It has taken a lot of work and conversations with the Union County Health Department, Christian Church in Ohio staff, volunteer directors for the various weeks, and a whole lot of prayer!

To be clear – if the situation changes, or if the Union County Health Department recommends we do not have Camp, we will not have Camp this summer. The only reason why we are planning to have camp is because we believe we can do so safely. Safely having camp will mean a lot of changes to our normal schedule and programming. It will certainly feel and look different this year more than any other year. But we still look forward to being able to gather together again safely at Camp Christian for our summer programming!

Click **HERE** to view our Policies and Procedures for Camp Christian 2021. Included in this working document will be a schedule for the summer, an outline of our policies and procedures, and a plan for our RSVPs, which will be required for this year due to the advanced planning we will need to do.

Please understand this this is a working document based on the most recent conversations we've had with the Union County Health Department, our staff, and directors. As we have updated information and recommendations, we will update our policies accordingly. We cannot anticipate what will happen or what developments may occur between now and July, but with the existing plans in place, we believe that we will be able to safely have Camp this summer. Additionally, we know that many of these may apply to one camp/conference, but not another. More specific program changes are being developed by the staff and directors and will be made available as the dates of camp get closer.

Please ask questions! Undoubtedly, many

concerned parents and pastors will want to know more than what is laid out in this document. That is okay! If you have additional questions or would like follow up conversations about these policies, please reach out to our Regional Program Director, Rev. Alan Dicken at adicken@ccinoh.org.

****IMPORTANT NOTE****: We are needing additional counselors who can serve for Junior Camp this year. Without at least 20 additional volunteers, we won't be able to offer Junior Camp, which would be very unfortunate for the youth and for our programming. If you are interested in sending in an RSVP for your child for Junior Camp and would like to accompany them as a counselor this year, we would greatly appreciate that! If you are interested in serving as Junior Camp Counselor this July 18-21, please fill out **this form here** and we will be in touch with you.

Also, we cannot thank you enough for helping to donate to the Renewal Initiative last year. Your gifts and donations helped to make this year possible and your ongoing support to the Renewal Initiative will continue to ensure that Camp Christian will continue to thrive and we will continue to engage in the powerful youth and young adult ministries that happen there every summer. Please click here if you would like to make a contribution to the Renewal Initiative.

Thank you all for your constant prayers and support as we have been working hard to make Camp a possibility for this summer. Please continue to hold us in prayer as we develop even more thorough and effective ways for us to safely have our summer programs up and running.

Peace and Love,
Rev. Alan Dicken
Regional Program Director
adicken@ccinoh.org

2021 Chili Cook-Off

The 2021 Chili Cook Off Golden Spoon winner is...Jonathan Rumburg! Congratulations Jonathan!

We had 11 delicious chili's entered this year to not only compete for the golden spoon but also help feed folks in the community. Many thanks to all 11 cooks who brought chili in to help with the Loaves and Fishes monthly community meal. An enormous thank you to Barb Bell and Mary Ellen Neitz and their crew who month after month provide food for Loaves and Fishes along with faith and a friendly smile with folks beyond our church walls in need of a hot healthy meal. What a blessing!!!

Plus Pantry Update

February 21 marked the second of FCC-Stow's food distribution, held in conjunction with the Loaves & Fishes meal. Our February distribution was double the January distribution. We served 55 people from 22 households. We look forward to growing this program in the months ahead.

In February the Akron Canton Regional Food Bank announced that increased donations from the community means that the ACRFB can distribute all food items at no charge for the remainder of 2021. The total cost of this program is \$4,300,000. What a testament to the generosity of the people of our area.

This means that money we--FCC Stow--budgeted for purchasing pantry food can be used in other ways to help those with food uncertainty.

We couldn't do this important mission without the generous donation of time from our volunteers. They gave up 3 hours of their Sunday to help those in need. Helping those in need requires time and money. The people of our region and our church are generous with both.

Youth Group Meetings and Events Frivolity!

The March Loaves and Fish meal will be on March 21, 2021, from 4 pm to 6 pm. The meal is drive-thru on the lower level.

The menu includes ham, scalloped potatoes, green beans, and dessert. Bakers are needed to provide brownies. Please have brownies in the kitchen by 2 pm on Sunday. Volunteers are needed to help serve the meals.

Bulldog Bags

We continue to collect items monthly as well. There is a plastic bin in the outside entry of the church marked Bulldog donations. The bin is for easy drop-off of the monthly items we are collecting for bulldog bags. March: Bandaid. Due Mar 10 April: Ramen Noodles. Due April 14 As always, Bulldogs thanks you for your kind donations to assist with feeding the kids. If you would like to donate money instead of shopping for items, please make check out to First Christian church with Bulldog Bags noted in the memo.

Kathy Gustafson Retirement

March 31, 2021

As we tip over into March we become ever more aware that our beloved church administrative assistant, Kathy Gustafson, who has served First Christian Church of Stow, Ohio for nearly 25 years, is set to retire as of March 31st.

The Elder are working on how we can and will honor and celebrate Kathy and her quarter century of service and ministry to the church, its members and guests, and the broader community, and details surrounding that celebration will be shared soon. In the meantime let us hold Kathy and her family in our prayers, giving thanks for the work and ministry and blessings that have been shared by Kathy for so very long.

EASTER FLOWER ORDER FORM

It has been a tradition in our Church to order Easter flowers in honor of or in memory of loved ones each year. They will be beautifully displayed in our Sanctuary on Easter Sunday morning. After the service, you can either deliver them to a home-bound member or take them home to be enjoyed. Please print your information below and return to the church office by Tuesday, March 16. Thank you!

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Given by _____

_____ 6" lilies (white) \$8.00

_____ 6" daffodil (yellow) \$8.00

_____ 6" hyacinth (blue) \$8.00

_____ 6" tulip (red) \$8.00

Enclosed is \$_____ to cover the cost of my order.
If paying by check, make payable to First Christian Church.