



PATHWAYS

MAY 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!



Pastor's Class

Pastor's Class continues to meet each Sunday after worship from 11:15 to 12:15. These classes will run through May 23rd. More information about when, and possible where, the baptisms will be held this year will be forth coming.

Membership Team

Membership Team met Monday, May 3rd, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Wednesday Grow Group Meetings in May

The Wednesday Grow Group will meet this Wednesday, May 5th at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Keep an eye on your email for the link.

Governing Board in May 10th

The Governing Board will meet via Zoom on Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m.

Stewardship Team May 12th

The Stewardship Team will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, May 12, at 7 p.m.

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry May 16th, 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.

Youth Group Pizza Party and Putt-Putt Outing, May 23rd

The Youth Group will gather on Sunday, May 23rd for a pizza party celebration followed by a special outing to Downview Sports Center.

FROM THE PASTOR



Pastor's Pen, May 2021

Since the pandemic has caused society to hunker down in homes and home offices, making connections via Zoom meetings and conferences, a whole host of new online

clergy learning and continuing education webinars have become available. In fact, I have attended so many I've lost track of what I've attended, which is not great because I need to be able to account for my continuing education each year when the Commission on Ministry makes the determination of whether or not I am in "good standing" with the denomination. But no worries, I'll get it sorted out.

The latest continuing education class I have been attending is called *Barna CoLab: Leading Hybrid Church*. This course is being offered by the think-tank organization Barna Group which is a visionary research and resource company located in California, and was started in 1984. This firm is widely considered to be a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture. I have read many of their articles and blogs, and assessed numerous surveys they have conducted, all of which pertains to nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world.

I was recently watching a webinar of this six week course led by Creative Design pastor of 12 Stone Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, Dave Ronne who said something that struck me as rather obtuse. Ronne said, "Covid has given a gift to the church because it is making us think differently, by mobilizing us differently, by calling our people to action differently."

I was struck by his choice of word—*gift*. "Covid has given a gift to the church..." That was a hard statement to hear because I struggle wrapping my brain around the idea this pandemic has been a *gift*. How can the lives lost, the enormity of the impact to our global society be a *gift* in any way? I don't see Covid as a gift. I do, however, agree with the overarching stance he gives when he continues his statement saying, "Covid has been a *gift* to the church...by making us think differently, by mobilizing us differently, by calling our people to action differently." This, this is truth. We are different because of Covid. The Church is different because of Covid. And yes, there is a gift to be found within this because this line of thinking goes

back, again, to what I have been saying with increasing frequency over the last fourteen months... *God is always at work, and God's work is always for good.*

We are different, and God is making good things happen within the different that has been unfolding around us. God is making new opportunities available to us because of the different way of life we have had to live within. And different can be good, it can be faithful, and it can be a gift.

And because different can be good, faithful, and a gift we next need to ask ourselves: *What opportunities do we see God presenting to us? As individuals? As a church? What new things is God leading us to do and be? What risks is God encouraging us to take? What changes is God asking us to make?*

These are questions of growth. These are questions of faith. These are questions that move us from one place to a new place God is leading us, and that new place is always good and faithful. It is always a gift.

Last month we gave thanks and praise to God for the gift of ministry God had given for a quarter century here at First Christian Church of Stow. And now this month we give thanks and praise again to God for the gift of ministry God is continuing to do here at First Christian Church, in a new and different way. These gifts make me lean into the truth shared by the prophet Jeremiah who said, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

God's plans, God's gifts, are never for harm. They are always for hope and newness. God is doing a new and different thing here at First Christian Church. New can be hard, and scary, but new can also be good and faithful. New can be a gift. And new can certainly be learned.

It is my hope and prayer we will be willing to do the continuing education God is leading us in so we are in good standing with the new and different. And I hope and pray we will all see the gifts God is in giving today for what they truly are—a vision of a future with hope.

Your Friend and Pastor,
Jonathan

Loaves and Fishes

The monthly Loaves and Fishes Drive-Thru Dinner will be held on May 16, 2021, from 4 pm to 6 pm. The menu will include homemade chicken strips, sides and dessert (Which may or may not have come from Galilee)

Miraculous circumstances aside, **volunteers will be needed for serving this important meal!**

Plus Pantry Update

On April 18 we held the fourth Plus Pantry Food Distribution held in conjunction with our monthly Loaves & Fishes Dinner. We served:

- 14 households
- A total of 31 people
- Which includes 19 senior citizens
- And 5 new households

Great news to hear! One of our households who received groceries last month said that their circumstances improved, and are not in need of assistance from the pantry immediately. Blessings to them as they get back on their feet!

The people who came to Loaves & Fishes + Pantry were very grateful to receive both a meal and groceries. Seeing their smiles and receiving their thanks validates all the outreach work that our church and its members do throughout the entire year.

A special thanks to all the volunteers who do the work behind the scenes to make this ministry possible.

Bulldog Bags

We continue to collect items monthly. There is a plastic bin in the outside entry of the church marked Bulldog donations.

May: Juice Boxes - Due May 12

As the school year draws to a close, Bulldog Bags are planning for the summer Bulldog *Boxes* program. The church will again participate in this effort, opening our doors and welcoming in the volunteers and those served monthly. For more information on the Bulldog Bags program, contact Wanda Deiwert.

As always, Bulldog Bags 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 your check payable to First

Christian Church with Bulldog Bags noted in the memo.

Grow Group

**Wednesdays, 7 p.m. via Zoom
May 5 and May 19**

Looking for some human interaction, good conversation, and the chance to further your faith formation? Then look no further than the Wednesday Night Grow Group! This group typically spends part of its time watching video shorts at the beginning of the meeting, and follows 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.

National Day of Prayer

Thursday May 6th, Noon

Mark your calendars for The National Day of Prayer, which is set for Thursday, May 6th. 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 Glen, due to current health and safety recommendations still in place this event has once again been cancelled for this year.

A few clergy will join with Stow Mayor John Pribonic on this National Day of Prayer at noon, socially distanced around the flagpole 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.

Graduate Recognition, Sunday May 16

On Sunday, May 16th, we will recognize, honor, and celebrate those who are graduating this

spring, or have graduated since last year—be it from high school, college, or any degree program. We want to be able to make known your accomplishment and lift you in our prayers. So, we invite anyone who would like their graduation recognized by their church family to send in the information about your graduation—name, school, degree, along with some information about what might be coming next for you. And if you can include a picture or two (baby picture to senior picture perhaps!?) then that would make for an even more fun and whimsical celebration.

Please email this information and picture(s) to the Christian Education staff at:

ChristianEd@FirstChristianStow.org

Mark your calendars for a special time of graduate recognition on Sunday, May 16th.

Youth Group Pizza Party and Putt-Putt Outing **Sunday May 23rd, 12:15 p.m.**

On Sunday, May 23rd the Youth Group will celebrate the conclusion of this year's Pastor's Class with a pizza party lunch followed by a special outing to Downview Sports Center in Cuyahoga Falls for an afternoon of batting cages, putt-putt golf, driving range, and general frivolity. Do you think you have what it takes to beat Jonathan, the self-proclaimed putt-putt champion of First Christian Church of Stow?! Then plan on coming out and proving it!

You are welcome, and encouraged, to bring friends. There is just a nominal cost of \$5 per student.

A Letter from Kathy

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for all the many, many cards and notes, gifts, and prayers for my retirement!

I was warned I would remain busy and possibly be even busier! That has proved true. April has flown by with the celebration at church, the many well wishes, calls, texts, and emails as well as personal celebrations. I will forever be grateful.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you as your church secretary for so long. Many things have changed over the years – but this remains – I love you all and feel your love as well.

Thank you,
Kathy

New Drumfit Class

This Friday night our church will begin to partner with Kellie Dziemianzuk and Tyrannosaurus Flex Fitness for a *Glow in The Dark Drumfit* class beginning at 8:30 p.m. in the lower parking lot of our church. This class is a great way to relieve stress and burn calories by combining cardio, muscle conditioning, balance, and flexibility all while having fun. (Note this class is highly endorsed by our very mayor of Stow!) Pay at the “door” for the class and bring your own drum-kit (exercise ball and a large bucket) or rent a kit for the class. Glow drum sticks will be provided. For more information check out Tyrannosaurus Flex Fitness on Facebook. Classes will be held at FCC Stow every other Friday and could attract as many as 200 participants!

Vacation Bible School

Save the date (And The Queen!)

HUZZAH! We're going on a quest! Gather your arms and armor, knights, for we need you on our journey with the Knights of the North Castle! Our VBS quest begins Sunday, July 11 through Thursday, July 15th from 6 to 8 p.m. There will be no shortage of adventure surprise on the quest for the King's Armor!

Speak with your quartermasters, **Anna and Richelle** at ChristianEd@FirstChristianStow.org and sign up to serve, lead, and most of all on this adventure, HAVE FUN with The Knights of the North Castle! More info coming in the months ahead.



Registration for Summer Camps at Camp Christian is Open!

Attention all youth and young adults! Registration for all summer camps and conferences at Camp Christian is now open! If you or someone you know is interested in attending camp this summer please let Jonathan or the church office know and we will get you all the information you need to get registered. Also, the church has scholarship funds available. Any and all who want to go to camp will be able to attend camp no matter what!

Please fill out hard copies of registrations forms, or fill the out online and submit, but please submit any fees to the church. The church will then make out one check to the Christian Church in Ohio to pay for registration fees.

The dates for camps this summer are:

- Chi Rho Camp, for youth who have finished grades 6- 8: Sunday, July 4- Saturday, July 10.
- CYF Conference, for youth who have finished grades, 9-12, Sunday, July 11- Saturday, July 17.
- Jr. Camp, for youth who have finished grades 2-5: Sunday, July 18- Wednesday, July 21.
- Advance Conference, post high school to age 29: Sunday, July 25-Sunday, August 1.

Please note there is an urgent need for counselors for Chi Rho camp, especially male counselors.

Also note the Christian Church in Ohio has made it a requirement that all counselors must be fully vaccinated by the beginning of the camp they serve/

Welcome to our NEW Director of Church Relations, Christian Sanko

Welcome Christian Sanko, our new Director of Church Relations here at First Christian Church of Stow! Christian began his ministry in this newly created position on Monday, May 3rd!

Christian comes to us not far removed from finishing his degree in Communication Arts at Malone University, and brings to First Christian Church a wealth of experience and background in performance, production, communication, and organization skills. Christian is also currently working as the Director of the Chancel Players at Malone University.

Plans for a future “meet-n-greet” with Christian will be put into place and shared in the coming weeks, but until then, please keep him in your prayers as he begins this new ministry in the life of our church, and please keep him in your prayers as he will have to be working exceedingly closely with Jonathan! Also, if you see an unfamiliar face wandering the church; it’s probably Christian trying to find his office. We hear the dime tour of the church and all its rooms, hallways, and doors were a bit mind blowing to him!

Christian and the church office will still use the FCCStow@FirstChristianStow.org email, so your email correspondence with the church will not change. Also, you are welcome to call or text Christian on his cell phone.

A Note from Christian Sanko

Hello! I’m Christian Sanko! As you’re receiving The Pathways, I’m setting up in the church office and getting everything ready for Sunday. As noted above, you can always reach the church office by FCCStow@FirstChristianStow.org or call me on my cellphone at 330-265-4765. **I’ll be joining in worship with you all this Sunday as well, so if you’re around, look for the odd one out with sunglasses.** You might be surprised if you see me wearing them inside or the office looking a little dim right now—I’m just genetically light sensitive! But don’t worry, I’m not too sensitive otherwise.

Thanks to everyone who has helped me settle into this new opportunity with the church as I’m learning more about the community. I look forward to meeting you all!
-Christian

2020 Vision New Church Impact Report

Last year, Disciples celebrated welcoming more than 1,000 faith communities to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and surpassing the goal set in the 2020 Vision.

As we celebrate this achievement and imagine what will come next, New Church Ministry offers this [Impact Report](#) to share a snapshot of the last 20 years of the Disciples [New Church Movement](#). You will find New Church data and listings by Region, gratitude for long-term financial support, programmatic highlights and history, as well as stories of new congregations and their impact.

Visit newchurch2020vision.org to learn more.

FEMA COVID-19 Funeral Assistance

The COVID-19 Funeral Assistance program will reimburse individuals for funeral expenses incurred due to COVID-19 related deaths from Jan. 20, 2020 to the present (ongoing). Individuals can receive up to \$9,000 reimbursement per decedent (maximum \$35,500 for deaths occurring in the same

state; if an individual has expenses from deaths in multiple states, the maximum amount is higher). Registration will begin April 12. Application will be by phone only; follow up documents will need to be faxed, mailed, or uploaded to the applicant file at disasterassistance.gov

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Line Number and hours of operation:

Phone number: **844-684-6333** | TTY: **800-462-7585**

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Central Time

More details are available on the [FEMA COVID-19 Funeral Assistance](#) web page, as will be any additional information and documentation as released. Currently on the page you will be able to find:

[Funeral Assistance IHP Policy](#)

Baptism Sunday

Date, Time, and Location TBA

To say it is “special” to complete Pastor’s Class and arrive at their day of baptism for a young person and their family doesn’t seem like a big enough endorsement of what they day truly is. Yes, it is special, but it truly is even more.

Baptism Sunday is a special and rare and profound day of *becoming* for a young person, and their family, and for their church family. It is the day when a young person consciously makes the decision on their own to step into the body of Christ and become a Christian who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Is the day when parents and family witness their child, grandchild, sibling, niece, nephew begin a new chapter in their life. It is the day when a church family celebrates the hope, peace, joy, and love of God being poured out in this holy sacrament.

Time and location of this event is yet to be determined, but more details will certainly be forthcoming.

Rubber Ducks Game, Fireworks, and Tailgate Party, Saturday, August 21st

Once again First Christian Church of Stow will spend a summer evening with the Akron Rubber Ducks on Saturday, August 21st. We are thrilled this summertime tradition for our church and friends is returning to Canal Park as it is a joy to spend an evening with church family watching the Rubber Ducks “*hit ‘em where they ain’t,*” and then take in a spectacular firework show after the game.

And this night will feature the man the myth, the legend, Uncle Ricco (Jon Gries) from the hit cult classic film, *Napoleon Dynamite!* Don’t miss your chance to have Uncle Ricco tell you, “*Back in ‘82, I used to be able to toss a pigskin a quarter mile.*” If that means anything to you then you know you have to be at this game. If nothing about this makes any sense to you, that’s ok because it is useless knowledge and there won’t be a quiz.

But wait! There’s more! Make plans to come and tailgate at the church from 4-6 that afternoon! Hot dogs, beverages, and fellowship will all be on hand for a socially distanced tailgate extravaganza!

Tickets are just \$10! What a bargain! Not as much of a bargain in past years, but hey, getting out to a night at the ballpark and tailgating for a couple extra bucks is worth it right!? See Bill Dowey or contact the church office to reserve yours tickets today!

Church Family Fun Night **Sunday, June 6th, 7-8p.m.**

Good news! Summer is nearly upon us and that means our Church Family Fun Nights are returning!

On **Sunday, June 6th, from 7-8p.m.** in the lower level parking lot we will gather, socially distant of course, to play a spirited game of Bingo!

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 while enjoying a beautiful summer evening. Please bring your own chair, beverages, and snacks. Prizes will be awarded!

Update from the Stewardship Team

Financial Giving from the Congregation for January – April 2021

We won't close the financial books for April 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 \$20,741 per month. This includes loose offerings and Week of Compassion donations.

For the month of April we have received \$20,133. For the month this is slightly below the budget amount by \$608.
 Year to date we have received \$83,321. This is slightly above the budget for Year to date by \$354.

Here is the information in table format:

2021	Jan-Mar	Apr	YTD
Budget - Congregational Giving	\$62,224	\$20,741	\$82,966
Actual Congregational Giving	\$63,187	\$20,133	\$83,321
Actual - Budget	\$ 963	-\$ 608	\$ 354

As we shared in December, the budget approved by the Governing Board and the congregation for 2021 has the total expenses higher than the total income. We refer to that gap as our Leap of Faith, with the hopeful expectation that throughout the year we will be able to both increase our income and control our expenses appropriately.

The 2021 Leap of Faith amount is \$20,046 for the year.

if you personally are feeling financially stable and would like to make an additional gift to the church above your normal giving, those are always 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.