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PATHWAYS SEPTEMBER 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!



- **Welcome Sunday, Sept. 12th!**
See pg. 6 for more information

- **Junior Church Returns!**
See “*CHRISTIAN ED*” for more info

- **Youth Group Events, Sept. 12th, 26th**

- **Loaves and Fishes**
Sept. 19th, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

- **Tech Grant Fundraising Continues**

Pastor's Pen,
September 2021

*The Elders and
Worship Team are excited
to announce the return to a
“new” normal...*

Hopefully by now you have seen this headline and read the rest of its message too—that on Sunday, September 12th First Christian Church will return to two worship services, 8:30 in the Chapel and **10:30 in the Sanctuary**, with opportunities for Christian Education and/or choir warm-ups in between. And it's probably no surprise that I wrote the headline that put to use the term we all have been hearing and saying over the last number of months—“a **NEW** normal.” We know what it means, but really, what does it mean?

Often when something new happens, particularly in the church, we aren't exceedingly happy or excited about it. (Not this church though, right!?!?) The word “new” to a lot of church folk is just a fancy way of saying “*Things are about to change.*” And the idea of change in the church has been the downfall of many a preacher.

I have a clergy colleague who told me how on the night before his very first Sunday at a church he decided to rearrange the seating set-up in the sanctuary. He thought the new arrangement would be better for folks to see one another and...well...no matter his reasoning he quickly learned just how bad an idea it was. Introducing a “new” normal on your first Sunday? Might want to rethink that idea and remember that a “new” pastor is enough “newness” for one Sunday.

Change is hard. We all know this. But change is necessary. And we all know this too. And changes are coming to First Christian Church because such changes are necessary for the success of our ministries. The Elders, the Christian Education Team, the Music Department, and the Worship Team all met and talked and prayerfully discerned the changes and it all became abundantly clear now was the time to make these new things happen, and set in motion this “new normal.”

What is really interesting, and what we all need to consider, is that doing a *new* thing, isn't all that *new* of a thing. New things have been happening, literally, forever. Literally. Each day is new, and no matter what you do, it won't be like the day before. Yes, that's an easy example, but still worth



noting. So let's look at our faith and God's word for how newness has factored in.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of God “*doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*” Isaiah was telling God's people who were in a tough place that God was at work, and God's work is going to be new and good.

The Apostle Paul said, “*Jesus has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace.*” Paul was helping people become a church, and that God's work in Jesus was new and good.

And the writer of the book of Revelation said, “*And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’*” And, well, this is all about new and eternal life, which is certainly good.

These are just a few of the references of the times God was at work to make things new, to make them better for the people who would be impacted. And another time is now, here at First Christian Church of Stow. We are coming back to a normal Sunday morning schedule, but with second service at a new time—10:30 a.m. Our order of worship is new, although only slightly. We are aiming to get the choir back sharing their gifts and talents, but with covid numbers where they are we are going to have to do that in a new way for the time being. We have new staffers—welcome again Christian and Katie!—and they are beginning new ministries that are bringing about new possibilities, some you won't notice, others you probably will. And we will be continuing to offer this new way of being part of worship via livestream, which means there will be a new impact upon what church looks like and feels like on Sunday morning. Some of it will be hard. But I am one hundred percent confident it will be absolutely faithful.

So if in the coming Sundays the new normal is feeling hard for you, please let me know. Please come talk to me. I want to hear from you and I want to share with you more about why this new thing is happening. And then, please also remember God is always at work and always doing a new thing. And God's work—no matter what it is—is always good. Especially when it's new.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry Update

Our Next Loaves and Fishes + Pantry will be on September 19th, starting at 4 p.m.

Prove that your potato salad is the best and help feed those coming for the meal. Let me know if you can make a bowlful!

If you're able to help out, contact Mary Ellen at 330-815-42230

Bulldog Donations **'21-'22 School year**

Below is a list of our upcoming donation items for Bulldog Boxes/Bags. Be sure to follow along WITH the dates! Perishable goods may not keep forever in a donation bin!

Sept.: Cup of Mac N cheese	Due Sept. 13
Oct.: Ramen noodle packets	Due Oct. 11
Nov.: Protein or snack bars	Due Nov. 8
Dec.: Hot chocolate packets	Due Dec. 6

Acme Community **Cashback Program**

It's time again for Acme Cashback! Make sure you keep your receipts and place them in the collection box in the Gathering area. The program will be continuing through December 25th, so make sure you save your receipts! Any receipt that qualifies for the 5% cash back is noted at the bottom.

All proceeds go to benefit the Dorcas Rebekah Guild and splits profits with the Mary Martha guild. The money received often goes to benefit our blanket ministry.

DCEF Tech Grant: **September Update**

As many of you already know (and have contributed towards!) We are in the midst of raising funds for the DCEF tech grant, which is described further below. In just a month of fundraising, we're already at \$1,947! This is a great start, but we still have a long way to go. See below for more information about the grant.

To take advantage of this grant, however, we need to raise enough of our own funds for DCEF to "match" our own fundraising. DCEF is willing to provide up to \$4,171 towards our purchase of tech equipment. The amount they provide is dependent on the amount we raise through contributions first. For example:

- **If we raise \$3,000** then DCEF will provide an additional \$3,000.
- **If we raise \$4,000** then DCEF will provide an additional \$4,000.
- **If we raise \$5,000** then DCEF will provide an additional \$4,171.

If you feel called to contribute to the online life of our church beyond your initial offerings, please note that part of your contribution as "Tech Grant" and our financial team will include it as part of this effort.

Building Usage Procedure **From Christian, Dir. Church Relations**

As we are returning to some time of relative normalcy after being away from meeting in person, church spaces are being used more and more. As such, to keep all schedules conflict-free and seamlessly running, a little more paperwork will be needed to ensure that every meeting can happen when they need to.

If you would like to have a meeting within the church or rent a space within the church for an event, please visit <https://www.firstchristianstow.org/calendar/> and then click "Calendar Request" in the top right corner of the calendar. Once you've submitted your information according to the guidelines, I'll reach out to you so that we can finalize your event. *A request does not guarantee the event will be scheduled, and an event will not be scheduled without confirmation.*

Thank you for your help! This vibrant church has events running almost every day of the week in the morning or evening. We love hosting so many different communities!

Youth Group **Introduction and Upcoming Events**

I am so excited for this year's youth group! This year's theme is "Pay it forward". The philosophy behind this is that acts of kindness

among strangers can generate a ripple effect from one person to the next, and one community to the next. These acts of kindness are not done with the intention of getting something in return. These acts of kindness could even change the world.

When learning about this movement I was reminded of what we are all called to do as Christians. In this ever-changing world we live in, we as Christians should strive to show kindness and help those in need. This year we will be taking a deep dive into figuring out how we can pay it forward in our communities and in our church.

-Katie Taylor, Director of Youth Ministries

Sunday, September 12th!

11:45 to 1:15 p.m.

Intro to “Pay it forward” and Scavenger Hunt

I will be introducing this year's theme of “Pay it forward” and how we can all be a part of this movement in our community!

There will also be a scavenger hunt around the church so make sure to bring your A game! Lunch will be provided! However, if you feel more comfortable packing your own that's fine too!

Sunday, September 26th!

11:45 to 1:15p.m.

Hiking at Brust Park in Munroe Falls (Weather permitting!!)

This week we will get out into nature! Not only can we pay it forward to others, but we can pay it forward to mother earth!

Be sure to wear closed toed shoes and bring a water bottle. Feel free to bring a friend!

Lunch will be provided! However, if you feel more comfortable packing your own that's fine too!

Looking forward to seeing everyone for Youth Group!

Choir Protocol September, 2021

As we return to something looking more like normal, choir will aim for it's return in October, if all goes well. The full details are listed in Chuck's email to the Chancel Choir.

STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGE

An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walks from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.” The old woman smiled, “Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.”

God created us, and as such, he knows our strengths and weaknesses, our gifts and our imperfections, our motivations, and stumbling blocks. And with knowing all of that, God knows what our best purpose is. So don't be ashamed by what you think you can't do but embrace the things that you can. In doing so, you will get to see all the things God has been able to use you for. And as you see what God has been using you for and what good you have been able to do, think about what could be next. What else does God have in store for you? What else is God asking of you? What else are you capable of and what else can you give? Each Sunday we have time in our service that we offer up ourselves, our gifts, our time, our treasures, for the purpose of benefitting this church, this community, and the world around us. So, understand that we don't have to be perfect in our own eyes to be able to do good in this world. God can use us just the way we are. -Andrew Robinson, August lay leader

The first planned rehearsal for the Chancel Choir will be Thursday, September 9th at 7:30 in the Sanctuary. Bring a mask if you are uncomfortable being inside without one and be prepared to spread out and keep some distance while singing.

Looking for Tech Volunteers!

If you're interested in learning more about streaming technology and the work that goes on behind the scenes at church, get in touch with the church office and let Christian know you're interested in volunteering with the tech area! This is a great opportunity for our kids who have aged out of junior church to start developing real-world skills in media and technology as we look to make some updates to our streaming with the tech grant described above. Anyone is welcome to help! You won't want to miss out on the exciting opportunities that are coming to the tech area!

Updated Schedule and Protocol From The Elders

To All and Sundry at First Christian Church:

On Sunday September 12 we will celebrate Welcome Sunday, which traditionally marks the time when we resume our regular Sunday service schedule.

That will happen this year, with some changes as outlined below.

One long term trend evident to all is a steady decline of attendance at every Sunday School class. Oftentimes there were no children attending Sunday School. At the same time there has been a steady increase in activities for our youth that occur after the second service. All the while Sunday afternoon activities for families have been increasing. This leads to a scheduling crunch and families having to make difficult choices about which activity to attend.

In response to this conundrum the Elders would like ease the choices for families by tightening up our worship service and making the start time 15 minutes earlier, at 10:30am. These changes will allow our youth plenty of time for post-service

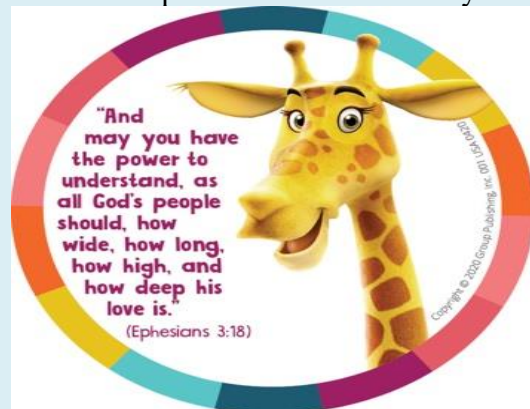
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Welcome back to JR CHURCH! **Sunday September 12th**

We are excited for the start of our new church year and can't wait to see everyone back together for Jr Church!

We will be using a brand-new curriculum and will see some of our favorite Bible Memory Buddies that you'll remember from Roar VBS!

There is a need for adult volunteers in Jr Church. Stop down and see us! Sign-ups are available on the "Kids in Worship" table in the Sanctuary.



Jr Church

Children K-5th grade begin 10:30a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary with their families. Following Children's Message, children have the opportunity to attend Jr Church.

**Children worship with their families when there is a 5th Sunday in a month. Kids in Worship activity bags are also available*

Save the Date!
Trunk or Treat
Sunday October 24, 3-5pm
More information coming soon!

Child Care
Available during 10:30a.m. Worship.

activities and get them home in time for the noontime meal. (Parents: no more packed lunches!)

Here is the new schedule of service as approved by the Elders on 8/30/21:

- Prelude
- At 10:25 the live stream commences.
- At 10:28 the worship leader gives limited announcements
- Call to Worship
- Opening Hymn
- Invocation
- Passing of the Peace
- Message in Music
- Children's Sermon
- Offering & Offering Hymn & Prayer of Dedication
 - We will rotate a selection of offertory hymns.
 - ◆ These will be limited to one verse.
 - We will continue to have baskets available for people's offering
- Scripture & Sermon
- Pastoral Prayer
 - Prior to the prayer the worship leader will mention specific people who need our prayers
- Communion & Words of Institution & Communion Prayer
 - We will continue with the individual cups currently in use.
- Invitation Hymn
 - First three verses
- Benediction
- Final verse of the Invitation Hymn
- Postlude

Notes:

- The Elders continue to encourage our Covid responses:
 - Social Distancing
 - Masking
 - Singing while masked.
- There will be teachers and lessons available for youth Sunday School.
- Adult Sunday will be held in abeyance for the time being. We are working on a new program that will be ready later in the fall.

A Church service is living thing that cannot be preserved in amber. The service that was proper for

our church in 1836 is not proper for our church today. A service that was proper in the 1950's is not proper today. A service that was proper pre-Covid is not proper today.

We as a church must respond to the changes in the world around us so that we can remain vital for our worshipers and our community. We believe that these changes will help First Christian Church continue to grow and to serve our worshipers, our community and our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Tom Safford, Chair

Financial Giving from the Congregation for January – August 2021

We won't close the financial books for August for a couple more days, but I wanted to provide a status of where we are currently with our congregational giving. The numbers below are not final but I believe they are a good estimate of the final numbers.

The Total Income budget amount is \$21,181 per month. This includes congregational giving and other income sources like building rental.

For the month of August, so far, our income is \$25,714. For the month this is above the budget amount by \$4,533.

Year to date our income has been \$177,936. This is above the budget for Year to date by \$8,486 (5%).

This is very good news and brings us much closer to meeting our Leap of Faith amount!

Some of the increase in August income is from building rental, with increased use over the summer months by some outside groups. But the bulk of the increase has come from increased giving from our members.

The Financial Giving Update continues on the next page

Here is the information in table format:

2021	Jan- Mar	Apr- June	July	Aug	YTD
Actual Income	\$65,146	\$66,007	\$21,069	\$25,714	\$177,936
Budget Income	\$63,544	\$63,544	\$21,181	\$21,181	\$169,450
Actual Income- Budget Income	\$1,602	\$2,463	(\$112)	\$4,533	\$8,486
% Actual Over Budget Income	2.5%	3.9%	-0.5%	21.4%	5.0%

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 full year, which is 8% above our budget income.

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.

Please let any member of the Finance/Stewardship team know if you would like to see our full reports, we are happy to share them.

Stuff the Truck!!



Donate Supplies for Glendora House

Family Promise of Summit County is an emergency shelter program helping homeless families with children stay together and achieve sustainable independence.

The Glendora House facility enables us to serve up to 10 families at a time, in individual apartment style settings so each family unit stays together. Below is a list of the supplies we are most in need of to serve the families in our program.



Cleaning Supplies:

- Paper towels*
- Laundry detergent*
- Dish soap*
- Cleaning products* (all-purpose, floor, bath)
- Trash bags (all sizes)*
- Broom/dust pan
- Mop/bucket
- Air fresheners
- Sponges/rags

*Priority Items

Kitchen

- Trash can (13 gallon)
- Dish drainer
- Toaster
- Coffee maker/mugs
- Plastic plates/bowls/cups
- Kitchen utensil set
- Oven mitts
- Dish towels
- Pots & pans/cookie sheets
- Cutting board
- Silverware w/organizer
- Mixing bowls

Linens (New items only).

- Bath towel sets*
- Twin sheet sets*
- Twin fleece blankets*
- Pillows*

Bathroom

- Shower curtains/hooks
- Floor mats
- Bathroom accessory set
- Hand soap*
- Toilet paper*
- Facial tissue

Accepting Donations on
Friday, September 10th, 2021 from 2PM to 6PM
at Glendora House located at:

1100 Copley Rd.,
Akron, OH 44320

Monetary donations will also be accepted

Contact Pauline at 330.253.8081 or

pauline@familypromisesc.org with questions