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PATHWAYS

OCTOBER 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!



- **Trunk or Treat, 2021!**
Sunday, Oct 24th, 3-5 p.m.

- **Youth Group Events**
Oct. 10th, 24th

- **Church Workday, November 6th,**
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

- **Loaves and Fishes**
Oct. 17th, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

- **Congregational Conclave, Disciples Hall**
Oct. 3rd, 10th, 17th, 27th, 31st

Pastor's Pen,
October 2021



It's October 2021. 2021. Which means October 2011 was ten years ago. 10 years. 1-0. Maybe you don't realize this, exactly, but 10 years is a decade. A **decade**. That means a **decade** ago it was October...2011. And now it's a **decade** later. Which means it's 2021. Two thousand AND twenty-one. It's literally October 2021. Unbelievable. Literally unbelievable.

Ok, so to be clear, the above paragraph isn't directed at any one of you reading this pastor's pen. Or as the case may be, the above paragraph isn't directed at the one of you reading this pastor's pen. (I kid, I kid! I know more than one of you reads this. There's at least two of you! I think. Again, I kid, I kid!) So, to be clear, the above paragraph was actually a little bit of a mind-trip for you all to enjoy, into the exploding head of your pastor, because the above paragraph has been the ongoing dialogue in my head for the past couple of months. (The "it's October" part notwithstanding until, you know, it actually became October.) And my mind has literally been exploding. (Literally!) And the reason for this ongoing and unbelievable truth racing through my exploding head at a breakneck pace and with near constant repetition, is because October 2021 marks the ten-year anniversary of when I became a parent. Literally. (See, I really do know the meaning of the word and how to use it, but sometimes it's just fun to use hyperbole.)

Now most would not call this the tenth anniversary of becoming a parent, and instead call it the tenth birthday of their child. And while that is certainly true, the inward introspection this upcoming anniversary, (ok fine, the birthday of my child) has thrust me into, has spiraled to new depths of my soul never before uncovered let alone explored. And it's blowing my mind. Literally. And so, I can't really think all that too good right now. (Thus, narcissistic hyperbole with exceedingly poor grammar comes out. Literally.)

So, with that set-up set up, let me get to my point. (I know, finally! But hang with me mom; you know how I can get sometimes.) (See what I did there? I made a guised call back joke to the joke above about "the one person" reading this pastor's pen, and now I'm insinuating the one

person is my mom. I crack myself up.) And so, my point is this... **Ten years can go by faster than we think.** And if we are not careful, we can...well, find our head exploding. Literally.

I get it. I am not preaching to the choir here. All of you are well aware of how quickly time passes, and how each day is a precious gift. Many of you have experienced the passage of time in ways that have brought about similar bewilderment. Which is why I know all of you will get why it becomes so critically important for us to be intentional with the time we have. Letting one day go by without much thought to living intentionally isn't a big deal. But let a year go by without such, and it becomes a big deal. Let a decade go by without living intentionally with focus, drive, and vision, and well, that is a monumental, big deal.

Which is why we literally have to be intentional. As individuals. As members of our families—parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or even when we become parents to our aging parents. Intentionality saves us from waking up a decade later and having our exploding head and the uncovered depths of our souls reveal to us that it's ten years later.

Now mind you, I have done the very best I possibly could be an intentional parent to my child who is about to turn ten years old. But I know that over the next ten years I am going to have to up my intentionality game even more. Not because I have ground to make up (even though I probably do) but because the game of life is only going to get harder and harder—for me, for her, for all of us.

And this is true for the Church as well. The next decade for the Church is going to be critical. And it is going to be critical that we are prepared for the next decade, which is why we are starting a process—via a Congregational Conclave—that will begin to prepare us for how God will use us in the coming years as a church and as members of the body of Christ.

Please see the article in this issue of the Pathways for more information about the Congregational Conclave, what it is and how you can be part of not just the conclave, but how you can be part of what God is going to be doing here at First Christian Church next year, the year after, and for decades to come. Literally.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

DCEF Tech Grant: **October Update**

Fundraising efforts continue for the DCEF tech grant, which is described further below. In just a few months, we've raised \$2,577 together! We're well on our way to improving our services for those who worship with us at home.

We do remind you that this is a "Matching Grant." We have to raise our goal of \$4,171 to acquire the full benefit of DCEF's grant.

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

Church Workday **November 6, 2021, from 9am to 1pm**

To prepare our church for winter and clean up from this fall, we're hosting another Church Workday. All are welcome! This workday will be mainly outdoor cleanup, such as raking leaves and hauling them to Williamson Road for city pickup and cleaning out gardens around the church. Please come and help with our fall cleanup!

Thanks,
Trustees

Work Projects Around the Church

Over the past few months many have helped work on the church TO DO LIST and we, the trustees, thank you. But just as at home the list is never completed, and new projects are added. God's house is no different.

Many of the projects can be done by one person while other may need a team of two or more. Below is a list we have. You may walk around the church and see other items. If you have a project in mind or can work on one from this list, contact Rick Lloyd or John McCreight. We can help you secure needed materials and work with you on scheduling the work to be done.

-Clean window by main entrance, lower entrance, and library. (Can be split into sections)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry Update

Our Next Loaves and Fishes + Pantry will be on October 17th, starting at 4 p.m.

We're looking for more volunteers to donate their time every third Sunday of the month. There's occasional prep on Saturday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. If you're able to help, contact Mary Ellen at 330-815-4223!

In November, we're serving a turkey dinner, and will need.

The September Loaves & Fishes + Pantry took place on Sunday September 19 and was quite a success! The Loaves & Fishes meal option of Sloppy Joes was a sellout! We had to close the kitchen 10 minutes early because we ran out of food. We lost count of how many meals we served. The grocery distribution from our Pantry had its best month ever. We served 25 households containing 61 people. We gave out groceries for 31 seniors, 15 adults and 15 children. 9 of the families were new to our Program.

As always some of the individual stories were compelling. One person was picking up meals for her neighbors because she knew they were struggling and could use a hand. Another was senior citizen who is raising his young step-granddaughter. Thanks to the work of our volunteers and the constant support of our church members we were able to supply the equivalent of 366 meals to people in need. Well done!

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!

Oct.: Ramen noodle packets	Due Oct. 11
Nov.: Protein or snack bars	Due Nov. 8
Dec.: Hot chocolate packets	Due Dec. 6

Acme Cashback Program

Make sure you keep your receipts and place them in the collection box in the Gathering area. We will be collecting until December 25th, so make sure you save your receipts! All proceeds go to benefit the Dorcas Rebekah Guild, Mary Martha Guild, and our Blanket Ministry

- Anchor pews in the balcony
- Paint walls in office hallway
- Paint front of AV booth and touchup walls by pastor and elder Chairs
- Paint walls in hall from elevator to Fellowship Hall
- Power wash and seal coat benches by fire circle
- Clean flat roof by emergency exit off Gym

Remembering Dear Friends

In the last few weeks, we have had to say goodbye to several from our church family. Please continue to hold in your prayers the families and friends of those who have passed recently.

Bill Bell, August 7th. (A memorial will be held Saturday, October 16th.)

Ruth Wade, September 9th

Joanna Badger, September 17th

Rose Weaver, September 26th

Dave Brandon, September 29th

We are always saddened by the loss of our friends and church family members as their passing leaves a void in our hearts. Yet we can rejoice in knowing they have been taken to their heavenly home where they only know of God's divine presence and peace. Let us pray for all who grieve their loss, while we also give thanks to God in Christ Jesus who promises life eternal.

Pumpkin Pandemonium! at Heritage Farms Sunday, October 10th 11:45 to 1:15 p.m.

Pumpkins, hayrides, and corn mazes galore! We will be going to Heritage Farms in Peninsula for a fun filled fall day! We will provide transportation, but any parents who would like to drive are welcome. Lunch will be provided! As always, if you feel more comfortable packing your own that's fine too!

Trunk or Treat Sunday, October 24th 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

We will be hosting our very own youth group trunk! We will be decorating a trunk and helping hand out candy at the annual trunk or treat event. Be ready to wear your best costume, the winner gets a prize!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Trunk or Treat 2021! Sunday October 24th, 3-5pm

We are excited for another Trunk or Treat! Join us Sunday October 24th 3-5pm! Wear your costumes and trick or treat in the church parking lot! Fall Photo Op will also be available during the event.

We are in need of volunteers to make this event successful! See below for how to help!

Host a trunk! Decorate your trunk with any decorations and costumes and bring candy to give out for 75-100 kids. Sign up in the Gathering Area or at www.firstchristianstow.org/trunkortreat.

Donate candy! There is a bin in the Gathering Area for candy donations (individually wrapped candy please).

Contact Anna & Richelle, christianed@firstchristianstow.org, with any questions.

Thanks,
Anna & Richelle

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

YOUTH GROUP

This month in the youth group we have so much to look forward to! We will be going to Heritage Farms in Peninsula for a fun, fall filled day. They have corn mazes, hayrides, and pumpkins galore! This month we will also be going to help out with the annual Trunk or Treat event. We will have our own trunk to decorate and help pass out candy. We will also be taking some time this fall to help out within our church community. Service projects are a great way to pay it forward to others. We will be discussing how we can help serve our home church and continue to grow in our faith.

-Katie Taylor

Congregational Conclave
Starting October 2021 Through 2022

Starting this Sunday, Jonathan and Christian will be hosting our latest and greatest ***Congregational Conclave***, “*An assembly that is designed to have special authority and influence.*”

This series of conversations will start to shape how our next year, and even five years, may look. We will be talking at times about what our future will look like, what kind of work we will be doing as Jonathan takes his Sabbatical next year, and what kind of impact we want to have in our community. Below is our schedule for the first “unit” of this conversation series

Do Note: We are moving our in-person gatherings to Disciples Hall. Apologies!

Session 1 Schedule: October 3-October 31.

10/3/21: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m., Disciples Hall (In-Person)

10/10/21: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m., Disciples Hall (Online participants can join via Zoom)

10/17/21: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m., Disciples Hall (In-Person)

10/27/21: 6:30 p.m. – 7:15 p.m., Meeting Via. Zoom

10/31/21: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m., Disciples Hall (In-Person)

We do hope you’ll join us once or twice in this first series as we assess our church as it is and create the dreams and visions necessary for The House of God to serve The People of God.

MUSIC

The COVID virus still seems to be with us, and as such we are taking things slowly getting the choirs back into the swing of things. Obviously, there is some concern having the choir sing from the steps of the chancel and as such we are taking steps to video record the choir on Thursdays at the end of rehearsals. The video will then be shown on the screens on Sundays. A starting date is up in the air as not all the mechanics have been worked out.

We will be starting Joy Bells rehearsals in the next couple of weeks. I will inform the members via email and phone as soon as we are ready to start. We also have a couple of openings in the bell choir we need to fill. If you are interested and have experience reading music, please call me (330-760-5177) and let me know.

I am happy to report that Joyful Noise is back this year and has already begun rehearsing!
Thanks, Barb.

Spiritus is on hiatus until we can figure out a suitable rehearsal time.

We have been trying to ascertain the amount of interest in starting up the children’s choir program. Many of the members of those choirs have moved on to middle school and so the number of elementary school-age children is smaller than in the past. We *have* decided that we will expand the membership of the Crusader Bells to middle school and older so that we might continue the progress that was being made before the pandemic struck. A survey was sent to parents a couple of weeks ago. We haven’t heard back from everyone. If you received the survey, it will be helpful to hear back even if to say your child will not be participating this year.

This has been a very strange year and a half (plus), and I am sure you didn’t think you would have to listen to me sing every Sunday morning for all that time. I know I didn’t imagine it. Please keep our church and its many outreaches (including music) in your prayers.

God bless all of you and I’ll see you in church,
Chuck

Fall Photo Op!
Sunday October 17th – Sunday October 31st

Looking for a fun, festive, and safe spot for a fall photo shoot? Then stop by and check out the Fall Photo-Op set up, ready for picture taking with family, friends, pets, kids in costumes, or maybe that special someone. You are welcome to take your own pictures or bring a photographer, and then consider posting them on your social media using #FCCStow.

The Fall Photo-Op, located off the upper parking lot, is free and open to any and all in the community, and is available Oct.17 through Oct. 31.

Jean Lamont's 90th Birthday!

Jean has completed another full circle around the Sun! Happy Birthday to Jean! To help her celebrate, we're going to fill her mailbox and her heart with birthday cards. Please help us honor her birthday on **OCTOBER 20th** with all your warm greetings and memories. You can mail your birthday wishes to:

Mrs. Jean Lamont
2787 Boltz Road
Akron, OH 44333

The Financial Update and Stewardship Campaigns can be found on the following pages.

**Update from the Finance/Stewardship
Team**

Financial Giving from the Congregation for January – September 2021

We won't close the financial books for September 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 close 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 September, so far, our income is \$21,577. For the month this is above the budget amount by \$396.

Year to date our income has been \$199,718. This is above the budget for Year to date by \$9,086 (4.8%).

September income was lower than August income and is shown in the chart below as part of the July – Sept column.

Here is the information in table format:

2021	Jan-Mar	Apr- June	July- Sept	YTD
Actual Income	\$65,146	\$66,007	\$68,565	\$199,718
Budget Income	\$63,544	\$63,544	\$63,544	\$190,632
Actual Income- Budget Income	\$1,602	\$2,463	\$5,021	\$9,086
% Actual Over Budget Income	2.5%	3.9%	7.9%	4.8%

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.



Stewardship is our faith in God's abundance even in times of scarcity, and willingness to bring abundance to others.

The Kick-off of our Annual Stewardship Campaign is quickly approaching and while we realize that the past two years have been challenging physically, emotionally, and financially for many we are truly blessed by the fact that you have remained "Devoted to Generosity". Because of your devotion to the mission and ministry of First Christian Church of Stow we have been able to stay open during these trying times, to continue the ministries that are so important to so many, and to provide a place for organizations that rely on our church to meet and serve those in need.

Stewardship is not a program, it's not about percentages, and it is not simply a part of our faith. Stewardship connects to every single thing that we do with our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. It draws us into deeper relationships with each other, with our community, and with God. To be good stewards we need to have an awareness of the problems and scarcity around us. It requires us to have compassion and hope for everyone that needs help and redemption in our world. There are many ways for us to step up even when we think we aren't quite ready, and be generous with gifts of time, talents, money, and other resources that God has blessed us with.

On Sunday October 10th, we invite you to join us for this stewardship journey. Over the next few weeks, we will share stories that witness to the ministries that God has entrusted to us and show how these ministries can transform lives. These stories of our shared ministries grow out of God's love in Christ and our desire to give back some of the many blessings he has shown to us. When we are good stewards, God is revealed! When we are good stewards, God's kingdom is revealed. When we are good stewards, Jesus is glorified!

Watch for additional information coming soon, including a visual narrative budget that will focus on specific dollar amounts of our mission and ministries.

On Sunday October 31st, we will share our natural and grateful response to the generosity and salvation that God has worked in our lives. On that day we will accept your personal commitment cards during our service.

In Christian Fellowship

Jim Hindel, Chairman Stewardship Team