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PATHWAYS

FEBRUARY 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!



Loaves and Fishes + Pantry

February 20th, 4pm-6pm

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry will be serving containers of pasta with sides on Sunday, February 20th!

Sketti & Skits

March 6th, 6 p.m.

Contact Christian Ed team if you want to record your act ahead of time! We're also having a bake sale to benefit the Youth Group and Week of Compassion!

Subs Available for Purchase

Superbowl Sunday, February 13th

Youth Group is Selling Subs for your Superbowl! \$5 per sub, available for pick-up or deliver in Stow.

Youth Group Events

Sundays, February 6th & 13th

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

On the 6th, Youth Group will be going Ice Skating, and on the 13th, making subs for a Super Bowl Fundraiser!

Pastor's Pen, February 2022



As I sit in my home office and look out the window, a winter wonderland continues to amass. And amass. And amass. It's a snow-day today. A snow-day that was actually announced last night, and the excitement of that announcement in this house was palpable, for a snow-day is something rare and special. But now the snow-day is about to begin, because soon the kiddos will awake to their snow-day, and the joy of the day will no doubt be robust. This quiet time before they are up is a bit of a calm before the proverbial storm.

I'm starting to think that January was kind of the same for me—a calm before the storm. But less a calm before “a storm” and more of a calm before “a whirlwind!” You see, I say this because it is absolutely 100% certain that I will be taking my much talked about, and twice postponed sabbatical. It's happening. Pandemic, or no pandemic; storm, or no storm; flood, or no flood; plagues of *frogs, gnats, or flies** or not, this sabbatical is going to happen. (*See Exodus 8 for more information.) But there is a multitude of matters to tend to before it all happens. Yes, a laundry list of matters I need to get in order, but there's a bit of list for each of you as well. But don't worry... as I often say, “*many hands make light work.*” (A quote I by no means claim as my own, but just use a lot.)

So what are the things that we all need to do to get ready? I am glad you asked!

First...*pray*. I invite you to hold this coming time of sabbatical in your prayers, asking for God's guidance to surround us all as we prepare for this time in all the ways needed. Pray God leads us to open our hearts to the importance and significance of this time of renewal that is meant to be one part of the ongoing preparations for where God will be taking First Christian Church of Stow in the coming years.

Second...*discern*. I invite you to enter into a time of discernment, starting now and throughout the coming months, to listen for God's still small voice to tell you and direct you to where and how you can continue to, or offer in new ways, your gifts and talents. Each of us are members of one body, but there are many parts. What part is God calling us to be in the coming months and years? How is God leading us to use our gifts and talents in service to the Church and others?

Third...*believe*. I invite you to believe this time of sabbatical—a time of renewal for me and for you—is a gift and a blessing God is giving to us so we can be better prepared for where God is taking us and for what God is going to ask us to do.

And lastly...*commit*. I invite you to commit to this time of sabbatical, this time of renewal. I invite you to commit to supporting me and my family prayerfully during our time away. I invite you to commit to supporting the church, the staff, the elders, and the interim pastor during our time away. I invite you to commit to continue to be the church, and be part of the life of First Christian Church, in the months ahead—and to not see this as a time to “*take a break because the pastor is gone.*” I say that not as a condemnation, because I know your commitment to the Church and our church is true and faithful. Rather I say that as an encouragement because we all know how easy it can be to convince ourselves that it's fine to “*take a little break.*” And yes, it is fine to take a break, to breathe, to rest. But there is a difference between *taking a break* and *breaking away*. My sabbatical time, this opportunity for renewal, this chance to step away from the day-to-day practices of ministry in order to focus on my spiritual development with an eye toward returning to all of you with renewed energy for the ministry we will then do together, won't be effective whatsoever if I am left wondering and worrying if there will be a church left to come back to.

Pray. Discern. Believe. Commit. This is the list of things to do before and during the upcoming time of sabbatical. Yes, each piece breaks down into longer lists of things to do, but these are the first and foremost matters we all need to focus on tending to. For when we do, we are letting God prepare us and lead us in a unique and special time in the life of First Christian Church, where God will reveal to all of us the blessed, hope-filled, exciting future and successful future ministry God is planning to do in and through us as individuals and us as a church.

I am excited for this sabbatical. Almost as excited as a fourth grader and a second grader when a snow-day is announced. (I don't think that level of excitement can ever be matched by an adult. Seriously, snow days are strangely magical for kids.) And I hope and pray you are excited too because this sabbatical, this time of renewal, the before, during, and after, will be a blessing to us all.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Pastor's Class
Begins Sunday, March 6th

All youth in fifth grade or older who have not been baptized, and their parents are invited to be part of this year's Pastor's Class set begin on Sunday, March 6th and will run through Baptism Sunday on April 24th. The class will meet weekly on Sundays at the church, at a time yet to be determined. If you are interested in being part of the class, please contact the church office, indicate your interest on the back of your Connection Card, or please contact Jonathan.

Scout Sunday, February 6th

Our church will once again host our annual Scout Sunday to highlight the Boy Scout Troop, Cub Scout Pack and Girl Scout Troops that all meet at our church throughout the year. This is a great opportunity to greet the scouts and leaders alike and remind them how grateful we are to have them as part of the First Christian Church family.

Week(s) of Compassion!

February 2022

"Love Remains"

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

~1 Corinthians 13:13

The world has changed dramatically in the last 2 years. Communities everywhere have been both socially and economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic—an impact that has been felt even more deeply in the most vulnerable communities and in those also affected by other disasters. Wildfires continue to get worse year after year in the U.S. and Canada, and the same is true in Europe. Severe drought affects communities around the world, making safe water even more difficult to access in a time when it is needed more than ever to stop the spread of disease. Earthquakes have destroyed homes, lives, and livelihoods in many global locations, including Haiti. And conflict continues to uproot families and communities, forcing more people to be displaced. In the past year alone, we have witnessed this in places like Myanmar, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the Middle East.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry
January Update

The September Loaves & Fishes + Pantry took place on Sunday January 16 and was quite a success. We served 22 households comprising 46 people. 29 of those we served were seniors.

A program such as ours is always important, but it is even more important when bad weather comes. You may recall that Sunday the 16th was the beginning of our big snow. So that's 29 seniors who not only got a hot chili dinner but also received enough groceries to see them through the storm and its aftermath. We didn't get an exact count of the number of chili dinners served, but it was more than 46 people who received groceries.

Let's have a big shout out to the Girl Scouts who helped deliver the meals. The seniors we serve always get a charge out of seeing young people in action.

This monthly outreach of Loaves & Fishes + Pantry is a living testament of the power and good of our Christian faith. Thank you to all the volunteers who demonstrate their faith through their actions.

Loaves and Fishes
February 20th, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

The February drive thru meal will be February 20th 4-6 p.m. We are serving individual containers of baked pasta with some sides. Sharing God's love one car at a time!

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!

Individual snack bags of Goldfish	Due Feb. 7
Individual cereal cups	Due Mar. 7
Unscented Soap	Due April 11

Which is why our support of this year's Week of Compassion: *Love Remains* campaign is so very important. In the midst of so much uncertainty and suffering, Week of Compassion continues to respond—walking with communities in times of crisis, providing: immediate relief and long-term recovery support after disasters; equipping churches and leaders for disaster preparedness; offering assistance to refugees; and supporting global development projects that empower communities around the world to thrive.

As Disciples, we are called to witness to this Gospel truth—in spite of all evidence to the contrary—showing that even in the most dire of circumstances, love remains. When we give to Week of Compassion, especially during our church-wide Special Offering, we put that love into action. Your giving shares faith, hope and love, around the world, around the year.

This year, our church has once again set as a goal for our offering the amount of \$2,000. (This offering is over and above our general fund giving.) And back again this year will be, in a unique and new way, the Week of Compassion Bake Sale! (More details to come!)

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

Sunday, February 6th!

11:45 to 1:15pm

Ice Skating!

We will be going Ice Skating in Downtown Cuyahoga Falls! Bring \$5 to rent skates (or bring your own pair), transportation and snacks will be provided.

Sunday, February 13th!

8:30am-11:45am

Super Bowl Sub Making!

We will be preparing all of the super bowl subs for our annual fundraiser. We also may be making a

YOUTH GROUP

Chi Rho and CYF Camp Opportunities

We have such a fun and jam-packed schedule this month in Youth Group! We will be going Ice Skating in downtown Cuyahoga Falls on February 6th. Skate rentals cost \$5, and we have had some parents volunteer to help transport. Then we will be gearing up for our annual Super Bowl Subs fundraiser! This year we made it even easier to order your subs by putting an online ordering portal on our church website! We can also make local deliveries in Stow and Munroe Falls after our 10:30 church service.

We will be getting together early on the 13th (Super Bowl Sunday) and preparing the subs for our church members in the first service. Then we will hand out and deliver all of our other orders to the congregation, friends, and family. We will be meeting again on February 27th at our regular time, 11:45am and will start preparing for Sketti and Skits. So be sure to bring all of your creative ideas and let's collaborate!

In other exciting news, Camp Christian has announced their dates! I have listed them below:

Chi Rho Camp #1:

Sunday, June 12th-Saturday, June 18th

Chi Rho Camp #2:

Sunday, July 10th-Saturday, July 16th

CYF Camp Week #1:

Sunday, June 19th-Saturday, June 25th

CYF Camp Week #2:

Sunday, July 17th-Saturday, July 23rd

You can register and make a payment for Camp Christian through the church. Because of the fundraising we do as a group we are able to help cover some of the cost for attending, so when signing up you can make a payment that is comfortable to you. If you have any further questions about this please feel free to get in touch with me or Jonathan.

couple of local deliveries to our friends and family that order through our online portal!

Sunday, February 27th!

11:45am-1:15pm

Sketti and Skits Prep!

With Sketti and Skits coming up in March, we will need to start prepping some of the fun skits we would like to do this year!

With the increasing number of Covid cases I am encouraging everyone to wear a mask and pack their own lunch at this time. I will have snacks provided just in case someone does not bring lunch. We will try our best to maintain social distance and continue our ministry safely. If any parents have any comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at 330-608-8810 or email me at youthdirector@firstchristianstow.org

Memorial Money Update for 2021

The Memorial Team had an active year in 2021. We received memorial gifts totaling \$2560.00. These were donated in memory of Ellie Wiggins, Dave Brandon, Myra Myers, Larry Williams, Bill Bell and Don Howard.

We contributed \$3,513.10 the upgrade of the lower level playground. We also spent \$20 to add Jack Veatch's name to the Timothy plaque in the Gathering Area.

These are the kind of things that memorial funds are spent on; ways to enhance our church life and our church building and grounds. In the past memorial money helped fund the upgrade to the sanctuary lighting. These funds are **not** used for operating expenses or maintenance costs.

Ash Wednesday Time of Worship **Wednesday, March 2, 7p.m.**

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent, the time when we commemorate Jesus' post-baptismal, forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness as preparation for his ministry to follow. Lent is also the time when we strive to prepare ourselves spiritually for the

CHRISTIAN ED

Sketti & Skits **March 6th, 6 p.m.**

Virtual Sketti & Skits is back! Tune into Facebook Live on Sunday March 6th @ 6pm!

But in order to have it we need your acts and performances— You can record and send to christianed@firstchristianstow.org, or you can contact Anna and Richelle to set up time come to the church where you will perform and we will record your act for you. If you would like you can also perform live that evening (sorry, no “Sketti”!)

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! Just want to give a shout out to your church family—do it!

Videos will be combined into one jam packed virtual Sketti & Skits to be live streamed via Facebook Live!

We will be having a bake sale alongside Sketti & Skits! All proceeds will go towards the Youth Group and Week of Compassion

Money donated in memory of someone can be directed for use in one area such as music or our library or for Camp Christian. Or it can be given with no specific instructions to be used as needed.

ministry we are called to. We do this prior to Easter through personal introspection, study, prayer, sacrifice or giving something up, or maybe even by taking up something such as volunteering/serving or getting involved in a new ministry. And what better way to begin this Holy season than in worship.

On Wednesday, March 2nd, at 7 p.m., an Ash Wednesday time of worship will be held in the sanctuary and on Facebook Live that will include imposition of ashes (done in a safe manner) as a symbolic reminder of repentance, along with the

reminder that earthly things may become ash and dust, but the divine love of God and Jesus are eternal.

The Worship Ministry Team hopes to see each of you on Ash Wednesday and we wish you a spirit-filled Lenten season of preparation for our Savior's death and resurrection.

Christmas Ingathering Magic Again!

Ingathering 2021 was fantastic, thanks to all of you and our outside sponsors! Through your donations, we provided 41 families with food, food gift cards, gifts for the children, hat/gloves/socks/underwear, coats and fleece blankets. Three of those families receiving gifts were Family Promise families. An additional 5 families received food baskets and/or grocery gift cards. Some amazing numbers for 2021:

46 families served.

Those 46 families included gifts for 104 children.

120 fleece blankets were distributed: 85 to children, 12 to Freedom House, 15 to Family Promise, 8 to Stewart Lodge Group Home.

THANK YOU to all who purchased gifts, food, gift cards, coats and other necessities!

THANK YOU to our outside sponsors who purchased gifts and food or donated monies including

Marhofer Chevrolet, Harvest Realty, Perry Reghetti, Keyfactor, Redmon's, Hudson United Methodist Preschool, and Cascade Imports!

THANK YOU to all who helped buy, pack, wrap, load, unload, clean up, drop off, direct traffic, organize shelves, label, re-arrange, collect boxes, break down boxes, make phone calls or any other of the myriad tasks which go into this ministry on a year-round basis!!! Everyone working together makes this Ingathering Ministry magic for our recipients.

Ann Halpin, Outreach

Update from the Finance/Stewardship Team
Financial Giving from the Congregation for January, 2022

We won't close the financial books for January 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 \$23,203 per month. This includes congregational giving and other income sources like building rental.

For the month of January, so far, our income is \$23,859. For the month this is above the budget amount by \$656. This is 2.8% above budget.

It is great to start the year out with our income above budget. This is partially due to a couple folks who contribute their total pledge for 2022 in one payment in January. However, it is still good news!

Here is the information in table format:

2022	Jan	YTD
Actual Income	\$23,859	\$23,859
Budget Income	\$23,203	\$23,203
Actual Income- Budget Income	\$656	\$656
% Actual Over Budget Income (need 7% to meet Budgeted Expenses/Leap of Faith)	2.8%	2.8%

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.