



First Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
Stow, OH

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## PATHWAYS MARCH 2022

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

Find us on social  
media @FCCStow!

### **Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent**

**Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 p.m.**

Worship In-person or via Facebook Live

Begin the season of Lent with this special time of worship on Ash Wednesday when we are reminded from dust we have been made and to dust we will return, but because of Jesus Christ we will not be left in the dust.

Imposition of ashes will be offered in ways that are comfortable for all to receive them.

### **Sketti N Skits 2022!!**

**Sunday, March 6 at 6 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 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.

Still time to get your video submitted! See inside for details!

### **Wednesday Night Grow Group Returns!**

Wednesdays beginning March 9<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m. via Zoom

Join in on this group to watch the critically acclaimed dramatic series "The Chosen"

Details and Zoom link will be sent out.

### **Daylight Savings Time Begins! Spring Ahead, March 13<sup>th</sup>!**

It's that time again—time to *Spring* ahead one hour on Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>.

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

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

### **Governing Board, Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m.**

The Governing Board will meet for its monthly meeting.

Watch your email for more information.

### **Loaves and Fishes + Pantry March 20, 4-6p.m.**

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

This time will also include the +Pantry food distribution.

See inside this issue for more information.

### **Laity Sunday**

Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, both services.

Worship Team members will be looking for willing participants to help with this special time of worship. Feel free to reach out to Barb Eppley or Jonathan if you would like to participate.

## March 2022 Pastor's Pen

**Cultivate** (verb): *to prepare and use for the raising of crops; to foster the growth of; to improve by labor, care, or study; to refine; to further; to encourage.*

**Let go** (verb): *relinquish one's grip on someone or something.*

Lent is a season of spiritual gardening, of inviting God to unearth in us what lies fallow, what needs to be tended. And it is a time of letting God tend to what needs to die for new life to emerge.

This Lent we're embracing the literal and spiritual practices of *cultivating and letting go*. And we are doing this thematic focus because we, the Church, are in a time and place where we must consider what it is God is calling us to cultivate—in our own hearts, spirits, and lives, but also what God is calling us to cultivate in the ministries we do, offer, and share. But in order for us to effectively, and faithfully, cultivate what it is God is calling us to cultivate, we must also consider what we will have to let go of so there is space, time, energy, and resources for the new crop we are aiming to prepare, raise, grow, and further.

Now what I just said above isn't anything new you haven't heard me say from the pulpit or in some form or another like this Pastor's Pen. This time it's just dressed up with the thematic presentation of "*cultivating and letting go*." But let's call a spade a spade—"Cultivating" is much like the Advent "*preparations*" of getting ready to receive the light of the world. "*Letting go*" is much like the Christmas message that reminds us because of Jesus' birth, "*everything changes*." It's tricky some times to find new ways to say the same message—a message that really is simply this...*Live for Jesus*. That's it. That's the principle, the most central of core values, the whole kitten-caboodle if you know the term. *Live for Jesus*.

Live for Jesus because everything else flows from that way of life. Put Jesus first. Seek him and his glory, not your own platform. Follow him and his teaching. Live according to Christ-like principles, not the latest business model or whatever is trending on social media.

So yeah, that's it. Live for Jesus. Cultivate a life where you live for Jesus, always, and let go of anything that keeps you from living in such a manner. That's pretty much what any preacher is



trying to find new ways to say. But at the risk of oversimplifying the message of the Gospel (and at the risk of making me wonder why I spent three years and a heck of a lot of money to go to seminary) preachers know that as simple as this "Live for Jesus" concept is, it's incredibly hard to do—it's incredibly hard to *cultivate and let go*.

It's hard because there are so many other ways, ideologies, systems, rules, expectations, preferences, and interpretations that compete for our time and attention—that *demand* our time and attention. From the current political battle, to the latest trends, to the relentless tug of do more with less—there's always something else aiming to take up space in our heads, hearts, spirits, and love. And these "something else's" are getting craftier and more cunning, working to convince us we can do both, that we can have our preferences, our desires, our wants, and we can have them all alongside Jesus. But that's not faithfulness. That's compromise. And compromise must be resisted because nothing stands alongside Jesus without eventually replacing him in our hearts, spirits, actions and motivations.

It's too easy to think "I've got this. I can handle this. I can do it all and keep Jesus" and move along to that something else. But there is nothing else to move along to. You'll never get enough of Jesus, you'll never be able to teach too much about Jesus, and none of us will ever live enough like Jesus that we can say "Yeah, I've got this." Which means, then, we have to keep hearing the message that we need to *prepare*, we need to *cultivate*; that we need to *let go* so that the *change* that is coming can come to us.

So, as we step into the season of Lent, may we do so with a willingness to cultivate and to let go. Or may we do so with a willingness to let go and then cultivate. (What's the difference? Good question. Keep asking yourself that one.) Let us step into the season of Lent open to cultivating a new way of life where we don't compromise with Jesus, where we willingly let go of all that is trying to replace him and his way. Because when we cultivate such a life, and let go of the rest, we find that life, when lived for Jesus is... Better. Hopeful. New. Faithful. Joyful. Peaceful. Blessed. Holy. Good.

I look forward to being with you throughout this season of Lent.

Your Pastor and Friend,  
Jonathan

**Ash Wednesday**  
**March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 p.m.**

Make plans to begin the season of Lent this Wednesday for an Ash Wednesday time of worship at the church and via Facebook Live.

**Lenten Wednesdays**  
**Beginning March 9<sup>th</sup>**

Need a Lenten focus? Then make plans to view the greatest story ever told by watching season one of "The Chosen" each Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. via zoom. We will watch an episode a week, followed by a brief time of discussion.

**Yoga Class by Tammy Lott**  
**Wednesdays in Disciples Hall**

The yoga class led by our own Certified Yoga Instructor, Tammy Lott, continues. 100% of the proceeds from the \$5 donation-based class go to church supported outreach programs.

Join us each Wednesday at 5:45 p.m. in the gym. All you need is a mat, blanket and a willing spirit –

*Yoga is for everybody and every body!*

**Clergy Renewal Update**

Summer is approaching and that means that Jonathan's twice-delayed clergy renewal time (aka sabbatical) is nearing.

Jonathan and the Elders are working together to ensure that our church life goes on without missing a beat. As of now, we

***COMMUNITY OUTREACH***

**Loaves & Fishes + Pantry**  
**February Update and March Plans**

The March meal will be meat loaf and mashed potatoes. It will be March 20th 4-6p.m. Planning ahead the meal in April will be April 24th so our volunteers can be with their families for Easter. There are a number of ways you can support the Week of Compassion Bake Sale that will be held on the Day of Sketti and Skits (no Sketti). Goodies will be available between and after the services on March 6 as well as at the event. Extra special items will be available for auction during the program so those attending bring your phones. Outreach is asking for donations of brownies, cookies, cakes and pies etc. Let me know what you can make.

Mary Ellen 330-815-4223

The proceeds from this will support Week of Compassion and the Youth.

The chili cookoff had sixteen entries. Our winner of the golden spoon was Kathy Platt. The chili served 65 people. The meal consisted of pasta dinners with sides and cookies for dessert. We served roughly 60 meals to a variety of people from our neighborhood. Although some people just wanted dinner, there were plenty who wanted groceries also. 25 different households consisting of 56 people received 6 bags of groceries. The bags included items such as peanut butter & jelly, pancakes & syrup, oatmeal, dry cereal, canned fruit, canned veggies, bread, applesauce, and many other items. Each person we serve, whether it's just dinner, just groceries, or both, is grateful that we provide this service. An extra roaster-full was taken to the Haven of Rest. Many thanks to the workers and the Girl Scouts who donated their time for this event.

**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 cereal cups	Due Mar. 7
Unscented Soap	Due April 11
Cup of Mac n Cheese	Due May 5

will have a lead Interim Preacher with one or two others standing by to assist. Jonathan's time for renewal will run from June through early September, with exact dates to follow.

There is funding for a big going away celebration at the beginning and a bigger welcome back celebration at the end.

As plans finalize over the next few months we will keep everyone updated via Pathways articles. If you have any questions about this summer please ask any of the Elders or Jonathan.

### **Trustee Work Day**

**Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 9 p.m. 12 p.m.**

The Trustees will have a work day on Saturday March 12 from 9:00 - 12:00. Our primary focus will be to reorganize storage spaces including the one behind the stage, the closet in Disciples Hall and the closet off Brotherhood Hall by the kitchen. If your group is using any of these spaces for storage now please contact John McCreight @ 330-814-3825.

### **Covid-19 Policy Updates**

The Elders met on February 28 and one of the main items we discussed was our church's current Covid policies. Things have changed since we last had that discussion.

- Summit County now is in a low (green) status for Covid. Green is the best status.
- As a green county current CDC recommendations for masking are that it is voluntary unless one has symptoms, a positive test, or

## ***YOUTH GROUP***

**Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>!**

**6pm**

**Sketti & Skits!**

We will be putting on a skit at our annual Sketti and Skits! We will also be helping with the week of compassion bake sale!

**Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>!**

**11:45-1:15pm**

**Bowling!**

We will be going to Clutch Lanes in Cuyahoga Falls for an afternoon of bowling fun! Pizza and transportation will be provided!

Our Super Bowl Subs Fundraiser was a huge success! Thank you to everyone who purchased a sub and thank you Mike Kostensky for donating the ingredients! It is truly a blessing to have such an amazing congregation and church family. This month in the youth group we will be participating in the annual Sketti & Skits! We will also be helping out with the week of compassion bake sale. On March 20th we will be going on an outing to Clutch Lanes in Cuyahoga falls for some bowling fun! Pizza and transportation will be provided.

As the seasons start to change and spring is in the air, we will be starting to work on doing some spring cleaning in the youth group room! We will be taking some time to revamp and discuss what we would like to see change in the youth group room as well as in the youth group as a whole. We will be getting involved in more service projects within the church as well as the community. We have lots to look forward to in this coming season!

-Katie Taylor, Director of Youth

exposure to someone with Covid.

- Vaccines are widely available for all people aged 5 & up.

Our current church policy is that masks are recommended for all and required for those working with children. Throughout this pandemic we have followed the CDC guidelines. We will continue with that now.

The Elders have decided to make masking voluntary for all. Please keep in mind that we have members who are immunocompromised or have other vulnerabilities.

In addition, people may now stand and sing during our service. You may also see some deacons moving through the sanctuary with trays during the offering. Communion procedures will remain the same.

As always, if you have any questions or comments reach out to Jonathan, Tom Safford (Chair) or any other Elder.

### **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

## ***CHRISTIAN ED***

### **Sketti & Skits** **March 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m.**

Virtual Sketti & Skits is back! Tune into Facebook Live or in the Sanctuary 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](mailto: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

### **Easter Candy Donations** **Due Sunday, April 3rd**

Our church will be participating in the Stow Community Easter Egg Hunt again this year at Silver Springs Park on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup>. There will be 350-400 kids and their families participating and we will have goodie bags for each of them.

We are asking for individually wrapped Easter candy donations to help us fill these Goodie Bags. There will be a bin in the Gathering Area for candy donations – Donations will need to be brought to the church by **Sunday April 3rd.**

Thank you!

money helped fund the upgrade to the sanctuary lighting. These funds are **not** used for operating expenses or maintenance costs.

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.

### **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 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.

## ***STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGE***

John Lennon's now iconic song asks us to "Imagine" – but his call is tinged with sadness and even hopelessness for our truly being able to realize a more just, a more abundant, a more peaceful world for each and every person. But we, who know the Good News of the Gospel, know that such imagining is not simply a wistful dream; we know what the Apostle Paul knew when he wrote those closing lines to the Ephesian church, where he praised God as the one Who, indeed, "by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

For Paul is right: God's power is at work within us, and that power is the power to imagine and help make a better world a reality for all God's children. So, think of your [Week of Compassion](#) offering as "More Than We Can Imagine."

And God's power has been – and will continue to be – at work through your gifts in more ways than you can imagine: through refugees finding safe haven, through those battered by hurricanes, through development projects making clean and safe water available, and so much more.

Your gifts work "around the world, around the year" to bring the love and hope of God in more ways than indeed we can imagine.

*-Jim Hindel, Elder*

## Kirkpatrick Conference March 18-19

Registration is now open for the 2021 Kirkpatrick Conference, presented by the **Disciples of Christ Historical Society** (DCHS). The conference will be held March 18-19 at Phillips Seminary in Tulsa and will address the topic, "*Visions of Wholeness: Systemic Racism, Anti-Racism, and 'Reconciliation' in Our Shared History and Tradition.*" Information about the event, including lodging, are available on the Historical Society web site at <https://discipleshistory.org/programs/tulsa-conference>.

This conference is an excellent opportunity for clergy and lay leaders of

Ohio to learn and to engage with others who share the dream of an anti-racist church and world. We are especially interested in ensuring diverse participation in the Conference.

The registration fee for the Conference is \$70, which includes three meals. With grants from Reconciliation Ministry and the Oreon E. Scott Foundation along with other sponsorships, DCHS will offer travel grants to help with those expenses. A live stream option will also be available. The registration form is on the DCHS web site at <https://discipleshistory.org/about/register>.

## Update from the Finance/Stewardship Team

### Financial Giving from the Congregation for February, 2022

We won't close the financial books for February 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 February, so far, our **actual** income is \$23,381. For the month this is above the budget amount by \$178. Year to date our income has been \$47,278. This is above the budget for Year to date by \$872 (1.9%).

Here is the information in table format:

<b>2022</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>YTD</b>
<b>Actual Income</b>	\$23,897	\$23,381	\$47,278
<b>Budget Income</b>	\$23,203	\$23,203	\$46,406
<b>Actual Income- Budget Income</b>	\$694	\$178	\$872
<b>% Actual Over Budget Income</b>	3.0%	0.8%	1.9%

As we shared in December, the budget approved by the Governing Board and the congregation for 2022 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 2022 Leap of Faith amount is \$19,481 for the full year, which is 7% 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.