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## PATHWAYS DECEMBER 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!

### **Christmas Services**

Sat, Dec, 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve,  
@ 7 p.m. (Kid friendly) & 10 p.m. (Candlelight Service)  
Sun, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Day, ONE Service @ 10:00 p.m.

Please join us for these special services as we celebrate the birth of  
Christ!

### **Christmas Ingathering Outreach** **December 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>**

There are many ways to help with the outreach! We also need cookies  
for the trays to give to families and helpful drivers to deliver gifts to  
homebound members. Reach out to the office if you can help with those!

### **Nursing Home Card Outreach**

After last year's incredible success, we're going to be sending out cards  
again! Please see the article from Cate Fioritto on how you can help out  
below!

### **Sign up Genius Success!**

Thank you for signing up to clean the church! There's still a few tasks  
left for December, and the link is attached in the article below.

### **Advent, 2022**

Begins November 27<sup>th</sup>. Read on to hear about our Advent season!

## Pastor's Pen

### December 2022

Ahh... December! The most wonderful time of the year! Advent! Children's choirs singing and bell choirs ringing! Christmas Eve candlelight services! Christmas Day worship! Tree trimming! Christmas inflatables inflating! Stockings hung by the chimney with care! Cookies! Parties! Secret Santa gift exchanges! Shopping! Wrapping presents! Credit card bills! Yes, indeed, the Advent season, and the Christmas season that will soon follow, are the most wonderful times of the year. The song says so, right?!

But there is a bit of a conflict in these seasons though, isn't there. I mean, things are wonderful this time of year as it becomes an intentional time to gather with family and friends and be together with the permission that it can be a day without other responsibilities and demands pressing in. My family Christmas Day (which gets scheduled for when it works for everyone) is the one day of the year when we give the gift of being together for an entire day. And because of it, it's my favorite day of the year. Still though, the season holds struggles and challenges for each of us in some way or another. Maybe we don't get to be with family like we want. Maybe a loved one died in the last year and this is the first Christmas without them. Or maybe the thought of credit card bills is fraught with worry, or not being able to provide a merry Christmas for our child. All of it can make the most wonderful time of the year also the most fearful time of the year. But the Advent and Christmas stories understand both truths, and because they do, we can step within them and find how both can be embraced.

When the angel appeared to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born, they immediately spoke a word of comfort to them: ***"Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people"*** (Luke 2:10). The angel was saying don't tremble, don't cover your eyes, don't cry, don't be afraid. Put those debilitating emotions aside and see that there is the opportunity to embrace joy! The angel knew the

people were full of fear—fear of the dimness, fear of the unknown, fear of the future. The angel knew that though who and what was coming would bring forth wonder and joy, that it didn't mean all the fear would suddenly go away. And so with the angelic declaration of universal, inclusive, unending joy, the angel also ***challenged*** the shepherds. The angel ***challenged*** them to look beyond even the most dismal of circumstances and see and feel the joy that surrounded them like the light of the heavenly host that came and sang, ***"Glory to God in the highest!"***

This angelic challenge given to the shepherds so long ago is the same angelic challenge given to each of us still today. We too are challenged to look beyond even the most dismal of circumstances and see and feel the joy that surrounds us like a light of the heavenly host that comes and still sings, ***"Glory to God in the highest!"***

The angelic challenge is not calling us to forget that in the last three years we have had to navigate and endure a global pandemic that claimed millions of lives. The angelic challenge is not calling for us to ignore record-breaking climate change, border crises, systemic and structural racism, or even hyper partisanship that has paralyzed politics of its possibilities. The angelic challenge is, however, calling us to see all that is not wonderful, and yet still embrace the joy that still surrounds us because, believe it or not, there is still joy that surrounds us! And the pinnacle of that joy is the assurance that all the not wonderfulness is known, it is seen, and God has a plan for it all, and that plan is filled with hope, peace, joy, and love.

Powers of this world have been determined to extinguishing the clamoring flame of the joy we have tried to protect. So let us remember and give thanks for Jesus' own declaration of the advent of joy and wonder in our lives. For He told us, ***"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"*** (John 15:11). Merry Christmas everyone.

Your Pastor and Friend,  
Jonathan

## **Sign Up Genius Success— Thanks to the Congregation!**

Friends, thank you for joining hands and giving time. Most of the tasks needed to cover this interim period has been covered, but there's a few more left that we need to round out this year. The nearest few are on December 18<sup>th</sup>, opening and closing the church for Sunday service. After that, the week of Christmas still has tasks available.

Amidst the busyness of Advent, we are extending that the interim cleaning sign-ups through January. The process of finding the next building management will take more time than initially expected, but the process will be more thorough and rewarding with the extra time and attention it (and our Church by extension,) will receive. Below is an article in thanks to you and all who have had a hand in maintaining and cleaning this building. Please read on to see the work you're doing in action!

See below to sign up and help out with these next tasks.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094EA8AD2BA7F9C70-interim>

## **Homebound Outreach Gift Delivery**

If you have time this holiday season to bring cheer directly to someone's home, please reach out to the office and make your interest known. We have gifts for homebound members that need to be taken to them.

## **Christmas Ingathering Outreach December 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

Outreach is hard at work preparing for our Christmas Ingathering. We are obtaining

## ***COMMUNITY OUTREACH***

### **Loaves & Fishes + Pantry November Report**

November was another record month for Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. We served over 110 Thanksgiving meals to our neighbors in need. Plus, our Pantry set a new record with 41 families provided with groceries.

In November we gave groceries to 33 seniors, 44 adults and 27 children.

We usually include a box of cold cereal as part of our groceries. In November we provided 2 boxes of cereal (1 Frosted Flakes & 1 Raisin Bran) plus a quart of shelf-stable milk. Shelf stable milk has been pasteurized at a high temperature and immediately transferred to a sterile container. This process ensures that the milk will store at room temperature for months at a time. Just make sure to refrigerate it before use and after opening. There's nothing like a cold glass of milk!

December 18 is the date for our next Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. December will be a big month because the 20th and 21st are the days for our Christmas Ingathering. If you're in need of some Christmas cheer stop by the church between 4pm & 6 pm on any of those dates and you will see lots of happy faces. We will be serving baked pasta with sides. We anticipate a crowd being so close to Christmas, so extra helpers would be appreciated!

November's meal we went through all the food we had prepared. We even ran out of forks. No one was turned away though as we have back up food and raided the pantry. Thanks to the youth who helped with delivery and food bank.

### **Bulldog Bags**

Dec. 7	Hot Chocolate Packets
Jan. 11	Ramen Noodle Packets
Feb. 8	Cereal Cups

information from the schools of families requesting assistance, contacting our outside sponsors as well as contacting the many of you who so graciously sponsor a family, shop for families, wrap presents, and donate food and monies that make this program such a success for the families in our community year after year. Donations now, of food and monies, are greatly appreciated as we prepare to share the joy of Advent with upwards of 50 families. If you would like more information or have questions about how you can support this amazing ministry, please see Ann Halpin or call 330-524-2228.

### **Ingathering Outreach** **Cookies Needed!**

We're getting close to the Ingathering! While the families will visit and receive their goods on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, we're going to be packaging trays of cookies for the families on the 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 during service to prepare for the Outreach. Every family will receive a tray of cookies, so we need donations of any cookies you can provide!

### **Thanks from Serenity Home** **And All Our Groups**

We recently received a card of gratitude from Serenity Home Hospice Care, simply saying, "Thank you so much for allowing us to use your space! – Serenity Hospice". It may not seem like much, but this is a large part of the ministry that we host here as a Church—Generosity of Space. Groups need places to work, and our giving of space to doctors and nurses as they determine goals and plans to give hospice and comfort care to those in need is a ministry we are helping with.

## ***MUSIC NOTES***

### **December 2022**

Greetings everyone! It is a very busy month music-wise here at FCC-Stow. This Sunday two of the handbell choirs will be playing at the second service as well as Scott Haywood on his trumpet. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ian Drews will be sharing his talents and Ralph Lorenz will be here to direct the choir in his arrangement of *Joy to the World*. The Kids are singing and Joyful Noise will be playing. As you know, music is also a big part of the Christmas Eve Services (7 and 10pm) as well. Bells, choirs, and brass!

Music is such a special way to worship our Lord and Savior, whether you are performing it or listening to it. It is our wish that through the music we create, that all our church family have a very Merry and Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

-Chuck

### **Summit Bells Winter Concert Series** **& Stow Heritage Ringers Concert**

The Summit Bells are having their second show of the series tonight in Christ Woodland UMC, they also have another opportunity to join in the Christmas cheer on December 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7 p.m. at Medina HS Performing Arts Center, 851 Weymouth Road, Medina, OH. Summit Bells will be performing this show with the Brass Band of the Western Reserve, so you can expect a variety of tunes and sounds for the evening!

Additionally, Stow Heritage Ringers is performing their *Christmas Around the World* concert on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 at Stow Presbyterian Church, 4150 Fishcreek road if you're looking for another opportunity to join in the holiday spirit.

Additionally, we have received thanks from Cuyahoga Falls – Good Neighbors, saying, “First Christian Church: Your Donation makes a difference. Our sincerest thanks for your generous contribution. You are helping Cuyahoga Falls Good Neighbors fulfill it’s mission to assist families within our community with food, clothing, personal, and household items.” Our stewardship in both our building and our financial outreach are seen and needed in this community.

While so many hands are coming together to clean and maintain the spaces around the church, this is a welcome reminder of the gratitude from all our groups who need places and spaces to meet and work together. Al-Anon on Mondays, Al-Anon on Tuesdays, AA Meetings on Thursdays, Boy Scouts on Tuesdays, Serenity Hospice on Thursdays, Yoga on Wednesdays, to our own choirs meeting and rehearsing in the space, every group is grateful when they have a place to meet and the spaces they need to work.

As we continue to maintain the space that we have, we pray that all hands-on deck are celebrating alongside our groups for what we do by having a church building, and being generous with its rooms. Amen.

### **Donald Myers Memorial**

If you look on the walls of the Gathering Area’s Entrance, you’ll see bricks from generations of the members here at First Christian Church of Stow. On that wall are bricks from both those who are still with us, and those who have gone on to join The Great Cloud of Witnesses, the Saints who have passed on before us. There are bricks for the Myers family, from Clinton and Virginia Myers.

Their son, Donald Myers, who now lives in Wilmington, Delaware, just passed

## ***YOUTH GROUP***

***Sunday, December 11th!***

***11:35-1pm***

***Christmas Party/Gift Wrapping!***  
We will be wrapping our gifts for the in gathering and having a little Christmas celebration! Food will be provided.

away on Thanksgiving morning. Don, known for his fixing ability and sense of humor, has left a huge impact in his community and family, and will be deeply missed. He is remembered here for his service as a Deacon, and as his wife, Karen, said, his frequent trips to get donuts during service after initial duties. We are grateful for his service to the Church and are praying for the Myers family as they grieve and celebrate this Wednesday with a memorial in Delaware. See the link below to read the full obituary, find details about the memorial, and more.

<https://www.dohertyfh.com/obituary/Donald-Myers>

### **Nursing Home Christmas Card Outreach**

With the amazing donation of Christmas cards last year, we have a jumpstart on the nursing home outreach for this year. To give some background to the project, I started this outreach a few years ago after reading a book where the author told a story about his father taking him to nursing homes as a kid to visit with the residents. This story resonated with me so

much, the thought of someone taking the time to visit with complete strangers and also instilling the value of compassion to the next generation. I decided to take leftover Christmas cards for the year, fill them out, and drop them off to nursing homes for them to be passed out with the residents. I shared this outreach with First Christian Church of Stow last year, and the support was overwhelming! We were able to distribute 525 cards to Stow and Kent facilities. Also, FCCS contact cards were added to the card distributions to share information about our church and the in-person and online church services we provide.

Once again, I will be collecting Christmas cards to fill out and distribute to local nursing homes and assisted care facilities. A donation box will be placed in the church lobby. Here are all the ways you can be involved!

- If you have any boxes of unused cards (even if it is a few), please consider donating them by dropping them off in the donation tote. I will fill them out with a message and deliver them to a local nursing home.
- Feel free to fill out your donated cards with messages for the residents! Wish them a blessed Christmas season to remind them they are thought of and prayed for.
- Don't have cards to give this year? That's okay, you can still be involved! Like Easter and Halloween candy, the best time to buy Christmas cards is after Christmas! Stock up on 75% off boxes of cards and donate them to the tote for next year.

To include my church family even more, there will be card signing sessions after the second church service. Blank cards will be available in the library on December 4<sup>th</sup> and

11<sup>th</sup>. Please stop by to write a message to a resident wishing them a blessed Christmas season and letting them know our church is praying for them. Can we donate more than 525 cards this year? I know we can because of your help!

Thank you again for your interest and involvement. Please feel free to contact me through the church office if you have any questions.

Thank you for your support and donations!

Cate Fioritto

Of course, the biggest decorating holiday is just around the corner... Only 90 days until Christmas! Church decor will need to be changed after the services on NOVEMBER 20<sup>th</sup> and throughout that week- so we are ready for the first Sunday of Advent on November 27<sup>th</sup>. Many hands are needed to haul the trees out from the narthex, haul boxes of ornaments and wreaths out from storage, and carry all the fall decor upstairs to be put away. We have 6 Christmas trees to decorate so please consider doing one as a family project. If you would like to volunteer or have any questions, please see Ann Halpin or call 330-524-2228.

### **Acme Community Cash Back!** **August 4<sup>th</sup> – December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Save all your Acme Receipts from August 4<sup>th</sup> through December 25<sup>th</sup>! There will be a box in the sanctuary to deposit your receipts in on Sundays. Proceeds will benefit Dorcas Rebekah Guild, Mary Martha Guild, and our Blanket Ministry.

### **Advent, 2022**

“As you leave this place, may you go knowing that  
from generation to generation,

we have been claimed and loved.  
From generation to generation,  
God has been by our side.  
From generation to generation,  
We are not alone.  
The God of yesterday and the God of  
tomorrow  
knows you by name, loves you, and calls  
you forth, saying 'Go be the person you are  
called to be, love wildly, do justice, and  
come back soon.'  
May it be so. Amen"

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From Generation to Generation, we have  
been claimed and loved. At the core of the

Advent story, revealed to us through the  
Gospels, is a story about love from God to  
humankind. This year, we will be focusing  
on the humans in the story of Advent, as  
God interacts with them, urges them  
forward, and as they pray to God for  
guidance to understand the full picture of the  
Advent story. As we make our way into  
Advent, and through Christmastide to  
Epiphany, we will see how God has always  
been reminding us, that from generation to  
generation, we too have been claimed and  
loved.