



3493 Darrow Road, Stow, Ohio 44224
330.688.4450
www.firstchristianstow.org

PATHWAYS

APRIL 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!

Stow Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 1st, 10am-1pm

Silver Springs Park, 5238 Young Rd., Stow

Look for more details and how you can help our church's involvement in this community event!

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil, Easter Sunday

Children's Processional at the opening of the 10:30 time of Worship

Youth Group after worship until 1p.m.

Maundy Thursday time of worship on April 5th, at 6 p.m.

in-person in Disciples Hall.

Community Good Friday worship, April 6th, TBA

Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil, April 8th, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

More information inside.

Easter Sunrise Service, April 9th, 7 a.m.

More information inside.

Easter Sunday Worship, April 9th,

8:30 in the Chapel, 10:30 in the Sanctuary and on Facebook.

Governing Board, Monday, April 10th, 7 p.m.

The Governing Board will meet on Monday, April 10th, at 7 p.m.

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry April 16th, 4-6p.m.

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

This will also time will also include the +pantry food distribution.

See inside this issue for more information.

First Meeting of the Revamped Diaconate!

Sunday, April 16th, Time TBA

A meeting of the newly reformed Diaconate will meet with Jonathan and representatives from the Elders and Trustees to begin finalizing the structure and duties of this ministry team.

More information inside!

Pastor's Pen

April 2023

It's almost here! Can you feel it? The trees are budding; the flowers are finding their way out of the cold ground toward the bright warm sun. The days are longer. All of that, and more mean it is almost here—Opening Day of the 2023 Major League Baseball season!! What did you think I was going to say? Oh, right. And *Easter* is almost here! (Ok, before you start that sternly worded email, just first read the rest of this piece.)

In my office hangs a Life Magazine picture of baseball fans perched high atop a building overlooking a long-ago baseball stadium in Pittsburgh, giving new meaning to the term "*cheap seats*." Below the picture is a quote by Ernie Harwell which reads, "*Baseball? It's just a game. As simple as a bat and a ball, yet as complex as the American spirit it symbolizes. It's a sport, a business, and sometimes even a religion.*"

I love this statement because sometimes to me, baseball is a religion. I have on more than one occasion sought to invoke the Holy Spirit upon a Cleveland baseball pitcher looking to get out of a ninth inning jam. I relied heavily on God's grace to lift me up out of the depths of despair back in 1995, 1997, and 2016 when the Indians were so close to a World Series title—not to mention last season, when the Guardians were playing proving the preseason pundits wrong and going further than anyone thought possible. So yes, baseball is a like a religion in the manner that it is something I am passionate about, go to daily, enjoy, follow, and use as a means to forget about a long day, and all the other *surface* matters religion can do for a person. But baseball certainly does not go to the depth of my soul like my Christian faith does. Baseball runs deep, but not that deep.

For some though, the "*Church of Baseball*" (or "*Church of 'fill in whatever sport you want'*") becomes their only religion. William Herzog, a New Testament scholar at

Colgate Rochester Divinity School, writes "*People are incurably religious. We have to have some form of religion, and for some people it's baseball. It's only a game, but it has elements that point beyond.*"

Is this true? Are we all looking for elements that "*point beyond*" and in doing so we use sports to get there? I shudder to think this is accurate, but alas when I consider such for even a moment I begin to see the accuracy of Herzog's statement. I've been watching the NCAA "March Madness" tournament, with all of its wild upsets, and the faces of shocked and dismayed fans support his statement for sure. In a world where athletes are revered (and paid) as gods, and stadiums are as cathedrals, I can only shake my head and grow sad at the "*point beyond*" many of our society is trying to get to.

A wise pastor (and brother) said to me once that Lent is like *Spring Training for Christians*. We practice, get into shape, and then we hit the thrust of a new season, which for Christians is Easter. We put into play what we've been practicing. We implement our Lenten practice so that we can do our best to thrive in our post Easter world of sharing and living the Good News that Jesus is risen, and because he is, everything changes for the better.

So, as we come to the end our *Lenten Spring Training*, and ready ourselves for a new season in the life of the church, as Christians, may we focus ourselves on the real meaning of our religion: Faith so deep that we embrace Christ Jesus, who overcame the cross, who rose from the dead, so that we could reach that "*point beyond.*" May we all have a blessed Easter season, which is truly my favorite season of the year. Happy Easter everyone.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Maundy Thursday Agape Service **Thursday, April 6th 6 p.m.**

Maundy Thursday at First Christian Stow is always a holy and sacred night, and is set to be such once again this year with the return of the agape dinner portion of this service.

We will gather to worship on this holy night together in Disciples Hall where the space will once again be transformed into that sacred upper room where Jesus gathered with his Disciples on the night before his crucifixion. There we join with our Savior to share with him a meal intended to fill us up spiritually more than physically because this meal, like the one Jesus shared with his Disciples, leads to a profound and moving time of worship where the dim setting, impactful music, moving and touching prayers, holy scripture, and living words of institution take on a deeper and more powerful meaning than any other time of the year.

Please plan to make this time of worship part of your Holy Week remembrances and celebration.

Community Good Friday Time of Worship **Friday, April 7th, TBA**

This time of scripture, meditation, and song will take us through the passion narratives found in the Gospels while guiding us in considering and remembering again the sacrifice Jesus made so that we would have eternal and everlasting life. You are invited and encouraged to make this part of your Holy Week experience. Time and location to be announced.

Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil **Saturday April 8th, 7 a.m.-7 p.m.**

The Apostle Paul calls for us to “*pray without ceasing.*” He didn’t mean we have to be on our knees or kneeling before a chancel 24/7, but rather that we are open to God’s presence with us at all times, and that a prayerful life is what ought to lead us in our daily lives.

As we seek to focus on our Holy Week walk, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the confusion and fear of Maundy Thursday, to the agony of Good Friday, may we aim to take a part of Holy Saturday to intentionally be in prayer for the new life that is made possible through the life, death, and soon resurrection of our Savior Jesus.

To do this we invite you to be part of this annual prayer vigil on Saturday, April 2nd. This prayer vigil will be held from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., in the Chapel at the church, or in any location of your choosing—your home, a park, a quiet spot, or maybe even the front steps of our Chapel where you can let the sounds of the busy road and the people passing by guide your prayers for our community and the world around us.

You can follow this link to our Sign-Up Genius and sign-up for a half hour time slot for the prayer vigil:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094EA8AD2BA7F9C70-prayer> (Although sign-up is not required to be part of this day of prayer.)

Multiple people can sign-up for the same timeslot. We invite you to use the comment section of the sign-up to share a prayer you will be lifting up, a prayer request, where you plan to be praying from, or any other relevant information to the prayer vigil. It won’t be difficult to come up with matters to lift in prayer, but some themes and focuses

to pray about could include: Essentials for our members and community; healing for those in need; peace for those feeling restless; hope for those feeling hopeless; comfort for those feeling alone; gratefulness for God's constant and abiding presence.

Let us join our hearts and minds and spirits together, no matter the distance between us, and go to God in prayer.

Lenten Wednesday Opportunity
Wednesdays, 6:45-7:45p.m.
March 29, 2023

One last Lenten Wednesday Opportunity will be held on Wednesday, March 29th from 6:45-7:45...or until the 500-600 treat bags for the Community Bunny Hop event are filled!

That's right, our Christian Education Team will be representing our church on Saturday, April 1st (no joke!) at the Stow Community Bunny Hop event to be held at Silver Springs Park. This event will see hundreds of youngsters and parents come out to have a hopping good time hopping around the bunny trail where they will collect goodies and treats from area churches and businesses. This event has grown in popularity, and it is anticipated that hundreds of little ones will be hopping around this bunny trail. Which means we need to be ready to great and treat each one!

Many hands make like work! Please consider how you can support this important event and ministry—come help stuff treat bags, donate individually wrapped candies, or give a gift to help purchase needed treats!

Trustee Workday - Spring Cleaning
Saturday, April 15th, 9:00 a.m. –
12:00 p.m.

Join us on the 15th for a day of Spring Cleaning around the church! This spring workday, we're focusing on cleaning up the yard and our windows. If you're available to share this gift of your time, our whole congregation will benefit from your efforts!

First Meeting of the Revamped
Diaconate
Sunday April 16th, Time TBA

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ~1 Corinthians 12:12

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

To all who have stepped up and thrown their name and willing heart of service into the newly revamped and reforming First Christian Church Diaconate!

Now that the new Diaconate has been set into motion, a meeting will be held with representatives from the Elders and Trustees, along with Jonathan, to begin assembling, assigning, and coordinating two teams of Deacons, followed by delegating needs, duties, and tasks to each team. New Deacons will have a significant role in finalizing the last parts of this revamped team of Deacons. So, if you were considering throwing your name and willing heart of service into this newly revamped team, there is still time to do so! Let Jonathan know or make plans to be at this meeting on Sunday, April 16th, at a time that will be shared soon! (Either at 9:30 a.m. or after second service.)

VBS – Save the Date!
July 9th – 13th, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Mark your calendars and get ready for a week of fun for the kids! Share this date with families you know and let them know there's a place for their kids to enjoy a Vacation Bible School here in Stow! More information will be coming soon—Get the word out now!

All Church Picnic
Sunday May 21st at 12:00 p.m., Noon

There's no better way to kick off the summer than with a good old fashioned summer kick off picnic luncheon right after church! Mark your calendars now for Sunday, May 21st right after second service.

This all-church-potluck-picnic will be held at Water Works Park at the Kelsey Creek Pavilion, which is located behind the Water Works Park pool, near the large playground, at the northeast end of the park. The church will be providing hot dogs, baked beans, watermelon, drinks, desserts, and snow cones! Please plan to bring with you a side dish and/or dessert to share, and your table settings! Hope to see you at the park on Sunday, May 21st!

April Response – Eastern KY Brethren Disaster Ministries

On the 19th, we will hear from Charlie Redman about his work with Brethren Disaster Ministries, which is a frequent partner with Week of Compassion. Charlie will be sharing his experience, some of the situations that Brethren Disaster Ministries and Week of Compassion have come together to restore, from blighted homes to

YOUTH

Youth Group in April
(and a little of May too!)

There's a lot of Youth Group happening in the month of April. It will be fun, faithful, and maybe even a little adventuresome! Check it out...

Sunday, **April 2nd** regular youth group, after church until 1 p.m. Lunch will be served. (*Anyone want to help make this lunch munching happen?*)

Sunday, **April 16th** regular Youth Group meeting until 1 p.m. Lunch will be served. (*Again, anyone want to help make this lunch munching happen?*)

Sunday, **April 30th** regular Youth Group meeting after worship, but this may turn into our annual hiking outing. (*Shhhh... Don't tell Mother Nature because she always thinks we want it to rain on our parade of hiking!*)

The plan is to have **“Youth Sunday” on May 14th**, which will mean we need to begin working on and planning for that special day of worship this coming Sunday, April 2nd... at our meeting... that will be at the church... after worship... and after we eat some lunch...and maybe dessert if anyone brings some... but with a bit of time left over to play some giant beach volleyball-ball... or some wicked Pilo-Polo... or kickball in the parking lot if that's what you want to do...or some other game that is loads of fun to play with a group of youth...and a pastor who still thinks he has the youthfulness of a young person... so, you know, that waiting ER visit to happen could be amusing to be around for... so just come this Sunday...you won't regret it...but Jonathan might!! See you at Youth Group in April!!

repairing uninhabitable spaces after massive weather damage.

If you are interested in helping out with this incredibly meaningful work after hearing about his experiences and the lives of those impacted, please see the details below about their upcoming week of work coming at the end of April.

April 23 – 29: S Ohio/KY & Charlie Redman Team

Tentative Housing Location:

Hampton UMC, 15 Peggs Fork Rd.,
Campton, KY 41301

What you Need to Know:

- Housing, meals, tools, and transport to project sites provided
- Air mattresses are provided, but you are welcome to bring your own
- Working with Eastern KY Conference of United Methodist Church
- Project Leaders: Charlie Redman, Cliff & Arlene Kindy

Damages: 2022 Flooding Event – Kentucky faced 11” of rain in just two hours. Major highways were 8 to 10 feet under water. 300 homes were destroyed or damaged. There were 39 deaths, and the 40th victim of these floods is still missing.

As are the case with many of their projects, they aren't sure of what they'll need to do until they arrive to survey the damages fully. If you are interested in going, please contact the church office, and you will be put in contact with Charlie and kept up to date with information as it is made available.

Summer Camp Dates / Information!

Camp Christian, Summer 2023

Summertime will be here before you know it! If your student or another youth

you know is interested in going to camp, make note of the options listed below! The early bird deadline for every camp is May 1st to save a few dollars before you get to camp! Additionally, if you're interested, you can sponsor a camper! Donors may contribute full or partial week payments, and they are tax deductible. If you're interested in going to camp, or looking to sponsor, contact the church office for a registration form for camping or the contact information for sponsoring.

With dedicated counselors, campers will be led through a week-long Christian experience in which, through classes, workshops, and organized play, they will strengthen their knowledge, deepen their faith, and build everlasting friendships. Each camp is deeply rooted with wonderful traditions, but all have the same goal – strengthening our faith in Jesus.

Grandparents camp

For children completing kindergarten, 1st or 2nd grade and their Grandparent
June 8 – 10, 2023

Ribbit – Junior Camp

For children completing 2nd grade and/or 3rd and 4th graders whose parents want a shorter camp experience
July 5th – 8th, 2023

Otter – Junior camp

For children completing 5th grade & those in 3rd & 4th grades ready for a full week of camp
June 11th – 17th, 2023

Music Camp

For youth completing 6th – 12th grades
June 25th – June 29th, 2023

Chi Rho Camps

For Youth completing 6th, 7th, or 8th grades this spring.

Camp #1

June 18th – 24th, 2023

Camp #2

July 9th – 15th

CYF Conferences

For youth completing grades 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th this spring.

CYF Week #1

June 18th – 24th, 2023

Chi Rho Combo week

CYF Week #2

July 16th – 22nd, 2023

Advance – Full Week

For anyone ages 19 – 29 (At least one year out of High School)

July 30th – August 6th, 2023

Week(s) of Compassion 2023!

“Rise Up Anew”

They Rise Up Anew each morning, so great is God’s faithfulness.

~Lamentations 3:21-23

Each February our church seeks to support our denomination’s relief and humanitarian aid ministry called Week of Compassion. Our goal for 2023 was to raise \$2,000. As of the end of March we have collected a total of... (*drum roll please...*) a whopping \$3,063!! Thank you to everyone who has given so generously to this year’s Week(s) of Compassion campaign! These contributions are made up of:

- \$650 from the bake sale
- \$213 from the Soup Cook-off

- \$100 from coin boxes turned in by the children
- \$2100 from general contributions

And please note if you haven’t yet, there is still time to get a gift to the church to be included in this year’s offering. Our individual offerings matter and can make a huge impact because gifts to Week of Compassion multiply over and over, enabling the Church as one body to achieve significant change in the world. We are one in Christ Jesus, and our love given changes the world. For more information check out the Week of Compassion website at www.weekofcompassion.org

Week(s) of Compassion 2023 Bake Sale!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year’s Week of Compassion Bake sale a smashing success once again! Thank you to all who donated to the bake sale and thank you to all who so lovingly and graciously sacrificed their diet and made purchases for the bake sale! Your willingness to do such is greatly appreciated. We all hope you were somehow able to manage not letting your sweet treats go to waste. (Except maybe they did go to...waist!)

And a very special and immense thank you to Mary Ellen Neitz who once again went above and beyond to coordinate and organize and lead yet another successful Week of Compassion Bake Sale! Thank you so much for all you do and make happen for the ministries of our church!

Sketti N Skits Talent Show 2023— Back Where It Belongs!!!

It was a night back in that familiar venue of the First Christian Church Fellowship Hall where the stage lights blazed bright and the “sketti” was served up piping hot! Sketti ‘n’ Skits 2023 once again returned to an in-person event, and it was an absolute blast! Special thanks to everyone who contributed to and turned out for our annual talent show! What a fabulous night of fun and frivolity! Thanks to everyone who submitted an act and who participated and supported this dinner for Christian Education ministries.

If you missed the show do yourself a favor and check it out on our church’s Facebook page or on our YouTube channel. You can see the video online at <https://youtu.be/JB9VmCo6Cyg>.

Enjoy below a favorite presentation from the evening!

Top 10 Reasons to Attend First Christian Church of Stow

Written & presented by Lizzie Aukeman at Sketti ‘n’ Skits

10. You get to watch Pastor Jonathan sweat during the Children’s Message
9. With Easter coming up, you have to make sure your pew is reserved so the C & E crowd doesn’t take it.
8. Since the deacons haven’t been passing around the offering plate, you can sneak out without tithing!
7. After you finish Pastor’s Class, you get to have a little snack at the end of service.
6. You can go through the Trunk or Treat line as many times as you want!
5. You visited one Sunday morning and took a wrong turn in the downstairs hallway. Now you’re lost and you can’t find the exit.

4. You just know that sooner or later, Mr. Kobb and his Tuba are going to “dot the i” during service.
3. You’re still waiting on that pumpkin you ordered in 2017
2. Maybe you can convince Mrs. Halpin to put up the Christmas decorations at your house, too.
1. I bet you thought I was going to say, “You’re well rested after the sermon.” Shame on you! No, the number 1 reason to attend First Christian Church of Stow is to spend time with your church family!

Lay Preaching Academy ***I Love to tell the Story!***

April 21 & 22, 2023, Camp Christian
10335 Maple Dell Rd. Marysville,
Ohio 43040

The goal of this event, and hopefully others like it in the future, will be to train a cadre of lay (non-clergy) preachers to fill pulpits in our Ohio churches either short term or long term. Some of the topics to be covered will include: public speaking basics, how to do sermon preparation, where to find quality resources, what are aspects of the modern style of preaching, African American preaching, the challenges of a female preacher, using multimedia in sermons, learning from great preachers, and much more.

This event was imagined and sponsored by the Regional Elders, this program will run Friday night through Saturday afternoon.

There is also a “Saturday Only” option for those whose schedules may not allow for the full event. The Friday night session begins with registration at 7:30 and worship at 8:00

PM. Saturday begins with Morning Devotions at 9:00 AM and concludes at 3:30 PM. A more detailed schedule will be sent to all who register. Saturday meals are included.

For more information and to register go online to: <https://www.ccinoh.com/regional-calendar.aspx?events=10992&action=details>. Registration deadline is April 13th.

Camp Christian Work Day **May 20th**

We will once again be hosting volunteers for a day of cleaning, repairing, and general preparation of Camp Christian in anticipation of the Summer Camp and Conference programs!

There are tasks suited for a wide range of ages and abilities. We hope you will join us!

More details, including specific tasks*, how to sign up, how to donate, and more can be found at <https://www.ccinoh.com/regional-calendar.aspx?events=10980&action=details>

Lost And Found Items



If you have been missing your glasses, an earring, or your ring, please look at the

following picture! These items have been hanging around unclaimed for a while now. If any of these are yours, they're in the office. (The red shining item is a Christmas stocking).

Please note: There is also an iPhone Charger that was left in the OUR Classroom, room 202.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry February **Report**

The March meal give away had us hurriedly opening extra food. Thankfully we always keep backup.

The next drive through meal will be April 16th 4-6 p.m. We are serving baked pasta and sides. Thanks to Mike Kostensky and leftover sauce from Sketti 'n' Skits we will make a half a dozen trays.

As we expected we served more people in February than we did in January. In January we served 30 families consisting of 72 individuals. In February we served 36 families consisting of 92 individuals.

Also, in February 2022 we served 25 families consisting of 56 individuals. In other words, in 2023 we served almost double the number we served in 2022.

The dinner of soup (choice of two!) and sandwiches was a big hit.

And a special shout out to the Girl Scouts for helping with the distribution. They brought a bunch of energy and brightened the day of all involved, from volunteers to customers.

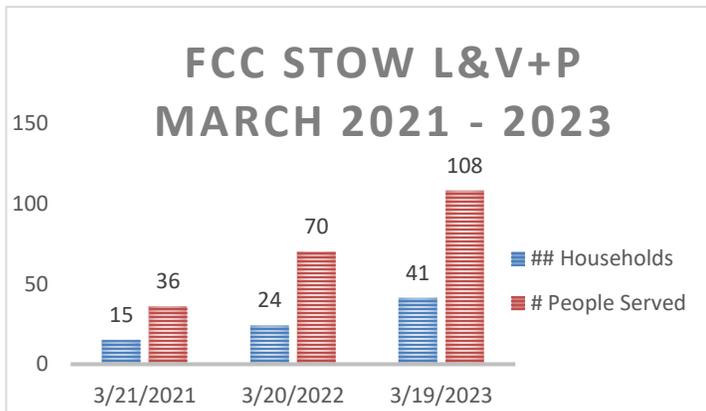
We expect our growth to continue this year, especially now that additional pandemic-related SNAP benefits have expired.

We also scored 100% on the Akron Canton Regional Food Bank's On-Site inspection of our building. Thanks to all those who work to keep our building safe and clean.

Thanks to your support we are ready and able to show compassion to those in need throughout 2023 and beyond.

Our next Loaves & Fishes + Pantry is scheduled for Sunday March 19.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry March Report



This chart shows the growth of our Loaves & Fishes + Pantry over three years. These are numbers for March 2021, 2022, and 2023.

On March 19, 2023 we served 41 families with groceries and 108 people with a hot meal. This is our biggest month ever!

Dinner, featuring creamed chicken over biscuits, was big favorite with everyone. Each family also received 5 bags of groceries with everything from soup to nuts. We included breakfast items of cold cereal

(with shelf stable milk), Entenmann's goodies, and bars. Lunch items included peanut butter, jelly, bread, trail mix, and chips. Dinner foods included mac & cheese, beef stew, a variety of vegetables, a box of scalloped potatoes, and a special chocolate treat. Everyone also received a 3 lb. bag of oranges, paper towels, and laundry detergent. We were able to provide all of these items for a cost \$240 or approximately \$2.22 per person.

This service and its growth is only possible because of the support of everyone in our church and the people who receive these items are very grateful that our church is here to provide help.

Our next Loaves & Fishes + Pantry is scheduled for Sunday April 16.