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PATHWAYS OCTOBER 2023

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

Find us on social
media @FCCStow!

Cakes & Connection

October 15th, 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Join us after Sanctuary Service on October 15th for an opportunity to connect and learn more about the work that our committees, elders, and trustees do around our church!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

October 15th @ 4-6 p.m.

All hands on deck! We're seeing more need than ever as we continue to grow our ministry in Stow! Join us as we provide for families in need with a warm meal!

Stow Woman's Fellowship Dinner

October 18th

While it took a break for COVID concerns, it's time for the women of Stow to fellowship again together! Save the date and look forward to more information in the weeks to come about the details.

Trunk or Treat 2023 - Sunday October 22, 3-5pm

We're just a few weeks away! Look inside for more information on how to help out, and what to expect! Share this information with friends and families with kids who are looking to enjoy this community event!

Trustee Workday – Fall Clean Up

October 28th, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Help us wrap up for the winter! There's a number of tasks that will be necessary to get the church ready for the snowy season. See the article below for more information!

Pastor's Pen, October 2023

After 26 years the vision became clear, illuminated in all of its colorful and splendid beauty, piercing the cool gray fall day and making the falling rain drops into nothing of any consequence. And I could not stop looking at it. (Except when I was driving the scissors lift of course!) I just kept staring up at it, mesmerized by its beauty, hardly able to believe that after so long it had finally happened, it was finally completed.

That all happened just the other day, Thursday, September 28, 2023. This was the day the new memorial stained-glass window was installed here at the church, in the upper peak of the south facing wall, where for the last 26 years a carefully crafted plywood insert had sat, waiting to be replaced with the fruition of a vision that was cast when the “new” building was erected. All of it made possible thanks to the generous gifts of so many who gave openhandedly in memory and in honor of loved ones and friends. With those gifts the Memorial Team, the Trustees, and others from the church, along with Akron Glass, Swiss Woodcraft (who built our chancel furniture several years back) and Ott Electric all worked and collaborated together to make this vision a reality. And I could not be happier with how it all came out.

We will share with you pictures and reflections on this project on Sunday, October 1st with a slideshow of the installation. And it is a fitting day for this presentation as we will be celebrating *World Communion Sunday*—the day when all Christians around the world, come together at our Lord's Table and share in the sacred meal of bread and cup. As people of the bread of life and the cup of salvation, with the Chalice and St. Andrews cross as our denomination symbol, we live into the belief that Christ invites any and all to gather at his table because all people—all of God's children—are welcome to sit with Jesus and know his grace, forgiveness, and love.

“We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.” This is

our denominational mission statement—a denomination that puts the Lord's table at the center of our faith, our call, our purpose, our witness. An open and welcoming table has been our church's primary witness since our founders first established the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They understood that this movement would have no credibility in our witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ for everybody, everywhere, and always regardless of who you are, how you think, or what you've done; if we are dismissive and unloving in our relationships with people who think differently, act differently, vote differently, or believe differently than we do. Which means we too, today, must remain steadfast in continuing to be this type of movement, this type of witness, this type of church.

And I think that is why I couldn't stop staring at our new window, with the chalice lit and a bright horizon rising up behind it. I couldn't stop staring because that window represents the very best of us. It represents our faith and belief that no matter how dim the world may look, a new dawn is surely coming. It represents who we are as a church that welcomes all to gather at the Lord's Table. And it represents the many good and faithful servants, whose shoulders we stand on, who before they moved on earthly life to life eternal showed us what it means and what it looks like to *be* a good and faithful servant.

I can't wait for each of you to see this beautiful new window. I pray it will be a beacon of light to each of you, and to each and every person who sees it, that they may in some way or another come to know and feel that the light of Christ shines for all to see and embrace. But even more so, I pray it will inspire all of us to remember who we are... *“We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.”*

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Youth Schedule for October 15th & 22nd

Youth will be meeting for the 15th with a regular meeting after worship until 1:15 p.m. and on the 22nd for hosting a Trunk for Trunk-Or-Treat!

Cakes & Connections October 15th, after Sanctuary Service!

Join us in Fellowship Hall for a chance to connect and reconnect with your church family! After second service, we'll have a "speed dating" style of introductions to different ministries around the church, where you can get familiar with all the many ways our church works to both serve in our congregation, and in our community. There's also a chance to win a cake to take home with you! Visit with us and enjoy a chance at fellowship, learning more about volunteering, and see people from all around the church! We'll see you there!

Women of Faith Dinner October 18th, 6:00 p.m., Lower Hall at Holy Family Church

Join the Women of Faith in Stow for this great fellowship opportunity! The dinner will be catered by Guidos. Admission is \$15. A program will be provided by Lisa Snow & Shelley Johnson of Project Give share about their positive impact in the community by helping small non-profit organizations in Northeast Ohio.

Bulldog Bags Donation Items

October 9th: Mac N Cheese Cups
November 6th: Cup of Soup

Trunk or Treat Sunday October 22nd, 3 - 5 p.m.

Trunk or Treat is right around the corner! We have a number of ways to help out with this big community event!

Join us Sunday October 22, 3-5pm! Wear your costumes and trick or treat in the church parking lot! We are in need of volunteers to make this event successful! See below for how to help!

- Host a Trunk! Decoration your trunk and bring candy to give out for 75-100 kids. Sign up in the Gathering Area or email christianed@firstchristianstow.org
- Candy Donations! There is a bin in the Gathering Area for candy donations (individually wrapped candy please). Contact Anna and Richelle for questions or more information.

Trustee Workday—Fall Clean Up October 28th 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Join us as we focus on cleaning up the church property for the winter, raking leaves, repairing our snow blower, cleaning the windows of the library doors, and replacing some lights! All are welcome to assist as much as they are able, and many hands will make light work.

2024 International Affairs Seminar for Youth - Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)

**Friday, March 8th 2024, 7 p.m. –
Saturday, March 16th 2024, 4 p.m.**

*Formerly known as "United Nations
Seminar"*

The International Affairs Seminar for Youth (IAS) Challenges youth to learn about international affairs, U.S. Foreign policy,

and the Church through study, discussion, and presentations during their time in New York City and Washington, D.C. It seeks to encourage faith-based critical thinking and reflection through prayer, worship, discussion and community building. We are excited to be partnering this impactful experience with the Heartland Conference, United Church of Christ.

The trip is limited to 46 high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. It will cost \$1,200 per student, which will cover bussing, lodging, most meals, tour fees, 2 theatre plays, and more, including a \$200 for personal use. The trip will depart and return from 1st Christian Church in Wadsworth. If a student you know would be interested, an application form is available at ccinoh.org. There are a number of pre-requisites to going on this trip, outlined in the IAS newsletter in the church office, but they are worth navigating for this very special opportunity!

If a potential student or their families are worried about the costs of this trip, there are financial assistance opportunities and scholarship options. Contact the church office for more information and share this opportunity with students you know!

Church Service Announcements
Recorded Announcements at the
Start of Service.

We're providing a new opportunity to get the word out on Sundays! CSA's (Both as "Church Service" Announcements, but also "church SERVICE" announcements), will be played after prelude, right before Jonathan opens up our service. We will be recording 15-30 second announcement videos that we will run on Sunday Morning. If you run an outreach opportunity or have an event coming up, we can even provide

On-Location recording of where your service or event will take place! Contact fccstow@firstchristianstow.org for Christian or Jonathan to sign up for your CSA before your next church event!

Think- Pray-Connect from
September

In case you missed it, please see below for our folks from the Think-Pray-Connect in September. Keep them in your prayers and connect with them when you get the chance!

Julie Cooper & Family
219 Indian Hills Dr.
Tallmadge OH 44278

*Pray and connect with the Mills Family
as they grieve the loss of Marv.*

Sue, Anna & Chris Lloyd
3400 Charring Cross Dr.
Stow OH 44224-4609

Jim & Debbie
3855 Northview Dr.
Stow OH 44224

Patricia & Jim Ruschak
701 Hunters Trl
Akron OH 44313

*Pray and connect with the Lloyd Family
as they grieve the loss of Sara Lloyd.*

Plus Pantry Paper Product Procurement!

In recent months our free dinner and pantry ministries have seen an increase in guests making their way to our church on the third Sunday of the month. We are thrilled we to be able to provide this much

needed ministry to all who come. Still, we aim to do more. And one part of this ministry we can do more of is helping provide much needed paper towel and toilet paper products to those who come to our Plus Pantry.

Paper products are always needed, but are not always available through the Akron-Canton Food Bank. And when they are, they of course require funds that could go toward needed food items. So the Outreach Team is asking for congregational support of these needed paper products through a current collection in the Gathering Area.

You are invited to support this collection with even just one roll of paper towels or toilet paper, or with a plethora of paper products! No amount is too small or too large because these resources can be packed into smaller amounts and distributed in an equitable manner based on the number of family members who will be served.

So let's see just how big of a pile of paper products we can produce and procure in the Gathering Area! Thanks for your thoughtful and generous support of this important ministry.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry September Report

WOW! What a great day on September 17. We served meals and provided groceries for 67 families consisting of 182 individuals. This number was way over the number of meals prepared and groceries packed ahead of time. Nevertheless our dedicated volunteers rolled up their shirtsleeves and went to work. Every guest who came to our door went home with a hot meal and groceries supplies.

The paper towels and toilet paper everyone donated was big part of this. Without your donations we would have run out of those two essentials. Thank you!

We had 14 new families in September. That's double our previous best of 7 new families.

Here's some interesting information. This shows the cities where our visitors reside. This number of families and people we've served this year (so far).

Just as people who worship with us come from all over, the people we serve come from all over.

We first added the pantry to our existing Loaves & Fishes in January 2021. That first month we served meals and groceries to 11 families consisting of 26 people. Thanks to the work of our volunteers and the generous support of our congregation we've been able to build this outreach up to our current level.

We don't know what the future holds but with the continued support of all of you we will continue to build this program and offer those in need a warm greeting, a hot meal, and a supply of items to stock their larders.

See below for the table of where we see our guests from for Loaves & Fishes + Pantry.

2023			
City:		# Families	# Guests
STOW		154	443
CUYAHOGA FALLS		67	218
AKRON		69	153
TALLMADGE		30	92
KENT		31	60
MUNROE FALLS		13	24
HUDSON		10	23
RAVENNA		6	8
(blank)		2	8
WADSWORTH		1	4
NEW FRANKLIN		1	4
MANTUA		2	4
BRUNSWICK		1	3
STREETSBORO		1	2
PENINSULA		1	2



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 this past year has continued to challenge us physically, emotionally, and financially, we are back to a “new” normalcy and are truly blessed by the fact that you have remained “Devoted to Generosity “. We have survived the days of COVID and continue our Christ journey. It is nice to be back to normalcy, well our new normalcy as we continue worshipping together in person as well as on Facebook, and our Pastor Jonathan continues to move us forward. The worship process has slightly changed, but the most important aspect remains, hearing about life stories and God's word and devotion to us. The choirs and ensembles are back bringing spiritual messages, the youth groups are again meeting, our Christian Education team has youth Sunday School classes operating, and outside groups from within our community are filling the building during the evening hours. Because of your devotion and generosity to the mission and ministry of our church, we continue to support 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 8th, 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 29th, 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 of the Stewardship Team