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PATHWAYS SEPTEMBER 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!

Welcome Sunday, September 10th: **Return to Regular Worship Hours**

8:30 a.m. in the Chapel
9:30 Coffee Fellowship in the Library / Gathering Area
10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Woman's Retreat Meeting **September 10th, after Sanctuary Service**

There will be a final meeting on the 10th after Second Service to discuss the trip, answer any last-minute question, and make sure everyone has a ride for the trip. Safe travels to all the women on this journey of fellowship!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry **September 17th @ 4-6 p.m.**

Many of our regular volunteers for this Loaves & Fishes will be on the Woman's Retreat by this time—We need extra hands as each month has been a record-breaking month!

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!

Trunk or Treat 2023 – Sunday October 22, 3-5pm Save the Date! More information coming soon!

Chapel Ceiling Update from John McCreight

Look inside for some good news about our Chapel Ceiling! We're on a long journey, but we're in good hands by the grace of God.

Pastor's Pen, September 2023

As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, we confess Jesus is the Christ, the son of the Living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world. In Christ's name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people. A key principle of the identity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada is that we are 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. This right here, is who we are.

And in 2013 the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada called upon the Christian Church *"to recognize itself as striving to become a people of grace and welcome to all God's children though differing in race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, physical or mental ability, political stance or theological perspective"* and *"to affirm the faith, baptism and spiritual gifts of all Christians regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that neither is grounds for exclusion from fellowship or service within the church, but we celebrate that all are part of God's good creation"*

This. This is also who we are.

So when a new resolution came before the 2023 General Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky last month, many wondered if who we say we are would be lived out. I am profoundly proud and deeply moved to say we have lived out who we are.

It is resolution *GA-2352: Invitation to oppose anti-trans legislation and affirm the dignity of transgender and gender-diverse people*. And when this resolution came up for a vote to be adopted and brought into the fold of who we are as Disciples and how we live out our call as Disciples; or to not be adopted, we Disciples made a resounding statement...with absolute silence.

General Assemblies are a lot of fun. Seeing old friends and colleagues. Picking up swag at all the booths of colleges, seminaries, and ministry organizations. Spectacular worship services with incredible music and song and dynamic preaching. But General Assemblies can also be a tiny bit tedious, particularly when it comes to business sessions. However, they can be joyful, fun, and even touching at times. For instance, the General Assembly re-elected Rev. Teri Hord-Owens to a

second term as General Minister and President. Rev. Hord-Owens is the first African American and second woman to lead the denomination—and the first African American woman to lead a mainline Christian denomination. So, yeah, that was a pretty spectacular moment for sure. There are, still though, times when General Assemblies can get a little tense. And that was what many anticipated when GA-2352 was brought to the Assembly floor. But, ye us of little faith would soon see we were wrong to anticipate such.

The resolution stated, in part, *"Therefore be it resolved that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Louisville, Kentucky July 29th-August 1st, 2023, reaffirms the historic commitment of this movement to recognize and affirm the sacred dignity of all peoples as all are made in the sacred image of God and deserving of respect and honor; and be it further resolved that the General Assembly encourages all expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to uplift religious texts and stand in solidarity with transgender and gender diverse individuals against harm being done against them often with the misuse of religious texts and symbols.*

This resolution, if adopted, would mean the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) would further its stance and belief that all people are God's holy and beloved children, and all deserve to be treated with dignity and love, and it is absolutely wrong to bring harm to any child of God, be it through legislation, misusing God's holy word and/or holy symbols of faith, or in any way.

Now, to be clear, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) spans the broad spectrum of politics and ideologies. Meaning we don't all agree on everything. Some Disciples are very conservative, and some are very liberal. And everyone else falls somewhere in between. Especially on "hot button" topic resolutions. That is except when it came to GA-2352.

When it was time for discussion, many Disciples lined up at the microphones designated for voices of support. Not a single Disciple went to the microphones designated for opposition. And when it was time for the vote, all in favor were invited to say "I", and Disciples raised their voices. Then, all opposed to GA-2352 were invited to say, "Nah." And this is when the Louisville Convention Center, filled with over three thousand Disciples fell

absolutely silent. Not a single “nah” vote was cast. GA-2352 was passed and adopted...unanimously.

When the gavel was struck, I saw numerous Disciples burst into tears of joy, because once again we Disciples said “*This is who we are.*”

We are a diverse denomination. Not all believe the same. We disagree on many points, especially “hot button” topics. That too is who we are. But what we all agree on is that all people, no matter what, no matter who they are, no matter how they identify themselves, no matter the pronouns they prefer—all people are holy and beloved children of God, and all holy and beloved children of God deserve dignity and love because that is what Jesus taught and showed and died for.

Love God. This is who we are. Love your neighbor. This is who we are. And because this is who we are, we are Disciples of Christ.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Stow Woman’s Fellowship Dinner **October 18th**

Ladies, many of you may remember that pre-COVID, we enjoyed an annual dinner & program with the ladies of Holy Family & St. Stephens. We feel it’s time to resume our get-togethers and hope you’ll set aside the evening of October 18th to join us. The dinner will be catered by Guidos. Admission is \$15. More information to follow!

Summit County Faith & Blue **Saturday, October 1st. 11 – 2 p.m.** **Hardesty Park**

Sheriff Fatheree invites you to join us for a day of fun and fellowship at our third annual Summit Faith & Blue! The faith & blue initiative is the largest nationwide community-law enforcement collaboration in history, with the goal of bringing law enforcement and the community together through the reach of houses of worship and faith-based events. There will be live

entertainment, games, a touch-a-truck, giveaways and more! Hardesty Park is at 1615 W. Market St, Akron, OH 44313.

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!

Woman's Retreat Meeting – Sept. 10th
September 15-17th, Lake Chataqua, NY

There will be a brief meeting on Sunday, September 10th, after second service, for those going to Women's Retreat. Barb Bell will share information, answer any last-minute questions, and make sure everyone has a ride. We will meet in the classroom to the left of the stairway. Chautauqua Here We Come!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

The September drive thru dinner is September 17th 4-6 p.m. Many workers will be in Chautauqua for the Women's Retreat. Tim plans to cook Sunday afternoon starting about 2. The menu is ham and scalloped potatoes.

We are getting crowds of 150 every month and anticipate a large turnout.

Especially helpful would be strong arms to take the casseroles out of the oven. Thank you!

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!

Music Notes
August 2023

This is a reminder that choirs are gearing up for the fall. As you can see, we have plenty of opportunities to get involved with the music making (glorifying God with our talents, of course) and a few opportunities that are not on a regular schedule. For instance, we have a brass choir that meets for special occasions. Here is the rehearsal schedule for this fall with starting dates.

Group

First rehearsal

Joyful Noise

Wednesday, September 6, 7-8pm in room 201

Chancel Choir

Thursday, September 7, 7:30-9:00 in the choir room

(We will sing on Sunday, September 10 at the second service.)

Joy Bells

Thursday, September 14, 6:00-7:15 in the bell balcony

Children's Bell Choir (Crusader Bells)

Sunday, September 17, begin 10 minutes after the service and meet for 30 minutes.

Children's Choir (yes, we're back!)

Sunday, October 15, during Children's Church

The Children's Choir will be meeting during Children's Church time on Sunday mornings. As was our goal last year, we

hope to have them sing in church on or around the last Sunday of each month, beginning in October.

Children's Bell Choir will follow the same routine we did last year. We will meet in the Bell Balcony 10 minutes after the service ends and rehearse for 30 minutes. Those who are also in the youth group will rehearse with us on the days they don't meet with the youth group, just like last year. Any student, 2nd grade and up is welcome to join. Chancel Choir is always open to new members, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass. If you have previous experience singing in a choir, please consider joining us on Thursdays. We have a great time of fellowship, prayer and music making. Joy Bells is always looking to recruit new ringers. If you have experience reading music and/or have rung before, this is the place for you. We have 5 octaves of bells to ring but are currently ringing three and a half. Lots of room for more. Joyful Noise is looking to recruit new members as well. If you want to learn to read music, or want to learn to ring bells, this is a great way to get started.

Think- Pray-Connect from August

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

Jean Lamont

2787 Boltz Rd
Akron OH 44333-1921

Pat and Judy Mahaffey

1530 Bolingbrook Dr.

Columbus OH 43228

Recently had a new grandchild join the family

Karen & Tom Myers

4591 Chatwood Dr
Stow OH 44224-1954

Larry Sicliano

c/o Altercare
1463 Tallmadge Rd.
Room 111B
Kent, OH 44240
(Brother of Gary Siciliano)

Cakes & Connection!

October 15th, after Sanctuary Service
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

We've heard a call from guests to our church and current members alike—We need more opportunities to meet everyone around the church and learn about all the different opportunities and committees around the church. As we find our way towards a more inter-connected church, we invite you to join us for light desserts and a chance to fellowship with leaders around the church. This is a call for all our elders, trustees, committee chairpersons, and staff to show up, share info, and socialize with everyone who's interested in learning more! Thanks to the Membership Committee for bringing Cakes & Connection to our church!

Youth Group in September

The calendar might say that Fall starts this month, and the shelves at retail stores across town might say it's time to get your Thanksgiving decorations, but the Youth

Group is going to do its best to hang onto the last little bit of summer Mother Nature might just let us have!

The Youth Group will meet Sunday, September 10th, right after worship, until 1 p.m. here at the church. Lunch will be provided at this “regular” youth meeting that will also include discussing our focus and theme for the year as well as a bit of frivolity! (More Wiffleball anyone?!)

Then on Sunday, September 24th (yes, by then it will “officially” be Fall), we will have ourselves a good ole fashioned pool party! Weather permitting of course. And don’t worry, this pool is solar heated and kept at a nice comfortable temperature even when the outside temp might not be as “pool party friendly.” More information about this outing will be coming out in the next couple weeks.

Hope to see all our youth at Youth Group here in September!

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.

Stuff the Truck – Family Promise

For the bulletin or slides:

A great big THANK YOU to those who contributed items for Family Promise for their Stuff the Truck event. Our church provided the following:

- 5 sets of sheets
- 6 pillows
- 18 fleece blankets (from our blanket ministry)
- 3 sets of shower curtains/liners/rugs/hooks
- 4 sets of towels
- 2 sets of kitchen bowls
- 2 sets kitchen towels

- 1 overstuffed shopping bag of cleaning supplies
- 1 large bag shampoo/soap/toothpaste
- 8 boxes facial tissues
- 3 laundry detergents and 1 fabric softener

Thank You! Thank You!! Thank You!!!



Pictured is the load of donated goods going to help Family Promise in their ministry!

Monday Night Al-Anon @ 7 p.m.

Tuesday Night Al-Anon @ 7 p.m.

Let's Step It Up! - Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library

While AA is hosted here on Thursdays for those directly living with alcoholism, Monday and Tuesday Al-Anon is here for the friends and families of alcoholics who need support, too. These support groups meet every week to pursue spiritual growth, personal development, and sharing experiences to find strength in community. If you have questions, please contact the church office for more information. Feel free to share this with anyone you know who might need support in this way!

Don't forget—Al-Anon Monday Night meets in Fellowship Hall, and Al-Anon Tuesday Night meets in the Library.

See below for our update from the Stewardship Team and an update about our Chapel Ceiling.

Birthdays, Anniversaries, And Special Occasions!

Many other churches have a regular calendar that they put out in their newsletters to celebrate their congregation's special days, as mentioned in the title. If you'd like to have one of these special days shared with the congregation so they can celebrate with you, we will have this monthly calendar in the Pathways Newsletter all year round alongside our Think-Pray-Connect which serves folks who could use some prayer and loving connection from their congregation for recent events.

Update from the Finance/Stewardship Team Financial Giving from the Congregation Through August 2023

Hello all! Here is a new update from the Finance/Stewardship team.

As you may recall, the Governing Board and the congregation approved the 2023 budget proposed by the Finance/Stewardship with the budgeted Expenses being higher than the budgeted Income. We refer to this difference as our Leap of Faith. We can achieve that Leap of Faith combining 2 goals; increasing our Income (primarily made up of Individual Giving) and decreasing our Expenses by controlling our spending.

Here are 2 views that show our progress towards meeting our Leap of Faith. These compare our total actual income to our total budgeted expenses, showing how close we are now at the end of August, comparing that to end of July.



Progress Towards Our 2023 Leap Of Faith Goal		
	Thru July	Thru August
YTD Actual Income	160,049	180,786
YTD Budget Expense (Leap Of Faith)	170,133	194,437
How Close to LOF (%)	94%	93%
How Close to LOF (\$)	\$ (10,084)	\$ (13,651)

The Total Income **budget** amount is \$21,664 per month. This includes congregational giving and other income sources like building rental.

The Total Expense **budget** amount is \$24,305 per month.

The **Leap of Faith** amount is the difference between our budgeted Expenses and our budgeted Income.

For the full year that amount is \$24,687, and monthly the amount is \$2,057.

If you prefer to think of this as a percentage, our actual income needs to be 9% higher than our budgeted income to meet our Leap of Faith, and thru the end of August our income is 7% lower than our budgeted 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 meet our Leap of Faith, and to sustain the outreach assistance we can provide to our community, both locally 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.

Chapel Ceiling Update— **From John McCreight, Chair of Trustees**

On June 21st, we found that the Chapel Ceiling had collapsed! The roof is fine, but the ceiling literally dropped in the area where the pews are located. The Chancel area & the back room appear to have only been affected by the dust & insulation from the fall.

Since then, Al Naylor has been working with our insurance company to see if they would cover this damage, and a few weeks ago they determined they would! This was after they had a structural engineer check it out to determine why it failed. Thanks, Al, for staying with them on this.

Joe Ott got our electric turned off in the damaged area for safety and has been working with Stow Building Department to make sure we have the proper permits, etc. needed for the cleanup. Joe also directed us to a contractor we expect to engage soon to begin the clean-up work. We expect the same contractor will be doing the “rebuild” part as well. Thanks Joe!

We are still asking everyone to stay out of the chapel. One reason is that it is not safe, parts of the ceiling are still hanging. If it were to drop further & people were in there, that would not be good. Another reason is that the floor is still covered with insulation and dirt. We don't need that tracked around the church.

We did get Asbestos testing done as quickly as we could once the event occurred. There was no asbestos found in any of the debris area/substances. So that is a good thing.

Going forward we will be working with our contractor, our insurance company/adjustor, and the City of Stow Building Department as we restore the Chapel.

There are still things we aren't sure about yet. We will try to keep the congregation informed as we reach milestones or get other significant updates.

We continue to Thank God there was no one in there when this happened & that we have other spaces in the church we can use as we continue to worship Him.

Thanks also to Mike Deiwert for his input on how to proceed. And thanks to everyone for your prayers regarding this unexpected event.

John McCreight – Trustee Chair.