



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

PATHWAYS

NOVEMBER 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!

Daylight Savings Time Starts November 5th: FALLING BACK!

Don't forget to set your clocks back an hour on November 5th as we're FALLING BACK and gaining an hour right before worship! Hope you're rested and energized for worship!

Get Out The Vote! **Tuesday, November 7th**

Your vote is your voice! It is your voice on issues affecting our state, community, housing, education, employment, and healthcare. Help make a difference and help make your voice heard because by not voting your voice isn't heard!

All Church Thanksgiving Dinner **Sunday, November 19th, 11:30 a.m.**

Are you feeling lucky?! You should be, because on Sunday, November 19th, all are invited to be part of a special Thanksgiving time of worship during both services, followed by our church's annual Thanksgiving Pot-Luck Dinner!

See inside for more details about how you can be part of this long time First Christian tradition!

Loaves and Fishes Plus Pantry

The November Loaves & Fishes Free Dinner + Pantry, will be Sun., Nov. 19th from 4-6 p.m. And you guessed it, a Thanksgiving Dinner that can't be beat even by Alice's Restaurant will be the menu fare served. Volunteers are always needed and appreciated!

Governing Board **Monday, November 20th**

The Governing Board will meet on Monday, November 20th at 7 p.m. in-person at the church. This meeting will include voting on the proposed 2024 church budget. All Governing Board members are needed for this important meeting.
Bonus! There will be no Governing Board in December!

Christmas In-Gathering Outreach Program

Once again, our Outreach Team is set to lead us through another year of this important and far reaching outreach program of serving area families in ways that will make Christmas merry and bright and filled with the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus Christ. Look for more details inside this issue of the Pathways for how you can get involved!

Pastor's Pen,
November 2023

I can still remember the first time I heard the word “adult” used as a verb. I paused in confusion, but soon figured out what was meant, especially when it was used in the sentence, “I can’t adult today.” While it’s an unconventional use of “adult” as a verb, it’s not hard to get at its meaning, which is, “At the moment, I am incapable of being a responsible grown-up. Don’t ask or expect me to do anything that will require me to be a grown up.” (*Sigh* If only it were that easy. Insert “eyeroll” emoji.)

Pastor and writer John Pavlovitz played off the “I can’t adult today” adage when he wrote an article titled, “I Can’t Christian today.” Only in his case, he wasn’t trying to be funny or sardonic. In declaring, “I can’t Christian today,” this pastor writes, “I can no longer be tethered to this thing that is so toxic and so painful to so many. I can’t wade through any more bad theology and predatory behavior from pulpit-pounding pastors who seem solely burdened to exclude and to wound and to do harm. I can’t sift through all this malice and bitterness masquerading as Christianity to try to find what of it is worth keeping.” That’s a powerful indictment toward Christians made by a Christian—and he’s not the first Christian I’ve heard make it.

All if it builds to the crescendo where Pavlovitz asks a pointed question, saying, “I find myself asking a question that I’d like to ask of similarly frustrated followers of Jesus: ‘Is Christianity helpful anymore?’” Look around even a little, and it can become difficult to say yes for all kinds of reasons. We see political figures who want our votes claim to be Christians while espousing ideas far off from what Jesus would advocate. We see Christians splintered into divisions and factions—and I’m not talking denominational camps, but rather divisions of political and cultural boundaries. And for many, these boundaries are far more important than denominational and doctrinal ones.

Whatever position we take on immigration policy, a border wall, same-sex marriage, presidential politics, Supreme Court nominations, abortion, welfare, or legalization of marijuana,

there will be Christians who will immediately call into question our relationship with Jesus Christ.

So, yeah... Is any of that helpful? Because when this happens, some will say, “Well, if this is what it means to be a Christian, I want no part of it.” Or, they might simply say, “I’m done. I can’t Christian today.” And with this perspective we can easily say to the “Is any of the helpful?” question, and emphatic no, it is not. Which is why it is an imperative to remember and know there are times when we experience a person of faith keeping the faith, putting faith in action, lifting others above themselves, going to those on the margins, being fully present and judgement free in ways that give dignity to all God’s children.

While every day is an opportunity for us to work and serve in Christ-like ways that will give a more faithful perspective to how we are called to live as followers of Christ, the turn of our calendars to the month of November opens up a vast array of opportunities and possibilities to such work and service. It is the time of year when we intentionally give thanks to the One who is the blesser of all good things. It is the time of the year when we are more overt in our efforts to serve those who are struggling with finances, or grief, or insecurities of all types.

And so at the beginning of November, and for the next couple of months, let’s pray every morning, “Holy God, help me show those I cross paths with today, how your love can help others.” “Lord, today use me as an instrument of your peace and new life.” “Holy Creator, let the words of my mouth and the actions of my heart, be acceptable to you, so others will see your true glory.”

Lift these prayers, and those like it, and God will change not only our perspective of each day, but God will be shown in new perspectives to others who have a misguided view of who God is. Lift these prayers, and others like it, and we will never say, “I can’t Christian today.”

Happy Thanksgiving everyone. And know I give thanks for each one of you.

Your pastor and friend,
Jonathan

Bulldog Bags Donation Items

November 6th: Cup of Soup

December 4th: Hot Chocolate Packets

January 8th: Ramen Noodle Packs

Relay for Life 7th Annual Craft Bazaar **November 11th, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

Join us for the Craft Bazaar! Fellowship and Disciples Hall will be filled with crafts goods. Vendors will be selling everything from carved wood, knitted goods, soaps and knick-knacks, and we may even have vendors from Mary Kay and Tupperware. Come to the Bazaar and find your Christmas Gifts for the whole family! Proceeds benefit American Cancer Society.

All Church Thanksgiving Dinner

Sunday, November 19th, 11:30 a.m.

On Sunday, November 19th all are invited to be part of a special Thanksgiving time of worship during both services, followed by the return of our church's **Thanksgiving Pot-Luck Dinner!** Turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes and drinks will be provided. Since it is a potluck dinner, we ask that you bring your own place setting and a dish or two that will feed at least 12-15 people. This way we have enough food to share for everyone. No reservations are necessary! Come and enjoy good food and fellowship.

Thanksgiving is a blessed time to share in a bountiful meal and robust fellowship with our families. So let us do the same as a church family and mark our calendars for this special day of worship to celebrate all we have to give thanks for, and to give glory, honor, and praise to the One who has made it all possible. Thanks be to God. Happy Thanksgiving everyone!!

Christmas Ingathering Outreach **Volunteer Opportunities Available Now!** **Prep: Dec. 18th, Service: 19th – 20th**

Christmas is just around the corner - at least, it is for the Outreach Team! We are preparing for Christmas Ingathering by gathering names from the Stow schools, our church family and community

OUTREACH

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry **October Report**

Well, after our record breaking month in September, we returned to normal in October. Overall we served 45 families consisting of 129 guests.

We want to give a special thanks to all our volunteers from October. When guests come to our building looking for food and a kind word, it does wonders for their spirits to see a whole bunch of people with smiles on their faces and food in their hands.

We'd also like to thank all those who contributed paper towels and toilet paper to the pantry project. These donations have gone a long way in helping us afford to distribute food items. We have enough paper towels for the remainder of 2023 but we could use some more toilet paper.

The Drive Thru meal in November will be November 19th 4-6 p.m. Meal will be roasted turkey, mashed potatoes and a vegetable. All are welcome!

contacts. If you are interested in helping with this huge ministry, we welcome your assistance! If you would like to adopt a family, shop for a family or make a donation, now is the time! It truly is a collaboration of church members, community members and friends that makes this ministry so amazing.

Any questions, see Ann Halpin or call 330-524-2228.

Poinsettia Online Order Form

It is time to order Poinsettias to decorate our Sanctuary for the holiday season! The poinsettias are \$10.00 each. Please note, this is a rise in price from last year as our vendor raised their price. We ask that you leave them on the Chancel until the end of the Christmas Eve services if possible.

The poinsettias can be ordered in honor of or in memory of someone special and we will have the names of those honored and remembered listed as a take home page by the December 17th worship service. Orders must be received by November 19th. Please fill out the form and return leave in communion plate or in the office. See the link below or scan the QR code with your phone's camera to go directly to the online ordering form!



<https://forms.gle/1Rt4eVBfEhUEUzRp9>

A Whole New Era of Youth Ministry At First Christian Stow

Praise God from whom all blessings flow! We are thrilled to share the exciting news that Emily Sanko has come aboard the First Christian Church staff as our new Director of Youth Ministries! She brings to this position not only her lifelong experience of growing up attending Carrolton Church of Christ, a Disciples of Christ Church, in Carrolton, Ohio, but she also brings with her an enthusiasm and passion for working with young students and being in a role of support for those who are working to figure out what it means to be a young person of faith in today's world. Throw in that she is a heck of a lot of fun and ready to play

some more *Pillo Polo*!! (Ok, that may just be because Jonathan wants to play, and he mandated it be put into her contract that the Youth Group plays this game at least once a month.)

Emily is ready and eager to dive into all things Youth Group, and will do so on Sunday, November 5th right after church where we will roll out the red carpet and mark the start of this new ministry together! So make plans to be at Youth Group this Sunday, and bring a friend and bring a spirit that is ready to welcome Emily and join with her on the wild and crazy ride that is always the First Christian Church Youth Group!

(Pssst... and take note there is in the works a special "*Youth vs. Parents/Adults Pillo-Polo Extravaganza!*" More details to follow in the coming weeks. Also note Jonathan thinks he's some kind of *Pillo Polo "scoring king"*, so make plans to help him humbly realize he might be a wee bit off in that thinking!)

May God's blessings abound as we begin a whole new era in Youth Ministry here at First Christian Church!

ThankSinging Hymn Festival @ First United Methodist Church Sunday, November 19th, @ 6 p.m.

Friends, there's an upcoming concert not too far away with a lot to see! This "ThankSinging" Festival will have Dean Wagner at the organ, with music by choirs and musicians from the local area. Additionally, there will be a freewill offering that will benefit the ministries of our friends, Flat Rock Homes, Care Center & Community Services! If you recall from their visit with us during Jonathan's Sabbatical last year, Flat Rock serves individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. This is a great opportunity to hear some wonderful music for the holiday season, as well as support a great ministry that we've helped before.

2024 Summer Camp Schedule At Camp Christian

The Christian Church in Ohio is excited to share with you the 2024 Summer Program Schedule! There are Summer Programs at Camp Christian for Children and Youth from Kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as Advance Conference for Young Adults. You will also note the two Disciples

Fellowship Retreats which are open to all ages. We have also included Adult Conference, which is open to all adults and is held at Northwest Christian Church in Columbus. Registration and more details about all of this coming this Winter.

We hope you'll save the dates and share this schedule with folks from your Congregations, Families, and Communities!! The first campsite event to kick off the summer schedule is the Disciples Fellowship Retreat on Friday, May 24th – Sunday, May 26th. The Regular season of camps begins with Grandparent's Camp – Elementary on Thursday, June 6th.

The full schedule can be viewed at the following link, <https://www.ccinoh.com/camp-christian.aspx>, as well as each date on the Regional Calendar. We hope you'll be able to participate in this great annual tradition of retreat, refocusing, and reverence.

Thanks For All the Help! **All-Church Workday**

Thanks to all who were able to help us do some cleanup during the recent All-Church workday on Oct 28th. We had 6 church members helping for at least part of the time, a friend of the church and 18 boys & parents from Boy Scout Troop 169!! Even though we had some tasks that could have been tackled inside, everyone stayed out in the cool, drizzly weather and got all the leaves cleaned up! Hopefully we will be able to keep up with them now with our mowing equipment. We even stayed outside, in the Vespers area for our donuts & cider (& coffee) break! Thanks again to all who were able to participate. John McCreight – Trustee Chair.

October Chapel Update **From Chair of Trustees, John McCreight**

As of October 30th, the Chapel Restoration Team is on hold while we wait for updated drawings from our architect & estimates for some of the restoration work. We will have some contractors stopping by this week to inspect the Chapel to help form their estimates.

Once we get the estimates for these items, we will go back to the insurance company for funding of

these items that were not in their initial settlement. This is said to be a normal process.

We'll try to keep everyone updated as we have information to spare.

Please keep this project in your prayers!

Regards,

John McCreight

Yard Signs in The Gathering Area: **“Let Us Practice Love”** **SAY IT, SHOW IT!**

1st Corinthians 16:14 reminds us: “Let all that you do be done in love.” But with how difficult the world is (And was, as we faithfully temper our nostalgia), a reminder to practice what we preach and acknowledge how the world we live in so often leads us astray is important. Laurie Scott has graciously provided these signs, and several are available in the Gathering Area. Please take one for your yard, and remind yourself and all, “We learned to hate, Now let us practice love!” (Picture included of the signs. Laurie often outlines the letters to make them stand out more. Get creative!). These were bought on Amazon, and more can be purchased if you want one after these are gone. Thanks to Laurie for buying some extra so we can have a standing reminder of our mission to practice love!



Regional Communications Poster Provided Every Congregation To Enhance Our Connectedness

You may have noticed a new poster in the poster display at the front of the Gathering Area. If you haven't seen it yet, read on for information from The Christian Church in Ohio and visit the poster later! From our regional Disciples Church office:

“Your Regional Church staff understands well the vital importance of communication in ensuring our mission and ministry is healthy and expanding. One creative way we are seeking to improve communication with our local congregations is through a poster that quickly connects individuals with our primary means of communication.”

There's also a beautifully designed Preamble to the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a reminder of our mission and our goals as Disciples of Christ.



“Devoted to Generosity” Consecration Campaign Concludes

We have heard our narrative budget, we have been made aware of the impact our annual giving has not just within our church, but beyond our walls as well; and we have heard the divine mandate that “*the righteous live by their faith.*” All of it has been part of the faithful encouragement to continue to do the good and faithful ministry God has called us to do, and to continue to be a church devoted to generosity by being the *difference makers* God calls us to be. That is our aim for 2024.

On the last Sunday of October, we concluded our 2024 *Devoted to Generosity* consecration campaign through the making of our estimated ledge of giving for next year. As living expressions

of God's generosity may our pledge to God be in response to all God has given us.

If you were unable to be in either worship service on that Sunday, there is still time to get your estimate of giving card in. You can drop it off any time at the church office or even just drop it in the mailbox by the upper doors, as all mail drops down in a secure lower section and only retrieved by church staff. Or you can submit your pledge card online via our church website.

Giving Thanks With Grateful Hearts

On behalf of myself, Julie, Violet, and A.J., we all want to extend our deepest thanks and appreciation to everyone for your outpouring of love, support, encouragement, and well wishes throughout October's Pastor Appreciation Month. We have been truly touched by all the cards, prayers, and treats that were shared. Thank you. And after fourteen years of serving as your pastor, I continue to be in humble awe of your love and support. I know I don't always get things right, but I do try my best to be the faithful pastor each of you deserves. So thank you for all you do to support and love me and my family. Each of you are truly a blessing to us.

With much love, the Rumburg Family

Trunk-Or-Treat Thank You for Helping!

We had a fun (and chilly!) afternoon at Trunk or Treat! Thanks to everyone who stopped by, we had over 200 children & families come out to trick-or-treat in the church parking lot! Special thank you to Membership Team and all our volunteers for hosting trunks & serving food; and to everyone who donated candy for the event!



It's Time for The Christmas Card Ministry!

It's November, so that means it's time for leaves, football, and Christmas card collections! For the past two years, our church family has supported the distribution of over 1,000 Christmas cards to locate nursing and assisted living facilities. We have over 300 cards previously donated that are ready for this year's signing, but more are always welcome for this year and next!

There are a few ways to become involved!

- If you have any boxes of unused cards (even if it is a few), please consider donating them and dropping them off in the donation tote located in the main church lobby (outside the sanctuary). I will fill them out with a message and deliver them to a local nursing home.
- Feel free to fill out your cards before donation 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.

I hope to hold a few in-person signing sessions again in December! Blank cards will be available in the library for members to stop and fill out as many cards as they'd like. Dates will be decided soon and communicated through announcements and the Sunday bulletin. Please feel free to contact me through the church office with any questions.

Thank you again for your continued support and donations!
Cate Fioritto