



First Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
Stow, OH

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## PATHWAYS DECEMBER 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!

### **Congregational Meeting**

#### **December 3<sup>rd</sup>, after Chapel and Sanctuary Services**

The Stewardship Team wants to inform the congregation there will be a Congregational meeting on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> following both the 8:30 and 10:30 worship services. This meeting will be to vote on the 2024 budget. Please make plans to attend this important meeting. Copies of the proposed budget are available in the church office.

### **Christmas Eve Services**

Sun, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve, One Service @ 10:00 a.m.

Candle light services: 7 p.m. (Child friendly),

Musical Prelude at 9:30 with service at 10 p.m. (Candlelight Service)

Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 10:00 a.m. (One Service)

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

### **Youth Group Schedule - December**

Youth will be meeting twice through the month—Once on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to shop for Ingathering at Target, and then on the 17<sup>th</sup> to wrap presents for Ingathering! See below for more information!

### **Christmas In-Gathering Outreach Program**

#### **Preparation begins December 18<sup>th</sup>, Distribution on 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>**

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!

### **Making Spirits Bright – Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

*A day of fun for kids, and a day out for parents!*

Parents are invited to drop off their children at the lower level of the church and enjoy time for whatever you need! Please let us know if your child will be attending on the back of your connection card! Full activities are included below!

## December 2023

### Pastor's Pen

*Haul out the holly; put up the tree before my  
spirit falls again.*

*Fill up the stocking, I may be rushing things,  
but deck the halls again now.*

*For we need a little Christmas, right this very  
minute,*

*Candles in the window, carols at the spinet.  
Yes, we need a little Christmas, right this very  
minute.*

*It hasn't snowed a single flurry, but Santa, dear  
we're in a hurry...*

\*\*\*\*\*

These are the lyrics from the popular Christmas song “*We Need a Little Christmas*” that originated from Jerry Herman’s 1966 Broadway musical *Mame*, and was first performed by Angela Lansbury. And it’s one of my favorite Christmas songs. Well, it has one of my favorite lines from a Christmas song. Typically my rendition goes a little something like this: “*Oh we need a little Christmas, right this very minute... (hummmm...something-something, hummm...)* Yes, we need a little Christmas, right this very minute. (Repeat.) Hey, I’m a preacher, not a singer.

I like this song and these specific lyrics because they ring true for me, and I bet they ring true for you too. Don’t we all need a little Christmas, right now? And I really mean, *right now...this **very** minute*. No waiting until December 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>. No waiting until whenever schedules are right for all the family to get together. I’m talking right now, as you read this. Wouldn’t a little Christmas—some really real Christmas (and not the fake-Christmas like *Advent Calendars* that are actually just *Countdown to Christmas calendars*) be a good thing? Right now? I think so. So what’s stopping us from making a little Christmas happen, right now?

We spend a lot of time and energy getting ready for Christmas, which is good and right. Decorations, cards, cookies, presents, wrapping—all of it is good and jolly. Advent is

a season to prepare us for Christmas, to get us ready for the coming of the Messiah, once again. And then Christmas comes. Christmas happens. And all the work and energy have its day, finally. And it is good and right. But what if...maybe...we made a little Christmas happen as we prepare, right now, right this very minute? Could that be good and right too? I think so.

Right now, there are people who aren’t getting ready for Christmas because they are simply trying to get through today. And then at the end of today, they are going to be thinking and wondering how they are going to get through tomorrow. It might be a day of loneliness or isolation. It might be a day of pain, anxiety, or fear. It might be a day of anger, regret, or confusion. It might be a day where the phone hasn’t rung, again. It might be a good day, but there isn’t anyone to share it with. It might be a day of delivering mail and packages, but no one has even said a kind greeting. It might be a day of scanning items at a checkout, and no one has bother asking how their day is going. It might be a day of teaching your kids or grandkids, or tending to those who are sick and injured, and no one has said, “*Thanks for all you do.*” It might be a day that is simply void of Christmas. But what is Christmas? I say it’s more than just a day or a season. Christmas is a feeling, an action, even a lifestyle of hope, peace, joy, and love. That is what Christmas is. And I know it is what Jesus, not Santa, brings. And it is what we are called to share...right now.

So let’s do it. Let’s bring a little Christmas, right now. Pick up the phone. Drop in. Engage in conversation. Express thanks. Ask questions and then listen...really listen. Let’s all aim to engage in some kind of act, gesture, word, or situation that will bring a little Christmas... right this very minute. Someone will be glad you did. Merry Christmas everyone!

Your Pastor and Friend,  
Jonathan

**Christmas Card**  
**For Our Homebound Members**

Friends, please stop by the Gathering Area on your way in or out of the Sanctuary on Sunday and sign the Christmas card that we have for our homebound folks! This is one of the easy but accessible and meaningful ways to remember our members.

**Youth Group in December!**

The Youth Group will meet ***THIS*** on Sunday, **December 3<sup>rd</sup>**, right after church for our annual Christmas shopping trip for the In-Gathering Outreach project. This year will be shopping for nine young people who will be served by this ministry. We will have lunch at the church and then will head to the Stow-Kent Plaza Target for our shopping expedition! ***Parent's: This outing may run past our normal end time, so we will call you when we are nearly done, and have you pick up your students at Target.***

Then on Sunday, **December 17<sup>th</sup>** all Youth are invited to the annual Youth Group Christmas Party! This will happen right after worship. Lunch will be served, and we will wrap all our gifts for the In-Gathering!

Also, please make note, all youth are invited to come and help at *Making Spirit's Bright Parents Day-Out* which is set for **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 9-1 p.m.**

**"Thanks," from A Community Member!**

First Christian Church,

Thank you so much for your Sunday meals (I don't have to cook or do dishes). The Turkey meal was so good. "Thank you," to all who spend time preparing it & cleaning up. We are so thankful for the food & supplies you give us to help us save lots of \$ on groceries. We love the 2 boys who help give dog treats & laundry soap. We are so blessed by your

# ***OUTREACH***

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

As expected, we had a huge day on November 19 for Loaves & Fishes + Pantry.

We served a full Thanksgiving meal to 160 people. This is in addition to all the turkey and fixings served at our church dinner earlier in the day. A big special thanks to all the cooks and servers and clean-up crew who worked all day to feed both our church family and our neighbors in need.

We also provided groceries to 59 different families. These families included 44 senior citizens, 75 adults, and 41 children. We also gave out paper towels, toilet paper, laundry detergent, and dog treats. What a blessing to be able to provide all these items to our guests.

December will be another big month because we have Loaves & Fishes + Pantry on Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> and then our Ingathering distribution will be on Tuesday and Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Loaves & Fishes Pathways**

December 17<sup>th</sup> will be the last day to turn in family presents and food for the Ingathering. Distribution will be Tuesday and Wednesday evening.

December 17<sup>th</sup> 4-6p.m is the drive through meal and Food Bank pick up. Menu will be creamed turkey over mashed potatoes and sides. Thank you to the crew who helped serve 172 people a full Thanksgiving feast.

We anticipate a good turnout being so close to Christmas.

food pantry & meal each month. You put in there stuff we need on our grocery list. We've been so blessed by this. - J. & D.

### **Master Singers Chorale Winter Concert** **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m.**

You are invited to the Masters Singers Chorale Winter Concert featuring "Christmas Oratorio" by Camille Saint-Saens and "Dreamweaver" by Ola Gjeilo. This free concert features soprano Jackie Josten, pianist Anne Dalby, and organist Charlotte Beers Plank plus a string orchestra.

Here is the time and location:  
Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 P.M.  
First Congregational Church of Hudson  
47 Aurora Street, Hudson OH 44236

Thank you for providing the space for our group to rehearse and prepare for this beautiful concert. We look forward to seeing you on December 9!

### **Christmas Card Signing Session**

Join us in the library after Sanctuary service on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and help sign cards to send out to people in nursing homes and assisted livings! We have a great number of cards to sign, so every card you can sign with some Christmas cheer on is helpful!

### **Christmas Eve Jr Church**

Join us at 7:00pm on Christmas Eve for our Child-Friendly Service! Children will begin the service in the Sanctuary with their families and then will have the opportunity to attend a special Christmas Eve Jr Church. Children will return to the Sanctuary with glow-stick candles to use during the candlelight portion of the service.

### **Making Spirits Bright** **December 9<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

*A day of fun for kids, and a day out for parents! Your children's friends are welcome too!*

# **MUSIC**

Merry Christmas from the Stow Church Choirs!

I have two announcements today. The first is an invitation to a Christmas Community Concert this Saturday, December 2, at St. Paul Catholic Church in Firestone Park, Akron. This event has been running for over 30 years and is an ecumenical celebration of the Birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. There will be a Community Chorus (with members from our own choir singing), Summit Bells, a youth hand chime choir, a professional orchestra and an amateur orchestra, vocal and instrumental solos, and scripture. And carol singing by the audience! Andrea Drews will be accompanying the choir and I am co-directing the chorus along with Jin Yu. The concert is free and open to the public. There will be a free-will offering taken to help defray some of the costs. St. Paul Catholic Church has a beautiful sanctuary with wonderful acoustics. Come and enjoy the festivities as we ring and sing in the Christmas Season.

The concert starts at 7 pm. The address:  
1580 Brown Street, Akron, Ohio 44301

The second announcement is about pianos. We have recently received a gift of a Yamaha Baby Grand piano! It is in the choir room and we are blessed to have such a wonderful piano accompanying the choirs. However, this brings up the fact that we have more pianos in the church than we need. Most of them are taking up space and are not being used. We are using pianos in the sanctuary, the choir room, the Chapel, and the Fellowship Hall. That leaves us with five (possibly six) pianos we don't need. I am reaching out to see if any of our church family would like a free piano or perhaps know of someone who would like one. The only expense would be moving charges. It might even be possible to arrange for some of the men in the church to do the moving for you. The pianos are all uprights, ranging in height from 35 to 52 inches. If you are interested or know someone who is, please don't hesitate to call or text (330-760-5177) or email me at [cek54jmk@gmail.com](mailto:cek54jmk@gmail.com).

Join us for Christmas Eve at 7pm or 10pm. The Children's Choir and Youth Handbells will be leading us in music for the 7:00 service and the Chancel Choir and Brass Ensemble will be providing music for the later service. Our late service is a traditional candle light service. Hope to see everyone there.

In Christ,  
Chuck

Parents are invited to drop off their children in the lower level of the church and enjoy time for whatever you need!

Please let us know if your child will be attending on the back of your connection card! Attendance includes crafts, a Christmas movie, pizza making, cookie decorating (both for lunch!) and an **INDOOR SNOWBALL FIGHT!** Welcoming all kids, potty-trained and older.

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

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 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.

**Ingathering Outreach Cookie Plates**

We have many ways to support the Ingathering—If you are looking for more ways to help out, we're looking for donations of cookies so that we can serve cookies to nearly 50 families! When you donate, please bring your cookies downstairs to the kitchen counters. Thanks!

**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.

**Lights for Lions - Cleveland Zoo,**  
**November through February**

This is a bit far north, but if you make it up to Cleveland, this is a great opportunity to make a meaningful donation for conservation with some lights you don't need anymore. See below for their information!

“Do you have broken or used holiday lights and extension cords? Donate them at the Zoo to help protect lions and cheetahs in Tanzania! Bring your broken, non-working or used strings of lights and extension cords to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for recycling November 1 through February 10, 2024. Please do not include any packaging. Proceeds from recycling support the Zoo's [lion and cheetah conservation program](#) partner Lion Landscapes.

In partnership with Lion Landscapes, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is working to mitigate human-carnivore conflicts and develop effective, long-term conservation strategies for large carnivores in Tanzania. This organization helps reduce the negative impacts of carnivore presence by providing



important conservation-related benefits to local communities.

When: November 1, 2023 through February 10, 2024

Where: At the main entrance of Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, 3900 Wildlife Way (you don't need a Zoo ticket to drop them off) or at the [Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District](#), 4750 East 131 Street in Garfield Heights.”

## **Camp Christian** **Christmas Market & Celebration**

Saturday, December 2nd from 10:00am to 6:00pm

Celebrate Christmas at Camp Christian with a fun-filled day of shopping featuring a wide variety of arts & craft vendors, small businesses, and yard sale booths.

PLUS there will be Live Christmas Music, Crafts for Kids, Gift Wrapping, Concessions, S'mores, SANTA!, and a Photo Booth for Christmas pictures with Santa and/or your family and friends!

All are invited to shop the market and enjoy a beautiful day at Camp Christian!!

Help us support Camp Christian's life-changing ministry. Sign up to sell your items or bring your church group, youth group, book club, families, friends, or just treat yourself to a day out. There will be concessions sold for lunch and snack items throughout the day to benefit Camp Christian.

If you are interested in selling your items at the event, please fill out the separate [Vendor Application form](#). Proceeds from vendor fees will go directly to Camp Christian operating funds, which helps prepare Camp for Summer Programming.

The Market will be open on Saturday, but we are also opening Camp up on Friday night for overnight accommodations and fellowship.

### Schedule Highlights

- 10am – The Christmas Market Opens
- 10am to Close - FREE Crafts for Kids (or Kids at Heart!)
- 10am to 2pm – Santa will be Onsite for Photos and Fun
- 10:30am – Rev. David Long-Higgins, Violin
- 1:00pm – Bellefontaine, First Christian Church, Choir
- 2:00pm – Acafellow Four, Barbershop Quartet

Details at: <https://www.ccinoh.com/regional-calendar.aspx?events=10929&action=details>

## **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 24<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>. The Regular season of camps begins with Grandparent's Camp – Elementary on Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>.

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.

### **Advance Winter Retreat** **January 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ Camp Christian**

*For all adults ages 19 to 30 (at least 1 year out of high school.)*

Theme: What's in your mental health toolbox?  
Taking a personal inventory of what we have in our "toolboxes" that we can use when presented with a challenge.

Join us for a cozy lodge weekend away from the world with other young adults. All are welcome! Plus, Advance is offering a \$30 discount on the full weekend for anyone first time attendees AND for anyone who brings a first time attendee. Registration available at

[https://www.ccinoh.org/events\\_details.aspx?id=516](https://www.ccinoh.org/events_details.aspx?id=516)  
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