



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

PATHWAYS MARCH 2024

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

Find us on social
media @FCCStow!

Sketti N Skits 2024!!

Sunday, March 10th, 5 p.m.!

Don't miss this long-time First Christian Church of Stow
annual spaghetti dinner, and Talent and Variety Show!

Sketti will be served at 5p.m.

Skits will begin in a timely manner once everyone is *fed up!* (Pun intended!!)
Still time to sign up and be a part of the show! See inside for details!

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry March 17th, 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.

Youth Group March 10th and 24th

The Youth Group will meet on Sundays, March 10th and 24th.
Watch your text messages for more information!

Stow Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 23rd, 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!

Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on March 24th, followed by Maundy Thursday
on March 28th, Good Friday on March 29th, and Easter Sunday on March 31st.

More details and our Holy Week schedule inside this issue of the Pathways.

Pastor's Pen: March 2024

I know I have said Lent is my favorite time of the year to the point that I probably sound like a broken record each time this season rolls around on the liturgical calendar. Lent is a time of self-examination, repentance, self-denial, conversion, and growth. It is a time of intentional introspection that can help us grow in our faith and deepen our relationship with God. But in addition to that, it is a time to be honest and truthful with ourselves and with God so that together we can become an even better version of ourselves. How can you not get excited about the idea and possibility of such becoming a reality!?

Put the season of Lent into this kind of perspective and yes it certainly does become something to get excited about. Who wouldn't want to become a better version of ourselves, right? But maybe some of you are saying, "But Ash Wednesday was weeks ago. We are already halfway through Lent. I missed the boat and I'm too late to jump on board." To that line of thinking I would ask you, "*Do you really think God keeps a calendar? Do you think God doesn't except late work?*"

It's true, Lent lasts for forty days, excluding Sundays, and begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the Saturday before Easter. In the early church candidates for baptism had to undergo an intense time of preparation (as long as two years) for the baptism service that was held once a year on Easter Sunday. The preparation was a time of study, prayer, fasting, and self-examination. Eventually the whole Church joined in this time of preparation for Easter—a time of celebrating Christ's risen life.

Over time Lent became connected to the 40 days of wilderness preparation experience of Jesus (Mathew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13) and to the events of what became known as Holy Week—the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Worship spaces are often decorated in purple which is the color of Lent. The word "*Lent*"

itself has come to mean springtime or new life and many congregations invite their people into a season of spiritual spring cleaning. Many people implement a practice of "*giving something up*" for Lent, a practice that when done with integrity, fosters a stronger will, one that intentionally chooses to make room for God amidst all the competing realities of life. Giving something up for Lent is a choice to say no to lesser desires so that we can say a greater yes to God. But "*giving up something*" isn't for everyone, and so folks will "*take something up*" for Lent. Perhaps taking up volunteering, or working through a particular book of the Bible, or writing daily prayers.

Regardless of the practice, what is key to using the season of Lent to help ourselves draw closer to God and become a better version of ourselves, is to be intentional within the practice. To take time to immerse ourselves in the season and say to God, "*Here I am. Guide me. And I will follow you.*" A willing and contrite heart is all that is needed for an intentional and faithful season.

At its heart Lent is a journey into wholeness, a participation in God's mission of redemption. The journey of Lent for believers follows the journey of Christ to the cross, the tomb, and resurrection. It is a corporate practice that joins believers to Christ's way of humility and dependence on God. In many ways, Lent is an invitation to a form of dying and rising. And because it is, it doesn't matter if you started this journey on Ash Wednesday, or if you start right now. When practiced well, Lent nurtures a greater knowledge and love of Christ and a more realistic understanding of believer's frailties, finitude and need of help from God. And days and dates on a calendar can never keep these blessings of God from us if we are intent on receiving them. Blessings on the rest of, or the beginning of your Lenten journey. I look forward to us all arriving at the tomb, together, on Easter Sunday.

Your pastor and friend,
Jonathan

Sketti and Skits:
Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Sunday, March 10th, 5 p.m.

Do you like a good meal and good entertainment for a good price? Do you enjoy a fun-filled time of fellowship with your church family? Do you enjoy laughing until it hurts?! Do you love all things green on St. Patrick's Day?! If you answered yes to any of these questions then you will want to make sure you are at this year's Sketti and Skits, a time-honored tradition of FCC Stow where the food is great and the entertainment is even better! This year in the theme is St. Patrick's Day so bust out your green garments a little earlier than planned and get to the celebration!!

Of course all the entertainment for the night is provided by each one of you! So if you have a talent, a song, a dance, a skit, a magic trick, or whatever you would like to perform, start getting it ready now and look for the sign-up sheet in the Gathering Area in the coming weeks. (Need not be St. Patrick's Day related of course!)

No need to have the Luck of the Irish or a pot of gold to come to this event. Cost for Sketti and Skits is just a low-low price of \$8 for adults, \$4 for children, and kids under 3 are free. All proceeds will go towards Christian Education ministries.

TAKING OUR OUTREACH
TO THE NEXT LEVEL
Mission Trip with First Christian
Church of Stow

On these trips, folks find a deeper understanding of just how devastating an impact a disaster can have. You get to do hands-on work to help those impacted by devastating disasters.

On these trips, folks get to directly serve and help families whose lives have been tragically impacted. Then, you become a part of their comeback story. On these trips, folks often go home tired, but with hearts and spirits ready to move mountains because they knew God used them to change lives in rare and special ways. Ordinary people get to clear away rubble and build up lives after disaster strikes. This is the work of Disaster Relief with Week of Compassion.

First Christian Church is planning a mission trip with Week of Compassion and partner disaster relief organizations for a week in mid-June! (If you cannot commit to a full week, partial weeks have been taken in the past.)

A likely destination is Pike County in eastern Kentucky, where residents continue to work towards recovery from the 2022 July Floods. Work could include clean-up and/or rebuilding projects, or support for teams on those tasks.

Those who are interested, even in the slightest bit, are encouraged to indicate your interest on the back of your Connection Card or by reaching out to Charlie Redman at (330) 283-4320, or to Jonathan here at the church.

Maundy Thursday Agape Service
Thursday, March 28th, 6 p.m.

Maundy Thursday is among the most holy and sacred of nights of the year here at First Christian Stow, and we aim for it to be just such a night once again this year.

We will gather for worship on this holy night 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 he was betrayed and arrested. There we join with our Savior and 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 night of the year.

Please plan to make this time of worship part of your Holy Week remembrances and celebration. A light dinner will be served at 6 p.m., followed by worship around 6:35, with an aim to conclude by 7:20 p.m. The Chancel Choir will rehearse after this time of worship.

Good Friday Time of Worship
Friday, March 29th, Noon

This time of scripture, meditation, and silence will take us through the passion narratives found in the Gospels while guiding us in considering and remembering again the sacrifice Jesus made so we

would have eternal and everlasting life. You are invited and encouraged to make this part of your Holy Week experience by joining us in our church sanctuary at noon for Stations of the Cross liturgy and scripture, which will be accompanied by intermittent times of silent meditation.

Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil **Saturday March 30th, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

The Apostle Paul calls for us to “*pray without ceasing*”, however he didn’t mean we should be on our knees, kneeling before a cross or communion table, hour after hour, day after day. Rather Paul calls for us to be open to God’s presence which is with us at all times. Paul wants us to know a prayerful life is what should be leading 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 made possible through the life, death, and coming resurrection of our Savior Jesus.

To do this we invite you to be part of this annual prayer vigil on Saturday, March 30th. This prayer vigil will be held from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., in the sanctuary at the church. However, you are welcome to be part of this time of prayer 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.

There is no need to sign-up and no need to pledge a length of time. Come and pray whenever you can and complete your time of prayer whenever you are so moved to be done. It won’t be difficult to consider what 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, food for those who go hungry; healing for the broken; guidance for the lost; wisdom for our leaders; compassion from those in power.

Let us join our hearts and minds and spirits together, no matter where we might be on this Holy Saturday and go to God in prayer.

Family Promise Bed Sheets Collections **March 17th through April**

Glendora House (The Family Promise home for temporary housing) is collecting bed sheets for twin bed sheets to be given to families who are moving to their own permanent housing! There’s a blue basket in the Gathering Area where you can leave twin bed sheets for these families. Thanks to Barb Eppley for bringing this to our attention and providing a Church Service Announcement!

Week(s) of Compassion 2024 Bake Sale!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year’s Week of Compassion Bake sale a resounding and delectable success once again! Thank you to all who donated, 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 hope you were somehow able to manage not letting your sweet treats go to waste—even if they did go to...waist! (Get it? Pun intended!)

And a very special and tremendous thank you to Mary Ellen Neitz who once again went above and beyond the call of duty to coordinate, organize, and lead yet another successful Week of Compassion Bake Sale! Your work and service and ministry is a tremendous gift and we are all so grateful to you for all you do!

Super Bowl Sub Sale Thanks!

On February 11th the Youth Group was on hand selling and filling orders for Super Bowl Subs on Super Bowl Sunday! These hearty sandwiches were available for purchase after both services just in time for the big game. We want to express a huge **THANK YOU** to Mike and Debbie Kostensky and Mike’s Place in Kent for their generous donation of all the sub fixings. They continue to support this fundraiser year after year.

Around 100 subs were made and sold and the proceeds are being put toward Youth and Christian Education ministries. **THANK YOU to EVERYONE** who supported this fund raiser! We hope you enjoyed your subs, and we hope next year we will be making subs for the Cleveland Browns Super Bowl Sunday!

Girl Scout Cookie Booth at the Church!
Saturday, March 16th
From 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Have you made your order for cookies yet? If you just can't wait for them to arrive, stop by the church on the 16th from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. for drive-up Girl Scout Cookies from troop #90754

Mission Trip Informational Meeting,
6 p.m. Weds, March 13th
Via Zoom or In Person,

Join us this Wednesday in person or via zoom for information regarding our plans for a mission trip! Please mark your connection card with your interest.

Prayer Request Email List

Friends, while many of us are getting updates regularly, there's now an easy way to get connected with the church's concerns and praises by signing up to the prayer request email list at the link below. If you have a prayer request you'd like to share, you can always directly email the church office at Fccstow@firstchristianstow.org with the concern. If you know anyone who might like to be signed up for Prayer Requests, please share with them the link below!

<https://www.firstchristianstow.org/prayer-chain/>

Stow Community
Bunny Trail Hop
Easter Candy Donations

The Christian Education Team will be participating in the Stow Community Bunny Trail Hop again this year at Silver Springs Park on Saturday March 23rd. There will be 400- 500 kids and their families participating and we will have treat bags to give to each of them.

We are asking for donations of individually wrapped Easter candy to help us fill the treat bags. There will be a bin in the Gathering Area beginning in February for candy donations – Donations will need to be brought to the church by **Sunday March 17th**. Thank you!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry – February Update

The soup cook-off and the bake sale show there are many talented cooks in this congregation. Outreach would like to form a committee to handle the monthly meals. If interested, comment on the connection card or let the office know.

Thanks to everyone who helped make the Week of Compassion bake sale a success. So many goodies and such generosity in donations. A special thank you for the Outreach team who made it happen.

The next Drive Thru meal happens to be on St Patrick's Day March 17th 4-6p.m so we are serving Sammies -Ham, Corned Beef and Turkey on request. Served with 'slaw and chips.

On February 18 we held our monthly Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. We had a big month serving around 140 dinners (we lost count!) to our guests. We also distributed groceries to 46 families. By comparison, in February 2023 we served 36 families. Our growth continues.

Dinner was meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans. The groceries included cereal, oatmeal, soups, vegetables, spaghetti with sauce, bread, Entenmann's', fruit cocktail, mac & cheese, laundry detergent, and the always popular toilet paper and paper towels.

Our volunteers, ranging in age from 6 to---well, a lot older than that---had a great time cooking,

packing food, packing dinners, shooting the breeze, sharing stories and lots of laughter.

Of course, none of this could be possible without the support of you, the members of our church who give us the spiritual and financial support needed to pull off an outreach like this. We know the people who went to sleep that Sunday night with full bellies and a full larder are thankful.

Church Officer Nominations **March 2024**

Last year the Elders of the church recognized the challenge in taking in nominations for church officers and then doing taking the necessary steps to pursue nominations and fill soon to be open church officer positions. Which is why the Elders decided to make a shift in the nominations season into the new year, and start new term starts at March 1st of each year.

Therefore we are currently taking nominations for church officers with terms starting in March. We invite anyone to nominate folks from our church family (including themselves) for the following positions: Governing Board Chair, Elder, Deacon, Trustee. Please make your nominations known on the back of your Sunday Connection Card, by emailing Jonathan, or dropping them off in the church office.

For more information about these roles please contact Jonathan or the church office.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry Update

We are restructuring the meal prep for meal give away to include more people. Saturday March 16th at 10a.m we will be meeting to make sandwiches for Sunday meal. I am looking for some people to make coleslaw (vinaigrette style). We are giving away bags of chips and would love donations. Perhaps you can support us financially. Let us know.

Youth Group in March

The Youth Group will be on hand for Sketti n Skits on Sunday, March 10th, helping to serve up all that delicious spaghetti, along with helping to serve

up the laughs in a skit or two during the talent show portion of the night.

Then on Sunday, March 19th, the Youth Group will meet right after worship for a regular meeting that will include lunch and conclude at 1:15 p.m.

Also, mark your calendars for “*Youth Sunday*” set to be held on May 12th! Which will mean we need to begin working on and planning for that special day of worship very, very, very, very, very soon!

Reporting Spam or Scam Text Messages!

Friends, if you have been receiving scam texts from someone posing as “Rev. Jonathan Rumburg” and asking for discretion, favors, or gift cards sent electronically, please read on. For those reading this online, you can click the following links for more information regarding how to report and block these scammers! Please make sure you report it to the FTC as listed below at www.ReportFraud.FTC.Gov

How To Report Spam Text Messages

If you get an unwanted text message, there are three ways to report it:

- Copy the message and [forward it](#) to 7726 (SPAM). This helps your wireless provider spot and block similar messages in the future.
- Report it on the messaging app you use. Look for the option to report junk or spam.

Report spam or junk in the Messages app

- You can report iMessages that look like spam or junk from the Messages app. If you get an iMessage from someone who's not saved in your Contacts, you'll see a Report Junk link under the message.
- - [How to report spam on an Android phone](#)
- Report it to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

Think Pray Connect from February

Please continue to support these members of our church family from our TPC's of December and January.

Tom Myers
4591 Chatwood Dr
Stow OH 44224-1954

Connect and share condolences with Tom as Karen Myers, his wife, passed away on February 4th.

Jim Painter, Stacy Montgomery
3913 Kay Dr. Stow OH 44223

Share condolences with Jim and Stacy, Husband and Daughter of Sue Painter, who passed away on February 14th.

Joyce Himes
3068 Kent Road #511
Stow OH 44224

Reach out to your church family and let them know we're thinking of them!

Richard Sellers
1925 Hawthorne
Stow OH 44224

Pray for and reach out to Richard, as he had a surgery earlier this week to address ongoing pancreatic issues.

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.

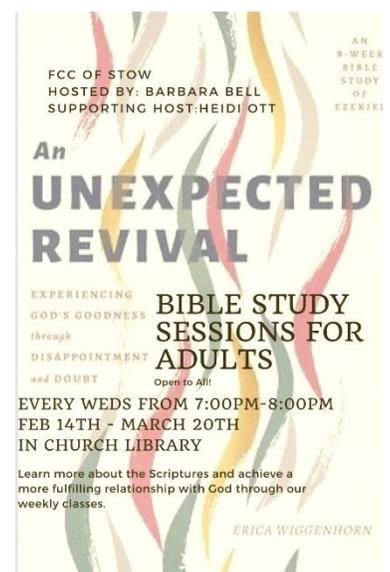
The full schedule can be viewed at the following link, <https://www.ccinoh.com/camp-christian.aspx>, as well as each date on the Regional Calendar. We hope you'll be able to participate in this great annual tradition of retreat, refocusing, and reverence.

Master Singers Chorale **Meet and Greet** **March 18th @ 7 p.m.**

You are invited to join Master Singers Chorale on Monday, March 18 at 7pm for a rehearsal and meet and greet. Please come to hear us rehearse (you are welcome to sing too!) then stay to meet our members and share some tasty treats. We are so grateful for the hospitality that First Christian Church has shown us since we arrived last fall. We look forward to seeing you on March 18!

Lenten Bible Studies **Wednesday Nights, 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.** **through March 20th**

Barb Bell and Heidi Ott are hosting a Bible study with *An Unexpected Revival!* See the flyer below. See Barb or Heidi for more information.



Family Promise 20th Anniversary! **Their Mission and Needs**

I am hopeful your 2024 has gotten off to a great start and that you have a wonderful, happy, healthy, and safe new year.

We have much to do in 2024 and so much to celebrate as we are in our 20th year of helping families experiencing homelessness obtain sustainable housing and brighter futures. 20 years! The only way we were able to serve for 20 years, and counting, is due solely to supporters like you! Without your time, talent, and treasure, there would be no Family Promise or Family Promise Welcome Home. Without you, there would be 510 families with children that would not have had a chance at sustainable lives over the 20 years of service. This represents over 2,000 individuals of which 60% were children. I hope that makes you smile.

Jeffrey Wilhite, Executive Director
330-253-8081

Director@Familypromisesc.org

What can you do to help families with children experiencing homelessness? A lot! Acts of compassion have the power to change the lives of families. Volunteers play an essential role in helping families experiencing homelessness attain sustainable independence.

Regular volunteer opportunities:

Make a Meal:

The shelter houses ten families at one time. Making a meal involves delivery of prepared and portioned meals for families to enjoy. Family Promise would provide a list of families and size of families to know how much food is required.

Examples:

- Pizza
- Pasta Dinner
- Salad
- Chicken Dinner

Food Bank Pick Up and Drop Off:

Family Promise of Summit County orders food items from the Akron Canton Regional Food Bank. Pick up and drop off would involve picking up

from Akron location and helping unload at shelter. Would need to know availability 3 days in advance for order to be placed.

Repair and Renew

- Assemble Furniture
- Building Maintenance
- Grounds upkeep

Inventory

- Inventory cleaning supplies, hygiene products, baby items, and bedding
- Organize Inventory Closet

Hosting A Fundraiser/Grab Bags

- Host an Ice Cream Social
- Craft
- Create Birthday Bags for those in shelter. (Items for a birthday celebration)
- Host a Supply Drive (Cleaning and Hygiene Products, Twin Size Bedding and Blankets)
- Host a Car Wash
- Host Bake Sale

Communications

- Assist with the Family Promise YouTube Channel
- Ideas for content/stories/people highlights
- Video and photography contributions
- Fundraising ideas/events
- Press releases on our activities

Family Promise is always open to new interest and ideas of the volunteers!

In-kind donations are a great way of supporting the mission of Family Promise. These donations not only provide much-needed items to the families we serve but also help to reduce our expenses, which allows us to use our monetary donations more effectively and efficiently. The following are items we always need.

CLEANING SUPPLIES

- Mop/bucket
- Broom/dustpan
- Garbage bags (13 gallon)
- Garbage cans (13 gallons)
- All-purpose cleaner
- Dish soap
- Floor cleaner
- Laundry detergent

- Cleaning sponges
- Toilet paper/paper towels

BEDDING/LINENS (NEW)

- Twin sized fleece blankets/sheets
- Pillows
- Towels/Wash cloths
- Twin sized mattress covers

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Laundry baskets
- Plastic dishes
- Silverware
- Bathroom rugs
- Shower liners

WELL BABY ITEMS

- Diapers/wipes
- Baby bath and hygiene
- Baby lotion
- Baby blankets
- Baby socks

- Baby bottles/pacifier
- Baby first-aid

TOILETRY ITEMS

- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Body soap/lotion
- Razors
- Tooth Paste/Mouth wash
- Hair brush/combs

Donation drop off location and hours:

The Job Center - 1040 East Tallmadge Avenue,
Akron, OH 44310

Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
and 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM