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PATHWAYS

AUGUST 2025

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

Find us on social
media @FCCStow!

Introducing Our New Directors of Music

Please take special note of Jonathan's Pastor's pen, and read it before skipping through this issue! We have a special announcement for the hiring of our new directors of music, along with the first Music Notes for this upcoming season of rehearsals, music, and holiday worships.

Rubber Ducks Game – ALL CHURCH OUTING **Saturday, August 23rd, 6:05 p.m., Fireworks to Follow!**

For those signed up to go to the game, please make sure you have all the information you need from the Membership Committee! Thanks again to the committee for planning this outing,

Youth Group Kick-Off! **Sunday, August 24th**

It's time to "Ring in the new (school) year!" The youth group will have a day after Sanctuary Service for a pool party and cookout at the Smeiles' house! Please bring a snack to share, your swimsuit, and invite a friend!

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

Loaves & Fishes will be serving Pulled Pork with sides this month! Please consider calling in friends, family, or co-workers to help, if they are looking for places to make an impact! We had a high number of families last month, and there's no reason to expect less this month. We're grateful for every volunteer for this great ministry.

Church Directory Photography Begins! **July 13th, After Sanctuary Service**

By Popular Demand (And, it's been a while!) We're ready to start working on a Directory for 2025/26 (Pending production & Printing)! Please see Christian after 10 a.m. Sanctuary Service in the Chapel through July for photos! Come dressed as you'd like to be captured and be prepared to verify your contact information afterwards. First Come, First Served!

Nursery Attendant Position Search Continues

The Christian Education & Stewardship teams are working diligently to find a long-term Nursery Attendant who can serve the needs of our congregation's young families during worship services. If you know someone who might be interested, please contact Anna or Richelle, or let the church office know!

August 2025

Pastor's Pen

I say this a lot, and for good reason. *“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”* And I am saying it once again because once again God has given me good reason to say it.

Church life is, in my opinion, way different than life out in the “real world.” And yet, it’s very much exactly like life in the “real world.” Paradox, right? And all y’all know how much a love paradox—when something is both one thing and another.

Eight years ago—right around this time of the summer too—a lot was changing for me, and a lot was changing for our church. My personal life changed when my father died, which was more than enough change for me. And then my professional life, and the life of our church changed, when two staffers of twenty years announced they were resigning to follow a new call God was leading them towards. I recall thinking over and over and over again, *“For everything there is a season...”* Admittedly, as true as these words are, still centuries later, they didn’t bring me the comfort I had lost, and was longing for.

None of us ever like change. Ok, ok, because none of us like absolutes either, I’ll rephrase and say, *rarely* do any of us like change. We like things the way they are because they are familiar, comfortable, secure, safe, and all the other reasons we don’t want things to ever change. But eight years ago...whew, as Bob Dylan so artfully and woefully sang, *“...you better start swimmin’, or you’ll sink like a stone, for the times they are a changin’.”* And so, I started *“swimmin’”*. And so did our church. And because I did, and because we did, and because God was with us, even though the times were *“a changin’”*, we didn’t sink like a stone.

Earlier this summer all of us—our church that is—found ourselves once again facing a significant time of *“changin’”* when our beloved Director of Music, Chuck Kobb, announced his retirement. We all certainly celebrated this milestone arrival for Chuck and his wife Janice, for how could we not? Still though, a part of us was uneasy about the *“a changin’”* that was coming, wonder and worry crept into our minds, and then into our hearts, which is only natural. Once again, I was seeing how seasons come and seasons go, and though I was saddened and wondering and worried how and when the next season would go, I leaned into the truth that just as

God had before, God would again bless us to the point where we could praise God from whom all blessings flow. And when God made it clear that God was about to bless us anew with the familiar, comfortable, secure, safe, and all the other blessings that we want (because we don’t like change) I was really singing my praises to God! And yet... God always has a way to surprise us, and bless us anew, even within the familiar, comfortable, secure, safe, and all the other blessings that we want (because we don’t like change).

I am thrilled that we are about to welcome home Cheryl and Ralph Lorenz as our next, and once again, Directors of Music at First Christian Church of Stow! They come back home bringing all of their gifts and talents, along with an already deeply engrained love for our church, ministries, and community. They come back home bringing all the familiarity, comfortability, security, and safety that we all want and long for. And yet... because did you really think that God was going to let us turn back the clocks eight years and pick up where we left off? And yet... God is *still* and *nonetheless* doing a new thing here at First Christian Church of Stow!

We are not the church we were eight years ago. I am not the pastor I was eight years ago. You are not the same person you were eight years ago. And Cheryl and Ralph...yep, you guessed it, they are not the same people they were eight years ago either. All of us are different. All of us have changed. And though, in many ways, the return of Cheryl and Ralph is a reunion, a homecoming even, God is without a doubt doing a new thing here at First Christian Church of Stow. Cheryl and Ralph return to a ministry they were part of for twenty years, but in the time they were away, they did new ministries, followed new calls, had new experiences, and grew in new ways. And in the eight years since their departure, we have done new ministries, followed new calls, and had new experiences. And each in their own way were blessings, and now, each in their own way, are about to be blessings anew.

So yes, the times are indeed *“a changin’.”* And while I, along with you, don’t always like change, when it comes to all that is *“a changin’”* for our church, and for what I know God is about to do, I say, *“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”*

Welcome Home!

Dr. Ralp Lorenz and Cheryl Neff-Lorenz, New Directors of Music

The Search Team assembled, prayed, discussed, discerned, interviewed, and decided! From there, the rest of the Elders were briefed and given a recommendation, as was the Stewardship Team. And finally, the First Christian Church Governing Board honored, approved, and blessed everyone's work and direction that was clearly guided by God throughout the entire process. And with all of that, we are thrilled to announce that starting September 1st, 2025*, we will welcome home as our next Directors of Music Dr. Ralp Lorenz and Cheryl Neff-Lorenz! (*No we are not going to make them start their new call on Labor Day—this is simply an easy demarcation for our finance staff!)

Cheryl and Ralph will be ready to make sure the music ministries of the church resume on schedule for the Fall. Meaning rehearsals will start up again as planned! Their first Sunday in worship will be on September 7th when we return to regular 10:30 worship!

Music Notes - August 2025

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens....” Ecclesiastes 3:1

Hello First Christian Church! We are so excited to be starting back up with the music ministry this September! We are extremely grateful to Chuck, for his expert leadership and warm welcome to be a part of FCC music whenever we were in town, during the 5 years we were in New York and the 3 years we've been back in Ohio. May Chuck be richly blessed in retirement, and we look forward to our paths continuing to cross!

More details will follow in September, but we invite all music makers to already mark their calendars for the beginning of fall rehearsals. For example, Joy Bells (advanced adult handbell ensemble) will start back up on Thursday, September 4 (6:00-7:15pm), and Chancel Choir (adult choir, high school age and up) resumes on Thursday, September 4 (7:30-9:00pm). Stay tuned for announcements about our other groups, including youth music and

instrumental music. Have you ever wanted to join one of our groups? We always love to have new members join us. See you soon!

-Ralph and Cheryl

Nursery Attendant Update

Work is ongoing to find a new Nursery Attendant, please share this opening with anyone you know that may be interested.

The Nursery Attendant is responsible for childcare for children ages 0 to 5 while their families attend church service. The role involves engaging in age-appropriate activities, ensuring the safety and well-being of the children, and maintaining a clean and organized environment.

Requirements for Nursery Attendant:

- Two hours on Sunday Mornings: 10am-12pm September-May & 9:30am-11:30am June-August
- Experience working with children ages 0-5
- Must be at least 18 years age
- Completion of CPR / First Aid Training
- Must complete and pass Background Check

Interested candidates can apply by emailing a resume to christianed@firstchristianstow.org

Church Nursery Volunteers

In the interim while we search for a new Nursery Attendant. The Christian Education Team is seeking volunteers to staff the Nursery on Sunday Mornings so that any family who wishes to utilize the nursery can do so. Youth Group helper(s) will be available to assist you as well. There is a sign-up sheet located near the Worship Activity Bags in the Sanctuary for anyone interested in assisting in providing Nursery Care for our children ages 0-5. Thank you!

Road Trip Vacation Bible School: Thank You!

We had a great week “On the Road with God” at Vacation Bible School in July! 26 kids joined us for amazing science experiments, memorable bible stories, creative crafts, fun recreation and delicious snacks on our Road Trip! THANK YOU to all of

the volunteers for helping make the week so much fun!!!

Check out our FCC Stow Facebook page for more pictures from the week at VBS!



First Christian Church Takes On The Rubberducks!

**Saturday, August 23rd, 6:05p.m.
With Fireworks After the Game!**

Shhhh... Jonathan wrote this headline because for some reason he's still trying to relive the glory days of our church's softball team, and he thinks we're actually playing the Rubberducks and he's slated to pitch! Yes, he will be disappointed come game day, but at least we will all still enjoy a beautiful summer night at the ballpark with peanuts, crackerjack, and other fun in-between inning frivolity provided by our Membership Team!

Please note! The church makes/made its final group/block of tickets order *and* payment to the Rubberducks on Monday, August 4th. This means that if you signed up to go to the game, we need you to make payment for your ordered tickets to the church—even if your plans or schedule change and you can no longer attend the game. We will be glad to make every effort to redistribute your tickets and then reimburse you if we are able to find someone else to use the tickets. Thank you for understanding and for your help to ensure the church does not have to absorb the cost of any unused tickets.

Oh, and in addition to it being a fireworks night, there is also a bobblehead give away. Just not one of Jonathan as he also seems to think is going to happen. It seems with the Guardians season in serious doubt, Jonathan has resorted to other baseball fantasies to keep his "America's Past

Time" dreams in full swing for the rest of the summer! Please, go easy on him. He's been "waiting til next year" for a very, very, very long time.

Youth Group Kick-Off! Sunday, August 24th!

Hey youth! Are you sad about summer quickly coming to an end and school starting back up? Kind of a bummer isn't it?! Well look on the bright side at least—Youth Group is back in session!! Another year in the life the FCC Youth Group will "officially" kick-off on **Sunday, August 24th!** This will happen right after church, and from there we will make the short drive over to Kent to the home of Debbie and Chris Smeiles' home for a cookout and pool party! So be sure to bring your swimsuit, water wings, a snack to share, and a friend (if you like) for this day of fun in the sun!

The First Christian Church Youth Group is open to all youth in sixth grade and up and their friends. We meet, typically, twice a month on a bi-weekly schedule. For more information, please contact Director of Youth Ministries Emily Sanko, Directors of Christian Education Anna Llyod and Richelle Aukeman, or if you're really hard up for information, you can always talk to our pastor Jonathan.

Christmas In July Ingathering Fundraiser

THANK YOU to everyone who helped organize, and everyone who helped contribute to this incredible event! With your help, 294 items were secured ahead of time! We're grateful for your help, but please do remember these food items, and continue to advocate for this ministry throughout the year—Remind friends & family that they can contribute to this important local & impactful ministry and consider asking them to be a part of it!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry August 17th, 4-6 p.m.

Thank you to everyone who donated Back to School supplies to Falls Good Neighbors. They were very grateful.

August 17th 4-6p.m is the meal giveaway. We will be serving pulled pork with sides. All are welcome!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry July Recap

In July we served pizza for dinner and offered our usual array of groceries. Representatives of 45 households came by to partake in our offering. In three separate months this year we've served 45 households so July matches our 2025 high-water mark.

There was something interesting about July....In January through June of 2025 16% of the families we served were new to Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. In July, 12 of the 45 families served were new to us. This comes out to 27%, by far the highest monthly percentage of new families that we've served.

This is good news in a couple of ways: first, the situation of some families has improved so they no longer need our services; second, the word has spread about our Loaves & Fishes + Pantry and we have reach more people in need.

We could not provide this needed outreach without the constant support of our church members and without the volunteers, both church members and non-members. For that support we, and the families we serve, are grateful

Acme Community Cash Back **Cash Back is BACK! Aug 1 – Feb 15**

We can't believe it either, but it's once again time to save those Acme receipts! The 2025-2026 Cash Back campaign begins August 1st and runs through February 15th, 2026. As in years past, the money we make helps support our blanket fund. This year, we need the support of this program more than ever, so please remember to put your receipts in the collection box in the Gathering Area. It's an easy way to support a great cause!

Vacant Nursery Attendant Position: The Search Continues!

The Christian Education Team and the Stewardship Team have begun work to find a new nursery attendant for Sunday mornings. (10:30 a.m. September through May; 10:00 a.m. June through August.) More information about the position is available via the church office. If you know

someone who might be interested in the position please encourage them to inquire about this opportunity.

Please know that in this time of transition we will still continue to offer nursery care each Sunday. Anna and Richelle will partner in staffing the nursery, along with volunteers from the congregation, so that any family who wishes to utilize the nursery can continue to do so.

Rubber Ducks Game and Fireworks, **Saturday, August 23rd** **First Pitch is set for 6:05***

**Note this out of the ordinary start time!*

Once again FCC Stow will spend a summer evening with the Akron Rubber Ducks. This summertime tradition for our church and friends is a great opportunity to enjoy a carefree night at Canal Park watching the Rubber Ducks "*hit 'em where they ain't,*" and then enjoy a spectacular fireworks display after the game. And that is going to happen again this summer on Saturday, August 23rd.

Tickets are just \$15! What a bargain! A night at the ballpark and fireworks for just twelve bucks!? You can't even walk past the Target door-buster dollar deals for twelve bucks! Of course, if you are bringing your kids our grandkids with you then sure, things might get a little more pricy—soda-pops, hotdogs, popcorn, peanuts, Cracker Jack, Dippin Dots, and the infamous Rubber Duck bubble blower gun—but can you really put a price on making memories like that?! (Does anyone want to take the preacher's kids with them to the game?! Because the preacher might "*still be working on his sermon for Sunday*" and unable to pay for—I mean—be there to make those memories!) See Bill Dowey or contact the church office to reserve your tickets!

Summer Worship Hrs. **8:30 a.m. postponed until further notice** **Coffee Fellowship 9:30** **Second Service 10:00**

Summer worship hours have begun! And that means first service will happen at 8:30 a.m. in the Chapel, and second service will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

Please note that there will be coffee, and maybe a few treats—after first service and before between services so that we can say hello and have a bit of fellowship time with those who just came from first service and those getting set to head into second service. This coffee fellowship, as usual, will be held in our Library and will offer a special opportunity for folks from the two services to see and greet one another. And then, because it just kind of organically happens, Coffee Fellowship will still happen after second service as well.

4th of July Pancake Breakfast
THANKS TO ALL VOLUNTEERS!

We have to say “THANK YOU” to all our awesome volunteers for the 4th of July Pancake Breakfast! We’re grateful for every member and leader who takes part in this

Disciples Hall Yoga Class
Wednesdays, 5:45 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Correction: The starting time for Yoga is 5:45 p.m. on Wednesdays! Your donations for admission participate in and provide for various outreach programs throughout the church, including Bulldog bags, Week of Compassion, and our Loaves & Fishes + Pantry Outreach program.

Yoga is for Every Body and Everybody!

Poodle Skirts & Promise
A 1950s Benefit for Family Promise
Sept. 4th, Save the Date!

Make sure you mark your calendars for a RETRO GOOD TIME! This event will feature Music, an Auction, a Raffle, Great Food, and Fun Photo Ops with Vintage Automobiles! More details will be posted when received from Family Promise.

Think – Pray – Connect

Families from July

07/06/25

Jim & Linda Phillips

3822 Woodbury Oval, Stow OH 44224
Please continue to pray with Jim and Linda as Jim is in the hospital.

07/13/25

Jack Baughman

70 East Ralston Ave., Akron OH 44301
Please pray with Jack Baughman and his family, in light of the loss of Retha Baughman, as she passed on July 4th, 2025.

Jim & Linda Phillips

3822 Woodbury Oval, Stow OH 44224
*Please continue to pray with Jim and Linda as Jim continues to face health complications. *Note the corrected address.*

**John & Gloria
McCreight**

44 Westminster Lane, Kent OH 44240
*John Sr. turned 95 years young on July 7th!
Join us in wishing John a very happy birthday*

08/03/25

Lindsey Hindel

2675 Prescott Downs, Stow OH 44224
Please continue to pray with and for the recovery of Lindsey as she's had a retinal hemorrhage. Doctors will be following up to determine the next best step for her soon.

Jim & Linda Phillips

3822 Woodbury Oval, Stow OH 44224
Please also pray for Jim Phillips. Jim has spent a few days at the hospital recently. Please pray that he may find renewed health, and return to a better quality of life!