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# PATHWAYS SEPTEMBER 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!

## **Welcome Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>** **Regular Worship Hours Resume, 10:30 a.m.**

We have a wonderfully planned Welcome Sunday set for tomorrow, so please make note of the time change, and join us for this return to the regular time of 10:30, and consider coming a bit earlier through September for the new Sunday School opportunities!

## **Trunk-or-Treat!** **Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 3-5 p.m.**

Please mark your calendar and start preparing your trunk! We have multiple ways to help out, and it's all listed inside this edition of Pathways! We hope to see you there!

## **Youth Group Kick-Off!** **Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup>**

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** **September 21<sup>st</sup> 4-6 p.m.**

Loaves & Fishes will be serving Sloppy Joes 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! This weekend will be the week of the Women's Retreat, where multiple regular volunteers will be on retreat—Extra hands are needed!

## **Church Directory Photography Continues!** **Through September 28<sup>th</sup>, After Sanctuary Service**

Please see Christian after 10:30 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. Please do be patient, as Christian has to wrap up the livestream & digital elements of worship for the folks at home.

## **Sunday School Opportunities for All Ages** **Beginning Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

Beginning in the middle of this month, Jonathan is hosting two different Sunday School events before 10:30 a.m. worship services! See below for more details! You won't want to miss it!

## **Upcoming Meetings:** **Stewardship Meeting** **Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> @ 7 p.m.**

**September 2025**

**Pastor's Pen**

Late August and early September always mark the unofficial end of summer and the unofficial beginning of the autumn season that's filled with first day of school social media picture posting, Friday night football and band performances (or Thursday night if you went to the game this past week), sweater weather, Starbucks "PSLs" (IYKYK), and seasonal décor that inevitably includes signs that say, "*Happy Fall Y'all!*" (Ok, I find this signage saying kind of whimsical, and what's life without a little whimsy now and then?!) And this new season also means the resuming of an array of weeknight endeavors that fill up our calendars and schedules. Summer certainly has its perks, but a routine schedule, even if crammed full, certainly has its advantages too.

Why are routines like this important? One reason is that our brains are designed to manage and conserve energy. When we reduce the number of decisions we make, we preserve energy for the things that matter most. In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explains, "*When a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision making. It diverts focus to other tasks. So unless you deliberately fight a habit... the pattern will unfold automatically. Intentional routines help us pre-decide how we'll spend our time and focus—so we're not led by default, but by design.*"

I like that concept, "*we're not led by default, but by design.*" It says to me that there is an intentionality, and a purpose within all that we do, there is service and duty toward something beyond ourselves, maybe even something bigger than ourselves from time to time. And with this understanding we can discover meaning. And that—*finding meaning*—is to me among the most important pieces to living life.

And yet, "*routine*" can only provide its comforts when life allows for such consistency. But life is rarely consistent. I've found, and I bet you have too, that when life gets stressful, I revert back to simple routines to help me cope. I've also found that routines, like going to church, can simply become a habit more than anything else. You get up on Sunday, say hello to a few people, smile, sing a few songs, listen to the sermon, rate it in comparison to all the sermons heard before (admit it, you do this!), stand to pray, shake hands, have

some cookies and coffee, and walk out. Check off the "*Christian-ed*" box of weekly duty, go back to life on Monday. Repeat next Sunday.

When going to church becomes routine, our faith becomes routine, and therefore purposeless and meaningless. I've said it dozens of times, there's a difference between going to church and being the Church. God didn't call us to routines, rather God routinely calls us to live godly lives in the world, to love others and to show God's kindness so that others may know of God's love and grace.

I think that's why Jesus consistently got upset with the Pharisees. Their salvation was found in the routines of God rather than in the demonstration of God's love. They cared more about doing the sacrifices just right than tending the hurting people all around the Temple. When Jesus flipped the script and made it about the hurting people, these religious leaders lost their minds. Their routines gave them power and authority over people, and by doing so it created pride in their hearts instead of compassion and service. They felt better than everyone else because they were following the letter of the Law rather than following the actual Law. But we know the truth, that God cares more about the hurting and the lost than God does for our church routines. Church is important, but Jesus didn't die so we could go to church. Jesus died to save the lost, and gave us the commission of spreading that Good News to create more disciples.

Summer is over, more or less, and the routines and demands of a new school year and a new programming year in the life of the church are all off and running. And to be clear, there is goodness, and purpose and meaning in all of it—even the routine parts of it all. But let us not forget that our lives are about more than routine. Our lives are not led by default, but by design. The design of our Creator who calls us toward a meaningful purpose. The design of our Savior who has shown us what is possible when we live with love, compassion, and service instead of just doing to get stuff done, instead of pride and self-centeredness. So let us strive to live, routinely, a Christ-like life. For in doing so, life will never be filled with simple routine, it will be filled with meaning and purpose.

*Happy Fall Y'all!*

Your Pastor and Friend,  
Jonathan

## **Return to Regular Worship Hours** **Sanctuary Service @ 10:30 a.m.**

We have SO much welcoming to do this Sunday! On this Welcome Sunday, as we welcome our Directors of Music back, and welcome in a new liturgical season, we also are returning to our regular worship hours, as school is starting. Please notify anyone you might know that would miss this notice if you can!

### **Music Notes:** **It's Time to Make** **Music Together Again!**

Fall rehearsals begin this week, continuing the rich history of music here at First Christian Church. There's something for everyone—adults, youth, children—choral/vocal and instrumental... Have you ever wanted to sing, sign, or play an instrument to the glory of God? We love to welcome new members.

**Joyful Noise** (intermediate handbell ensemble) rehearses Wednesdays 7:00-8:00 pm, in Rm 201 with Barb Eppley.

**Joy Bells** (advanced handbell ensemble) rehearses Thursdays 6:00-7:15 pm.

**Chancel Choir** (adults, plus high school age and up) rehearses Thursdays 7:30-9:00 pm.

Children's and youth music are just as important. More information is coming soon about other ensembles. In the meantime, please ask us any questions you may have! Speak with Ralph, Cheryl, Barb, or Cora.

The Children's Bell Choir will have its first rehearsal on Sunday, September 14, immediately after the church service (in the balcony).

## **"Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?"**

### **A Sunday School Class**

#### **Beginning September 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 a.m.**

Does prayer change us, or God? Or both? What is prayer? How does it work? And more importantly, does it work? These are just some of the questions and concepts that will be explored in a new six-week Sunday school opportunity that will begin on Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, and will run through October 19<sup>th</sup>. The curriculum will be based in Philip Yancy's book, "*Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*" In this these six thought-provoking and inspiring sessions, Yancy will guide us to explore and experience the very heartbeat—the most fundamental, challenging, perplexing, and deeply rewarding aspect—of our relationship with God: prayer.

These six sessions will be led by Jonathan, in the Our Classroom (Room 202, past the Library), and will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 10:10. They will include short video presentations by Yancy himself, followed by a time of guided discussion and bible study. Outside journaling and discovery work is always optional.

### **"Children of God Storybook Bible"** **Bible Stories for Children and Pastor** **Beginning September 14<sup>th</sup>, 10:10 a.m.**

If you have a child who might enjoy hearing and learning about the bible in story form, then make plans to join Jonathan **in the church library** at 10:10 a.m. each Sunday morning starting on Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>. This will be simply a brief time of sharing some of the most beloved stories from both the Old and New Testaments of the bible, as they are told from Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his books, "*Children of God Storybook Bible.*" Tutu has written the first truly global Bible for children of all nationalities, retelling more than fifty beloved stories, each one showing how God's work is always for good.

Each week a new story will be told and shared in story form, along with time for children to share their thoughts and ask their questions. These sessions will be kind of like a longer children's sermon that takes place during worship—light hearted, fun, whimsical, and faithful. And they will last just 15 minutes. Open to any and all children (of any age!), parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

## **Loaves & Fishes + Pantry** **September 21<sup>st</sup>, 4-6 p.m.**

The September drive thru meal will be September 21st 4-6 p.m. We will serving sloppy joes and sides. ( This is the weekend of the Women's retreat so any help will be appreciated!)

### **Loaves & Fishes + Pantry August Recap**

We hosted our most recent Loaves & Fishes + Pantry on Sunday August 17th. As we suspected, usage was more robust than July. We served 52 families, which is 4 more than July. This was our second highest monthly total ever since we began in January 2021.

26% of the families were new to Loaves & Fishes + Pantry, which is similar to our experience in July.

In addition to the groceries we served 120 Pulled Pork Dinners, which got rave reviews from our guests.

In these uncertain times our outreach is more vital than ever. Your support of Loaves & Fishes + Pantry means everything to people who are just trying to make it through another day, another week, another month.

They may not be able to count on much, but they can count on us. Their gratitude is humbling.

### **Trunk or Treat** **Sunday October 26, 3-5pm**

Join us Sunday October 26 from 3-5pm! Wear your costume and trick or treat in the church parking lot! We are in need of volunteers to make this event successful, see below on how you can help. Sign-up's will be available in September.

— *Host a Trunk!* Decorate your trunk and bring candy for 75-100 trick or treaters. Sign up in the Gathering Area or email [christianed@firstchristianstow.org](mailto:christianed@firstchristianstow.org).

— *Candy Donations!* There will be in a bin in the Gathering Area for candy donations (individually wrapped candy, please).

Contact Anna or Richelle for questions/more information.

## **Akron Zoo** **Community Appreciation Days**

The Akron zoo believes that EVERYONE should have the opportunity to come nose-to-nose with amazing animals, and learn about our natural world! They are extending this invitation to our whole congregation. Please consider joining them for some of these wonderful community days!

- Free admission to residents of Summit Co., September 1-30, 2025.
- There are a limited number of tickets that are available for each day, and tickets must be reserved online in advanced at [www.akron.org/community-days](http://www.akron.org/community-days)
- Limit 4 tickets per household, while supplies last.

If you need paper tickets, you can contact Tina Edwards at [t.edwards@akronzoo.org](mailto:t.edwards@akronzoo.org) or 330-842-6162. They will be good for any day in September, and must be presented at the ticket counter on the day of the visit.

### **Acme Community Cash Back** **Collecting Receipts Until Feb 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

We can't believe it either, but it's once again time to save your Acme Receipts! The Cash Back Campaign will continue until next February, so please save your receipts and bring them to the drop box in the gathering area! All proceeds benefit the blanket ministry with a portion of the cost from your receipt, with no extra charge to you! Please consider shopping at Acme to support this important mission with a portion of that receipt!

### **From the Trustees** **Chapel Update:**

A belated thanks to the members of the Chapel Renewal Team for their work on getting the Chapel back in functional order! All members of the team helped make the decisions we needed for the project, but many had unique talents that we relied on as well. Ann Halpin led our decorative processes. Mike Deiwert lent his building expertise to the project. Al led the effort to get our insurance

claim filed & completed. Dave Helmick and Jonathan were instrumental with the idea & execution of finding different pews, rather than repairing the original ones, saving the church thousands of dollars. We were able to use some of that savings to add the vaulted ceiling in the Chapel. Also, thanks to Paul Kleis who repaired the "Narthex" (area between the back of the Chapel & the door to 91/Darrow Rd). This was not included in our insurance settlement, but also needed a face lift. And of course, the good Reverend also put together a great way to rededicate the Chapel in the service which began in the Sanctuary.

Thanks also to Joe Ott Electric who handled our electric needs and to Dan McShane our general contractor for the project. Stow Building Department & Fire Department were also very interested and cooperative through the entire process.

Thanks to the congregation for all of your prayers & support! If you haven't been in the Chapel yet, stop by!



### **Trustee Update:**

It has been a busy year so far! We have had to get a new furnace installed for the Chapel & 3 other furnaces repaired back when it was cold outside. Now we are having A/C issues with the Library, which should be resolved the end of June. We have

been using Jeremy Miller of Wally's Mechanical. They have been very responsive and friendly with the church. (Jeremy used to work for Brandon Heating before starting on his own. He probably put most of the HVAC systems in back with Dave Brandon).

We've also been chasing down a couple of leaks in the roof. Maybe this time we'll get that last little one.

And our lawn tractor quit the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of mowing. Thanks to Terry Dillinger & Chris Smeiles for bringing their lawn equipment to church & mowing for us while we were out of commission. We have the tractor repaired & are back with our regular mowing crew.

The Boy Scouts have volunteered to repair our fence, but first I need to get the correct fence for them. Tom Stanley was able to band-aid it with snow fence for the Nest who are conducting 4 weeks of school this summer. Hopefully we'll be in business later this summer or early fall.

Thanks for your prayers & thoughts for the physical building & equipment. There is a lot of it!

John McCreight

### **Rededication of the John Brown Monument Sunday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>, 3 p.m.**

Akron Zoo Parking Lot B, 505 Euclid Avenue,  
Akron  
Free & Open to the Public.

The John Brown Monument, located in a wooded area of the Akron Zoo, symbolizes struggles for civil liberties and civil rights by Akron's early settlers. Inspired by the abolitionism of John Brown, Akron's German American Alliance erected the monument's central pillar in 1910, and the Negro 25 Year Club added bench seating, fountains, and a sculpted plaque in 1938.

The program, based on the 1938 re-dedication ceremony organized by the Negro 25 Year Club, weaves the monument's fascinating history with

understanding of its current meaning and significance.

Don't miss this once-in-a-quarter-century opportunity to remember our ancestors' commitments to freedom and equality!

3:00 – 4:30 p.m.: Program with speakers, musical selections, and wreath laying procession  
4:30 – 6 p.m.: Mingling, Activities, and Light Refreshments

**RSVP BY WEDNESDAY, SEPT 24<sup>th</sup>.**

Email: [ExternalAffairs@AkronZoo.org](mailto:ExternalAffairs@AkronZoo.org)

Or by Phone: 330-842-6162

**Thank You!**  
**From the Girl Scouts**

Troop 90754 would like to thank FCC Stow for their continuing support through our scouting adventures! Last school year, we baked muffins in the kitchen for first responders, held a lock-in in the youth rooms, served at Loaves and Fishes, and supported Christmas Ingathering. Through our years at the church we have learned what it means to serve. As a thank you, our troop has donated a new picnic table for the fire circle! We love using the area for s'mores and outdoor games, and we are grateful to have the space available. The eight of us look forward to another year with Girl Scouts and FCC Stow!

Thank you, Violet, Ceci, Daphne, Abby, Nora, Rose, Kinley and Eliza

**Bulldog Bags Collections**  
**2025-2026 School Year**

We're collecting items for Bulldog Bags again! Please see the list below for the WHOLE School year! We can't take items too early, but if you can plan ahead, please do. Additionally, please note: **NO NUTS IN ANY PRODUCTS.** If you can, check to make sure what you're providing doesn't have any nut/tree nut additives. Thanks to all for your contributions!

Box for donations can be found in the Gathering Area!

<b><u>Due</u></b>	<b><u>Items Needed</u></b>
9/14	Toothbrush, Toothpaste
10/12	Mac 'n' Cheese Cups
12/7	Hot Chocolate Packets
1/11	Ramen Noodles
2/8	Deodorant (Travel Size)
3/8	Pudding Cups
5/10	Shampoo (Travel Size)

**Disciples of Christ Historical Society**  
**Miracle Day at the Campbell Mansion**

Join the Disciples of Christ Historical Society for Miracle Day at the Alexander Campbell Mansion — September 20, 2025

Ohio Regional Pastor & President, Rev. Allen V. Harris, will be in attendance and personally invites Ohio Disciples to join him.

Have you ever wanted to be a part of a miracle? Now you can! On Saturday, September 20, 2025, we invite you to Miracle Day at the historic Alexander Campbell Mansion in Bethany, West Virginia—a day of hands-on service, fellowship, and restoration.

The Campbell Mansion, home of one of the founding voices of the Stone-Campbell Movement, has stood for generations as a symbol of faith, education, and unity within the Christian Church. Now, it's our turn to give back and help preserve its legacy for future generations.

We're calling on 150 volunteers with skills in painting, carpentry, deep cleaning, food provision, and much more to join us for this all-day work event. Whether you're skilled with a brush, hammer, vacuum, or casserole dish, there is a place for you to serve. Your work will directly support the restoration and ongoing care of this sacred space, making an enduring difference in the preservation of our history and our wider church family.

Schedule for Saturday, September 20

- 8:00 AM Registration Opens
- 8:30 AM Morning Worship
- 9:00 AM Work Begins
- 4:30 PM Closing Worship

Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided

Register to be a part of the miracle here:  
<https://near.tl/sm/n9vTsgdia>

Can't attend but still want to help? Consider donating to support the effort. Your financial gift provides essential supplies like paint brushes, wood, and other materials needed to complete the work. You can donate through the QR code in the image attached or the link above.

Come for the day. Leave a legacy.

Questions? For more information, contact Rev. Erin James-Brown ([ejamesbrown@bethanywv.edu](mailto:ejamesbrown@bethanywv.edu)) or Rev. Dan Paul ([pastordanpaul@gmail.com](mailto:pastordanpaul@gmail.com))

Let's make a miracle happen—together!

**Summit County Faith & Blue**  
**Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

The Summit County Sheriff's office is hosting the annual day of fun and fellowship at Hardesty Park on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Folks are invited to build community with our law enforcement organizations. There's a lot to see and do this year, with live performances, games & contests, bounce house & obstacle course, food trucks available, a touch-a-truck, a mounted unit on site, raffle prizes, and more!

**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 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through February 15<sup>th</sup>, 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!

**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!

**Think – Pray – Connect**  
**Families from August**

**08/03/25**

**Sandy Long**

73 East Avenue, Tallmadge OH 44278  
*Please pray with, and send support to Sandy, as she was hospitalized last week. She has been facing significant weakness, and is now in rehab to recover her strength.*

*(Sandy has since moved to an assisted living, and is welcoming in visitors! Her new address is listed above)*

**08/24/25**

**Bob & Marty Blaine**

5926 Ogilby Dr., Hudson OH 44236  
*Friends, please send support and encouragement to Bob as he recovers from a fall this past week, and surgery to repair the resulting several broken ribs. He came out of surgery well as of this past Friday evening!*

**08/31/25**

**Dr. Ralph &  
Cheryl Neff Lorenz**

3658 Myersville Rd,  
Uniontown OH 44685

*Please join us in welcoming Ralph & Cheryl back as they return as our Directors of Music! Rehearsals will be starting very soon, and there's a lot of opportunities this year! Please pray for them as they lead us through another wonderfully musical year!*