



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

PATHWAYS

DECEMBER 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!

Christmas Season Services

Christmas Eve Services: Candlelight services: 7 p.m. (Child friendly),
Musical Prelude at 9:30 with service at 10 p.m. (Candlelight Service)

The Season of Advent **December 1-December 24th**

Welcome to the Season of Advent! It marks the beginning of a new year in the liturgical life of the church, and it is a time of moving from dimness to light as each week we light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. It all culminates on Christmas Eve when we light the Christ candle and give thanks for, and rejoice in, the light of the world finally coming to us at Christmas.

Happy Advent everyone! And Merry Christmas!

Christmas In-Gathering Outreach Program Distribution **Tuesday, December 17th and Wednesday, December 18th**

Once again our church is preparing to make Christmas a bit more merry and bright for folks from our community in need of a little extra help. There is still time to get involved by shopping for gifts, filling food boxes, making a donation, or being on hand to help distribute.

Please get with Ann Halpin or the church office for more information about how you can help with this important and far-reaching outreach program.

Congregational Meeting **Sunday, December 8th**

The Stewardship Team wants to inform the congregation there will be a Congregational meeting on Sunday, December 8th following both the 8:30 and 10:30 worship services. This meeting will be to vote on the 2025 budget. Please make plans to attend this important meeting. Copies of the proposed budget are available in the church office, or you can see Lisa Roseman or Barb Bell

Stampin' For the Holidays **December 7th, 11a.m. – 5 p.m.**

Register online ahead of time! Your registration fee of \$65 includes 12 cards with 6 different designs, two 3D Projects, and refreshments with door prizes and more items you can add on during registration! Contact 330-592-9559 or email Crafting4FunWithPaula@gmail.com to register.

December 2024

Pastor's Pen

When we were kids, and the calendar turned to December, my brother Greg, sister Kim, and myself would have secret “Christmas meetings.” When we were really little, these meetings were held in the closet of my brother and I’s room. Eventually, however, the years of accumulating stuff from Christmas and birthdays, along with our own yearly growth spurts, pushed the meetings out of the closet and into the bedroom, but still behind closed doors and away from mom or dad who we were certain would want to know every detail of these secret “*Christmas meetings*.” Of course, now I realize they probably wished we had had these meetings every night so as to give them a much desired and needed respite from their three active and loud kids in a small house.

Greg was the oldest, so he set the agenda and led the meetings. Kim, the middle child, would always insert her own mode of leadership into the meetings though, which mostly consisted of telling me to settle down, be quiet, and quit going on and on about the need for every meeting to have refreshments. The agenda though was always the same, centering around what time we would wake up, how Kim would sneak over into our room, how Greg would take on a reconnaissance mission to the living room and assess not only the loot left behind by good ole St. Nick, but also if the milk, cookies and carrots left out for him and the reindeer had been completely or just partially consumed. And then I would also strenuously recommend that as he made his way back from his recon mission he should somehow secured refreshments for our “Christmas Morning Christmas meeting” where we would have to agonizingly wait until the assigned time our parents declared we were not to leave our beds until.

It’s funny looking back on these memories now. Those years of congregating early on Christmas morning with my siblings didn’t last very long because soon my older siblings were of an age that sleeping—no matter what the day—was the priority. After all, the presents would be there whether they were opened at 7 a.m. or 10 a.m. Besides, the earlier you got up, the sooner “*Christmas was over*”, a refrain that become more ubiquitous each year. But the amusing part of all this is that though the years of Christmas meetings and early rising were few, the term “Christmas meeting”, and even the act of discussing our Christmas Day plans, still remains part of our lexicon and yearly planning all these years later. In fact, just last night, via Facetime, we had a

“Christmas meeting” for this year, and there will probably be the need to have another one in the coming weeks as we get closer to the big day.

What kinds of traditions and memories of Christmas’ long, long ago do you still have? Do you still do any of them? Christmas memories are among some of our most cherished, aren’t they? I’m certain we can all remember particularly special gifts we received, but I’m willing to bet what we remember even more than all the gifts are the traditions and memories—the places we’ve celebrated Christmas and most especially the people we celebrated with. We remember how our Christmas celebrations made us feel so full of joy and love. We remember how Christmas was truly the most wonderful time of the year because it implored us to be with those we loved the most.

Christmas is such a special time, and each Christmas we remember past Christmas’ with our traditions and our memories. And we do this because deep with each of us is a longing to reconnect and even relive the goodness of all those previous joyful times. And what is at the heart of each of our traditions, memories, and celebrations is the greatest story in the world—the story of God’s son coming into the world so the world would not be judged, but saved—saved from a story that could only end in separation from God *unless* God sent the world a Savior.

It is my hope and prayer that in the weeks to come you will be able to take time to look back on your Christmas memories, the Christmas stories you can recall as if they happened yesterday, and tap into the joy and love that is at the root of those stories. It is my hope and prayer you will have the opportunity to live out some of the traditions you and loved ones have created and crafted together, and you get to instill them and pass them along to those in the younger generations of your family. And most of all, it is my hope and prayer you will see your stories and your memories and your traditions coming out from the greatest of all stories—that long ago, in the strangest of places, in the oddest of ways, in the fullness of time, God sent God’s son, Immanuel, to fully recovery what was lost, forgotten, and had gone astray. Because that is what Christmas truly does, and it’s why we celebrate this blessed time. Our stories are all part of thee greatest story. Happy Advent and Merry Christmas to all.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Ingathering Outreach
Food Donations Needed!
Due by December 15th

Friends, as needs around our Stow community have risen, and more folks have needed help this upcoming holiday, we are in need of food donations to make the Ingathering Outreach the special and comprehensive program that it has always been. Please see below for the food that can be donated as you are able in the Gathering Area bin. Any and all assistance is appreciated. Please reach out to your friends and family if they are able to give as well, as it takes every helping hand possible to clothe, feed, and provide gifts for these families.

There are also 10 families that receive food and gift cards (and cookies!) Traditionally, we always make plates for our staff. Please consider making some cookies for this endeavor.

Please support our Ingathering by donating foods from the food lists available. Foods are due in December 15.

We need cookies (lots of cookies) to make up plates for our 39 families we are sponsoring this Christmas. Cookies must be at Church December 15th (in the morning).

Spaghetti Sauce	Boxed Potatoes	Cake Mix
Cereal (Cheerios or like)	Mac & Cheese	Icing
Jello or pudding	Jelly	Juice
Fruit or applesauce	Meat or Stew	Peanut Butter
Toilet paper (4 roll packs)	Soup	Beans
Spaghetti, Macaroni, Noodles	Tomato product	Tuna
Velveeta Cheese (or like)	Vegetables	Rice

Youth Group in December!

The Youth Group will meet **THIS** on Sunday, **December 1st**, right after church for our annual Christmas shopping trip for the In-Gathering

Outreach project. 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 usually runs past our normal end time. We will call/text when we are nearly done, and have you pick up your students at the Stow-Kent Target.***

Then on Sunday, **December 15th** 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 7th from 9-12 noon.**

Making Spirits Bright
Christmas Fun for Kids,
A Time Out for Parents!

When: Sat. Dec 7

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Where: Lower level of the church

Kids: Join us for a morning of crafts, movie, snack, scavenger hunt and indoor snowball fight!

Parents: Enjoy some time off to shop, wrap, bake or just get a cup of coffee

Please sign up on the sheet provided in the Gathering Area or let Bill and Cora Dowey know your child is attending.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry
Next Meal: Dec. 15th, 4-6 p.m.

November's meal give away was busy, busy. We served 140 meals. By the end we just had turkey, mashed potatoes and peas but ample amounts of all. December's giveaway meal is December 15th 4-6p.m. We will be serving creamed chicken with biscuits.

All are welcome!

Tell people about our Ingathering Outreach. It is a wonderful thing we do, in the spirit of Christian giving, for the families we give to. They will receive groceries, a grocery gift card, presents for the children and an opportunity to select coats. Tables are set up with new and gently used items for them.

When I told my friends they wanted to be part of it. "In giving we receive."

RECAP from Tom Safford

On Sunday November 17 we had our biggest day of the year for Loaves & Fishes + Pantry.

We served dinners and provided groceries for 53 separate households. We served well over 100 turkey dinners. We may have run a little low on fixings but everyone went home ready to enjoy a hot meal. The line of cars snaked all the way from the lower entrance up into the upper parking lot. It was a busy day.

We expect a similar crowd on December 15, which is our next Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

In other news our new freezer unit arrived and is in place in the kitchen. We are sharing this freezer with Bulldog Bags (they picked up half the cost). This freezer makes it possible for us to provide frozen groceries to our guests. We will also use it to store items for the Loaves & Fishes meal.

A special thanks to all our volunteers who went above and beyond to provide for all our guests.

We're Hiring! Custodian Needed **Flexible Hours & Fair Pay**

First Christian Church of Stow is seeking a part time custodian. Duties include routine cleaning of bathrooms, classrooms, common areas and sanctuary. This includes duties such as but not limited to sweeping, mopping, buffing, and cleaning floors and entryways; dusting furniture and equipment; washing walls and windows; vacuuming carpets; emptying trash; replacing light bulbs and fluorescent tubes; keeping necessary items stocked. Responsible for maintaining inventory of cleaning supplies.

Individual hired must be a self-starter. Must be able to lift a minimum of 40 pounds and climb a stepladder. Work closely with other church staff and report to the church Trustees. We offer flexible hours along with a low-pressure work environment. This job is 15 hours per week with flexible schedule Monday through Saturday with a pay scale of \$12-

15 dollars an hour based on skill level and experience. Additional hours could be requested for weddings, special event, building rentals and funeral luncheons. Must be able to pass a pre-employment background check and drug screening.

To apply send a letter or resume to:

First Christian Church of Stow
3493 Darrow Rd.
Stow, Ohio 44224

Or fccstow@firstchristianstow.org

Interim Custodial Support Needed

Friends, if you have a spare hour or even 30 minutes through your week to stop by and help with one of cleaning needs that we have as a church, please consider stopping by and helping maintain the worship and community center that we have in our church. There's a number of tasks that most folks can help out with, regardless of ability.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094EA8AD2BA7F9C70-52752186-interim>

Advent Devotionals **Available in The Gathering Area**

Friends, if you are looking for another way to prepare in the season of advent, and reflect on more than just the "holidays," feel free to take one of the Advent devotionals in the Gathering Area. If you are looking, and there are no more, let Christian know and he can print another one for you!

Music Notes, December 2024

With Christmas fast approaching there are a myriad of ways to celebrate this most blessed season: going to church, spending time with family and friends, parties, attending musical concerts, etc. On Sunday, December 22 the Music Department of FCC will be presenting a "Musical Christmas Celebration." This "event" will be part of the 10:30 Worship Service. All of the musical organizations of our church will be performing: The Chancel Choir, all three handbell choirs, the Children's Choir, a new group called The Grace Notes, the Resurrection Brass, a

vocal ensemble and soloists. Andrea and Janice will be playing another piano/organ duet and Ralph and Cheryl Lorenz will be joining us!! Please make sure to join with the congregation in this wonderful time of praising God and worshiping Him through music. See you on the 22nd.

In other news, the Joy Bells will again be presenting the prelude music for The Akron Children's Hospital Memorial Service on Wednesday, December 4 at the Goodyear Theater, Akron. Please pray for the choir and pray for those in attendance who will be grieving the loss of beloved children to sickness and disease.

For those who are interested, my community handbell ensemble, Summit Bells, will be performing four times this Christmas at various locations.

Saturday, December 7 @7:00pm
Firestone Park Community Christmas Concert
St. Paul Catholic Church
1580 Brown Street, Akron 44301

Monday, December 9 @7:00pm
Friends of Music Concert
Bath UCC
3980 W. Bath Road
Bath, Ohio 44333

Friday, December 13 @7:30pm
Akron Symphony Orchestra
E.J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall

Saturday, December 14 @7:00pm
Brass Band of the Western Reserve
Medina HS Performing Arts Center
851 Weymouth Rd
Medina, Ohio 44256

You are cordially invited to attend any of these performances. Tickets must be purchased for the Akron Symphony Orchestra and the Brass Band concerts (see their websites), but the other two concerts are free.

Let me wish the family of First Christian Church a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. God bless you all,
Chuck

Acme Community Cash Back Program **August Through December**

Save all your Acme Receipts from August 4th through December 25th! 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.

Ruth Miskell Emanuel—Obituary

Friends, if you recall some time ago, we shared an email regarding the passing of a former member, who went on to do great things and serve many folks in different congregations around the U.S.— Today, we have her obituary. Rev. Ruth Miskell Emanuel served first as the Director of Religious Education here at First Christian Church of Stow many years ago. Below is a link to the rest of her story.

<https://neptunesociety.com/obituaries/edmond-ok/ruth-emanuel-11995710>

Coffee Fellowship Opportunities **After Both Services in the Library**

Just a reminder for those who aren't yet in the know-- Coffee Fellowship will be happening *between* services at 9:30 and will be available after second service as well! Now you're in the know! There's still plenty of slots ahead of this Sunday for volunteering to host coffee fellowship! Help connect and fellowship with your church family!

72nd Anniversary for **Alcoholics Anonymous** **At First Christian Church of Stow**

A Shared Sorrow is A Sorrow Halved

While we may consider the primary work of service and outreach that we do at this church our main focus, over the past several years, we've had groups come and go that all share in a secondary area of outreach that we serve: Support Groups for those in need of help. Those of you may remember that we had Al-Anon, the support group for loved ones of alcoholics, but our first and longest running outside

group activity is the Stow chapter of AA. They have met in Fellowship Hall for years, hearing each other's stories, sharing in fellowship, and mentoring those struggling with addiction, isolation, and every other challenge that is correlated with chronic alcohol abuse. They are both faithful stewards of our home, and faithful family to each other.

On Thursday, the 14th of November, 2024, they celebrated their 72nd anniversary as a chapter. Though numbers fluctuate, they have a solid 30 members who come weekly to meet, talk, share a warm cup of coffee, and share their burdens and celebrations. We are grateful, as a church, to host such an important service to the community. That those who are struggling, hitting rock bottom, and sometimes, required to help by law, find that help here. They find fellowship, community, healing and wholeness, here.

Continue to hold this support group in your prayers, and consider visiting or offering their services, if you know someone who is struggling to find a way to manage their relationship with alcohol. If anything is a testament to their value as an organization, and this chapter specifically, it has outlived its founders and continues to serve people in need.

Christmas is coming.... **Ingathering Outreach Support Options**

The Outreach team is preparing for our biggest outreach project of the year: Ingathering.

Your help wanted and needed!

Even though it is not yet Halloween, the outreach team is hard at work preparing for Christmas Ingathering. Ingathering is a huge and vital ministry for our church and community. Last year we served 44 families with children (food, coats and gifts) and 10 additional families with food assistance. It is a huge cooperative effort between businesses and organizations in the community, the Stow Munroe Falls City Schools and the generous and giving folks in this congregation. If you want to shop, wrap, make a donation, bake cookies, make phone calls, assist with excel program forms or want more information about the program, please see Ann Halpin or call 330-524-2228.

You can also help us prepare for this ministry by:

- 1) buying items that may be on sale now for the food boxes (please check expiration dates). Possible items can include cereal, pasta, canned tomato products, tuna, juice, canned meat, mac and cheese, jelly, peanut butter, and soup. I try to buy a little bit of something every couple of weeks when things are on sale, especially now when grocery prices are high.
- 2) Discuss with family members if you might, as a group, sponsor a family for Ingathering.
- 3) Discuss with your employer if they might like to make a donation or sponsor a family for Ingathering.
- 4) Consider donating new or used/ in good condition, household items. Families are often grateful for that lamp you no longer need, children's toys that your children have outgrown, holiday decorations, photo frames, pet supplies, folding chairs, unused candles, and women's purses to name a few. Tools, command strips, cleaners and cleaning supplies, laundry soap and plastic storage bins are also much appreciated.

Thank you for your support of this ministry!!! Any questions- contact Ann Halpin 330-524-2228.

Bulldog Bags Donation Items

Any donations can be placed in the Bulldog Bin in the Gathering Area.

<u>Due Date:</u>	<u>Item:</u>
Dec. 8 th :	Hot Chocolate Packets
Jan. 12 th :	Ramen Noodle Packets
Feb. 9 th :	Fruit Cups

Think – Pray – Connect **Families from September**

11/03/24

Rev. Jonathan Rumburg

1806 Arndale Road, Stow OH 44224

Please send well wishes and a speedy recovery to Jonathan after his surgery this past Monday.

11/10/24

Sharon Sellers

1925 Hawthorne, Stow OH 44224

Continue to send support and encouragement to Sharon and Richard Sellers in light of Sharon's recent Pancreatic Cancer diagnosis.

11/17/24

Tom Myers

4591 Chatwood Dr, Stow OH 44224

As we look to begin another holiday season, let us remember how this will be the first season since Karen's passing.

10/27/24

Dawn Bowen

3427 Curtis St., Mogadore OH 44260

Please share support and condolences with Dawn as her family has recently lost both her bother-in-law and son-in-law in earlier this month.

12/01/24

Laurie Scott

718 Franklin Ave, Cuyahoga Falls OH 44221

Please send encouragement and prayers to Laurie as she is having a CT scan to diagnose a mass on her neck this week, with surgery to follow.

Fred Lloyd

4361 Cherryhurst Dr, Stow OH 44224

Send support and well-wishes to Fred as he is out of the hospital after an emergency visit.

Leaps of Faith

A word about our 2025 First Christian Church Budget

When we give to the church we are giving to God. And these gifts go towards ministries, programs, Christian education, worship, staff, and everything you expect such gifts to go towards. And yet, when we give to God, our gifts also go to coffee fellowship supplies, utility bills, cleaning supplies, maintenance of our building and grounds, and yes even basic sanitary needs in our restrooms. No these aren't exciting or "mountain top inspiring" as many aspects of church usually are, but best assure they are all necessities of being church.

Nevertheless, no matter the magnitude, nor the insignificance to what our gifts are used for, our gifts are still gifts to God because we know and believe God is at work in and through our church, and God's work is always for good. Which means, a cup of coffee after worship can spark a moment in a fellowship conversation where someone shares with another difficult news of a loved one or from

their recent doctor's appointment, and a door of love and support is opened. It means the lights are on and the building is warm for the person who has made the incredibly hard decision to walk into our church and attend their first Alcoholic Anonymous meeting and begin their journey to recovery and new life. It means the phone will ring and a staff member will answer the call from a single parent of three children whose heat is about to be turned off and they will be heard, and hope will be offered. Each of these, and countless situations like them, are all leaps of faith that can be taken because we generously give our gifts to God.

Everyday leaps of faith are taken by people who have no other choice but to take a leap of faith. And leaps of faith are taken even by our church because we know what God is calling us to do and what God is calling us to be. Which is why our 2025 church budget includes again this year a Leap of Faith of its own. This Leap of faith represents ministries, programs, and needed funding not yet covered by pledged and anticipated giving. And yet we remain hopeful through God's good work these funds will come to fruition through the faithfulness and generosity of folks who will see and recognize the life impacting work God is going through First Christian Church of Stow.

For 2025 our church's Leap of Faith is \$22,823. Yes, this is a significant sum of money, but it is not one that is impossible for our church—especially when we continue to trust in the One who guides and blesses us.

Please take note, if you have not yet turned in a 2025 *Estimate of Giving Card* there is still time to do so. Additionally, if you are feeling moved to adjust your 2025 *Estimate of Giving Card* since submitting it back in October, you still have time to do so as well. To turn in a card or make an adjustment, please do so by mailing in your card to the church office or by calling or emailing Lisa Roseman who will be more than happy to hear from you.

God is always at work, and God's work is always for good. May our trust in this truth guide and inspire us into and throughout the New Year. And may all we do as First Christian Church of Stow help guide and inspire others to know that with God, they can always take the leap of faith they need to take and God will be there to help them land safely.

