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PATHWAYS FEBRUARY 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!

Sketti & Skits: Let's Glow!

March 2nd, 5 p.m.

Join us in Fellowship Hall for an incredible talent show of music, skits, and other acts! Don't forget to invite your friends and family for this affordable Spaghetti Dinner for just \$8 for adults, \$4 for kids, and children under 3 have dinner for free!

Week of Compassion Bake Sale

February 23rd, After Sanctuary Service

We need people to make baked goods and treats, and even more people to purchase these baked goods! All proceeds from this fundraiser will benefit Week of Compassion and their ministries.

Loaves and Fishes + Pantry February 16th

Free monthly drive-thru dinner and pantry, 4-6 p.m. Volunteers are always greatly appreciated! Serving meatloaf this month!

Welcome New Members!

Jim & Linda Phillips and Mary Craven

Be on the lookout for Jim, Linda, and Mary around the church!
Make sure you say, "Hi," and send them a welcoming message!

Pastor's Class

Beginning Sunday, March 9th, 9:30 a.m. Every Sunday

For all students in 5th grade and older who are ready to be baptized in the church, read the article below! Pastor's Class will meet every Sunday until Baptism Sunday.

Pastor's Pen, **February 2025**

There's a saying I've been using around the church for quite some time, which means you've probably heard me say it, but it's worth repeating because it's always so on point. I like to say, *"There's never a dull moment around here...except twice on Sunday for twenty minutes!"* I think it's hilarious because it's almost entirely true. If you spend even a little bit of time around the church—whether you're physically here or keeping up with our work and ministries through this newsletter or our online presence, or even just driving by the church and seeing our parking lot—you'd know there is always something happening around here, and all of it is filled with some kind of non-dull energy. Some of it is even planned!

For instance, the Super Soup Cook-Off a couple weeks ago was a planned event filled with fun, excitement, tasty soups, and the edge of your seat anticipation of who would take this year's gold, silver, and bronze spoons! (Not sure who did? Just dig deeper in this February Pathways to find out!) There was a Girl Scout Lock-In back in January and the Cub Scout Pinewood and Blastcar Derby on February 1st. The renewal work of the chapel continues to progress nicely with the completion of the painting and installation of new lights—complete with dimmers! And the floors are set to be refinished this week. We are going to be back worshiping in the chapel in no time! The Youth Group continues to delve deeper into their theme of *"A Little Jesus"*, discussing, meditating, and acting on the theme, all while still finding time to rain down a barrage Nerf darts upon their pastor! There was also the arctic blast that made its way through our neck of the woods necessitating ongoing snow and ice removal with an estimated twelve tons of salt. (Ok, that might be a slight exaggeration. But it did take a lot nonetheless.) I'll spare you the long litany of aging furnaces that struggled to keep up with that blast of arctic weather. And if that wasn't exciting enough, someone thought our monthly drive-thru dinner and pantry was in the middle of the night last weekend, but discovered the only option available was to just "drive-thru" the white fence on the southwest side of the church! Which of course required us to report that "error" in day and time to the Stow Police Department. Special thanks to our Boy Scout Troop who reached out and said they would gladly take on the non-dull task of cleaning up the debris and mess left behind.

And now as we turn the calendar to February, we are getting ready for Scout Sunday, Youth Group Super Bowl Sub sale, our annual WeekS of Compassion offering which will include the highly anticipated WeekS of Compassion Bake Sale, a Visitation Team training seminary, another round of *"So You Might Want To Be a Lay Leader"* seminar, a special Youth Group outing, and then just as we tip into March it will be time for Sketti N Skits and Ash Wednesday! And this is on top of/in addition to, our ongoing Bulldog Bag collections, Bulldog Box distribution, Loaves and Fishes +Pantry, the Outreach Team care box distribution, weekly worship, Christian education events and ministries, weekly music ministries and rehearsals, weekly ministry team meetings, ongoing prayer request support, Wednesday night yoga, Thursday night A.A. meetings, regular Cub, Boy, and Girl Scout meetings, the Cub Scout Arrow of Light Crossover ceremony, and Valentine's Day! (Ok, we don't have do anything with Valentine's Day, I just threw that in there for anyone needed the reminder it's coming up pretty soon. Looking at you Christian Sanko! And no, Emily didn't make me put this in here. I just know these things, ok!?) And there might even be a weekly Thursday night ping-pong group forming. (If you want more information about this, please reach out to me!)

That is a heck of a list! And undoubtedly I've forgotten something here, and for that I am sorry. But the point I am trying to make is... well... it's what I said above... *"There's never a dull moment around here...except twice on Sunday for twenty minutes!"* (And yes, I know we've suspended the 8:30 service, so really it's now just *"once on Sunday"*, but you know what I mean.) And what I mean is that our church has a lot happening, a lot going on, and is doing a lot of work and ministry. All of it has purpose and meaning. And all of it has an impact—a positive and faithful impact that tells us and others that if First Christian Church of Stow ceased to exist tomorrow, people would notice. And not only would people notice, it would have an impact—a very negative impact.

What we do here... what we do as a church family... matters. It matters because without what we do, what we offer, what we provide, God's presence, God's blessings, God's gifts, would go unfelt, unreceived, and unrevealed. So may we remember, always, the truth about First Christian Church of Stow... *"There's never a dull moment around here...except twice on Sunday for twenty minutes!"*

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Sketti & Skits: Let's Glow! **March 2nd, 5 p.m., Fellowship Hall**

Save the Date for 2025 Sketti & Skits: Let's Glow! Sunday March 2 at 5pm. Sketti & Skits: Spaghetti Dinner and Talent Show is a time-honored tradition of FCC Stow where the food is great, and the entertainment is even better!

Do you have a talent, magic trick, song, skit or something else you would like to perform? Sign up in the Gathering Area on Sunday.

The cost for Sketti & Skits is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children and kids under 3 are free. All proceeds go towards Christian Education Ministries and the Youth Activity Fund.

Week of Compassion Bake Sale **Sunday, Feb. 23rd, After Services**

The Week of Compassion Bake Sale will be Sunday February 23rd between and after services. The Outreach team will transform your donations of baked goods into sweet goodies for your enjoyment. We need bakers and takers!

February Loaves & Fishes + Pantry **February 16th, 4-6 p.m.**

The Drive Thru Meal for February is February 16th 4-6p.m. We will be serving meat loaf and sides. All are welcome to receive dinner, and all volunteers are welcome to help as well!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry **January Recap**

Despite the low, low, temperatures there was a healthy turnout for January's Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. We served guests from 38 households. Everyone received a hot meal of Jambalaya (perfect for a cold January day) and groceries.

As usual our groceries consisted of a mix of breakfast and dinner foods.

We have not been able to hand out paper towels or toilet paper in the last couple of months because of a lack of supply. Any donations would be greatly appreciated by our guests.

On a brighter note we have learned the TANF grants will once again be available for us in 2025. Of course, we will take advantage of those low costs items to help us stretch our budget.

We're off to a solid start in 2025 and know that your support makes all this possible.

Welcoming Jim & Linda Phillips, **And Mary Craven** **Joined FCC Stow in January**

Friends, please join us in welcoming Jim & Linda Phillips and Mary Craven to the church! These three have affirmed their membership with our church and are here almost every Sunday. Their address is listed below if you'd like to reach out and send them a welcome letter as they are a part of our church family!

Jim & Linda Phillips
3822 Woodbury Oval
Stow, OH 44224

Mary Craven
800 Gardenstone Cir.
Talmadge OH 44278

A Temporary Suspension **Of the 8:30 Worship Service**

Steady progress continues to be made on the chapel renewal project. It has been a "*slow but sure process*" and the work is coming along and looking incredible. Next week the painters will finish their work, followed by the floors getting refinished, and the pew cushions getting cleaned. All of it gets us closer and closer to completion and being able to finally worship again in the chapel.

And because we are getting so close to being back in the chapel, the Elders and myself recently discussed that an opportunity has presented itself to take just a short break from having the 8:30 Sunday morning service. While holding this service in the

sanctuary has served as a suitable alternative for nearly 19 months, now seems like a good chance to temporarily suspend the 8:30 service until we can resume worshipping in the chapel. It is our aim to resume the 8:30 service, in the chapel, sometime in late March or early April. More details, updates, and timeline will be shared as they develop.

Thank you to everyone who has been working so hard and being so patient with the chapel renewal project. Thank you to everyone who has faithfully worked to manage and maintain worship in an alternative space. All of you have shown again and again how you make worship and the ministries of First Christian Church a priority. Thanks be to God.

Together in Christ,
Jonathan

Ash Wednesday, March 5th

All will be invited to join in this special time of reflection and worship as we begin the season of Lent. Please keep a watchful eye on the bulletin and pathways, as more information will be published soon regarding the worship opportunities for Ash Wednesday.

Winter Storms and Snowy Paths Shoveler's Needed!

While we face the winter storm, our sidewalks will need attention for snow clearing and salting. Anyone who is available to shovel and salt the paths to the upper entrance, please let the church office know. We'll add you to a contact list, and someone will be in touch!

Lent Décor Changeover March 2nd, After Sanctuary Service

Any hands to help are invited and welcome! We will be putting away the Epiphanytide décor and putting out everything we need for Lent, as it begins on the 9th of March. Please mark your calendar and come help after Sanctuary service for a few minutes or the whole time!

Acme Community Cash Back Program Turn in by Feb. 15th!

For anyone with receipts left, there's still time to get your 2024 Acme Receipts in to the church! Please drop off any remaining receipts in the box in the Gathering Area labeled "ACME RECEIPTS." Proceeds will benefit Dorcas Rebekah Guild, Mary Martha Guild, and our Blanket Ministry.

Coffee Fellowship Opportunities After Second Service in the Library

Just a reminder for those who aren't yet in the know-- Coffee Fellowship is held after second service for all of us to chat, share a brief refreshment, and get connected! Now you're in the know!

Signups for helping with Coffee Fellowship are on a clipboard just outside the library doors. If you have any questions about how to host Coffee Fellowship, Lisa Roseman or Jacob Aukeman can fill you in on all the details. Help connect and fellowship with your church family!

Pastor's Class Beginning Sunday, March 9th

All youth in fifth grade or older who have not been baptized, and their parents, are invited to be part of this year's Pastor's Class set begin on Sunday, March 9th. The class will meet weekly on Sundays at the church, at 9:30 a.m. If you are interested in being part of the class, please contact the church office, indicate your interest on the back of your Connection Card, or please contact Jonathan.

Soup Cookoff Champions Thanks & Congratulations!

Thanks everyone for participating in this year's Soup Cookoff, whether you were participating by bringing a soup to share, helping to host the event,

or just judging our soups! Every person involved matters. Thanks for helping in every way!

Congratulations to our winners, Mike, Melissa, and Sue! This year, we had a great turn out of 12 soups, and returning champions and great new flavors— See below for the winners, and their soups.

1st: Mike Drews, Stuffed Pepper Soup

2nd: Melissa Gustafson, Lasagna Soup

3rd: Sue Naylor, Chicken Broccoli Cheese Soup

The United Disciples Youth Group Second Tuesdays @ 6:30 via Zoom

A collaboration between the Heartland Conference (UCC) and the Christian Church of Ohio (DoC)

All youth are invited to join the United Disciples Youth Group! Anyone who needs more Youth opportunities in their life can join the Monthly Youth Connections on 2nd Tuesdays via Zoom at 6:30 p.m., hosted by Colleen Munley from the DoC and Rev. Jonathan Bradner from the UCC. This group plans to do summer camps, service projects, cultural experience trips, and offer leadership opportunities for youth!

Contact Colleen Munley at MunleyColleen@yahoo.com for the Zoom link and to join the community!

For those who haven't heard or need the reminder, the Disciples Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ have a collaborative Ecumenical partnership, where assist and practice discipleship together as an expanded and cooperative Body of Christ. This Zoom Youth group will include students from both sides of this partnership!

Chapel Update, February 2025

The Chapel is finally coming together. At this point the ceiling is up, insulated, painted and lit! (We are still waiting for the final lighting fixtures). The walls have been repaired and painted. The 4 windows in the Chapel have been replaced (one was broken). The floor is to be refinished soon. Once that is done, we can get the new pews installed! The pew cushions are to be cleaned soon as well. So far,

we have been able to stay within the amount our insurance company allowed for the project! At this point I think you can look inside, if you haven't already. If we need to block the space while floors are being done, etc. we will put up signs. Also be careful, there are a couple ladders and a couple scaffolds and who knows what (construction trash) still in there.

Thanks for your patience. It shouldn't be much longer now (fingers crossed).

Regards,

John McCreight – Trustee Chair.

Disciples Christian Church in Cleveland Heights Offers Arts & Spirituality Retreat

Please save the date for an upcoming Arts and Spirituality Retreat & Learning Event on Wednesday, May 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for you or those in your congregations who might be interested. This workshop is an outgrowth of the work that Disciples Christian Church in Cleveland Heights is doing with the cultural arts center in their building, as well as integrating art in worship in more diverse ways for their congregation. The congregation is also engaging the congregation and community in topics of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. They also are hoping to learn what other congregations are doing as well as sharing their own experiences.

The event will be co-led by the Rev. Jason Bricker-Thompson, Pastor of Disciples Christian Church, and the Rev. Elyse Berry from Council for Health and Human Service Ministries of the United Church of Christ. If you or any members of your congregations/organizations are interested in joining this retreat and share what you all have been doing with art in worship and spiritual formation in your ministries, that would be lovely.

Bulldog Bags 2024 Wrap Up

First, as a note, the president of the board for Bulldog Bags, Inc. is now Denise Mullins. Laura Root has retired and is thanked for many years of service and for founding the organization that has impacted the lives of so many in our community.

For the first time ever, the annual budget of Bulldog Bags is closer to \$150,000 than \$100,000. They give thanks to all their donors who have made it possible to serve so many families.

The Bulldog Box program, hosted at First Christian Church of Stow, wrapped up another busy year with its final food distribution on December 13th. We served 75 families this last month with a 58-pound box of food items to help stock their pantries and prepare meals.

Over the course of this past year, the program distributed 856 food boxes totaling a little over 47,000 pounds of food and other items to help kids and their families in Stow-Munroe Falls and nearby communities. Overall, 3,361 people were served via this program.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to our many volunteers that show up each month to pack and distribute food for this Bulldog Bags, Inc. program. Thank you also to the many individuals, businesses and community groups that support us financially so we can purchase food for our programs. We look forward to another busy and productive year in 2025!

Summit County Children Services **Recruitment Calendars 2025**

If anyone needs a calendar for the year and is interested in learning more about the Summit County Children Services Department, reach out to the church office via email or phone and let us know that you want a calendar! To share what they do and how they help people, Summit County Children Services is sending free calendars to members of our church! Please let us know by February 7th.

Think – Pray – Connect **Families from January**

01/19/25

Liz Cawley

539 Vine St., Kent OH 44240

Please send condolences and support to Liz and the Howard family in light of Marjorie Howard's passing

01/26/25

Joni & Justin Fitch

4574 Tulip Lane, Ravenna OH 44266

Please keep Joni & Justin in your prayers and send them support as Joni's brother, Seth, passed away on January 21st.

02/02/25

Marilyn Bolen

962 Carnegie Ave., Akron OH 44314

Please send encouragement and support to Marilyn as she just got a knee replacement a week ago and is recovering.