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www.firstchristianstow.org

PATHWAYS MARCH 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.

COMING TO YOU THIS SUNDAY NIGHT! 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!

Bible Stories for Grown Ups by Josh Scott

With Barb Bell, Sundays, 9-10 a.m.

This coming Sunday, and Sundays through Lent, from 9 – 10 a.m. in the OUR Classroom on Sunday mornings, Barb Bell will be hosting a Bible Study with Josh Scott's Book, *Bible Stories for Grown Ups*! If you have any questions, reach out to Barb at 330-807-5498.

Youth Group in March

Sundays, March 9th and 23rd

Youth Group has plenty of activity for this month! See below for details regarding helping with Sketti & Skits, bowling, and meeting later this month.

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

March 16th, 4-6 p.m.

All volunteers are welcome to come and help out! We have a meal of Chicken Casserole and sides to serve this month. Please Note: April's meal is moved to the 27th as Easter lands on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Please share that info!

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, March 2025

Over the past week or so I have been keeping a watchful eye on the developing health concerns of Pope Francis, having seen and read about how he showed improvements a couple of days ago, but as of the writing of this piece, had just taken a worrisome turn over the last couple of hours. All of this compelled me to seek out any message of his already shared about the upcoming season of Lent that is set to begin on March 5th with Ash Wednesday. And to my delight I found just such a message entitled, *“Let Us Journey Together in Hope.”* Due to space constraints, I will share just the opening to this piece, but I encourage everyone to find it and read it in its entirety as it is both a touching and inspiring piece from a deeply devoted servant of God. Pope Francis begins, saying,

Dear brothers and sisters,

We begin our annual pilgrimage of Lent in faith and hope with the penitential rite of the imposition of ashes. The Church, our mother and teacher, invites us to open our hearts to God's grace, so that we can celebrate with great joy the paschal victory of Christ the Lord over sin and death, which led Saint Paul to exclaim: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

Again, while the entire piece is faithful and inspiring, I was struck how Pope Francis in just the first two sentences guides us to see the truth that even in the ashes of our sins, we are invited to open our hearts to God's grace so we can celebrate with great joy the paschal victory of Jesus over sin and death. His statement runs completely counter to what so many of us think about when it comes to sin—especially the sins we have committed. Usually we are filled with remorse, guilt, and shame for our sins, unable to forgive ourselves let alone willing to accept that the One who is all powerful and all-knowing would so freely and willingly forgive us of our sins. And yet, Pope Francis offers the call to open our hearts in the midst of the ashes of sin so that we *can* celebrate. Has any of us ever faced our sins and thought that we ought to celebrate in the midst of our sinning? Of course not! We know sin separates us from God, furthering the gap between us and the divine. And yet Pope Francis calls us to *celebrate* the great joy the paschal victory of Christ over sin and death. He

is reminding us, we don't lose because we have sinned, rather we win because Christ Jesus us loves us so much that he willingly took on death...*and won for us.*

And how can we, in our ultra-competitive, ultra trash-talking culture not revel in Pope Francis' use of the Apostle Paul's own trash talking, where he exclaims, *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”* It's a line that sounds like it could have come right out of any sports underdog movie where the unlikely team of misfits overcomes impossible odds and defeats the unbeatable. Think, “The Bad News Bears”, “The Mighty Ducks”, “Hoosiers” “Miracle” “Rudy” “The Karate Kid” “Remember The Titans”, and “Rocky II, III, and IV”, just to name a few. (And arguably, we could include Rocky I, even though he lost to Apollo—but Rocky won in many other ways!)

No, the season of Lent doesn't scream *“time to celebrate.”* Certainly not like the Advent and Christmas seasons do. No radio station is playing *“Lent songs”* months before Holy Week because there aren't any! And yet, there is reason still to celebrate, isn't there?

Yes, Lent implores us and guides us to take a good long look in the mirror, and see who we are, and who we don't want to be. Lent takes us into a time of wilderness wandering where we are left to follow a path of fasting, a path of temptation in a weakened state, a path of uncertainty about whether or not we will be able to endure to the end. And yet Lent implores us to celebrate because we can remain mindful and hopeful that even if we are guilty or ashamed of ourselves, God is not. Even if we are too weak to follow the path, God will give us strength. Even if we convince ourselves the end will never come, God will inevitably, and gladly, pick us up and carry us to the end. And when we reach that end, we too, like the Bad News Bears, the Mighty Ducks, like Hickory High (Hoosiers), the 1980 U.S. Hockey Team, Rudy and his teammates, like Daniel-san and Mr. Miyagi, like Coach Boone and his team of integrated football players, like Rocky Balboa, and like the Apostle Paul himself, we all get to cheer and chant, *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

I am eager and looking forward to the Lenten journey we are all about to take together.

Your Friend and Pastor,
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!

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.

Dave Harlow Memorial Service **Saturday, March 22nd, 10 a.m. visitation,** **11 a.m. funeral**

All are invited to come and spend some time remembering, honoring, and celebrating long, long time First Christian Church member, Dave Harlow, on Saturday, March 22nd. There will be a time of visitation from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. followed by the funeral service. Immediately following the funeral service, a luncheon will be held in the Fellowship Hall. May we all continue to keep the Harlow family in our prayers, praying they all continue to feel God's abiding presence of peace surrounding them, and that the many years of grateful memories, along with knowing Dave and Mary are together again, will be a healing balm to their broken hearts.

Youth Group in March **Sundays, March 9th and 23rd**

The Youth Group will be on hand for Sketti 'n' Skits on Sunday, March 2nd, 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 9th, the Youth Group will meet for either a regular youth meeting or a bowling outing to Station 300 in Akron. (Right off route 8, just south of Cuyahoga Falls.) Then, depending on what kind of meeting was held on the 9th, the Youth Group will meet again on Sunday, March 23rd for the type of meeting/outing that did not happen on the 9th. So if we went bowling on the 9th, we will have a regular meeting on the 23rd. Or

visa versa. Please let Emily know what day works best for you to go bowling.

Also, mark your calendars for "Youth Sunday" set to be held on May 11th! Which will mean we need to begin working on and planning for that special day of worship *very, very, very, very, very* soon!

Stow Players Presents *Pride and Prejudice* **With Anthony Damcott!**

Need more drama in your life? Head down to the Stow Players and see Anthony Damcott as Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*! This is a great opportunity to support local arts and support a church family member! You might not get a spaghetti dinner with the show, but it's sure to be a great performance, all the same.

Pride and Prejudice opens March 7th and runs through the 23rd. Doors open at 30 minutes before show time. General Admission tickets are \$18. The Stow Players are located at 5238 Young Rd, Stow, OH 44224.

Ash Wednesday, March 5th

Self-Guided Reflection: 8 a.m. to 7p.m.

Guided Reflection: 7 p.m.

Throughout the day the sanctuary will be open for self-guided prayer, meditation, reflection, communion, and an ashen reminder to take with you.

Additionally, at 7 p.m., Jonathan will lead a guided time of prayer, meditation, reflection, communion, and the imposition of ashes.

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!

Summer Camp Dates and Information!

Camp Christian, Summer 2025

It might be March, and the warm sunny summer days of summer probably still seem so far away, but trust us when we say it's time to start thinking about Summer Camps and Conferences at Camp Christian! Please look over the list of camps and their dates and consider which one is best for you and/or your child. If you have any questions, please reach out to Jonathan. And please remember, no one who wants to go to camp will be denied this opportunity due to financial restraints. Both our church and the regional church have scholarship funds available to ensure all students who want to attend camp at Camp Christian can. Again, please contact Jonathan for information about camp scholarships.

-Friday, May 16th – May 18th: **Camp Our Way**—
For special needs campers age 7 – *young adult, each camper brings a companion.*

-Friday, May 23rd-Sunday, May 25th: **Disciples Fellowship Retreat** — *For all ages*

-Sunday, June 8th – Tuesday, June 10th:
Grandparents & Me Camp, (Concurrent Camp) –
For children completing Kindergarten, 1st, or 2nd grade AND their grandparent!

-Sunday, June 8th – Sunday, June 14th: **Otter Camp, Elementary** (Concurrent Camp) – *For children completing 5th grade & those completing 3rd & 4th grades ready for a full-week camp.*

-Wednesday, June 11th – Saturday, June 14th:
Grands, Me & Family (Concurrent Camp) – *For children ages 4-13 with a grandparent OR parent.*

-Sunday, June 15th – Saturday June 21st: **Music, Mime, Art, Dance, Drama / Camp OUT** (Concurrent Camp) Both camps—*For Children and Youth ages 8-18*

-Sunday, June 22nd – Saturday, June 28th:
SportsCamp—*For children and youth ages 7 – 18*

-Sunday, June 22nd – Friday, June 27th: **Adult Conference**—Northwest Christian Church, Upper Arlington (**NOT** at Camp Christian)

-Sunday, June 29th—Wednesday, July 2nd: **Ribbit Camp**, Elementary (Concurrent Camp) *For Children completing 2nd grade and/or 3rd and 4th graders whose parents want a shorter camp experience for their children*

-Sunday, June 29th-Saturday, July 5th: **Chi Rho Camp Emmaus**—Junior High (Concurrent Camp) *For youth completing 6th, 7th, & 8th grades.*

-Saturday, July 6th – Saturday, July 12th: **CYF Conference**—High School (Concurrent Camp) *For youth completing 9th, 10th, 11th, & 12th grades*

-Sunday, July 6th – Saturday, July 12th: **Created to Be Me Camp**—Junior High (Concurrent Camp) *For youth completing 8th grade*

-Sunday, July 13th – Saturday, July 19th: **Chi Rho Camp Corinth**—Junior High *for youth completing 6th, 7th, & 8th grades*

-Sunday, July 20th – Sunday, July 27th: **Advance Conference**—Young Adults *for adults 19-30 (out of high school)*

-Friday, August 29th—Sunday, August 31st:
Disciples Fellowship Retreat—For all ages

Week of Compassion Giving Totals and Goal

Friends, we are grateful for every offering made, but we're looking to keep raising for Week of Compassion! As of Sunday, February 23rd, we've raised \$1,662 from offerings and the Bake Sale, but we're aiming for \$3,000 to send to Week of Compassion. We will continue taking donations for Week of Compassion through the next few weeks into March. Please consider making a donation to Week of Compassion soon if you haven't done so, and if you just haven't got yours in yet, it's OK! There's plenty of time to make donation in-person or online.

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

The next Loaves & Fishes + Pantry meal is March 16th, serving chicken casserole and sides. Invite a friend to help out!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry February
Recap

Once again, we had the full winter weather experience during Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. Nevertheless, people from 28 families braved the snow and cold to come to our church to receive hot meals and groceries.

Experience shows us that we will serve more families as the weather warms in the coming months. As such we rely on your continued support.

Easter Sunday this year falls on the third Sunday of April. Because of that we will be delaying Loaves & Fishes + Pantry to the fourth Sunday, April 27.

We will return to our usual third Sunday in May.

Week(s) of Compassion 2025 Bake Sale
Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who once again helped make this year's Week of Compassion Bake sale a resounding and delectable success! Thank you to all who donated and thank you to all who so lovingly and graciously sacrificed their diet and made purchases from 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 and her crew of dedicated helpers who once again went above and beyond the call of duty to coordinate, organize, and lead yet another successful Week(s) 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!

“Do You Think You Might Want To Be A Lay Leader?”

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has always held to the stance we call “*The priesthood of all believers.*” This is a belief and view that stresses all have a role in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, even in and during worship. Which is why our church is aiming to do a new thing when it comes to it Lay Leadership in our weekly worship services.

If you have ever entertained the idea of helping to lead worship services, or if you have ever felt God giving you that calling “nudge” to guide the gathered community in times of word and prayer, then you are invited to further that consideration through the ongoing available seminar “*Do You Think You Might Want To Be A Lay Leader?*” with Jonathan.

By inquiring about and sharing your interest in this opportunity, please know you are not committing to being a Lay Leader. If you simply want to learn more about this opportunity and then prayerfully consider and decide if this is something you might like to try, you are more than welcome to come and have a conversation with Jonathan.

As Disciples of Christ, we are all called to share our God given gifts and talents in a variety of ways. Maybe being a worship Lay Leader is a new way God is calling you to serve!

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.

Mission Trip w/ Week of Compassion **Dates available June 8th-28th 2025**

Friends, as we have seen this year, there is no shortage of need for relief and assistance from organizations like Week of Compassion. This year again, we are looking at domestic long term recovery mission trips so that we can go and be a part of Week of Compassion's restorative work. Charlie Redman, our volunteer team leader last year, will be in Kentucky again this June 8th through 28th. Please let us know if you are interested and available during that time. We will get more specific details soon.

This year, we are looking at traveling to Western Kentucky, where we worked last summer. If you recall, Mayfield and the surrounding towns are still in long-term recovery from a tornado in 2021, and floods in 2023. If you want to see last year's worship service that reviewed our mission trip, see the following link to that Sunday Service: ["Gifts to Live On, Part II" | Sunday Worship, June 2024](#)

If you or someone you know is interested in helping with another mission to Kentucky, please reach out to the church office and let us know. We're aiming to have a few more than last year's mission trip, so that we can increase our impact this summer!

Kid & Parent Prom 2025 **Friday, May 9th, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.**

We're back with our second time hosting The Kid 'n' Parent Prom (K-6th Grade). Please share this information with anyone you know in the area with kids who are looking to join us for an evening of dinner, dancing, and memory-making! The admission cost of \$12 per person includes dinner,

music, and more! Children must be at least Kindergarten through 6th grade aged to attend. More information will be posted as we approach the date—Please look online for our Facebook event and share it with folks you know!

Ping Pong Club **Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.**

Break out your paddles and get ready to serve! We have a new group meeting on Thursday nights, 6 p.m. in the Gym* to play ping pong! We're currently playing singles, doubles, and some other "fun" game types. All skill levels are welcome!

We currently have two tables, but if the group continues to grow, anyone who has a table at home is invited to donate their table, and we will find a way to get it to the church.

*We meet in the Gym typically, but every 4th Thursday is Bulldog Boxes—Because of that, we will be meeting in one of the classrooms instead, as long as we are able to move tables and fit into a room, we will continue to play! Check the church calendar if you're unsure of where we're at.

Super Bowl Sub Sale Thanks!

On February 9th the Youth Group was on hand selling Super Bowl Subs on Super Bowl Sunday! These tasty sandwiches were available for purchase just in time for the big game. We want to express a huge and deeply heartfelt ***THANK YOU*** to Mike and Debbie Kostensky and Mike's Place in Kent for once again making a generous donation of all the sub fixings. They continue to support this fundraiser year after year. Around 90 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! (But we won't be holding our breath. Just as long as it's not the Ravens or the Steelers, right?!)

Faith, Collaboration, and Creation **By Women's Interfaith Spiritual Heritage**

This unique project of community-activated art will foster connections among diverse faith groups. Join in the weaving process of a unique tapestry. Bring a dish to share and talk about your faith experience. Participants will bring fabrics/textiles that have personal meaning and turn them into strips for the six-foot loom. Prayers, poems, spiritual expressions from every faith will be written on the strips and then woven into the single tapestry -- a tapestry of unity.

Just as weaving has been an art and craft form that has spanned thousands of years across all cultures, prayer also is woven into the lives of all people of faiths and uniquely connects our faith traditions. A handwoven tapestry will be created by the faith communities of Akron. The tapestry will become a symbolic representation of the interfaith work, prayers and relationships that exist in our community.

Choose One of Three Dates:

Event dates: Wednesday, April 2, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Saturday, April 26, 2:00 - 4:00 PM, or Thursday, May 8, 6:00-8:00 PM

Event Location: Summit Artspace 140 E. Market St., Akron

Advanced registration only through

Eventbrite. (You may need to create an account on Eventbrite)

Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1146440858469?aff=oddtcreator>

Contact for more

info: neowish2020@gmail.com. See website: <http://www.neowish.org> <https://www.facebook.com/womensinterfaithspiritualheritage> <https://www.facebook.com/AAICOH>

New Hours for Christian in the Office
Starting March 3rd

Friends and Family,

Try as we might to make things in life stay the same, sometimes, they have to change. Thankfully, this change is for the better.

On March 3rd, I will be starting as the part-time administrative assistant at WHBC 1480 AM / MIX 94.1 FM Radio station in Canton! This is a great opportunity and will allow me to continue working at church for the future. I will be working there from 9-2 weekdays, so if you can't reach me via phone in the mornings, that will be the reason.

While I would love to work my full time here at First Christian Church of Stow, it has simply not been in the cards over the past few years. Regardless, this extra position provides Emily and I what we need in terms of income.

May 1st will mark my 4th year working here at the church, and while I've been incredibly grateful to serve this community, it has come time that I stopped building so many theatre sets and side-hustling so much. Slowing down to just two part-time jobs, instead of doing some very hard-labor gig work throughout the year will be much better for both myself and for serving you, the church.

All that being said, my (tentative) updated hours for the church are listed below.

3-9 Monday
3-9 Tuesday (Working from Home)
3-9 Thursday
3-9 Friday
9-2 Sundays

I will continue to be available by text or by call after 2 on days that I'm not on site.

All the Best,
Christian Sanko
Director of Church Relations
First Christian Church of Stow

Think – Pray – Connect
Families from January

02/16/25

Lynn Scott

4187 Vira Road, Stow OH 44224
Lynn was recently in the hospital but has returned home this week. Please send prayers and support to Lynn and Mona!

02/16/25

Sharon Sellers

1925 Hawthorne, Stow OH 44224

Please send encouragement to Sharon as she as has recently received a difficult medical diagnosis. Please see the latest prayer request email for more information.

02/25/25

Beth Burger

171 Graham Rd Apt. 69,
Cuyahoga Falls OH 44223

Please send some warm greetings to Beth Burger who has been staying home due to the weather!

03/02/25

Jo Alboreo

Hudson Grande Sr. Living, 5400 Darrow Road
Apartment A22, Hudson, OH 44236

Please send some warm greetings to Jo Alboreo, one of our homebound church family members!