



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

431 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, Ohio 44870
firstconguccsandusky.com

May 2019

Including Historical Highlights



From the
MINISTER

In just a few weeks we will gather to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of this congregation. That is absolutely amazing to me, as is the fact that the very next week it will be 20 years since we began our summer community worship services down at Shoreline Park.

Over the years we sat in midst of God's beautiful creation (no matter what the weather) and heard a multitude of incredible faith stories as members of the community, from all walks of life, spoke on the topic *How the Awesome Love of God Has Impacted My Life*. We heard from mission workers, veterans, recovering addicts, victims of domestic abuse and people facing all kinds of physical and mental challenges. We were inspired by their courage, perseverance and complete trust in the Lord.

We worshiped with lots of wonderful people, tourists and townies alike. Some only joined us once, others became regulars, and at least one, Jackie Ramsey, was with us almost every Sunday from the very beginning. I've been especially grateful for the way she took my mother under her wing and guided her through the services. Jackie died in January. She will be greatly missed.

The services have been enhanced by those who bring jokes and goodies to share, or make the coffee, or play the music. However, no one has been more helpful than Evalyn Vroman. She faithfully gets up before dawn to bake something scrumptious so we can enjoy it while its still warm. She also greets everyone, passes out the bulletins and always comes prepared with jokes.

Thanks to those who advertise on the back of the bulletin, our costs have been kept to a minimum. Many advertisers have come and gone, but Firelands Regional Medical Center has supported us since day one. Last year we added 7- Eleven, owned by our Muslim friends Ali & Rihab Salhieh. This year The Better Half has come on board.

Without a doubt, one of the many ways the awesome love of God has impacted my life is through the stories and support of all the people who have participated in these services, one way or the other, over the past two decades. If you haven't done so already, I hope you will join their ranks this year.

Shalom , Rev. Lenore

Welcome Our Newest Members



In addition to celebrating the Resurrection Easter morning, we welcomed Cheryl & Jim Negrey, Stuart Rhea and Laurie Yates into our church family. Stuart and Laurie have been worshipping with us for several years. Jim & Cheryl started coming last year recently decided to transfer their membership from Grace United Methodist Church in Vermilion.

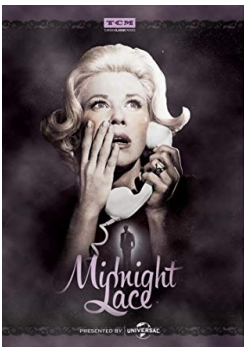
The May 7th gathering of the **Supper Club** will be at Berardi's at 6:00 p.m.. We need to make reservations so please sign up on the bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary.

Get ready to CELEBRATE!

At long last it's time for our BIG anniversary service and luncheon on May 19th. This only happens once every 200 years, so don't miss it! If you haven't marked the date on your calendar, do so now and if you received an invitation to the luncheon and didn't respond, there's still a chance we may be able to accommodate you if you call the church office on or before May 5th.

SHORELINE WORSHIP BEGINS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

The first Shoreline service of the season will be May 27th. Don't forget, we meet rain or shine at 8:00 a.m. at the Shoreline Park pavilion. (The Park is next to the Yacht Club.)



The feature for **Movie Night** this month is *Midnight Lace*, starring Doris Day and Rex Harrison. This 1960 shocking mystery thriller is about the elegant newlywed wife of a British financier who is threatened by a stalker. A nail-biting thriller, this glitzy production will have you on the edge of your seat until the very end! Showtime is 7:00 p.m. and, as always, popcorn will be provided. Invite your friends!

Firelands Chorus presents *It's Eclectic* with the Osborne Elementary Piccolo Choir Friday May 10th and Saturday May 11th at Zion Lutheran Church. Both performances begin at 7:30 p.m. and are followed by a reception. Glenn Gast is a member of the Chorus. There will be a free-will offering.

The Letter Carriers' Food Drive

On Saturday, May 11th, the Letter Carriers of the Sandusky Post Office along with the The Sandusky Rotary Club and The United Way of Erie County will hold their annual Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. Please your non-perishable donation in a bag by your mailbox.

Heyley Ketchum, daughter of Randi Ketchum and granddaughter of Harvey Heys, will graduate June 2nd from Edison High School. She plans to study music therapy at BGSU Firelands. Everyone is invited to her party Saturday June 1st from 4 - 8 p.m. at 8402 Joppa Rd. Huron.

Jacki Warren's grandson, **Ryan McConnell**, graduates Magna Cum Laude from Ohio State University with a bachelors of science in Mathematics. He will be pursuing his doctorate in Applied Mathematics starting this fall at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Alex Wilhelm, Laura Elliot's son, graduates from Sandusky High School June 2nd. He hopes to enlist in the Army.



THANK YOU!
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New members **Jim & Cheryl Negrey** wasted no time in getting active. They cleaned up the front landscaping just a couple of days before **Kim Nemeth, Meredith Holman and Brad Wimmer & crew** installed the anniversary sign in the front yard. Kim plans to paint the sign posts white before the big celebration in a couple of weeks. We are thankful to all of them for making us look good in the neighborhood.

We received **three certificates of appreciation** at the Association meeting Rev. Lenore recently attended in Galion. The first was for being a 5 for 5 Church. That means we support Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, The Christmas Fund and Strengthen the Church Special Mission Offerings of our denomination. The second was for our donation of \$4,571.70 to Our Church's Wider Mission in 2018. The last one was for increasing our giving to OCWM by 10% over 2017. Congratulations - to us!

A HUGE thanks goes to **Rev. Bob Bottoms** for the weeks of work he has put into organizing a multitude of articles, records, photos and miscellaneous "stuff" to make a beautiful historical display that will soon appear in the Boardman Room. It will be there for the remainder of the year so please take time to look at it, and be sure to express your gratitude to Bob.



DIRECTORY UPDATE

Debbi Keller no longer has a land line. She can be reached on her cell phone, 419-202-7521.



Rhonda Roberts	5/2
Olivia Badamy, Rhonda Neese	5/5
Anne Johnstone	5/12
Punky Porto	5/13
Marty Anderson	5/16
Johnnie Lee Turner, Jr.	5/17
Glenn Gast	5/18
Leslie Conant	5/19
Evalyn Vroman	5/26
Diane (Dee Dee) Swartz	5/31



Tracy Ambrose Brian & Christine, Kathy Butler, Judy Conrad, Chuck Decarlo, Jim Grahl, Rebecca Howell, Kathy Hunscke, Fred Kochendorfer, Don & Marion Miller, Michelle Murray, Jack Neese, Mike Thomas, Don Schlett, Cheryl Talley-Sharp & Family, Jacki Warren, the Hatley and West Families and our homebound members and friends: Ruth Baker, Anne Johnstone, Dot Malinovsky, Dorothy Moore, Elmeda Schwartz, and Christine Vroman



REPORTS FROM OUR BOARDS

Christian Education

Jacki Warren-Chairperson

The Board met April 2nd with Rev. Lenore. Everyone was present except Kathy Hunscke who was recovering from surgery.

Parkvue Book Club: Details were finalized for the April 5th meeting. The book for May is One Hundred Names by Cecelia Ahern. Books for the next few months have been chosen.

Study Group: Rev. Lenore suggested a future topic we might explore from Alphausa.org. We will

find out more about this.

Sunday School: Trying to order a table and chairs through Staples hit a snag. So Rev. Lenore will try ordering something through Amazon Prime with no shipping charge.

International Day of Peace (September 21st): Plans are still developing. Rev. Lenore will be joining others from The Center for Peace Through Understanding May 4th at Cleveland's Station Hope event to get ideas.

Board of Elders

Chris Michaels Chairperson

Everyday-all day, I am a W.I.P. A work in progress that is. Since joining First Congregational UCC, an excitement to be a part of something bigger than me has initiated the "want" to learn. I am so excited to be on the Board of Elders. So much information! So much to do! So much to...learn. Special thanks to Chris for extending his knowledge of all the procedures.

I'm about to say a 4 letter word...BUSY! With the upcoming 200th Anniversary Celebration, the Shoreline Worship Series, the intake of new members, bowling, breakfasts, dinners, movie nights and of course the weekly Sunday worship-WOW! It's exciting and fulfilling to think of all the ways we can share the Gospel. Spread the word of God. Be a person that can change another person's life. Help someone figure out where they are on their faith journey. See, BUSY! ~ Nette

Board of Mission & Outreach

Barb Petersen-Chairperson

Our annual Blanket Offering will be collected on Mother's Day, May 12th. Please read the information on the back cover.

THIS MOTHER'S DAY,



Blanket the World with Love!
cwsblankets.org/mothersday

Sometimes wrapping yourself in a blanket and holding it close is reminiscent of childhood and the sense of comfort and security you found in your mother's loving embrace. That's why Mother's Day is the perfect time for our Blanket Offering. For just \$10 Church World Service will provide blankets for refugees and those involved in natural disasters all over the world, giving them a sense comfort and security in the midst of the crisis they are going through.

CWS distributed thousands of blankets around the world in 2018. Last year we collected \$336. We hope to have an even greater response this year with the offering that will be taken on May 12th. Envelopes are available on the back tables in the sanctuary. If you won't be in church that day, you may donate anytime throughout the month.

"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover them with favor as with a shield." Psalm 5:11-12 (NRSV)

MUSIC

As our choir and musicians are busy preparing for our Anniversary Service on May 19th, I'll give a brief overview of the music our congregation has experienced over our 200-year history.

Over the past 15 years

In 2004 Marianne Webb was the director of our small choir. When she resigned two years later the choir decided it was not cost effective to hire a replacement. With assistance from our organist, Charles Scroggy, they have led themselves with Barb Petersen being their chief organizer and motivator. The choir has done an excellent job even though at times there have only been three or four of them singing. There usually wasn't enough of them available for a performance during the holidays. Then last year, with three of our new members and Robin Pratt joining them, their number increased to ten, and this Easter, for the first time in recent history, they were all here to sing. It was beautiful!



In July of 2009 we were honored to host a concert as part of the Organ Historical Society's annual convention in Cleveland. Over 500 organ enthusiasts from all over the world filled our sanctuary for this amazing event.



The year 2009 was also memorable because, unknown to us at the time, our music program was about to change in a dramatic way when our piano tuner, Robin Pratt, became a member of our church family. At first he just played the piano occasionally. Then every once in awhile, much to the congregation's delight, he and Charles would play a duet. A couple years later Robin was hired on the staff and we hear incredible duets almost every Sunday. Their music is so appreciated that, unlike in most churches where everyone exits during the postlude, almost all our folks sit down and listen to it. A few even linger to hear them practice for the next week. It's no wonder then that funds were quickly raised in 2012 when Robin suggested we purchase a new piano.

Since 1819

Music in the early days was provided by a member named Frank Parish. He played several instruments, his favorite being a "bull fiddle." Frank was a pillar member of the church. You will hear more about him later in the year when I highlight our most memorable members.

The first choir wasn't organized until 16 years after the congregation was founded. That's when our first building was constructed and our first resident pastor hired. Rev. Alan Nash (1836-1838) felt strongly that a choir was necessary to supplement and contribute vitality to each worship service. In addition to starting the choir, records indicate he also established a singing school, but I wasn't able to find any details about the school.

When Rev. Nash resigned Rev. Ichabod Hart (1838-1844) was hired. He also believed wholeheartedly in inspiring music and a strong church choir. He worked hard to support both and that may have been why an assistant pastor, Mr. Clapp, was hired to direct the choir and singing school. Later, when the decision was made to replace the extremely popular Mr. Clapp with a "hot shot" director from Boston, Rev. Hart tried to smooth over the awkward situation.

It appears that controversy in the choir was not uncommon back in the early days. A man named

Bill West joined the church a few years after Parish. Apparently, he had a remarkable “New England trained voice” and was able to sing either tenor or bass, “top to bottom, with gusto.” For a time, when there was no choir director, he and Parish led the choir. There was no piano at the time so he was the one to keep the choir on pitch. A few years later he had a huge disagreement with the choir director and left our choir to join the one at Grace Episcopal Church. However, he also remained an active member here at First Congregational.

By the early 1900's things had settled down in the choir and they proudly declared they were a “self-sustaining” choir. They held concerts to raise funds to cover their expenses and to help purchase the new organ that was dedicated on August 22, 1917. In the dedication program it is described as “a two-manual Austin Organ with electric action, universal wind-chest, and detached console. It contains 628 speaking pipes. Of the 75 display pipes only 12 speak.” It was put to good use for more than 65 years and much of that time Carol Judson was the organist. Legend has it that she had been asked to fill in for a few weeks when the organist resigned and ending up serving in that capacity for 47 years. Carol then became a legend herself! The congregation was so appreciative of her dedication that they declared April 29, 1962 “Carol N. Judson Day.” She was absolutely shocked by the afternoon concert held in her honor and attended by church members, family and friends who traveled from all around the country to celebrate with her. The concert was followed by a reception with a cake decorated to look like a pipe organ!



That same year there was also a lot of excitement in the congregation when Jackie Mayer was crowned Miss America. Her mother, Beverlie, was our choir director and Jackie herself was at our church almost every week while growing up. She came for choir and worship after attending Sunday School at First Presbyterian Church. According to Rev. Boardman in the Annual Report that year, Jackie remained unchanged. He said, “How appropriate it was that when she attended our worship service on November 4, she sang in our choir dressed in a choir robe just as the Jackie we have seen there many times before.”

By the late 1970's it was obvious that it was only a matter of time before the old organ gave out. A committee was established to begin looking for a new one and in 1980 the committee's recommendation to purchase the organ we now have was voted on and accepted. Built in 1875, it is an Opus 462 of the well-known Johnson & Son Organ Company of Westfield, Massachusetts with 23 speaking stops and 26 ranks of pipes. It was purchased through the Organ Clearing House for \$18,000. Eighteen months of restoration took place before the dismantled organ arrived at the church in two large Ryder trucks. Then piece by piece, pipe by pipe, it was carefully rebuilt in our sanctuary and enclosed behind a facade of the old pipe organ.

The new organ was dedicated on April 18, 1982 at the 10:00 a.m. worship service with special choir and organ music being an important part of the service. The cost of the restoration and installation, including complete renovation of the choir loft, was \$51,000. Such a large project was only possible because of the congregation's love of music that motivated them to give generously of their time, talent and financial support.

That love of music is a thread that has run throughout our congregation's history. Like the pastors of long ago I also believe music, both vocal and instrumental, is necessary to enhance our worship services. It sure feeds my soul, and for that I continually give God thanks for the dedication and talent of Charles and Robin and our choir members.

