

The Messenger

NEW COVENANT

COMMUNITY CHURCH

A WEST AKRON NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

The President's Page

February
2023

So, it is February 2023, the very month Tom let us know 14 months ago that he and Cathy would be retiring and moving to New Mexico. We all had and still have conflicting emotions:

1) *We want Tom and Cathy to have a wonderful retirement phase of their life together. Most of us are retired and we know how enjoyable and fulfilling this phase of life is. They are vibrant and healthy with years of exploration waiting for them.*

2) *We adore Tom, want him to stay, and have benefitted greatly from his outstanding gifts of inspiring preaching; leadership to our numerous activities; a steady hand at the helm; a delightful sense of humor; and keeping us faithful to what God has in store for us.*

Now, how do we live with these two viewpoints that seem at odds? I don't pretend to have your answer but I'll share with you mine. We know at our core that everything changes. I repeat, **everything changes**, all the time. We shall send him joyfully off while trying to control our tears. We know we will miss him and yet also know that God has unseen, unknown wonders in store for us. And, for Tom and Cathy.

I heartily recommend a phrase, an attitude of "relentless optimism" for all we are facing in this time of transition. We were assured by the Holy Cow consultants that we are an exceptional congregation, so remember, "relentless optimism" in the days, weeks, and months to come.

Nancy Clem,
Governing Board President

WHEN YOU ARE ASKED....

At the January Governing Board meeting we did like we always do at the initial meeting, assign members to be the liaisons to committees. That led to a widely spread discussion of our committee structure. It is crystal clear that with our small congregation and our projects, outreach activities, social events, mission, building maintenance, and lawn and garden there is always a need for more hands on each committee.

Many times, folks simply don't want to join a committee and be obligated to monthly meetings and constant projects.

Standing right beside that is the willingness to do one particular task or project:

- Dig up potatoes in the garden in late August
- Set up Fellowship Hall for the Christmas Party
- Pack backpacks for refugees arriving from the boarder
- Sign a petition advocating gun safety
- Open or close the building on Election Day

So, here is what we are asking of you.

When you are asked to do a particular job, say "Yes" to doing one specific job. Governing Board and Committee Chairs will be ever so grateful.



The Pastor's Page

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
– Hebrews 10:24-25

As the author of Hebrews has noted, one of the most glorious things that Christians can do is to gather together.

Whether it is a service of worship with friends from other churches or the regular routine of a weekly Bible study,
whether it is gathering around the table of our Lord or gathering at a table in the Fellowship Hall,
whether we gather on the pews in the National Cathedral or on rustic benches at a retreat in the woods,
we participate here and now in the mystery of God's activity among us.

Not only are we blessed to gather together as a faithful and joy-filled congregation, but in our fellowship we also have the opportunity to mutually critique, encourage, support, and challenge one another,
enabling the community of faith to grow together through virtues and practices that shape our calling as disciples.

As a result, we can respond to the clarion call of the author of Hebrews, as we commit ourselves to the promotion of love and good deeds around the world by trusting that
God will kindle the fire of our generosity;
God will warm us with the gift of hospitality;
and God will bless us with the wonder of forgiveness and grace.

As we gather together,
we can consider how we can encourage one another as a community interested in the common good of society;
we can express and enact gratitude for the blessings that God has given to us;
and we can come together to share ideas about how to make the world a better place.

And, of course, each week God calls us to gather in the sanctuary with a great company of saints to continue the faithful practice of worshiping together, for it is in being together that we encounter the living Christ who inspires us, empowers us, and equips us to accomplish His work in the world.

Although the sitcoms may be more entertaining,
although the movies may be filled with more intrigue,
and although the park may provide a nicer view,

(Pastor's cont. on page 3)

Pastor's cont. from page 3)

nevertheless none of those elements can do what our time in worship does –
to supply an authentic encounter with the living Lord
who initiates light and life,
who renews us with hope and wholeness,
and who strengthens us to persevere in the work of Jesus Christ.

See you on Sunday!

tom

Dear Friends,

The much loved
Footprints in the Sand poem
ends with the phrase

“When you saw only one set
of footprints,

It was then that I carried you,”
as the writer realizes that he hadn't
been alone on the difficult parts of his
journey after all. This writer shares
that sentiment.

Thank you so much for the thoughts, prayers,
cards, kind words, expressions of concern, and the
monetary gift for Tony Roth and his kids. You have
truly lifted us up and carried us over a particularly
horrendous time. Tony's family has been over-
whelmed by the outpouring of love and concern
from people they have not and probably never will
meet. Your gift will not bring back Julie. But it will
help Tony pay the medical bills for Rory's hospitali-
zation and surgery. And, it will give him some
breathing room to focus on the wellbeing of his kids
as they adapt to a one-parent household.

Romans 12:10 says, "Love one another with
brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing
honor." You outdid yourself. We are truly humbled
by your displays of love.

With much gratitude,

Jackie, Bob, Margaret, & Robert Roth

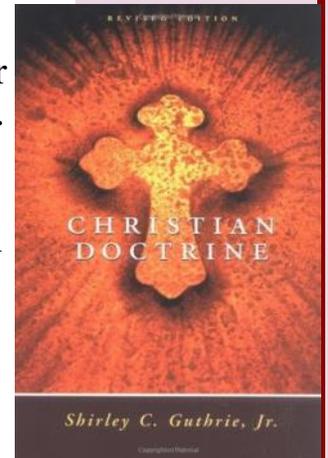


BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

If you're interested in a
very brief, three-week
Bible Study, you are
invited to join us as we
explore the last chapter
("What's Going to
Happen to Us?:

The Doctrine of
Christian Hope for
the Future") of Dr.
Shirley Guthrie's
book, *Christian
Doctrine*. We will
gather by Zoom
at 4:00 p.m. on
February 8th and
22nd. We

anticipate some
meaningful discussion
as we explore the
material in this chapter.
If you would like to
participate but don't
have the book, please
contact Tom, and he
will be glad to email
the chapter to you.



FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Last year was probably one of our most ambitious years for activities. We began on January 9 with a first-ever brunch after church to celebrate getting back for worship in our building after 6 weeks at Westminster for Advent and Christmas. We also welcomed Elissa, our new Music Director, that Sunday.



In rapid succession the brunch was followed in February, with a Souper Bowl Lunch, and a ladies' lunch at the church in March. Then we held the Easter Continental Breakfast in April. In May, the rained-out picnic at Seiberling Nature Realm was moved to Shea Brewing in the Valley.

In June, we had our largest attendance ever at Porthouse Theatre. Many of you came out to see the play *Little Shop of Horrors*. In



August, it was our Caribbean Nights party, featuring Matt Dudack, director of the University of Akron Steel Drum Band, and his son.

Their performance at the Williams' house was preceded by a delectable array of Caribbean food provided by attendees.

In September, a first-ever ladies' lunch was held at Akron Woman's City Club, followed by a hot dog cookout at church in October.

Capping off 2022 was the annual Christmas party at church featuring hammered dulcimer payer, Mark Alan Wade.



Of course, December led us into January where we feasted on soups, salads, and desserts on the 22nd and witnessed the changeover in leadership of the Governing Board, the welcoming of new Board members and the retiring of those going off the Board. Of course, now we look forward to the retirement open house for Cathy Ulrich on the 12th and Tom's retirement party on the 19th.

A long and busy year—YES; a fun time in planning and carrying out activities—YES; a lot of work—YES, especially with only a few active members on the Fellowship Committee.

For the remainder of 2023 as all church committees begin some restructuring, I am taking a break from the Fellowship Group. We will, hopefully, continue to focus on three activities for the year—an Easter Breakfast, a summer activity (I think plans are already underway for a play), and a fall activity or Christmas party. Members will sign up to chair each event, which means writing up the event, providing for a signup sheet, purchasing supplies if needed, and anything else. Think ahead and come up with ideas and people to lead them.

In closing, I thank all of you for participating in our many fun fellowship activities. The greatest compliment I received was someone who said, "Thank you for getting us together." Certainly I felt this was most important in our transition year.

Nancy Williams

A MONTH OF CELEBRATIONS... AND GOOD-BYES

We will be celebrating three events in a row at NCCC. The first occurs on Tuesday, February 7 when AAIC will be acknowledging Pastor Tom's interfaith efforts through his participation in AAIC since 2018. A brief celebration will begin the noon meeting with light refreshments and a word from Conni Dubick, acting AAIC President. You are invited to come and join us.

A second celebration will occur on Sunday, February 12 from 3:00—5:00 p.m., when we will host an open house for Rev. Cathy Ulrich, General Presbyterian and Stated Clerk of Eastminster Presbytery, who retires on February 28. The Fellowship Group is handling the details.

Last, but not least, is the BIG Retirement Lunch for Tom on February 19, after church, at 12:00 p.m., at the O'Neil House. We're delighted that 46 people are attending,



including a few members who have moved away. For the party, please note that the O'Neil House, 1290 W. Exchange St, Akron, no longer has valet parking, so Robert Roth has graciously agreed to assist in parking cars at the Westminster lot or on a side street. Just pull up to the front door, let your passenger out, and let Robert park your car.

Yes, we are happy to celebrate these grand occasions, but celebrations followed by goodbyes always come with some sadness. However, let's keep in mind the celebration part, realizing how greatly blessed and enriched we have been these past years by Tom's presence.

FELLOWSHIP MEETING

Friday, February 3
10:30 a.m.

The Fellowship Team will meet to go over final details for our two upcoming social events and to clean and reorganize kitchen cabinets.

COME FOR COFFEE

Nancy Williams & Jim Strandberg will host the February coffee hour. A volunteer is needed to work with Jackie Horton, will do the one in March. Volunteers are needed for April—June.



SUPER SIX LENTEN FOOD COLLECTION

Because the issue of hunger continues to plague our community and our world, during the six weeks of Lent, we would like to initiate an effort in which all of the congregations in the Ohio Fellowship of the International Council of Community Churches will participate.

Food insecurity happens to plague far too many people in our country, and as a result, throughout the six weeks of Lent, we will participate in a collection of the “Super Six” Food Items which are always needed by foodbanks in our area.

The list of the Super Six food items includes –
boxed cereal
peanut butter
canned tuna
canned vegetables
canned beef stew
canned soup –
and each week during Lent we will collect one of those items to address the issue of hunger in our community. For example, on the
- First Sunday of Lent (February 26), we will invite members of our congregation to bring “boxed cereal.”



- On the Second Sunday of Lent (March 5), we would request that our members contribute “peanut butter.”

- On the Third Sunday of Lent (March 12), we would encourage a collection of “canned tuna.” And so it would be throughout the six Sundays of Lent.

Accordingly, at the end of Lent, there is new life and resurrection with the celebration of Easter, and the gifts we offer will provide individuals with the gift of new life.

Last year, Ken and Nancy Williams delivered the donations to the foodbank each week. This year, they will only be able to do that the first week, so volunteers are needed for the remaining weeks. The only parameters for the drop off is that the delivery needs to happen between 8:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. or 1:00—3:00 p.m., Monday—Friday, at 350 Opportunity Pkwy, Akron.

This food drive is a combined effort of Worship, Missions, and New Initiatives. We hope that you will participate with us and with the other churches in the Ohio Fellowship of the ICCA as we seek to serve our hungry sisters and brothers in the world in the name of the One who is the Bread of life.



AAIC Meeting
Tuesday, February 7, 2023
12:00-1:15

Fellowship Hall

Members of the Akron Area Interfaith Council will take time to recognize the contributions our Rev. Tom Ulrich has made to their efforts. Come help celebrate how he has made a difference in this community.

MEN'S MONTHLY LUNCH

This event has been rescheduled for:

Thursday, February 23
12:00 p.m.

Akron Family Restaurant
Please tell John Sezna if you will be able to attend, so he can make proper arrangements.

Lupe Gonzalo understands all too well the hardscrabble life of a farmworker. She often had to wake up at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning to travel to a farm, where she was handed a bucket and told to fill that bucket as many times as humanly possible during the day. "That's your job," she said. "That's what you're there to do. And when you're doing this work, sometimes you aren't given the time to stop, take a break, to drink some water or to just gather yourself."

While all farmworkers are subject to exploitation, women are especially vulnerable. "For farmworker women, one of the main things that they have faced is sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace, which can be verbal but also physical," Lupe said. "The women don't really have an option of speaking out for themselves, because often if you do, you run the risk of losing your job. And if you lose that job, you're not able to put food on your family's table."

But Lupe's and thousands of farmworkers' lives were made better, thanks to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a worker-based human rights organization. CIW is a partner of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, a ministry supported by our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

One Great Hour of Sharing's purpose of helping neighbors in need around the world remains constant, giving us a tangible way to share God's love — not only through the ministries of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, but also Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Self-Development of People.

"Accompanying the CIW as they struggle to bring safety and justice to the fields where our food is grown, I believe, is a perfect way



to actualize our commitment to being a Matthew 25 denomination," said Andrew Kang Bartlett, representing the Presbyterian Hunger Program. "Farmworkers face daily hardships rooted in racism, sexism and poverty, and our solidarity with them is a clear demonstration of our beliefs."

"For us farmworkers, the support from Presbyterians across the county has meant the world to us," said Lupe. "It has meant that we don't feel like we're alone, and that we're not just demanding dignity and human rights, but that human rights need to be guaranteed. And we're walking the walk together.

Presbyterians have fasted with us, they've marched with us. It has been through collective action that we've been able to demand together a new day for farmworkers."

It's a new day, because we are the Church, together. And when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Let us pray~

We pray to you for justice, O God — justice for all who struggle to feed their families, maintain shelter and strengthen their lives. May our gifts and prayers join with our partners in faith to bring about the just world you desire. Amen.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

FIRESTONE PARK COMMUNITY

CHILI COOKOFF

SATURDAY, MARCH 4TH, 5-7 PM
\$7/ADULTS - \$3/9 AND UNDER

NO ENTRY
FEE!

CHALLENGE!!
CAN YOU OUTCOOK
OUR GUEST CHEF,
COUNCILMAN DONNIE
KAMMER ??

HELD AT
FIRESTONE PARK
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
275 S. FIRESTONE BLVD

COMPETITORS MUST ENTER
BY FEBRUARY 25TH -
CALL 330-352-9401

JUDGED BY WALK IN THE
PARK CAFE!!

Gospel Meets Symphony



Guest soloist Shirley Dailey
from Anthony Brown Group Therapy

February 11 at 7:30 pm
Tickets at AkronSymphony.org