

THE MESSENGER

NEW COVENANT

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

As we move into the season of Valentine's Day, it becomes all too apparent that love is in the air. Heart-shaped boxes of chocolates and bouquets of flowers are flying off store shelves. Reservations for romantic dinners for two are becoming harder and harder to make as the big day gets closer. Everywhere you look, the colors of red and pink seem to be plastered all over various sections of the local stores, almost like the stores themselves are blushing. Regardless, "love" is on many of our minds, so much so that, in any given year, 6M people get engaged on Valentine's Day. However, the love on everyone's mind is romantic love, that sacred love shared between two persons. As such, I want to take a moment to draw our attention away from the expensive romance of Valentine's Day and focus on a different kind of love: God's unconditional love.

I realize that you've probably read plenty of articles, heard plenty of sermons, (*Random continued on pg. 2*)

What's New In February 2025

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Opportunities Abound

Yes, we at New Covenant have opportunities to become even more involved than last year.

What can our members do? Fellowship, FIT, and Mission Committees are all quite active but could use another member or two. Worship needs another individual maybe to relieve our tech crew, to offer an idea or two for various services during the year such as an outdoor service, assist with Communion, help decorate the Sanctuary at special times and work on what may be a tradition—the Blue Christmas Service.

A Lenten Bible Study is in the works along with a possible book discussion later in the year. Volunteers are needed for the various FIT programs listed in the January Messenger and the two book fairs. Our traditional Super Six Lenten Food collection (remember the blue tub) begins March 9 and needs volunteers to run items to the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank each week.

(Opportunities continued on page 3)

Your “random act of kindness” might very well pay for the meal of someone whom you find ideologically deplorable (e.g. a neo-Nazi), but that’s the point.

(Random continued from pg. 1)

and had plenty of time to think about that unconditional love and how wonderful it is to have such a gracious gift as that. So, I won’t “preach to the choir” on that point. However, as we are thinking about how we wish to express our romantic love for another, I want to encourage us all to be thinking also about our calling as Christians to “love as we have first been loved,” which is to say “unconditionally.” That sounds like a tall order, does it not? Loving someone who voted for such and such an elected official, loving the die-hard U of M fan living deep within OSU territory, loving our enemies and those who need our forgiveness; those are all (potentially) very difficult actions for us to take. However, as difficult as it might sound, that is one of our most central callings as God’s children, and like anything, it takes practice. So, as an exercise and a means of “flexing that muscle,” I would invite you all to take on the practice of performing “random acts of

kindness.”

Now, I know what you might be wondering: How is a “random act of kindness” an expression of “unconditional love”? To answer that, we need to consider the implications of what constitutes a truly “random act of kindness.” Let’s say, for example, you are in the drive thru of your favorite fast food joint, and you decide you want to pay for the order of the person behind you as well. Beyond just being “kind,” such an act would be truly “random.” That is to say, there’s a significant chance that you don’t know a single thing about them. While you may have seen them in your rearview mirror and heard their voice as they placed their order (and maybe you didn’t) you don’t know how they identify, who they voted for in the last election, who they’re rooting for in the Super Bowl, what they believe, or anything else for that matter. Your “random act of kindness” *(Random continued on page 3)*

(Random continued from pg. 2)

might very well pay for the meal of someone whom you find ideologically deplorable (e.g. a neo-Nazi), but that's the point. In paying for their order, you have done so sans any limitations placed by the demographics and/or societal norms we as humans have created, therefore making it "unconditional." It doesn't stop there, though.

The other factor that plays into designating it as a true "random act of kindness" is that such an act can and must be motivated by nothing other than love, which is to say that it must be selfless in nature. We've paid for their food and our own. Do we then pull off to the side after getting our food to wait for them to thank us, pay us back, or make some other gesture? More than likely, not. We pay for both meals, pick up our own, and then we drive off without any expectation of repayment or recognition. We know what we did, why we did it, and that good feeling we get from doing it is enough of a reward. If we commodify kindness into a bargaining chip for garnering favors and/or recognition from others, we have placed a condition on it, meaning it is no longer "unconditional."

Therefore, in considering acts of love during this season of love, there is (debatably) no greater act of love than a truly "random act of kindness," for it is at its core an act of unconditional love, that same kind of love with which we were first loved and are called to love one another. So, thus, as we move further into this season of love, and as we hear more of the hatred one group has for another in our country or in our world, I would invite you to think about how you have been doing with your calling to "love as you have first been loved." What random acts of kindness have you done for others lately?

- Pastor Brad

(Opportunities continued from pg. 2)

Our annual AAIC Hunger Walk kickoff is Sunday, March 9, led by Cathy and me. The 16th Annual Hunger Walk sponsored by AAIC is May 4 from the Unitarian Universalist Church. We hope that everyone can donate something to this cause to help feed our food-deprived families in Summit Co. Our small congregation with the help of relatives and friends donated a record \$3,830 to this cause last year.

A new activity sponsored by AAIC and WISH (Women's Interfaith Spiritual Heritage) is collaborating with other faith groups. When completed, the tapestry will become a traveling exhibit to each faith group. People weave a modern tapestry that has a personal meaning for the congregation involved. (See flyer on page 6.) More information will be given later in the month, and "no," you are not expected to be an experienced weaver.

Heading into June we hope to participate in one or more Mitzvah Day projects. Last year, several of us worked at Harmony House of which 20% of our church's contributions to the Pentecost Offering was donated to Harmony House. No other congregation involved in Mitzvah Day that I know of contributed any funds for a project.

So, from donating a box of cereal, to serving on a committee, to buying cookies for Coffee Hour, please contribute to the enrichment of a forward-thinking congregation in the year 2025.

-Nancy



MARDI GRAS

Everyone had a great time at the Soup & Salad - Governing Board Transition Lunch last month. Twenty-six people attended the annual event, and enjoyed a variety of tasty soups, salads, and desserts along with plenty of good fellowship.

Governing Board President Nancy Williams recognized outgoing as well as incoming board members. She presented Hal Horton, Jackie Roth, and Jim Strandberg with parting gifts, and welcomed Jaci Chetelat and Tim Meyer to the board.

Look for these upcoming events from Fellowship Committee. A Mardi Gras party will kick off the Lenten season on March 4 at 5:30 p.m. A sign-up sheet for this event is in the lobby. The committee is planning an Easter breakfast at the end of Lent, April 20. Details for those events will be discussed at their next committee meeting which will be February 10 at 1:30 p.m.

Giving Statements

Because tax laws have changed and more people are using the standard deduction, please let the office know if you would like a print out of your 2024 giving statement or if you would like to have it emailed.

MISSION MATTERS

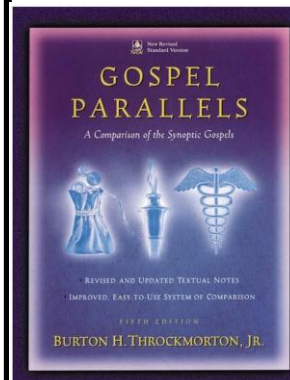
Mission Committee has worked with administrators at Case CLC to set March 27 as the date for this year's book fair. Jaci Chetelat has not been able to make contact with leaders at Portage Path CLC yet, but may have an update in time for the committee's next meeting, which is set for February 18 at 1:30 p.m.



Lenten Bible Study



You can add this to your calendar. The Lenten Bible study will be Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. "The Passion Narratives" is the title of the 6-week study, which will run from March 11-April 15. We will be using passages from Burton Throckmorton, Jr.'s book Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels.



Look for a sign-up sheet in the near future for a book club that is being planned.

We Miss You, Lev.



Congratulations from



**AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL
FOODBANK**

Last year your Akron Canton Regional Foodbank, in partnership with nearly 600 hunger-relief programs, helped provide access to enough food for 31.4 million meals. Your contributions made a profound difference in the lives of individuals and families in our community. We are incredibly grateful for your partnership in this mission.

In 2024, the Akron Area Interfaith Council contributed 53,492 meals. Congratulations! Your generous support qualifies AAIC to be recognized as a Community Partner during 2025.

AAIC News

The February 4 meeting for the Akron Area Interfaith Council (AAIC) will be from noon-1:15 p.m. at Beth El Temple, 750 White Pond Drive. A Zoom link is available upon request. A couple of the main topics that will be discussed in the upcoming meeting will revolve around the possible deportation issues for our friends in the North Hill area and a roundtable discussion entitled, “Food Insecurity Is Pervasive: It Doesn’t Have To Be.” If either of those issues interest you, please be sure to join us in person or online.

Another topic on the agenda is an upcoming weaving project which will held at the Summit Art Space. This event will have three gatherings in April. It is sponsored by AAIC and the Women’s interfaith Spiritual Heritage (WISH). You can find more information about this event on page 6.


In addition, February is the month dues from the member organizations will be collected. Dues are \$30 per member or \$50 for two members from the same faith group. Access the dues information on the AAIC website---akroninterfaith.org and follow the prompts for Membership. Note that there is a fee when paying dues on the website. The website, however, does give a place to note contact information including email, phone, address, and faith group. A check can be mailed to AAIC, 3300 Morewood Rd, Fairlawn, OH 44333. Mark "Dues" in the memo line and please include contact information for the Directory.


Information on the Hunger Walk and the meeting, which will be held at New Covenant Community Church just before the Mardi Gras party on March 4, will be sent out later in the month.



WOMEN'S INTERFAITH SPIRITUAL
HERITAGE
(WISH)
AND
AKRON AREA INTERFAITH COUNCIL



 **YOU ARE INVITED TO
AN EVENING OF
FAITH,
COLLABORATION
AND CREATION**

 **ADVANCED REGISTRATION
REQUIRED THROUGH
EVENTBRITE**
(SEE LINK BELOW OR USE QR CODE)

CHOOSE ONE OF THREE SESSIONS:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2:00 - 4:00 PM

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 6:00-8:00 PM

**EVENT LOCATION: SUMMIT ARTSPACE
140 E. MARKET ST., AKRON, OH**



For more details, please contact us:

Email: neowish2020@gmail.com

Website: www.akroninterfaith.org

www.neowish.org

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



[HTTPS://WWW.EVENTBRITE.COM/E/INTERWEAVING-SACRED-PRAYERS-COLLABORATIVE-TICKETS-1146440858469?AFF=ODDTDTCREATOR](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/interweaving-sacred-prayers-collaborative-tickets-1146440858469?aff=oddttdtcreator)



akron roundtable



Thurs, Feb 20, 2025, 12pm
Quaker Station, 135 South Broadway St, Akron

Guest Presenter:

Linda Nageotte

President & Chief Operating Officer,
Feeding America

Presentation Title:

Food insecurity is pervasive. It doesn't have to be.

Continue the Discussion...

**A Pantry Simulation: Navigating
the Charitable Food System**

Thurs, Mar 6, 2025, 4:30pm

Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, 350 Opportunity Pkwy, Akron

**BRINGING IT
HOME**

REGISTER
for one or both events
at akronroundtable.org



2025 Title Sponsor



When Disaster Strikes, CWS Responds

Donate to the California Wildfires Relief Fund



ICCC Mission Partner- Church World Service (CWS). CWS is providing support in the form of CWS Kits and Blankets, technical assistance and information sharing with local partners, as well as offering limited temporary housing for newcomers needing to evacuate. In collaboration with CWS local offices, CWS' Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery team (EPRR) has assembled and distributed over 200 "Go Bags" with essential supplies.