

THE MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2025

Happy
Thanksgiving

GIVING THANKS

Thanksgiving; it's the holiday that no one seems to care much for anymore. Halloween displays and "pumpkin spice" everything started to be sold not even halfway through August, and by the time we got to October, some stores already had their Halloween merchandise in the Clearance Section because they were already putting Christmas displays up. Now that we're in November, we'll be seeing very little (if any) displays regarding Thanksgiving, because stores will be shifting their focus to Christmas. This happens every year, and I have the same gut reaction as I do during Holy Week: "We need to slow down." Just as we can't get to Easter Sunday without going through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday first, we cannot get to Christmas without first observing Thanksgiving, and no, I'm not talking about the

fantastical rendition of that first Thanksgiving dinner we all were taught in elementary school; the one that made Native Americans and Pilgrims sound like the best of friends. Rather, I'm talking about the spirit of Thanksgiving; the conscious intentionality of pausing to look around and see all that we have for which we can be thankful, a practice that we need now more than ever.

Having said that, though, I get it. It's hard for us to see the beauty of this world and our lives when the news reminds us daily of the darkness within human hearts and when our leaders, rather than try to keep us united, choose to pit us against one another as "a house divided." It's hard to say "thank you" when we are being reoriented to (*Giving continues on page 2*)

NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH

1587 W. Exchange St.
Akron, OH 44313
330.253.6989

office@covenantakron.org
COVENANTAKRON.ORG

Upcoming Meetings

Governing Board

November 17
6:00 PM

Worship Committee

November 3–4:30 PM

Finance Committee

November 11
11:00 AM

Mission Committee

November 18
1:30 PM

Fellowship Committee

November 11
10:30 AM

FIT

December 4–4:30 PM

(Giving continued from page 1)

see only the worst in people, and it's hard to show love when hatred has become so normalized. The leaves change colors beautifully, as they always do, but we choose to complain about the allergens in the air instead. Squirrels and chipmunks continue to skitter about, but we complain about how they keep dropping acorns on our lawns and driveways. No matter how bright and beautiful the world is, we seem to always find something to complain about. That's why Thanksgiving and its spirit is so important.

We need to take a moment, each and every one of us, to be intentional about being thankful, and there is much to be thankful for. I know I'm definitely thankful for much. I'm thankful for a Worship team that continues to persist against all the tech issues and who has helped immensely to make our worship experience meaningful. I'm thankful for a Finance Committee that keeps us updated on how we're fairing amidst rising prices across the board. I'm thankful for all the fellowship events Heidi and the Fellowship Committee work so hard to plan and to execute. I'm thankful for all the mission and service opportunities Mission and FIT provide for us to help not just with our

tithes, but also time and talents. Then, of course, there's our wonderful Facilities team that keeps the church and its grounds a place that fosters life, whether that "life" be the caterpillars that became butterflies earlier this year or our spiritual lives. I'm thankful for a congregation that's supportive and far more realistic in its expectations of both its pastor and their family. Above all, though, I'm thankful for Katie, her willingness to follow me wherever the Spirit leads us, and putting

We need to take a moment, each and every one of us, to be intentional about being thankful, and there is much to be thankful for.

up with my nerdiness (or, as autocorrect keeps trying to say, my "neediness").

In the end, there is much we can (and should) be thankful for. Health, the beauty of Creation, a caring and graceful God; these are but a few of the many things we can be thankful for. So, I ask: For what will you give thanks during this season of Thanksgiving?

- Pastor Brad

Lighting the Wreath

As we approach the Season of Advent, the Worship Committee needs to find people who are willing to light the Advent Wreath for each of the services in Advent. Those dates are:

November 30
December 7
December 14
December 21
December 24

The liturgy for each Sunday is short and is written for two people, though they can be done by one person. Pastor Brad will give you the liturgy ahead of time to allow you to look it over, ask questions, etc. If you are willing and available one of these days, please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the hallway.





A HOPE & A FUTURE

As we move from early to late fall with our church family, we continue to strive “to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God” as we go about our daily routines in the year ahead. The year 2026 is certainly very important in our lives as a church family and for our country as a whole.

Considering 2026, the various committee officers are all in place, and the Governing Board has a new president, Jenn Bryson. Ken Heischman, who agreed to serve back-to-back terms on the board, will also remain on as vice-president. Additionally, the time and efforts of our treasurer, John Sezna, along with the Finance Committee, have not gone unnoticed. In order to come up with a budget for next year, they had to handle the changes in benefits from Presbytery for Brad and Katie (which included two transposed numbers), the lost revenue from Pastor Bell’s church, and the financial negotiations with the Church of Ghana (that now worships here most Sundays). The Finance Committee deserves a huge thank you for their volunteer efforts.

Our church volunteers showed up again in support of Fall Fest at the Northwest Family Recreation Center. Thanks to Shelley Koutnik for coordinating everything so well.

Plans are underway for a fun Christmas Party on December 4th put on by Heidi Heischman and the Fellowship Committee.

While our country is besieged by the rise in costs and hate, a peaceful No Kings march on October 16th demonstrated what our country can do when we come together in a spirit of cooperation and unity.

The prophet Micah, who was known for speaking out against injustice, reminds us to do the same and to assist our fellow human beings in their struggles. May we remember this during the Thanksgiving season ahead. Maybe we could “pay it forward” in the grocery line and contribute in ways that might give others a meaningful Thanksgiving.

In the meantime, a blessed Thanksgiving to you all and your loved ones, and to those who will not have enough food on this holiday to feed their loved ones. Remember Micah’s words, “to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.”

- Nancy Williams,
Governing Board President



SWEET GENEROSITY

Over 100 heroes, princesses, ghosts, and goblins, came out to the Northwest Family Recreation Center's Fall Fest. Ten NCCC members volunteered at the October 23rd event and served refreshments, supervised games, and helped with crafts. Several rec. center employees said they could not have done this event if we weren't there and were very appreciative. NCCC also donated 19 bags of candy to the event. Fifteen bags were opened that evening and the rest went to children who attend classes at the center during the week.

This was the last FIT project of 2025. If you would like to learn more about FIT and our work in the neighborhood, please join us Thursday, December 4th at 1:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will discuss our 2025 activities and plan for 2026.

- Shelley Koutnik



Shelley:

I am forever grateful to you, Tom, and all the other volunteers from the New Covenant Community Church. We literally could not have had our annual Fall Fest without you and your wonderful volunteers. When we were shorthanded due to some of our volunteers showing up late, you all stepped up and took charge of our multi-purpose room doing double duty handing out candy and playing games with the children. Thank you.

Thank you for all the extra candy, the after-school kids are very appreciative.

We are so blessed to have you and the New Covenant Community Church members volunteering in our community. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Christie

Christie U. Walsh
Supervisor II
City of Akron
Recreation & Parks
CWalsh@akronohio.gov

**Northwest Family
Recreation Center**

Eastminster Presbytery Presents:
IMAGINING GOOD
FUTURES

December 10 – 7:00 p.m.

Firestone Park Presbyteria



Rev. Mark Elsdon invites us to reimagine the future of the church. In a time of shrinking budgets, declining attendance, and rising community needs, Mark offers a bold vision: our churches are not broke but rich with assets, people, and possibility. Through real-life stories of innovation, he will inspire us to see our buildings and land as engines for mission, justice, and new life. This talk will encourage leaders to imagine good futures—and help us take faithful steps forward.

The author of *[We Aren't Broke: Uncovering Hidden Resources for Mission and Ministry](#)*, and editor of the book *[Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition](#)*, he is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, USA and serves as co-founder of [RootedGood](#) and principal at [Threshold Sacred Development](#). RootedGood focuses on ways to generate new forms of income, and how to reimagine the use of buildings and land to fulfill your mission and purpose in the community.

GENNESARET

Volunteers are needed November 8th to help serve and distribute food at Gennesaret. If you can lend a hand,



please see Betsy Davis. NCCC has a long-standing commitment to serve those in need on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



MEN'S LUNCH
3rd Thursday
Noon
Akron Family
Restaurant
254 W. Market St.
Tell John if you
plan to attend

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Want to play a role in the worship experience? Sign up to serve communion (during Sunday service or during a home visitation) and/or to read the liturgy. If you are interested in either of these opportunities, please see Pastor Brad.



Christmas Baskets 2025

Help a family in need!

A \$50 donation assures that one needy family has a meal this Christmas!

Thank You for your Donation!

2025 Christmas Party

It's time to sign up for this year's Christmas Party. The party will be December 4th at 5:00 PM.

They plan to set up for the party on December 3rd. Fellowship Committee is still ironing out the details. We'll have more information after they meet on November 11th at 10:30 a.m.



Deck the Halls

It really is time to start talking about decorating the church for the Christmas.

Ken Williams is also looking for volunteers who will help organize and clean up the "children's corner". There are some questions about what we need to keep and what we need to get rid of.

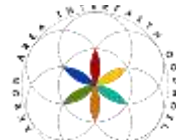
If you are interested in helping with decorating, please sign up on the sheet in the hall. If you can help organize the corner, please contact Ken W.



*Lake Erie Area Fellowship of
Community Churches
Fall Meeting*

Gahanna Community Congregational Church was the site October 11th of the Lake Erie Area Fellowship of Community Churches where our pastor concisely explained The Politics of the Cross, the book our book club is currently reading. Ken Heishman and I were fortunate enough to hear that plus the host pastor, Robb Tarr's, presentation on the marvelous work his congregation has been doing with a community garden to help feed their community. We were also greeted by Janet Burch, President of ICCC. We then enjoyed a home-cooked meal.

The next meeting will be in Detroit in April 2026.



AAIC NEWS

There is no meeting in Nov. 4th, which is Election Day.

Since our newly-elected President, Bobby Burt, resigned, after he took a pastoral job in Lakewood, the group is now without a president. We hope the situation will be resolved next month. In the meantime, because the prayer vigil for the immigration community was so successful, a group of clergy is discussing having another vigil on gun violence in the near future. Expect more information after the meeting on December 2nd, which will be held via Zoom.

The 17th Annual Hunger Walk Committee has met and will have a Zoom meeting on November 10th. The date for the Walk is Sunday, May 3, 2026 with a kickoff meeting hosted by our church on Tuesday, March 3rd at 12:00 p.m. with a lunch preceding at 11:30.

Resource Committee of Eastminster Presbytery

On October 18th, 75 volunteers, representing 13 congregations, showed up to help prepare for Warren Family Mission's



annual coat giveaway. Those in need receive a coat, hat, scarf, gloves/mittens, and a blanket! Last year, the Mission gave away over 800 coats, and they are hoping to surpass that this year.

In just two hours, volunteers set up racks and hung around 500 coats, sorted and organized hundreds of hats, scarves, gloves/mittens, and blankets.

The next opportunity to volunteer with for a project put on by the Resource Committee of Eastminster Presbytery will be a one-day workshop "Supporting Those We Love in the Last Season of Life," led by Rebecca McCurdy. The event will be held on February 9, 2026, at United Presbyterian Church, Cuyahoga Falls. More details will be shared later this month.

Reformation Sunday

Congregations from the West Area Churches of Eastminster Presbytery celebrated Reformation Sunday together on Sunday, October 26, at Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church. Synod Executive, Rev. Chip Hardwick, provided the engaging and thought-provoking sermon, "It's Not About You." The joint choir from the churches offered a beautiful anthem. The music from the bagpiper, Raiden Ehrenfried, was grand and vibrant. David Freggiaro, Partner Relations Coordinator for the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank delivered a moment for mission, and an Offering was taken to benefit Goodyear Heights Food Pantry.

We thank God that Presbyterians from the metro

Akron area had the opportunity to connect with each other in worship, praise, and fellowship!

