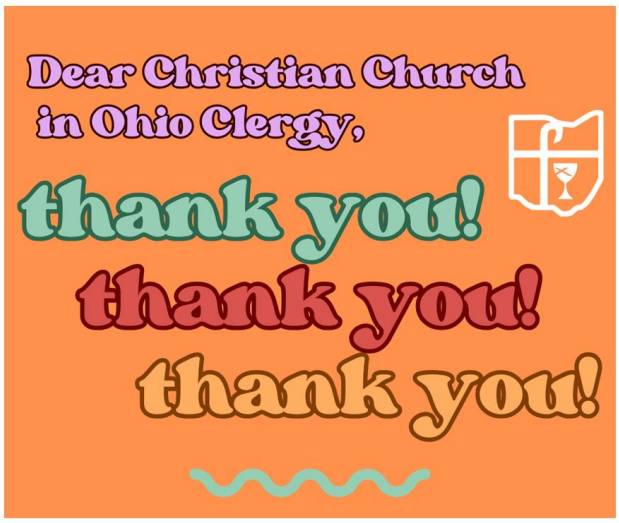
Ohio Regional Newsletter ~ October 2025

Around The Region And In My Heart
Rev. Allen V. Harris
Regional Pastor & President, Christian Church in Ohio



Cultivating An Attitude Of Gratitude For Our Clergy

Most any thoughtful counselor, advisor, or mentor, and probably even any parent or therapist would tell you in times of great stress, anxiety, and chaos that one of the best ways to relax and recenter yourself is to think about those things for which you are grateful. Likewise, they might also invite you to offer a word of appreciation to those in your life from whom their gifts you benefit.

We are certainly living in extraordinarily anxious and chaotic times right now, and so perhaps this word of advice might be good for all of us to consider on a communal as well as individual basis. Whether we are talking about our personal or family life, our political world, or our churches, it seems uncertainty abounds, and tensions are only rising.

I do believe gratitude is one part of the antidote to stress and fear. I can personally verify that this is true and a very successful technique in my own life! I have a gratitude journal (using one of those ever-present journals given out as assemblies and conferences) in which to write down my thanksgivings when they come to me. The problem I find is that after I have been reminded how healing and renewing an attitude of gratitude is, it seems to slip my mind, and I forget about it in the midst of the storms of life. That is why we need to build into our lives, rhythms of thankfulness and gratitude.

Next month is Thanksgiving, a holiday, which helps us every year to enjoy thoughtful introspection about the gifts that we've been given and finding ways to offer gratitude to God and to those around us. I'm glad we have that set on the calendar for the fourth Thursday of every November.

And this month, October, has been designated as Clergy Appreciation Month and October 12-19 named as Week of the Ministry. Both commemorations are a chance for us to share the gratitude we have for the clergy in our lives and their spiritual care. Whether they are a local church pastor, a chaplain, a professor or campus minister, a non-profit leader, or a retired clergy person, it is true that those who have been trained and who have set aside part of their lives to focus on ministry in Christ's name give us abundant gifts in the leadership they offer.

Please take a moment to offer a word of gratitude to the clergy in your lives and, if they have family, their family members. Think about putting a card in the mail to them or have a special celebration in or after worship. Talk to your finance team about making sure your pastor has a Cost-of-Living increase and merit raise in their salary for 2026. Hold your pastor and clergy from around the Christian Church in Ohio in prayer daily during the month. You'll see many more ideas below, some from the Pension Fund of the Christian Church, and others from my previous years' articles.

And may this focus on gratitude for the clergy in our lives invite us to have a deeper and enduring sense of thankfulness for all of God's gifts.

Here is a link to the Pension Fund's Week of the Ministry resources:
https://pensionfund.org/learn/resources/week-of-ministry

Here are links to my past years' reflections on Clergy Appreciation Month:

- October 2024: https://www.ccinoh.com/ccio-blog/2024/october/11/the-very-best-gift-you-can-give-your-pastor-this-october-for-clergy-appreciation-month.aspx
- October 2023: https://www.ccinoh.com/ccio-blog/2023/celebrating-and-honoring-our-clergy-all-year-round-%E2%80%93-and-especially-in-october.aspx

Ever Gratefully Yours,
Allen

Renewal Initiative 2025
Every Gift Helps Build Up The Body

Each year the Christian Church in Ohio reaches out for support of our Renewal Initiative. We call it a *renewal* offering because it is an opportunity to renew the work of the Regional Church, but it also a time to renew our own individual commitments to the mission and ministry of the Regional Church and to covenant afresh to our shared work.

As we think about our gifts to the region, we can reflect on the gifts of the Christian Church in Ohio as a whole that build up the Body of Christ, such as:

- Stronger and more confident congregations
- Better equipped and more closely connected clergy
- Reliable Christian faith formation and quality discipleship training at Camp Christian
- A compelling spirit of generosity and abundance
- Visionary thinking, such as our "If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who?" campaign
- Nurturing hospitality and a Christlike welcome for all at the table of communion

Just to name a few!

Our Ohio congregations and individual members build up bodies in their communities in so many ways! They support food pantries, backpack ministries, medical equipment needs, and nurturing that comes through scouting programs. We provide VBS programs that reach out to families in communities, hospitality to social service agencies, volunteers to neighborhood organizations, and in so many other ways! Ohio is a gifted Regional Church that shares our gifts to the world by supporting our congregational leaders and communities to improve and share their gifts to the larger community.

Please see the attached Renewal Initiative full letter and brochure for more information. These PDFs, as well as contribution updates, can always be found at https://www.ccinoh.com/other-pages/renewal-initiative.aspx

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Welcome Two New Regional Elders: Rev. Jamie Gump And Rev. Audrey Connor!

The Christian Church in Ohio welcomes two new Regional Elders to the ministry of the Regional Church. The Rev. Jamie Gump is the new Regional Elder for District 7 and the Rev. Audrey Connor is Regional Elder for District 9. They will be confirmed to their service at the November 8th Regional Church Council Meeting. Both are currently serving as chaplains and both have congregational church experience.

The Rev. Jamie Gump – District 7 Regional Elder
Jamie is a Chaplain with Aultman Health System out of Canton, Ohio. As a staff chaplain, his time is spent caring for patients, families and staff at Aultman Hospital and also doing the same for a portion of his time at Aultman Woodlawn and with Aultman Hospice/Compassionate Care Center.

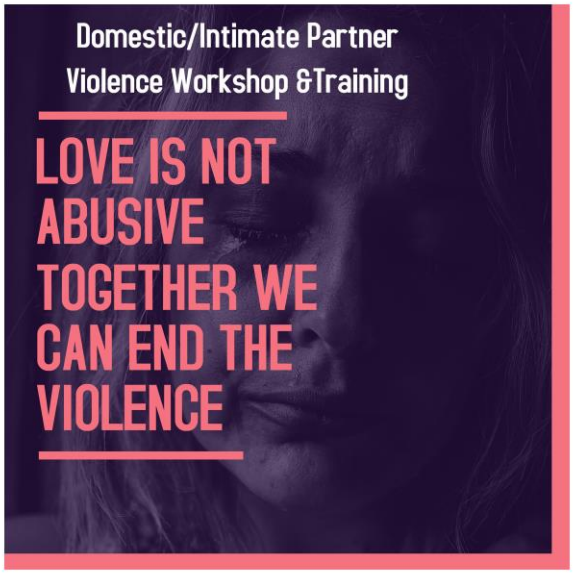
Jamie grew up in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and attended the University of Akron and Lexington Theological Seminary. He has served as a Pastor in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio, including First Christian Church of Mt. Vernon, Ohio. He has served on the Ohio Regional Board, as a counselor at Camp Christian, and on several Regional Church Commissions and Committees. He is married to Chaplain Carol Gump and they live in Canton.

The Rev. Audrey Connor – District 9 Regional Elder
Audrey is Senior Staff Chaplain at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center in Columbus. Audrey is also a life-long member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and grew up in Ohio.

She was ordained at First Christian Church of Bowling Green and attended Vanderbilt University's Divinity School. Audrey has served congregations in Tennessee and Virginia and is currently a member at First Community Church of Columbus but a regular visitor to Northwest Christian Church in Upper Arlington.

Audrey has been a counselor at Camp Christian and was an Advance Conference Officer. She has served on several Christian Church in Ohio Boards and Committees and is currently a member of the "If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who?" Campaign Committee. Audrey lives in Upper Arlington.

Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Workshop & Training
November 1st, 9:30am – 3:00pm



Northwest Christian Church
1340 Fishinger Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221

The Christian Church in Ohio is hosting a special workshop dealing with domestic/intimate partner violence awareness and prevention. It will be on Saturday, November 1st from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will be held at Northwest Christian Church in Columbus. Lunch is included with this training.

The Rev. Dr. C.J. Koen has designed and will be facilitating this workshop and training.

Training for increased identification of victims of domestic violence and increased referrals to specialist domestic violence agencies and advocacy programs. This training is open to EVERYONE, Clergy and Non-Clergy. This training meets the Healthy Boundaries ministerial standing renewal requirement for Disciples Ministers who have already completed the basic Boundary Training.

Objectives:

- Define Domestic/ Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
- Discuss current trends for IPV
- Explain the impact of IPV on victims
- Definitions and words to know

Understanding the Cycle of Violence:

- The Bible AND The Church
- Reasons Victims Stay
- What Is the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence?
- Healthy and Unhealthy Behaviors
- Being Accountable

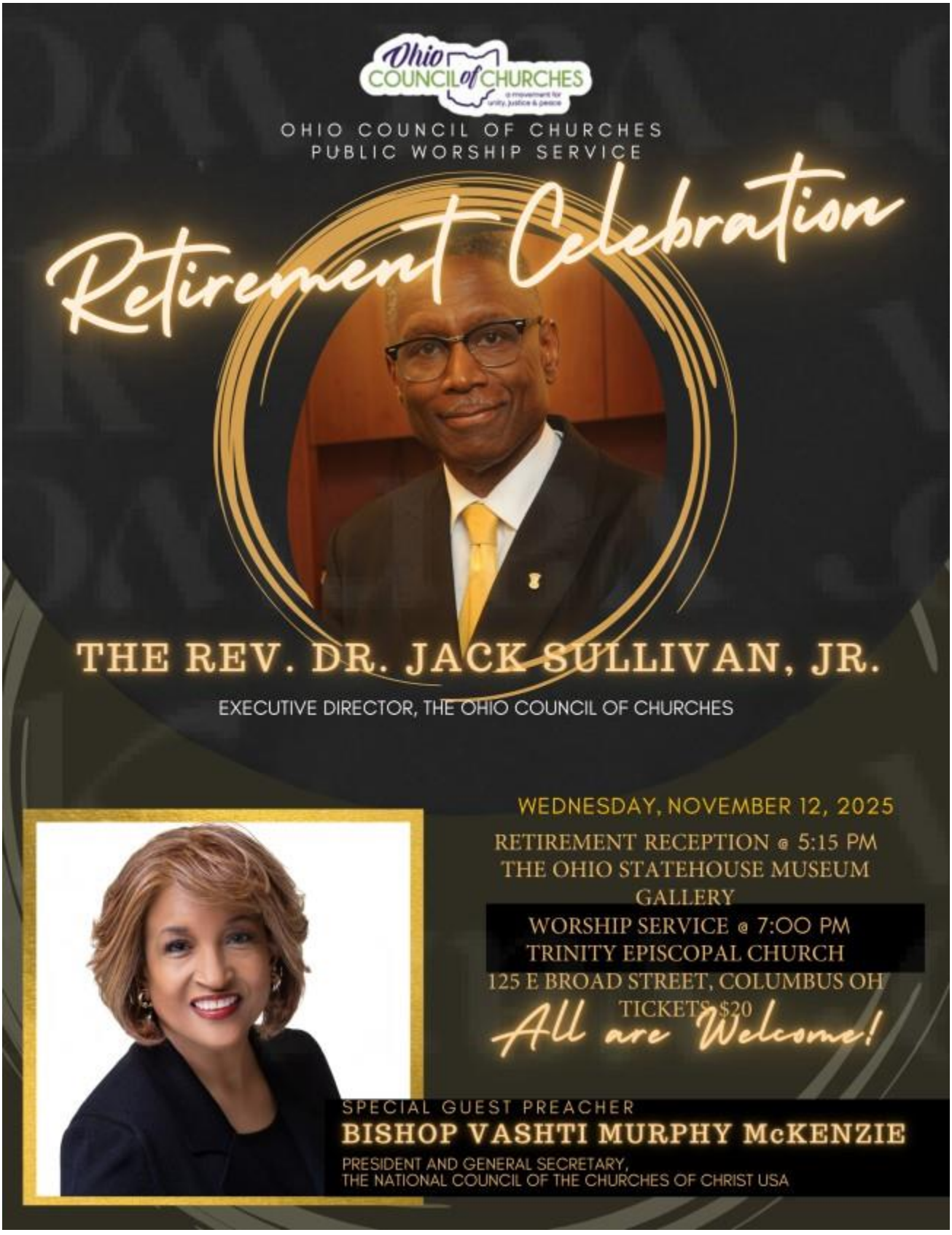
Registration information is attached to this email and can also be accessed **HERE**.

November 12 Celebration Set For The Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr.'s Retirement

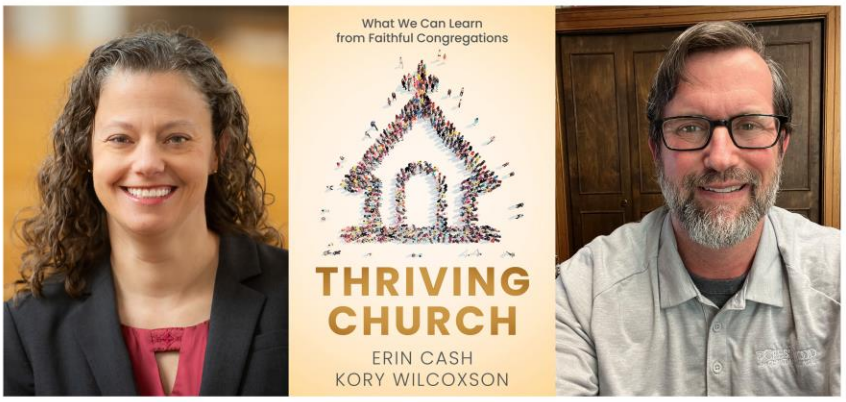
This winter, the Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. will have been Executive Director for the Ohio Council of Churches for the last seven years. Earlier this year he announced his retirement from the position and a celebration of his ministry will happen on Wednesday, November 12. There will be a retirement reception at 5:15 p.m. at the Ohio Statehouse Museum Gallery and a Worship Service at 7 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church at 125 E. Broad St., Columbus. Special Guest Preacher for the service is Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President and General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA. Tickets are $20.

Register for the events here: OCC Retirement Celebration for Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan Jr.
Buy tickets here: Retirement Celebration for Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. | Ohio Council of Churches

To read a full bio of the Rev. Dr. Sullivan, please go online here: https://www.ohcouncilchs.org/reverend-dr-jack-sullivan



THRIVING CHURCH
Featuring Erin Cash & Kory Wilcoxson



Saturday, November 15, 2025,
9am – 4pm
Camp Christian

Event hosted by the
Congregational Renewal Team

All Are Invited!

Kory Wilcoxson, Pastor of Crestwood Christian Church in Lexington, KY, and Erin Cash, Project Director of the Thriving Congregations Project at Lexington Theological Seminary, have published a book, Thriving Church, telling the story of their Lilly Endowment project on the attributes of a thriving church.

Come spend the day hearing the stories of thriving churches and the core values that help them thrive. This event is for both Pastors and congregational leaders! The $60 registration fee includes the all-day session, a copy of the book ($10 value,) and lunch. Add on overnight at Camp Christian in a Cabin for $25.

Registration information is attached to this email and can also be accessed **HERE**.

Camp Christian Christmas Market and Celebration
Vendor Applications Now Available!

It will be a fun-filled day of shopping featuring a wide variety of arts and craft vendors, small businesses, and yard sale booths. PLUS there will be festive family activities, cookie decorating, live Christmas music, crafts for kids, gift wrapping, concessions, s'mores, a photo booth for holiday pictures and MORE!!

EVERYONE IS INVITED!!

We hope that you will mark your calendar NOW and plan to attend! And please share the flyer and Vendor information with your friends, family, congregations, and communities.

Flyer and vendor application PDFs are attached to this email and also available at
https://www.ccinoh.com/regional-calendar.aspx?events=15399&action=details

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In Faithful Expectation We Ask, "If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who?"

Below you will find the next in the series of devotions for our If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who? Fundraising campaign. Thanks goes out to the Prayer Team for working on and gathering these devotions. Our hope is to send a devotion out to churches and individuals as a means to ground our efforts in scripture and inspire others. Our goal is that a devotion is available each month of the 36 month campaign. These devotions and other worship resources are available on our website www.ccinoh.com/campaign.

Please share this devotion with your friends and family.

Where Friendship Becomes Family: The Camp Christian Community

Camp Christian. The name alone brings a rush of memories, doesn't it? For many of us, it's more than just a place; it's a part of our story, a foundational chapter in who we are. **"Camp Christian isn't just a place I went; it's a place that shaped who I am."**

When we try to explain the depth of the friendships we made there, people don't always get it. "Camp friends?" they might ask, a hint of amusement in their voice. They see a fleeting summer, a temporary gathering. But we know the truth. We know the bonds forged there are different—they're **a rare treasure, something time hasn't forgotten.**

Our friendships from Camp Christian are a beautiful reflection of the enduring love of God. Think about it: in a world of temporary connections and fleeting moments, the friendships we've built—some spanning years, even decades—stand strong. They remind us that some things are meant to last. They teach us what it means to be part of a community rooted in faith, where we can be our true selves, surrounded by people who have seen us through it all.

These are more than just friendships; they are the heart of our faith community. They are a testament to the power of a shared journey, of moments around a campfire, of late-night talks, and of growing up together in the presence of God.

And that's why we're called to action. The relationships we cherish didn't happen by accident; they were nurtured in a special place. Let's make sure that future generations have that same opportunity. The **"If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who? Capital Campaign"** is our chance to pay it forward. By supporting this campaign, you're not just building a building; you're helping to build and sustain these vital friendships and strengthen our community for years to come.

What's a memory from Camp Christian that has shaped your faith journey or a friendship you still cherish today?

Brittany Stricklen-Hillyard
Member of "If Not Now, When…If Not You, Who Committee

Compass Christian Church in Mason - Youth Sunday

Under the direction of the Youth Mission Team Leaders, Carol Yarborough and Daun Seitz, fifteen youth designed and completely led a Youth Sunday on September 7th. The service consisted of contemporary favorite videos, "Holy Moly" videos and scripture, an Adult Moment using Worship and Wonder (instead of a Children's Moment), and the sermon was a skit by the youth. The youth sponsors and parents then provided the church with an awesome picnic of burgers, dogs, and sides. The youth celebrated their hard work with their annual water balloon fight!

Compass Christian Church loves supporting their The Youth!!

First Christian Church Of Findlay Home To New HELM Fellow, Samuel Dolan!

We are excited to announce that one of the new Disciples Higher Education and Leadership Ministry (HELM) Leadership Fellows is Samuel Dolan, a member of First Christian Church of Findlay! Samuel attends University of Findlay. He is the only HELM Leadership Fellow from the Christian Church in Ohio this year.

SAMUEL DOLAN

Hi, my name is Sam Dolan, and I am thrilled to be a HELM Leadership Fellow this year. The Leadership Fellows program piqued my interest when I first heard about it last year as a Youth Leadership Symposium participant, and I was eager to apply as soon as I could. I am now looking forward to engaging with my fellow students and learning from our mentors. I hope this program will help me become a more well-rounded and intentional person.

Next fall, I will be attending the University of Findlay, my hometown university in Findlay, Ohio. I plan to major in finance with minors in entrepreneurship and music, while also continuing my swimming career at the collegiate level for the Findlay Oilers. Some of my other interests include gardening, woodworking, and music. I play both the piano and violin and occasionally share my music with my congregation.

You can read more about each Fellow on the HELM website: https://www.helmdisciples.org/post/meet-the-2025-2026-year-one-leadership-fellow-cohort

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Rev. Jeff Gill Receives Ohio Archeological Council Award

At their recent 50th anniversary meeting on October 3rd, the Ohio Archaeological Council gave their Public Awareness Award to the Rev. Jeff Gill, a Disciples of Christ clergy and community leader in the Newark area.

It reads, "In recognition of his significant contributions to the advancement of Ohio archaeology and raising public awareness of the importance of the Newark Earthworks" and was signed by Elizabeth Hoag, President.

For more information about Jeff's involvement, go to: https://www.thereportingproject.org/wandering-licking-county-moonrise-through-other-eyes/

First Christian Church of Paulding
Celebrates 25 Years In Their New Building

On Sunday, October 5th, First Christian Church of Paulding celebrated 25 years in their new building.

Their current Pastor, Ric Beals, preached on Luke 17:5-10 and Matthew 18:21-22. Special greetings were brought from former pastor, Rev. Dawn Remster.

An Anniversary Dinner was held after worship in the Fellowship Hall. During the anniversary dinner they opened the contents of a time capsule kept in the cornerstone of the original church in downtown Paulding, which was recently razed. The two oldest members of the congregation had the privilege of showing off things such as a historical letter, names of the church leaders and building committing at that time, a Bible, photographs, newspapers of that time, and a beautiful paperweight with a picture of the church and pastor, Rev. Charles Darsie, in it (pictured). The previous church building cornerstone was laid on November 4, 1906.

For more information about this Congregation go to https://www.firstccpaulding.org/.

Welcome Rev. Tyler Whipkey

Recently, we welcomed the Rev. Tyler Whipkey to the Christian Church in Ohio as a new clergy colleague and chaplain in Zanesville. Here is Rev. Whipkey's introduction of himself. Please join the regional church in welcoming him.

Rev. Tyler Whipkey joined the Genesis Healthcare System in Zanesville, Ohio, on September 22nd as their Director of Spiritual Care. Tyler earned his MDiv from Phillips Theological Seminary, and is currently pursuing his DMin at Brite Divinity School. He is a Board Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains, and also serves as a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy Reserve, attached to RELSUP III MEF as a chaplain.

Tyler comes most recently from the Pacific Southwest Region, where he served as a mission leader for the Dignity Health - St. Rose Dominican Hospitals in Las Vegas, Nevada. He also served as Interim Minister at First Christian Church of Las Vegas for a brief period prior to relocating to Ohio.

October Networks

The Christian Church in Ohio is now partnering with the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ to do expanded mission and ministry through a series of Networks. Below you will see the October Network gatherings.

For more information about each of these and/or if you have any questions, please email the Rev. Karen Bruno, Network Coordinator, at networks@heartlanducc.org

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National Convocation Offers Online Foundations Conference October 18

Greetings Convocation!
ONLINE FOUNDATIONS CONFERENCE

In ONE afternoon, Saturday, October 18 from 1-5 p.m. (CT) you will learn the basics you need to help your ministry thrive! Gain practical tools from expert speakers to strengthen Children & Youth Ministries, Evangelism, Sermon Prep, Worship Planning, Stewardship, and Technology.

REGISTER HERE: **ncccfoundations.eventbrite.com**
ONLY 100 SPOTS AVAILABLE!!! $25pp

NATIONAL CONVOCATION
OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

THE INAUGURAL FOUNDATIONS Conference

LIVE

Host **DR. DELESSLYN KENNEBREW**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1-5 PM CT

Gain practical tools from expert speakers to strengthen

- Children & Youth Ministries
- Evangelism
- Sermon Prep
- Worship Planning
- Technology & Stewardship

In ONE afternoon, you will learn the basics you need to help your ministry thrive!

SPEAKERS

REV. JESSE JACKSON, JR. | **REV. MANAGERRIE WINSTON** | **DR. JENNIFER CARNER** | **DR. KHALIA WILLIAMS** | **DR. DIONNE BOYICE** | **DR. DANIEL KENNEBREW** | **REV. DK HAMMONDS**

$25 REGISTRATION REQUIRED ON **EVENTBRITE**

via: https://ncccfoundations.eventbrite.com

Festival of Sharing Response
From Matthew Stevens,
Church World Service and the Festival of Sharing Committee

Dear Friends,

We did it—we completely filled the truck with Church World Service (CWS) Kits and Emergency Cleanup Buckets!

This incredible milestone is only possible because of *you*—our dedicated Festival of Sharing Committee, our faithful congregations and the many denominational partners who help spread the word across Ohio.

A special thank you to the **Festival of Sharing Committee and your home congregations**. You are truly the heart of this ministry. For nearly 40 years, you've inspired people to share so generously so that neighbors here at home—and around the world—have the supplies they need when they need them most.

We're also deeply grateful to our denominational partners for their ecumenical leadership and faithful promotion of this statewide effort:

- **The West and East Ohio Conferences of the United Methodist Church**
- **The Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ**
- **The Presbytery of Scioto Valley**
- **The Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ)**

Your support and encouragement help congregations across Ohio take part in this meaningful ministry.

We also recognize the many churches, district offices, and church camps that serve as local kit depots—some of which remain open year-round for the convenience of our donors. You make it easy for people to give and multiply their impact.

And a special shoutout to **First Community Church – North Campus** for once again hosting the Festival and providing amazing volunteers on both Friday and Saturday. Your hospitality helps create a space of welcome, belonging and shared purpose.

As the Festival of Sharing Blessing says:
We gather today to offer our gifts of Festival of Sharing Kits, which will bring comfort and hope to those in need...
Bless the givers of these kits and cleanup buckets. May they demonstrate your love to all people.
Bless CWS while they are delivering the kits and buckets on our behalf.
Bless the lives of all who will receive these kits—let them know your love. Amen.

Thank you for sharing the love!

You Are Invited - Fifth Christian Church, Cincinnati 155th Anniversary
Saturday, October 11th

Foundations of Compassionate Communication Workshop

Presenter: Rev. Jason Bricker-Thompson
Saturday, October 25, 2025 10am-4pm

at Disciples Christian Church
3663 Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights

A day of learning, connectedness, and empathy.

This workshop will center on the work and philosophy of Marshall Rosenberg's non-violent communication (NVC), with some other contemporary thinkers in related fields. It focuses on the simple idea that we can live lives filled with joy and empathy for ourselves and others where we and those we interact with can all have our needs met without coercion, violence, or rewards. We will spend the first two hours of the workshop engaged in the four-step process of NVC. This will be interactive with activities and breaking into smaller groups. We will share a lunch together and have time to debrief, and then spend the afternoon deepening and practicing non-violent/compassionate communication.

You can come just for the first half of the session, or for the entire workshop. However, having the opportunity to practice compassionate communication in the afternoon will bring alive the philosophy we will be learning in the morning, as well as resources for continued study and practice.

Register by clicking **HERE**. Please post/share the attached detailed flyer for the event.

DCEF Supports Churches Preparing For Fall

As you get your place of worship ready for fall, make sure that it doesn't let in the cold. But if it does, improve operations with Disciples Church Extension Fund renovation loans to create more energy efficient facilities. Receive up to $150,000 USD to:

- Upgrade heating systems
- Replace or repair inefficient windows
- Insulate, rewire, or weatherproof your sanctuary, fellowship hall, and other structures
- Improve operations that makes your community of faith more environmentally friendly

Contact your regional Building and Capital Services Advisor, Brock McCracken, at 317.635.6500 Ext. 2540 and/or bmccracken@disciplescef.org today to care for God's creation!

If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who? Campaign
New Resources Available!

As many Congregations are ramping up their Congregational "If Not Now, When? If Not You, Who?" Campaigns, we wanted to make sure you all knew where to download resources for the Campaign.

The Google Drive folder (linked below) contains all the information that was in the packets received by all of the Congregations earlier this year, as well as a few new resources. We have added a single page Campaign Report PDF, a sign for donation boxes, 2 high resolution Campaign logos, and a donation QR Code that can all be used for your local Campaigns.

We encourage you to utilize these resources and share them with your Congregations. Thank you!

The direct link to the shared google drive folder is https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NjXSxciqxstZg2S4sa7tCqoa0-eqIECm?usp=sharing

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Please see the attached schedule for the 2026 Summer Camp Program schedule, share it with friends, coworkers, and others who may be interested, and we'll look forward to another year of faithful fun and exploration!