

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

33 N. Arlington Ave., Niles, OH 44446

News and Events Around
Your Church



Mission Statement:

We celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ by witnessing, loving, growing, and serving from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

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"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Whether you know these words from Peter, Paul, and Mary or whether you know them from the qoheleth, as the teacher and author of Ecclesiastes is known, I am sure that they are of some familiarity. From weddings to funerals and maybe occasionally from the Sunday pulpit, we use this small section from Ecclesiastes to remind us in some vague terms that we all live, we all die, and that in our short lives we waste time gathering, stacking, and then discarding stones. I've pontificated upon that passage several times, though it was more from tradition and comfort than some innate understanding of the text. Honestly, I had previously thought the passage was just an eloquent way of saying that every aspect of life waxes and wanes.

Recently I regained a forgotten understanding of the depth and truth of these words. In the same way a well worn paperback takes on new shape and form due to new experience or changes in life, this spot in Ecclesiastes spoke in a new dimension. And as all well written literature does, though its authorship was penned in antiquity, it speaks to me where I am in this moment.

I take pride in multitasking. I cannot say that I have yet mastered the art of balancing the minutia of life. But I will name that the carefree, extemporaneous nature that I was known for in my youth has ameliorated into a well ordered life. The nature of our culture and that of my profession demands a structured calendar and intentional long envisioned direction. As Charles Spurgeon has said, "a holy life is no work of chance; it is a masterpiece of order."

For several years I believed that a systematic structuring of my life would alleviate the stress that comes from an uncertain tomorrow. I thought that knowing the next steps in the dance of life could solve the complications that came from the existential unknown. And then I became a father. The sure foundation of certainty that I believed was built on firm foundations was shown to have the consistency of sand. The vanity of my false assuredness was made apparent. Children bring with them new worries, anticipations, and mysteries that stymie even the most assiduous vision.

All was well and good when we received a due date for our first child. "That fits in my schedule wonderfully," I thought. I even cleared my calendar for a week in each direction. We set up the nursery with a month to spare. Our other projects came to fruition according to carefully planned schedule so that the unforeseen details could all be handled accordingly. And then I sat, in that month long grey zone when a baby may choose to come on its own terms.

An anxious understanding took me when I realized that the due date was only a suggestion. A fear came over me when I internalized that this is something that can't fully be planned for. I had given up that reactionary indifference of my youth for the confidence of a well-structured lifestyle, only to realize that the rudder had just gone from the ship.

Immediately, I find myself in the same position that I struggled to comprehend nearly three years ago. Thankfully, experience is the best teacher. As Thomas Paine has said, "The mind once enlightened cannot again become dark." Though I still struggle with the unrevealed and mystical nature of new life, I have come to find joy and an immeasurable hope that comes with life working on its own timeline. The new life that will enter into our family, and each new life that comes into our community in similar and different ways is a God given reminder that we are not the masters of our own ships. Even admirals of the fleet are dependent on the wind to drive them to the destinations that they have so carefully planned.

And so, we are brought back to the words of the teacher, the qoheleth, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." The power of time beyond our control speaks acutely to this existential realization. It has called me to read again what I had forgotten in Seminary and seem to keep forgetting. *Ecclesiastes is powerful wisdom literature*. And unlike other scriptural examples of the genre it takes a very critical view of working to attain wisdom. It speaks to a foundational drive of all humans to explain the world around them and in giving voice toward explanation, to ultimately control it. For comfort, for ambition, for power, or for love, we attempt to become masters of ourselves and our sphere of influence. To make things better for ourselves or for others. And yet our best laid plans fail to foresee future failings. Moreover, that pursuit of wisdom is painful and difficult. The betterment of self, takes blood, sweat, and tears. Not to mention the Herculean effort of will necessary to direct the flow of the world around us. Ecclesiastes gives voice to our frantic scramble to improve, to develop, to master, all the while knowing that death will end our pursuits. That all will be laid equal in those last moments, soon to be forgotten in the unaffected march of eternity.

The author of Ecclesiastes echoes those whom have voiced the toil and incongruity of our assiduousness on this earthly coil. From Plato's Allegory of the Cave to Kierkegaard's Absurdism, we understand futility. And yet we laboriously plod onward. However, in the midst of the author's dismal understanding, he yet finds a powerful hope. In this desolate valley of uncontrolled anxiety, in the depths of despair, the teacher finds that love, joy, and hope spring forth, bringing life.

Though our prestige dies with us, our work remains. Just as the author of Ecclesiastes name is lost in time, his work yet inspires. Though we struggle for meaning as individuals, in community we find direction that moves beyond ourselves. Further, we find greater strength in the collective, being lifted up when the burden of the absurdity of life is too great to bear. Indeed to live for others removes much of the arduous strain that comes from the pursuits of personal aspirations.

Though wisdom leads to sorrow, it is still worth striving for. To have knowledge of life and its machinations is a weight to carry. And yet that weight is worth carrying. Wisdom opens the heart and calls us to action. "Wisdom makes one's face shine, and the hardness of one's countenance is changed."

And through this all is the joy that comes from deeds well accomplished and for good purpose. Hand in hand, we apply our knowledge and wisdom in creating work that others can pick up long after we are dust, unknowing of the hands who have shaped it previously. Here we toil, knowing that we might not find fruition, aware that our mighty works may well be reduced to nothing in a whim. Yet we toil onward, for hope of greater things. We lay aside our vanity, our hubris, knowing its frailty and work with joy in our hearts for what may come.

Indeed, there is a time for all things, and we may never know the right time for anything, or we may perceive it in error. But in this time, in this moment, there is an eternity of joy in simple pleasures. In a shared meal, in a toast for good friendship, in the weary endorphins of a hard day's work, and perhaps even in the uncertain moments of new life, there is limitless joy to be experienced and shared. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. We just need to enjoy it." Pastor Chris

"FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH will be entering into a visioning process this summer so that we may discern our current narrative and the ways that our stories shape our vision together to witness and serve our community and the neighborhood around us. We are looking for a few more leaders to help develop this process. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Chris."

WITH THE IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF BABY STARK, I will be taking a few days off to help Amanda and Ellie. The unpredictable nature of new life means that I won't know the exact days that I will be taking off, but the elders and I are working together to make sure that everything works smoothly during those times that I will be absent. I invite you to call, text, email, and otherwise contact me as you normally would, but ask for your grace if it takes me a bit longer to get back to you. If there are emergencies that require immediate care, please contact one of the elders. My thanks to everyone at First Christian for your understanding and care in the welcoming of our new one into God's creation and into the community of FCC. - Pastor Chris

RUMMAGE SALE MAY 3, MAY 4, MAY 5 sponsored by Disciples Men. Contact Howard Gerke (330.689.9298) for more info or to schedule a pick up. The sale will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 3rd and May 4th. Times for May 5th are from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DIST. IV MEN'S SPRING RALLY will be held Sunday, May 6 at Third Christian Church in Warren. Registration begins at 3 p.m. The event starts at 4 p.m. A sign-up sheet is posted on bulletin board by the parlor. This Sunday, April 29 is deadline to register.

OFFICIAL BOARD MEETING SUNDAY, MAY 20 in the board room following worship.

2018 PENTECOST OFFERING - Our Pentecost Special Offering will be received on **PENTECOST SUNDAY, MAY 20** and also on Sunday, **MAY 27**. Your gifts to Pentecost Special Offering support the New Church Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

NILES MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL BACCALAUREATE SERVICE will be held Monday, May 21 at 2 p.m. here at First Christian Church.

THE ELDERS MAKE MONTHLY CALLS taking communion to members who are unable to make it to church. Please let an elder or the church office know of anyone to be added to our list.



MISSIONS LENTEN PROJECT UPDATE: Missions collected a total of \$310.29 for Christian Blind Mission, an organization that distributes vitamin A to children in third world countries. Thank you to those who participated in this worthy cause.

MISSIONS IS COLLECTING SOCKS AND UNDERWEAR through this Sun., April 29, for boys at the Cleveland Christian Home (sizes middle school through high school). Missions will have a **BAKE SALE** on Sunday, May 6.

THANK YOU to **Disciples Men** for filling and hiding eggs for our Easter Egg Hunt and to the **Sunday School classes** and **congregation** for the 16 Easter baskets presented to Homes For Kids.

WE EXTEND OUR SYMPATHY to James Fowler, family and friends, in the recent passing of James' son, James Fowler, Jr.

JUNE 23 CLEVELAND INDIANS GAME - CYF is attending the game and is extending an invitation to everyone to join them. Cost is \$23/person. Let Stacy Gaugler know ASAP (330.979.6655) if you wish to attend. **Money is due by this Sunday, April 29.**

A CYF MEETING will be held Sunday, May 6 following worship in the CYF Room. CYF will sponsor a **PARENTS NIGHT OUT** on Friday, May 11. CYF will be babysitting at church. CYF collected a total of \$167.00 which was sent to Christian Church in Ohio for S.C.O.O.P. (**S**pecial **C**oncerns-**O**hio **O**utreach **P**roject) Thank you to those who participated.

THANK YOU TO THOSE who participated in the Deacons cabin fundraiser for Camp Christian scholarships. We collected a total of \$398.04 to help defray the church's cost for eight of our youth attending camp this summer.

MAY BIRTHDAYS:

May 1 Kathy Marsteller	May 7 Ellie Stark	May 16 Dale Havaich	May 25 William Joseph
May 2 Kyle Tenney	May 7 Kim Tenney	May 16 Ellen Sheldon	May 27 Mary Shafer
May 3 Keeley Sprague	May 10 Ellen Lott	May 18 Gregg Marsteller, Jr.	May 31 Beverly Cross-Thomas
May 3 McKenna Sprague	May 10 Paigelyn Nelson	May 20 Doris Mathews	May 31 Pat Heston
May 7 Dan Pecchio	May 10 Alaina Wagner	May 22 Daina Wagner	

FROM JOHN M. RICHARDSON, INTERIM REGIONAL PASTOR:

'As you are aware the Reverend Steve Bentley has resigned as Regional Associate Pastor of the Christian Church in Ohio. His final day will officially be on May 15, 2018, although he is on vacation until that date. Steve served our regional church faithfully for over 12 years in a variety of capacities, including Acting Regional Minister for several months in 2017.

As is often the custom in local congregations, we invite you to express appreciation to Steve by sending cards, letters and love offerings to the regional office by May 10, so that we can present our collective gratitude to Steve, with a basket full of **cards**, letters and love offerings on May 15.

For a love offering, please make a check to Steve Bentley, or to the Christian Church in Ohio. If your check is made to the CCIO, we will write one check in the sum of all these love offering checks to Steve.

Cards, letter, and love offerings expressing your gratitude may be mailed to: Jennie Stoddart Bernard, Christian Church in Ohio, 1347 Worthington Woods Blvd., Suite A, Worthington, OH 43085.

Steve has sacrificially given many years of his life in ministry to the Christian Church in Ohio. Please join me in expressing appreciation.'

VBS FUNDRAISER LUNCHEON MAY 20 - A hot potato and salad bar luncheon, sponsored by Anna Circle, will be held **Sunday, May 20** after worship to benefit this year's Vacation Bible School. Mark your calendar!

PARENT/CHILD DEDICATION JUNE 24 - Anyone wishing to have their child/children dedicated, please let Pastor Chris know as soon as possible.

IT IS TIME TO REPLENISH our stock of certificates for **GAS** and **GROCERIES** that can be distributed by the pastor when needs arise. Please contribute to this cause if you are able so that additional certificates may be purchased. Thank you.

OHIO DISCIPLES MEN SPRING MISSION RETREAT/WORKDAY is May 18 and May 19 at Camp Christian. Cost for both days is \$30 which includes lodging Friday night. There is no charge for Saturday only which includes all three meals. There is an under-30 discount. Deadline to register is May 13. Visit ccinoh.org for more info and registration form.

LIBRARY NEWS – Thank you to David Post who donated books to our church library.

DISCIPLE WOMEN'S JAIL MINISTRY TEAM will be conducting worship services on the Mondays of May 7 and May 21 at 6:45 p.m. at the Trumbull County Jail.

FCC VOLUNTEERS will serve a dinner **Tuesday, May 29** from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Rescue Mission of the Mahoning Valley, 962 Martin Luther King Blvd. in Youngstown, coordinated by Becky Carpenter. Desserts need to be to the church **by 11 a.m.** using buzzer and door closest to the library parking lot.

PASTOR CHRIS STARK CONTACT INFO: cell phone 330.442.2558; email address pastorchrisstark@gmail.com.



MAY NEWSNOTES **Easter Special Offering** total received was \$818 . . . **Elders** will meet Sun., May 6 following worship in the library **Disciples Men** will meet Sun., May 6 at 8 a.m. at Perkins **Lydia Circle** will meet at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 9 in the parlor **Stewardship** and **Finance** will meet Sunday, May 13 at 9 a.m. **TMH Psych Unit Worship Service** will be held Sunday, May 13 at 1:30 p.m. **Ohio Women's Ministry** (OWM) is collecting **tuna, canned chicken, canned meat** for Niles Community Services during the month of May. Donations may be placed in the cabinet in the main hallway Our best wishes to **Dan Pecchio** as he celebrates his 91st birthday on May 7

OUR SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE BEGINS

MAY 27through SEPTEMBER 2

Worship service is 10:00 a.m.

No Church School classes or Junior Worship.

PRESCHOOL CARE PROVIDED

Families are invited to worship together.

Activity bags will be available in worship for the children.

NEWS & EVENTS
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First Christian Church, Niles, Ohio
330-652-5839 • www.firstchristianniles.org
Rev. Christopher Stark, Minister
Mrs. Carolyn Rossi, Secretary