

# 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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Forty is a big number. I mean no offense toward the folks in our faith community who have in their years reached or surpassed that number. I'm sure I'll have a more accurate assessment of 40 as an age when I more closely approach it. My meaning is that 40 is a powerful number when it comes to scripture. It's all over the place. Even the uninitiated could probably name a few examples without any prompting. This is because 40 in scripture represents more than the number itself. There is a common theme through its usage in most of the instances of our faith stories.

Forty represents, in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament a time of trial, testing, or judgment amongst other things. Think Jesus and his forty days in the wilderness, the forty days that Jonah preached to Nineveh, the Hebrew's forty years in the wilderness. The Number forty comes into play concerning this nuanced meaning with the prophets Elijah and Ezekiel, with the deluge of Noah, and a dozen other examples.

Forty is also the number of days contained within the Lenten Season. The period that starts at Ash Wednesday and runs through Holy week counts off that special number for a very intentional reason. While scholars would be quick to dismiss the reading of forty as a literal number in many of the Bible stories, for us the counting off of forty days leading up to the empty tomb of Easter is a daily literal reminder of the importance of the number in our faith stories.

Just as with Jesus in the wilderness the season of Lent is an intentional journey of trial for us. Let me be the first to say that I am not a subscriber of extreme asceticism. We are not expected to fast for forty days, at least not anymore. Nor can we expect to be led to the top of a mountain that we might be offered to rule the world. But the Lenten Season is a time for those of us in the faith to seriously check our faith journeys. Through forty days we are called to pay special attention to those aspects of faith to which we adhere throughout the year: prayer, sacrificial stewardship, atonement, and a realization of where we have fallen short.

It's common for some folks to give up trivial pleasures. Go for it! Be it chocolate, wine, or candy crush saga, this mild form of self-denial is never a bad thing. But if that is all you are doing in your Lenten journey, then you are missing the point. That self-denial should be a reminder of the larger impact that you are making this season. When you skip the Cabernet, the realization should move you to grander experiential realizations. It should be a reminder to pick up the Bible and read, a prompt that we don't always earn the rewards with which we treat ourselves, and a realization that many of those in poverty around the world would view our trivialities as unapproachable luxuries.

We do these things as we walk with the Christ for forty days. To empathize. To live differently. This season, don't just give up something trivial. Instead, take on the mantle of faith. Do justice, love kindness, push yourself to be the person of faith that you wish you could be. Come to small group study, read scripture, pray alone and together, worship with your whole being, contemplate our atonement. Struggle with the way the world is and how, in our Lenten Journey, we are making it better.

Pastor Chris

## FIRST CHRISTIAN GREEN TEAM

Our congregation has begun an initiative focused on sustainability and rooted in the recognition that we are called by our Creator to be good stewards of all that we have been entrusted. Our first steps include separating our waste stream into recyclables, landfill, and compostable items. Many of our trash cans are now labeled with their intended contents. Please be aware of which bins are meant for which materials. This, however, is only the first step. We are currently seeking folks to participate in our "green team" so that we may continue the work of good stewards. If you are interested in participating, see Pastor Chris.

## FIRST CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATION TASKFORCE

Every living thing and system has a natural life cycle. A congregation is no exception. In every faith community moves from inception through the stages of growth, stability, and decline. This is a natural and healthy process for any community. It is in that time that comes after the stable plateau in which a congregation is faced with the choice of continued decline and eventual death or the choice of renewal, redefinition, redevelopment, and eventual rebirth. It is with this natural cycle in mind that First Christian Church is seeking to find new communal vision that we might move together in the process of rebirth. Our first step in accomplishing this new vision is to gather a "transformation taskforce." These leaders will help focus our vision as we move through a "Ministry Action and Potential Survey" that will help us redevelop our narrative as we move into the future. If you are interested please contact Pastor Chris or place your name on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE will be held **February 14** at 7 p.m. This service is a good start to the Lenten journey. Please plan to attend!



WE WILL OBSERVE WEEK OF COMPASSION beginning **Sun., February 18 through Sun., February 25**. Offering envelopes will be available for your Week of Compassion Offering on these dates. This is one way Disciples of Christ seek to meet the world's needs. Check out [weekofcompassion.org](http://weekofcompassion.org) to learn more.

'SOUPER BOWL' OF CARING FEBRUARY 4 – Our Christian Youth Fellowship and Chi Rho Youth Groups will team up with thousands of youth across the country by asking worshipers to give \$1 or more to help needy people in our community. It's as easy as putting your contribution in a soup bowl. Can we count on **YOU** to help us out? Youth will be at the back door of the sanctuary on **February 4** to collect your contribution. Proceeds will go to the Youngstown Rescue Mission.

BELOW IS A LIST OF THE 2018 CAMP DATES. PLEASE BEGIN THINKING WHICH WEEK YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND:

**Otter Camp** for youth who have completed 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade: June 17 – 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Chi Rho Camp** for youth who have completed 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade:

Emmaus: June 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>; Corinth: July 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>; Damascus: July 22<sup>nd</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>

**CYF Conference** for youth who have completed 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade:

Conference #1: June 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>; Conference #2: June 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>; Conference #3 July 15<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBER Marcia Fabian to our church family. Marcia transferred her membership from Lordstown Christian Church on January 14. Marcia resides here in Niles. We wish her God's blessing in her new church home.

COMMUNITY MEALS will be served by First Christian Church during February. Meals will be served on the Thursdays of February 1, 8, 15 and 22. Monetary donations are being accepted for these meals. If you wish to contribute, please make checks payable to First Christian Church labeled 'meals.'

BIBLE STUDY meets on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. in the church parlor. Everyone is welcome to join us!

DISCIPLE WOMEN'S JAIL MINISTRY TEAM will be conducting worship services on the Mondays of February 5 and February 19 at 6:45 p.m. at the Trumbull County Jail.

CHI RHO YOUTH GROUP will meet Sunday, February 11 following worship in fellowship hall. Chi Rho is for youth in grades 6 to 8.

CYF CANNED FOOD DRIVE COMPETITION - women vs. men - place food items in main hallway in designated spots. CYF is hosting a **PARENTS NIGHT OUT** on Fri., February 2 from 6-9 p.m. in fellowship hall. CYF and Chi Rho will be attending Winter Jam on Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>. A CYF Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 18 following worship in the CYF Room.

A SOUP/DESSERT LUNCHEON will be held Sunday, February 25 following worship, hosted by our Disciples Men's Group.

#### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS:

Feb. 3 Brian Lamp

Feb. 14 Amanda Stark

Feb. 23 Stevie Paris

Feb. 6 Cade Secrest

Feb. 15 Stephen Preston

CONGRATULATIONS to Monica Lott and Justin Leigh on the birth of a baby boy, Andrew Michael Lott Leigh, born on January 11. Don and Ellen Lott are the proud grandparents.



FCC VOLUNTEERS will serve a dinner **Tuesday, February 27** 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](mailto:pastorchrisstark@gmail.com).

DEACONS 'COINS FOR CAMP CHRISTIAN.' Cabins are available in the narthex. One cabin to a family, please. Money collected will go into the Camp Christian Scholarship Fund towards tuition for First Christian students eligible for summer camp. Filled boxes can be turned in to the church office or to Lynn Gombos, Deacons Chair.

PLEASE REMEMBER to keep your email addresses current with the church office so that we can communicate most effectively. Thank you.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER ITEMS is Mon., February 26 by 11:30 a.m.



FEBRUARY NEWSNOTES . . . . Elders will meet Sun., February 4 following worship in the library . . . . Disciples Men will meet Sun., February 4 at 8 a.m. at Perkins . . . . Stewardship and Finance will meet Sunday, February 11 at 9 a.m. . . . . Missions Committee will meet following worship on Sun., Feb. 11 in the parlor . . . . Lydia Circle will meet at 6:15 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, February 14 in the parlor. The ladies will then attend our 7 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service . . . . TMH Psych Unit Worship Service will be held Sunday, February 11 at 2 p.m. . . . . Sandy Pressell wishes to thank everyone for all their cards, prayers, food, support and concern during her illness . . . .

**2017 YEARBOOKS AND DIRECTORIES WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON.  
ONE TO A FAMILY, PLEASE!**

NEWS & EVENTS  
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First Christian Church, Niles, Ohio  
330-652-5839 • [www.firstchristianniles.org](http://www.firstchristianniles.org)  
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