

# 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)

VOL. LXIV No. 7

Summer Worship 10 a.m.

July 26, 2017

My back yard is a jungle. Alright, it's more of a deciduous forest. We have been fighting for months to keep the tangle subdued, but it seems to be a losing battle. I know that previously the property was well tended, trimmed, and pruned. But over the past few years, the wood crept in, unwanted plants took root, trees overgrew. And the weeds; long-rooted, tenacious, people-resistant weeds... So every hour that we have free, we go out and chop, cut, trim, whack, bury, burn, and otherwise wage war against a back yard which is poised to devolve into wilderness at the first sign of indifference. We've even drafted our family members into this literal turf war. Finally, we decided to fight smart. We brought out our tiller, we brought shovels and axes, and we went for the roots. A few days ago we dug and burned for hours on end and after a long day of arduous work and we stood up to admire our cleared land; all twelve feet of it. Nonetheless, it is the first step of a more distant goal that we work toward; a goal that we will reach, now that we know a solution.

This is a struggle that all of us face daily. Even if you are not a gardener, most often in life we try to treat symptoms instead of going to the root of the problem. At work, at home, and in our faith journey, it is always easier to slap on a Band-Aid than it is to perform surgery. Think of it this way: most churches have a community meal, they fund drives for resources to give away, and they provide aid to those who need it. But when it comes to financial education, organizing against legislature that hurts those in poverty or even programs that structurally help those in generational poverty to reach above the gap, churches are often absent. We keep picking at individual leaves without every trying to find the root.

Now there are a few things that complicate this equation. One issue that we have is that sometimes, we don't even know where to start. When the back yard jungle first became a project, we didn't even know how to address it. We didn't know what was what, what was planted intentionally and what showed up of its own volition. With our tools still packed up and no clue as to what grew where, the back yard became a scary place, a wilderness with no possibility of taming. So we began to research. We started small, compartmentalized the yard into attainable projects. We identified plants to keep and weeds to kill. We came up with a plan and started on it.

Sometimes, a lack of progress is demoralizing. After months of hard work we came back from vacation to find the virility of Mother Nature reclaiming our territory. The loss of ground led the battle of the backyard to become a reason for despair. At times we were embarrassed by the overgrowth. We weren't keeping up with the Jones'. And whether you compare your success to others around you or if you simply compare it to an idealized goal, not reaching it can have a serious impact on your will to continue striving. And when you are demoralized, it is difficult to think in new ways to correct a problem. You just keep hacking at the weeds, hoping that this will be the last time.

So where do we, in the church, start? Well, I believe that it does start with weeding. When a garden gets out of hand you need to mow it over to see what's underneath. So we must begin with the ministries that we already have. Our community meals, our VBS, our collections, drives, and our one on one ministry are effective. But mission work and alms giving only gets us so far. This is the work that is clearing the path so we can see the next step of ministry. Once the leaves are gone, we can begin to work at the roots.

These roots run deep. They are part of our culture, part of society, of economy, and often of the things we pride ourselves on. The roots of the issues that we face in ministry: poverty, racism, sexism, bigotry, and hatred in any and all forms, is systemic and deeply ingrained. Often we don't even know that we are looking at a root when we see it. That is why advocacy must be the next step. To be an advocate means to speak out, to teach when folks are unaware of a situation. To be an advocating church means we hold forums, listen to speakers, and intentionally make ourselves aware of the issues that subvert our building of God's Realm in this world.

With advocacy, we now know what plants are actually invasive weeds, we know what the roots look like, and we know what stops them from going to seed, from spreading. Here is where the church moves toward committed and intentional community planning. Here we move on a local level. We affect our community with our voices, with our hands, and with our hearts. We stop coercive business practices (absentee landlords and payday advance businesses come to mind), we move for funding to address and support mental illness and addiction in our community, and we allow for and work with more community gardens in areas where potential food deserts exist. But even these are just the roots that I have been made aware of, there are more, and they persist. It is up to all of us working together in mission work, almsgiving, advocacy, and community planning to start clearing our gardens of weeds. Let us work together in love, being true caretakers of the creation that God has given us.

Pastor Chris



FCC VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 'Hero Central' will be held Sun., August 6 through Thurs., August 10, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Dinner will be served. All youth entering kindergarten through 6th grade are welcome to attend. Register your child/children **TODAY** either with the church office (330.652.5839); Shelly Pressell (330.306.5710) or Trishia Bassett (330.509.9549).



WE STILL NEED VOLUNTEERS for: Bible Lesson Leader, Reflection Time Leader, a few more Hero Guide Leaders, Mission Leader (3 days), Recreation Leader (2 days), and various Bible story characters. We need volunteers to provide dinner on Monday, August 7 and Wed., August 9<sup>th</sup>. See posting on bulletin board by the parlor or contact Shelly Pressell at 330.306.5710 ASAP! A **VBS Meeting** will be held **this evening**, July 26, from 5 to 8:30 p.m.

VBS MISSION PROJECT – we are collecting **single serving** snack items such as chips, applesauce, raisin boxes, trail bars, peanuts, candy (no gum) and cracker packs. Items may be placed in main hallway by the parlor.

SCHOLARSHIP FORMS are available on the bulletin board by the main office for those heading to post high school education in an accredited institution. Applications must be filed each year (even if you have applied in previous years). **Deadline is August 31<sup>st</sup> complete with proof of enrollment.**

'THE SHACK' BOOK CLUB concludes Tuesday evening, August 1st at 7 p.m. in the church parlor.

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



SCHOOL SUPPLIES NEEDED! Lydia Circle is collecting school supplies for distribution through Niles Community Services, who serve over 400 families in the Niles area. Donations may be placed in the box provided in the narthex. **Deadline is August 13th.**

MISSIONS COMMITTEE collected 68 gently worn and 95 new pairs of socks along with 13 count new and gently worn underwear for distribution through Niles Community Services. Thank you to those who helped with this project.

FCC VOLUNTEERS will serve a dinner **Tuesday, August 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 **before 11:30 a.m.** using buzzer and door closest to the library parking lot.

OHIO WOMEN'S MINISTRIES FALL RETREAT will be held Friday, Sept. 8 through Sunday, September 10 at Camp Christian. Watch for more info to follow.

#### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS:

Aug. 2 Ruth Joseph	Aug. 11 Bob Brothers	Aug. 18 Sandra Pressell	Aug. 26 Jeri Williams
Aug. 2 Tom Bevilacqua	Aug. 12 Katie Tenney	Aug. 21 Howard Gerke	Aug. 28 Robert Pitts
Aug. 6 Becky Carpenter	Aug. 14 Tina Havaich	Aug. 21 Richie Sprague	Aug. 30 Glenna Simko
Aug. 8 Andrew Blose	Aug. 15 Jack Engle	Aug. 23 Stephanie Bevilacqua	Aug. 31 Evelyn Leigh
Aug. 8 Dorothy Joseph	Aug. 17 Martha Hellam	Aug. 25 Savanna Cross	

CONGRATULATIONS to Shannon and Eric Kellerman on the birth of a baby boy, Caden Douglas, born on July 3. Kurt and Martha Hellam are the proud grandparents.



OHIO DISCIPLES MEN'S FALL RETREAT will be held Friday, September 15 through Sunday, September 17 at Camp Christian. Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm will be Keynote Speaker. Visit [ccinoh.org](http://ccinoh.org) to register and for more information. Deadline to register is September 5.

A CHURCH LEADERS WORKSHOP will be held **Sat., September 23**, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Central Christian Church, Wooster, OH for all elders, deacons and church leaders. Featured speaker will be Rev. Bill McDonald. Registration fee including lunch is \$20 per person if received by August 15; \$25 per person if received by Sept. 1; and \$30 per person after Sept. 1 if space allows. For more info email [jdouglas@cccwooster.org](mailto:jdouglas@cccwooster.org) or call 330.262.4652.

LYDIA CIRCLE IS SELLING COOKIES for graduations/weddings. If anyone is interested, please call Beverly McCloskey (330.538.9994) or Martha Hellam (330.856.5768).

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

PASTOR CHRIS STARK CONTACT INFO: cell phone 330.442.2558; email address [pastorchrisstark@gmail.com](mailto:pastorchrisstark@gmail.com).

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER ITEMS is **Mon., August 28** by 11:30 a.m.



AUGUST NEWSNOTES . . . . **Elders** will meet Sun., August 6 following worship in the library . . . . **Disciples Men** will meet Sun., August 6 at 8 a.m. at Perkins . . . . **Stewardship** and **Finance** will **NOT** meet in August . . . . **TMH Psych Unit Worship Service** will be held on Sunday, August 13 at 2 p.m. . . . . **Ohio Women's Ministry** (OWM) is collecting **mustard/ketchup/mayo/syrup** for Niles Community Services during the month of August. Donations may be placed in the cabinet in the main hallway . . . . We extend our best wishes to **Don** and **Ellen Lott** as they celebrate their 53<sup>rd</sup> Wedding Anniversary on August 9<sup>th</sup> . . . . Our best wishes also to **David** and **Sandra Pressell** on their 51<sup>st</sup> Wedding Anniversary August 28 . . . .

NEWS & EVENTS  
is a monthly publication of  
First Christian Church, Niles, Ohio  
330-652-5839 • [www.firstchristianniles.org](http://www.firstchristianniles.org)  
Rev. Christopher Stark, Minister  
Mrs. Carolyn Rossi, Secretary