

Worship
With Us
Sundays
10AM

The Courier

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First Congregational Church, Elyria, Ohio. September, 2019 courier@firstcongelyria.org

Children

As the month of September begins many think to the beginning of the school year: children and adolescents returning to the classroom, the excitement of learning new concepts, and the mastery of new skills. For many, the noise, excitement, and activities of children fill us with fond and warm memories. Children are in actuality the future.

Currently we do not have many children who are members of the Congregation. Yet, we have many children who consider First Church to be their home or safe place, but do not, for a multitude of reasons join us for Worship. Children in Worship and their active participation in Worship has not been a part of the life at First Church. Children traditionally came with their parents and were in the Sanctuary for the very beginning of Worship and then sent off to Church School, joining their parents after Worship for coffee hour. This practice did not foster a familiarity with Worship or a connection to Worship. After numerous conversations with the members of the Faith Team, it has been decided to be intentional about children being in Worship. What does this mean? How does this occur?

Intentional means that there is a clear plan concerning Children in Worship.

In the Matthew Gospel, it tells us, *Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there."* Just as Jesus welcomed the children so do we at First Church. We make our welcome based on the words and actions of Jesus. Notice that when Jesus said bring and let the children come to Me, He did not put any parameters or expectations on the children and nor should we. Picture if you would, Jesus is sitting in the village or town square and the children begin to approach Him. Jesus smiles and then motions for the children to come closer. The children begin one by one to come closer and before Jesus knows what has happened, he has children all around Him and on top of Him. They have come with their dirty feet and hands, the sweat of play, the stickiness of whatever they had to eat last, in other words they came just as they were. Jesus does not get upset that His garments become a bit soiled, He does not cringe at sticky hands all over his face. Instead this Jesus embraces them, accepts them, and loves them. The children came with their personalities, behaviors, tempers, loud voices and at times highly entertaining behaviors, which by the standards of many, might be seen as inappropriate. Jesus welcomes them all, just as they are, the entire spectrum of children.

The picture I just described is and will be our model at First Church. We must understand that our society has changed and is continuing to change. What had been the acceptable norm of the past is no longer viable. We, First Church must also change. It is a completely misguided conception to believe that young families will be in worship every Sunday. For many families Sunday may be their only day in which both parents are home together. For many families the thought of getting up, feeding the children, getting them dressed, and being at Worship on time is daunting, if not nearly impossible to accomplish. Admittedly my parents and many of you made it happen at that time. Times have changed, values have changed, expectations have changed. Yes, the Church remains a constant as do Gospel values, but the way of allowing for those immutable values and teaching to others must be contemporary and meet people where they are at along life's journey.

You have undoubtedly heard me speak often about how our words and actions are able to make a difference. When it come to young families and children it is absolutely true. Just as a smile is able to make another's day, a frown or look of disgust can turn young families or children away. Looking upset because a child is making noise during worship is telling that child or family that they are not welcome. New people, young families, and children when they venture in the doors of First Church must unequivocally get the sense and know that they are welcomed and accepted. We never get a second chance at that first impression.

You will be hearing more about children and young families coming to First Church in the future and the Faith Team.

-Pastor Patrick

Youth and Young Adult News

Bounce Castle

The Apple Festival will begin this year on Friday, September 20th and conclude on Sunday, September 22nd. This year First Church will have a "Bounce Castle" on our lawn. The Bounce castle will be open during the hours of the Apple Festival and operated by members of The God Squad and the Young Adult Group. The cost will be 1 dollar per child for a few minutes of fun. The cost remains the same so that the bouncing is affordable to everyone. While you are attending the Apple Festival be sure to stop by and say "Hi" to the young people of First Church, the enthusiastic bouncers, and if you want enjoy a bounce.

The God Squad

The God Squad will meet on

Thursday, September 5th and September 19th.

The group gathers beginning at **6:00 pm and finishes around 8:00 pm.**

All youths grades 7 and above are welcome. Come and have some Jesus Time and a lot of fun.

C.Y.A.T.C.

The Young adult group meets each Wednesday.

In September, the group will meet on **September 4, 11, 18, and 25.**

The group is open to all Young Adults ages 18 and above. All are welcome.

The group begins each **Wednesday at 6:00 p.m., and ends at 9:00 p.m.**

Come and make some new friends, reconnect with old ones, or just come and have a great discussion and fun.

Stuff the Van and Backpack Blessings Update.

The close of July and first half of August has been a whirlwind of activity. A "Stuff the Van" event was scheduled for Thursday, August 1st on the front lawn of the church, to collect school supplies for our Backpack Blessings program. Thanks to a call Carol Haywood at 9:00 am on Wednesday, July 31st, I learned that the Chronicle Telegram had mistakenly printed that the event was that day and set to begin in an hour and a half! Our one-day event had suddenly turned into a two-day event. Thanks to Andrew Page and Save Our Children, I was able to have a van on the front lawn with a freshly painted sign by the 10:30 start time. I'm happy to report that the two day event was a huge success! We received school supplies, backpacks and \$61.00 in cash donations and some great publicity that provided a few more donations.

Thanks to Melissa from SOC, we were connected with Pastor Chad Britt and Refuge Church (located in Elyria Township, 7942 Murray Ridge Rd.) that wanted to help out. They donated dozens of backpacks and school supplies, and on the day of our SOC giveaway Pastor Chad and some members of Refuge Church showed up to help out. Their assistance and the help of Sue Schillig helped this year's event run smoothly and meet the needs of all of the kids in the program.

Special thanks to Sue Schillig, Janet Belcher and Brenda Yost for helping out with shopping and transporting the supplies and myself to gather supplies. Thanks to Betty Salisbury and Bobbie Mudge for all of their help in prepping backpacks for distribution.

In addition to the 125+ students from SOC, we have also provided backpacks and supplies to over 30 students in our community. Without the generosity and support of you and our community, it would not be possible to serve in this way. Thank you!

-Tracy Belcher

Busy Times Ahead

Community Breakfast

The God Squad will be back in the kitchen one Sunday of each month. After their summer break, the God Squad will be back beginning on **Sunday, September 15th**. This group of talented young people will once again demonstrate their culinary expertise. After Worship on September 15th, join us in the Great Hall to enjoy a wonderful breakfast prepared by the members of the God Squad. All donations from the community breakfast will go towards Youth programming for the God Squad.

Blessing of Animals

On **Sunday, September 29, 2019** during the 10:00 am worship we will be blessing the non-human members of our families. Please bring your furry, feathered, finned, or whatever species is your special pal to worship for a special blessing. This tradition recalls the love of animals Saint Francis of Assisi demonstrated in our scriptures.

Fellowship Team News

We've been busy lately and we hope you've been feeling the fellowship! Looking back, we must give a world of thanks to Brenda & Bob Yost for the use of their pool and property. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! The Pizza/Pool Party was, once again, a success and a pleasant time together. Lorenzo's pizza was superb, as usual. Many engaging conversations were heard and a number of people were all wet. We recently hosted the **All UCC Church Picnic** in our own Courtyard. Again, we were blessed with beautiful weather! We were joined by members of Pilgrim UCC and Community of Faith and their Pastors. The chicken from Fligner's lived up to it's delicious reputation and, as it always is, the potluck offered a nice variety of sides and desserts. Instrumental folk music was a background for our meal. Afterward, more lively music was required for the **Cake Walk**. We had four cakes, a plate of brownies, and a plate of cookies to give away as prizes. Six people learned to freeze when the music stopped and find out if the number they stood on was drawn. We didn't have much in the way of leftovers. Activities were offered (cornhole and origami), but it seemed that most folks were happy just to make conversation. We didn't blow up the bouncy house because we didn't have anyone in a bouncy mood. But we were ready! Thanks so much to everyone who attended these events. We love it when you share your time. Thanks to the Fellowship Team for jobs well done. Thanks to those not on the team who pitched in and helped. Thanks to our Sextons for expert set-up and break down. We've all done very well. We look forward to our next event, **Laity Sunday on October 20th**. We will meet with the Faith Team and work together to provide a meaningful and, we hope, phenomenal Day of Worship and Celebration of Fellowship. We hope you can be there!
Please **mark your calendar for October 20th**.

- Ken Smith

Faith Team News

Hello First Church family! We hope you have all been enjoying the summer as much as possible! As you know, in June the Faith Team launched an 8:45am contemplative service for those who have expressed a desire to engage in worship this way. Initially we had planned this summer to be a trial period for the service: using its attendance and reception to decide if it should extend past that period. Attendance is pretty straight forward...but when it comes to reception, we need help from the rest of the congregation. We want to hear from you! Have you joined us at one of our 8:45am services? What were your thoughts? Would you like to see this type of experience continue to be offered here at First Church? We encourage you to let us know! Tell us at coffee hour, pick up that church directory and give one of us a ring, or you can submit your thoughts to our new Faith Team Contact email: FirstCongFaith@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Summer Blessings,
The Faith Team

Did You Know?

Save Our Children Inc. (SOC) was founded by Asbury Methodist Church, the oldest African American church in the City of Elyria, Ohio; we have been serving disadvantaged children in the community for over 30 years. SOC received non-profit 501(c)(3) status on June 12th, 1996.

The after-school program is offered to children free of charge. In 2013, there were 45 children in grades 1st-6th. Thanks to the move to First Congregational UCC, the program currently serves 80 children in grades K-8, with an additional 48 students in our teen program for a combined total of 128 children. Each day, children receive a hot meal, participate in classroom activities that offer homework assistance and tutoring, and curriculum that aligns with common core standard. The students journal every day and are encouraged to explore their creativity through weekly Imagination Days. SOC conducts quarterly assessments in fluency, comprehension, and written expression to track a student's progress in addition to tracking a student's grade and communicating with the children's teachers to support them after school. The program loosely resembles a Montessori atmosphere with mixed groupings of students in three classrooms from grades K/1st/2nd, 3rd/4th, and 5th/6th, 7th/8th, and 9th/12. SOC had 14 Seniors graduate this year. They are headed off to college this fall with SOC's continued guidance and support.

At SOC, our mission is to improve literacy, promote academic excellence and cultivate leadership skills to at-risk youth within our community.

Our goal is to promote academic excellence and help narrow the opportunity gap, which in turn will help develop leaders and productive members of society. During the school year, we provide transportation both from school and directly to children's homes after the program. During the summer, we pick up and drop off students at the beginning and the end of every day. We are currently able to offer hot meals to our students on a daily basis, as we collaborate with Second Harvest to have a children's soup kitchen. Keeping kids plugged in to a positive environment that promotes learning and creativity, in addition to focusing on them receiving proper nutrition, not only offers personal enrichment, but also keeps them safe and supervised in a nurturing setting that focuses on giving them the individual attention they seek.

SOC serves as a safety net for the children who could very easily fall through the cracks. Because of the multiple risk factors our students face on a daily basis, we serve as the calm in the storm for them by providing a consistent and nurturing environment that has high expectations.

When we believe in them and show confidence in their abilities to enjoy hope-filled futures, our students will stay in school, stay off the streets, and make positive life choices.

SOC cannot thank First Congregational UCC enough for opening your doors and your hearts to us. We invite you to please stop by for a tour or to check out the volunteer opportunities with our program.

Great Need: The Wall of Love

On Thursday, July 25th the Wall of Love was established here in Elyria. Through the combined efforts of First Church, Save our Children, and Elyria Teens Achieve Success, the fence behind the church and down Second Street was packed full of items for those with need. People were able to take the bagged personal care items anonymously, without questions or judgement. Within a few hours the wall was looking depleted. Within 2 days the fence was empty. This speaks to the great need within our community and of course the world.

Some of the items placed on the wall were tooth paste, tooth brushes, soap, wash cloths, and shampoo. The items were individually packed in a bag and with a twist tie placed on the fence. I am proposing that First Church continue replenishing the wall, possibly every other month First Church would collect items and the children and teens from S.O.C. and E.T.A.S. could sort and bag the items and place the items on the wall. This would not only keep the Wall of Love going, but also further connect First Church with the community we are a part of and deepen our relationship with S.O.C. and E.T.A.S. Throughout the year, First would be doing our part to ease the needs of those in our community. Look for upcoming information concerning donations to The Wall of Love.

-Tracy Belcher

Quilters and Crafters Unite!

We will meet again on **September 12 and 26**, in the Gates Room, from **1:00-3:00 PM**

Social hour and lunch at the Foundary at 12:00 Noon if interested.

We expect to have a quilt to raffle beginning with the Apple Festival. Bring your projects, or work on church projects.

We still need your clean T-shirts for tote bags.

What's Happening

Spirit Island VBS Update

We had a wonderful week of VBS (Aug. 5-9) this year! We partnered with Washington Ave. Christian Church and Community of Faith UCC to present "Spirit Island" VBS, which was held at Washington Ave. Christian Church this year. Our theme was "Embrace the Fruits of the Spirit" and we had a week of fun, fellowship and fruit!

Special thanks to Patti Thomin (Craft Leader Extraordinaire), for her amazing work with the kids all week. Patti has led crafts at VBS for several years now and is a favorite with the kids. Thanks also to Sue Schillig for shopping and helping with dinner and dessert on Friday, as we fed 50 people! Finally, again thanks to my mom Janet Belcher for all of her help with gathering craft supplies and transporting the supplies and me (Not to mention great ideas when I get stuck on how to do something.). It's always great to provide a fun event for the kids, but it wouldn't be possible without the help and support of those committed to helping make them a success. Thank you!

-Tracy Belcher

First Church Book Club September 11, 2019

**Book for discussion:
The Great Alone**

**We meet in the Gathering Room at
7:00 PM.**

**Refreshments will be served
Please join us, even if you haven't
read the book.**

First Church Teams and Team Leaders

Leadership Team:

Anthony Beall, Faith Team
Genny Dangerfield, Moderator
Diane DeFazio, Clerk
Terri Despones, at large / Outreach
Allison Gallaher, at large
Nancy Martier, Treasurer
Rev. Patrick Nicolino, Senior Pastor
Chuck Schillig, Trustees
Ken Smith, Fellowship

Faith Team:

Anthony Beall
Kris Lawrence
Lynn Newell
Cindy Salmon
Sue Schillig
Erin Smith
Raymal Stone
Tracy Belcher
Rev. Patrick Nicolino
Dylan Sanzenbacher

Trustees:

Clare Gallaher
Tyler Holtzman
Diane Page
Chuck Shillig
Mike Thomin
Rev. Patrick Nicolino

Outreach Team:

Bev Becker
Terri Despones
Mary Ann Dyal
Marty Perry
Patti Thomin
Libby Thomas
Rev. Patrick Nicolino

Fellowship Team:

Allison Gallaher
Ken Smith
Mary Smith
Candice Dangerfield
Tracy Belcher
Betty Salisbury
Rev. Patrick Nicolino

Open and Affirming:

Tracy Belcher
Allison Gallaher
Norm Lundberg
Zoe Pouvlon
Dava Warner
Rev. Patrick Nicolino

This list of teams and team members is provided for your convenience. As your Moderator I feel it is important that the congregation be kept apprised of the roster of church leaders. If you have a concern, a compliment, or would like to be of further service to your church, these are the people to contact.

ERROR MESSAGE: Betty Salisbury's name was inadvertently omitted from the list as published in August.
-Genny Dangerfield, Moderator

First Church Women September Luncheon

We welcome Holly Jackson, founder of Walls of Love, to our September Luncheon on **Wednesday 9-4-2019 at 12 noon in the Great Hall**. As you know we recently hosted a "Wall of Love" on our church property last month (July). Holly will enlighten us about the wonderful services that Walls of Love provides to people right here in Elyria and how we as a congregation can contribute and continue to assist this very worthwhile organization.

Our delicious homemade lunch will be prepared by the First Church Women Board. Please sign up on one of sheets placed around the church: Narthex, near the Great Hall or the Church Office. Or, call the church at **440-323-5454 by Tuesday Sept 3, 2019**. This presentation by Holly about Walls of Love, a much needed and appreciated program, and a delicious homemade lunch can be yours for only **\$6.00**.

Save The Date – we'll see you there!

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The Courier is published monthly. All interested parties are encouraged to contribute articles.
Please send articles and announcements via email to: courier@firstcongelyria.org
Deadline for August, 2019 articles is July 15, 2019

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Change Service Requested Dated Material
Please deliver by August 30, 2019

8:45 am Summer Worship

The 8:45 am worship added for the summer will conclude for this year on September 1, 2019. For those of you who have attended this service, I hope it has been meaningful. We will look at adding the 8:45 am service next summer.

First Church Staff

Reverend Patrick Nicolino, Pastor. Bette Lou Higgins, Administrative Assistant, ext. 10. Andrew Page, Business Manager. Tracy Belcher, Education and Outreach Coordinator. Dylan Sanzenbacher, Organist and Choir Director. Ross Kingman, Campanella Ringers Director. Genny Dangerfield, Courier Editor.(courier@firstcongelyria.org), Candice Dangerfield, Artist in Residence. Rick Lawrence, Sexton. Taquala and Rex, Assistant Sextons.

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