

December 2020

Rev. Andy Wagner
937-372-7601 office@fcum.org www.fcum.org
Sunday Worship
9:00 Traditional Worship in Sanctuary
10:00 Sunday School
11:00 Contemporary Worship in Community Center
We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation

Attendance

	<u>9:00</u>	<u>11:00</u>	<u>S.S.</u>
October 18	39	47	25
October 25	34	53	30
November 1	69	33	38
November 8	63	25	40
November 15	60	39	42

From Pastor Andy

Well, here we are, entering into the last month of 2020. I feel like we all deserve some kind of medal for making it through this year. 2020 has certainly been different from any that have gone before it in our lifetimes. And it has been a challenge. A global pandemic which has dragged on longer than most of us expected and seems to be coming back stronger than ever, a contentious national election which likewise seems to be unending, not to mention all of the challenges each of us has faced in our own parochial lives. When will we get some relief?

It seems appropriate, then, that we are entering into the season of Advent and preparing for the celebration of Christmas. It was, after all, into a world of darkness, sin, and sorrow that our Savior entered on that first Christmas morn. He came to a people crying out after years of oppression, "When will our deliverer come?" He came to a land crying out in desperation, "Who can redeem us?" He came into a worn and weary world to bring Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

And he comes to us even now. He comes to bring Hope for a brighter future. He comes bringing Peace to shelter us from the storm. He comes with Joy amidst all of our troubles. He comes in Love, showing us the way of God, showing us God's Love for us. It is into a broken world that our Savior comes. It is unto a fractious and turbulent nation that he shows us who is Sovereign. It is for our deepest needs that he comes to deliver. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight," go the words of the carol. When will we get some relief? When Christ comes and reigns in our hearts. So let this Advent be a time to welcome his arrival,

to anticipate the bright future he has for us, to take comfort in his peace, to rejoice in his presence, and to bask in the warm glow of his love.

Be sure to stay connected with your church and with your God in worship throughout this season. We have several opportunities for you to do that. We have our Traditional service in the Sanctuary at 9:00AM. We have Contemporary worship in the Community Center at 11:00AM. And we will continue to provide worship online for those who are worshipping at home. Know that whenever, wherever, and however you choose to worship, we are all one community of faith here at Faith Community.

Blessings, Pastor Andy

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve Candlelight Family Friendly Service in Sanctuary

December 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service in Sanctuary

December 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. and 9:00-10:00 p.m.

If You Are over 70 and Have an IRA Please Read This

IRA Withdrawal: If you are over 70 and have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) the IRS requires you to make an annual withdrawal that is based on a combination of your age and the value of your IRA at the end of the preceding year. This withdrawal, called a Required Minimum Distribution or RMD, is generally treated as Taxable Income. However, there is a provision in the law that allows you to have some or all of the RMD made directly to a qualifying charity such as Faith Community. The IRS calls this a Qualified Charitable Distribution and if you do this it is not taxable. Note that while the RMD was suspended in 2020 due to the virus, we have no reason to believe the suspension will be continued.

Some at Faith Community are already using this provision, but if you are not you should consider it. Talk to your financial advisor or broker to get more details to see if it would work for you. If doing this results in tax savings, you should consider adding some or all of the savings to your pledge.

Stephen Ministry

Grace through the Holidays 2020

To state the obvious, Christmas will be very different for us this year. 2020 has called for change, flexibility, modification, and patience. While Christmas is the best time of the year for some, for many it is an especially difficult one for any number of reasons. How do we balance these extremes?

For those who are dreading this Christmas, consider viewing this season as an opportunity to think, feel, and act in ways that break free from the past. Plan ahead or maybe plan not to plan ahead. If you go into Christmas without a plan, you risk spending it alone or becoming depressed. On the other hand, if you decide not to plan and let things unfold, you'd be a little bit like Mary and Joseph. They went To Bethlehem because they had to with no place to stay and no one waiting for them. If you choose to spend the day in solitude, know that you are not alone. Christ is with you.

Be open to new ways of celebrating. Instead of gathering as a family this year, you may need to “visit” virtually through Zoom or FaceTime with the hope that next year you can resume in-person gatherings. As much as you can, try not to forget tradition. Attending Christmas Eve services, lighting candles, praying from the heart, reading the Christmas story, and taking communion are all long-honored ways of remembering the reason for the season—Christ's birth. While some of these traditions may take on a slightly different “look” this year, most will still be available.

Instead of withdrawing, make Christmas a time for growth. Buy gifts for those less fortunate. The need is greater than ever right now. Bake Christmas cookies and share them with someone who isn't expecting them. These kinds of things can still happen—even if it means a “porch drop” rather than a personal visit. Reaching out to others often leads to healing for both the giver and the receiver.

Put your feelings into writing. Keep a journal during Advent. Record what is different because of Covid-19. Write a letter to those who have wronged you or to those you are missing. If forgiveness is in order, say a prayer of forgiveness then destroy the letter. Reconciliation is a great gift to both the living and the dead.

If there is a place that's empty at your Christmas table this year, recall memories as family and friends share how that loved one still continues to affect their lives.

While you may feel sad as you go through any of these activities, that's okay. No one knows how you feel except you. Talk with God about your feelings. Share them with a trusted friend, relative, or Stephen Minister. Michael Guinan reminds us, “. . .we must not deny honest pain, nor skip too quickly from loss to acceptance. . .Christian faith does proclaim a message of hope, but death and grief are still real.” [Franciscan Voices, Cincinnati, Oh, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011]. Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they simply are.

If Christmas is a difficult time for you, you are not alone. Be gentle with yourself. Do what feels comfortable, not what you feel obligated to do. Let those who care about you know what you need.

Believe that healing, hope, and peace will be yours when the time is right.

How many times have you been in a situation when you wanted to help someone going through a difficult time but didn't know where to start? One of the greatest gifts you can give not only during the Christmas season but any time of the year is the gift of presence. Reach out to those who are struggling for whatever reason. Spend time with them, especially during Advent and Christmas, even if it has to be over the phone or online. Let them know you are praying for them. Invite them to share in our Blue Christmas service which will have to be virtual this year. Likewise suggest Grief Support which meets at 2 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month. Pick up Care Notes that deal with specific challenges—for example, *Feeling Depressed at Christmas*, *Pathways through Your Christmas Grief*, *Celebrating Your Last Christmas with a Loved One*, *Coping with Holiday Stress*, *Rediscovering the Many Gifts of Christmas*. We are called to reach out to others. As a Christmas card I picked up today indicates, "In the promise of Christmas, may healing begin. May this be a season of peace, if not joy—a season of healing and love, knowing others remember and care." May we be the hands and feet of Christ for those who are hurting, offering grace that we receive in abundance. As Pastor John shared with us recently, there is still another chapter waiting to be written. No matter what you are going through, there will be a next chapter.

For additional information about Stephen Ministry for yourself or another, contact Becky Cultice, 376-5747.



It's Poinsettia Time



Poinsettia order forms will be available at each service and in the office beginning Nov. 29-Dec. 13. The cost is \$10.00. Please complete the form: choose red, white or pink; write the donor name(s) and to whom it is given in honor of or memory of. They will be available for pick-up after Christmas Eve service or anytime the church is open following Christmas.

FCUM College Crew Update

You are amazing, Faith Community. Thank you so much for your generosity in your financial donations and your care package item donations for our FCUM College Crew. All ten of our college kids received a 12x12x8 package packed full of all sorts of goodies including crackers, popcorn, chips, candy, and... a toothbrush. I have received word back from all ten of them that they not only received the care package but also expressed their appreciation for their church family. It is a weird year to be a college student, and I am so thankful that through your goodness, we could pro-

vide a little bit of "normal" to them. With the remaining funds, we will look to send them each a box of Girl Scout Cookies and provide some cards of encouragement during the Spring semester.

United Methodist Women

Since the membership in most circles has declined, the Executive Committee decided to call a special meeting to discuss the possibility of combining all circles into one unit including the time, day of the week, etc. Therefore, on Wednesday, October 20 members of the three circles met in The Fellowship Hall. Comments were invited and much discussion followed. It was not the intent to push the circles but to only explore and discuss how everyone wished to continue. Dorcas Circle indicated that they wished to remain separate and to continue at their regular time and day: Third Tuesday, 1:00 P.M. The rest of those attending indicated they wished to combine and have a daytime schedule. Each person was given a chance to indicate their preference. It was decided to call the new circle, Women of Faith. All agreed. They have chosen the Third Monday of each month at 1:00 P.M

United Methodist Men

ATTENTION ALL MEN: The Men of Faith will meet on Monday, December 21st and all men are invited to join us. The meeting time will be 6:00 PM in rooms 16 A&B. Each person will bring their own meal and beverage. We will have a social time during the meal. Business portion will be installing of the officers for 2021 and reports on other new and old business. We will then sing Christmas Carols followed by communion in the Chapel. Come at 7:00 PM if you want to come just for the program and communion. YOU MAY BRING A FRIEND. Hope to see you on the 21st.

Love Packages Report

Many of you have brought used Christian materials, books, and bibles for the Love Packages mission. As coordinator for our church, I receive quarterly reports and I wish I could share the heart-warming expressions of appreciation of these third world people but space wouldn't allow me to include all. I have copied just one of the many responses below:

India

I am pastor Edward living in Bangalore. A friend of mine took me to your literature distributor saying that they have good inspirational books. The people there were friendly and showed us their library. Seeing my interest, they told me I can take some of these books for free as they give books free of charge for people serving the Lord. I took, "More Than A Carpenter" by Josh McDowell, "Knowing God" by J.I. Packer "The Problem of Pain" by C.S. Lewis, "What's So Amazing About Grace" by Philip Yancey, and "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan. When I reached my room I was so happy. I started reading these books that day after prayer. I was very

interested in reading these books and read every day. These books contained life stories that empowered me and changed my thinking to a great extent. Reading the stories made me understand that I can hope in the Lord and expect his love. It made me understand that we can defeat Satan by firmly believing and doing God's will. I became sure God will give us what he has promised. I came to know what God's Word actually meant.

Such books really help us to obey God's instructions. As we read, God will give us wisdom. I look forward to reading more enlightening books as it leads me in the right path and helps me fulfill my duty in serving the Lord and his people.

We (FCUM) have provided 3 full tubs (about 300lbs.) of materials that you have provided so far this year. Combined from churches throughout the USA, LOVE PACKAGES has sent 2,252,512 lbs. or 1.127 tons of these materials to 3rd world countries this year.

This is a program that will cost you nothing. Clean off your shelves of used Christian books, materials, and Bibles and bring them into our church. **The Love Packages tub is to the right of the Narthex, under the coat rack as you enter the education wing.** As Christmas approaches, why not make an effort to clean out used books and materials that could be priceless to our friends in these third world countries. This could be your Christmas gift to the poor. Thanks for your support of this mission program. For questions, call John Sherer, Coordinator at 372-2204

A Voice for Environmental Stewardship December 2020

In our United Methodist Book of Worship, copyright 1992, on page 425, we have a resource for celebrating Native American Awareness Sunday. I don't know if Faith Community U.M.C. has celebrated this day in the past. The resource includes a responsive reading inspired by a speech that Chief Seattle, a Suquamish and Duwamish chief in the state of Washington, gave in Washington D.C. in 1854. He was a very effective spokesman for Native American concerns and perspectives as European immigrants spread across the North American continent. He said:

Every part of this earth is sacred.

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore,

Every mist in the dark woods,

Every clearing and humming insect is holy.

The rocky crest, the meadow, the beasts and all the people,
all belong to the same family.

Teach your children that the earth is our mother.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.

We are part of the earth, and the earth is part of us.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst.
The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the air is precious,
for all of us share the same breath.
The wind that gave our grandparents breath also receives their last
sigh.
The wind gave our children the spirit of life.
This we know, the earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth.
This we know, all things are connected.
Like the blood which unites one family, all things are connected.
Our God is the same God, whose compassion is the same for all.
For we did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves.
Let us give thanks for the web and the circle that connects us.
Thanks be to God, the God of all.

Environmental stewardship has as much to do with our relationship with
the Earth as it does with the things we do in our daily lives. For me it is a
spiritual matter because It impacts my relationship with God, our Creator.
~~Rev. Alan D. Barone, B.A. in science education, M.Div.,
Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist.

Passings

Prayers and sympathy to family and friends of **Rosella (Rosey) Dawkins** on her death; to Doris Eakins on the death of her sister-in-law **Joanne Mays**; to family and friends of **John Thompson** on his death; to Jackie Foster and family on the death of her husband **Ray Foster**; to Linda Guckian on the death of her granddaughter **Autumn Guckian**; and to Flo Harner on the death of her niece **Jill Allen**.

Thank You

Thanks to our generous and caring congregation, we met and surpassed our goal of providing Thanksgiving dinners with all of the fixings to over 35 families in the Xenia area. Our church family has just demonstrated we are focusing on our community with our faith, love and support. WAY TO GO!!!

Another huge THANK YOU for being a Christmas blessing to the children's programs at the United Methodist mission sight at St. Paul UMC in Dayton. With your love and generosity, the children will be able to select a Christmas gift for their family members this year. Again, our Faith Community family is sharing our faith, love and support to our extended community. WAY TO GO!!!



Thanks so much for the care package. I love all the snacks and school supplies. They will really help tide me over during Zooms and studying. I

really appreciate everything you have done for me over the years. Even with everything going on in the world I am glad that the church is able to get together in some form or way. Hopefully in 2021 we can return to a more normal church setting ~Morgan Wickline



To everyone at Faith Community,

I want to thank all of you for all you have done for both Dolores and myself in the past few months. Your kindness and concerns for us have been so great and very much appreciated. She enjoyed the short visits when food was brought to our home. It has been very humbling for both of us and to know that we have made a difference in many people's lives. We never thought we made that much difference. All the great meals, the help when we moved, the many cards of concern and encouragement during our rough time and much more. Many of you sent cards, made phone calls as well as some visits to our home. That was great and much appreciated. As most of you know, her passion was flowers on the altar each week and she was very intent on making sure that was done, i.e.: the ordering, the pacing and just about everything as far as the flowers went. You may not know that each Saturday night when I checked the church, I had to make sure the flowers were there and had enough water.

Again, we thank everyone for their thoughts, prayers, and concerns. We are blessed with a great church family. ~Dick Strous



I am so grateful to belong to a compassionate, loving, and giving church family. The outpouring of condolences and tributes following Ray's passing were such a blessing to our family. Thank you so much.

In Christian Love,
Jackie Foster and family

FCUM

October 2020 Financials

Monthly Income	\$ 31,332		YTD Income	\$ 330,206	
Monthly Expenses	\$ 30,678		YTD Expenses	\$ 299,470	
Difference	\$ 654	2.09%	Difference	\$ 30,736	9.31%

Deadline for January Faith Links: December 18

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

December 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 6:30-8:30pm-Ad. Bd.-FCC 6-8:45pm-Girl Scouts-15A-C & 16A	2 5:30-8:30pm-Trustees -Rm. 6	3 11-12pm-Prayer Shawl-16A,B	4 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC	5 4pm-8pm-Double I-15A/Kitchen
6 9am-Traditional Worship-Sanctuary 10am-Sunday School 11am-Contemporary Worship-Community Center	7 6:10-7:30pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 7-9pm-Stephen Ministry-Library 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C	8 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC 4:30-6pm-SPRC-Lib 6-8:45pm-G.S. Leader Meeting-FH 15A.	9 4-5pm-Worship Design Team-Library	10 11-12pm-Prayer Shawl-16A-B 12:30-1:30pm-Membership Care-16A-B 2-4pm-Grief Support-16A-B	11 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC	12
13 9am-Traditional Worship-Sanctuary 10am-Sunday School 11am-Contemporary Worship-Community Center	14 6:10-7:30pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C	15 Dorcas-1-3:00pm-15 A-C 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC 6-8:45pm-Girl Scouts-15A,B,C, 16A	16	17 11-12pm-Prayer Shawl-16A-B	18 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC Faith Links Deadline	19
20 9am-Traditional Worship-Sanctuary 10am-Sunday School 11am-Contemporary Worship-Community Center	21 6:10-7:30pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 6-8:30pm-Men of Faith-16A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C	22 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC	23 6:30-7:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Family Friendly Service Sanctuary	24 6:30-7:30pm & 9-10pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Sanctuary	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26
27 9am-Traditional Worship-Sanctuary 10am-Sunday School 11am-Contemporary Worship-Community Center	28 6:10-7:30pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C	29 3:30-5:15-XHS Winter Guard Practice-FCC	30	31 New Year's Eve		