The Circuit Rider

The newsletter of First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, Ohio

October/November 2026

Loving God and Loving All People, Making Disciples of Christ for the Transformation of the World



Jeff and Ann Cherry believe they are familiar with miracles. In their roles with the Short East Community Kitchen, an outreach program supported by First United Methodist Church, they say they have seen what they can only describe as miracles. Ann is director of the program and Jeff is president of the board of directors.

The Kitchen serves approximately 40 breakfasts and 60 lunches five days a week to mostly disadvantaged people in the Lancaster community, all with the help of about 40-50 volunteers and funded through community support. Volunteers help on a rotating basis, with meals served at the Maple Street United Methodist Church in Lancaster.

“It’s a God thing,” Jeff said.

Jeff and Ann said, “It’s just a pleasure seeing action taking place, seeing God intervening. For example, we had a freezer go out and posted on social media asking if anyone could help. Fairfield Community Foundation saw our post and asked, ‘What do you need?’ We went to Menards, picked out a freezer and they just took care of it. We needed bottles of water for our guests and right away, we received donations of water. Right from the get-go, it just seemed like every time we needed something, it just fell into our laps. That’s how things have worked and God has blessed us in so many ways.”

Jeff and Ann have been involved with the Kitchen since December of 2024. They said there was an announcement at church that the program may need to be eliminated because the previous director of the program had retired and there wasn’t anyone to keep it going. Jeff and Ann said they looked at each other and decided they had to get involved to help keep the program going. And that involvement meant getting other people involved.

Gifts and Donations “We get donations from Panera Bread, Kroger’s and others. We share food back and forth with Vineyard Food Pantry. The Ford company challenged their dealers and the local Ford dealership donated over 400 pounds of food.”

Other sources of support include, but are not limited to, the Women’s Giving Circle of the Fairfield County Foundation, the Charity Newsies and Coins for Christ and donations from church members at First United Methodist Church. The Helping Hands Community Farm program provides some fresh produce. The Maple Street United Methodist Church also provides support in addition to being the host site.

Continued on the next page

Ministry Spotlight: Short East Community Kitchen *(continued from page 1)*

Hours of Operation Doors open at Maple Street United Methodist Church by 8:30 a.m. with breakfast starting at 9 a.m. Lunch servings begin at noon, and all meals are open to anyone. Names are taken, Ann said, but just to give the Mid-Ohio Food Collective the numbers it needs to know how much food to bring to Lancaster twice a month. Ann said their guests help unload and put the food away. People can also complete community service requirements by helping.

Want to help? "We can always use volunteers," Ann and Jeff said. "We can always use donations. At First United Methodist Church, people can just donate at the church office or in the offering. But there are so many different avenues for people to get involved. Even if they don't have time or money, there are ways to help. We get a lot more out of it than what is given out."

Jeff said Ann knows most, if not all, of the guests by name.

"It means a lot to our guests," Ann said. "We listen to their needs and try to meet those needs. The focus is on food, but it has to be a place where they feel safe and comfortable.

Maple Street United Methodist Church has a free clothing program, and we have also provided hand warmers, foot warmers, ponchos and things like that. We treat everyone with compassion and respect, and they treat us with compassion and respect. For some, it becomes a place for shelter.

"We don't let things go to waste. If we can't use it, we move items to somewhere else it can be used. There's a counter with food items like soup and bread. Very little waste was one of our goals. We're not 'squirreling' stuff away. As an example, if we have doughnuts left over, we take them over to the Lancaster Fire Department.

"Our cooks are fabulous! All the meals are up to high standards. We're very pleased with how it's going. We'll have been involved for two years in December.

"It's a great feeling to be needed and wanted, providing a community service."

SHORT EAST COMMUNITY KITCHEN

CONTACTS:
Ann Cherry (740) 215-0563
Jeff Cherry (740) 503-1630

There are many items for which we don't receive donations from the community or other agencies. You wonderful folks from First United Methodist Church have so generously donated these items as we present our needs each month. Thank you for your support. Here are the items needed for October and November:

October
Sugar
Cereal
Small Paper Plates

November
Large paper plates
Coffee
Large Ziploc bags



Love Looks Different Here

"If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends".

Philippians 2:1-4, The Message paraphrase

For me, the church has been the most tangible expression of Jesus' love in my life. God's love in Jesus Christ, expressed through the community of faith, has changed me profoundly and continues to transform me daily. Love looks different here.

In the church, I have learned that love is far more than a list of conditions or a simple transaction. Instead, love is a way of being. Love looks different here because it urges us to take the time to listen carefully before we respond. Love helps us hear beyond mere words. When we forget to wait and end up saying hurtful things, love compels us to work faithfully to restore the relationship. Love gently teaches us to say, "I'm sorry. Please forgive me".

Love looks different here when we gather to pray for one another and pray with one another. Somehow, love makes us brave enough to sit with our friends and even with strangers to ask God to work God's best in their lives. Love gives us the courage to speak up for one another.

Love looks different here as we give ourselves permission to grow, knowing that none of us has it all figured out.

Love graciously forgives our flaws and stumbles, giving us the deep desire to get up whenever we fall. Love makes us resilient.

Love looks different here when we serve one another with joy and use our different gifts for the good of the whole community. Love helps us identify and celebrate how others are made differently, inspiring heartfelt gratitude for the diverse gifts God bestows. And love looks different here when we roll up our sleeves and use those gifts together to serve our neighbors and our broader community. Working for someone else's good lifts our spirits because we give ourselves to something beyond ourselves.

As we move through October and November, seasons filled with rich reminders of God's abundance and generosity, may we pause to give thanks—not only for what God has given us, but for how Jesus' love transforms us and for the people God has placed around us. What a gift it is to be the church together! With Christ, love is not a transaction; it is a whole way of life. Love looks different here among God's people, and we have the sacred honor of carrying that love wherever we go. Let us give thanks for all God has given us, and for the privilege of sharing those gifts with one another and with the world.

God loves you and so do I!

Pastor Nikki

Pastor Appreciation Month

October is Pastor Appreciation Month, beginning Sunday, October 4! This is a special opportunity for us to celebrate and give thanks for Pastor Nikki and the many ways she serves our church and community. Throughout the month, we invite you to share your appreciation for Pastor Nikki through prayers, notes of encouragement, cards, and other expressions of gratitude. A **collection basket for Pastor Nikki will be available in the Parlor throughout October** for those who would like to leave a card, note, or monetary gift as a personal expression of appreciation.

Let's take this month to recognize Pastor Nikki's leadership, faithfulness, compassion, and dedication to our church. Please join us in letting her know how much she is loved and appreciated!



Have You Met Jon?

Have you met **Jon Vannoy,** our new Maintenance Technician? Jon joined our team in July and has already hit the ground running! We're excited to have him as part of our church family.

Jon and Hannah are the proud parents of their three-year-old daughter, **Lottie**. Fun fact: Lottie is a Christmas baby and is also Sandy Roberts' great-granddaughter! Lottie has already enjoyed several church events alongside her great-grandma Sandy.

When he's not working, Jon enjoys gardening, hunting, fishing, and working on small engines.
Be sure to say hello and introduce yourself the next time you see Jon around the church!

What's Coming in Worship

We are so blessed at 1st UMC with a vibrant worship life together! Psalm 95:6 tells us "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" True worship is the acknowledgment of God in everything we do. To do this, we need to know God, spending time in God's presence and building our daily relationship with the divine. A way to jumpstart that each week is to gather and worship together. If it's not already a regular part of your life, make a move in that direction. Your life will be better for it! In upcoming weeks…

We'll share the Holy Meal with Christians everywhere on **World Communion Sunday, October 4th**. We're currently enjoying our "Winging It" worship series, which continues through October 18th.

We'll remember those known to us who have gone on to glory on **All Saints Sunday, November 1st,** which is always a special time in the life of our worship family. This is also when we set our clocks back an hour!

November 8-22 our "Life of Gratitude" sermon series will explore the many ways our lives can respond to the blessings of a generous God, a fitting preparation for Thanksgiving time!

November 22, after the 2nd Service, join us for our annual **Hanging of the Greens** as we prepare the church for the Advent season. Enjoy a light lunch and fellowship as we joyfully decorate our church for the holiday season. There's a job for everyone, and we'd love to have you join us! "Many hands make light work!" as our favorite Director of Music often says.

Beginning **November 29th**, our Advent season will focus on "Joy" as we prepare for the gift of Christmas. As an early heads-up, our Christmas Candlelight schedule will be a little different this year: both **December 23rd and 24th** will offer <u>one</u> worship service at 7:00 p.m.

It's so good to spend time together in worship each Sunday!



FUMC Charge Conference Date

FUMC's Charge Conference will be held on Tuesday, November 10 from 6:30-7:30 pm in room 22 at the Main Campus. We hold a Charge Conference annually to hear ministry celebrations, receive membership reports, remember those from our community who have passed, approve the pastor's salary and benefits package, and accept members nominated to serve on our One Board. This meeting is open to all; the agenda is set by Discipline. Please contact Pastor Nikki or Mike Lieber, Board Chairperson with questions.

KIDS MINISTRY

Contact: Anna King annaking@love-first.org or 740-653-3330, ext. 1008

FOCUS ON A NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

Beginning September 13, Sunday School will be offered during the 10:30 a.m. service only.
With the number of children attending each service and the challenge of finding enough teachers, we believe this will allow us to provide the best Sunday School experience possible. There will be two groups:
6 years old –2nd Grade Lessons, activities, and projects designed with our younger kids in mind.
3rd–6th Grade Lessons and activities that encourage our older children to explore their faith.
This will give us more opportunities to tailor our lessons and activities to the interests and needs of each age group.

WHAT ABOUT FIRST-SERVICE FAMILIES? We know many of our families attend the first service, and we still want your children to be part of Sunday School! Whenever you are able, we would love for first-service families to join us for Sunday School during the 10:30 a.m. service. And parents, this could be a great opportunity for you, too! A Christian Pathfinders Bible study meets upstairs during the second service. You could use this time to participate in Bible study, connect with others, or get involved in another ministry at FUMC.

WE NEED SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS! You don't have to be a professional teacher to make a difference. With the loss of one of our Sunday School teachers, we are moving toward a rotation of teachers. The more people we have on our team, the less of a commitment it will be for each individual person. Right now, five wonderful people have stepped up to serve as leaders of faith for the children of our church, and we are incredibly grateful for them!
Who makes a great Sunday School teacher? Someone who:

- Loves children
- Is creative and willing to try new things
- Enjoys sharing their faith
- Wants to help children learn and explore the Bible
- Is willing to build relationships with our kids
- Simply wants to make a difference

You don't have to have all the answers. You just have to be willing to walk alongside our children as they grow in faith. Know someone who would be a great addition to our team? Talk to Anna!

COMMUNION SUNDAYS = FAMILY WORSHIP

Our children asked, and we listened! One of the things we love most about our children's ministry is hearing what our kids have to say! Our children have asked to participate in communion in the sanctuary, and we absolutely love that idea. Because we want to make communion a meaningful experience for our children and families, Communion Sundays will now be Family Worship Sundays (no Sunday School). The Nursery will continue to be open for ages 0-5. We invite the whole family to worship together in the sanctuary and celebrate communion as a church family.

Need a little help keeping little hands busy?
We have new and updated busy bags located at the back of the sanctuary! They include age-appropriate activities, art supplies, quiet fidgets, and other items to help our children stay focused and engaged during worship.
We love having our children worship with us! ❤️‍🩹

Caring Ministries

Contact: Judy Hug, CLM judyhug@love-first.org or 740-653-3330, ext. 1002

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in it's various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

American Red Cross Blood Services	**Crossroads Ministry Center** **Noon – 5:30 p.m.** **Monday: November 9**

The final 2026 Red Cross Bloodmobile will be held on **Monday, November 9**, noon through 5:30pm at Crossroads. Our theme will be honoring our veterans and expressing gratitude for our freedoms. Cookie donations will be welcome!!

We continue to be experiencing a severe blood shortage nationally If you are unable to donate, please share the information with someone who wants to donate. Surgeries and other treatments requiring blood/blood products are being cancelled or rescheduled as blood is not readily available. When someone donates, they truly are giving the Gift of Life!

NEIGHBOR2NEIGHBOR

[Jesus] said to him, *'You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart ad with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Jesus calls us to care for our neighbors, those near and those farther away. You are invited to become a *Good Neighbor* to an individual or to a couple from our list of members/friends that are homebound. Visitation is a wonderful family ministry, not just for individuals, as our children learn compassion and caring in each contact. Yes, it might be scary when you first start, yet each of us is created to be the Church, even when we are uncertain. When that friendship grows with your neighbor, all will be blessed. There are four easy steps:

1. On **October 11,** refer to the 'Neighbor2Neighbor' locator map in the parlor. Find your neighborhood and a colored pin close to your home.
2. Consult Judy Hug who will make initial contact with the member who is homebound, then she will share the name of that person with you.
3. Begin your cards/phone calls/visits. If you would like someone to accompany you on your first visit, let Judy know – or take a friend with you!
4. Let Judy know you visited, sharing any prayer concerns or other comments about your visit.

This ministry replaces our Sweet Treats ministry in that it is building relationships throughout our church family. However, it does not replace the Pastoral and Congregational Care visits and contacts made by our clergy, staff, and Visitation Ministers which are most frequently requested due to personal or medical issues.
Please consider being a *Good Neighbor* for someone in our church family!

Reception of New Members in October

Persons interested in becoming members of First UMC will be received into membership on **Sunday, October 25**. Unless you participated in the 'Join the Journey' session on October 4, please notify the church office of your intention. We look forward to welcoming you into our family!

Grief Recovery

The Grief Recovery Method ®
by The Grief Recovery Institute®

Watch for new dates of the Grief Recovery Method class in the Spring. 2027. Until then, if you are wanting to talk with someone about your loss, you can contact either Pastor Nikki or Judy Hug. You do not have to carry the loss by yourself, and there are resources available now.

HOPE Letters

Please mark your calendar for **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6**, 1:00 p.m. for the first meeting of our HOPE Community! This will be in Room 26 of the main building.

This new ministry group is open to all, whether members/attendees of our church or not, and works in cooperation with our Conference's *All In* initiative in corresponding with persons who are incarcerated. This ministry brings hope and encouragement to men and women in participating Ohio prisons, and all correspondence is conducted through the church. Inmates are selected by the prison Chaplain and are persons who are preparing for reentry into their communities upon release. Be a part of this important ministry in bringing HOPE to others who may feel forgotten, unworthy, and scared by sharing Christ's **H**ealing, **O**pportunity, **P**resence and **E**mpowerment.

WORSHIP AT THE SPRINGS AT WYANDOT TRAIL

We are entering our third year of offering monthly worship among the residents of The Springs at Wyandot Trail. The 30-minute worship is scheduled the second Sunday each month at 1:00 p.m. and includes scripture, a short message, singing and Holy Communion. If you would like to be involved, please contact Judy Hug. A special Christmas service is being planned for Sunday, December 13, 1:00-2:00 p.m., so please come and worship with this community of believers!

In Sympathy

We express our sincere sympathy to the families of those who have lost loved ones:



Loretta Dozer
Ernest Morris
Debra Willette

Meditation Moment

Every day, you have two choices:
To focus on what's wrong or
To embrace what's right.
Choose gratitude. Choose joy.
Choose to see the beauty in the little things
and life will become even more incredible
than you imagined possible.

OneBoard
Leadership Model

Lots of things going on with One Board…
We have four open positions on the One Board for three-year terms. If you are interested in joining our leadership team, please reach out to Chantel for an **application (due October 6)** or speak with any One Board member for more information. **We would love to have you!**

We are actively heading into budgeting season and preparing for our annual Charge Conference.

As always, there are many moving parts and pieces as we care for four properties and prepare our facilities for the fall and winter seasons.

- **Main Campus:** We are on the schedule with Air Force One to replace the gas valves and bring the system up to current code. They will also examine the fire brick from last year's explosion. Durable Slate will be addressing roof underlayment issues, including leaks in the balcony and Judy and Anna's offices, as well as a gutter repair that is currently causing water to leak into the new basement men's restroom. Once these repairs are completed, we will develop a plan for the associated repairs.
- **Parsonage:** RN Smith is scheduled to install two new mini-split units to replace the existing 25-year-old units.
- **The Rising Garage:** WE NEED YOU**!** Please join us for a garage clean-out on **October 5 at 5:30 p.m.** (rain date: October 19). We need to get the garage cleaned out so we can park the church van inside for the winter. Many hands make light work!
- **Crossroads:** Rise Up Arts Alliance has donated **$2,100** toward having Yates Painting repaint the stage before the Advent season. We also have a leak in the small conference room that will be addressed.

Thank you to everyone who helps keep our church, properties, and ministries moving forward. There is always something happening, and we are grateful for the many people who give their time, talents, and support!



DOWNTOWN TRICK-OR-TREAT



Our next community outreach event will be Downtown Trick-or-Treat! Every year, our church hands out full-size candy bars, and this year we'll also be handing out popcorn for the parents! So, if you're looking for a lucrative candy haul, come downtown and spend Trick-or-Treat with us! More importantly, this is a wonderful opportunity for our church family to be together, meet people in our community, and show them the love of FUMC.

We hope you'll join us on **Thursday, October 29th**!

Higher Education & Scholarship Committee News



Congratulations to our Scholarship Recipients

The 2026–2027 scholarships have been disbursed to the colleges and programs of study on behalf of the Higher Education Outreach & Scholarship Committee for the following students:
Michael Belt, Catherine Buckley, Emily Buckley, Aiden Burdsal, Judy Hug, Sarah Polinski, Brenna Reed, Jacob Thomas, Reagan Thomas, Lauren Wilson, and Peyton Wilson.

Fall College Care Packages



The Higher Education and Scholarship Committee will meet on **Saturday, October 10, at 10:00 a.m.** in Room 22 at the Main Campus to prepare fall college care packages for our students.

If you have a student who would enjoy receiving birthday cards and care packages throughout the year, please let us know by filling in the form below and dropping it off at the church office. We collect student names and addresses annually to ensure that we have the most current information.

Thank you for helping us stay connected with and encourage our college students!

College Caring Ministry

Student's name: _____ College/University: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Student's Email: _____

Cell: _____ Birthday: _____

~~~~~Thank You~~~~~

Dear FUMC Scholarship Committee,
Thank you so much for granting me a scholarship for my second year of college. The money helps me to pursue my ultimate dream of becoming a livestock veterinarian. I truly appreciate it.
Love, Reagan Thomas

Dear Higher Education Outreach and Scholarship Committee,
Thank you so much for your generous scholarship and support as I enter my first year of medical school. I am grateful for your investment in my future and all that FUMC has provided for me my entire life, both financially and spiritually. I am honored to be a scholarship recipient and appreciate the encouragement from the community!
Thanks again,
Brenna Reed

First United Methodist Church,
Thank you for choosing to support Harcum House. Your contribution will allow us to provide much needed services to the children of our community and begin the road to hope and healing for so many. Thank you all so much for the support of our mission. We appreciate you!
Cody Tatum, MSW, LSW
Executive Director

Life's Journey

A poem by Jane Bontrager

When you start your life's journey,
The road may be broad and long.
Your soul will thirst and yearn
For a good old gospel song.

Travel along this road with safety,
Keeping to the right as you go along;
Help some traveler who is in trouble
And sing him a good old gospel song!

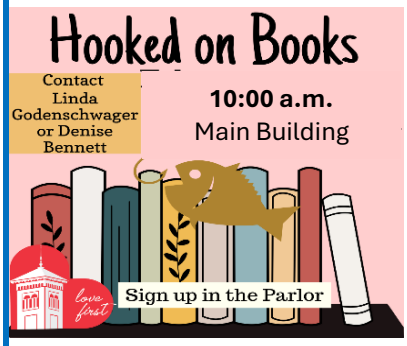
Life, at its best, has many hardships;
You'll find success as you walk along.
Pray to God every day for strength,
And sing one of your gospel songs!



A very special fall Faith Walk is happening on
Sunday, October 18th at 1:30 p.m.
Mambourg Park
5535 Cincinnati-Zanesville Road NE (Route 22),
Lancaster.
Come and join us for a hike in the woods
during peak fall colors.

Contact Sam Benham if you have any questions.





Monday, October 5
The Frozen River
by Ariel Lawhon
Monday, November 9
The Last Lecture
by Randy Pausch

Questions? Contact:
Linda Godenschwager
740-503-6026 or
Denise Bennett 740-503-7210

United Women in Faith

Trinity Circle Meeting Dates
Noon-3:00 p.m.
Room 22 Main Church Building
Tuesday, October 13
Wednesday, November 11
Come join us in making Thanksgiving and Christmas cards for our shut-ins.



NOVEMBER 1st

P.S. It is OK to do this before you go to bed on the 31st.

Mark Your Calendars

CR = Crossroads, M = Main Church Building

Weekly Meetings

Mondays: 6:30 p.m. Boys Scouts (CR)
Wednesdays: 9:00 a.m. Fellowship Quilters (CR)
Wednesdays: 3:00 p.m. Chair Volleyball (CR)
Wednesdays: 6:30 p.m. Crossroads Community (CR)

Thursdays
6:30 p.m. Hi-Lo Ringers Bell Choir (M)
7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Practice (M)

Additional Events

OCTOBER

3 8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast (CR)
5 10:00 a.m. Hooked on Books (M)
5:30 p.m. Rising Garage Clean Out
6 1:00 p.m. HOPE Letters Community (M)
7 6:00 p.m. Grief Recovery (CR)
8 Church Office closed for Staff Training
10 10:00 a.m. College Care Package assembly (M)
11 Neighbor 2 Neighbor begins
13 12:00 p.m. Trinity Circle (M)
20 6:30 p.m. One Board Meeting (M)
21 6:00 p.m. Grief Recovery (M)
27 7:00 p.m. PEC Meeting (M)

NOVEMBER

2 1000 a.m. Hooked on Books (M)
3 ELECTION DAY (CR)
4 6:00 p.m. Grief Recovery (CR)
7 8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast (CR)
9 12:00 p.m. Red Cross Blood Drive (CR)
10 6:30 p.m. FUMC Charge Conference (M)
11 12:00 p.m. Trinity Circle (M)
6:00 p.m. Grief Recovery (M)
9:00-4:00 Nativity Set Up (CR)
14 9:00-4:00 Nativity Set Up (CR)
18 6:00 p.m. Grief Recovery (M)
19-22 9:00-8:00 Nativity Set-Up (CR)
22 12:00 p.m. Hanging of the Greens (M)
26-27 Church Office Closed for Holiday
29 Advent begins

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

(740) 653-3330

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Clarence McCoy (Worship Arts) clarencemccoy@love-first.org ext. 1004
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It's easy to follow everything happening at Lancaster First. In addition to our Facebook page, we have an X account and an Instagram account. Keep up to date with our events and resources. Follow us at: Facebook: Lancaster First United Methodist Church;
X: LoveFirstUMC;
Instagram: Lancasterfirstumchurch

Articles for the December/January issue of the CIRCUIT RIDER are due by November 10 to Clarence McCoy, clarencemccoy@love-first.org.
Janet Gossell, Editor/Publisher

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is the bi-monthly newsletter of
First United Methodist Church
163 E. Wheeling St.
Lancaster, OH 43130

Sunday
9:00 a.m. -- Worship Celebration
10:30 a.m. -- Praise Worship

Wednesday
6:30 p.m. -- Crossroads Community
Crossroads Ministry Center
2095 W. Fair Ave.

We welcome you to worship with us and to experience the joy of having fellowship with other people who believe in the love of God and the teachings of Christ.

Rev. Nikki Baker, Pastor

Telephone: 740-653-3330
Email: receptionist@love-first.org
Website: www.love-first.org

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