

# First Congregational United Church of Christ

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## TOWER BELL AUGUST 2019



### PASTOR'S PAGE



Did you know that the month of August is National Eye Exam Month? This designation was directed by Sears Optical in 1989. The importance of proper eye health is crucial and frequently people put it in on their, "I'll do it tomorrow list." When I was 6 years old, grandma, mother and I went to Target to get ready to buy school clothes for the new school year. I was so

excited thinking about all the things I would learn and wondered if I could get a toy. On the drive I looked out my window in the middle of suburban North Dallas and declared, "Grandma, look, Dairy Cows!"

I was so excited to see dairy cows. Earlier that spring, I milked one at the local fair. My grandma looked sideways and said, "Myra, you've got to make him an appointment to get glasses!" As we drove closer and closer the black and white dairy cows melted away and became black and white trash bags piled up on the lawn of a business. This story reminds me of how we see things as Christians.

We see things in black and white. We know how they are supposed to be. But when we truly see the Holy Spirit at work our eyes are opened. The Apostle Paul had a similar thing happen to him. Paul, once named Saul, was a zealous Pharisee who followed the Laws of Moses explicitly. He knew that God was one God and that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth were threatening all that he and the pharisees held dear. They had over 600 years of tradition and Talmudic study to give them the perception that Christians were destroying the Jewish faith, and once more leading people astray. Paul was instrumental in the stoning of the First Martyr Stephen. Stephen saw the Christ in the clouds...I wonder what kept Saul from seeing the Christ?

On the road to Damascus, Saul encountered the risen Christ. The brilliance of that moment caused him to go blind. It wasn't until Ananias came and proclaimed that he was sent to restore sight and to be filled with the Holy Spirit that he would see again. Paul's healing was not just a fitting for a new pair of glasses, but a spiritual healing that would correct his spiritual vision and see his new calling. *(Continued on Page 3)*

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**JOIN US  
EVERY  
SUNDAY FOR  
WORSHIP  
AT 10:00 A.M.  
AND  
FAITH  
FORMATION**

**Office Hours  
8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Monday - Thursday**

Please submit articles for publication by the 20th of month.  
Editor: Mary Tenan  
Production Staff:  
Mary Ann Shull

## PRAYER CONCERNS, CELEBRATIONS, AND THE CHURCH

### August Birthdays

- 08 Tricia Nelson-Weddle
- 13 Howard Reed
- 17 Mardy Townsend
- 29 David Hodge
- 31 Joyce Shore

### Anniversaries

- 03 Jarrod & Tawnya Busch
- 03 Greg & Kelly Fuhrmann
- 08 Jim & Suzy O'Connor
- 28 Jenna & Tom Hoyt, Jr.
- 30 ed and Betsy Burke



Happy Anniversary

# Thank You!

**Change for Change**, Missions has collected and donated \$55.00 for the Foster Children of Ashtabula County. Thank you for your on-going support!

Please keep these people and those in the armed forces in your prayers. Consider sending them a note, calling them on the phone or visiting them.



Virginia Helwig (Beth Carlson's mother), Rev. Dick Jones, Joyce McClintock, Hazel Ouillette, Julie Rice, Waylon Scott, Betty Mae Shear, Carey Sheldon (Betsy Burke's father), Marjorie Townsend, and Eileen Westfall

Please pray for the families and friends of Robert Kuhar (Chuck Borsukoff's brother), and all who continue to grieve the death of a loved one.

If you know people who could be added or removed from the Prayer list, **PLEASE** contact the Church office (576-4531).

**Guest WiFi Password:  
URWelcome2019**

## BILL CAMPBELL MEMORIAL SERVICE First Congregational UCC SUNDAY, September 1, 2019—2:00 p.m.

	Lector	Communion Servers	Teacher
Aug. 04	ed Burke	Betsy Burke, ed Burke, Judie Sylak	Betsy Burke
Aug. 11	Pat Nelson		Cameron H.
Aug. 18	Nancy Hodge		Jenna Hoyt
Aug. 25	Betsy Burke		Judie Sylak
Sept. 01	ed Burke	Betty Burkholder, Kelly Fuhrmann, Cameron H.	Kelly Fuhrmann

**Greeters.** Greeters for the month of August and September are needed!.. If you are able to be a greeter, please sign the sign-up sheet on the Forum Room table. Thank you.

## PASTOR'S PAGE (CONT'D), AROUND THE CHURCH & COMMUNITY

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Paul's conversion would lead him to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the gentile nations. In Galatians 3:25-30 Paul writes,

<sup>25</sup> But once a person has learned to have faith, there is no more need to have the Law as a teacher.<sup>26</sup> All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>27</sup> And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes.<sup>28</sup> Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman.<sup>29</sup> So if you belong to Christ, you are now part of Abraham's family,<sup>[a]</sup> and you will be given what God has promised.

We as Christians sometimes fall into the same traps as Paul did. We see things in black and white and assume we know what we are seeing. I know I did the day I saw those beautiful black Holsteins on the lawn of the local business in the suburbs of North Dallas! We need to encounter the light of Christ to open our eyes to the love and mystery that we all belong to the family of God. When our spiritual eyes are open, we will find a world of beauty and color; a world that is transfigured with the renewing of minds through the love and guidance of the Holy Spirit. My prayer is that we see through eyes of love and compassion and see the holiness of all God's children whether they are Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman.

Yours in Christ,

*Pastor John*



**Manna:** Thanks in part to all of you we have been able to give very generous kids' bags to students on summer break. Now August is upon us and children will be returning to school in as little as two weeks. Manna would like to change its focus and shift to some everyday items. We would appreciate help with shampoo, toothpaste, spaghetti sauce, and pasta. We truly appreciate the support of our local church community. Thank You!

**Special Music:** We are forming a Men's Chorus for special music on Sunday, August 18, 2019. All men are welcome, regardless of singing experience. There will be **rehearsals at 7:00 PM on Wednesdays, August 7, and August 14**, in the Harmony Room. Please join us.

## Meet Rev. Beth Long-Higgins



***Rev. Beth Long Higgins will be presenting the Message on August 11th!***

Rev. Beth will share her unique perspective of how we care for seniors who are part of the LGBTQ Community and her work at United Church Homes. She is the Director of Church and Community Relations of United Church Homes, she is also the wife of our Interim Conference Minister David Long Higgins.

Rev. Beth Long-Higgins joined the staff at United Church Homes in 2013 after having served two congregations as co-pastor along with her spouse, Dave, over the course of 25 years. The latest congregation being David's United Church of Christ in Canal Winchester. Beth is currently serving UCH as the executive director of the Ruth Parker Center for Abundant Aging with United Church Homes. She is a graduate of Heidelberg (College) University with degrees in psychology and music and holds an M.Div. from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Beth is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, musician, fiber artist and mother of two adult children.

**11:15 a.m. There will be a Faith Formation opportunity with questions and answers and a video.**

**Pizza Lunch to Follow.**

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT that The United Church Homes is compassionate to LGBTQ Seniors?**

-Because I'm getting OLDER!! For years I used to say that AARP junk mail had the wrong address, but as I reach the senior category, I can no longer deny it. My mother is 92 so I probably have some longevity in my genes. Forty years ago, my gay friends and I would talk about what we will do when we get old, where will we go, will we be allowed to be with our partners? Will we be understood? Will we be disrespected? Will we be abused if anyone finds out we're gay? These fears were real back then. Hearing about The United Church Homes, their Open and Affirming status, the special SAGE training, compassionate treatment, care and respect for LGBTQ seniors, quiets that fear. I'm looking forward to hearing Rev Beth Long-Higgins speak at our church.

## UCH Furthers Commitment to LGBT Older Adults In 2017

United Church Homes obtained the platinum level in SAGE Care training, cultural competency training for those working with LGBT older adults. More than 80 percent of staff participated across the entire UCH network. UCH was recertified at the platinum level this year. The move came five years after the United Church Homes Board of Directors voted to become Open and Affirming, a designation within the United Church of Christ that empowers groups to fully accept — not just tolerate — LGBT people to live their most authentic lives.

-Carol Murphy

Respectful care of *all* persons regardless of age, sexual orientation, and gender identity (among many other things) is sacred work. I've never had to wonder if I'd be able to be with Greg (my husband) when we reach an old age. I can't imagine what it might be like to be in a situation where I didn't feel safe revealing the one whom my soul loves, especially at such an age after spending so much of our lives caring for one another. Rev. Beth Long-Higgins is doing the important work of ensuring that United Church Homes is caring for all residents with the respect they deserve, including the LGBT community. SAGECare educates workers on seeing each resident as their whole self and allows them to be safe in their place of care. SAGECare training also extends to the care and respect of the staff. Loving your neighbor, it's sacred work.

--Kelly Fuhrmann

While I maybe of a younger generation it is great to hear that there is a place that is so compassionate and open for folks of the older generation that belong to the LGBTQ+ community. United Church Homes is a living and caring organization that strives to help the LGBTQ+ community members that are in need of assistance. I am excited to welcome Rev. Beth Long Higgins to our church for worship and for the Question and Answering session after church. To know that there is a group that wants to help protect the rights and liberties of the LGBTQ+ Seniors is heartwarming.

—Cameron Hartley



## **Congregational Listening August 18<sup>th</sup>**

### ***Proposed Open and Affirming Covenant***

### **THIS IS NOT A VOTE!!!**

We are asking members and friends of the congregation to gather in the Fellowship Hall and share their thoughts and feelings concerning the Proposed ONA Covenant of the church.

The ONA Core Team has worked tirelessly spending countless hours, asking for input from you as individuals, wordsmithing, praying over this document and its reception. The Core Team will be presenting the Proposed ONA Covenant and asking for feedback from our faith community. Please prayerfully consider attending this Congregational Listening.

#### **First Congregational UCC Council Meeting, June 18th., 2019**

7:00pm Murph called meeting to order. Pastor John opened in prayer. The devotional was read from an excerpt by Blaine Smith, Nehemiah Ministries.

1. Approved submitted reports
2. Pastor's Report with Announcements: FACT OHIO for Creation Care Workshop will be held here on Sat July 13 th ; August 11th Rev Beth Long-Higgins will present The United Church Homes
3. ONA Core Team Report: Marla Romig, Core Team member, presented the report with recommendations and the proposed new covenant. It was agreed that Council would support Core Team in holding a Congregational Listening on August 18th for sharing the proposed new covenant and answering questions about moving forward with the ONA process.
4. Announcements: Betty Burkholder presented a letter from Betsy Burke, who has resigned as president of Church Belles. Looking forward, Church Belles is seeking ideas for restructuring.
5. NEXT MEETING: August 20th, 7pm, Harmony Room. Adjourned

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Worship: 10:00 am.  
Faith Formation: 11:15 a.m.



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## VISION STATEMENT

Led by the Holy Spirit, we affirm God's love by growing spiritually, pursuing justice and caring compassionately for all.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe God's grace is available to all through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We envision ourselves as a community of believers,  
inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
united by faith and  
enriched by diversity  
in our shared spiritual journey.

Nurturing each other in this joyful family of faith, we will strive  
to love and worship God,  
to honor all people as children of God,  
to respect all creation as the handiwork of God, and  
to live as just and peaceable citizens in the world.