

September 2016

# NEWSLETTER



23 Church St  
Shelby, Ohio 44875

Sunday Worship 10:00 AM

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On August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 members of the First United Church of Christ voted by majority to adopt an Open and Affirming Covenant.

## Our Open and Affirming Covenant

We the Members of the First United Church of Christ of Shelby, Ohio welcome you.

Regardless of **age**.

Regardless of **race**.

Regardless of **marital status**.

Regardless of **gender identity or expression**.

Regardless of **sexual orientation**.

Regardless of **ability or disability**.

Regardless of **religious affiliation**.

Regardless of **how you interpret scripture**.

Regardless of **political affiliations**.

Regardless of **socio-economic status**.

Regardless of **military status**.

Regardless of **your past or present**.

Regardless of **how you may have been treated by any other church in the past**.

Regardless of any of these things, or anything else you can think of... however the rest of the world describes you and however you describe yourself; you are welcome at the First United Church of Christ because, "Jesus didn't reject anyone, and neither do we."

We promise to always seek to affirm the person who you are with loving hearts and open minds. We promise to follow the teachings of Christ Jesus with you in loving and being loved by God and neighbor. **We promise to love you for the person that you are, and whom God created you to be by living out the United Church of Christ's promise that, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome at the First United Church of Christ of Shelby, Ohio."**



## A Letter From Our Reverend

Dear Church Family,

As summer comes to a close and the kids make their back to school the pace of things will once again begin to pick up here at the church. I must say it is an exciting time it is to be a part of the family of faith here at The First United Church of Christ. On August 28, 2016 by congregational vote, 1<sup>st</sup> UCC became an Open and Affirming Church. We made history, becoming Shelby's first ONA congregation and the sixth ONA congregation in the North West Ohio Association of the UCC. Now that the ONA covenant has been voted on and accepted by the congregation our work is far from over. The struggle to continue to be a church that is all-inclusive and welcoming to all of God's children will continue. God has called us to be a light in this time and place as one of the only ONA churches our community. God has called us to be a church of love, grace, and peace. That my friends is what being an Open and Affirming church is about. Extending God's radical grace, extravagant welcome, and no strings attached hospitality to **ALL** people, no matter who they are, where they have been, or whom they love.

When most people hear that a church is ONA, they immediately thinks of the church's acceptance and affirmation of LGBTQ individuals. It is true that as an ONA congregation, we will welcome LGBTQ brothers and sisters into the fold. However, we must remember that our ministry as an ONA church reaches far beyond the LGBTQ community. For many years, (far before I became your minister), the First United Church of Christ of Shelby has always reached out to folks who were on societies margins. We have always reached out to individuals whom culture said were not good enough to live or be happy amongst the rest. The minorities. The outsiders. The undesirables if you will. This covenant is our moment to shine! Our moment to declare to Shelby and the world that we DO NOT set boundaries on God's extravagant love and grace for humanity! It is our moment to declare that we will not draw a line in the sand and leave others out of the Kingdom of God because they are different from us. It is our moment to reach out to those who have never gone to church before because they did not feel welcome. It is our moment to introduce people to our loving God by doing one simple thing: welcoming them into our church through loving and accepting them for the person that God created them to be.

For 165 years, 1<sup>st</sup> UCC has been spreading God's light and love to the Shelby community. May that light continue to shine as we look to the future and strive to remove the barriers that keep "the lesser of these" out of Christ's Kingdom, and God's church. We look to God for strength and guidance as we stand with the thousands of ONA churches nationwide. We also look forward to continuing ministry and working together with other local ministries that are not ONA nor supportive of our ONA stance (Because even though they may not accept or recognize us as Christian, we will accept them and recognize them as Christian because of our bold stance). I will leave you with the words of the song that we closed our congregational meeting with last Sunday. These lyrics have been my prayer through the yearlong ONA process. Will you join me and make it your prayer also? *"Guide us to openness! Guide us to openness! Let no one ever be shunned or denied. Make of the Church a bold place of compassion, that all who seek You may come and abide."*

With Joy and Gratitude,

*+Pastor James*

**Reverend James R. Robinson**



## A Letter Concerning Our New Open and Affirming Status

On August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 the First United Church of Christ in Shelby, Ohio had a congregational meeting and voted by majority to adopt an Open and Affirming (ONA) Covenant. This effectively puts in writing our unrelenting desire and mission as a congregation to extravagantly welcome, affirm and love all people, regardless of who they are or what they believe. Although our particular covenant is wide ranging in its statement, the general perception (admittedly, even my own historical perception) is that ONA is simply a term for a church that is LGBT friendly. And yes, as well as officially now welcoming and affirming all walks of life, the adoption of our ONA covenant does mean that we are now officially a LGBT friendly church as well. I will not mince words concerning this: same sex couples may freely join, be active in, and get married in our church, just as all people may. This is in accordance with our congregation's beliefs, desires, and convictions concerning the path of our ministry. It has been met with some opposition from various congregations and Christians in Shelby and abroad, and has at times stirred much animosity and negativity – particularly on social media. I am writing this to address these two issues: our detractors and our social media presence going forward.

I get a feeling while reading and hearing much of the negative feedback from people outside our church that we are viewed as having been “hijacked” by a 26 year old “false prophet” pastor. I've heard that we are merely joining a liberal “fad” on a whim without consideration of the scripture. I've also heard that our congregation is blinded by a desire to grow membership and are being compelled to cast our Christian moral convictions aside to accomplish this. The term “apostate church” has come up now and then. None of this is true. The desire to become an Open and Affirming Church was born long before our current pastor ever stepped foot in the First UCC several years ago. I have been told by lifelong congregants that “we've always been unofficially ONA” and “this is something we've worked towards for a long, long time.” Going by some of the personal stories I've been told by church members and leaders concerning the subject, I can infer that the concept of being an Open and Affirming church was born in the hearts of our congregants decades before Pastor James Robinson and his family ever walked into the sanctuary of the First UCC. Our ONA covenant was embraced and shaped by a very strong and outspoken group of church elders and leadership that have dedicated untold years of service to our church, its message, and its direction. No one person has had a disproportionate influence on this decision. The title of Open and Affirming very much reflects and represents who we have been, who we are, and who we want to be as a congregation.

Christianity has not been a monolithic faith since shortly after the apostolic age. Various eclectic belief systems have long co-existed within the Christian umbrella. The variations in faith and belief can vary from large differences to very pedantic ones. And the histories of mergers and schisms throughout the denominations are long and confusing. In my opinion, the diversity of Christian denominations is an often overlooked strength of the religion. Our acceptance of the LGBT community through our ONA covenant is but another variation in belief amongst Christians everywhere. The ONA movement has existed as a streamlined process within the UCC since 1987, and has less defined roots leading back much further. This movement has a basis in the scriptures, is built on sound doctrine, and has grown to over 1,300 churches in the last 28 years. The First UCC of Shelby may be breaking new ground within our community, but we are in good company throughout our denomination.

Undoubtedly, there are Christians who do not share our beliefs concerning becoming an ONA church. I think it is safe to assume that there are many who respectfully disagree with our congregation, who we have never and will never hear from. Some have voiced their thoughts on the matter and then moved on. But there exists a very vocal minority who have not been able to let the subject go, and their discontent has grown to damaging and distracting levels. Posts concerning our church's acceptance of the LGBT community, and celebrating our adoption of an ONA covenant have continually been drowned out by repetitive debates, repetitive biblical quotes, and repetitive declarations, concerns, attacks and detractions. And in many – but not all - cases these come from familiar names and faces and contain the same content each and every time. It is upsetting to see posts of cheerful content, ministerial outreach, and celebration of our beliefs followed by countless comments of negativity – which then becomes the focus of the post, and our church's message is lost.

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After much discussion and thought on the matter, our social media presence has turned into a very censored one. Condescending, attacking, and argumentative posts and comments are being deleted from the First UCC's (and by extension our Pastor's) social media content. To cite a very millennial idea: we're weeding out all of our trolls. Freedom of speech, embracing debate and openness of ideas, and the basic communitive input from those around us remains very much alive and intact through a variety of in person and electronic channels, just not currently on our social media channels. The First UCC of Shelby, Ohio has accepted the mission of an Open and Affirming Church, and our social media outlets should reflect our outreach, vision, and message. Frankly, the time for debate and discussion concerning the right and wrong or validity concerning being ONA is behind us. The decision has been made by our congregation, and it is not negotiable. This is now who we are, and we must now follow our calling to God as we see it.

I hope this has brought clarity to those outside of our congregation concerning our new Open and Affirming covenant. I hope it has brought clarity concerning the basis of our church's decision. And I hope it has brought clarity to our mission and stances on our social media outlets. Our congregation looks forward to coexisting and working in unity with our diverse surrounding congregations in doing God's work. We look forward to standing as yet another pillar of our Christian community. And we look forward to continuing to spread the message of the still-speaking God.

**-Robert Ruck**  
Media Coordinator

**Birthdays**

Liz Watkins	6
Robert Ruck	7
Kyle Cooke	8
Savannah Dye	8
David Steele	16
Wilbert Glower Jr.	22
Sara Hall	22
Billy Wright	25
Nathan Morris	26
Carmen Devito	26
James Brooks	27

**A Note of Thanks**

Pastor James and Katie would like to thank everyone for their cards and well wishes honoring their 1st year anniversary with 1st UCC. "We love all of you and you are all our family. We are so happy and proud to serve you and your families!" Pastor James would also like to thank everyone for their cards and well wishes honoring his 26th birthday. "I am proud to be the youngest pastor in the North West Ohio Conference!"



**Anniversaries**

Jim & Nancy Kolb	Sept. 4, 1960
Jay & Allison Fordyce	Sept. 22, 2001
Pastor James & Katie Robinson	Sept. 24, 2011

**Prayer Concerns**

Peggy Knapp, Darlene King, Sandy Laser, Shelli Laser, Dori McKinney, safety for church youth involved in school athletics.

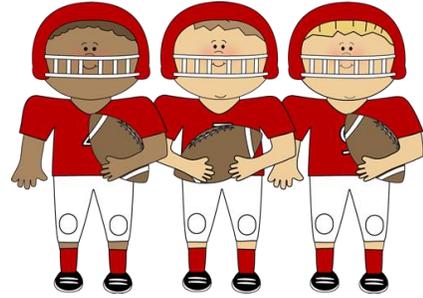
**Congratulations Again!**

The members of 1st UCC would like to congratulate Martha Grimwood and Fred and Lynn Cooke upon receiving the Dick and Doris Cumberworth Christian Volunteer Award for 2016. Martha and The Cooke's accepted the award from Dick Cumberworth at the August 7th worship service, in the midst of their children and grandchildren.

**Thank you!**

Bob Ruck and Savannah Dye want to extend their sincere gratitude for the house warming gift. They just purchased their first home this summer – a little ranch style on East Whitney – and the church gave them flowers and a gift card during worship on August 28<sup>th</sup>. "Thank you everybody! It was a wonderful surprise. We're both always amazed at how wonderful and welcoming everybody in this congregation is to us!"

# Coming In September



## Sunday 9/4/16 Guest Preacher Rev. Pam Easterday

On Sunday September 4th Rev. Pam Easterday will be preaching at the 10:00am worship service. Pastor Pam is an ordained UCC minister and school teacher in the Tiffin area. We are glad to have Pastor Pam back with us.

## Sunday 9/4/16-9/10/16 Pastor James on Vacation

Pastor James will be on vacation Sunday September 4, 2016- Saturday September 10, 2016. As always if you need pastoral care please feel free to call him at any time. The office will be closed that week as well.

## Sunday 9/11/16 Church Directory Make Up/Group Pictures

On Sunday September 11th following the morning worship service, we will be taking pictures of church members and their families who missed out on having pictures taken for the directory. We will also be taking pictures of church groups for the directory (ie- Church Council, Nursery Volunteers, Women's Guild, etc.)

## Sunday 9/11/16 Potluck and Putt-Putt Golf for Rally Sunday

On Sunday September 11, 2015 we will celebrate Rally Sunday to mark the beginning of fall Sunday school for church youth. Church youth will be working on a series that covers the Fruits of the Spirit. We will celebrate by hosting a potluck dinner, and going for a round of putt-putt at the new miniature golf course across the street. Bring a yummy dish to share, and be ready for a round of golf! We want to thank Roselawn Miniature Golf for offering church members a round of golf free of charge!

## Sunday 9/11/16 Change the Church

Sunday September 11, 2016 is change the church Sunday. Be sure to bring your loose change and dollar bills to donate to our youth's various mission projects.

## Monday 9/19/16 Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet Monday September 19, 2016 at 6:30pm in the parlor on the second floor of the education wing. All church members are invited to attend the church council meetings and bring questions, comments, and concerns before the committee.

## Wednesday 9/21/16 Choir Practice Resumes

The music department is glad to announce that choir practice will once again resume on Wednesday September 21, 2016 at 7:00pm at the Presbyterian Church. All are welcome to come practice and sing with the choir. Practices are every other Wednesday at 7:00pm at The First Presbyterian Church.



## July Financial

### General Fund

Balance:	\$6,146.49
Deposits:	\$5,587.37
Expenses:	\$6,222.53
Difference:	-\$635.16
Earmarked:	\$3,545.60
Bills to Pay:	\$707.32
Available Balance:	\$1,893.57

<b>Kitchen Fund:</b>	\$746.59
<b>Youth Missions:</b>	\$677.47

### Strawberry Festival

Total Donations:	\$1,694.75
Expenses:	\$649.89
Net Profit:	\$1,044.86
Net Profit Divided 3 ways:	
General Fund:	\$348.28
Missions:	\$348.28
Kitchen Fund:	\$348.29

# Looking Ahead

## **10/1/16 Angie and Nicole's Wedding**

Angie Dull, Nicole Rinehart and their daughter Emma have been joining us for worship for many months now. They have felt love and warmth from our congregation and would like to invite the members of our church to their wedding. They will say "I do," in our church sanctuary on Saturday, October 1, 2016 at 1:30pm. Please come and show them your support!

## **10/2/16 World Communion Sunday**

On Sunday October 2, 2016 we will celebrate World Communion Sunday during the 10:00am worship service.

## **10/16/16 Guest Preacher Rev. Dan Busch**

On Sunday October 16, 2016 Rev. Dan Busch, the Association minister for the North West Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ, will be preaching at the 10:00am worship service. Rev. Dan is an exceptional speaker. Please try to attend.

## **10/16/16 Fall Fun Day at the Cooke's**

Sunday October 16, 2016 at 4:00pm will be fall fun day at Fred and Lynn Cooke's farm. More details to come. The Cooke's always make it a fun time for us!

## **Confirmation Class**

Pastor James and the Board of Christian Education will soon be announcing the start date for confirmation classes for 2016-2017. So far we have two confirmands signed up - Isaac and Haylie Brooks. We will be looking for church members to "sponsor" these confirmands throughout their confirmation journey. If you would like to sponsor a confirmand, please see Pastor James for more information. If you know of someone else who would like to be part of the class, please contact Pastor James or someone from the Board of Christian Education. Your Board of Christian Education is Darlene King, Allison Fordyce, Kelly Schroeder, and Lynn Cooke. More details to come.

## **Adult Sunday School Resumes**

The adult Sunday school class is taking the month of September off to look for new curriculum. The class will resume sometime in mid to late October. The class format will change from previous sessions. Pastor James will no longer be leading the class, it will be a group lead effort. All are invited to be a part of this group that meets on Sunday mornings at 9:00am.

## **New Member Sessions**

Once again, we have worship attenders who are interested in becoming members of the church. Look for new member sessions to begin in the next couple of months. Anyone interested in joining our family? See Pastor James with questions!

### **Pastor James Office Hours for September**

Sunday: 9:00AM - Noon

Monday: On Call

Tuesday - Thursday: 8:00AM - Noon

Friday: 8:00AM - 2:00PM (office/ visitation)

Saturday: Family Day (Emergency Calls Only)

### **Pastor James' Contact Information:**

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