



Forest Hill Church
presbyterian

The Tower Newsletter

January 2025



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Cover photo by Ann Donkin

Would you like to see a picture you took on the cover of the *Tower* newsletter? Send it to Laura at churchadmin@fhcpresb.org! Pictures that were taken in or around the church would be best, but if you have something else that would be appropriate, send it along for review.



WORDS FROM THE REV. CAROL WEDELL



It has been my joy and privilege to serve as your “Gap” pastor for these past four months. I’ve appreciated the opportunity to preach more regularly and be present with you during some of life’s challenging moments. I’ve loved seeing how many of you are deeply committed to the life and ministry of this congregation, often working behind the scenes to make things happen. I’ve been amazed at the depth of commitment of each and every staff member. I’ve been touched by your receptivity, your candor and your passion. Forest Hill has lots of which to be proud. Thank you for letting me be part of that journey.

Beginning January 1, the Rev. Dr. Gene McAfee will be our Transitional Pastor. I’ve known Gene for nearly 20 years and highly respect him as both a colleague and a friend. We will be in good hands! The best way to reach Gene is via email: pastormcafee@fhcpresb.org

Here are some ideas to help bring Gene on board quickly and smoothly:

- Every time you see him, introduce yourself by name. He’s a quick study and

will pick it up fast – but there are a lot of us, and only one of him. Help him out!

- Remember that he doesn’t have a network of church folks that will let him know if there are pastoral care needs. If someone is in the hospital, facing surgery or just going through a rough time, let him know. He’s incredibly smart, but last I checked, he doesn’t read minds!
- Let him get to know you. Come to tea when the opportunity arises. Invite him out for coffee or lunch (or dinner!). Let him into your lives. You won’t be sorry.
- Allow him to be himself. Actually, I think you all do that remarkably well. I rarely, if ever, heard, “Well, John used to…” Gene has a wealth of experience to bring to us, as well as a profound faith and great sense of humor. Let Gene be Gene.
- If asked to do something, seriously consider saying “Yes!” Just because Gene will be on board doesn’t mean the rest of us get to sit back and do nothing. Now more than ever – WE are the church!

Blessings to all of us as we enter this next phase of our journey.

Carol

Note: The Rev. Carol Wedell will be on vacation from December 25-31. Please contact the Rev. Sally Wile (216-374-9306) for pastoral care during this time.

FAMILY, YOUTH, AND CHILDREN MINISTRY

GINGERBREAD JOY!

Joyful conversation and laughter filled Fellowship Hall on December 8 at our annual Gingerbread Event. One hundred thirty-five people gathered to join in the fun of decorating gingerbread houses for Christmas. The evening was truly intergenerational, with participants ranging in age from two months to 87 years. Little ones, teens, parents, grandparents, and groups of adult friends created beautiful and fanciful houses covered with candy and frosting. A good deal of candy was “taste tested” by all!

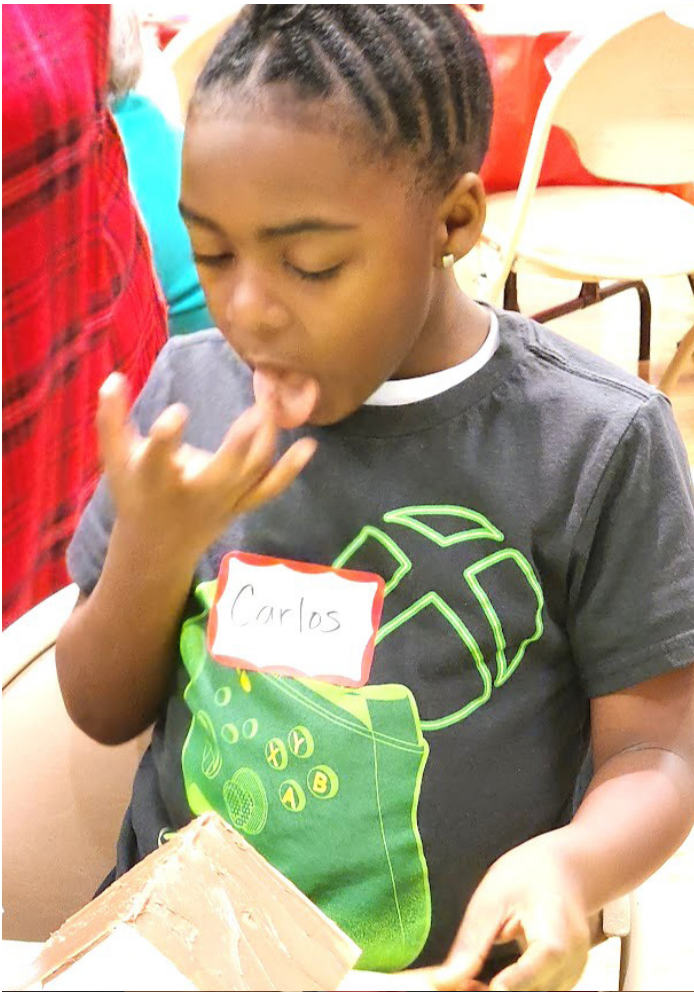
Many thanks to everyone who supported this event, which raised over \$1000 for Family Promise of Greater Cleveland, an organization providing shelter and services to families facing homelessness in our city.

Special thanks to the members of the Family, Youth and Children’s Ministry: Rachel Martinez-Finn, Laurie Logan, Pat Seeders, Kurt Haas, Emma Haas, and Kylie Evans; to the gingerbread bakers; and to our photographers, Kitty McWilliams and Deedee Pim.

Amy Wheatley
Family, Youth and Children’s Ministry







A Thank You from Family Promise of Greater Cleveland

Dear Amy and Forest Hill Parishioners,

On behalf of everyone at Family Promise of Greater Cleveland, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for your incredibly generous donation. Your support means so much to us, and it plays a vital role in helping our mission to provide shelter, care, and hope to those in need. Thanks to your kindness, we are able to continue offering a safe, supportive environment for families experiencing homelessness. Your generosity not only provides immediate relief but also helps us offer long-term solutions that give individuals and families the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

We are truly blessed to have the Forst Hill community as a partner in this important work. Your compassion and commitment to making a difference are an inspiration to all of us.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support. May you continue to be blessed as you have blessed others.

Lisa Fritz (Donor Relations)
and the Staff of Family Promise



MUSIC MINISTRY

Ugly Christmas Sweater Competition

The ugly Christmas sweaters made their annual appearance at the last rehearsal of the year for the Voices in Bronze and the Chancel Choir! In this year's bell choir competition, Chiquitia Montgomery and Barbara Hansen won with use of creative flair. The winner of the Chancel Choir division was Sally Wile!





RESONANCE PROJECT CONCERT: A SPANISH AFFAIR

The Resonance Project's
Next Concert is Coming Up!

"A Spanish Affair"
Friday, January 31, 7:30pm
CLE Concierto at The Resonance Project

QinYing Tan, harpsichord
Guillermo Salas-Suarez, baroque violin
Brian Kay, historical plucked instruments
and percussion

The next concert features The Resonance Project's baroque ensemble-in-residence, CLE Concierto back in concert. Longtime collaborators, Guillermo Salas-Suarez, QinYing Tan, and Brian Kay reunite for a vibrant program of Spanish music. The trio will perform a spicy Fandango by Felix Lopez, Jose Herrando's El Jardín de Aranjuez, which evokes the gardens of Madrid with its bird calls and vivid musical imagery, and Luigi Boccherini's rarely heard but brilliant harpsichord and violin sonatas. Tickets are \$15-20 each, and Pay-What-You-Can tickets are always available! More information is available at RMSeries.com.



The Resonance Project was dreamed up by FHC's music director, Ying, and her husband, Irwin, to bring accessibility to classical music in the Heights area. We interact with audience members in ways to help listeners connect with the music in a deeper way than is normal in concerts; it is important to us that the audience is part of the classical music conversation! The first two concerts brought close to 300 audience members of different backgrounds and ages to Forest Hill Church, and we SOLD OUT all premium seating at both concerts!

We are in the initial stages of building this dream and would appreciate ideas, feedback, and support! Contact us at qinyingtang@gmail.com or irwin@rmseries.com if you are interested in being part of this project!

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Vision Statement of Session:

By 2027, Session will courageously embrace the transition by:

*Being spiritually led, more diverse, and more fully prepared to serve
Living into individual gifts
Connecting with and across ministries, and
Communicating openly and actively with congregants, all as a Matthew 25 Church and Beloved Community.*

The Session of Forest Hill Church (FHC) met on November 6, 2024, in a Call Meeting. Pastor Carol Wedell was the moderator.

The sole business of the meeting was to consider a candidate for the position of Transitional Pastor. Session met with Rev. Eugene C. McAfee and learned about his background, experience and approach to pastoral ministry. After an extensive question and answer period, Session approved the offer of the position to Rev. McAfee. He accepted the offer and agreed to a start date of January 1, 2025, for a one-year term which is open to renewal. Session expressed its appreciation to the Transitional Pastor Search Committee for their faithful work.

The Session of FHC met on November 17, 2024, in a Call Meeting. Pastor Carol Wedell was the moderator.

The sole business of the meeting was to examine and welcome prospective new members. Each person shared their background and what called them to want to be a part of FHC. Pastor Wedell asked the constitutional question of the prospective

members. All replied in the affirmative. Session received into membership: Chiquitia Montgomery, Sharon Leary, David Linden, Ellie Linden, Chris Nau and Robin Nau.

The Session of FHC met on November 20, 2024. Pastor Carol Wedell was the Moderator. Pastor Wedell led a spiritual conversation that encouraged all present to reflect on and share thoughts on the emotions that arise among us while doing the work of the church and how those emotions might mislead or influence how we interact with each other.

The Financial Report for the period ending October 31, 2024, was received. The Co-Treasurer also reported that an offer will soon be made to a candidate to fill the position of bookkeeper.

The Finance committee presented the first draft of the 2025 budget.

Session approved the formation of a Communications Committee. This committee will develop and support FHC's communications staff and provide focus and consistency for the varied communications media used at the church. The committee will report to Session.

The Ministry of Family, Youth and Children (FYC) reported on discussions with the Immigration Task Force about the intention to improve the living space for sanctuary guests and how that might impact spaces used for FYC activities. After much discussion, Session approved that a master plan be developed and approved and that new spaces for FYC programming be completed before any renovation work begins on the existing spaces. Session also approved a renovation to add a shower for sanctuary guests to

the bathroom at the top of the stairs in the Education Wing.

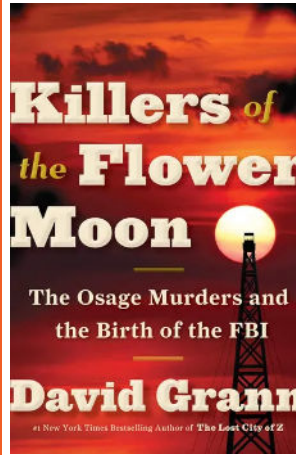
A proposal was presented on how to address the leadership and decision-making style of Session in order to move more fully towards the Beloved Community where all voices feel safe and empowered to contribute while staying centered on Jesus as our guide. After discussion, an ad hoc committee was formed to do further work on this issue. They will invite current and former Session members to participate in this effort.

Pastor Wedell reported on the need for FHC to develop an Anti-Racism Policy, as required by the Book of Order. A small group was formed to develop a policy for Session review and approval. They will seek other congregants to help in this effort.

Submitted by Elizabeth J Shaw, Clerk of Session.

Congregants are invited to observe meetings of Session. While observers are not able to actively participate in discussions or decision-making, they can see firsthand how Session coordinates the work of the church. The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 7:00-9:00pm in South Hall.

RACIAL EQUITY BOOK CLUB



Saturday,
January 11,
10:30am-12:00pm
via Zoom

*Killers of the
Flower Moon*
by David Grann

Racial Equity Buddies (REB) continues our commitment to honor America's Indigenous People by reading and discussing the NY Times bestseller *Killers of the Flower Moon*.

Our hosts are Mark Wedell and Chiq Montgomery. Chiq is a founding REB member, and Mark is a stalwart supporter. If you want the Zoom link for this discussion, send a request to racialequitybuddies@fhcpresb.org, or call the office.

For a brief history of the Osage Nation, use this link: <https://fhcpresb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/REB-OsageHistory.pdf>

Racial Equity Buddies website: <https://sites.google.com/view/racialequitybuddiesofgreatercl/home>.



Racial Equity Buddies Steering Committee

THANK YOU TO THE FALL WORK-DAY CREW

The Trustee Ministry deeply appreciates everyone who volunteered on October 12 for the Fall Clean-up. So much was accomplished in preparing the church for Winter, including garden cleaning, window washing, decluttering, removal of window air conditioners, storm window installation, and the preparation of a very delicious lunch. We hope to see everyone in the Spring!

Thank you

Chris Bell
Dave Bell
Boy Scout Troop 403
Ann Donkin
Kris Fay
Jane Frederick
Carol Gifford
Tim Gifford
Adnan Gill

Kurt Haas
Roger Heineman
Sharon Leary
Gary Lustic
Julie Lustic
Nancy Lyon-Statler
Matt McPheeters
Linda Martin
Brian Misch

Margaret Misch
Gretchen Reynolds
Dean Sieck
Jeff Smith
Elaine Turley
Eileen Vizcaino
Peg Weissbrod



IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE



The Immigration Task Force (ITF) has been hard at work. The current members are Jeff and Anne Smith, Julie and Gary Lusic, Chris Henry, Nonie Stack, Steve Sedam, Cynthia Lehman, and Sharon Shumaker. We have been working together for seven years, forming just before Leonor came to live in sanctuary at Forest Hill Church. After Leonor was able to return to her home in Akron, the three men from Burkina Faso moved into our apartment. Emmanuel was the last to move out almost a year ago.

We have been in discussions about the future of our apartment and how we might best use the space we have available. It was recently approved by Session to move forward with

inviting a new immigrant family into our space. We have updated the apartment, thoroughly cleaned it, replaced linens and some furniture. In the near future, the bathroom at the top of the stairs in the Christian Education wing will be renovated. We will be adding a shower and upgrading the space, to create a dedicated bathroom for our family. Their apartment and this bathroom will be private spaces to be used only by them.

Since the election, there have been many concerns about the future of immigrants in our country. We know you have many questions, as we do. We are spending time attending webinars and conferences on this topic, as well as consulting with immigration lawyers. We are educating ourselves as best we can about immigrant rights.

We would like to share everything we have learned and answer any questions you may have, at a brief, but important meeting after our service on January 19 in the sanctuary. Please join us!

If you are interested in joining the ITF at FHC, please let one of us know.

WINTER CLASS OFFERINGS FROM ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH (ASG)



Sunday Morning Bible Study 9:15-10:15am

In the new year, our Sunday morning education hour returns to the format used prior to COVID. Two classes will be offered on the Bible study of the Books of Ruth and Esther—one by Tom Zych and Kathryn Eloff, and the other by Ron Zimmerman. The offering by Tom and Kathryn will be online and in person. The second offering by Ron will meet in the library. We will again meet at 9:15(ish) each Sunday morning through March 16.

We will be studying and discussing the Books of Ruth and Esther from Hebrew Scripture—two very different texts that each center on the profound lives and journeys of two of the most fascinating women of the Bible. In remarkably different ways, the stories of Ruth and Esther present narratives rich in determination, dedication, and courage, with lives more than worthy of close study. Sign up at this link: <https://fhc.breezechms.com/form/9b8ab4>.

Writing and Drawing Your Way into the New Year Sundays, January 5 and 12 12:15-1:30pm

Join Jean Reinhold as you spend the first week writing about your life and hopes for the new year, using poetry as prompts. The second week of this mini-class features transforming



your writing into a drawing for you to post and be inspired by throughout the year. All materials are provided; just bring your heart. A light lunch will be provided by ASG. Sign up at this link: <https://fhc.breezechms.com/form/061ef2>.

Contemplative Scripture Study Based on the Lectionary (scripture readings of the week)

Contemplative scripture study will continue in January. We will meet in the chapel at 4:00pm on January 12 and 26. We will read a passage from the lectionary (Bible selections for worship) followed by meditating and sharing how the passage speaks to each of us and what it calls us to do in the coming week. No sign up needed. Facilitated by Valeria Stutz and Jennifer Blakeney.

Find more details and other ongoing classes on the church website: <https://fhcpresb.org/adults/class-sign-up/>

WORSHIP

To contribute flowers for Sunday worship, use this form: <https://fhc.breezechms.com/form/641db7701127776329>



If you are interested in being a lay reader for worship, please contact Linda Martin at martin3386@ameritech.net or (216) 280-4049. If you wish to assist in serving communion, contact Jeanette Nemcek at jet0830@aol.com or (216) 789-6740.

Lay Readers for January

January 5: Diana Woodbridge

January 12: Kylie Evans

January 19: Keith Logan

January 26: Barb Hansen

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY EVENT HOSTED BY GCC

“Where do we go from here?
Chaos or community?”

A GCC Prophetic Conversation

Monday, January 20, 10:00am-12:00pm
Olivet Institutional Baptist Church
8712 Quincy Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44104



first time—has the resources and technology to eradicate poverty.

Children and Youth encouraged to attend. We will have programming for Elementary aged children, Pre-teens, and Teenagers.

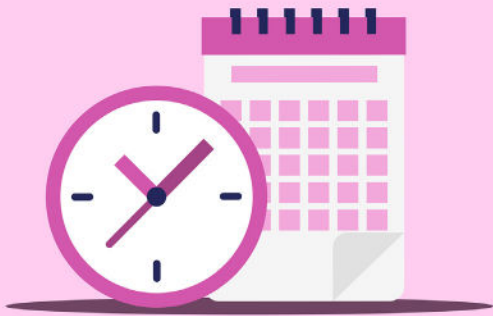
On-site parking is available but if you'd like to join a car pool from FHC, email Diana Woodbridge.

Register for the event at this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe9ZjMw5C5ApdkAW9-HEB_YhfGEoMIf6xWsuGRzrhQ-19WeLA/viewform

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., isolated himself from the demands of the civil rights movement, rented a house in Jamaica with no telephone, and labored over his final manuscript. In that prophetic work, he laid out his thoughts, plans, and dreams for America's future, including the need for better jobs, higher wages, decent housing, and quality education, and here we are today. With a universal message of hope that continues to resonate, King demanded an end to global suffering, asserting that humankind—for the

PACESETTERS

It Is Time to Plan for 2025!



The FHC Pacesetters (50- to 80-somethings) includes a mix of long-time and brand-new members and visitors, singles, and couples who gather for a variety of activities, both social and service-related.

All are welcome to the 2025 Pacesetters Planning Party, hosted by Scott and Sue Lafferty.

When: Saturday, January 18 at 7pm
Where: 1969 Bromton Drive, Lyndhurst

Bring your ideas of activities you would like to join in with the Pacesetters in the coming months and an appetizer, salad or dessert to share. BYOB. Soft drinks and juices will be provided.

No RSVP necessary! As we seek to be the Welcoming Community, we encourage long-time Pacesetters to greet someone new and bring them along with you on January 18. Also, new members or visitors to Forest Hill, take a chance and come and see what the fellowship of this group looks like! You won't be disappointed!

Questions? Contact Sue (440-669-4885) or Scott (440-429-2937) or email salaff@sbcglobal.net.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT FHC!

Tuesday, December 31, 7:00pm-Midnight

On New Year's Eve, do you ever find yourself kind of tired from all the busy-ness of the holidays, but still wanting to do something to ring in the New Year?

Then bring your favorite party game, and your favorite dish to share for a Multi-Generational Potluck Game Night here at Forest Hill!

We will gather around 7:00, and starting at 9:00 we will ring in the New Year each hour as it comes to different time zones. This way, if you don't want to stay until midnight, you can still take part in a little bit of Happy New Year Hoopla before you go home to get to bed at a decent hour.

RSVPs are not necessary, but it would be helpful, to get a rough headcount. Please email Marcie Denton at marciedenton70@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Whether there are five of us or 50 of us, we will definitely have a fun time. Hope you can join us!



RECENT PHOTOS

Julie Minder took the photo on the left, showing Tim Gifford and Emmett Stock cheerfully handing out worship bulletins on December 8.

Dick Obermanns took the photo, below, of joyful music being shared at the Service of Lessons and Carols on December 15. The trumpet players were Ahren Stock and Scott Lafferty.

Thank you, Julie and Dick, for sharing these photos with us!



EARTH CARE CONGREGATIONS



Earth Care in Ohio

As a group, we have often focused on what we can do as individual families, and as a church family at Forest Hill to help take better care of the earth and our environment. We have also been at least cognizant of the environmental issues pertinent to our city and country, but often only with minimal direct involvement.

But there is yet another organization focused on environmental issues germane to our state: the Ohio Environmental Council. They address regional environmental concerns in every corner of the state, concerning climate change, energy, public lands, and waterways, all underpinned by concern for democracy, with legal and field advocacy.

Unfortunately, the Republican-dominated state legislature and government is strongly influenced by out-of-state industrial and lobbying organizations which attempt (often successfully) to convince local populations

that “economic development” is in their best interests and has little or no environmental impact.

Such is now the state of affairs with increased fracking underpinning our public lands, allowing for potential mishaps, and despoiling not only the natural beauty of unencumbered and undeveloped forestry and woodlands, but of farmlands, waterways and aquifers as well.

Another organization, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) has its hands full of pollution concerns for public waterways and air pollution from industrial/chemical plants. I call your attention to their website www.OhioEnvironmental.com to learn more about this organization and especially to read the News and Updates section. Such information will increase our knowledge of how we can help.

In 2025 we shall consider ways to provide further support and potential actions on a near-local regional basis to enhance Earth Care within our own state.

Dave Neff, FHC Earth Care Leader

BIRTHDAYS

January 2 – Betsy Andrews	January 15 – Peter Eloff	January 24 – Caleb Wright
January 2 – Chris Henry	January 15 – Mark Joseph	January 25 – Linda Martin
January 2 – Charity Stock	January 15 – Lisa Vahey	January 25 – Noel Ullom
January 6 – Anne Smith	January 16 – Clayton Minder	January 26 – Chris Nau
January 7 – Ethan Gifford	January 16 – Scott Peters	January 27 – Muriel Dean
January 8 – Kay Dunlap	January 18 – Sally Davis	January 27 – Libby Dolan
January 8 – Jenny Himmelman	January 20 – Anne Caminiti	January 27 – Diana Woodbridge
January 13 – Megan Allen	January 20 – Zivile Khoury	January 28 – Emily Brock
January 13 – Lauren Miller	January 20 – Jean Reinhold	January 28 – Carol Leslie
January 14 – Nancy Burcham	January 21 – Bader Boland	January 29 – Pat Jeffreys
January 14 – Sandy Moran	January 21 – Sara Shaner	January 31 – Kylie Evans
January 14 – Katie Reed	January 22 – Lisa Hamilton	January 31 – Robin Mervine
January 14 – Peggy Sasso	January 23 – Molly Bergman	
	January 24 – Pat Seeders	

CALENDAR

January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 NEW YEAR'S DAY - CHURCH CLOSED	2	3	4 10:30 am - Men's Group (virtual)
5 12:15 pm - Writing and Drawing Your Way into the New Year	6	7	8 5:00 pm - Eastside Citizens Empowerment Foundation 7:00 pm - Ministry Meetings	9 7:00 pm - Forest Hills Homeowners Association Meeting	10	11 10:00 am - Fiber and Fellowship
12 12:15 pm - Writing and Drawing Your Way into the New Year 4:00 pm - Contemplative Scripture Study	13	14	15 7:00 pm - Session Meeting	16 Deadline for the February Tower 5:30 pm - Finance Committee Meeting	17	18 7:00 pm - Pacesetters Planning Party
19 12:15 pm - Immigration Task Force Update	20 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY - CHURCH CLOSED	21	22	23	24	25
26 - Labre Ministry at North Church 12:15 pm - Annual Congregational Meeting 4:00 pm - Contemplative Scripture Study	27	28	29	30 5:45 pm - Excell Parents Meeting	31 7:30 pm - Resonance Project Concert	
Regularly scheduled events meet every week unless noted 9:15 am - Bible study 11:00 am - Worship service	8:00 am - Bulletin and email deadline 6:00 pm - AA: Progress Not Perfection 7:00 pm - Al-Anon: Now There's Hope 7:30 pm - AA: Borton Group	10:30 am - Abundance Food Pantry	7:30 am - Bible & Bagels (virtual) 12:00 pm - Staff Meeting 12:30 pm - AA: Wed. Women's Group 6:00 pm - AA: Four Absolutes	1:00 pm - English Country Dance 6:15 pm - Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - Boy Scouts	10:00 am - Al-Anon: Hand in Hand 5:00 pm - Praying with Others 6:30 pm - Scottish Country Dance	

CONTACT INFORMATION

Rev. Dr. Gene McAfee	Transitional Pastor	pastormcafee@fhcpresb.org	x201
Dr. QinYing Tan	Director of Music/Organist	music@fhcpresb.org	x208
Dr. Amy Wheatley	Director of Family, Youth, and Children	CE@fhcpresb.org	x206
Antoinette Richardson	Community Engagement Manager	office@fhcpresb.org	x202
Laura Schultz	Digital Communications Manager	churchadmin@fhcpresb.org	x200
	Bookkeeper	finance@fhcpresb.org	x203
Ann Donkin	Building Manager	adonkin@fhcpresb.org	x214
Custodians		custodian@fhcpresb.org	
Rev. Carol Wedell	Parish Associate		

**3031 Monticello Blvd.
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118**

Church Office: 216-321-2660

Custodians' cell phone: 216-217-5257

Email: churchadmin@fhcpresb.org

Website: www.fhcpresb.org

Deadline for the February Tower: 9:00am on January 16, 2025
Deadline for The Week Ahead email: 9:00am every Monday

Giving Options

Friends of FHC, you may give monetary gifts or donations by texting 216-400-5300, or see the online giving options at fhcpresb.org/give. You may also mail a check to the church bookkeeper (3031 Monticello Blvd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118).