

# THE GOOD NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF WEST PARK UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Summer 2023



WEST PARK UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

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*Following Christ, Caring for All, Growing Together*

## PRIDE in the CLE

Our church voted to officially become open and affirming in 2015, though we have long recognized the sacred worth of all God's children. In celebrating God's infinite diversity in our world, our church will walk as a group in this year's Pride March on Saturday, June 3 in downtown Cleveland. If you would like to join our group, contact the church office to sign up. ALL ARE WELCOME.



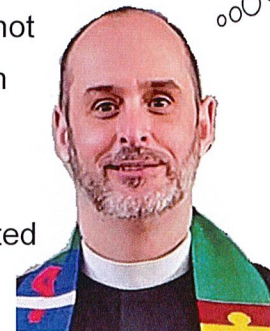
## WEST PARK UCC ANNUAL HYMN SING

Are there songs you want to sing in worship that we just never seem to sing? Do you have a favorite hymn that you want to sing over and over? This is your chance! Our annual hymn sing will take place on Sunday, August 20 as part of morning worship. You pick the song and we will sing together!

## IN MY HEAD *thoughts from Pastor Jason*



The season of Lent was not generally observed in the church of my youth. The community of faith that raised me was not a liturgical group; we only celebrated Holy Communion two times each year. Perhaps this is why



the Lenten season is so special to me as an adult. Lent, for me, is a time of deep prayer and introspection: Where have I sinned against our God and how can I repent?

I am reminded of the vows I made at my baptism; the vows we all make at baptism or, if we are children, the vows we affirm at confirmation. At baptism and confirmation, we promise to renounce the powers of evil, to receive the freedom of new life in Christ, to profess Jesus Christ as savior, to resist oppression, to show love and justice and to witness to the work of Jesus in our world. That's a tall order! And one that we don't take lightly.

I kind of think of Lent like my annual physical with my doctor – a necessary and important part of taking care of my spiritual health. Lent can be like a tune up – a time for us to adjust and correct, a time for us to dedicate more time to our relationship with Jesus. During Lent we also observe a season of fasting. Christian fasting is biblical (based on Jesus's forty day fast and temptation in the wilderness) and has a long history in the Church. The first observances were in the early 4th century.

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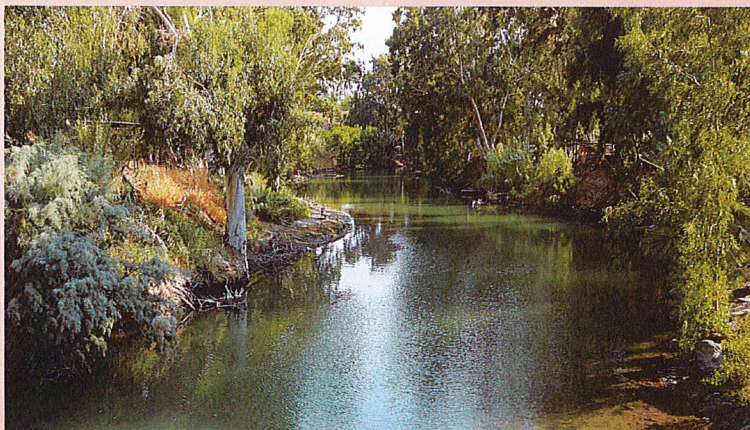
Is fasting during Lent necessary for our salvation? No. But it can bring us closer to our God and create a great sense of empathy for God's people.

There is another part of our baptismal vows over which we have no control. In the United Church of Christ we offer to support others at their baptism. As gathered witnesses, we vow to be a community through which the baptized can discover the meaning of Christian faith. And we promise to help the baptized discover the gifts God has given. This, too, is a tall order. Baptism in the UCC is a three-way covenant between God, the baptismal candidate and the congregation. How many times have you witnessed a baptism? How many times have you vowed to offer support to the one baptized?

In the early Church, baptisms were usually done on Easter morning. The weeks leading up to Easter were a time for the baptismal candidate to study and pray. For centuries, we have generally avoided celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism during Lent, setting these forty days aside for penance, fasting and prayer. I ask you to join me this year as we again walk the road to the Cross as a community of God's people.

Yours in Christ,

*Pastor Jason*



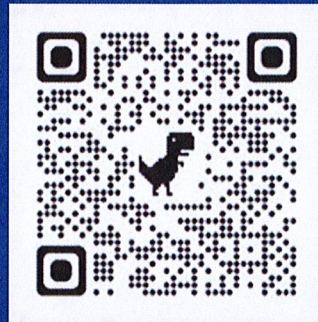
*(pictured is the site on the Jordan river where many believe John baptized Jesus)*

## JULY 4TH PARADE

We will gather in the church parking lot on the morning of July 4 to walk as a group in the annual Kamm's Corners Parade. There will be space to ride for those who cannot walk. Wear your festive red, white and blue as we join in community to celebrate our nation's independence. Thank you to the Board of Growth and Outreach for once again organizing our group to celebrate our nation's independence.

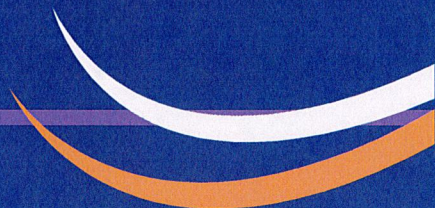
## SUMMER MUSIC

Help us praise God this summer by sharing your musical gifts. Our choir will take a break for the summer, but our music program will not! To sign for our summer music program, please scan the QR code or speak directly with Minister of Music Susan Keserich.



## CEDAR POINT

The Board of Christian Education is organizing a youth trip to Cedar Point on Wednesday, July 19. If your child is interested in attending, please contact the church office.



## CONFIRMATION SUNDAY

Confirmation Sunday is June 4, 2023.

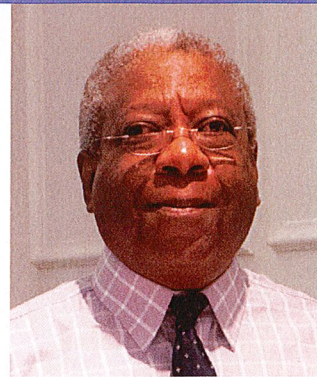
Over the last year, our confirmands have learned about shared faith through classwork, reading, service, field trips and mentorships. On Sunday, June 4 at 10am, they will affirm their baptisms and join our church. The Board of Christian Education is hosting coffee hour where you will have a chance to congratulate our confirmation class and read their statements of faith. This year's confirmands are Isabelle Armstrong, Benjamin Rhea and Jaden Zmina. And thank you to our mentors for all their long hours in guidance for our youth: Robin Jessen, Lisa Gibson and Dan Moreland.

## FATHER'S DAY PICNIC

With great anticipation, this year's picnic is returning to North Olmsted Cabin. We will gather at the cabin at 10am on Sunday, June 18. This is potluck celebration so bring food to share. Please also bring your own plates, cutlery and napkins. The Board of Deacons will provide drinks. Family and friends, neighbors and acquaintances, ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND!

## MODERATOR'S CORNER

*Clarence Chavers*



Hello Church Family!

I am happy to speak to you in our wonderful news letter. After a year of careful nurturing from Moderator Margaret Owens I am ready and willing to take up the reins of office. Last month's Church Council meeting went without a hitch, and in one hour and ten minutes. So far so good!

On Sunday the 19th of February, we had our Annual Meeting in Bartter Hall after several years of restriction. I conducted the meeting and prepared the entrée. It was a big day for yours truly, but with the help of the Holy Spirit and the Vice Moderator, Mandi Salvino, and former Moderator, Margaret Owens, and of course other friends who baked and generally helped out, this event was a blessing!

Our beloved Pastor Jason will go on sabbatical later this year, bringing forth unusual challenges, but once again, I depend on the Holy Spirit and the love of the members for WPUCC and each other to carry us through this headwind.

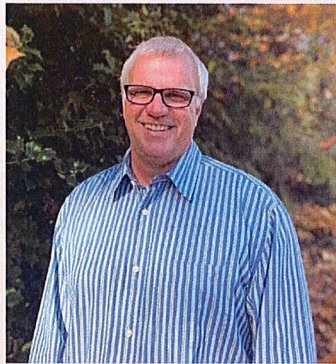
I would like to thank all of you for entrusting the Moderator's gavel to me. It is the answer to a prayer I didn't yet know I was praying. This type of service is in my family, and I am proud to fulfill that destiny in such a worthy institution. Philippians 2:3 states: "Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem each other better than themselves." This is what I feel and see at WPUCC, and pray I can help us down that pilgrim path.

Thank You and God Bless Us All,

Clarence Chavers, III  
Moderator

## SABBATICAL SUPPLY

Charlotte is excited to return to the West Park UCC community where she previously served as Interim Pastor following the tenure of Rev. Larry Craig. Charlotte was born and raised in the Low Country of South Carolina, a daughter of a landscaper and a bank teller. Charlotte is married to the Reverend Rip Noble and is stepmother to Rip's two adult daughters, Vicki and Faith,. Rip and Charlotte also raised two goddaughters, Anna and Nina, whom they met as small children at their home church, St. Paul's (UCC) on the near westside of Cleveland. Charlotte and Rip are grandparents to four grandsons all of whom live in the Cleveland area. Recently Rip and Charlotte became parents to a small, fluffy white puppy who currently rules the roost.



The Rev. Dr. Paul J. Barbins, is completing his 25th year of professional ministry as an ordained pastor with the American Latvian Baptist Association. He is also a former Spiritual Director through the Ignatian Spirituality Institute at John Carroll University and is the current Program Coordinator for the Spirituality Program for Adults (S.P.A.) at Saint Ignatius High School. Paul is married to the Rev. Dr. Laura L. H. Barbins who is the presiding Bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He and Laura are the very proud parents of four lovely daughters.. Paul has grown to understand that both God and the human soul ultimately desire the same – unity with one another – and that each individual is constantly being invited by the Holy into a deeper, more profound relationship with God.

## SABBATICAL YEAR

By now, you are likely aware that our Sabbatical Planning Team has selected two pastors to serve our church while Pastor Jason is away later this year: The Revs. Charlotte Noble and Paul Barbins. Pastor Charlotte will be with us during September, October and December and Pastor Paul will guide us during November. They will both serve half-time with support from church volunteers and lay leaders. Stay tuned for the Fall edition of our newsletter for all the details about this year's planned sabbatical!

## SAFE CHURCH TRAINING

In keeping with our commitment to children, youth and vulnerable adults, a Safe Church training will be offered after worship on Sunday, August 13. A background check and training are required every three years for volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

## CALLING ALL TEACHERS

Want to offer your gifts help teach Sunday School and guide our children in Christian Faith? Join us on Sunday, July 16 as we plan Fall programming for children and youth.



*Things happen around our church that few ever notice. Myrtle, the Church Mouse sees all! Here are some recent excerpts from her diary.*

**April 2, 2023**

There was a very large mouse in church this morning. The hoomans called it a pony, but I know it was a mouse. She was so friendly. I hope I get to see her again on the next Palm Sunday. I told her she could bring some friends if she comes to visit again.

**May 4, 2023**

Lots of UCC hoomans from different churches were in Bartter Hall having dinner! The Deaconess Foundation was celebrating all the grant money they awarded. I was the only mouse there. Maybe next year, the other churches can bring their mice!

**May 15, 2023**

The entry to the doorway on Truax looks lovely. I sat outside in the sun today watching Mark Rust for hours as he painted. Thanks for making our home nice, Mark. Now you can paint my mouse door. Pink, please.

## PANTRY VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY

Our food pantry serves hundreds of people each and every month and has become a reliable source of nutritious and health food for our local community. In the last 12 months, we have served over 50,000 pounds of food and household items. But it doesn't just happen. To offer our gratitude to all of our hard working volunteers, our pantry is hosting an appreciation day on Saturday, June 17 at 11am. If you volunteer in our pantry, please plan to attend so we can show you our appreciation.



## COMMUNITY CUPBOARD

@ West Park United Church of Christ

**June Volunteer Opportunities**

- Wednesday, June 7: 12:30pm - Truck Day
- Friday, June 9: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, June 10: 9:00am - Pantry Day
- Friday, June 16: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, June 17: 9:00am - Pantry Day

**July Volunteer Opportunities**

- Wednesday, July 5: 12:30pm - Truck Day
- Friday, July 7: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, July 8: 9:00am - Pantry Day
- Friday, July 14: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, July 15: 9:00am - Pantry Day

**August Volunteer Opportunities**

- Wednesday, August 9: 12:30pm - Truck Day
- Friday, August 11: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, August 12: 9:00am - Pantry Day
- Friday, August 18: 3:00pm - Prep Day
- Saturday, August 19: 9:00am - Pantry Day



# CHURCH NEWS

## SPECIAL MISSION OFFERINGS: PINK ENVELOPE

Each month, our church supports a special offering to benefit other organization's missions to serve God and neighbor.

**June 2023:** STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH is one of the 5 UCC offerings we support each year, making us a 5 for 5 church in our denomination. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry and innovation in existing congregations.

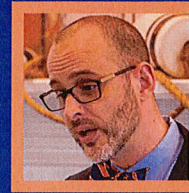
**July 2023:** PROVIDENCE HOUSE provides safe havens for infants and young children while their parents are dealing with crises in their own lives. The program offers parenting classes so parents and children can be reunited.

**August 2023:** COMMUNITY CUPBOARD is the food pantry operated by our church. The annual budget for this ministry is almost \$27,000. Funding is secured from grants and individual donations to serve those in our neighborhood experiencing food insecurity,

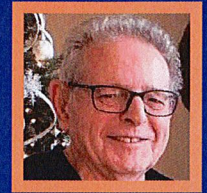
## SAVE THE DATES

September 3, 2023 — Sabbatical Celebration Sunday

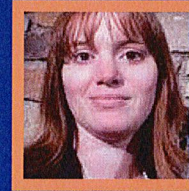
September 23, 2023 — Annual Fundraiser



Jason Thompson  
Senior Pastor



Jim Furry  
Associate Pastor



Sue Keserich  
Minister of Music



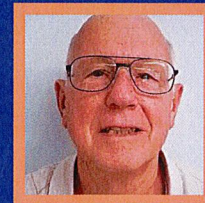
Linda Ferro  
Church Administrator



Jennifer White  
Director of Digital  
Ministries

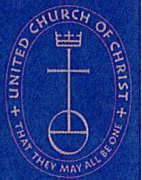


Sara Jovanovic  
Food Pantry  
Coordinator



Bob Arcuri  
Director of Maintenance

*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



WEST PARK UCC'S



# Strawberry Social

Saturday June 10th 4-7pm

ONLY  
\$8!

## ON THE MENU:

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE WITH WHIPPED CREAM  
HOMEMADE SLOPPY JOE SANDWICH  
HOT DOG/CHILI DOG  
CHIPS & PICKLES

*With a "Best Strawberry Dessert" Competition! Drop your dessert entry in the church*