Rev. Dr. Veronica R. Goines, Rev. Dr. John C. Lentz, Co-Pastors Discovering God's call, celebrating the Spirit's presence Witnessing to Christ's transformative power!



The TOWER

OCTOBER 2020

WORDS FROM PASTOR VERONICA

Biblical scholar Walt Bruggemann said that the prophetic imagination involves "the embrace of pathos," bringing to speech God's suffering over the plight of the people. Sympathy is our human participation in divine

pathos..." And yet, the necessary safety protocols related to COVID-19 have suspended what has been one of the hallmarks of our human, Christian participation in pathos—bringing to speech the hope of resurrection, and the love and compassion extended to the bereaved through the corporate funeral/memorial service.

During this prolonged period of suspended conventional worship, Forest Hill Church has experienced the loss of a number of members. At the same time, we have been prohibited to gather in our customary fashion. Because we now know that corporate worship will not resume in the near future, the Co-Pastors envisioned a way to mitigate the grief of members and also celebrate the lives of those who passed on between February and October of 2020. Hence, I announce the upcoming corporate memorial service, to take place on **All Saint's Day: Sunday November 1, 2020**, when during morning worship we will commemorate our deceased.

You are invited to participate by submitting the name of your loved one, along with a digital photograph and one or two sentences about his or her life. Submissions are due **no later than October 19** to: office@fhcpresb.org.

"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

-- Rom. 14:8

Together, let us affirm is eternal truth.

WORDS FROM PASTOR JOHN



I don't know if it is one of the symptoms of Covid-19, but I have lost track of time. I am writing for the October Tower, but my mind and psyche are still in August, or June, or March, for that matter. It is all blending in.

October – World Communion Sunday, the Stewardship season starts, Halloween at the end of the month. Before you know it, Thanksgiving and Christmas – do I put away my grill? Where did summer go?

It is befuddling and confusing. And yet, in a way, redeeming. Because while we like marking points, seasonal cairns along the path of the year, really each day is like the other: 24 hours of fullness to experience life. God provides daily all that is necessary for us to survive if we share the abundance. And every day, every week, every month allows us to praise God, to share from our abundance, and give generously to the work of God through Forest Hill.

Although it is important for us to celebrate the harvest annually and give thanks to God for the abundant blessings we have received as a community, I wish we didn't have a Stewardship season because every day is Stewardship day. A day to stop and consider the ways that God is working in your life, blessing you, agitating you, and growing you.

Part of the everyday growth of a Christian is to be generous, sacrificial, and faithful. Use these eleven biblical verses to help guide you daily to offer the best of your time, talents and treasures to the Lord.

1 Peter 4:10 "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

Proverbs 3:9 "Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce"

Luke 6:38 "give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap."

Acts 20:35 "Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Deuteronomy 16:17 "All shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you."

2 Corinthians 9:7-8 "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you always have enough of everything."

Mark 12:42-43 "A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then Jesus called to his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who have contributed to the treasury."

God bless and thank you for your amazing generosity and faithfulness! ~John

TRUSTEE'S COMMITTEE

Sermon on the Amounts

Thank you to all who have supported Forest Hill Church and its programs in 2020. We could not continue to be the beloved community on the corner of Monticello and Lee without your support. The following information summarizes Forest Hill Church's operating income and expenses through August 31, 2020 and August 31, 2019.

2020 YTD Summary -- Income & Expenses -- August 2020

	8/31/2020 Actual	8/31/2019 Actual	2020 <u>Budget</u>
Income	Acioai	Acioai	<u>boager</u>
meome	\$	\$	\$
Pledges	519,097	472,877	801,000
Other Pledges /	\$	\$	\$
Gifts / Rentals	22,494	24,779	135,950
	\$	\$	\$
Church Rentals	32,350	62,446	87,360
	\$	\$	\$
Total	573,942	560,102	1,024,310
<u>Expenses</u>			
	\$	\$	\$
Board of Trustees	131,393	152,455	188,213
	\$	\$	\$
Payroll and benefits	438,271	447,591	723,364
	\$	\$	\$
Ministries	24,428	30,856	54,533
	\$	\$	\$
Justice and Mission	7,117	25,181	58,200
	\$	\$	\$
Total	601,208	656,083	1,024,310
Net	\$	\$	\$
Gain(Loss)	(27,266)	(95,981)	(0)

The Church often has a net operating deficit coming into the fall due to reduced giving in the summer months. The negative \$27,000 in 2020 is not unexpected and looks pretty good compared to the negative \$96,000 in 2019. That said, in 2019, we were gearing up for the new church year with a full slate of worship, programming, and community support. In 2020, the harsh realities of the COVID-19 shutdown are affecting all we do.

On the income side, non-pledged gifts, Sunday offerings, and church rentals are well below budget expectations. As for expenses, the Copastors, staff, and ministries have worked hard to reduce discretionary spending, and, as a result, we have been fortunate to make it through the first six months of the new COVID-19 age without having to layoff or furlough any staff.

Please note that the analysis above is for the Church's basic operations only and does not consider donor-designated support for programs such as the COVID-19 Fund, the Food Pantry, Sanctuary/Asylum, and Friends of Music, to name a few. Programs such as these only disburse cash on hand and can never show a net loss.

Thank you all again for all you do to support the work of Forest Hill Church. We cannot do good work in the community if we do not have a strong base for operations.

Fall 2020 will be like no other, and we need to keep a close watch on the health of the Church's finances while at the same time developing the 2021 budget. Please feel free to bring any concerns to the Co-pastors, Trustees, or me.

> Regards, Mary McMillan Treasurer

COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM

In April of this year, the Session of Forest Hill Church met to discern God's call for our church and community in 'times such as this.' The COVID-19 response fund was born. The fund aims to address the emerging needs of individual members of the greater Forest Hill community through Mutual Aid and fund programs and/or organizations that address underserved communities impacted by the COVID-19 crisis through modified community grants.

Because of your generosity, Forest Hill Church has raised over \$107,000 for this fund through individual donations and reallocations from Endowment and Justice and Mission funds and the annual operating budget. Your support has allowed us to live into the fourth goal of Forest Hill's Long-Range Plan to Engage in Transformative Social Action.

Our Mutual Aid Network has empowered essential workers to retain reliable transportation to and from work, helped single parents obtain childcare in a crisis, and helped over forty families keep a roof over their heads until the Cuyahoga County rental assistance program kicked in. Our community grants have supported local minority-owned businesses, provided relief to childcare professionals so they can continue to provide important opportunities for young learners, and supported non-profits working to help the unhoused population increase their safety and stability.

The past six months have been fruitful, but the need our community faces is ongoing. People still need your support and generosity in these uncertain times. The vast majority of our initial funding has been distributed. However, people are still supporting each other by donating furniture, meals, children's clothes, books, school supplies, time, and energy to help out where they can. Mark and I continue to be overwhelmed by the 'cheerful giving' we have seen from families in dire financial straits--proving that everyone has something to offer!

As the weather turns colder and with no foreseeable end to our national public health crisis, we ask that you dig deep and ask yourself what can I do to offer relief? If you are in a position to make a financial gift to the COVID-19 fund, please do so by clicking here and putting "COVID-19 Fund" in the notes section. If you are willing to donate your time and/or talents to our ongoing work, please contact Ajah Hales or Mark Chupp at im@fhcpresb.org. Thank you to all of the generous donors who have supported this important initiative that impacts the lives of so many individuals within our community.

Yours in Christ, Ajah Hales, Mark Chupp, and Megan Ullom

INTRODUCING THE 2020-2021 RON REGISTER SCHOLARS

The Ron Register Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce that Damari Loretz and Alaysia Brooks are the recipients of its scholarship award for the 2020-2021 academic year. Both recipients are graduates of Cleveland Heights High School and members of the National Honor Society. Please join us in congratulating these remarkable young women on their outstanding achievements and in wishing them great success in their future endeavors. Brava!



Damari Loretz

Ms. Loretz graduated with a GPA of 4.17 (unweighted 3.64). She excelled in Honors, Advanced Placement, and College Credit Plus courses, including Honors Physics. She made the Honor Roll every semester, and her class rank was 27 of 409. Damari will be enrolled in Eastern Michigan University in the fall and is interested in Interior Design. Damari was also involved in a number of extra-curriculum activities, especially those offering help to others. She tutored students with the

National Honor Society and attended both the Minority Student Achievement Network and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated Leadership Academy. As a candidate for the Ron Register Scholar, Damari wrote an essay demonstrating her awareness of social injustice and the need for change: "As a minority in America, it's hard to overlook the constant injustice and oppression that takes place across this country: Mike Brown, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Emmet Till...This injustice hits extremely close to home and is deeply concerning to me. If law enforcement and the people who are supposed to protect us cannot be trusted, who can we turn to? What do you do when you're terrified of the people who are supposed to keep you safe? How can you live in constant fear that you, your mom, or brother maybe next? Although involuntary servitude was 'abolished' in 1863, it has taken a different form in today's world. While Blacks only account for 13% of the American population, we make up 50% of the prison population. One in three Black men are expected to be imprisoned in their lifetime compared to one in 17 white men. The same holds for women: one in 18 Black women compared to one in 111 white women are expected to be locked up in their lifetime..."

Alaysia Brooks



Ms. Brooks graduated with a 3.9 GPA (3.6 unweighted) and ranked 49 out of 409 in her class. She, too, excelled in Honors, Advanced Placement, and College Credit Plus courses. Alaysia is also a member of the National Honors Society. Alaysia will enter Ursuline College in the fall and major in Nursing. Alaysia has demonstrated leadership, organizational talents, and compassion for others. One academic example of love and concern for others is that she took a number of American Sign Language classes. Additionally, she was awarded a paid internship at Cleveland Clinic, received her CPR certificate and State

Nursing Assistant certification – all while in high school. Among the activities in which Alaysia was involved are: track and volleyball teams, the Student Leadership Cadre (a focus group that gives students a voice in addressing change and equity), playing trumpet, and singing in CHHS' Gospel Choir. Following is a snippet from her essay in support of becoming a Ron Register Scholar, where she displays personal maturity, growth, and insight:

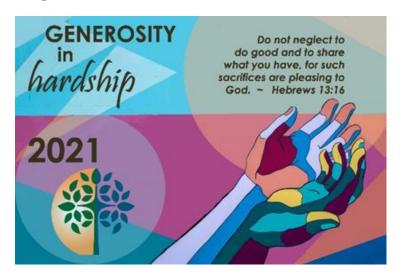
"If I could change any actions from my past two years, I would return to the tenth-grade Regional Track and Field meet. As a freshman, I had my share of victories. However, the pressure of being the fastest in the 400 meters in my school and LEL division always kept my head spinning. I had feelings of doubt and could not explain my lack of confidence. In my sophomore year, I was placed in the District Track Finals and advanced to the Regional Preliminaries. My advancement to the Regional Preliminaries did not erase my doubts and fears. Unfortunately, they became worse and I allowed my anxiety to get the best of me. I ran one of the worst times in my career and failed to make it to the Regional Finals. I missed an opportunity to conquer my fears and compete at the State Level Track Meet".

The Ron Register Scholarship Committee is comprised of community persons and FHC members. Community members include: Reg Evans, Susie Kaeser, and Louisa Oliver. FHC members include: Doris Allen, Vikki Nowak, Quentin Smith, and Diana Woodbridge

2021 Stewardship Campaign October 11- November 1

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We give thanks to God for sustaining Forest Hill Church throughout the past year and for your faithful partnership during an unprecedented time.



Our 2021 stewardship theme—**Generosity in Hardship**—is informed by Hebrews 13:16 "Do not neglect to do well and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

Why pledge? Christian giving is an unselfish act that affirms our generosity and willingness to share. This is such a generous congregation that some may wonder "**Why do I need to pledge?**"

When we pledge, we support the good and visionary work of the church, including

- The new and visionary leadership of our Music Ministry and our Family, Youth, and Children Ministry;
- Our ability to move forward with new forms of Worship; and
- Our commitment to racial reconciliation, immigration reform, environmental justice, and criminal justice reform, as well as the ever-increasing needs of our Food Pantry, our COVID-19 assistance program, and our partnership with Greater Cleveland Congregations.

When members pledge, they tell us how much of a budget we will have for the year, allowing for faithful future planning. Please take a moment to view our <u>Stewardship video</u> for the answer to the more important question: "Why not pledge?"

How much should I pledge? Rather than a set amount that is the same for everyone, Scripture supports proportionate giving according to your individual income. The emphasis is on equal sacrifice, rather than equal giving, while recognizing the relationship between increased giving over time and increased faith.

How do I pledge? Two easy ways:

1) An electronic confirmation card allows you to complete and confirm your pledge directly online.

Or

2) A confirmation card is <u>available on our website</u>. You may print or download the attached card to your computer or device, enter your pledge, then sign and email it in confidence to <u>finance@fhcpresb.org</u> or mail it to the church.

All church leaders are encouraged to **complete your pledge online before the October 11 kick-off**.

Thank you for taking the time to consider how best to support the work of God at Forest Hill Church. As you enjoy our <u>Stewardship</u> <u>video</u>, please prayerfully consider increasing your 2021 Stewardship pledge. It is the giving of time, talents, and treasures from all our members that empowers our church to be the Body of Christ.

Many thanks and blessings to you,

Your 2020-2021 Stewardship Ministry

Elder Consuelo Heineman Elder Peter Williams **Co-Pastors**

Rev. Dr. Veronica R. Goines Rev. Dr. John C. Lentz

What do NGO's really do for Environmental Concerns?



Over the past several years, you've heard commentary from me in this column concerning many US NGO environmental groups such as Natural Resource Defense Council, Earth Justice, Center for Biological Diversity, National Wildlife Confederation, Wilderness Society, Sierra Club---- to name a few of the more prominent ones. But what do they do?

Now all of us as responsible members of a faith community are pretty much doing what we can as individuals to care for Mother/ Earth--refusing, reusing, recycling, conserving. And some of us do petition our government and Congressional representatives individually to take specific actions.

But it is the collective actions that the NGO's can take with their many thousands of supporters, which can gain the attention of lawmakers, cabinet members, and the courts to achieve positive environmental actions. Excerpted from one of these organizations, here is a generic view of what all of them do on behalf of the public interest.

Activate: mobilizing volunteers to speak out against destructive industries, pollution, destruction of public lands, and other governmental actions that harm communities.

Protect: securing and preserving protections for public lands, habitat, and endangered wildlife.

Litigate: going to court to challenge (and often very successfully) governmental orders which threaten the air, land, water, climate, and public health.

Investigate: shining the light into the darkest corners of politics and environment to bring transparency and accountability to our time's most critical environmental issues.

Illuminate: filing Freedom of Information Act requests and taking other necessary steps to expose proposed governmental and Congressional actions that may be harmful to the environment.

Educate: providing useful environmental science information to Congress, members, and friends regarding all issues pertinent to their mission of contributing to positive Earth Care.

Each and all of these NGO organizations provide a powerful collective voice and deserve whatever support---including financial--which we can give them.

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Litigate: going to court to challenge (and often very successfully) governmental orders which threaten the air, land, water, climate and public health.

Investigate: shining the light into the darkest corners of politics and environment in order to bring transparency and accountability to the most important environmental issues of our time.

Illuminate: filing Freedom of Information Act requests and taking other necessary steps to expose proposed governmental and Congressional actions which may be harmful to the environment.

Educate: providing sound environmental science information to Congress, members and friends regarding all issues pertinent to their mission of contributing to positive Earth Care.

Each and all of these NGO organizations provide a powerful collective voice and deserve whatever support---including financial--which we can give them.

Dave Neff Earth Care Leader

GCC UPDATE

1) Another Victory for GCC (Greater Cleveland Congregations)! As an extension of GCC's Color of Health Initiative to expand Covid-19 testing availability in communities of color, GCC has advocated and lobbied CVS, Rite Aid, and Walgreens to add additional locations within vulnerable City of Cleveland neighborhoods that provide Covid-19 testing. When originally announced, all but one testing site for the three drugstore chains were located in the suburbs. As a result of GCC's efforts, CVS added four testing sites and Rite Aid 3 areas within the City of Cleveland. Late last week, Walgreens announced it had added a second site for COVID testing at a central City location in one of the harder-hit areas of Cleveland.

2) In support of efforts to enhance voter turnout and improve the likelihood that ballots will be received and counted for the November 3rd General Election, GCC coordinates several actions within its congregations. First, we will seek volunteers to act as "Captains" and contact other FHC members to verify that they are registered and have a plan to vote, including how (absentee, early in-person at the Board of Elections, or in-person at their local precinct.) Also, we hope to contact members, especially senior members, to find out if they will need a ride to the polls, help to get an absentee (mail-in) ballot, or they would like a ride to the Board of Elections' drop box because they do not want to mail their ballot.

GCC is also planning a "Roll to the Polls" campaign for two weeks in October after early voting begins, and absentee ballots have been mailed out. This will involve organizing a caravan of drivers from FHC and other GCC congregations to collectively drive to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to personally deliver our absentee ballots and ensure that our votes will be counted! We anticipate the need for volunteers to drive 1-2 people to drop off their ballots as part of Roll to the Polls. More details about Roll to the Polls and contacting members about voting plans will be forthcoming.

Please direct questions or express your interest in volunteering for any of these efforts to Scott Lafferty, at swlaff@sbcglobal.net or Diana Woodbridge, at diana@ninthrung.com.



AMIS, Inc. has provided hope and a sense of community to Northeast Ohio families with roots in The Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mexico, Bulgaria, Guatemala, and Burkina Faso. Thank you for making this possible in just one year since we registered as a nonprofit. Join us to celebrate the first anniversary of AMIS and the vibrant traditions and cultures of our extended family. In addition to your ticket purchase donation, the event will include our popular "fund-a-need" style donation opportunity to support the immigrants we serve. Ticket purchase consists of a personalized recipe booklet, sent via USPS before the event that will feature various authentic recipes for international drinks and food that we hope you will make at home and enjoy during our time together. TICKETS AVAILABLE AT amisohio.org Suggested Ticket Donation \$30/Person Checks can also be mailed to AMIS, PO Box 18558, Cleveland Hts., OH 44118. Please mark "Event Ticket" on the memo line. Your donation in support of this event will contribute to immigrants and their families' well-being as they seek legal status in the US; it is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Sunday, October 11, 2020, from 7-8:00 p.m. A private, virtual event.

MESSAGE FROM JACK LENTZ

Members of Forest Hill Church,

It's over, it's done. My Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) year in Washington D. C. has come to an end. What can I say? I indeed came away with a better understanding of what it means to be an ally, meaning how I can use my very, very real white privilege to help the underprivileged. I attended monthly ally-ship meetings run by a fellow YAV living in the house.

I went into the program with two goals. The first was to prove that I could live away from Cleveland and away from my parents. I did that. There were many ups and downs, and let me tell you; there were many times when I wanted to quit, leave everything behind, and come home. But I didn't, I survived, and now, here I am, writing this letter, as kind of a thank you, to all of you who supported me through this very long process.

The second goal that I went to DC with was to hopefully find something that I could be "decent" at, if not some sort of calling. I was hoping to do this through my work placement. I was working for a company called Everyone Home DC that works with individuals experiencing homelessness in the city of Washington. I started my work at the organization on the Street Outreach team and moved to their day center, Shirley's Place, in January and worked there until mid-April, when they ran out of remote work for me to do. Day in and day out, both on outreach and at the day center, I worked very closely with homeless residents of DC.

At first, that was incredibly uncomfortable for me. I had never ever done that type of work before. But I worked through that discomfort, and eventually, I think I kind of started to flourish. I learned that not only is helping people who are less fortunate than I am incredibly

rewarding but that when faced with discomfort, I can be comfortable with that discomfort.

Without the time I spent in DC, I probably wouldn't have learned all of that. Or at least, it would have taken me longer. By jumping headfirst into the deep end, as it were, I came away with a better understanding of how systems are created to keep certain people down and how difficult it is for those same people to rise. I also came away with a better understanding of myself as a man. I think, because of this year, I'm better because of it.

So, thank you to all of you who supported me, both monetarily and through prayer. I wish that things had ended differently. But without all of your support, I wouldn't have gotten through my time in DC. That being said; however, I can't even begin to express how happy I am to be home and start a new chapter in my life with an entirely new outlook. Your support made that possible. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

Best,

J. Lentz

PS – I have added a couple of photos so you can see the other YAVS I worked and lived with.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Regularly scheduled events: meet every week unless noted	6:00 pm -AA: Progress not Perfection 7:00 pm -AI Anon: Now There's Hope -Book Group 7:30 pm -AA: Borton Group -Boy Scout Trp. #403 -OA Big Book	11:00 am -Abundance Pantry 5:00 pm -Fitness Fusion exercise class -Bulletin and Weekly email Deadline	7:30 am -Bible & Bagels (virtual) 12:00 pm -Staff Meeting (virtual) -AA: Wednesday Women's Group 7:00 pm -Guest Group: Speak Life Bible Study	1:30 pm -English Dance 5:00 pm -Fitness Fusion exercise class 6:20 pm -Voices in Bronze 7:30 pm -Chancel Choir	9:30 am -Al Anon: Hand in Hand	
September 27	September 28	September 29 7:00 pm Immigration Task Force Live Stream	September 30	October 1 STAVROS' BIRTHDAY	October 2	October 3
October 4 -World Communion Sunday	October 5	October 6	October 7	October 8	October 9	October 10
October 11 - Stewardship Campaign Begins	October 12	October 13	October 14	October 15 TOWER DEADLINE	October 16	October 17
-AMIS Event October 18	October 19	October 20	October 21	October 22	October 23	October 24
October 25	October 26	October 27	October 28	October 29	October 30	October 31

October 2020

Staff Emails

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Next TOWER deadline: 8 am on October 15 Custodians' cell phone: 216-217-5257

Giving/donation options- Friends and family of FHC, during this time, you can give monetary gifts/donations using our website (<u>www.fhcpresb.org</u>) and clicking the PayPal link. You may also mail in a check to the church bookkeeper (3031 Monticello Blvd. Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118).