

The Quarterly Magazine of Florence Christian Church

# Abundant

Volume 4 Issue 2 Fall 2022

1987

SING PRAISE

TO THE  
GLORY OF GOD  
A.D. 1964

**Building  
on Firm Foundations**

# REBUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

By Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond, Senior Minister

There's a wonderful hymn that some of you know called "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less." The refrain to each verse says these words:

*On Christ the solid rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

For 191 years, Florence Christian Church has been seeking to live into that refrain which calls us to remember our WHY and to recognize this foundation upon which we build is solid. It will hold us through all of the challenges and changes that come.

There is no doubt that we are in a time of great challenge and change in our lives, our church, our community and our world. The question is always "how will we respond to challenges and changes that confront us?" In this issue of *Abundant*, we are looking at how our expanding ministries are a witness to our mission as a church to build and, in some cases, rebuild...on Christ, who calls us to stand upon our faith in Him.

I am so grateful for each of you who have decided to stand on this Rock...this Sure Foundation...as you and I faithfully consider and respond to what God calls us to for such a time as this! Read on as we hear from our leaders about vision, celebrations, challenges and opportunities that are on the horizon.

Standing on the solid rock with you,

*Pastor Susan*

## Abundant

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Florence Christian Church

### Contributors

- Peggy Chukwudolue
- Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond
- Jennifer Hern
- Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka
- Ben Iden
- Janet Jackson
- Dan Kent
- Gail McDaniel
- Maleah Rhodes
- Beth Silvers
- Rev. Melissa Stephens
- Melanie Triplett
- Ginny Yahl

### Design & Editing

- Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond
- Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka
- Dan Kent
- Rev. Melissa Stephens

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Cover Photo - the foundation marker on the Atrium



# Building on the Tradition of Strong Leadership

GORDON CALDWELL

MILLARD STEINHOFF

BURL RUSSELL

EVA GOODRIDGE

PAUL DUCKER

ALLAN TICHENOR

KITTIE McHENRY

RUBY BRADFORD

LUTHER PARSONS

G. F. SCHRAM

L. RANKIN

ANNIE CLORE

CHARLES HOLDER

HAROLD

VERNER McCORD

JOHN R. ROSS, JR.

HAROLD

CHESTER EDWARDS

BRUCE KRING

JACK TURNER

MARGARET GOODRIDGE

Memorial Wall in Chapel



FALLING MEMORIAL  
1900  
LOUING MEMORIAL  
BOB WELSH  
JOHN MARIE

By Ben Iden, Board Chair

Greetings fellow Ministry Partners and Friends of Florence Christian Church! I am excited and yet humbled to be serving as your board chair for the next three years – as we used to say in the country, Lord willing and the creek don't rise!

All of the amazing ministries we have at Florence Christian Church – from worship, faith formation and generous outreach are congregationally driven. Our ministries are formed as the vision and talents of our congregation meet the needs of the community. Part of our continued evolution as a community of God is the acceptance that this may shift as our vision, talents and the needs of the community shift.

I just read *"Now What?"* by Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers. One key takeaway for me is: "Do I look at my relationship with organizations I'm involved in as a consumer or a participant?" As a consumer I am "paying" for a service. However, as a participant I can take an active role in shaping that organization and working with others for the good of all.

As the Board chair for the next three years, I need your participation as I set three goals that belong to all of us: **Sustainability, Community and Deepening our faith.**

**Sustainability:** Keeping all the good things we have going GOING, through continued growth. This doesn't necessary mean growth in our numbers or pocketbook, although that is a part of the equation. God calls us to go forth

and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19) and our continued sustainability depends on how we understand and implement this *Great Commission*.

**Community:** Personally, I want to get to know each and every one of you and at the same time I encourage and want each of you to get to know each other. Let's challenge ourselves to look to the early Christian Church which was a model of community. They knew each other and took care of each other in spite of their diversity and differences. (Acts 4:32)

**Deepening our faith** happens through worship, study and many other traditional avenues. In my personal journey, my faith has deepened more through service than anything else, by reaching out to those who need to experience God's generous love. Ask "in what way can I be the hands and feet of God in the world?"

Brothers and Sisters, I pray for your prayerful discernment of these opportunities before us and that you may always feel free to reach out and share your vision – whether it be through the pastors, deacons, elders or me. Let's all be participants! Let's trust that as we move forward in our faith that it be reflected in our service. May all of us find that sustainable balance that allows us to come together as a community, grow our faith and to be God's light unto the world!

As we close worship each Sunday *now that the worship is over...*

**The SERVICE begins!**

Memorial sidewalk in Meditation Garden



# Building on Experience

By Ben Iden, Beth Silvers, Jenn Hern,  
and Dan Kent

Throughout our lives, God provides us opportunities to lead and calls us repeatedly, persistently, sometimes stubbornly, to seize the moment. Sometimes, our initial reaction to our calling is an excited "Yes!" At other times, we may say, as did Moses, "I'm not ready" or "I'm not sure I can do that well" or "Can't you ask somebody else!?"

Each of these distinctive leadership opportunities has felt new, different, unique. And yet, in one respect, each one has been the same. Whenever we answer a call from God to lead, whether we are confident or plagued with self-doubt, God confides in us, saying: "You will not be alone; I will be your partner. You will be the **decidedly** junior partner. And together, we'll work wonders."

## **Ben Iden, Board Chair**

In the 1990s, I had a mountain top experience on an Emmaus Walk. Since then I have served on the

Emmaus Board and in most of the support positions.

The biggest blessings in my wife Shari's and my lives has been our kids Luke & Sarah. Another big blessing came from working with youth on a biweekly basis at the Crittenden Youth Detention Center for several years and working at Florence Christian helping ex-prisoners re-enter society.

## **Beth Silvers, Board Vice Chair**

In addition to being an Elder and **Board Vice Chair**, I'm the Treasurer of the Beech Acres Parenting Center Board of Directors. I share life with my spouse, Chad, and daughters Jane and Ellen.

I co-host Pantsuit Politics podcast, featured in the New York Times, the Atlantic, and named by Apple Podcasts as one of the Best Shows of 2021. I co-authored several books with co-host Sarah Stewart Holland, and I speak frequently to universities, businesses, and civic organizations about improving political dialogue.



**Jennifer Hern, Treasurer**

Since I like numbers, I'm excited to serve God and the church as **Treasurer**. I've attended Florence Christian Church since I was very little. In 2011, Larry, my husband and I moved to Edgewood. Since then, I've been working as a Bottom Line Services Corporate Executive. Larry and I have three daughters: Olivia, Lizzie, and Taylor.

I've learned from my parents, John and Phyllis Reed, the importance of serving God locally and nationally in everyday relationships with others. Like my dad, I have found that when committing to serve God, I'm amazed by how rewarding that service is.

**Dan Kent, Church Clerk**

In my life, leadership roles have found me. In high school, I led The Latin Club and, in college, led the Free Speech Union. In 33 years of academia, I led the College Curriculum Committee. At Florence Christian Church, where I first attended on January

28, 1951, and currently worship with my beloved wife Shannon and our treasured son Ian, I have been an Elder, a Deacon, a Trustee; chaired the Outreach, Education, Nominating and Personnel committees; and am now **Church Clerk**.

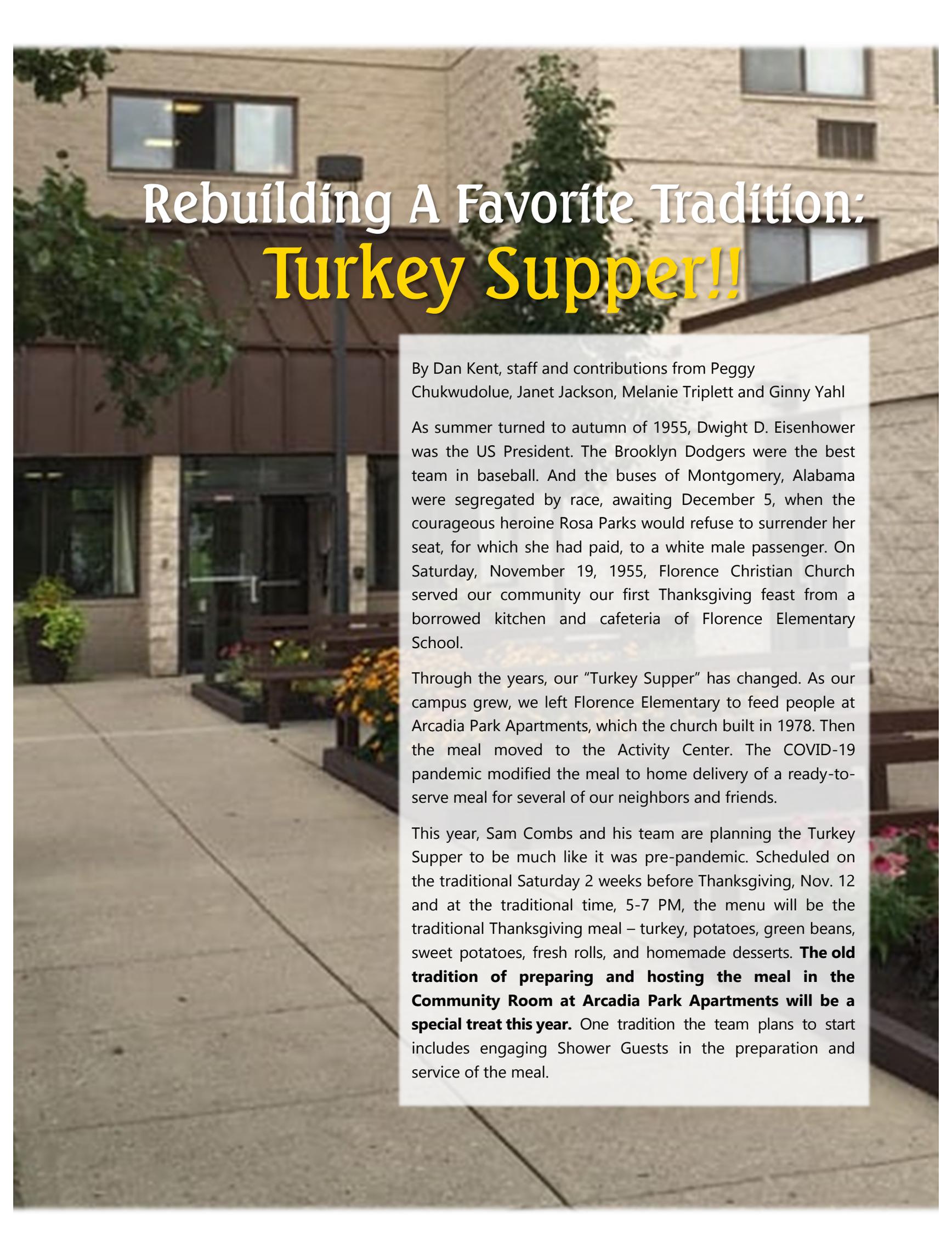
**Gail McDaniel, Secretary**

I have attended Florence Christian Church for over 20 years and have been involved in several of the church ministries. I have served as a deacon on and off the Board. I have helped with the Giving Tree, the Turkey Supper, School Supply Drive, Arcadia Food Aid and the Care & Share Pantry. I especially like helping with the food ministries because everyone should have enough to eat. Also, I help with the School Supplies Drive because these supplies are so needed and appreciated by teachers, students, and families.

Please join God and us as we work together to achieve wonders.



**Detail from Atrium skylight windows**



# Rebuilding A Favorite Tradition: Turkey Supper!!

By Dan Kent, staff and contributions from Peggy Chukwudolue, Janet Jackson, Melanie Triplett and Ginny Yahl

As summer turned to autumn of 1955, Dwight D. Eisenhower was the US President. The Brooklyn Dodgers were the best team in baseball. And the buses of Montgomery, Alabama were segregated by race, awaiting December 5, when the courageous heroine Rosa Parks would refuse to surrender her seat, for which she had paid, to a white male passenger. On Saturday, November 19, 1955, Florence Christian Church served our community our first Thanksgiving feast from a borrowed kitchen and cafeteria of Florence Elementary School.

Through the years, our "Turkey Supper" has changed. As our campus grew, we left Florence Elementary to feed people at Arcadia Park Apartments, which the church built in 1978. Then the meal moved to the Activity Center. The COVID-19 pandemic modified the meal to home delivery of a ready-to-serve meal for several of our neighbors and friends.

This year, Sam Combs and his team are planning the Turkey Supper to be much like it was pre-pandemic. Scheduled on the traditional Saturday 2 weeks before Thanksgiving, Nov. 12 and at the traditional time, 5-7 PM, the menu will be the traditional Thanksgiving meal – turkey, potatoes, green beans, sweet potatoes, fresh rolls, and homemade desserts. **The old tradition of preparing and hosting the meal in the Community Room at Arcadia Park Apartments will be a special treat this year.** One tradition the team plans to start includes engaging Shower Guests in the preparation and service of the meal.



Today, we worship and serve God in a world much changed from November 1955. President Eisenhower is (lo-o-o-o-ng) gone. The Dodgers dwell in Los Angeles. Rosa Parks has become an icon, a beacon lighting the way toward a still-elusive racial harmony in which freedom is received by all. But the Florence Christian Church commitment to Serve God Boldly endures, in the form of our annual Turkey Supper and its many outreach cousins.

### **Why do you help with the Turkey Supper?**

*I am looking forward to working as a volunteer with shower ministry guests, Scouts, and other community members. I am ready to serve and follow the footsteps in the life changing name of Jesus Christ.*

Peggy Chukwudolue

*The Turkey Supper brings our community and church family together in love and fellowship. I am so blessed to be a small part of this event.*

Janet Jackson

*I choose to serve on the planning committee because I see this year as a turning point, a rebuilding as we emerge from COVID. It brings excitement to welcome our community back and to feed our neighbors in joy and fellowship.*

Melanie Triplett

*Volunteering to work at the Turkey Supper was always one of my favorite events. It is a time to celebrate the bounties of the end of the season and to share it with others.*

Ginny Yahl

### **How can you help with the Turkey Supper?**

- Sign up in the Narthex to bring desserts
- Sign up in the Narthex to help prepare and serve the meal
- Donate funds to buy turkeys. All funds raised in excess of expenses will be used to Feed the Multitudes in our community.

Contact Sam Combs - (513) 386-4795

**Building 100 of Arcadia Park Apartments, built by Florence Christian Church in 1978**



# Rebuilding On Our Christi

## Reflections on Worship and Faith Formation

By Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond

Over the past several months, we have spent time rebuilding on our church's solid foundation in Christ through worship and faith formation because...

**Without worship and the intentional, continual pursuit of forming our faith, you and I will not be able stand on the rock that is Christ Jesus!**

And we have much to celebrate! I am thankful for so many new people who have decided to become ministry partners of Florence Christian Church. In the past three months, we have welcomed **14 new ministry partners!** Praise be to God! And as I talk with these new members, the one thing that they keep saying is "We see the love of Christ at work here...and we want to be a part of that."

It's interesting that several of these new ministry partners started getting to know us online through Florence Christian's streaming worship and daily devotions months before they ever came in person. Our online presence will continue to be a focus as we rebuild worship and explore more effective ways to engage in the digital age.

I hope we can encourage more of our long-time ministry partners to make in-person worship a priority. It's easy to stay in our jammies and watch worship online, but we need each other for fellowship and encouragement and service in Christ's name. Hebrews 10:24-25 (CEB) reminds us,

***"And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near."***

New opportunities for Faith Formation are building new traditions. There are monthly book clubs, a congregational retreat in Oct., Healing Circles of Trust, and Sunday morning studies for all age groups.

If you haven't been to worship in person for a while, please hear this encouragement. Come back and reconnect. Get involved not only in worship, but in a Bible study, a small group, a healing circle, daily devotions, and service. There is something for every member of the family and we need you to be a part of that!

Detail of the base of the pulpit from the Little White Church

# Christian Church Tradition

## Reflections on the Journey to Ordination

By Rev. Melissa Stephens

*Rain and snow fall from the sky.*

*They don't return without watering the ground.*

*They cause the plants to sprout and grow.*

*And the plants make seeds for the farmer.*

*And from these seeds people have bread to eat.*

Isaiah 55:10

So, it's been a journey! I graduated from seminary 31 years ago and it's been a circuitous route to this place and this time at Florence Christian Church. And as churched as I am, I have never done *this*, ordained ministry before. Thank you to everyone who wished me well on my Ordination Service on Sept. 18, 2022.

So here I am with you, my dear companions on the journey, sharing this unique and spectacular moment. What might we have learned from the journey to date? The writer of Isaiah teaches us that storms serve to water the earth and out of the cold, wet discomfort new life is generated; we are fed and nourished.

Let me bear witness to the truth that God's word does not return empty, for here I stand. Many times it looked like I had given up and, in fact, I



had. But that stubborn seed of calling planted at Camp Ernst on a middle school youth group retreat has continued to push up through the clay to find the light. It seems we've waited a long time to see it bloom, but dare I lean on cliché to say "all things in God's time." No, I make the bold claim that God's purpose is served in this moment, in this time, in this place with you.

Thank you, Florence Christian Church, for providing me the amazing opportunity to walk alongside you. Will you put on your hiking boots and join me? There is much work yet to do. As your Outreach Minister is it my mission, much like Ben stated in his article, to build sustainability into the thriving outreach ministries of this congregation. Will you join in the work of feeding Jesus's sheep, of affirming dignity for the most marginalized people in our community? Pray with me - Gracious God: The journey has been great so far. We are along for the ride into your future.



## New Bike Repair Station

By Rev. Melissa Stephens

Florence Christian has a bike rack and outdoor bicycle repair station for all of our neighbors who need a tire pumped, a spoke tightened, or handlebars straightened. Stay safe on the road, friends!

Florence Christian’s campus is very busy. Our location at the corner of US 42 and Dixie Hwy. and our many outreach ministries generate a lot of foot, bike and vehicle traffic by the church and through the parking lot. The bike rack provides safe parking for shower and pantry guests’ bicycles while on campus. The bicycle repair station is available to the entire community of folks who bike by necessity or for recreation and who do not have capacity to purchase or store tools.

This project was made possible by the 2022 AARP Community Challenge grant. This year, the AARP Community Challenge funded this project in order to deliver a range of transportation and mobility options by increasing connectivity, walkability, bikeability, wayfinding, and access to a wider range of transportation choices in our community.

“We are incredibly excited to support Florence Christian Church as they work to make immediate improvements, encourage promising ideas and jumpstart long-term change in the city of Florence,” said AARP Kentucky volunteer State President Charlotte Whittaker.



# Building Partner

# y Through erships



## New-to-Us Church Van

By Rev. Dr. Diana Hodges-Batzka

This Summer, when John McLemore was driving our children home from camp on the church bus, it broke down in Lexington. Thankfully everyone was safe, never in danger and John pulled into a gas station. We quickly made plans to get the kids and bus back to Florence.

I told this story at our monthly Disciples pastors' meeting and asked if anyone had a vehicle we could buy. Word got around the state, and I received a call from an Elder at East Second Street Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Lexington, KY. They had a van that they were no longer using . . . and interested in **donating** it to us! Praise God!

After inspecting and discussing costs associated with paperwork and a tune up, we are now accepting this amazing donation.

Ways we will use this vehicle:

- To pick up food from the food bank to distribute through the Free & Fresh Distribution and Care & Share Pantry.
- To transport children from school to Discover Zone, to field trips, to camp, and to regional church events.
- To transport Arcadia residents to local retailers.

Another thankful moment is that we were able to do some extensive maintenance to our existing church bus to allow us to use it while we explore long term options.

East Second Street heard of our need, and they responded mightily . . . simply because we are all Disciples of Christ. Safe, reliable vehicles are vital to our ministries. More deeply, this gift continues to show the power of when churches work together to build up the kingdom.

Cross the US42 side of the building.

# Building a Stronger School Supply Drive Every Year

By Rev. Melissa Stephens and Maleah Rhodes

The Annual School Supply Drive is a fundraising campaign to purchase school supplies for Boone County Schools. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the schools had no idea what their needs were, and yet we raised \$1,430 over our goal of \$4,000. In 2021, we didn't change our goal and we raised \$1,890 over goal.

This year, the students are returning to school in the strain of an economic downturn. We didn't raise our goal but this congregation responded with amazing generosity to raise \$6,708, \$2,708 over our goal.

On Sept. 29, 2022, Maleah Rhodes, School Supply Drive Chair, Rev. Melissa Stephens and Sam Combs hosted a gathering for the Boone County Schools' Resource Coordinators to determine ways we can continue to support each other in our shared mission to serve our community. Without fail, the Resource Coordinators praised our program compared to the many other organizations that provide school supplies because we meet specific needs for each school. The Resource Coordinators "order" supplies from Florence Christian and our volunteers do the shopping, sorting, packing and delivering. Further, we learned that the schools provide a minimal (<\$500) budget for school supplies, or no budget at all because they expect these donations. Other donors are hit-or-miss each year, but the Resource Coordinators have grown to count on the foundation we have built together.

Thank you Florence Christian Church for so generously supporting this vital ministry to the community we call home.

Detail of the window in the Chapel and pulpit chair from the Little White Church

# Build Your Faith in the Holy Land

By Rev. Dr. Susan Ward Diamond

The sermon series "Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus" examined some of the most important stories of the life and ministry of Jesus and his call to follow him. I shared some stories from my pilgrimages to the Holy Land and my hope that many of you will come with me in May 2023 for your own time of walking where Jesus walked. It truly is a time when scripture and faith rises to a new level.

We will be visiting places such as:

- Bethlehem where Jesus was born.
- Nazareth where Jesus grew up.
- Jordan River where Jesus was baptized.
- The Sea of Galilee and the Galilee region where Jesus healed and taught and performed many miracles.
- Jerusalem where Jesus spent his last days.
- Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.
- The Dead Sea

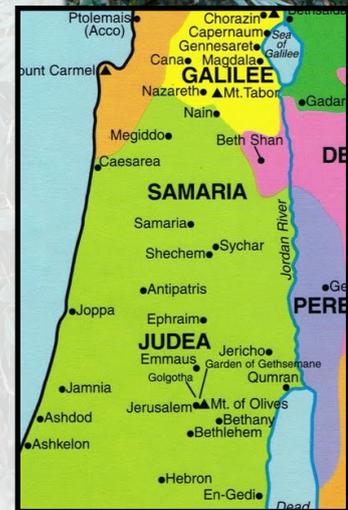
Each day, we will have special worship services at one of the holy sites. We will also learn many things about archaeology, geology, Bible history and theology from our fantastic guide, Tsippi Segal, who was Pastor Susan's guide for all three of her previous pilgrimages.

The 10-day pilgrimage will begin with our departure from CVG airport on May 15 and return on May 24. The all-inclusive price per person is \$4,479 which includes: deluxe A/C motor coaches, entrance and program fees, fuel surcharges and government taxes, guided tours, airfare (international and domestic), breakfast and dinner daily, first class hotels, gratuities, live audio headsets, and select lunches.

Pastor Susan says, "One thing I can promise you. You will experience your faith in a new way as we learn and grow together. This is a life-changing experience!"

For more information or registration visit

[www.noseworthytravel.com/DiamondIsrael2023](http://www.noseworthytravel.com/DiamondIsrael2023)





300 Main Street, Florence KY 41042

(859)647-5000

[fccinfo@florencechristian.org](mailto:fccinfo@florencechristian.org)

[Florencechristian.org](http://Florencechristian.org)