



# The Circuit Rider

The newsletter of First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, Ohio

April/May 2026

Loving God and Loving All People, Making Disciples of Christ for the Transformation of the World

## Holy Week Observances

Our “Breaking Open: Breakthrough Moments with God” continues with powerful Holy Week experiences! Invite family, friends, and neighbors to be a part of Holy Week this year. Come and worship!

### March 29 Palm Sunday

9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Main Building

*Breaking Open Our Expectations*

Family worship with some use of palms, children are invited to be part of the palm processional!



### April 2 Maundy Thursday

7:00 at Crossroads

*Breaking Open Our Hands*

Worship around tables, focused on Jesus’ final Passover gathering and communion. (No livestream option for this service.)

### April 3 Good Friday

7:00 p.m. at Main Building

*Breaking Open Our Silence*

Powerful worship in our sanctuary, the Passion story presented through scripture, spoken word, and silences



### Sunday, April 5 Easter

9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. at Main Building

*Breaking Open the Tomb*

He is Risen! Join us for a glorious Easter celebration of the Resurrection. The church will be filled with flowers. We will rejoice with Alleluias and the ringing of bells.

## Music Sunday

As we reach the Easter season, we also approach the ending of the 2025-26 choir season. It’s been another good year of faithful ministry by all of our participants, and we’ll celebrate with a Music Ministry Sunday on May 17th. This year’s theme will be “From the Hymnal,” and will feature a morning of wonderful hymn tunes, old and new.

We give thanks to God that music ministries at First UMC continue to be a blessing to our worship life, and we give thanks for the many talented people who give of themselves so faithfully to help make that happen. Plan to be a part of worship on May 17 as we experience God’s music together.



## He Is Risen

*John 20:16 — “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’”*

On Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene had an unexpected encounter with Jesus at the tomb. One moment, she stood in grief, her world shattered, her hope buried. Then a stranger spoke her name, and she recognized the voice of her beloved rabbi. She knew it was Jesus calling her name. In an instant, her sorrow became joy, and death gave way to life.

Jesus is calling us! On Easter, we celebrate that the tomb is open. The grave is empty. Through Christ, we are set free. We are not defined by our failures, our sin, our fears, or our past. We are called into a bright future with the risen Savior. In Christ, we are free to walk in the fullness of life. We are free to share our joy with our neighbors. We are free to celebrate our liberation from all that bound us. Our story is not over. In fact, the best is still ahead!

### So many good things are coming — stay tuned for:

- *A special worship service for all ages to celebrate God’s Creation for Earth Day on Wednesday, April 22, 7:00 p.m. at Crossroads. Bring your own camp chair!*
- *A multi-generational mission opportunity on a Sunday after church to fill 100 drawstring bag hygiene kits for the Lancaster Stand Down for Veterans event in May.*
- *Adventure Island Vacation Bible School 2026! We are gathering a dynamic team of leaders to help us share the love of Jesus with children in our community. Save the dates, July 8-10 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. There’s a way for everyone to participate! Watch your bulletins, Facebook, and announcements for details. Tell your neighbors! Join the fun!*

### We have things to celebrate!

- *Congratulations to Abbey and Daniel Giannamore on the birth of their son Thomas Giannamore!*
- *Welcoming new staff member, Anna King, as Director of Children’s Discipleship and Outreach Ministries.*
- *A consistent group of 20-25 faithful disciples meeting every Wednesday during Lent to share a delicious meal, fellowship at the table, reading the Bible together and growing in the knowledge and love of the triune God.*

Just as Mary ran from that empty garden with the greatest news the world has ever heard, go tell someone the good news. Share how your relationship with Jesus brings you joy, a sense of belonging, and gives you opportunities to serve in the community. Tell a neighbor, a friend, a stranger: **Christ is risen!** The world is waiting to hear it, and you are the one to say it. **Christ is risen indeed!**

God loves you, and so do I!

*Pastor Nikki*

**HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS**  
First United Methodist Church

**Apply by April 30, 2026!**  
Visit: [www.love-first.org/scholarship](https://www.love-first.org/scholarship)

Questions? Call (740) 653-3330

### Scholarship Opportunity!

Our Higher Education Scholarship Fund provides scholarships for members of First United Methodist Church who are pursuing education beyond high school. This includes education at universities, community colleges, and trade schools. Applications will be available at the Information/Reception Desk at the church or online at <https://www.love-first.org/scholarship> starting April 1. Applications must be turned into Sarah Mason in the Business Office or post marked by April 30, 2026. The committee will meet in May to award scholarships and notify recipients.



*In 2026, the Ohio Episcopal Area moves forward in collaboration, discipleship, multiplication, leadership development, and global mission—building a unified, Spirit-led movement rooted in abundance, trust, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to prayer, partnership, and courageous action as we form “One Ohio” for the sake of God’s mission in the world.*

On Saturday, March 7, about 100 clergy and laity in the Scioto River and Great Miami Districts met at the Mason, Ohio, satellite of Church of the Resurrection that is led by the Reverend Adam Hamilton and Reverend Jenn Lucas. Resurrection Mason is the first Resurrection Church plant outside of Kansas. At this all-day gathering, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, outlined the 2026 Vision for the churches in the Ohio Episcopal Area. Together, we are stepping forward with a hopeful, Spirit-led vision—one that invites every congregation to participate in God’s mission beyond its own walls. Rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are moving toward becoming “**One Ohio**,” united in prayer, purpose, and service so that together we may share Christ’s love more fully with our communities and the world. This vision calls us into deeper collaboration, faithful discipleship, and courageous action as we trust in God’s abundance and guidance.

To live into this calling, the Ohio Episcopal Area is focusing on five strategic pillars that will shape our shared ministry. First, we are committed to **building relationships**. As we continue healing from past divisions, we seek to nurture trust, practice honest and grace-filled communication, and strengthen partnerships in local and global mission. Through spiritual and relational practices, we will cultivate relationships that reflect Christ’s reconciling love.

Second, we will embrace a **shared mission**, bringing together East and West Ohio as one unified body. By collaborating in ministry, learning from one another, and supporting common goals, we will break down barriers and celebrate the ways God is already working through our connection.

Third, we will deepen **discipleship** through the SEED framework—**Seek, Engage, Equip, and Deploy**. Grounded in our baptismal identity and the priesthood of all believers, SEED reminds us that every Christian is called into ministry. Together we will listen for where God is already at work, nurture relationships that grow faith, and equip people to lead, serve, and witness in the church and the world.

Fourth, we commit to **multiplication**, working toward the vision of 100 new faith communities across Ohio by 2030. From house churches to multicultural ministries and digital expressions of faith, we will nurture new spaces where people can encounter Christ.

Finally, we will invest in **emerging leaders**, mentoring youth, young adults, clergy, and lay leaders so that the church continues to flourish for generations to come.

This is an invitation for all of us—to pray, to partner, and to step forward together as **One Ohio**, joining the Holy Spirit in God’s transforming mission.



## Graduation Sunday

Every year we like to acknowledge those young people who have graduated from high school or from college. If you have a student who is graduating, please contact the church office and provide a picture of your graduate so that we might honor them. Graduation Sunday is tentatively scheduled for May 31st. Continue to check the bulletin on Sundays for confirmation of this date.

## Meet Our New Director of Children's Discipleship and Outreach Ministries – Anna King



I grew up in Athens and attended Athens First United Methodist Church. My faith was nurtured by my grandfather, who was a United Methodist minister. I earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Rio Grande with a focus in psychology and the arts. I have been working with kids my whole life and in childcare for the past 4 years. My husband, Erik, and I have been together for over a decade and married for



six years. We recently welcomed our first daughter, Cricket. We love nature and art of all kinds and can't wait to share them with her. I can't wait to start this new journey with you and Lancaster First United Methodist Church.

As the weather warms up, we're all excited to get outside and spend time together with our kids! We have several upcoming events that will be fun for all ages while also giving us the opportunity to serve our community. (See articles below.)

### Celebrating Earth Day

To celebrate Earth Day, we invite church families to participate in a **hands-on Seed Stones Making Activity**. This fun and meaningful event encourages environmental stewardship, creativity, and community participation while preparing small gifts that can be shared during our Earth Day service.

**Date:** April 12 or April 19 (final date to be confirmed)

**Time:** Immediately after 2<sup>nd</sup> service

**Location:** Fellowship Hall

During this activity, families and church members will make **seed stones (seed bombs)** using native wildflower seeds. These seed stones can be planted in gardens, yards, or other appropriate spaces to help support pollinators and promote local biodiversity.

Participants are encouraged to make **extra seed stones** to share with other church members during the Earth Day service as a simple way to spread beauty and care for creation throughout our community. All ages are welcome. Come enjoy this creative activity and help us celebrate and care for God's creation together.

### Supporting Our Veterans

Join us for a special service opportunity as we come together to support our amazing veterans.

**Hygiene Kit Assembly for Veterans Date:** May 3

**Time:** After 2nd service

**Location:** Fellowship hall

Families of all ages are invited to stay after church and help us assemble **100 hygiene kits** for veterans in our community. This is a wonderful way to serve together, show gratitude, and make a meaningful impact. All supplies will be collected prior—just bring your helping hands and a heart to serve! Small refreshments will be provided.

If unable to join, we are looking for donations of shampoos, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, baby wipes, toothpaste, body wash, lotions, nail clippers, washcloths, and combs/ hairbrushes.

Hygiene kits will be distributed at Veterans Stand Down AMVETS Post 1985 on May 11th and 12th. Let's work together to bless those who have served our country. We hope you and your family will join us!

## End of School Planning

As the school year comes to an end, our Sunday School curriculum will be wrapping up as well. We'll be reaching out to see if any church members would like to share their talents through experiments, theater or music experiences, or art projects that can connect with the Sunday message. If you have ideas or would like to help, please contact Anna King.



### Vacation Bible School

#### Quest for God's Great Light: Discovery on Adventure Island

July 8 –10, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Contact: [lindsayescalf@gmail.com](mailto:lindsayescalf@gmail.com)

*"Arise! Shine! Your light has come, the LORD's glory has shone upon you!"* Isaiah 60:1

This summer our children will set out on a 3-day adventure discovering how God's light guides our lives through Bible stories, music, dancing, games, crafts, science, and mission activities.

VBS is one of the most meaningful outreach opportunities of the year, and it takes our whole church family working together. We are currently looking for volunteers to serve as:

- Snack Leader
- Mission Leader
- Nursery Leader
- Station Coordinator
- General Volunteers
- July 4th Parade Team

You don't have to be a Bible expert — just someone willing to encourage kids and help for a few hours. Even helping prepare or coming for one morning makes a difference!

If you are interested in helping guide our congregation's children in their journey of faith, contact: Lindsay Scalf – [lindsayescalf@gmail.com](mailto:lindsayescalf@gmail.com), 614-369-7254

Pray about where God might be inviting you to serve. Let's shine His light together!

### Happy Earth Day!

Celebrate Earth Day in worship as we gather outdoors to give thanks for the gift of creation and reflect on our call to care for the earth. This service will explore how faithful stewardship connects with the food we grow and eat, highlighting practices like gardening, supporting pollinators, composting, and buying locally. Together we will celebrate God's abundant creation and consider how small, everyday choices can help nurture a healthier planet for all.

#### **Creation Care Tip:**

With electricity prices rising, there's both a financial and an environmental incentive to reduce your energy consumption. A great way to reduce how much energy you use in your home is to air-dry your clothes. You can save wear and tear on clothes and save on electricity if you dry your clothes on a line outside or inside on a rack. When you are using your dryer, dry full (but not over-full) loads rather than a few items at a time. Waiting until you have full loads for washing can also reduce your water consumption. Each small step can add up to make a big difference.



**Date:** Wednesday, April 22

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Place:** Crossroads Ministry Center

**Bring your own camp chair!**

*\*If it rains, we'll worship indoors at Crossroads in the 4-Square Room.*



# Caring Ministries

Contact: Judy Hug, CLM [judyhug@love-first.org](mailto:judyhug@love-first.org) or 740-653-3330, ext. 1002



American Red Cross

Blood Services

The need is real! Blood to be transfused into a person that is ill or injured cannot be manufactured– it has to be collected from a live donor. Please consider donating, if you are eligible, or invite a friend to donate! To register a donor, contact Judy Hug or register online at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) Interested in volunteering at a bloodmobile? We have openings!

Remaining Bloodmobiles in 2026 will be held at Crossroads on the following Mondays, noon-6:00 p.m.

May 11

July 13

September 14

November 9

## SWEET TREATS



Be the reason someone smiles! Our Sweet Treats Ministry visits members who are no longer able to attend church, delivering delicious homemade cookies, fresh fruit and a prayer on the second Saturday each month. There are almost 100 people on our visitation list so many hands are needed! Bakers, packagers, and deliverers are welcome so bring a friend – or 10! This is a great ministry outreach for couples or families as well!! Hope to see you beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall on **April 11** and **May 9!**

## Worship at The Springs at Wyandot Trail

Every month, we have the opportunity to be in worship with our members and friends at The Springs at Wyandot Trail, just across the street from the new Lancaster High School. Whether you choose to read selected Scripture or a prepared prayer, sing along with chosen hymns, help serve Communion or simply worship with our growing faith community at The Springs, you are welcome to join us on second Sundays, 1:00-1:30 p,m,!

### Card Ministry –

Did you ever receive an unexpected card just to be reminded that others are thinking of you, or perhaps to welcome you home after spending time in the hospital or a rehabilitation center? One card can remind another that they are a precious child of God, and that they are not alone in their journey. Cards and stamps can be provided, and, if desired, you can be matched with someone on our visitation roster whose day would be brighter knowing they have a ‘Card Buddy’ who writes regularly. Great ministry for families or individuals!

## Visitation Ministries

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in it’s various forms. 1Peter 4:10*

Each of us has been given gifts, not to be used for a season then discarded or re-gifted, but a spiritual gift from God to be used to bring good into our world. You may be a good listener or just have a warm smile. If you are interested in brightening the day of one of our members who can’t get to church for whatever reason, contact Judy Hug.



## Emergency Training

Whether you know CPR or not, YOU can be helpful in emergency situations just by becoming familiar with our AED and location of our response equipment and supplies! Let Judy Hug know if you are interested!

### *In Sympathy*

We express our sincere sympathy to the families of those who have lost loved ones:



**Diane Eversole**  
**Barbara Klinker**

## Baptism

**Connor Anthony Roth**

Parents – Colton and Sarah Roth  
Grandparents – Dan and Julie Cruit

The **Helping Hand Farm Ministry** has begun! This mission is recruiting local gardeners to grow a little extra produce designated for the Short East Community Kitchen. This will help provide fresh, local produce to hungry people in our community, as well as help offset costs for the Short East Community Kitchen. Sign up is open now on the First United Methodist Church website, [love-first.org](http://love-first.org). Contact Renee Benham for more information.



### CONTACTS:

**Ann Cherry (740) 215-0563**

**Jeff Cherry (740) 503-1630**

Did you know?? During the week of extremely cold temperatures in January, our volunteers were able to keep Short East Community Kitchen open for our guests until 4:30 p.m., with a light dinner being served to them around 4:00 p.m. Our guests were very appreciative of a warm and safe place to be. We are now back to our regular schedule, with a hot breakfast being served at 9:00 a.m. and lunch being served at noon.

We welcomed new volunteers to our teams on Mondays and Thursdays! We are always looking for additional volunteers. If you would like to help, please contact Ann or Jeff Cherry.

Your support through donations is greatly appreciated! These are our specific needs for April and May,

#### **April**

Sugar  
salad dressing (Ranch, Italian, French, 1000 Island)  
9" paper plates

#### **May**

Coffee  
9 oz clear cups  
small (10-12 oz) bowls for cereal

## ~~~~~Thank You~~~~~

*Thank you so much for your support and packages! Every time I receive one, it makes my day! I'm very grateful for the snacks, supplies, and crafts/notes I receive! It has helped a lot when I have busy days to have small snacks I can take with me or school supplies already there, so I don't have to walk to get more.*

*Thank you! Kylee Lehman*

*Dear FUMC*

*Thank you so much for the packages that I have received not only this year but last year as well. I always look forward to the crafts that you include. I have the cardinal hanging in my window and have recently put the turkey on my corkboard. Thank you also for sending such yummy snacks and fresh gum. I also used a new pen that you sent me to write this. Thank you, and you my church family will be in my prayers. Claire Deem*

*Thank you to all who donated cards, postage stamps, and/or quart-size Ziploc bags for Caring Ministries! Due to your generosity and care, our church can continue to extend God's love beyond the walls of the church! Interested in doing more? Contact Judy Hug 😊*

*A big thank you to Bev Callahan for purchasing batteries for the toys in the church nursery. We really appreciate her thoughtfulness!*

*Sincerely, Miss Mary (FUMC nursery)*

*Dear First United Methodist Church,*

*Thank you for your donation! Your generosity supports our mission and makes a real difference. Your contribution of \$400 helps us continue to provide needed services and support to our community with mental illness and disabling emotional problems. Our programs could not exist without your generosity. We're grateful for your kindness and support. Thank you,*

*Elizabeth Chalfant COO, LISW-S, LICDC*

*Dear First United Methodist Church,*

*Thank you for your donations to Kaunas United Methodist Church (Lithuania) in 2025 and 2026. Your donations help in the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of the church.*

*Superintendent Remigijus M.*

### **OneBoard** Leadership Model

The First United Methodist One Board met on February 17, 2026. The Board developed a team that would be interviewing candidates for the children's outreach director position with Pastor Nikki. In addition, another team was formed to review the HVAC needs at the church.

Finally, a separate team was set up to reach out to the Foundry to begin the discussion of an appraisal of the Crossroads facility.

The next meeting of the One Board happened on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, after the newsletter deadline. The Board meets each month on the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in Room 22 at the main building. One Board meetings are open to the people of First UMC.

Submitted by Mike Lieber

At Crossroads Ministry Center  
2095 W. Fair Ave  
**April 4 & May 2**

**MEN'S  
Breakfast**

8:00 a.m.  
Call 740-653-3330 to reserve your spot.



**CIRCLE MEETING DATES**

**Elizabeth Circle** April 16 and May 21  
at 9:30 a.m. in Room 22. New members are always welcome.  
Please join us!

**Trinity Circle** April 8 and May 13 at Noon in Room 22. Come  
join us in making greeting cards for our congregation shut-ins.  
All supplies are furnished.

In 2025 the Elizabeth and Trinity Circles donated \$1,585.51 to  
the following:

Local Relief \$306.06  
To the our District: Pledges \$797.25, World Thank Offering  
\$161.75, Call to Prayer & Self Denial \$61.26, UMCOR \$259.19

**Hooked on Books**

Contact  
Linda  
Godenschwager  
or Denise  
Bennett

**10:00 a.m.**  
Main Building

Sign up in the Parlor

**Hooked on Books** meets at 10:00 a.m. in Room 22 of the main  
church building.

**Monday, April 13** *The Women* by Kristin Hannah  
**Monday, May 4** *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd

Questions? Contact:  
Linda Godenschwager 740-503-6026 or Denise Bennett 740-503-7210

**Mark Your Calendars** CR = Crossroads, M = Main Church Building

**Weekly Meetings**

- Mondays: 6:30 p.m. Boys Scouts (CR)
- Wednesdays: 9:00 a.m. Fellowship Quilters (CR)
- Wednesdays: 3:00 p.m. Chair Volleyball (CR)
- Wednesdays: 6:30 p.m. Crossroads Community (CR)
- Thursdays: 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir (M)
- 7:30 p.m. Choir Practice (M)
- Fridays: 3:45 p.m. Girls Scouts (M)

**Additional Events**

- |                      |                              |                      |                                    |
|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>APRIL</b>         |                              | <b>MAY</b>           |                                    |
| <b>2</b> 7:00 p.m.   | Maundy Thursday Service (CR) | <b>2</b> 8:00 a.m.   | Men's Breakfast (CR)               |
| <b>3</b> 7:00 p.m.   | Good Friday Service (M)      | <b>3</b> 11:20 a.m.  | Veterans' Hygiene Kit Assembly (M) |
| <b>4</b> 8:00 a.m.   | Men's Breakfast (CR)         | <b>4</b> 10:00 a.m.  | Hooked on Books (M)                |
| <b>8</b> 12:00 p.m.  | Trinity Circle (M)           | <b>9</b> 9:00 a.m.   | Sweet Treats (M)                   |
| <b>11</b> 9:00 a.m.  | Sweet Treats (M)             | <b>11</b> 12:00 p.m. | Red Cross Blood Drive (CR)         |
| <b>13</b> 10:00 a.m. | Hooked on Books (M)          | <b>13</b> 12:00 p.m. | Trinity Circle (M)                 |
| <b>16</b> 9:30 a.m.  | Elizabeth Circle (M)         | <b>19</b> 6:30 p.m.  | One Board Meeting (M)              |
| <b>21</b> 6:30 p.m.  | One Board Meeting (M)        | <b>21</b> 9:30 a.m.  | Elizabeth Circle (M)               |
| <b>22</b> 7:00 p.m.  | Earth Day Service (CR)       |                      |                                    |

## STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

(740) 653-3330

**Nikki Baker** (Pastor) nikkibaker@love-first.org ext. 1001  
**Clarence McCoy** (Worship Arts) clarencemccoy@love-first.org ext. 1004  
**Judy Hug**, CLM (Caring Ministries) judyhug@love-first.org, ext. 1002  
**Anna King** (Children's Ministries) annaking@love-first.org, ext. 1008  
**Sarah Mason** (Business Admin) sarahmason@love-first.org ext. 1005  
**Michael Belt** (Financial Secretary) michaelbelt@love-first.org ext. 1007  
**Chantel Rutherford** (Administrative Assistant) receptionist@love-first.org, ext. 1000  
**Chip Elder** (Maintenance) chipelder@love-first.org

It's easy to follow everything happening at Lancaster First. In addition to our Facebook page, we have an X account and an Instagram account. Keep up to date with our events and resources. Follow us at: Facebook: Lancaster First United Methodist Church;

X: LoveFirstUMC;

Instagram: Lancasterfirstumchurch



**Articles for the June/July issue of the CIRCUIT RIDER are due by May 15 to Clarence McCoy, clarencemccoy@love-first.org. Janet Gossell, Editor**

## The Circuit Rider

is the bi-monthly newsletter of  
**First United Methodist Church**  
163 E. Wheeling St.  
Lancaster, OH 43130

**Sunday**

**9:00 a.m. -- Worship Celebration**

**10:30 a.m. -- Praise Worship**

**Wednesday**

**6:30 p.m. -- Crossroads Community**

**Crossroads Ministry Center**

**2095 W. Fair Ave.**

**We welcome you to worship with us and to experience the joy of having fellowship with other people who believe in the love of God and the teachings of Christ.**

**Pastor Rev. Nikki Baker**

**Telephone: 740-653-3330**

**Email: receptionist@love-first.org**

**Website: www.love-first.org**

Place label here

NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Lancaster, Oh  
Permit No. 53

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

THE CIRCUIT RIDER  
163 E. Wheeling Street  
Lancaster, OH 43130