

THE MESSENGER

JULY 2026

NEW COVENANT
COMMUNITY CHURCH

COMMUNION WITH GREASY BREAD

As we enter into the summer months, I find myself reminiscing on many a summer where my paternal grandparents would have my family and the family of my dad's middle brother over for a barbeque on July 4th. My grandfather ("Papa") would pull out this long, wooden picnic table and put it in the garage, and we would sit around that table laughing and "breaking bread" with one another. However, we didn't always have those barbeque staples of "burgers and hot dogs." On occasion, my family would pay homage to my grandparents' Hungarian roots by instead making a traditional summer meal in Hungarian culture. That food was szalonna (pronounced "sah-low-nah"). Now, if you haven't heard of this dish before (and most people haven't), szalonna is the Hungarian word for "bacon," but make no mistake, we didn't actually eat the meat itself. What we did, instead, was skewered and roasted the pork meat over a pit and collected all the drippings (which tasted just like bacon). Those drippings

were then put on bread; seasoned with black pepper, salt, and/or paprika; and garnished with various vegetables (lettuce, radishes, carrots, onions, you name it). The pork continued to roast until it was a charred, dried-out husk, collecting those drippings all along the way. As you might imagine, my mother and my aunt (both of whom married into the family) never partook of this delicacy. As for those of us born into the family (i.e. me, my brothers, my cousins, my father and his brother), we loved it. As disgusting as this might sound to most people, szalonna sandwiches were a real treat.

However, in looking back, as delicious as those sandwiches were and as exciting as it was (*Communion cont. on page 4*)

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Governing Board

July 27
6:00 PM

Worship Committee

July 6
4:30 PM

Finance Committee

July 21
11:00 AM

From the President's Pen

A big congratulations to Jake Bryson and Beth Gornall. Jake proposed to his longtime girlfriend, Beth, on June 4th- their 8th anniversary!! Jake and Beth met through ETC, an Akron-area competitive, youth, show choir. Jake was in the combo, playing various instruments through the years, and Beth was a singer/dancer, performing many beautiful solos throughout her time there. Beth became friends with Emma first and they always thought it would be fun if Beth, who is an only child, started dating Jake and they could be “sisters!”

Jake is currently working at Ken Ganley Subaru in Bedford, along side his parents, working as Lead Porter at the Subaru store, and currently working at the Brecksville Library, following in the footsteps of her parents Bill and Stephanie Gornall who are both librarians within the Cuyahoga County library system.

We wish Jake and Beth many years of happiness to come!

- Jenni,

Governing Board President



VENEZUELA EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

On June 24, 2026, Venezuela experienced two powerful back-to-back earthquakes killing over 1,400 and leaving tens of thousands missing amid widespread destruction. If you

would like to donate to the disaster relief efforts please



write your check payable to NCCC with “Venezuela Earthquakes” on the memo line. Gifts will be sent to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Church World Services.

(The International Council of Community Churches is a covenant member with CWS.)

THANKS FOR THE T.P.

Food insecurity in our community has reached unprecedented levels, and the food pantry at Christ Woodland United Methodist Church continues to respond to this growing need with compassion and hope. They provide food assistance to families in Ward 8 and throughout our surrounding community, ensuring that our neighbors have access to essential resources during difficult times. They operate a choice model in which clients go through the pantry and choose what they need.

The pantry is usually open every Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. However, during the summer month they're open every other week.

In addition to nutritious food, they distribute personal care items, cleaning supplies, and toilet paper—more than 80 rolls each week—to help meet basic household needs.

This past year brought both challenges and blessings. When SNAP benefits were reduced last November, the need in our neighborhood increased dramatically. In one week alone, they served more than 150 families. Through God's provision and the generosity of supporters like you, they had enough food for everyone who came through their doors. It was a powerful reminder of Jesus feeding the 5,000.

Last year, the pantry reached another milestone by providing more than 90 families with complete, holiday, dinner boxes. This made it easier for some families to gather around the table and celebrate the holiday with dignity and joy, and for some school children to have nutritious meals while on break, and away from school lunches.

The pantry now serves an average of over 80 families each week—more than 250



individuals. That's more than twice the number of people they served in 2024. According to the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, they distributed over 100,000 pounds of food and helped feed more than 8,000 people. None of this would be possible without your support.

NCCC's generosity helps stock their shelves, provide household essentials, and offer hope to families facing difficult circumstances. As food costs continue to rise, so do the expenses of operating the pantry. Their monthly foodbank bill now exceeds \$800, and they regularly purchase additional items that are unavailable through the foodbank to meet the needs of those they serve.

Thank you for partnering with us in this vital ministry. Because of your kindness and commitment, families are receiving encouragement, care, and hope, along with food and essential goods. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors.

NCCC donated 251 rolls of toilet paper, 6 rolls of paper towels and 2 boxfuls of individually packaged cereals and snacks, which FIT collected during TP Sundays.

(Communion continued from page 1)

when we got to eat them, I don't think it was ever about what we ate, but rather with whom we ate it. Whether we were having szalonna or just burgers and hot dogs, a good time was had by all. The adults sat around the table and conversed about who knows what while the children

(largely) took turns with Papa's magnifying glass to see who could burn the most ants. The food was delicious, the time we had together was a blast, and I was always sad to see those meals together come to an end.

Perhaps that's why those memories always held a special place in my heart, and I'm sure you all have similar memories that you hold close to heart as well.

Having said that, Katie and I would relish the opportunity to create such memories with you all. We're realizing that our plan of "Sunday nights for dinner" as a time to do fellowship with you all might have been a misfire. So, for the "Breaking Bread with Brad and Katie" sign-up sheet (which, I and the Personnel Committee hope you all will sign up for), the next iteration will be for "the week of" rather than the specific Sunday. With any luck, that will work out better for more of you all, because we would love to commune with and get to know you all better. So, if you're interested, I would invite you all to sign up and/or let Katie or me know so we can get something worked out. And before you ask, I promise, we don't have to have szalonna sandwiches (because I know so many of you were enticed by the thought of eating bacon grease-soaked sandwiches, right?). Regardless, we look forward to communing with you all, and also, blessings as you commune with family and friends this 4th of July.

- Pastor Brad

Gennesaret



Volunteers Needed
to serve/distribute
food

Saturday, July 11

10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Please see Betsy Davis if you can help

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Men's Lunch
Akron Family Restaurant
250 W. Market St.
Noon
Thursday, July 16



Book Club

Thank you for taking time to fill out the book club survey. The hope is that we can find more common ground with one another, to build relationships and gain a better understanding of Scripture. Every book may not be a *Peanut Butter Falcon*, but don't judge *The Lord of the Rings* by its cover. (I'm sure there's some good stuff on one or two of the pages.)



IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

The panel discussion presented during Mitzvah Day 2026, focused on our immigration system, what is happening now, and how we can all advocate for and support those impacted by it. The panel included Michael DeBruhl, a former Border Control Agent who is now running a shelter for immigrants on the border, Kathy Ress, Immigration Committee Chair for Akron Area Interfaith Council and Tania Neimer, former Federal Immigration Judge. They gave an insightful depiction of what is happening with the people not the politics.

If you missed the discussion go to this link to view it:

<https://boxcast.tv/view/mitzvah-day-immigration-panel-fzbpveuhjp1jcboz5a2i?>

Rev. Tom Bodie shared the story of an immigrant who was living in Northeast Ohio, who is now being held in the detention center in Youngstown. Walter Gonzalez-Sanchez was arrested last October, at his regularly-scheduled court date. He is not charged with a crime, a federal Magistrate has ordered that he be released, and yet he is still locked away from his son, who was three-months old when he was taken into custody.

On June 19, Rev. Tom Bodie became the only person, aside from his lawyer, to visit him. That was just two days after his son turned a year old.

Walter, who is legally blind, has suffered deterioration of his eyesight, because he has not seen his doctor. The emotional trauma, though, caused by the suffocating isolation has had the greatest impact. Walter says the detainees rarely interact with each other, and since he only speaks Spanish, he can't really enjoy watching television. A priest, who comes every other week, only provides mass in English. He has a Spanish New Testament but, can't read it because of his eyesight.

When asked about his spirits in such a place, he maintains that he will not bend. He is strongly intent on returning to his family. He told Tom that he keeps his spirits up by praying, convinced that God has a plan, that somehow these last nine months have a larger purpose. He was buoyed by the notion that so many people who are following his case, show up in court every time he goes before a judge.

AAIC's Family support group is helping with the family's bills, legal fees, food, and diapers. A hand-made quilt is being auctioned off to raise money. You can place a bid at akroninterfaith.org.

AKRON AREA INTERFAITH COUNCIL SUMMER POTLUCK *Save the Date*

PLEASE BRING A DISH TO SHARE!

TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026 | 5:30 PM

ISAK Pavilion, 152 E Steels Corners Rd, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44224



RSVP REQUIRED
isak.org/aaicpotluck