

THE MESSENGER

JUNE 2026

DR. FRUIT CUPS, Ed.D.

It was the fall of 2021. I woke up one night with a pain all through my right side that just wouldn't go away, even with painkillers, and this pain persisted throughout the following day. Concerned about what might be going on and having been told by a clinician at the nearest urgent care (about an hour's drive from our house) that they wouldn't be able to help, I ended up driving the following evening to the nearest emergency room (about 45 minutes' drive in the other direction) only to find out that I had gall stones. Until such a time that I would be able to have my gall bladder removed (February 2022), I was placed on a "low/no fat diet." This meant no more hot dogs, non-low-fat yogurt, but above all else, no chocolate.

As luck would have it, about the same time as my diagnosis, I was starting in a cohort for "rural pastors" in the Presbytery of Arkansas. It met for about a week every other month, but before we met for the first time, they needed to know if any of us had dietary restrictions. So, I told the director of the program

that I couldn't have "greasy foods or high-fat desserts like chocolate." Wouldn't you know: every dessert for every meeting we had was chocolate. Chocolate mousse, chocolate cake, chocolate ice cream; basically, if it was a dessert that you could get in chocolate flavor, we had it. However, to their credit, they did honor my dietary restriction and gave me the sole "fruit cup" every night, something that, as you might imagine, I wasn't the most enthusiastic about (at least not at first). The running joke of "Brad's fruit cup" picked up steam rather quickly, though, and even I laughed about it by the end of that first week, excitedly announcing "No more fruit cups for me" at the
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NEW COVENANT
COMMUNITY CHURCH



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Akron, OH 44313
330.253.6989
office@covenantakron.org
COVENANTAKRON.ORG

UPCOMING MEETINGS

JUNE Governing Board

June 22
6:00 PM

Fellowship Committee

June 9
10:30 AM

Finance Committee

June 16 – 11:00 AM

Mission Committee

June 16 – 1:30 PM

FIT

July 2 – 1:30 PM

Worship Committee

July 6 – 4:30 PM

From the President's Pen

I'd love to share an update from Emma in Spain! She flew into Madrid and took a bus up to Valladolid where she is staying on the outskirts of town with her host mom, Gemma. She was very nervous to fly (she's only ever flown once when she was 2 years old and didn't remember it) but she ended up being okay.

Once she realized she knew a couple friends on the trip, most of her nerves melted away!

She's loving her host mom and loving town- she started classes on Monday and said campus is beautiful. She's enjoying the daily "Siesta" and said the food and coffee have been delicious, but they eat dinner very late, near 10:00-10:30 p.m.!

She's enjoying getting to take public transport and walking around downtown to meet up with other students to explore.

Please continue to keep her in your prayers. She leaves Spain for Greece on Saturday, June 13th.

- Jenni,

Governing Board President



A THANKFUL UPDATE

First and foremost, on behalf of Katie and myself, thank you everyone for your support for the two of us as Katie underwent and recovered from surgery. The food we received was delicious and we have asked many of you for the recipes to what you sent our way. What we didn't anticipate, though, was the sheer amount of food we received. It lasted us for three additional weeks, which was even more of a blessing, since Katie had her ups and downs in terms of pain and energy going into that following week especially. It's great how God's will makes things work that way, isn't it?

As for a quick update on Katie's condition: her drainage tubes are out, and her post-op appointments have all gone swimmingly. Both surgeons were very happy with how quickly she has healed up and with the biopsy results (all clean margins). Having said that, because of Katie's risk for cancer in general, she will still get a port put in for her course of chemo treatments. However, while it will be a 12-week course of treatments, she will only need treatment every third week. We have already arranged rides for her to get her port in on June 10th and for her first chemo treatment on the 19th. That being said, she has expressed interest in having meals provided on her appointment dates. Look for a sign-up sheet on the table to sign up for those dates.



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first meeting after my surgery.

So, why do I tell you this story? I tell it because of a powerful lesson I learned from those fruit cups (hence the title). You see, for all the fruit that was in those cups, they were predominantly melons (more specifically, honeydew and cantaloupes), a category of fruit that I strongly disliked up to that point. However, I knew deep down that I wouldn't be having any other type of dessert before the surgery, and so I was faced with a decision: no dessert until the surgery, or eat the fruit cups and learn to like them. As you can probably guess, I chose the latter option, making it a point to try and find something redeemable about those fruit cups and the fruit therein. Likewise, while I at first felt singled out and (admittedly) really peeved that they kept giving everyone else these delectable desserts as if to taunt me, I made a conscious effort to try and see how they were trying to look out for me, not offend me. Fortunately, it worked on both accounts.

Every time they brought out a fruit cup for me, I felt a little less offended than the last time, and eventually that "offense" switched to a feeling of "love" (the jokes about "Brad's fruit cups" definitely helped, too). Likewise, in trying to find a redeemable quality in those melons that would allow me to at least think "This is palatable" if not "This is really good," I learned not only how to tolerate these fruits I previously picked out of fruit salads sans remorse, I actually started to like them. In other words, once I stopped looking for "the bad" in the fruit and in the situation as a whole, I was better able to see those parts

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that were redeemable, that were "good." So, too, is this the case with people.

If we only ever choose to see "the bad" in those persons or groups that have hurt us in the past or who are simply different from us, then that's all we will be able to see. It's only in our choosing to see the "good" in those who have hurt us that we open ourselves to being graceful, merciful, forgiving; in a word, "loving." However, I realize (and research proves) that this is much easier said than done. Christena Cleveland in her book *Disunity in Christ* points out that, in categorizing someone as "bad" or as "them," we therein reduce those "others" into one-dimensional caricatures, causing us to miss out on opportunities to get to know them for the multi-dimensional persons they actually are. Likewise, as Donna Hicks discusses in her book *Dignity*, studies have shown how the indignities (i.e. the emotional wounds) we suffer carry far more weight than the ways we are honored by others, even those who have hurt us. Only in healing those wounds are we able to begin to see the way we are honored by others. That said, choosing to see the "good" in others, especially those who have hurt us, even without their knowing it, is very much a choice, and one only we can make for ourselves. We must choose to forgive those who have hurt us, to see them as "good" and as "worthy of forgiveness." In other words, we must choose to see others not for the one bad thing they did, but for the "good" that is their multifaceted-ness and their bearing the divine image. Once we see a person as "good," we see them as "worthy" of having a conversation with, of consulting

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FELLOWSHIP NEWS

GREASE

Porthouse Theatre Thursday, June 25

For those attending the showing of *Grease* at Porthouse Theatre, please meet there at 6:30 p.m. for supper. A few of us will be there earlier to get tables together. Plates, napkins, cups, eating utensils, and wine will be provided. Bring your own beverage if you want something else. Please bring serving utensils for your food contribution. Tickets are held at "Will Call" and will be distributed that evening.

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on this world's problems, of our being vulnerable (i.e. able to be harmed, but also able to develop those deeper relationships) with them.

Who knew a cup of melons, grapes, and the occasional strawberry could be so insightful, right?

Book Club

"What do you want to read?"

Sunday, be sure to take a book club survey when you pick up a bulletin. Worship Committee wants to know what you already enjoy reading so they can tailor this worship experience to you. Because that's the goal, please be honest with your answers, and note that you don't have to put your name on it.

ON THE GRILL

Friday, August 28th, Jackie Horton has invited us to her home for an end-of-summer barbecue. We'll get together at 5:30 p.m. Planning for this event will occur at the June 9th Fellowship meeting.

Happy 100th

Here's a slice of the celebration of Mary Lindsey's 100th birthday celebration. She didn't want a big to do, just time with family at her favorite restaurant, Blue Canyon Kitchen & Tavern in Twinsburg.
Happy birthday, Mary!



Men's Lunch
Akron Family Restaurant
250 W. Market St.
Noon
Thursday, June 18

Gennesaret

Volunteers Needed
to serve/distribute
food
Saturday
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM



Please see Betsy Davis if you can help

TP SUNDAY

During the month of June, FIT will collect toilet paper to stock Christ Woodland's Food Pantry. Please bring your contribution on any Sunday and place them on the pew at the back of the Sanctuary.

On June 21st, Margret McCans, one of the food pantry organizers, will join us for worship. She will tell us about food pantry operations, volunteers, and the people they serve. Come for worship and learn about a mission project that serves our neighborhood.



HUNGER WALK UPDATE



This year's Hunger Walk has been deemed a great success, despite a few glitches. Around 175-180 people participated in the Akron Area Interfaith Council event. Many started the two mile walk well after 3:00 p.m. The Akron event raised \$22,547.45 for the Akron Canton Regional Foodbank. The Stark County event raised another \$13,149, with their walk occurring at the same time. An additional \$230, which came in too late to be included with last year's Walk, was included in this year's total.

Once again, NCCC led all congregations/groups in contributions with a total of \$5,352, which included \$300 from the Mission Committee. A big thank you to all— members, friends of the congregation, and relatives—for your continued support for families in need of food in these uncertain times. We'll do it again next year on Sunday, May 2nd. Take down that date!



Lake Erie Area Fellowship of Community Churches

The Lake Erie Fellowship of the International Council of Community Churches held its spring meeting Saturday, May 16th at the Historic People's Community Church of Detroit, Michigan. The regional fellowship is made up of churches in Ohio, Michigan, and western Pennsylvania. Fifty-five people attended and represented four Ohio congregations and three from Michigan, plus Rev. Bruce Merton, I.C.C.C.'s Executive Director.

Rev. Cassandra Phipps gave a presentation in the morning on current concerns in mental health and the treatment of mental health issues. A worship service followed the morning presentation. Rev. Rashard Hollman delivered a fine sermon. He has been the interim pastor for the past year, and all signs point to his election as the next senior minister of People's Church. He plans to attend I.C.C.C.'s annual conference in July, which was positive news for us all.

Following a wonderful lunch, provided by the good folks of the host church, the business session was called to order chaired by Mike Mehan, President of the fellowship. The agenda included:

- A. Bob Harris, Treasurer, reported the fellowship holds a \$1,400 balance. This prompted three proposals:
 1. Janet Burch proposed writing to congregations that have withdrawn from the Council and encouraging them to return. Bob Harris added sending a floral piece with the letter. After debate, the motion was passed.
 2. Winnie West, from Berea proposed the Fellowship support a program through Church World Service, that buys farm animals here and abroad.



2. The fellowship voted to support two packages of sheep and goats at \$265 each. This mission project will be discussed further at Conference.
3. It was decided to delay giving our traditional donation to Council until we meet again at Conference.

B. Finally, we shared our appreciation for Rob Ashmall, who was ordained into the Christian ministry on May 23rd. Rob's dad is Don Ashmall, former Council executive and pastor of Bridgeport Community Church in Michigan. Rob is completing his seminary work at Methesco, the Methodist Seminary at Delaware, Ohio.

The business meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m., with everyone grateful for a fine meeting and wonderful fellowship.

-Rev. Phil Smith

The Immigration Process

Crisis; Concerns – A Mitzvah Day Panel



Kathy Ress
AAIC Immigration
Committee Chair



Michael DeBruhl
Former Border Control



Tania Neimer
Former Immigration Judge

Moderated by Rabbi Joshua M. Brown

A conversation with immigration experts on how the system has changed, what's happening now, and how we can support those impacted and advocate for reform.

**Sunday
June 7**

3:00PM - 4:30PM

**Temple Israel
Akron**

91 Springside Dr.



Join us for other projects in
the community



mitzvahdayakron.com



HALO exists to develop students as servant leaders by recognizing specific overlooked needs within the community and illuminating the selfless example of the heroes of Flight 93 as our model.

CLEAR OUT SALE

SHOP UNIQUE TREASURES AND GIVE BACK TO THE HALO FOUNDATION

SATURDAY, JUNE 6TH | 10 AM - 3 PM | 134 WESTERN AVE

ODDS, ENDS, AND GALA PRIZES PRICED TO MOVE FOR A GREAT CAUSE
KICK OFF THE SUMMER WITH FELLOWSHIP, FINDS, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

HALO STORAGE

CLEAR-OUT



The HALO Foundation is clearing out the back room and making space for future programs and community initiatives. Over the years we have accumulated a wide variety of odds and ends, household items, décor, tools, toys, and leftover gala prize items, and now it is time to sort through everything and pass great deals along to the community. This is a great opportunity to find fun and unique items while also supporting The HALO Foundation's ongoing community programs and outreach efforts. HALO staff and volunteers will be on hand throughout the event to answer questions about the organization, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and future initiatives. In addition, if you were unable to attend the dedication of our Blessing Box initiative, this will also be a wonderful opportunity to visit the site, learn more about the project, and bring a food or pantry donation to help us continue maintaining this important community resource.

We hope to see you there as we kick off the summer season with community, fellowship, and support for The HALO Foundation.



Home
Decor



Appliances



Travel Bags



Toys

June 6th, 2026 @10:00–3:00

134 Western Avenue | info@HaloFoundation.com

