**Annual Report**

**FIA Grants**

The witness of the Faith in Action Grants Program is more than just a funding initiative—it is a living legacy of congregational generosity and justice. By honoring the past, responding to the present, and investing in the future, we ensure that the church remains an embodiment of Christ in the world.

The Faith in Action Grants Program provides financial resources through:

- Direct Community Service designated funding to essential outreach initiatives such as food security, housing assistance, emergency relief, and direct community support programs.
- Prophetic Community Engagement funding for congregational initiatives focused on advocacy, justice, and systemic change.
- Additional Strategic Investment for strategic local community engagement initiatives aligned with the association's mission and long-term goals.

In 2026, the Faith in Action Grants team met the challenge of reviewing a record number of applicants who requested a total dollar amount ($81,340) that was almost twice what was available. ($43,244)

Of the twenty-four applicants, sixteen received funding at some level of their request and two were determined to more closely align with Church Development and Vitality Grant initiative.

FIA funding supports these partners in ministry and their life-giving ministries
Archwood UCC - Dennison Hot Meals Program
Chatham Community Church - Blessing Box Cleaning Supplies
Church in Silver Lake - Grace Park/Serve the People
Church of the Redeemer, Westlake - Blessing Box
Claridon UCC - Red Tulip Substance Abuse
Federated Church, Chagrin Falls - CLC Building a Stronger Community, One Story at a Time Video Project
First UCC, Andover - Back to School Bash
First UCC, New Philadelphia - EQUIDAD
InterReligious Task Force - Migrant Accompaniment, Support and Defense
Middleburg Hts. UCC - Freezer
Newbridge Place - Resident Activities and Community Engagement Fund
Old South - Witness for Justice Ministry PRIDE 2026
Olmsted Community Church - Refugee
Olmsted Community Church - Blessing Box
Pilgrim Congregational - Community Worship for LGBTQ+ Holy Days
Strongsville UCC - Free Lunch for All
The team is building on foundational guidance of Michael Howard and is reviewing forms and process for the upcoming year.

Grants Team Members: Larry Becker, Chair; Rich General; Patsy Harris; Marty Culbertson; Ellen Kaliber; and Rev. Kevan Franklin.

**SPIRE Center**

The purpose of the SPIRE Center is to provide resources, inspiration and training to church leaders, members, pastors, faith explorers, and all those hearing the call to be part of the creative labor and the new birth the Church is experiencing in our evolving world.

Through regular on-line offerings, the SPIRE Center fosters dialogue and engagement in Living Water and beyond. Attendance ranges from 10 – 30 zoom participants.

The 2026 Sessions were:

- **Regional Discernment Project**, a panel discussion with Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott, Rev. Dr. Dave Long Higgins and Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen
- **Treasurer's Workshop**, facilitated by Machelle Miller
- **Place Based Ministry**, facilitated by Rev. Michael Howard
- **Financial Integrity: Protecting Your Church Assets** featured CPA Pete Metzloff, Director of Finance for Medina UCC, Congregational.
- **Do's and Don'ts of Effective Ministry Assessment** featured Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, of the MESA: Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization Team.
- **Thriving in Retirement** featured retired General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ and former New York Conference Minister, The Rev. Geoffrey Black.
- **LWA Exploratory Team Report** led by Rev. Monica Dawkins-Smith
- **Understanding Neurodiversity in Church** featuring First Congregational Church of Hudson - Youth Ministries: Rev. Connor Filkins and Allie Factor

Submitted by
Rev. MiMi Chamberlin
Bridge Minister for Faith and Action