



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Brian Burke, Interim Pastor

379 South Main Street, Amherst, Ohio 44001

440.988.9148

www.AmherstUCC.org

Office@AmherstUCC.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Over 322 years of ministry will join together when Congregational United Church of Christ of Amherst and First Congregational United Church of Christ of Lorain merge on July 1.

Both congregations voted overwhelmingly on May 7 to become one. While the ministry will be centered in the Amherst building at 379 S. Main, the merged congregation will continue the Lorain congregation's passion for ministering to people of need.

Over two years ago, First Congregational Lorain began a formal process to change its course and determine a new future. This process ultimately identified Amherst Congregational as its preferred merger partner, leading to the May vote.

"Each congregation brings different gifts and strengths to the other," said the Rev. Brian Burke, who will serve as the interim minister of the merged congregation. "The Amherst congregation is filled with youth and vitality while the Lorain congregation brings a passion for mission outside the church walls. With similar worship styles and core values, the merged congregation will thrive."

Amherst Congregational was founded in 1840 and still worships in its original 1843 church building. In 1872, First Congregational Lorain came into existence. The two historic congregations will choose a new name to reflect its vision and ministry, and will retain its affiliation with the United Church of Christ.

"The transition teams of both congregations have looked at church mergers that succeeded, as well as others that experienced significant challenges or failed," Burke reflected. "They are doing their best to incorporate the positive aspects of these experiences and avoid the pitfalls to insure the smoothest possible transition."

The final worship service of the Lorain congregation in its sanctuary will be on Sunday, June 25, with the merged congregation holding its first official worship service on July 2, 178 years to the day that the Amherst congregation was founded.

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For further information:

James Park, Transition Chair
First Congregational UCC Lorain
jpark@pandicpas.com
Office: 440-277-9020

Marcia Miller, Moderator
Congregational UCC Amherst
believe44001@gmail.com
Cell: 440-935-4006

Rev. Brian Burke, Interim Minister
pastor@amherstucc.org
Office: 440-988-9148
Cell: 440-225-4458