

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
13740 Pearl Road
Strongsville, Ohio 44136
Rev. Rebecca Stephenson, Pastor



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Worship at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday

APRIL 2013 NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Visioning

Recently many people both inside and outside the congregation have been telling me how exciting it is that the church has become so active. We are famous for our great dinners and Thrift Shop. Now I am hearing about things like the Open House and the exciting new worship services on Sunday evening. The Retreat and the Variety Show are also well received. The Mission and Outreach Committee has begun to reach out both locally and internationally. It is about to sponsor a child in India and is also looking at local missions. New Bible studies and other activities have begun to revive our community of faith. The recent approval to purchase the adjoining property with an eye for church growth has caused some in the community to ask what's going on at old Strongsville UCC. My answer has always been that God is doing something wonderful in the congregation.

With all these new and wonderful changes comes lots of hard work. Throughout our recent past we have been operating as a church of the 1950's might operate. What I mean by this is that in the 50's we were one of a few churches of significant size in our town. Persons would join the church because we were the established church and offered activities for the family. Often little needed to be done to keep the church going. Members would come and participate simply by osmosis, it seemed. Little thought was given on how to reach the unchurched because we were doing so well. Since that time the community has changed. Today we are no longer the primary church in town. Many new churches have begun to reach larger numbers of new people and those who are less than satisfied with their spiritual connections in traditional churches. Many traditional churches, like us, find themselves struggling regarding members and finances, while new congregations seem to be able to attract many new members.

In order for us to move forward, we need to have a Vision of what God is calling us to be in the world—a clear understanding of our Mission in this time and place, and some measurable Goals that we can work toward as we seek to be the Church. Vision calls us all to see where we are going as the Body of Christ. Without a Vision we simply wander in the wilderness, waiting for something to happen. Without a Vision we cannot ever hope to go anywhere.

Mission is the basic understanding of how we are to accomplish the Vision. An example of a Vision is "to be the living embodiment of Christ's Love in our community and beyond." The Mission then could be something like "to develop passionate followers of Christ through the Celebration of Worship, the Excitement of God's Word, the Blessing of God's Healing, the Rewards of Service, the Honoring of God's Creation, and the Joy of Fellowship, where all are welcome at God's Table."

Goals would then be the measurable things we can do to help bring about the Vision by way of our Mission. Examples might be "increase average worship attendance by x number of people, increase our outreach ministry by..., form a youth group and have it grow by..., establish new worship services..., increase church school attendance by purchasing a bus..." or many other goals. These goals must be measurable over a specific time. Increasing worship attendance might be over a one-, two- or five-year timeframe.

We must also do our homework in preparation for this process. We need to look at community demographic and future trends. We should all try to read some inspirational works like what Joyce has been distributing. However, what is most important is that as many of us as possible participate in the process. We must also do this with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us. I know it is a lot to ask; but after the initial work, we can begin to steer a course that will lead us toward an exciting future for Christ in our community.

To cast our Vision, define our Mission, and set our Goals, please come on Saturday, April 6, and Saturday, April 20, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to High Point Clubhouse, 17847 Brandywine Drive in Strongsville. Food will be available in the morning, and lunch will also be provided. These meetings are open to all members, and your attendance is highly encouraged. We sincerely hope you will join us on April 6 and 20.



"Danger, Danger, Will Robinson"

These are the words of the robot to young Will Robinson on the old TV series, *Lost in Space*. If you remember this, you must be as "seasoned" as I am. Whenever the

robot sensed danger, he tried to warn the family he served. I want to write today about something I am sensing in our church family.

Since I have come to be part of this WONDERFUL church family, we have begun many new things—Bible and Breakfast, Lenten Services; and a renewed emphasis on committee work has increased greatly. New people are coming, and over 30 people have attended the Journey in Faith class. We are talking about reactivating the Youth Group and increasing Sunday School. These are exciting times, and these are a hint of things to come. I want to sincerely thank everyone who has been so supportive of me and these new programs. I know many have gone the extra mile to help make these things happen.

However, there is a danger. The danger is that as we grow, we continue to function under the idea that everyone must and will be active in all church things. When a church is small, everyone must be involved in EVERYTHING for the church to be the church. But as a church grows, it becomes more difficult for everyone to be involved in everything. Before long there are so many activities that it is physically impossible to do everything—a person would have to be in three or four places at once or live at the church. This level of commitment, while noble, often puts unbearable burden on the member or the member's family. While I appreciate all the support, please DO NOT feel that you must do it all. As a matter of fact, trying to do everything is neither good for you, your family, nor the church. Instead, please pray about what God would have you do, what gifts He has given you to do the task, and the needs of your family and the church. It is far better for someone to take on one task and do it well, preserving his/her health and the goodwill of the family, than to try and do it all and end up either not fulfilling the job, becoming ill, or experiencing family problems that cause him/her to step away totally from being active or to leave the church.

I have felt and heard it said by others “unless we do such and such, it won't happen.” This might possibly be true. I must admit that sometimes things did not happen because someone didn't step up to do them. I then ask the question: Was it important to happen, or was it God's time to happen? Sometimes it is important, sometimes it is not. Often if some activity or program fails one year, someone new will revive it the next. Sometimes what we do is simply out of tradition that is no longer meaningful. An example of this is a church in a retirement community bemoaning the fact that there is no youth group when youth are not even present in the area. What may be better is to start a younger than 100 group for people who are youthful in spirit, or support a youth ministry in another community. If it's meant to be, God will bless it; and it will happen.

In all honesty, while it is necessary for the majority to be active in most everything in a small church, it becomes detrimental when a church chooses to grow. New persons need to be part of the ministry of the church. They need to participate in some meaningful ministry that helps them fulfill their covenant with God. When we try to do it all, we hinder their growth. It is better to encourage and include others, when possible, by letting go of some of the responsibility. I applaud those who can find ways to accomplish this and lead others to pick up the mantle. When we grow, there will be many new responsibilities for others to handle.

The Special Events Committee has begun to search for persons to lead and be part of events. Persons are not being asked to be involved in everything, but to commit to just one event. Adult Bible study leaders will be asked to lead for a 12-week time period, not for all eternity. Communications Team members will be asked to do one form of communion—web page, Facebook, news articles, or signage—but not everything. Lenten evening services should be attended by those who like that service. The evening service counts as Sunday worship, and no one is expected to be at both the morning and the evening services. Bible studies are all optional, unless you're the leader. Making banners, bringing in butterflies, cooking dinners—the list goes on and on—are all optional. DANGER, DANGER, (*fill in the blank*), burnout is likely if you try to do it all.

I know that if I try to be involved in every committee/ every dinner/ every activity, sing with the choir, visit all persons in their homes, and cook dinner for everyone at my home too often, I would soon collapse from exhaustion, not to mention lose a husband. God does not want any of us to be the savior; Christ already accomplished that. We are just to be a part of the body, working with the other parts of the body to do God's work. As we grow, and we will, we will all become involved in new and exciting ways. Strongsville UCC is a great church and will become even greater as we open ourselves and the church to those God is sending our way.

Once again I say THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE AND ARE DOING. Your work and support are what have helped make our church to be a vital congregation for God. Let us continue to reach others for the Risen Christ.

If you would like to talk about your participation in the church, please feel free to call or meet with me.

Pastor Becky



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY – APRIL 7 – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon: *On the Road to Emmaeus*

Scriptures: Luke 24:13-27

Liturgist: Dale Hawk

Acolytes: Alex Metivier and Aylah Purdum

Greeter: Linda Plain

Nursery: Vicky Masuga

Coffee Hour: Sarah Hawk

SUNDAY – APRIL 14 – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon: *How Hot Can It Get?*

Scriptures: Daniel 3:1-7

Liturgist: Lora Rung

Acolytes: Gina Gigliotti and Lauren Knotts

Greeters: Lloyd and Barbara Bridle

Nursery: Sharon Heinrich

Coffee Hour: Rachel Zielinski

SUNDAY – APRIL 21 – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon: *The Mission Continues*

Scriptures: Acts 9:36-43

Liturgist: Jim Studer

Acolytes: Michael Fischer and Jenna Miller

Greeters: Greg and Ingrid Dickson

Nursery: Barb Fraunfelder

Coffee Hour: Barb Fraunfelder

*Pipe Organ Restoration Fund
All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Breakfast
9:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon*



SUNDAY – APRIL 28 – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon and Scriptures: *To Be Determined*

Liturgist: Sarah Hawk

Acolytes: Jordyn Miller and Lisa Pogozeleski

Greeter: Jim Studer

Nursery: Lora Rung

Coffee Hour: Sharon Heinrich

Strongsville UCC

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Fundraiser for the Pipe Organ Restoration Fund

Sunday – April 21, 2013

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

All You Can Eat !

Pancakes, Sausage, Scrambled Eggs,
Coffee, Tea, Milk, Juice

\$6.00 Adults \$3.00 Children under 10

iPod Nano and Gift Card Raffles



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's Fellowship will meet on Wednesday, April 3, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. in the Parlor. Our church member, Tom Gaumer, will present a program on Medicare.

Devotions will be given by Betty Craig, who is also our hostess. Please bring your own lunch; dessert and beverages will be provided. All ladies are welcome!

Our Spring Project will again be to fill 60 tote bags for the Brookside children, ages 5 to 12. The finished tote bag size is 12" by 12". Donations of any of the items listed below or a monetary donation so we can purchase items would be appreciated. **We need these NEW items by Sunday, April 21.** Please place items in the box in the Gathering Area. Monetary donations should be placed in an envelope marked "Brookside Project" and left in the church office.

Please do not bring in **family-size** items.

soap (facial size or small)
shampoo
deodorant
toothbrushes
toothpaste (small tubes)
combs or brushes
wash cloths
pens
sidewalk chalk
small tissue packets
small cars or trucks
decks of cards
books
activity books or coloring books
blowing bubbles—small bottles
small stuffed toys
bracelets

We do not need pencils or crayons at this time.

Thank you for your support!



WE'VE FOUND A NEW FRIEND IN INDIA!

The Mission and Outreach Committee's long wait for a child from the Child Sponsorship Program, Global Ministries, has ended with good news: a charming-looking girl, Keerthana, six years of age, from the village of Karigiri, about three miles from the Family Village Farm and School in Villore, India. Her brief bio describes her as "a smart, cheerful girl, very social, and enjoys spending time with her classmates. She always completes her homework on time and earns good grades. Her father is a painter." (He did not attend school as a child due to his poverty, and he says he wants to educate his daughter so that she will not suffer like him.) Thus, with our congregation entering into this sponsorship, little Keerthana will continue her studies and escape a life of poverty.

Ha Bennett and Erv Koch chose Keerthana recently from among three other children available during a meeting with the Program Manager, Linda Lawrence, on March 6 at the offices of Global Ministries at the UCC Headquarters in Cleveland. Previously, we received the following letter (abbreviated) dated February 19, 2013, from the principal of the School, Mrs. Vatsala Vijayakumar:

"Greetings from all of us at King's Matriculation School... We are overwhelmed with gratitude to know that you (are part of) our school so that our children will be able to continue their education. By investing in the lives of these children, your group will be giving a child access to a truly bright future. King's Matriculation School provides an excellent education to the outlying villages that are from poor families...

They are mostly illiterates and they want to give their children a good education. Our children come from economically disadvantaged families...

Your gift will cover their tuition fee, textbooks and notebooks, papers for all tests and exams, pens, pencils, erasers, ink, etc., for one year... Due to the failure of the monsoons over the past few years, the parents have found it difficult to pay for the children's tuition. May God bless you for investing in a young person's mind."

We have agreed to sponsor Keerthana for \$30.00 a month, 100% of which goes toward the school's expenses for her. We hope to hear from her, because she may use English as her second language. The Mission and Outreach Committee will soon put together a large poster showing pictures of the School and little Keerthana (in color). In existence since 1996, Global Ministries is part of the mission outreach of the Disciples of Christ (Christian) and the United Church of Christ. One Great Hour of Sharing and OCWM monies help fund the Global Ministries program in close to 40 countries of the world. We truly look forward to the next chapter in this fascinating story.

Mission and Outreach Committee

SERVING MEALS AT ZION UCC

Now the First Saturday of the Month !

Our church continues to serve meals to the poor, but **our date has changed from the fourth Saturday of the month to the first Saturday of the month.**

Our next day to serve is Saturday, **April 6**. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area. Please arrange carpooling with others who will be serving on the same day. Thank you for participating in this outreach.



STEEPLE LIGHTING

To light the steeple for a week, the minimum donation is \$5.00. Donation forms are on the bulletin board in Pilgrim Hall. Multiple donations for the same week will be accepted.



Week of March 17, 2013

*Happy Birthday on March 17 to Natalia and Mia Hill
With love, Grammy*

*Happy Birthday on March 15 to Dan Masuga—
The Bestest Son-in-Law Ever!
Love, Banny Loler*

Week of March 24, 2013

*Happy Birthday to My Granddaughter, Jessica
Barb Fraunfelder*

Week of March 31, 2013

*In Remembrance of My Father, Nicholas Paul's, Birthday
Gary Paul*

*In Loving Memory of Alfred R. Graves
Edith Graves*

*In Loving Memory of Our Parents—
Elsie Ruman, Albert Ruman, and Robert Heinrich
Jim and Sharon*

*In Loving Memory of Our Father and Grandfather,
Richard Saylor
The McKenzie and Fischer Family*

In Sympathy

Our love and prayers are extended in sympathy to the following three families on their recent losses:

To the Gaumer and Metivier families on the passing of Judy's mother and Sharon's grandmother, Betty Fox, on February 25. A memorial service was held March 9 at First Presbyterian Church in Ashland, Ohio.

To the family of David Hoch on the occasion of his passing on March 7. The funeral took place March 11 at Jardine's. David was a former member of our church, and his father John served as our church custodian.

To the family of Ruth Taylor on the occasion of her passing on March 17. Ruth was a church friend, who had been attending our church the last few months with her daughter. A memorial service was held March 21 at Jardine's.

THANK YOU

I want to thank my church family for all the calls and cards that I got on my birthday. I was blessed, and I thank you all.
Nadine Burnand

Thank you to all who attended, to all who participated in, and to all who helped with the Variety Show on March 2. It was a fun evening for all!

Our thanks for all the cards and messages of condolence on the death of our mother and grandmother. Your support has been very much appreciated.
The Gaumer and Metivier Families

Thank you for all the acts of kindness extended to me after Vic passed away. I shall always be grateful. God surely is very pleased, because you are "Doers of The Word".
Sincerely, Karen Rak

Thank you for the cards and best wishes after my recent surgery. A thank you also to the Women's Fellowship for their gift. It's good to be up and back to church again.
Bill Ritchie

OUR PRAYER LIST

Hospitals no longer provide names of members who are patients. If you or a family member would like a visit, please call the church at (440) 238-6697.

Long-Term Care or Homebound Members: Bill Betz at Chapel Hill Community in Canal Fulton, Nadine Burnand, Edith Graves at Century Oak Care Center, Debbie Krause, Louetha Rieth at Sunrise Assisted Living of Dresher in PA, Erla Mae Schultz

Church Family: Shirley Brand at Falling Water, Roger Citino, Nancy Cochran, Janet Kato, Betty Kovach at Parkside Villa, Bill Ritchie, Elizabeth Snook

Extended Church Family: Betty Berk (mother of Mary Mortus), Zachary Crouse (grandson of Barbara Morgan), Audrey and Gene Curry (parents of Pam Keenen), Victor DiChiro (father-in-law of Rob Wentz), Donna Fargo (mother of Sally Herzog), Ruth Fraley (relative of the Jannsohn family), Shirley Gerecke (friend of Frank and Pat Jefferis), Janine Kaltenstein (cousin of Vicky Masuga), Phyllis Keenen (mother of Bruce), Erik Kratky (friend of Sarah Hawk), Cyrila Kribel (friend of Betty Craig), Judy Mackin (friend of Len and Bev Lane), Shirley Piotrowski (friend of Marti and Ed Powers), Rick Pfuhl (former custodian of Strongsville UCC), James Smith (brother of Katie Renfro), Barbara Sommers (mother of Sheri Martin), Sarah Spiegler (niece of Betty Craig), Trudie Taylor (sister of Karen Morgan), Mike Thutt (friend of Louie Gigliotti), Bob Tomko (cousin of Ed Sobek), Bob Wentz (father of Larry)

Please call the church with updates, 440-238-6697.

SPRING PLANT SALE

It's time to start planning for our Spring Plant Sale! Before we know it, spring flowers will be blooming! What a beautiful sight to look forward to! So as you begin to think about your yard and what you may plant, please keep this fundraiser in mind.

We are planning to have the same flowers as last year – flats of Begonias, Impatiens, Marigolds, and Petunias. We'll add Geraniums, sold in six to a pack. The 10" hanging baskets, Begonias, Impatiens, Fuchsias, Boston Ferns will again be available along with Geraniums. There will be 4" pots of Geraniums, and 5" pots of Gerber Daisies and New Guinea Impatiens. Delivery will be in mid-May by Maria Gardens to our church.

More details will be in the April newsletter along with a pre-order form. **Please consider purchasing your spring flowers from our sale and supporting our church.** Also, please pass along the idea to family and friends! The flowers are very colorful and will look nice in individual pots or planted in beds around your home or trees.

The profit is spent on church expenses as decided by the Official Board. Last year our profit was \$556.75!

If you have questions, please contact Barb Fraunfelder at 440-331-3673.



FROM OFFICIAL BOARD



The Roast Pork Dinner on February 23 made a profit of \$1,574.69. Thank you again for all for your support!

Congratulations to the three door prize winners of the free oil changes at RadAir:

The Hawk Family, June Bricker, Cliff Murphy

THE THRIFT SHOP

Spring is coming to the Thrift Shop in April! April 4 will be a special bag sale. Stop in and fill a brown paper bag for only \$5. Anything too large for a bag will be half off!



After the bag sale, **the shop will be closed on April 11 for a thorough "Spring Cleaning" and then will reopen with all new Spring merchandise on Thursday, April 18.** Anyone who would like to help clean or restock should contact Lola Millhoane or Betty Bushea for information on times. Everyone is welcome!

If you are not on the Thrift Shop email list, please let us know so we can include you. One email a week will let you know what's on sale and the shop's hours.

We hope to see you Thursday, April 4, for the bag sale and Thursday, April 18, for the debut of the new Spring items. Please remember: The Thrift Shop will be **closed on April 11** and will **reopen on April 18.**



JOURNEY IN FAITH CLASSES

Monday Daytime
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evenings
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Beginning the first week in April 2013, Pastor Becky will teach two Journey in Faith Classes simultaneously. The Monday morning class will begin on April 1; and the Wednesday evening class, on April 3. Each class will last for 12 weeks.

For the Monday morning class, please bring a lunch for yourself.

To register, please either sign up on the sheet on the board in the Gathering Area, or call the Church Office at (440) 238-6697.

