

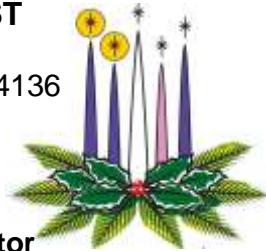


THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, Ohio 44136
(440) 238-6697

StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com
StrongsvilleUCC.com

Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

Sunday, December 10, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.
Second Sunday of Advent



WELCOME!

We are grateful you chose to worship with us this morning. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

† Please stand as you are comfortable.

PRELUDE "Wachtet Auf" Bach

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Joyce Reed

INTROIT "Emmanuel" McGee

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Listen to what the Lord our God says to us:

People: Peace is God's hope for us; salvation is God's gift to us.

Leader: See what the Lord our God reveals to us:

People: Righteousness is the path to the kingdom; faithfulness is the highway we build.

Leader: Tell what the Lord our God asks us to speak:

People: Prepare God's way; the Christ is coming to redeem us.

† HYMN 255 "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

LIGHTING THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE (LOVE)

Colette Emerson & Karen Bates

Leader: Jesus taught his disciples, saying, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." This message reminds us that God's Love for each one of us never fails.

People: In a world where sometimes it can be so difficult to truly love one another as God has loved us, we thank God for this season of hope and love.

Leader: We are all beloved children of the Most High. Today and every day, in our words and in the way we live our lives, Love wins. Knowing and believing in the power of Love, we light the Second Advent Candle – the Candle of Love, the Love Jesus has for all people.

People: Jesus' promise of God's unconditional Love illuminates our souls. As we light the Candle of Love, may this light in our souls shine more brightly in the world.

HYMN 245 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (verse 2)

LOVE FROM THE PROPHETS Isaiah 40:1-11
(New International Version)

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her

that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling:

"In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."
A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?"
"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever."

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"
See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.
He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Leader: The Word of God, for us, the people of God;
People: Thanks be to God.

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

ANTHEM "Advent Celebration" Paige

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "O Love, How Deep" English Melody

† DOXOLOGY 815 Tune: *Old Hundredth*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

† DEDICATING OUR LIVES AND OUR GIFTS

A READING FROM THE GOSPELS Mark 1:1-8
(New International Version)
The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,
as it is written in Isaiah the prophet.

SERMON "Good News from Long, Long Ago"

† HYMN 754 "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Ascending"

† BENEDICTION Howard Thurman
Let us light Candles this Christmas: Candles of joy despite all sadness. Candles of hope where despair keeps watch. Candles of courage for fears ever present. Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days. Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens. Candles of love to inspire all our living. Candles that will burn all the year long. Amen

† RESPONSE/POSTLUDE "All You Need is Love" Lennon/McCartney



ATTENDANCE CARDS ARE IN YOUR BULLETIN!

Please take a moment to complete the card that is in your bulletin and place it in the offering plate. You may write prayer requests on the reverse side, if you wish to have us pray for someone and add a name to the prayer chain.

SERVING

TODAY – DECEMBER 10

Carole Kapcar/Teri Barbish
Mary Ellen Zimmerman
Volunteers needed
Tom Foley
Mike Elkins
Sharon Heinrich
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Chancel Choir

NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 17

Greeters Judy & Les Fox
Liturgist Sandy O'Shea
Ushers Volunteers needed
Director of Music Tom Foley
Associate Director of Music Mike Elkins
Organist Sharon Heinrich
Sound Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Special Music Dave Williams, Children's Choir



PLEASE NOTE: Our worship services are video recorded each week and posted on our YouTube channel for all to enjoy. Just go to strongsvilleucc.com, select **Worship**, and click on **Service Videos**.



A NOTE OF THANKS—

We thank our **Chancel Choir**, along with **Ken Mehalko, Mike Elkins, Sharon Heinrich, and Tom Foley** for their music today.

The altar flowers are given—

In remembrance of my twin, Karen Zeyn
Sharon Maresco



A 2024 SIGN-UP SHEET FOR ALTAR FLOWERS IS POSTED IN PILGRIM HALL. (Please note: the cost of flowers will be \$18 for 1 vase and \$36 for 2 vases beginning in January 2024.)

Our steeple will light the sky this week—

Happy Birthday today to Suzi Foley!
Love, Tom, Jimmy, Jackie, & Bobby

Happy Birthday today to Ken Mehalko, Suzi Foley, and Chris Minnick!

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:



THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT IS COMING!

Sunday School families: Please plan to stay for our dress rehearsal today after the service. December 17th—

OUR PAGEANT DAY--we will have our pageant during the worship service!

PENNY SUNDAY--The next Penny Sunday will be January 28, 2024.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES— December 24th

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT 10 A.M.

TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS 10 P.M.



FAMILY OF FAITH TREE. If you have not donated an ornament for yourself/your family, you may bring it to the church office and your ornament will join the others on our tree! We would love for everyone to be represented.



THANK YOU NOTE

On behalf of the entire Lerch family, we would like to extend our deepest thanks to the church family and Strongsville UCC for the cards, prayers, and kindness during the difficult days of losing our loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, and coach, Bruce Lerch. **Susann Lerch**

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OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed	\$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received	\$ 4,074.00
Difference	\$ 456.99

Thank you very much for your support.
PLEDGE CARDS RECEIVED TO DATE: 50

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THE CHRISTMAS FUND

Formerly known as Veterans of the Cross, this special offering of the United Church of Christ provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. A ministry of the Pension Boards, the offering is received throughout December. Offering envelopes will be in the pew racks.

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CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

To send Christmas greetings to fellow members and friends, the church "mail box" will again be available in the Gathering Area. Please remember to check the box for greetings you receive.

Also, please do not put cards in the box for friends who are not in town for Christmas. The church office cannot mail your personal Christmas cards. Cards left after Christmas will be discarded. Thank you.

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AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE

In order to be accountable to our benefactor of our Fresh Start fund, Pastor Heidi keeps those funds separate from her Pastor's Discretionary Fund (PDF). Over the past two months, we have been meeting people's daily needs at a record pace, supplying one-time gifts of Sheetz gas cards for food or gas. As a result, the PDF is diminished. If you are so inclined, Pastor Heidi would appreciate your support of these day-to-day emergency funds. **You may write a check to The United Church of Christ and please write Pastor's Discretionary Fund on the memo line.** Thank you for being in ministry—*together*.

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FROM OUR FRIENDS AT STRONGSVILLE COMMUNITY BAND:

TODAY at 3 p.m., the Band will present their Christmas concert at the Strongsville Middle School. More music to enjoy and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year!

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BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

TONIGHT at 7 p.m. Service of Remembrance & Healing--Join us for a time of reflection, remembrance, and meditation as together we seek peace during this busy season. All are welcome—especially you.

SWINGIN' SOUNDS OF THE SEASON CHRISTMAS JAZZ CONCERT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17th at 7 p.m. featuring Strongsville's Jazz Band and vocalist Cindy Smith Tickets will be \$10 (\$5 for kids under 10) and we will have a reception following the concert. *Please contact **Ingrid Dickson** or **Pam Keenen** if you can donate finger foods for the reception.*

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OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Joan Beckwith, Laurie Meister, Ruth Milidonis, Karen Rak, Connie Rebar, Maggie Struhar

Church Family: Serena Abruzzino, Jennifer Cockrell, Sam Cuyler Jr., Sue Hawk, Irene Jannsohn, Carole Kapcar, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Jim Maresco, Reggie McCray, Roy Merkle, Lola Millhoane, Kenn Oerkfitz, Gary Paul, George Pavisich, Dan Ponstingle, Joyce Reed, Dorothy & Bill Ritchie, Peter Smith, Sharon Wilson, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Edward and Sharon Acton (Sally Herzog's friends), Dorene Baldridge, Ron & Yvonne Adams (Judi Pavisich's friends), Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Angie Colosimo (Judi Pavisich's friend), Barbara Davis (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen's friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung's friend), Joanne Garipey (Sally Herzog's friend), Kathy Ghetti (friend of Ginger Rothel), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Rudy Matjazic (Judi Pavisich's friend), Donna McDonald (the Ritchies' friend), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rothel's sister-in-law), Thomas O'Shea (Sandy's dad), Sylvia Pakish (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Jeff Peacock (former member), Zora Roundtree (FL4A volunteer), Mike Rung (Lora's brother), Amanda Shannon (Sarah & Jon Hayes' friend), Vicki Smith (Venner Clarinets), Chris Vozniak (Lora Rung's friend), Tom (friend of Judi Pavisich), Don Wills (friend of Judi Pavisich), The people of Ukraine, victims of violence, those affected by natural disasters

OPT-IN: Please contact Pastor Heidi if you would like to pray for others via the email prayer chain. h.e.denman@gmail.com

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BE A BUSY BEE IN 2023 & DO MORE IN 2024!

New sign-up sheets in the Gathering Area are waiting for your name to be added as a greeter or usher. No experience is necessary—we will show you everything you need to know! Everyone is welcome to be a part of our church life.

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FREE LUNCH FOR ALL—

Wednesdays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Our Free Lunch for All Program welcomes everyone to enjoy a nutritious meal and warm fellowship.

OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN GOING STRONG FOR 10 YEARS!!

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THRIFT SHOP

The Thrift Shop is OPEN on Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Come and shop lots of interesting merchandise at amazing prices. Donations are being accepted during those hours, but please try to limit your donations to what you can carry downstairs. **Thanks, as always, to our dedicated volunteers!**

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NEW YEAR'S EVE HYMN SING—December 31st at 10 a.m.!



WOULD YOU LIKE A WAY TO SERVE GOD AND SERVE YOUR CHURCH AT THE SAME TIME? How about volunteering to serve on a church board or committee?

The Nominating Committee, through the Official Board, will be looking for church members to fill the many open positions on our boards. Please consider saying **YES** when a member of

the Nominating Committee asks you to serve. Some of the positions that are available include:

Moderator, who presides over the Official Board and represents the church in the community

Vice-Moderator, who works in tandem with the Moderator, serves on the Nominating Committee, and enlists volunteers for dinners and other Official Board events

Treasurer: Manages the outgoing finances of the church in conjunction with the Financial Secretary

Diaconate, which oversees the worship operations and church services. The committees of the Diaconate are Acolytes, Altar, Coffee Hour, Funeral, Greeters, Membership, Nursery, Pastoral Relations, Special Events and Ushers

Board of Trustees, which oversees the finances and physical plant of the church. The committees of the Trustees are Building and Grounds, Finance, and Long-Range Planning and Memorial/Endowment

Mission & Outreach, which sponsors projects and our church's benevolence in the local, national, and international communities, including the 5 for 5 offerings through the United Church of Christ

Stewardship, which administers a yearly campaign to assess and inspire giving of time, talent, and treasure

Christian Education, which oversees the Sunday School and Adult Education programs

Music Committee, which supervises all aspects of the Music Ministry

Remember the old but true saying, *Many hands make light work*. Plan to be a part of one of these boards or committees. Thank you for your consideration.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Chairs of church organizations: Annual reports are to be submitted electronically and are due in the church office on **January 7, 2024**. Please be kind an email your reports in on time. Thank you!!!

Once completed, Annual Reports will be available for pickup prior to the Annual Meeting.

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ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will take place Sunday, **January 28, 2024**, and will be preceded by the traditional Pancake Brunch. All are encouraged to attend this meeting.

FINANCIAL OFFICERS OF CHURCH GROUPS:

Please turn in your financial statements to the Auditing Committee through the church office by **January 7, 2024**. It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 28, 2024. All organizations are required to submit:

1. ALL bank books (savings and/or checking).
2. ALL bank statements for each month for each account. Checking accounts statements should show completed reconciliation on the back.
3. ALL monthly recap forms.
4. ALL bank deposit slips, withdrawal slips and bank check receipts (if received), attached to monthly recap forms.
5. ALL receipts and bills paid.
6. Copy of Annual Financial Report (original provided to church office for Annual Report).

Thank you for your cooperation.

CHURCH OFFICERS FOR 2023

*Elected January 29, 2023

Moderator: Greg Dickson Vice-Moderator: Jen Barry
Treasurer: Sally Herzog Clerk: Judy Gaumer

Sunday School Co-Superintendents
Linda Elkins Mary Densmore*

Board of Trustees
Diana Creecy Chris Goff* Herb Hampson Cathy Hawk
Sarah Hayes Cheryl Sobek* Dan Winrod*
Laura Winrod* Rachel Zielinski

Endowment Fund Subcommittee
Greg Dickson Linda Stepan Dave Williams*

Diaconate
Teri Barbish Jean Bittinger* Elaine Coffey
Bobbi Cook* Wayne Cook* Judy Davis*
Carole Kapcar* Sharon Maresco Linda Ponstingle Cherie Teagno
Barbara White* Mary Ellen Zimmerman*

Christian Education Committee
Serena Abruzzino* Mary Densmore*
Linda Elkins Amanda Marshall Lora Rung

Music Committee
Richard Densmore Ingrid Dickson
Pam Keenen Ken Mehalko* Mike Willis*
ex officio: Sharon Heinrich Tom Foley Mike Elkins

Stewardship Committee
Judi Pavisich Bill Schneider* Richard Taylor
Rob Toth Mary Willis*

Mission and Outreach Committee
Judy Carte* Sarah Hayes Bobbie Krisak Lora Rung*
Jennifer Sekorky Peter Smith* Bev Wehr
Mary Ellen Zimmerman*



The Strongsville Food Bank is searching for a coordinator for the Food Bank. They are looking for a community-focused, compassionate, and detail-oriented individual who will oversee all aspects of the Strongsville Food Bank, guaranteeing smooth operations.
- Average weekly work hours: 30 hours, some weekends and evenings;
Compensation: \$30-\$35k

Qualifications for this job include: a strong desire to help others, ability to effectively communicate with community members as well as volunteers, organizational skills and Word/Excel knowledge for record keeping. If you are interested or want more information about this position, please ask for a complete job description or send a resume and cover letter to strongsvillefoodbank@gmail.com



IMPORTANT INFO—Do you know where the AED and First Aid Kit are located in the church? They are adjacent to the doorway in Pilgrim Hall, just to the right of the confirmation classroom.

GIFT CARDS

IT’S TIME TO BUY CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS
GIFT GIVING! Please see Jim Joyce if you have ordered gift cards for Christmas. We will have a limited selection available for purchase.



PANERA PALS

Are you able to give less than an hour of your time on a Monday or Friday morning to pick up and/or sort Panera bread, bagels, and pastries? Please contact the church office if you can help with this worthwhile ministry.

2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN --M.A.P.L E.

M- Making and moving
A- Accepting and Acknowledging
P- People
L- Learning and Loving
E- Encompassing



Strongsville United Church of Christ
2024 Estimate of Giving

In recognition of God's many blessings to me, I am happy to join with others in the following commitment for 2024:

Name _____

Address _____

I plan to give \$_____ each

☐ week ☐ month ☐ other _____ to be used for

Our Congregation's Ministries and Operations \$_____

Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) \$_____

☐ I would like to talk with someone from the Endowment Committee about including the church or church-related institution in my Will.

☐ I would like to talk with someone about using the automatic deduction plan from my checking/savings account.

Signed _____ Date ____/____/____