



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 14, 2025 – 10:00 A.M.
Third 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 "Some Children See Him" Burt

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Irene Joyce

INTROIT "Ode to Joy" Beethoven, arr. Hopson

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Be patient! The time is coming when we will celebrate the birth of Jesus,

People: When we will sing and rejoice, dancing with everlasting joy.

Leader: But for now, be patient, as we wait in this time called Advent,

People: When God speaks through dreams and visions, and we are invited to dance down the holy way into the kingdom.

Leader: For this is Advent, as we prepare to join the world in celebrating the Creator of goodness and hope,

People: When those who limp will learn a new dance, when those who have no voice lead the joyful chorus. Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

† HYMN 21 "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE (JOY)

The Joyce Family: Erik, Bryana, Alaya, and Elliott

Leader: On the third Sunday of Advent, we feel the joy of God that comes to us through the birth of Jesus. We remember how Mary sang a song of joy before Jesus was born, of how God was going to make all things new.

People: We sing our own songs of joy, knowing that even when we are sad now, even when we grieve, our mourning will turn to dancing.

Leader: We light this third candle for the joy we know in Christ Jesus.

People: Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth; join angels in dancing from heaven to earth. Wave banners of Good News! Lift high thankful praise! One candle is lit for the Joy of these days!

HYMN 245 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (verse 3)

JOY FROM THE PROPHETS Isaiah 35:1-2, 5-7
(New International Version)

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them,
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;
It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God.
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.
The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each lay,
there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

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

A TIME OF GREETING ONE ANOTHER WITH JOY

CHILDREN'S PAGEANT "Do Not Be Afraid!"
DO NOT BE AFRAID!

NARRATOR 1: Penny Zielinski

NARRATOR 2: Oliver Zielinski

MARY: Lacey Marshall

JOSEPH: Jack Hayes

ANGEL GABRIEL: Autumn Schneider

SHEPHERDS: Henry Hayes, Elliott Joyce, Austin Pyles,
Brecken Raymond, Cade Raymond, Leo Thorn

ANGELS: Charlotte Boden, Emma Boden, Ember Schneider,
Ella Hayes, Alaya Hitchens, Lily Pyles

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

† HYMN "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy"

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, Down in my heart, (Where?)

Down in my heart, (Where?) Down in my heart;

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, Down in my heart,

Down in my heart to stay.

And I'm so happy, So very happy;

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart. (Down in my heart)

And I'm so happy, So very happy,

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus, Down in my heart,

(Where?) Down in my heart, (Where?) Down in my heart;

I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus, Down in my heart,

Down in my heart to stay.

And I'm so happy, So very happy;

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart. (Down in my heart)

And I'm so happy, So very happy,

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart!

SENDING THE CHILDREN OFF WITH JOY

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful" Traditional

† 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

JOY FROM THE GOSPELS Luke 1: 68-78

Zechariah's Song

(New International Version)

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—

to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

the oath he swore to our father Abraham to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness
and righteousness before him all our days."

SHARING OUR JOYS IN COMMUNITY

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.

† HYMN 269 "How Great Our Joy!"

† BLESSING THE FEAST WE SHARE (unison)

God, as we gather to enjoy a meal,
our hearts are overflowing with gratitude and joy.
We ask you to bless the food we share; bless the hands that
have prepared this feast; and bless us as we
break bread together. May our time be filled with love and
laughter; may the Christian bonds we share grow ever stronger;
and may our love for one another
mirror the unconditional love you have for us.
In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

† BENEDICTION Nathan Nettleton

Go now, with good news for the poor and prepare the way for the Lord. Wait patiently. Do not grumble against one another, but encourage one another. Be strong and do not fear. And may God come quickly to save you; may Christ Jesus give you everlasting joy and gladness; and may the Holy Spirit strengthen your hearts and lead you on God's holy way. Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

† POSTLUDE "Sheep May Safely Graze" Bach

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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 14 NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 21

Lynne McCray	Greeters	Barbara Toth
Dale Hawk	Liturgist	Judi Pavisich
Judi Pavisich	Head Usher	John Toth
Tom Foley	Director of Music	Tom Foley
Mike Elkins	Associate Director of Music	Mike Elkins
Sharon Heinrich	Organist	Sharon Heinrich
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich	Video/Sound	Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Children's Pageant	Special Music	Bell 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**, click on **Service Videos**.

FAMILY OF FAITH TREE—It's not too late!

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!





IT'S BACK! Save a stamp or two and use our Church Family Mailbox (located in the Gathering Area) for *in-town* church friends. Please remember to check the box for any greetings you may receive.



A NOTE OF THANKS—We thank our Children's Choir, Dave Williams, along with Sharon Heinrich, Mike Elkins, and Tom Foley for today's music!

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Thanks to Elena Joyce for writing the script for today's pageant; to Tom Foley, Ingrid Dickson, & Irene Joyce for the original song; to our Sunday School teachers: Linda Elkins, Colette Emerson, and Lora Rung; and to Riley Marshall and Rachel Zielinski for their assistance, but most especially to our Sunday School families.



Please plan to stay for our reception after worship. We will have a fried chicken lunch, songs, and a special activity to send Christmas greetings to our troops, plus our special visitor from the North will come to greet the children. Don't miss it!



PENNY SUNDAY: The next Penny Sunday will be on **January 25, 2026.**

The altar flowers are given—

Wishing everyone Joy today and always!

Susann Lerch

Happy 90th Birthday to Diana Creecy from the Breakfast Bunch--Judi, Jan, Jo Ann, Virginia, and Mary Ellen



A 2026 SIGN-UP SHEET FOR ALTAR FLOWERS IS POSTED IN PILGRIM HALL. Please note: the cost of flowers is \$18 for 1 vase and \$36 for 2 vases. Reserve your date(s) in memory or in honor of something or someone special.



Our steeple will light the sky this week—

Happy Birthday to Bill Craig on December 17th

With love, Mom

OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 3,565.50
Difference -(\$ 793.50)

Thank you very much for your support.

PLEDGES RECEIVED: 58



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Sunday, December 21st 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.



LIVE MUSIC!

FROM OUR FRIENDS AT STRONGSVILLE COMMUNITY BAND:

Come to our Christmas Concert **TODAY at 3 p.m.** at Strongsville Middle School Auditorium! Bring your friends for a wonderful afternoon of music.

**SWINGIN' SOUNDS OF THE SEASON
CHRISTMAS JAZZ CONCERT**

THIS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19th at 7 p.m.

LIVE MUSIC featuring Jim's Little Big Band and vocalist **Cindy Smith** Tickets are \$15 and are on sale now and at the door. Plus, we will have a reception following the concert. *Please contact **Ingrid Dickson** or **Sharon Heinrich** if you can donate finger foods for the reception.*



OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Irene Jannsohn, Connie Rebar



Church Family: Serena Abruzzino, Bryana Joyce, Mark Camp, Judy Carte, Elaine Coffey, Betty "Grammy" Craig, Sam Cuyler Jr., Roz Fotos, Sue Hawk, Bruce Keenen, Erv Koch, Carol Konet, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Roy Merkle, Amanda Moulton, Ginny & Kenn Oerkfitz, George & Joyce Reed, Dorothy Ritchie, Ron Rothel, Jennifer Sekorky, Tracy Seneff, Peter Smith, Bruce Sperber, Linda Stepan, Debbie Wentz, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Barbara Davis (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Allison Emerson (Colette's sister), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen's friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung's friend), Joanne Gariepy (Sally Herzog's friend), Kathy Ghetti (friend of Ginger Rothel), Jennifer Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's daughter-in-law), Sarah & David Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's grandson & wife), Michaelene Hanrahan (Jim Joyce's sister), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Tiffany Hassel (Judi Pavisich's daughter-in-law), Barb & Dale Holmberg (Tiffany Hassel's parents), George Love (friend of the church), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rothel's sister-in-law), Sylvia Pakish (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Jeff Peacock (former member), Amanda Shannon (Sarah & Jon Hayes' friend), Vicki Smith (Venner Clarinets), Chris Vozniak (Lora Rung's friend), Don & Pauline Wills (Judi Pavisich's friends), the people of Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Israel, victims of violence, those affected by natural disasters, First Responders

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

IN CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family and friends of 78-year church member, **Bryan R. Roub**, who died on December 2, 2025 in Florida, where he and his wife, Judy, had resided for many years. Even though he was far away, Bryan continued to show interest in and contribute to our church and its mission. He was 84 years old.



Love and prayers are extended to Linda and Jim Dettmer and family on the death of Linda's sister, **Gwen Giddings**, who died on December 4, 2025. Gwen attended our church with the Dettmers quite often and always had a kind word and a smile. She was 92 years of age.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - 7 p.m.

Family Service of Lessons & Carols

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - 11 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight Lessons & Carols

THREE WITH GLEE!

Capital Campaign: We currently have \$47,648.08 in our capital campaign account. The automatic door openers have been installed! The Trustees are scheduling the painting of Pilgrim Hall, which needs to happen prior to dealing with the acoustics in that room. Things are happening, but we still have more projects on the list. Please make sure you designate your donation for "Capital Campaign." Thanks for your continuing support.



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Are you interested in learning more about the United Church of Christ and becoming a member?

Please let Pastor Heidi or the church office know if you would like to join our congregation in membership. We will be welcoming new members soon.



THRIFT SHOP



The Thrift Shop is OPEN every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Come and shop lots of interesting merchandise at amazing prices. Donations are accepted during our Thursday sale

hours, but please try to limit your donations to what you can carry downstairs. **Please do not abandon items outside the church doors.**

THE THRIFT SHOP WILL BE CLOSED ON DECEMBER 25th and JANUARY 1st.

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 are in the pew racks.



FREE LUNCH FOR ALL--Wednesdays

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



THE LUNCH WILL NOT BE SERVED ON CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24th or NEW YEAR'S EVE, JANUARY 1st.


BE A GREETER! A new sign-up sheet in the Gathering Area is waiting for your name to be added as a greeter. No experience is necessary—we will show you everything you need to know. Being a greeter is a wonderful way to get to know people and welcome them to worship!




ANNUAL REPORTS

Chairmen of church organizations: Annual reports are to be submitted electronically and are due in the church office on **January 7, 2026**. Please be kind and email your reports in on time. Thank you!!! Once completed, Annual Reports will be available for pickup prior to the Annual Meeting.



**ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will take place Sunday, **January 25, 2026**, and will be preceded by the traditional Pancake Brunch. All are encouraged to attend this meeting.

**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.

**UPCOMING BOARD MEETING**

- The Diaconate will meet on the third Tuesday of the month, **December 16th** at 10:30 a.m. in the Parlor.

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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.



FINANCIAL OFFICERS OF CHURCH GROUPS:

Please turn in your financial statements to the Auditing Committee through the church office by **January 7, 2026**. It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 25, 2026. 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.

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THANK YOU TO OUR CHURCH OFFICERS 2025

**Elected January 26, 2025 ** appointed by Official Board*

Moderator: Greg Dickson **Vice-Moderator:** Jen Barry
Treasurer: Sally Herzog **Clerk:** Judy Gaumer
Sunday School Superintendent: Linda Elkins

Board of Trustees
Karen Bates** Bill Giuliano Chris Goff*
Mike Elkins Les Fox Herb Hampson Cathy Hawk*
Sandy Pogozeleski Cheryl Sobek*
Alex Tomoff* Mike Willis* Rachel Zielinski

Endowment Fund Subcommittee
Greg Dickson* Dave Williams*

Diaconate
Teri Barbish Jean Bittinger* Elaine Coffey*
Bobbi Cook* Wayne Cook* Judy Davis*
Judy Fox Pam Heimbürger* Lynne McCray*
Linda Ponstingle* Lora Rung* Cherie Teagno

Christian Education Committee
Linda Elkins Colette Emerson Dale Hawk*
Sarah Hayes* Amanda Marshall Lora Rung*

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

Stewardship Committee
Ingrid Dickson* Sue Gigliotti Linda Stepan*
Rob Toth Sarah Toth* Dave Williams*

Mission and Outreach Committee
Gina Cathcart* Bobbi Cook** Myron Costin*
Diana Creecy Cathy Hawk* Sarah Hayes
Lora Rung* Peter Smith Mary Willis*
Mary Ellen Zimmerman

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WINTER RETREAT: MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US AT INSPIRATION HILLS ON PRESIDENT’S DAY WEEKEND: February 13-15, 2026

More information is coming soon.

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