



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, Ohio 44136
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StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com
StrongsvilleUCC.com



Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

Sunday, December 17, 2023 – 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
Dave Williams, vocalist

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Irene Joyce

INTROIT "O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful" Traditional

† 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 262 "Away in a Manger"

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE (JOY)

Rachel & Gus Bembenick

Leader: Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world; whoever follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Christ's messages of Hope and Love are symbolized in the lighting of the first two Advent Candles; this morning, we light the third candle, the Candle of Joy.

People: In this season of hope, love and joy, we thank God for the freedom to celebrate and worship the One who is worthy of our faith and praise.

Leader: In her innocence, filled with questions and uncertainty, Mary worshipped God, saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord!" This morning, we light the third candle, the rose-colored one, the Candle of Joy.

People: With Mary, we affirm God's presence in every circumstance. We celebrate the Joy of Christ in our lives, even in times filled with uncertainty and anxiety.

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

JOY FROM THE GOSPELS

Luke 1:46b-55
(New International Version)

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

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.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "Of the Father's Love Begotten" 13th century 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

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Good News! written by Elena Joyce

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

REFLECTION

"Big News from Little People"

† HYMN

"The Friendly Beasts"

Jesus, our brother, strong and good, was humbly born in a stable rude, And the friendly beasts around Him stood, Jesus, our brother, strong and good.

"I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown, "I carried His mother uphill and down, I carried His mother to Bethlehem town; I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

"I," said the cow, all white and red, "I gave Him my manger for his bed, I gave Him hay to pillow His head; I," said the cow, all white and red.

"I," said the sheep with curly horn, "I gave Him my wool for His blanket warm. He wore my coat on Christmas morn; I," said the sheep with curly horn.

"I," said the dove, from the rafters high, "I cooed Him to sleep that he should not cry; we cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I; I," said the dove, from the rafters high.

Thus all the beasts, by some good spell, in the stable dark were glad to tell of the gifts they gave Emmanuel, the gifts they gave Emmanuel.

† BENEDICTION

Howard Thurman

I will 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 my living. Candles that will burn all the year long. Amen

† RESPONSE/POSTLUDE "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" Bach

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 17 **NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 24**

Judy & Les Fox	Greeters	Judy & Roger Davis
Sandy O'Shea	Liturgist	Dave Williams
Volunteers needed	Ushers	Volunteers needed
Tom Foley	Director of Music	Tom Foley
Mike Elkins	Associate Director of Music	Mike Elkins
Sharon Heinrich	Organist	Sharon Heinrich
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich	Sound	Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Children's Choir, Dave Williams	Special Music	Chancel 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 **Children's Choir**, along with **Dave Williams, Mike Elkins, Sharon Heinrich, and Tom Foley** for their music today.

Good News!

Directed by Sarah Hayes & Rachel Zielinski Music: Tom Foley

ANCHOR 1: Oliver Zielinski	MARY: Riley Marshall
ANCHOR 2: Jack Hayes	JOSEPH: Jack Hayes
ROVING REPORTER: Penny Zielinski	ANGEL 1: Lacey Marshall
SHEPHERD 1: Luke Giuliano	ANGEL 2: Ella Hayes
SHEPHERD 2: Everett Ashforth	ANGEL 3: Autumn Schneider
SHEPHERD 3: Oliver Zielinski	ANGEL 4: Alaya Hitchens

GOOD NEWS ANGELS: Ember Schneider, Lena Ashforth

WANDERING SHEPHERDS: Elliott Joyce, Leo Thorn

LITTLE LAMB: Henry Hayes

Songs: "Big Things" and "I've Got a Message"

Music: Tom Foley

Lyrics: Irene Joyce & Ingrid Dickson

Thanks to Elena Joyce for writing the script, to

our Sunday School teachers: Linda Elkins,

Mary Densmore, Lora Rung, and Serena

Abruzzino, to Sarah Hayes, Brandi Garsteck,

and Rachel Zielinski for their assistance, our Sunday School families.



Christmas Pageant

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

PLEASE JOIN US FOR CAKE FOLLOWING TODAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE!

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



The altar flowers are given—
Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy &
Healthy New Year! Joyce & George Reed



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 Bill Craig!
With love, Mom

Happy Birthday today to Bill Craig!

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!**

OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 5,799.50
Difference \$ 2,182.49



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

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.

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.

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.

SWINGIN' SOUNDS OF THE SEASON CHRISTMAS JAZZ CONCERT—Get your tickets now!

TODAY at 7 p.m. featuring Strongsville's Jazz
Band and vocalist Cindy Smith Tickets are \$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.*



OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.



Long-Term Care or Homebound: Joan Beckwith, Laurie Meister,
Ruth Miliidonis, 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 Baldrige, 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 Filiautraut (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 Matjzic (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

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!!

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!**



**PLEASE NOTE: The Thrift Shop will be closed on
January 4th & 11th, 2024**



**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 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 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 Ponsingle 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 ____/____/____