



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
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Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor
Sunday, December 20, 2020 – Online
Fourth Sunday of Advent

OPENING MUSIC "Christmas Tidings" arr. Fordell

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTROIT "Love Came Down at Christmas" Traditional Irish Melody

CALL TO WORSHIP

When our good fortunes have returned, our dreams will come true. We will sing "Glory!" to our God; we will rejoice in our Savior's birth. Our mouths shall be filled with laughter; we will embrace one another again, feel the loving touch of family and friends. Words of Love will rise from our hearts. We will proclaim: "Look what the Lord has done!" Others will know beyond any doubt how the Holy One has blessed us with hope. We once were lost; now, we find our way home to the Creator who loves us. For God has picked us up when we fell; God keeps the promises made so long ago.

HYMN "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

Come Thou fount of ev'ry blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above!
Praise His name--I'm fixed upon it--Name of God's redeeming love.

Hither to Thy love has blest me'; Thou has brought me to this place;
And I know Thy hand will bring me Safely home by Thy good grace.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wand'ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger Bought me with His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love!
Here's my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.

CCLI Song # 108389 John Wyeth | Robert Robinson
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LIGHTING THE FOURTH CANDLE OF ADVENT: LOVE

The Rolland Family

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we know that God's love has always been with us. God's love has been made known to us in a new way, through the birth of Jesus. God has become one of us, the Word that breathes the Spirit into us, and in Christ we know the fullness of God's love. We are called to share that love with the world. We light this fourth candle for the love God has for the whole world.

PRAYER AS WE LIGHT THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE: Come, wander where lion and lamb gently play, where evil is banished and faith takes the day: A babe in a manger to fool the world's eyes. One candle is lit for God's loving surprise.

RESPONSE "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

O come, Desire of nations, bind All peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel.

FIRST READING Luke 1:26-33 (New International Version)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." But Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

SHARING AND PRAYERS

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

MUSIC "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" Prichard

TIME FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

BEING COMMUNITY WHEN WE ARE APART

OFFERTORY "In the Bleak Midwinter" Holst

The one thing we are all called to do, whenever and wherever we are, is to bring glory to God. No matter our circumstances, no matter what is going on in our lives, God remains eternal and faithful. Pause and reflect: How is my life bringing glory to God? Together, in virtual community, we commit our lives and our resources to finding new, innovative ways to continue to walk with Jesus, even during this season of pandemic. We appreciate your commitment to giving freely of your talents and your treasure, as you are able. Thank you. Thank you. To give online, you may go to:

<https://www.myeoffering.com/eonline/index.php/dashboard/login/5027>

or mail your offering to **Strongsville UCC 13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, OH 44136**. You may also save a stamp and drop your envelope in the church mailbox at any time.

SECOND READING **Luke 1:46b-55** *(New Revised Standard Version)*

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

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

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

REFLECTION

God is with us, too.

HYMN

"Love Has Come"

Love has come--a light in the darkness;
Love explodes in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises
Love! Love! Born unto you a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high!

Love is born! Come share in the wonder;
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of His mother
What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come--He never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us;
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;
Love! Love! Praise to You, God on high!

CCLI Song # 2060820 Ken Bible © 1996, 1997 LNWhymns.com (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Traditional French Carol Melody 17th century

BENEDICTION FOR A PEOPLE OF LOVE

Be people of love. Let love live in your heart and share the love of Christ with all you meet. Share love by loving those you see regularly. Start by loving your community. Share love by loving those you do not know. How do your actions affect the rest of God's creation? Share love by praying for our world. In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share love. As you go out into the wonder of God's creation, share love, joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. Amen.

POSTLUDE "The Holly and the Ivy" Traditional British Folk Melody

SERVING

TODAY – DECEMBER 20

Irene Joyce
Tom Foley
Mike Elkins
Doug Thorn
Chuck McDougall
Barb Fraunfelder, Will Foley
The Rolland Family

NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 27

Liturgist Irene Joyce
Director of Music Tom Foley
Associate Director of Music Mike Elkins
Sound Doug Thorn
Video Chuck McDougall
Special Music Sharon Heinrich
Advent Readers

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020—ONLINE

The worship team is putting together a service of readings, interspersed with music new and old. Even though we can't be together this year, we can still celebrate the birth of our Savior. Christmas will come—no matter what!



Additional song credits

Christmas Tidings Medley of Traditional Christmas Carols arranged for handbells by Lucien Fordell . Silent Night/Oh Faithful Pine/*Adeste Fideles*/O *Sanctissima*/Hark the Herald Angels Sing Music: Public Domain

Love Came Down at Christmas CCLI Song # 2774192 Christina Georgina Rossetti: Public Domain Music: Traditional Irish Melody, Garton

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus CCLI Song # 31999 Charles Wesley | Rowland Hugh Prichard © Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain

In the Bleak Midwinter CCLI Song # 3083174 Christina Georgina Rossetti | Gustav Theodore Holst | Walter Ehret © Words: Public Domain Music: 1999 Richmond Music Press, Inc. (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)

The Holly and the Ivy CCLI Song # 4782687 Traditional British folk carol © Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain

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Many thanks to Barb Fraunfelder for recording handbell music for today's service and to Will Foley for adding his vocal talents to our worship!

Thanks also to Dawn and Ian Rolland for lighting the Fourth Candle of Advent: Love.

The steeple will light the sky this week—

*Happy Anniversary to Ryan and Tony Craig on December 24th
With love, Grammy*

*In memory of Jane C. Graves
Roberta Carpenter*

*Wishing all my church family, friends, and relatives a blessed
Christmas and a New Year filled with love, joy, peace, and good
health. God bless everyone! Love, Lola Millhoane*

OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed	\$ 3,473.27
Last Week's Offering Received	\$ 2,618.00
Difference	-(\$ 855.27)

Thank you very much for your support of our church and its ministries.



OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Janet Kato, Martha Liebert, Marge McKinney, Karen Rak, Connie Rebar, Trish Shields

Church Family: Joan Beckwith, Adria Bond, Eddy Bond, Mary Carey, Elaine Coffey, Betty Craig, Christina Craig, Sam Cuyler Jr., Linda Elliott, Don Gleichauf, Sue Hawk, Steve Herzog, Paul Hirt, Elliott Joyce, Carole Kapcar, Tony Koussa, Lori Kovatich, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Millie Lafave, Lacey Marshall, Brigitte Matchett, Judy Maur, Laurie Meister, Michele Mhlack, Lola Millhoane, Judi Pavisich, Joyce Reed, Dorothy and Bill Ritchie, Ginger Rothel, John & Maggie Struhar, Keith Sullen, Jamie & Josh Trinckes, Sharon Wilson, Sally Vetovitz, Peg Weakley, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Dorene Baldridge, Jackie & Phil Berkheimer (Judi Pavisich's friends), Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Judy Carte's son-in-law, Ryan, Ruby Cuyler (Sam's sister), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen's friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung's friend), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Kelly Kling (Strongsville Emergency Food Bank), Julie Kowell (Sarah Cathcart Wilhoit's friend), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Pat Masuga (Dan's mom), Donna McDonald (the Ritchies' friend), Zachary McKeever (Pastor Heidi and Chuck's great-nephew), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rothel's sister-in-law), Mae O'Shea (Sandy O'Shea's mom), Carrol Riley (Marjorie Morrison's dad), Terry Robson (the Camps' friend), Mike Rung (Lora's brother), Anneke & Lukas Scholtz (Irene Jannsohn's sister & brother-in-law), Amanda Shannon (Sarah & Jon Hayes' friend), Sherry Sheeks (Mark Camp's sister), Chris Vozniak (Lora Rung's friend), Brad Williams (Judi Pavisich's friend), Daphne Wilson (Irene Jannsohn's niece)

Please contact Pastor Heidi if you would like to pray for others via the email prayer chain.



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.





Are you an online Christmas shopper? If so, why not benefit the church while you make your purchases from Amazon? It's incredibly easy! Here's what you do:

1. Instead of typing amazon.com into your search bar, type in **smile.amazon.com**.
2. Select United Church of Christ Congregational Strongsville by clicking this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/34-1298100>
3. Shop as you would normally—that's it!

Your addresses, billing information, and shopping cart are still saved and your Prime membership privileges still apply. A small percentage of your purchase price will go toward supporting the church. **We have earned \$269.05 from Amazon through November. Thank you!**

NEED AN EASY WAY TO CHRISTMAS SHOP? GIFT CARDS!



You can still order gift cards by calling **Jim Joyce** at 216-267-5043 in advance with your order. Hurry—limited stock available! You may pick up your cards at the church office with your payment at a convenient time. **Thank you to those who continue to support this project by purchasing gift cards!**



Our deepest sympathy is extended to **Sally and Steve Herzog, Andrew and Mallory Herzog and Aidan, and Sarah and Dale Toth** on the death of Sally's mom, **Donna Fargo**, on December 14, 2020. Our love and prayers also to Sally's sisters **Mary Fargo and Lisa Timm** and their families.

THRIFT SHOP NEWS

The Thrift Shop will be open for special last-minute shopping hours on **Monday December 21st from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. They will be closed on Christmas Eve, December 24th.**



OUR CHRISTMAS GIFT TO YOU

The Music Team has put together a CD of Christmas music, called "Christmas Presence" as a **FREE** gift to our members and friends, since we cannot be together in worship this year.

The CD features vocalists, **Dave Williams, Sarah Keenen, Cindy Smith, Marsha Coleff, Brittany Fernandez, Tom Foley, and Mike Elkins**, plus instrumental pieces by the **Satori Winds, Tom Foley and Mike Elkins**. Please stop by the church office any time between **9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on weekdays* to pick up your copy!**

*The church office will close at noon on Thursday, December 24th, Christmas Eve, and be closed on Friday, December 25th, Christmas Day.

ANNUAL WINTER RETREAT

February 12-14, 2021
at Tempel Hills Camp in Bellville, Ohio

As of now, we are planning for this event to take place in whatever safe form presents itself. This Retreat will be different than any other year, but we hope it will still be a time for fellowship with your family and perhaps a change of scenery. Plans will be extremely flexible and subject to change based on the camp's safety protocols.



Rachel Zielinski and Irene Joyce had a Zoom meeting with the Heartland Conference outdoor ministries administrator, Jill Frey, on December 2nd to discuss the possibilities. More information, including pricing and protocols, will be disseminated through email and Facebook. Please stay tuned...

ANNUAL REPORT



Although we are not meeting in person, we will still be compiling our Annual Report. **Chairs of church organizations: Annual reports are due in the church office on January 8, 2021.** Please email your report to strongsvilleucc@gmail.com and be kind to the Church Secretary by getting your reports in promptly during this unusual time. Thank you!!!

Financial Officers of all church organizations: Please submit your financial records, reports, and bank statements to the church office for audit by January 4, 2021.