

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



Church Telephone: (440) 238-6697
 Email: StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com
 www.strongsvilleucc.com
 Traditional Worship 9:45 a.m. Sunday
 Contemporary Worship 11:15 a.m. Sunday

DECEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES		
<p>DECEMBER 7 <i>The Sacrament of Communion</i> Scripture: John 1:6-9 and Mark 1:1-8 Sermon: <i>John the Baptist</i> <i>Deadline for ordering poinsettias</i> (order form on back inside cover)</p>	<p>TRADITIONAL 9:45 a.m. Liturgist: Lynne McCray Greeter: Needed Ushers: Needed Nursery: Dianne Maringer Coffee Hour: Beth Giuliano</p>	<p>CONTEMPORARY 11:15 a.m. Liturgist: Barb Fraunfelder Graphics Operation: Rosemary Bechtel Coffee Hour: Beth Giuliano</p>
<p>FRIDAY DECEMBER 12</p>	<p>BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE 7:30 p.m. <i>followed by a reception in Pilgrim Hall</i></p>	<p><i>In this special service we will remember our loved ones who have passed away, while we seek hope during the Christmas Season. All are welcome.</i></p>
<p>DECEMBER 14 Scripture: Luke 1:5-25 Sermon: <i>Don't Mess with an Angel</i></p>	<p>TRADITIONAL 9:45 a.m. Liturgist: Jim Nicoulin Greeter: Linda Plain Ushers: Sharon Heinrich and Linda Plain Nursery: Ginny Oerkfitz Coffee Hour: Ginny Oerkfitz</p>	<p>CONTEMPORARY 11:15 a.m. Liturgist: Dan Masuga Graphics Operation: Vicky Masuga Coffee Hour: Ginny Oerkfitz</p>
<p>DECEMBER 14 Christmas Pageant at 5:00 p.m.</p>	<p>SUNDAY SCHOOL PAGEANT 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary <i>followed by Potluck Meal and festivities in Pilgrim Hall</i></p>	<p><i>For the pageant, children are to arrive at 4:30 p.m.</i> <i>For the potluck, please bring a main dish plus either a side dish, salad, or dessert to share.</i></p>
<p>DECEMBER 21 Scripture: Luke 1:39-56 Sermon: <i>The Faith of a Virgin</i></p>	<p>TRADITIONAL 9:45 a.m. Liturgist: Dale Hawk Greeter: Roy Merkle Ushers: Needed Nursery: Cheryl Sobek Coffee Hour: Tom Gaumer</p>	<p>CONTEMPORARY 11:15 a.m. Liturgist: Dale Hawk Graphics Operation: Michele Mihlack Coffee Hour: Tom Gaumer</p>

CHRISTMAS EVE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24	FAMILY SERVICE 7:30 p.m.	CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 11:00 p.m.
DECEMBER 28 Scripture: Luke 2:22-40 Sermon: <i>A Sword in Your Heart</i>	TRADITIONAL 9:45 a.m. Liturgist: Kenn Oerkfitz Greeter: Lola Millhoane Ushers: Needed Nursery: Rachel Zielinski Coffee Hour: Cheryl Sobek	CONTEMPORARY 11:15 a.m. Liturgist: Kenn Oerkfitz Graphics Operation: Sharon Heinrich Coffee Hour: Cheryl Sobek

DIACONATE DAILIES !

The Diaconate thanks everyone for their food and financial donations for our Thanksgiving baskets. We also thank those who assisted with moving our collected food and with assembling the baskets. Without all your help, this successful program would not be possible. We plan to continue this program each year.

Advent began on Sunday, November 30, and we invite you to continue to join us for this joyful season as we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child.

On Friday, December 19, at 7:30 p.m. in our Sanctuary, we will once again host a Blue Christmas Service for those who wish to remember their loved ones during the holiday season. We are inviting members of the community, and after the service we will have a small reception in Pilgrim Hall. If you can donate baked goods or help with the reception, please see the posted sign-up sheet in Pilgrim Hall.

Come, one and all, to our annual Diaconate Cookie Sale on Sunday, December 21. This is one of our big fundraisers for the year! Please see the announcement on this page for information, or see Dianne Maringer.

We will again have our two Christmas Eve services: the Family Service at 7:30 p.m. and the Candlelight Service at 11 p.m. We hope you will join us for one of the services.

Also, we thank everyone who decorated the church for the Christmas season. We greatly appreciate your help.

With the year coming to an end, many groups in the church will be looking for new members to serve on their boards. If you are interested in serving on the Diaconate, please see Sally Herzog, a member of the Nominating Committee, or myself. If you would just like to help with an event, please see any member of the Diaconate.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas!
Rachel Zielinski , Diaconate Chairperson

HOLIDAY COOKIE SALE

Too busy to bake for the holiday season? The Diaconate will hold its eighth annual Holiday Cookie Sale on Sunday, December 21, in Pilgrim Hall. Come prepared to buy all your favorite cookies. To provide bakery, please sign up on the sheet posted in Pilgrim Hall and bring your treats in half-dozen or dozen packages. All are welcome to participate!! For questions, please contact Dianne Maringer, (440) 243-3635.

TRUSTEES MEETING

The Trustees will meet on Sunday, December 7, 2014, following the 9:45 a.m. Traditional Worship Service.

200TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK

As part of our church's 200th anniversary In 2017, we will be printing a new, one-of-a-kind . . . cookbook! We would like to include old recipes passed down through generations from your families and friends. Also we want any new recipes you are currently loving! Please submit all recipes in an envelope with your name and phone number to Marty Winch, Dianne Maringer, or place under the church office door. Thank you.



IN SYMPATHY

Our love and prayers are extended in sympathy to two church families on their recent losses. to Bob Kovatich and family on the passing of his father Albert on November 7, 2014, in Pennsylvania. and to Jim Studer and family on the passing of his brother Tom on November 10. The funeral took place on November 16 in West Salem, Ohio.

WEDNESDAY FREE LUNCH PROGRAM

The new Wednesday Free Lunch Program begins this week on December 3, 2014. The lunch will be free to all who attend. Volunteers are asked to be at the church no later than 9:00 a.m. to prepare meals. Servers can arrive at 10:00 a.m. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. Volunteers are needed. A signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area. Donations of canned or dry goods will be accepted, and monetary donations will be appreciated.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The music students of Elena Taylor will present a Christmas Concert on Saturday, December 6, at 4:00 p.m. at the church. All are welcome!

**Swingin' Carols of Christmas
Fundraiser Concert
for Strongsville UCC's Music Ministry**
featuring the
Strongsville City Jazz Swing Band
under the direction of Ken Mehalko and Jim Wonnacott
with vocals by Kim Wasielewski and Polar Vortex
Friday – December 12, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.
in our Sanctuary

\$10 – 13 years and older
\$4 – 6 to 12 years
Free – 5 years and under

For tickets, please call (216) 598-6198.



BLUE CHRISTMAS

Friday, December 19, 2014, 7:30 p.m.
in our Sanctuary

A worship service remembering those who have passed away, while seeking hope for all of us during the Christmas season.

*You are not alone . . . we welcome you.
Come, join us in fellowship.*



After the service, a reception will be held in Pilgrim Hall.

THANK YOU

Dear church family,

Bob, Rachel and I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your thoughtful expressions of concern and sympathy during Rachel's illness and the passing of Bob's father. Having the support and prayers of our church family means so much to us. Thank you.

Bob, Lori and Rachel Kovatich

Dear church friends,

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers and cards over the past five weeks regarding my brother, Tom, during his recent illness and passing on November 10.

You may remember Tom, as he sang at our church several years ago as a part of the "Studer Brothers Trio".

During his time at the hospital, Tom endured over 20 major and minor surgeries in his fight for life. He was given over 100 units of blood, as the medical staff at Akron City Hospital attempted to resolve his internal bleeding condition.

These procedures were covered by medical insurance; however, we all know there are limits to what insurance will cover.

With this in mind, I have a very simple but heartfelt request of you. Please consider going to the website below for information on how to make a donation to his family for this cause. Anything you can provide will be greatly appreciated, and I can assure you that his wife, Linda, and family will be eternally grateful for your gift.

Website: youcare.com
Go to "search for a fundraiser" and enter Thomas Paul Studer.

Thank you again for your thoughtfulness and kindness.

Jim Studer

THE THRIFT SHOP

The Thrift Shop is the place to shop for Christmas items. We are well stocked with Christmas cards, holiday décor, Christmas tree ornaments, and lots of holiday clothing. Shop the Thrift Shop first for all your holiday needs. The shop will be open only three Thursdays in December: December 4, 11, and 18. Our hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and we hope to see you soon!

The Shop is giving away the 33 1/3 rpm records that are in boxes on the floor by the Royalton Road entrance door. Please feel free to help yourself!

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. Please inform the church of updates to this list.

Long-Term Care or Homebound Members: Janet Kato at Western Reserve Masonic Community in Medina, Sandra Kornick at Southwest Commons, Betty Kovach at Parkside Villa, Debbie Krause, Connie Rebar, Erla Mae Schultz at Medina Village

Church Family: Betty Babics, Betty Bushea, Marie Bury at Parkside Villa, Jim Davis at Southwest General, Rachel Kovatich, Dolores Matchett, Barbara Morgan, Betty Yarnell

Extended Church Family: Bob Allwood (brother-in-law of Dale Hawk), Marianne Allwood (niece of Dale Hawk), Don Antos (friend of Judy Carte), June Brewer (niece of Ed Powers), Ryan Brubeck, Audrey Curry (mother of Pam Keenen), Zachary Crouse (grandson of Barbara Morgan), Rebecca Deeb (Goddaughter of Lora Rung), Victor DiChiro (father-in-law of Rob Wentz), Pam Doubell (friend of Sue Gigliotti), Donna Fargo (mother of Sally Herzog), Ruth Fraley (relative of the Jannsohn family), Irene Hagemeyer (niece of Betty Craig), Phyllis Keenen (mother of Bruce), Christine Knudsen (friend of Lora Rung), Nancy Leasure (friend of Pastor Becky), Lily (friend of Lora Rung), Pat Masuga (mother of Dan), Barbara Sommers (mother of Sheri Martin), Trudie Taylor (sister of Karen Morgan), Bob Tomko (cousin of Ed Sobek), Donna Wadden (friend of Gayle Sperber), Marilyn Woodward Strongsville United Church of Christ (mother of David and Carol)

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's Fellowship will **not** have a Christmas Tea this year.

Women's Fellowship will sell candy on Sunday, December 7, after the Traditional Service during Coffee Hour.

Thanks to all who came and helped make candy. We had a few faithful helpers plus new helpers, including two men who returned a second day!! Thank you all and also to Linda and Jim Dettmer for printing the labels.

OFFICIAL BOARD

The profit from the Turkey Dinner on November 1 was \$2,342.27. Thanks again to all who supported the dinner in any way.

STEEPLE LIGHTING

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

Week of November 9, 2014

*Happy Birthday to Zach Craig on November 13
With love, Grammy*

Week of November 16, 2014

*To celebrate 66 wonderful years together
since November 20, 1948
John and Maggie Struhar*

Week of November 23, 2014

*Happy Anniversary to Debbie and Larry Wentz
on November 24,
Happy 16th Birthday to Stephen Popovich
on November 28,
Belated Happy Birthday to Katie Rower on November 18,
Belated Happy Birthday to Adam Craig on November 20
Betty Craig*

Week of November 30, 2014

*In Memory of Jane C. Graves on Her Birthday,
December 4
Dan and Roberta Carpenter*

Thank you to all who light our steeple!



SHOW TICKETS

Linda Plain has tickets to see *Dirty Dancing* at Playhouse Square on Sunday, March 22, 2015, for the 1:00 P.M. Matinee Show. Those interested can email her at lindaplain416@aol.com or call her at (440) 668-4848.

AN APPRECIATED CHRISTMAS GIFT

Each Christmas season, gifts that come from generous people for *The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and Emergency Fund* of the UCC are distributed to active and retired UCC and lay employees who are facing financial difficulties. They bring light and joy into many a dark place.

Read some of their words of thanks; each letter is unique, as its handwriting, but all have in common a deep gratitude:

"I thank God for all the hundreds of congregations and thousands of individuals who have contributed to the Christmas Fund." (Last year, \$1,545,326 was given, an increase of over \$80,000!)

"I would like to express my sincere thanks for the gift from the Christmas Fund. I use oxygen almost every day to breathe, but now I breathe easier knowing that we have the money to buy the medicines we need."

"It is heartwarming to know that our churches and church people care so much for pastors like myself who, for various reasons, find themselves struggling at times to make ends meet."

At one time, the UCC was called "The Church with the Warm Heart." Its benevolence support was unmatched among other denominations. **The Christmas Fund** is a good example. Offering envelopes for The Christmas Fund are in the pew racks and can be mailed to you, by calling the church office, (440) 238-6697.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

A beautiful quilt, handmade by Ha Bennett, will be raffled off on Sunday, December 14 – between the worship services. Proceeds from ticket sales will be used by the Mission and Outreach Committee for a variety of programs locally and globally. Raffle tickets prices are \$10 for one and \$15 for two, and they are available from Committee members: Ha Bennett, Kelly Bickley, Lora Rung, Elizabeth Snook, and Pastor Becky, and also in the Church Office. The queen-size quilt is on display in Pilgrim Hall. *Good friends are like quilts—they age with you, yet never lose their warmth.*

The Mission and Outreach Committee is currently exploring the possibility of creating a Community Garden on the unused property west of the church. We are working with the Rotary Club of Strongsville and may apply for a grant from the Deaconess Foundation. We are at the exploratory stage of this major project.

The Committee is seeking additional members. Please see Kelly Bickley.

REMEMBERING CAROLINE Y

Early this year, we "adopted" a little eight-year-old girl, Caroline Y, who lives at the Family Village Farm in Vellore, India, through the Global Ministries program of the UCC. She is now 9, and we hope to soon have her picture. We recently received a brief letter from her with some crayon drawings, which are on the Mission and Outreach display in Pilgrim Hall. Stop by and notice other work being done by the Committee. Thanks for your creative work, Lora.

A description of Caroline was provided by Linda Lawrence, director of the Child Sponsorship Program: Caroline Y is a conscientious and persevering girl—very cheerful and sociable. She is studious, a class leader, and gets along with her friends. She attends both church and Sunday School, and loves to sing. She also helps her mother in washing dishes and cleaning the house.

Her father is a painter, but he rarely gets a painting job. Her grandparents also live with her family. The King's School, where she attends is where children learn good manners, skills, training and discipline, and receive good study habits. She comes from a village five kilometers from her school.

The KFC (Kids for Christ) from our church will soon be writing Christmas letters to her, and anyone from the congregation can do so, too:

Caroline Y at Family Village Farm in Vellore, India
c/o Ms. Linda Lawrence
Director, Child Sponsorship
Global Ministries
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44115-1100

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Your help would be appreciated with the following

Jazz Concert on December 12

Bakers, Kitchen Helpers, Ushers, Nursery Attendant are needed. Please see the signup sheet in Pilgrim Hall.

Blue Christmas Worship Service on December 19

Bakers, Kitchen Helpers, Ushers, Nursery Attendant are needed. Please see the signup sheet in Pilgrim Hall.

Greeters on Sunday Mornings

Please see the signup sheet in the Gathering Area.

Ushers on Sunday Mornings

Please see the signup sheet in the Gathering Area.

Wednesday Free Lunch Program

Please see the signup sheet in the Gathering Area.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENERAL SYNOD

The Ohio Conference, and especially Western Reserve churches in the Cleveland area, is busy preparing an extravagant welcome for more than 4,000 delegates and visitors to General Synod in June. Needed: 450 volunteers who will extend this welcome in many ways (14 in all).

Over a five-day period – June 26-30-General Synod 30 will be held at the new Cleveland Convention Center in downtown Cleveland. Sessions and activities run from morning through evening each day, and many hands are needed to assist with greeting and directing guests, ushering, assisting with committee work, helping with child-care and kid field trips, as well as baking and serving cookies, to name a few.

All volunteers need to sign up for TWO 4-hour shifts. The shifts can be back to back or on separate days.

Details and ways to sign up may be found in the Church Office. Or go to ucc.org/synod. At the bottom of that screen (“About General Synod”), click on “Ohio Conf. Volunteers” to view all the volunteer opportunities. A link at the top of the volunteer page leads to the sign-up page that lists all times and dates.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Because of two substantial gifts, we were able to meet all of the outstanding debts until the end of October. At present we are at least able to meet the salaries and pay some of the bills.

This time of the year is an ideal time to evaluate your blessings. It is also a good time to see if a few extra dollars will get you a larger tax refund. Do you remember your pledge for this year? How are you doing?

Another thing I would like to encourage you to do would be to once again count your blessings, pray for the Lord’s guidance and make your pledge for next year. No one except the financial secretary sees these pledges and that is only to put it in the system for accounting, and it gives you a goal to try to achieve. You are the only one responsible for meeting the pledge.

We do not set the budget on pledges. We trust the members of the congregation and the Lord to deliver the needs of the church family.

CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

For those who wish to send Christmas greetings to fellow members, the annual “mail box” will again be available in Pilgrim Hall. Please remember to check the box for greetings you have received.



2015 ANNUAL ALL-FAMILY CHURCH WINTER RETREAT AT PILGRIM HALLS

Mark your calendars now (less than 3 months away!) for the 2015 Winter Retreat at Pilgrim Hills on President’s Day weekend: February 13, 14 and 15. Pilgrim Hills is under new management, but Jeff is still running the camp and there will be very little change, if any, in our retreat experience. The sign-up sheet will be hung on the Pilgrim Hall bulletin board around Christmas. Please contact Charles or Aimée Jannsohn if you have any questions, concerns, suggestions or ideas.

In preparation for a new game at the Winter Retreat (after 2 consecutive years, “The Best Game” will be sent to the bench), we have prepared a 50-question survey in which **ANYONE CAN PARTICIPATE**. You don’t need to be a regular church retreat goer, and it’s OK if you’ve never even attended the retreat. (But if you’ve never gone, shouldn’t you be asking yourself, “Why not?”)

For each question on the survey, just give the first answer that pops into your head. For example, when the survey asks you to name a church organist, it can be any organist past or present. We are not asking you to name the current person in each position, but if that is the first answer you think of, by all means, write it down. There are no right or wrong answers. Don’t overthink it, just jot down whatever answer you think best fits the category. After you complete it, please give to Charles or Aimée Jannsohn. Or you can fill it out and e-mail it to us at jannsohn@cox.net. There will also be extra copies on the bulletin board in Pilgrim Hall for people to fill out. We’re doing this now before we get too busy with the holidays. Won’t you please do us a favor and take 10 minutes to quickly fill out our fun little survey? It would be much appreciated.

2015 RETREAT GAME SURVEY QUESTIONS

- 1) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME BETTY:

- 2) CHURCH DINNER:

- 3) CHURCH FUNDRAISER:

- 4) CHURCH THRIFT SHOP WORKER:

- 5) CHURCH CHOIR DIRECTOR:

- 6) CHURCH CHOIR MEMBER:

- 7) CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER:

- 8) CHURCH ROOM / AREA:

- 9) CHURCH SET OF TWINS:

- 10) CHURCH MINISTER / PASTOR:

- 11) CHURCH SECRETARY:

- 12) CHURCH COMMITTEE:

- 13) CHURCH BOARD:

- 14) CHURCH CONFIRMATION TEACHER:

- 15) CHURCH PART OF THE SANCTUARY:

- 16) CHURCH MIDDLE-ROOM WORKER:

- 17) CHURCH PIE-ROOM WORKER:

- 18) CHURCH PART OF PILGRIM HALL:

- 19) CHURCH GARAGE SALE WORKER:

- 20) CHURCH FAVORITE CHRISTMAS EVENT:

- 21) CHURCH BOX-LUNCH AUCTIONEER:

- 22) CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE JOB / DUTY:

- 23) CHURCH ORGANIST:

- 24) CHURCH FAMILY:

25) CHURCH 50-YEAR MEMBER:

- 26) CHURCH TREASURER / FINANCIAL SEC.

- 27) CHURCH RETREAT GAME / ACTIVITY:

- 28) CHURCH RETREAT LOAF:

- 29) CHURCH CLUB OR GROUP:

- 30) CHURCH RETREAT COORDINATOR:

- 31) CHURCH PICNIC ACTIVITY:

- 32) CHURCH RETREAT BUILDING:

- 33) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME BILL:

- 34) CHURCH BELL CHOIR MEMBER:

- 35) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME DON:

- 36) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME BARB:

- 37) CHURCH PART OF WORSHIP SERVICE:

- 38) CHURCH FAVORITE HYMN:

- 39) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME JIM:

- 40) CHURCH MEMBER FIRST NAME SARAH:

- 41) CHURCH TALENT SHOW ACT:

- 42) CHURCH EASTER-TIME EVENT:

- 43) CHURCH BETTY CRAIG RELATIVE:

- 44) CHURCH DEFUNCT ACTIVITY:

- 45) CHURCH ADULT EDUCATION ACTIVITY:

- 46) CHURCH YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITY:

- 47) CHURCH BOOK OF THE BIBLE:

- 48) CHURCH OFFICER POSITION (TITLE):

- 49) CHURCH DIACONATE JOB:

- 50) CHURCH PART OF THE NEWSLETTER:

BONUS: NAME ANOTHER LOCAL UCC CHURCH:

ANNUAL REPORTS

Chairmen of church organizations: Annual reports are due in the church office on December 31.



ANNUAL REPORT BOOKLETS

After they are printed and assembled, the booklets will be available for pickup at the church. **If you want a copy mailed to you, please call the church office at (440) 238-6697.**

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will take place Sunday, January 25, 2015, and will be preceded by the traditional Pancake Brunch. All are encouraged to attend this meeting.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Many offices in the church will be available for the coming year. Please consider saying yes when a member of the Nominating Committee asks you to serve. Some of the positions that are available include serving on the:

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.

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 in advance for your consideration.

FINANCIAL OFFICERS OF CHURCH GROUPS:

Please turn in your financial statements to the Auditing Committee through the church office by December 31. It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 25, 2015. 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.

