

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
Website: www.strongsvilleucc.com
Worship at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday
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DECEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 4, 2016 – 10:00 A.M.
Sacrament of Communion, Reception of New Members

Scriptures: Matthew 3:1-12
Sermon: “Then Along Came John”

Liturgist: Dale Hawk
Greeter: Linda Plain
Announcements: Sally Herzog
Usher: Linda Plain
Coffee Hour: Ed and Cheryl Sobek

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 18 – 5:00 P.M.
CHILDREN’S PAGEANT + POTLUCK MEAL



All are welcome to come see our Sunday School children’s pageant and enjoy a potluck meal together. Please bring a dish to share for the potluck.

FRIDAY – DECEMBER 9, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.
BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Liturgists: Betty Craig and Lora Rung
Greeters: Volunteer Needed
Ushers: Volunteers Needed

SATURDAY – DECEMBER 24 – 7:30 P.M.

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-7
Sermon: “He Is Born!”

Liturgists: Ted and Teddy Bickley
Greeters: Dale and Cathy Hawk
Ushers: Volunteers Needed

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 11, 2016 – 10:00 A.M.

Scriptures: Luke 1:47-55
Sermon: “The Magnificat”

Liturgist: Jim Studer
Greeter: Sally Herzog
Announcements: Irene Joyce
Ushers: Volunteers Needed
Coffee Hour: Cathy Hawk

SATURDAY – DECEMBER 24 – 11:00 P.M.

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-20
Sermon: “He Is Born!”

Liturgist: Bruce Keenen
Greeter: Gina Cathcart
Ushers: Volunteers Needed

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 18 – 10:00 A.M.

Scriptures: Matthew 1:18-25
Sermon: “Joseph Dreams”

Liturgist: Bill Schneider
Greeters: The Bickley Family
Announcements: Irene Joyce
Ushers: Ted and Kelly Bickley
Coffee Hour: Allen and Michele Mhlack

SUNDAY – CHRISTMAS DAY – 10:00 A.M.
SERVICE OF SCRIPTURES AND CAROLS

Liturgist: Betty Craig
Greeter: Volunteer Needed
Ushers: Volunteers Needed
Coffee Hour: Volunteer Needed

If you would like to provide music on Christmas Day, please tell Pastor Becky. 🎵🎵

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As I am writing today, I am sitting next to an undecorated Christmas tree and thinking of all the work I need to get done before Christmas. There are decorations to be put up, cookies to be baked, presents to be bought and parties to hostess. Suddenly I am feeling a bit overwhelmed by EVERYTHING I need to do (UGG). I know that many of you feel overwhelmed too. Sometimes I feel like there is so much to accomplish that I miss the joy of Christmas. The joy of Christmas is not about all the things we do but about remembering the special event that happened 2016 years ago in a small wayside town called Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem many people had gathered to register for the census ordered by the Roman emperor. There were so many people that all the hotels and inns were filled to capacity. There was No Room even for a young woman who was having a baby to rest her head. Not only were there no rooms, but the country was in turmoil because of the census. People were angry at the government for making them travel to their ancestral homes to register. There were many who were so angry that they failed to see what God was doing in their midst.

We, like our ancestors long ago, seem to be so consumed by all the pressures of the day that we are not able to see the how God is moving in our midst.

The unfinished Christmas tree sitting next to me reminds me that the beauty of God is not in the finished product, but in the process of becoming the beautiful Christmas tree. Like the Christmas tree, no two of us are the same. With each ornament I place on the tree, I remember a story that makes my tree special. I remember each experience or person that contributed to making me, ME. In a real way God has always been working in my life and molding me to be something special. The tree is the canvas upon which God hangs all the experiences of life. I also know that my tree is not complete, and there are many more beautiful ornaments to be displayed.

I guess this year I am going to stop and look at my tree from a different perspective. I'm going to look at it as a symbol of my life that is unfinished. I will look at the beauty of the tree God created and give thanks for each life ornament that I hang on its branches. Well I guess it's time to put on the tree topper, the angel. Merry Christmas!

Pastor Becky



HEADLINE NEWS

'WANTED: CALL EXTENDED FOR LOCAL MINISTER'

1824 Rev. Simeon Woodruff accepted the call as the first minister to the First Congregational Church. 'Nothing is said of money', but he was offered ½ of lot #7, which is ½ of 94 acres. December of 1824 the society voted as follows: Resolved, that to free our minister from trouble as far as possible, that part of the salary that is to be paid in produce shall consist of a suitable proportion of the different articles necessary for family use. Another resolution called upon different members of the society to assist the minister in clearing his lot of timber. A committee was appointed every year to price produce: wheat 62.5 cents per bushel, corn 31 cents, oats 20 cents, potatoes 25 cents, beans 75 cents, hay \$4.00 per ton (labor 50 cents per day), oxen hired for one day for 25 cents, fresh pork \$3.50 per hundred pounds, beef \$2.50 per hundred pounds, butter 10 cents per pound, cheese 6 cents per pound, lard 8 cents per pound.



200th ANNIVERSARY CHURCH COOKBOOKS

Please see Dianne Maringer on Sunday morning to get your copy. Price per book is \$12; mailing the book is an additional \$3 per book.



WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

Women's Luncheon is Tuesday, December 6, at 11:30 a.m. upstairs at Pomeroy Restaurant. Please contact Lola Millhoane, (440) 238-3037, by Sunday, December 4, to make your reservation. All ladies are welcome!



BLUE CHRISTMAS

Service of Remembrance and Hope

Friday – December 9, 2016 – 7:30 p.m.
in our Sanctuary

Blue Christmas is a worship service remembering those who have passed away, while seeking hope 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.



STRONGSVILLE CITY JAZZ SWING BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Fundraiser for Our Music Ministry



Friday – December 16, 2016
7:30 p.m. in Our Sanctuary

A reception will follow the concert.

OFFICIAL BOARD

Profit from the Turkey Dinner on November 5 was \$2,006.39. Thank you to all who bought tickets and to all who worked on Friday and/or Saturday. It was nice to see new faces helping along with our regulars.

THE THRIFT SHOP

The Thrift Shop is ready for Christmas. The shelves are stocked with holiday décor, lights, cookie tins, ribbon and greeting cards. Our racks are filled with holiday clothing. Why pay \$30 at Kohl's when you can buy a Christmas sweater in the shop for \$3? We have lots of jewelry too. We hope to see you this December for some holiday shopping fun.

We will only be open 3 Thursdays in December. We will be closed December 22 and 29, so plan to shop early. We will reopen on Thursday, January 7.

In case you receive a Christmas gift that you can't use or want, please think about donating it to the shop. Our customers love shopping for new items, and we love selling them too!

“REAP WHAT YOU SOW” RAFFLES

The drawings for the two “Reap What You Sow” basket raffles will take place on Sunday, December 4, in the sanctuary after the last hymn of the worship service. The congregation is requested to take their seats after the last hymn.

THE MITTEN TREE / FAMILY OF FAITH TREE

The Mitten Tree will be in the Gathering Area until December 4, 2016, for collecting donations of hats, gloves, mittens and scarves for Brookside Center. Brookside is an ecumenical center that provides clothing and necessities to the poor and needy and is located on Pearl Road in Cleveland.

After worship on December 4, the Mitten Tree items will be removed. The tree will become the Family of Faith Tree, which we will decorate with Christmas ornaments donated by members and friends. If you have not yet donated an ornament – or – if you'd like to donate an additional ornament, please bring it to the church office and include your name. Official Board will prepare a tag with your name, attach the tag to your ornament, and hang the ornament on the Family of Faith Tree. Please know that your ornament will NOT be returned to you, but it will be part of the Christmas decorations each year. Please do not bring expensive heirloom ornaments.

Thank you for celebrating with your church family in both the Mitten Tree and the Family of Faith Tree!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Due to lack of workers, Women's Fellowship will NOT make or sell Christmas Candy this year.

GIRL SCOUT GOLD PROJECT

I would like to thank Jim Heinrich for his help with my outdoor worship area Girl Scout Gold project. Also, thank you to Sharon Heinrich for helping coordinate the delivery of supplies. The majority of my project has been completed, but the plants will be added in the spring. Unfortunately I am over my budget (by \$410), so if you are interested in donating anything toward it, please let me know. Thank you for your support.

Gina Gigliotti



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, (440) 238-6697. Please provide updates for this list. Thank you.

Long-Term Care or Homebound Members: Eric Brand, Betty Bushea, Margot James, Ethyl Jeglie at Elmcroft of Sagamore Hills, Janet Kato at Western Reserve Masonic Community in Medina, Dolores Mihalack at Southern Hills, Harvey Pincombe, Connie Rebar, Trish Shields, Doris Soucie, Trudie Taylor at Royal Oak Nursing and Rehab Center

Church Family: Pam Peacock, Denzil Richards, Melinda Slavik, Leah Tressa Forget, Kyle Woodward

Extended Church Family: Bri Brostek, Thom Cerny, Dylan Churnega, Zachary Crouse, Audrey Curry, Edie Deitcher, Hollie Paine Dodge, Kim Filiatraut, Elizabeth Fulford, Matthew Geletka, Dan Karoly, Sue Mason, Pat Masuga, Debbie Morey, Tonette Putrino, Carrol Riley, Keith Stewart, Joe Valli

STEEPLE LIGHTING

Week of November 13, 2016

*Happy Birthday Today to Zach Craig
With love, Grammy*

*In Memory of Our Mother, Lorna Robinson
Becky and Bill*

Week of November 20, 2016

*Happy Birthday Today to Adam Craig and
Happy Anniversary to
Debbie and Larry Wentz on November 24
With love, Grammy*

*In Celebration of our 68th Wedding Anniversary
John and Maggie Struhar*

Week of November 27, 2016

*Happy Birthday to Stephen Popovich on November 28
With love, Grammy*

To light the steeple, the minimum donation is \$5.00. Donation forms are on the bulletin board in Pilgrim Hall. Multiple donations for the same week will be accepted. For questions, please call the church, (440) 238-6697. Thank you to all who light the steeple.



STEWARDSHIP CORNER

In a few months we will be asking everyone for a pledge as a part of stewardship drive, but stewardship is more than giving money, it is using your talent also. We have many talented members who provide their time and talents. When I taught, I was told catch them being good and recognize it.

I intend to try to do that with this column. I want to be able to recognize those members who do the little things to add to the ministry of the church. No talent is too small to be recognized. We do recognize musicians and Sunday school teachers. But, we have others who also contribute. I will lead off with some I have been told about.

Austin Eggert who has been behind the scenes making contributions of supplies to the dinners and to the garage sale.

Gina Cathcart, Jim Heinrich and Doug Thorn who add to our Sunday services. **Gina** sees that there is water for the speakers and the altar is ready. She also finds ushers and greeters if no one volunteered. She also orders and picks up our poinsettia and lily plants each year. **Doug and Jim** are there weekly to take care of the sound and record the services. **Doug** also was part of the group who brought electricity to the outside and set up all the sound for the tent revival. Doug also comes to Band Rehearsal at the church every Wednesday to run the sound system.

Betty Craig, Karen Morgan, Lola Millhoane led by Virginia Churnega and all of the food donators who worked to serve at the funeral lunch for Betty Kovach.

I found out that **Lloyd Bridle** helped Dick Colmery bring electricity to the outside. We have a great bunch of retired men who give service.

Judy Carte comes to the church on Friday afternoon to fold our Sunday 11x17 bulletins. In the past, **Linda Plain and Billie Jo Cantrell** also helped fold bulletins.

Those are just a few that I have observed or have been told about, who have taken on something to use their time and talent.

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN!

Please send me those people who you would like to have recognized. My email is kennjoerk@yahoo.com or send it to Sharon at the church office email Strongsvilleucc@gmail.com. Let's all recognize those who use talents to help in the ministry of the church.

Kenn Oerkfitz, Treasurer.



IN SYMPATHY

Our love and prayers are extended in sympathy to four church families on their recent losses—

to Don Kovach and family on the passing of his wife Betty on November 3, 2016. The funeral was held on November 7 at our church.

to Sharon Wilson and family on the passing of her husband Howard on November 12. A memorial service will take place in the spring at their farm.

to Janet Kato and family on the passing of her husband Bill on November 15. A memorial service was held November 25 in the Chapel at the Western Reserve Masonic Community in Medina.

to Marjorie Morrison on the passing of her mother, Betty Riley, on November 16 in Athens, Ohio. The funeral took place on November 18 in Athens, Ohio.

COFFEE HOUR

To donate staples for Coffee Hour and the Free Lunch program, these items are needed: napkins, small recyclable cups for juice (7 or 9 oz.), Splenda, Sweet 'n Low, Equal, coffee, tea, powered mix for lemonade, iced tea, and hot chocolate. Please **DO NOT** donate styrofoam cups, plates, and bowls, as they are **NOT** recyclable. We are trying to go **GREEN**. Thank you.



SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CHORUS CONCERT

The Southwest Community Chorus and Chamber Singers will present their 2016 Christmas concert on Sunday, December 4, at 3:00 p.m. in the United Methodist Church at 170 Seminary Street in Berea. This year's performance, entitled *Count Your Blessings*, features former church choir leader Tom Foley as director, accompanist Carol Konet, and church singers, Irene Joyce, Ingrid Dickson, Pam Keenen, Gary Hackett, Jack Stephenson, Bruce Keenen and UCC guest singer Craig Hardy. You'll enjoy the music, and we'll get you in the Christmas mood. We like looking into the audience and seeing our fellow church members. So, please attend. Thank you. Tickets are available at the door and cost \$10 for adults and free for children 12 and under.



NEWS FROM OUR FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Lori Kovatich

Below is a monthly report listing the budget income we need to receive from Pledges and Offerings and the amount received from October 23 through November 20, 2016. This information also appears on a weekly basis in our worship bulletin.

Offering Needed \$19,500 for 5 Sundays @ \$3,900/week
Offering Received 13,250
Difference - \$ 6,250



THANK YOU

To my church family,

Thank you to all for your cards, thoughts, and prayers for my family and me on the passing of my wife Betty. I truly appreciated them all. Don Kovach

Dear members,

Thank you so much for all your support during this difficult time. We really appreciate everything you have done to ease our loss. I wish I could name everyone for their help, but the list is so long, and you know who you are. We were grateful for the help setting up the church for Betty's memorial, for the luncheon set up after the service. Betty would have loved all the desserts—it followed her wishes perfectly.

Sincerely grateful, The Kovach Family

STRONGSVILLE FOOD BANK

The Strongsville Food Bank needs volunteers for the Christmas Village at Southpark Mall during the month of December. The village will be on the second level near Sears. It will be open daily with two shifts - 12 noon until 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Two adults are needed for each shift. This entails greeting visitors, answering questions and ensuring safety of the display.

This could be a volunteer opportunity for older children and teens. They must be accompanied by an adult. Free will offerings of cash or non-perishable foods are welcomed.

Additionally, this is a lovely display, so please pass the word to others to stop by and enjoy the display. Please contact Judy Carte at (440) 238-8283 or email at alacartej@gmail.com.

2017 ANNUAL ALL-FAMILY CHURCH WINTER RETREAT AT PILGRIM HILLS

The Church's Annual All-Family Winter Retreat at Pilgrim Hills will take place on President's Day weekend 2017: February 17, 18 and 19. The sign-up sheet to attend and the sign-up sheet for things to bring and to volunteer have been posted on the bulletin board in Pilgrim Hall. Please reserve your spot and room now, as rooms will be first-come, first-serve. The cut-off to sign up—January 15—will be strictly enforced this year. We will not have the same luxury as we've had in the past, in which we were able to take reservations up until the event weekend. Also, please let us know if you have any special dietary needs. Finally, those that wish to come down on Saturday only—we would be happy to have you there, but we also need your reservation by January 15, and the cost is \$10 per meal. Please contact Charles Jannsohn if you have any questions.

Here is the cost breakdown (no change from last year):

ADULTS (12 and up): \$65
CHILDREN (6-11): \$10
CHILDREN (5 and under): FREE

Important dates to remember:

JANUARY 15, 2017: Reservations close AND MONEY DUE

JANUARY 29, 2017: All special dietary needs must be reported

FEBRUARY 12, 2017: Retreat planning meeting in the Pre-school Sunday School room at church after the worship service

OHIO CONFERENCE OUTDOOR MINISTRY UPDATE ON PILGRIM AND TEMPLED HILLS

Since contracting with UCCR (United Camps, Conferences & Retreats) to run Pilgrim Hills, the camp went from showing a financial loss for many years to generating a profit. Those profits were then turned into making capital improvements at the camp. Because of the success at Pilgrim Hills, the Board of Directors decided to remove Templed Hills from sabbatical and reopen the camp to be run by UCCR on a trial basis for 2 years. As a result of the decision to contract with UCCR, an earlier motion to put both camps up for sale with the intent of only selling one has been tabled.

The Board of Directors reports they have now spent \$50,000 on capital repairs and improvements at both camps, which was funded through profits and some generous donations. The next major capital improvement in 2017 will be to replace the large deck attached to the dining hall at Pilgrim Hills.

So what does this mean for the Strongsville UCC Annual All-Family Winter Retreat? Well, we know how much everyone loved Templed Hills, but we are already locked

in to a contract with a paid deposit at Pilgrim Hills for 2017. However, that hopefully means we will have the option to return to Templed Hills for the 2018 Retreat (February 16, 17 and 18, 2018). This is definitely something that can be discussed and perhaps voted on by those who attend, or are planning to attend, future retreats. Please see Charles Jannsohn if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

A big thank you to Barb Fraunfelder for bringing this information to my attention.

CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

To send Christmas greetings to fellow members and friends, the church "mail box" will again be available in Pilgrim Hall. 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, because the church office cannot mail your personal Christmas greetings. Cards left at the church after Christmas will be discarded. Thank you.

Pastor Becky and Jack Stephenson
cordially invite you to a

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

at their home – 2214 Substation Road in Medina

Saturday – December 17, 2016 – 4:00 p.m.

All are welcome!



BIRTHS

Our congratulations to the Bell family on the birth of twin boys, Cooper Erhardt and Trevor Anton, on Sunday, November 27, 2016!



ANNUAL REPORTS

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



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 29, 2017, 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 December 31. It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 29, 2017. 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.

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 for your consideration.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Your help would be appreciated with the following:

Blue Christmas Worship Service on December 9

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

Jazz Concert on December 16

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

Ushers on Sunday Mornings

Please see the signup sheet in Pilgrim Hall.



THE CHRISTMAS FUND

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 annually on the Sunday before Christmas, which is December 18 this year. Offering envelopes will be in the pew rack.

