

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Congregational)

13740 Pearl Road

Strongsville, Ohio 44136

Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Designated Minister



Church Telephone: (440) 238-6697

Email: StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com

Website: www.strongsvilleucc.com

Worship at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday

DECEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 3, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Advent 1, Sacrament of Communion

Scriptures: Mark 13:24-37

Liturgist: Greg Dickson

Greeter: Linda Plain

Usher: Linda Plain

Coffee Hour: Kenn and Ginny Oerkfitz

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 24, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Advent 4

Scriptures: Luke 1:26-58

Liturgist: Jim Studer

Greeters: Dawn and Alysha Rolland

Ushers: Volunteers Needed

Coffee Hour: Volunteers Needed

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 10, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Advent 2

Scriptures: Mark 1:1-8

Liturgist: Bruce Keenen

Greeters: The Clotworthy Family

Ushers: Jim and Linda Dettmer

Coffee Hour: Myron Costin

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 24, 2017 – 11:00 P.M.

Liturgist: Kenn Oerkfitz

Greeter: Volunteer Needed

Ushers: Volunteers Needed

FRIDAY – DECEMBER 15, 2017 – 7:30 P.M.

Blue Christmas Service of Remembrance

(Please see page 3.)

Liturgist: Betty Craig

Greeters: Volunteers Needed

Ushers: Volunteers Needed

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 31, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Liturgist: Ted Bickley

Greeter: Volunteer Needed

Ushers: Volunteers Needed

Coffee Hour: Cathy Hawk

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 17, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Advent 3, Children’s Pageant During Worship

Advent Potluck Meal after Worship

For our Advent Potluck meal, please bring a main dish plus either a side dish, salad, or dessert to share.

Also bring your own table service. Thank you!

The Christmas Fund Offering will be received.

(Please see page 7).

Scriptures: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Liturgist: Gina Gigliotti

Greeters: The Bickley Family

Ushers: Ted and Kelly Bickley

Coffee Hour: Jim and Linda Dettmer



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

*You take it on faith, you take it to the heart.
The waiting is the hardest part. –Tom Petty*

Tom Petty, pop theologian, really got it right when it comes to Advent. The season seems to come earlier every year. Thanksgiving has been ingloriously shoved to one side. After all, *Christmas* is coming, right?

It's true. Christmas *is* coming—but it won't be here for several weeks yet. So let's slow down and wander to the manger together. Instead of tearing into the Gift that awaits us, pause for a bit and admire the "packaging."

Wait expectantly with Israel as we sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Feel the desperate longing in their hearts. When, O Lord, will you return to your children?

Listen with the shepherds. What's that fresh, unusual sound? The gentle flutter of angels' wings? Lifted voices of a cherub chorus? Understand the words by listening with the ears of your heart.

Hold your breath with Mary as Gabriel appears. Rejoice at the unexpected miracle of birth with Elizabeth. (Can you imagine? I can't. I really can't. . . .)

Study the skies. Set aside the busy-ness of this world and immerse yourself again in the Greatest Story Ever Told. Try to pretend you're hearing it for the very first time. Be like a little child. Open your eyes to the beauty of the journey. Hold hands. Look up! Feel the warmth, the promise—the hope.

And no shaking that package ahead of time! It's not Christmas yet!

Peace,
Pastor Heidi



IN SYMPATHY

Our love and prayers are extended in sympathy to Mary Carey on the passing of her brother, Harry Bowlin, on November 10, 2017, in California.



UPDATE FROM YOUR PULPIT SEARCH COMMITTEE

To date, we have received 21 ministerial profiles. The Committee has been carefully and prayerfully evaluating the ones we have so far, and are in the process of discerning which of these would be a good fit and a possibility to become our settled pastor. Each profile is between 20 and 30 pages long, and we each read and all discussed the merits of every one. After that, we narrowed the list down to 10, which we are ranking and deciding which of these to further explore. The process continues! Your ongoing support and prayers for us are gratefully felt. Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns to any one of us. Thank you.

Your Pulpit Search Committee

Ted Bickley, Judy Carte, Kristen Clotworthy,
Jim Dettmer, Ingrid Dickson, Sally Herzog, Bill Schneider

MISSION AND OUTREACH NEWS

Mission and Outreach appreciates the wonderful support from our congregation in our fundraiser in honor of Veterans Day. A total of \$640.00 was raised. Once the committee agrees on distribution, we will have the news in the Sunday bulletin. Hopefully the information on display in the gathering area for two Sundays was as helpful to you as it was for us. Many thanks to all!

Hurricane and Earthquake Relief – The UCC denomination has this link for helping with the relief programs:

http://www.ucc.org/disaster_hurricane_2017_relief

ORGAN RESTORATION COMMITTEE PANCAKE BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER

Appreciation is extended to all who supported the ORC Pancake Breakfast on November 12, 2017. The breakfast earned \$1,068 for our pipe organ's restoration. Thank you very much to these people who volunteered at the breakfast:

Rosemary Bechtel, Adria Bond, Greg Dickson,
Ingrid Dickson, Judy Gaumer, Tom Gaumer,
Bill Giuliano, Jim Heinrich, Irene Jannsohn,
Irene Joyce, Jim Joyce, Bruce Keenen, Pam Keenen,
Sarah Keenen, Bob Kovatich, John Maringer,
Dan Masuga, Vickie Masuga, Chuck McDougall,
Allen Mhlak, Sandy O'Shea, Ed Sobek,
Doug Thorn, Sarah Toth, Clay Williams



SWINGIN' CAROLS OF CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Fundraiser for Our Music Ministry



**Friday – December 8, 2017
7:30 p.m. in Our Sanctuary**

\$10 Adults \$4 Ages 6-12
Free Ages 5 and under

A reception will follow the concert.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

of Remembrance & Healing

Friday, December 15, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

*Come to me. Get away with me . . . and learn the unforced rhythms of grace. . . . Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.
–Matthew 11:29-30, **The Message***

This time of year can really mess with our heads (and our hearts). We get all caught up in the busy-ness of the season, hustling and bustling here and there, but our hearts are longing for something—*more*.

Slow down. Breathe. Remember.

Join us for a time of reflection, remembrance and meditation as together we seek peace during this busy season. All are welcome—especially you.

OFFICIAL BOARD

Profit from the Turkey Dinner on November 4 was \$2,798.72. Thank you to all who bought tickets, to all who provided bakery, and to all who worked on Friday and/or Saturday.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR INNER-CITY SCHOOL



I am collecting Christmas gift (or money) donations for an inner-city Cleveland school. 90% of the students are below poverty level. The grades are Pre K through 3rd. If you would like to donate or would like more information, please see me after church or feel free to call me at (216) 598-6198.

Deadline for gifts is Sunday, December 3. Thank you for your support.

Beth Giuliano

As we close our 200th Anniversary celebration year, I wanted to send along my special thanks to everyone who participated in recognizing this special milestone in the life of our church. Whether your contribution was purchasing commemorative items, attending various events or being part of the planning or development of the many things we did to make the year a memorable one for everyone, your support was most appreciated.

There aren't too many churches that can say they have been in existence for 200 years, but what makes us special isn't just the building or its history but most importantly the people who contribute so much to it through their faith and support.

As we begin our journey to the next 200 years, let's continue to be proud of our past but look forward with anticipation and excitement to what the future holds for each of us as members of The Strongsville United Church of Christ.

Sincerely,
Joyce Reed, Chairperson
200th Anniversary Committee

ADULT SOCIAL CLUB

A reminder to those who made reservations, the club will go to Stan Hywet Hall on Thursday, December 14, for "Deck the Hall 2017." We will meet at church to carpool at 4:00 p.m. Admission of \$13.50 per person includes tree lighting at 5:30 p.m.; live music in the Music room – courtesy of area choirs and musicians; self-guided tour of Manor House; freshly baked gingerbread cookies, warm pretzels, cocoa, hot cider, beer and wine for purchase in the Courtyard; animated gingerbread bakeshop window; a 20-foot poinsettia tree in Corbin Conservatory; shopping for holiday gifts in Molly's Shop. For questions, please contact Adria Bond at (440) 227-8410.

Adult Social Club will **NOT** meet in December.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's Fellowship Cheeseball Fundraiser –
Delivery is Sunday, December 10.

A Ladies' Christmas Tea will take place on Wednesday, December 6, at 12:30 p.m. in the Parlor. If you would like, please bring a tea cup and share a Christmas tradition you have enjoyed in your home. Refreshments, coffee, and an assortment of tea bags will be available for this casual event. All ladies are welcome!



THE THRIFT SHOP

December is a special time in the shop. We are stocked with Christmas items. Why go to Target or the mall and pay high prices, when the Thrift Shop has quality items at low prices and many are new! We have tree décor, home décor, greeting cards, ribbon, craft items, Christmas clothing and more. Stop in and do your Christmas shopping at the Thrift Shop. Need a sweater or holiday item to wear to work? We can help you.

We will be open the Thursdays of December 7, 14, and 21 from 10 to 4. Our sales will be amazing each week. We will even have a BUY ONE GET TWO FREE sale on our holiday items. Just check the church website; or even better, sign up for a weekly email from the Thrift Shop.

If you are wondering what to do with holiday gifts you cannot use, donate them to the shop. Our customers really love new items!

The shop will be closed Thursday, December 28.

THE MITTEN TREE / FAMILY OF FAITH TREE

The Mitten Tree will be in the Gathering Area from now until December 3 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 3, 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 become 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!
Delivery of



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: Betty Bushea, Margot James, Janet Kato at Kemper House, Connie Rebar, Trish Shields

Church Family: Betty Babics, Gordon Cockrell, Dan Davis, The Grabski/Williams Family, Lacey (daughter of Amanda Hawk), Steve Herzog, Martha Liebert, Michele Mhlack, Bill Ritchie, Betsey Santomen (wife of Rev. Joe Santomen) at Parkside Villa, Jan Stough, Rev. Oommen Thomas, Leah Tressa Forget, Kyle Woodward

Extended Church Family: Luke Bazan (friend of Judi Pavisich's grand-daughter), Donna Briggs (mother-in-law of Judi Pavisich's daughter), the Brlas family, Audrey Curry (mother of Pam Keenen), Kim Filiatraut (friend of Sarah Keenen), Joyce Freeman (sister of Carol Woodward), Elizabeth Fulford (friend of Lora Rung), Sue Grunenwald (friend of Sharon Heinrich), Diane Mason (friend of Lora Rung), Pat Masuga (mother of Dan), Piper Masuga (granddaughter of Dan and Vicky and great-granddaughter of Lola Millhoane), Carrol Riley (father of Marjorie Morrison), the family of Logan Sink (friends of Judy Pavisich's granddaughter), Keith Stewart (cousin of Carol Woodward), Frank Toth (father of Rob), Sheena Toth (mother of Dale), Joe Valli (brother-in-law of Vicky and Dan Masuga)

NEWS FROM OUR FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Adria Bond

Giving Statements – If you would like a to receive a year-to-date statement on the status of your pledge, please email Financial Secretary, Adria Bond, at succfinancialsecretary@gmail.com or call her at (440) 227-8410. Otherwise, we are just planning on sending the year-end statements in January.

Below is a monthly report listing the budget income we need to receive from Pledges and Offerings and the amount received from October 22 through November 12, 2017. This information also appears on a weekly basis in our worship bulletin.

Offering Needed \$15,460 for 4 Sundays @ \$3,865/week
Offering Received 11,145
Difference (\$ 4,315)



STEEPLE LIGHTING

Week of November 5, 2017

*In Remembrance of the Passing of
My Father (Nicholas) on November 5, 1994, and
My Mother (Peggy) on November 5, 2002*
Gary Paul

Week of November 12, 2017

*Happy Birthday
on November 13 to Zach Craig and
on November 18 to Katie Lett*
With love, Grammy

Week of November 19, 2017

*Happy Birthday to Adam Craig on November 20
Happy Anniversary to Debbie and Larry Wentz
on November 24*
With love, Grammy/Mom
Celebrating 69 Wonderful Years Together
John and Maggie Struhar

Week of November 26, 2017

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.

BIRTH

Our congratulations to
parents Jake and Lauren Masuga
on the birth of their third daughter Sloane
on Tuesday, November 14, 2017.
Congrats also to
grandparents, Vicky and Dan Masuga, and
great-grandmother, Lola Millhoane!



STEWARDSHIP CORNER

As of this printing, 51 Estimate of Giving Cards have been received for a total of \$82,750. We will gratefully accept Estimate of Giving Cards at any time! The cards aid in developing our church's budget each year. We thank you very much for your support.

We appreciate the time and talents of these members recently:

Lloyd Bridle – for his tuckpointing work on the bricks at the rear entrance of the church

Jim Dettmer – for preparing the walls and painting the classroom by Pilgrim Hall

Ingrid Dickson – for clearing out and making the classroom by Pilgrim Hall usable and appealing

Everyone who helped with the Holiday Open House on November 19.

All our Free Lunch Program volunteers for their dedication.

Please inform the church office of others who should be recognized within our church family:

Email: Strongsvilleucc@gmail.com.
Telephone: 440-238-6697

SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CHORUS CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2017

The Southwest Community Chorus and Chamber Singers will present their 2017 Christmas concert on Sunday, December 3, at 3:00 p.m. in the United Methodist Church at 170 Seminary Street in Berea.

This year's performance, entitled *Make the Season Bright*, features former church choir leader Tom Foley as director, accompanist Carol Konet, and church singers: Ingrid Dickson, Gary Hackett, Irene Joyce, Bruce Keenen, Pam Keenen, Sarah Keenen, and UCC guest singer, Craig Hardy.

Tickets are available at the door at a cost of \$10 for adults and free for children 12 and under. 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!



2018 ANNUAL ALL-FAMILY CHURCH WINTER RETREAT AT PILGRIM HALLS

The Church's Annual All-Family Winter Retreat will be returning to Temple Hills this year and will take place on President's Day weekend 2018: February 16, 17 and 18. The sign-up sheet to attend and the sign-up sheet for things to bring and to volunteer will soon be posted on the bulletin board in Pilgrim Hall. Please reserve your spot and room now, as rooms will be first-come, first-served. The cut-off to sign up—January 14—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. Space is limited to 68 attendees. 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 14, and the cost is \$10 per meal. Please contact Irene Joyce or Rachel Zielinski if you have any questions.

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

ADULTS (12 and up): \$70
CHILDREN (6-11): \$15
CHILDREN (5 and under): FREE

Important dates to remember:

JANUARY 14, 2018: Reservations close AND MONEY DUE
JANUARY 28, 2018: All special dietary needs must be reported
FEBRUARY 11, 2018: Retreat planning meeting in the church after the worship service

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. The church office cannot mail your personal Christmas cards. Cards left after Christmas will be discarded. Thank you.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you to everyone who participates in our Sunday School students' Penny Sunday collections. On October 29, we collected \$134.10 for Hurricane Relief for Puerto Rico, plus a \$10 check for the Strongsville Food Bank! The Sunday School added \$100 from their treasury and \$234.10 was sent to UCC Disaster Relief – Puerto Rico; the check went to the Strongsville Food Bank. The next Penny Sunday collection will be on November 26; and the students voted to give the money to the National Youth Advocacy Program (NYAP), which serves foster children in Cuyahoga County. Our Sunday School has supported this organization in years past through their Giving Tree program; and this year, the money will be used to provide a better Christmas to children who have been removed from their parents' care for a myriad of reasons. These children often enter the foster care system with little or no possessions to call their own and what little they do have is often stuffed into a garbage bag. We will provide duffel bags and/or backpacks along with Christmas wish list items for as many children as our funds allow. Please give generously on to Penny Sunday on Nov. 26 and Dec. 31.

Hello Families!

The Sunday School Christmas Pageant will be on Sunday, December 17, during our 10 a.m. worship service. Elena Joyce is writing the play once again this year, and we will have parts for everyone!

Brief rehearsals will be on the Wednesdays of December 6 and 13 at 7 p.m., followed by Children's Choir for the pageant music with Elena Taylor at 7:30 p.m.

On the 17th, please bring a delicious dish to share, because our Annual Christmas Potluck after the service is back; and there will be a special visitor from the North to greet the children (of ALL ages).

Parents: please turn in this form to your child's Sunday School teacher.

My child(ren) will participate in the pageant on December 17.

Child's Name(s):

My child(ren) will attend rehearsals on:

Wednesday, December 6 _____ Yes _____ No
Wednesday, December 13 _____ Yes _____ No

Thank you so much for being part of our Sunday School!

GIFT CARDS!

What a perfect, hassle-free gift that helps our church at the same time! Remember to use gift cards for your Christmas gift giving or entertaining needs. We have many merchants in stock, plus there are hundreds of gift cards that can be ordered in various amounts. Movies, dining, department stores, travel, gas, groceries, home improvement, salons—give the gift of guilt-free shopping!

Of course, you may use the gift cards yourself to purchase your presents and your Christmas ham ;) Have you thought of . . .

Your parents & grandparents? _____

Your kids & grandkids? _____

Your spouse? _____

A special someone? _____

Your siblings? _____

Your nieces & nephews? _____

Your friends & neighbors? _____

Your employees? _____

Your hairdresser/barber? _____

Someone in need? _____

Hostess/host gift? _____

Christmas Dinner? _____

Give your Christmas order to Jim Joyce in Pilgrim Hall after church, and he will fill it for you!

**DEADLINE TO RECEIVE YOUR ORDER
ON CHRISTMAS EVE IS
DECEMBER 17.**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Your help would be appreciated with the following:

Jazz Concert on December 8

Bakers, Kitchen Helpers, Ticket Sellers, Greeters, and Ushers are needed.

Please see the signup sheet in Pilgrim Hall.

Blue Christmas Worship Service on December 15

Bakers, Kitchen Helpers, Greeters 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 17 this year. Offering envelopes will be in the pew racks.



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 28, 2018, 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 28, 2018. 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.



When
the angels
had left them
and gone into
heaven, the shepherds
said to one another, "Let us
go now to Bethlehem and see this
thing that has taken place, which
the Lord has made known to us." So
they went with haste and found Mary
and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.
When they saw this, they made known what had
been told them about this child; and all who heard
it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But
Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in
her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising
God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
Luke 2:
15 - 20