

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
13740 Pearl Road
Strongsville, Ohio 44136



Church Telephone: (440) 238-6697
Email: StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com
Website: www.strongsvilleucc.com

Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall
Pastor

(Worship at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday)

DECEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

We have met the enemy, and he is us. –Pogo

The War on Christmas

Every year, it seems, the media tries to get us all excited over holidays and religious freedoms, frequently over really stupid things like the “War on Christmas” that’s waged over Starbucks and their seasonal coffee cups. If you’ve been fortunate enough to miss the hubbub, here it is, in a nutshell:

In years past, Starbucks has created wintry cups adorned with symbols of the season: snowmen, snowflakes, reindeer. But in 2015, they chose to issue a plain red cup. No decorations. And this led some angry, conservative Christians to claim that Starbucks is “declaring war on Christmas.” (Never mind that many of our Christmas symbols and traditions are deeply rooted in paganism, not Christianity. But I digress.)

Seriously? All this over a disposable coffee cup? Who gives a flying . . . reindeer? (The fancy cups have since returned; the War is over [for now].)

Here’s what I believe: God did not come in to the world in human form to teach us how to decorate coffee cups. God did not come to model taking offense over how we greet one another, or what kind of music is most God-honoring.

No. Jesus came into the world to teach us how to love one another. When we have plenty, he shows us how to share, to “pay it forward.” He reminds us that others will know we follow the Christ, not by our coffee cups, our t-shirts or CD collections—not even when we call ourselves Christians—but by our love for one another, especially those who can be difficult to love.

As we begin our Advent journey again, how will you practice love in the ways Jesus taught us?

Pacing ourselves for the Journey. . . .

Peace,
Pastor Heidi

ONLINE WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 6– ONLINE
Sacrament of Communion
Second Sunday of Advent
Special Music: Dave Williams
Advent Candlelighters: The Sekorky Family



SUNDAY – DECEMBER 13 – ONLINE
Third Sunday of Advent
Special music: Venner Clarinet Quartet
Advent Candle lighters: The Zielinski Family



SUNDAY – DECEMBER 20 – ONLINE
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Special Music: Barb Fraunfelder
Advent Candle Lighters: The Rolland Family



THURSDAY—DECEMBER 24—ONLINE
Special Christmas Eve
Service of Lessons and Carols



SUNDAY – DECEMBER 27 – ONLINE
First Sunday after Christmas
Special Music: Sharon Heinrich

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, go to **Worship**, and click on **Service Videos**. Our You Tube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCynOZfg4uKoX7HMnKORbXfQ/videos>*



Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of **Bill Bitterman**, who passed away on October 31, 2020. His wife of over 60 years, **Ann**, died on October 9, 2020.

Our heartfelt condolences to **Michelle Szasz** and the friends and family of **Debra Szasz**, who died on November 1, 2020. Michelle and Debbie were married in our church in 2014.



We are saddened by the loss of church member and artist **Martha Liebert**, who passed away on November 23, 2020. Our love and prayers go out to her family and friends. Martha will be cremated, and a memorial service planned here in Ohio at a (much) later date. Please keep Lisa and her sisters **Caren** and **Deanna Liebert** in your prayers. If you would like to send a card or lovely memory to Lisa, her address is Lisa Krell; P. O. Box 467; Hammonton NJ 08037

Lisa said how much her mother absolutely loved her church. If you are so inclined, gifts in Martha's memory may be given to the **Strongsville UCC Memorial Fund** via the church office.



BABY CONGRATULATIONS

Many blessings to **Chad** and **Brittany Johnson** on the birth of their son, **Wyatt James Johnson**, on November 25, 2020.

Congratulations also to big brothers **Cole** and **Owen** too!

THANK YOU NOTES



Many thanks to **Sarah Keenen and Pam Keenen, Sandy O'Shea, Richard Densmore, Brad Holtman, Carol Foley, and Sharon Heinrich** for sharing their music with us in November for our recorded worship services.

Thank you to **Herb Hampson**, who created an authentic manger to be used in future Christmas pageants!



From our members...

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you to the people who made meals for our Financial Secretary, **Adria Bond**, after her eye surgery: **The Hawks, the Costin-Barrys, the Clotworthys, the Gaumers, Linda Ponstingle, Rosemary Bechtel, the Herzogs, the Heinrichs, the Joyces, Ingrid Dickson, and Barb Fraunfelder**. It's nice to see our church officers support each other.

Sincerely, **Greg Dickson**

I have received so many beautiful cards from the SUCC, expressing their sympathy [on the passing of Rev. Larry Craig] and that has been most comforting to me and our family. Thank you,
Christina Craig

UNSUNG HEROES

Did you know that **Dale Hawk, Ed Sobek, John & Amanda Marshall, Jon Hayes, and Doug Thorn** braved the elements and set up the Nativity scene on our church lawn? Thank you all so very much!



Thank you to everyone who participated in our Halloween "Penny Saturday" for UNICEF! We collected \$250.13 to help children in need! Thanks again to **Gina Cathcart** and **Bill Ritchie** for procuring the pumpkins!



OUR THANKSGIVING “BASKET” COLLECTION

Thanks to your generous contributions, our church was able to provide food assistance to over 151 individuals in 37 families from three counties from Strongsville to North Olmsted, to Medina, to Columbia Station, to several areas of Cleveland and in between.



OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office. Thank you.

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., Mike & Linda Elkins, Linda Elliott, Don Gleichauf, Sue Hawk, Steve Herzog, Paul Hirt, Carole Kapcar, George Kapcar, Tony Koussa, Lori Kovatich, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Millie Lafave, Lacey Marshall, Brigitte Matchett, Judy Maur, Laurie Meister, Michele Mihlack, Lola Millhoane, Judi Pavisich, Lisa Pogozielski, Joyce Reed, Dorothy and Bill Ritchie, Alysha Rolland, Ginger Rothel, John & Maggie Struhar, Keith Sullen, Jamie & Josh Trinckes, Sharon Wilson, Sally Vetovitz, Peg Weakley, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Ron, Yvonne, & Ronnie Adams (Judi Pavisich’s friends), Dorene Baldrige, 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), Donna Fargo (Sally Herzog’s mom), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen’s friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung’s friend), Dana Hardy (Craig’s wife), Kelly Kling (Strongsville Emergency Food Bank), Rev. Kent Knife (retired pastor from MHUCC), 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), 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.

GIFT CARDS

NEED AN EASY WAY TO CHRISTMAS SHOP?



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!**



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 received a check for \$33.57 from Amazon in November. Thank you!**

SPONSORSHIP OF CAROLINE IN INDIA

It’s time to sign up for 2021: The cost is \$30 per month.

Please call the church at 440-238-6697 or email at strongsvilleucc@gmail.com to sign up.

December, 2020—Sharon & Jim Heinrich

January—The Sunday School

February—

March—

April—

May—

June—

July—

August—

September—

October—

November--

December—



The Child Sponsorship Program is a part of Global Ministries, United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ (Christian) Churches.

STEEPLE LIGHTING

Week of November 1st

*In Loving Memory of William A. Fraunfelder, Jr.
from his friends who will always remember him with love*

Week of November 8th

*Happy Birthday to Jim Joyce on November 12th!
With love, from Erik & Bryana, Evan & Estera, and Elena
Happy Birthday to Zach Craig on November 13th
With love, Grammy*

Week of November 15th

*In memory of our parents and grandparents
Mark and Barbara Camp
Happy Birthday to Katie Lett on November 18th
and Adam Craig on November 20th
With love, Grammy*

Week of November 22nd

*Happy 12A Anniversary to Ingrid & Greg Dickson
With love from their family
Happy Anniversary to Debbie & Larry Wentz on
November 24th*

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

Week of November 29th

*In loving memory of Susan Stevenson Tressa and deep
admiration for her musical talents
In honor of my grandson Michael McNabb's 15th birthday
on November 26th—Ginger Rothe*



To light the steeple, the minimum donation is \$5.00. Thank you to all who light the steeple. **You may still light the steeple even though we are not meeting in person. Please email the church at strongsvilleuc@gmail.com.**

**MEN'S LUNCH BUNCH meets at 11:30 a.m. on
the fourth Thursday of the month at Gourmé
Restaurant 15315 Pearl Rd. in Strongsville.**



MISSION OUTREACH

We provided 72 bagged gift sets to Church Street Ministry. Each bag contained two pairs of Bombas socks and two candy bars along with a note of thanks for their service to our country.

They were delivered to their distribution center on Bagley Road on Friday, October 30th to ensure they were available for all Veterans on their November visit there. Included were 20 extra pairs to be sure all were provided for.

Many thanks to Reverend Heidi for obtaining the grant from Bombas and Irene Joyce for creating a lovely, meaningful and colorful note.

A special thank you to Bev Wehr for helping with the packaging.

Judy Carte, Mission Outreach

PANERA BREAD REPORT



The bread and pastries we pick up every Monday and Friday are distributed to people in need in Cleveland and surrounding areas. This ministry feeds low income seniors, the homeless, people living in group homes, folks who are unemployed or underemployed, and families in impoverished neighborhoods. We could not offer this ministry without someone willing to pick up the baked goods from Southpark Mall on Mondays at 11 a.m. or from the store on Route 82 on Mondays and Fridays at 9 a.m. If you can give a half hour of your time to help, please call Cathy Hawk at 440-781-7512 or the church office. (Thank you to the faithful bread transporters and sorters who continue to help!)

ANNUAL WINTER RETREAT

February 12-14, 2021

at Templed Hills Camp in Bellville, Ohio

As of now, we are planning for this event to take place in whatever safe form presents itself.

Rachel Zielinski and Irene Joyce will be having a Zoom meeting with the Heartland Conference outdoor ministries administrator on December 2nd. More information will be disseminated through email and Facebook. Please stay tuned...



KEEP RECYCLING YOUR PAPER, MAGAZINES, AND CARDBOARD!

The church (and everyone else) benefits any time you recycle. Thank you!



River Valley Paper Company

THRIFT SHOP



The Thrift Shop is **OPEN** on **Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.** with enhanced safety protocols in place and

lots of interesting merchandise. Donations are being accepted, but you must **call** the church first to arrange a time for drop-off.

THRIFT SHOP BONUS HOURS

**One Monday of the month—
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.**

Come on down for last-minute Christmas shopping down at the Shop during these extra hours. (We are still open on Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. **except Christmas Eve, December 24th and New Year's Eve, December 31st.**)

Also, the Thrift Shop is in need of volunteers to help out for a couple of hours—sorting, organizing, and selling on Thursdays. Please call Cathy Hawk (440-781-7512) if you can help!

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.



The Strongsville Emergency Food Bank is suspending accepting any donations

through December due to COVID. Despite the pandemic, our church has contributed approximately \$1,525.00 worth of food since January, 2020. Thank you!

MITTEN TREE—THERE'S STILL TIME!

We continue to collect hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and socks for the needy this year. From now through December 6, 2020, bring your items to the church during office hours and they will be placed on the Mitten Tree. This year's tree—so far...



GIVING OPTIONS

If you are interested in giving electronically, Here's how: You can customize your giving based on how, when, and how much through **E-Offering**. Log on to our church website at www.strongsvilleucc.com and click "Donate Now". You will be taken to the church's myEoffering page. Simply click on the "Sign-up" button and you will then fill in your personal information and "Register". Follow the prompts to set up your payment, one-time or ongoing. You can also set up your giving through Bill Pay on your bank's website. **You may also mail a check to Strongsville UCC 13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, OH 44136 or drop it off in the church's mailbox.**



NEWS FROM OUR FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Adria Bond

Below is a monthly report listing the budget income we need to receive from Pledges and Offerings and the amount received from **November 1 through November 22, 2020**. This information also appears on a weekly basis in our worship bulletin.



Offering Needed \$13,893.08 for 4 Sundays
Offering Received 9,941.75
Difference (- \$3,951.33)

Thank you to everyone who is maintaining their giving!

TRUSTEES UPDATE

You may already be aware, but the Board of Trustees has continued to meet through email meetings, doing the business of the church during this time.

- Approved a second clean-up of fall leaves by New Age Landscaping.
- Had the major holes patched in the parking lot—thank you to Dale Hawk.
- Discussed moving forward with lock changing on the church's exit doors.
- Contacted our snow removal service to review this season's contract.

Thank you to our dedicated Trustees !

ADDRESS CHANGES

To update your Church Directory:

Betty Jacobson
13800 Westwood Place #412
Strongsville, OH 44136
440-567-7577



CHURCH OFFICERS FOR 2020

Officers elected on Jan. 26, 2020, have an asterisk* by their names.

** = appointed by the Official Board



Moderator Rachel Zielinski
Vice-Moderator Rob Toth*
Treasurer Sally Herzog
Clerk Judy Gaumer*

Sunday School Superintendent

Board of Trustees

Eddy Bond* Greg Dickson Mike Clotworthy*
Myron Costin* Bill Giuliano
Dale Hawk Sandy Pogozelski
Ed Sobek Linda Stepan Rob Stepan

Endowment Fund Subcommittee

Irene Jannsohn* Joyce Reed

Diaconate

Jennifer Barry Barbara Camp Gina Cathcart*
Kristen Clotworthy Elaine Coffey* Cathy Hawk*
Sarah Hayes Linda Plain Linda Ponstingle
Nicole Stevens Dawn Rolland* Marty Winch
Barbara White* Mary Ellen Zimmerman*

Christian Education Committee

Serena Abruzzino* Kristen Clotworthy Mary Densmore
Linda Elkins Suzi Foley Sandy O'Shea
Lora Rung

Music Committee

Richard Densmore* Ingrid Dickson
Ken Mehalko Pam Keenen*
ex officio: Sharon Heinrich Tom Foley Mike Elkins

Stewardship Committee

Serena Abruzzino* Rosemary Bechtel Sue Gigliotti*
Beth Giuliano Judi Pavisich** Bill Schneider**

Mission and Outreach Committee

Judy Carte Bobbie Krisak Tony Koussa*
Michele Mihlack Gary Paul Lora Rung*
Jennifer Sekorky** Bev Wehr

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

The comfort of your spirit, The wisdom of your whisper,
The silence of your soul...Volunteers are vital to our mission and we welcome your involvement. Our work is possible because of people like you giving of themselves in service of others. Especially, giving comfort to patients and families dealing with the end of life.

Opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Companionship and support to patients and their family
 - Providing assistance with miscellaneous and clerical duties within our office
 - Assisting in our bereavement department
- No experience necessary.
Orientation and training provided.

InCareOhio Hospice

Martha Cromleigh, Volunteer Coordinator
330-335-9999 OR direct # 330-923-4554

Thank You!

Martha Cromleigh, Volunteer Coordinator
InCareOhio Hospice
Compassionate hearts inspired by Life

A PASTORAL LETTER AND COVID RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HEARTLAND CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

November 18, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have experienced spread of the COVID virus in some of our congregations and have received reports of deaths that can be directly attributed to that spread. We do not want congregations to experience a spread of the virus or, God forbid, the death of those who have gathered. Religious organizations, churches, must do their part in helping to limit the COVID virus. Therefore, we jointly offer the following as our best counsel for this season, when the COVID-19 pandemic rages throughout our Conference, Associations and Congregations.

We strongly recommend that churches not conduct in-person worship for at least the remainder of 2020. We recognize that this recommendation includes both Advent and Christmas, and deeply regret that this may entail a shift in usual holiday plans. While this seems drastic, it is necessary. We are making these recommendations to prevent the spread of the pandemic and to save lives.

We urge the Denomination, Conferences, Associations, and Congregations to refrain from in-person meetings for at least the remainder of 2020. We have all been engaged in electronic meetings. While not ideal, these meetings have served us well. Such meetings may represent a new normal for how we conduct our business together and for how we plan our shared and collaborative ministries.

We pray continually for persons in our churches, in our judicatories, and throughout the denomination, that our efforts might contribute to curbing this pandemic in our neighborhoods and communities. We want our people healthy and safe, and we want our communities healthy and safe. We only hope that the efforts we recommend here contribute, in some way, to that end. More detailed guidelines regarding ministry practice in this season may be found on the following pages.

You are in our prayers.

The Heartland Conference Leadership Roundtable
Members:

David Long-Higgins (Transitional Conference Minister), Daniel Busch (Northwest Association Minister), Patricia Battle (Central Southeast Association Minister), Nayiri Karjian (Living Water One General Minister), and Carl Robinson (Southwest Ohio Northern Kentucky Association Designated Minister)