



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Congregational)

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Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

Sunday, December 21, 2025 – 10:00 A.M.

Fourth Sunday of Advent



WELCOME!

We are grateful you chose to worship with us this morning. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

† Please stand as you are comfortable.

BELL PRELUDE "Let There Be Peace on Earth" arr. Sherman

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Joyce Reed

BELL INTROIT "O Come, All Ye Faithful" arr. Ryan

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come, Over-flowing joy:

People: Tip-toeing into our lives like the children on the holiest of nights.

Leader: Come, Good News of grace:

People: Prepare our hearts to welcome you, and all whose hopes have turned to ashes.

Leader: Come, Dreamer of peace:

People: So we may pour our lives and gifts into a world in need of reconciliation.

† HYMN 245

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE (PEACE)

The Schneider Family: Bill, Deborah, Autumn, and Ember

Leader: On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we listen for the word of peace.

We listen for stories where people stop hurting each other and start helping.

People: We listen for words of peace from leaders, and we remember that Christ is the Prince of Peace.

Leader: We light this second candle for the peace we listen for, that sings in our hearts, reminding us that God's reign is near.

People: Come quickly, Shalom, teach us how to prepare, for a gift that compels us with justice to care. Our spirits are restless till sin and war cease. One candle is lit for the reign of God's Peace.

Leader: As we light this Candle of Peace, let us sing together:

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God our creator, family all are we.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, may this be my solemn vow:

To take each moment, and live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

PEACE FROM THE GOSPELS

Luke 1:47-55

Mary's Song (New International Version)

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm: he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Leader: The Word of God, for us, the people of God;

People: Thanks be to God.

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

BELL ANTHEM "Joy to the World" arr. Dennis

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "Gymnopedie #1" Satie

† DOXOLOGY 815 Tune: *Old Hundredth*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below. Praise Him above, ye heav'ly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

† DEDICATING OUR LIVES AND OUR GIFTS

PEACE FROM THE PROPHETS

Isaiah 7:10-16

(New International Version)

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

SERMON

"Go Ahead! I Dare You!"

† HYMN 277

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!"

† BENEDICTION

Celtic Blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you; deep peace of the flowing air to you. Deep peace of the quiet earth to you; deep peace of the shining stars to you. Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you. Deep peace of Christ, the light of the world to you; deep peace of Christ to you. Amen.

† POSTLUDE

"The First Noel" Traditional English Carol

ATTENDANCE CARDS ARE IN YOUR BULLETIN!

Please take a moment to complete the card that is in your bulletin and place it in the offering plate. You may write prayer requests on the reverse side, if you wish to have us pray for someone and add a name to the prayer chain.

TODAY – DECEMBER 21

Barbara Toth

Judi Pavisich

John Toth

Tom Foley

Mike Elkins

Sharon Heinrich

Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich

Bell Choir

SERVING

NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 28

Greeters

Liturgist

Head Usher

Director of Music

Associate Director of Music

Organist

Video/Sound

Special Music

Judi Pavisich

Ingrid Dickson

Carole Kapcar

Tom Foley

Mike Elkins

Sharon Heinrich

Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich

Hymn Sing

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, select Worship, click on Service Videos.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

TODAY at 7 p.m.

Service of Remembrance & Healing

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



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Family Service of Lessons & Carols—7 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight Service—11 p.m.



FAMILY OF FAITH TREE—It's not too late!

If you have not donated an ornament for yourself/your family, you may bring it to the church office and your ornament will join the others on our tree!



A NOTE OF THANKS—We thank our **Bell Choir**, along with **Mike Elkins, Sharon Heinrich and Tom Foley** for today's music!



IT'S STILL HERE! Save a stamp or two and use our Church Family Mailbox (located in the Gathering Area) for *in-town* church friends. Please remember to check the box for any greetings you may receive.

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

PENNY SUNDAY: The next Penny Sunday will be on January 25, 2026.



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. Offering envelopes are in the pew racks.

The flowers on the organ are given—

Celebrating the Christmas Season and wishing everyone much happiness as they gather with their family & friends! George & Joyce Reed



A 2026 SIGN-UP SHEET FOR ALTAR FLOWERS IS POSTED IN PILGRIM HALL. Please note: the cost of flowers is \$18 for 1 vase and \$36 for 2 vases. Reserve your date(s) in memory or in honor of something or someone special.



Our steeple will light the sky this week—

Happy Anniversary to Ryan & Tony Craig on December 24th! --With love, Grammy

OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 4,359.00
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 2,567.24
Difference -\$1,791.76



Thank you very much for your support.

PLEDGES RECEIVED: 58

OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Irene Jannsohn, Connie Rebar



Church Family: Serena Abruzzino, Barb Bridle, Mark Camp, Judy Carte, Elaine Coffey, Betty "Grammy" Craig, Sam Cuyler Jr., Roz Fotos, Sue Hawk, Bruce Keenen, Erv Koch, Carol Konet, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Roy Merkle, Amanda Moulton, Ginny & Kenn Oerkfitz, George & Joyce Reed, Dorothy Ritchie, Ron Rother, Jennifer Sekorky, Tracy Seneff, Peter Smith, Bruce Sperber, Linda Stepan, Debbie Wentz, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Barbara Davis (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Allison Emerson (Colette's sister), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen's friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung's friend), Joanne Gariepy (Sally Herzog's friend), Kathy Ghetti (friend of Ginger Rother), Jennifer Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's daughter-in-law), Sarah & David Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's grandson & wife), Michaelene Hanrahan (Jim Joyce's sister), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Tiffany Hassel (Judi Pavisich's daughter-in-law), Barb & Dale Holmberg (Tiffany Hassel's parents), George Love (friend of the church), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rother's sister-in-law), Sylvia Pakish (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Jeff Peacock (former member), Amanda Shannon (Sarah & Jon Hayes' friend), Vicki Smith (Venner Clarinets), Chris Vozniak (Lora Rung's friend), Don & Pauline Wills (Judi Pavisich's friends), the people of Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Israel, victims of violence, those affected by natural disasters, First Responders

OPT-IN: Please contact Pastor Heidi if you would like to pray for others via the email prayer chain. h.e.denman@gmail.com

THREE WITH GLEE!

Capital Campaign: We currently have \$48,100.08 in our capital campaign account. The automatic door openers have been installed! The Trustees are scheduling the painting of Pilgrim Hall, which needs to happen prior to dealing with the acoustics in that room. Things are happening, but we still have more projects on the list. Please make sure you designate your donation for "Capital Campaign." Thanks for your continuing support.



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Are you interested in learning more about the United Church of Christ and becoming a member? Please let Pastor Heidi or the church office know if you would like to join our congregation in membership. We will be welcoming new members soon.



THRIFT SHOP
The Thrift Shop is OPEN every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Come and shop lots of interesting merchandise at amazing prices. Donations are accepted during our Thursday

sale hours, but please try to limit your donations to what you can carry downstairs. **Please do not abandon items outside the church doors. THE THRIFT SHOP WILL BE CLOSED ON DECEMBER 25th and JANUARY 1st.**

FREE LUNCH FOR ALL--Wednesdays

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

THE LUNCH WILL NOT BE SERVED ON CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24th or NEW YEAR'S EVE, JANUARY 1st.



BE A GREETER! A new sign-up sheet in the Gathering Area is waiting for your name to be added as a greeter. No experience is necessary—we will show you everything you need to know. Being a greeter is a wonderful way to get to know people and welcome them to worship!

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER—January 11th

Please plan to join us in worship on Sunday, **January 11, 2026**, when we will have a special guest speaker, Rev. David Long-Higgins, the conference minister for the Heartland Conference of the UCC. Dave has served in a wide variety of capacities throughout the United Church of Christ. He is a graduate of Heidelberg University with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and music (violin performance). His Master of Divinity was earned at

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in New Brighton, Minnesota. He is also a graduate of the Wellstreams Spiritual Direction Program of the Spirituality Network of Columbus (Ohio). Prior to beginning his role with the Conference, Dave was a parish pastor for over 30 years. Dave and his wife Beth, who is also an ordained UCC clergyperson have two adult children, Andrew and Hannah. When not on the ministry trail Dave enjoys movies, playing violin and guitar, bicycling, travel, writing poetry/prayers, and photography.

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR... ANNUAL REPORTS

Chairmen of church organizations: Annual reports are to be submitted electronically and are due in the church office on **January 7, 2026**. Please be kind and email your reports in on time. Thank you!!! Once completed, Annual Reports will be available for pickup prior to the Annual Meeting.



ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will take place Sunday, **January 25, 2026**, and will be preceded by the traditional Pancake Brunch. All are encouraged to attend this meeting, but only registered members are entitled to vote.



WOULD YOU LIKE A WAY TO SERVE GOD AND SERVE YOUR CHURCH AT THE SAME TIME? How about volunteering to serve on a church board or committee?

The Nominating Committee, through the Official Board, will be looking for church members to fill the many open positions on our boards. Please consider saying **YES** when a member of the Nominating Committee asks you to serve.

Some of the positions that are available include:

Moderator, who presides over the Official Board and represents the church in the community

Vice-Moderator, who works in tandem with the Moderator, serves on the Nominating Committee, and enlists volunteers for dinners and other Official Board events.

Treasurer: Manages the outgoing finances of the church in conjunction with the Financial Secretary

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 and Memorial/Endowment.

Mission & Outreach, which sponsors projects and our church's benevolence in the local, national, and international communities, including the 5 for 5 offerings through the United Church of Christ

Stewardship, which administers a yearly campaign to assess and inspire giving of time, talent, and treasure

Christian Education, which oversees the Sunday School and Adult Education programs

Music Committee, which supervises all aspects of the Music Ministry

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.

FINANCIAL OFFICERS OF CHURCH GROUPS:

Please turn in your financial statements to the Auditing Committee through the church office by **January 7, 2026**.

It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 25, 2026. 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.

ANNUAL ALL FAMILY WINTER RETREAT

February 13-15, 2026

Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio



The Church's Annual All-Family Winter Retreat will take place on President's Day weekend 2026. This year, we are at a new location and things will be a little different. 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 18th—will be strictly enforced. Space is limited to 12 families. 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 11th, and the cost is \$10 per meal. Please contact Irene Joyce or Rachel Zielinski if you have any questions.

Here is the cost:

ADULTS (12 and up): \$80

CHILDREN (6-11): \$20

CHILDREN (5 and under): FREE

Important dates to remember:

JANUARY 18, 2026: Reservations close; MONEY DUE

FEBRUARY 1, 2026: Retreat planning meeting in the church after the worship service

**UPCOMING BOARD MEETING**

- The Official Board will meet on **January 6th** at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.



IMPORTANT INFO—Do you know where the AED and First Aid Kit are located in the church? They are adjacent to the doorway in Pilgrim Hall, just to the right of the confirmation classroom.

THANK YOU TO OUR CHURCH OFFICERS 2025

*Elected January 26, 2025 ** appointed by Official Board

Moderator: Greg Dickson **Vice-Moderator:** Jen Barry

Treasurer: Sally Herzog **Clerk:** Judy Gaumer

Sunday School Superintendent: Linda Elkins

Board of Trustees

Karen Bates** Bill Giuliano Chris Goff*
Mike Elkins Les Fox Herb Hampson Cathy Hawk*

Sandy Pogozelski Cheryl Sobek*

Alex Tomoff* Mike Willis* Rachel Zielinski

Endowment Fund Subcommittee

Greg Dickson* Dave Williams*

Diacinate

Teri Barbish Jean Bittinger* Elaine Coffey*
Bobbi Cook* Wayne Cook* Judy Davis*
Judy Fox Pam Heimburger* Lynne McCray*
Linda Ponstingle* Lora Rung* Cherie Teagno

Christian Education Committee

Linda Elkins Colette Emerson Dale Hawk*
Sarah Hayes* Amanda Marshall Lora Rung*

Music Committee

Karen Bates Ingrid Dickson
Pam Keenen* Ken Mehalko* Mike Willis*
ex officio: Sharon Heinrich Tom Foley Mike Elkins

Stewardship Committee

Ingrid Dickson* Sue Gigliotti Linda Stepan*
Rob Toth Sarah Toth* Dave Williams*

Mission and Outreach Committee

Gina Cathcart* Bobbi Cook** Myron Costin*
Diana Creecy Cathy Hawk* Sarah Hayes
Lora Rung* Peter Smith Mary Willis*
Mary Ellen Zimmerman