



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Congregational)

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Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

Sunday, December 3, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.

First Sunday of Advent

Sacrament of Holy Communion

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 “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” arr. Geschke

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Greg Dickson

BELL INTROIT “Advent Promise” Page

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Now, in this holy season of Advent, we wait.

People: For the faithful God is coming to us.

Leader: Now, in this season of waiting, we listen.

People: For the faithful Word speaks of good news to us.

Leader: Now, in the waiting and listening, we watch.

People: For the faithful Spirit is moving among us.

† HYMN 460 “Let Us Break Bread Together”

LIGHTING THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE (HOPE) Nicole & Brett Wade

Leader: Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; those who follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” This message of HOPE is symbolized by the light of the first Advent Candle.

People: Thank God for this season of light and hope in a world too often clouded and darkened by human acts of faithlessness.

Leader: We are all beloved children of the Most High. Today, as we remember those who struggle to find hope and meaning in their everyday lives, we light the first candle, the Candle of Hope. Our lives are filled with things and people that come and go, but the hope we find in Jesus Christ lasts forever. We light the first candle, the Candle of Hope.

People: May God grant to each and all of us the courage to keep the light of Hope burning in our hearts.

HYMN 245 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (verse 1)

HOPE FROM THE PSALMS Psalm 80:1-7
(New International Version)

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Awaken your might; come and save us.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder
against the prayers of your people?

You have fed them with the bread of tears;

You have made them drink tears by the bowlful.
You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,
and our enemies mock us.

Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

PRAYING IN SILENCE

Pastor: Lord, in your mercy, ALL: Hear our prayers. Amen.

BELL ANTHEM “Carol of the Bells” Leontovich, arr. Wagner

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY “Nun Komm, Der Heiden Heiland” Bach
 (“Savior of the Nations Come”)

† DOXOLOGY 815 Tune: Old Hundredth
Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

† DEDICATING OUR LIVES AND OUR GIFTS

A READING FROM THE PROPHETS Isaiah 64:1-9
(New International Version)
Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any
God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

SERMON “Long Time Coming”

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Pastor: Advent is a season of preparing, of waiting, of hoping.
Slowing down to experience once more, for the very first time, the
wonder of the birth of this very special Child of God. So let us
confess to the One who comes, our impatient, toe-tapping, instant-
gratification-filled lives, as we pray

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

People: God who is drawing near to us: we live in a world of
violence, which we do not condemn enough. Come to us, filling
us with your peace. We set out with the best of intentions, but
we are unable to follow through with action. Come to us,
showing us your will. We are sinners, who are afraid to gaze
into your mirror of grace: Come to us, blessing us by your
mercy. (silent prayer)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: In this season of waiting, the Good News is this: mercy, new
life, hope, and joy are the gifts we receive from our God.
People: Thanks be to the God of Advent, who came in the Child,
who is with us in the Spirit, who will come again in
glory! Amen.

A BRIEF GREAT THANKSGIVING

RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP “Lamb of God” Paris
Sarah Keenen, vocalist

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.)

† HYMN 244 “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

† BENEDICTION

Be people of hope. Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ
with all you meet. Share hope by noticing someone else’s humanity. Share
hope by listening to someone’s story. Share hope by praying for our world.
In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope. As you go out
into the wonder of God’s creations, share hope with those you meet. Amen.

† RESPONSE/POSTLUDE “Psalm 19–The Heavens Declare” Marcello



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.

SERVING

TODAY – DECEMBER 3	NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 10	
Colette Emerson	Greeters	Carole Kapcar/Teri Barbish
Linda Ponstingle	Liturgist	Mary Ellen Zimmerman
Roz Fotos	Ushers	Volunteers needed
Tom Foley	Director of Music	Tom Foley
Mike Elkins	Associate Director of Music	Mike Elkins
Sharon Heinrich	Organist	Sharon Heinrich
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich	Sound	Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Bell Choir, Richard Densmore	Special Music	Chancel Choir



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**, and click on
Service Videos.



A NOTE OF THANKS—

We thank our **Bell Choir**, along with **Richard Densmore**,
Sarah Keenen, **Mike Elkins**, and **Tom Foley** for their
music today.

The altar flowers are given—

In memory of Steve Herzog and Tom Fargo's birthday on
December 3^d

Sarah Toth & Sally Herzog



**A 2024 SIGN-UP SHEET FOR ALTAR FLOWERS IS POSTED IN
PILGRIM HALL.** (Please note: the cost of flowers will be \$18 for 1
vase and \$36 for 2 vases beginning in January 2024.)



Our steeple will light the sky this week—

In loving memory of Alfred “Jiggs” Graves on his
birthday, December 4th--Roberta Carpenter

Happy 3^d Birthday to Elliott Joyce on December 9th!
Love, your family



FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL: SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT IS COMING!

Rehearsals will take place during and after Sunday School classes each week prior to December 17th—OUR



PAGEANT DAY, when we will have our pageant during the worship service!

PENNY SUNDAY THANK YOU

We collected \$443.50 to help with the medical bills of Brynn Goedel, a high school student who was seriously injured in the Tusky Valley band bus accident. **The next Penny Sunday will be January 28, 2024.**



GIFT CARDS

IT'S TIME TO ORDER CARDS FOR

CHRISTMAS GIFT GIVING! You can order gift cards by calling **Jim Joyce** at 216-346-4161 in advance with your order. **We will be placing a Christmas THIS WEEK!**



OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 1,965.00
Difference **-(1,652.01)**

Thank you very much for your support.

PLEDGE CARDS RECEIVED TO DATE: 50



The Mitten Tree...

We will collect hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and socks for the needy this year until **TODAY**. Tomorrow, the items will be given to the homeless shelter and the tree will become the **Family of Faith tree**. 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!

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 will be in the pew racks.



CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

To send Christmas greetings to fellow members and friends, the church "mail box" will again be available in the Gathering Area. 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.

OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Joan Beckwith, Laurie Meister, Ruth Milidonis, Karen Rak, Connie Rebar, Maggie Struhar

Church Family: Serena Abruzzino, Jennifer Cockrell, Sam Cuyler Jr., Sue Hawk, Irene Jannsohn, Carole Kapcar, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Jim Maresco, Reggie McCray, Roy Merkle, Lola Millhoane, Kenn Oerkfritz, Gary Paul, George Pavisich, Dan Ponstingle, Joyce Reed, Dorothy & Bill Ritchie, Peter Smith, Sharon Wilson, Claire Wills, Marty Winch



Extended Church Family: Edward and Sharon Acton (Sally Herzog's friends), Dorene Baldrige, Ron & Yvonne Adams (Judi Pavisich's friends), Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Angie Colosimo (Judi Pavisich's friend), Barbara Davis (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Kim Filiatraut (Sarah Keenen's friend), Elizabeth Fulford (Lora Rung's friend), Joanne Gariepy (Sally Herzog's friend), Kathy Ghetti (friend of Ginger Rothel), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Rudy Matjazic (Judi Pavisich's friend), Donna McDonald (the Ritchies' friend), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rothel's sister-in-law), Thomas O'Shea (Sandy's dad), Sylvia Pakish (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), Jeff Peacock (former member), Zora Roundtree (FL4A volunteer), Mike Rung (Lora's brother), Amanda Shannon (Sarah & Jon Hayes' friend), Vicki Smith (Venner Clarinets), Chris Vozniak (Lora Rung's friend), Tom (friend of Judi Pavisich), Don Wills (friend of Judi Pavisich), The people of Ukraine, victims of violence, those affected by natural disasters

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



FROM OUR FRIENDS AT SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CHORUS:

TODAY at 3 p.m. is our Christmas concert, "Amid the Winter Snow," at the Berea United Methodist Church (170 Seminary Street in

Berea). Come and hear this community choir, which is under the direction of Tom Foley, accompanied by Carol Konet. Many of our own SUCC Chancel Choir members also sing in the Southwest Community Chorus. We hope you will support our singers and celebrate the Christmas season with music!



FROM OUR FRIENDS AT STRONGSVILLE COMMUNITY BAND:

On **Sunday, December 10th** at 3 p.m., the Band will present their Christmas concert at the Ehrnfeldt Center. More music to enjoy and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year!

SWINGIN' SOUNDS OF THE SEASON CHRISTMAS JAZZ CONCERT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17th at 7 p.m. featuring Strongsville's Jazz Band and vocalist Cindy Smith Tickets will be \$10 (\$5 for kids under 10) and we will have a reception following the concert.

Please contact **Ingrid Dickson** or **Pam Keenen** if you can donate finger foods for the reception.



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Sunday, December 10th 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.

BE A BUSY BEE IN 2023 & DO MORE IN 2024!

New sign-up sheets in the Gathering Area are waiting for your name to be added as a greeter or usher. No experience is necessary—we will show you everything you need to know! Everyone is welcome to be a part of our church life.



FREE LUNCH FOR ALL—

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

Our Free Lunch for All Program welcomes everyone to enjoy a nutritious meal and warm fellowship.

OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN GOING STRONG FOR 10 YEARS!!



THRIFT SHOP

The Thrift Shop is **OPEN** on Thursdays from **10 a.m. until 4 p.m.** Come and shop lots of interesting merchandise at amazing prices.

Donations are being accepted during those hours, but please try to limit your donations to what you can carry downstairs. **Thanks, as always, to our dedicated volunteers!**



ALTAR POINSETTIA FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

Order deadline is **TODAY**. Please complete this form and give it to the Church office with your cash or check payment. The cost is \$7.00.

Wording for bulletin: _____

Given by: _____

Number of plants: ____ x \$7.00/plant = \$ _____

Please make your check payable to **United Church of Christ**, and place it with your order in the offering plate, under the office door, or mail it to:

Strongsville United Church of Christ

13740 Pearl Road

Strongsville, OH 44136

Thank you for placing a poinsettia plant on the altar!

For Treasurer's Records 2023 Christmas Poinsettia

Total number of plants: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Envelope number: _____ Cash/Check # _____

Name: _____



Order deadline is TODAY!



PANERA PALS

Are you able to give less than an hour of your time on a Monday or Friday morning to pick up and/or sort Panera bread, bagels, and pastries? Please contact the church office if you can help with this worthwhile ministry.

CHURCH OFFICERS FOR 2023 **Elected January 29, 2023*

Moderator: Greg Dickson **Vice-Moderator:** Jen Barry
Treasurer: Sally Herzog **Clerk:** Judy Gaumer

Sunday School Co-Superintendents
Linda Elkins Mary Densmore*

Board of Trustees
Diana Creecy Chris Goff* Herb Hampson Cathy Hawk
Sarah Hayes Cheryl Sobek* Dan Winrod*
Laura Winrod* Rachel Zielinski

Endowment Fund Subcommittee
Greg Dickson Linda Stepan Dave Williams*

Diaconate
Teri Barbish Jean Bittinger* Elaine Coffey
Bobbi Cook* Wayne Cook* Judy Davis*
Carole Kapcar* Sharon Maresco Linda Ponstingle Cherie Teagno
Barbara White* Mary Ellen Zimmerman*

Christian Education Committee
Serena Abruzzino* Mary Densmore*
Linda Elkins Amanda Marshall Lora Rung

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

Stewardship Committee
Judi Pavisich Bill Schneider* Richard Taylor
Rob Toth Mary Willis*

Mission and Outreach Committee
Judy Carte* Sarah Hayes Bobbie Krisak Lora Rung*
Jennifer Sekorky Peter Smith * Bev Wehr
Mary Ellen Zimmerman*



The Strongsville Food Bank is searching for a coordinator for the Food Bank. They are looking for a community-focused, compassionate, and detail-oriented individual who will oversee all aspects of the Strongsville Food Bank, guaranteeing smooth operations.

- Average weekly work hours: 30 hours, some weekends and evenings;
Compensation: \$30-\$35k

Qualifications for this job include: a strong desire to help others, ability to effectively communicate with community members as well as volunteers, organizational skills and Word/Excel knowledge for record keeping. If you are interested or want more information about this position, please ask for a complete job description or send a resume and cover letter to strongsvillefoodbank@gmail.com



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.

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.

2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN --M.A.P.L E.

M- Making and moving
A- Accepting and Acknowledging
P- People
L- Learning and Loving
E- Encompassing

Strongsville United Church of Christ
2024 Estimate of Giving



In recognition of God's many blessings to me, I am happy to join with others in the following commitment for 2024:

Name _____

Address _____

I plan to give \$_____ each

☐ week ☐ month ☐ other _____ to be used for

Our Congregation's Ministries and Operations \$_____

Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) \$_____

☐ I would like to talk with someone from the Endowment Committee about including the church or church-related institution in my Will.

☐ I would like to talk with someone about using the automatic deduction plan from my checking/savings account.

Signed _____ Date ____/____/____