



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Congregational)

13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, Ohio 44136

(440) 238-6697

StrongsvilleUCC@gmail.com

StrongsvilleUCC.com

Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

Sunday, December 8, 2024 – 10:00 A.M.

Second 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.

PRELUDE "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" from *Godspell* Schwartz

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Elaine Coffey

INTROIT "Of the Father's Love Begotten" Traditional

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: You have sent many messengers into our world.

People: Help us recognize the messengers that are proclaiming your Word.

Leader: Voices cry out for our attention.

People: Help us hear the voices that speak your wisdom.

Leader: Paths are open in every direction.

People: Help us make a straight path toward your love.

† HYMN 255 "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

LIGHTING THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE (LOVE) Teri Barbish & Carole Kapcar

Leader: Jesus taught his disciples, saying, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

This message reminds us that God's LOVE for each one of us never fails.

People: In a world where sometimes it can be so difficult to truly love one another as God has loved us, we thank God for this season of hope and love.

Leader: We are all beloved children of the Most High. Today and every day, in our words and in the way we live our lives, Love wins. Knowing and believing in the power of Love, we light the Second Advent Candle – the Candle of Love, the Love Jesus has for all people.

People: Jesus' promise of God's unconditional Love illuminates our souls. As we light the Candle of Love, may this light in our souls shine more brightly in the world.

Leader: As we light this Candle of Love, let us sing together, the second verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

HYMN 245 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (verse 2)

LOVE FROM THE PROPHETS Isaiah 40:1-11 (New International Version)

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?

For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.

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.

ANTHEM "Come, Emmanuel" Price/Besig

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" arr. Raney

† 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

LOVE FROM THE GOSPELS Luke 3:1-6 (New International Version)
"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him!'"

SERMON "Salvation is Created."

† HYMN 754 "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending"

† BENEDICTION Howard Thurman
Let us light Candles this Christmas: Candles of joy despite all sadness. Candles of hope where despair keeps watch. Candles of courage for fears ever present. Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days. Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens. Candles of love to inspire all our living. Candles that will burn in our hearts all the year long. Amen.

† POSTLUDE "Love Came Down at Christmas" Traditional

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 8	NEXT SUNDAY – DECEMBER 15
Greta Rich & Doug Turnbull	Greeters Carole Kapcar
Sandy O'Shea	Liturgist Herb Hampson
Carole K., Barbara W., Teri B., Mary Ellen Z.	Ushers Diana C. Bill & Deborah S., Elaine C.
Tom Foley	Director of Music Tom Foley
Mike Elkins	Associate Director of Music Mike Elkins
Sharon Heinrich	Organist Sharon Heinrich
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich	Video/Sound Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich
Chancel Choir	Special Music Children's 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**, click on **Service Videos**.



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

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Rehearsals for our Christmas Pageant continue!

Our **Pageant Day is December 15th** during worship, with a dress rehearsal on **December 8th** following the service. **Children's Pageant Sunday** will be your opportunity to wear your favorite Christmas/holiday sweater an extra day! Let's fill the church with extra cheer on **Sunday, December 15th** and wear those special outfits! (And don't forget to stay for our reception and to greet our special visitor from the North after worship!)



PENNY SUNDAY: The next Penny Sunday will be on **January 26, 2025** and will go to our Free Lunch for All Program.

OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed	\$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received	\$ 4,533.00
Difference	+\$ 915.99

Thank you very much for your support.

PLEDGES RECEIVED: 58



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP EVENING WITH CHILDREN WHILE PARENTS SHOP

Tomorrow – December 9, 2024 – 6 to 9 p.m. – Pilgrim Hall



As an outreach, the Evening Women's Fellowship will watch the children of young families within our church while their parents go shopping. The ladies will serve chicken nuggets, mac & cheese, fresh fruit, and fresh veggies to the children. After the meal, the ladies and children will bake and decorate sugar

cookies together. A children's movie will be shown also. To have your child(ren) watched, please sign up on the sheet on Pilgrim Hall's bulletin board.

MISSION OUTREACH NEWS:

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Sharing Tree project. We helped 25 young people with gift cards for Christmas in partnership with the Strongsville Emergency Food Bank. Also, thank you to everybody who donated to the Mitten Tree. We collected over 300 hats, pairs of gloves/mittens, scarves, and pairs of socks in total to help keep folks warm this winter. Items went to Snow School, Anton Grdina School in Cleveland, the City Mission, and the needy in West Virginia.



COMING IN JANUARY: We will be collecting cans of soup for "Souper Bowl Sunday." Mark your calendar for **Sunday, February 9, 2025** when we will conclude our collection and celebrate with a soup luncheon!

OUR PRAYER LIST

Please provide updates for this list to the church office.

Long-Term Care or Homebound: Irene Jannsohn, Karen Rak, Connie Rebar, Maggie Struhar

Church Family: Serena Abruzzino, Judy Carte, Sam Cuyler Jr., Brandi Garsteck, Sue Hawk, Bruce Keenen, Sarah Keenen, Kay Konicek, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Jim Maresco, Roy Merkle, Lola Millhoane, Ginny & Kenn Oerkfitz, Judi Pavisich, George & Joyce Reed, Dorothy Ritchie, Ron Rothel, Tracy Seneff, Peter Smith, Gayle Sperber, Linda Stepan, Sharon Wilson, Claire Wills, Marty Winch



Extended Church Family: Yvonne Adams (Judi Pavisich's friend), Linda Allwood (Dale Hawk's sister) Dorene Baldrige, Denece (Sherry Ahern's sister-in-law), Amy Carroll (Marty Winch's sister), Barbara Davis (Don & Sandy Gleichauf's friend), John Dickson (Greg's dad), 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 Rothel), Jennifer Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's daughter-in-law), Sarah & David Gleichauf (Don & Sandy's grandson & wife), Dana Hardy (Craig's wife), Barb & Dale Holmberg (Tiffany Hassel's parents), Diane Mason (Lora Rung's friend), Linda McNabb (Ginger Rothel's sister-in-law), 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), The people of Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Israel, 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

IN CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

A celebration for **Tom Gaumer's** life is being planned for Saturday, January 11, 2025. Visitation will be at 10:30 a.m. and the service will be at 11:30 a.m., followed by a luncheon in Pilgrim Hall.



Our deepest sympathy to **Kathie Paul** and the family and friends of **Gary L. Paul**, who died on November 28, 2024 at the age of 75. Gary served our church in many capacities throughout his time as a member here. He and Kathie always made certain that the church grounds were beautified with flowers. A celebration of his life may be planned at a later date.

Our love and prayers go out to **Brandi Garsteck** and family. Brandi's grandfather, **John Garsteck** died on December 2, 2024. He was 81.



The altar flowers are given—

In loving memory of **Karen Zeyn--Sharon Maresco**



A 2025 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 Birthday to **Elliott Joyce** on December 9th

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!



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Sunday, December 22nd 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.



UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

- The Board of Trustees will meet on the second Tuesday of the month, **December 10th** at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.
- The Diaconate will meet on the third Tuesday of the month, **December 17th** at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.

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



FROM OUR FRIENDS AT SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CHORUS:

TODAY at 3 p.m., join us for "Believe," our Christmas concert 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!

SWINGIN' SOUNDS OF THE SEASON CHRISTMAS JAZZ CONCERT

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13th at 7 p.m.

LIVE MUSIC 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.*



FROM OUR FRIENDS AT STRONGSVILLE COMMUNITY BAND:

Come to our Christmas Concert on **Sunday, December 15th** - 3 p.m. at Strongsville Middle School Auditorium!



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 26th & JANUARY 2nd.**



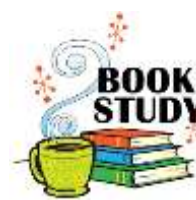
THE CHRISTMAS FUND

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.

FREE LUNCH FOR ALL--Wednesdays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



A reminder: Donations are welcomed to support the increasing costs of this valuable program. **We received a \$1,000 Make a Difference grant from the Heartland Conference of the UCC. THE LUNCH WILL NOT BE SERVED ON CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25th or NEW YEAR'S DAY, JANUARY 1st.**



BOOK STUDY—TURNING THE PAGE

On **December 16th**, Pastor Heidi and Linda Elkins will be leading some Advent activities. At the beginning of the calendar year, we will begin a study of a book called *Sisterhood*. They will continue to meet on the **third Monday of each month at 7 p.m.**

ALTAR POINSETTIA FOR CHRISTMAS EVE—LAST CHANCE

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 = \$_____

I WILL: TAKE MY PLANT(S)
LEAVE FOR A SHUT-IN

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 2024 Christmas Poinsettia

Total number of plants: _____

Amount enclosed: \$_____

Envelope number: _____ Cash/Check # _____

Name: _____

Order deadline is TODAY!

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!



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.

CHURCH OFFICERS IN 2024

**Elected January 28, 2024 **Appointed by the Official Board*

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

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

Sunday School Co-Superintendents

Linda Elkins Mary Densmore

Board of Trustees

Bill Giuliano* Chris Goff Mike Elkins* Les Fox*
Herb Hampson* Cathy Hawk Sarah Hayes* Sandy Pogozeleski*
Cheryl Sobek Dan Winrod Laura Winrod Rachel Zielinski*

Endowment Fund Subcommittee

Greg Dickson* Dave Williams*

Diaconate

Teri Barbish* Jean Bittinger Elaine Coffey* Bobbi Cook Wayne Cook
Judy Davis Judy Fox* Carole Kapcar Cherie Teagno*
Barbara White Mary Ellen Zimmerman

Christian Education Committee

Serena Abruzzino Mary Densmore Linda Elkins*
Colette Emerson* 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

Sue Gigliotti* Judi Pavisich Bill Schneider Rob Toth* Mary Willis

Mission and Outreach Committee

Diana Creecy* Sarah Hayes* Lora Rung
Jennifer Sekorky* Peter Smith Bev Wehr* Mary Ellen Zimmerman

PAPER RECYCLING—NEW COMPANY!



Our paper recycling bin will now be serviced by Royal Oak Recycling. Please continue to deposit your **FLATTENED** cardboard and your papers in the bin. However, **please do not place papers/cardboard outside the bin if it's full.** Thanks!

GIFT CARDS

PLEASE DON'T FORGET ABOUT THIS EASY, CONVENIENT PROGRAM THAT BENEFITS THE CHURCH. ORDER NOW FOR CHRISTMAS!



You can order gift cards by calling **Jim Joyce** at 216-346-4161 in advance with your order. **Limited stock is available for purchase on Sunday mornings.**

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:



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.

SUPPORTING OUR FRIENDS SNOW SCHOOL

We would like to continue to support Snow School throughout the school year. They have a school "store" to reward appropriate behavior and help students learn money management skills. If you would like to contribute items for their school store, we will have a bin in the Gathering Area for:

- NEW Small toys, puzzles, or games for kids
- NEW marker sets, journals
- NEW Water bottles
- NEW fun socks or hats for kids
- Children's books (ages 5 and up)
- Fun snacks or candy (non-perishable)



For the most part, clothing is given directly to Ohio Guidestone for distribution to the kids, but Principal Tami Klammer, will offer special clothing items in the store from time to time. Please note: they cannot accept anything sharp or things that can be used for injurious behavior.

2025 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN—it's not too late!

What do you bring to the campfire?

United Church of Christ 2025 Estimate of Giving

In recognition of God's many blessings to me, I am happy to join with others in the following commitment for 2025:

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 _____

