



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
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StrongsvilleUCC.com



Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor
Sunday, February 22, 2026– 10 A.M.
Reception of New Members
Penny Sunday

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 "Lord, I Want to be a Christian" Spiritual, arr. Carter

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Irene Joyce

INTROIT "Down by the Riverside" Traditional Spiritual

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: O Christ, led by the Spirit to wander temptation's wilderness, show us how to turn our backs on the wrong ways of the world, so we can follow you faithfully.

People: Walk with us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: O Christ, Wellspring of wonder, let go of your glory, and hold our shattered hearts.

People: Cradle us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: O Christ, grace-full and truth-full, you empty yourself to fill us with the bread which makes us whole, with the living waters which burst the banks of our faded dreams.

People: Fill us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: O Christ, Shatterer of sin's death grip, into our despair, bring hope; in our fear, you come with peace; in our loneliness, you become our sibling.

People: Save us, Lord Jesus. Grant us your peace.

† HYMN 654 "Change My Heart, O God"

A READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (The Message)

God took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden to work the ground and keep it in order. . . . God commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you're dead." The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made.

He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?"

The Woman said to the serpent, "Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'" The serpent told the Woman, "You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."

When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate. Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

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 "In the Bleak Midwinter" Holst, arr. Bertalot

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE Penny Sunday

INTRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATES

QUESTIONS TO THE CONGREGATION

Friends, do you profess Jesus as the center and cornerstone of your faith? **We do.**

Will you be faithful to these new friends as they join this congregation and begin the next leg of their journey of faith?

We promise our faithful companionship to these new members of our family.

Will you challenge them to strive to become the very best versions of themselves, upholding them in Christian love and holding them accountable to the Way of the Christ?

We will lovingly challenge these new members to strive to become the very best versions of themselves, guiding them to live into the faith they profess.

Will you allow yourself to be challenged and changed, shaped and transformed by these new members, together seeking God's will for our lives together?

With the help of God's Spirit, we will allow ourselves to be challenged and changed, shaped and transformed, living even more fully into our called identity as the family of faith, Strongsville United Church of Christ.

Let us pray together:

O God, we give you thanks, first for calling us to believe, then leading us to join together and gather into this church, the Body of Christ. We give you thanks for this Family of faith, and rejoice that you have led these newest members into our midst, adding their gifts and talents to ours. Together, may we live more fully in the Spirit, building one another up in Love, sharing in the life and worship of the church, and serving the world for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Amen.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" Spiritual

† **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 GOSPELS

Matthew 4:1-11

(New International Version)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

REFLECTION

"Don't Tempt Me. . . ."

† **HYMN 692**

"God Will Take Care of You"

† **BENEDICTION**

Malcolm Doney

In every detail of this day, may we be fully alive: To the words we speak, and those we hear, and in the eloquence of the silence where no words are spoken. May we be fully alive to the work we do: How we prepare, how we pursue it share it and complete it. May we be fully alive to the people I see this day – friend or stranger, easy and difficult. May we be fully alive today to every instant, to the pulse of God at the heart of all things. May we see this day as a gift from God. May we take it, enjoy it, make it our own and share it with others. Grant us the strength to survive, the grace to be generous, and the courage to stand tall for all that is good and fair. Amen.

POSTLUDE

"Wade in the Water" Traditional Spiritual

SERVING

TODAY – FEBRUARY 22		NEXT SUNDAY – MARCH 1
Roger & Judy Davis	Greeters	Linda Plain
Dave Williams	Liturgist	Elaine Coffey
Carole Kapcar	Head Usher	Judi Pavisich
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
Children's Choir/Choir	Special Music	Carol Foley, Chancel Choir
Ken Mehalko, Carol Foley		

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 **Ken Mehalko, Carol Foley, the Chancel Choir, the Children's Choir, Tom Foley, and Sharon Heinrich** for today's music. In February, our music team has been featuring traditional spirituals in our worship music.

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:



PENNY SUNDAY IS TODAY! It's time to turn in those coins, dollars, and checks (to UCC) to our kids, who will be collecting for **World Central Kitchen**, feeding people in crisis all over the world. In Gaza alone, WCK is serving over 1 million meals a day. The next Penny Sunday will be on **March 22, 2026** and we will be collecting for **Providence House**, caring for babies and young children needing assistance in Cuyahoga County and surrounding areas.

The altar flowers are given—

In loving memory of William J. Foley
From All the Foley Family
Happy 11th Birthday to Penny & Oliver
Love, Mom & Dad



Our steeple will light the sky this week—

Happy Birthday to Pam Craig on February 22nd
and Larry Wentz on February 28th (29th)! With love, Mom



In loving memory of Susan Stevenson Tressa

Happy Birthday today to Pam Craig!

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OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 5,212.00
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 4,823.50
Difference -(\$ 388.50)



Thank you very much for your support.

PLEDGES RECEIVED: 62

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Giving statements for 2025 are available in the Church Family Mailboxes in the Gathering Area.



BEREA ANIMAL RESCUE FUND WISH LIST

Women's Fellowship of Strongsville United Church of Christ is collecting donations for

Berea Animal Rescue Fund through March 1. ARF is always in need of basic animal care and cleaning supplies used daily at the shelter. Your donations of these items can make a big difference to the animals.

- Dry Dog Food, Dry Cat Food, Dog and Cat Treats
- Canned Cat Food (any kind), Canned Dog Food (any kind)
- Pill Pockets/Pouches for Dogs and Cats
- Scoopable Litter and Clay Litter
- Nylabones, Benebones, Kongs
- Small Litter Boxes, 3-Tier Cat Cages/Playpens
- Snuggle Safe Pet Heating Pad
- Plastic Swimming Pools
- Paper Towels, Toilet Paper, Nitrile Gloves
- 30 or 13 Gal. Trash Bags, Lawn & Leaf Bags
- Dishwasher Detergent (powder or liquid)
- Laundry Detergent (powder or liquid)
- Liquid Hand Soap, Bleach, First Aid Supplies
- Printer Paper, Wet and Dry Erase Markers
- Postage Stamps
- Computers or Tablets to process adoptions
- Treat Pouches, Leashes
- Gift cards for--



Target*, Walmart*, Petco, PetSmart, Pet Supplies Plus, OfficeMax, or Staples

*These gift cards are available from our Gift Card Program.

Unfortunately, ARF cannot accept donations of comforters, sheets or pillows of any kind.

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UPCOMING BOARD MEETING

- The Official Board will meet on **February 24th** at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.



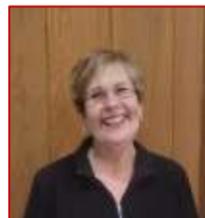
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Bryana Joyce is a nurse at MetroHealth in Cleveland and the mom of Alaya Hitchens and Elliott Joyce. Bryana and Erik Joyce were married in our church in May of 2025, and Bryana has been participating in church activities and events for several years. Her sponsor is her mother-in-law, Irene Joyce.



Mary Martha Krutsch & Joe Hattery will be getting married in our church in September of this year. Joe and Mary Martha live in Bowling Green Ohio, but attend our church whenever they are in town. Joe's mom and dad, Martha and John Hattery, have been members of our church since 2021 and will be sponsoring the young couple.

Rev. Jill Kundtz has been attending our worship services for several months. When she moved to her current home in Strongsville, she was looking for a UCC church. Lo and behold, her building on Westwood is practically across the street from the church. As a retired minister, she knows when to follow God's signs. Jill's sponsor is Rev. Pat Jefferis.



Marianne Luca has been joining us in worship for several years, and has been singing with the choir on holidays. She was raised in the Catholic church, but has found a spiritual home with the UCC. She has many friends here at Strongsville UCC, including her sponsor and fellow Southwest Community Chorus singer, Ingrid

Dickson.

Jo-Ellen Rokicsak has been worshipping with us for several years. She is retired from PNC. Jo-Ellen visited our church one Sunday and was impressed with the warm welcome she received. She continues to be a part of our church family and



has decided to make it official. Sue Gigliotti is her sponsor.

Jo Ann Thomas has been adding her special fashion flair to our church family for almost a year. This fall, she joined the choir, as singing is one of her passions. She has many friends who are members here at Strongsville UCC. Jo Ann is a long-time member of the Southwest Community

Chorus, as is her sponsor, Sharon Maresco. Judi Pavisich, Jo Ann's long-time friend, joins as her co-sponsor.

YOUTH GROUP SPAGHETTI DINNER

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28th
5 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. (Carry out available)
Adults: \$12, Kids 6-12: \$8,
5 & under = FREE



Includes your choice of spaghetti & meatballs or vegetarian marinara, salad, bread, dessert, and coffee/tea/soft drink. Contact Cathy Hawk for reservations 440-781-7512 or purchase your tickets this morning.

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, Jen Barry, Mark Camp, Judy Carte, Elaine Coffey, Betty "Grammy" Craig, Sam Cuyler Jr., Roger Davis, Colette Emerson, Sue Hawk, Frank Jefferis, Pam & Bruce Keenen, Erv Koch, Jan Meier, Carol Konet, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Jim Maresco, Jan Meier, Roy Merkle, Amanda Moulton, Ginny & Kenn Oerkfitz, George & Joyce Reed, Dorothy Ritchie, Ron Rothel, Jennifer Sekorky, Tracy Seneff, Peter Smith, Bruce Sperber, Linda Stepan, JoAnn Thomas, Debbie Wentz, Heather Williams, 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 Garipey (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), 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 Rothel'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), Jeaneane Steinmeyer (Greg Dickson's aunt), 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

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EASTER FLOWERS ORDER FORM

You may choose lilies, hyacinths, or tulips (no color choice). To order, please email the church or turn in this form prior to the deadline of **Friday, March 20, 2026 at NOON**. The cost is **\$8.00**.

Wording for bulletin:

Given by: _____

(# of plants) Lilies _____ (x \$8)

Tulips _____ (x \$8)

Hyacinths _____ (x \$8)

Total amount due: \$ _____



I will take my plant(s). I will leave my plant(s) for someone who needs some cheer.

Please make your check payable to **United Church of Christ**, and call or email the church with your order.

For Church Records 2026 Easter Flowers

Total number of plants: _____ Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Offering envelope number: _____ Cash/Check No. _____

Name: _____

THERE'S STILL TIME TO PLEDGE FROM YOUR H.E.A.R.T.!

Hospitality, Engagement, Activities, Resources, Time, Talent, & Treasure

United Church of Christ 2026 Estimate of Giving

In recognition of God's many blessings to me, I am happy to join with others in the following commitment for 2026:

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 ____/____/____

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. *Matthew 6:21*

CHURCH OFFICERS 2026

**Elected February 1, 2026*

Moderator: Rachel Zielinski *

Vice-Moderator: Herb Hampson*

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

Sunday School Superintendent: Linda Elkins

Board of Trustees

Karen Bates Jen Barry* Greg Dickson*

Bill Giuliano* Chris Goff Les Fox* Cathy Hawk

Sandy Pogozelski* Bill Robinson* Cheryl Sobek

Alex Tomoff Mike Willis

Endowment Fund Subcommittee

Linda Stepan* Dave Williams*

Diaconate

Jean Bittinger Elaine Coffey* Diana Creecy*

Bobbi Cook Wayne Cook Judy Davis

Judy Fox* Pam Heimburger Marsha Hemphill*

Cindy Hurley* Lynne McCray*

Linda Ponstingle Lora Rung

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

Jen Barry* Gina Cathcart Bobbi Cook*

Cathy Hawk Sarah Hayes* Lora Rung

Mary Willis Mary Ellen Zimmerman

YOU CAN ACCESS RESOURCES FROM AND INFORMATION ABOUT OUR HEARTLAND CONFERENCE OF THE UCC! Looking for a way to get connected for ministry resources in the wider church? Just scan the QR code.



THREE WITH GLEE!

Capital Campaign: We currently have \$60,206.08 in our capital campaign account after paying \$2,500 for the painting of Pilgrim Hall. A new roof for Pilgrim Hall and the church building may be on the horizon. 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.



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. **Thank you to all of our faithful volunteers!**



PLEASE NOTE: For Safety Reasons, if the Strongsville City Schools are closed due to inclement weather on a Wednesday, the Free Lunch will not be served.

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 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.**

IMPORTANT: If the Strongsville City Schools are closed due to inclement weather on a Thursday, the Thrift Shop will not be open.



BOOK STUDY--SISTERHOOD! On March 9th, Pastor Heidi and Linda Elkins will continue our Book Study at 7 p.m.