



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(Congregational)  
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Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, Pastor

**Sunday, January 4, 2026– 10 A.M.**  
**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.

**PRELUDE** "Mary, Did You Know?" arr. Larson

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** Ingrid Dickson

**INTROIT** "New Year Song" Mehalko

## † CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We gather wondering, "Where will we find the Babe born in Bethlehem?"

**People: We will find the Babe in the laughter of children, in the wisdom of grandparents.**

Leader: We gather asking, "Where will we find the Child of Christmas?"

**People: We will find the Child where the needy are gifted with hope, where the oppressed are set free.**

Leader: We gather wanting to know, "Where will we find the Christ who has come for us?"

**People: We will find our Hope where fear is overwhelmed by grace, where hatred is overwhelmed by love, where all people are overwhelmed by joy.**

† HYMN 281 "What Child is This?"

**A READING FROM THE PROPHETS** **Isaiah 60:1-9**  
(New International Version)

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

"Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.

Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.

Herd of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah.  
And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense  
and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;  
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple.

"Who are these that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests?

Surely the islands look to me; in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,  
bringing your children from afar, with their silver and gold,  
to the honor of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel;  
he has endowed you with splendor.

**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.**

**ANTHEM** "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow" Traditional Spiritual  
Dave Williams, vocalist

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

## OFFERING

**OFFERTORY** "Go Tell it on the Mountain" Traditional 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 2:1-12**  
(New International Version)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King  
Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked,  
"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?"  
We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

**REFLECTION** "The One True King"

## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

## CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Pastor: Why do we huddle in the shadowed corners of life, rather than running to the Light of life? Why do we love the wrong we do rather than grasping the good news offered to us? As we struggle with such questions, let us speak to God of all we have failed to do, seeking hope and grace as we pray together:

## UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

**People: We search for your light, Star Caster, but too often end up settling for the dimness of temptation. Our motives for seeking to find Christ are not always pure, for we expect him to fulfill our desires, rather than your hopes for us. We want the gifts of wealth, health, success, fulfillment, rather than those of servanthood, of compassion, of peace. Forgive us, Shaper of our lives, that we are so foolish to put our needs ahead of your grace. Help us to be like those wise people of so long ago, who found hope, instead of a destination; who found grace, instead of gratitude; who found salvation, instead of a sign. As we journey with your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, fill us with the light of your joy and love.**

*(silent prayer)*

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Arise, shine! For your Light has come! Grace has been poured into our hearts, love has flooded our souls, the light of hope shines in us.

**People: This is the light which has come to all people, in every time and in every place, the light we will carry in our hearts and give to everyone we meet. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## A BRIEF GREAT THANKSGIVING

**RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP** "In the Bleak Midwinter" Holst  
Ken Mehalko, woodwind

## 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 288 "We Three Kings"

† **BENEDICTION** Nathan Nettleton

*Go now as a light to the nations. Honour the Lord; preach what you know of the risen Christ, and fulfill all righteousness. And may God strengthen you and bless you with peace; may Christ Jesus bring forth justice for you and among you; and may the Holy Spirit alight on you and affirm you as God's beloved ones. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. Amen*

† **POSTLUDE** "O, How Joyfully!" arr. Burkhardt

## SERVING

### TODAY – JANUARY 4

Linda Plain  
Elaine Coffey  
Dicksons & Joyces  
Tom Foley  
Mike Elkins  
Sharon Heinrich  
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich  
Ken Mehalko, Music Team

**Greeters**  
**Liturgist**  
**Head Usher**  
**Director of Music**  
**Associate Director of Music**  
**Organist**  
**Sound**  
**Special Music**

### NEXT SUNDAY – JANUARY 11

Pat Jefferis  
Pastor Heidi  
Bill Robinson  
Tom Foley  
Mike Elkins  
Sharon Heinrich  
Doug Thorn/Jim Heinrich  
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](http://strongsvilleucc.com), select **Worship**, and click on **Service Videos**.

## 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.



## A NOTE OF THANKS—

We thank **Dave Williams, Ken Mehalko, Mike Elkins** and **Sharon Heinrich** for today's music!

## CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

Although it's after Christmas, please remember to check the box for greetings you have received. The church office cannot mail your personal Christmas cards. Cards left after January 11<sup>th</sup> will be discarded. Thank you.



## 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.





[FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

**PENNY SUNDAY:** The next Penny Sunday will be on **January 25, 2026** for World Central Kitchen.



**The altar flowers are given--**

*Happy Heavenly Birthday, Mom!*  
*You were the best mom a child could ever hope for!*  
Elaine Coffey

**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 Birthday to “Little K” on January 2<sup>nd</sup>!*

**OFFERINGS RECEIVED**

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 4,359.00  
Last Week’s Offering Received \$ 4,288.00  
Difference -(\$ **71.00**)  
**Thank you very much for your support.**  
**PLEDGES RECEIVED: 59**



**THREE WITH GLEE!**



Capital Campaign: We currently have \$60,900.08 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.

**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., Roger Davis, Roz Fotos, Sue Hawk, Pam & 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 Rothel, Jennifer Sekorky, Tracy Seneff, Peter Smith, Bruce Sperber, Linda Stepan, JoAnn Thomas, 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 Ghatti (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), 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](mailto:h.e.denman@gmail.com)

**SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER—January 11<sup>th</sup>**



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.



**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 18<sup>th</sup>**—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 11<sup>th</sup>, 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: Planning meeting in the church after the service

**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 an email your reports in on time. Thank you!!! Once completed, Annual Reports will be available for pickup prior to the 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**, who 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.

**UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS**

- The Official Board will meet on **January 6<sup>th</sup>** in the Parlor at 7 p.m.
- The Board of Trustees will meet on the second Tuesday of the month, **January 13<sup>th</sup>** at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.
- The Diaconate will meet on the third Tuesday of the month, **January 20** at 10:30 a.m. in the Parlor.



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 Pogozeleski   Cheryl Sobek\*  
Alex Tomoff\*   Mike Willis\*   Rachel Zielinski

**Endowment Fund Subcommittee**  
Greg Dickson\*   Dave Williams\*  
**Diaconate**  
Teri Barbish   Jean Bittinger\*   Elaine Coffey\*  
Bobbi Cook\*   Wayne Cook\*   Judy Davis\*  
Judy Fox   Pam Heimbürger\*   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

**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.



**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!

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

Many thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers and to all who come and enjoy food and fellowship on Wednesdays! A reminder: Donations are welcomed to support the increasing costs of this valuable program.

**If the Strongsville City Schools are closed due to weather, the Free Lunch will not be served on that Wednesday.**



**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 yourself. **Please do not abandon items outside the church doors.**

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

**IT’S NOT TOO LATE 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

☐ a week   ☐ a 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***