



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

Sunday, January 7, 2024– 10 A.M.
First Sunday after Epiphany
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 "O Sing a Song of Bethlehem" English Melody

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Irene Joyce

INTROIT "Blessed Quietness" Ferguson

† CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: On that first day, when time began:

People: You gave birth to creation; light danced through the darkness; the waters of hope flowed free and clear.

Leader: On that first day at the Jordan, when redemption began:

People: You spoke of life for all your children, as your Child stepped into the waters of forgiveness, dancing in hope with his cousin, John.

Leader: On this first Sunday of the new year, when we begin anew:

People: You call us to faithfulness, as we open our hearts to you, your voice claiming us as your own.

† HYMN 225 "Come, Christians, Join to Sing"

A READING FROM THE PROPHETS Isaiah 60: 1-6
(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.

Herds 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."

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 "Be Present, Spirit of the Lord" Beall

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "Once in Royal David's City" Gauntlett

† 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."

SERMON "The Other Wise Man"

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

It is clear that God wants to hear our prayers and forgive us, for God is willing to lean close to our hearts to listen to our failures, our poor choices, all the things we have done wrong. Please join me, as we pray together.

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

You are patient, O God, even as we continue to live in the shadows of life. We could delight in your hopes for us, but instead, we choose to do things our way. We could serve the most vulnerable around us, but instead, we prefer to be around the powerful. We could share the glad news of deliverance, but instead, we prefer to swap stories and gossip. With patient ears, you lean over to listen to our prayers, and whisper forgiveness in our souls. With gentle hands, you lift us out of the holes we've dug for ourselves, brush the dirt off and set us on Hope's solid ground. You strengthen our weak faith with the life, grace, and love of Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Savior. (*silent prayer*)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Come, friends, and receive God's grace; look around and see all God is doing for you; strive to follow Jesus, as he leads you closer to God.

People: I will sing of God's love for me; I will sing a new song of hope and wonder. Thanks be to God. Amen.

A BRIEF GREAT THANKSGIVING

RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP "Hymn Medley"

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 "The Night It Snowed" Norma Farber
*"The Queens came late, but the Queens were there
With gifts in their hands and crowns in their hair.
They'd come, these three, like the Kings, from far,
Following, yes, that guiding star.*

† RESPONSE/POSTLUDE "As With Gladness Men of Old" Kocher

SERVING

TODAY – JANUARY 7	NEXT SUNDAY – JANUARY 14
Linda Plain	Greeters Barbara Toth
Elaine Coffey	Liturgist Sandy O'Shea
Volunteers needed	Ushers Roz Fotos
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
Chancel Choir	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**.



ALL ARE WELCOME AT GOD'S TABLE!
As we seek to walk ever more closely with Jesus and welcome all without question or singling anyone out, we will now be offering gluten-free bread to ALL who come forward to the Table for Holy Communion. ALL means ALL at The United Church of Christ (Congregational)!



A NOTE OF THANKS—

We thank our **Chancel Choir**, along with **Tom Foley, Mike Elkins**, and **Sharon Heinrich** for their music today.

The altar flowers are given—

*In loving celebration of Linda Kapcar
from your "charming child"-- Elaine*



A 2024 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.



Our steeple will light the sky this week—

In celebration of my 75th Birthday!

Ginger Rothel

Happy Birthday today to Ginger Rothel and Kristopher Justice!

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Are you interested in joining our congregation? Pastor Heidi will be offering a membership class in the near future. Please contact her or the church office if you would like to become a member of the Strongsville UCC.





FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL: PENNY SUNDAY--The next Penny Sunday will be January 28, 2024.



OFFERINGS RECEIVED

Weekly Offering Needed \$ 3,617.01
Last Week's Offering Received \$ 4,660.50
Difference +\$ 1,043.49

Thank you very much for your support.
PLEDGE CARDS RECEIVED TO DATE: 50



CHURCH CHRISTMAS MAIL BOX

Please remember to check the box for greetings you receive. The church office cannot mail your personal Christmas cards. Cards left after January 14th 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, Bobbie & Wayne Krisak, Karl & Sharon Kuhlenschmidt, Jim Maresco, Reggie McCray, Roy Merkle, Lola Millhoane, Kenn Oerkfitz, Gary Paul, George Pavisich, Dan Ponstingle, Joyce Reed, Dorothy & Bill Ritchie, Peter Smith, Sharon Wilson, Dave Williams, Claire Wills, Marty Winch

Extended Church Family: Edward and Sharon Acton (Sally Herzog's friends), Dorene Baldrige, Ron & Yvonne Adams (Judi Pavisich's friends), Chris Anderson (Linda & Mike Elkins' son-in-law), 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 Garipey (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), 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, 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



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP—

All ladies are invited to Game Night on Monday, January 8th at 7 p.m.

MISSION OUTREACH is collecting cans of soup now through Super Bowl Sunday (February 11th) for the Strongsville Emergency Food Bank. Please bring your cans of any kind of soup and place them in the receptacle in Pilgrim Hall near the bulletin board.



Also, the Food Bank is in need of canned vegetables, so please bring those any time.



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.

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE NOW!

Chairs of church organizations: Annual reports are to be submitted electronically and are due in the church office TODAY. 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 28, 2024, and will be preceded by the traditional Pancake Brunch. All are encouraged to attend this meeting.

FINANCIAL OFFICERS OF CHURCH GROUPS:

Please turn in your financial statements to the Auditing Committee through the church office TODAY. It is extremely important that all books be audited before the Annual Meeting on January 28, 2024. 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.

IN CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY



Our most heartfelt sympathy is extended to Rachel, Gary, Penny, and Oliver Zielinski, as well as to the family and friends of Phyllis Kurz, who died at the age of 99 on December 30, 2023. Phyllis was a helper and worker throughout her life and was an integral part of the Thrift Shop crew, the perpetual Garage Sale cashier (even when she lived in Florida), and "GiGi to everyone who was lucky enough to know her. Visitation is tomorrow, January 8th from 10 a.m. – Noon at Sunset Memorial (6265 Columbia Road North Olmsted), with a service following at Noon.

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!

PLEASE NOTE: THE THRIFT SHOP WILL BE CLOSED ON JANUARY 11th, 2024



ANNUAL ALL FAMILY WINTER RETREAT
February 16-18, 2024
Templed Hills Camp in Bellville, Ohio

The Church's Annual All-Family Winter Retreat will take place on President's Day weekend 2024. As you may already know, Templed Hills is being sold and this will be our last Retreat at that location—Let's make it the best ever! The sign-up sheet to attend and the sign-up sheet for things to bring and to volunteer are 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 has been extended to January 14th. Space is limited to 12 families for overnight. 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 14th, and the cost is \$20. Please contact Irene Joyce or Rachel Zielinski if you have any questions.

Here is the cost:
ADULTS (12 and up): \$75
CHILDREN (6-11): \$20 CHILDREN (5 and under): FREE
Important dates to remember:
JANUARY 14, 2024: Reservations close; MONEY DUE
FEBRUARY 4, 2024: Retreat planning meeting in the church after the worship service

BOOK STUDY

A YEAR OF BIBLICAL WOMANHOOD

Continuing on January 15th, Pastor Heidi and Linda Elkins are leading a monthly book study based on Rachel Held Evans's wonderful book, A Year of Biblical Womanhood. The group will meet on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m., for one hour. It's not too late to join us! DECEMBER MAKE-UP DATE IS TODAY AFTER WORSHIP!




AN INTERFAITH OPPORTUNITY



Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple has invited our congregation to a Shabbat prayer service on Friday, January 12th at 6:15 p.m. commemorating the life of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Please see Pastor Heidi if you're interested in attending.

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.



 **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.

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FREE LUNCH FOR ALL--
Wednesdays

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Thank you to all our faithful volunteers!



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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*



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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



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.

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 ____/____/____