



# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

217 E. Liberty St. Medina, Ohio 44256 330-725-4559

www.uccmedina.org

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**LIVESTREAMING OF THE SANCTUARY SERVICE IS AVAILABLE AT UCCMEDINA.ORG**

## **“WELCOMING, LOVING, SERVING, WHERE GOD HAS NO LIMITS”**

*Please take a moment to sign the attendance pads, (located at the end of each pew) so that you know who is worshipping near you and you may greet them by name.*

### **RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL**

### **GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **\*PASSING OF THE PEACE**

**PRELUDE** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” – arr. James Mansfield Cathy Fafrak, Organist

**\*VISIONING PRAYER** by Sharon Alberson

God, help us to be welcoming. God, help us to be loving.  
God, help us to see that serving you can lead us to  
A place full of grace with no limits where we can be free...  
To open our hands, welcoming. To open our hearts, loving  
To be more than church on Sunday, to live in the light from above;  
To celebrate in service and love.

**\*LITANTY OF LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF PEACE** Stacy Rosen, leader

**Leader:** Our homes and our world are under siege with information:  
Television and telemarketing; blogs and texting:  
So much information often bearing too little wisdom.  
Angry voices compelling hate;  
Quiet voices counseling complacency;  
Mechanical voices offering “deals”--  
Too much information! Too little wisdom!

**People:** **Confusion surrounds us; Truth gets lost.**

**Leader:** We call out in our confusion:

**People:** **Where is your Wisdom, O God? Where is the word that leads to life?**

**Leader:** We remind ourselves of our ancient story:

**People:** **John, Zechariah’s son, out in the desert at the time, received a message from God.  
He went all through the country around the Jordan River preaching a baptism of  
life-change leading to forgiveness of sins, as described in the words of Isaiah the  
prophet: “...prepare God’s arrival! Make God’s road smooth and straight!”**

*Luke 3: 2-4: adapted from **The Message** © 2002 Eugene H. Peterson; reproduced with permission*

Leader: Let us light this fourth candle of Advent, a candle of Peace.  
 In its light, let us think, quietly and peacefully, about what voices  
 of true life-change and forgiveness  
 are speaking in our world right now.  
 In a few words, let's share those voices with each other.

[Candle is Lit.]

Leader: Let this candle of Advent Peace shine in our hearts all week  
 and remind us to enter times of quiet and peace in order to listen,  
 through the noise of our lives, for the call to prepare for the Holy One.

**\*OPENING HYMN**

**"The Baptist Shouts on Jordan's Shore"**



1 The Bap - tist shouts on Jor - dan's shore, the  
 2 The earth and sky and sea now feel that  
 3 Clean up your hearts, lay down the way, for  
 4 Through you, O Je - sus, you a - lone sal -



earth shakes with the might - y roar, A - wake, let laz - y  
 which their Au - thor will re - veal: The Child now leap - ing  
 God ap - proach-es day by day; Pre - pare for such a  
 va - tion, so - lace, strength are known; With - out your love we



sleep now flee: be - hold, the voice of proph - e - cy!  
 in the womb as God does hu - man form as - sume.  
 wor - thy heir, for such a guest your house pre - pare.  
 fade like grass, like wilt - ed flowers our lives will pass.

*Charles Coffin, distinguished scholar and Latin author, was rector of the University of Paris for a time. The hymn, appearing here in a new translation, is from a breviary ordered by the archbishop of Paris to replace ancient Latin hymns with newer ones.*

Tune: WINCHESTER NEW L.M.  
 Musikalisches Handbuch, Hamburg, 1690

**CHOIR ANTHEM**

"This Is the Time to Be Joyful"  
 Words and Music by Pepper Choplin

Chancel Choir

**The Lord's Prayer**

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.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Joys and Concerns, Silent Prayer, Pastoral Prayer

**PRAYER RESPONSE**

**"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"**

O Come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
an ensign of thy people be;  
Before Thee silent rulers fall;  
all peoples on thy mercy call.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.

**SCRIPTURE**

Luke 3: 1-6

Dorothe Edinger, liturgist

**SERMON**

"Merry Christmas, You Brood of Vipers!"

Rev. Luke Lindon

**OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS****Offertory Invitation**

Just as John the Baptizer committed his life to helping people realize the ultimate opportunity in Christ's coming, we too commit our time, talent, and treasure in this offering to the same goal.

**Offertory Music** "O Jesulein Süß (O Little One Sweet) – arr. David Paxton Cathy Fafrak, Organist

**\*Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Prayer of Dedication (unison)**

Still Speaking God, we are ever thankful for the message you have sent us, and for those who have made us aware of your love and care for us. Accept these offerings as an act of loyalty and gratitude for those who have dedicated their lives to making your good news known. Amen.

**\*SENDING HYMN**

**"O Come, All Ye Faithful"** (vs. 1 & 2)

WORDS: Attr. John F. Wade (1711-1786); tr. Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880)

MUSIC: John F. Wade's *Cantus Diversi*, 1751

ADESTE FIDELES

Irregular

LicenSing #L1824 © United Methodist Publishing 1989

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O  
 2 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,  
 3 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing,

come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;  
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove;  
 Je - sus, to thee be all glo - ry given;

come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;  
 glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;  
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

**Refrain**

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,  
 O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord.

**\*BENEDICTION** (By Samuel A. Trumbore)

Leader: Every week we gather in this beautiful space to find peace.

People: **Each week words and music offer and celebrate peace with the hope of instilling it in us.**

Leader: Now, take the peace you have found here back out into the world with you.

People: **Renewed in our faith and inspired to act, let us be the peacemakers the world aches for; and, by being peacemakers, let us find the peace we long for.**

Leader: Go in peace. Make peace. Be at peace.

People: **Amen!**

**\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "God Be With You"**

**God be with you 'til we meet again; by His counsels guide, uphold you,  
With His sheep securely fold you: God be with you 'til we meet again.**

**POSTLUDE "Every Valley"** – John Ness Beck/trans. Janet Linker

Cathy Fafrak, Organist

**"MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY"**

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\*Those who are able please stand

**Ushers: Dick Christy, Darlene Bagley-Fazekas, Julie Gilliland, Crell Johns**

**\*\*\*There will be no Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall today\*\*\***

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**PASTORAL STAFF**

Rev. Luke Lindon, Senior Pastor – email: [luke@uccmedina.org](mailto:luke@uccmedina.org)

**OFFICE STAFF**

Cindy Korecky, Office Manager - email: [office@uccmedina.org](mailto:office@uccmedina.org)

Kelly Charnley, Financial Manager – email: [financial@uccmedina.org](mailto:financial@uccmedina.org)

**PROGRAM STAFF**

Stacie Yates, Director of Christian Education; Michelle Lisco, Co-Director of Youth

Jim Kiser, Director of Music; Cathy Fafrak, Organist

Rebecca Rosen, Nursery Supervisor

Xanthe Phillips, Director of Hobby Horse Preschool

## POINSETTIAS



### **NAME OF DONOR**

*Bruce & Connie Anderson*  
*Lois Anderson*  
*The Andrews Family*  
*Bruce & Sally Bauer*  
*Donald Beebe*  
*Pete & Syd Benson*  
*Mary Bessick*  
*Mary Ann Blosser*  
*Carol Brenneman*  
*Christopher & Beth Burdick*  
*The Charnley Family*  
*Dorie & Dick Christy*  
*Jen Cockrell*  
*Jan & Tad Coleman*  
*Medith Davis & Earle Olson*  
*Ken & Sue Dean*  
*Ruth Dunn*  
*Dorothie & Linde Edinger*  
*Betty Einhart*  
*The Falconer Daughters*  
*The Farnham Family*  
  
*The Farnham Family*  
  
*Gene & Jan Febus*  
*John & Judy Gorsek*  
*John & Judy Gorsek*  
*Beth & Craig Hari*  
*The Hofstetter Family*  
*Diana Hunter*  
*Diana Hunter*  
*Carol Holtz*  
*Arnold & Cheri Ingraham*  
*Kellie & Crell Johns*  
*Jim Kiser*

### **IN MEMORY OF**

*Our Wonderful Families and Friends*  
*Loved Ones*  
*Joe Andrews*  
*Our Parents*  
*Geraldine M. Beebe*  
*Our Parents*  
*Mr. & Mrs. Arthur R. Dunger*  
*My Son, Brian*  
*Willard H. Brenneman*  
*Marilyn W. Burdick and Our Grandparents*  
*Doug, Husband and Father*  
*Our Grandparents*  
*Gordon Cockrell*  
*Mr. & Mrs. Jack & Jean Post*  
*Loved Ones*  
*Son, George Dean*  
*Jane Schmidt and My Parents*  
*David Edinger*  
*Husband, Jay Einhart*  
*Clair & Ruth F. Falconer and their Families*  
*Our Parents, Ruth & Robert Wright and*  
*Mary & Denver Farnham*  
*Katherine Jensen, Carolyn Riordan &*  
*Carol Buck...Our Sisters*  
*Our Parents*  
*John & Dorothea Sattler*  
*Dorothy Gorsek*  
*Our Parents*  
*Jack Hofstetter*  
*Howard Hunter*  
*Joy Hunter*  
*My Mother, Jeannette Stokes*  
*Berneta Ingraham*  
*Jerry Johns "Pop"*  
*Barb Kiser*

***NAME OF DONOR***

*Marilyn Koehler*  
*Dick & Joyce Komjati*  
*Karen Leidy*  
*Karen Leidy*  
*Karen Leidy*  
*Ronald & Jill Linek*  
*Ronald & Jill Linek*  
*Pete & Alice Metzloff*  
*Nancy Montgomery*  
*Judy Neuhauser*  
*Alan Parkhurst*  
*Alan Parkhurst*  
*Lori Price*  
*Dennis & Allayne Reese*  
*Barbara Rosen*  
*Dorothy Rossman*  
*Jane & Lou Schaefer*  
*Swantek Family*  
*Lois Tampion*  
*Becky & Dave Weber*  
*Roger, Susan, Tim & Chris Whitaker*

***IN MEMORY OF***

*Donald R. Koehler*  
*Our Parents*  
*Kitty & Bill Andrews*  
*Thelma & Glenn Leidy*  
*Sherry Fodor*  
*Robert & Marion Fleming, Sandra Root*  
*Ralph Linek*  
*Loved Ones*  
*Roger Montgomery*  
*Carole Neuhauser, Betty & David Smith*  
*John Wilder*  
*Martha & Howard Parkhurst*  
*Husband, Mother & Father*  
*Our Loving Parents*  
*Keith Rosen*  
*Lou Rossman and Niece, Peggy*  
*Our Parents and Sisters*  
*Martha Pettit*  
*Husband, Felix*  
*Our Parents*  
*Truman & Justine Whitaker*

***NAME OF DONOR***

*Bruce & Connie Anderson*  
*Steve & Jane Anderson*  
*The Andrews Family*  
*Ashley Bonsell*  
*Joe & Lori Donnelly*  
*Walter & Virginia Hall*  
*Holly & Gary Hallman*  
*Kellie & Crell Johns*  
*Jim Kiser*  
*Karen Leidy*  
*Lou & Nancy Livengood*  
*Judy Neuhauser*  
*Nancy & Bill Orris*  
*Beth & Dean Winquist*

***IN HONOR OF***

*Our Wonderful Families and Friends*  
*Our Family*  
*MaryAnn Andrews*  
*My Mother, Cathy Bonsell*  
*Lt. Patrick Donnelly, PA-C*  
*Our Family*  
*Our Virginia and Ohio Families*  
*Our Family and Friends*  
*The Chancel, Adult Bell and Youth Bell Choirs*  
*Jamie Andrews, US Army, Afghanistan*  
*Our Children and Grandchildren*  
*Fred Neuhauser*  
*All who volunteer here at UCC*  
*Our Parents*

# THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

## DECEMBER 23, 2018

**“WELCOMING, LOVING, SERVING, WHERE GOD HAS NO LIMITS.  
MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY!”**

Live streaming of the Sanctuary Service is available at [uccmedina.org](http://uccmedina.org)

December 23, 2018 thru December 30, 2018

### **WEEK AT A GLANCE**

**Sun** **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**No F.I.S.H. (One Room Sunday School)**  
8:15 am Chapel Worship  
9:00 am Gathering Worship  
9:15 am Choir Practice  
10:30 am Traditional Worship  
2:00 pm JMM @ Medina Meadows  
Sing-a-long  
7:00 pm JMM @ Western Reserve  
Masonic Home

**Mon** **CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED**  
*Christmas Eve Worship*  
6:00 pm Family Service  
9:00 pm Candlelight Service

**Tues** **CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED**  
*Merry Christmas*

**Wed** 10:30 am Quilters

**Thu** **Garfield Deliveries**

**Fri**

**Sat**

**Sun** **No F.I.S.H.**  
10:00 am **ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP**  
**Service of Remembrance**  
1:15 pm JMM @ Brookdale North

### **PILGRIM MESSENGER MAILING**

We will not be mailing the Pilgrim Messenger between Christmas and New Year's on December 27<sup>th</sup>.

We will resume mailing again on Thursday, January 3, 2019

**Worship Highlights:** 8:15, 9:00, & 10:30 am

Scripture: Luke 3: 1-6

Sermon: "Merry Christmas You Brood of Vipers!"  
- Rev. Luke Lindon

**Altar Flowers:** Poinsettias

**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**  
6:00 pm Family Candlelight Service  
9:00 pm Candlelight Service

### **SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**

**December 30, 2018**

### **ONE SERVICE ONLY 10:00 am**

On this Sunday we will remember those persons who have passed away this past year. By having the time of remembrance during a worship service, we encourage family members and others to come and share this time together. During the worship service, the names of the members of Medina UCC who have passed away during 2018 will be read. For each member a candle will be lit and a chime will ring. We will also have a white rose on the altar for each of the members who have passed away. They are for the family to take home following the service. We would also like to read the names of family members and loved ones who have passed away during this past year.

**If you have a loved one that you would like remembered, please call the Church Office no later than December 26<sup>th</sup> with the full name of the loved one, their relationship to you, and the date of their passing.**

## **THE CHRISTMAS FUND**

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**The light is surely coming!** Please give generously this holiday season to **THE CHRISTMAS FUND FOR VETERANS OF THE CROSS**, the unique UCC Special Mission Offering recognizing and honoring our beloved ministers and their spouses who dedicate their careers and so much of their lives to the church. For over a century, these offerings have been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, United Church of Christ members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. This ministry cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ. Your gift will also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks next December to lower-income retirees.

## **MIAMI UNIVERSITY CHEEZIES**

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Kyle Root and The Miami University Cheezies are doing a home town tour this winter and will be making a stop right here at the church on **January 16, 2019**. They are thrilled to offer an evening of fun *a cappella* selections as well as guest performances by several members of the church. The performance will start at **7:30 the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup>** and will conclude with a reception so you can meet some of the talented performers. How much does this cost? It is 100% FREE! Come enjoy the music and we will offer a donation plate if you think it was amazing!

## **Upcoming Youth Events:**

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- \***December 23 – NO F.I.S.H. MERRY CHRISTMAS!**  
One Room Sunday School
- \***December 30 – NO F.I.S.H. HAPPY NEW YEAR!**
- \***January 6 – Third Grade Bible Parent Meeting –**  
10:00 in the Library
- \***January 6 – Youth Group 4-6 pm**

## **THIRD GRADE BIBLE PARENT MEETING**

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**January 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am**

There will be a meeting for all parents of third graders who wish to receive their bible. We will meet in the library at 10:00 am. Please see Stacie Yates if you have any questions.

## **ALTAR FLOWERS**

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The 2019 Flower Chart is now hanging on the bulletin board in the East Room hallway. Please sign up to sponsor the Altar Flowers. This is a wonderful way to honor or remember someone, or to celebrate a special occasion.

Please fill in your name and write "church" or "self" to let us know if you would like the church to order the flowers for you or if you will be ordering them yourself. The cost of the flowers ordered through the church office is \$22.50.

Also, please write what you would like printed in the Messenger and if you want to claim your flowers after the 10:30 service.

## **COFFEE HOUR HOSTS NEEDED**

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Please consider signing up to host a Coffee Hour after the 10:30 service in January, February, or March. Sign-up sheets are in the East Room. Please remember this is supposed to be a snack with coffee or punch. Doughnut holes, cheese and crackers, fresh fruit or anything you like may be served. **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Thank you and if there are questions, please contact Beth Hari @ 330-242-1807.

## **COSTA RICA PANELS**

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We are raising funds to build a house in the East Room! Well, a model of a house that will be built in Costa Rica. Each panel costs \$375. We hope that we can build a full model of the house which will be built in January with Mercy Homes, our mission partner in Costa Rica. **We have currently raised \$2525.00, enough for 6 panels!** Any amount helps. Thanks for helping provide a home for our Costa Rican families!

## WHAT GOES UP, MUST ALSO COME DOWN

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With Christmas nearly upon us, as we are enjoying the beautiful surroundings within our church walls, we need to take our time to reflect on the "Reason for the Season." We thank our volunteer crew for setting up all the decorations, and now need to turn our thoughts to the times and dates when we can disassemble, package, label and tape the boxes for storage next year.

The plan: Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 after the traditional service. Please plan to stay after church to help with the "Un-Decorating" process. Blessings to you and thank you in advance.

## GARFIELD HYGIENE PROGRAM NEW ITEMS NEEDED!

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Thank you for the generous contribution of toiletries for the Hygiene Program to assist the children at Garfield School. We are now asking for your contributions of **ear muffs and body lotion** in addition to the hygiene items. Socks are always appreciated. Please place your contributions in the box at the bottom of the staircase.

## EXTRA GIFT CARDS ON HAND FOR PURCHASE

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Extra Gift Cards Available for Christmas Gifts:

\$10—Chipotle, \$10—Panera, \$10—Starbucks,  
\$25—Speedway and \$25—Target  
and \$10.50—Regal Premiere Movie Ticket

Please contact Kelly weekdays in the office or via email [financial@uccmedina.org](mailto:financial@uccmedina.org) if you would like to purchase any of these cards. You may pay cash or by check payable to UCC. These cards make great gifts. Supplies are limited.

## KEY FOUND FOR A BUICK

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A Buick key was found in the kitchen sometime around the Youth Group Thanksgiving Potluck or Candlelight Walk. Please claim it if it is yours.

## GIFT TO ENDOWMENT FUND

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Gift time is close approaching, and often, we are seeking a gift for the person who "has everything" or the person who says they "need nothing". Please consider making a GIFT OF GRATITUDE for the life of that person by making a gift to the ENDOWMENT FUND in their name. The Fund is here to do good things. The fund is here to underwrite projects, programs and needs that emerge from the life of the church. Your loved one will be honored – and it is the perfect size and perfect color!

## 2019 BICENTENNIAL CALENDARS

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As our Bicentennial year approaches, we have several exciting things planned to celebrate the upcoming year!

We have compiled a usable working wall calendar for 2019 with all the special church events listed along with some beautiful photos of the church. Of course, things will be subject to change and we will keep you posted throughout the year, but it is a great way to keep track of what will be happening so you can save the dates!

Calendars will be available beginning Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> for a \$5 donation that will go towards our Bicentennial Celebrations.

## SAVE THE DATES!

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Would you like to join our church family!? If so, please mark the dates of the next new member classes on your calendar now! They will be held on January 21<sup>st</sup> & January 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. We will receive new members on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. More information to come soon!

New Bible Study  
**TWOSDAY**  
Tuesdays at 2 p.m.

A new Bible Study for those who don't like to drive in the dark! Beginning on Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm, Pastor Luke will host a Bible Study in the new library.

The first topic will be: THE THEOLOGICAL WORLDS: Why there are so many types of Christians?

## **SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIAGE**

Thursdays at 6:00 pm, all couples are invited to explore the Spirituality of Marriage. Part Bible study, part couples exercise, part discussion with other couples; we'll explore what it means to be married and what it takes to sustain the covenant promise made at the wedding date.

Childcare will be provided. Topics are as follows:

January 17: The Zimzum of Marriage  
January 25: AWKWARD Communication  
January 31: Sex and What Can Result  
(Parenting)  
February 7: The Unfolding Mystery

## **ANNUAL REPORTS AND MEETING**

### **Save the date!**

**Our Annual Budget Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup>** immediately following the 10:30 service.

If Cindy has asked for an annual report from you, **the deadline is Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

**This means:** Endowment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Finance Team, Treasurer and Church Clerk.

Please email them to her at: [office@uccmedina.org](mailto:office@uccmedina.org) or drop them off in the church office.

## **STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

**Thank You** to those of you who have returned your pledge cards for 2019!

**All 2018 contributions must be postmarked by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, to be eligible for tax deductions.** In order to best forecast 2019 budgets the church is still in need of your 2019 Faith Offering Card. Blank cards are available in the pew racks.

## **OFFERING ENVELOPES**

If you requested offering envelopes they are available on the table in the East Room.

## **Bicentennial Tidbits – Standing Notice from a 1912 Sunday Bulletin**

The Pastor requests to be informed promptly of all cases of serious or protracted sickness in the congregation. He also wishes to have it understood that his time and services are always at the disposal of any who wish to confer with him on spiritual matters. In making his calls he is always glad to read or pray with those who desire it and will request it.

All are invited to become members of this church, who are in sympathy with its aims and are striving to live a Christian life. Members are usually received at our Communion services, which occur the first Sunday in January, March, May, July, September, November. If you wish to talk over the matter of church membership with the pastor, use one of the cards in the pews.

This church is supported by voluntary offerings, and its pews are free to everybody. Any desiring to contribute to its expenses will be provided with printed envelopes upon application to the treasurer, Mr. R. G. Calvert. All amounts, large or small, deposited in envelopes on the collection plates are credited on the books of the treasurer.

We cordially welcome all strangers to our services, and invite all who are not regular attendants elsewhere to make this their church home. Strangers are invited to make themselves known.

Let us be workers together. It is wonderful what can be accomplished by going after folks. Among your neighbors and friends there are persons not now interested in any church, and all that is needed to bring them here is a persistent personal invitation. Never let a week pass without having invited someone to church.

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-being, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

**“A Child’s Charlie Brown Christmas...or, an Every Child’s Christmas”**

Growing up, I never really liked Charlie Brown, despite his good heart. A cartoon with... ‘and the moral of the story is...’ was such a downer for me. It was difficult to watch poor ‘blockhead Charlie Brown’. I was raised to be a forward-looking optimist that looks for the best in every moment. Ok, I was a day dreamer. Give me Snoopy and the Red Haired Girl any day.

But last Sunday, our children moved everyone to hear in every line, in every song, and to see in every child, the discovery of wonder in the true meaning of Christmas.

It was certainly a different pageant presentation. Sure there were shepherds, angels, Mary and Joseph and of course, baby Jesus. Charlie Brown needed help from Lucy the ‘psychiatrist’, common sense and care from Linus, and rocking musical support from Snoopy and the gang. Oh, and then there was Charlie Brown’s little sad Christmas tree. A symbol against the whole commercialization of Christmas. A thing of true beauty and wonder.

As if by miracle, all the children realized the true meaning of Christmas Joy...Charlie Brown’s glowing heart captured us all. It was Matthew’s Christmas story of Jesus’ birth, of the simple gift of a child born to us, of the ‘Advent’ story of Love come to earth, of Emmanuel – “God With Us.”

Have you been waiting for a rebirth of your spirit of joy? It is in every child’s smiling face, in the deeply moving sounds and lyrics of Christmas hymns, in every outreach gift of food, clothing and toys. And yes, it is in the wonder of Christmas trees and so much more. It is all there for us – our special gifts from God. ‘For unto us, this day...’

Thank you, children, and thank you, Charlie Brown.

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**The deadline for submission of articles for NEXT Sunday’s *Messenger* is this Sunday at 11:30 am.**

**Please submit articles to the church office at [office@uccmedina.org](mailto:office@uccmedina.org)**

**\*\*\*\*\*CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm MONDAY THRU FRIDAY\*\*\*\*\***

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December 23, 2018  
Fourth Sunday of Advent  
*Christmas Fund Offering*

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Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

### **Moving with Mary's Song**

*Magnificat* is the first word in the Latin version of the song of Mary that starts on verse 46 in the first chapter of Luke's gospel. It means "my soul magnifies." The church around the world uses this word as the title for this piece of poetry. Considered a song (a canticle) this passage has come to be a regular part of the season of Advent. Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visits Elizabeth, also pregnant, and Mary can't help but sing. She sings about the goodness and joy of being in that place, that village, with her much older cousin Elizabeth, invoking an attitude of overwhelming thankfulness. Mary must have felt quite safe. There is a Franciscan church called The Church of the Visitation that was built to commemorate this moment in time—this visit between two women many generations apart.

Mary sings about filling the hungry with good things. Filling the hungry is something churches do quite well. We feed people dinners. We organize pot lucks, and serve coffee. We bake cakes and cookies and offer them to anyone who comes through our door. We care for each other. There is an offering we take every year which is a part of that ongoing care. It's called "The Christmas Fund" and is administered by The Pension Boards, United Church of Christ, Inc. The gifts we give to this Fund are given to supplement the income of those retired clergy and church lay workers and surviving spouses whose pensions are small. It's as if generations come together and say, "Yes, you are a part of us and we have not forgotten. You are safe with us. We are here for you"

Feeling vulnerable and being able to find a place where you are affirmed and aided is the kind of atmosphere that surrounds the two women in this passage. They are comfortable and know that each of them is supportive of the other. This Fund we collect this Sunday makes that kind of comfort available across generations and is available on behalf of all of us. And, if you know of a retired church worker who has hit a rough patch and once worked on behalf of us with the United Church of Christ make sure they know about this Fund and tell them to call, or go to [pbucc.org](http://pbucc.org) and search for ministerial assistance. The hungry we feed with this fund are those who have fed us spiritually and have visited us many times in our homes, prayed with us and preached the Good News.