



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

INTRODUCTION

Leader: Where you are is called “now,”

People: and we must treat it as a powerful stranger.

PRELUDE “Cold December Flies Away” – setting, Lynn Arthur Koch

Cathy Fafrak, Organist

***INTROIT** “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.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: O Lord, let our souls rise up to meet you;

People: As the day rises to meet the sun.

Leader: Glory be to the Creator...

People: To the Redeemer, and to the Sustainer, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN

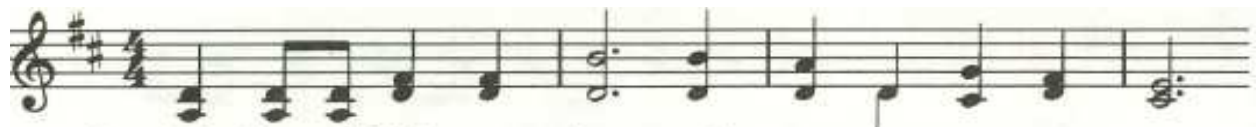
“Soldiers of Christ, Arise”

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1749 (Eph. 6:13-18)

MUSIC: George J. Elvey, 1868

DIADEMATA

SMD



1. Sol - diers of Christ, a - rise, and put your ar - mor on,
 2. Stand then in his great might, with all his strength en - dued,
 3. Pray with-out ceas - ing, pray, (your Cap - tain gives the word)
 4. From strength to strength go on, wres - tle and fight and pray,



strong in the strength which God sup - plies thru his e - ter - nal Son;
 but take to arm you for the fight the pan - o - ply of God;
 his sum - mons cheer - ful - ly o - bey and call up - on the Lord;
 tread all the powers of dark - ness down and win the well - fought day.



strong in the Lord of Hosts, and in his might - y power,
 that hav - ing all things done, and all your con - flicts passed,
 to God your ev - ery want in in - stant prayer dis - play,
 Still let the Spir - it cry in all his sol - diers, "Come!"



who in the strength of Je - sus trusts is more than con - quer - or.
 ye may o'er - come thru Christ a - lone and stand en - tire at last.
 pray al - ways, pray and nev - er faint, pray, with - out ceas - ing pray.
 till Christ the Lord de - scends from high and takes the con - querors home.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Holy One, we remember today. We remember your great works. We remember the people in our lives who have departed into your care. Speak to us in visions and dreams, make your will known to us, and be patient with us. Be with us as we remember those saints now gone. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE (Psalm 23, adapted)**

Leader: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

People: **We will lie down in green pastures beside still waters.**

Leader: God's grace restores our souls;

People: **Thanks be to God!**

SPECIAL MUSIC

"T'was in the Moon of Wintertime" – Jean de Brébeuf; French folk melody
Sung by Pam Branscome

SCRIPTURE

Romans 16:1-10

Pam Branscome, Liturgist

SERMON

"The List" Rev. Luke Lindon
(a sermon inspired and adapted from "When the Roll is Called Down Here" by Fred Craddock)

*HYMN

"On Eagle's Wings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Michael Joncas (1951-)
Words and Music © 1979 New Dawn Music

Unison G D/F# G

1 You who dwell in the shel-ter of the Lord, who a - bide in his
 (2) snare of the fowl - er will nev - er cap-ture you, 7 and fa-mine will
 3 You need not fear the ter - ror of the night, nor the ar - row that

D/F# F Dm

shad-ow for life, say to the Lord, "My ref-uge, my
 bring you no fear, un - der his wings your ref-uge, his
 flies by day; though thou - sands fall a - bout you, 2

F Gm Asus A Refrain D

Rock in whom I trust."
 faith - ful - ness your shield. And he will raise you up on
 near you it shall not come.

Em A7 D D7/F#

ea - gle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the

G A Bm F#m Em7 A Dsus D D.C.

sun and hold you in the palm of his hand. 2 The

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Leader: Today we give thanks for the saints who have walked with God throughout the ages and whose lights still illumine the way to life.

People: Abraham and Sarah, Ruth and David, Mary and Joseph, apostles and martyrs, grandmothers and fathers –all these saints we celebrate are now with you in the heavenly banquet, united with us across time and place.

Leader: Today we remember the saints of this community who have shared our work and life and story.

People: We remember those whose faithful witness proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in words loud and soft, in actions great and small.

Leader: Today we gather before our God, and remember the saints whose light reflected yours. Whose legacy of love and faithfulness is woven into our lives.

Ritual of Remembrance: Reading of Names of Members, Sounding Chime and Lighting Candle

Leader: May the light of their lives continue to glow deeply in the work and witness of this church.

People: May their lights remind us of the day when we will all be reunited in God's realm where there will be no darkness and no death. God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

Leader: Being surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, may we be encouraged to run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

People: By the spirit, may we be made one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world as we look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who told us when we pray to say...

... 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.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"For All the Saints"



1 For all the saints who from their labors rest, who to the
 2 You were their rock, their refuge, and their might: you, Christ, the
 3 Still may your people, faithful, true, and bold, live as the
 4 Ringed by this cloud of witnesses divine, we feebly
 5 And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long, steals on the



world their steadfast faith confessed, your name, O Jesus,
 hope that put their fears to flight; 'mid gloom and doubt, you
 saints who nobly fought of old, and share with them a
 struggle, they in glory shine; yet in your love our
 ear the distant triumph song, then hearts are brave a -



be forever blessed.
 were their one true light.
 glorious crown of gold. Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
 faithful lives entwined.
 gain, and faith grows strong.

This traditional All Saints Day hymn originally consisted of eleven stanzas written for the Sarum Hymnal (1869) and set to a tune by that name, Sarum. It has grown in popularity since it was later paired with the enduring Sine Nomine in The English Hymnal (1906).

Tune: SINE NOMINE 10.10.10.4.
 Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Music Copyright ©. Oxford University Press. From *The English Hymnal 1906*.

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

Offertory Invitation

We lift up to you this day, seeds for the future. May you take our time, talent, and treasure and transform them into hope for the world.

Offertory Music "Oh, Sleep Now, Holy Infant" – arr. Karl Osterland 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

Creator of Everything, we offer our whole selves to you. It is a joy and a blessing to share our gifts, just as the saints of our church and of our lives have shared so much with us. As we offer these gifts for the work of your church, help us be mindful of all that we can do together as the body of Christ. Amen.

*SENDING HYMN

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"



1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
3. To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small;
4. Thou reign - est in glo - ry; thou dwell - est in light;



in light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might;
in all life thou liv - est, the true life of all;
thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight;



most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
we blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,
all laud we would ren - der: O help us to see



al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise.
thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
and with - er and per - ish, but naught chang - eth thee.
'tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee.

WORDS: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1867 (1 Tim. 1:17)

MUSIC: Welsh melody from *Canoidau y Cyssegr*, 1839; adapt. by John Roberts

ST. DENIO

11.11.11

***BENEDICTION** (by Kate Braestrup, Facing the Dark, the Moth Radio Hour Podcast, April 3, 2017)

Leader: Walk fearlessly into the house of mourning,

People: For grief is only love come up against its oldest challenge.

Leader: And after all these mortal years,

People: Love knows how to handle it.

Leader: Walk boldly, love fiercely, and trust in the ways of our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer.
This service has ended.

People: Our service now begins.

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

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

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

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*Those who are able please stand

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

*****Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service***
Today's coffee hour is hosted by **Ken & Sue Dean.****

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PASTORAL STAFF

Rev. Luke Lindon, Senior Minister – email: luke@uccmedina.org

OFFICE STAFF

Cindy Korecky, Office Manager - email: office@uccmedina.org
Kelly Charnley, Financial Manager - email: 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

REMEMBERING WITH LOVE - MEMBERS 2018

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Birth</i> | <i>Death</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Felix A. Tampson</i> | <i>March 25, 1928</i> | <i>February 5, 2018</i> |
| <i>Mary G. Keck</i> | <i>January 2, 1932</i> | <i>April 24, 2018</i> |
| <i>James R. "Bob" Jack</i> | <i>June 7, 1929</i> | <i>May 24, 2018</i> |
| <i>Doris J. Naragon</i> | <i>October 13, 1930</i> | <i>May 31, 2018</i> |
| <i>Elwood W. Naragon</i> | <i>August 19, 1925</i> | <i>June 6, 2018</i> |
| <i>Bette W. Hoover</i> | <i>March 20, 1945</i> | <i>June 19, 2018</i> |
| <i>Alice L. Tollafield</i> | <i>August 15, 1920</i> | <i>July 2, 2018</i> |
| <i>Gladys P. "Dally" Cochran</i> | <i>October 3, 1926</i> | <i>July 16, 2018</i> |
| <i>John C. "Jack" Wilcox, Jr.</i> | <i>July 18, 1931</i> | <i>July 23, 2018</i> |
| <i>Patricia R. McCurley</i> | <i>August 26, 1939</i> | <i>July 24, 2018</i> |
| <i>Ruth F. Falconer</i> | <i>September 7, 1922</i> | <i>September 5, 2018</i> |
| <i>Yvonne "Terrie" A. Ellwitz</i> | <i>February 21, 1923</i> | <i>September 15, 2018</i> |
| <i>Richard H. Neidert</i> | <i>April 1, 1932</i> | <i>November 4, 2018</i> |

Other Loved Ones Deaths 2018

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Cara Neumann</i> | <i>Friend of Hunger Mission Team</i> | <i>January 7, 2018</i> |
| <i>Shirley L. Rickett</i> | <i>Sister-in-law of Mary Keck</i> | <i>January 27, 2018</i> |
| <i>Henry J. Kuhr</i> | <i>Uncle of Valerie Cervenak</i> | <i>February 7, 2018</i> |
| <i>Jo Ann Merrell</i> | <i>Sister of Fran Largen</i> | <i>February 15, 2018</i> |
| <i>Gerald L. Woodling</i> | <i>Father of Mark (Karen) Woodling</i> | <i>February 18, 2018</i> |
| <i>Charles Bondi</i> | <i>Uncle of James Sprosty</i> | <i>March 6, 2018</i> |
| <i>Janet K. Ross</i> | <i>Friend of Earle Olson</i> | <i>March 8, 2018</i> |
| <i>Douglas G. Charnley</i> | <i>Husband of Kelly Charnley</i> | <i>March 10, 2018</i> |
| <i>Jeanette B. Stokes</i> | <i>Mother of Carol Holtz</i> | <i>April 9, 2018</i> |
| <i>Robert McCormick Young</i> | <i>Father of Stephanie Manhoff</i> | <i>April 11, 2018</i> |
| <i>Dixie Lee Baran</i> | <i>Aunt of Jen Hendershot</i> | <i>May 12, 2018</i> |
| <i>Charles "Squeak" McGill</i> | <i>Brother of Bonnie Shuman</i> | <i>May 25, 2018</i> |
| <i>Anthony "Tony" Manfred</i> | <i>Cousin of Rev. Luke Lindon</i> | <i>July 21, 2018</i> |
| <i>Edward McClung</i> | <i>Son of Stephanie McClung</i> | <i>August 11, 2018</i> |
| | <i>Grandson of Ruth Falconer</i> | |
| <i>Gordon L. Cockrell</i> | <i>Father of Jennifer Cockrell</i> | <i>September 8, 2018</i> |
| <i>Marian Hudson Keeler</i> | <i>Mother-in-law of Nick North</i> | <i>October 6, 2018</i> |
| <i>Thomas L. Holden</i> | <i>Brother of Patricia Rickard</i> | <i>October 21, 2018</i> |
| <i>Ralph G. Greinke</i> | <i>Brother of Ron Greinke</i> | <i>November 10, 2018</i> |
| <i>Jerold "Jerry" Lichty</i> | <i>Uncle of Jack Stoll</i> | <i>November 10, 2018</i> |
| <i>June M. Marks</i> | <i>Grandmother of Greg Alber</i> | <i>November 22, 2018</i> |
| <i>Ted W. Chandler</i> | <i>Father of Christine Wilder</i> | <i>November 29, 2018</i> |
| <i>Robert "Bob" E. Fox</i> | <i>Brother of Laverne McGuire</i> | <i>December 9, 2018</i> |

THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

DECEMBER 30, 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

December 30, 2018 thru January 6, 2019

WEEK AT A GLANCE

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Sun | No F.I.S.H. 10:00 am SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE 1:15 pm JMM @ Brookdale North |
| Mon | CHURCH OFFICE CLOSURES @ Noon |
| Tues | CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED <i>Happy New Year!</i> |
| Wed | 10:30 am Quilters |
| Thu | Garfield Deliveries 7:00 pm Congregational Council |
| Fri | |
| Sat | |
| Sun | EPIPHANY SUNDAY 8:15 am Chapel Worship 9:00 am Gathering Worship 9:15 am Choir Practice 10:00 am 3 rd Grade Bible Class Parent Meeting 10:30 am Traditional Worship 11:30 am Un-decorate the Church 11:30 am Hunger Outreach Meeting (Project Leaders Only) 4:00 pm Youth Group – Post New Year’s Party |

Worship Highlights: 10:00 am

Scripture: Romans 16: 1-10

Sermon: “The List” - Rev. Luke Lindon

Altar Flowers: The altar flowers are given by Jane Langol in honor of the birthday of her son, Stephen.

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP

Sunday, December 31st –10:00 am

Upcoming Youth Events:

***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 – Post New**
Year’s Party!

***January 20 – Youth Group 4-6 pm – Make**
Valentines for residents at Medina Meadows.

THIRD GRADE BIBLE PARENT MEETING

January 6th 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.

SAVE THE DATES!

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 21st & January 28th at 7:00 pm**. We will receive new members on February 3rd. More information to come soon!

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS:

We will close on Monday, December 31st at Noon and remain closed Tuesday, January 1st. The office will reopen Wednesday, January 2nd.

We will resume mailing the Pilgrim Messenger on Thursday, January 3rd

WHAT GOES UP, MUST ALSO COME DOWN

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: Next Sunday, January 6th 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.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

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

All 2018 contributions must be postmarked by tomorrow, December 31st, 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.

ALTAR FLOWERS

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

Thank you to those who have signed up to host a Coffee Hour in January! Please consider hosting a Sunday after the 10:30 service in 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.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY CHEEZIES

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 16th** 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!

COSTA RICA PANELS

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!

ANNUAL REPORTS AND MEETING

Save the date!

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

If I have asked for an annual report from you, **the deadline is Monday, January 7th**.

This means: Endowment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Finance Team, Treasurer and Church Clerk. If you have any questions or need a copy of last years' annual report to refer to please let me know.

Please email your reports to Cindy in the office at: office@uccmedina.org or drop them off in the church office.

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

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 15th 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?

2019 BICENTENNIAL CALENDARS

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 are available in the East Room for a \$5 donation that will go towards our Bicentennial Celebrations.

MANY, MANY THANKS

The Community Outreach Ministry would like to thank everyone who has shared their time, talent, and/or treasure to make a difference in so many lives in our community. Whether you Cooked for Cups, contributed to the personal hygiene program for Garfield students including handmade hats, scarves and gloves, participated in the library Shop-n-Drop, donated a variety of items to the BOGO for the Community Service Center, and/or contributed your time to driving to deliver food items, or shopped and brought to church many, many food items, or donated so generously for our adopted fourteen Garfield families...*WE THANK YOU.*

KEY FOUND FOR A BUICK

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.

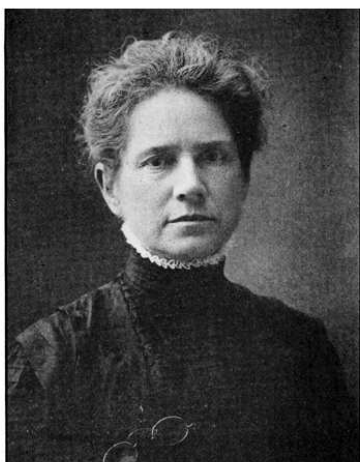
Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before others...”

A teacher leads students into a dark forest while holding a lit candle to show the way. The teacher turns and says, ‘keep your candlelight shining brightly. Illumine the way for others with your light as I have led you.’

Those who have gone before us with their lights shining brightly have lighted the way.

We carry the light of truth in our minds and the flame of love in our hearts. That light—the light from truth and love—will never go out. For although the lights of those who have gone before no longer shine brightly among us, they are aglow in another congregation.

Today and every day, we follow the path they first walked...our lamps shining brightly.



MRS. W. S. AMENT.

It was during his ministry in China that the Boxer uprising broke out, and Dr. Ament was of untold assistance to all the foreigners located in Peking at that time. His knowledge of the Chinese character, combined with his coolness, resourcefulness, and unselfishness, proved him the hero that he was. When Dr. Ament returned to this country for a much needed rest he received a deserved ovation wherever he went.

Bicentennial Tidbits

For many years in the late 1800's, we sponsored Mary Ament as our missionary in China. She was the wife of Dr. William Ament, who served briefly as our minister, before returning with his wife to the missionary field in China.



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

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

Luke 2:41-52

Who is This Child?

Have you ever looked up for a moment out on the street, in the park, at the mall and not seen your children? Have you ever become separated from a child and felt a hole open in your heart? Can you imagine how Mary and Joseph felt that day in Jerusalem a city with thousands of people crushing in for the holidays? The streets would have been narrow and crowded. Mary and Joseph would have been alone and out of their comfort zone in a place not their home. Put yourself in their shoes. Their only son is missing. They had been through so much turmoil in the first year of their son's life.

His birth was outdoors, in a stable among straw because as luck would have had it they landed in a strange place too late in the day for a bed with a roof. They were homeless. Later the life of the baby was threatened by the Governor. What else could they do but jump on a donkey and flee the country? So, they fled to Egypt for asylum where their baby would be safe. How different the world might be if Egypt had deported them back into Herod's evil hands? Deported baby Jesus into the bloody slaughter of the innocents? But they had survived all that, and the young family returned. Now, however, the boy had disappeared into the crowded market streets of urban Jerusalem. What could have happened to him?

In the last late spring and early summer, we all learned of the terrible things happening in our name and on our borders. Young children, even toddlers, were forcibly removed from their parents who were seeking asylum in the United States. Parents who had come to our country, just like Mary and Joseph had gone to Egypt, seeking safety from violence and protection for their children were having their children taken from them.

How does the church explain the pain of such policies to a world that doesn't always want to see how and where suffering occurs and how it can be perpetrated in our name by those who are our servants? A United Church of Christ in Sacramento, California found a way to do just that. The Parkside Community Church United Church of Christ took the figures from its Christmas nativity and set them up in the front of their church to mirror what was happening to asylum seekers on our borders. They put Mary and Joseph in a chain link cage and put baby Jesus in another similar cage with a sign that said, "Asylum seeking in America Today." How powerful a message, linking the Christmas story with the moral and political events of our day.