
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL



217 E. Liberty St. Medina, Ohio 44256 330-725-4559
www.uccmedina.org Email: office@uccmedina.org

*****Assisted Listening Devices Available – Please Ask Your Usher*****

LIVE STREAMING 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 “They’ll Know We Are Christians” – arr. Charity Book Putnam 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.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Gift-giver, you call us together,
People: with our different gifts, our different ideas, our different tastes.
Leader: You call us together,
People: to share what makes us special, to build each other up, to serve each other in love.
Leader: You call us together,
People: knowing that we need all parts of the body if we are to be whole.
Leader: You call us together,
People: to sing, to pray, to listen, to speak.
To be refreshed so that we can go out and serve.
Leader: You call us together to love you and our neighbor as ourselves in this worship today.
People: Amen.

***OPENING HYMN** “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

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

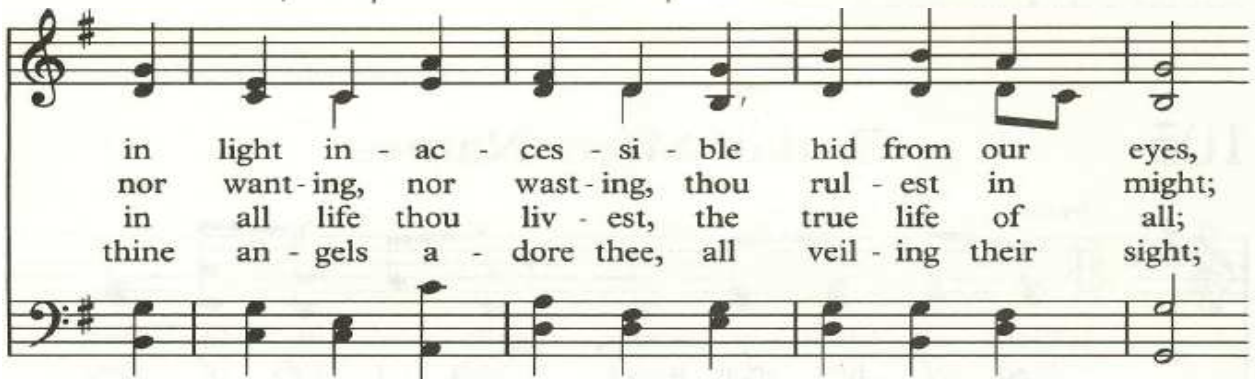
MUSIC: Welsh melody from *Canaidau y Cyssegr*, 1839; adapt. by John Roberts

ST. DENIO

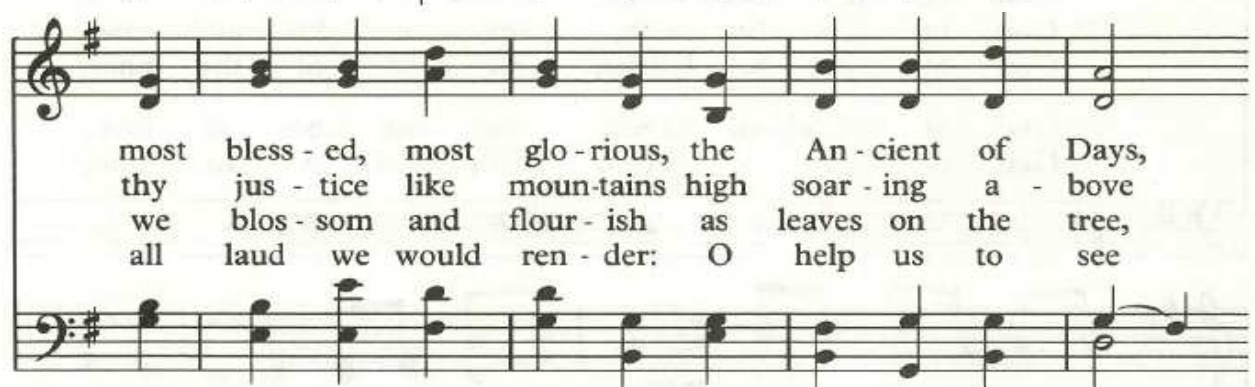
11 11.11 11



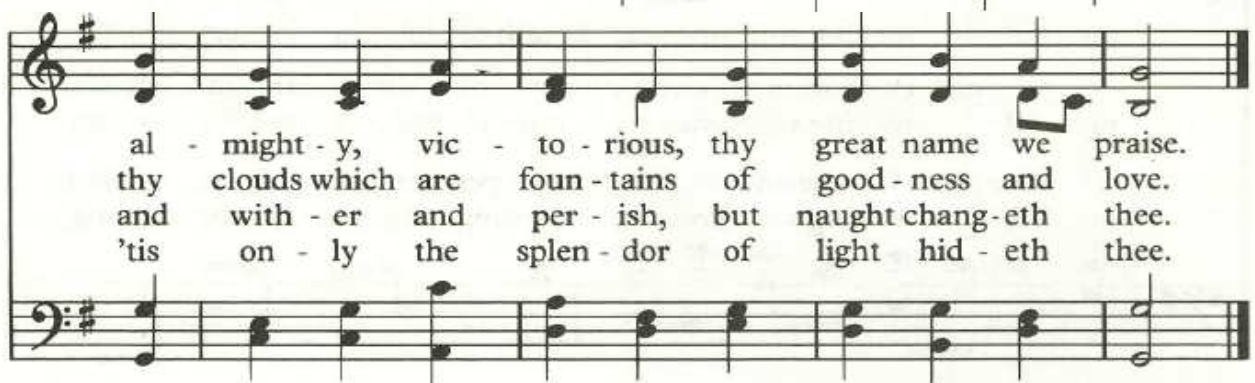
1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
 2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
 3. To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small;
 4. Thou reign - est in glo - ry; thou dwell - est in light;



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.

***CONFESSION** (Posted by Rev Gord on his blog, **Worship Offerings.**)

Leader: God you have given each of us many gifts,

People: but sometimes we cannot recognize what gift we have to share, so we hide it under a bushel.

Leader: God you remind us that all gifts are needed,

People: but sometimes we let ourselves be convinced that some gifts are more special than others.

Leader: God you call us to work, to live, to love together as parts of one body,

People: but sometimes we decide that membership in the body is limited by our understandings.

Leader: God, for the times we have ignored or mislabeled Your gifts, for those times we have cut another off from the body,

People: We offer words of repentance, we ask for forgiveness and grace.

...time of silent prayer...

***WORDS OF ASSURANCE/FORGIVENESS**

Leader: God is the giver of MANY gifts.

People: God is the Creator of the ONE body.

Leader: God is slow to anger and quick to forgive.

People: God helps us to share and honor the gifts of all.

Leader: God helps us to heal the wounds and reunite the body.

People: We are forgiven, loved, and accepted. Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

***PRAISE RESPONSE**

"We All Are One Mission"

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some measures containing beamed eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes. The score ends with a double bar line.

1 We all are one in mis - sion, we all are one in call,
our var - ied gifts u - nit - ed by Christ, the Lord of all.
A sin - gle, great com - mis - sion com - pels us from a - bove
to plan and work to - geth - er that all may know Christ's love.

ANTHEM

"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

Chancel Choir

Quoting "Hymn to Joy" by Ludwig van Beethoven;
Arr. by Hal H. Hopson; Music donated in memory of Don Rafn

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Stacie Yates

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

Morning Prayer

PRAYER RESPONSE

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (Refrain only)

Great is thy faith-ful-ness! Great is thy faith-ful-ness! Morn-ing by
morn-ing new mer - cies I see; all I have need - ed thy
hand hath pro - vid - ed; great is thy faith-ful-ness, Lord, un-to me!

WORDS: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923 (Lam. 3:22-23)
MUSIC: William M. Runyan, 1923

© 1923, renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Co.

FAITHFULNESS
11 10.11 10 with Refrain

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 62: 1-5 and 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

Pete Metzloff, Liturgist

SERMON

"It Is a River, Not a Pie"

Rev. Luke Lindon

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

Offertory Invitation

Holy One, the gifts that have floated to us from upstream, we send a part downstream.
For this is not our piece of the pie, it's all part of your river.

Offertory Music "Trio, Op. 49, no. 1" – Josef Rheinberger/ed. C.H. Trevor 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)** *(from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand website
<http://presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/worship-resources>)*

Move us, by your Spirit, to pick up our presents that you so freely give, to open them and to spend them lavishly on the stewardship of your world. Break in on our confusion, and astonish us anew, O God! Our prayer is that you will claim us again and silence within us our desire to always have words for every occasion, that we might hear the whisper of the wings of your Spirit dove. In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

*SENDING HYMN

"Forward Through the Ages"

WORDS: Frederick Lucian Hosmer, 1908
MUSIC: Arthur S. Sullivan, 1871

ST. GERTRUDE
65.65 D with Refrain



1. For-ward through the a - ges, in un - bro - ken line,
2. Wid - er grows the king - dom, reign of love and light;
3. Not a - lone we con - quer, not a - lone we fall;
move the faith - ful spir - its at the call di - vine;
for it we must la - bor, till our faith is sight.
in each loss or tri - umph lose or tri - umph all.
gifts in dif - fer - ing mea - sure, hearts of one ac - cord,
Proph - ets have pro - claimed it, mar - tyrs tes - ti - fied,
Bound by God's far pur - pose in one liv - ing whole,

man - i - fold the ser - vice, one the sure re - ward.
po - ets sung its glo - ry, he - roes for it died.
move we on to - geth - er to the shin - ing goal.

Refrain

For-ward through the a - ges, in un - bro - ken line,
move the faith - ful spir - its at the call di - vine.

***BENEDICTION**

Leader: May your hearts open to the spirit of God.

People: **May we move beyond our fears, reaching out in trust, openness, and welcome.**

Leader: May your yearning for transformation create a space where God can pour more love, more trust, more compassion into you.

People: **And may we extend the same compassion and radical welcome to the world, all for the sake of Christ.**

Leader: Go and be a blessing for this service has ended,

People: **And our service now begins! 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 "Forward through the Ages" – arr. Christina Becket**

Cathy Fafrak, Organist

"MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY"

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* Those who are able are asked to please stand

Ushers: Dick Christy, Darlene Bagley-Fazekas, Pete Benson, Ron Greinke

Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service

Today's coffee hour is hosted by **Bruce & Sally Bauer.**

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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

THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 10, 2019

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

Live streaming of the Sanctuary Service is available at uccmedina.org

February 10, 2019 thru February 17, 2019

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun	8:15 am	Chapel Worship
	9:00 am	Gathering Worship
	9:15 am	3rd Grade Bible Class
	9:15 am	Choir Practice
	10:30 am	Traditional Worship
	11:45 am	Caring Team
	11:45 am	Mission Team
	3:00 pm	Confirmation Class with Mentors
	3:00 pm	JMM @ Brookdale North
		Hymn Sing
	3:00 pm	Youth Group – Valentine Delivery
Mon	6:30 pm	Women's Bible Study
Tues	8:00 am	Men's Fellowship @ P.J. Marley's
	2:00 pm	Pastor's Bible Study – “Theological Worlds”
	7:00 pm	Worship Team
	7:30 pm	Women's Book Group
Wed	10:30 am	Quilters
	6:30 pm	Youth Bell Choir
	7:15 pm	Bell Choir Rehearsal
Thu	Garfield Deliveries	
Fri	MEDINA ICE FESTIVAL – 15TH - 17TH LOOK FOR OUR ICE SCULPTURE	
	1:30 pm	JMM @ Evergreen
Sat		
Sun	11:30 am	SOUP COOK-OFF YOUTH FUNDRAISER
	8:15 am	Chapel Worship
	9:00 am	Gathering Worship
	9:15 am	3rd Grade Bible Class
	9:15 am	Choir Practice
	10:30 am	Traditional Worship
	11:45 am	Both Sides of Prison: Easter Bag Meeting
	2:00 pm	JMM @ Medina Meadows

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

Isaiah 62:1-5 & I Corinthians 12:1-11

“It Is a River, Not a Pie” - Rev. Luke Lindon

**In an effort to “recycle & reuse”, this Sunday we
will be repurposing the Sunday bulletin &
worship from January 20th when church was
cancelled due to inclement weather!**

Altar Flowers: are given by Ellen Nolan in loving
memory of her uncle, Patrick Kauffmann.

MEDINA ICE FESTIVAL

February 15th, 16th & 17th

In celebration of our Bicentennial year our church has commissioned *Elegant Ice* to carve a beautiful Ice Sculpture to commemorate our 200 years of being the church. Please take a moment to tour the square and look for our sculpture! If you get a chance, please take a photo and email it to the church office at office@uccmedina.org (just in case the weather is warm and it melts!) Hopefully the weather will be conducive to an Ice Sculpture!

WANTED: SOUP!!!

**SOUP COOK OFF
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17**

The youth will be hosting a Soup Cook Off on February 17th immediately following the 10:30 service. We are now looking for people who would like to enter their favorite soup! A prize will be awarded for the best soup along with the Golden Ladle Award! If you have a soup you would like to enter, please sign up in the Crossroads Hallway. There will also be salad, bread and desserts. Make sure to bring some money if you would like to vote on your favorite soups. We hope you will plan on joining us on this day for some yummy soup, great fellowship and friendly competition!

New Bible Study
TWOSDAY
Tuesdays at 2 p.m.
LAST WEEK

A new Bible Study for those who don't like to drive in the dark! Our last meeting is this Tuesday, February 12th at 2:00 pm in the new library.

SECRET PAL – LAST CHANCE!

Today is the last day to sign up for the Secret Pal Project. **You can get a sign up slip from the ushers** or sign up with Stacie Yates. The Secret Pal Project is when a child/youth in the church is paired with an adult from the church and for four weeks they secretly exchange letters. At the end of the project there will be a special coffee hour when all the secret pals will be revealed. **There will be a table set up in the Crossroads Hallway where I will be sitting to help with sign ups.** The exchanging of letters will begin on Sunday, February 17. Complete instructions will be provided at the time of sign up. This is a wonderful way for the youth of the church to get to know the members of the congregation. I hope you will be a part of this fun project.

If you have any questions please contact Stacie Yates at yatesmsla@zoominternet.net or (330) 723-7344.

FOUNDERS DAY 2019

They say that too many cooks spoil the broth, but today we are asking folks to be a part of making the broth! Yes—that means every foodie person that wants to help with a Founders Day celebration. On February 24th, a special shared luncheon will be a part of the activities of the day. We need volunteers to sign up to bring the “fixings” for a hearty stew to be served at noon on that day. Deadline for food donations is Friday, February 15th. A sign up list is available in the East Room. Items can be brought to the church kitchen. Please check the sign up list for an item that you can donate to the kettle! Thank you in advance!

DRESS-UP FOR A VINTAGE DAY

History comes alive as we invite all to join in the festivities of the “*LEGACY LETTERS – Remembrances of a Church in 1919.*” Presented as a Readers’ Theatre, the story of a Congregational Church family will warm your heart and recall familiar facts and not so familiar history of our town. Exciting visuals and music of the times have been integrated into the production for all to see. We have a cast of dedicated readers to draw you into the life of a family. Come meet Uncle Evan, Aunt Rose and the Doughboy! See little Eve and Joel at their best! Circle February 24th at 10:00 am on your calendar. By the way—stay for lunch and share a typical 1919 hot lunch as shared by our fictional family. Such fun! See you there!

EASTER BAGS PLANNING MEETING

Sunday, February 17th at 11:45 am

It's time to start organizing our annual “Easter Bags” for children event! Easter is on April 21st this year, so the “Both Sides of Prison” group will be meeting to divide up small tasks to prepare for the 2019 Easter Bag project. All are invited to join in and pick a small task to help!

The Easter Bag Project began in 2010 and is an outreach of Christ's love to children whose parents have been incarcerated in the Medina County Jail. For the past 9 years, the project has been organized by “Both Sides of Prison”, a Medina UCC group which looks at all aspects of the criminal justice system and how its processes affect individuals, their families and the community around us.

Please call the church office at 330-725-4559 if you have questions.

**THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH
IN OBSERVANCE OF PRESIDENT'S DAY**

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The Men's Fellowship group has their monthly breakfast the 2nd Tuesday of every month at PJ Marley's, meeting at 8 am. The next breakfast is Tuesday February 12th. All men are welcome. While we don't have formal programs, we do have the opportunity to socialize with each other and share our stories. Please join us. Please let Pete Benson know if you wish to be included in our meeting notice emails: sydandpete.benson@gmail.com

THE PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY CHURCH OF 2019

Community Services Center has advised that peanut butter and jelly are the most critically needed foods for its Medina County clients. PB&J are distributed every service day at the Center. We can become their PB&J angels this year by regularly buying a jar or two and placing it in the grey BOGO bin across from the elevator. Thank you for your ongoing support of this and all our Community Outreach projects!

HAVE WE OVERLOOKED ANYONE?

Do you know an older member or a shut-in that may enjoy a visit from a Circle of Caring member? If so, please call the church office (330-725-4559) or Syd Benson (330-725-5540) so they can be added to our list.

ONLINE GIVING ALWAYS AN OPTION!

Don't forget you can always go online to pay your pledges. Use this link: <http://uccmedina.org/give>

- Make a one-time contribution
- Register yourself for recurring giving
- Log in to your profile and update if needed

Feel free to contact Kelly 330-725-4559 if you have any questions.

Upcoming Youth Events:

- *Feb 10 – 3rd Grade Bible Class (9:15-10:15)
- *Feb 10 – Confirmation Class (3:00-4:30) with Mentors
- *Feb 17 – 3rd Grade Bible Class (9:15-10:15)
- *Feb 17 – Soup Cook Off – 11:30 am
- *Feb. 24 – High School Mission Trip Parent Meeting 11:30 am
- *Feb 24 – Confirmation Class (3:00-4:30) with Parents

GIFT CARD ORDERS

Plan ahead now for Special Occasions and place your Gift Card order soon. Please see the Yellow Retailer List on the table near Fellowship Hall or visit www.glscip.com and click on the Retailer List on the left side to view or print your own list. Complete a Green Order Form, also available on the table near Fellowship Hall and return to Kelly or Stacie with payment.

The next order will be due a day later on Tuesday, February 19th at 10:00 am.

“SOUPER” BOWL SUNDAY THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who brought in a can of soup and/or money for “Souper” Bowl Sunday. They collected 111 cans of soup and \$60 for community services. Thank you for helping those in need right here in Medina County.

HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP PARENT MEETING

FEBRUARY 24 at 9:30 am

There will be an informational meeting for parents and high school students who plan to go on the annual mission trip. The mission trip will be the week of June 2 and we will be heading to Pipestem, West Virginia. Come and find out all of the details.

STEPHEN MINISTERS

AFTER the funeral, the divorce, the diagnosis, the job loss, the tragedy, Stephen Ministers can help. How can our congregation provide care for all the “afters” in life? After being trained, Stephen Ministers can give Christ centered care and support to hurting people in an effective and biblical way. Do you want to learn more about Stephen Ministers and their wonderful caring ministry?

Come to a half day introductory workshop on Saturday, March 2nd from 9:00 am–1:00 pm at the United Methodist Church of Berea (170 Seminary St., Berea, Ohio 44107). The cost is \$15 per person or \$50.00 per congregation (four or more). Registration forms are available in the office or call Stephen Ministries at 314-428-2600 between 8:00-5:00 Central Time or visit stephenministry.org/workshop

LADIES & GIRLS TEA SAVE THE DATE

Please mark your calendars for Saturday, April 27, 2019 from 12:00-2:00 pm for the Ladies and Girls Tea. The program will be a special one featuring Angela Strach-Gotthardt from the Secret Tea Society of Hudson, Ohio. Join this certified Tea Specialist to share the flavors of the tea leaf and learn the wonderful traditions of sharing tea and conversation with moms, daughters, family and friends. You will learn about the world's most consumed beverage, tea! It will surely brighten up your lovely April day. More information will follow but plan on joining us.

GOSPEL GALLEY

by Linda Turek

Three different St. Valentines showed heroic love for the Lord and His Church, all sharing Feb. 14 for a feast day. The historical record is sparse. The first St. Valentine was a priest and physician in Rome. He along with St. Marius and his family comforted the martyrs during the persecution of Emperor Claudius II, the Goth. Eventually, St. Valentine was also arrested, condemned to death for his faith, beaten with clubs, and finally beheaded on Feb. 14, AD 270.

The second St. Valentine was the Bishop of Interamna. Under the orders of Prefect Placidus, he too was arrested, scourged, and decapitated, again suffering persecution during the time of Emperor Claudius II.

The third St. Valentine suffered martyrdom in Africa with several companions.

During the Medieval Age, a common belief in England and France was that birds began to pair on Feb. 14, “half-way through the second month of the year.” Chaucer wrote in his “Parliament of Foules” (in Old English): “...When every foul cometh there to choose his mate.” For this reason, the day was dedicated to “lovers” and prompted the sending of letters, gifts, or other signs of affection.

There is a Christian message that should be remembered. The love of our Lord is a sacrificial, selfless, and unconditional love. Such is the love that each Christian is called to express in his own life, for God and neighbor. Jesus said, “...love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:12-13). St. Valentine fulfilled this command, and may we do the same.

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*****

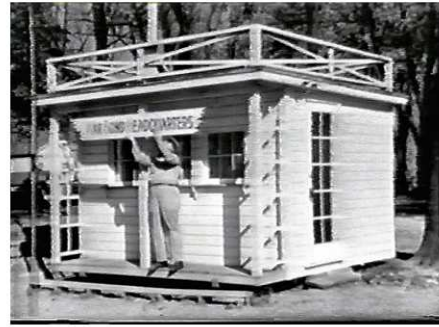
YEAR 1944

SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MEDINA, OHIO 6a

S/Sgt. Lawrence N. Abbott	T-4 Carroll B. McClure
Sgt. Ralph E. Adams	Lt. Theodore A. McDowell
Lt. (J.G.) Robert F. Adams	Stanley E. Mersing, EM 1/C
S/Sgt. James Warren Anderson	Pfc. John C. Nettleton
Sgt. Paul William Anderson	Cpl. Paul Nettleton
Pfc. William C. Anderson	Floyd Elmer Nichols, SK 3/C
S/Sgt. Paul H. Aylerd	S/Sgt. William Nosker
Pvt. Richard E. Babcock	Steve Oraveas, F 2/C
Wade Barnes, AS	James Palmquist, Jr., S 2/C
Pvt. Albert J. Bartholomay, Jr.	Lt. Col. David Porter
(Killed in action)	Jack C. Post, SF 3/C
Maxwell Burnham	Pvt. Norman Z. Raese
Lt. Almerin B. Chaffee	William E. Papp, Chief Mo. M. M.
Capt. Day L. Chase	Cpl. Frank J. Bau
Alan Bruce Clark, AS	Corwin Rickard, AS
Pvt. Robert W. Clark	Erwin H. Rickard, Baker 1/C
Pfc. Craig S. Fenn	Corwin B. Riegger, CM 2/C
Cpl. Lloyd E. Fisher, Jr.	Pfc. Hugh C. Riegger
Paul A. Harge, C. SP.	Pvt. Robert W. Riegger
Cpl. Laurence B. Hemmeter	David Root, AMM 2/C
Ensign Lloyd E. Hoff	Lt. Thomas B. Rowe
T-3 Roland M. Hoff	Pvt. Clinton W. Schmidt
Sgt. Ted J. Hoff	Howard W. Selzer, S 1/C
(Medical discharge)	Lt. Robert B. Shane
Lt. Burton C. Houseman	Cpl. William Smith
Capt. John L. Jones	O/C Hal E. Snedden
Pfc. Hobart Judkins	Robert J. Sprankle
Cpl. Kenneth R. Judkins	Bert Stone, Jr., CM 2/C
Ensign Lois M. Kaden	Pvt. Irvin S. Strong
Lt. Marlan Kernan, Jr.	Russell S. Thomas, SK 2/C
Cpl. Fred B. Koehler	J. Orville Thompson, THM 2/C
Sgt. Walter L. Koehler	Ensign Ronald C. Tollafeld
Pvt. Andrew Kuntz	Richard H. Wagner, S 2/C
Lt. Ella Kuntz	Robert C. Wainwright, AMM 3/C
T-4 Everett C. Leister	Pvt. John A. Weber
Pfc. Norman Leister	Cpl. Ebert Weidner
Robert Leister, AM 1/C	Capt. Morris Wilderom
T-5 Mary E. Leidig	Lt. Ruth M. Woods
Lt. (J.G.) Richard D. Longacre	Lt. Elmer A. Zearney
Lt. Com. A. R. Lyons	

Bicentennial Tidbits

Elmer Zarney is shown here with the building and sign he designed as "headquarters" for war bond sales in Medina. Now located at the Hospital, it was originally placed on the square in an open space between the Court House and the Library. This fund raising raised over \$3 million dollars towards the war effort – so dramatic was this that the U.S. government featured Medina in a home-front film (still available from the Library) called "Hometown U.S.A." Lt. Zarney served with distinction in the Army Air Corp during the war, flying in over 88 missions.



John 2: 1-11

Extravagant Sign

Weddings join more than the people being married. They join families, traditions, and stories. Generations come together. Children who were strangers become cousins. Two become one in many ways. In this story told in John's Gospel, there is a wedding with a problem. The wine has run out. Jesus is there, with his mother. In the hands of this gospel author that situation turns into an opportunity to make a point about a moment in the first century when the religious landscape was changing. This is a story about the transformation of traditions.

During the time that John's Gospel came into being, synagogues were being disrupted by Jews who were proclaiming a new religious vision within the context of Judaism. Their voices were raised in worship and community gatherings. What they proclaimed was disruptive to the religious traditions of their day. They were saying that a carpenter's son who was crucified by Roman guards was the Messiah for whom they have been waiting. Talk about conflict! Talk about turmoil! It must have been hard for everyone. John's gospel emerged in the middle of this commotion. That is why this Gospel often takes traditional religious symbols of its day and puts them in the hands of Jesus who transforms them.

The jugs that Jesus fills with wine were used for religious rituals of cleansing. What was sacred and symbolic is, after Jesus gets through with them, now filled with wine...a symbol of celebration and newness. There are many ways we can think about this. One is that by using ritual vessels for wine Jesus joins what we think of as ordinary with our sacred practices.

Many of our churches are experimenting with new ways of worship and new ways of transforming old traditions. In Cleveland, at our own Amistad Chapel, this past summer, artists gathered from all over the country. They were visual artists, dancers, scholars of liturgy, writers, and storytellers. They gathered to create and wonder and experiment and discover a new language of our faith – a language for a new century already well underway. They gathered to develop resources for the local church and to support our justice work, and they all came to share how the sacred speaks through our creative selves made in God's image. One of the participants, Rev. Erin Beardemphl said this about art, "If we could, in our churches and in our communities, show people that they really are creative beings, I expect the world would be so much more loving." Like what Jesus did at the wedding, they were filling old vessels with new wine.