



Advent 4

Sunday December 24, 2023
Medina UCC, Congregational
uccmedina.org



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

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

*There will be no Jesus Vibes or Children’s Message today.
Young children are invited downstairs to do a Christmas craft with
Ms. Stacie during the service.*

**Those who are able please stand*

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” - arr. Chris Lobdell

Cathy Fafrak, Piano

PASSING OF THE PEACE

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (*Cloth for the Cradle*, Iona Community 1997, Glasgow G51 3UU Scotland)

Prepare the way of the Lord!

Make a path for our God in the desert.

Every valley shall be exalted.

Every hill and mountain laid low.

The crooked shall become straight.

Rough places shall become plain.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,

All people shall see it together.

This is the promise of the Lord.

God’s promise shall be fulfilled!

*OPENING HYMN

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (vs. 7 & 1)

*Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710
Based on ancient Antiphons from Advent Vespers*

VENI, EMMANUEL L.M. with refrain
*melody from a 15th century French processional
arr. Thomas Helmore, 1854*

**O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease; Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

God has revealed what was kept hidden for so very long;
Divine love incarnate stepped out in the light.
In the brighter light on this fourth Sunday in Advent,
may we see more clearly the glory of God in Christ
and sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever.

**"With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens" (Psalm 89:1b-2).**

The candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are lit.

Light four candles, see them glow
Brightly, so that all may know
How four candles show the way
Making our darkness bright as God's day.
I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

**Dear God, your faithfulness has been great, leading us to this day of anticipation and
celebration. May the glorious light of your steadfast love shine brightly in us and through us,
that all may give you praise and glory. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer

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.**

SPECIAL MUSIC "Not That Far From Bethlehem"
By Jeff & Gayla Borders, Lowell Alexander

Ann Nagy & Jen Vilimonovic, soloists

SCRIPTURES Luke 1:26-38 (N.T. pg. 53)

POETRY READING

"And Did It Happen" by John L. Bell
(c) 1992 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH, Scotland.

And did it happen that in a stable long ago
a weary couple whom no one wanted to know
should choose a manger despite the danger
to hold and hallow the Lord below?

And did it happen that in the stillness of the night
the woman labored to let God see the light
and bathed and dressed him, breastfed and blessed him
the Word incarnate whose time was right?

And did it happen that news of this first reached the poor
compelled by angels to tiptoe to the door
and see not trappings just linen wrappings
a child for certain and God for sure?

And did it happen that all of this was meant to be
that God from distance should choose to be set free
and show uniqueness, transformed in weakness
that I might touch him and he touch me?

SERMON "Greetings, Favored One!"

Rev. Meghan Malone

REFLECTION HYMN
Mary Frances Fleischaker, 1988

"Mary, Woman of the Promise"

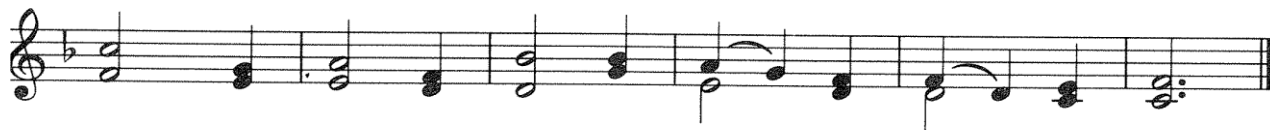
QUEM PASTORES 8.7.8.7.
German carol, 14th century; harm, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
Harm. © Oxford University Press



1 Mar - y, wom - an of the prom - ise; ves - sel
2 Mar - y, song of ho - ly wis - dom sung be -
5 Mar - y, wom - an of the gos - pel; hum - ble



of your peo - ple's dreams: Through your o - pen,
fore the world be - gan: Faith - ful to the
home for trea - sured seed: Help us to be



will - ing spir - it wa - ters of God's good - ness streamed.
Word with - in you, as you bore God's won - drous plan.
true dis - ci - ples, bear - ing fruit in word and deed.

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

There is an offering plate if you feel led to deposit your envelope or an offering there. You can also give through our Realm app or get the link to give by texting UCCMEDINA to 73256. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

Offering Invitation

We have waited and waited through Advent together.

Soon Mary's child will arrive, the angels will sing, and shepherds will quake at the sight.

What a gift we have been given, Emmanuel, God with us.

Let us bring our gifts as boldly as Mary, and in our very being, magnify the Lord.

***Doxology** (words, Christina G. Rossetti, 1872; music, Gustav Holst, 1906)

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Holy One, here we are. Help us to bear Christ in the world and to serve one another with the gifts we have been given. Let it be with us according to your call. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

"Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

REJOICE, REJOICE 9.8.9.8.8.7.8.9..

Words & music: Marty Haugen



1. A - wake! a - wake, and greet the new morn, for
2. In deep - est night his com - ing shall be, when
3. Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, sing out your joy, for
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall

soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less;

Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
Then shall the si - lent join in song, the tired shall leap in
love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our end - less

geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry, may God fill ev - 'ry day we share, and

Am7 D7 G Am7 1. 2.
lives now in - side us for ev - er.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

***ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***BENEDICTION**

***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 "Hark, the Glad Sound!" - setting, Paul Manz**

Cathy Fafrak, organ

"MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY"

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THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

DECEMBER 24, 2023

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

Live streaming of the Sanctuary service is available at www.uccmedina.org/live

December 24, 2023 thru December 31, 2023

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:30 am One service of worship

CHRISTMAS EVE

6:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

9:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (Livestreamed)

Mon CHRISTMAS DAY - OFFICE CLOSED

Tues

Wed 10:30 am Quilters
6:00 pm Gathering Band Rehearsal

Thurs

Fri CHURCH OFFICE CLOSSES AT NOON

Sat

Sun 10:30 am One service of worship
10:30 am Teen Church

LITURGIST SIGN-UP

Check out the bulletin board in the East Room hallway to sign up to be a liturgist during the 10:30 Sanctuary service. The new sign-up sheets are up for January-March.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA VIDEO

If you tried to watch the livestream of our 10:30 Christmas Cantata on December 17th and couldn't hear anything, it wasn't just you. Our tech team has fixed the problem, and you can watch (and LISTEN TO) the service now at www.uccmedina.org/live. The beautiful music is worth the wait, thank you for your patience!

Worship Highlights: ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP AT 10:30 am

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

Sermon: “Greetings, Favored One!”
Rev. Meghan Malone

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

6 pm – Candlelight Family Worship
9 pm – Candlelight Traditional Worship

THE VETERANS OF THE CROSS OFFERING

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years! These funds provide emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. The generous financial offerings given at Christmas time by United Church of Christ congregations enable the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance Team to provide financial support to those who serve and have served the Church. Please consider offering a monetary amount, on Christmas Eve, to help support the Veterans of the Cross.

GIVING ENVELOPES

2024 Giving Envelopes for those who requested them are now available for pick-up in the East Room.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Mark your calendars for the next Men's Breakfast on Tuesday, January 2nd at Buehler's River Styx at 8:00 am. All men of the church are invited. No reservations required. We hope to see you there!

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE SOON

Annual Report time is near! As we are working on our 2023 budget, we will also need a few other reports to put this together. **We will need an annual report from our Church Clerk, Church Treasurer, the Finance/Stewardship Team, and the Endowment Team.** Please have your report to the office no later than Wednesday, December 29th. Thank you.

COFFEE HOUR

Please consider hosting coffee hour one Sunday. **Dates in February are still available.** Never hosted before? No worries! You'll receive a letter and a call from a Caring Team member should you have any questions. Hosting is meant to be simple, so would you please consider hosting Coffee Hour one Sunday?

COMMUNION TABLE FLOWERS

The 2024 Flower Chart is now hanging in the East Room hallway. 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.

DONATION OF THE MONTH

This month we will be collecting full size candy bars for the children at the juvenile detention center. Each year, for Christmas, the kids receive a gift bag full of treats to help them feel loved during the holiday season! If you would like to help, please place a full-size candy bar in the bin across from the elevator by the Mission Team table! Thank you for your generosity!

SAVE THE DATE

Chili Cook Off - Sunday, January 28, 2024

Brrr, it's getting *chilli*! Mark your calendars for the Medina UCC Chili Cook Off following one service of worship at 10:30 and the Annual Meeting. Signups will begin the second week of January. Stay tuned for more details!

A fun fact about chili: ICS is the International Chili Society. Since 1967, ICS has been bringing people together over America's greatest culinary creation – CHILI! Traditional Red Chili is defined by the International Chili Society as any kind of meat or combination of meats, cooked with red chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients, with the exception of beans and pasta which are strictly forbidden. No garnish is allowed.

PLEDGE UPDATE

Thank you for submitting your 2024 Pledge cards, to all those who have done so. Several members had elected to have their gifts set up on autopay, but unfortunately there is no banking/credit card information setup in your Realm profile. If you would like setup on auto pay you can log into your Realm account and enter your desired bank/credit card details, or you can give me a call in the office, and I can enter on your behalf, whichever you feel most comfortable with. Please send me an email (jeff@uccmedina.org) or give me a call if you have any questions.

Also, just a reminder, **all 2023 contributions must be postmarked by December 31st, 2023, to be eligible for tax deductions.** In order to best forecast 2024 budgets, the church is still in need of your 2024 Faith Offering Card. Blank cards are available in the pew racks or online.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ONA TASK FORCE

Dear Friends,

In March of 2020 the church council received a formal request to begin an ONA process within our congregation. ONA “Open and Affirming” is a designation within the United Church of Christ for congregations and other bodies within the UCC who make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Full life and ministry means sacraments (baptism and communion), marriage, and all leadership roles. Before the request could be acted upon, Covid put a halt to communal conversations and the request was put on hold. But the Council recently agreed that perhaps the time had come to begin a process of conversation, education, and discernment within the congregation to determine whether Medina Congregational UCC might now move forward with becoming an ONA congregation.

Because we seek to follow Jesus Christ, we take seriously his message of extravagant welcome to all. We affirm that all people are made in the image of God and we celebrate the diversity of God’s creation. We say, “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, **you are welcome here!**” “You are welcome here” are words that define our theology. As we strive to follow Christ’s commandment to love God and our neighbor, we want people to know that Medina UCC is a safe place where love abounds. We know this, but a designation of being an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, would make it explicit to the larger community and to those seeking a safe place for themselves or those seeking a congregation that values Christ’s call to love our neighbor.

Who is on the ONA Task Force for our church? Pam Branscome, Dan Daubner, Vicki Marty, Brad Rice, Michael Sferro, and Lilly Wolff. Feel free to call, email, or engage in person any one of us with questions or comments. You may contact us through the Task Force at ONA@UCCMedina.org. We are excited and would love to talk with you!

Faithfully, Pam, Dan, Vicki, Brad, Mike, and Lilly.

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 am – 3 pm MONDAY THRU THURSDAY; FRIDAY 9 am – 12 pm

PASTORAL STAFF

Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon, Senior Minister - luke@uccmedina.org
Rev. Meghan Malone, Associate Pastor of Youth & Mission - meghan@uccmedina.org
Karen Brocco-Kish, Visitation Pastor – karen@uccmedina.org

OFFICE STAFF

Cindy Korecky, Office Manager - office@uccmedina.org
Jeff Miller, Financial Director - jeff@uccmedina.org

PROGRAM STAFF

Stacie Yates, Director of Christian Education – stacie@uccmedina.org
Jennifer Cochran, Director of Music - jenny@uccmedina.org
Cathy Fafrak, Organist & Office Assistant – cathy@uccmedina.org
Jennifer Vilimonovic, Director of Hobby Horse Preschool – jen@uccmedina.org
Jack Sharpe, Maintenance
Nick Brlan, Custodian

POINSETTIAS



NAME

*The Bauer Family
Syd & Pete Benson
Mary Bessick
Eleanor Billig
Richard & Dorie Christy
Edward L. Farnham
The Hofstetter Family
Arnold & Cheri Ingraham*

*Faye Jessie
The Johns Family
Karen Leidy*

*Pete & Alice Metzloff
Katherine Murray*

Alan Parkhurst

*Lori Price
Corey, Jaclyn & Jack Raub
Dennis & Allayne Reese
Barb Rosen
Greg & Barb Shaffer
Jennifer Vilimonovic
Mark & Karen Woodling,*

NAME OF DONOR

*John & Judy Gorsek
The Johns Family
Corey, Jaclyn & Jack Raub
Jennifer Vilimonovic*

IN MEMORY OF

*Our Parents
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur R. Dunger
My Beloved Grandmother Emma
Don Canfield
Helen W. Farnham
Our Loved Ones
Carol & Bill Brenneman
Berneta M. Ingraham
Carl Jessie
Jerry Johns
Kitty & Bill Andrews
Thelma & Glenn Leidy
Sherry Fodor
Daughter, Jeannette and Loved Ones
Robert & Gloria Yeager, Brother David and My
Husband, Galen Murray
Sandy & Howard Parkhurst, Paul, John,
Don & Hope Wilder
and the Rev. Jon Fleming
Husband, Mother & Father
Grandparents
Loved Ones
Keith Rosen, Dan Howe & Parents
John Goersmeyer
Danny & Anka Vilimonovic
Our Parents*

IN HONOR OF

*Our Family
Our Family & Friends
Parents
Phil & Claire Nicholson Wedding Anniversary
(Dec 21)*

Luke 1:26-38

Birth of a Promise

This is the fourth Sunday of Advent, the season when we set time aside to express the human longing for God to be right here with us. There are many moods in this season. Some of us are too busy and some of us are too lonely. Some of us take joy in all that there is, some of us grieve all that is lost. Some of us find comfort in the same story told a new way each year, some of us just want to hurry along to the turning of the year. Some of us find deep peace in the rituals of this season, and some of us feel very anxious. And many of us feel all these things! On each of our Advent Sundays, we are invited to sink deeply into our spiritual lives with a time of devotion and contemplation, knowing that God meets us exactly where we are - busy and lonely, joyful and grieving, comfortable and hurried, peaceful and anxious.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1:30-33

First, read the focus scripture for this day. Read it again, more slowly, perhaps even out loud. Now read it a third time. What are the questions or images that come to mind? Here are some to get you started. You may have others.

-During the Advent season, we have expressed longing for God, found comfort in God's presence and praised God for all the good we have received. Now we open our arms to embrace the Christ Child. Which of these moods of Advent are you feeling now? Or are you experiencing another mood altogether?

-What are some of your Christmas Eve traditions of the past? How are those traditions like or unlike how you will spend this Christmas Eve? How do those traditions help you draw close to the Child? Are there some traditions which need to shift or change?

-A big word for the coming of the Christ Child is *incarnation*. Spend some time with this word and this idea. How is incarnation confusing or uncertain for you? How is incarnation real or profound for you?

-If you are intentional about it, the season of Advent can help you get closer to God and deepen your spiritual life. Do you have ideas about how you might continue this intention beyond Christmas Day? What will help you live into that intention?

End your time of meditation with this prayer: *Incarnate One, We long to be with you because you long to be with us. Your longing brings us the gift of the Christ Child. Help us to respond with a gift worthy of that gift, today and all days. Amen.*