

A miniature model of a snowy town at night. The scene is illuminated by warm, yellow lights from windows and street lamps. A small Santa Claus figure with a red suit and a yellow sack is walking on a snow-covered street. In the background, there are several houses with lit windows and a small evergreen tree. The overall atmosphere is cozy and festive.

THE
WEARY
WORLD
Rejoices

RESTORATION



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

- *During the 10:30 service, Jesus Vibes Sunday School is available for ages 3-8th grade*

“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.

**Those who are able please stand*

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” – arr. Lloyd Larson

Cathy Fafrak, piano

WELCOME & PASSING OF THE PEACE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leon Coard, Liturgist

The world can beat us down and wear us out.

"Come to me, you who are weary and heavy burdened."

Our souls can get lost in the hustle and bustle.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."

We long for a place of rest, a moment of peace.

"For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

So let us come together in worship, seeking renewal and restoration.

In this space, may we find the peace that surpasses all understanding.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Bischof Family

The light glowing from our Advent wreath is burning brighter. This radiance warms our hearts and fills us with joy! The Lord has done great things for us. Let us rejoice.

"May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves" (Psalm 126:5-6).

The Candles of Truth, Compassion, and Restoration are lit

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE “O Holy Night” vs. 1

Led by Jenny Cochran

O holy night! the stars are brightly shining; It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope- the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born!

O night, O holy night, O night divine!

The Prophet Zephaniah calls out

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion! Shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exalt with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

God will remove disaster from you, save the lame and gather the outcast.

Thank you for your love and restoration, O God. Help us bulldoze whatever blocks the coming of the Promised One and clear out whatever stops the flourishing of all your people. Amen.

MESSAGE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY OF GOD

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.

A GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS

"Do You Hear What I Hear" by Gloria Shayne & Noel Regney; arr. Joel Raney

Alleluia Ringers

"To God Be the Glory" arranged by Sandra Eithun

Chamber Ringers

"Gloria" by Mark Hayes

Chancel Choir

I. Gloria in excelsis Deo

soloists: Jen Vilimonovic & Pete Metzloff

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Glory to God in the highest.

Et in terra pax

And on earth peace

Hominibus bonae voluntatis.

To all those of good will.

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.

We praise thee. We bless thee.

Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.

We worship thee. We glorify thee.

II. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis

soloists: Harry Buch, Kimberly Gallagher,
Jen Vilimonovic, Tracy Gabrielsen

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,

Lord God, Heavenly King,

Deus Pater omnipotens.

God the Father almighty.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.

Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,

Thou who takest away the sins of the world,

Miserere nobis.

Have mercy upon us.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,

Thou who takest away the sins of the world,

Suscipe deprecationem nostrum.

Receive our prayer.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,

Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Creator,

Miserere nobis.

Have mercy on us.

III. Quoniam tu solus sanctus

Quoniam tu solus sanctus.
Tu solus Dominus.
Tu solus latissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
In Gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

*For Thou alone art holy.
Thou alone art the Lord.
Thou alone art the most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit
In the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

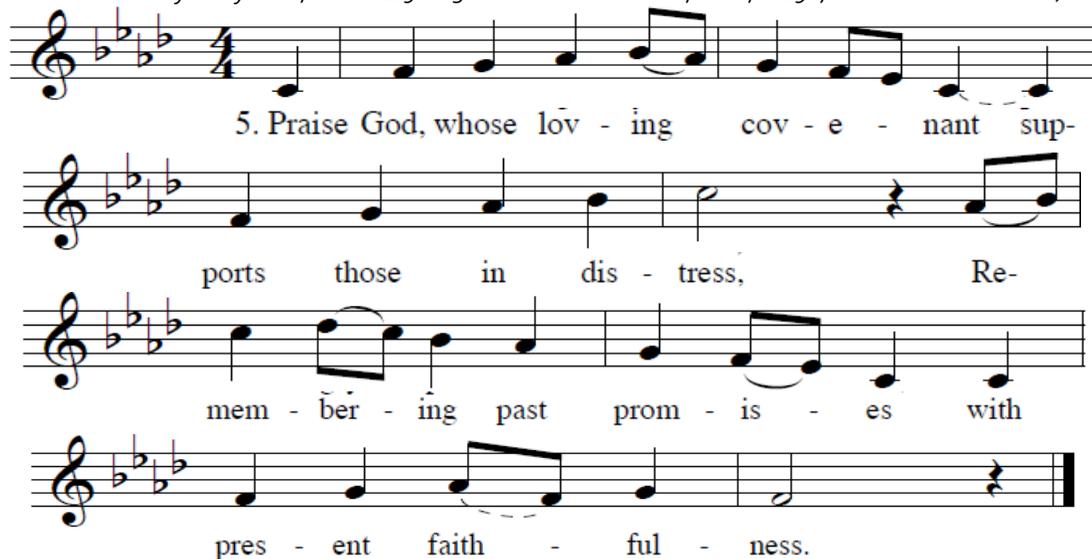
INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

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. You can also give through VENMO. Look for our Venmo QR codes by the offering plates. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

Offering Invitation (From "A Blessing for Our Part in the Bigger Story by Kate Bowler)

Blessed are we, gathered already into the plot,
Part of the epic story God has been writing from long before we were ever born.
Let us rise in body and spirit and sing out our praise

***Doxology** (Tune: "Morning Song" from Kentucky Harmony, 1816. Harm. C. Winfred Douglas, 1940; Text: "My Soul Gives Glory to My God", NCH # 119 vs. 5 Miriam Therese Winter, MMS, © 1987 Medical Mission Sisters)



5. Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup -
ports those in dis - tress, Re -
mem - ber - ing past prom - is - es with
pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

*Give Thanks

Holy God, thank you that we are not separated but joined together as those who were loved into being. We are made for meaning and a purpose that only our days can breathe into action. Pull us closer to the bigger story that reminds us that our ordinary lives are the stuff of eternity. We are a story of extraordinary love. Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

"Come, O Long Expected Jesus"

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788. alt.

Psalmody Sacra, 1715; adapt. William Henry Havergal, 1793-1870. alt.

3. Born your peo - ple to de - liv - er;
 Born a child and yet a king! Born to reign in
 us for ev - er, Now your grac - ious king - dom bring.

***ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***BENEDICTION**

Music is heaven come down, a foretaste of the glory divine!

As gentle as snow, as fierce as a blizzard. Restoration for the weary, balm for the soul!

Thanks to those who have made a joyful noise!

Thanks be to the source of all music and to whom all creation sings!

Go now in the name of that source, our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer!

One God, forever more! 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 "A Christmas Rondel" – Charles Callahan

Cathy Fafrak, Organ

"MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY"

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

Coffee Hour is hosted this week by John & Kathi Kavouras

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THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

DECEMBER 15, 2024

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

Live streaming of the 10:30 a.m. Sanctuary service is available at www.uccmedina.org/live

December 15 thru December 22, 2024

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8:00 am Blake Donation List Posted
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:00 am Bell Choir Rehearsal
9:30 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship –
Music Sunday
10:30 am Jesus Vibes
11:45 am Hospitality Team Meeting
4:30 pm Youth Group Christmas Party

Mon 1:00 pm Breadmakers

Tues

Wed 10:30 am Quilters
6:00 pm Gathering Band Rehearsal
6:00 pm Instrumentalist Rehearsal
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Thurs

Fri

Sat

Sun FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8:00 am Blake Donations Due
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:30 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
10:30 am Jesus Vibes
12:00 pm Instrumentalist Rehearsal

CHRISTMAS WEEK SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve Worship Services will be:
6:00 pm – Family Candlelight Service
9:00 pm – Candlelight Service

Church office will be closed Dec. 24th at 12 pm
and re-open at 9 am on Monday, Dec. 30th

**One service of worship at
10:30 a.m. on December 29th**

Worship Highlights: 8:15 & 9 a.m. Music Sunday

10:30 am – Music Sunday presented by
Chancel Choir and Alleluia Ringers
“Gloria” – by Mark Hayes

Communion Table: The communion table
flowers are given by Pete & Alice Metzloff in
honor of their 45th wedding anniversary,
December 29th.

A GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS!

Join us as the Chancel Choir performs Mark
Hayes’ exciting three-movement “Gloria” on
December 15th during the 10:30 service. The
Alleluia Ringers will add the delight of an energetic
handbell version of “Do You Hear What I Hear?”
The morning will feature some delightful musical
offerings.

VETERANS OF THE CROSS OFFERING

Sunday, December 22nd

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
UCC for over 100 years! The generous financial
offerings given at Christmas time by UCC
congregations enable the Pension Boards’
Ministerial Assistance Team to provide financial
support to those who serve and have served the
church. Please consider giving generously, on
December 22nd, to this special offering. Checks
should be made payable to our church with
“Veterans of the Cross” noted in the memo. Your
donation may also be made online through Realm
– see the line item for Veterans of the Cross.

ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ANNUAL MEETING & CHILI COOK OFF

JANUARY 26TH:

ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP at 10:30 a.m.

ANNUAL MEETING at 11:30 a.m.

CHILI COOK OFF TO FOLLOW at noon

GIVING TREE DONATIONS DUE

Our Giving Tree will be on display upstairs next to the elevator until December 18th. The items on the tree will be distributed to the eight families we support from Blake Elementary, the Juvenile Detention Center and Prospect Pantry. **Please return unwrapped gifts on or before December 18th.** Thank you for your continued support.

BIBLE STUDY BREAK

The Tuesday night Bible study meetings will resume on Thursday, January 9th and then back to Tuesday, January 14th.

JAZZY CHRISTMAS

Friday, December 20th at 7 pm

You are invited to a wonderful evening of holiday music on Friday, December 20th at 7:00 PM!

The "Jazzy Christmas" concert will feature Gateway Band, led by our Music Director and vocalist Jennifer Cochran.

To support the choirs at Medina UCCC, a freewill offering will be taken during the concert and there will be folks at tables by the doors selling raffle tickets for a visit to your home from Santa Claus, himself!

SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD

The church office has updated our UCC Christmas card list for Circle of Caring. Please pick up a card list and reach out to our homebound members and those in care facilities with the Spirit of the Season-LOVE.

YOUTH GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual Youth Group Christmas Party will be Sun. December 15th, 4:30-6pm. Please bring a wrapped ornament for the gift exchange and wear a silly Christmas sweater!

ADVENT HOME STUDY

You can access this study with the link below. If you need a printed copy of the booklet, please contact the church office. If you'd like to print your own or share this journey with others, feel free to share this link: katebowler.com/advent

JACKIE'S JARS DUE NEXT WEEK

The Mission Team is putting out Jackie's jars during this season of giving. Collect all your loose change and give it to a place it is needed. In honor of our own saint, Jackie, these donations will be given to the Medina County Office for Older Adults which offers Monday, Wednesday, and Friday lunches for county residents. **Jars are due back on Dec. 22nd.**

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

As we continue our stewardship month, we reflect on the blessings of our communal space—a place where we have gathered, grown, and transformed lives together for over 200 years. Please take a minute to contemplate how this space has served our community in ever adapting ways. Although the space has physically changed very little in the last year, please consider how 'keeping the lights on' and maintaining this physical space costs about \$85,000 annually. We often focus on the vast majority of the budget that secures our talented staff, but we don't often think about the mundane items like the gas bill and the hazard insurance. Let us remember that this sacred space is more than just a building. It's where we come together in the spirit of welcoming, loving and serving. By pledging, we ensure that we continue to be a beacon of hope and a place of refuge for all who seek it. Together, we can sustain and enhance this environment, fostering a community where lives are touched, and world-weary hardened hearts are softened. Every contribution, no matter the size, brings us closer to our shared vision of making a positive impact in the world.

NEW YEAR STAR WORDS SERVICE

There will only be one service at 10:30am on Sunday Dec. 29th led by Pastor Meghan. At this service we will give out “Star Words” to be your guiding light for 2025!

OUR WHOLE LIVES CLASSES

Our first OWL classes will take place Jan. 14th - Feb. 18th on Tuesday nights, 6:30-7:30pm in the Youth Room. This class is for high school students and will be co-facilitated by Pastor Meghan and Logan Yates. Pastor Luke will lead a group for parents happening at the same time upstairs in the East Room! If you are interested, please join us in the library on Jan. 5th after church for more information and to register.

YOUTH GROUP SNOW TUBING



For youth group on January 19th, we will go tubing at Boston Mills 4:30-6:30pm. Youth who want to participate must register on realm. (Cost is \$15) Meet at the church at 3:45pm for carpooling! Scan the QR code for registration!

WOMEN’S RETREAT



Pastor Meghan and Kim Gallagher will lead a women’s retreat on Saturday, Jan. 25th from 10:00am – 3:30pm. Our theme is “Held” based on Psalm 94:17-19. We’ll spend the day being held in community, being held by God, and holding space for each other. This event is free for all the feminine folks in our church, but please register on Realm so we’ll have plenty of supplies. Youth in 6th grade and up (who don’t mind a lot of sitting-still activities) are welcome to join us. If you’d like to help with lunch, please bring a cold salad to share (pasta, fruit, veggie, whatever!) and we’ll have a nice light potluck. Other than that – dress comfy and simply bring your beautiful selves!

HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER TRIP WITH OTHER+WISE



This summer’s trip is going to be a bit different. This is not a service or mission trip, but a cross-cultural experience to broaden our understanding. We will travel to Tahlequah, Oklahoma to be immersed in Cherokee culture and indigenous spirituality with the organization Other+Wise, run by Lutheran pastors. This trip will be both enlightening and fun! The dates for this trip are June 26th-July 2nd, and the cost will be \$180 per student (entering 9th grade or higher next school year). Please register for this trip on Realm by the end of January!

GREETING CARD VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Circle of Caring Greeting Cards Outreach is looking for volunteers to help in the months of February, July, September, and November 2025. Each week greeting cards of Get Well, Thinking of You and Sympathy are sent to our congregation-at-large. A volunteer prepares cards on Fridays for the congregation to sign on Sundays. Training, supplies and greeting cards are provided. Interested? A signup sheet will be available in the East Room.

A LATE GIVING OPTION

As we near the end of 2024, The Endowment Committee would like to remind everyone that 30 for 30 Donations (\$30 for 30 years that our Endowment Fund has been in existence) are still being accepted. Need a gift idea for that person on your list that is difficult to buy for...make a donation in their honor to the Endowment Fund. Checks payable to UCC Medina and note Endowment 30 for 30 on the memo line. Donations using Realm are also accepted.

COMMUNION TABLE FLOWERS

The 2025 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 \$25.00.

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

Please consider hosting coffee hour one Sunday. **Dates in January and 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?

SHEPHERDS FUND

Giving to the church is essential to its mission and ministry, allowing it to serve as a beacon of hope and a force for good in the community. Financial support enables the church to provide resources, programming, and support services that benefit not only the congregation but also those in need around them. Through stewardship, members actively participate in the church's call to build a more compassionate, inclusive world, grounded in the teachings of love, justice, and mercy.

Contributions are what keep the doors open, the lights on, and the ministry vibrant.

Moreover, giving is a spiritual practice that invites individuals to connect their faith with generosity. When we give, we participate in something larger than ourselves, aligning with a legacy of giving that goes back to the early church. Giving cultivates gratitude, reminds us of our interconnectedness, and reflects a commitment to the values we hold dear. For example, through our Shepherd’s Fund, we supported 68 people and helped them with over \$6,600.00 for utilities, food, and medical expenses.

In this way, our contributions go beyond mere financial support; they signify a dedication to living out the gospel, fostering a community rooted in doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Make sure to get your 2025 pledge in by December 29, 2024.

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

Luke 3:7-18

“Look Forward”

There was a cartoon a few years ago making the social media rounds of John the Baptist, arms flailing in anger, pointing to some religious bigwigs. In the picture were also snakes slithering away. The text read, “Happy Advent! You brood of vipers.”

While we might chuckle at first, beneath the brevity is a sobering message. John is calling out the corruption that’s often lurking behind seemingly good deeds.

In John’s case, he is angry with the hypocrisy of the religious elite. They claim to be righteous, but they are just a brood of vipers — snakes slithering away so as not to get consumed by fire. In the agriculture society of the time, people would have been familiar with this image, as snakes would flee for safety when the stubble in fields was burned to prepare for a new planting.

While we might not have witnessed snakes escaping the burning stubble in fields, we have seen — or know of — people who have turned their backs on organized religion because words and actions didn’t match up.

During the holidays, especially, we hear stories of scams claiming to help others when really the money donated lines a pocket that doesn’t need lining. Vipers are out there, but so are obedient sheep.

Take for instance a logger in a rural community who, upon hearing of a severe shortfall in the village’s community fuel fund, took it upon himself to give away wood — his bread and butter — to help others heat their homes. The logger, who didn’t belong to any church, helped many people survive that winter.

Yes, there will always be a brood of vipers in this world, but may we be the ones this Advent season who listen to John, giving away a coat and sharing food with those in need.

Look around your community and begin asking what are the unmet needs? And may you find it in your heart to give like that logger who gave from what little he had himself.

Gracious God, as we draw closer to Christmas, may we realize that we have more than enough and plenty to share with Your children who hunger, thirst and are naked. Release our grips on all that we cling to tightly. Increase our trust that with You, our daily bread will always be sufficient. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.