

A miniature Christmas village scene at night. In the foreground, a small Santa Claus figurine with a red suit and a yellow sack is walking through a snowy path. The path is lined with small, black, curved street lamps that are glowing. In the background, there are several miniature houses with warm, yellow lights glowing from their windows. To the right, a larger, more ornate building, possibly a church or town hall, is also lit up. The sky is a deep blue, suggesting twilight. The overall scene is cozy and festive.

JUSTICE

THE
WEARY
WORLD
Rejoices



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

“Savior of the Nations, Come” – arr. Kenneth Kosche

Cathy Fafrak, Organ

WELCOME & PASSING OF THE PEACE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

May your soul magnify the Lord!

May our spirits rejoice in God!

For God looks on us with favor!

Advent ushers in a gentle revolution of justice through love and mercy. Amen!

*OPENING HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

VENI EMMANUEL. L.M.

Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710, based on ancient antiphons

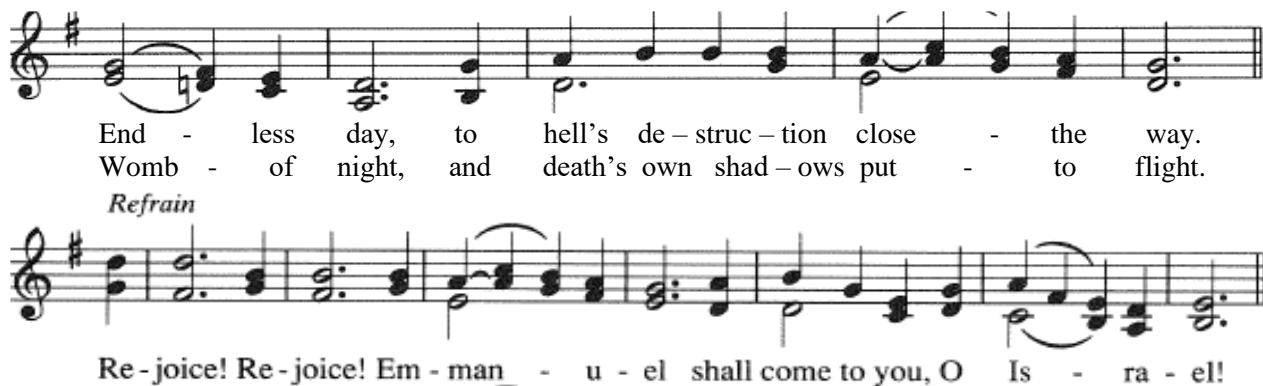
Trans. John Mason Neale, 1851, and others, alt;

Melody from a 15th century French “processional”

Arr. Thomas Helmore, 1854

5 O come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and
6 O come, O Day - spring, come - and cheer our

o - pen wide your heaven - ly home; Make safe the path to
spir - its by your ad - vent here; Love stir with - in the



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Koehler Family

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 Truth, Compassion, Restoration, and Justice are lit

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"O Holy Night" vs. 1

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!

Holy One, we give you thanks for your mother, Mary. Somehow, Mary sees it clearly. A world of justice and mercy, where every wrong has been made right. She rejoices in a glorious future, but one that has, at the same time, already been secured. Thanks be to you, the source of all truth, compassion, restoration, and justice. In Jesus name. 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.

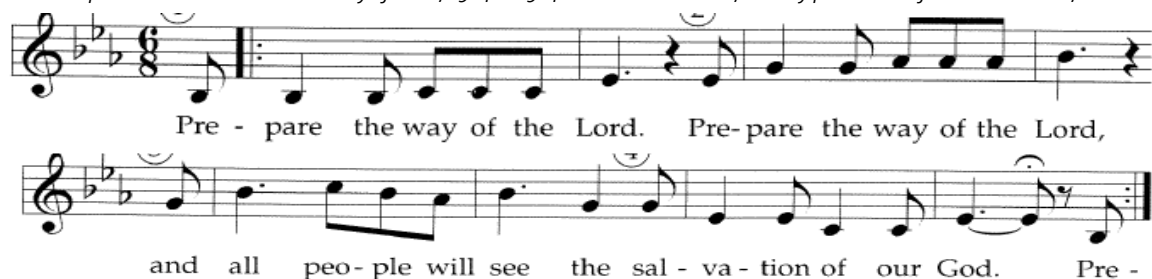
ANTHEM "People Look East" – arr. Howard Helvey Chancel Choir

SCRIPTURE Luke 1:46-55 (N.T. pg. 53) Brad Rice, Liturgist

SERMON "Justice" The Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

REFLECTION HYMN "Prepare the Way of the Lord" PREPARE THE WAY Irr.

Jacques Berthier and the Community of Taizé, 1984 © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé, used by permission of GIA Publications, Inc.



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. **This morning's offering goes to the UCC Christmas fund, a collection that supports low-income retired clergy, and gives emergency grants to employees of the United Church of Christ who are in need. Envelopes are available in your pews.***

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** (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)



*Give Thanks

Thank you, O God, for this gentle revolution. You are not some grand show of power. You choose the margins of society to be born. Dire circumstances to an unwed mother in unsanitary conditions without a proper roof over her head. You, oh Christ, soon to flee the country from a powerful and vengeful king. Thank you for choosing to enter at Christmas into the world, so you could be the difference we didn't know we needed. Amen.

*SENDING HYMN

"Come, O Long Expected Jesus"

STUTT GART 8.7.8.7.

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788. alt.

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



4. By your own e - ter - nal Spir - it
Rule in all our hearts a - lone; By your all suf -
fi - cient mer - it Raise us to your glo - rious throne.

*ANNOUNCEMENTS

*BENEDICTION (A Blessing for the Coming of Justice by Kate Bowler)

Blessed are you like Mary,
For saying yes to the big risk of being God's dwelling place.
Blessed are we, like Mary,
Starting to sing our own songs of joy,
At the thought that maybe this advent we too can start to trust it,
to risk it,
to live it out
the love that decides to love first
before it's earned or deserved,
the love that your incarnation embodies to the full.
Blessed are we, breathing in the truth that we belong,
and so does everyone else. 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.

“MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY”

****Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service****
Coffee Hour is hosted this week by Jeanette & Chris Fagan

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Jack Sharpe, Maintenance & Custodian

POINSETTIAS



NAME

Bruce & Connie Anderson
Katherine Baker
The Bauer Family
Mary Bessick
Nancy Brintnall
The Burdick Family
Richard & Dorie Christy
Jan & Tad Coleman
Sue & Ken Dean
Edward L. Farnham
Mary Gresco
Diane Howard
Arnold & Cheri Ingraham
Arnold & Cheri Ingraham
Faye Jessie
Dick & Joyce Komjati
Karen Leidy
Karen Leidy
Karen Leidy
Pete & Alice Metzloff
Medith & Earle Olson
Lori Price
Dennis & Allayne Reese
Barb Rosen
Greg & Barb Shaffer
Bonnie Shuman
Jan & Chet Simmons
The Vilimonovic Family
Becky Weber

NAME OF DONOR

Katherine Baker
Alan Parkhurst
Ronald Sermak
The Vilimonovic Family
The Bischof Family

IN MEMORY OF

Natoma Canfield
Rev. Jerald W. Baker
Louise Bauer & Alex Harnocz
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur R. Dunger
Howard & Helen Gross
Edward Lichtenberg & Marilyn Burdick
MaryAnn Andrews & Sally Bauer
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Post
Parents
Helen W. Farnham
Nelson & Mary Chesler
Brian Howard
Berneta Ingraham
Bill & Carol Brenneman
Carl Jessie
Our Parents
Kitty & Bill Andrews
Thelma & Glenn Leidy
Sherry Fodor
Loved Ones
Loved Ones
Husband, Mother, & Father
Loved Ones
Keith Rosen
Our Parents
My Mother
Jay Simmons
Dragisa & Anka Vilimonovic
Dave Weber and Our Parents

IN HONOR OF

Rachel Baker
All the church committee workers
Eric Jones & Our 24th Anniversary
Phil & Claire Nicholson's 55th Wedding Anniversary



THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

DECEMBER 22, 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 22 thru December 29, 2024 WEEK AT A GLANCE

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

Mon

Tues **CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED AT NOON**
6:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship
9:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship

Wed **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**
Church office closed

Thurs Church office closed

Fri Church office closed

Sat

Sun 8:00 am Blake Donations Posted
10:30 am ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP

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

December 24th at 12 pm

and re-open at 9 am on Monday, December 30th

One service of worship at

10:30 a.m. on December 29th

NEW YEAR STAR WORDS SERVICE

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

Worship Highlights: 8:15 & 9 a.m. & 10:30 am

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55

Sermon: “Justice” - Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

The poinsettias adorning our worship spaces were donated by various members of the congregation.

VETERANS OF THE CROSS OFFERING TODAY 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.

JACKIE'S JARS - DUE TODAY

Those who took jars to collect loose change to benefit the Medina County Office for Older Adults are asked to **return those filled jars to the church office today**. If you would like to have your donation amount reflected on your giving statement, please include your name on a slip of paper and place it inside of the jar.

SAVE THE DATE ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ANNUAL MEETING & CHILI COOK OFF

JANUARY 26TH:

ONE SERVICE OF WORSHIP at 10:30 am

ANNUAL MEETING at 11:30 am

CHILI COOK OFF TO FOLLOW at noon

BROKEN CHRISTMAS LIGHTS???

Rhett Behler is collecting broken, non-working, or used holiday lights for recycling to benefit the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and their efforts to support the lion and cheetah conservation program! Please look for the labeled box if you'd like to donate from now until February 2nd, 2025.

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.

OUR WHOLE LIVES CLASSES

Our first OWL classes will take place Jan 14th - Feb. 18th on Tuesday nights, 6:30-7:30 pm 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.



WOMEN'S RETREAT

Pastor Meghan and Kim Gallagher will lead a women's retreat on Saturday, Jan. 25th from 10:00 am – 3:30 pm. 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!

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Dear Church Family,

As we approach the end of the year, we are filled with gratitude for the ways this congregation has supported the mission and ministries of our church. Your generosity enables us to remain a vital and serving community, sharing Christ's love with one another and with our neighbors near and far.

We ask that you prayerfully consider completing your 2025 pledge if you have not already done so. Every gift matters, and your faithful contributions allow us to:

- **Worship Together:** Maintain our sacred space for inspiring worship, music, and prayer.
- **Serve Our Neighbors:** Support missions that feed the hungry, clothe the needy, and care for the vulnerable.
- **Nurture Faith:** Provide programs for children, youth, and adults to grow in faith and fellowship.
- **Sustain Our Ministries:** Ensure that our dedicated staff and programs have the resources they need to thrive.

Completing your pledge not only sustains the work we do today but also ensures that we can dream boldly for tomorrow. If you've already fulfilled your pledge, thank you! If you're able to give an additional gift, it will help us close any gaps in our budget and position our church for a strong start in the new year.

Let's continue to be a beacon of hope and faith in our community. Thank you for your generosity, commitment, and prayers. Together, we are doing God's work!

In gratitude,

The Stewardship and Finance Committee

If you have questions about your pledge or would like to complete it, please contact the Stewardship and Finance Committee.

TAX DEDUCTIONS...

Just a reminder, **all 2024 contributions must be postmarked by December 31st, 2024, to be eligible for tax deductions.**



YOUTH GROUP SNOW TUBING

For Youth Group on January 19th, we will go tubing at Boston Mills from 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!

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 3rd, 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!



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. Celebrate a special birth, anniversary or birthday by giving to the Endowment's 30 for 30 Campaign. Checks payable to UCC Medina and note Endowment 30 for 30 on the memo line. Donations using Realm are also accepted.

EXCITING NEWS! – KITCHEN UPDATE...

Our Property and Grounds team has been hard at work, and we have some exciting updates to share!

This past summer brought challenges and opportunities. One of our ovens, which has served us faithfully for decades, finally gave out. Unfortunately, it was so old that repairs were no longer an option. Around the same time, we mourned the loss of two remarkable saints of our church, Mary Ann Andrews and Sally Bauer. These incredible women touched countless lives in our congregation, and their families chose to honor their memory by directing memorial gifts toward kitchen repairs—a tribute that reflects their generous and nurturing spirits.

In God's timing, everything has aligned to make this project possible. With contributions from our healthy capital fund, support from the Endowment, and the memorial gifts, we are thrilled to announce that construction on our kitchen will begin in late January.

The updates will include a new dishwasher, a state-of-the-art oven and range, and a redesigned layout that makes the space more functional and welcoming. As a church, we know the heart of our ministry is Jesus, who so often gathered with others around the table to share meals and meaningful conversations. This kitchen will be a vital tool for fostering connection, hospitality, and discipleship in Christ's name.



Ken Zuehlke approached me about an incredible project happening at Castle Noel. Mark and Dana Klaus had an idea to help folks in North Carolina who were devastated by Hurricane Helene this fall, especially around the Asheville area. Farmers from Medina, along with Keller Meats, Swine BBQ, and others, traveled there in a caravan to deliver food, help with livestock, clear debris, and provide relief. They built meaningful connections and have stayed in touch with these communities.

As the holidays approach, they realized that many families in NC wouldn't have the Christmas they're used to—they're still rebuilding, still waiting for restoration. So, the idea came about: **"What if we brought them to our Hallmark town and gave them a Christmas?"**

It's happening! **"The Promise of Christmas"** will bring friends from NC to Medina from **January 10–12**. Castle Noel, the City of Medina, Main Street Medina, the Visitor Bureau, and the Chamber of Commerce are organizing a weekend full of love, laughter, and the magic of Christmas. Around 200–300 people are expected.

Here's where we come in: On **January 11**, our church, along with St. Paul's Episcopal, will host a dinner for our NC guests. We'll need 15 crockpots of soup. We'll need donations of hot coco and beverages. We'll need volunteers to serve as hosts and friendly faces to welcome them. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment!

This is restoration in action. And like in the Bible, restoration is not just personal—it's communal. Hosting our friends and neighbors, including some fellow Christians, is a way to restore their spirits after losing so much. And here in Medina, we'll experience restoration too. This is a chance to connect with real people, to rediscover hope in humanity—and perhaps even inspire you to sing your own song of restoration.

If you'd like to volunteer or sign up for soups and other items needed, [click this link for the sign-up genius](#) with what is needed. You may also contact the office.

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 1:39-45 (46-55)

“Moving with Mary’s Song”

A bit of trivia on this the fourth Sunday of Advent. What’s one of the earliest Advent hymns ever to be recorded? (Hint: It’s found in today’s reading from Luke.)

It’s Mary’s song of praise, also known as The Magnificat, which is Latin for “my soul magnifies the Lord.”

Mary, the teen betrothed to Joseph, whose life has been turned upside down when an angel tells her she has found favor with God and will bear a son, goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also with child, carrying the wilderness wandering baptizer, John.

When the two women meet, the child in Elizabeth’s womb leaps with joy and she says to Mary, “Blessed are you among women!”

Such a greeting would lead any person to break out in song — as Mary does. But her words are not the maternal sentiments one might expect. Rather, 20th century German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis for his role in speaking out against Hitler, described Mary’s song as, “the most passionate, the wildest, most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung.”

This is no meek and mild Mary cast in the glow of heavenly light that we see on Christmas cards. This, says Bonhoeffer, is “the passionate and enthusiastic Mary who speaks out there.”

Mary’s song reminds us just what Christmas — this Christ moment — is all about. She sings of God who fills the hungry with good things. She sings of God who sends the rich away empty. She sings to the One who lifts the lowly — to the One who does great things through people like her who are often deemed unworthy.

Sadly, we live in a world where the lowly still get pushed to the side, silenced and ignored. But as Advent comes to an end — and soon we will be singing about holy and silent nights — can we take a moment once again to listen to Mary’s song, believing how God is still doing great things for many Marys — and Toms, Rauls, Juans, Anitas, and you.

Yes, YOU. For God is wanting to use your life as well in making this world a better place for all.

The Magnificat is not filled with fa la las. It is a “hard, strong song,” says Bonhoeffer, one which “tells of the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind.”

And that is exactly why Mary sings it for us this day.

Amazing God, who works through us all, may this day we move with Mary’s song, tapping our feet, snapping our fingers, and singing praises of how You are indeed doing great things among us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.