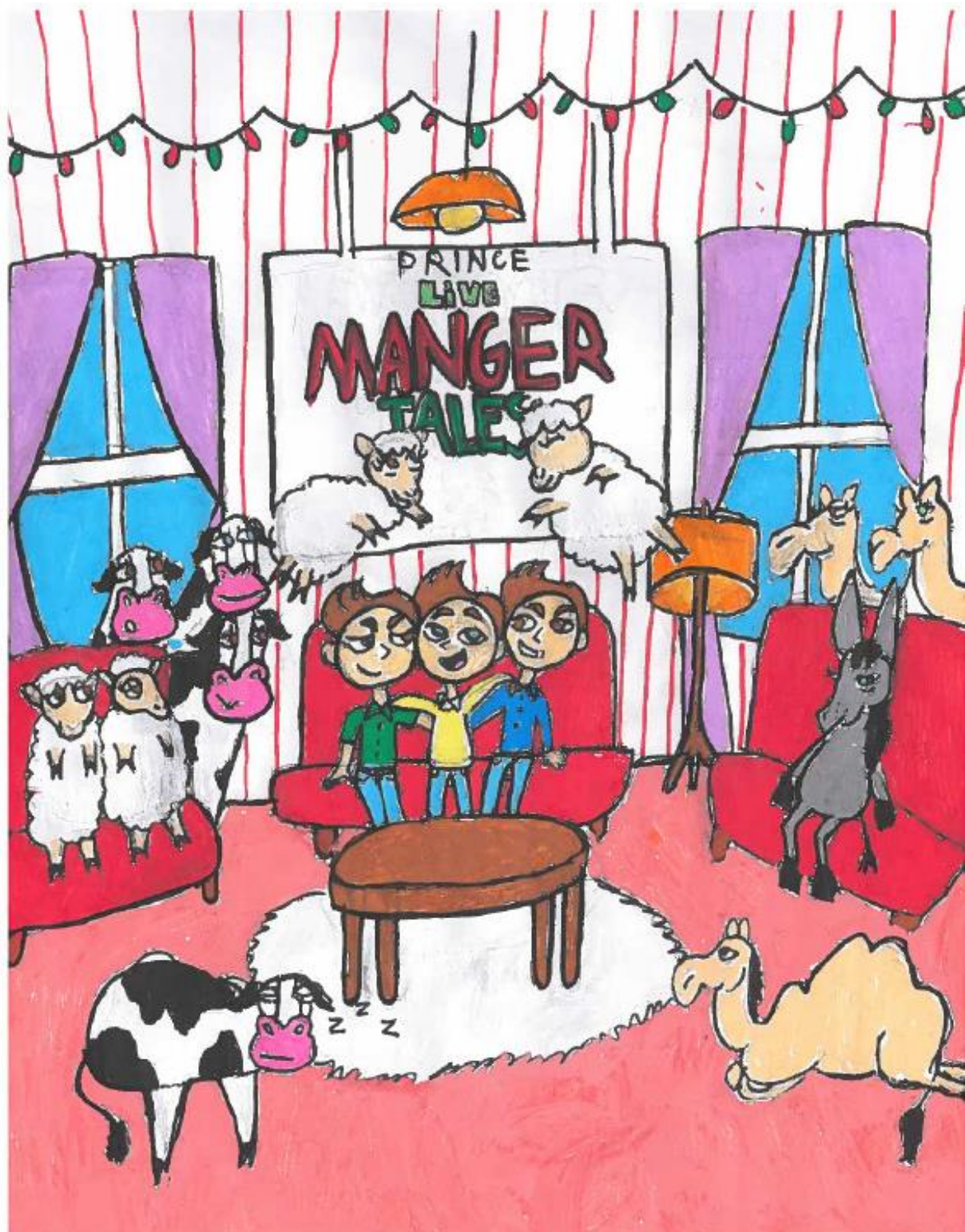




COMPASSION

THE  
WEARY  
WORLD  
*Rejoices*







# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

217 E. Liberty St. Medina, Ohio 44256 330-725-4559 [www.uccmedina.org](http://www.uccmedina.org)

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

LIVE STREAMING OF THE SANCTUARY SERVICE IS AVAILABLE AT [UCCMEDINA.ORG](http://UCCMEDINA.ORG)

- *During the 10:30 service, Jesus Vibes Sunday School is available for ages 3-8<sup>th</sup> 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** “People, Look East and On Jordan’s Banks the Baptist’s Cry” - Curt Oliver Cathy Fafrak, Piano

### **WELCOME & PASSING OF THE PEACE**

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Come, let us gather in this season of Advent, in the warmth and light of God’s promise.

**We gather in a world marked by brokenness yet holding the promise of hope and compassion.**

We come longing for justice, for comfort, for the presence of God-with-us.

**Let us come, with open hearts and expectant spirits, ready to see where God is fulfilling promises among us.**

### **\*OPENING HYMN**

### **“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

VENI EMMANUEL. L.M.

*Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710, based on ancient antiphons*

*Melody from a 15<sup>th</sup> century French “processional”*

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

*Arr. Thomas Helmore, 1854*

*St. 2, trans. Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916; alt.*

O come, O come, O Adonai, who came to all on Sinai high,  
And from its peak a single law proclaimed in majesty and awe.

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

O come, O shoot of Jesse, free your own from Satan’s tyranny.  
From depths of hell your people save, and give them victory o’er the grave. **Refrain**

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*The Collier Family*

Fire burns. It hurts. It can destroy. Fire also gives warmth and light. The coming of Christ is both a warning to the oppressors and a promise for the oppressed. Two candles, flickering brightly, help us remember that the coming of Christ has many meanings.

**"Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky"**  
(Psalm 85:10-11).

*The Candles of Truth and Compassion are lit*

## CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "O Holy Night" vs. 2

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.  
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, Here came the Wise Men from Orient land.  
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger, In all our trials born to be our Friend.  
He knows our need- to our weakness is no stranger. Behold your King, before him lowly bend!  
Behold your King, before him lowly bend!

The coming of Jesus is a fulfillment of a promise that the hungry will be fed,  
**The hurting and suffering will find comfort and compassion, and truth will reign.**

The mighty reversal of the world has just begun,  
And during Advent these candles are a reminder,  
**to look for where God is fulfilling the promises made to us.**

A radical promise that says "I'm not just helping you..."

**"I am with you." Thanks be to you our God, our Christ, Our Spirit! Amen!**



**Scene 1: The Donkey**

Larry Prince and Darla the Donkey

Angel Choir: "Away in the Manger"

**Scene 2: The Cows**

Barry Prince and Clara, Courtney, Colin, and Christie – The Cows

Angel Choir and Cast: "Silent Night"

**Scene 3: The Sheep**

Gary Prince and Samantha, Sylvia, Susie, and Sarah- the Sheep

Angel Choir and Cast: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

**Scene 4: The Camels**

Larry, Barry and Gary Prince and Cody, Carly and Candice...the Camels!

Angel Choir and Cast: "Joy to the World"

**Manger Tales Cast List**

Larry Prince - A talk show host - Sam Lindon	Carly the camel - Addisyn Miller
Barry Prince - A talk show host - Sammy Ockunzzi	Candice the camel - Grace Branam
Gary Prince - A talk show host - Mason Rusyniak	Camera Man - Tanner Wolff
Darla the donkey - Emily Lehman	Producer - Ellie Wasilewski
Clara the cow -Kaelyn Miller	Stage Crew - Bobby Nolan
Courtney the cow - Kimmy Lichtenberg	Stage Crew - Adele Oswald
Colin the cow - Milo Armbrust	Costume Designer – Kallie Armbrust
Christie the cow - Jillian Bischof	Bulletin Designer – Laura Medley
Samantha the sheep - Josie Bilikam	Props – Charlie Lichtenberg, Charlie Welday,
Susie the sheep - Rhett Behler	Kadence Wright
Sarah the sheep - Paige Rusyniak	
Sylvia the sheep - Leah Bergstresser	
Cody the camel - Max Ockunzzi	

**Angel Choir:** Meghan Bischof, Laney Bergstresser, Addie Armbrust, Finley Armbrust, Evelyn Rader, Lily Rader, Kodie Wolff, Chase Harper, Jett Behler, Joey Ockunzzi, Nora Branam

A HUGE thank you to Quinn Behler and all the Delts for all your help and support with the production of the pageant. It couldn't have been done without you.

Thank you to Matt Yates for all your technical help. Thank you, Cathy Fafrak, for giving your time and talent to accompany the music for the program. Thank you to all the parents for your help and support. And finally, a BIG thank you to all the youth.

What a gift you are to our church. You all are amazing!!

***God Bless You and Merry Christmas***

*Stacie Yates*

## 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.

## 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 (A Blessing for Beginning Again in Advent by Kate Bowler)

We need truths that can stand the test of time.

**Could this be the Advent when we notice compassion?**

**\*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)

**Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,  
Remembering past promises with present faithfulness.**

### \*Give Thanks

Gracious Mystery, your prophet said a child shall lead us. Thank you for our children. Thank you for the joyful noise they make. Thank you for teaching us that a noisy church is a growing church. For their energy. Their talents. For the gift of who they are and all they are: gifts from you. Amen!

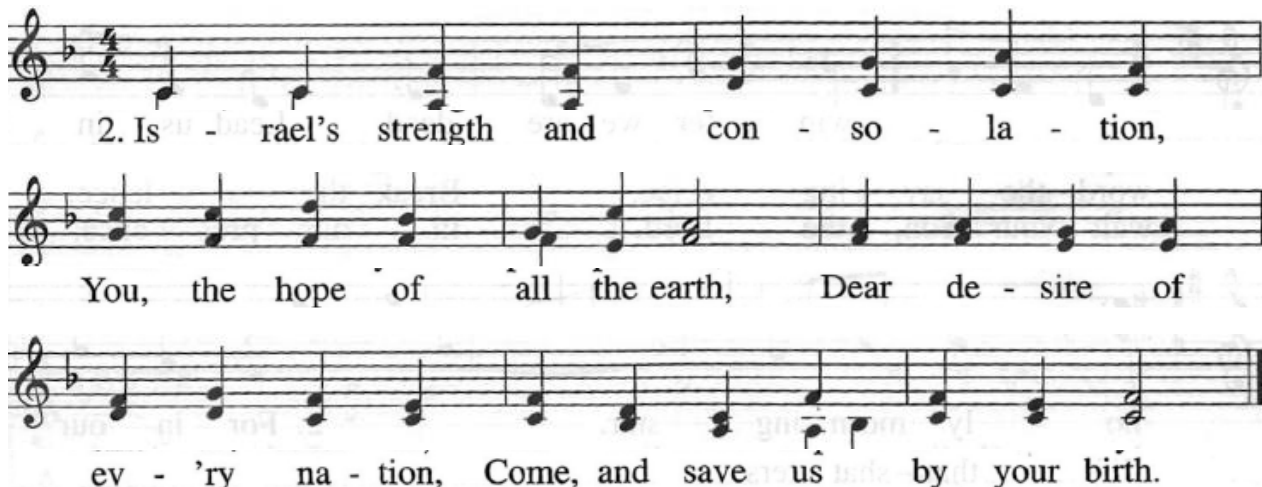
## \*SENDING HYMN

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788. alt.

### "Come, O Long Expected Jesus"

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.

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



2. Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion,  
You, the hope of all the earth, Dear de - sire of  
ev - 'ry na - tion, Come, and save us by your birth.

**\*ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*BENEDICTION**

As we leave this place, may the light of Truth and Compassion guide your way,  
**warming and illuminating all who walk with us.**  
Go forth, remembering that God’s promise is not only to help us but to be with us,  
**in every moment and every place.**  
May we carry the hope of Advent into the world,  
**looking for signs of God’s love and promise fulfilled around us.**  
Go in peace, with open eyes and expectant hearts.  
**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      “Hark, the Glad Sound!” - setting by Paul Manz      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 Jane Watt & Kathi Kavouras***  
\*\*\*\*\*  
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Karen Brocco-Kish, Visitation Pastor – [karen@uccmedina.org](mailto:karen@uccmedina.org)

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Cathy Fafrak, Organist & Office Assistant – [cathy@uccmedina.org](mailto:cathy@uccmedina.org)  
Jennifer Vilimonovic, Director of Hobby Horse Preschool – [jen@uccmedina.org](mailto:jen@uccmedina.org)  
Jack Sharpe, Maintenance & Custodian

# THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

## DECEMBER 8, 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](http://www.uccmedina.org/live)

### December 8 thru December 15, 2024 WEEK AT A GLANCE

**Sun** SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
8:15 am Chapel Worship  
9:00 am Gathering Worship  
10:00 am Blake Food Donations Due  
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship –  
Children's Christmas Pageant  
11:45 am Mission Team  
3:00 pm Confirmation Class

#### **Mon**

**Tues** 7:00 pm Worship Team Meeting  
7:00 pm Property & Grounds Meeting

**Wed** 10:30 am Quilters  
6:00 pm Gathering Band Rehearsal  
6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal  
7:00 pm DELT Meeting  
7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal  
**Thurs** 6:30 pm Bible Study

#### **Fri**

#### **Sat**

**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

### 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](http://katebowler.com/advent)

**Worship Highlights:** 8:15 & 9 a.m.

Scripture: Luke 1:68-79

Sermon: “Compassion” - The Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon  
10:30 am – “Manger Tales”

**Communion Table:** The communion table flowers are given by Pete & Alice Metzloff in memory of Sahara Jade Pettit.

### CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM TODAY!

Today the children and youth will present “Manger Tales.” We've all heard the stories of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and wise men, but what about the others who were there when baby Jesus was born? We will introduce you to the animals that were there to hear the Christmas story from a different point of view and give you a fresh perspective on the Wonder of Christmas.

### LAST CHANCE FOR POINSETTIAS!

**Poinsettia orders are due to the office tomorrow, December 9<sup>th</sup>!** You may donate a poinsettia to decorate the church for Christmas services and claim it afterward, or you may donate a poinsettia to be delivered by the Flower Committee to a shut-in to be enjoyed before the holiday. The cost is \$10.00. Pick up an order slip from one of the ushers, call the church office or download one off the [church website here](#) under “Upcoming Events” or you may order through [REALM here](#).

### GIVING TREE

Our Giving Tree will be on display upstairs next to the elevator until December 18<sup>th</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your continued support.



## **A GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS!**

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Join us as the Chancel Choir performs Mark Hayes' exciting three-movement "Gloria" on December 15<sup>th</sup> 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 offerings from our organist, Cathy, and a vocal cameo from Music Director, Jenny Cochran.

## **JAZZY CHRISTMAS**

**Friday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm**

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You are invited to a wonderful evening of holiday music on Friday, December 20<sup>th</sup> 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!

## **STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

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As of November 26, 2024 we have received 82 pledges for the 2025 Operating Fund, totaling \$174,580. This is just over half the number of pledges we had last year and the amount represents 58% of our goal. Of those that pledged in both 2024 and 2025, giving has increased by 3.6%.

Pledges for the Mission Fund and the Capital Fund are \$29,254 and \$9,786, respectively.

If you have already returned your pledge, THANK YOU! It helps us have an accurate plan for next year. If you have not yet made a pledge, please consider doing so. You can make a pledge on-line through REALM, by a paper form available in the office, or by contacting Pete Metzloff at [pete@uccmedina.org](mailto:pete@uccmedina.org)

## **JACKIE'S JARS**

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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. 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

## **BIBLE STUDY BREAK**

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The Tuesday night Bible study will meet this Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, before going on hiatus for a few weeks. Meetings will resume on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD**

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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.

## **A LATE GIVING OPTION**

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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.

## **YOUTH GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY**

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

## **NOVEMBER MISSIONS ACTIVITY**

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The Missions Committee would like to update you on November's outreach made possible by your offerings and donations. This month the following initiatives were supported:

Candy donations that were used by the youth group for donations to various groups, Games to Claggett for student use, and Jackie's Jars with donations going to the Medina Co. Office for Older Adults. Thank you for your continued support that allows our church to be a vital part of the outreach in our community and beyond.

## **VETERANS OF THE CROSS OFFERING**

**Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>**

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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 22<sup>nd</sup>, 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.

## **CHRISTMAS WEEK SCHEDULE**

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Christmas Eve Worship Services will be:

6:00 pm – Family Candlelight Service

9:00 pm – Candlelight Service

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

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

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW & SAVE THE DATE!**

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**JANUARY 26<sup>TH</sup>:**

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

**ANNUAL MEETING at 11:30 a.m.**

**CHILI COOK OFF TO FOLLOW at noon**

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**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](mailto:office@uccmedina.org)**

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: 9 am – 3 pm MONDAY THRU THURSDAY; FRIDAY 9 am – 12 pm**

Luke 3:1-6

**“Make Ready”**

Advent just wouldn't be Advent without John the Baptist emerging from the wilderness with the urgent message for all to repent. Now to our modern ears “repent” might conjure images of a street preacher shouting at passers-by. But let's not go there. Rather, hear the word “repent” as it is meant to be heard, as a call to turn back to God.

Yes, John leaves his wandering monastic existence to give us this public service announcement to get back to what really matters — loving as God loves and creating a world where that love is extended to all. John even helps us find our way back to God by giving us a list of things to do.

Another list is probably the last thing we need right now, especially as our Christmas to-do's grow longer each day. There are gifts to buy. Presents to wrap. Cookies to bake. Trees to trim. And, if you are one of the rare saints that still writes Christmas cards rather than sending an e-greeting, then there are cards to address and stamps to lick.

John, though, wants us to make ready for Christmas in ways we might never have thought of before. Echoing the very words of the prophet Isaiah, John invites us to prepare the way for the Lord by adding the following to our holiday lists:

**Fill in every valley.**

*What can we do to reach those who are low and full despair? How can the valleys of poverty of body, mind and soul be filled by us?*

**Make low the mountains and hills.**

*What looming mountain or hill of injustice can be lowered so that the playing field for all is finally level?*

**Straighten crooked roads.**

*In what way is God asking us to find the courage to speak truth to lies?*

**Smooth the rough places.**

*What are the rough places in our own lives that need smoothing out? Does a callus heart need to soften? Does a short temper need more patience?*

It is interesting to note that John's appearance in Luke's gospel starts with an introduction of the rulers and religious authorities who were in power during his life, reminding us that often earthly rulers have their own agendas.

It is only through our hands and hearts that God's beloved community becomes a reality. After all, if we don't prepare the way for the Lord by filling in valleys, lowering mountains and making smooth rough places, then who will?

*Loving God, may our lists of things to do include more than just holiday busy work. May our lists reflect our commitment in creating beloved communities that point to Your glory, now and forever. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*