

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve Service of the Word

Celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus



Christmas Light

by Br. Mickey O'Neill McGrath, Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, Camden, New Jersey

This painting was used on the front cover of the Advent devotional book titled "Expecting the Unexpected: An Advent Devotional Guide" (published 2006).

<https://www.trinitystores.com/artwork/christmas-light>



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a just world for all

December 24, 2023

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“On this night, we light the Christ-candle, a reminder that hope, peace, joy, and love are not merely words for this season of the year, but promises of God that are alive in us for eternity, and that God’s steadfast love endures forever.”
from Advent 2023 Year B: Traditional themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love - The Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

Leader: The people who once lived in darkness have been given a great light!

Unison: Praise be to God who has heard our cries.

Leader: Our souls sing out God’s praise!

Unison: God has brought us a light of Hope and Peace.

Leader: Tonight, in this place, the Light of God’s Love is given to us!

Unison: And we shall see that light and let it shine through our lives. AMEN.

***Advent-Christmas Prayer**

**When we wait in the night
in the hush that only stars can hold
as they bend towards the coming of the light;**

**when we wait in the night
laboring with anticipation
of what the night shall bring;**

**when we wait in the night
listening to the cadence of minutes
beat in rhythm with the birth of hope;**

may we hold our collective breaths
with the angelic host
as they clutch their restless alleluias,

for God is on the way:
the mother is laboring
the father pacing
the stable readying
the word is waiting
the light is sliding
and the promise is breaking through

When we wait in the longing for this night
in expectation of Good News
may we choose to wait together
and find we have moved to the edge of our seats

for in such anticipation
it is the only place
for the Word to be born among us.
Amen.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy: Christmas Eve (December 24, 2023) – GOOD NEWS!

One: Hope is assertive, peace is subversive, joy is provocative, and love is transformative. God tore open the heavens as hope became alive in us with the cry of the newborn babe. The heavenly host, the army of God, showed up and instead of declaring war, said “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill to all.” Joy was shared by parents and visitors in the midst of an empirical census and under the rule of an insecure puppet king. And love—love from God, love for one another—the Christ-child taught us that the greatest love is to lay down one’s lives for one another, to set aside the things of this world that would tear us apart and instead look to what draws us together. This is the kind of love that still transforms the world when we share it. On this night, we light the Christ-candle, a reminder that hope, peace, joy, and love are not merely words for this season of the year, but promises of God that are alive in us for eternity, and that God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Light the Christ-candle

Prayer: O come to us, abide in us, our Lord, Emmanuel. God with us, make your presence known to us, now and always. Shine bright in the shadows and despair, and may the warmth of your love carry us forward. You changed the world forever that night long ago when you were born, and you are changing our lives, right now. On this Christmas Eve, we pray for your transformative love to be renewed, for our own hope, peace, joy and love to be restored. We ask for your guidance in helping each of us live into your reign on earth as it is in heaven, for your reign is at hand, and it is coming. Lead us into ways of participating in your reign now by doing justice, practicing compassionate love and kindness, and walking humbly with you, our Savior and Redeemer, the Living God, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Carol – NCH No. 135 – “Adeste Fideles (O Come, All You Faithful)” vv. 1, 3, & 4

Adeste Fideles (O Come, All You Faithful)

Author (attributed to): John Francis Wade

Translator: Frederick Oakely, 1841; alt.

Tune: ADESTE FIDELES Irr. with refrain

Source: English Melody, 18th century; John F. Wade's Cantus Diversi, c. 1743;

Harm. Collections of Motets or Antiphons, 1792

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**1 O come, all you faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come now, O come now to Bethlehem.
Come and behold the ruler of all angels;**

Refrain:

**O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him: Christ the Lord!**

**3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all you messengers of heavenly love:
“Glory to God, all glory in the highest:” [Refrain]**

**4 Amen, Lord, we greet you, born this happy morning;
Jesus to you shall all glory be given;
Word of our God now in flesh appearing; [Refrain].**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Isaiah declares that in contrast to his present age of war, gloom, and despair, there is coming an age when peace will reign universally. It will begin with the coming of the Messiah, the promised future ruler – a descendant of David. “Messiah” is a Hebrew term that means “anointed one,” that is, the anointed ruler. Peace will come with the dawn of the Messianic Age – and the righteous reign of the Messiah. Christians, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, found these passages meaningful in their understanding of who Jesus was - they came to believe that Jesus Christ is that Messiah. The New Testament word “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah.”

9 2 The people walking in darkness
are seeing a brilliant light—
upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows
light is shining!
3 God, you have made the nation greater—
you have brought them abundant joy!
They celebrate in your presence
as with the harvest celebrations,
or as warriors celebrate when dividing spoils.

4 For the yoke that burdened them,
the weight on their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressors—
you have shattered it,
as you did at the defeat of Midian.

5 For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak that was dragged through blood,
is now used as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child is born to us,
an heir is given us,
upon whose shoulders
dominion will rest. This One shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God,
Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace.

7 This dominion, and this peace,
will grow without end,
with David's throne and realm
sustained with justice and fairness,
now and forever.

Psalm Response: Psalm 96

Psalm 96 is exuberant praise of God as Sovereign/Ruler and Creator. Its focus is worship, and the call is for the whole world, the earth and all that is in it, and the heavens to sing the praises of God. It opens with a call to "sing a new song" and this night calls for a new song, for God has sent the Only Begotten One to live among us and show us the way to salvation and a righteous life. Tonight once again, God has a new song for an old people, another chance to start over and hear the amazing stories of this One. The response to that new song is to join in the celebration offered by God to the world. The Psalm is imbedded in Christmas carols such as "Joy to the World:" "Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth its praises bring" (v. 1); and "Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ" (v. 2); and "Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove" (v. 3).

96 Sing to God a new song!

Sing to God, all the earth!

2 Sing to God, bless God's Name!

Proclaim God's salvation day after day;

3 declare God's glory among the nations,

God's marvels to every people.

4 God is great, most worthy of praise,

God is to be revered above all gods.

5 the gods of the nations are nothing,

they don't exist—but God created the universe.

6 In God's presence are splendor and majesty,

in God's sanctuary power and beauty.

- 7 Pay tribute to God, you tribes of the people;
pay tribute to the God of glory and power.
- 8 Pay tribute to the glorious Name of God;
bring out the offering, and carry it into God's courts.
- 9 worship God, majestic in holiness;
tremble in God's presence, all the earth!
- 10 say among the nations,
"God reigns supreme!"
The world stands firm and unshakable:
God will judge each nation with strict justice.
- 11 Let the heavens be glad; let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar and all that it holds!
- 12 Let the fields exult and all that is in them!
Let all the trees of the forest sing for joy
- 13 at the presence of God, for God is coming.
God is coming to rule the earth—
to rule the world with justice
and its peoples with truth!

A Reading of the Christmas Story: Luke 2:1-7 – The Birth of Jesus

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Carol – NCH No. 124 – "Away in a Manger"

Away in a Manger

Author: Anonymous

Source: United States, 1885; St. 3, 1892, alt.

Tune: AWAY IN A MANGER (MÜLLER) 11.11.11.11.

Source: English Melody, 18th century; John F. Wade's Cantus Diversi, c. 1743;

Composer (attributed to): James R. Murray (1887)

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**1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.**

**2 The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.**

**I love you, Lord Jesus; protect me, I pray,
and stay by my side until night turns to day.**

**3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.**

A Reading of the Christmas Story – Luke 2:8-20 – The Shepherds and the Angels

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of God stood before them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom God favors!

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which God has made known to us.” 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Choral Hymn – NCH No. 127 – “Es ist ein' Ros entsprungen (Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)”

Es ist ein' Ros entsprungen (Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)

Source: German, 15th century

Translator: Theodore Baker, 1894; alt.

Tune: ES IST EIN' ROS 7.6.7.6.6.7.6.

Source: Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesäng, Cologne, 1599

Harmonizer: Michael Praetorius, 1609

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Choir: Bob Bucklew, Keith Konet, and Barbara Rossington

Accompanist: Adam Petrosino

Reflection – “There Was No Place for Them” - The Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*Christmas Eve Prayer

We come seeking wonder with the bright lights of the season in our eyes. Come this night, Gift of Hope, not only for us, but for those surrounded by family and friends, yet are filled with that ache called loneliness, and for those who will go home to an empty house and one place-setting on the table.

We come with overflowing hearts for all who have touched us. Come this night, Gift of Love, for those whose hearts are shriveled by a life-time of hurts and rejections, as well as for those whose hearts break over the poverty and struggles of those they see around them.

We reach out in this season to embrace those we haven't seen for so long. Come this night, Gift of Peace, to all those places scarred by fear and hatred, to the communities where people search through rubble for a few precious heirlooms, to families torn apart by old divisions, to all who stand watch during the hours we sleep.

We laugh with delight as stories are told for the umpteenth time and marvel at the videos on our grandkids' handheld devices. Come this night, Gift of Joy, kneeling with those who place poinsettias at grave markers, and for those who will not receive all the treasures promised on television, but whose parents work two jobs to feed and clothe them.

Come this night, Gift of all gifts, and stay with us forever, we pray. Amen.

*Carol – NCH 128 – “In the Bleak Midwinter” vs. 1, 2, & 3

In the Bleak Midwinter

Author: Christina G. Rossetti, 1872; alt.

Tune: CRANHAM Irr.

Composer: Gustav Holst, 1906

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1 In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

2 Our God transcends all heaven, earth, and its domain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when Christ comes to reign;
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the sovereign God almighty, Jesus Christ.

3 Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the midnight air;
But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved with a kiss.

Call to Share Our Offerings - (from *In the Bleak Midwinter* verse 4, The New Century Hymnal – No. 128)

One: What can I offer, poor as I am?

Many: If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.

One: If I were a wise one, I would do my part;

Many: What can I offer: all my heart.

One: As we open our purses, our wallets, and our pockets,
may the gifts we bring be in proportion
to the gratitude of our hearts at Christ's birth.

Offertory - Adam Petrosino

***Presentation of Offerings - Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Blessing of the Gifts**

In the midst of the wrapping paper and ribbons, may we embrace others with your hope.
In the piles and piles of stuff, may we minister to those who have so little. In the warmth of family
and feasts, may we touch the lives of those who are lonely and feed those who are hungry.
May our gifts bless others with the Gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

***Christmas Litany – Welcome the Light** *(light a candle and join us)*

A Song of Praise for Christ's Birth

Leader 1: In a little town, known for nothing much,
God's holy child was born.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 2: *By the faint light of the moon,
Mary and Joseph found their way.*

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 1: Shown by a courtyard fire,
the open stable door.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 2: *Warm breath of resting beasts,
kindly sparkle in their eyes.*

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 1: In the shadowy stable stall,
Joseph kindled a lamp.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 2: There Mary gave birth to Jesus,
called God-With-Us.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 1: Angels opened the doors of heaven,
sang, "Glory to God in highest heaven!"

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 2: Shepherds saw the sky ablaze,
left their sheep and came to see.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 1: In the darkest winter night,
God set a brilliant star.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 2: Magi from the East
divined God's shining sign.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

Leader 1: And on this Christmas night
with joy, we greet the Child.

Unison: Welcome the Light!

And we will join in singing....

***Carol – NCH No. 134 – "Silent Night, Holy Night"**

Silent Night, Holy Night

Author: Joseph Mohr, 1816/1818

English Transl.: John Freeman Young, c. 1859

Tune: STILLE NACHT Irr.

Composer: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1818

Accompanist: Keith Konet

Violin: Adam Petrosino

1 Silent night, holy night

All is calm all is bright

'Round yon virgin Mother and Child

Holy infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

2 Silent night, holy night,

Shepherds quake at the sight.

Glories stream from heaven afar,

Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia;

**Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born**

**3 Silent night, holy night,
Child of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from your holy face
bring the dawn of redeeming grace;
Jesus Christ at your birth,
Jesus Christ at your birth.**

Guided Meditation on John 1:1-14

1 1 In the beginning there was the Word
and the Word was in God's presence,
and the Word was God.

2 The Word was present to God from the beginning.

3 Through the Word all things came into being,
and apart from the Word
nothing came into being that has come into being,

4 In the Word was life,
and the life was humanity's light -

5 Light that shines in the darkness,
Light that the darkness has never overtaken.

6 There came one named John, sent as an envoy from God, 7 who came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that through his testimony everyone might believe. 8 John wasn't the Light; he came only to testify about the Light – the Light that illumines all humankind.

9 The Word was coming into the world -

10 was in the world -
and though the world was made through the Word,
the world didn't recognize the Word.

11 Though the Word came to its own realm,
the Word's own people didn't accept the Word.

12 Yet any who did accept the Word,
who believed in that Name,
were empowered

to become children of God -

13 children born not of natural descent
nor urge of flesh
nor human will -
but born of God.

14 And the Word became flesh

and stayed for a little while among us;
we saw the Word's glory -
the favor and position a parent gives an only child –

filled with grace, filled with truth.

The Lord's Prayer – using “debts” and “debtors”

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Carol - NCH No. 132 – “Joy to the World!”**

Joy to the World!

Author: Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Tune: ANTIOCH C.M.D.

Composer: Lowell Mason, 1836

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**1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Christ room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**

**2 Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of God's righteousness
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders of God's love,
and wonders, wonders of God's love.**

***Commissioning and Benediction**

Leader: Light of the World,
you have come again
to shine through all the shadows.

**Unison: You have lit up our hopes again
and reminded us what love can do
when it lives and breathes.**

Leader: You have come into
this world of deep shadows,
O Christ Child, and illuminated
the way ahead
with mystery and grace.

**Unison: Fill creation and
our very lives with justice and mercy
as only your love can do.**

Leader: Be our great light
and cast our vision
into the not too distant
future when there will be
no more shadows;

**Unison: we will need no light of lamp or sun,
for you, O Christ, will be
our light forever and ever. Amen.**

Postlude – Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the postlude)

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship is adapted from *Call to Worship #1*, written by Nancy C. Townley, posted September 2, 2021, on *Worship Connection Christmas Eve (Option 1)*. Nancy C. Townley was an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. She consulted on visual arts, drama, liturgy and wrote for *Worship Connection* for several years. Nancy passed away in February 2018. This was posted on the website of *Ministry Matters*. <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2127/worship-connection-christmas-eve-option-1>
- (2) The Advent-Christmas Prayer is adapted from *Call to Worship for Christmas Eve*, written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on *Mucky Paws*. <http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>. Reposted on December 14, 2016 as *Christmas Eve Call to Worship: Edge of your seat on the blog*, re: *Worship*. <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/>.
- (3) The Advent Candle Lighting is adapted from *Advent 2023 Year B: Traditional themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love*, by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell. Posted October 28, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lution.org/new-advent-candle-lighting-liturgy-for-2023-and-12-days-of-christmas/>
- (4) The Christmas Eve Prayer is adapted from *Christmas Eve Liturgy*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted Saturday, December 20, 2014 on the website, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>.
- (5) The Blessing of the Gifts is adapted from *Christmas Day Liturgy*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted Sunday, December 21, 2014 on the website, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>.
- (6) The Guided Meditation – for John 1:1-14 is adapted from a post by Zack Roberts on the blog, *slo ember collective* - <https://emberhq.com/guided-prayer-john-1-1-14/>

- (7) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Prayer for the Light of the World*, by The Rev. Elsa Anders Cook, 2020, from *Shadows and Light – A Service for a Pandemic Christmas Eve*.
file:///C:/Users/scottrosenstein/Downloads/Shadows%20and%20Light.pdf
- (8) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #A-736636. All rights reserved.

Ministers: *All of Us*
Pastor: *Scott Rosenstein*
Music Director & Pianist: *Adam Petrosino*
Council President: *Keith Konet*
Administrative Assistant: *Beverly Wurm*

***Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas
and a Healthy and Happy New Year 2024!***



News & Special Events

God is Still Speaking...

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you will find a spiritual home in this United Church of Christ congregation. WELCOME!

Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont is committed to reaching out to all people with the saving "Good News" of God's Love. To do this, we strive to attain a covenant relationship with people of all races, colors, ethnic origins, ages, sexual orientations and identity. We are also committed to grace-filled inclusivity in our worship, programs, membership, mission and social activities. We very

strongly believe in outreach and community involvement, as well as ecumenical spiritual involvement within the surrounding community. We are committed to listening to history while joining with the future.

Upcoming Worship Services:

- **Sunday, December 31st – First Sunday of Christmas - Celebrate the new year while still celebrating the Christian season of Christmas – Wassail Punch Reception follows worship**
- **Sunday, January 7th – Epiphany of Our Lord – Retelling the story of the visit of the Magi – Holy Communion**
- **Sunday, January 14th– The Baptism of Christ — Renewal of Baptism**

Tithes and Offerings - Checks and Money Orders can be made payable to: “Zion United Church of Christ” and mailed to:

**Zion United Church of Christ
c/o Keith Konet
1039 Bridlewood Drive
Copley, OH 44321**

Questions: Contact Keith Konet at 330.604.6939

Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We’re grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com and by phone at 234.205.9397.

Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14th St)/home. The days and hours are:

Winter Schedule :

Tuesday– 9am – 1pm

Wednesday – 10am-2 pm

Thursday – 9am – 1pm

Beverly can be reached at: zionchurchtremont@gmail.com or by phone at: 216-273-7561 (church) or 216-310-6810 (mobile).



**Tremont-Duck Island-Irishtown Bend Holiday Food Drive
2023-2024
Running now through January 15th, 2024**

lend a helping hand to neighbors - families and children - in need
in Tremont, Duck Island, and Irishtown Bend
and provide help to the 12 local Cleveland food pantries - ministries.

In Round 1 - 259 canned goods/paper products were distributed to several food pantries along with \$16,430 in cash & checks sent to 11 food pantries before the Christmas & New Year's holidays.

Round 2- runs now through Friday, January 15th, 2024 - to re-stock the food pantries following the holidays.

Three Ways to Donate:

- 1) **Give canned goods & paper products** – deliver to Zion Chapel (2700 W 14th Street).
- 2) **Donate online by Credit or Debit Card, Venmo, or PayPal** – visit:
<https://givebutter.com/HolidayFoodDrive-TRE-DI-IB>
select the Holmden-Buhrer-Rowley/Mentor-Castle-Clark block clubs or the Auburn-Lincoln Park block club and the food pantry/hunger center you would like your donation to go to
- 3) **Donate by Check** – make payable to the food pantry/hunger center of your choice ******(see list below******) – for verification purposes, deliver check to Zion Chapel and Pastor Scott will see that it gets to the food pantry you designate.

Total Collected as of Friday, December 22nd, 2023 - \$19,930
Goal in Cash/Checks for this food drive: \$25,000

Food Pantries – Hunger Center Ministries:

- Immanuel Lutheran Church Food Pantry
- Pilgrim Church Food Pantry
- St. Augustine Hunger Center hot meals program
- St. Malachi Church Back Door Ministry
- The Greater Cleveland Food Bank
- Westside Catholic Center
- St. Augustine Parish food pantry services
- Iglesia Nueva Vida Food Pantry - Comedor comunitario
- Mega Church Resource Center Food Pantry
- Hunger Action Network of Greater Cleveland
- Scranton Road Bible Church Food Pantry
- St. Michael the Archangel Food Pantry - Reparto de Compras

Any questions regarding the Holiday Food Drive contact Scott Rosenstein
(tremont701@gmail.com – or call Scott at 216.577.1514 (mobile).

Please Remember in Prayer

- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community.
- The interrelationship of Gospel values and civic engagement.
- Ministries of the United Church of Christ and of Zion Church.
- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for our Living Water Association UCC, Association General Minister, The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, and Association Faith in Action Minister, The Rev. Michael Howard.
- The ministers and missionaries of the world.
- Those who are refugees and immigrants.
- For children separated from their parents at detention camps along our southern border.
- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.
- Mother Earth and the global reflection on climate disruption.
- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7th, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen



infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, were being held in Gaza as hostages. During a pause in military action in late November, Hamas released 81 Israelis and dual nationals and 24 foreign nationals from captivity in Gaza, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. A spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

said that around 135 hostages remain in Gaza. They include U.S. citizens. Nineteen hostages are presumed dead. Israel in return released 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons (mostly women and teenage boys). In addition to significant air strikes Israel followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. More than 20,000 people have been killed in Gaza and surpassing 50,000 wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The death count is incomplete because health officials can't tally the dead at two of the enclave's large hospitals or account for bodies under the rubble from air strikes that Israel's military has carried out in response to the Hamas attack on October 7th, At that time Israel imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. During a temporary pause some trucks loaded with medical supplies and food aid have entered Gaza from Egypt, some of which made it to northern Gaza — a first in the conflict. The pause ended and hostilities resumed on Friday, December 1st. Since the pause ended, Israeli troops have pushed into southern Gaza, and have taken "aggressive" action against Hamas and other armed groups in and around the city of

Khan Younis. Israel has also carried out many air strikes on Rafah, near the Egyptian border, where it has told residents of Khan Younis to flee. There continues to be fierce fighting in the north, around Jabalia refugee camp and the Shejaiya district of Gaza City. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are thought to remain in the north. Israel claims to have killed thousands of Hamas fighters during the war, including many commanders. The IDF says 139 Israeli soldiers have been killed since the start of the ground offensive on October 27. In total, 468 soldiers have been killed since October 7, the vast majority of them in Hamas' attacks that day. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 11 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still partly functional and able to admit new patients. Only one of them is in the north. Food is scarce in Gaza and prices have soared, meaning many people are unable to afford staples such as flour. A lack of power makes cooking difficult. UNWRA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, has said that 1.9 million Gaza's residents - about 85% of the population - have been displaced and that 1.3 million of them have been sheltering in its facilities. This includes the hundreds of thousands of people who fled the fighting in the north after an Israeli order to move south of the Wadi Gaza river valley for their own safety. UNWRA warned that the 600,000 people in southern Gaza who have been ordered to leave their neighborhoods because of the fighting have nowhere to go, since its own shelters are already beyond capacity. Israel has severely limited supplies of fuel, arguing that it could be stolen by Hamas and used for military purposes. Fuel shortages have meant that water pumps and desalination plants, waste and sanitation services, and many bakeries have been unable to function. Hundreds of foreign passport holders - including some British and US citizens - and seriously wounded and sick Palestinians have also been allowed to leave through Rafah, but many remain.

- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6th, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25th that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 643 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of December 21st, 2023. In 2022 a total of 648 mass shootings occurred. In 2021 a total of 693 mass shooting incident occurred across the US, in 2020 a total of 611, in 2019 a total of 417, with 337 incidents in 2018. While we pray for the families and friends of those whose lives have been taken in violent acts – and we pray for those injured in body, mind, soul, and spirit—and for their neighborhoods and communities across the United States – We know that our words and prayers are not enough. We must repent for our collective inaction and commit to tirelessly working toward meaningful gun violence prevention.
- For those affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the various variant surges: for all those who are infected and/or sick, and those who are grieving, for all who are affected, all around the world, for essential workers and frontline workers...we pray for comfort, for safety, for health and for wholeness.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.

- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments.
- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home
- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
 - Patti Augustine (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
 - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
 - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
 - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
 - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
 - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
 - Keith Konet and family.
 - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
 - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
 - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
 - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
 - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
 - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
 - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
 - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)