

February 2024

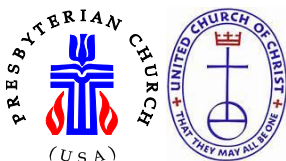
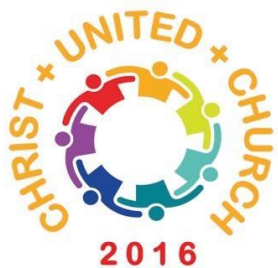
# The Good News

The monthly newsletter of Christ United Church

## Christ United Church

A federated church  
of the Presbyterian Church  
(USA) and the  
United Church of Christ

With Christ  
as our heart  
and God's love  
as our fire,  
we learn, we love,  
we care for all  
people.



## Lent: Preparing our Heart and Minds

Lent this year begins on one of the earliest dates possible in the calendar year. On February 14, Ash Wednesday, we start off the season that is typically known for giving something up so we might sacrifice before we celebrate Easter on March 31. This year we will mark the start of Lent with ashes as we recall that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We are God's children and we will return to God.

This season of Lent, rather than or in addition to giving something up, we are studying justice. Our theme is *Roll Down Justice*. Each week we will focus on one aspect of how we can follow the words of Amos 25:21-25 to be a part of the justice that we long to see and be the "bringers about" of God's Kingdom. Join me as we explore that mission together. ✝

Yours in Christ, Pastor Janis

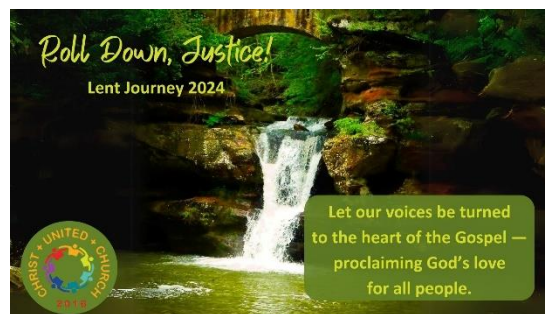
## Watch Your Email . . .

. . . for the "Soup-per-Capita" Sunday on February 11.

## Roll Down, Justice!

### 2024 Lent & Easter Series

Lent is a time of reminding ourselves who we are called to be in this world. Our Lenten series is inspired by Amos, a prophet whose message is that God calls us to let "justice roll down like waters." Worship without justice is not acceptable, rather our songs must move us to action on behalf of the oppressed. Through the powerful music of Mark Miller's "Roll Down, Justice" songbook and the remembrance of our rituals of baptism (the origins of Lent), this season will offer us reflection and renewed inspiration to let our voices be turned to the heart of the Gospel — proclaiming God's love for all people. What prejudices are we challenged to "give up" as a Lent practice and how are we willing to "give" of ourselves for the sake of the world?



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# Roll Down, Justice!

2024 Lent & Easter Series

## Ash Wednesday, February 14, 7 pm — Make Me an Instrument of Peace: Re-Cognition

*I hate, I reject your festivals; I don't enjoy your joyous assemblies. If you bring me your entirely burned offerings and gifts of food — I won't be pleased; I won't even look at your offerings of well-fed animals. Take away the noise of your songs; I won't listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. — Amos 5: 21-24 (CEB)*

The season of Lent begins with a call to repent, which means to “turn around.” We will turn from our apathy, turn from simply “going through the motions” of our life and worship. Instead we will pray to be active instruments of peace, agents of change in the world. We begin the journey toward renewing our baptismal identity as the hands and feet of Christ by “re-cognizing” — tuning our minds and hearts toward the world and its peoples.

## Sunday, February 18, 10 am — Child of God: Naming Each One

*So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? [God] didn't spare [God's] own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't [God] also freely give us all things...?*

— Romans 8: 31-32 (CEB)

In our baptismal rituals, we take a special moment to repeat the precious name of the person being baptized. In a world that seems obsessed with who is “right and wrong,” “good or bad,” “in or out,” or on “this side or that side,” it is a radical endeavor to name each person as “Child of God” — no matter what people say.

## Sunday, February 25, 10 am — How Long: Renouncing Evil

*How long will you forget me, Lord? Forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long will I be left to my own wits, agony filling my heart? Daily? How long will my enemy keep defeating me? Look at me! Answer me, Lord my God! Restore sight to my eyes! Otherwise, I'll sleep the sleep of death,*

*and my enemy will say, “I won!” My foes will rejoice over my downfall. But I have trusted in your faithful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. Yes, I will sing to the Lord because the Lord has been good to me.*  
— Psalm 13 (CEB)

Over half of the liturgical songs of the Israelites were Psalms of Lament. Penned in a time of exile and persecution, these were poets trying to give voice to the pain of the people. Today we lament the injustice of our time and yet, like the Psalms of Lament, we end in praise anyway for “God is good, all the time.” We remember that even and especially in times of despair, through our baptism we are given the “freedom and power to resist evil in all its forms” as we “put our whole trust in God.” How will we put these words into action to show hope to the world?

## Sunday, March 3, 10 am — I Dream of a Church: Christ's Representatives

*“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’ “Then those who are righteous will reply to him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ “Then the king will reply to them, ‘I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.’”*

— Matthew 25: 34-40 (CEB)

At our baptism, we promise to nurture others and are reminded that we are to “serve as Christ's representatives in the world.” Today we ask the question, “do we as the church look and act like Jesus?” Our song of justice today invites us to dream of a church “where justice is flowing with hope and peace growing.” What thoughts and behaviors do

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we need to shed to make room for hope and peace to grow in and through our lives and this church?

**Sunday, March 10, 10 am — I Choose Love:  
Communities of Forgiveness**

*They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right hand and the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing. The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one." The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine and saying, "If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Above his head was a notice of the formal charge against him. It read "This is the king of the Jews." One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing the you've also been sentenced to die? We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise." — Luke 23: 32-43*

Each time someone is baptized, the church body gathered also makes vows. One of the things we promise is to be a community of love and forgiveness. Each day we must choose between letting the difficult things about life create resentment in us and allow the work of forgiveness to make way for love. Our song of justice this week is a response to a modern-day act of forgiveness that reminds us of the power of Jesus' forgiveness on the cross.

**Sunday, March 17, 10 am — God Has Work for Us  
to Do: Faithful Disciples**

*Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke, setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke? Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and brining the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family? Then your light will break out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly. Your own righteousness will walk before you, and the Lord's glory will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here." If you remove the yoke from among you, the finger-pointing, the wicked speech; if you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon. The Lord will guide you continually and provide for you, even in parched places. He will rescue your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water that won't run dry. They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account; the foundations of generations past you will restore. You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets. — Isaiah 58: 6-12*

Our featured scripture this week speaks of being a "well-watered garden like a spring of water that won't run dry." Baptismal waters continue to feed the streams of justice as we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us every time we set our hands and feet to the work God has for us to do. We remember that as long as there are those who are hurting, hungry, excluded and oppressed, we are called to be faithful disciples, setting a table and inviting all to the feast.

**Palm Sunday, March 24, 10 am — The Day Is  
Coming: We Are One**

*The desert and the dry land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. They will burst into bloom, and rejoice with joy and singing. They will receive the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the Lord's glory, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and support the unsteady knees.*

— Isaiah 35: 1-3 (CEB)

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The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem was a vision of a coming day when power is displayed not with military might but through the solidarity of all people in the name of love and justice. We pray this day for a time when we are one and we support one another on the road of life, not tear one another down because of our differences. We will affirm our oneness with the whole human family this day.

**Maundy Thursday, March 28, 7 pm — Traveling Companions: Journey to the Water**

Holy Week is a time to mourn when love is crucified on the cross. We bring the story of Jesus into reflection with the story of our world in which this continues. And yet, that is not the end of the story. Our Lenten experience heightens and culminates in a journey to the waters of baptismal renewal in the dark of night on Maundy Thursday. The earliest Christian communities saw this time of the year as the ultimate time for baptisms because this was when Christ died and was raised — just as we die to the old and rise again to new life through our baptisms. Drawing on the ancient Vigil ritual that incorporates Light, Water, Word and Table, we will go on a pilgrimage as traveling companions, offering us a deeply moving experience of our faith story then and now.

The service will begin in Friendship Hall just as the disciples gathered with Christ in the upper room. The service will move to different parts of the church ending with an opportunity to renew our baptism and receive communion. Join us for this moving service of food for the body, food for the soul, water, baptism, candlelight, and communion.

**Easter Sunday, March 31, 10 am — Welcome: The New Jerusalem**

*At that time, declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people. The Lord proclaims: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness. As Israel searched for a place of rest, the Lord appeared to them from a distance: I have loved you with a love that lasts forever. And so with unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself. Again, I will build you up, and you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel. Again, you will play your tambourines and dance with joy. Again, you*

*will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; farmers will plant and then enjoy the harvests. The time will come when the watchmen will shout from the highlands of Ephraim: "Get ready! We're going up to Zion to the Lord our God!" — Jeremiah 31: 1-6*

On Easter Sunday, we proclaim that justice does indeed roll down in a stream of love that cannot be stopped! No matter what, we will continue to work to invite and welcome all people to "a city built of love and light, the new Jerusalem." For it is in walking together, talking together and dreaming together that we are all saved from the things of death and made heirs to life as we create a better, safer, and more hospitable world. ☩

## **Lenten Soup Suppers Return: Save the Dates**

The Wednesday evening Lenten program preceded by a soup supper returns on Feb. 21, 28, March 6, 13 & 20. More details to come!

## **2024 Pledging Update**

To date we have received 43 pledges for 2024, totaling \$183, 275 for church operations and \$6,130 for This Old Church. These are five fewer and about \$6,000 less than last year. The good news is that for those who have pledged, it represents a 5.5% increase in giving.

Each year we pay a per capita apportionment for each CUC member who is also a member of the Presbyterian Church to cover expenses at the presbytery, synod, and national church offices. This year the per capita amount is \$38.00 per member. We very much appreciate when our members donate their share to help defray our costs. ☩

## PJ Party 2.0

The Member Care **Pajama Party** (before the pandemic) was such fun that we were requested to “do it again.”



All the ladies of the church and their friends are invited to join us in Friendship Hall for fun, food and fellowship on **Friday, February 9 from 6 – 10 PM**. No need to RSVP – but you are encouraged to dress in pajamas!

Ideas for games or other activities will be greatly appreciated by the Member Care planners – Wendy, Katie and Gladys. †



## Happy Birthday

### February

1	Stan Barclay
1	John King
6	Barb Berkey
9	Austin Cole
12	Martha Gibbs
12	Judy Mitchell
13	Linda Ault
14	Henry Ault
17	Don Berkey
20	Terry Mercier
22	Shirley Duncan
22	Katie Fort-Fleming
24	Trish Demko



## A Request for Help

*This request to **help a neighbor during cancer treatment** has been sent out several times. Here is an update. If you want to help, click on the link below to access the meal train schedule.*

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who have generously contributed meals and gift cards for the Sadlons during this challenging journey since December. As we approach the end of January, Joan gears up for her second round of chemotherapy. We've opened up dates in February. Could we kindly ask if anyone would be willing to sign up for an additional meal in late January or anytime during February?

Your support is invaluable as Joan faces her upcoming treatments. Thank you for the ongoing support that has uplifted Joan's spirits and strengthened her confidence in overcoming cancer.



With appreciation,

Jack, Joan, Jeremy, Dave and Leah

[Meal Train for The Sadlon Family](#)

## NEW Pastor E-mails

Pastor Janis – [PastorJanis@ChristUnited.Church](mailto:PastorJanis@ChristUnited.Church)

Pastor Joel – [PastorJoel@ChristUnited.Church](mailto:PastorJoel@ChristUnited.Church)

Please begin using them now and change them in your address book. They also have separate mailboxes in room #2.

## Academy for Dramatic Arts (AFDA)

AFDA is pleased to bring the congregation a great report. Our performance of *Willy Wonka* was a huge success. All aspects of the performance went well from casting to performance to props to sound to lights and fundraising. It was our largest cast, which gave us the opportunity to move some of our senior actors into roles of Assistant Director and Assistant Choreographer. The stage was expanded and seating rearranged and we still sold out within a few weeks. The cost of the new stage was covered by a UCC Association grant.

Going forward – success breeds success. We held auditions for *The Lion King* and 37 young people auditioned, which exceeds our last performance. We are focusing on the theme of helping our young people bring balance into their hectic lives. The cast will form three tribes led by graduates of the AFDA program. Due to the size of the cast, we approved a fifth performance in mid-April.

Since the *Willy Wonka* performance, we have received several donations. If you want to donate, put a check in the offering made out to AFDA. Due to Andi Allen's absence on the Board, we are seeking new members. If you know of anyone that might be interested, contact Rich Spinner. See you in April. †



## CUC Cash Mob Month Ten Spudnut Donut

Thanks to all who supported Vitality Bowls in January. We hope you enjoyed some healthy eating.

**February's Cash Mob** location is **Spudnut Donuts** located at 650 Prospect St. in Berea. This locally owned Berea institution will bring a smile to your Valentine (or Galentine) when you treat them.

A former American franchise chain that specializes in using potato flour, the parent company no longer exists but there are independent stores across the country. The original recipe is based on a folk recipe that traces back to Germany when the company was founded in 1940 and in 1946 there was a nationwide chain of Spudnut shops with as many as 600 across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The national chain is gone but there are approximately 35 independence shops in the United States. We are lucky enough to have one near us. Please stop in to support them in February with our CUC Cash Mob. ☪

## Martha Circle

Our February 14 meeting is lunch at Savour Restaurant located in Polaris at 12 pm. There is limited seating of only 10 people, so notify Gladys Kershaw ASAP if you want to attend, gmkershaw@aol.com or 440-238-2363.

It is only February but Martha Circle is already planning for Easter! Our project for March is to fill eggs for **the Easter Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday, March 24th**. We have plastic eggs but need wrapped candy, stickers, or small toys to fill them. Bring those items to church on **Sundays, March 3 or 10** and give to either Katie Walker or Corky Wilson. Please join us on **Wednesday, March 13th at 10 am** in room 10 to fill the plastic eggs.

Katie Walker is organizing games for the kids while the eggs are hidden. If you want to help Katie, contact her at 440-799-2881 or katieowalker@gmail.com. If you have questions, you can contact me at 440-243-2667 or grammacats@cox.net.

## Community Outreach Task Force

The Community Outreach Task Force thanks the congregation for their support with this much needed ministry to the Berea and Olmsted Falls communities. Here are some of the people we helped in the past couple of months and a few that we decided not to help financially. Please keep them in your prayers.

Last month, we had a family of four adults and three kids living in a condominium having financial problems. Here is an update. We decided to help the family by paying one month's rent. We did not agree to help them with what they owe the homeowners association. We felt that was outside of our scope and a complicated legal issue.

We heard back from the family of five when the husband lost his job, but the mother works. We decided to help them with one month's rent.

We are still talking with a single mom taking care of two nieces who is \$8,000 behind in her mortgage. We are helping her update her resume and find a full time job where she can work from home. She is trying to refinance her home. We are giving her some budget advice.

A young man who lives alone has been unemployed since the beginning of November and is looking for a new job. We decided to help him out with one month's rent.

We received one other request in January from a father that has health, landlord, and family problems and is behind in all his bills. We decided that any help we would offer would not fix his situation. We don't get this type of request often, but we had to turn it down. ☪



# At North Church in December

During the first four weeks of December, Christ United served a meal each Sunday at North Presbyterian Church and joined with the worshipping community in praise and Thanksgiving. Over 40 people helped with everything from cooking and serving to donation of funds to bringing the morning message. Christmas Eve was especially festive with presents under the tree and a visit from Santa. ✝



## The Good News

The monthly publication of  
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