

GUESTS, Welcome to our faith community. To learn more about us please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unionneffs.

Let us know you're here by completing the Welcome Card in the racks in front of you and hand it to a pastor or drop it in the offering plate. Feel free to call or email a pastor.

#### **Vision Statement**

UNION UCC: RELEVANT, ENGAGED, and GROWING

#### **Mission Statement**

Our church is a diverse family of believers, spiritually united in Christ, rooted in a rich heritage and growing with vitality into the future. We proclaim God's word, nurturing and inspiring dedicated Christian discipleship through worship, education, pastoral care, fellowship, and outreach within our community and the world.

No matter who you are or where you on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Lay Reader: Dan Topp Sound: Karl Klinger

Sunday Set Up Staff and Camera/ Online Team: Payge Haydt,

Hannah Minnich, Ryleigh Minnich

#### \*Please stand in body or spirit.

Everyone is welcome to this meal of love and grace. You will be served in your seats.

Wait to eat and drink until the Pastor invites you to do so.

A non-gluten option with juice is available in a prepackaged container on the bread tray.

Both red wine and white grape juice are on the tray of cups.

Please choose either.

For those of you at home, please take a minute to find something to drink and eat to represent communion for you.

#### **Prelude Music**

Mary, Did You Know? Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene Susan Glosan with Blake Hoppes

Gesu Bambino Pietro A Yon **Payge Haydt,** Viola with **Blake Hoppes** 

Angels We Have Heard on High Traditional Arr. Don Miller **Cameron Kuntz**, Guitar

#### Welcome

Becoming Present — an Advent Ritual What Can I Give Him Arr. Mark Hayes

Leader: Welcome, friends, to this special night when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. This year in this church, we have been spending time preparing for this night by becoming more "present." You can see we have many presents here in the sanctuary. Being surrounded by them all Advent long has helped us be inspired to be more present — to ourselves, to each other, and to God. It all started with the idea that

we can spend a lot of time worrying about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all... our very presence. Relationship is the most needed gift in our world. Loneliness and isolation is, according to some experts, the "pandemic of our time." So no matter how able you are to offer gifts that the world considers "valuable," really what we need the most is simply to "be with." That is what one of the names for Jesus — "Emmanuel" — means: "God with us." And this is the best gift of all.

#### Solo:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;

Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We have unwrapped a present on each Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gifts that God reveals.

People: We open our hearts as we open the gifts!

The gift of hope is an essential survival tool because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word.

The gift of Christ's peace reminds us that we can have peace even in the midst of non-peaceful situations.

The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness, but rather the deep call to delight in the small things.

The gift of love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples.

The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

And tonight we celebrate the presence of the Light among us.

#### **Prayer of Presence**

Let us pray:

Holy Living God,
you are our Light.
Let this light grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Light to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen.

ALL: What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Being Presence/Present with Each Other –
Passing God's Light

Please stand in body or spirit.

\*Carol #193 O Come, All Ye Faithful Gold Hymnal/Hymns for the Family of God

Instrumentalists: Garet Hill - alto sax, Lucas Maxwell - alto saxophone, Andy Hill - trumpet, Andy Dyszel - trumpet, Justin Bower - trumpet, Matt Gerry - trumpet, Craig Knauss - clarinet, Cameron Kuntz - clarinet, Mike Baer - trombone, Isaac Brace - snare drum, Director: Mitchell Roth Jacob Roth, Organ

#### ALL:

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come, and behold Him, born the King of angels!

#### **Refrain:**

O come, let us adore Him;

O come, let us adore Him;

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

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation; sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
[Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n! Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

Please be seated.

**Christmas Song** Blake Hoppes

Children's Time with Ms. Tiffany and Friends– The Gift of Children

#### On Sundays:

**Children's Church –** during 10:30am Worship for ages 3-grade 5. Kids start in worship with their family and are invited forward for a children's time, They then leave with Ms. Tiffany and return before worship is over. Children will be in **Room 100** and will return before worship is over. If worship ends early, parents are welcome to meet their children downstairs.

**Education Hour and Faith Formation for All Ages –** 9:15-10:15am on Sundays, ages 3 to grade 7.

#### **Christmas Song** Blake Hoppes

#### Scripture First Reading Isaiah 9: 2-8, excerpts

Reader: We have been reading the words of the prophet Isaiah in the past few weeks as we begin to understand why we are called to be fully present with one another. Isaiah wrote in a time of occupation and exile of his people and by the end of the Book of Isaiah, the people have been freed. But the scripture we read tonight is toward the beginning of the book and the people are scattered and afraid, feeling alone and despondent. Isaiah speaks what perhaps felt like an impossible prophetic word to remind the people that God is present with them always. Let us read responsively:

The people walking in darkness are seeing a brilliant light—upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows light is shining!

God, you have made the nation greater — you have brought them abundant joy!

They celebrate in your presence as with the harvest celebrations...

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.

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

now and forever.

## Scripture Gospel Reading

Luke 2: 1-14, (15-20)

Reader: As we have considered the presence of God, we have encountered an image that winds itself through the scriptures — that of the gentle presence of the Holy holding us close as a shepherd holds a lamb. And tonight the image of those shepherds — who know how to care deeply in each present moment with the flock — are again at the center of the story. They are the ones who first hear the Good News. And while the light initially frightens them, they run toward it, not away. Hear the story from the Gospel of Luke:

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to "the city of David" — Bethlehem, in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her delivery. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son; she put him in a simple cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket, and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle, because there was no room for them at the inn. There were shepherds in the area living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. The angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them; they were very much afraid. The angel said to them, "You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you — news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in David's city, a savior — the Messiah — has been born to you. Let this be a sign to you: you'll find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, there was a

multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in high heaven! And on earth, peace to those on whom God's favor rests." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us." They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger; once they saw this, they reported what they had been told concerning the child. All who heard about it were astonished at the report given by the shepherds. Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. The shepherds went away glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

#### The Message

Come See The Light Pastor Kayli

# Book suggestion for the season: Right Here Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness Amy G Oden

Oden invites us to practice mindfulness and Christian prayer practices to help anchor our hearts, minds, spirits and bodies this season.

#### Prayer

Song: Right Here, Right Now Chuck Bell, Marcia McFee

Solo/Choir: Right here and right now we open our senses to see and perceive the gifts we've been given, to know and believe that what we must do is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

Leader: In our time of prayers during this Advent and Christmas season, we have been taking the opportunity to practice being fully present in the moment. Mindfulness has

deep roots in our Judeo-Christian tradition. The scriptures say "be still and know that I am God." Prayer is an intentional way to sink deeply into the sense of the presence of God among us.

I'd like to invite all of you into a quiet reflection on three questions, each followed by a short silence. Focusing intentionally on thoughts and memories can be a kind of prayer, bringing our lives into a conversation with the Holy. I invite you to take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing that.

The first question is this: Who has been a gift of presence in your life? Whose presence feels like a holy gift for you? Take a moment to see their face or faces emerge in your mind's eye like opening a gift. It may be a memory of someone or a present reality.

The second question is this: In what ways do you try to offer yourself as a gift of presence? What does it feel like when you extend your attentiveness and availability beyond yourself? What difference does it make to someone else for you to be truly present to them?

The third question is this: Is it possible that God's presence is felt more acutely in these moments when we truly tend to one another? As if you are doing last-minute shopping for just the right gift, can you imagine right now how you can, in the future, be a Gift of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Light — letting these gifts flow through you to someone else? It may be as simple as finding opportunities to speak an encouraging word. Or as complex as actually lifting up someone's circumstances through volunteering or donating.

ALL SING: Right here and right now we open our senses to see and perceive the gifts we've been given, to know and believe that what we must do is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

In this prayerful, present moment, we pray for...

In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All,

to help us savor this moment of celebration of Christmas.

Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last.

Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing, and accept it with open hearts and minds.

In doing this, we allow you to meet us in the right here, right now, right where we are.

The Lord's Prayer

ALL: 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.

ALL SING: Right here and right now we open our senses to see and perceive the gifts we've been given, to know and believe that what we must do is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

Thank you for the many ways in which you support God's work and God's people here in Neffs and in the community and world.

#### NEWS ABOUT THE MINISTRY AND MISSION OF GOD'S CHURCH



#### OFFERING

#### **Christmas Mission Offering**

Please share your financial support by using the Christmas Mission Offering envelope in your envelope packet, or blank envelope marked - Christmas Mission, or donate online at <a href="http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/ChristmasMission">http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/ChristmasMission</a>.

**Sixth Street Shelter** -Located in Center City Allentown, Sixth Street Shelter provides safe, short-term housing for families who are experiencing homelessness of any configuration and size, this includes mothers, fathers, girls, boys, multi- generational families, or those from the LGBTQ+ community. They help guests grow as an individual and a family unit, increase academic progress, find work, find affordable housing, so they can be successful when they leave. The property has 25 private apartments, a family resource center, playground, and full-choice food pantry for residents.

World Central Kitchen - World Central Kitchen is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization devoted to providing meals in the wake of natural disasters. They have organized meals in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Zambia, Peru, Cuba, Uganda, The Bahamas, Cambodia, Ukraine, Puerto Rico, the United States, and most recently Morocco, Turkey, Syria, and Hawaii. In August 2023, World Central Kitchen set up kitchens in Maui and provided over 6000 meals per day with the help of volunteers.

## Donate to God's Mission and Ministry at UNION UCC Because of YOU our church changes lives....

Here are some of the ways you can share your financial generosity at Union.

• `ELECTRONIC GIVING https:// secure.myvanco.com/L-Z51X/home or use the QR code with your cell phone. Choose an ongoing regular donation or a single donation with your credit or debit card. (Help us with fees if you can.)



Vanco

• FREE Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement app Look for our church Union United Church of Christ, Neffs, PA and register your information to contribute.

· **Venmo @unionuccneffs** Make a donation or

pay for a fundraiser or event. Complete
"What's this for?" See QR code.

• Cash or checks (to "Union UCC") Place in the offering plate with a member offering envelope or guest envelope (in the seat racks) or drop in the mail if you're not in person. Contact John Harting (610-799-2508) or Don Penrod (610-972-8719) or Pastor Kris if you have questions or if you'd like to learn more about other giving options or legacy gifts to Union.

#### **Musical Offering**

The Gift Steve Anderson

Julie Wehr, solo with Blake Hoppes

Please stand in body or spirit.

#128 In the Bleak Midwinter
Black Hymnal/New Century Hymnal
ALL Sing:
What can I offer, poor as I am?

# If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise one, I would do my part; But what can I offer: all my heart.

Please be seated.

#### **Holy Communion**

#### Invitation to the Table

Leader: Everyone is welcome to this meal of love and grace. You will be served in your seats. Please wait to eat and drink until the Pastor invites you to do so. If you are at home, we invite you to find something to eat and drink that represents communion for you.

A non-gluten option with juice is available in a prepackaged container on the bread tray. Both red wine and white grape juice are on the tray of cups. Please choose either.

Leader: We are all invited to this table of Jesus. This is one of the ways that we acknowledge the continual gift of his presence with us. We remember the rituals of his Last Supper with his disciples in which he offered a poignant invitation for all of his followers to be together at meals, break bread and lift cups, and know that we are never alone. This is the invitation now. The gift of presence — with each other and with Christ. This is the mystical union that binds us to Christ, present in this moment, and to all who have ever gathered at this table... no matter where, or when.

#### **Confession and Assurance**

Leader: There are times when we have cut ourselves off from this gift of presence. We distance ourselves from the light that is ours as heirs in the family of God. It seems too wonderful a gift. And yet the Shepherd comes to find us, leading us gently back into safety, back into care, back into relationship. In this moment, we take a deep breath, we feel our bodies relax into the right here, and right now, and we acknowledge those regrets that are best let go...

Know this... there are gifts with your name on them called "Grace," called "Forgiveness," called "Assurance." They are yours whenever you accept and open them. They are already and always there for you... you do not have to "be good enough" to get them. They are there because that is the nature of our loving God, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

Leader: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, so that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his love.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

#### **BREAKING BREAD AND POURING WINE**

L: The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

L: The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.

L: The gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all things are ready.

SHARING THE MEAL Everyone is welcome to this meal of love and grace.

You will be served in your seats.

Wait to eat and drink until the Pastor invites you to do so.

A non-gluten option with juice is available in a prepackaged container on the bread tray.

Both red wine and white grape juice are on the tray of cups. Please choose either.

#### THE BREAD

Carol #131 It Came Upon A Midnight Clear New Century Hymnal/Black Hymnal

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;
Peace on the earth, good will to all, great news of joy we bring
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled And still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing And ever o'er its Babel sound the blessed angels sing

And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way, with painful steps and slow
Look now, for glad and golden hours

come swiftly on the wing
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold, When with the ever-circling years comes round the age of gold When peace shall over all the earth it's ancient splendors fling, And all the world send back the song which now the angels sing.

L: Take and eat, the body of Christ, broken for you.

#### THE CUP

#### **Music Offering**

Once in Royal David's City arr. David Willcocks **Jacob Roth**, Organ; **Mitchell Roth**, Trumpet

L: Take and drink, this is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you.

#### The Blessing

L: May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, keep and preserve you unto eternal life.

#### **COLLECTING OF CUPS**

Music Offering Cantique de Noel (O Holy Night) Adolphe Adam, transcribed by G.E. Holmes Craig Knauss, clarinet Mitchell Roth, trumpet Blake Hoppes, piano

#### Candlelighting

Leader: I want to invite us to get our candles ready to be lit. But before we move immediately to celebrating the light, I want us to take a moment to sit and enjoy the gift of the darkness. Darkness is holy... it was in the dark of the night that Jesus was born from the dark of a womb. Our lives might not always feel "calm" or "bright." But that does not mean that God is not present. It means that God is growing something within us, just waiting to be born. Too often we rush out of the times when we aren't sure what is next for us. But if we sit with the darkness for a moment, our eyes begin to adjust, helping us to see more clearly. May we give ourselves the gift of time and room this season to be present, without judgement, to "what is" — to just be... present. If you are comfortable doing so, take a deep breath with me and turn your candles on and let's sing.

\*Carol Silent Night, Holy Night
Jacob Roth, Organ

Directions: Turn your candle on when the music begins and join in singing.

ALL: 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

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,

### Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born

#### **RAISE YOUR CANDLE:**

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

#### \*Benediction

[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]

Leader: Friends, the carol is over, but again, let us not rush to leave before we take in this moment fully. The Gift of the Light of Incarnation — God with us always — cannot help but spread. As we look around at the faces lit by our candles, what is revealed is the abundance of gifts that we are given — the presence of community, of each other. We are not alone. And we are deeply grateful.

"The good news of Jesus Christ is that God is with us, no matter what, no matter where, no matter when. There is no place you can go where God is not, no time of the day when God is off the clock.

This is the teaching of the Incarnation, God with us, Emmanuel."

Thank you for your presence here tonight. What a gift.

So now go and be truly present in the world so you may be a gift of presence for others.

That's all that is expected —

## that the gift that is YOU is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence, the Divine Gift, and the Spirit of Light that is just waiting for us to unwrap abundant life.

Merry Christmas!

#### \*Closing Carol

\* Carol Joy To The World Jacob Roth, Organ

#### AII:

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
 Let earth receive her King;
 Let every heart prepare Him room,
 And heaven and nature sing.
 And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns: Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found. Merry Christmas! Enjoy the Lights in the Grove, they will be on every night until the New Year.

#### Postlude Music

Worship Theme ©www.worshipdesignstudio.com

**Thank you** to our team of angels and elves for their work in decorating the church for Christmas: Claire Kern, Deb Topp, Kathy Bonsell, Kathy Milander, Maryann and Claire Puia, Tiffany Lakatosh, Miranda Brown, and our Children, Worship Committee – Susan Glosan, Edie Fella, Ron Pope, Dan Haftl, Julie & Phil Wehr, Eric & Pam Minnich family, Pastors Kayli and Kris.

Sound Team: Doug Albert, Mike Baer, Pat Sorg, Karl

Klinger, Dawn Dengler **Lighting:** Damon Gelb

**Thank you** to our Poinsettia Sponsors and our Helping Hearts and Communion Ministers and Pastor Carrie for delivery to those on our Visitation List.

Thank you to all who helped to make our Advent and Christmas so meaningful. Thank you to everyone who helped clean and decorate our sanctuary, church, and grove. Thank you to those who served as choir members, musicians, ushers, and worship participants. Thank you to our staff, Consistory, and leaders for giving your time and talents so generously.

Giving God thanks for your Christmas spirit now and all year long!

#### **INFORMATION FORM AND SURVEY**

Members if you haven't yet completed the information form and survey that was sent to you, please do so as soon as possible. This form includes letting us know about your membership status and offers a chance for you to participate in a survey.

<u>Please complete</u> the form either by using the online link provided or by completing a paper copy and returning it to the church.

If you do not want to complete the survey portion that's fine, but please complete the information part of the form and check off your membership status.

Here's the online link to complete it: <a href="https://forms.gle/JEZM4v4EcZ29EktMA">https://forms.gle/JEZM4v4EcZ29EktMA</a>

Paper copies are available in the lobby on Sundays or you can contact the church office for additional paper copies to be mailed to you.

Thank you for your help.



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#### In Honor Of:

Grandchildren: Emilia, Zoey, Cole, &

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Sister & Brother-in-law: Nancy & Albert Grandchildren: Tyler, Kaylee, Emileigh,

Julia, & Hudson

Grandchildren: Ethan, Clay, Carolyn, &

Our Grandchildren

Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren

My Sons: Darren & Jordan

Grandchildren: Kate, Luke, Carson, and

Logan

Our Family Marilyn Sechler

Michele Motter and Tracy Snyder

Family

#### In Memory Of:

Parents

Mom & Dad, and Ray Arey

Loved Ones Gerald Blose **Beloved Parents** 

Donald & Peggy Ressler, Gleonice &

Borman, Jr. Mary Christ

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and Mother: Marjorie Wenhold

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Lynne Klinger

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Loved Ones
Jack & Janice Liscka
Loved Ones

#### **EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY**

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)		Attenda	ın
Last Week	\$7,942.00	8:00 am	)
Calendar Year 2023 (JanOct)	\$ 308,275.00	10:30 am	1
Calendar Year 2022 (JanOct.)	\$ 309,414.00	Education H	lou
Change from Last Year	-0.4%	Online Views	
Budget FY 2023-24 (July-Oct.)	\$ 128,120.00	Breathe 2023 Do	
Actual Fiscal Year-to- Date (July-Oct.)	\$ 11,2,231.00	Northern L	.el
Difference in Giving vs. Budget	-12.4%	Last Week:	,
Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes		Total YTD:	

Attendance Last Week	
56	
144	
20	
536	

2023 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	\$, lbs
Total	6,9707lbs,
YTD:	\$1310

**Christmas Mission Donations** 

\$1,446.00

#### Presentations to the Glory of God

In Memory of Lucille and Paul Schellenberger -Donna Schellenberger and family

## In Memory of Loved Ones by Richard & Barbara Carinci

Be a sponsor for \$20, send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News or \$8 for Children's Bulletin. Contact Marissa to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.

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