

The Visitor

December 2020

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 103 Issue 11

A publication of St. John's United Church of Christ

A Message from the Designated Pulpit Supply Minister:
Rev. J. Martin (Marty) Westermeyer

We are preparing to enter the Season of Advent beginning on Sunday, November 29th. During the four Sundays of Advent we will set aside a time to light our Advent Candles. There are five candles in our Advent Wreath. The four to be lit on the Sundays preceding Christmas symbolize: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

On Christmas Eve we will light all the candles including the large one which symbolizes Christ. Please plan to be with us during this time of anticipation and celebration of Christ's coming to us.

To help with your daily devotions during this time of the year, I have included Scripture Readings below to be used throughout the week. My sincere hope is that you may benefit from these readings and that they make your preparation of the coming Christ Child meaningful and relevant.

Week One: November 29-December 5:

1) Mark 13:35-37; 2) Isaiah 40:9 3) Isaiah 11:1; 4) Isaiah 25:7-8; 5) James 5:7-8; 6) Matthew 9:27; 7) Isaiah 30:19.

Week Two: December 6-12:

1) 2 Peter 3:13-14; 2) Isaiah 35:10; 3) Isaiah 2:2-3; 4) Matthew 11:28-29; 5) Matthew 11:11; 6) Isaiah 48:17-18; 7) John 16:16.

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Week Three: December 13-19

1) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 2) Psalm 72:11-12; 3) Zephaniah 3:12-13; 4) Isaiah 45:6-7; 5) Luke 7:24-26; 6) Matthew 1:1-2; 7) Matthew 1:20.

Week Four: December 20-26

1) Luke 1:38; 2) Isaiah 7:14; 3) Psalm 3:2-4; 4) Luke 1:46-47; 5) Zephaniah 3:14; 6) Luke 1:68; 7) John 1:3-5.

Christmas Day:

Isaiah 9:2-3.

Advent Prayer:

God, you are master of both light and darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We, who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We, who are anxious over many things, look forward to your coming among us. We, who are blessed in so many ways, long for the complete joy of your reign. We, whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.

Merry Christmas to all of you! May these days and all your days be full of love, beauty, meaning and may the Holy Spirit be in and through all the moments. Let us give thanks for the wonder and miracle of the Incarnation – “the word made flesh”, and may new wonders and miracles be yours this season and all through 2021.

Continue to share the faith - see you in church!

Pastor Marty



Interim Note

During the past month, I have continued to be involved with organizing the Sunday Service and assisting in leading the Worship experience – both the online/virtual service and on Sunday mornings. I am still reaching out with calls and/or notes to members of the congregation. I have officiated at funerals for persons connected to St. John’s UCC. As I write this we are canceling Sunday Worship until further notice, but hope to reopen during Advent. I hope you are able to access the service online and experience the continued presence of God.

As we are beginning to move into the New Year, I would also request that you think about our journey into 2021. How do you see God at work at St. John’s UCC and in your life? In what ways might you and the church need healing and grow? With the issue of the virus situation, how does the church approach the future: How to Worship? How to do ministry? How to be together safely? But most importantly – how is God working in our midst and in our lives?

An Update from the Pastoral Search Committee

From the Pastoral Search Committee: The search committee is still hard at work reading profiles and setting up interviews. Thanks to Laura, Dave, Kyle and Tim for keeping things going while I was recuperating post surgery. You guys are the best!

Pat



A Prayer for our Pastoral Search Committee

Almighty and ever living God, look favorably upon us, the people of the Holy Comforter, in this time of transition as we search for a new pastor. We pray for the life of our congregation, that we may continue to be guided by your love and strengthened in our mission to serve you through ministry, fellowship and worship. We pray for the search committee, that their hearts and minds may be open to what your spirit is saying. We pray for the pastor whose name is yet known to you alone, that he or she be open to your call. Give us your grace to follow where you would lead us and grant us your peace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.





Virtual Christmas Concert



In many respects the year 2020 has proven to be a real downer in all of our lives. For the first time since I have been on the music staff at St. John's we cannot have a live Christmas Concert due to the pandemic. But as the angel said to the shepherds, "Fear Not!" Our choral director Dobin Park has been busy preparing and recording a virtual Christmas Concert for all of us to enjoy. Yes, the tradition will continue!

We have already recorded the music with our wonderful Choral Scholars, and we will be bringing our choir members back for the grand finale. Yes, all of our choir members will be part of the concert!!!

The concert will feature the cantata "The Road to Bethlehem" by Lloyd Larson. This lovely piece recalls the Christmas story through music and narration. The cantata will be accompanied by both piano and organ.

The concert will be up for viewing on Sunday, December 20th. After that, it will be available for viewing throughout the entire Christmas season.

We hope this concert will bring joy and happiness to your Christmas season!!!



Food Pantry Update

The Food Pantry continues to be open each Thursday and Mike, Joette, Rose, Roger and Ralph faithfully show up every Thursday to serve our clients.

We will again be passing out our famous Red Christmas bags.

Thanks to the congregation and all our supporters for their prayers and support to give some joy and Christmas spirit.

Wanda Quinn



Prayer Ministry Update

The following letter is from Sgt. Josef Bazhaw who has served almost six years in the United States Army National Guard. He has been very grateful to be on the St. John's Military Prayer list. Josef is also the great-nephew of Joan Berkemeyer and Don Berkemeyer.

St. John's United Church of Christ,

Thank you for your daily prayers for me while I was stationed in Kuwait for eleven months. Now, I am safely home and living in Texas. Please continue to pray for me as I do my civilian work and until my next active duty for the United States National Guard.



Sincerely,
Sgt. Josef Bazhaw

Gifts to the Manger Community Christmas Ministry **Washington United Church of Christ**

Special Request: We request no violent games or toys. No wrapping of gifts (but DO include wrapping paper, etc.)

Monetary Donations are needed and appreciated: We will do the shopping! Please send to: Christmas Ministry, Washington UCC, 2950 Sidney Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45225

Toys: We need toys for all ages-especially for teens (toiletries, jewelry, hand held video games, CD players, anything electronic is very popular). We need basketballs, Connect 4 games, action figures, cars and trucks. We need infant toys, ethnic baby dolls and Barbie clothes.



Last day to bring gifts to church is Sunday, December 6, 2020

Choral Scholars & Music Fund Matching Donation Campaign

A generous challenge has been issued in our congregation to support the Joe Haas Sr. Choral Scholars Fund and Music Fund! A wonderful couple in our church who are long time supporters of our music program have agreed to match your donation dollar for dollar up to \$10,000. This fund provides a stipend to our CCM students for their leadership in our Chancel Choir and the music fund is used to buy music for our choir and to pay for guest instrumentalists who come to play for our services. None of these funds are taken from the general fund and are solely dependent on your generous gifts. Please prayerfully consider taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity to maintain high quality music in our worship services. Be sure that your gifts are marked for "Choral Scholars Fund." **The Matching Pledge Challenge will end Monday, December 14th. Thank you!**



Thank You Dan & Flo Grey

Holiday thanks to Dan and Flo Grey for the generous donation of our Christmas tree for the sanctuary. This tree adds a festive touch and beauty to our sanctuary for the Christmas season. While we will miss the old tree, our volunteers were very happy with the ease of putting up this new tree! Merry Christmas!



Thank You to our Christmas Volunteers

A big thank you to Carol Fickenscher, Ralph Schoulthies, Kyle Taylor, Donnie Carr, Mike Hanson, Dobin Park and Michael Sullivan for decorating our sanctuary for the Christmas season. We appreciate all of the hard work they put into making our sanctuary beautiful for the holiday season. Even though we cannot worship in person this season, we can still enjoy the beauty of our sanctuary through our online services.

Happy Holidays to all!



A Thank You Note from Pat Goins

Thank you to everyone for the thoughts, prayers, cards, and flowers you sent my way after my heart surgery, and to Pastor Marty for the phone calls checking up on me. Your kindness and thoughtfulness was definitely appreciated. Will be glad when this Covid is under control and I will be able to return to church to see all of you! Stay safe!
Pat Goins



2021 Church Offering Envelopes and Church Directories

The 2021 church offering envelopes and church directories are available to be picked up in the hallway by the church office. You can stop by to pick yours up any day. The church office is open Monday-Wednesday 9:00 am-3:00pm and Thursday-Friday 9:00am-1:00pm. If you would prefer contactless delivery, just call the church office and Kelli will bring them to your car.

St. John's Provides Trick or Treat Bags for the Students of Trent Montessori School

On Friday, October 30th the students from Trent Montessori School were all treated to bags of Halloween treats from St. John's UCC. Each student received a bag filled with candy, snacks, puzzles, a small toy as well as a card inviting each student and their family to attend worship with us here at St John's on Sunday morning.

The bags were greatly appreciated and allowed each student to have a happy Halloween.

St. John's UCC Online Worship Services

Can't come to church? Below are the various ways that you can continue to stay connected to our worship life together. You will still be able to access the bulletin and order of worship for Sunday on our church website (www.stjohnsuccnewport.org). You will be able to access the worship services in several different ways:

Call in (audio only)

This method ONLY works starting at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays. To access this each Sunday, you can do the following:

- at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays, call either 929-205-6099 or 312-626-6799 (either number will work).

- You will then be (quickly and repeatedly) prompted to enter a meeting ID – that ID is 997-401- 6614. **You will also have to put in a password, you will need to type in 123 here.**

- You will then be asked a participant ID. There is no need to enter a number. Simply hit # on your phone and you will be connected to the audio of the service.

Video

You can access the video of the worship service starting at 10:30 a.m. ET each Sunday and it will be available any time after that as well. There are multiple ways to access the video of the worship service.

St. John's UCC website

<http://www.stjohnsuccnewport.org>

St. John's UCC Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsuccnewport>

St. John's YouTube Channel

<https://tinyurl.com/y8jmgxq5>

Next Visitor Deadline: Tuesday, December 22, 2020

If you would like to submit an article or receive *The Visitor* via email please contact StJohnsUCC@StJohnsUCCNewport.org.

You may also visit the "News" heading on our website and fill out the appropriate form.

A digital copy of *The Visitor* can be accessed at our website: StJohnsUCCNewport.org under our "News Section."



Bonnie Hoffmann and the Memory of June Jana Honored

On Sunday, November 1st the Leadership Team honored Bonnie Hoffmann and June Jana for their service and dedication to St. John's.

Bonnie Hoffmann was recognized in appreciation for "50" years of dedicated service to St. John's United Church of Christ. Her service to the children of St. John's will be remembered for years to come. A reception to honor Bonnie will be held at a later date when we can all get together again after COVID restrictions have been lifted. A plaque was dedicated in her honor.

June Jana's memory was honored for her dedicated service to the youth and loving gifts to the people of St. John's. A plaque was dedicated in her memory and honor.

St. John's is very appreciative of the work and dedications of these two individuals through the years. Thank you!

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

December Birthdays

December 1st: Pam Schierberg
December 4th: Barbara Boyers & Phil Hamilton
December 5th: Blakely & Greyson Rice
December 7th: Barbara Caudill
December 8th: Bill Seibert Jr.
December 9th: Ralph Schoulthies
December 15th: Charli Burns, Karen Schofield & Janet Wendel
December 18th: Eric Haas
December 21st: John Westlund
December 22nd: Robert Slater
December 25th: Betty Webster
December 26th: Gerry Krebs & Brad Wendel
December 27th: Elizabeth Schwalbach
December 30th: Jan Kreutzer



December Anniversaries

December 2nd: Gary & Patty Wagner (2 years)



St. John's would like to wish a happy birthday and happy anniversary to our friends and family celebrating during the month of December!

Christmas Word Search



G L E T W C R S T O C K I N G
Y I P I D A E R B R E G N I G
A C O V T R P Y A E C E F F U
R E A S L E Q I X O C T A P Z
E M I R Y H A U D P S A J O N
S E A P O B E T H L E H E M I
N R U L O L D O N T F O S P U
A R L S L E I G H A A S U D O
M Y N O K L T T O Y S I S H R
W C E N E M E S I W F E T A N
O B M K A J L O Z Y E G V M A
N E R N O L U H M G O T E L M
S O G I E O Y D N A C X O N E
V E R B I J O T H U W B K A N
R E E D N I E R Q C A E E R T



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|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Bells | 9. Holly | 17. Sleigh |
| 2. Bethlehem | 10. Jesus | 18. Snowman |
| 3. Candy | 11. Manger | 19. Star |
| 4. Carol | 12. Merry | 20. Stocking |
| 5. Christmas | 13. Ornament | 21. Toys |
| 6. Elves | 14. Peace | 22. Tree |
| 7. Gifts | 15. Reindeer | 23. Wisemen |
| 8. Gingerbread | 16. Santa | 24. Yuletide |

In Loving Memory of, and In Honor of...

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Diane Wendeln

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Carol & Barry Peper

Joseph Haas Sr. Choral Scholarship Fund & Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Walter & Helen Berkemeyer ~ Joan Berkemeyer

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Joan Berkemeyer

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Larry & Sue Miller

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Larry & Michelle Miller

In Loving Memory of Betty Adams ~ Martha Malone

Memorial Fund

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Linda Meier

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Victoria & Joseph Sampson

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Megan Sampson

In Loving Memory of Gail Miller ~ Jacqueline Darnel

In Loving Memory of Barry Peper ~ Dan & Flo Grey

In Loving Memory of Rob Hawkins ~ Jan & Darlene Knepshield

