

The Visitor

March 2024

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

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A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

These last few weeks have been a whirlwind for me. With the death of Betty, getting ready for Lent, making sure arrangements for family to be present for Memorial Service, and working out details of the Memorial Service: I'm not quite on top of things as I usually am. But God does not leave us alone, and God has been present through this journey.

I have said numerous times in the last 3 weeks or so how overwhelmed I have been with the outpouring of support for Betty's family and me. I (we) can't thank you enough for the cards, phone calls, texts, FB messages, personal presence, emails, etc., in making us aware that you were there for us. You may not realize how important and meaningful all those words were/are to me (us), but they are!

Saturday, February 17th, Betty's Funeral/Memorial/Celebration of Life Service was held. And again, I was overwhelmed by the presence of those who attended.

I posted on FB:

"The important people were gathered: Betty's children and spouses, our three granddaughters, and our seven great grandchildren. My family and extended family were in attendance as well. All the church's I had served either as settled Pastor or Transitional/Interim were represented, as well as folks from Betty's life and mine we have met along this journey of life.

It was a blessing to have all of you there in one place to remember and honor my wife, my love, my partner in life, Betty."

On to the business at hand – we began the Season of Lent as we gathered for Ash Wednesday Service and the First Sunday in Lent. We celebrated Communion at both those Worship experiences. Reminder that we will not celebrate Communion in Worship until Maundy Thursday Service, March 28, 2024. As is tradition, Communion will be offered on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024.

During our faith journey during Lent, we are encouraged to take a look at our faith and see how we may look differently at our lives, our work, our church, and understand better God's presence among us – and maybe, be transformed.

To assist in that, there will be Mid-Week Lenten Programs/Services, beginning Wednesday, February 20th and concluding on Wednesday, March 20th. Two times to meet will be offered each week to accommodate as many as possible. During the day, we will meet at 1:00 pm and the other will be at 6:00 pm. We will run for 1 ½ - 2 hours. There will be Worship/Devotion time with discussion. Following, will be time to address 2-3 questions each week about St. John's UCC. The purpose of the gatherings is to begin to gather information for the church profile. And to also acquaint ourselves with how we feel, think and understand St. John's UCC. It is my hope you will take time to be part of all or part of these times together on Wednesdays during Lent. There will also be a questionnaire to fill out and return to the church office.

I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2 NRSV)

The translators of many modern translations understand the structure of this Hebrew sentence differently. They write something like, "I look at the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from God." As we are in this journey of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection, we are reminded of the true source of the help we experience. Our help is not what society or the world tells us, which seems to be impersonal forces in a cold, uncaring universe, but of a loving God, the Creator of the universe. And this God has as two major attributes: love and compassion, some of which were made part of our nature when, as Genesis tells us, we were "made in the image of God." So, as we move through this Lenten Season, where do you go when you seek your help from God? And as you seek, do you feel love and compassion from God? And, lastly, do you remember that you are "made in the image of God"?

May God continue to be in our lives as we journey together to make decisions for ourselves and for our church!

Prayer Ministry-March Blessings

May you have
The gladness of Easter
Which is HOPE.
The promise of Easter
Which is PEACE.
The spirit of Easter
Which is LOVE.



If the only prayer you ever say in your whole life is Thank You, that would suffice.

Smile, it will make you feel better
Pray, it will keep you strong
Love, it will make you enjoy life.

Every day God fills our lives with so much goodness.
All we need to do is open our eyes and give thanks for each of them.

MID-WEEK LENTEN PROGRAMS

Mid-Week Lenten Programs/Services will begin **Wednesday, February 21, 2024** and conclude on **Wednesday, March 20, 2024**. Two times to meet will be offered each week to accommodate as many people as possible. During the day, we will meet at **1:00 p.m.** and the other program/service will be at **6:00 p.m.** Light snacks will be provided. The programs/services will run for 1 1/2 to 2 hours and will meet in the chapel. Join us during Lent for these special programs.

ALL CHURCH QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the Transitional Minister/Interim Ministry role, Pastor Marty is asking all members to fill out a questionnaire. It is quite comprehensive (and long) and may seem overwhelming. It is very important that **each individual member** fill one out to gather information to assist the committee in creating a Church Profile in the future. The deadline to return the questionnaire is Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact Pastor Marty. Pick up a packet at church today or on Sunday morning.

EASTER BREAKFAST AT ST. JOHN'S

The Leadership Team will be coming together to serve an Easter Breakfast to all of our members and friends. Please join us on Sunday, March 31st beginning at 8:15 a.m. in Fellowship Hall for a breakfast of pastries, coffee cakes, different breakfast casseroles, and drinks. All we need you to do is just show up as the Leadership Team is providing this to thank everyone for all that you do for St. John's. We hope you can join us for a delicious meal and fellowship before we join together in the celebration of our Easter Service.



LUNCH BUNCH
Wednesday, March 13th
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Bring your own lunch
Drinks and dessert provided

**JOIN
US
For
LUNCH**



Sunday, March 24th Palm Sunday



10:00 a.m. Worship Service

"And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" Matthew 21:9

Thursday, March 28th Maundy Thursday



7:00 p.m. Worship Service/
Communion

"I am giving you a new commandment. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples." John 13:34-35



Sunday, March 31st Easter

8:15 a.m. Easter Breakfast

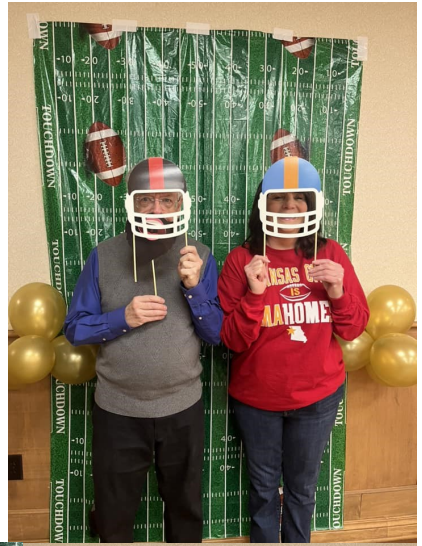
10:00 a.m. Worship Service/
Communion and Special Music

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it." John 3:17

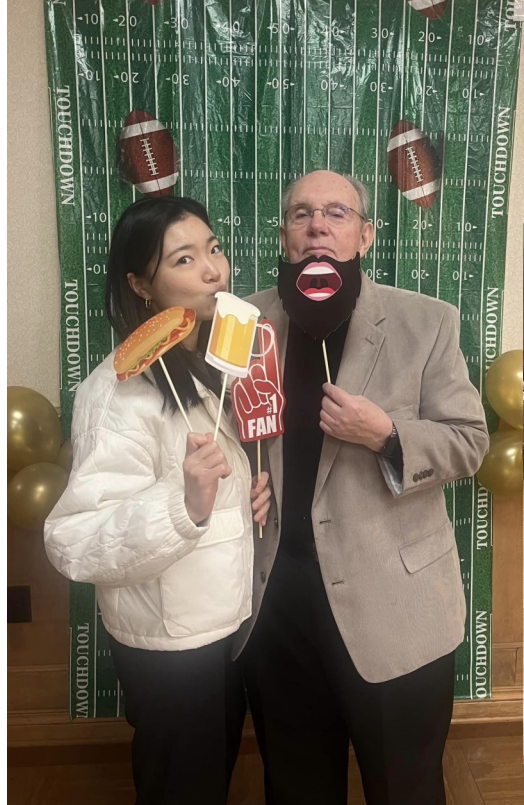
An invitation from you may be the only thing keeping a friend from visiting St. John's church. Share with them the difference Christ has made in you. Invite them to join you for services during Holy Week and the Easter season.

“Souper Bowl” Sunday a Success

Our “Souper Bowl” Sunday luncheon was a huge success. We collected many canned goods to deliver to the Washington UCC food pantry. The luncheon was great fun. Many different homemade soups were available, along with sandwiches and desserts. We had many fun photo opportunities for everyone to take part in. Thanks to all the cooks and helpers who worked on this project, and special thanks to Carol Thompson and Julie Ollier for organizing this event. It was great fun!!!







Shirley Rice Birthday Celebration

On Sunday, February 19th during worship, we recognized longtime member Shirley Rice on the occasion of her 90th birthday. Shirley's family surprised her by providing a lovely birthday luncheon for the entire congregation following worship. Happy Birthday Shirley! We wish for you many blessings on this your special day!



ST. JOHN'S UCC ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICE

You will be able to access the worship service by following the link below:

St. John's UCC website (This is the Sunday morning worship service-audio only)

<https://www.stjohnsuccnewport.org>



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within Wider Church Ministries.

On Sunday, March 10, 2024 St. John's UCC will participate in One Great Hour of Sharing by collecting a special offering on that day. Please consider giving to this special project.



ST. JOHN'S GIFT IN HONOR OF BETTY WESTERMEYER

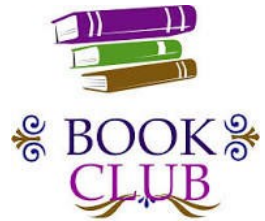
The Leadership Team of St. John's wanted to inform everyone of the gifts that were given to Pastor Marty and local organizations to honor the life and legacy of Betty Westermeyer. The church presented a floral arrangement for the memorial service that took place on Saturday, February 17th. The church also presented a donation in the amount of \$130 to the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Cincinnati to help find a cure for Alzheimer's and promote groups and resources that are available for those facing this condition and their caregivers. The Leadership Team also presented, from their own personal funds, a memorial bench for Pastor Marty to take and use as a way to remember the life he shared with Betty. We hope these gifts have helped honor Betty and provided some support to Pastor Marty.

CHURCH BOOK CLUB - ALL ARE WELCOME!

Saturday March 23, 1:00 – 2:30pm, church parlor

Twelve Extraordinary Women by John F MacArthur

These women were ordinary, common, and in some cases even ostracized and rejected by society, yet each was made extraordinary by her life-changing encounter with God.



In *Twelve Extraordinary Women*, bestselling author and Bible teacher John MacArthur shows us that the God to whom they were so faithful is the same God who continues to mold and guide us today.

As you meet these women in Scripture and get to know more about their lives and characters, they will challenge you, motivate you, encourage you, and inspire you with love for the God whom they trusted, served, and loved, teaching us that:

- Our personal struggles and temptations are the very same kinds of trials that all believers of all ages have confronted
- Even in the midst of our trouble, God remains eternally faithful
- Through God, anyone can become extraordinary

From Eve to the Samaritan Woman, these twelve women each serve as reminders of both our frailty and our potential. Together, they all point us to Christ and His grace.

If you have any questions reach out to Laura Haas or call the church office. No sign ups required.

WASHINGTON UCC NEEDS YOUR HELP

Washington UCC is in need of men's gently used clothing. If you have any closets to clean out and have something to donate, please bring it to church and we will take it over to Washington UCC for you. Thanks for your help with this project.



March Birthdays



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

March 3rd: Marcia Schmidt-Birthday 03/10
 March 10th: Peggy Westlund
 March 17th: Henry Marksberry-Birthday 03/26
 March 24th: Betty Hasse
 March 31st: Betty Webster

NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: THURSDAY,
MARCH 21, 2024

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.”

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

Memorial Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Mary Haas ~ Betty & Robert Hasse
In Loving Memory of Mary Haas ~ Fred & Mary Espensched
In Loving Memory of Carol Marksberry ~ Betty & Robert Hasse
In Loving Memory of Barbara Runge ~ Betty & Robert Hasse
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Jan & Darlene Kneppshield
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Dr. Michael Hanson
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Paul Bergmann
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Kelli & Scott Taylor
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Flo Grey

Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Mary Haas ~ Bruce & Marjory Barkhau
In Loving Memory of Barbara Runge ~ Sara & Drew Gaskins
In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Jim & Carol Thompson

Flower Fund

In Loving Memory of Barbara Runge ~ Joanna & Winston Haas

Joseph Haas Sr. Choral Scholars Fund

In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ John & Elizabeth Robson

General Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Betty Westermeyer ~ Ralph & Carol Schoulthies

THANK YOU NOTE

St. John’s United Church of Christ,

My 9 years of Army military service have ended. Thank you for all of your years of prayers for my family and me.

God Bless,

Retired Sgt. Cody Taylor