

The Visitor

April 2024

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 107 Issue 4

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

A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

Many thanks to you, who offered me condolences and wishes in person, used electronic means, sent cards or attended Betty's Celebration of Life Service. All of your thoughts and prayers and presence in my life are greatly appreciated. It is a reminder that we do not journey this life alone – but with others – together!

As I write this, Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter will soon be upon us. And in our faith life, we are preparing ourselves for the rollercoaster week prior to Easter. We celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem; follow him to the upper room and the garden; then to the arrest, trial and crucifixion. We gather on Maundy Thursday and then we wait in grief and separation from Good Friday to the Resurrection Celebration on Easter Sunday.

I asked you in last month's Visitor as we moved through the 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"? For those who have attended some of the Mid-Week Lenten Discussion groups, those types of questions were raised there as well.

As we continue the journey of Lent to Easter and beyond, I would encourage you to return to these questions and after Easter to keep them before you as we journey together into the rest of the year. What people of faith (you and I) are to be about as we live everyday is to keep asking the questions in the above paragraph.

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I would be interested if you would share with me when you have those interactions with God – what may have occurred or happened. You may do that in personal conversation with me, in a conversation with others or even during Prayer Time on Sunday morning. We are to share with others the “Good News”, which is really only when we realize we are in the presence of God. I pray you will be willing to share with me and with others as you are comfortable.

May we continue to journey in this life not alone, BUT together!
Together with one another and together with God!!

On to the business at hand – we have not celebrated Communion throughout Lent, but will at our Maundy Thursday Service. March 28, 2024. As is tradition, Communion will be offered on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024. There will be no Communion celebrated in April - but beginning in May, we will be back to the first Sunday of the month.

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

Prayer Ministry-April Blessings

April Thoughts

If you light a lamp for someone it will also brighten your own path.

FAITH goes up the stairs that
LOVE has built and looks out the window that
HOPE has opened.

PRAY when you feel like worrying
Give THANKS when you feel like complaining
Keep GOING when you feel like quitting.



Happiness blooms where seeds of love and joy are planted.

AMBIGUOUS LOSS

My brain pondered Kelli's prompt for an article for *The Visitor*. What do I know/experience in my service for St. John's that is worth sharing? And then a segment of *CBS Saturday Morning* brought me to an old concept: Ambiguous Loss. I experience it daily in some form — so do you. And if not now, you have had your own confrontation with ambiguous loss in years past.

What is it? It means a loss that is ever so sloooooow. It is by another term the Long Goodbye. One definition is “a person's profound (that is the critical word — profound) sense of loss and sadness that is not associated with a death of a loved one.” It can be a loss of emotional connection when a person's physical presence remains but their mind (their personality—their love and sense of humor, etc.) is lost. Often, there isn't a sense of closure. You — the living —can't move on.

As an example, I see it when I visit folks who live in Memory Units. The Rev. Marksberry and Ms. Carol comes to mind. I saw 64 +/- years of a devoted marriage/love affair in front of my eyes. They would always be together, often in an open space — sometimes on a secluded patio — and Henry tending to Carol. His eyes never wavering. He'd prompt her that I was there to chat. He'd prompt her through communion and taking the wafer. Ms. Carol was physically present, her beauty was still there; but, her mind mostly in other realms. I say mostly, because there would be bits of light come into our conversations. Rev. Henry grieved at what had become of the love of his life. I could see it.

Gone mentally, but present physically. Ambiguous Loss.

I've read some peer-reviewed articles and they agree on one thing: you and I need to call and visit and give a hug, hold a hand. And I speak not just of Ms. Carol and those whose minds have taken a holiday; but, more especially of Rev. Henry and all the Henry's of life. They need recognition that they are grieving each day. Think of how you honor a life of a person by attending their funeral. You go to give words of sympathy and a hug to surviving children and spouse. Well, do so also for those who find themselves in that long journey into night. Sending a card with your words asking how they are and sharing news of your life — it helps and the card will be kept! Visiting if possible and giving a hug. Loneliness is a competent of Ambiguous Loss. And pray. And pray. And pray.

Blessings,
Pastor John



Baptism



On Sunday, March 3rd during worship, we had the privilege of baptizing Hank Eugene Sester. Hank is the son of Shane and Abby Sester. We pray God's blessing on Hank and on his beautiful family. Congratulations on your baptism.

"You are a child of God, you are wonderfully made, dearly loved, and precious in His sight." -Psalm 139

Quote of the Day

Just because your miracle didn't happen today doesn't mean it won't happen tomorrow. Don't lose faith and hold hope in your heart. God always answers in the right time.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Sunday, March 10, 2024 St. John's UCC participated in One Great Hour of Sharing and collected **\$1,050.00**. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this special project.



WASHINGTON UCC CLOTHING DRIVE

Thank you to Laura Haas and Jim Breyer who took over 10 bags/boxes of men's clothing to Washington UCC to help re-stock their clothing closet. Washington UCC was in need of men's gently used clothing and St. John's once again stepped up to help. Thank you to everyone who took the time to clean out their closets and donate clothing.



Upcoming Church Business Meeting

Leadership Team Meeting:
Saturday, April 13, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.
Church Parlor





BRIGHTON CENTER

A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

PO Box 325 • Newport, KY 41072-0325 • 859.491.8303 • Fax 859.491.8702 • www.brightoncenter.com

February 28, 2024

St. John's United Church of Christ
415 Park Avenue
Newport, KY 41071-1793

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your generous contribution of \$761.00 to Brighton Center. Gifts like yours enable us to achieve our mission of creating opportunities for families and individuals to reach self-sufficiency through family support services, education, employment, and leadership.

Since 1966, we have grown to provide a wide range of programs and services that work together seamlessly to ensure families have access to the combination of services that will help them reach financial stability and independence. Last year, because of generous donors like you, more than 24,000 individuals, from infants to older adults, all had a place to turn to when needed. To the right of this letter, you will see our impact from our most recently completed fiscal year.

Your generous support ensures that we can continue supporting families like Whitney's on their journey toward financial stability and independence well into the future.

"In just one year, I went from being abruptly told I needed to relocate due to my apartment complex being sold to owning my own home, all thanks to the support of Brighton Center. I was four months into my homeownership journey with the Financial Wellness team at Brighton Center when I was given notice to vacate the apartment complex, I'd been living in for seven years. We had to leave much of our belongings behind and sleep on family members' couches for about a year. The people at Brighton Center never gave up on me and kept working with me to pay off my debts, increase my savings, and learn about all the different parts of homeownership. I recently received pre-approval for a mortgage and closed on our new home. I don't know where I would be without Brighton Center and its Homeownership Program."

We invite you to see your impact firsthand by scheduling a tour. Contact development@brightoncenter.com. With your support, we will continue helping families achieve their hopes and dreams and have the best quality of life possible.

Thank you for being an essential part of our community of support.

With much gratitude,

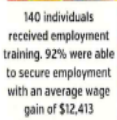
Wonda
Wonda Winkler
President & CEO

*Thank you for all
you do for the Center
& our families!*

Brighton Center, Inc. confirms that we did not provide any goods or services in connection with this gift.



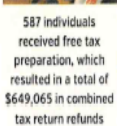
95% of the children enrolled for a minimum of twelve months in our child care centers were assessed age-appropriate in cognitive and language skills



140 individuals received employment training. 92% were able to secure employment with an average wage gain of \$12.413



48 individuals became homeowners



587 individuals received free tax preparation, which resulted in a total of \$649,065 in combined tax return refunds



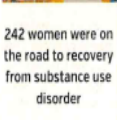
6,146 individuals received food, diapers, and personal care items and 275 families avoided eviction or a utility disconnect



5,218 individuals received employment services



192 youth were enrolled in Youth Leadership Development and 80% demonstrated the social and emotional skills necessary for success



242 women were on the road to recovery from substance use disorder

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TRENT MONTESSORI STUDENTS SAY THANK YOU ST. JOHN'S!

The students from Trent Montessori School were all smiles and laughter when they received their Easter bags filled with candy and treats thanks to St. John's.

We want to thank Carol Fickenschier and David and Diana Stamm for assembling 88 treat bags for the students of Trent Montessori and our kids at St. John's.



Congratulations St. John's on another successful outreach project!

AN EASTER SURPRISE FOR OUR KIDS AT ST. JOHN'S

On Easter morning each child in attendance received a small bag full of candy and small treats.

We hope that this small gesture provided smiles for all of our kids. Happy Easter to everyone!!



THANK YOU CAROL FICKENSCHER

We thank Carol Fickenschier for her hard work and dedication with decorating our sanctuary this Easter season. We all enjoyed the beauty of the tulips and lilies that were displayed throughout the sanctuary thanks to her hard work. Thank you Carol!



DART BALL LEAGUE

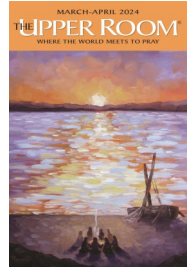
Starting this fall, Pastor Marty is looking for individuals who might be interested in resuming our dart ball league. The Northern Kentucky Pastor's Association is working cooperatively to bring our local UCC churches together for different events. We had a strong dart ball league here at St. John's in the past and would like to resume that role with our local area churches. Look for more information to follow in September.



SHARING THE UPPER ROOM

“Christ is among us in fresh ways when we gather together, listening to God and to each other.” (The Upper Room) Please consider joining us on the last Saturday of each month for a spiritual discussion group. We will share scripture, meditation, prayer, and conversation regarding how God works within us and around us. Discussion will center on how we live our lives, and how we hear and respond to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We'll use *The Upper Room* as our resource because this is easily available to us through our church. Xerox copies of the meditation and the discussion questions will be available to pick up the Sunday before each session. We'll begin with one gathering a month and increase our time together if those involved feel that calling. Over time we'll consider using other suggested resources specific for small groups and spiritual growth.



We'll meet at St. John's UCC in Newport, the last Saturday of each month, from 10:00 – 11:00 am, in the church chapel area (near the church parlor).

All are welcome! Bring a friend. No reservations required. We hope to see you on April 27. We'll be using the meditation from Wednesday April 24, “God Provides Strength”. When I focus on God, I will find renewed strength. Reading from Hebrews 12:1-11. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.



LUNCH BUNCH
Wednesday, April 10th
12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

Lunch will be provided
Drinks and dessert provided

**JOIN
US
For
LUNCH**



ST. JOHN'S UCC ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

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>

ONLINE VIDEO WORSHIP SERVICES RETURN

After a slight pause, St. John's online video worship services have returned. You can view the services through our church website **www.stjohnsuccnewport.org**, our Church's Facebook Page or YouTube Channel (just search our church's name on Facebook/YouTube) and through the Constant Contact weekly email, (just click the online worship button at the bottom of the page). Please be patient as we are working out any technical issues that may arise. Hope you enjoy the services!



NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 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...

General Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Katherine Daley ~ Patricia Sieve

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Don Berkemeyer ~ Joan Berkemeyer