

The Visitor

August 2024

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 107 Issue 7

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A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

Can you believe it?! Here we are already moving into August! Seems the summer has gone by so quickly – but for me there were those times that it moved s-l-o-w-l-y since I was rehabbing from my knee surgery.

Before I write anything else, I need to thank *every one* of you who supported me on Sunday, June 16 when you celebrated my 40th Ordination Anniversary. All the work, preparation, and implementation was well received - and the day was a great time. Many folks from my life journey, from my first years to today, were present to share in that day – and I appreciated that more than you may know.

Thank you for the artwork that will be displayed in the foyer/lobby dedicated to me. I appreciate that you have that and not a portrait. As you described it shows what I think church, the body of Christ should be – community, a family.

And then two days after that Celebration was my knee surgery and rehabilitation. Thanks to John Robson, Melissa Stephens and Vickie Grey Kennedy for filling in during my absence.

In my absence from the church, I was reading different devotionals and one dealt with the text from Hebrews, that says, “*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely.*” - Hebrews 12:1a (NRSVUE)

It talked about cloud computing, also known as the cloud, describing it as a sharing resource that exists on the internet. It remotely stores data for individual computers, phones, tablets, and other devices to access as needed. The cloud acts as a supercomputer that hangs onto all the stuff we need and has it ready whenever we want to access it. Beyond the convenience of accessing files from just about anywhere, the cloud enables individual devices to direct their resources toward more important and relevant tasks.

Continued on next page

My slightly techy brain (my brother says I know just enough to make me dangerous) makes me quite fond of the idea of those who have died – our loved ones - joining an ever-growing cloud of witnesses. Though we can't call or text, hug or kiss, fight or snub loved ones who've died, like a computing cloud we can remotely access them in new ways beyond our individual physicality. Before their death, we had to figure out ways to connect (phone calls, texts, emails, letters, handwritten notes, etc.), and even had to be more creative over distances when we dealt with the pandemic.

But now, our loved ones are anywhere we are and at any time we need them. I am not saying they're hovering over us in some spiritual internet. Instead, I'm suggesting that the collective cloud of witnesses acts as a sort of supercomputer that holds onto our shared memories, loves, griefs, and losses. In so doing, we're empowered to redirect our energies into the important and relevant work of living into our fullest selves – sharing the presence of God to others.

My friends, I invite you to join me as we share God's presence with others – as individuals and together as a congregation. May God bless us as we journey!!

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS CAMPAIGN FOR ST. JOHN'S

St. John's is setting a goal of raising \$25,000 to use for buildings and grounds work at the church. The church is in need of some work like cleaning the air ducts in the sanctuary and repairing the windows in the sanctuary. Members and friends can place their donations to the campaign in the offering but it is in addition to their regular offering not a replacement. The Leadership Team will put on a celebration for the church once the goal is met. Please join us in this goal and work together to strengthen our foundation.



PRAYER MINISTRY-AUGUST BLESSINGS

The Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions.

When Satan is knocking at your door simply say, "Jesus, could you please get that for me."



DISEASE: LONELINESS; CURE: US

To say that loneliness is a disease may sound a bit extreme. Often, we use the word disease to mean a condition like those of our childhoods — mumps, measles, or chickenpox. Get a shot and the kid will be all better in 3-4 days and cured. But loneliness? I visit lots of folks and I see that loneliness compounds whatever “real” disease or condition they may have.

You know folks who have fallen, spent a day or so in the hospital and then weeks in rehab — perhaps like Highland Spring. A lot of us have battled some type of disease, perhaps cancer. Surgery, chemo and laser therapy — lots of tools to conquer the bad cells. But there in the room — so to speak — remains loneliness. And it too has a big impact on the disease and getting well.

Research I’ve read says that loneliness is a factor in heart disease, blood pressure and such. Research also tells us that loneliness is a factor in mental issues like depression and anxiety.

Good news, you are a part of the cure. Call folks and say you are thinking about them. Pick up a real pen filled with ink and write to someone saying you are thinking about them and then share your up’s and downs and those of your kids and grandkids. Or pay a visit — what I have been reading says human touch and presence is a powerful tonic. Imagine, your face or even my face can cheer a person’s day.

Sure, the Internet and A.I. can help a person to stay connected and their brain engaged with the wider world that exists right outside their apartment or home. I subscribe to a number of daily blogs focused on faith. I eagerly read and then scan the comments. Facebook and TikTok are virtual neighbors.

But, scholars state that folks need personal contact. A voice, a note, a visit with handshake and perhaps pat on the shoulder — these are powerful tools in the battle against loneliness.

The management of fine senior-living facilities plan daily activities. And then there are three meals a day in a dining room plus afternoon snacks. And these are critical to encourage residents to make new friends. But such is hard. And at the end of day, folks return to their apartments or to their own homes. A letter, a telephone call — contact means much.

Look to your church directory and look up an old friend. Reach out.

Blessings,
John Robson

THE CHOSEN

You are invited to join a “watch and discuss” group for Season 4 of “*The Chosen*”. We will gather on the Saturdays listed below from 9:30-11:00 in the church parlor. If you have already seen this season, nothing can be better than watching it again and discussing it with others. If you haven’t seen previous seasons of *The Chosen* it will be easy for you to follow and enjoy the season. All are welcome and we welcome your family and friends too!

- Saturday August 24, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday September 14, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday September 28, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday October 05, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday October 26, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday November 09, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday November 23, 9:30-11:00
- Saturday December 14, 9:30-11:00



WHY MUSIC IN CHURCH?



Music has been an integral part of church worship for centuries, playing a vital role in uplifting and inspiring congregations worldwide. Let’s explore just how important music is in worship. Music has the unique ability to unite people across generations, cultures, and backgrounds, creating a sense of community and belonging.

Also, music in the church serves several purposes:

It honors God, expressing praise, gratitude, and adoration.

It provides comfort, solace, and hope in times of need.

It enhances the worship experience, making it more engaging and meaningful.

It helps to memorize scripture and spiritual truths through hymns and songs.

It fosters a sense of unity, as believers sing together in harmony.

In addition, music has a powerful impact on our emotions and spiritual well-being, helping to create a sense of joy, peace, and connection with the divine. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Sing to the Lord with gratitude in your hearts" (Colossians 3:16).

So, as you can see, music is a precious gift in the church, inspiring and edifying believers as they worship and serve together. Let us always give thanks to God for the gift of music!

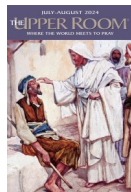
Blessings,
Michael

UPPER ROOM DISCUSSION GROUP

Our final "**Upper Room Discussion Group**" met on the last Saturday in July. The discussion scripture was Isaiah 2:1-5. Shared in the devotional were the following statements. "Isaiah shares a vision of the entire world walking in the ways of God. How could such a thing occur? The power of this vision is much needed. The faithful must take a higher way". The questions for discussion seemed important to share with all of you. We encourage you to read the scripture, think about these questions, and discuss them with your family, friends, and members of St. John's.

1. What draws you in to your current congregation?
2. What draws you in about the Christian faith as a whole?
3. How might you be "a magnet" to people looking for a faith community?

Laura Haas



ST. JOHN'S UCC BACK-TO-SCHOOL DRIVE

St. John's is hosting a Back-to-School drive to benefit Washington UCC. We are collecting any type of school supplies such as paper, pencils, backpacks, etc. but the biggest need is for Crayola products (crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.). Donations can be placed in the baskets marked for the event at each entrance to the sanctuary. If you are unable to shop we will also be collecting monetary donations to benefit the cause. Just place your donation in an envelope and designate on the envelope that it is for the back-to-school drive. The drive will take place **now through August 11th**. Please contact the church office if there are any questions.



SEPTEMBER SHOES AND SOCKS

During the **month of September, the 1st through the 29th**, we will be collecting (NEW) shoes and socks of all sizes and types to be donated to the Washington UCC community store. There will be tubs at each of our sanctuary entrances during the month for you to drop off your donations. If you prefer to make a donation of money we will gladly do the shopping for you, simply mark an offering envelope with "shoes and socks", and we'll be sure to purchase items on your behalf. Thank you for participating in this community service. Your support of the important work that Washington UCC does for so many people makes a difference.



GRADUATE RECOGNITION SUNDAY

On Sunday, June 9th St. John's recognized the graduates in our midst. Each graduate received an Amazon gift card and an inspirational book entitled God's Promises for Graduates Class of 2024. Congratulations graduates!



Karen Kiefer & Tanner Lawrence



David Stamm, Alisa Stamm & Diana Stamm



Mike Penrod, Paige Barber, Pastor Marty & Claire Coppage



PASTOR MARTY'S 40 YEARS OF MINISTRY

On Sunday, June 16th we had a beautiful service followed by a wonderful dinner and program in appreciation of Pastor Marty's 40 years of ministry. At the dinner following church, many people came forward to express their appreciation for all Pastor Marty has meant to them through the years. It was a wonderful celebration filled with much happiness and joy! St. John's is especially grateful for all Pastor Marty has done for us. "Well done good and faithful servant."





Lunch Bunch
Wednesday, August 14th
12:00 p.m.-2:00p.m.
Lunch will be Provided
Salad Bar
Drinks and Dessert Provided

**JOIN US
For
LUNCH!**



THANK YOU NOTE FROM ALISA STAMM

St. John's Church Members,

Thank you so much for honoring me and my High School Graduation. The amazon gift card will definitely be put to good use. I'm excited to begin my next chapter in life at Thomas More University in the fall to study health science. Thanks again for your amazing support.

Granddaughter of Dave & Diana Stamm
Alisa Stamm



THANK YOU NOTE FROM CLAIRE COPPAGE

Dear Members of St. John's,

Thank you so much for supporting me with your generous gift. I love the inspiring book and gift card! I will definitely put them to good use at Clemson. Go Tigers!

Love, Claire Coppage



THANK YOU NOTE FROM PAIGE BARBER

Dear Members of St. John's,

Thanks so much for my graduation gift! I'm so grateful for all the support throughout these years and blessed to have such amazing people in my life. I will keep y'all in my heart as I take the next step in my life! Thanks so much!

Love, Paige Barber



**THANK YOU NOTE TO THE EAST ROW GARDEN CLUB &
EAST ROW HISTORIC FOUNDATION**

Dear East Row Garden Club & East Row Historic Foundation,

Thank you so much for the help of cleaning the carpets to the entrance of Fellowship Hall. We really appreciate all the work you do to keep our church beautiful. You are wonderful neighbors, and we could not do the work we do without your support. Again, thank you so much for your kindness, support and effort.

Sincerely, Kyle Taylor



THANK YOU NOTE TO THE EAST ROW GARDEN

Dear East Row Garden Club,

Thank you so much for the help of all the yardwork and gardening that you all have done for our church. We appreciate all the effort you all put into our gardens and yard and are captivated by the beauty of the flowers and plants you all place. Without all of you, our gardens would not be half as beautiful as they look now. Thank you again for your hard work and being wonderful partners to work with.

Sincerely, Kyle Taylor



**THANK YOU NOTE TO THE EAST ROW HISTORIC
FOUNDATION**

Dear East Row Foundation,

Thank you so much for the generous gifts to our food pantry and good Samaritan fund. We really appreciate your consideration and support to our missions to help the individuals of our local community. Your support has always been beneficial to us and because of it we are able to help many individuals who may be facing hardships. Thank you again for letting us be a part of the wonderful work you all do.

Sincerely, Kyle Taylor



NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 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.”

THANK YOU NOTE FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Dear Friends at St. John's United Church of Christ,

Thank you for your generous donation to the United Church of Christ to support the work of Global H.O.P.E. Your gift of \$389.00 was received on 2/20/24. Because of your kindness, we will help people rebuild their communities and bring comfort to their lives.

Your gift enables the church to be present with people amid catastrophic and life changing situations, offering immediate relief and providing long term support. Working through a network of global and local partners, the church lives out its call to care for our neighbors as we strive together toward a just world for all.

In Faith,
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President



THANK YOU NOTE FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Dear Friends at St. John's United Church of Christ,

Thank you for believing in the passionate work of the United Church of Christ. Your donation of \$2,324.00 to One Great Hour of Sharing was received on 5/24/2024

Our ministry embraces a wider church that is global, multiracial, open and affirming, and accessible to all. Your gift shapes our advocacy work, grows sacred community in our weekly webinar series, and is inspiring more than 10,000 readers of our Daily Devotional.

Your gift will help our neighbors in the United States and internationally recover from disasters.

In Faith,
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President



THANK YOU NOTE FROM KYLE TAYLOR

I wanted to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for your help with putting together and managing the party we had for Pastor Marty celebrating his 40 years of ministry on Sunday, June 16th. I appreciate all of you taking the time to set up all the decorations, make food for the event, and help serve the food during the party. Pastor Marty really enjoyed the party and is grateful for all the work everyone put into this. Again, thank you for all of the help and support with this event.

Thank You, Kyle Taylor



COOKIES AND LEMONADE SOCIAL

On **Sunday, August 18th** St. John's will be hosting our third and final cookies and lemonade social for the summer following the morning worship service. The social will take place outside underneath the canopy and we are asking our members and friends to make cookies for this event. This will be a special celebration of appreciation for our church staff. Please contact the church office if you have a special cookie recipe you would like to make for this event. Thanks in advance for your help.



AUGUST HOMEBOUND MEMBERS OF THE WEEK

We would like to celebrate and honor our homebound members of the week for the month of August. We appreciate and celebrate these individuals as our members of the week!

August 4th: Joan Berkemeyer
August 11th: Betty Hasse (Birthday August 19th)
August 18th: Bonnie Walter
August 25th: Gayle McAtee

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION AT ST. JOHN'S

On Sunday, June 30th St. John's celebrated Independence Day with a wonderful worship service led by Pastor Melissa Stephens from Washington UCC (Pastor Marty was still out recovering from knee surgery), Dobin Park playing "Battle Hymn of the Republic" on piano and Michael Sullivan and Kendra Franke with a wonderful rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever." Our members even got into the spirit of the Fourth by dressing in patriotic attire. We hope everyone had Happy Fourth of July!



Laura Haas, Diana Stamm & Pat Goins

COOKIES AND LEMONADE SOCIAL

On Sunday, July 21st following worship, we held our second cookies and lemonade reception under the North entrance canopy. There were lots of yummy cookies and goodies!! Thanks to all who helped with the reception. Also, Pastor Marty returned to the pulpit following his knee surgery leave with his inspirational message, and Jean Nutgrass and Katheryn Jones sang two beautiful duets. It was a wonderful Sunday! Our last cookies and lemonade reception for the summer will be **Sunday, August 18th** where we will have a special celebration of appreciation for our church staff.



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

August Birthdays

August 2nd: Fred Haas, Jr. & Mel Hanson
August 6th: Erma Deslongchamps
August 9th: Lisa Daniels
August 10th: Tara Connley & Brooks Morris
August 13th: Mike Boyers
August 19th: Betty Hasse
August 20th: Carol Peper & Judy Slater



August Anniversaries

August 1st: Sue & Tom Williams (71 years)
August 5th: Betty & Bob Hasse (63 years)
August 7th: Elizabeth & John Robson (48 years)
August 12th: Alison & Matthew Morris (18 years)
August 19th: Betty Jo & Fred Haas (63 years)
August 23rd: Peggy & John Westlund (65 years)
August 25th: Laura Haas & Jim Breyer (12 years)
August 25th: Darlene & Jan Knepshield (62 years)
August 28th: Kirstie & Brandon Rice (9 years)



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

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

General Fund

In Honor of Marty's 40 Years of Ministry ~ Jennifer Claudy

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner
In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner
In Loving Memory of Helen Berkemeyer ~ Joan Berkemeyer

Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Donna Hamilton ~ Domino Group
In Loving Memory of Donna Hamilton ~ Patricia Sieve
In Loving Memory of Donna Hamilton ~ David & Tracie Malone
In Loving Memory of Donna Hamilton ~ Bruce Barkhau
In Loving Memory of Donna Hamilton ~ Karen Griesse

Memorial Fund

In Loving Memory of Mary Haas ~ Diane Baumer

Buildings & Grounds

In Honor of Marty's 40 Years of Ministry ~ Dr. Michael Hanson