

The Visitor

January 2025

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 108 Issue 1

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

A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

I want to thank all of you who remembered me this Christmas: beautifully worded cards, gifts of all kinds of baked goods, chocolate treats, and the list goes on. All are gratefully received, but the best gift of all is that I know I have a group of folks who have supported me through the last year – in all the ups and downs of my life – emotionally and physically. We have journeyed together in the Faith - and that, my friends, is the best gift we share with one another. My prayer for this New Year is that we may continue in the same way as we seek to discern what God wants for St. John's UCC. May God bless us as we journey together.

I would like to look at the upcoming year using the following verse from the book of Genesis: "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." - Genesis 12:1 (NRSV)

I read that each January, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Mary Schlich invites her readers to pick a guiding word for the year—an idea that came from a reader named Mae. Mary is clear it is not a resolution nor a goal, but simply a word to shape the 365 days ahead. In 2016, Mary's word was "pause." As 2021 began and the pandemic continued, it was "endurance."

Mary's readers often send her their words. A class of fourth graders chose "kindness." For some high schoolers, their words ranged from "balance" and "self-acceptance" to "wanderlust" and "ataraxia." (Mary said she had to look it up. I did, too.)

continued on next page

The word from Abram would had to have been “go,” as in: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house.” Go from all that was familiar and comfortable. But also “go” from that which no longer brought life. Abram’s father Terah had died in that land and that house. His journey was over. Abram’s wasn’t. “Go,” God said.

“Go.” It’s not as long as other words chosen and probably not as deep or profound. Yet I want “go” to be my guiding word for the days ahead. I’d like it to help me guide the congregation of St. John’s UCC in Newport KY too, as we continue to figure out what it means to be the church—to be faithful—in this time, day and age.

“Go,” even if we don’t know where the journey will lead.

“Go,” even if we seldom see the way ahead.

“Go,” even when the way is cloudy.

“Go,” because we can trust the One who goes with us.

Let us “GO” together on this journey into 2025. We thank God for the new journey together and God’s presence every step of the way.

Blessings – Pastor Marty

See you in church!!

ST. JOHN’S GREAT BIG BEAUTIFUL TOMORROW

Happy New Year St. John’s! I wanted to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for making 2024 a special and successful year at St. John’s. Through the work of everyone, we were able to increase our enrichment of members, mission work, and outreach to the community. There were several new events St. John’s tried this past year such as our “Souper” Bowl Sunday, Trunk-or-Treat, and the return of our Thanksgiving Baskets. We also kept many of our programs in place such as our monthly lunch bunch, food pantry, and The Chosen discussion group.



With all that being said, there are many bright things to look forward to. The Leadership Team is actively working on creating a new calendar for 2025 with many favorite returning events as well as some new events. We ask you to keep your eyes and ears open to these events and give them a try when they come up.

The Leadership Team is always open to new suggestions and ideas for new things to try. If there is something you would like to try or have a passion for please see a member of the Leadership Team and we will be happy to discuss the idea with you. I also always extend the invitation for anyone to join us at our monthly meetings that normally take place on the second Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m. in the church parlor.

Continued on next page

I leave you with some lyrics from an old Disney song that I believe sums up St. John's currently. This church has a lot of potential at this moment and is starting to make a real impact within our own walls and outside in the greater community. That is why I feel these lyrics fit so perfectly:

There's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
Shining at the end of every day
There's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
And tomorrow's just a dream away



Let's make 2025 the best year yet for St. John's. Thank you again for all you do for our church and the community.

- Kyle Taylor, President St. John's

A WORD OF THANKS

I hope all of you still have the music from our choir's Christmas concert ringing in your ears. It was truly a beautiful evening. Our Christmas concert, "The Glory of Christmas," was enjoyed by all. We had a full sanctuary with a most appreciative audience.

The Chancel Choir and orchestra, under the direction of Dr. Dobin Park did an outstanding job!! Everyone performed the music with skill and passion. I thank Laura Haas and Vickie Kennedy for the excellent narration that brought the story of Christ's birth to life. And a special thank you to Robert Pettus for his hard work arranging microphones and mixing sound so that everything sounded just right.

As we know, events like these cannot happen without the help of many people. I want to thank our many volunteers who helped to make this event so successful. Thanks to John and Elizabeth Robson and Kyle Taylor and Kelli Taylor for ushering during the concert. Many thanks to Carol Fickenscher and Mike Hanson for arranging the beautiful reception following the program. Also, thanks to Kelli Taylor for creating the program, and to Kelli and Kyle for many other tasks, too many to mention. I hope I didn't forget anyone, but if I did, please know that you are appreciated!

I pray we can carry the joy and spirit of Christmas into the New Year and all through the year ahead.

Happy New Year!
Michael



THANK YOU TO OUR CHRISTMAS VOLUNTEERS

A big thank you to Carol Fickenscher, Mike Hanson, David Stamm, Carol Thompson, Julie Ollier, Vickie Kennedy, Laura Haas, Jim Breyer, Michael Sullivan, Scott, Kelli, Kelsey & Kyle Taylor for decorating our sanctuary for the Christmas season. What a fantastic crew we had at church to decorate the sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas season. They decorated inside the church as well as the outside of the building. Thanks to all of our members who gave up their Saturday to make our church beautiful and joyous for the holiday season. We appreciate all of the hard work they put into making our sanctuary beautiful for the holiday season. Be sure to give them a big thank you when you see them. Happy Holidays to all!



THANK YOU EAST ROW COMMUNITY

We would like to thank the East Row Community which provided the beautiful luminaries to our walkways for our Christmas Concert and Christmas Eve Service. These luminaries provided a beautiful addition to our festive outdoor decorations for the Christmas Season. We are always thankful for the partnership we have with the East Row Community and everything they do to support the church. Thank you again East Row for making our church look beautiful!



THANK YOU JULIE OLLIER

We would like to thank Julie Ollier who provided the festive decorations to our outside planters. These decorations provided festive cheer during the season while we took a break from our normal floral arrangements in these planters. Thank you Julie for helping keep our gardens and plants looking so nice for the church!



THANK YOU TO THE COPPAGE FAMILY

The Memorial Committee would like to extend a big thank you to Barbara Coppage for giving permission to use the David Coppage Memorial Funds to purchase new paraments. Also a big thank you to Barbara for giving an extra donation enabling us to purchase three different sets.

We now have beautiful new green, red, and white paraments to be used for the upcoming seasons of the church year.



Thank you Barb.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

On Monday, December 2nd the children from Trent Montessori School presented food donations to the St. John's food pantry. The school had a food collection drive and collected over 400 items for our pantry. Pastor John received the gifts and explained to the children how the food would be used to help the less fortunate during this holiday season. Many thanks to Trent for helping others to have a happy holiday season.



CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

Every Christmas St. John's participates in "Gifts to the Manger," a ministry of Washington UCC in Cincinnati. This ministry will provide gifts of toys and clothing to underprivileged children in the Cincinnati area. Washington UCC will serve 84 families this year for a total of 333 people who will benefit from these gifts. This year our members once again shopped for gifts to donate to this wonderful ministry along with a monetary donation of \$125.00. Thanks to two of our volunteers, Pat Goins and Judy Slater who delivered these gifts to Washington UCC. Thanks to all of our members who shopped and gave monetary gifts for this wonderful ministry



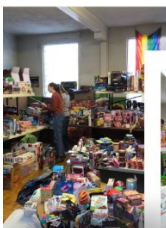
ALL OF IT THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

What a big day!! And it was a truly beautiful day as you can see from these photos. The church house was overflowing with volunteers, gifts and Christmas Spirit!

Thanks to these churches, businesses and organizations that supported this project:

St. John's UCC, Newport KY

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!
-Washington UCC



Gifts to the Manger
2024
WASHINGTON
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

PRAYER MINISTRY-JANUARY BLESSINGS

When you speak, remember, God is one of your listeners.

Worrying doesn't change anything, prayer does.

Every day forgive those who hurt you, pray for those who need it, and Thank God for everything you have.

Kindness is like snow, it beautifies everything it covers.

A snowflake is winter's butterfly.



THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

The staff of St. John's would like to thank all of our members and friends who brought in gifts, Christmas treats, and cards during the Christmas season. We appreciate everyone who took the time to stop by and think of us during the holiday season. Thank you St. John's!!

THANK YOU NOTE FROM JOAN BERKEMEYER

St. John's UCC Staff and Congregation,

Thank you for your friendship, love, and the many cards and letters you sent to me in 2024. Special thanks are given for your prayers of encouragement for my continuing recovery with my legs and lower back. Your families and you are in my daily prayers, especially those with health issues.

During this Christmas season and in 2025 I wish you hope, peace, joy, and love with everyone. God bless!

Much Love,
Joan Berkemeyer

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The Church Office will be closed on the following days:

Wednesday, January 1, 2025:
New Year's Day

Monday, January 20, 2025:
Martin Luther King Jr. Day



INFORMATION REGARDING CHURCH CLOSINGS

As we get into the winter months, we wanted to let you know of our plan of communicating with you in case we need to close/delay any event due to inclement weather. We will communicate the following ways:

Church Website—a message will be posted on the home page

Email—an email through our listserv will be sent out with information. Please sign up for our email on the church website if you are not a part of our weekly email or contact the church office.

Local News Stations—we will send updates through Channel 5 (WLWT), Channel 12 (WKRC) and Fox 19 News (WXIX).

Please contact the church office if you have any additional questions.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY OFFERING BENEFITING CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP

This year, St. John's will be collecting a special offering the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr. Day to benefit the group Closing The Health Gap. This group works to advocate and engage the community to make changes to help better provide for underserved communities. Many obstacles are in place that make it difficult for people to have access to proper healthcare and food in these communities. This group works in the greater community to help provide access to these services for these individuals and providing education to healthcare providers on the disparities that are in place for these individuals.

We hope you will consider donating to this cause. Special offering envelopes will be in the bulletins for Sunday January, 12th and 19th. You can also mark a special donation for MLK Offering in your weekly giving. This offering will be collected at our January 19th service during the offering portion of the service. Thank you for your consideration for this cause.





**JOIN US
For
LUNCH!**

LUNCH BUNCH
Wednesday, January 8, 2025
12:00 p.m.-2:00p.m.
Bring Your Own Lunch
Drinks & Desserts Provided

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
<https://www.stjohnsuccnewport.org>

St John's UCC YouTube Channel
St. John's Newport UCC

St. John's UCC Facebook Page
St. John's UCC Newport



January Birthdays and Anniversaries

January Birthdays

January 1st: Carol Strong
January 2nd: Julie Croley
January 7th: Tim Kennedy
January 8th: Mike Witte
January 12th: Dobin Park
January 13th: Carolyn Garriott
January 15th: Darlene Knepshield
January 16th: Pam Maloney
January 22nd: Charles Croley & Jack Patterson
January 23rd: John Robson
January 24th: Robert Pettus
January 25th: Jenny Williams
January 30th: Connie Haas



January Anniversaries

January 8th: Sheila & Mike Witte (25 years)
January 28th: Jim & Carol Thompson (64 years)



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

JANUARY HOMEBOUND MEMBERS OF THE WEEK

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

January 5th: Carol Strong-Birthday January 1st
January 8th: Pam Maloney- Birthday January 16th
January 15th: Betty Hasse
January 22nd: Judy Adams
January 26th: Joan Berkemeyer

NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025

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...

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner

In Loving Memory of Howard & Beverly Bill ~ Barbara Bill

Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Dr. Michael Hanson

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Flo Grey

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Jeri & Steve McClane

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ John & Elizabeth Robson

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Chuck Hawkins

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ David & Tracie Malone

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Anna Teichmoeller

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Lloyd Memorial High School Class of 1964
Lunch Bunch

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ James & Bettina Malone

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Cynthia Hamann

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Cheryl Derrick

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Joan Berkemeyer

General Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Bill Seibert ~ Diana Seibert

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS CAMPAIGN FOR ST. JOHN'S + UPDATE

St. John's has set a goal of raising \$25,000 to use for buildings and grounds work at the church. The church is in need of some routine maintenance and this fund will pay for the repainting of the sanctuary windows, replacement of the broken lights in the upstairs classrooms, and reseeding of the church lawn. Members and friends can place their donations to the campaign in the offering plate 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.



St. John's has had a very strong start to the beginning of this campaign. Currently the campaign is \$17,442.00. Although the work that needed to be done is complete, the church is still in need of donations to this campaign. We ask that as we journey through this holiday season, please consider the church's buildings and grounds campaign as part of your holiday giving. We thank you for your consideration during this time.

New Year's Word Search

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

BABY

BALL

CALENDAR

CELEBRATION

CLOCK

CONFETTI

COUNTDOWN

EVE

FAMILY

FRIENDS

HAPPY

JANUARY

MIDNIGHT

NEW YEAR

NOISEMAKER

PARTY

RESOLUTION

TOAST



CRAYONSANDCRAVING5.COM