

The Visitor

February 2025

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 108 Issue 2

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

A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

Before I shared some spiritual nugget with you this month, I wanted to address a more pragmatic question. One of the things in this life that we don't control is the weather. It seems that cold, no, frigid temperatures, snow and ice will be controlling our travel – or lack thereof for the immediate future. If the weather on a Sunday morning feels that it is not conducive for safe travel – at least to you – then stay home! I fully understand AND I pray that you stay safe. It is more important to me and the leadership of the congregation that you are safe and able to be with us another time.

We are preparing to enter into the second month of the year – and I'm wondering what's going on? Ash Wednesday isn't til next month – what am I supposed to do with February? I'm used to working on things for Lent and toward Easter – but not this year!

Then, I ran across a devotional that used the following verse, and those words spoke to me as a Pastor, counselor, mentor, friend and fixer.

From Daniel 3:24b-25: *They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."*

No matter what title I use, deep down I'm a fixer.

This is especially apparent when a loved one, friend or parishioner is in trouble. I want to know how I can make it better. I sometimes offer advice without people asking for it. I'll offer to mediate a conversation or research a solution, even if no one asked me to.

I do anything I can to push people toward a final resolution. This fixer mentality was especially disorienting when I started studying to be a minister and sometime spiritual director.

Although the name might indicate otherwise, ministers and spiritual directors aren't supposed to tell people how to live or fix their lives. Instead, we journey with people as they look for God's presence and seek God's wisdom for themselves.

Many ministers prefer to call this work spiritual accompaniment, because we aren't showing up to change outcomes but to provide a contemplative companion.

Folks in my life most often need me to make space to listen more than they need my interference or unsolicited advice. When someone is in distress, someone showing up for them can be their miracle.

In the Daniel text, the divine presence with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, could have easily put the fire out, but instead, walked in the fire with them. And the divine presence alone was enough to save them from harm.

It's a spiritual practice to show up for someone—exactly how they need it, when they need it—without making it about your own ego and own desire for a quick fix-to keep one's eye on the long-term goal.

As we journey through this month of February (without any liturgical holidays) – we need to take on this spiritual practice in some way: show up for each other, listen to each other, make no judgement call, and be together as people of faith.

I look forward to seeing you in Worship this month of February as we embrace each other not only in friendship, but in the Christian love we profess. May we know Christ's presence as we gather in fellowship and Worship.

See you in church!! Pastor Marty



March 5, 2025
Services at 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

We will begin the Season of Lent with Worship Services on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. Two services will be offered that day: 12:00 noon and 7:00 pm.

The 12:00 noon service will be Liturgy only and the 7:00 pm service will be a full worship experience including hymns and special music. The Imposition of Ashes will be offered at both services. Holy Communion will be offered only at the 7:00 pm service. Please place this on your calendar and let us begin Lent together.

PRAYER PARTNERS FOR LENT

Praying for one another is a special way in which we become acquainted with each other. In keeping with that idea, we will exchange Prayer Partners for Lent. You will be given the name of a church member or church friend that you will pray for each day during the Lenten Season. You will **not know** who is praying for you!!



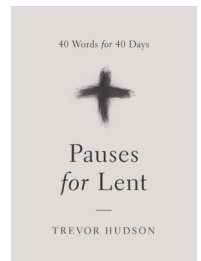
Partners will be exchanged on the First Sunday of Lent, March 9th and will be revealed on Easter Sunday, April 20th. This commitment is for six weeks and is a good way to remember one another every day

There will be a sign-up sheet available for those interested in being part of this Lenten Prayer Ministry 2025 until Sunday, March 2nd. If you cannot be present to sign-up and would like to be part of this Lenten Prayer Ministry, call the church office, 859.431.1818 or email Kelli:

kelli.taylor@stjohnsuccnewport.org

PAUSE FOR LENT

Please consider joining our small group gathering during Lent. “Sometimes a pause is good for the soul. It gives us the chance to regroup, reflect, and refocus on God. In *Pauses for Lent*, Trevor Hudson offers a beautifully minimalist book in which he focuses on one word for each day of Lent. You are invited to pause, focus on the word, read a scripture and a brief meditation related to the word, and then offer a prayer.” We will enhance the experience by gathering each week for reflection and learning together.



This discussion group will meet from 10-11 am in the church parlor every Saturday during Lent beginning on March 8. All are welcome. You do not need to be following Hudson's book to join us, nor do you have to participate every week. If you have questions, please contact Laura Haas (lauraclairehaas@gmail.com) or Kelli in the church office.

AN ORDINARY DAY

January 10th, 1939. It seemed like an ordinary day on the west side of Newport. It was a Tuesday afternoon. Epiphany Sunday was celebrated two days prior on the 8th. The weather was good for winter — cloudy with prospects of late rain. Church scoutmaster, Louis Crawford, was no doubt prepping for the regular Tuesday meeting. Scoutmasters are a hearty and dedicated brotherhood. And standing outside St John Evangelical on 7th Street — the church standing on the northwest corner of 7th and Columbia — saw wisps of smoke above the roof over the east wing. Oh my. That is NOT good. The Gothic church built in 1853 was a tremendous structure of wood with a brick facade. Even at that date, the lumber probably came from primeval forests of Michigan.

Mr. Crawford ran to the manse to tell Rev Barkhau — now in his eighth year serving St. John. The manse stood and still stands at 709 Columbia. It fell to Mrs. Barkhau to phone the Newport Fire Department, which stood where it does now— just a few blocks away. Fire Chief Edward Miles and the crew responded within the hour. And what he saw was not good. Fire in a Victorian church spreads rapidly. He summoned the fire chiefs and crews from Covington, Dayton, and Ft. Thomas. All hands.

Neighbors no doubt were on the sidewalks fearing for their own brick and timber homes. Newport houses are just a matter of 5-6 feet apart and the photographer for the Kentucky Post, Charles Nerpel, was right on site to capture that famous photo of the 50-foot steeple falling to the west, right onto the main portion of the two-story sanctuary. The steeple collapsing into the beautiful second story sanctuary of the historic church captured the tragedy of the fire as mere words could not.

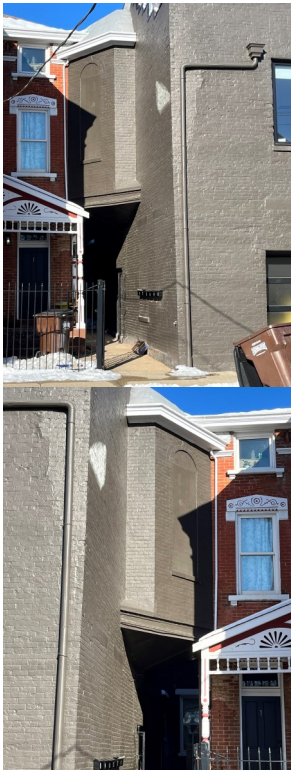
Accounts in the newspaper said that the ‘aerial truck crew’ — ladder boys? — battled for hours. They were on scene before the steeple’s collapse. The ladders were removed just in time, or they too would have been lost. Falling bricks threatened the men and one fireman, Edward Young, was injured but continued to work with the crew — including some from the neighboring towns. Another factor inhibiting their work was low water pressure from the hydrants. The fight to save and contain took four hours in total.

Volunteers helped save the manse and other houses. Of note, Mary Barkhau, oldest child of Rev. and Mrs. Barkhau was ill with bronchitis and was carried by Lillian Hughes down the street to 723 Columbia, the home of family doctor Dr. Clarence Hughes. Let’s hear it for good neighbors and church members.

The fire chiefs concluded that sparks from the old flues of the coal heating system were at fault, by igniting the rafters. Of note, the nests of pigeons in the church's attic rafters was cited as a factor in the rapid spread of flames. The manse and the neighboring house of Mr. Milius — both suffered smoke damage appraised at \$500 (modern day equivalent \$11,000). But the damage to the church was \$75,000 (\$1,650,000 in today's dollars). And these were at a time when the Great Depression was still in force.

The very next day, church leadership, chaired by President Albert C. Keeler, gathered in a member's home with the question: Can we rebuild, or do we need to consider another site? With a membership of 500, leadership wasted no time. A meeting of the congregation was called for January 29th at First Baptist (8th and York). Rev. Barkhau led services on Sunday in the high school auditorium, a block to the south. While the confirmation's weekly class would be postponed, the Ladies Aid Society choir would meet per schedule at the homes of a member and the Galileans would meet at the Congregational church a block away (it still stands). Monetary donations came in immediately from folks with no connection to St. John's. As a result of the fire, property owners were encouraged to have their flues inspected to prevent fires.

Blessings,
John Robson



These photos are where the former church and manse stood in 1939.



PRAYER MINISTRY-FEBRUARY BLESSINGS

We love others best when we love God most.

The shape of true love isn't a heart or a diamond, it's a cross.

It's the little things that usually have the greatest impact in life: a smile, a hug, a thank you and a compliment.

Pray not because you need something, but because you have a lot to thank God for.

Be Kind
Be Thoughtful
Be Genuine
But most of all be thankful.



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The Church Office will be closed on the following day:
Monday, February 17, 2025: President's Day



INSTALLATION OF THE 2025 CHURCH LEADERSHIP TEAM

On Sunday, January 26th St. John's celebrated our Sunday service with the Installation of our 2025 Leadership Team. We congratulate:

President: Kyle Taylor
Vice-President: David Stamm
Secretary: Pat Goins
Treasurer: Vickie Kennedy
Past President: Laura Haas



“SOUPER” BOWL SUNDAY AT ST. JOHN’S

Join St. John’s on Sunday, February 9th as we celebrate Super Bowl Sunday with our “Souper” Bowl Event. This event will be a two-part event consisting of a food drive and luncheon following Sunday Worship.

Before worship, we will be hosting a canned food drive benefiting the Washington UCC Food Pantry to help individuals in need in our local area. We are asking everyone to bring in a canned food item (soup, fruit, vegetable, etc.) and place it in the baskets located at either entrance of the Sanctuary.



Then, following worship, join us in Fellowship Hall where we will be hosting a light luncheon of soup, sandwiches, and desserts. Carol Thompson and Julie Ollier are leading this luncheon and will be providing some delicious recipes, but they can always use our help. If you would like to help, sign-up sheets for food will be located at the entrances of the sanctuary of the church. Please sign up if you would like to bring a dessert or just come for the luncheon.



Reservations are also welcomed, and you will find forms in the bulletin to do so, or you may contact the church office. Forms may be placed in the offering plates on Sunday morning.

We hope you can join us as we gather for worship and fellowship while also helping our local community with this fun event. If there are any questions, please contact the church office.

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

St. John’s is pleased to announce that we were able to collect **\$445.00** to benefit Closing the Health Gap to support their needs in helping others. This collection will go to help this organization continue working for equality in healthcare and healthy lifestyles for the Cincinnati region. This donation will be able to help Closing the Health Gap continue their work which is a continuation of the work Dr. King envisioned. Again, thank you to everyone that participated in this and know that you made a difference in our community.



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES 2025

The devastation caused by the California wildfires has left countless families without homes, communities in mourning, and landscapes forever changed. As the smoke clears, the work of recovery begins—and it's a long road ahead.

Your support can bring lasting hope to those affected by this crisis. Your gift will help provide resources including emotional and spiritual care to families in need. It will also support long-term recovery efforts, ensuring communities can be rebuilt stronger and more resilient.

When disaster strikes, the United Church of Christ responds. Together, we can show God's love in action.

Thank you for standing with California's communities during this time of unreal hardship. Your generosity will make a difference.

In hope and solidarity; 100% of your donation will go directly to disaster relief efforts. Every gift matters. Please give today.

You can also mail a check payable to the United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note "California Wildfires 2025" in the memo section of your check.





**JOIN US
For
LUNCH!**

LUNCH BUNCH

Wednesday, February 12, 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



THANK YOU NOTE FROM RALPH & CAROL SCHOULTHIES

Ralph and I would like to thank those who took the time to send a card during our recent recoveries. It was very much appreciated. A special thanks to John Robson for his visits while I was in the hospital. All the prayers mean so much.

Thank you all,
Ralph & Carol Schoulthies



February Birthdays

February Birthdays

February 10th: Carol Haas & Michael Sullivan
February 12th: Roger Quinn
February 15th: Sheila Witte
February 17th: Tom Fuldner
February 18th: Shirley Rice
February 19th: Kelli Taylor & JoAnn Winstel
February 20th: Kelsey Taylor
February 23rd: Paul Bogen & Robert Gray
February 24th: Julie Ollier
February 27th: Pamela Fuldner



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

FEBRUARY HOMEBOUND MEMBERS OF THE WEEK

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

February 2nd: Joan Berkemeyer
February 9th: Bertie Jo Tuerpe
February 16th: Jean Morrow
February 23rd: Norma Biery

NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 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."

LOVE YOUR CHURCH

Don't just ATTEND your church-LOVE your church.
Serve, give, invite, worship, post, join, engage, participate!

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

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner

Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Peggy Westlund ~ Laura Haas

In Loving Memory of Phil Hamilton ~ Laura Haas

Sanctuary Flowers

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 \$17,707.00. 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.

END OF YEAR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

The 2024 End of Year Contribution Statements were mailed out on Friday, January 17th. If you did not receive a financial statement and feel that you should have, you can contact our financial administrator Chris Baker

at: Financialadmin@stjohnsuccnewport.org or you can call the church office at (859) 431-1818 option 3 for Kelli or option 7 for Chris for more information.



© Can Stock Photo - cap1969653



SENDING VALENTINE'S DAY CARDS TO CHILDREN AT CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

This Valentine's Day, St. John's would like to help the children that are unable to participate in the normal festivities of Valentine's Day. Cincinnati Children's has made it possible for individuals to send Valentine Day Cards to children in the hospital so that they may feel the love of others on this special holiday.



To send a card please visit:

<https://give.cincinnatichildrens.org/site/SPageNavigator/ValentinesDay>

or google search Cincinnati Children's Valentine's Cards. **A link for easy access will also be located on our weekly email and Facebook page.**

We would love for members of St. John's to participate in this special activity to help those children in need. If there are any questions please contact the church office.



Valentine's Day Word Search

c g f l o w e r s i p
j s w e e t h e a r t
e f p a c u p i d a e
v h o i k a c p s r t
a o g u y h e a r t s
l o v e r r d e g o f
e k r a p t r r o w r
n r i r o s e s p x i
t o h s d r d e i r e
i s u h s p i n n h n
n r g a r e l l k t d
e o s c h o s r o s h
s w e e r t s f r i e
v c h o c o l a t e k

valentine
arrow
cupid
hearts
love

red
fourteenth
hugs
chocolate
pink

roses
friend
flowers
sweetheart
kisses