

The Visitor

March 2025

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 108 Issue 3

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

A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

We are entering into the month of March and will be beginning our Lenten Journey with our Ash Wednesday Services on Wednesday, March 5, 2025 (12:00 noon – Liturgy and Imposition of Ashes; 7:00 pm – Imposition of Ashes and Communion). During our journey which will take us to Easter, April 20, 2025, our journey revolves around preparation, reflection, and penance. These things take place in a variety of ways: study groups, daily devotion and prayer, doing something for others in the community, and gathering for Worship on a regular basis. As I was preparing for our journey through Lent, the following verse was lifted in a devotional I was using: We do not have a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Then let us boldly approach the throne of grace to receive mercy. - Hebrews 4:15-16

Jesus may have been sinless, but he's never expected you or I to be. So, let's don't get hung up on that "without sin" part. Pay attention to the "in every respect" part. Jesus was tested by life just as we are, his weaknesses probed, his frailty in play as he struggled for an authentic life. Jesus knows what is in us.

He's inside the thousand promises we've broken, the thousand times we've sworn off a vice and done it again, the thousand lies we've told trying to be someone we're not, the thousand sordid, sad, and stupid sins we've hidden from our own consciences, the thousand ways we try to be good and prove ourselves to God, who isn't really interested in self-improvement projects, who just wants us to surrender/turn/repent and come home.

Continued on next page

Jesus was a fellow testee (if that's a word), and being tested turned him tender. As you and I struggle every day, driven by fears, unfortunate in choosing, distracted by shiny objects, overcrowded with longings, doing the best we can, he sympathizes.

The words of the Apostles Creed say he will "come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." My friends, don't get hung up on the "judge" thing, either. Who best to judge us but the one whose instinctive compassion for weakness makes it impossible for him to condemn us? With him on the throne, we approach boldly, as if there's nothing to fear; because there isn't.

If that doesn't make you emotional and glad, nothing will. Let us journey through this Lenten Season with the knowledge of Jesus' presence with us and the understanding that he has experienced what we do because of his human dimension. May we continue to grow in faith together!

See you in church – Pastor Marty

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!!



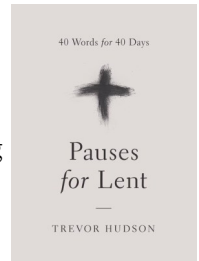
Partners will be exchanged on the First Sunday of Lent, March 9th and will be revealed on Easter Sunday, April 20th. This commitment is for six weeks and is a good way to remember one another every day

There will be sign-up sheets 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.

LITURGISTS WANTED

Pastor Marty is looking for more individuals who are interested in serving as liturgist for our Sunday Worship Service. The responsibilities of being a liturgist include reading a couple of scriptures, the call to worship and the offertory invitation. If you would like to serve in this role, please reach out to Pastor Marty or Kelli in the church office. If you are already on the liturgist list, no need to worry.



“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY”

On February 9th we sang the beautiful hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy” during worship. The following Sunday our choir sang a beautiful arrangement of the hymn by Craig Courtney. Since this is such a favorite hymn to many of our members, I thought you would like to know the story about the man who wrote the words to this beloved hymn.

“Holy, Holy, Holy” was written by a man who revered God as wholly holy; a man who put such an effort into living for God that it eventually killed him.

Reginald Heber was born in Cheshire, England, 1783. He came from well-to-do parents, allowing him to receive an exceptional education throughout his early years. Reginald easily could have taken these blessings for granted, but he did not. For Reginald, failing his education would have been to tell God that His gifts were undesirable. Therefore, Reginald learned the value of hard work through his appreciation of God’s gifts. In turn, he received top grades and was praised for his academic ability.

Soon after completing his education, Reginald was ordained into the Anglican Church and became a minister. Rather than using his great education and reputation to find the largest and most glamorous church to lead, Reginald chose a tiny church in the little village of Hodnet, England. Among his congregation, Reginald had a reputation for two things: being a devout man of God, and being a wonderful poet; the perfect recipe for a legendary hymn.

In 1823, Reginald was called to serve in India. He was still young – only 40 years old – and the responsibility was greater than his years. His title was Bishop of Calcutta, which made him leader over missions in India, the Island of Ceylon, and even all of Australia. During his time in India, Reginald worked tirelessly. Once again, he refused to squander this great gift from God. His chief ambition was to build a training school for local clergy so the area would have ministers long after Reginald was gone. Along with building the school, Reginald also traveled across India spreading the gospel.

Over the years, the intense climate and even more intense responsibility wore on Reginald’s health. Through the hardship, he never relented. Such an effort did he give, that on one Sunday, directly after an outdoor sermon to a large group of Indians, Reginald dropped dead from heatstroke.

In death, Reginald’s work carried on, for it turned out that during his time at the tiny church in Hodnet, Reginald had written a number of hymns. He never sought publication; perhaps too humble, or perhaps thinking his works not good enough. But his wife saw the beauty in her husband’s work, and she put a collection of her husband’s hymns together

and had them published. Fifty-seven hymns made up the collection, and all fifty-seven are still being used to this day. Of the collection, one stood out far above the others:

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee.”

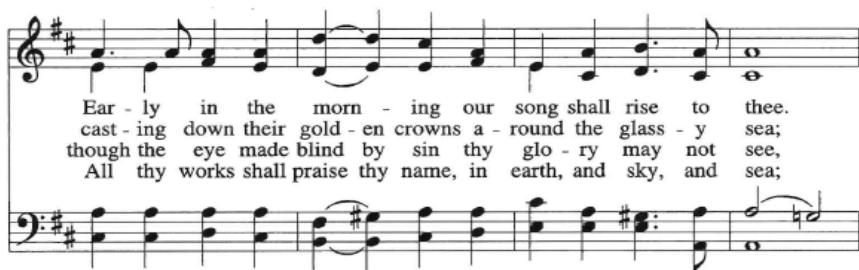
Blessings,
Michael

THE TRINITY

136 Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!



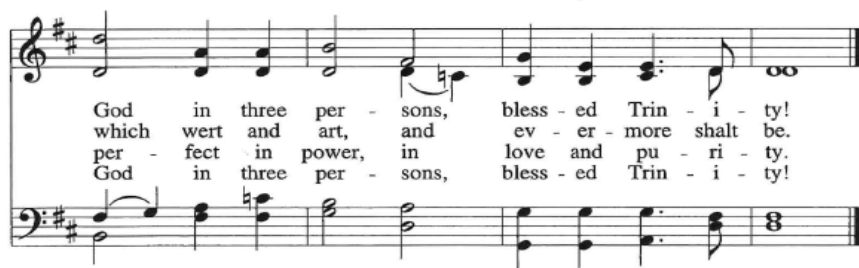
1 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!
 2 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! All the saints a - dore thee,
 3 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! though the dark-ness hide thee,
 4 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!



Ear - ly in the morn - ing our song shall rise to thee.
 cast - ing down their gold - en crowns a - round the glass - y sea;
 though the eye made blind by sin thy glo - ry may not see;
 All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea;



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Mer - ci - ful and might - y!
 cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim fall - ing down be - fore thee,
 on - ly thou art ho - ly; there is none be - side thee,
 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Mer - ci - ful and might - y!



God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!
 which wert and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.
 per - fect in power, in love and pu - ri - ty.
 God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!

“SOUPER BOWL” SUNDAY FUN

Our “Souper Bowl” Sunday luncheon was a huge success. We collected many canned goods to deliver to the Washington UCC food pantry along with a \$100.00 monetary donation. 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. Congratulations to Steve Twehues who won the Kroger gift card drawing for correctly guessing who would win the super bowl. 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!!!





FORGIVENESS: A BOOST TO MEMORY?

Those of us of a certain age — as you are reading *The Visitor* you probably are of that age — have concerns about our brains and remembering. Childhood friends and my family would often remark on my remarkable memory. Athletic prowess — well not so much. Think of your friends who can bring up the names of grade school teachers some seventy years back or names of South Pacific colonial possessions posed on “Final Jeopardy”. I’d be that guy.

But not quite as much these days. I was diagnosed by St. Elizabeth Neurology as displaying “age appropriate cognitive decline.” Oh my. But my ‘baby’ sister Mary— the ceramics engineer who turns 70 this year— said at least it was “age appropriate.” And so I was advised by a doctor on strategies as to how to hang onto my brain and ability to recall readily. You probably know whereof I speak.

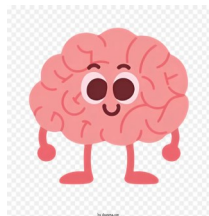
I was advised to (1) be physically active, (2) challenge the brain, (3) get 7+/- hours of sleep, and (4) meet new folks and make friends. You know the components of the lists. So, Elizabeth and I go to the Ft. Thomas YMCA and know our way with the treadmill, we subscribe to a couple of puzzle books, and we support community groups like our monthly book group and Cincinnati Preservation. Sleep — well that is elusive.

And then the brain/memory lists often have — towards the end — **FORGIVENESS**. And my commissioned lay pastor training and work for St. John’s and for a couple of rural Presbyterian congregations come together. I talk one-on-one with people — some of whom you have known — and find that they have ‘stuff’ on their minds that disturbs them. “Stuff” can keep folks from finding peace at the end of the day. We talk about the challenge to forgive — not forget — but to forgive. The psychology of those two concepts are related, but they are not synonymous.

My doctor said, in so many words, that forgiveness is the choice to give a blessing to folks who have not been **so good** about giving a blessing. Peer-review studies have concluded that ill-will festers in the brain and thereby impedes the brain in being all it can and should be. Forgiveness is for the benefit of the giver. John Robson needs all the grey matter he has.

The Visitor is a publication for us who are followers of Christ — not a peer-reviewed journal. So, I offer to you these words of Christ as found in Matthew 6, verses 14-15:

14 “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”



My fellow disciples of Christ, you know that forgiveness is a virtue in us. He affirms that forgiveness is His will for His disciples. He left it to scholars centuries later to affirm that we will more fully have command of our brains and memory when not carrying around hatred. And we need all the power of our brains to go the distance as disciples. I find myself growing in empathy and better able to take lessons from experiences in my past — and those I visit — and find ways forward. Let us not allow negativity — negative folks — to live ‘rent free in our heads.’

Forgiveness — not unlike daily walks, using the treadmill, tackling the New York Times puzzles, and attending city council meetings — takes time and attention and prayer. I speak for myself. It takes time to forgive. Jesus said it is worth the investment and scholars have affirmed His will for us.

As mentioned earlier, scholars do not equate forgiveness with forgetting or pretending something did not happen or was said. Just in following Jesus and helping yourself to be a better disciple, you decide not to give brain space to ill-will or anger. You see the merits of moving ahead in this troubled world.

Blessings,
John Robson



THANK YOU TO OUR SNOW ANGELS

St. John's would like to thank our snow angels who helped brush and clear snow off of our members cars following the February 16th Sunday Worship Service. Our members and friends were greatly appreciative to have a clean car in order to drive home safely. Thanks to Dave Stamm, Judy Salter, Chuck Shay and Garrett Cutajar for clearing cars and helping members into their cars. Thank you for all that you do for the church.



PRAYER MINISTRY-MARCH BLESSINGS

There's always something to thank God for.

Be the reason someone feels seen, heard, and supported.

You aren't too small to make a difference.

What is done in love is done well.

Be a rainbow for somebody's cloud.



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, refugees, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within Wider Church Ministries.

On Sunday, March 30, 2025 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.



MARCH HOMEBOUND MEMBERS OF THE WEEK

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

March 2nd: Marcia Schmidt-Birthday March 10th

March 9th: John Westlund

March 16th: Betty Webster

March 23rd: Peggy Eckert

March 30th: Gayle McAtee

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

March Birthdays

March 1st: Yvonne Daniels & Carol Fickenscher
March 5th: Christine Schwalbach
March 9th: Elise Faller
March 10th: Marcia Schmidt
March 11th: Laura Haas
March 13th: Gary Wagner
March 17th: Carol Schoulthies
March 25th: Sandra Steele
March 29th: Donna Westerkamp
March 30th: Mike Hanson



March Anniversaries

March 17th: Vickie & Tim Kennedy (18 years)
March 30th: Carol & Ralph Schoulthies (62 years)



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



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

**JOIN US
For
LUNCH!**



ST. JOHN'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY LUNCHEON

On Sunday, March 16, 2025 St. John's will be celebrating St. Patrick's Day early with a potato bar luncheon in Fellowship Hall. Join us following worship for baked potatoes, salads, and desserts as we gather with family and friends for this fun event.



We are asking the congregation for food donations for this luncheon. A sign up sheet will be located at the front of the church by the baptismal font if you are interested in signing up to bring in potato toppings, salads or desserts. The church will provide the baked potatoes.

We also ask that you please RSVP to the luncheon by filling out the form in your bulletin and placing it in the offering plate or contacting the church office.



ST. JOHN'S COOKBOOKS DISCOVERED AGAIN

After many cleaning projects in the church, we have discovered another box of church cookbooks. You can purchase your cookbook(s) for \$5.00 each by calling Kelli in the church office. Proceeds once again will go to the Buildings and Grounds Campaign.



BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS CAMPAIGN FOR ST. JOHN'S

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.



Currently the campaign is at \$18,977.00. We thank you for your consideration during this time.

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

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Marteene Beimesch
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Tina Mary Beimesch
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Paul & Cara Rigby
In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner

Music Fund

In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Wendy Watts

General Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Linda LaCroix Zigos ~ Dr. Michael Hanson
In Loving Memory of Linda LaCroix Zigos ~ John Robson
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Ralph & Carol Schoulthies

Memorial Fund In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Jeri McLane
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Karen Schofield
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Scott & Kelli Taylor
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Jan & Darlene Knepshield
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Frances & The Morris Family
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Deborah Grahm
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Diann & Roger Meade
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Susan Wilmes
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Brian Herrmann
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Norman Meier
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Daniel & Diana Schloemer
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Michael & Pamela Coppage
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Catherine Schreiber
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Rowekamp & Fields Families
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Flo Grey
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Daniel Diltz
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Robin Rogers
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Joann Abel
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Diane Faehr
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Janice Mortenson

Joseph Haas Sr. Choral Scholars Fund

In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ John & Elizabeth Robson

Buildings and Grounds

In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Dr. Michael Hanson
In Loving Memory of Barbara Coppage ~ Jim & Carol Thompson

Quote of the Day

As long as you're breathing, it's never too late to do some good.