

The Visitor

JANUARY 2026

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 109 Issue 1

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A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

As I write this, I am still planning for the end of Advent and for our Christmas Celebration on Christmas Eve. But this is to be an article for January – the beginning of a New Year – so I'll try to get my head into that space.

I should also thank all of you who remembered me with cards, thoughts, prayers and gifts for the Christmas Season. I very much appreciate all of you being part of my life.

There's a sense of impatience when we begin to understand that the current year is nearing its' end and a new one is aching to begin. As we end a year, our mind compels us to recall the highs and lows, review our successes, forget our missteps and embarrassments, and resolve to do better and try it all again next year.

So, my question: Why do we wait until the New Year to do what we could do on any other day of the year?

Sure, some things need to be thought about and worked on before we implement them. And it's good to set intentions and look to a future date for restarting and renewal.

But, when we hold our peace to keep the peace, because we don't want to upset the status quo or make others (or ourselves) uncomfortable, things grow and build until eventually crisis happens. And what do we do? We restrain ourselves to tiny whimpers and whines until we finally let out a loud cry, alerting others to our distress – and then we demand to be heard, or lament our brokenness.

Continued on next page

My friends, we do not need to wait for the New Year to turn our hearts, make ourselves heard, seek justice, try something new, or cry out. It is one thing to wait for the right time. It is another to restrain or not do anything – to our detriment and often the detriment of others.

Let us not wait for a crisis – let us cry out now!! Let us share with others the Good News and invite them to be part of our mission and ministry at St. John's United Church of Christ.

Continue to share the faith - see you in church!

Pastor Marty

(this missive was written based on the following passage: *For a long time, I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like one who is in labor.* - Isaiah 42:14 (NRSV, adapted)

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

We will begin the Season of Lent with Worship Services on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2025. Two services will be offered that day: 12:00 noon & 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 and Holy Communion will be offered at both services. Please place this on your calendar and let us begin Lent together.

PRAYER MINISTRY- JANUARY BLESSINGS

Begin the year with prayer and hope.

Snowflakes are unique and
so are you in God's eyes.

Life in January is like a snowball, unpredictable and cold.

New beginnings come wrapped in mittens.



CHRISTMAS DISCUSSION GROUP

Saturday January 3, 2026

10:00 - 11:00am, church parlor

Join this group for reflection on the Christmas season.

The light of Christ.

All are welcome.

PRAYER PARTNERS FOR LENT 2026

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, February 26th and will be revealed on Easter Sunday, April 5th. 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 2026 until Sunday, February 15th. 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





ST. JOHN'S CHROAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT



On Sunday, December 21st St. John's members and friends and the community enjoyed a beautiful concert at our church! Many thanks to our choral director Tony Burdette for his excellent planning, rehearsing and directing the choirs and orchestra for the performance. Thanks to the St. John's Chancel Choir and the Choir of Gloria Dei for their time, dedication and wonderful singing. Thanks to the awesome orchestra who supported us so beautifully as we sang. Thanks to our soloists and narrators for a job well done. It was wonderful to see a full church with a very appreciative audience. The entire evening was magical, and we thank everyone for coming. We want to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years!!



LUNCH BUNCH CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

The St. John's "Lunch Bunch" crew put on a lovely Christmas luncheon for the entire congregation after our church service this morning. Everyone enjoyed a lovely dinner and many wonderful desserts, as well as a great time of after Christmas fellowship. Thanks to Carol Thompson and her entire crew for putting on this festive event!



WASHINGTON UCC GIFTS TO THE MANGER

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, clothing and food to underprivileged children in the Cincinnati area.

This year St. John's was given the challenge of providing hats, gloves, mittens and blankets for the families of Washington UCC. Washington UCC served **287 kids** who benefited from these gifts on December 13th and 14th.

This year our members once again shopped for gifts to donate to this wonderful ministry along with a monetary donation of **\$265**.

Thank you to two of our volunteers, Pat Goins and her husband Dan who delivered these gifts to Washington UCC. Thanks to all of our members who shopped and gave monetary gifts for this wonderful ministry.



WASHINGTON UCC GIFTS TO THE MANGER

Washington UCC distributed toys, clothes and food to 287 kids! And the weather didn't hold us back on December 13th and 14th.

The Gifts to the Manger program on the 2nd weekend in December is our annual Christmas in which we honor families with gifts, love and God's Abundant blessings for their children. It requires lots and lots of people to make this huge ministry happen.

The families picked out toys and clothing for each child, often more than they could carry so "elves" helped them out. They picked up food boxes from Camp Cupboard. Then they loaded it all in their cars, whisking off to celebrate a joy-filled Christmas because God blessed them with these gifts.



Thank you St. John's for being one of our supporters of this ministry!

Blessings,
Washington UCC Gifts to the Manger Ministry Team

THANK YOU TO OUR CHRISTMAS VOLUNTEERS

A big thank you to Carol Fickenscher, Mike Hanson, Carol Thompson, Julie Ollier, Ralph Schoulthies, Jeff Schoulthies, Chris & Regina Fickenscher, David Stamm, Kyle and Scott Taylor for decorating our sanctuary and outside area for the Christmas season. What a fantastic crew we had at church to decorate 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 and friends who gave of their time to make our church beautiful and joyous for the holiday season. We appreciate all of the hard work they put into making our sanctuary and outside area look beautiful for the holiday season. Be sure to give them a big thank you when you see them. Happy Holidays to all!



LUNCH BUNCH

There will be no Lunch Bunch Meeting in January.



FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

On Friday, December 5th the children from Trent Montessori School presented food donations to St. John's Food Pantry. The school had a food collection drive and collected **207** items for our pantry as one of their service projects. Pastor John received the gifts as the kindergarteners counted all of the items as part of their learning. Pastor John 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!



HENRY HOSEA HOUSE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Good News! We have secured the 5th Friday of each month as our church's time to volunteer at Henry Hosea House. **We have a fifth Friday opening on Friday 01/30/26.** We are looking for 7 volunteers to work from **3:30-6:00 PM** to help serve dinner. If you and/or friends and family would be able to help, please text or call **Pat Goins at 859-250-2830**. We would like to make this an ongoing relationship with Henry Hosea House and really need your help to make this happen. Thank you in advance for helping with this important community outreach venture.



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.



THANK YOU NOTE FROM JOHN & ELIZABETH ROBSON

Friends Who Lunch,

On behalf of Elizabeth and myself, I thank you for the kind and most generous gift card. For us both, it represents discipleship which equate to LOVE.



These are difficult days—new challenges are before us all with family and friends, we will come through.

Peace,
John

THANK YOU NOTE FROM JOHN & ELIZABETH ROBSON

Dear Friends and Fellow Disciples,

As I think on my 75 years as a disciple-in training of Jesus Christ, I am aware that I ought to look out for others. My Sunday School teaching days of junior high boys had a focus on helping the boys “find: the “other” one in their lives.



I’d tell boys back then, my own daughter and granddaughter and folks in the pews to “fill” their “others.”

And now I AM the “other.” I need the prayers to navigate today and tomorrow. The folks at St. John’s have offered prayers for Elizabeth and me. And the love has also come in gift cards to give to Mr. Kroger in exchange for nutrition in ways to spark Elizabeth’s waning appetite. As I use the cards I find myself sharing with the checkout ladies how I came to have such cards. Each represents discipleship in 2025!

Peace,
John

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 United Church of Christ Congregation,

Thank you for the set of daily Advent scriptures cards which are bringing me much joy. I value your friendship and prayers for my better health. I'll continue to pray daily for your families and you.

*Thank
you*

Merry Christmas 2025! Happy and healthy 2026! God bless everyone.

Love,
Joan Berkemeyer

LIVE STREAMING NOW AVAILABLE FOR ST. JOHN'S

LIVE STREAMING. Join us Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. on our church Facebook page to join our service live as it happens. The service will be available to watch at any time on our Facebook page and will be uploaded to our YouTube page and website. We hope you can join us for worship in any format that works for you.



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

NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 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](https://www.stjohnsuccnewport.org) under our "News Section."

January Birthdays and Anniversaries

January Birthdays

January 1st: Carol Strong
January 2nd: Julie Croley
January 7th: Tim Kennedy
January 8th: Mike Witte
January 13th: Carolyn Garriott
January 15th: Darlene Kneppshield
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 (26 years)
January 28th: Jim & Carol Thompson (65 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 MEMBER 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 4th: Bonnie Walter
January 11th: Pam Maloney-Birthday January 16th
January 18th: Bertie Jo Tuerpe
January 25th: Judy Adams

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The Church Office will be closed on the following days:

Thursday, January 1, 2026 & Friday, January 2, 2026:
New Year's Day

Monday, January 19, 2026:
Martin Luther King Jr. Day



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



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