

The Visitor

MARCH 2026

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 109 Issue 3

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A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

As we continue the Lenten Season – a reminder to those participating in the Prayer Partner exchange – keep up the praying for one another. It is important to keep each other in prayer as we journey together. In looking ahead, Holy Week will be upon us sooner than we think. It begins with Palm Sunday, March 29th, when we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Then Maundy Thursday, April 2nd, when we gather at 7:00 pm to remember when Jesus gathered with the disciples in the Upper Room to celebrate Holy Communion. Good Friday, April 3rd, is the time when we remember Jesus' death on the cross – we don't hold a service, but you are encouraged to attend a community service.

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat the boat. ... Jesus rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

- Mark 4:37 & 39 (NRSV)

After I read the above text, I asked myself the question below and now I'm asking you as we continue through this Lenten journey.

Have you ever tried to be completely still? The answer would probably be something like: You'd sooner sprout wings and fly or when pigs fly.

No matter how static we attempt to become, the heart pumps, lungs breath, intestines digest. Our brain produces an endless stream of thoughts, sometimes a trickle, sometimes a fire hose. The body continues to function in a variety of ways.

Continued on next page

Not even inanimate objects are still: not the rock, not the chair, not the parked car. From the perspective of quantum physics (about which I know very little – just read it somewhere), subatomic particles are buzzing about at warp speed.

Sedentary or not, everything is a teeming dance of movement. True stillness, therefore, requires divine intervention as today's passage makes clear. So, to my way of thinking, stillness is akin to holiness.

When Jesus stilled the storm, he brought creation to a standstill, to the point of "dead calm," which might have been the brink of non-existence, something only the Creator could pull off. And that's the point: Jesus had those creds.

I still recommend sitting quietly, at least once a day – if you can make the time. It's the best way I know to encounter the unstoppable miracle of life that continues dancing through me ... and then be moved to praise.

Shhhh... I'm trying to be in a moment of quietness.

See you in church – Pastor Marty

PRAYER MINISTRY– MARCH BLESSINGS

Spring cleaning for the soul starts here.

If you have time to worry, you have time to pray,

Prayer must be your lifestyle; not just your emergency contact.

God can live anywhere but he prefers your heart.



NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

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."

LENTEN DISCUSSION GROUP

We invite you to join in the Lenten Discussion group. This year we will be using ***“The Easter Code: A 40 Day Journey to the Cross”*** by O.S. Hawkins. The devotional guide provides daily materials from Ash Wednesday through Easter. Each day includes daily reflection, scripture, a word for the day, and prayer. Engage in a meaningful way to prepare your heart and mind for Easter. The group will meet each week to share in discussion of the weekly devotions. All are welcome, church members or not, and we’ll gather on **Saturdays, 10:00 – 11:00 am, February 21 through April 4.**

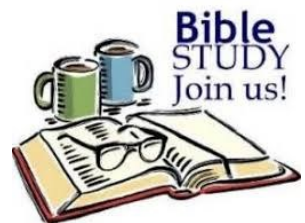
If you are interested, please sign up when you are in church on a Sunday morning, reach out to the church office (859-431-1818 option 3), or contact Laura Haas at ([859-240-9807](tel:859-240-9807) or lauraclairehaas@gmail.com).

If Saturdays are not convenient for you, please sign up and indicate a better day, marking the most convenient time as morning, afternoon, or evening.

LENTEN DISCUSSION GROUP

COMING THIS SPRING! BIBLE STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, APRIL THROUGH JUNE, 2026

“One encounter with Jesus changed Matthew’s life. He can change yours, too.” This spring we will use **Max Lucado’s *Life Lessons***, the gospel of Matthew, for a 12-week study of the gospel. This is year A of the common lectionary and the gospel of Matthew is the primary focus of the gospel readings. Each lesson includes bible readings, “intriguing questions, inspirational stories and poignant reflections”. The study guide works well for small groups and individual study.



More information and encouragement to sign up coming soon.

Sunday, March 29th Palm Sunday

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

“And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’” Matthew 21:9

Thursday, April 2nd Maundy Thursday Service

7:00 p.m. Worship Service/
Communion

“I am giving you a new commandment. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples.” John 13:34-35

Sunday, April 5th Easter

8:15 a.m. Easter Breakfast-Fellowship Hall

10:00 a.m. Worship Service/
Communion and Special Music

“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.” John 3:17



An invitation from you may be the only thing keeping a friend from visiting St. John's church. Share with them the difference Christ has made in you. Invite them to join you for services during Holy Week and the Easter season.

“THE SOUNDS OF REFLECTION: MUSIC DURING LENT”

Lent, a period of spiritual preparation and reflection, is often associated with somber melodies and contemplative harmonies. As the world quiets down, music takes on a more subdued tone, echoing the themes of introspection and devotion.

As the world observes Lent, music becomes a powerful tool for reflection, comfort, and spiritual growth. Whether through traditional hymns or modern compositions, the sounds of the season invite us to slow down, reflect, and connect with something deeper. 🎵

Lenten music is all about setting the mood for the Lenten season. It is typically more somber, reflective, and contemplative, focusing on themes of sacrifice, redemption, and spiritual growth. Think of hymns and classical pieces that evoke a sense of reverence and introspection. Hymns such as “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” or “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” are good examples of introspective hymns.

One of the most noticeable musical changes is the omission of the Alleluias. By removing Alleluia, the Church returns in spirit to a time when the people of God were in exile, waiting for the Messiah to come and save them. During Lent, our focus is on repentance, not rejoicing. Then, when Easter arrives, we will sing the Gloria and Alleluia with renewed joy and deeper appreciation - because we have spent time without them.

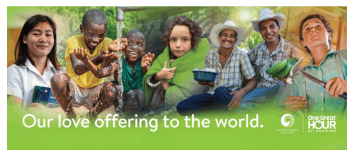
Ultimately, we follow these guidelines for a reason: to help Easter feel like Easter. If you find yourself missing certain musical elements during Lent, that’s a good thing - that longing is part of the journey!

So as we move through this sacred season, take notice of more silence and simplicity. Let the absence of certain musical elements deepen your appreciation for the celebration to come. And when Easter morning finally arrives, let us rejoice all the more fully - ***He is Risen!***

Michael Sullivan

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



On **Sunday, March 15, 2026** St. John’s UCC will participate in One Great Hour of Sharing by collecting a special offering on that day. 5
Please consider giving to this special project.

EASTER BREAKFAST AT ST. JOHN'S

The Leadership Team will be serving an Easter Breakfast to all of our members and friends. Please join us on **Sunday, April 5th beginning at 8:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall** for a breakfast of pastries, coffee cakes, different breakfast casseroles, and drinks. All we need you to do is just show up as the Leadership Team is providing this to thank everyone for all that you do for St. John's. We hope you can join us for a delicious meal and fellowship before we join together in the celebration of our Easter Service.



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

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

Food Pantry

In Loving Memory of Sue Wagner ~ Gary Wagner
In Loving Memory of Elizabeth Robson ~ Judy Adams

Memorial Fund

In Loving Memory of Elizabeth Robson ~ Karen Schofield

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

March Birthdays

March 1st: 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 20th: Brinley Greenert
March 25th: Sandra Steele
March 29th: Donna Westerkamp
March 30th: Mike Hanson



March Anniversaries

March 17th: Vickie & Tim Kennedy (19 years)
March 30th: Carol & Ralph Schoulthies (63 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!

MARCH HOMEBOUND MEMBER 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 1st: Marcia Schmidt-Birthday March 10th
March 8th: Janice Keeney
March 15th: John Westlund
March 22nd: Betty Webster
March 29th: Robert Hasse

LUNCH BUNCH

Wednesday, March 11th

12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

Bring Your Own Lunch

Drinks & Desserts Provided

ALL ARE WELCOME!!!!



“SOUPER” BOWL LUNCHEON

On Sunday, February 8, 2026 St. John’s had a “Souper Bowl” Soup Luncheon following our morning worship service. Before worship, our members brought in items to be used in our Food Pantry. The luncheon featured delicious homemade soups, along with various salads and desserts. Many thanks to our Leadership Team for arranging this fun event and to everyone who prepared food items for this luncheon!!



