

The Visitor

APRIL 2026

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Volume 109 Issue 4

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A Message from J. Martin Westermeyer

As I write this for our April Visitor, I am preparing for Holy Week and Easter, which occurs the last week of March and ends on Easter, April 5th. First, I need to thank all of you who participated in the Lenten Prayer Partner exchange – six weeks is a longer time than the four of Advent. It is my hope and prayer that you experienced God's presence during the Lenten Season as you prayed not only for this particular person, but others on your prayer list.

Things begin to slow down as far as activities at St. John's UCC, but our presence in the community, and our outreach and continuing ministries continue to exist and share God's presence with others. And as always, we gather each week for Worship – our time together to praise God for the week past, and to be instilled with God's presence for the day and week to come.

The prophet Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, and broke it, saying, "Thus says the Lord: This is how I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon from the neck of all the nations." Sometime later, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, "Go, tell Hananiah: You have broken wooden bars only to forge iron bars in place of them! You have made the people trust in a lie." - Jeremiah 28:10-13 (abridged)

It's easy to preach or share good news: Just declare it with confidence and ignore all complications to the contrary.

For example: "We live in a color-blind world! The Covid pandemic is over! God will bless us with prosperity! God will prevent nuclear war! A lawn sign for justice will change the world! A day at the spa will revive your weary spirit! The next election will right all wrongs! Politeness will convert evil!" Or my personal favorite, "God believes in us too much for us to fail!"

Hananiah promised good news to a people who were desperate for it: residents of the small kingdom of Judah, who were overwhelmed by the growing threat of the Babylonian Empire. In those anxious days when Judah's freedom seemed certain to collapse, no sermon was as sweet as Hananiah's sermon promising the fall of Nebuchadnezzar: "Don't worry, folks, God's rescue is just around the corner! See look—I can break this silly wooden yoke that Jeremiah's been carrying around, so you know I'm telling the truth!"

It's easy to preach good news.

It's harder to wait with people until that good news is realized. It's harder to struggle alongside people when good news is a long time coming, to grieve their losses and pains through the in-between time, to live each day without easy answers.

It's easier to break a wooden yoke, paint a positive slogan on a wall, promise the good news everyone wants to hear, and be self-satisfied with the impact of grand gestures. It's harder to labor for good news, to sweat over its advent, to remain ever-ready to leap in faith as soon as good news arrives.

Promising good news is easy.

Practicing good news is the harder work to which we are called.

May we continue to be the faithful people God has called us to be! Share the Good News!

See you in church! Pastor Marty

PRAYER MINISTRY– APRIL BLESSINGS

Easter is the time to rejoice and be thankful for the gifts of life, love and joy.

Let us remember that Easter is not about a full basket but the empty tomb.

Let your joy burst forth like flowers in the Spring.

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

A smile is a curve that sets everything straight.



BIBLE STUDY, THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (2026 LECTIONARY YEAR A)

Saturdays 10:00 – 11:00 AM

April 11 through June 27

St. John's UCC Newport, church chapel

Consider studying the Gospel of Matthew during this Spring season.

“Matthew’s life was changed when he met Jesus. In his Gospel Matthew shares the glorious good news about Jesus’ life. From start to finish Matthew reminds us that Jesus is more than just a carpenter. He is our King.”

Max Lucado’s “Life Lessons from Matthew” is a 12-lesson study including readings, stories, questions, and reflections. The study can be done individually or in a small group. The book can be purchased through Amazon (\$7.15), Kindle, or other online or local book sellers (\$4-\$10).

You may wish to join our small group, complete a lesson before each Saturday gathering, and enjoy the fellowship of discussion, or you may prefer to complete the study individually at your own pace with family or friends at home. If you choose the small group you may have to miss now and then, no problem, it is easy to catch up and stay connected.

The first gathering of the small group will be Saturday April 11 at 10:00am in the church chapel area. Please complete “How to Study the Bible”, the introduction, and Lesson 1 – “God With Skin On” before the Saturday gathering.

Saturday April 11 – Lesson 1

Saturday April 18 – Lesson 2

etc to Saturday June 27 – Lesson 12

Questions? Contact Laura Haas at 859-240-9807,
lauraclairehaas@gmail.com

NEXT VISITOR DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 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.”

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

8:30 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.

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. 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

Joseph Haas Sr. Choral Scholars Fund

In Loving Memory of Elizabeth Robson ~ John Robson



April Birthdays and Anniversaries

April Birthdays

April 5th: Chase Coppage & Diana Stamm
April 13th: Ethan Schwalbach
April 15th: Brenda Scharber
April 16th: Jan Knepshield
April 20th: Rona Hater
April 21st: Judy Eads
April 24th: Bette Bolmer & Steve McLane



April Anniversaries

April 28th: Barbara & Mike Boyers (42 years)
April 28th: Jeri & Steve McLane (53 years)



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

APRIL HOMEBOUND MEMBER OF THE WEEK

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

April 5th: Bertie Jo Tuerpe
April 12th: Betty Hasse
April 19th: Judy Adams
April 26th: Carol Strong

LUNCH BUNCH

Wednesday, April 8th

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

Bring Your Own Lunch

Drinks & Desserts Provided

ALL ARE WELCOME!!!!





When they saw the **star**, they were filled with **joy**.

(Matthew 2:10)

February 17, 2026

Saint John's UCC
415 Park Avenue
Newport, KY 41071-1792

Dear Friend,

I hope you've enjoyed a beautiful winter. As a cherished supporter of The Christmas Fund, and as a beacon of generosity within our United Church of Christ community, I wanted to thank you for your generous gift.

Your donation helps the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA) multiply the light of God's love into the lives of our active and retired ministers, church workers, and their families. So many lives are impacted by our Christmas Fund Community and so much spiritual support is conveyed through the gifts you make each year. Thank you again for your faithful generosity!

With heartfelt appreciation,

Rev. Dr. Paul Leon Ramsey
Director, Church Relations & Philanthropy

United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (EIN: 13-6168290). Gifts to UCBMA are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor for further information.

Date: 1/16/2026

Amount: \$175

Reference #: 23156

HAWAII FLOOD APPEAL

In late March 2026, Hawaii experienced back-to-back storms known as Kona Lows that caused severe flooding across the Hawaiian Islands. This flooding represents the worst flooding that Hawaii has seen in more than 20 years. The Governor of Hawaii estimates the damages from these storms at over \$1 billion, including damage to airports, schools, roads, homes, and a Maui hospital in Kula. While the immediate threat of further flooding has passed, the long road to recovery is just beginning.

UCC Response

The Global HOPE team is in regular communication with the Hawaii Conference staff, ecumenical partners in disaster recovery, and response coordination calls with the national network of voluntary organizations active in disasters (VOAD). At this time, we are working to connect response resources with communities in need – this includes coordination with Church World Service and the potential deployment of clean up kits.

We know that at least three local UCC churches in Hawaii are in communities directly affected by the flooding. We are also aware of several other UCC churches that have made their spaces available as shelters.

As we continue to pray for and support those who experienced unimaginable loss, we invite you to support the UCC's recovery efforts in the following ways:

- Donate to the UCC's Hawaii Flooding 2026 Appeal. Your gifts will support the long-term recovery efforts of these communities, as we work to ensure an equitable approach to recovery.
- Pray for those who have been impacted.

Thank you for your partnership in our collective efforts to accompany those most deeply impacted by these recent events. Your heartfelt support will make a difference.

You can also mail a check payable to:

The United Church of Christ

PO Box 71957

Cleveland, OH 44194

Please be sure to note "Hawaii Flooding 2026" in the memo section of your check.

Our EIN: 34-1927041