



JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER



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A Note From Our Pastor

Dear Friends:

January is named after the Roman god Janus, who had two faces, one looking forward and one looking back. The New Year is a time for doing both. The year 2024 brought many changes to my life. I officially “retired,” and a month later, I began a call to be the Pastor of St. John’s UCC. It was a fantastic year getting to know my new church family as we celebrated the 175th anniversary of the congregation. Your love and acceptance have been overwhelming to me, and I thank God daily for bringing us together. At times I ask, “Why didn’t we do this sooner?” I truly feel at home here and hope my ministry with you continues to be filled with solid Biblical teaching, the good news of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the continued renewal of the Holy Spirit in our lives and missions. I am also grateful for how you have embraced Scarlett and her work as a therapy dog. I wish you could see the faces of those we visit at home, in nursing facilities, and even in the hospital.

As I reflect on our eleven months together, I am very proud of how we have meshed together, accepted some changes, and continue to respond to God’s calling to serve. We have added some Bible Study opportunities, have seven young people pursuing Confirmation, and launched an exciting Messy Church program, all while continuing to serve this community through Sandy’s Pantry, Phoebe’s Mission, the Babe Store, Kid’s Hope, the Blessings Box, Laundry Love, and more. Additionally, we added a Little Library. Who knows where God will next lead us?

Looking forward to 2025, I am excited about new changes coming to my personal life and our life together. In May, my son Nick and daughter-in-law Addison will welcome their first child, a boy, around May 16th. My youngest daughter, Noah, became engaged to her long-time boyfriend, Aaron, and they will soon be married in a small ceremony. God is so good, and I am thankful for all the blessings God has given me.

As we begin a new year, may we all trust in God and follow where God leads us (without dragging our feet too much). God has plans for each and every one of us, and together, we can do all things

through Christ, who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). May our hearts and minds be open to God's call as we continue to serve together.

Peace,

Pastor Debbie Jo



SCARLETT SPEAKS: Woof! Woof! On December 10th I visited with the Caterpillar Preschool classes while Mom read them *The Story of the Candy Cane*. I dressed in my Santa outfit, and we gave candy canes to the children. I also went with my mom on several visits to church members and attended the Children's Moment twice. Thank you to Harper, who takes care of me most of the time I'm at church, and Korbin, who helps.

Thanks also to all my church family who sent me Christmas treats. I guarantee I will personally eat each and every one. It is so nice to be remembered. I feel so loved. Merry Christmas! Woof! Woof!

MESSY CHURCH will be held on January 8th from 5:30-7:00 pm. The theme is "There's Snow-body Like You." There will be lots of snowy activities, boomwhackers, and a Taco Bar and Nachos for dinner. Join us!

ADULT BIBLE STUDY on The Gnostic Gospels will be held at 10:30 am and 6:30 pm on Tuesdays, January 21, 28, and February 4, 11. The Gnostic Gospels are 52 texts discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. They include 'secret' gospels, poems, and myths attributing to Jesus' sayings and beliefs, which are very different from the New Testament. We will be focusing on the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Phillip, and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. We will also look at the Gospel of Judas if we have time. If more time is needed, we will add more sessions. Pastor Debbie will have some background info on these gospels to prepare for this study; copies of it are available in the church office.

COMMUNION AT ST. JOHN'S UCC is open to EVERYONE, no matter their age, church affiliation, or non-affiliation, whether confirmed or not. If you belong to Christ you are welcome at the table. It is God's table, not ours. No one should be denied God's grace through the sacrament.

CONFIRMATION CLASS will meet on January 5th at 5:00 pm to discuss

What is Epiphany *What We Believe About Ourselves & the Christian Way of Life*. Confirmands should turn in their Old Testament Bible Questions and Answers sheet (labeled "Creation" on the first page); Be able to recite the Books of the Bible and watch the first two episodes of *Jesus of Nazareth* on YouTube.

January Assignments:

Work on New Testament Bible Study Handout

Watch *Jesus of Nazareth Part 3* on YouTube

Review Books of the Bible

Memorize *The Lord's Prayer*

January Service Opportunities:

Help undecorated church after worship

Help with Youth Soup Dinner on the day of the Annual Meeting

Help carry boxes up & down basement stairs at Parsonage

ONLINE GIVING helps the church in so many ways. By signing up to have your contribution automatically withdrawn from your bank account and sent to the church on a regular basis, you help keep a continuous flow of income for the church to use in paying its bills and see that our missions continue without any shortfalls that sometimes happen. You also don't have to remember to bring your envelope or check on Sunday mornings. You may sign up for online giving by going to the church website at myucc.org and following the contribution prompts. Thank you for your continued support of our church and its mission.

Newsletter to be Sent Via Email

At the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Church Board voted unanimously to move to a Newsletter sent by email beginning with February's newsletter. Our best information is that this will save the church secretary and others significant time in printing , folding, and mailing the newsletters and save the church approximately \$3,800 per year.

We will have available a few hard copies of the newsletter at church for those not having email. For those unable to get to church who do not have access to email, please notify our office and your copy will be mailed.

We recognize that any change can be difficult. However, many churches have done this for years. We believe that, eventually, most of our members and church friends will appreciate the convenience of this. We may use this email to provide other information to our church family.

Lastly while this change may not be seamless and you certainly will need to update the church office on your current email address, we believe that this is an important step for our church family to take to address our cash flow problem. We have other ideas which will be shared at the congregation meeting in January. It is important that each of us play a role in working toward a more balanced budget. This is a small step but gives us each a chance to benefit St. Johns by working to make this change successful.

Ed Cummings
Treasurer

Monthly Board Meeting



Church Board Highlights December 16, 2024

Joys and Concerns: The children's Christmas program was wonderful. Everyone did a great job and enjoyed watching the children and the confirmands involved. The Schotter family did a great job with the Advent wreath lighting! Thanks to Will Meyer for the church's Christmas display at Gregg Park. Prayers for all involved in the school shooting in Wisconsin. The amended agenda and secretary's report were accepted after adding the Pre-School to new business.

Ed discussed the financial reports and motioned that he be allowed to make some fund transfers to reimburse the operating fund for monies expended from the operating fund that should come out of specific funds. The motion was unanimously passed.

Pastor Debbie Jo's report included the following highlights: Confirmands and their families will be lighting the Advent candles each week. In January, we will begin a new weekday/evening Adult Bible Study on the Gnostic Gospels, focusing on the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. Messy Church's January theme is There's Snow Body Like You. Due to the first Wednesday being New Year's Day, Messy Church will be held on January 8th.

Scarlett and Pastor Debbie Jo read The Legend of the Candy Cane to the Caterpillar classes on December 3rd.

Christmas Eve service will take place at 7:00 pm, and Jonathan Clark will provide special music.

On January 5th, we will celebrate Epiphany, and the 1st Sunday in January is Baptism of Jesus Sunday, during which everyone will have the opportunity to renew their baptism vows.

Pastor Debbie Jo will be traveling during the week between Christmas and New Years to visit with family and friends.

She will be away from the pulpit on December 29th which will be a service of Lessons and Carols and will not require a guest minister.

Committee Reports:

Music & Worship

January 12th everyone is invited to help with taking down the holiday decorations. Annual congregation meeting is January 19th.

Christian Education

The youth fundraiser of selling cookies, etc., for Christmas is going well.

Pre-sale of soups is available through January 17th, with pick up being on January 19th following the annual congregational meeting. There will be soup available on that date also for purchase. Youth Group meeting will be January 5th at 6:00 following confirmation class.

Pre-School

We were informed via a letter sent to preschool parents that Miss April Brown will not return as St. John's preschool director/teacher in August of 2025. St. John's is committed to the uninterrupted continuation of the preschool, and the preschool committee will be meeting in January to develop a job description for the position and discuss how to move forward.

Finance

A tentative budget report for the Operating Fund was presented for review and acceptance.

The Board voted to change the monthly newsletter that is currently being mailed to be sent electronically to members. Watch the bulletins for more details. Anyone that would prefer to have a paper newsletter may contact the church office.

Outreach

Approved recommended expenditures for the Outreach and Benevolence Committee in the total amount of \$4,600 as follows:

OCWM	\$2,000
LAM	\$1,000
LAM Banquet	\$600
Sandy's	\$1,000

Church Facilities

The remaining LED light replacements will be completed in January. Duke Energy will be inspecting the electrical panel on January 9 & 10, and there will be no power in the old parsonage while the inspection is taking place.

Technology:

No response to a plea for help with sound and projection on Sunday mornings.

A complete copy of the Church Board minutes and Treasurer's report will be available after they are approved at next month's Board meeting.

Betsy Marchino, Church Board Secretary

Finance Committee Report for 2024

2024 was a great year for St. John's UCC. Pastor Debbie Jo Atkins became our settled pastor in February and brought joy and new ideas, as did Scarlett, to our congregation. Thanks to the great work of Sheri Stodghill and her extraordinary committee, we celebrated our 175th Anniversary in grand style. We also made and continue to make improvements to our church facilities, principally thanks to Mark Schutz, Marvin, and Sandee Covey. We welcomed new and old friends to our church.

All of these projects and changes, though necessary and beneficial to our church, cost money. We have reserves mostly invested in the stock market, which has been done well. However, the market doesn't always go up. This year we made transfers from those reserves of over \$170,000 to maintain a positive balance in our Operating Account. At the beginning of the year, \$62,100 of that money came from the Gauer distribution. The remainder came from the close out of our Regions money market account and our Wilhelm and Scholarship accounts at Edward Jones. We changed the Wilhelm account from an investment account with investment costs to a money market account so we could more easily access those funds to pay for operational expenses.

We hope that 2025 is the year we start to turn the corner on getting our receipts closer to or in balance with our expenditures. We have a good start. The pledge campaign received commitments of \$130,056 for the Operating Fund - an increase of over \$25,000 from 2024. This is due to the spirit and experience of Pastor Debbie Jo but also the outstanding lay speakers Larry Marchino and Krisi Mattingly as well as Jana Vieck's superb President's letter to the congregation. Of course, the real credit goes to those who pledged, particularly those who increased their pledge.

We know, however, that we need to review expenses and consider ways to maximize the use of our resources. The preschool now pays its cleaning costs directly from its budget. Its reimbursement to the church for cleaning, insurance, utilities, and related expenses has not been changed since 2016.

We are also changing to emailing our newsletter to save significant time and around \$3,800 on a yearly basis. Other possibilities will be discussed at the Congregational meeting. Our budget for this year could come close to balancing if we don't have large unanticipated expenses. We recognize that we will have some; we just hope they are not too large.

We hope that addressing the budget issues will bring us together to address a problem that has been lingering for a number of years. Our commitment to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and our attempts to do his work here are too important for us not to take steps to see that our Church's long-term future is secured.

Ed Cummings



January

2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Happy New Year	2	3 Phoebe's Mission 4:30-6pm	4
5 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Worship 10:30 w/ communion Children's Church Confirmation Class 5pm	6 BABE Store 12-5:30 pm Evangelism & Membership 6:30pm	7	8 Christian Ed 6 pm Choir 7pm Messy Church 5:30-7pm	9 Technology 10am Dinner at Applebee's 6pm	10	11
12 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Worship 10:30 Children's Church Undecorating the church following service	13 BABE Store 12-5:30 pm	14	15 Choir 7pm	16 Dinner at Senior Tequila 6pm	17 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	18 Prep for the CFM soup sale 3pm
19 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Worship 10:30 Children's Church Annual Congregational Meeting CFM Soup Sale Pick up After Service until 1	20 BABE Store 12-5:30 pm CFM Soup Sale Pick up 4-5 pm Worship Comm. 6 pm Church Board 7pm	21 Bible Study 6:30pm & 10:30am	22 Choir 7pm	23 Dinner at Texas Roadhouse 6pm	24	25 CFM Family Night 5-7:30pm
26 Adult Sunday School 9:15 Worship 10:30 Children's Church	27 BABE Store 12-5:30 pm	28 Bible Study 6:30pm & 10:30am	29 Laundry Love 6-8 Choir 7pm	30 Dinner at Ponderosa 6pm	31	



January Birthdays

Cheryl Meyer
Susie Milligan
Tony Riley
Zack Gilmore
Kelly Alexander
Brenda Cummings
Jeff Newell
David Grube
Ryan Vieke
Keaton Summers
Carmen Horton
Daxton Lawrence
Will Vieke
Rodger Hobson
Ryan Watts
Conway Wilson





ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS AND CONCERNS

- Continued prayers for **Patrick Gott**, Gabrielle Gerhardt's husband, who remains at Deaconess. **Donna Gerhardt** is recovering from Covid. Prayers appreciated for this family.
- Please keep **Norma Phegley** in your prayers as she grieves the death of her son.
- **Vern Houchins** continues to consult with his physicians. Please continue praying for Vern and Marilyn.
- **Norma Meyer**, Gary Meyer's mother, is recovering from surgery after a recent fall.
- Continued prayers are appreciated for Eric and Cheryl Meyer's Niece's husband, **Warren**. He is home recovering from a successful heart ablation procedure.

Addresses for Shut-ins and Others

Norma Meyer, Colonial Assisted Living, - Room 142, 1622 Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591

Susie Milligan, Colonial Assisted Living, - Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591

Leona Conway, Aperion Care , - 3801 C Wing Room 3, Old Bruceville Rd , Vincennes, IN 47591

Marge Beamon, The Villages at Oak Ridge, -1694 Troy Rd. Washington, IN 47501

Home

Bruce Deckard

Gary Meyer

Michael Lankford

Gayle Huffer

Ellen Riggs

If you have a caregiving need such as a hospital stay, a visit or desire communion, please contact the church office, Janet Goodman (co-chair of Caregivers) or any caregiver listed below. We would appreciate your help and want to make sure everyone is blessed by St. John's when you need it!
St. John's UCC Caregivers- Ed and Brenda Cummings, Cindy Deckard (co-chair), Connie and Dan Coulter, Peggy Meyer, Ray Pieper, Terry and Janet Goodman, Lonny Vieck, Larry and Betsy Marchino.

Join us for worship and communion in the New Year, on Sunday, January 5, 2025, as our congregation celebrates Christ Jesus manifesting God on Epiphany Sunday!

Reflecting on the Advent and Christmas season, confirmands Owen Schotter and Vera Mattingly and their families, plus Brayton, Allison, and Grady Cummins lit the candles on the Advent wreath. The Music and Worship Team celebrates St. John's children and youth as they presented *ONE SMALL CHILD* during worship. Thank you, Owen Schotter, Charlotte Bahr, Korbin Alexander, and Harper Coomes for sharing your talents with your solos. And thank you to Jill Lopez and Sarah Lowe for leadership and guidance; thank you, also, to accompanist Becky Brockman.

During our *Lessons and Carols* Christmas Eve service, solos by Jonathan Clark and Vera Mattingly enhanced our worship experience. Thank you confirmand Addison Cummings and family for lighting the Christ candle on the Advent wreath.

As the adage "time flies" is ever present, Music and Worship has also scheduled holiday "undecorating" for Sunday, January 12, after worship. All assistance is very much appreciated!

Lent is just around the corner, with Ash Wednesday's service at 7 PM, March 5. Additional Lenten announcements will follow in the February 2025 "*Our Church Matters*".

Thanks to all volunteers for working to make our 2024 Advent worship and activities special!

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Preschool News



Bells were ringing, and stockings were hung in the preschool classroom. We made cute snowmen, reindeer, and Santa ornaments for our Christmas trees. Every child decorated their own Christmas stocking.

The Butterflies performed the “Waiting for Santa” Christmas program. Everyone sang great, and Santa even visited after the program!

Mid-year evaluations were completed and sent home. The Caterpillars did so well that they all got a special Christmas movie day, and the Butterflies did so well that they had a pizza party and snowball fight!

We are all geared up for Christmas, and the teachers are looking forward to a new semester of learning.



Preschool Hours **Butterflies Class**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9am-3pm
(doors open at 8:55 am)

Caterpillars Class

Tuesday and Thursday, morning class 9-11:30 am
(doors open at 8:55 am)
afternoon class 12:30apm-3:00 pm
(doors open at 12:25 pm)





The Children and Family Ministry had an active December. To start the month, the CFM group began to sell Mason Jar Cookie Mixes, Homemade Hot Chocolate Mixes, Christmas cards, and Christmas gift bags as a fundraiser. On Sunday, December 8, the Children and Family Ministry had a Family Holiday Dinner that evening at church. The meat and drinks for this event were provided, and the families provided a side dish or dessert to share with the other families. The CFM group had a Christmas Party on December 22 to finish the month. There was a taco bar, games, and crafts at the activity to finish the 2024 CFM calendar year activities.



The Children and Family Ministry families are asked to help prep for the CFM Soup Fundraiser on Saturday, January 18, at 3 pm in the kitchen and will be done by 5 pm. The families are also asked to help prepare the orders on Sunday, January 19. Please look for announcements in the bulletin and on a Facebook group for future information. If there are any questions, please let Will know!



On January 25, from 5-7:30 pm, the Children and Family Ministry will have an opportunity to enjoy a night at church with their church family. Some opportunities will be playing pool, foosball, giant board games, and watching a movie. The families can also bring games from home to share with the other families. At this activity, there will be a pasta bar and other snacks. Inviting friends, grandparents, and other family members to the fun activity will be great! Come and go to fit your schedule, or stay the whole time.

St. John's UCC Children and Family Ministry Soup Sale Order Form

Would you like an easy lunch or dinner? The Children and Family Ministry Group has a solution for that! We are selling soup for you to reheat & eat at home. Please order for presales by Wednesday, January 15, for pickup starting Sunday, January 19. Order forms can be turned in to the church office, offering plate, or by emailing Will Meyer at stjuccfamilyministry@yahoo.com. Payment is due with pickup. Checks can be made out to Children and Family Ministry. Free donations will also be accepted. Proceeds will go towards the 2025 In-town Mission Week and future activities.

12oz Soup Cup (Great for lunch or small meal)-\$3.50

16oz Soup Cup (Great for a dinner serving)-\$4.50

Name _____

_____ 12oz Potato Soup

_____ 16oz Potato Soup



Enjoy some pictures from St. John's United Church of Christs December Activities!





**St. John's United Church of Christ
606 North Fifth Street
Vincennes, IN 47591**

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