

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 12, 2025

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Affirmed by Love

The teen waded into the cold lake. With words of being joined with Christ and the community of believers through the waters of baptism, under she went — emerging seconds later with the most radiant smile anyone had ever seen.

Her father captured that smile, memorializing the day with a photo in a frame that was inscribed with the words God spoke at Jesus' baptism, "This is my beloved."

Now, in a shoebox apartment with a toddler getting into mischief and overdue bills piling up on the kitchen counter, the girl with the once radiant smile, wondered where it all went wrong.

Tired and defeated, she sat on the couch, staring at the wall of pictures before her. It was then she spotted her younger self staring back at her with a smile that time had forgotten.

She shifted her gaze to the words on the frame. Only this time what she heard in her heart was a whisper, "You are STILL my beloved." Just then she did something strange. She smiled — radiantly — remembering who was still holding her.

Today is the Baptism of Our Lord Sunday. It is a day that follows the celebration of Epiphany, underscoring the season of Christ appearing to us, revealing the love he has for us and the hope that is found when we clasp our hand in his.

Here, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is recognized as God's beloved, emerging from his baptism in the Jordan River to God's voice thundering praises and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. It is a new beginning for Jesus. The start of his earthly ministry.

Baptism is an invitation to new life. But as we know, life's newness — its bright prospects, endless possibilities and hopeful promises — can fade with time.

That is why on this day we remember not only Jesus' baptism, but our own. For the very act of remembering that we have been claimed as God's beloveds has the power to revive us once again.

It is said that on his most difficult days and times of great trials, 16th-century German Reformer, Martin Luther, would repeat these words: "I am baptized." It was Luther's way of reminding himself that no matter how off course life got, he was still held by a loving God who was always making all things new.

We all need that baptismal reminder.

So today, fill up a sink or a bowl with water. Dip, submerge, splash your hands in it. Then close your eyes and hear God whisper to you, "You are my child, the beloved, with you I am well pleased." And as you do, may you find a radiant smile sweeping across your face.

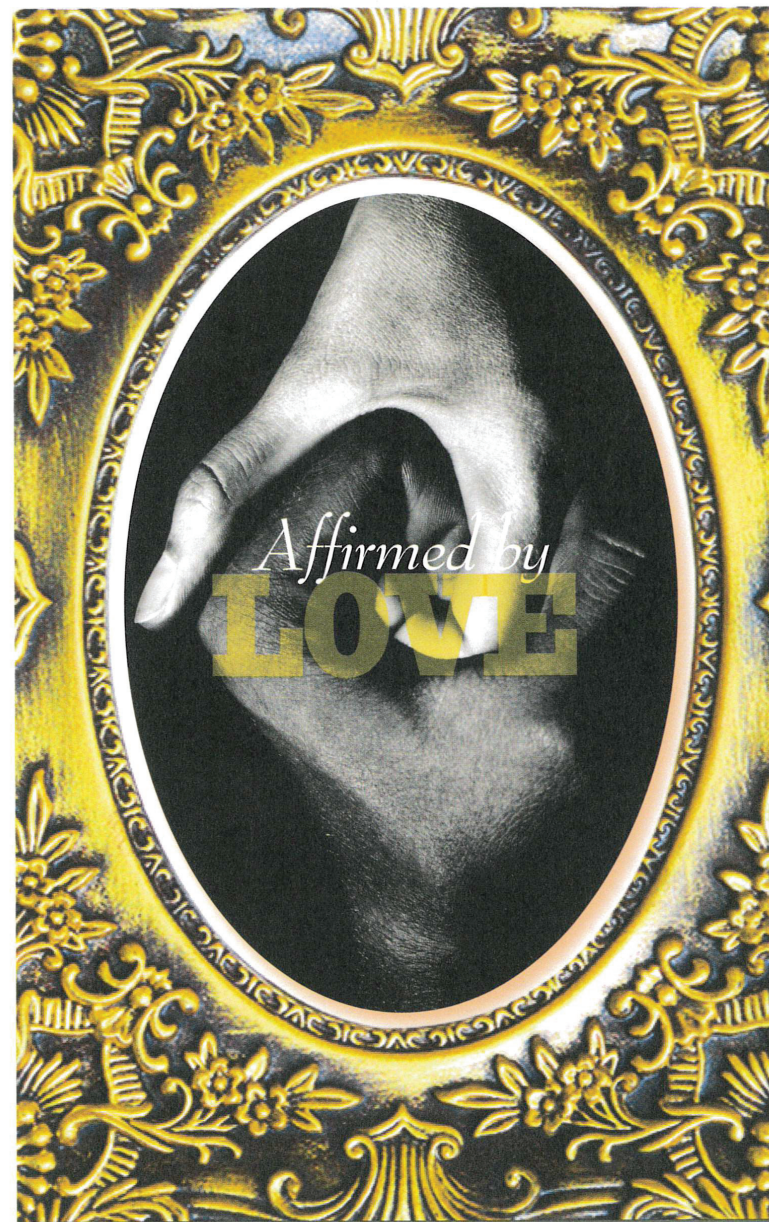
All-knowing and All-Loving God, may the cleansing waters of baptism wash over our lives, reviving hope for our tomorrows. May we hear Your voice this day reminding us that we are Your beloveds. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



8 1/2" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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BUL0207





St. John's United Church of Christ
Epiphany Sunday
January 5, 2024



* Please stand if it is comfortable to do so. **Bold print** is everyone in unison

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER (be seated)

CHURCH BELL (the bell invites us to worship)

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP (responsively)

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

A new day is dawning, a new year is born, fresh and clean.

Arise, shine for your light has come.

Emmanuel, God is with us on every path we take, no matter where we go.

Arise, shine for your light has come.

And the stars still shine where Christ is present and voices sing in praise!

***OPENING HYMN** *We Three Kings* #172

***WE CONFESS OUR SIN** (unison)

Divine Light, illuminating our shadows and darkness, we turn to you in hope and fear. We long to be freed from times of bewildering darkness, when depression and despair haunt our days and perplex our nights. We hope for clear answers and readily marked paths. Healing Light, remind us that you desire not our punishment but our salvation. Your light is gracious and brings insight and renewal, hope and blessing. Restore our courage and make us your light for others. Amen.

***GOD FORGIVES US** (responsively)

As Mary, Joseph and Jesus settled in Nazareth, help us, God, to let you take up residence in each one of our hearts. Forgive us our failures, our weaknesses, our fears and our doubts.

In the name of the babe of Bethlehem, the Prince of Peace, we are now made new and whole.

***RESPONSE** *The First Noel* (v.1 & 2) #151

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE *Jesus Loves Me*

OFFERING INVITATION**

Let us give back to God with gratitude for all blessings received.

***RESPONSE** *As With Gladness* (v. 1) #173

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

Our gifts, O Lord, are an expression of our undying gratitude for our salvation through Christ and for your boundless love that supports us even when we are unworthy servants. Accept then, these tokens of our stewardship and use them according to your will. Amen.

ANTHEM *Do You Know the Way to Bethlehem* Wagner

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:7-14

New Testament: Matthew 2:1-23

L: The Word of God for the People of God P: Thanks be to God

MESSAGE *Star Trek*

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

Communion Prayer

God be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to God.**

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Words of Institution; Consecration and Sharing of the Elements

Thanksgiving Prayer (unison)

We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another and let us show forth your praise in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN** *I Am the Light of the World* #469

***BLESSING** (responsively)

Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? He is in us and among us—our risen and reigning Lord.

Let us follow his star and serve him always in all our words and deeds.

* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Go In Peace* #445

* **POSTLUDE**

ST. JOHN'S UCC STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

Pastor	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist	Eric Meyer
Head Usher	Saundra Lange
Organist	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist	Becky Brockman
Children /Family Ministry Coordinator	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant	Darcie Bahr
Projection	Jill Doggett
Sound	Jonathan Lange
Church Secretary	Angie Robinson
Church Board President	Jana Vieck
Greeters	Cherty & Will Meyer



The annual Congregation Meeting is scheduled immediately following Church on January 19, 2025 ! Please plan to attend.

MESSY CHURCH will be held on February 5, from 5:30-7:00 pm. The theme is *There's Snow-body Like You*. Lots of activities, Boomwhackers, with 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.

**You may place your offering in the plate at the back of the sanctuary or online at myucc.org and clicking on the *contribute* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.



Virtual Worship Service is still available on the church website, myucc.org. Worship Services are also "Live Streamed" on the Church's FACEBOOK page



THIS WEEK in the Life of St. John's

SUNDAY, January 12
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
Undecorating Church After Worship

MONDAY, January 13
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Pastoral Relations 7 PM

WEDNESDAY, January 15
Choir 7pm

THURSDAY, January 16
Dinner at Señor Tequila 6 pm

FRIDAY, January 17
Newsletter Deadline

LOOKING AHEAD

SUNDAY, January 19
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
Annual Congregational Meeting Following Service
CFM Soup Sale

MONDAY, January 20
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Worship 6 pm
Worship 7 pm

WEDNESDAY, January 22
Choir 7pm

THURSDAY, January 23
Dinner at Texas Roadhouse 6 pm



Continuing Prayer Requests: Laura Sanders, Bruce Deckard, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr., the families of Carole Klein and Franklyn Schroeder, plus Norma Phegley.

- **Vern Houchins** is anticipating a surgery date as he consults his physicians. Please continue praying for Vern and Marilyn.
- **Norma Meyer**, Gary Meyer's mother, is undergoing rehab at GentleCare following her recent fall and subsequent surgery. Cards may be sent to Norma at GentleCare, Room 8, 1202 S. 16th, Vincennes IN 47591.
- Please pray for Bob and Janis Turner and family upon the death of their nephew, **Dr. Baron Brocksmith**.
- **Cindi Gilmore** is having heart issues. Please pray for resolutions to this health challenge.

Addresses for Shut-ins and Others

Norma Meyer, Gentle Care, - Room 8, 1202 S 16th, Vincennes, IN 47591
Susie Milligan, Colonial Assisted Living, - Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Leona Conway, Aperion Care, - C Wing Room 3, 3801 Old Bruceville Rd , Vincennes, IN 47591
Marge Beamon, The Villages at Oak Ridge, - Room 303, 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.

BABE Store



What Is The BABE Store Mission?

This unique "store" provides incentives encouraging families to nurture healthy babies. Serving pregnant women and their children up to age three with no income restrictions to be able to participate in this program. Clients earn vouchers by keeping prenatal appointments, taking their children for immunizations and other activities, then redeeming the coupons at the BABE Store located in St. John's for merchandise from diapers to cribs and everything in between.



How Can I Help?

BABE relies on the support of individuals and organizations in Knox County. Tax deductible donations are accepted for new:

- High Chairs & Strollers
- Diapers & Wipes
- Baby Clothing
- Bottles & Pacifiers
- Bathing Supplies
- Potty Chairs
- Bedding
- Teething Rings & Rattles
- Financial Gifts
- Host a "Baby Shower" For BABE
- Volunteer At The Store
- Serve As A Board Member

HOURS OF OPERATION

12 noon - 4:30 pm
 Monday's Only
 Closed on Holidays

Contact

Peggy Meyer
 812-886-9723
 Cindy Deckard
 812-887-2999

St. John's United Church of Christ
 812-882-2720 www.myucc.org