

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

February 23, 2025

Luke 6:27-38

Love Your Enemies

In her book, "The Hiding Place," Corrie ten Boom shares how during World War II, at the age of 50, she joined the Dutch resistance, working with her older sister, Betsie, in helping to hide their Jewish neighbors from the Nazis behind a sliding panel in a bedroom of their family home in Holland.

In 1944, though, the family was caught and arrested by the Gestapo. The sisters were subsequently sent to a concentration camp. Despite the brutal conditions, Betsie and Corrie clung to Jesus' command of loving one another, even the very people who were holding them captive.

Corrie, though, recalled how one especially trying day her sister spoke words of faith and encouragement to her, reminding her that, "if people can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love."

"We must find a way, you and I, no matter how long it takes," said Betsie said to the younger Corrie.

Corrie did find way. After the war was over, she committed the remainder of her days modeling what is perhaps one of the hardest things Jesus asks of us here in Luke's gospel: *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

Corrie ten Boom illustrated radical love by forgiving the guards in the concentration camp. She continued to write and give lectures about the healing power of God's love extended to those who hurt us, and how that love was the only thing capable of healing a broken world.

Decades have passed since ten Boom wrote "The Hiding Place," and hate still seems to be winning over love. We read the news headlines and hear the broadcasts of retaliation and retribution rather than redemption and forgiveness. The few times the media does share such a story of love winning over hate, we find it hard to imagine — let alone imagine us being the ones displaying such love. It seems impossible. Unfathomable.

But we must find a way to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and pray for those who mistreat us. No matter how long it takes, the world, which has mastered how to hate, needs to be taught love. It's a lesson that begins at home.

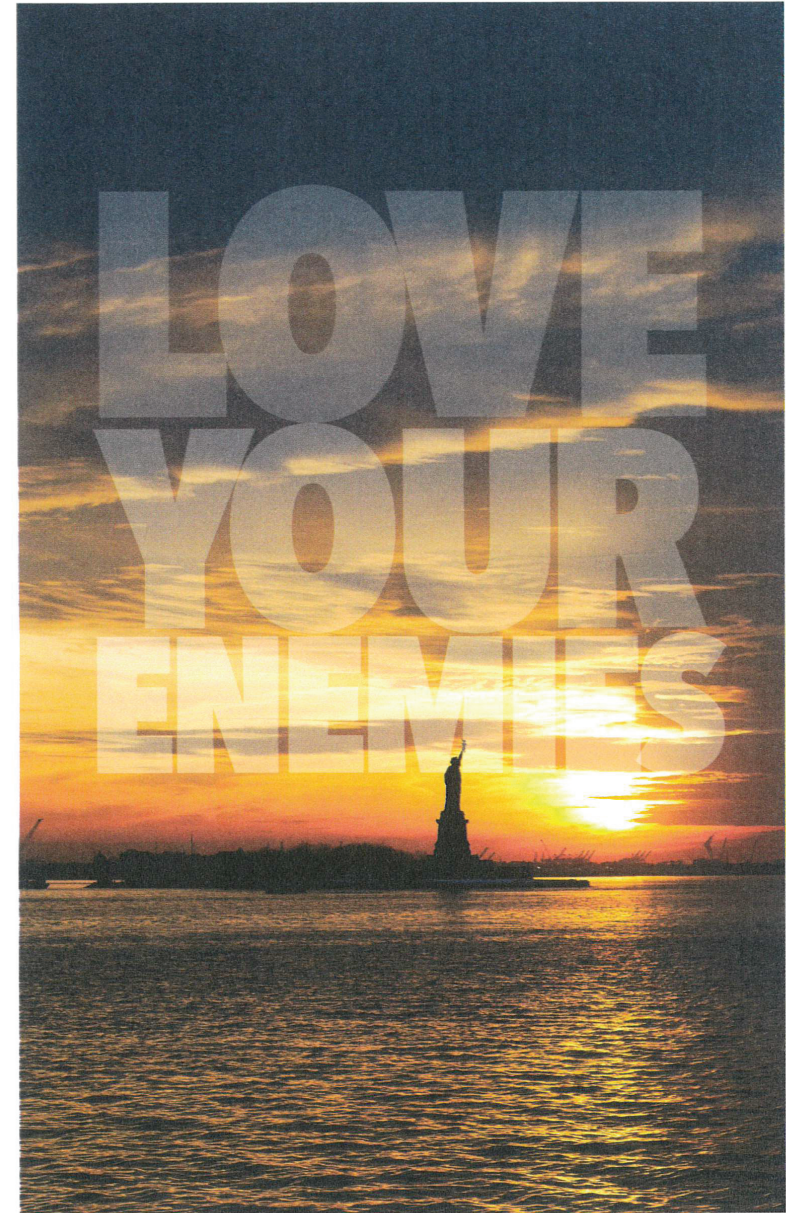
Merciful God, You who are our hiding place in times of trouble, we boldly ask for the strength to do the impossible this day — love our enemies and forgive those who have hurt us. All things are possible with You, O God. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



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

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BUL0213





St. John's United Church of Christ
Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
 February 23, 2025



* 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) **PRELUDE**

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP (responsively)

As we come to worship, let us leave at the door our self-centered thoughts.
And open our eyes to see our neighbor in worship.

As we come to worship, let us leave at the door our feelings of exclusiveness.

And open our minds to the possibilities of inclusion.

As we come to worship, let us leave outside our notion of generosity and open our hearts to the possibility of giving beyond our typical gift.

As we come to worship, let us open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to what can be instead of what is. For all of our gifts and for all possibilities, let us lift our voices in praise!

***OPENING HYMN** *Now the Green Blade Rises* (vs. 1 & 4) #230

***WE INVITE GOD TO WORSHIP** (unison)

Almighty God, Creator of the universe, Sustainer of life, Redeemer of the world, we are awed that a God of such majesty and mystery receives our worship, hears our prayers and cares for our concerns and burdens. We turn our hearts to you in this time and place to be reoriented to the truths of faith: that there is more to life than what we can see and touch; that love can conquer hate; that forgiveness of one's enemies is not only possible but a mandate. We embrace the truth that hope is found in Jesus Christ, not in our retirement accounts, and that the foundation of life rests on you, not on us. Thank you, Lord, for meeting us here. We pray for your Spirit to speak to us and renew us by your grace. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *I Am the Light of the World* (chorus) #469

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE (children please come forward) *Jesus Loves Me*

OFFERING INVITATION**

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

***RESPONSE** *Great is Your Faithfulness* (chorus) #86

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

With thankful and glad hearts, O God, we offer our tithes and offerings to you. Thank you for the privilege of participating in your kingdom, of spreading the good news, of taking care of the "least of these." Use these gifts, and us, for your purposes and will in the world. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

Silent Prayers – Pastoral Prayer-The Lord's Prayer (debtors/debtors)

Congregational Response: *Here I Am, Lord* (chorus)

ANTHEM *Now and Forever More* McDonald

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

New Testament: Luke 6:27-38

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

MESSAGE *Golden Rule Thinking*

***CLOSING HYMN** *Help Us Accept Each Other* #487

***BLESSING** (responsively)

You have been given love to cherish others, hope to encourage others, faith to believe in others, wisdom to teach others.

As loving, encouraging, believing and teaching servants of God we go out to an expectant world. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE *Go In Peace* #445

* **POSTLUDE**

ST. JOHN'S UCC STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

Pastor	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist	Saundra Lange
Head Usher	Ren Simmons
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	Ed Cummings
Greeters	Kyle & Jill Doggett Family

2025 Church Board Members

Ed Cummings Church Board President
Saundra Lange Church Board Vice President
Ren Simmons Treasurer
Jill Doggett Secretary
Jake Alexander
Steve Cooper
Kim Godare
Michelle Godare
Krisi Mattingly
Mark Schutz
Brad Summers



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, February 23
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
MONDAY, February 24
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm
WEDNESDAY, February 26
Choir
Laundry Love 6-8 pm
THURSDAY, February 27
Dinner at Café Moonlight 6 pm

LOOKING AHEAD

SUNDAY, March 2
Adult Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am
Children's Church
MONDAY, March 3
BABE Store 12-5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:15 pm
TUESDAY, March 4
Sandy's Pantry 11– 12:30 pm
WEDNESDAY, March 5
Messy Church 5:30-6 pm
Ash Wednesday Service 7 pm
THURSDAY, March 6
Sandy's Pantry 11– 12:30 pm
Dinner at El Corral 6 pm
FRIDAY, March 7
Phoebe's Mission 4:30-6 pm



ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS AND CONCERNS

Continuing Prayer Requests: Bruce Deckard, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr., Norma Meyer, Pat Hutchins and Family.

- Cindi Gilmore has a heart procedure scheduled for Thursday, February 27. Please pray for a successful outcome and safe travels for Cindi and Clayton.
- Prayers for Vern and Marilyn Houchins. Marilyn is still recovering at home from flu A. Vern was to have surgery this past Friday for a newly found herniated disc while he was being treated for Flu A in Evansville this past Friday.
- Gayle Huffer is continuing chemotherapy and kidney dialysis. She will have cataract surgery on March 8th. Continued prayers for her, please. Her address is 5372 E. Wheatland Rd. Vincennes, IN, if you would like to send a card.
- Continued prayers for Brian Fillingim. He is still in a lot of unexplained pain. Praying for answers.

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.

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

MESSY CHURCH will take place on Wednesday, March 5th from 5:30-7. The theme is Live, Love, Lent, and will include a number of activities to experience during the Lenten season. Dinner will be hot dogs, mac & cheese & chips. Everyone is invited to join us afterward for the Ash Wednesday service.

LENT BEGINS with Ash Wednesday on March 5th with a Service of Communion and the Imposition of Ashes at 7 p.m.

LENTEN MOVIE & DISCUSSION nights will take place on several Sunday evenings during the Lenten season. The first movie will be Conclave, starring Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, and Isabella Rossellini, on March 16th at 5:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall.

We need help moving the Cross into the Sanctuary. We plan to move it on Sunday, March 2, after church. Please let us know if you can help us out.

A Big Thank You goes out to Bill Lathrop for repairing the broken drawer in the kitchen and to Larry Marchino and Mark Schutz for their work on the stained-glass window in the Sanctuary. We appreciate all of you! Also, a big thank you to Mark Schutz for sidewalk and property snow removal!

If you would like to donate a Spring flower in honor of or in memory of a loved one, please have them at the Church by **noon on Friday, April 18**. A list of donors will be in the May newsletter.

To maintain a healthy relationship between the congregation and the pastor, St. John's United Church of Christ has formed a Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC). Ideas or issues for the PRC may be directed to any of the following members of the committee: Hope Clausman, Brenda Cummings, Eric Meyer, Sheri Stodghill, and Jana Vieck.