

Open Table

I have a friend who pastors a neighboring congregation who was hoping to use a generous gift left by a saint of the church to reconfigure the sanctuary seating.

She wanted to remove the wooden pews and buy moveable chairs, thus, opening space to set up banquet tables and invite the hungry in the community to an extravagant sit down dinner.

That didn't happen. The money went instead to repaving the church parking lot.

She asked the committee who made this decision if that was the best way to show hospitality to others? The committee thought so. And perhaps it was.

But if we explore the ancient meaning of hospitality, perhaps removable chairs allowing room to feed the hungry was a better choice than a coat of asphalt.

The word "hospitality," in the original Greek, is *philoxenos*, which means, "to love the stranger." In Middle Eastern culture it was considered a sacred duty to take responsibility for the stranger — to give them food and shelter. So true hospitality is more than opening church doors or paving a parking lot but opening our hearts to seeing the needs of others.

Jesus didn't see hospitality on display when he went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee. What he saw was guests clamoring for the good seats — the places of honor. And he called them out, telling them to be humble, adding, too, that around the table should be the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind.

In the book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Brennan Manning said that in the Near East, the shared table symbolizes the shared life. "Sadly," Manning writes, "the meaning of meal sharing is largely lost in the Christian community today."

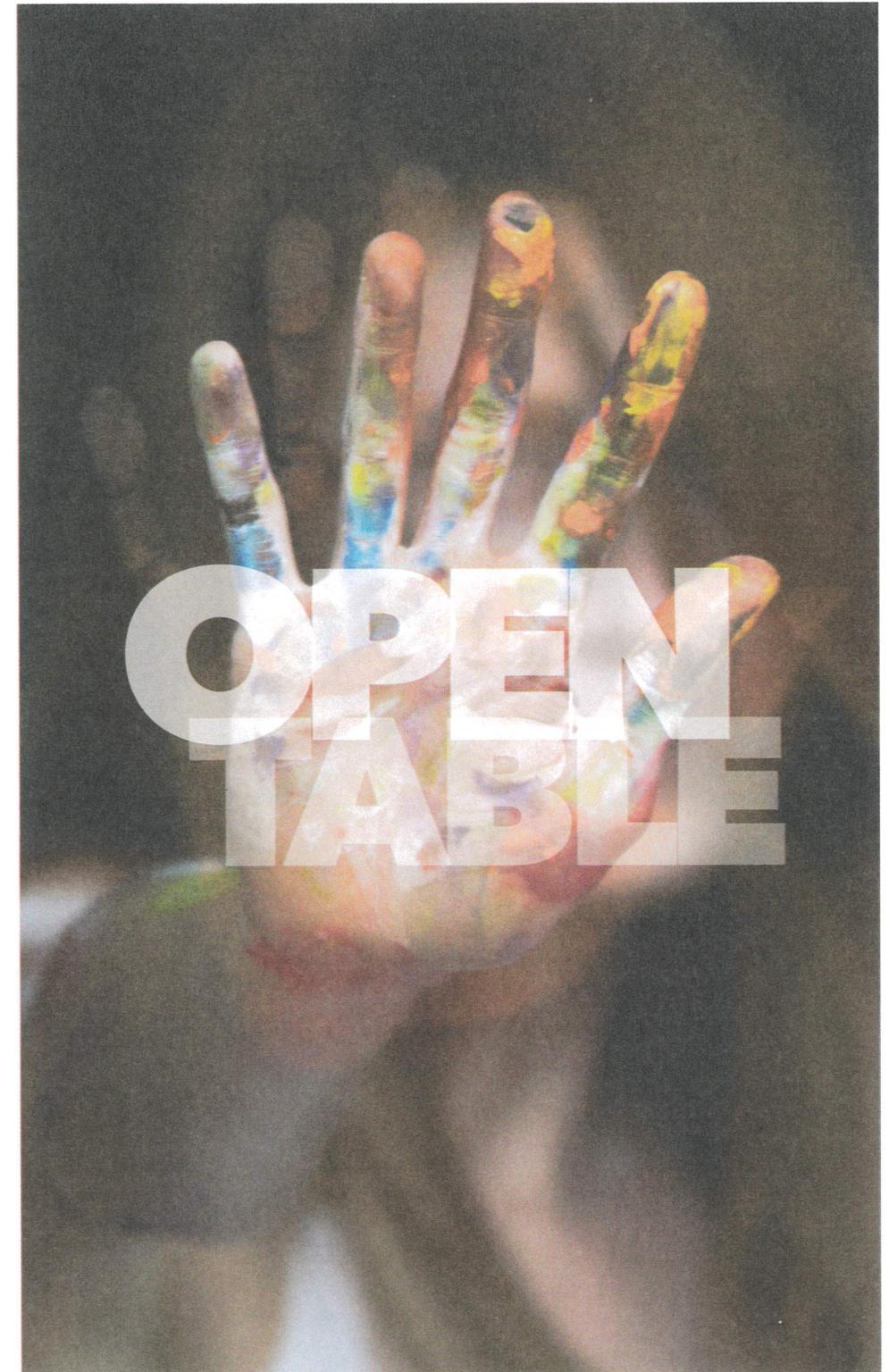
What does hospitality look like in your life? Are the doors to your heart opened to the stranger who is hungry, cold and lonely?

My friend who failed in getting removable chairs in the sanctuary to create a banquet hall for the hungry in her community is now looking for another church to serve.

The one she served has a great parking lot, not a pothole to be found, but there are no longer cars parked there on a Sunday. The doors closed for good a few months ago.

God, we hear Jesus' words that the first will be last and the last will be first, yet still we put our desire for recognition, prestige and comfort ahead of Your children who are pushed aside and overlooked. Open the doors to our hearts, so that true hospitality is lived in our communities. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)





St. John's United Church of Christ
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
 August 31, 2025



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

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER (be seated)

PRELUDE

CHURCH BELL (the bell invites us to worship)

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP (responsively)

Hear the voice of God instructing us:

Give justice to the weak and the orphan.

Maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy;

Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Let us rise up as children of the most high! Let us show mercy and give justice, for every person is our neighbor. Alleluia! Amen!

* **OPENING HYMN** *Called as Partners in Christ's Service* #453

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

It is good to be together in the presence of the Lord! God, we welcome you to this place. We know that, apart from you, all that we try to do, say or sing will sound like noise. Instead, we ask that you guide us in our words, guide us in our prayers and guide us in our worship -- that all that is said, sung and done in this place will bring you the great glory you deserve. May it be a sweet sound to you. Amen.

* **RESPONSE** *When in Awe of God's Creation* (v. 1) #688

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

OFFERING INVITATION**

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

* **DOXOLOGY** #46

* **PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

Spirit of wind and fire, bless these gifts of our labors and transform them into your work in this world. Make them be a blessing for all who search for your bounty. May your Spirit continue to call us forth to live a life of giving. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

Congregational Response: *How Great Thou Art* (chorus only) #33

SCRIPTURE:

Old Testament: Micah 6:8

New Testament: Luke 10:25-37

The Word of God for the People of God **Thanks be to God**

MESSAGE *2025 Mission Week Experiences*
 Will Meyer & Mission Week Workers

* **CLOSING HYMN** *Pass it On* #477

* **BLESSING** (responsively)

God's faithfulness, kindness and mercy are unfailing and without end. May that faithfulness, kindness and mercy spill out from our lives to each person that we encounter this week.

May lives be changed as the gospel is lived out of our words and actions as we go now, full of kindness and mercy for others. Amen.

* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *God Be With You* (v.1-no chorus) #434

* **POSTLUDE**

Announcements

Introducing Faith Ventures! This fall begins some new changes in our Sunday morning Children's Ministry. Following the Children's Moment, those in **Kindergarten through 6th Grade only** are invited to participate in Faith Ventures, our reimagined Sunday School. Preschoolers are welcome in the church nursery or to quietly play in the pray ground in the back of the sanctuary. **Middle and High Schoolers** are welcome to remain in worship and will receive their faith lessons with Will during Youth Fellowship on Sunday evenings.

Fall Kickoff Breakfast will be held on Sunday, September 7th at 9:30 a.m. as the Fall Faith Formation classes begin their program year. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**

Messy Church Returns on September 3rd from 5:30-7:00 pm featuring the theme of *Bee-Attitudes*. Our Scripture will be the *Beatitudes* from Matthew 5:1-12 and we will have lots of "Bee" related games, crafts and activities. Dinner will be mini corn dogs, mac & cheese and veggies. Plan now to participate and join us for a great evening of Food, Fun and Fellowship. Invite your friends!

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. top continue our outreach into the community.

The Blessings Box needs donations. Suggestions are: cereal, peanut butter, jelly, Velveeta mac & cheese (doesn't require milk or butter), canned pastas, soups, crackers. Cans with pop top lids are best.

While we don't have a **permanent church secretary**, volunteers will be manning the office Monday through Friday from 9 am to 12:30 pm.

Pastor Debbie Jo is at St. John's UCC in Southport today, leading worship and baptizing her grandson, Colsen Max Atkins-Harris.

Thanks to Will Meyer and members of the Youth Fellowship for sharing their Mission Week experiences with us today.

Friends on Stage Live Performance, Monday, September 15th, doors open at 5:50 for a performance at 6:00 PM. Rock and Roll Forever, Lincoln High School Ader Auditorium. Free will donations will be appreciated.

Prayers and Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Bruce Deckard, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr., The Family of Laura Sanders, Mark Schutter, Kelvin Strange, Wayne Baker, Lynne Simmons, Katrina Memering, Jasmine Zeller, The Family of Sam (Dick) Goodman, Ted Lowe and Vern Houchins.



Shut-in Addresses:

Susie Milligan - Colonial Assisted Living, Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Leona Conway - Aperia Care, C Wing Room C-35, 3801 Old Bruceville Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Marge Beamon - The Villages at Oak Ridge, Room 303, 1694 Troy Road, Washington, IN 47501

At Home:

Bruce Deckard
Gary Meyer
Mike Lankford
Vern Houchins



**Until further notice, all prayer requests or updates should be relayed to Janet Goodman instead of the church office. Email: terrybaseball@gmail.com
Text or phone call: 812-887-2797.**

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, August 31st

Adult SS Classes 9:30 am
Youth Camp Presentation During Worship
Worship 10:30 am
Pastor Debbie Gone

Wednesday, September 3rd

Messy Church 5:30 - 7pm
Choir Practice 7 pm

Friday, September 5th

Phoebe's Mission 4:30 - 6 pm

Monday, September 1st

Labor Day Holiday Church Office Is Closed
BABE Store Closed Due To Holiday
No Friends Meeting Tonight

Thursday, September 4th

Dinner & Conversation - American Table
6pm

Looking Ahead In September

Sunday, September 7th

All Ages Breakfast 9:30 am
Adult FF Class 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Faith Ventures (K - grade 6) During Worship
Communion

Tuesday, September 9th

Sandy's Pantry 11 am - 12:30 pm
Vision Committee Mtg. 5:30 pm

Thursday, September 10th

Tech Meeting 10 am
Sandy's Pantry 11 am - 12:30 pm
Dinner & Conversation - Log Inn 6 pm (**CASH ONLY**)

Monday, September 8th

BABE Store 12 - 5:30 pm
Friends 5-6:30 pm @Ader Auditorium
Evangelism & Membership Mtg 6 pm

Wednesday, September 10th

Messy Church 5:30 - 7 pm
Choir Practice 7 pm



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist:	Ren Simmons
Head Usher:	Mark Schutz
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Sandra Lange
Sound:	Jonathan Lange
Church Board President:	Ed Cummings



Did You Know?

St. John's Sunday Morning Worship Services are streamed **LIVE** on our church's Facebook page, "**St. John's United Church of Christ Vincennes.**"

Or, you can watch the Worship Service at your convenience by going on the church website, "**myucc.org**" and clicking on "Worship Service" for a particular date.

You can also download a copy of each monthly **church newsletter** from our church website to keep up with all the activities.