

A New Identity

Grace to you and peace from God.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful world if we received letters from friends with the same salutation of that of the Apostle Paul? Better yet, wouldn't it be nice just to receive letters rather than texts and emails?

But I'm not here to talk about the lost art of letter writing. I want to discuss the seemingly lost art of seeing one another as siblings who belong to the family of God and, as such, truly able to love despite flaws, failures, and fickleness.

Onesimus was standing in the need of such redeeming and accepting love. The runaway slave had returned to his master, Philemon, but Philemon was not willing to take him back. Enter Paul, who steps in to mediate. He urges Philemon to not only welcome Onesimus with open arms but to welcome him as a beloved brother, not a slave.

Paul knew firsthand how our true identities were not found in the roles we were assigned, nor do they rest in familial bloodlines. Our true identities are steeped in the blood of Christ, making us all siblings of one another.

By the grace of God, Paul himself received a new identity going from "Saul the Feared Persecutor of Jews" to "Paul the Great Spokesperson for the Risen Lord."

Why couldn't Onesimus' identity change as well?

Philemon does as Paul says, and while we don't have subsequent letters to see how this new friendship progressed, we do have the legends. One has Onesimus becoming an influential Christian leader in Greece. Another has Onesimus becoming bishop of Ephesus.

While we aren't certain what is true or not, this we do know: Onesimus, whose name means "useful," reminds us today, that we, too, are useful in the eyes of God.

Our identities are not wrapped up in who we think we are, what others say of us, or what we do for a living. Our very being is found in Christ, and as such, Christ urges us to take on a new identity. Perhaps you are really a peacemaker, or bridge builder, or even a compassion sharer? What divine potential is within you?

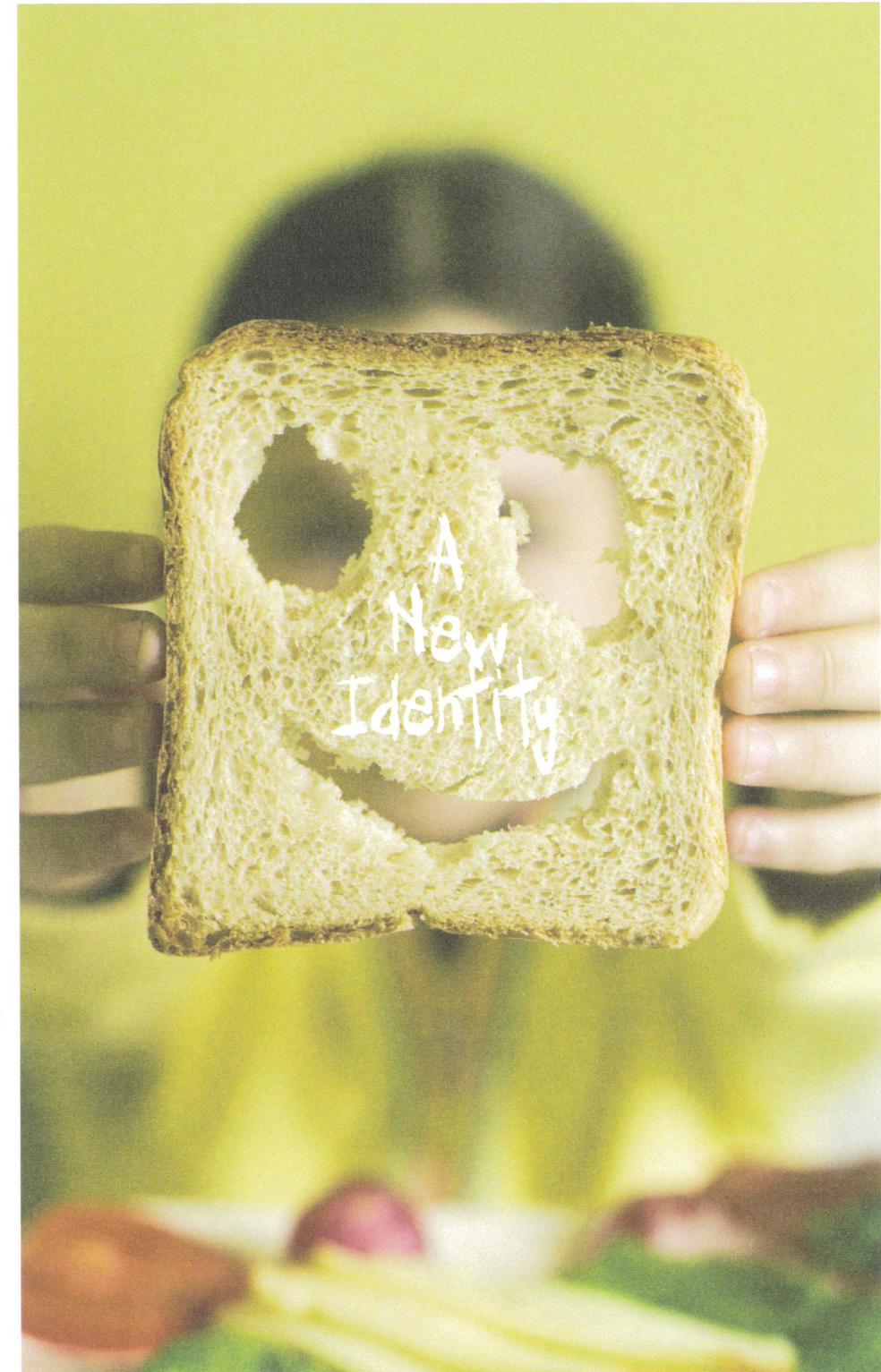
Creator God, free us from the roles we play in life. May this day we embrace new identities as your beloved children, ready to be used for your purpose in making this world a loving and just place for all. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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



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

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St. John's United Church of Christ
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 7, 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)

We seek a big enough God who has overcome all things.

Jesus said, "If you would be my disciple, you must deny yourself and take up the cross."

We take heart knowing that "Nothing can separate us from God's love, which enables us to do all things."

This we do by the promise of faith guaranteed by God's abounding grace.

***OPENING HYMN** *Rejoice, You Pure in Heart* #15

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

By the touch of your Spirit, help us hold fast to you, O Lord, and serve you by attending to the needs of others in a world dying for your touch. Empower us, Holy Spirit, to discern the difference between self-serving motives hidden within good intentions and true sacrifice that entails daily dying to self. Join with us now as we worship and glorify You. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *Seek Ye First* (v. 1) #354

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.

***RESPONSE** *Accept. O God, the Gifts We Bring* #379

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison) Mother Teresa
Here I am, Lord -- body, heart and soul. Grant that with your love, I may be big enough to reach the world, and small enough to be at one with you. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

Congregational Response: *Seek Ye First* (v. 2) #354

SPECIAL MUSIC

Jonathan Clark

SCRIPTURE:

Old Testament: Psalm 139:1-6

New Testament: Luke 14:25-33

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

MESSAGE

Let Go and Let God

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

***CLOSING HYMN** *I Come with Joy* (vs. 4-5) #420

***BLESSING** (responsively)

The call to live as Christ's disciples is made possible through the power of God's Holy Spirit working in and through us.

We go forth together as those who are sent to be salt and light, and to

* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* (v. 1) #433

* **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.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the **Fall Breakfast** this morning.

Messy Church on October 1st from 5:30-7:00 pm features the theme of *Prayer*. Our Scripture will be Romans 12:12 and we will have lots of prayer related games, crafts and activities. Dinner will be sloppy Joes, chips & raw 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.

Church Picnic will take place on September 28th under the pavilion at Gregg Park at 10:30 am. The Church Board will be providing pulled pork (by Brayton Cummins) and everyone is asked to bring a side dish to serve 10-12 people.

Family Movie Night: On September 21st at 5:00 pm we will gather to watch *Leap of Faith* (rated PG-13) starring Steve Martin, Liam Neeson, Debra Winger, Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Meatloaf. Synopsis: *Fake faith healer Jonas Nightingale is stranded in a small town where he finds he can't fool all of the people all of the time.* Everyone is invited.

The Choir returns to worship next week!

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, 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, 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 11th

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

Christian Education Mtg. 6 pm
Choir Practice 7 pm

Looking Ahead In September

Sunday, September 14th

Adult FF Class 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Faith Ventures (K - grade 6) During Worship
Visioning Session with Lunch 11:45 - 1:30 pm

Wednesday, September 17th

Choir Practice 7 pm

Saturday, September 20th

Grube Private Party in Memorial Hall
12 noon - 5 pm



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Liturgist:	Eric Meyer
Head Usher:	Krisi Mattingly
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Jana Vieck
Sound:	Lonny Vieck
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.