

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

November 30, 2025

Matthew 24:36-44

Called to Gift

The season of Advent has begun. Four weeks till the birth of Christ. Four weeks of journeying to Bethlehem. Four weeks of lighting candles around the Advent wreath.

I love this season that begs for us to turn our back on the commercial frenzy of the holiday so that we can embrace the spiritual practices of slowing down and, as Matthew's Gospel tells us, learn to be "watchful" for we do not know when the Son of Man will return.

I will admit that I am an advocate for Advent. But no matter how hard I try to do the holidays differently than those around me, I get sucked into the busyness. And if there is one thing that I really dislike the most about this time of year, it's the gift giving.

Now before I am labeled a Grinch — or worst yet, a Scrooge — let me explain. My anxiety with Christmas gifts stems from the fact that I never have any idea what to get those I love. I envy those who know just what trinket would make their spouse, friend, or child smile.

Last year, I was especially drawing a blank as to what to get my father. Then two days before December 25, I remembered the jar of homemade mincemeat I had in my cupboard. I then remembered how much my father loved mincemeat pies.

I had an epiphany. I would make him a pie. The choice of this gift felt so right. I was excited to prepare it, imagining the joy on his face when I gave it to him. And the day I gave it to him, his expression of joy was better than I imagined.

I realized then that being a good gift giver is all about being attentive to others — to borrow from Matthew, being "watchful" — and truly learning how to listen.

Gift giving isn't hard when you realize gifts are all around you.

There's a term in the Church that I happen to love, especially this time of year when we might be struggling with our Christmas shopping lists. It's "called to gift." At first glance, it might seem grammatically incorrect. Called to do what? Gift?

But "called to gift" reminds us to take the spiritual gifts we have been given by God and share them with others. We are called to gift the world with the light that shone that holy night. We are called to gift strangers with adoration just like the Magi bestowed on Jesus. We are called to gift our loved ones with the same song of peace and good will that the angels sang announcing the babe's birth.

What are you being "called to gift" this season?

God, as the season of Advent begins, we remember how out of great love for us you gave us Jesus. That is the most amazing gift we have ever received. Help us now to share that gift of love with others. Help us to become amazing gift givers of your Spirit, Word and Truth. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

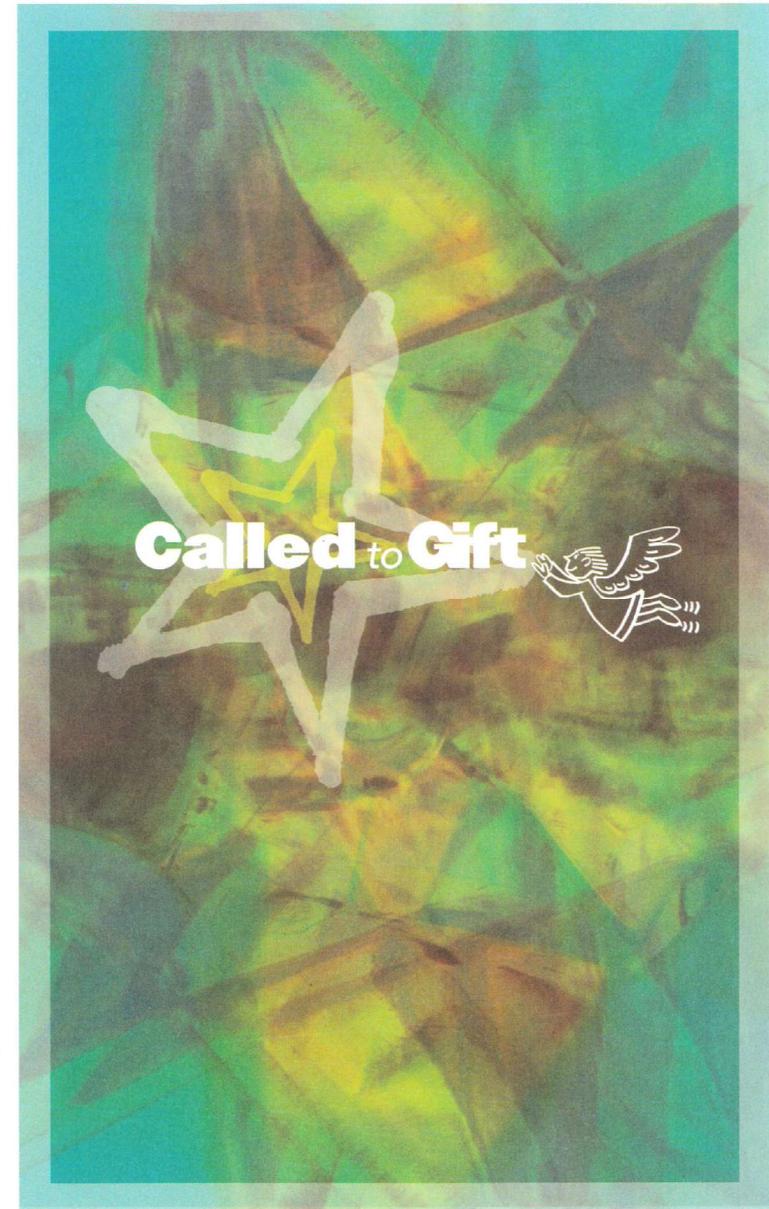
(Rev. Donna Frischnecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



8.5" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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St. John's United Church of Christ
First Sunday of Advent
November 30, 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)

Awake from sleep.

Raise weary bodies.

Light a candle in the cold and dark.

One candle to chase away the night and herald the coming light.

This is the time of readying the heart.

This is the day for steps toward the stable.

***OPENING HYMN** *The Way Prepare* (tune: *Deck the Halls*)

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

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come into our midst. Come into our hearts. Come into our homes and our community, into our schools and workplaces. May we welcome you everywhere, making room for you, preparing for you, anticipating your arrival with joy and reverence. We commit this season of Advent to becoming ready. Shine your light in those nooks and crannies we keep in the shadows. Sweep the cobwebs from our long-hidden doubt and fear. Repair our torn and wounded places. We long for your arrival. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *Come, O Long Expected Jesus* (v.1) #125

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH-Harper & Ryland Coomes

ANTHEM

Will We Know Him?

Besig

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Jesus Loves Me

OFFERING INVITATION**

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

***RESPONSE**

In the Bleak Midwinter (v.4)

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

Generous God, thank you for the gifts you bestow upon us daily. Bless what we bring before you to bless others, we pray. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

Congregational Response: *Come, O Long Expected Jesus* (v.2) #125

SCRIPTURE:

Old Testament: Isaiah 11:1-10

New Testament: Matthew 3:1-12

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

MESSAGE

The Impossible Dream

***CLOSING HYMN** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (vs. 1 & 2) #119

***BLESSING** (responsively)

Go forth and begin the journey of Advent. Begin your preparations, start the planning, look to the future, but in all you're doing, keep focused on the great gift, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ Child of Bethlehem.

May the Lord make hope grow within us as together we await Christ's coming. Amen.

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

* **POSTLUDE**

Announcements

** You may place your offerings in the designated basket or online at myucc.org and click on the *contribution* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.

DINNER & CONVERSATION CHANGE: Due to the closing of Luigi's, this week's dinner will be at Dogwood at 6pm Thursday Night. Please sign the list in the back of the sanctuary so we can reserve a large enough table.

November Youth Dates

11/30 (Sunday) 11:30am-1pm **Lunch Provided**
12/03 (Wednesday) 7pm-8pm **After Messy Church**
12/14 (Sunday) 4pm-5:30pm

MESSY CHURCH /ADVENT EVENT will take place on Wednesday, December 3rd from 5:30-7:00 pm. This year the Messy Church Core Team, Christian Education Committee and the Membership & Evangelism Committee have united to combine these two events. Our theme is *Jump for Joy: It's Christmas!* We will have a bounce house in addition to our regular activities which include: Worship, Dinner (soup & sandwiches and a fruit plate), a mini-cake walk, tree decorating, a cookie bar & punch, foam Advent wreaths, Joy necklace, candy making with Elaine, melted crayon ornaments, painting and MORE! Advent coloring/activity books & crayons will be sent home with each child. Join us for an exciting evening of food, faith, fun and fellowship!

HANGING OF THE GREENS: Thank you to everyone who helped decorate our sanctuary and church for the Advent season. Your help is greatly appreciated and the lovely decorations enhance our worship during this festive time.

UGLY SWEATER DAY: Grab your "ugliest" Christmas sweater and wear it to worship on December 14th. Join in the fun as we celebrate the season.

HAT & MITTEN TREE: A bare Christmas tree stands in our entry ready to be decorated with hats, mittens, gloves and scarves to be given to children in need at Riley Elementary. Please help decorate our tree with these items.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS MOVIE will take place on December 14th at 5:00 pm in Memorial Hall with a light supper served. The movie will be *Disney's A Christmas Carol* featuring the voices of Jim Carrey, Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Cary Elwes, Bob Hoskins and Robin Wright. Everyone is invited, but please sign the sheet in back of church if you plan to attend so we can plan the food.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED to remove the wrappers from our old crayon collection and shave them into smaller pieces for a Messy Church craft project this Wednesday night. We also need help taking down round tables and setting up long ones in Fellowship Hall for this week's Messy church. If you could help after church today it would be greatly appreciated.

OLD CRAYONS WANTED for a craft project for Messy Church. Please bring your old, broken crayons to the church prior to December 1st. Thanks!

Members of our church family will be ringing bells for the Salvation Army inside at "Save A Lot" tomorrow (December 1st.) Might others of us from St. John's UCC drop by between 11am and 7pm

Friends, we need to prepare the 2026 budget and review end of year matters. We will meet on Monday, December 01 at noon at the church. Mackenzie will provide us a draft for consideration in advance of the meeting. We need a total of 11 members and one person from each committee. You are responsible for getting a representative for any committee that you are involved with. Please send me the name, it can be your name, so I know how many at large members I need to assure at least 11 people will attend. Please let me know that you can attend.

Prayers and Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Jessica Connor and family, Gary Meyer, Don Osborne, Jr. and Conway Wilson. The Family of Mark Schutter, Kelvin Strange, Jasmine Zeller, Cindy Utley, Jo Tarrh, sister of Jill Lopez and Jerri Johanningsmeier, Tony Riley and Ellen Riggs. Mollie Joice, cousin of Darcie Bahr and prayers for Bobby Bahr. A kidney donor has been found for Katrina Memering. Her surgery is scheduled for December 11. Please continue to keep her and the donor in your prayers.

Shut-in Addresses:

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

Gary Meyer
Mike Lankford

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, November 30

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
First Sunday of Advent

Tuesday, December 02

Girl Scout 4:30-6:30pm
Preschool Meeting @ 6pm

Thursday, December 04

Tech Meeting @ 10am
Dinner & Conversation Dogwood @ 6pm

Monday, December 01

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Friends 5:30-6:15pm
Finance Committee Mtg. @ noon
Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Wednesday, December 03

Messy Church Core Team Meeting
@ 5:30pm
Choir Practice @ 7pm

Friday, December 05

Phoebe's Mission @ 4:30-6:00pm
Pastor Debbie is Off

Looking Ahead In November

Sunday, December 07

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Communion 10:30am

Tuesday, December 09

Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30pm
Outreach & Benevolence @11am
Nominating Committee Mtg. @ 6pm

Thursday, December 11

Tech Meeting @ 10am
Dinner & Conversation Dragon 2000 @ 6pm
Sandy's Pantry @11-12:30pm

Monday, December 08

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Friends 5:30-6:15pm

Wednesday, December 10

Messy Church Core Team Mtg. @5:30pm
Choir Practice @ 7pm
Christian Education Mtg. @6pm

Friday, December 12

Pastor Debbie is Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Liturgist:	Sandra Lange
Head Usher:	Kim Godare
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Projection:	Jana Vieck
Sound:	Lonnie 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.