

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

January 4, 2026

John 1:(1-9), 10-18

Another Road

There's nothing more inviting than a candle's warm glow on a cold winter's night. The flickering flame dances as if being led by some divine melody. It's a light that calls to mind the opening of John's Gospel that speaks of a light in which no darkness can overcome.

Since the discovery of fire, a candle burning in the pitch black has always held symbolic hope. Back in the day, placing a candle in the window announced there was a birth in the house. It was also a sign of someone's passing or a remembrance of a loved one. During the persecution of Catholic priests in Ireland, a candle in the window let a priest know that the home was a place of refuge.

We all need a candle burning in the window guiding us to our place of refuge, for we all seem to be groping in the dark these days, wandering for far too long on uncertain roads. Where is that spark of hope leading us to a place of belonging?

Long after the Christmas season of light is over, I continue to embrace every opportunity I have to light candles. With a strike of a match, darkened nooks in my home magically come to life. I also find a soothing calmness wash over me while watching a candle burn. The limited reach of its flame is my reminder to stop trying to see so far ahead. Rather, trust what the light is revealing, no matter how narrow or short the path it illuminates is. It's then I realize I don't need search lights to be found. All I need is the Christ light shining on me.

There's a poem by Howard Thurman who writes about lighting candles all year long. In it he encourages us all to light "candles of joy, despite the sadness; candles of hope where despair keeps watch; candles of peace for tempest-tossed days; candles of grace to ease heavy burdens; and candles of love to inspire all my living."

There's a light to be found in the world — one that the darkness will not overcome. May we do our part in keeping the light of Christ burning brightly in 2026.

Loving God, help us be the ones who light the candles of joy, hope, peace, grace and love this year, illuminating the darkness for those who are lost and shining a beacon of welcome to those who are lonely. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

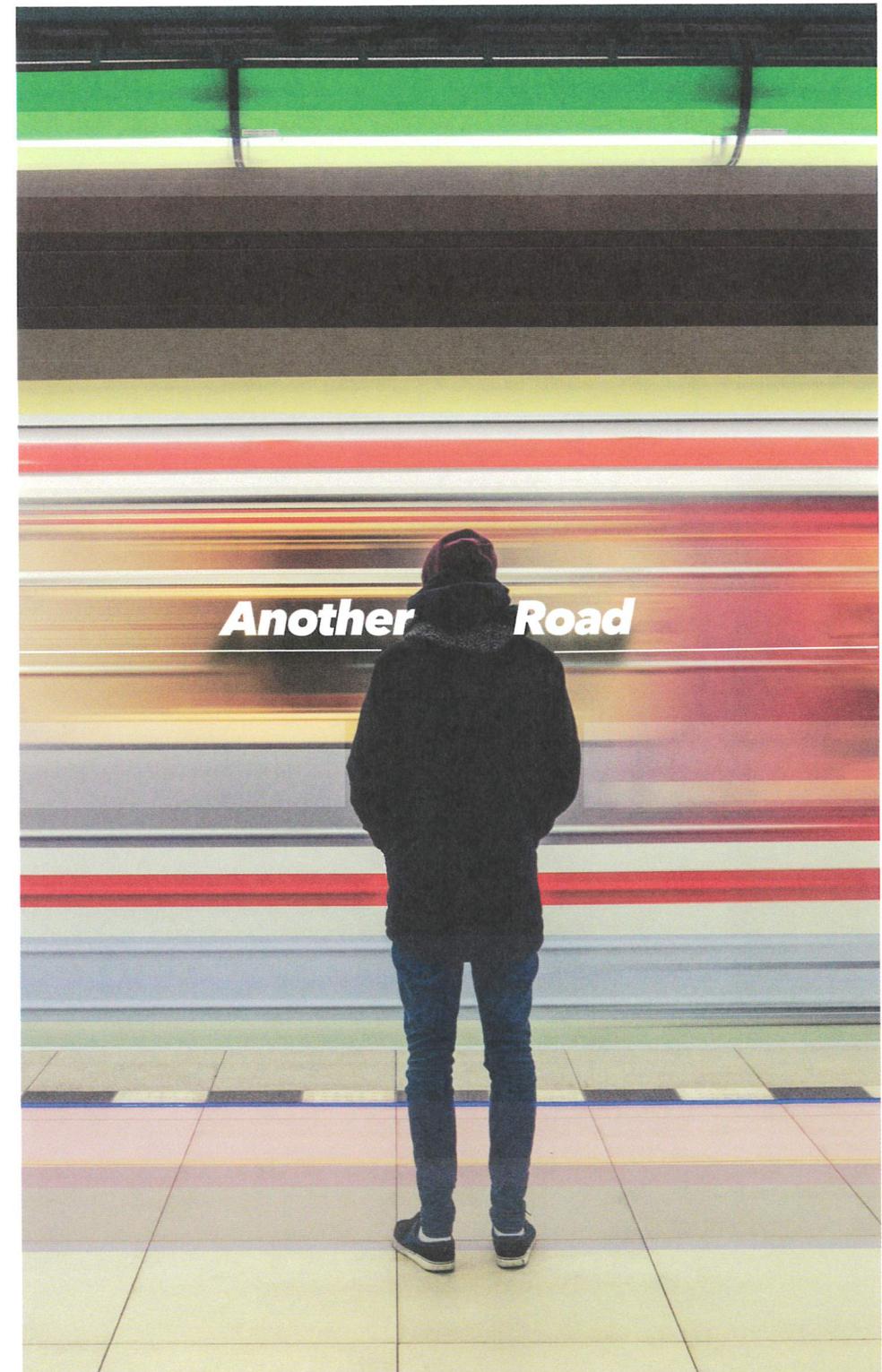
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



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

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St. John's United Church of Christ
Epiphany Sunday
January 4, 2026



* 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)

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 clean 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

ANTHEM *Love Came Down at Christmas* Hill

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.

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1-6
 New Testament: Matthew 2:1-23

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

MESSAGE *Epiphany Glory*

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

***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**

**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.

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.

COMMUNION AT ST. JOHN'S UCC is open to EVERYONE, no matter their age, church affiliation or non-affiliation, Confirmed or not. If you belong to Christ you are welcome at the table. It is God's table, not ours. No one should be denied God's grace through the sacrament.

DINNER & CONVERSATION: This week's dinner will be at Dogwood at 6:00 pm Thursday night. Please sign the list in the back of the sanctuary so we can reserve a large enough table.

BAPTISM RENEWAL will take place on Sunday, January 11th as we celebrate the Baptism of Christ. Participants will have an opportunity to come to font for a blessing and a time to renew their baptism vows.

MESSY CHURCH will be held on January 7th from 5:30-7:00 pm. The theme is *Follow the Star: The Three Kings*. Lots of activities, crafts, dinner and fun! We will receive "Star words," play "Pin the tail on the camel, decorate crowns and share a King Cake to see who will be "King/Queen" for the evening. Bring the family and join us.

RETIRING OF THE GREENS will take place immediately following worship on January 25th. Please stay if you are able to help put away Christmas decorations. Many hands make the work easier and faster.

MOVIE NIGHT on January 11th at 5:00 pm will feature *Harriet*, starring Cynthia Erivo (of *Wicked* fame), Leslie Odom, Jr. (Aaron Burr in *Hamilton*) and Janelle Monae (*Hidden Figures*). In spite of an amazingly talented cast, it is NOT a musical. Harriet is the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroines, whose courage, ingenuity and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history.

Our annual updates from the October 2025 Church Directory is now taking place through January 2026. If you would like to make a change in your personal entry, do so by calling the Church Office and leaving the corrections with Kim. 812-882-2720 or email stjohnsuccoffice@gmail.com. Items to change, add or delete are of the following: Photos, Resident Address, Email Address, Family Members, Phone numbers/work or home, Add new entries or delete entries and Errors in Spelling.

Prayers and Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Gary Meyer, Marilyn Houchins, Tony Riley and Ellen Riggs. Mollie Joice, cousin of Darcie Bahr and prayers for Bobby Bahr.

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

Ellen Riggs - Bridgepointe, 1900 College Avenue, Vincennes, IN 47591

At Home:

Gary Meyer

Mike Lankford

Prayer request or updates can now be relayed to the Church Office during regular office hours: Monday-Friday from 9am-1pm. Email: stjohnsuccoffice@gmail.com. Text or call at 812-882-2720.

Prayer request or updates are to be sent to Janet Goodman during the evening and weekends.

Email: terrybaseball@gmail.com. or you can text or call at 812-887-2797

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, January 04

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Epiphany Sunday

Tuesday, January 06

Thursday, January 08

Dinner & Conversation -
Dogwood @ 6pm

Monday, January 05

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Evangelism & Membership @ 6:30

Wednesday, January 07

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

Friday, January 09

Pastor Debbie is Off

Looking Ahead In January 2026

Sunday, January 11

Adult FF Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Baptism of Christ
Movie @ 5pm (Harriett)

Tuesday, January 13

Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm

Thursday, January 15

Dinner & Conversation -American Table @ 6pm

Monday, January 12

BABE Store 12-5:30pm

Wednesday, January 14

Messy Church 5:30-7p
Christian Ed @ 6pm

Friday, January 16

Pastor Debbie is Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:

Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins

Secretary

Kim Butler

Liturgist:

Isabelle Lange

Head Usher:

Brad Summers

Organist:

DeEtta Welte

Music Director, Pianist:

Becky Brockman

Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:

Will Meyer

Nursery Attendant:

Darcie Bahr

Projection:

Jill Doggett

Sound:

Brian Fillingim

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.