

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 11, 2026

Mathew 3: 13-17

### Possibilities Unfolding The Baptism of Christ

The sacrament of baptism is still so shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding. In conversations with families, I often discover the desire to have their child baptized is rooted in an expectation to carry on a tradition.

Baptism, though, is a rite not a tradition. It's a moment where a child is claimed as Christ's own. It's a moment where family — both blood and spiritual — make a commitment, promising to raise the child in the faith. And in that moment that I hold the child in my arms, there is a holy, fleeting second where I realize only God knows the future. It is only God that holds the possibilities born at the font that will keep unfolding for the child till the day their last breath is taken.

Yet after the water is sprinkled on a child's forehead, the excitement of these God possibilities is pushed aside for a slice of the celebratory cake and photo ops with the newly baptized.

What does it take for us to remember our baptismal identities as Christ's own? How would that identify then shape our lives?

Thomas Merton, a 20th-century Catholic monk, addressed unfolding possibilities in a letter he wrote to a young mission worker who had become cynical and jaded. First, Merton urged the mission worker to stop relying on a job for fulfillment and to shape one's identity. This is only the world's way of trying to fend off a despairing sense of "nothingness."

Rather Merton advised that, "All the good that you will do will come not from you but the fact that you have allowed yourself, in obedience to faith, to be used by God's love."

Once we truly allow God to use our lives, the need to prove our worth disappears. We are set free to be our authentic selves, allowing God's power to work through us.

"The big results are not in your hands, but they suddenly happen. There is no point in building our lives on personal satisfaction," said Merton.

Through the waters of baptism, we are claimed as Christ's own. But the question remains to be answered: Do our lives reflect who we belong to? Are the possibilities unfolding before us truly God possibilities?

*God, we know Your plans for us are higher and better than we could ever imagine. We want to die to self and live for You. We want to claim our identities as Christ's own. Give us the strength to do so. Help us to let go of our tight grip on who we think we are or who we wish to be. May we surrender completely to Your will, so that all Your beautiful possibilities might be revealed. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

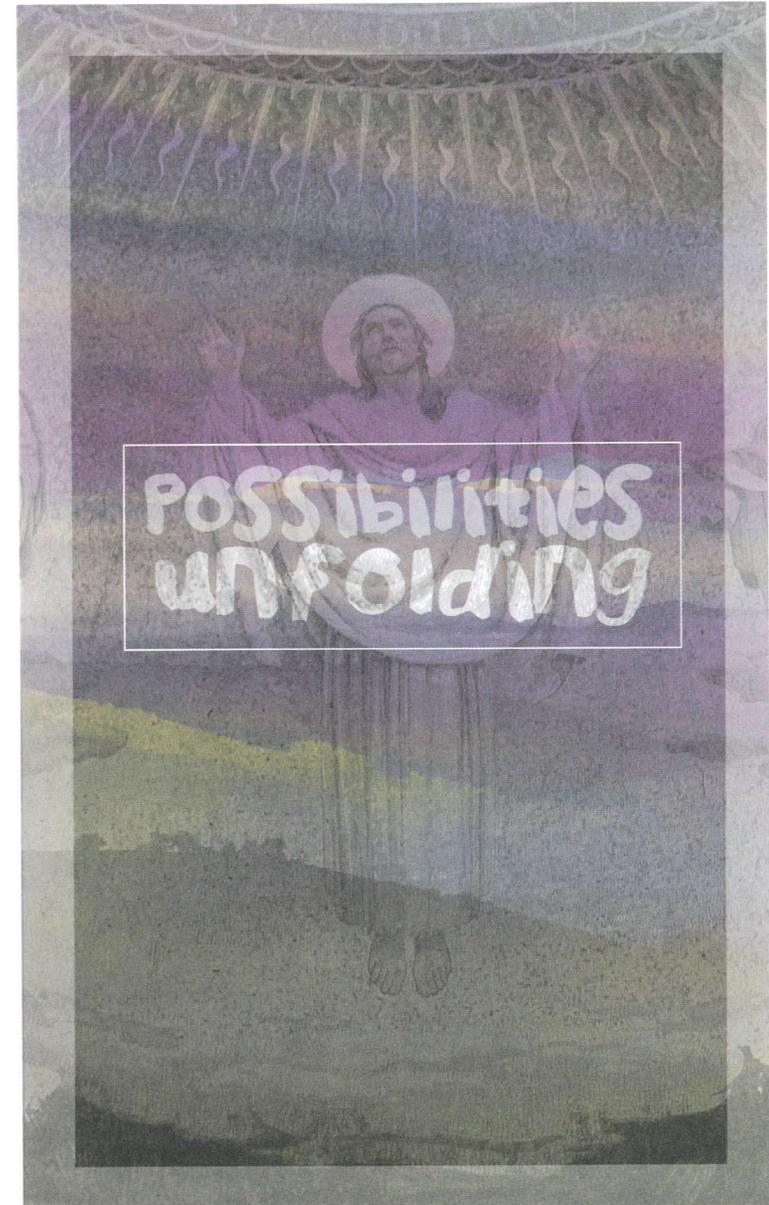
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



8.5" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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BUL0206





St. John's United Church of Christ  
**Baptism of the Lord**  
 January 11, 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)

Wade into the waters of love;

**Step into the rivers of blessing.**

Here, find the renewing streams of mercy.

**Here, taste the wonder of God's goodness.**

Feel the waters of life;

**Know the joy of baptism;**

See the springs of eternal life;

**Sing of the triumph of God's blessing.**

\***OPENING HYMN** *What Was Your Vow and Vision* #177  
 (melody: *Lead On, O King Eternal*)

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

**O God, you create all things. You bear all things, you hope all things, you endure all things. Each of your creatures, all of your children are members of your body. All partake of your promise. Open your heaven and descend like a dove upon the world; make plain your hidden plan, your mysterious purpose for our lives. Standing in the waters of our baptism, we await your presence.**

\***RESPONSE** *I Am the Light of the World* (chorus)

**ANTHEM** *Love Came Down at Christmas* Hill

**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)

**Gracious Spirit, you have showered us with your gifts, and we embrace you with thanksgiving. May our embrace be arms wide open, ready to share, to serve and to love. Use our spiritual gifts that we may live the spiritual life, moving according to the Spirit's heated touch and bending in the direction of God's holy will.**

**WE GATHER IN PRAYER**

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

Congregational Response: *When I Needed a Neighbor* v. 1

**SCRIPTURE:** Old Testament: Psalm 29  
 New Testament: Matthew 3:13-17

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

**MESSAGE** *Spiritual Waters*

**RENEWAL OF BAPTISM VOWS**

\***CLOSING HYMN** *Here I Am, Lord* #452

\***BLESSING** (responsively)

Lord, you clothe the lilies, you feed the birds of the sky, you lead the lambs to pasture, and the deer to flowing waters. Lord, you multiplied loaves and fishes, changed water into wine, and you brought sight to the blind.

**Now, Lord, send us forth strengthened and refreshed. Send us forth filled with hope in the promise of eternal life. Amen.**

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

\* **POSTLUDE**

## Announcements

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

\*\* 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.

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

**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](mailto: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.

**MOVIE NIGHT** on January 11<sup>th</sup> 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.

## 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, Bobby Bahr and Mike Abel (brother of Donna Gerhardt) and Mikes wife Mary Ann, daughter Bonnie and grandson Micah. Prayers for Megan Jennings upon the death of her dad.

### **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 requests or updates can now be relayed to the church office during regular office hours and Pastor Debbie during the evening/weekend.

Email: [stjohnsuccoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnsuccoffice@gmail.com) or call 812-882-2720 M-F, 9 am - 1 pm.

### This Week in the Life of St. John's

#### 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

### Looking Ahead In January 2026

#### Sunday, January 18

Adult FF Class 9:30am  
Worship 10:30am  
Annual Meeting after Worship

#### Tuesday, January 20

#### Thursday, January 22

Dinner & Conversation  
Senor Tequilla @ 6pm

#### Monday, January 19

BABE Store 12-5:30pm  
Office Closed

#### Wednesday, January 21

February Newsletter Items Due  
in Office Today  
Choir @ 7pm

#### Friday, January 23

Pastor Debbie is Off



### Staff and Volunteers

<b>Pastor:</b>	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
<b>Secretary</b>	Kim Butler
<b>Liturgist:</b>	Kyle Doggett
<b>Head Usher:</b>	Brad Summers
<b>Organist:</b>	DeEtta Welte
<b>Music Director, Pianist:</b>	Becky Brockman
<b>Children &amp; Family Ministry Coordinator:</b>	Will Meyer
<b>Nursery Attendant:</b>	Darcie Bahr
<b>Projection:</b>	Sandra Lange
<b>Sound:</b>	Jonathan Lange
<b>Church Board President:</b>	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.