

Restoring Beauty

There's a white-washed stone and thatched roof cottage in Ireland that sits on a cliff. From every weather-beaten shuttered window there is a view of the sea that has inspired poets and composers for centuries. Wildflowers dance amid the grassy bluffs where a passing sheep or two can be found perfecting the storybook setting.

I stumbled upon this cottage during one of my bouts with writer's block. I had a pressing deadline, yet no inspiration. So, I decided to Google "Irish cottages for sale." Sadly, this dream cottage was not on the market. It was a vacation rental.

I was intrigued, but not with the possible dates in which to book a much-needed getaway. There on the website was the history of the cottage and how its owners restored the structure that had fallen not only into disrepair but had become what looked like just a pile of rocks.

Each before and after picture had me in awe. The restoration project was a massive undertaking. Yet what impressed me was not the amount of time, money and energy they put into bringing this ancient cottage back to life. What impressed me was that they had the eyes to see the beauty lurking in the rubble.

I am grateful that there are people who can see the possibilities in this world when others can't. I often show my husband, with great excitement, dilapidated old homes that are for sale. I begin pointing to the amazing stone foundation. I trace with my finger on the realtor's picture the faint outline of a chimney to what would have been a huge open hearth used for cooking. He, though, can't see what I see. He still sees just a pile of wood that would cost many dollars to rebuild.

But what would this world look like if we weren't blind to the "what can be's"? This question goes beyond Irish cottages, and even beyond the New England clapboard saltboxes I constantly dream about restoring.

I am talking about the "what can be's" that Jesus sees amid the broken beams, crumbling foundations and caved roofs of our lives. For just when we think rebuilding our life is impossible, Jesus not only sees that restoration is possible. Jesus makes it happen.

Many years ago, Jesus urged God's children to let their lights shine. Don't hide your light under a bushel basket. Shine — and shine brightly. Shine amid the rubble and ruin. Shine so that the God beauty can be seen. Shine to reveal that there is always hope. Shine, because the God truth is this: A pile of stone can indeed become a beautiful cottage once again.

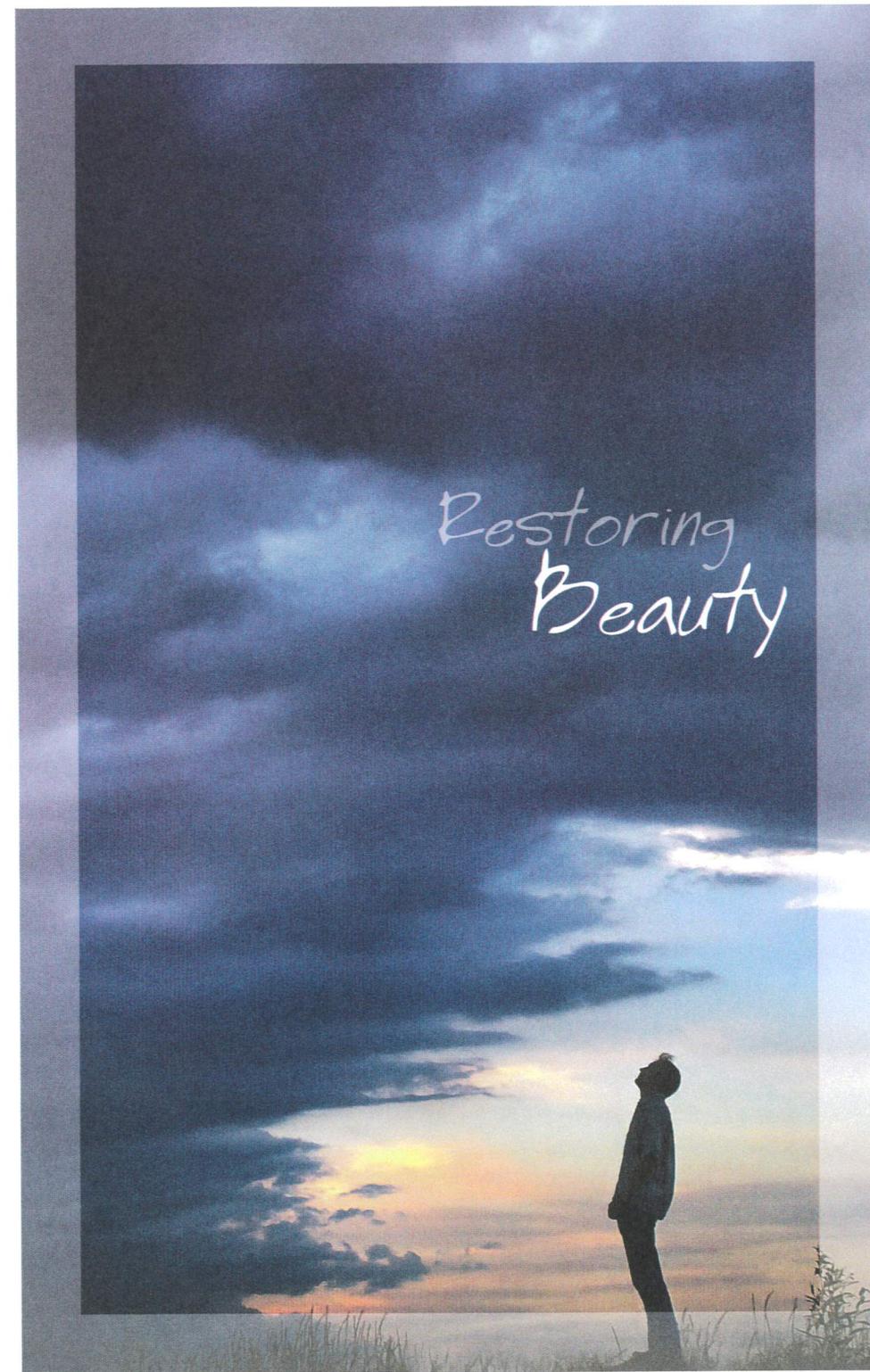
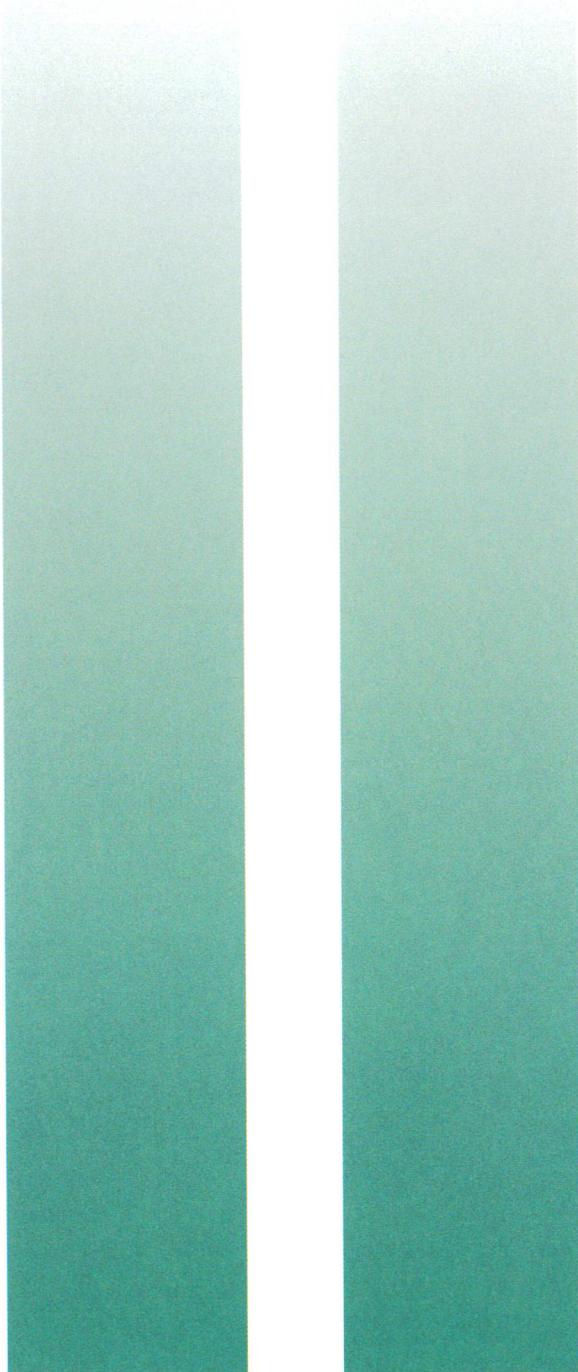
Loving God, forgive us when we start believing that restoration work is just too hard and costly. Open our eyes to see what You see — that all things are possible with You. Come into our lives this day and restore all that has crumbled. Restore, rebuild, reimagine — do what it takes for us to begin to shine once again. 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
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 8, 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)

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

We are gathered in your house, O God, to celebrate the light.

Jesus said, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

We praise you, Lord Jesus, for illuminating our path and helping us master our fear of the dark, even of the dark tunnel of death.

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to our God in heaven."

Spirit of God, empower our witness to the Light, in this service of worship and in our whole beings, as women and men claimed by the Light.

***OPENING HYMN** *I Am the Light of the World* #469

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

O God, we come before you as a people gathered to behold the Christ, a light dawned that cannot be extinguished. We offer special thanks for this community of faith and your faithful presence. Help us to see more clearly your glorious light, that we will open our hearts to your reign on earth and dedicate our lives to your service. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *When I Needed a Neighbor* v. 1

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE *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)

God only Wise, accept these offerings, the fruit of our labor and lives, in obedience of our faith, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

Congregational Response: *When I Needed a Neighbor* v. 6

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Isaiah 58:1-14

New Testament: Matthew 5:13-20

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

MESSAGE *Let Your Light Shine*

***CLOSING HYMN** *This Little Light of Mine* Larry Marchino, guitar

***BLESSING** (responsively)

You are people who have seen a great light! You are people who have received the ultimate gift in the Son of God — the Light of the World.

We are bearers of the light. We will be salty and remain lit with the blessing of Almighty God, now and always. Amen.

* **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.

OFFERING ENVELOPES are available in the entry just outside the sanctuary or from the church office. The envelopes are not dated, numbered or marked with your name so any leftover boxes/envelopes can be used next year. If you use an envelope, just make sure to write your name on the outside.

LENT BEGINS on February 18th with Communion and the Imposition of Ashes at 7:00 p.m. a Soup and Dessert dinner will be held beforehand at 6:00 pm.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY on Tuesdays beginning February 24th at 11:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. each week. *The Room Where It Happens* is a Lenten Course based on the musical *Hamilton*. Plan now to attend. The theme for Week One is: *Identity and Belonging*.

MESSY CHURCH Our February 4th Messy Church theme is *Love One Another* and will feature card making for friends and shut-ins, playdoh, Love You to Pieces craft, Science project, Love One Another Paper Chain, Would You Rather game and so much more! Dinner will be sloppy joes, chips and fruit with a King Cake to celebrate Mardi Gras on February 17th. Everyone is welcome!

CELEBRATE MARDI GRAS with Pancakes at American Table at 11:00 a.m. Traditionally Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) is a day to use up all the “fat” in one’s household prior to the beginning of the Lenten Season the following day. Pancakes are a traditional food to celebrate before the weeks of self-denial and fasting. Pastor Debbie will be at American Table restaurant on Tuesday, February 17th at 11:00 a.m. for anyone who wishes to celebrate Mardi Gras with her.

MOVIE NIGHT TODAY at 4:00 p.m. will feature *Saved!* Starring Mandy Moore, Jenna Malone and Macauley Culkin. When a girl attending a Christian high school become pregnant, all of her former friends turn on her and she is ostracized and demonized. In spite of the seriousness of the topic, this is a comedic satire with a dash of drama. Rated PG-13. No dinner will be served—bring a snack to share. Everyone is invited. This is a GREAT movie for teens.

Announcements

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ASHES TO GO ON Ash Wednesday, February 18th, Pastor Debbie will be in the parking lot from noon-1:00 pm for anyone who is unable to make it to a service. She will have a prayer, impose ashes and provide info on our church's Lenten activities. Share with your friends.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY on Tuesdays beginning February 24th at 11:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. each week. *The Room Where It Happens* is an exciting Lenten course written by Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, inspired by the filmed version of the award-winning stage musical *Hamilton*. The course has been written in the hope that all ages can be involved in the room where it happens for discussions about what the Bible and the experience of Christian faith teach us about some of the big issues faced in the musical by Alexander Hamilton: his responses to injustice, adversity, and temptation, his search for identity, and his realization that he (and all of us) can make a difference in the world. The course has five weekly sessions

- Identity and Belonging
- Ambition and Temptation
- Love and Sacrifice
- Hope and Courage through Adversity
- Forgiveness and Redemption

Each session includes suggestions for inspiring songs from the musical to watch, with relevant Bible passages and discussion questions. Invite your friends and join us.

LENTEN SELF-DENIAL OFFERING Check out the explanation sheet included in this newsletter. Set aside a dish, box, jar, can, basket, whatever and each day toss in the amount listed on the sheet as a daily reminder of all the blessings you have received at God's hands. Bring your offerings on Easter Sunday as a special Lenten sacrifice.

DINNER & CONVERSATION: This week's dinner will be at Applebee's 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.

February Youth Dates:

02/15 (Sunday) 4-5:30pm

CELEBRATE MADRI GRAS with Pancakes at American Table at 11:00 a.m. Traditionally Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) is a day to use up all the "fat" in one's household prior to the beginning of the Lenten Season the following day. Pancakes are a traditional food to celebrate before the weeks of self-denial and fasting. Pastor Debbie will be at American Table restaurant on Tuesday, February 17th at 11:00 a.m. for anyone who wishes to celebrate Mardi Gras with her.

LAM Banquet: St John's UCC is again sponsoring a table at the LAM (Life After Meth) banquet which will be held on February 19th at Highland Woods Community Center. This is an opportunity to learn about an important local ministry that we support and includes a meal. We encourage members who have never attended to consider attending. Doors open at 5:30 PM, program at 6:00 PM. Please place your name on the sign-up sheet in the back hallway no later than Sunday February 15th if interested in attending. Any seats not used by church members will be donated for LAM program participants. Contact Larry Marchino, the church office or LAM at 812-830-8238 or 812 899-2397 with any questions.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING is one of the four denominational offerings we collect each year. This offering supports relief efforts for hunger, poverty, natural disasters, climate change, immigration/migration and refugees. It serves individuals and communities in need providing people with safety, sustenance and hope. This year's offering will be collected during worship on March 15th.

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Prayers Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Gary Meyer, Marilyn Houchins, Tony Riley and Elen Riggs. Bobby Bahr. Prayers for Megan Jennings upon the death of her dad. Prayers for Rhonda Webber (Brenda Fillingim Niece)

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:

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: st.johnsuccoffice@gmail.com or call 812-882-2720 M-F, 9 am - 1 pm.

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, February 08

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Movie (Saved) @ 5pm

Tuesday, February 10

Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm

Thursday, February 12

Technology Mtg @ 10am
Outreach/Benevolence @ 11am
Dinner & Conversation

Monday, February 09

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

Wednesday, February 11

Messy Core @ 5:30pm
Christian Ed @ 6pm
Choir @ 7pm

Friday, February 13

Pastor Debbie is Off

Looking Ahead In February 2026

Sunday, February 15

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Fellowship Time @ 9:45
Worship 10:30am
Youth 4-5:30pm
Transfiguration Day

Tuesday, February 17

American Table @ 11 am
Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm

Thursday, February 19

Dinner & Conversation
Procopio's @ 6 pm
Lam Banquet @ 6 pm

Monday, February 16

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Music/Worship @ 5pm
Board Meeting @ 6pm
Office Closed

Wednesday, February 18

Ash Wednesday 12-1 pm
Supper @ 6 pm
Worship @ 7 pm

Friday, February 20

Pastor Debbie is Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Liturgist:	Calvin Doggett
Head Usher:	Ren Simmons
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:	Sandra Lange

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.