

St. John's United Church of Christ

606 N Fifth Street
Vincennes, IN
47591

812-882-2720

stjohnsuccoffice
@gmail.com



March 2026 Newsletter

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Vincennes, IN 47591**

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A Note From Pastor Debbie Jo...

Dear Friends:

I cannot recall a time in my ministry where it has been so hard to **be** a minister. Our world has always been chaotic but never have I experienced the polarization and vitriol attacking us from all sides. I am called to preach the gospel and that is what I strive to do but so many weeks I feel as though I am letting you down. I believe many ministers are facing similar dilemmas. We struggle with national leaders hijacking the gospel message, misusing it to support everything Jesus preached against in order to validate their inhumane actions. When we preach the gospel, we are accused of being “political” with some purported Christians not recognizing basic Christian doctrines. How do we minister under such circumstances? How can we be true to our ordination vows?

I know I am not a *fiery* or eloquent preacher, rather more of a teacher/preacher, wanting to explore scripture with my congregation. I want to share the gospel and apply it to our everyday lives. **All** of the gospel, not just the pretty parts. Jesus was a radical for his time, often speaking against the political leaders of his time. Jesus calls us to love ALL our neighbors, not just those who look and speak like us. Jesus calls us into social justice for the rights of all God’s children, especially the poor and marginalized. Many in our world today are against such fundamental Christian beliefs. So how again, do ministers preach without making folks mad at the messenger? Where do our loyalties lie? How do we cope with the barrage of un-Christlike behaviors and statements coming from our national leaders? How do we minister to those who are being harmed? For myself, I stand firmly upon three foundational scriptures:

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 15:24).

He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

I realize that sometimes folks will not agree with what I say or what I post on my personal Facebook page. Some will even be offended. It is not my intention to offend, only to draw attention to injustices or teach Christian principles. If you do disagree, I hope and encourage you to come speak with me so we can discuss the issue at hand. Likewise, I invite you into conversation if you DO agree or if you’re not sure.

I’d like to share something that recently happened as an example of “different” things I (and other ministers) are dealing with that are far out of the ordinary. Last week, a post-it note was left on a sign outside our front door. On it was handwritten: *Epstein Files are out. You feel uncomfortable imagine what the children felt.* Obviously, this is from someone in pain. Probably someone from our neighborhood. Was this a condemnation that churches are supportive of the cover-up? Or complacent? Or unfeeling? Or was it a cry of anguish on behalf of the victims? Did they just leave a message for us or did they plaster the neighborhood with these little notes?

After several days of prayer, I responded with a letter, taped to the same sign in which I acknowledged their pain and gave assurance that our denomination is seeking justice for the victims. I also offered to listen if they ever need to talk and included my contact info. I have prayed for this person every day. Their words haunt me. The note is gone. Whether the right person took it or it blew away, I do not know.

So many people are hurting in our world and as a follower of Christ, I have to do everything I can to ease suffering, confront injustice and daily spread the gospel message anywhere and everywhere. Please pray for me and all ministers as we navigate through uncharted waters.

Peace,

Pastor Debbie Jo



Visioning

Visioning for St. John's UCC

Vision Committee: Eric Meyer, Kelly Alexander, Betsy Marchino, Allison Cummins, Pastor Debbie, and Sheri Stodghill.

Scarlett Speaks!

SCARLETT SPEAKS! Woof! Woof!

I was so happy to see the snow melt! I was getting a bit stir crazy being cooped up by the snow that was deeper than I am tall and the cold temperatures. There is nothing fun about having to go to the bathroom when your soft little belly is dragged through the icy snow. I missed seeing my friends in church and in the preschool. I had two new outfits to show off for January and Valentine's Day and didn't get a chance to model them for everyone. Guess they will have to wait until next year. I DID get to be with the preschool classes as Mom read *Love from The Very Hungry Caterpillar* from the World of Eric Carle and *Love from the Crayons* by Drew Daywalt and Oliver Jeffers. I got lots of pets and belly rubs and had a great time. I'm looking forward to March with my fourth birthday on the 12th and visiting again with the preschoolers for St. Patrick's Day. Woof! Woof!



Mission Spotlight...



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty.. OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.



Children & Family Ministries

The Children and Family Ministry had an active month of February. Mini-Marvels (age 4-2 grade) had an opportunity to enjoy a winter afternoon at church on Saturday, February 7. There were crafts, games and light snacks to enjoy too! On February 22, CFM had an opportunity to enjoy a family game night at church with their church family. Some of the opportunities included playing pool, foosball, giant games and card games. The families could have brought games from home to share with the other families. At this activity there was a pasta bar and other snacks.

This past month the St. John's youth group for grades 7-12 had two meetings upstairs in the youth space. During the meeting times the youth had a lesson, an activity and a community outreach project. For the month of March, the youth will have 4 meetings.



The KFC (3rd-6th grade) and youth (7th-12th grade) will have a lock-in at church starting at 7pm on March 13, until 9am the next morning. We'll kick off the night by making our own *personal pizzas*, followed by games and other great activities. It's a chance to relax, hang out, and enjoy time with our church family.

Drop Off Info:

Children can be dropped off any time throughout the evening, especially if coming from other events. However, if you plan to arrive after 7:30 PM, please contact Will ahead of time, as the back door will be locked after that point and arrangements will need to be made for entry. Hope to see everyone there for a great night of food, fun, and fellowship!

***For the lock-in a 25-26 medical information form will need to be on file for the St. John's children and their friends. The medical forms are located on the bulletin board by the nursery and on the Facebook group in the file tab.



The St. John's Youth (7th- 12th Grade) meets at least twice a month upstairs in the youth space. During meetings the youth have a lesson, an activity and do mission work/community outreach. If there are any questions, please let Will Meyer know!

March Youth Dates

3/1 (Sun): Youth Group **11:30am-1pm** Lunch Provided

3/4 (Wednesday): **7pm-8pm** After Messy Church

3/8 (Sunday): **4pm-5:30pm**

3/29 (Sun): Youth Group **11:30am-1pm** Lunch Provided

Will Meyer

Children and Family Ministry Coordinator

Children & Family Ministries

Stay Connected:

Be sure to check the church bulletin, our CFM Facebook group, and the Children and Family Ministry mailboxes for upcoming announcements and schedules.

Children and Family Ministry Age Groups

CFM: Children from age 4 to high school and their family

M&M (Mini-Marvels): Age 4-2nd Grade

KFC (Kids for Christ): 3rd-6th Grade

Youth: 7th – 12th Grade



The Unbeatable Egg Hunt is Back!!! On Saturday, April 4, starting at 4pm to 5:30pm the Children/Family Ministry and Christian Education will be having an Unbeatable Egg Hunt at church. There will be egg hunts for preschool age thru 6th grade with special eggs mixed in with opportunities of prizes. Weather permitting, the younger group will have the hunt outside. For the 3rd-6th graders the Easter egg hunting will be upstairs with flashlights since the windows will be darkened with new features this year and new prizes. Snacks and games will also be at the activity. Please bring your baskets or bags to get the eggs and flashlights for the older children. Please be looking for announcements in the bulletin and Children and Family Ministry Facebook group for future information for the Easter activity!

**WE NEED YOUR
HELP!**

The Children/Family Ministry and Christian Education are in need of volunteers to take some plastic eggs or donate candy to fill the eggs starting on March 1. The eggs will be located by the coatrack. Please return the filled eggs to the basket by the coatrack by March 29.

Children & Family Ministry Age Groups

M & M (Mini-Marvels) Age 4-2nd Grade

KFC (Kids For Christ) 3rd - 6th Grade

Youth 7th Grade - High School



Prayer & Post

We ask for continuing prayer requests for:

Tom Nowaskie, Marilyn Houchins, Tony Riley and Ellen Riggs. Bobby Bahr and Mark Schutter. Prayers for Rhonda Webber (Brenda Fillingim Niece) and Ryan Vieck.

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

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.

Email Pastor Debbie: revdjatkins@gmail.com

Text or phone call: 812-760-2226

Preschool Activities

Read Across America Week is Coming!

We are excited to celebrate Read Across America during the first week of March in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday! Our class will enjoy fun dress-up days, read lots of our favorite Dr. Seuss books, and even take a special field trip to the library to celebrate our love of reading. It's going to be a wonderful week full of imagination, rhyming, and literacy fun!

We are also happy to share that Open Enrollment for the 2026–2027 school year is now open! If you know a family who may be interested in joining our preschool community, please help us spread the word.

Open House: March 15th at 2:00 PM

In the classroom, we continue working hard each day as we learn our alphabet, practice our numbers, write our names, and most importantly, learn how to be kind friends and get along with one another. We are so proud of the growth we see.

Notes from Music & Worship

Dates to remember:

March 15 – 10 AM, Fellowship Time in Memorial Hall

March 29 – 10:30 AM, Palm Sunday Worship

April 2 – 12 noon, Maundy Thursday Service and Communion in the Chapel

April 3 – 7 PM, Good Friday Service in the Sanctuary

April 5 – 9:45 AM, Fellowship Time in Memorial Hall, followed by the Easter Service and Communion in the Sanctuary at 10:30 AM

If you would like to donate a Spring Flower in honor of, or in memory of a loved one, please leave them in Memorial Hall by 12:00 noon on Friday, April 3. Don't forget to complete the donor form including the label to attach to your Spring Flower. A list of donors will be included in the May newsletter.

THANK YOU to Kim Godare and her crew for a lovely February valentine-themed Fellowship Time! And **THANK YOU** to Sheri Stodghill and others for a delicious soup/stew meal — including fantastic desserts — before the Ash Wednesday worship service! You and your endeavors are very much appreciated!

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
- Forgiveness and Redemption
- Love and Sacrifice
- Hope and Courage through Adversity

Invite your friends and join us.

LENTEN SELF-DENIAL OFFERING Set aside a dish, box, jar, can, basket, whatever and each day toss in the amount listed on the self-denial list as a daily reminder of all the blessings you have received at God's hands. A sheet was included in the February newsletter and copies are available in the back of the sanctuary. Bring your offerings on Easter Sunday as a special Lenten sacrifice.

MESSY CHURCH Our March 4th Messy Church theme is *Marching in the Light of God* and will feature Science experiments, suncatcher, sunburst craft, lightbulb craft, treasure hunt with glow sticks and MORE! Dinner will be chicken pot pie, salad, and ice cream treat. Everyone is welcome!

MARCH MOVIE NIGHT will be *Hamilton* on March 15th at 4:00 p.m. This movie is almost 3 hours long so we are starting early. A light dinner will be served during the intermission. *Hamilton* is a revolutionary Broadway musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda that tells the story of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, blending hip-hop, R&B, pop, and traditional show tunes with a diverse cast to reimagine U.S. history. It follows Hamilton's rise from an immigrant to the first Secretary of the Treasury, exploring his political and personal life through his relationships with figures like Aaron Burr, George Washington, and Eliza Hamilton. The show won numerous awards, including 11 Tony Awards, a Grammy, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Some adult language and content but recommended for high school students and up. The sign-up sheet in back of sanctuary will help us plan food.

RETIREMENT ANNOUNCED: We have received a letter of retirement from our organist, D'Etta Welte, effective May 24, 2026. D'Etta has faithfully served our congregation for many years and we wish her all the best in her retirement. A celebration of her service and that of our choir director, Becky Brockman will be held in May. Please watch the bulletin for more details and announcements.

March 2026

Birthdays

Zoe Gilmore
 Fred Klein
 Mark Meyer
 Shawn Brown
 Brian Fillingim
 Kynzlie Brown
 Lucas Doggett
 Jennifer Cole
 Dean Newell
 Kim Vieke
 Olivia Lange
 Henry Joseph Lopez III
 Krisi Mattingly
 Nicole Daniels
 Mackenzie Jones
 Dustin McCrary
 Carla Schmidt
 Patricia Schutz
 James Simmons
 Lisa Hartig
 David Culp
 Calvin Doggett
 Adelynn Lange

Anniversaries

Mark & Marcy Meyer
 Mark & DeEtta Welte
 Ish & Hope Clausman

Dinner & Conversation



Everyone is invited to join us on Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm. Each week we visit a different restaurant and enjoy an evening of food and conversation. It's a great way to get to know our fellow church members better. A reservation sheet is in the back of the sanctuary weekly or you can call the church office to add your name. The schedule is as follows:

March 05	Ponderosa
March 12	Café Moonlight
March 19	Kelso's
March 26	El Corral

Church Board Highlights

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 2026						
1 Adult SS Class 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Communion	2 Babe Store 12-5:30pm Membership/Evangelism @ 5:30pm	3 Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30pm Hamilton Bible Study @ 11am & 6:30pm Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm	4 Messy Church 5:30-7pm Choir @ 7pm	5 Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30pm Dinner & Conversation Ponderosa @ 6pm	6 Pastor's Day Off Phoebe's 4:30-6pm World Day of Prayer	7
8 Daylight Savings Time Adult SS Class 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am One Great Hour of Sharing	9 Babe Store 12-5:30pm Evangelism & Membership @ 6:30	10 Hamilton Bible Study @ 11am & 6:30pm Good Samaritan Foundation-Meeting/Dinner in Evansville @ 6pm	11 Messy Core @ 5:30pm Christian Ed @ 6pm Choir @ 7pm	12 Dinner & Conversation - Kelso's @ 6pm Scarlett's 4th. Birthday	13 Pastor's Day Off	14
15 Adult SS Class 9:30 am Fellowship @ 9:45am Worship 10:30 am One Great Hour of Sharing Hamilton Movie @ 4pm	16 Babe Store 12-5:30pm Music /Worship @ 5pm Board Meeting @ 6pm	17 St. Patrick's Day Hamilton Bible Study @ 11am & 6:30pm Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm	18 Christian Ed. @ 6pm Choir @ 7pm	19 Dinner & Conversation - Café Moonlight @ 6pm	20 Pastor's Day Off	21
22 Adult SS Class 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am	23 Babe Store 12-5:30pm	24 Hamilton Bible Study @ 11am & 6:30pm Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm	25 Laundry Love 6-8pm March Newsletter Items Due In Office Today Choir @ 7pm	26 Dinner & Conversation - El Corral@ 6pm Ministerial Alliance @ noon	27 Pastor's Day Off	28
29 Adult SS Class 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Palm Sunday	30 Babe Store 12-5:30pm	31 Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30pm				