

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 5, 2026

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Chosen Journeys

My husband wonders why I make life hard for myself. He especially wonders this when, under the scorching sun, he watches me walk by the hose he bought — the one with the extra-long extension — choosing instead to lug sloshing buckets of water from the house to my out-of-the-way garden.

It is a bit odd. I sometimes question my own sanity, too. But I have chosen this garden journey as a spiritual discipline. For in the arduous act of carrying water buckets, I'm reminded of those who still walk miles for their water. It is a small, prayerful act that keeps my coddled heart conscious of the urgent need for clean, accessible water for all.

Last summer, though, I finally admitted that watering the garden this way was becoming too much for me. My husband smiled, thinking the prized hose he bought would finally be used. He was wrong. Rather, what arrived a few days later in the mail was a 19th-century wooden yoke from a farmer in Lithuania. Its well-worn patina featured ornate notches carved into the wood that kept the buckets from sliding.

I placed the arch of the yoke behind my neck and masterfully balanced the buckets. The yoke did help to distribute the weight of the water, lightening the load a bit, and making my task a bit easier. And it also deepened my spiritual gardening discipline, as feeling the buckets sway with my steps, I heard my Savior's invitation once again: Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

I thought about the heavy burdens I carried that no one knew of — the worries that sloshed around in my spiritual buckets. I had grown weary by their weight. I had a tiredness in my bones that no sleep could cure. It was a tiredness that came from the constant buzz of stress keeping my nerves on high alert.

How many times would I ignore Jesus' help? Why did I insist on carrying all of life's burdens alone?

It is no wonder Jesus told the people of his time to take his yoke, for his was an easy one. Before modern machinery, farmers would use a wooden yoke on their animals. The frame that joined two beasts of burdens would mean they would share the weight of a load, making it easier to keep moving forward.

What a beautiful invitation we have as well. This is our opportunity, this day, to finally give our burdens to the one who will make them lighter. Will you embrace Jesus' yoke? I have. The garden hose, though? That I still ignore.

Patient God, how tiresome it must be to watch us struggling with the burdens and stresses and worries that we insist on carrying by ourselves. Help us to finally accept Jesus' invitation to take his yoke. May we stop being crushed by the weight of this world. May we know that all we struggle with is now in Jesus' capable and loving hands. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

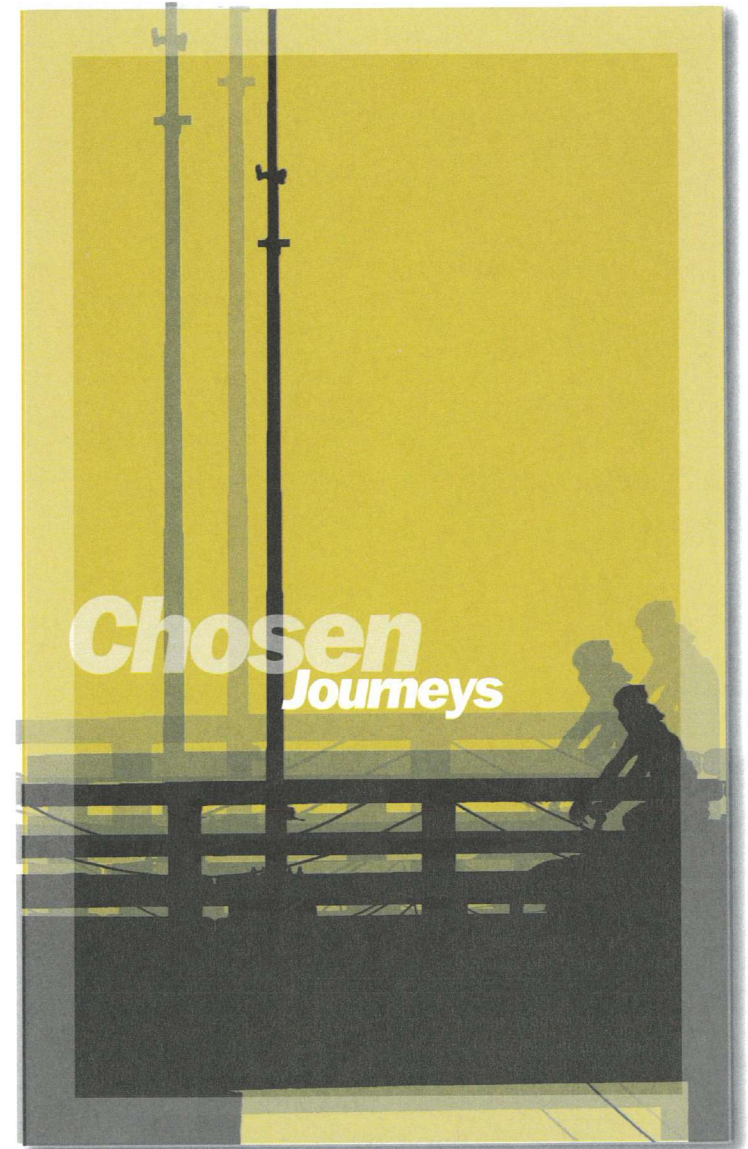
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



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

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BUL0405





St. John's United Church of Christ
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
 July 5th, 2026



America's Semiquincentennial

* 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)

The love of God is more splendid than purple mountain majesties.

God's word of grace fills the spacious skies.

The amber waves of grain remind us of God's abundant care.

Above the fruited plain is God's eternal joy in anyone who turns from sin and follows the path of truth.

In every nation, in every heart, God is working for good.

Let our songs rise, and let God's praise be heard from sea to shining sea.

* **OPENING HYMN** *God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand* #725

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

Nurturing God, we lift to you today all whose memories are part of our lives. For those who stood up for what they believed, for those who worked in the name of justice, for those who simply lived the life of holiness, we give you thanks. We pray for the renewal of all our spirits. Hear our prayers, O Life-Giver, and come to us in worship. Amen.

* **RESPONSE** *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* #720

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE (children please come forward) *Jesus Loves Me*

Galaxy VBS Songs: *He is the Light & Be Kind to One Another*

MEMORIAL MOMENT

Rev. Al Wilhouse

SPECIAL MUSIC

Conway Wilson & Larry Marchino

** **OFFERING INVITATION**: God is so good and we are richly blessed. Let us give back to God with gratitude and thanksgiving.

* **RESPONSE** *My Country, 'Tis of Thee* #721

* **PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

Accept these gifts, O God, as testimonies of our love for you and our desire to serve you. Let these offerings be an affirmation that we are bound to one another as your people. In your generous name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 4:9

New Testament: Matthew 11:28-30

The Word of God for the People of God **Thanks be to God**

MEDITATION & PRAYER FOR THE NATION

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

* **CLOSING HYMN** *This is My Song* #722

* **BLESSING** (responsively)

God's arms encircle a family bigger than we are able to imagine.

As members of this family, we go out as agents of reconciliation and carriers of God's love to all. Amen.

* **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Let There Be Peace on Earth* #677

* **POSTLUDE**

Announcements

***You may place your offering in the plate at the back of the sanctuary or online at myuc.org and clicking on the contribute button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.*

UNITED STATES OF KINDNESS is a movement to complete 250 acts of kindness in celebration of the 250th birthday of the United States. We encourage everyone to perform one act of kindness per day for the rest of the year.

JULY MOVIE NIGHT is July 19th at 5:00 pm, featuring *Sheep Detectives* starring Hugh Jackman. George Hardy is a shepherd who loves to read murder mysteries to his sheep, never suspecting that they can understand him. When George is found dead under mysterious circumstances, the sheep decide to solve the crime themselves, even if it means leaving their meadow for the first time and facing the fact that the human world isn't as simple as it appears in books. A light supper will be served and everyone is invited.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY: Join us in worship on July 26th for *Christmas in July*. We will sing Christmas carols and celebrate that its only five months till Christmas!

CHURCH PARADE FLOAT: Will and the youth will be developing a float for the July 4th city parade promoting our various missions to the community. It will be built on July 2nd & 3rd if you would like to help. Please see Will for details.

THANKS TO ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE who helped make our *GALAXY: Launching Kids on a Mission of God's Love* a great experience. We are already looking forward to next year's VBS: *Crave: Stirring Up a Hunger for Jesus!*

CATCH THE MEROM SPIRIT: All Ages Church Camp July 12-18. The church will cover the expenses for any church young person wishing to attend.. Registration is online and Pastor or Will can give you the link.

PRESCHOOL FUNDRAISER: Come dine at Procopio's on Tuesday, July 21st for either lunch (11-1:30) or dinner (4:00-9:00) or BOTH and help raise funds for our preschool. Procopio's will donate 20% of their sales that day (dine-in or carryout and even gift cards) to our preschool. This is a great way to help support this vital community mission so plan now to participate!

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

Never put a period where God has put a comma, God is still speaking!

COMING UP IN JULY:

- 12TH Alan Pancake will be in concert during worship. Pastor Debbie on vacation.
- 19th Vera Mattingly will sing in worship.
- 26th Christmas in July!
Jonathan Clark will provide special music.
Fellowship Time.

WE OFFER OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS to the family of Rev. Al Wilhouse who entered eternal life on June 18th. Rev. Al served our congregation from 1974-1990 and was Merom Camp Director. Cards may be sent to his wife, Leta, at 1662 Cloister Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46260. Memorial Service will be held July 11, 2026 at Matthews Mortuary, in Brownsburg, Indiana. Visitation will be from 10-noon with Services at noon at Matthews Mortuary. Memorial donations may be made to either Eden Theological Seminary 475 East Lockwood Ave St. Louis, MO 63119-3124 or Church World Services PO Box 968 Elkhart, IN 46515-9962 .

The FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR this morning are in memory of Reverend Al Wilhouse's .

Prayers Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Marilyn Houchins, Rhonda Webber (Brenda Fillingim Niece), John Mineo, Cindi Gilmore, Kim Godare's daughter Mallory, Jeremy Carpenter, Kelsey Pepmeier Oladubu (Janet Daniels' 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

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, July 05

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am

Monday, July 06

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

Tuesday, July 07

Wednesday, July 08

Christian Education @ 6pm

Thursday, July 09

Dinner & Conversation
Cowtown —6pm
Technology Mtg. @10am

Friday, July 10

Pastor's Day Off

Looking Ahead In July 2026

Sunday, July 12

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Fellowship @ 10am
Worship 10:30am
Alan Pancake—Music Special
Pastor on Vacation all Week

Monday, July 13

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Outreach/Benevolence @ 6:30pm

Tuesday, July 14

Wednesday, July 15

Thursday, July 16

Dinner & Conversation
Kelso's —6pm

Friday, July 17

Pastor's Day Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Church Board President:	Saundra Lange
Pianist:	Pat Sparks
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Head Usher:	John Riggs
Projection:	Jana Vieck
Sound:	Lonny Vieck
Liturgist:	Allison Cummins

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.