

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 12, 2026

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

A House Divided

I can't seem to master the art of growing bountiful rows of vegetables and meadows of bee-friendly wildflowers.

My farmer neighbors tell me that my problem is I can't throw seeds down and expect success. Growing something beautiful takes some elbow grease — and education. Starting with understanding what type of soil I have. Is it clay, sand, silt or peat?

Truthfully, I have no idea what language they are speaking. I've tried studying up on soil. I even purchased testers to see what I need to amend my soil with. Still, I can't seem to understand the science of the nutrients needed to help various plants grow.

This I do know: My soil is extremely rocky, so any hopes of growing blue-ribbon winning straight carrots are dashed. Rather than deal with the soil I have, I opted for raised beds. But they aren't the carefree option I thought them to be. Even the "good" soil I put into the beds needs care.

My challenges with soil have made me better understand Jesus' Parable of the Sower.

When Jesus wanted to make his point about what it meant to grow in God's Word and till the Kingdom here on Earth, he used soil as a metaphor for the conditions of our heart — where the seeds of justice and love grow.

First, there was soil on a path that the Sower threw the seeds on. Being it was a path; the birds easily saw the seeds, swooped in and gobbled them up. The seeds had no chance of taking root.

Next, there was the rocky soil. The seeds did begin to grow, but the roots could only go so deep, making the plants easily uprooted. And may I add, making carrots wonky.

Then the Sower threw seeds amid the thorns, where they were soon choked by the overgrowth. Finally, the Sower's seeds fell upon good soil where they produced a bountiful yield.

We are all being asked today by Jesus to assess the soil of our hearts. Where are the seeds of faithfulness falling? Are they scattering on safe, well-worn paths that will not lead to deep growth? Are they falling in rocky ground where the roots will not reach deep enough to withstand droughts or even deluges? What about those thorns of distractions and busyness in our overgrown gardens of life? Are they choking our commitment to following in the ways of Christ?

Be honest with your assessment because, as I have learned the hard way, ignoring what needs to be amended doesn't get you the beautiful abundant life God wants for you.

God of green pastures, rich soil and abundant crops, help us to be honest with You about the condition of our heart soil. May we admit where we are failing in the growth of Your Word here in our own lives and communities. And then, may we be willing to amend our ways so that truly a garden of hope and peace will flourish. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

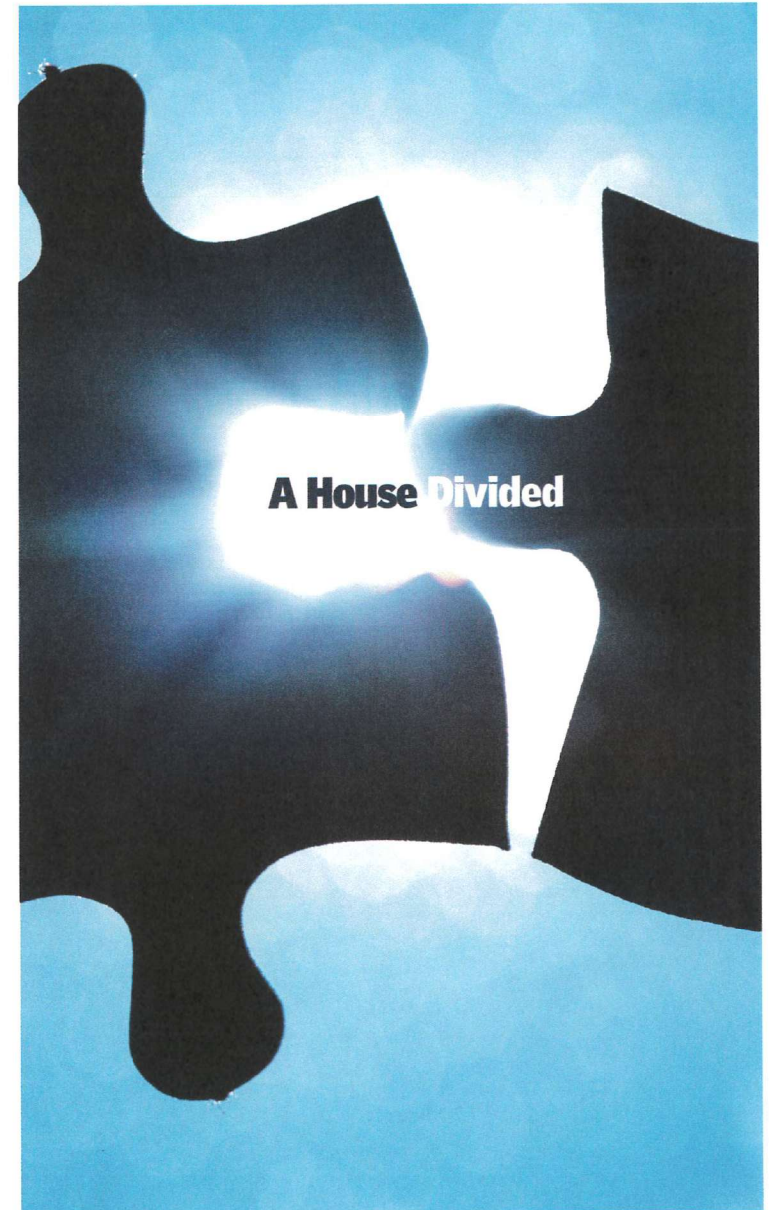
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



8.5" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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BUL0406





St. John's United Church of Christ
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
 July 12, 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)

It is good to praise the Lord, and make music to your name, O Most High,
Proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night.
 To you we make music, to you we offer melody, harmony and rhythm.
I sing for joy at what your hands have done.

* **OPENING HYMN** *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* #2

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

God our Provider, we walked into church today needing you in different ways.
 Some of us need strength because we are facing a big challenge. Some of us
 need hope, because we feel like giving up. Some of us need love, because we
 are feeling alone. We trust that you will provide for us, whether through words
 or music, or in a quiet moment of reflection. You are here; you are with us.
 Amen.

* **RESPONSE** *Gloria Patri* #35

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

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

* **RESPONSE** *We Give Thee but Thine Own* (v. 1) #382

* **PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

Thank you, joyous God for the opportunity to be part of your work of peace and
 redemption in this world. We ask that you receive our gifts and use them to
 further your purposes in our lives and in the lives of others. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

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

Congregational Response: *Hear Our Prayer, O God* #306

SCRIPTURE:

Old Testament: Psalm 150

New Testament: 1 Corinthians 14:15

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

MUSICAL MESSAGE

Alan Pancake

* **CLOSING HYMN** *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing* #5

* **BLESSING** (responsively)

Go now to the splendor of the universe; to enjoy the music of the spheres; to
 resound the life chords of the Spirit.

**We go to the uncertainties of tomorrow; following where Jesus leads, trusting
 God will fill our lives with peace and truth.**

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

* **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 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!

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!

WE WELCOME ALAN PANCAKE as our guest musician this morning. We are grateful for his sharing of his musical talents with us. Next Sunday, Vera Mattingly will be singing in worship.

SAVE THE DATE: The Membership & Evangelism Committee is hosting a Fall Festival (like the Spring Block Party) on Sunday, October 4th from 3:00-5:00 p.m. More details to come!

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

COMING UP IN JULY:

- 19th Vera Mattingly will sing in worship.
- 26th Christmas in July!
Jonathan Clark will provide special music.

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), DeEtta Welte

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

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

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 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

Looking Ahead In July 2026

Sunday, July 19

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Vera Mattingly—Special Music
Movie: Sheep Detectives @ 5pm

Monday, July 20

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Music & Worship @ 5pm
Board Meeting @ 6pm

Tuesday, July 21

Procopio's Fund Raiser for
Preschool

Wednesday, July 22

August Newsletter Info Due
Visioning Mtg. @ 5:15pm

Thursday, July 23

Dinner & Conversation
Off the Square @ 6pm

Friday, July 24

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:	Jill Lopez
Sound:	Brian Fillingim
Liturgist:	Terry Goodman

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.

