



# The Visitor

St. John United Church of Christ, Reading, OH

January 2026

## From the Pastor

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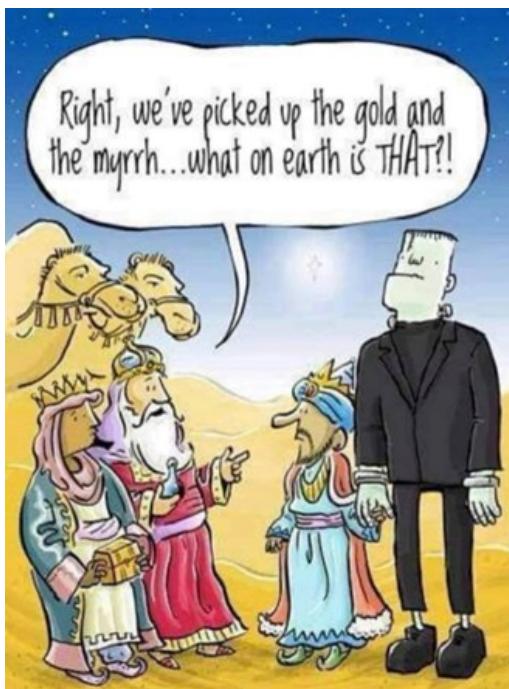
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Welcome to the season of Epiphany – well, almost! Until January 6, we are still in the season of Christmas, at least in the church year. Christmas



decorations may start appearing on retail stores as early as August, but usually before the end of December, all Christmas has disappeared. Everywhere, but the church (hopefully!) The 12 days of Christmas do not

come before December 25, but after. Counting down to January 6, the date set for Epiphany, also known as the Visit of the Magi. The wise men from the East, following the star, who came to bring their gifts at the manger – gifts of gold (for a king); frankincense (for a priest) and myrrh (an embalming spice). All point to the person of Jesus, all have symbolic value.

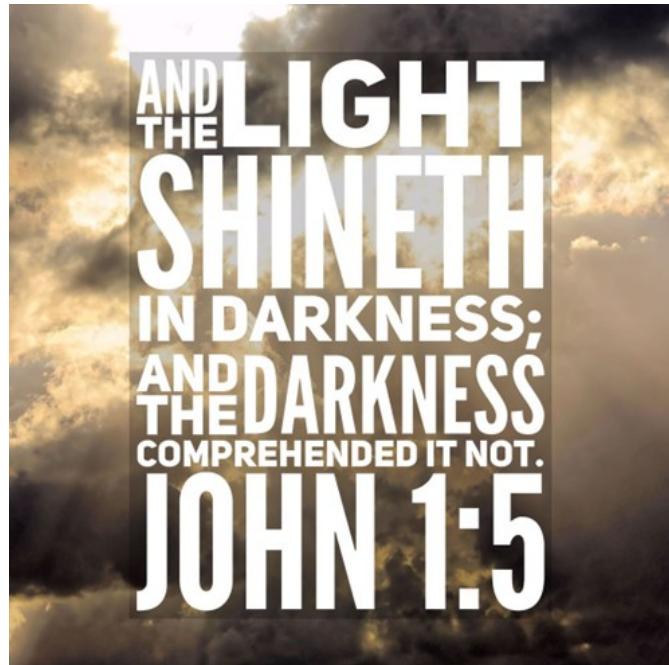
But after the wise men have left and Christmas is over, we enter into a short time in the church calendar year called Epiphany. The season of light. And we celebrate the light that is Jesus, the new-born king, the Light of the world, between the great church seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter.

In the northern hemisphere, our days are short and our nights

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## From the Pastor

*(Continued from page 1)*



are long, and we may crave the sun-light that is hidden by grey, cloudy skies. But in our faith journey, these next few weeks give us an opportunity to lift up that light, to strengthen our faith, to shine brightly in a world that seems to grow darker every day.

You have the light of Christ in you, and I encourage you to let that light shine brightly during Epiphany. Let that holy light shine in your family, on your friends, around your co-workers. Let that light be the motivation you need to love your neighbor as yourself, and to get up on those dark January Sundays and come to worship. And remember those encouraging words from John 1:1-5:

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

-Rev. Torie

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## Special Meetings in January

The **Popcorn Committee** will meet Tuesday, Jan. 6 at 5 pm.

Sunday, Jan. 18 is the **Annual Meeting** of St. John UCC. Please plan to stay after worship and hear about our 2025 ministry highlights, as well as plans for 2026. The 2025 Annual Report will be available Sunday, Jan. 4, in accordance with our by-

laws requiring the report to be available two weeks ahead of the Annual Meeting.

**Installation of 2026 Church Leaders** will be Sunday, Jan. 26 during worship. Please keep all our Council and Ministry Board members and our other lay leaders in your prayers as they prepare to serve in 2026.

## Ministry Board of Christian Nurture

*The Ministry Board of Christian Nurture exists to encourage and nurture our members' faith by providing education and fellowship opportunities for all ages.*

**January meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 30 at 2 pm.**

**Men's Group** will meet Sunday, Jan. 4 after worship.

Christian Nurture invites you to Mt. View Terrace for **UNO games and pizza** on Friday, Jan. 9 from 4-6 pm. All are welcome!

**Hospitality Team** will meet Sunday, Jan. 11 after worship.

**January Lunch Bunch** is at the Grand Buffet, 3320 Highland Ave., after worship on Jan. 11.

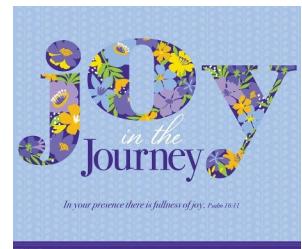
Brighten up your January with another fun **Game Night**, this time hosted at the Prater/Carey home (2624 Petworth Ct., off

Hunt Rd.). The fun will begin Sunday, Jan. 18 at 5:30 pm.

### **Save-the-Dates for February and March:**

The annual **Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner** will be Tuesday, Feb. 17. The **German Heritage Dinner**, raising funds for the Bob Christophel scholarship fund, will be Saturday, March 7. Thanks to the Men's Group for hosting both of these special events!

The "Joy in the Journey" **Women's Retreat** will be Saturday, March 21 with an optional overnight. More info to come!



## Heartland Conference UCC Info



*Scan here with your phone camera to see online resources from the Heartland Conference, including event registration, newsletters & social media, and prayers/devotions.*

THE HEARTLAND CONFERENCE'S PORTAL TO MINISTRY RESOURCES!



SCAN ME

## A Musing Moment from Rev. Steve



*Solitaire is simple yet challenging game requiring integrity, patience and a good dose of “Well, maybe next time.”*



Almost every afternoon after a mid-day nap I meet up with an old friend over a cup of coffee, a cookie and a deck of cards. He goes by the name “Ole Sol.” At least that’s what my maternal grandfather called him some 65 years ago. I can still see Pawpaw sitting at the dining room table playing a game of cards in solitude (except for me watching and learning, his #1 fan). A card game called “Solitaire.” Well, sir, this ripe, aging fruit has not fallen far from the Pawpaw tree.

Now I know some of you play “Solitaire” on your laptop, cell phone or tablet. Not me. I prefer the way God intended it. Cards in hand and hope in heart. I play 3 hands with “Ole Sol” (after all I am a devout Trinitarian). I “keep my fingers crossed” that perchance I just might win one of them. Rarely do. You see “Ole Sol” is a stubborn old cuss and can be as difficult to beat as a contrary mule with a bad \*\*\* attitude.

“Solitaire” is simple yet challenging game requiring integri-

ty, patience and a good dose of “Well, maybe next time.” You begin by shuffling the deck and laying down 7 cards in a row (one for each day of the week) left to right with Sunday’s card face up and the rest face down. Then you add Monday’s face up with the rest face down continuing this pattern until the week is finished with 7 cards face up. Now I like this a lot because there is order and surprise from the get go. The remaining cards form “the kitty” (again that’s what my Pawpaw called it). Here’s where the fun begins. From “the kitty” you turn over 3 cards with the third one face up and playable trying to build columns of cards from the row of 7 with alternating red/black, black/red suits in descending order. When aces appear out of nowhere you place them above the row of 7 columns with each forming a home base. Add cards to home bases by suit in ascending order. The goal is to have all 52 cards in four complete stacks

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## Ministry Board of Elders

*The Ministry Board of Elders exists to spiritually support the body of the church by creating meaningful worship.*

*Next meeting: Thursday, Jan. 8 at 2 pm*

Sign-up sheets are available outside the Cozy Corner for **readers, greeters, ushers, and dedications of altar flowers** for 2026. See the Board of Elders with any questions about any of these roles, and please sign up if you are interested!

We will **undecorate the church** on Sunday, January 4 after worship—please stay and help and enjoy some treats!

We will finish the “**Through the Bible in a Year**” readings on January 11, 2026! Congrats to all who have studied and prayed through the whole Bible in 2025!

## Scripture Readings

Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for December 23-29	Dec. 30	Jan. 4
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Finishing up!	Jan. 6	Jan. 11
Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 40:1-11 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42	Jan. 13	Jan. 18
Isaiah 9:1-4 Psalm 27:1, 4-9 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23	Jan. 20	Jan. 25

## The Visitor

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### Ministry Board of Property and Finance

*The Ministry Board of Property and Finance exists to be stewards of the building and finances of the church.*



*Next meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 5 pm*

A few thoughts from Property and Finance:

It's January and the church is doing well  
 The building felt so warm even as the temperatures fell.  
 It's another New Year for us to embrace  
 On last year's shortcomings we will not dwell.

Property and Finance is always on the ball,  
 For any new projects we are ready to stand tall.  
 Just give us a suggestion on what we need to do,  
 And we will faithfully and gladly answer the call.

The building to us is truly a blessing,  
 Although at times the problems might keep us guessing.  
 We work hard to keep it fit and running well,  
 But at times it can be quite distressing.

Our staff is great, they keep us afloat.  
 They are performing so very well, they have my vote.  
 Our minister is precious; she's one of a kind.  
 She keeps us active and she hits the right note.

The congregation is getting older, even as we speak.  
 We still work many missions and always love to eat.  
 We worship and feel blessed in so many ways.  
 We live, laugh, love and serve and it is so very sweet.



## A Musing Moment from Rev. Steve

*(Continued from page 4)*

thus beating “Ole Sol.” Did I say this card game is simple?

T’is once you get the hang of it. And when you see the cards falling into proper place like kids lining up for recess you know “Ole Sol” is sweating like a surgeon performing open heart surgery on the President. But “Ole Sol” is relentless. He won’t go down without a fight. Why he’ll tease you into thinking, “I’m going to get you this time.” In the blink of an eye he can stop you short of sweet victory. He’s a silent, subtle, strategic contender who never gloats when he wins which is most of the time. Unlike me, I exclaim with pride and joy when my last remaining card is

placed on the last of the 4 stacks, “Ah hah! I beat you! You old ...”

My Pawpaw left me no financial inheritance. But he did leave me with a source of fun and pleasure which I treasure every time “Ole Sol” and I go toe to toe over a cup of joe, a cookie and eager curiosity. And that’s “money in the bank.”

Simply,  
Rev. Steve



## Celebrations in January

### *Birthdays:*

January 10 - Phil Hogan  
January 10 - Emily Hogeback  
January 15 - Rev. Torie Front  
January 21 - George Clary  
January 22 - Jane Hendrix

January 23 - Kathy Bentley

January 24 - Gary Kurtz

*Are we missing your birthday or anniversary? Please call the office and let Jane know!*



## St. John UCC Regularly Scheduled Events

Weekly			
Event	Day	Time	Location
Handbell Choir (Sept.-May)	Sunday	9 am	Sanctuary
Fellowship Time	Sunday	9:15 am	Cozy Corner
Worship	Sunday	10 am	Sanctuary
Bible Study (Afternoon)	Tuesday	1 pm	Bible Study Room
Bible Study (Evening)	Tuesday	6:30 pm	Mt. View Terrace
Chancel Choir (Sept-May)	Wednesday	6:15 pm	Choir Room
Feed My Sheep	Thursday	4:30 pm	Fellowship Hall

Monthly			
Event	Day	Time	Location
Communion	1st Sunday	10 am	Sanctuary
Deacons	Last Thursday	2:30 pm	Fellowship Hall
Lunch Bunch	2nd Sunday	After Worship	Various
Men's Group	Various Sundays	11 am	Various
Property & Finance	2nd Tuesday	5 pm	Bible Study Room
Christian Nurture	1st Tuesday	5 pm	Bible Study Room
Elders	2nd Thursday	2:30 pm	Bible Study Room
Euchre	3rd Tuesday	2:45 pm	Church
Church Council	3rd Thursday	6 pm	Bible Study Room
Work-ship Day	First Saturday	8 am	Church

# SNOW GLOBE CRAFT FUN

Five students in the after school program were making snow globes. They each included a special feature (one used a penguin), used a different material to make their "snow" (one used glitter), and they each used a different color of ribbon! Use the clues below to figure out the details of each student's snow globe craft!

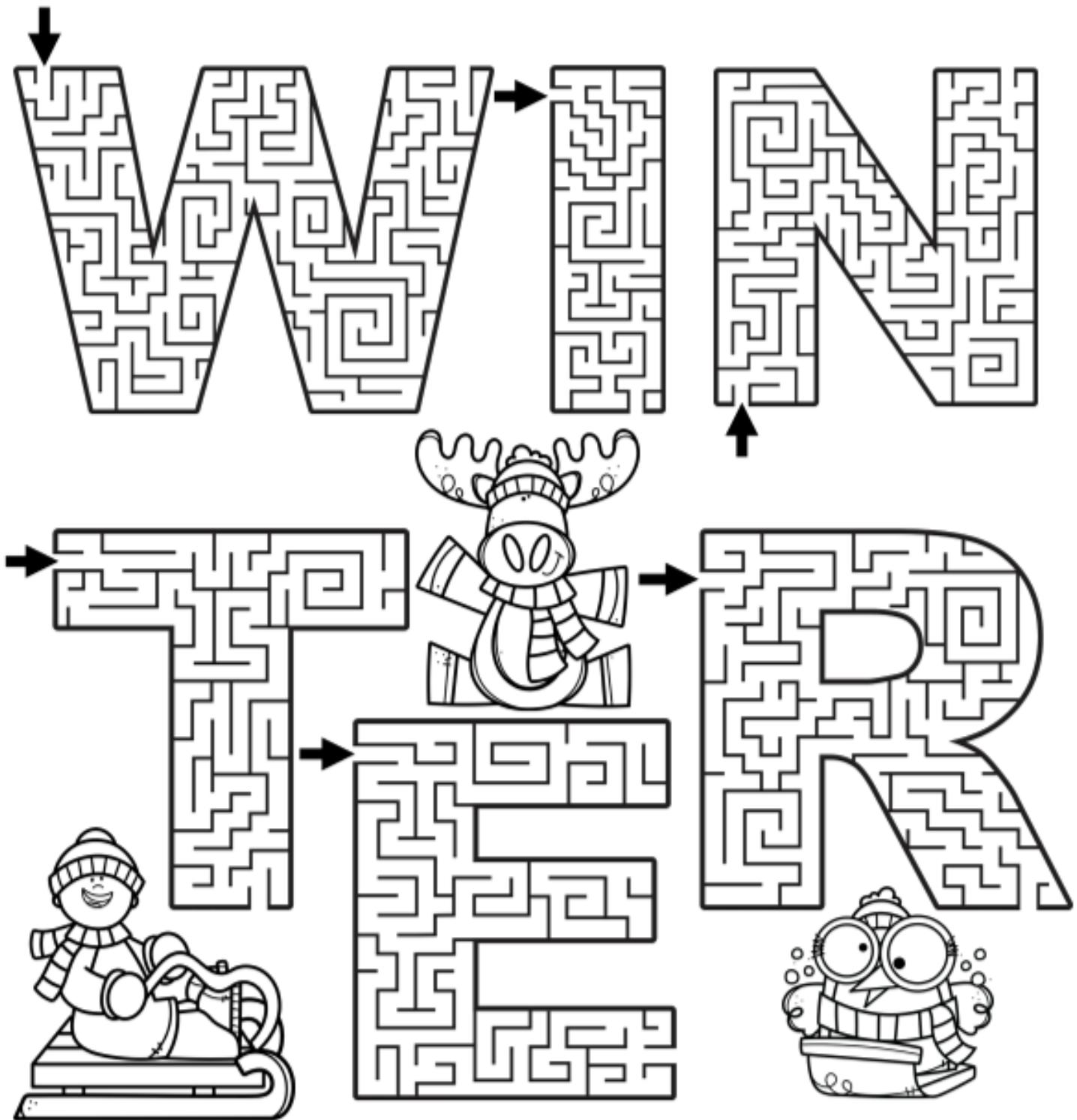
	main feature					"snow"				ribbon color				
	snowman	deer	penguin	child	cardinal	copy paper	plastic	Styrofoam	glitter	tissue paper	red	silver	blue	gold
student	Tomás													
	George													
	Mary													
	Claire													
	Freeman													
ribbon color	red													
	silver													
	blue													
	gold													
	green													
"snow"	copy paper													
	plastic													
	Styrofoam													
	glitter													
	tissue paper													



## Clues:

1. The five snow globes were the one with gold ribbon, the one with a snowman, the one with glitter for snow, Freeman's snow globe, and the one with a child making a snow angel.
2. Mary's snow globe had a cardinal and her snow was a type of paper.
3. Tomás used a metallic ribbon, but his child wasn't making snow angels in paper or Styrofoam.
4. George's snow globe featured Styrofoam snow and a green ribbon.
5. Freeman's tissue paper snow turned out pretty well, although it did stick to the globe some.
6. The snowman didn't have a red or blue ribbon on his globe, and he didn't have any paper snow.
7. Claire's red ribbon really went well with the holly berries she included in her globe.
8. Freeman didn't use a deer.

student	main feature	"snow"	ribbon color



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