

# DECEMBER 2023

# THE VISITOR

The Newsletter of St. John United Church of Christ - Reading

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## CHANGES

by Reverend Torie Front

Isaiah 9:6 - For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

As we take these next several weeks to prepare for the birth of our Savior, I invite you to join me in meditating on these names of Jesus as foretold by the prophet Isaiah. With the four weeks of Advent, and the four titles given to Jesus here, we can meditate on one a week. I've chosen to order them following the traditional themes of Advent:

November 26 - Sunday of Hope = Wonderful Counselor

December 3 - Sunday of Peace = Prince of Peace

December 10 - Sunday of Joy = Mighty God

December 17 - Sunday of Love = Everlasting Father

Focusing on this prophecy about the Messiah, in addition to the use of the "Christmas: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" and our daily Advent devotions in the booklet "Journey to

Joy" (to be started Sunday, November 26,) should give us many opportunities to hold on to the holiness of this season.

There is joy in gift shopping and giving, in cookie baking and meal-preparation, in putting up lights and decorating a Christmas tree. But let's not let the commercial side of Christmas, which started over a month ago in the stores, get in the way of celebrating the birth of the Messiah, the coming of Emmanuel, God with us, this Advent and Christmas season.



May the Advent blessings of hope, peace, joy, and love be with you now and always.

-Rev. Torie



# BOARD OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE



Who can resist a cheesy slice of pizza heaven? Mark your calendars for **December 17th**, and join us for Lunch Bunch after worship for a Pizza Smorgasbord.



Time to jingle all the way! Come join us as we spread some holiday cheer by caroling for our lovely Saints at Home. We'll be singing our hearts out on Sunday, December 17, right after our scrumptious Pizza Smorgasbord. And if you can't make it, don't worry, we're doing it again on Tuesday, December 19th at 2 pm and Thursday, December 21st at 10:30. So, bring your best singing voice and let's make this holiday season unforgettable!



Our **November Euchre Game** will be Thursday, December 28th at 6:00pm at Bruce & Linda Read's house. We would **LOVE** for you to join us, please call Linda at 513-485-6009 so we know how many tables to set up!



Mark your calendars for December 28th! We are going to La-Comedia to see "Miracle on 34th Street". Those interested in joining should sign up no later than Dec. 10th. Please see Haven to pay for this event.



Get ready for a holly jolly December 10th! Our Church Family Christmas Dinner is coming up, right after worship. We want everyone to come, so please sign up and let us know you're coming. Just bring a festive ornament to exchange. Thank you for all you do throughout the year for, at and through St. John UCC.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 28th @ 2:30pm**



## BOARD OF DEACONS



The primary outreach ministry of St. John UCC is the **“Feed My Sheep” grocery distribution program**, held every Thursday from 4:30pm – 5:30pm. We are handing out around 75 bags of groceries each week, all provided from YOUR support and the donations of some local businesses.

**Reading Christmas Walk** is December 2nd, 6:00pm-9:00pm. We will welcome to the community with popcorn and hot chocolate. Come and sit in the Fellowship Hall to greet and talk with any guests that come through our doors!

**December 12th** we are sponsoring a one day mission trip to Hope Emergency to help their families shop for Christmas. We will meet at 7:30am If you are interested in volunteering, please add your name to the sign-up sheet.

**November Giving Tree:** Once again we are collecting Kroger & Wal-Mart gift cards for Hope Emergency due December 3rd.

**Kids Shoppe:** We will set up an area for our Feed My Sheep kids to shop for their parents. We need small gifts and gift bags for moms and dads as well as small toys and candy for the 25 Christmas stockings made by the amazing Ann S. The last day to drop these off is December 3rd.

**Winter Wear:** As always we are collecting hats, gloves, and scarves for men, women and children throughout the winter.



**Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 14th @ 2:30pm**



## Board of Elders



### **December 3rd is Cantata Sunday!**

This will be a joyous celebration of the gift of Jesus and a wonderful opportunity to invite someone to join you at worship (especially people who don't like sermons!)

We hope you are able to make plans to join us for our **Christmas Eve Worship Service** Sunday, December 24th at 4:00pm.

Sunday, December 24th we will be having a **Service of Lessons and Carols** at 9:45pm. We look forward to seeing you there!

Join us for our **"Blue Christmas"** Worship Service on Thursday, December 21st at 12:30pm in Fellowship Hall. We gather in the midst of suffering to remember God is good. God is strong. God is near.



The Jeremiah Study will take a long winter break. Phase #2 (Lenten season) will resume February 18th, and continue on February 25th, March 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th (Palm Sunday). Each session will begin at 11:15 am and conclude at 12:15 pm.




**Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 14th @ 2:30pm**




Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
<b>Book Study:</b> Matthew 2:1-12  <b>Bible Study:</b> Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, Corinthians 1:3-9	November 28th	December 3rd <b><i>Christmas Cantata</i></b>
<b>Book Study:</b> Matthew 1:18-25, 2:13-15, 2:19-23  <b>Bible Study:</b> Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3:8-15	December 5th	December 10th
<b>Book Study:</b> Luke 2:8-20  <b>Bible Study:</b> Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126, Luke 1:46-55	December 12th	December 17th
<b>Book Study:</b> Matthew 2:1-12  <b>Bible Study:</b> Afternoon Bible Study potluck at 12:30pm	December 19th	December 24th
Matthew 2:1-12	December 26th <b><i>No- Book/Bible Study</i></b>	December 31st





## BOARD OF PROPERTY AND FINANCE



The improvements to the sanctuary were completed on time and we were finally able to worship in our newly refreshed sanctuary on Sunday, October 29th. The newly retrofitted lights with the LED bulbs and white panels really brighten up the entire space and the wall colors appear as they should....nearly white. A few pews were removed from the back and replaced with some comfortable rocking chairs, which seem to get good use during worship services. The carpeting looks great and should last for many years. The audio/video booth has new tables and is now much more organized, updated and neater looking. The new pew cushions are expected to arrive sometime in February of next year so sitting should be a bit more comfortable. A dedication service for the sanctuary was held on Sunday, November 19th and was well attended. The service included some history notes, great music from the choir and guest musicians, and a prayer and blessing of the sanctuary. Service was followed, of course, with a meal in Fellowship Hall. The service and activities of this day were reminiscent of the dedication services for the new church held 100 years ago. It was all quite moving, fabulous, and enjoyable. Thanks to everyone and anyone who had even the smallest part in the sanctuary improvements, and also to our wonderful contractors who have painted, remodeled

and carpeted the sanctuary. So many small group discussions were held because so many decisions had to be made. Special thanks goes to Rick Caudill, who spent many hours up on ladders and scaffolding, cleaning and retrofitting all the lights, and moving, repairing, de-gumming and anchoring pews. Yes, we found quite a few pieces of historic chewing gum stuck under the pews, and once the DNA test results are in we will know who has deposited those over the years. Thanks to Rev Torie, Haven, Susie and others who pushed for these improvements, and kept us moving along. Thanks to all those who contributed to the funds that made this possible...the stained glass fund, the Ruth Schnier Estate gift, the Al Edwards gift, and the Amy Wright Estate gift. We are truly blessed and forever thankful!!!

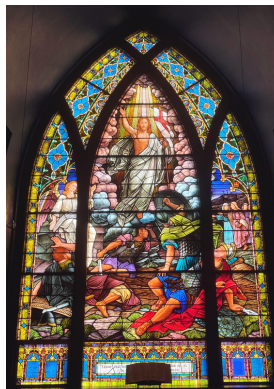
Our Stewardship Campaign was successful as we reached our goal of \$115,000 in offerings. If you have not yet returned a pledge card, please feel free to submit it as soon as possible....and we thank you all for your help and generosity.

Because of YOU our church changes lives !!! The P&F Board has developed the Ministry Spending Plan (budget) for next year with the help of all the other boards. Once approved by Church Council it will be submitted to the congregation for approval at our annual meeting. Huge thanks to Kathy Culver, Treasurer, for all she does in managing the financials of the church and keeping accurate records.



It is the end of the year and I want to thank each and every one of our board members, all the other board and council members, church staff, employees and the entire congregation for another wonderfully enriching and gratifying year.

Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years to you !!!



## A GIFT-OPENING LITANY

- L** Decorated with ribbons and bows and wrapping paper,  
**C** these gifts under the tree remind us that Christ is the gift more beautiful than these.  
**L** Lovingly searched for and meant especially for each one of us,  
**C** these gifts tell us that Jesus was born to save every individual person on earth.  
**L** Given with excitement and joy,  
**C** these gifts reveal the gladness that God has in sending us his Son.  
**L** As each one is torn open and unwrapped,  
**C** these gifts open our eyes to the many blessings of God in our midst.  
**L** Received with great anticipation and hope for what they might be,  
**C** these gifts reflect the fulfillment of a promise God made to us long ago.  
**L** Jesus is the Greatest Gift,  
**C** the Greatest Gift of all. Amen.



## BEFORE OPENING

- C** Little Lord Jesus, we celebrate your birth among us by exchanging gifts, remembering that you are the Greatest Gift that was ever given or received. Help us to enjoy and appreciate the presents that our loved ones put into our hands just for us. Remind us with every gift that is opened, that you opened the way for us to receive forgiveness, salvation and life everlasting. Through your manger birth among us, fill us with gratitude and praise for all the gifts we have been given because of you. Amen.

## AFTER OPENING

- C** O Savior of the world, you are the Greatest Gift of all. In the midst of this festive environment, surround us with the love that can only come from you, the peace that calms every troubled heart and the hope that springs eternal for you and your presence among these presents. We give thanks to you for these gifts now given, and we pray that what was given may serve as a benefit and a bright spot in our lives, as we honor you for being born to us, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Amen.

## GIFTS TO SHARE

- What was your favorite gift?  
 What gift were you most excited to give?  
 How were your gifts received?  
 What makes Jesus such a gift to us?

# Christmas PARTY

Get ready fellas for the ultimate shindig of the year! The Men's Group is throwing their annual bash on **December 10th from 5pm-9pm** at the **Eagle's** social room (you know the drill, same spot as last year). It's only \$10 to join the party, and hey, bring whoever you want, family and friends, for a night of games, food and good times. Want the inside scoop? Chat with Steve Culver or Gary Kurtz for more details.



**Next Men's Meeting: Tuesday, December 10th @ 5:00pm-9:00pm**



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## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DEC 02	6:00 PM	CHRISTMAS WALK
DEC 03	10:00 AM	CHOIR CANTATA
DEC 10	AFTER WORSHIP	CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA
DEC 12	7:30 AM	HOPE EMERGENCY
DEC 17	AFTER WORSHIP	LUNCH BUNCH PIZZA COOKIE EXCHANGE & CAROLING
DEC 19	2:00 PM	CAROLING
DEC 21	12:30 PM	BLUE CHRISTMAS & CAROLING
DEC 24	4:00 PM	CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
DEC 24	9:45 PM	SERVICE OF CAROLS & LESSONS
DEC 28	10:45 AM	LA COMEDIA



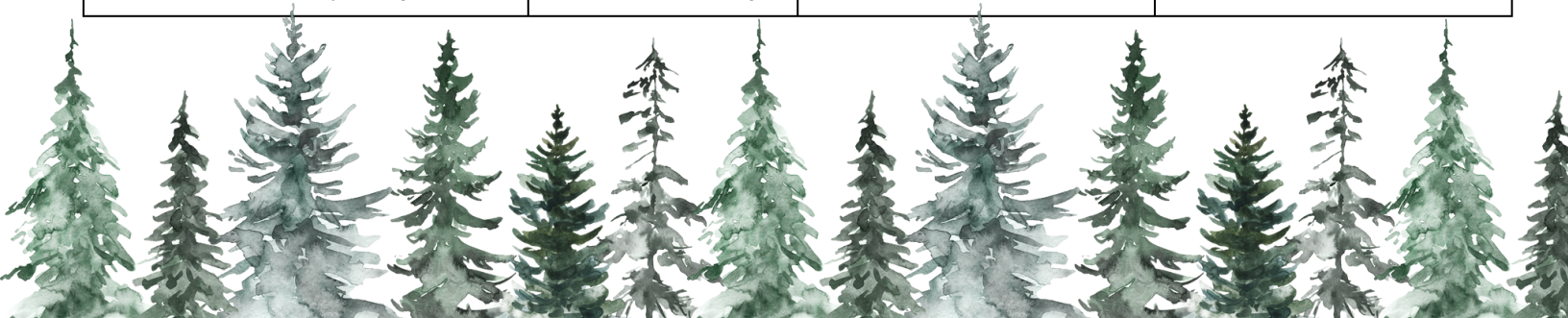
## St. John United Church of Christ Regular Events

### Weekly Events:

Event	Day	Time	Location
Handbell Choir Practice	Sunday	9:00am	Sanctuary
Worship	Sunday	10:00am	Sanctuary
Bible Study Afternoon	Tuesday	1:00pm	Bible Study Room
Bible Study Evening	Tuesday	6:30pm	Mt. View Terrace
Chancel Choir Practice	Wednesday	6:15pm	Choir Room
Feed My Sheep	Thursday	4:30pm	Outside

### Monthly Events:

Event	Day	Time	Location
Communion	1st Sunday	10:00am	Sanctuary
Board of Deacons	Last Thursday	2:30pm	Cozy Corner
Pizza Path	2nd Sunday	After Worship	Various Locations
Men's Group	Various Sundays	11:00am	Various Locations
Missionary Sewing	1st Wednesday	10:00am	Fellowship Hall
Board of Property & Finance	2nd Tuesday	5:00pm	Fellowship Hall
Board of Christian Nurture	2nd Wednesday	5:00pm	Fellowship Hall
Board of Elders	2nd Thursday	2:30pm	Bible Study Room
Euchre	Last Thursday	6:00pm	The Read's
Church Council	3rd Thursday	5:45pm	Fellowship Hall
Work-shop Day	Last Saturday	8:00am	Church





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## December Birthdays and Anniversaries

HAPPY  
*Birthday*

### Birthdays

December 11 - Sue Meyer

December 12 - Marlin Fuchs

### Anniversaries

December 10 - Robert & Jeanette Wiley

December 31 - Melissa & Rob Harman



# Christmas Word Search



CANDY CANE  
CAROLS  
CHRISTMAS  
DECEMBER  
ELVES  
GINGERBREAD  
JINGLE

HOLLY  
LIGHTS  
MERRY  
NORTH POLE  
ORNAMENTS  
PRESENTS  
REINDEER

SANTA  
SLEIGH  
STOCKING  
TREE  
WINTER  
WREATH

