



The Visitor

St. John United Church of Christ, Reading, OH

September 2026

From the Pastor: Stewardship

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September and October have become the main 'stewardship' season here at St. John UCC. To be fair, we should all be thinking about 'stewardship' throughout the entire year. Because what is 'stewardship?' Basically, stewardship is the job of supervising or taking care of something. In this case, we are talking about stewardship of the church, and also what portion of our own time, treasure, and talent we commit to the church. And, the answer to that question is going to be different for each person.

Some people live close to the

church, are retired, and are able to spend a lot of time and talent at the church. Others live farther away, and only make the drive in on Sundays. Still others are not able to physically get to the church property at all, and for many, but not all, the ability to worship online keeps them connected to their church. ("White Bags," visits, and cards also help keep our Saints at Home connected.)

Notice that so far, all we've talked about is time and talent. Everyone has a different amount of time that they have chosen to commit to the church – we all have 24 hours in a day, 7 days a week, but how we use that time differs. Same with talents. There is a broad range of talents in our church family, and many peo-

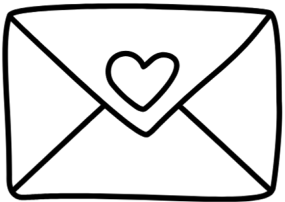
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The Visitor

From the Pastor



"Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."



(Continued from page 1)

ple use many talents to help out at the church. And for these things, the giving of time and talent to take care of St. John UCC, we are thankful.

But the primary focus in the annual stewardship season (for better or worse) is what we call 'treasure.' Finances. Money. And all Christians are called to be good stewards of the money that God has blessed them with. Jesus says in Matthew 22:21 - "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." And this then begs the question - 'what is God's?' As early in the Bible times as Genesis 14, "And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything." The 'him' here is King Melchizedek, a priestly king who had just blessed Abram. And the concept of 'tithing' was introduced. Perhaps you want to use the concept of 'tithing' as you figure out how you understand 'what is God's.' Perhaps you want to

pay your monthly bills and see what is left over. Perhaps you come up with a number and include that in your monthly bills. Perhaps you give what is in your wallet on Sunday mornings. The possibilities are endless!

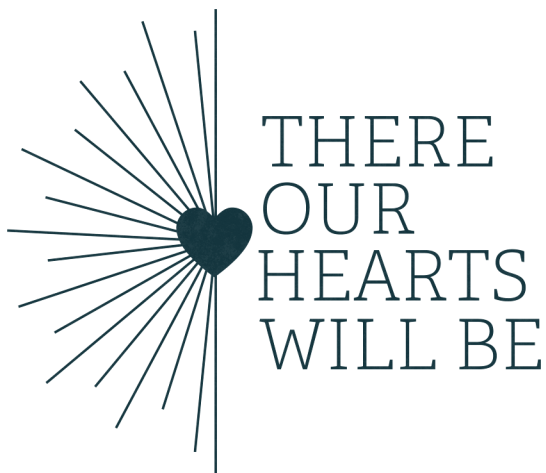
But, the bottom line is that everyone should be giving something - time, treasure, and talent - to the Lord. To support and take care of the church, their church, your church.

There are bills to pay and supplies to purchase, there are salaries and benefits and food to buy. When I looked at a recent print out of who is giving financially to support the church (just 'who' - not 'how much!') I was surprised that there seems to be a large percentage of the congregation that does not financially support the church. Perhaps it is because they give cash and don't use the offering envelopes - please - use the offering envelopes - and if you

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2026 Stewardship Campaign Theme:

“There Our Hearts Will Be”



There Our Hearts Will Be invites us into a season of deep spiritual alignment—an honest, hopeful exploration of how our practices, priorities, and resources reveal what truly claims our hearts. Rooted in Jesus’ teaching from Matthew 6, this theme reframes giving not as performance or obligation, but as the quiet, courageous work of placing our hearts in God’s care. Turning to the breadth of our sacred scripture, we’ll examine what we love, whom we trust, and how we live out our faith.

Ultimately, *There Our Hearts Will Be* is an invitation to:

- **Re-center our lives** on God’s quiet, faithful presence.
- **Let our giving reflect** our deepest values and commitments.
- **Align our actions** with our confession of Christ.
- **Allow God to transform, heal, and renew** our hearts.
- **Practice a generosity** that is not performative, but rooted, joyful, and Spirit-led.

Through this journey, we will discover again that faithful stewardship is not primarily about money—it is about placing our hearts in God’s hands, trusting that where our hearts go, our lives, choices, and resources will follow.

Together, as a community shaped by grace, we will ask: Where is our treasure? How can our hearts more fully align with God’s?

In this season, we commit to making our answer clear.

There our hearts will be.



“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

-Matthew 6:21



*The measure
you give will
be the
measure you
get back.*

need some, please ask Kathy
Culver for a set.

God has blessed each member, each friend, each person who worships with us – in-person and online. And each member, each friend, each person who worships with us should be giving of their time, treasure and talent to support their church. In our stewardship video moments, we will hear from some members of the congregation who give regularly – weekly, monthly, or annually – to support their church, and why that is important to them. We still need a volunteer or two to share their story, so please see Rev. Torie

if you are willing to do a short video. Our hope is that their heart-felt words will encourage everyone, everyone, to give regularly to support this church. Even \$1 each Sunday (\$52 a year) given by someone who has not been a regular giver to the church will be a blessing. To the church, and to the giver.

Jesus says in Luke 6:38 “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Accept this blessing, and if you do consider this church a ‘treasure’ then may your heart be there also. Amen.

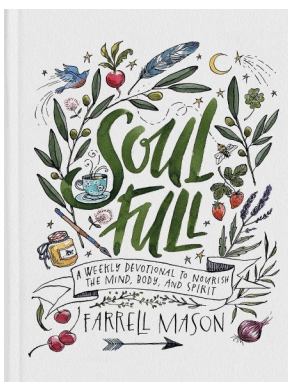
Ministry Board of Christian Nurture

September Sundays are going to be busy, so the **Hens Group** will resume meeting on October 4. We will be discussing Soul-Full #10, "It's a da Vinci." All women are welcome, no need to read the

book before. We look forward to seeing you there.

We are looking forward to the annual **Outdoor Worship and Picnic** on Sunday, Sept. 13.

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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.

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For the picnic part, please bring a side-dish, salad, or dessert to share, and your own beverage. We will provide the plates and plasticware and hot dogs! Let's stick around and play games afterwards, so bring a game if you'd like!

The **90th Birthday party** is set for Sunday, September 20, immediately after worship. St. John UCC is blessed to have many members of the '90's Club' and we look forward to celebrating all of them at this event – even if they can't make it in person! Everyone is invited to attend the party in the Cozy Corner, and there is a sign-up sheet posted so we know how much cake to get.

Here are the names of those that we know of who are in their 90's – if we've missed you, please contact Jane at the office so we can add you to the birthday list. And, if you will be turning 90 in the next 6 months, go ahead and consider yourself part of the group!

- Bob and Virgie Cutter
- Glenda Richardson
- Julie Kadooka
- Marty Christophel

- Pat Marshall
- Shirley Martin
- Verna Ficke

The Faith Formation Team of SONKA is excited to announce the first offering of our third year of *In The Deep End!* Rev. Mark Anthony will be offering

"FANTASTICAL FAITH: God and Religion in the writings of Tolkien, Lewis, L'Engle and others" in September!

Wednesday nights on September 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 at 6:30 pm on Zoom.

Two of the most influential authors of the Twentieth Century, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, used fantasy and science fiction to present matters of faith, religion, and God to the public. Each author brought his own faith perspective and experience to their works. We will explore what they have to say about these subjects. In addition, we will look at the writings of Madeleine L'Engle, Walter M. Miller, Jr., and others.

To register, please email Ruth Hopkins at ruhop@me.com to get the free zoom link!

Ministry Board of Deacons

The Ministry Board of Deacons exists to serve our community in Christian love.

The Deacons invite you to join us the second and fourth Thursdays of the month for a **contemporary worship service**. Music begins at 3:30. We would love to see you there.

We also invite everyone over age 50 to join us for **Cozy Corner Café!** We meet the fourth Thursday of the month at 12:00 for lunch, games and chatter! Bring

a bag lunch and a favorite game if you have one.

Feed My Sheep is serving around 72 families a week. Our current needs include pasta and sauce, canned vegetables and meat, personal hygiene items and pet food. You are always welcome to join us and meet our neighbors. FMS is every Thursday from 4:30 - 5:30.

Washington UCC Homework Club: Tutors Needed



Washington UCC (2950 Sidney Ave., Cincinnati 45225) is seeking volunteers for their after-school Homework Club program. Tutors work one-on-one with elementary-age children to help with homework and other learning activities. Tutors are needed one day a week from 4 to 5:30 PM on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.

Statistics consistently show that children who get enough to eat; have a safe, stable environment in which to play and learn; and are provided one-on-one attention, have a better chance at negotiating a difficult world in which many things are outside of their control. Homework Club provides kids another point of contact in addition to home and school.

As with all ministries at Washington UCC, Homework Club seeks to meet people where they are and to love them with no other agenda. There is no proselytizing to children or an obligation for families to attend church services.

To volunteer or for more information, contact Alex at vista@washingtonucc.org.

Ministry Board of Elders

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

Chancel Choir starts practice on Wednesday, September 2 at 6:15 pm, and will sing during worship each Sunday beginning on September 13 – if you enjoy singing and would like to join the choir this year, all are welcome!

There will be a **handbell polishing party** on Thursday, September 17. If you are intrigued by these beautiful instruments and might be interested in joining the Handbell Choir, join us at 10:30 and we'll introduce you to the bells. Rumor has it there may be sweet treats after the work is done!

Are you interested in sponsoring our **Altar Flowers** for a month? There is a sign-up sheet outside the Cozy Corner for your name and your dedication. Sponsors may dedicate the flowers in honor or in memory of a loved one, in celebration of an anniversary or birthday, or any other person or event that's important to you. You can dedicate one of the two arrangements for \$30/month, or both for \$60. Please place any payment in the offering basket (or mail to the office if you aren't at church) and clearly mark it "Altar Flower Dedication."

Scripture Readings for September

Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 149; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20	September 1	September 6
Exodus 14:19-31; Psalm 114; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35	September 8	September 13
Exodus 16:2-15; Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16	September 15	September 20
Proverbs 3:1-12; Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32	September 22	September 27

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.

Summer is nearly over and school is back in session. Serendipity Learning Center will be returning to the church for one final year. Next school year they will hopefully be in a new location and our church pantry will move into the rooms currently occupied by the school. This should free up Fellowship hall to be more readily available for gathering and as a rental space for other outside groups. We certainly have been blessed to have this school on our premises for nearly 40 years and we wish them well. Please remember to be extra watchful and prayerful as our children return to school.

We are again actively working on completing several projects. Included are: the sale of the parsonage, the repair of the sanctuary walls, the re-landscaping of the church grounds, the installation of a redesigned lattice panel in the sanctuary, the tiling of the backsplash in the kitchenette, and a few other small projects.

The Pohnpei Church will be returning to worship in our sanctuary starting in September. We also have an opportunity to provide worship and gathering space for another church early next year. We will keep you posted.

Workshop Days are also starting again with the most recent on August 29th. These days are always filled with fun, fellowship, food and even some work. Feel free to come and help or simply visit with us whenever you can. Look for announcements or emails regarding upcoming Workshop Days.

Our Stewardship theme this year is "There Our Hearts Will Be". There will be sermons and moments throughout September and October encouraging and inviting you to pledge financial help to the church. Personal testimonies regarding giving are always helpful, and we are looking for several members to do so. It would be a short recorded session that would be aired during worship service. Please let Rev Torie know if you would be willing to share your story. It would be most appreciated and meaningful for all.

As always, let us know your thoughts, concerns, and praises about the workings of the church. We continually hope to be a welcoming, safe and beautiful space to worship and gather.

Peace and love from the Board of P&F (Prayers and Faith).

Men's Group Street Feed served 125 free lunches!



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

Celebrations in September

Birthdays:

Sept.18 - Virginia Gilbert
Sept. 18 - Rev. Steve Cummins
Sept.29 - Tammy Rohne
Sept. 30 - Debbie Hogeback

Anniversaries:

Sept. 2 -
Phil & Julie Hauenstein
Sept. 17 -
Rev. Torie & Vince Front
Sept. 19 - Ann & Jess Feldman



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
Christian Nurture	1st Tuesday	5 pm	Bible Study Room
Church Council	3rd Thursday	6 pm	Bible Study Room
Communion	1st Sunday	10 am	Sanctuary
Contemporary Praise & Worship	2nd and 4th Thursdays	3:30 pm	Fellowship Hall/ Courtyard
Cozy Corner Café	4th Thursdays	12-3 pm	Cozy Corner
Deacons	Last Thursday	2:30 pm	Fellowship Hall
Elders	1st Thursday	2:00 pm	Bible Study Room
Euchre	3rd Tuesday	2:30 pm	Church
Living Single group	2nd Wednesday	12 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
Work-ship Day	1st Saturday	8 am	Church

==HAPPY==

★LABOR DAY★



BARBECUE
 HOLIDAY
 JOB
 LABOR
 MCGUIRE
 MONDAY
 MOVEMENT
 ORGANIZE
 PARADE
 PARTY
 PICNIC
 PULLMAN
 RALLY
 RIGHTS
 SECURITY
 SEPTEMBER
 STRIKE
 TRADE
 TRAFFIC
 TRIP
 UNION
 VACATION
 WAGES
 WEEKEND

ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL

Outdoor Worship

AND PICNIC



Sunday, September 13

10 am - at Vorhees Park, 318 Southern Ave.

BRING YOUR FAVORITE DISH &
ENJOY OPEN-AIR WORSHIP AND
GREAT COMPANY!



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