



The Visitor

St. John United Church of Christ, Reading, OH

December 2025

From the Pastor

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On November 15, I attended the SONKA (Southern Ohio Northern Kentucky Association) of the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ. This was a short business meeting with an injection of worship, and some time to meet and greet. The new Regional Ministers were installed, and Rev. David Long-Higgins brought greetings from the Heartland Conference. And I learned that there are now 68 churches in SONKA – when I arrived here almost 16 years ago, there were at least 84 churches in SONKA. There is a ‘Legacy’ Ministry, to help churches determine how they are going to transition into a new ministry – perhaps one without a building. And I learned that the grant that Debbie Cummins had written for a Charch and Hale grant was

awarded, and our organ will be tuned as soon as can be arranged!



Rev. Torie, Rev. Emmanuel and ministry leaders at SONKA Fall Gathering

And, I had the opportunity to meet with Emmanuel. Emmanuel Tuyishime was our student minister back in 2014-15, and he has since been ordained and has been serving in ministry in the Dayton area. Emmanuel is from Rwanda, and his passion is to help refugees

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From the Pastor

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make the transition from one culture to another. He is currently pastoring the New Hope Apostolic Church. Over the past 14 years, his ministry has moved six times, always sharing spaces with other churches. Though God has been faithful, Emmanuel and his leadership team believe it is time for them to have a permanent home where they can build stability, expand their ministries, and create a safe, welcoming place for the many newcomers we serve. With over 120 people in worship, and 52 kids running around, their own space makes sense!

Emmanuel says this about his church and their mission outreach: We are deeply committed to welcoming newcomers to the United States. Our members regularly:

- Pick up new arrivals from the airport
- Host them in their homes
- Help them apply for Social Security numbers
- Take them to job centers when eligible
- with immigration paperwork and appointments

We walk with them through the entire adjustment process with compassion and hospitality.

In a time when mainline Protestant churches are in a decline, isn't it refreshing to hear of a church that is growing?! And meeting needs?! The New Hope Apostolic Church has set a goal of \$100,000, and have already raised \$50,000, and are working hard to meet this goal by January 1, 2026. If you would like to be part of this ministry, I invite you to use the labeled envelopes in the narthex and put your support in the offering plate. These envelopes will be available each week in December, and after the last Sunday in December we will make a Happy New Year's gift to Emmanuel and his church fund.

I am also sharing this information within SONKA, especially the Dayton area churches, so that more can be part of this exciting church growth. We are in a covenant relationship with all the churches in SONKA, and I feel that we are in a covenant relationship with Emmanuel as well. We helped train him for the ministry, and his time with us is precious to him. He sends his greetings and love, and asked about many of you by name. Please add him and his church to your prayers, and in this season of love and goodwill, see if God nudges your heart to be part of Emmanuel's ministry.

2025 ADVENT & CHRISTMAS EVENTS

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Christmas Card Writing Party at Transfiguration Spirituality Center, Glendale	Tuesday, Dec. 2	10 am
Christmas Cantata: "The Living Light"	Sunday, Dec. 7	10 am
Christmas Lights Walk (meet at Caudills')	Thursday, Dec. 11	6:15 pm
Deadline to bring gifts for FMS families	Sunday, Dec. 14	
Hospitality Team - Special Holiday Fellowship Time	Sunday, Dec. 14	9:15 am
Christmas Extravaganza & Cookie Exchange	Sunday, Dec. 14	11:15 am
Men's Group Christmas Party at Reading Eagles (all men welcome!)	Sunday, Dec. 14	5-9 pm
Christmas Caroling with Saints at Home	Dec. 16	2 pm
	Dec. 17	3 pm
	Dec. 21	11:30 am
"Blue Christmas" Worship Service	Thursday, Dec. 18	5:45 pm
Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols Services	Wednesday, Dec. 24	3:30 pm & 9:30 pm



stjohnunitedchurchofchrist.com

729 Jefferson Ave., Reading, OH | 513-821-1740

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.

Next meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 2 at 3:45 pm

Please **sign up now** for our many Advent & Christmas events (see the flyer on page 3)! Sign-up sheets are available outside the Cozy Corner for:

- Christmas Card Writing Day at Transfiguration Spirituality Center
- Christmas Extravaganza
- Christmas Caroling with our Saints at Home

Please sign up now for our many Advent & Christmas events !

The City of Reading **Christmas Walk** is Friday, Dec. 6 from 6-9 pm. St. John UCC is not officially participating, but do come out and enjoy the crib dedication and tree lighting. St. Paul Lutheran Church will present their annual Live Nativity beginning at 6:30.

The second session of the “**SoulFull**” **Hen Gathering** will be held on Dec. 7 after worship. We will be studying the devotional *SoulFull* by Farrell Mason, after worship on the first Sunday of each month. All women are welcome. There is no homework—

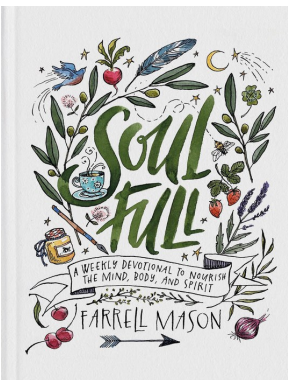
each session is a complete discussion.

Please see Susie Koehler to get a copy of *SoulFull*. We have some on hand already and can order more if needed.

Euchre group will have their December game on Dec. 9 at 2:30 pm. Please bring a small gift for a gift exchange!

Hospitality Team will host a special **Fellowship Time** for the holidays on Sunday, Dec. 14 from 9:15-10 am. Join us for festive food and drinks in the Cozy Corner!

The annual St. John UCC **Cookie Exchange** will be held on Dec. 14 after worship/before the Extravaganza! Please bring 2 dozen cookies, wrapped in 2 cookies per baggie, for the exchange, and 1 dozen cookies to be donated for the carolers to take Christmas Caroling the following week.



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Ministry Board of Christian Nurture

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Stay after worship for the **Christmas Extravaganza** on December 14! Join us for Christmas dinner, party games, and music with our Family of Faith. Please bring a wrapped ornament or small decoration for gift exchange.

The **Men's Group year-end party** will be Sunday, Dec. 14 from 5-9 pm. Games, food and drinks. Cost is \$10 per man. Invite a friend or two! The party will be at the lower level of the Reading Eagles building, 403 W. Benson St. (same as in years past).

Christmas Caroling dates/times with our Saints at Home:

Tues., Dec. 16, 2 pm -

Saints north & northwest of church

Weds., Dec. 17, 3 pm -

Saints in Reading and Kenwood

Sunday, Dec. 21, 11:30 am -

Saints in Mason and Montgomery

Line Dancing with Teresa meets at St. John each Thursday evening after Feed My Sheep. Beginner Class is from 6-7 pm; Open Dancing from 7-7:30 pm; and Experienced Class from 7:30-8:30 pm. Cost is \$7 per class or \$10 for both.

Blue Christmas

Are the holidays difficult for you this year - a recent bereavement, difficult anniversary, or other "blue" feelings? Join us for a service of prayer and candlelight, asking for God's comfort in our times of loss and pain.

THURSDAY, DEC. 18 * 5:45 PM

Ministry Board of Deacons

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

Thanks to all who gave Thanksgiving food items to brighten the holiday for our Feed My Sheep families!

If you have signed up to bring a gift for our **Giving Tree**, please bring all gifts, wrapped and tagged, by Sunday, Dec. 14. Thank you!

As Christmas and New Year's Day fall on Thursdays this year, Feed My Sheep will be rescheduling its services in late December. Pantry dates for the holidays will be **Tuesday, Dec 23 and Tuesday, Dec.**

30. Please come and help out on those days if you are able!

Other Christmas items needed for Feed My Sheep:

- Small gift items for men and women (for kids to gift to their parents)
- Small toys and candies (for Christmas stockings)

There are donation bins outside the sanctuary for these items. Please bring all gifts by **Sunday, Dec. 14.** Thank you!

Men's Group volunteered with People Working Cooperatively in November to help elderly and disabled homeowners prep their homes for winter! Thanks, guys!



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, Dec. 4 at 2 pm

The **Cantata "The Living Light"** by Ruth Elaine Schram will be offered at the 10 am service on Dec. 7. It is a 35-minute work that includes dramatic monologues for Mary and Joseph, innkeeper and innkeeper's wife, shepherd and angels, and

a Roman soldier. The 9-piece instrumental ensemble will include strings, woodwinds, and percussion, as well as Bart Choate at the piano. Debbie Cummins conducts.

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Ministry Board of Elders

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December's **Contemporary Praise & Worship** services are planned for Dec. 11 and 18 in observance of Christmas.

Are the holidays difficult for you this year? Please consider attending our **Blue Christmas worship service** on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 5:45 pm. We will pray by candlelight and ask for God's comfort and blessings in our times of pain and grief.

Christmas Eve worship services will be at 3:30 pm and 9:30 pm this year. Both will be Service of Lessons and Carols.

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 this year!



Scripture Readings

Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for November 25-December 1	December 2	December 7
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for December 2-8	December 9	December 14
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for December 9-15	December 16	December 21
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for December 16-22	December 23	December 28

The Visitor

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: Thursday, Dec. 4 at 5:45 pm

Christmas is coming and P&F stockings are full of new and ongoing projects.

This time of year we always reflect upon the many good things that we have been able to accomplish with the help of all our ministry board and church members and with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The new digital sign is performing well. We have helped to inform the community of upcoming events, not only at our church, but also for other local churches. It has even brought a couple new faces to worship and church activities. And I am sure that Bruce Koehler is rejoicing that he no longer needs to suffer through the changing of the sign information...and we thank him for the many times he updated the old sign.

Thanks, Bruce!

We have been advised by a forensic engineer, that our mois-

ture penetration issues in the sanctuary are most likely caused by leakage thru the outside edges of our stained glass windows on the side walls. We have had those edges caulked and re-painted with the hopes that this will end those problems. Once we are sure, we will repair and paint the inside walls that are damaged. In the coming months we will also be looking at some additional remodeling of the stained glass façade and lattice panel at the front of the sanctuary.

We have met our \$120,000 goal for our Stewardship campaign. Prayers have been answered and we thank you all for your contributions of time, talent and treasures.

We have received the final construction documents for the installation of new front entry doors. A dark bronze color has been selected for the aluminum doors and all new access hard-

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*Prayers have
been answered
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time, talent and
treasures.*



Ministry Board of Property and Finance

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ware will be installed. We are hoping to see the new doors in late winter or early spring.

The ministry spending plan (budget) for 2026 has been created and awaiting approval from council. It will be presented for your review and approval at our annual meeting in January. Staff and minister reviews have also been completed, and we are so blessed and thankful to have such wonderful people working and ministering here.

A couple other projects are also in the works. We are getting very close to offering online giving. We are also reviewing plans for updating the kitchenette, or sacristy, outside the sanctuary. Please let us know what other projects are important to you.

Have a wonderful and joyous Christmas, celebrating with family and friends and also here at church. The Christmas Cantata is soon and other festivities will be coming for you. Peace and Goodwill to all !!!



Heartland Conference Links



Scan the QR code at right 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

Celebrations in December

Birthdays:

December 12 – Marlin Fuchs

Anniversaries:

December 26 –

Delores & Joe Osborne

December 31 -

Melissa & Rob Harman



INTRODUCING



AMERICAN FOLK
MUSIC SCHOOL
A NONPROFIT 501C3

5 YEARS - 90 YEARS OLD
ALSO SPECIAL NEEDS

MOUNTAIN DULCIMER, UKULELE,
BEG STEELE DRUM,
FREE LESSONS



St Paul Lutheran Church 106 Maple St Reading
EVERY THURSDAY - CONTACT
Vickey Sasser 513-207-5785 for
times

St. Paul Lutheran Church is hosting the American Folk Music School every Thursday. If you are interested in learning a folk instrument, please contact Vickey Sasser (info at left).

Christmas poinsettia orders are due by Sunday, Dec. 7—please cut out and hand in the order form below if you need a copy!



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



Poinsettias are in 6.5" pots with foil cover.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Red: _____ plants at \$12 each

Pink: _____ plants at \$12 each

White: _____ plants at \$12 each

Dedication

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

**Order Deadline:
Sunday, Dec. 7**



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

The Living Light

CHRISTMAS CANTATA

SUNDAY,
DEC. 7
10 AM

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

729 Jefferson Ave., Reading



St. John United Church of Christ

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