



The Visitor

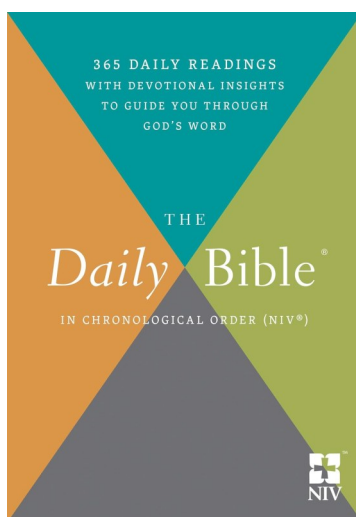
St. John United Church of Christ, Reading, OH

April 2025

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From the Pastor



In our *Through the Bible in a Year* readings, we will move the time of the judges to the time of

the kings of Israel. This transition in leadership moves the nation of Israel from a theocracy, a God-centered, God-based, God-ruled group of people to a kingdom ruled by a human. God is still involved, and depending on the king, or the situation, the king still has the choice to follow God's guidance and laws, or not. And the last part of April will see us pause in the story-line of the Israelite people and begin reading the Psalms.

As a people traveling along our Lenten journey, a journey of repentance and reflection as we build up to Holy Week, and the hosannas of Palm Sunday, the re-creation of the Last Supper at our Maundy Thursday service, and the final sacrifice of Jesus on Good Friday, we are reminded that we too, are a people with a choice. A choice to follow God or not. A choice to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, Ultimate Sacrifice, Friend to Sinners, our Lord and Savior. Or not.

We have a choice to walk with Jesus in his final days in Jerusalem before his death on the cross. And we have a choice come to the same sanctuary in which we heard about his death, and come back on East-

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From the Pastor

(Continued from page 1)



What a great way to share your love of God with those you love. Invite them to church.



er Sunday morning to celebrate His resurrection!

We also have a choice to invite our family and friends to join us. For a mid-day Lenten Taizé worship service, or the moving Tenebrae service of Good Friday. If Easter is one of the two times you have a chance to get some family members to come to church, then I hope you make that choice to purposefully invite them. To choose to celebrate the defining moment of our faith, the resurrection, with those you know and love. Because God knows and loves you, and your family, and your friends! And what a great way to share your love of God with those you love. Invite them to church. Palm Sunday. Good Friday. Easter Sunday. And then, choose to take the next step, and invite them back to church. For the joint UCC Pohnpei worship on June 1, or on Holy Humor on May 4th. (Bonus point if you can guess our theme this year!)

I, as your pastor, and the church leadership are beginning discussions about the future of the church. Creating a vision statement was a start. Talking with other ‘thriving’ churches is a step. Reading the materials provided by the UCC national setting on church future and working with an older congregation are all tools. Working to start a ‘First Thursday’ contemporary worship service after Feed My Sheep is an idea. But no matter what books we read, experts we consult, programs we implement, there is one constant that I’ve heard in almost every discussion. Church growth starts with the person in the pew. It’s that personal invitation that makes the difference. The Easter season is a great opportunity for you to do one thing that will help secure the future of this church – invite someone to worship with you. Invite someone to come and serve at Feed My Sheep. Invite someone. Make that choice, and be blessed!

-Rev. Torie

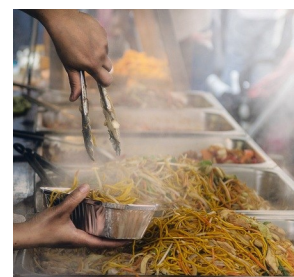
Ministry Board of Christian Nurture

The grand total for the **M&M fundraiser** is \$700.00! Thank you for your generosity!

Our April **Lunch Bunch** will be held on Palm Sunday, April 13, at the Grand Buffet, 3320 Highland Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45213. This buffet has been voted one of the Top 10 in the city – perhaps buffets could be the focus of one of our years of theme-focused Lunch Bunch spots! Please join us after worship on April 13!

Euchre will be held on Tuesday, April 15, at 2:15pm at the church. If you'd like to learn how to play euchre, please see Rev. Torie and plan on joining us that day!

Our April **Fellowship events** will take place on Sunday, April 27, immediately after worship. Men – check out what the Men's Group has planned! Women, check out the information below:



Women's Mini-Retreat: April 27

"A Friendship Bouquet": A Mini-Retreat for the Women of St. John UCC

Sunday, April 27, 2025

11:15 am – 2:30 pm

Cost: \$5.00



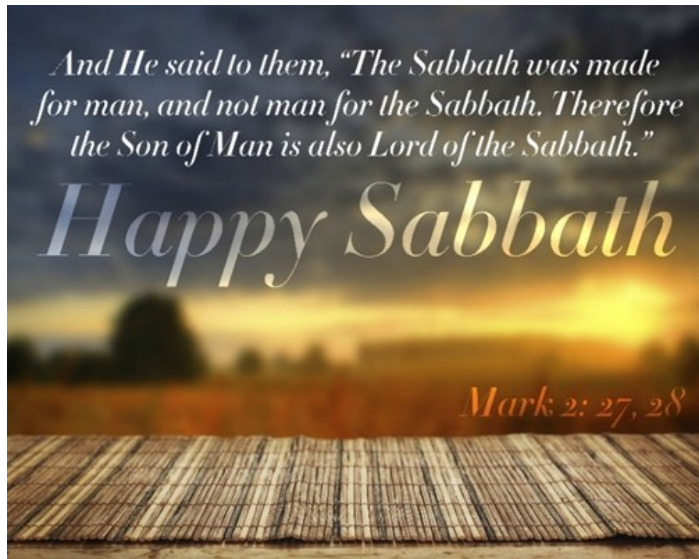
Join us for a special time for the ladies of the church to come together in fellowship and fun. We'll talk about friendship and see how different flowers can represent different components of friendship, and how we need to have a diverse group of friends to make a beautiful bouquet. Food, music, crafts, games, and laughter – we'll have it all in this special mini-retreat.

Please sign up outside the Cozy Corner to attend!

Ministry Board of Deacons

Deacons' Pilgrimage Retreat—April 11-13

Higher Ground Conference & Retreat Center, West Harrison, IN



If you help out with Feed My Sheep, or would like to someday and would like to join us on this Pilgrimage Retreat, please see Susie Koehler today! You can join us for both nights at Higher Ground, or just come over on Saturday.

We will meet at the church at 5 pm on Friday to carpool to the retreat center. On Sunday morning we will breakfast at 8:30, then depart for Palm Sunday worship at St. John UCC.



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Ministry Board of Elders

Our second **Lenten Lunch** will be at noon on Thursday, April 3. Please bring a bag lunch and join us for a meditative service of Scripture reading, Taizé music, and silence.

Save the Date – this year’s **Holy Humor Sunday** is going to be on May 4th! If you can guess what this year’s theme will be, you get a gold star! ■

We had such a good time and great response to our **joint worship** with the Pohnpei UCC church last year, that we are doing it again – including a pot-luck lunch afterwards! Save the date – Sunday, June 1, 2025. More information to follow!



Scripture Readings This Month

Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for March 25-31	April 1	April 6
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for April 1-7	April 8	April 13
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for April 8-14	April 15	April 20
<i>Through the Bible in a Year</i> Readings for April 15-21	April 22	April 27

Ministry Board of Elders

St. John's Lenten Banner: Symbols and Sources

by Ann Seeborn



Upper Left: GOLGOTHA*

And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.

-Mark 15:22-24

Center Left: HOSANNA*

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" -Matthew 21:9

***Palms are associated with Palm Sunday, of course, but they can also represent spiritual victory—for example, a martyr's triumph over death.*

Lower Left: CROWN OF THORNS*

And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns, put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" -Mark 15:17-18

Upper Right: ROAD TO JERUSALEM*

And when they drew near to Jerusalem... they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from trees and spread them on the road. -Matthew 21:1, 7-8

Center Right: CROWN OF THORNS**

Although mentioned in three of the Gospels, the Crown of Thorns did not appear in religious art until the thirteenth century, when St. Louis brought back a

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Ministry Board of Elders

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relic in the form of a wreath of rushes from the Holy Land.

Lower Right: CROSS WITHIN A CROSS*

And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

-Luke 23:26

*From *That Patchwork Place: Biblical Blocks Sampler Series* by Rosemary Markham

**From *The Patchwork Pilgrimage: How to Create Vibrant Church Decorations and Vestments with Quilting Techniques* by Jill Liddell



Holy Week and Easter with the Music Ministry

On April 6th, we will enjoy the flute music of Grace Kim as she will play a couple of solos and accompany the Chancel Choir on "Merciful God".

Holy Week in a busy time for the Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir.

On Palm Sunday, the handbells will ring in worship. Guest organist Bart Choate will play a piano/organ duet on "The Palms" with Debbie.

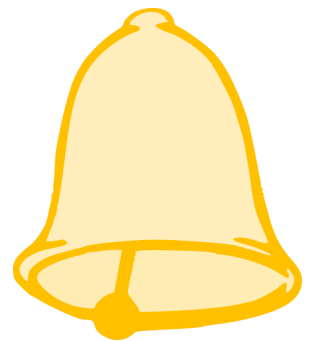
The bells and trumpet will accompany the Chancel Choir on "Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord."

On Maundy Thursday, April 17th - guest French Horn player Karen Knueven will play a Mozart piece for Prelude and Karen and Rev. Torie will play a French Horn duet on "There is a Redeemer".

On Good Friday, the service begins at 7:30 with a cello solo by Jennifer Higgins-Wagner. She will also accompany the Chancel Choir as we sing "Gethsemane Hymn".

The 8 am Easter Sunday service will feature Gary Kurtz as he sings a medley of Resurrection songs.

At the 10 am Easter Sunday service, the Handbells will ring the prelude. The Chancel Choir will sing "Alleluia! Give Thanks to the Risen Lord". Guest organist Bart Choate and Debbie will play a piano/organ duet for the Postlude.



The Visitor

Ministry Board of Property and Finance



*We have
scheduled
another Work-
ship Day for
Saturday, April
5th.*



The daffodils are blooming along with the Lenten Rose bushes in the courtyard.

Spring is here and the hope for the return of warmer weather. Many of our plantings located against the building suffered damage or near total destruction from the tuck-pointing work done on the church in 2024. Other plants, like the Bishop's Weed may be nearing their end of life. We will be re-designing these and other areas of the landscape and will be adding new and additional plantings this spring. We receive a lot of compliments on our gardens and consider it another mission that beautifies the church and the neighborhood. It's always gratifying to see others using the courtyard, walking through, sitting at the tables or wall, and just enjoying the beauty and serenity.

We have arrived at a final design for the new outdoor digital message board and sign. We actually met with the designer at their place of business and got a quick tour of their design

and production facilities. It was very impressive. Producing the drawings and details will follow shortly from the sign company, and once received, we can then start the permit and zoning appeal process. It still will take several months before we actually see the new sign installed.

We have scheduled another **Work-ship Day** for Saturday, April 5th. There will be plenty of tasks waiting for us as we prepare the church and grounds for Easter. As always, we start around 8 am and end around noon, but you can come and work or come and chat anytime you like. There are always refreshments and fellowship and we would love to see you there. You will see an email with more details about Work-ship day soon.

Many thanks to Ed Campbell for painting the stairwell to Fellowship Hall. It really makes for a fine entrance. Ed has many construction skills and is eager to help out wherever he can.

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Ministry Board of Property and Finance

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His time and talent are certainly appreciated.

Through the efforts of Susie Koehler and Rev. Torie, we have received a grant for the purchase of a new refrigerator that will serve the Feed My Sheep pantry.

Rev Torie is also working on getting a matching grant that would nearly cover the remaining cost of the new refrigerator. Thanks and Prayers for success.

As always, give us your thoughts and prayers, and let us know how we are doing.

Peace and blessings and a joyous Easter from P&F.

One Great Hour of Sharing collection is March 30

One Great Hour of Sharing is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for ref-

ugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. Give at church by cash or check using the special envelope in your bulletin, or online at ucc.org/oghs.



Celebrations in April

Birthdays

April 2 - Heidi Bothe

April 14 - Vince Front

April 15 - Rechelle Nicely

April 19 – BJ Bothe

April 25 - Diane Forster

Anniversaries

April 1 - Carol & Dave Hall

April 11 - Jan & Paul Godwin

April 11 - Rick & Donna Cutter

April 17 - Bob & Virgie Cutter

April 23 - Kathy & Steve Culver



*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	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	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	Cozy Corner
Lunch Bunch	2nd Sunday	After Worship	Various
Men's Group	Various Sundays	11 am	Various
Property & Finance	2nd Tuesday	5 pm	Fellowship Hall
Christian Nurture	1st Tuesday	5 pm	Fellowship Hall
Elders	2nd Thursday	2:30 pm	Bible Study Room
Euchre	3rd Tuesday	2:15 pm	Church
Church Council	3rd Thursday	6 pm	Fellowship Hall
Work-ship Day	Last Saturday	8 am	Church

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS WORD SEARCH

R	Z	H	S	Q	R	C	M	A	M	E	S	S	I	A	H	S
V	Q	J	D	D	L	G	P	W	O	R	S	H	I	P	Y	E
A	Z	M	R	R	I	O	Q	S	F	N	P	S	T	O	N	E
N	H	S	A	T	R	S	U	A	K	S	M	R	I	S	E	N
G	T	A	U	Q	M	P	C	V	T	S	G	A	O	A	M	R
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O	A	H	R	B	E	L	I	G	H	T	N	I	N	G	Y	A

ANGEL

APOSTLES

DISCIPLES

EARTHQUAKE

EMPTY

ETERNAL

FAITH

FEAR

GALILEE

GLORY

GOSPEL

GRAVE

GUARDS

HOPE

JESUS

LIFE

LIGHTNING

LOVE

MAGDALENE

MARY

MESSIAH

MISSION

REJOICE

RESURRECTION

RISEN

SALVATION

SAVIOR

STONE

TOMB

WORSHIP

HOLY WEEK & EASTER

ST. JOHN UCC

Palm Sunday: April 13

10:00 am: Worship Service

Jesus' procession into Jerusalem with praise and palm branches

Maundy Thursday: April 17

6:00 pm: Meal and Worship Service

St. John's meal (seder-inspired) and worship in the upper room

Good Friday: April 18

7:30 pm: Tenebrae Service

Tenebrae (Service of Shadows) recounts the crucifixion through scripture, music, and increasing darkness.

Easter Day: April 20

8:00 am: Sunrise Service

9:00 am: Coffee & Donuts

10:00 am: Easter Worship



St. John United Church of Christ

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