



# The Visitor

St. John United Church of Christ, Reading, OH

December 2024

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## From the Pastor



Traditionally, for the December newsletter, I'd write something about the four themes of Advent – Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. But we'll be talking about them each Sunday in December, so I'm choosing to use this space to instead to provide some information about the commitment of the church to offer the opportunity to read Through the Bible in a Year in 2025. Decades ago, St. John UCC made the decision to go with the NRSV version of the Bible – this is what is in our pews, this is what is used for preaching and for Bible Stud-

ies. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, or the NRSV, first appeared in 1989 and has received wide acclaim and broadest broad support from academics and church leaders. The NRSV translation was prepared by the National Council of Churches, a religious organization currently consisting of 35 Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, African-American and historic Christian denominations in the United States, and is widely regarded as a leading force within the ecumenical movement of Christianity. A major revision, the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue), was released in 2021. (this version is not in our pews).

Now that you are totally captivated, let me throw a monkey

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## From the Pastor

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wrench into the works – starting January 1, 2025, with ‘The Daily Bible’, we will no longer be using the NRSV version, but will switch to the NIV. The New International Version (NIV) is a translation of the Bible into contemporary English. Published by Biblica, the complete NIV was released on October 27, 1978 with a minor revision in 1984 and a major revision in 2011. The NIV relies on recently-published critical editions of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. “The Daily Bible” that we’ve used in the past and will use again next year, is provided in the NIV.



Again, now that you are totally enthralled with this vital information, let me clarify why this may (or may not) be important to you. Broadly speaking, the NRSV is a more liberal, inclusive version, and the NIV tends to be more conservative. To show you an example, compare these texts from Genesis 1:

**NRSV:** So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

**NIV:** So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

“Humans” vs “Mankind” – is it a big deal? Maybe, maybe not. But it is worth noting, I think, that we are making this switch. Because if there is a word or phrase used that makes you feel uncomfortable, or it feels a bit ‘male dominant’, please be aware that this is because we are using a different translation of the Bible. As a society, I think we are a good path of more inclusiveness and acceptance, and I wouldn’t want the choice of a Biblical translation to set us back. So, when these words or phrases come up, let’s talk about them, acknowledge them, and together seek to find the Light of Truth that they contain. Perhaps we’ll even have some after worship discussion over lunch sometime!

No matter the version, I hope that God’s Word will continue to speak to your heart, be the basis for our worship, and serve as our Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth (B.I.B.L.E.)– and I look forward to reading Through the Bible in a Year with you in 2025!

**-Rev. Torie**



# I HEAR *The Prophet Callin'*



**CANTATA SUNDAY**  
**Dec. 8, 2024 - 10:00 AM**

***I Hear the Prophet Callin'* • by Pepper Choplin**

Featuring the St. John UCC Chancel Choir and a 9-piece orchestra,  
under the baton of Debbie Cummins, Music Director.

**Ministry Board of Deacons**

Feed My Sheep needs **warm hats and gloves** for our neighbors, as the weather has gotten frosty!

Don't forget to take a 'tree' off the board in the narthex next to the stained glass window – these are names of children from the families that come to Feed My Sheep. There are still several **kids who need some Christmas** from us! You can also give money and the Ministry Board of Deacons will go shopping for you.

**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. 15**. Thank you!

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**Welcome, Guest Musicians: Our Cantata Sunday Instrumentalists**

**Diane Magill – flute.** Diane has been a church musician ever since she finished her studies at CCM nearly thirty years ago. She loves being able to use her flute to praise God. She is a staff musician at Good Shepherd Church in Montgomery. She enjoys teaching piano and flute to students of all ages so that they can enjoy music for the rest of their lives.

**Lori Schafer – clarinet and percussion.** Lori is a CCM graduate and former director at the School for Creative and Performing Arts and international schools in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. She currently teaches clarinet at Walnut Hills and Summit Country Day Schools, and teaches from her home studio as well.

**Julie Grasso – oboe and English Horn.** Julie is a retired public school music teach-

er and has a reed business called “Double or Nothing Reeds”. While living in Georgia, Julie performed with the Atlanta Symphony and the Atlanta Pops Orchestra with artists such as Johnny Mathis, Joni Mitchell, Michael Bolton, and Harry Connick, Jr.

**Audrey Schmid – trumpet and percussion.** Audrey holds a Master's Degree in trumpet from UC's College-Conservatory of Music. She teaches private lessons and plays with many orchestras in the area, including the Richmond Symphony and Queen City Opera.

**Elaine Wisniewski – violin.** We welcome Elaine to St. John UCC. Elaine moved to Cincinnati in 2016 to teach Suzuki lessons at the Wyoming Fine Arts Center and recently joined the Cincinnati Music Village

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## Ministry Board of Christian Nurture

Our annual **Cookie Exchange** will take place Dec. 8 after worship. Please bring 3 dozen cookies to participate in the cookie exchange – we'll provide the take-home containers. It would be great if you would sign up so we don't get all chocolate chip cookies!

Sign up for the annual **Christmas Extravaganza** on December 15! Join us for Christmas

dinner with our Family of Faith. Please bring a wrapped ornament for gift exchange.

### **Christmas Caroling dates/times** to our Saints at Home:

*Tues., Dec. 17, 10 am -*

Saints west & north of church

*Weds., Dec. 18, 3 pm -*

Saints east & north of church

*Sunday, Dec. 22, 11:15 am -*

Saints in Deer Park & Reading

## Our Cantata Sunday Instrumentalists (continued)

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faculty. She holds Masters degrees in Suzuki Pedagogy and also a Masters in Viola Performance and a Music Education degree. She currently plays viola with the Seven Hills Symphony and the Butler Philharmonic.

### **Karen Knueven – French Horn.**

Karen is a newly retired music teacher and now enjoys substitute teaching. She also enjoys playing French Horn and keeps busy playing in a couple of ensembles that meet weekly.

**Mika Komuro – pianist.** It is always a joy to have Mika with us

on Cantata Sunday. She is an accomplished pianist and graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, UK. She has performed throughout Europe, Japan and the United States. Currently Mika is a collaborative pianist at Northern Kentucky University. She lives in Ludlow, KY and is married to trombonist, David Roode.

### **Rev. Torie Front – French Horn and Carol Nieman – autoharp.**

We are thrilled that “two of our own” are part of the instrumental ensemble. We are truly blessed with talent at St. John.



*Looking for that special gift for Christmas? St. John UCC has car magnets and St. John UCC baseball hats available - \$10 each! They are located in the church office – just stop by or call Jane to reserve one.*

### Ministry Board of Elders

#### **A note from Charlotte:**

Dear St. John family,  
I hope you are well and enjoying the holiday music. This time of year, I love seeing the wonder in the eyes of children. We are blessed with having such wonderful worship services and programs. May you feel the love of Jesus as we celebrate His birth coming on Christmas.

In Christian love,  
Charlotte Bell

*Please continue to keep Charlotte in your prayers while she is staying at home.*

**Christmas poinsettia orders** are due by Sunday, Dec. 8—please cut out and hand in the order form below if you need a copy!

**Advent Devotions** and Advent and Christmas schedules are still available on the Deacon’s Table in the Narthex. Pick one up to share with a friend—this is a great time of year to invite new people to church!

There are vacancies on each of our **Ministry Boards** – if God is nudging you to

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# CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



*Poinsettias are in 6.5" pots.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Red: \_\_\_\_\_ plants at \$13 each

Marbled: \_\_\_\_\_ plants at \$13 each

White: \_\_\_\_\_ plants at \$13 each

#### **Dedication**

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

**Order Deadline:  
Sunday, Dec. 8**



## Ministry Board of Elders (continued)

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take part in the leadership of your church, please talk with Rick Caudill, President of Council, or Rev. Torie – we’d love to have some fresh faces on the Ministry Boards!

If you’d like to donate the St. John UCC **Staff and Clergy Christmas gifts**, please put your monetary donation in the

offering plate (with a notation!) or hand it to Rick Caudill.

We are looking for someone(s) to join our **AV Team** to assist with recording the Sunday worship service. It is a paid position. Contact Steve C. or Gary K.

We will **undecorate the sanctuary** on January 5th after worship. Please plan to stay and help—there may be treats!

## Lectionary

Scripture	Bible Study	Sermon Date
<i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6	n/a	Dec. 8
<i>Third Sunday of Advent</i> Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18	Dec. 10	Dec. 15
<i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45	Dec. 17	Dec. 22
<i>Christmas Eve</i> Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20	Dec. 3	Dec. 24
<i>First Sunday after Christmas</i> 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52	n/a	Dec. 29

**Ministry Board of Elders (continued)**

# 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. 19 \* 5:45 PM

**Ministry Board of Property and Finance***A note re 2025 offerings:*

The 2025 Offering Envelopes will be available soon for pickup at the church. These cost \$6.00 each, and there is a special envelope for you to put in \$6 if you’d like to cover the cost of the envelopes. They are invaluable in collecting, recording, and tracking each individual’s offering (Your 2024 Statement of Giving will be available in January 2025 for tax purposes) and we hope that each member will utilize the Offering Envelopes (even if you don’t cover the \$6.00 cost!) Thank you!

*Report from Ministry Board of Property & Finance:*

Tis the season of Advent and we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas Day. There is so much happening at church this month and we hope that you are able to help and also to join in on all the activities and missions.

Blanck Studio has completed all the restoration work on the Christ Ascending stained glass window and we are so very thankful for all their work on this project. In fact, it looks so good that we are leaving the lights on over the choir area in the sanctuary so that

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## Ministry Board of Property and Finance

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the window is visible evening and nights to the surrounding neighborhood over the weekends. It is truly impressive when seen from the outside. Blanck Studio has also indicated that the windows on the sides of the sanctuary are in good shape and are not in any urgent need of restoration. Again, thanks to everyone who helped support this project in so many ways.

Tuck pointing continues every week and progress is being made. Work should be completed by the end of November with several days of cleanup afterwards.

There will be no official WorkShop Day this month. However, there will be a list of small projects posted at the church for anyone to view and choose something on which to work. Just let us know what you would like to do and we can provide the necessary information, materials and advice to get you started.

We continue to work on the development of a new sign with a digital message board to replace our aging sign on Jefferson Avenue. We are working with a local sign

company with the final details, drawings and costs. This will require a permit and a presentation to the Reading Zoning Board of Appeals and to the local neighbors in hopes of receiving approval. Along with this project we are receiving proposals for a new front entry to replace our battered and leaky doors. We are so very thankful that these projects can be funded through the undesignated funds that we have received from the estates of our members who have passed away.

The Ministry Spending Plan, otherwise known as the budget, has been generated for the coming year. With the help of all the boards, our Treasurer, Kathy Culver, and knowing that we have reached our Stewardship offering goal through your pledges, we have again developed a plan that meets all our needs with minimal supplements from Memorial Endowment. We hope for Council's approval in December and congregational approval at our annual meeting in January.

A very Merry Christmas and God Bless each and every one of us.

**Peace and blessings from P&F.**



### Celebrations in December

#### *Birthdays:*

December 12 –  
Marlin Fuchs

#### *Anniversaries:*

December 26 –  
Delores & Joe Osborne

December 31 -  
Melissa & Rob Harman

***Are we missing your birthday or anniversary? Please call the office and let Jane know so that we can send you a card!***

## St. John UCC Regularly Scheduled Events

Weekly			
Event	Day	Time	Location
Handbell Choir	Sunday	9 am	Sanctuary
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	Outside

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
Missionary Sewing	1st Wednesday	10 am	Fellowship Hall
Property & Finance	2nd Tuesday	5 pm	Fellowship Hall
Christian Nurture	1st Tuesday	4:30 pm	Fellowship Hall
Elders	2nd Thursday	2:30 pm	Bible Study Room
Euchre	Last Thursday	6 pm	Reads' home
Church Council	3rd Thursday	6 pm	Fellowship Hall
Work-ship Day	Last Saturday	8 am	Church

# Christmas Word Search

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

**ADVENT**  
**ANGELS**  
**BAUBLES**  
**BELLS**  
**BIRTH OF JESUS**  
**BOXING DAY**  
**CAROL SINGING**  
**CHIMNEY**  
**CHRISTMAS CAKE**  
**CHRISTMAS**  
**PUDDING**

**CHRISTMAS TREE**  
**CRACKERS**  
**ELVES**  
**FAMILY**  
**FOOD**  
**HOLIDAYS**  
**HOLLY**  
**IVY**  
**MINCE PIES**

**MISTLETOE**  
**MULLED WINE**  
**PARTY**  
**PRESENTS**  
**QUEEN'S SPEECH**  
**REINDEER**  
**ROBIN**  
**RUDOLPH**  
**SANTA CLAUS**

**SCROOGE**  
**SHEPHERDS**  
**SNOWMAN**  
**STAR**  
**TINSEL**  
**TURKEY**  
**WISEMEN**  
**WRAPPING**  
**PAPER**  
**YULELOG**



## St. John United Church of Christ

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# CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, READING, OH

3:00 PM:  
CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

9:45 PM:  
LESSONS AND CAROLS

BOTH SERVICES WILL INCLUDE CHRISTMAS CANDLES  
AND THE SINGING OF "SILENT NIGHT" IN GERMAN!