

THE MESSENGER



St. John
God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Wood River, Illinois



&



2013



Vacation Bible School

July 29-August 1

6-8pm

What's Inside

Prayer list

Kids Klips

Calendars

Birthdays

VBS info



Israel is to make no image of Yahweh, but Israel is to be such an image of God in the world . . . We should note, however, that human beings represent God's cause in the world not primarily in spiritual ways but in very concrete and practical ones.

– Walter Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*



Back then, they just called the young boy “a bit slow;” today we might say he had Asperger’s or was somewhere along the Autism Spectrum.

The parents were not members of the church. The members, in fact, regarded the family as a sort of mission project. They hired the man for jobs like painting, clearing brush, mowing the cemetery and such. A few would hire the mother for some major house cleaning once a year or when they were having a big party.

One year, the boy enjoyed vacation bible school at the church. And they even came to church the Sunday after VBS to sing with the rest of the children. They saw him struggling, flinching at the other children brushing up against him, his head twitching sometimes during the songs but he stood there at least lip synching and seemed to be relieved as much as the other children when it was over.

And the next week, the family came back to worship. And it was a Communion Sunday.

At the “Invitation” the pastor genially but sternly reminded worshippers that only members or people who were members of other churches which shared the Apostle’s Creed as their statement of faith should commune. As the bread plate was passed in front of the family, the parents dutifully refrained from taking any bread and started to pass the plate across their son to the people down the pew.

When the boy reached up to take some bread, the usher pulled the tray back and said, “You must be confirmed before taking Communion.”

The boy cried out, pounding his ears and banging his head on the pew in front of him. His mother reached her arms around him, held him close and rocked with him as he tried to fling his body against the pews. Before the cup trays started to come around, she picked him up and carried him out, the father carried her purse and nodded apologies to people on their way out.

The pastor visited the family later that day, explaining the importance of the sacrament, the sacredness of the elements and the need for everyone communing to have the same faith and understanding

for the holiness of the moment. The parents kept apologizing for disrupting the service. And they never came back to worship again. At any church.

About fifty years later, I got to hear that story in a hospital room from the other usher, the one on the other end of the pew waiting for the bread plate that got pulled back. This usher was just in his twenties back then and fifty years later was facing heart surgery the next day. He needed to confess his part, his standing and doing nothing, in that event so many years ago.

He had served in Korea, built a business and had a family. And the thing that bothered him the most, that he had to confess to someone before he went in for bypass surgery, was the shock and guilt he still felt over seeing the bread plate pulled back from a confused boy reaching expectantly for the bread of life. As church members rationalized what had happened, even blaming the parents for coming to church that day, he slowly drifted away from the church. Christmas, Easter, weddings and funerals, he could say, “And also with you,” but every time the plate passed in front of him, he saw the look of confusion and sadness on the boy’s face just before he cried out.

“We’re supposed to bring people TO Jesus, not drive them away,” he said. “Can God ever forgive me for losing the soul of one of his children?”

As we approach vacation bible school, we do well to remember that we are the only image of God some children will ever encounter. Churches and individual members are to be as Christ to the children we meet. May we pray that every child and every parent who meets us during our Vacation Bible School meets an image of the loving, reconciling, inviting, inclusive and still speaking God we know and love ourselves.

I wish I could tell you how the story ended for that family. When the father died the mother and son moved away to live with family in another state. The man, and the church, lost track of them.

Mindful of that past, let us make a different future for the children we love.

Rejoicing in God’s welcoming us, let us offer that same extravagant, grace-filled welcome to others. And at VBS, we even get to have fun in the process!

So come to the midway, play some of the games and be ready for anything at the **Everywhere Fun Fair!**

Book of Timothy



Church Leadership Retreat: July 13

9am-2:30pm

Anyone on a team at St. John UCC is invited to attend and participate in our annual Ad Team/Church Leaders' Retreat here in Fellowship Hall. We'll do some Bible study, look at how we communicate in the church, learn some collaborative skills and have a lot of fun in the process. Lunch will either be "brown bag" or we'll order from Charlie's Silverfrost.

Semi-annual Congregational Meeting

July 21, after worship

Mid-year financial report

Building & Grounds, Worship Ministry, Mission and getting ready for VBS updates

Conversations, Questions, Comments



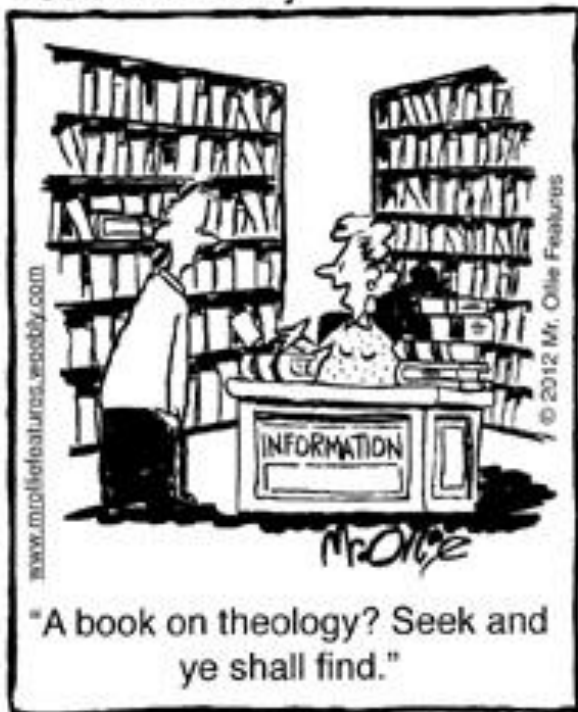
I asked God for strength that I might achieve.
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things.
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy.
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

– The Prayer of an Unknown Confederate Soldier

To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

– Nelson Mandela

Book of Timothy





Who's got a birthday?

July

- 3 - Tyler O'dell
- 7 - Marlene O'dell, Marion Skundrich
- 10 - Renee Rhodes
- 11 - Shelby Fleigle, Reygan Rider
- 12 - Linda Gebelein, Blake

- Sabolo, Oscar Crockett
- 13 - Lynn Bassett, Ashley Niehaus, Ashley Tomkinson
- 16 - Dana Gowin
- 17 - Jim Jones, Jas Sullivan, Kim Wiegand
- 20 - Ford Frazar
- 21 - Kaleigh Rider, Jordan Sheraka
- 22 - Caleb Lenhardt
- 23 - Eric Noble
- 24 - Grace Kichline, Fred Gowin, Ryan Helmkamp
- 27 - Adalyn Nicole Baron, Margot Hardester

August

- 1 - Beth Helmkamp
- 2 - Kori Baron, Freda Frizzell
- 3 - Destini Lednicky
- 4 - Judy Crowder, Athana Tomlanovich
- 7 - Dustin Wiegand, Nathan Pavish, Tracy Butler
- 9 - Jared Faulkner
- 10 - Dale Noble, Stacey Noble
- 11 - Abigail Wiegand, Lucy Lednicky, Auden Hill
- 12 - Elizabeth Shewmake, Allie Hosto
- 14 - Kyle Bassett, Ruth Baxter
- 15 - John Gebelein, Luke Lednicky
- 16 - Alyssa Niehaus, Royce Tucker, Brian Rhodes
- 18 - Leigh-Ellen Kichline
- 19 - Benjamin Farrell
- 20 - Tena Cotton, Jeremy Crockett
- 21 - Lyndon Thies
- 22 - Vicki Roberts
- 24 - LeAnn Hartwick
- 25 - Margaret Hinkle
- 27 - Samantha Kichline
- 28 - Christine Weller



Everywhere Fun Fair
Where God's World Comes Together
July 29-August 1

Please keep in prayer:



Hospitalized or Health Concerns since the last Messenger:

- Ruth Baxter
- Freda Frizzell
- Darleen Gowin
- Gregg Smith
- Elias Hill
- Jackson Rider

Staying Close to Home/Health Concerns

Eleanor Kohlmiller, Pat Westerhold, Margaret Rowden, Betty Wiegand, Lucille Aubin, Ed Hamlin, Roger Ringering, Bob Hall, Margaret Hinkle, Paul Harris, Joyce Gholson

In Nursing Homes

John Niehaus, Jerseyville Manor

Serving in the Military

Tyler O'dell, Blake Sabolo, Brandon Sabolo and Brandon Southcombe

Overseas Teacher

Leigh-Ellen Kichline in China

Born to Heaven



Please keep the family of **Catherine Austin** in your prayers. Cathi died June 14. Funeral services were here at St. John UCC on June 19.

To speak about prayer is indeed presumptuous. There are no devices, no techniques; there is no specialized art of prayer. All of life must be a training to pray. We pray the way we live.

– Abraham Joshua Heschel

Praying Together

Take my life,
and let it be consecrated,
Lord, to thee.

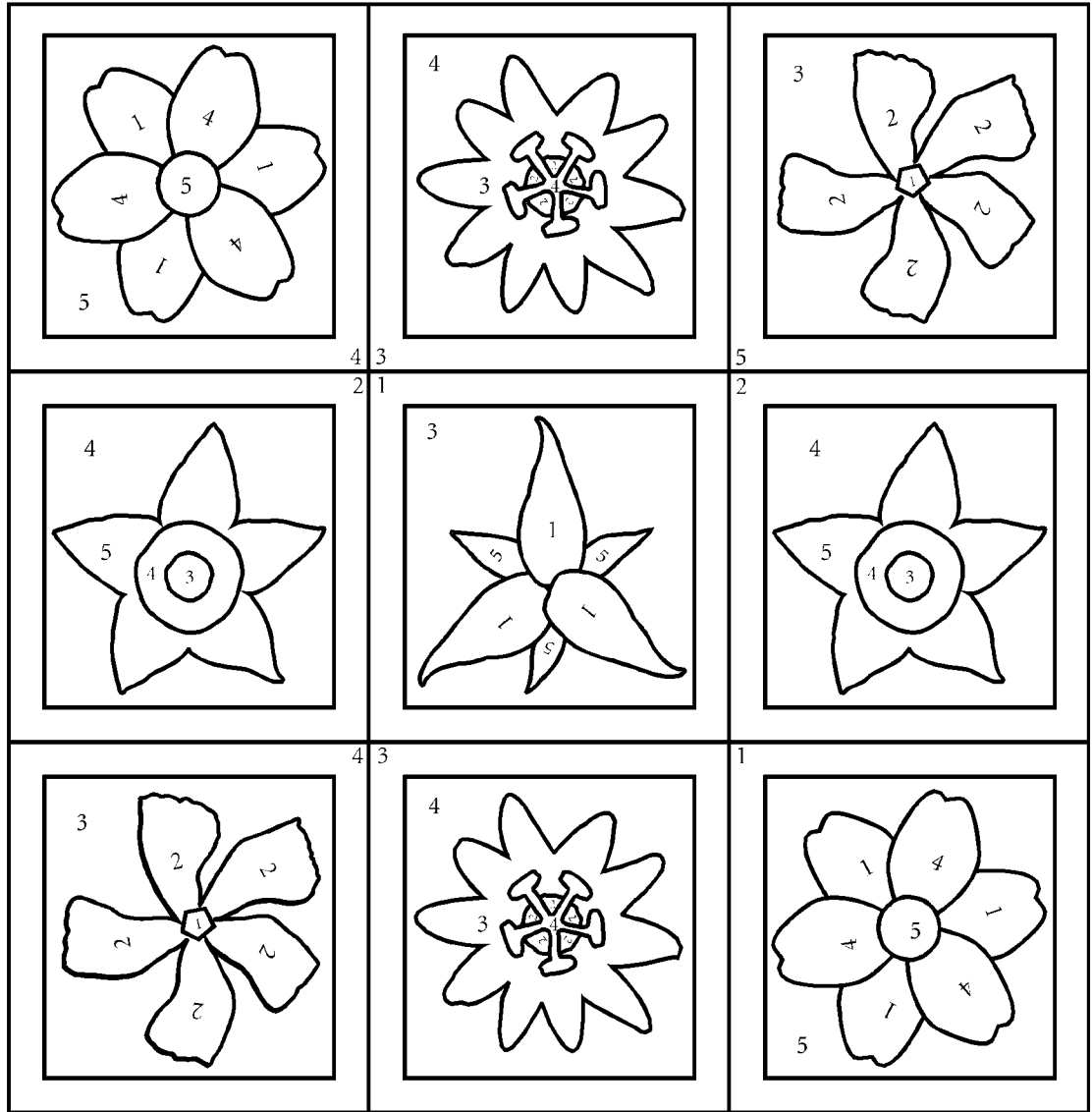
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

– Frances R. Havergal, 1874

A Warm Quilt

A warm quilt would be a nice thing to give someone who is in need. Color the areas in the quilt with the color numbers listed below.

- 1 – orange
- 2 – blue
- 3 – purple
- 4 – yellow
- 5 – green



Something's Missing

Find out what's missing in this reading from Acts 2:44-45.

Use the Key below and fill in the missing letters. The first one is done for you.

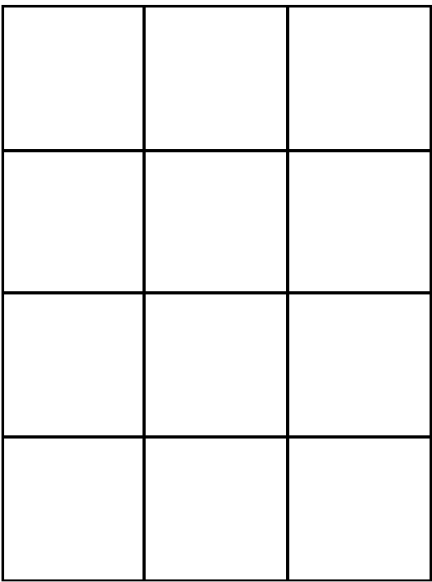
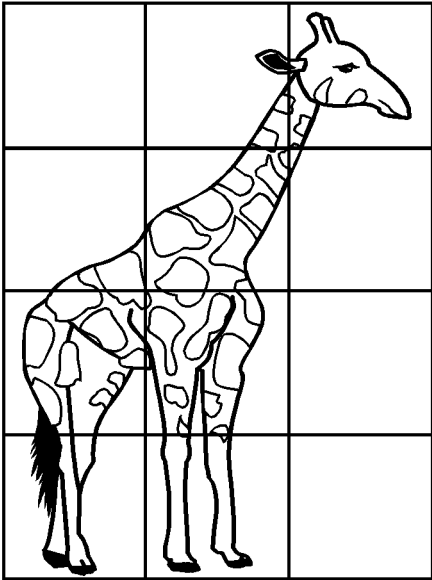
KEY	
p	g
u	d

All who believe d were to l ether and hal all thinls
in common; they woll l sell their lossessions anl
lools anl listriblte the lroceeds to all, as any
hal neel. – Acts 2:44-45

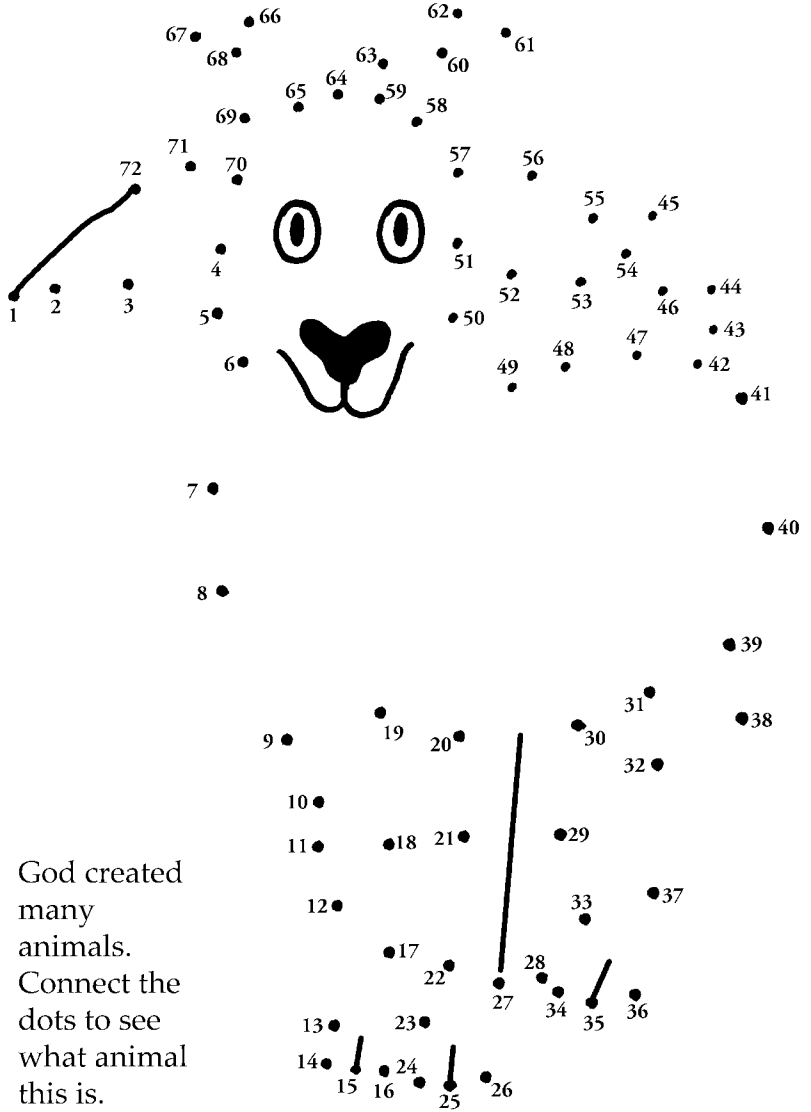
Answer: All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Drawing

Using the grid as a guide, redraw the picture below.



Dot-to-Dot



Animals

Using the code at right, fill in the missing letters to find the names of animals.



H R S

S N K

L N

C T

C W

G R F F

C Y T

G R L L

K N G R

B R

M S

G T

Answers: Horse, Cow, Kangaroo, Snake, Giraffe, Bear, Lion, Coyote, Moose, Cat, Gorilla, Goat



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 12p WR Rotary 5:30p Sheltered Reality 7p Boy Scouts	2 9:30a Stewardship	3 8p NA	4 	5	6 5:30p AA
7 9:30a Worship Communion 10:30a Coffee Fellowship	8 12p WR Rotary 7p Quilters 7p Boy Scouts	9 6:30p Pinochle	10 4:30p Outreach Mtg 8p - NA	11	12	13 9a Ad Team Retreat 5:30p AA
14 9:30a Worship 10:30a Coffee 10:30a Finance Mtg	15 12p WR Rotary 5:30p Sheltered Reality 7p Boy Scouts	16	17 8p - NA	18 4:30p WMT	19	20 5:30p AA
21 9:30a Worship Baptism Annis 10:30a Coffee 11a Semi-annual Meeting	22 12p WR Rotary Messenger Deadline 7p Boy Scouts	23 6:30p Pinochle	24 8p NA	25 6p Ad Team	26	27 5:30p AA
28 9:30a Worship 10:30a Coffee	29 12p WR Rotary 6-8:30p VBS 7p Boy Scouts	30 9a Quilters 6-8:30p VBS	31 6-8:30p VBS 9p NA			

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 8:30a Fellowship Breakfast 6-8p VBS	2	3 5:30p AA
4 9:30a Worship Communion 10:30a Coffee	5 12p WR Rotary 5:30p Sheltered Reality 7p Boy Scouts	6 9:30a Stewardship Mtg	7 8p NA	8 7p Pastoral Relations	9 3-10p Creative Memories	10 10a-4p Creative Memories 5:30p AA
11 9:30a Worship 10:30a Coffee	12 12p WR Rotary 7p Heartland Quilters 7p Boy Scouts	13 6:30p Pinochle	14 4:30p Outreach Mtg 8p NA	15 4:30p WMT	16 4p Wiegand Rehearsal Dinner	17 4p Wiegand Wedding 5:30p AA
18 9:30a Worship Baptism Annis 10:30a Coffee	19 12p WR Rotary 5:30p Sheltered Reality 7p Boy Scouts	20	21 8p NA	22 6p Ad Team	23	24 5:30p AA
25 9:30a Worship 10:30a Coffee	26 12p WR Rotary 7p Boy Scouts	27 9a Heartland Quilters 6:30p Pinochle	28 8p NA	29	30	31 5:30p AA

Justice and Witness Corner
by Sadonna McMillan

Sometimes God makes me feel uncomfortable. Like now. Like when a 71 year old gray haired grandmother goes to the library desk to ask for help in finding books about homosexuality.

Missy Kichline and I attended a conference workshop on Open and Affirming churches. It seems to us an idea for St. John UCC to explore.

All I know on the subject right now is that they too are children of God and that He loves them as much as he loves me.

Soooo, what do you think? Could we have a bible study group devoted to this topic? Could we form a discussion group? Come! Let us be uncomfortable together. Sometimes it's what God wants.

And from the Pastor:

Over the last few months I have received at least 6 calls and two office visits from people asking me in one way or another if our church is "safe" for them. What a question! But the tears in their eyes told a story of experiences in churches that said they were "welcoming" but who weren't really ready—not completely ready—to welcome members of the LGBT community who were "out."

I had to tell them, "No. Our church has not done the ground work, the bible study, the self-examination about how we all read and sometimes mis-use the bible to be a safe place for people who had been so terribly hurt by other churches in the past.

Becoming Open and Affirming on one level is understanding the Bible in its entirety. Why do we so blithely ignore some passages but cling to the inerrancy of others in an almost idolatrous way?

And so, being able to say with a clear conscience that we are Open and Affirming is also about self-knowledge. And that is the scary part.

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, with the recent Supreme Court rulings, these conversations are going on all around us: in homes, businesses, families, car pools, bowling leagues and, somewhat sadly, in the reductionist shouting matches we accept as news media today.

It is simply time we brought these conversations into the church. We will either shape the conversations or the conversations happening out there will shape us. And the way the conversations are happening in the media and in other groups is often destructive of community and damaging to people who are most vulnerable.

We, however, are called to allow the Holy Spirit to shape us through faithful conversations and prayerful discernment; not the simplistic paranoia of talk radio callers.

Some of those calls I have received have asked me if I would be willing to perform Christian Civil Union ceremonies. I have, of course, answered, "Yes. It would be my privilege."

Sadonna and Missy and the culture around us are asking us as a congregation, are we ready to learn a bit more about ourselves as believers, how we read the Bible, how we misread the Bible and what authority we give God's holy Word in our lives? Do we pick and choose the parts we like and pick and choose the parts we can use to judge others? Or do we approach all of scripture in a way that draws us ever more deeply into a relationship with Jesus Christ?

It grieves me to know that there are people who want a local church who drive by our congregation and others to churches in St. Louis or Belleville who have done this hard work and which are safe places for everyone to worship and fellowship.

We may go through this study and find that we are not ready to fully and lovingly welcome gays, lesbians and others into the full life of this congregation. And that is okay. It is better, in fact, than saying we are "welcoming" and end up further hurting someone and alienating them from the church again. We are, after all, speaking here of family members, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters and mothers and fathers. Let us simply be honest about who we are as we struggle to remember whose we are.

I have had these conversations before. I trust all of you in this congregation to have these conversations faithfully and respectfully, knowing we are talking about issues that affect people we all love. And I look forward to the depth and breadth of faith and loving relationship with Christ these conversations may open for all of us.

Watch the Sunday Messenger, more to come.

In Christ's love and service,

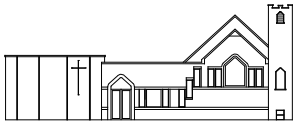
Pastor Mike



Mission Statement for St. John UCC

St. John United Church of Christ, Wood River, Illinois
is a Christian Community:

- ♣ Worshiping the Triune God
- ♣ Claiming the historic faith of the church
- ♣ Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ
- ♣ Nurturing for Christian discipleship
- ♣ Ministering to one another through fellowship and caring
- ♣ Serving our community and the world
- ♣ Connecting with other Christian for witness and service



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Access our home page at www.stjohnucc.net. Worship is at 9:30 a.m. Sunday school is during worship. Our Pastor is Rev. Mike Southcombe, cell phone (618) 558-5014
The Messenger editorial staff includes, Evalena O'dell and Marlene O'dell.

All guests are welcome.

“always caring, always sharing”

St. John United Church of Christ

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Return Service Requested