

Welcome Home!

to the Church you remember....Welcome home to....

St. John's

The 2026 February Chimes

United Church of Christ



Prayer List

General Prayers: Bill Carr, Charlie Bruah, Rev. Dr. Winfield Strout, Molly Sheets, Rev. Gunnar Cerda, Eli Taylor and the families of Norma Martin and Larry Crane

Homebound and Nursing Facility Residents: Jeanette Morris, Bonita Farmer, Patricia Gilbert, Paula Hatfield, Rosalie Johnson, Faith Kelly, Delores and Harold McDonald, Esther Gillham, Helen McGaughy, Mary Lou Hostetler, Lois Meyers, & Molly Sheets

Please contact Rev. Swisher if you know of any sick or hospitalized members. Remember, if you want someone on the Bea's Blessings prayer chain, you can email the office at stjohnsunited@windstream.net

Thank you for your continued support! In addition to your giving in person, by drop off, by mail, or by clicking on the donate button on the website, you can also scan this QR Code.

We continue to find new ways to connect with our members and our community that are convenient, secure, helpful, and relevant to the ways in which some people prefer to donate. We thank God for our ability to offer these methods for those who may choose to use them.



Thank you!

Dear Church Family,
I have felt your love and support during this season of life. Mike and I were married for 44 years. I consider the last 14 years (since his first bout with cancer) as a gift from God.
Thank you for the generous donations to the Memorial Fund in Mike's name.
I feel very blessed by your love and support.
Thank you, Katie, Kim & Cindy Dunn

Your donation of Christmas presents to a family served by LCBDD is greatly appreciated. I was told last week this family had no presents for their two children. I had told the family yesterday that nobody I had reached out to was able to help. This was heartbreaking news to deliver. Being able to call them back today and tell them their kids were going to have a Christmas this year was incredible. I will be forever grateful to your church for making this happen.

Sincerely, Hallie Gulley
Licking County Board of DD, Service Coordinator

Dear St. John's United Church of Christ,
We would like to (express) our gratitude for your generosity. Your donation will help us meet our goal of helping those less fortunate in our community. Without supporters like you we would not be able to do our best to help those in need. Thank you!

The Main Place Staff



Norma Jean Martin
 Born: June 30, 1937
 Died: December 25, 2025
 A member of St. John's since 1951

Larry E. Crane
 Born: November 10, 1937
 Died: January 18, 2026
 A member of St. John's since 1986



2026 Offering Envelopes
 Assigned envelopes are in the Fellowship Room. If your envelopes are not there or if you would like assigned envelopes, please contact Anita or Kim in the office. Thank you!



February Worship Hours
 8:00 a.m. Chapel Service
 10:30 a.m. Traditional Sanctuary Service
 Ash Wednesday Service – February 18 at 7:00 p.m.

Office Hours -Monday, Tuesday, & Friday: 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. For additional times, please call the office at (740) 323-2407 and leave a message to make an appointment or call/text Anita at 740-973-8218. Thank you!



As we embrace February, it's good to know we are one month closer to Spring! Like most months with famous holidays, people approach them from different perspectives. Some look forward to Valentine's Day while others dread it, and some completely ignore it all together.

Currently in America more than half of our adult population are single. The National Census Bureau reports 51% of people 18 and older are unmarried. Being single in America has become usual, common place and represents a significant part of our population.

One hundred and thirty-six million Americans are married yet more than 50% of marriages happening today are expected to end in divorce.

With these statistics in mind, let's take a look at a few more details on Valentine's Day: People are expected to spend 28 billion dollars on the holiday this year. With 56% of our population participating, the highest since 2013. Top-selling items include candy 2.5 billion, flowers 2.9 billion and jewelry 6.5 billion.

Many people share that they are celebrating this year with family, friends and pets not just significant others. In fact, our fellow citizens are expected to spend 1.5 billion on Valentine's gifts for pets.

How do we reconcile all of these statistics that seem to contradict each other? Despite it all, loneliness and dread seem to challenge people especially this time of year. Mental health professionals report that depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder increases significantly during the month of February.

Why is this? Perhaps it is because, as the legendary Mickey Gilley song says, "We are looking for love in all the wrong places...."

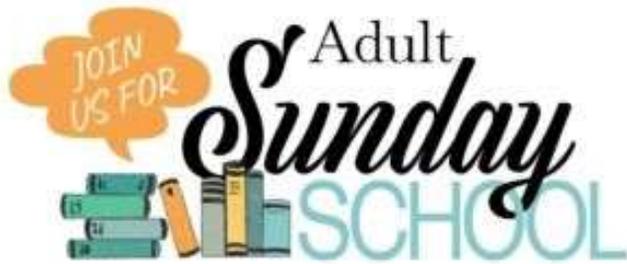
Jesus puts everything into perspective when He declared in John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not come into the world to condemn the world but that through Him the world might be saved."

When we elevate the purpose of love, our experience of love changes. It is no longer capricious or transactional but instead purposeful. John 14:27 reminds us of Jesus' words; "My peace I give to you not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid." True love removes fear and establishes meaning, growth and significance.

Our next Bible verse from the Gospel of John Chapter 13 gives us the ultimate meaning of not just Valentine's Day but every day of the year for Christians; "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

When we approach February with these ultimate truths in mind, we move from the common and elevate to the supernatural in our celebration of love. In so doing we find true meaning and eternal peace.

See you soon in Church and around the Community,
 Pastor Steve



Sundays at 9:00AM
in the Large Meeting Room

Through February 22
Abide in Christ
led by Carl Kochendorfer

Starting March 8
Ancient Christians
led by Tim Powers

Youth Canned Soup Drive **February 8, 2025**



Canned soups and
monetary donations welcome

Benefits the Licking County Food Pantry

Collection bins will be in the
Fellowship Room

"Vote" for your favorite team with your donation.

Annual Congregational Meeting Potluck

**Congregational
Meeting**



We will be having a potluck during the Annual Meeting on February 15, which is directly after the church service. Bring your favorite side dish or dessert. Special Events Committee will provide the chicken sandwiches. Bring your items down to the kitchen in Hermann hall before the service and we will keep warm/cold as needed.

We will see you there!

Tim Powers
Special Events

Afternoon Circle -

- will meet for lunch again this month on Wednesday, February 4, at 12 o'clock noon. This month we will meet at The Olive Garden. In case of bad weather, our meeting will be cancelled.

Last month 10 ladies met at Longhorn Steak House to enjoy a good meal and fellowship together. All ladies of our Church Family are invited to attend. If you are new to the group, please let Bev Lange know by Sunday, February 1, that you will be coming.

February 18
7:00PM

ASH
Wednesday

Imposition of ashes, communion,
inspirational music and

Rev. Dr. Swisher's
life changing message
"Ashes and Dust"
Psalm 51:1-4

Lenten devotional books available

Welcome

Mission and Outreach Focus for February

The United Church of Christ celebrates Racial Justice on the 2nd Sunday of February, the 8th, this year. The United Church of Christ acknowledges and supports the equality of all human beings. Racial justice is inclusive and never excludes anyone based on skin color, culture, or ethnic origin. We affirm God's creation. All people bear God's image and likeness with equal status. Prayerfully consider this month how God is calling you to advocate for racial justice in today's world.



St. John's Little Free Pantry

Take what you need. Give what you can.
Our little food pantry needs your help.

To replenish our food pantry every day we need your help every week. There are collection boxes near each entrance to the Church. Keep in mind that many of the people using this pantry have limited cooking facilities. Ollie's, Dollar Tree, and Aldi's are good places to find foods at good prices. Cans with pull tabs when possible and no glass containers! Thanks for your support!

<https://www.littlefreepantry.org/>



Read the Bible in a Year

Q&A

March 1, 2026 at 9:00AM

Bring your questions. Bring your insights.
Bring you curiosity.
Enjoy the conversation.
*Be sure to drop your questions in the box
in the Fellowship Room*



Notes from Church Council Meeting - January 19, 2026

Attending: Jeff Conner, Greg Crowthers, Frances Hill, Gary Kinser, April Kinser, Brian Lensink, Ken Kroah, Terry Gano, Julie Davis, Frank Davis, Chuck Chirdon, Tim Powers, Rev. Stephen Swisher, Anita Chirdon and Kim Workman

Opening devotions were led by T. Gano with reflections from "A Purpose Driven Life." He reminded us that each animal has a purpose and role based on how they are shaped by God. Humans are the same. Each of us has a role to play. You are made for service to God, a masterpiece of his creation.

Rev. Swisher will be gone on February 1, and Rev. Walker will be asked to cover. He also went over the Lenten /Easter schedule. Ash Wednesday service is February 18 at 7pm. We will also have a Maundy Thursday service and a Good Friday service at 7pm. There will be an early Easter sunrise service, an Easter breakfast and a 10:30am service on Easter Sunday.

A new severe weather policy and procedure was approved for use during inclement weather.

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be Sunday, February 15, 2026, after the 10:30am worship. A POT LUCK luncheon will be served with the church providing drinks, sandwiches, and table service. Members are asked to bring side dishes and desserts to share.

Respectfully submitted,

April Kinser, Secretary Jeff Conner, President

Our next meeting will be on February 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. All members of St. John's are always welcome to attend.

Camperships available for St. John's UCC Members

Although the Heartland Conference of the UCC has sold both camps previously used for outdoor ministries, camping and outdoor ministries continue through cooperation and sharing of resources with the Christian Church. Camp Christian, located in Marysville, Ohio, will be the site for UCC sponsored camps this year. A Grands and Family Camp from June 10-13, a Music, Mindfulness, Art, Dance, and Drama Camp from June 21 -27 (or a short camp from June 21-24) and Sports Camp for various ages from June 28- July 4. Also a UCC sponsored Family Camp in Dunkirk, New York, from July 5 - 11 of 2026. A scholarship fund has been donated for the purpose of assisting St John's members with the cost of camp. This is open to any member of St John's and is not based on financial need, with children and adults being eligible. These funds are not part of the church budget. No tithes or offerings are being used for this program. The funds are limited. YOU MUST REGISTER FIRST WITH THE CHURCH OFFICE BEFOR REGISTERING FOR CAMP TO BE APPROVED. The amount of funding provided would be 50-100 % based on the number of people participating. If a member takes a non-member to camp, the non-member will be covered at 100%. These funds may also be used for the Lantern Fellowship Women's retreats in the spring and fall. More information about the camp experiences may be found online through UCC Heartland Conference Outdoor Ministry or by contacting Jill Frey, Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries 740-901-0740 or jill@heartlanducc.org.



2026 Meetings

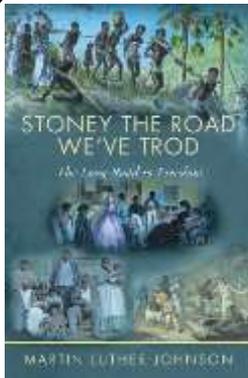
11:30AM—1:00PM

February 8, 22, March 8, 22 and April 12, 26

Reflect, Remember and Renew



The Season of Lent is a time to reflect, remember and renew. We reflect on what God is doing in our lives, we remember Jesus's sacrifice and we renew our commitment to Him. One of the tangible ways we can do all of those at once is to give to the Lenten and Easter offerings. These second-mile tithes and offerings help us go to the next level in putting feet to our faith and reality to our religion. Let's join together in making this year's Holy Season our most impactful yet for the Lord and His Kingdom. Thank you so much for being light to this community and beyond.



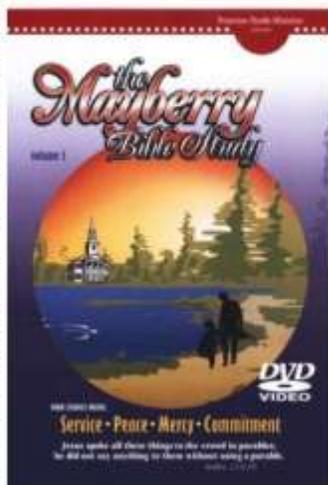
The book study group will meet each Thursday at 11am (February 5, 12, 19, 26) at the River Road Coffee House on the north side of the square in downtown Newark. We have selected a new book to start this month which can be found online. The book we have selected is *STONEY THE ROAD WE'VE TROD: The Long Road to Freedom* by Martin Luther Johnson. This book, published in 2004, provides insights into the life and struggles of abolitionist David Walker, focusing on American racism and the inconsistencies between slavery, Christianity, and the teachings of Jesus. Rev. Johnson was an Army Chaplain and a Bishop with the Church of God in Christ. Please join us as we learn about the past as we journey together to become better followers of Jesus Christ.



Bible Discovery Zone



9:00 AM Youth and Children's Classes



led by Elaine Gard

In the Small Meeting Room

Truth
for
kids

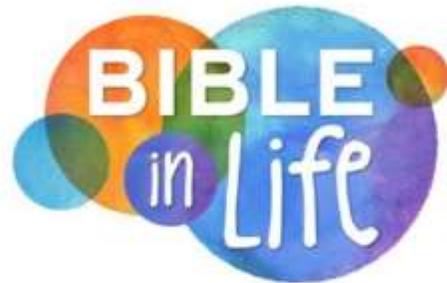
Devotions and crafts

ages 5 to 12

In the Thou Art Room

Lower Level

10:30 AM Children's Church



ages 5 to 12

Bible Lessons and Crafts

In the Thou Art Room

Lower Level

Journey Together: Our Year of Bible Discovery

Reading the Bible in a Year as a Congregation

Fruitful Vines: 7 Reasons to Read the Bible in a Year (Excerpt 6) by Melissa Kruger

**Reading the Bible through in a year helps you:
Enjoy the Surprising Ways God Meets You**

This past year, I found myself weary as I got to the end of Leviticus. Weeks of all the various ways to be unclean left me burdened. *Unclean, unclean, unclean... I get it. Everything makes you unclean.* It felt heavy and didn't seem relevant to anything in my life at the time. At the same time, I was preparing to teach on [John 15](#). I'd been studying the passage for months and was going through a final read through the week before the conference.

As I read it again, [John 15:3](#) caught my attention in a new way: "*Already you are clean* because of the word that I have spoken to you." What precious truth these words must have been to Israelites wearied and worn down by purity regulations. I would have missed the glorious freedom of Jesus' words if I had neglected my study of Leviticus. I needed to read each and every regulation and feel the heaviness of their weight so that I could taste a bit of the joy: You are clean! God put me in just the right passage at just the right time so that I could experience the freedom of the gospel in a new way.

God's providence has met me each and every time I've read through the Bible in a year. Some days, the Psalm for that day helped me to pray for a friend in need. Other days, the passage convicted me of sin and led me to repentance. I can still remember the specific chapter that ministered to me years ago when my Dad was taken into emergency surgery. The Lord tenderly comforted me through His word. Like an old friend who knows just what you need when you need it, the Lord will meet you in surprising ways as you place yourself in His word.

Bible Reading Plans are available in the Fellowship room or on our website at www.stjohnsnewark.org.

March 1, 2026 at 9:00AM

Second Quarterly Read the Bible Q and A

We'll cover 2 Kings through Esther. Come share what you've learned, what is maybe not too clear and what surprised you. Be sure to submit your questions.

ASK THE
Pastor

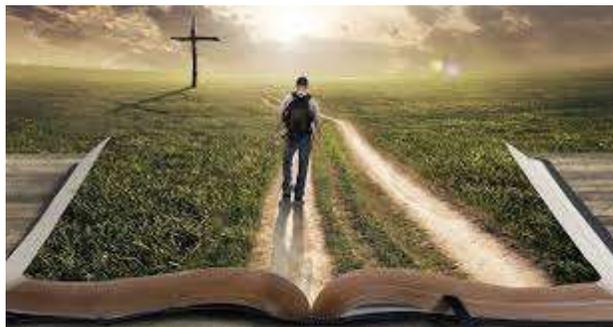
If you have questions as you read the Bible this year, submit your questions to Rev. Swisher and he will answer them at the Q&A February 22.

Two Kinds of Walking

by Kurt Selles

June 1, 2023 todaydevotional.com

“Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.”— Deuteronomy 8:6



A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” (Chinese proverb). Early one morning in April 2022, I took the first step on a hiking trip along the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine in the eastern United States. While enjoying God’s good and beautiful creation, I also meditated on the theme of “walking” in the Bible.

Since ancient times, walking has been the most common way for people to go from place to place. It’s no surprise, then, that walking is mentioned more than 200 times in the Bible. Whether people took short strolls or long journeys, they moved forward one step at a time. In the Bible, the Hebrew word for “walk” (*halak*) can also refer to following God and living for him in his world.

In Deuteronomy 8 we find examples of both kinds of walking. God’s people had been walking in the wilderness for 40 years. And now, preparing to enter the land that God had promised them, they were reminded to walk in the ways of the Lord and to honor God in all they would do. And God promised to bless them abundantly.

Wherever we walk today, on short strolls or a long journey, may each step remind us to walk in God’s ways and to honor him.

Lord God, help us always to walk with you in our journeys near and far, seeing your hand in our world and striving to please and serve you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Finances for the Month and Year to Date

<u>General Fund Income - Incomplete</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Congregation giving (Faith Promise)	6,949.00	6,949.00
Income from Foundation Fund	11,500.00	11,500.00
Monthly Income from Emerson Miller Fund	3,758.33	3,758.33
Month & YTD Income	23,630.58	23,630.58
General Fund Expenses	23,630.58	23,630.58
Month & YTD	\$ 0.00	0.00



Over/Under
() = Negative



Collection bins will be in the Fellowship Room. "Vote" for your favorite team by placing canned soups of all kinds or monetary donations in the bins provided. This collection benefits the Licking County Food Pantry.

Youth Group will be meeting following the 10:30AM service on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the coming months. Future service projects are TBD.



The mission trip is scheduled for May 31 to June 6. At this time, we have 14 people signed up to go. If you'd like to join the team, contact Julie Kroah at 740-323-2408.

Adult Sunday School Class will continue studying "Abiding In Jesus" by our very own Carl Kochendorfer through February. Join Carl Sunday mornings at 9:00AM in the Large Meeting Room for this informative study.



Read the Bible in a Year: Our Journey Together. We're starting month 6 of our year-long journey together. There are reading plans available in the Fellowship Room and on the website. Come share your journey, insights and questions. Plan to join us for the 2nd Question and Answer Session, March 1, at 9:00AM. Rev. Swisher will be on hand to answer questions that are left in the "church" box in the Fellowship Room, emailed or just bring your questions with you.

Sunday School Classes

Adult class – Sundays at 9:00AM

Youth Class – Sundays at 9:00AM

Bible Discovery Zone – ages 5 to 14 at 11AM

Cradle Roll – Available during the 11AM service



February Worship Service Duties

Ushers: Frank Davis, Jeff Conner, Terry Gano, Barry Dooley, Gary Kinser

Cradle Roll

- 1 Volunteer
- 8 Volunteer
- 15 Volunteer
- 22 Volunteer

Cantors

- 1 Charles Dudley
- 8 Julie Davis
- 15 Diane Reef
- 18 Todd Baldosser
- 25 Todd Baldosser

Bible Discovery Zone

- 1 Brian Lensink & Pat Farley
- 8 Marla Crowthers & Youth if needed
- 15 Elaine Gard & Pat Farley
- 22 Frances Hill & Youth if needed

Sunday Sound Worship Team

- 1 Ken Kroah
- 8 Karson Ewing
- 15 Ken Kroah
- 22 Karson Ewing

Sunday Video Worship Team

- 1 Tom Lawyer
- 8 Julie Kroah
- 15 Tom Lawyer
- 22 Julie Kroah



FEBRUARY



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 8:00am Chapel Service 9:00am Adult Sunday School 9:00am Bible Discovery Zone Elementary Class in BQZ Classroom 9:00am Youth Class 10:30am Bible Discovery Zone Children's Church 10:30am Sanctuary Service</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 12:00pm The Afternoon Circle lunch gathering weather permitting at Olive Garden Heath 6:00pm Mission & Outreach Committee Meeting 6:00pm Private Use- Chorus Practice</p>	<p>5 Thursday Book Study- 'STONEY' THE ROAD WE'VE TROD- The Long Road to Freedom by Martin Luther Johnson at River Road Cafee on the Square</p>	<p>6 2:00pm Music Committee Meeting</p>	<p>7 Valentine's Day</p>
<p>8 Super Bowl of Carng 8:00am Chapel Service 9:00am Adult Sunday School 9:00am Bible Discovery Zone Elementary Class in BQZ Classroom 9:00am Youth Class 10:30am Bible Discovery Zone Children's Church 10:30am Sanctuary Service 11:30am Youth Group Meeting</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 7:00pm Frances & Stewarship Meeting</p>	<p>11 10:00am Christian Education Meeting 6:00pm Private Use- Chorus Practice</p>	<p>12 Thursday Book Study- 'STONEY' THE ROAD WE'VE TROD- The Long Road to Freedom by Martin Luther Johnson at River Road Cafee on the Square 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15 Transfiguration Sunday 8:00am Chapel Service 9:00am Adult Sunday School 9:00am Bible Discovery Zone Elementary Class in BQZ Classroom 9:00am Youth Class 10:30am Bible Discovery Zone Children's Church 10:30am Sanctuary Service 11:30am ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL POTLUCK AND MEETING</p>	<p>16 OFFICE CLOSED Presidents' Day 6:30pm Church Council Meeting</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 Ash Wednesday Ash Wednesday Service- Communion & Imposition of Ashes 6:00pm Private Use- Chorus Practice</p>	<p>19 Thursday Book Study- 'STONEY' THE ROAD WE'VE TROD- The Long Road to Freedom by Martin Luther Johnson at River Road Cafee on the Square</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22 8:00am Chapel Service 9:00am Adult Sunday School 9:00am Bible Discovery Zone Elementary Class in BQZ Classroom 9:00am Youth Class 10:30am Bible Discovery Zone Children's Church 10:30am Sanctuary Service 11:30am Youth Group Meeting</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 6:00pm Private Use- Chorus Practice</p>	<p>26 Thursday Book Study- 'STONEY' THE ROAD WE'VE TROD- The Long Road to Freedom by Martin Luther Johnson at River Road Cafee on the Square 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>



St. John's United Church of Christ
 285 W. National Drive
 Newark, Ohio 43055

*Rooted in the Evangelical and Reformed Traditions
 We are Sowing Seeds of Hope in a Time of Chaos
 So We May All Be One*

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 Newark, Ohio
 Permit No. 103

Worship Services!

8:00 a.m. Chapel Service
 10:30 a.m. – Sanctuary Service
 Volume 26 Number 2

Address Service Requested



<p>Main Office Phone 740-323-2407 www.stjohnsnewark.org</p>	<p>Rev. Dr. Stephen Swisher Our Minister Office 740-323-2854 stjohns.pastorstephen@gmail.com</p>	<p>Todd Baldosser Organist/Choir Director scarlatti35@hotmail.com</p>
<p>Anita Chirdon/Office Administrator Kim Workman/Office Assistant stjohnsunited@windstream.net</p>	<p>Mike Dooley Church Sexton 740-398-5863</p>	<p>Julie Kroah Christian Education Director Direct Number 740-323-2408 stjohnsucc.ce@windstream.net</p>



LIBRARY FOCUS FOR FEBRUARY

Loving God by Charles Colson. Calling all believers to a better and more committed relationship with the Father of Love and Author of Life.

Unbroken DVD An unbelievable true story of survival, resilience and redemption.

For Children

Samson and Delilah and other Old Testament stories by Victoria Parker. Classic Bible stories brought to life with beautiful illustrations.

***** These featured books and DVD's can be found in the Church Library on the center shelves*****