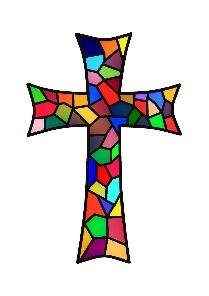
**“The Visitor”**

*The February 2022 Newsletter of*

*St. John United Church of Christ - Reading*



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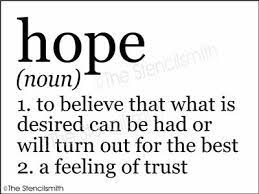
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**Pastor’s Page**

“Resurrecting Hope” is the title/theme of this year’s Family Retreat, scheduled for March 11-13, 2022 at Higher Ground Conference and Retreat Center. As the pandemic continues longer than we had thought or hoped, as the dark days of the winter season in Cincinnati surround us, as the violence and discontent and hate seem to grow in the world, we might find ourselves struggling with hope.

Hope is ability to feel positive in the midst of a negative situation. Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. Hope is the belief that anything is possible. In Christianity, our biggest hope is that of eternal life. But we have ‘smaller’ hopes, if you will, that are part of our lives. We hope to stay healthy, we hope for happiness. We hope for friendships and a feeling of being connected to someone or someones! We hope that we have enough money for our needs…and our wants. We hope that our church will grow and our ministries will expand. We hope for…fill in the blank.

If you are struggling with keeping your hope alive, come to this year’s Family Retreat. It’s open to men and women of the church and friends of ours as well. It will be a time of fellowship and good food in a comfortable setting (we’ll have our own meeting space/separate building) and will eat our meals with some separation from other tables. It will be a time of faith building as we explore some Biblical examples of people whose hope kept them going in tough times. And it will be a time to worship through singing, through praising, through prayer, through silence and through laughter.

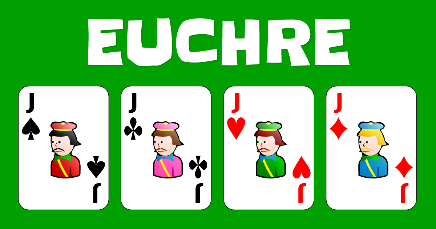
The cost is $150 for the full weekend (two nights in a double room, 5 meals) or $75 for Saturday only, or $115 for 1 night and 3 meals. If cost is an issue, we have partial scholarships available – we’d love for you to be part of this event. Please prayerfully consider making “Resurrecting Hope” part of your plans for next month.

~Rev. Torie

**Board of Christian Nurture**

The Board of Christian Nurture is once again sponsoring the **Butler County Donut Trail**! This year, we have a whole year to visit the dozen or so donut shops up north! ☺ We have set the second Tuesday of the month as the day that we’ll visit 1-2 donut shops. Meet at the church at 8:30am if you’d like to go with a group of people. Otherwise, grab a friend or make a new friend and start visiting donut shops together. The Passports will be available soon, as will our visiting grid!

The **February Lunch Bunch** will be held on February 13th, following worship! It will be during our UNO afternoon, and the plan is for it to be a baked potato bar. Please join us for an afternoon of fun, food and fellowship! Look for a sign-up sheet outside the Cozy Corner!

Interested in playing **euchre**?? Every third Thursday, at 2:00pm, St. John will be hosting euchre games in the Fellowship Hall! Please feel free to join us!

We will be doing **Ceramic Painting** as our Fellowship Event again in February! We are planning to hold it on February 25th at 6:00pm. Please join us for a night of painting to boost your creativity during our night of fellowship. Look for a sign-up sheet outside the Cozy Corner!

We are bringing back the **M&M Fundraiser** this year! It will start on March 6th. We will be set up right outside the Cozy Corner. Take an M&M tube and fill it with quarters and return the tube by March 27th! Thank you in advance for your support!

****The **Family Retreat** is coming up! It will be held March 11-13, 20 22. The theme is *Resurrecting Hope*! If you and your family are interested in attending, please sign-up outside the Cozy Corner to allow us to gauge interest! Thank you in advance!

\*\*The next Board of Christian Nurture meeting is February 16th at 5:00pm\*\*

**Board of Deacons**

The **Make a Difference Grant** is funded by the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ. These are small grants made to local congregations and are to be used to ‘Make a Difference’ in their communities. St. John UCC submitted a grant for open shelving in the Food Pantry and several wheeled carts to give to our neighbors who walk to get their food from us on Thursdays. We are very excited to be able to implement these changes in the Feed My Sheep program!

The **“Feed My Sheep”** program is for our community - Reading and beyond, including the beloved community of St. John United Church of Christ. Do you have a New Year’s Resolution to help out? Give Susie a call and come down on a Thursday evening to help with our drive-up food pantry!

**Board of Elders**

Rev. Torie’s vacation Sunday was moved to the first Sunday of February, and Rev. Allen Fluent will be in the pulpit that day.

**Lent** starts with Ash Wednesday, this year on March 2. For each of the 6 Sundays of Lent, Rev. Torie would like to include a **short video** (or in person) interview with a member of the congregation, talking on these subjects:

March 6 – Take Every Test – *When have you felt tested and how did you respond?*

March 13– Finish the Work – *When have things conspired against you to stop doing a ministry before you were ready?*

March 20 – Looking for Fruit – *Where have you looked for fruit in your life? Church? And not found it, but had someone say they’d help you?*

March 27 – Come to Life – *Tell us about a ‘come to life’ moment/epiphany in your life.*

April 3 – Leave Her Alone – *When have you done something nice for someone and got in trouble, even though what you did turned out to be alright.*

April 10 – Shout Out – *When in your life did you experience a holy encounter and the only response possible was to shout out your praise?*

If you are interesting in sharing one of your life/faith stories around one of these topics, please contact Rev. Torie.

Rev. Torie is offering a **new Bible study** this year. On the first Wednesday of the month, she will be at Northgate Park Senior Living, home of Ruth Jean Kretschmar. This Bible study may start out as a study of the gospel of Mark, or it may follow our lectionary study. If you are interested in joining that would be great! The Bible study starts at 2:30pm and is open to all residents of Northgate Park as well as members of St. John UCC.

Our **AV Ministry** is continuing to work on providing a high-quality live and recorded worship service for the congregation, which will be especially important during these times of many choosing to remain safely at home to worship. Thank you to Steve Culver, Michele Bunke & Cyrus Newitt for their work with our AV Ministry.

We are looking for **Liturgists** to serve in 2022. If you can’t commit to the whole month, please sign up for a few weeks and share with someone else. Thank you for helping to lead worship in this most meaningful way. If you’ve not been a Liturgist before, don’t let that stop you – all are welcome, and training is provided!

**Greeters and Ushers** are also needed for 2022 – if you like to meet people, and don’t mind arriving at church at 9:30 am, please sign up to be a Greeter! Ushers are tasked with handing out the bulletin (or placing them in the pews!) and taking up the offering. Training provided, so let us know if you are willing to help.

The **Altar Flowers** are a $50 gift to the church that someone, or a team of someones, makes each month. The fresh flowers add to the beauty of our worship, and bring in a bit of God’s creation to our sanctuary. If you’d like to provide the Altar Flowers for one of the upcoming months, please let the Church Office know. It’s a lovely way to make a donation in memory or honor of someone, or simply to the glory of God!

\*\*The next Board of Elders meeting will be February 10th at 2:30pm\*\*

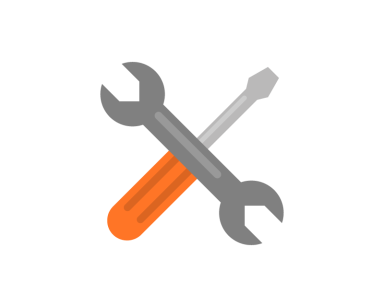
**Lectionary Page**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scripture** | **Bible Study** | **Sermon** |
| Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)  Psalm 138  1 Corinthians 15:1-11  Luke 5:1-11 | February 1st | February 6th  \*\*Communion\*\* |
| Jeremiah 17:5-10  Psalm 1  1 Corinthians 15:12-20  Luke 6:17-26 | February 8th | February 13th |
| Genesis 45:3-11, 15  Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40  1 Corinthians 12:35-38, 42-50  Luke 6:27-38 | February 15th | February 20th |
| Exodus 34:29-35  Psalm 99  2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2  Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a) | February 22nd | February 27th |
| Deuteronomy 26:1-11  Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16  Romans 10:8b-13  Luke 4:1-13 | March 1st | March 6th  *\*First Sunday in Lent\**  \*Communion\* |

**Board of Property and Finance**

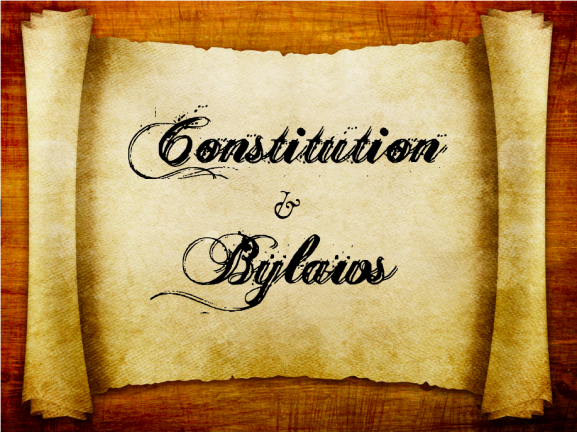
December: $12,847 ☺ | 2021: $22,375 ☺

Beginning this year, we were hit with a substantial increase in our insurance costs. This spurred us to begin shopping for new insurance. We are currently getting quotes from a couple new providers which require us to answer a lot of questions, provide a lot of information, and give tours of the church, the grounds and the parsonage. We are praying and hoping that any new coverage and rates are better than what we have currently…prayers are needed.

In January, we reviewed our lengthy list of repairs and new projects needed for the church. We attempt to accomplish several of these each year. It was decided that we would set up a new storage cubby in the narthex area for the pill bottles, aluminum pull tabs and other items. We would also install new lighting over the bulletin boards so they can be better seen, especially when viewing notices and volunteering or signing up for needs and events. If you have any thoughts on these projects, please let us know.

This month we hope to present our recommendations to the congregation on the use of the funds from the Ruth Schnier estate. We are hoping that, once approved, we can replace the roof, restore the Christ ascending stained glass window, and paint the sanctuary. It is still possible that much of this can be done yet this year.

Workship Day this month is Saturday, February 26, from 8am-12pm. Come and help us tackle some of the more immediate repair, organizing, and cleaning needs of the church. There is always food, fellowship, fun and the good feelings of satisfying a need. Please come and help…I’m sure there is something on the list you can help with.

Our Constitution Committee is meeting this month to begin work on updating out constitution and bylaws. In addition, they will be creating an employee/volunteer handbook of sorts, which will include policies regarding sexual abuse, discrimination, harassment, and general procedures. Having these documented policies will help to keep our church safe and also help with our insurance costs.

We are truly thankful for all the blessings we receive from you, our members and friends, the neighborhood and our gracious Lord.

\*\*The next board of Property & Finance Meeting is February 8th at 5:00pm\*\*

**Men’s Group**

The Men’s Group has resumed regular monthly meetings, typically on the 1st Monday of each month, at 6:00pm. A meal is provided, and we plan fundraisers and service projects for the church and community.

Men of the church, as well as friends of the church are encouraged to participate. There is strength in numbers and we gain strength and energy from each other!

Upcoming plans include:

* **Coffee Hour:** Sunday February 27th after worship
* **Mardi Gras Pancake Supper:** Tuesday, March 1, 5:00pm-6:00pm
* **Dart Night** & **Bed Making Service Project**: targeted for early 2022

This is a great time to get involved with the Men’s Group! Please contact Steve Culver (513-262-7471) with any questions!

\*\*The next Men’s Group Meeting is February 7th at 6:00pm\*\*

**Member Outreach**

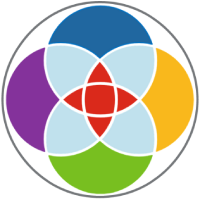
At a recent Men’s Group meeting, it was agreed to offer the following services to our church members:

* **Handyman Services**: If you need any assistance with a handyman or clean-up type projects, please contact us. We will do our best to find a convenient time to assist.
* **Computers Looking for a Good Home**: Through a member’s resources, we have a number of gently used computers that are available for use. If you are in need of a Windows-based computer, please let us know and we can help with delivery and set-up.

Please contact: Gary Kurtz 513-446-5827 | Steve Culver 513-262-7471



**The Heartland Conference**

Registration for **Summer Camp** at Templed Hills Camp and Retreat Center opened on January 3rd, 2022! If you are interested in registering for any of the camps this summer, visit heartlanducc.org/templed-hills/.

**Camps:**

June 12th-15th – Grands and Family (ages 4-12 w/grandparent/parent)

June 19th-25th – Music, Mime, Arts, Dance, Drama Camp (ages 7-18)

June 19th-25th – Just Camp! (ages 7-18)

June 26th-July 2nd – Sportscamp (ages 7-18)

July 6th-9th – Mini Just Camp (ages 7-13)

July 10th-16th – Choir Camp (ages 7-18)

July 13th-16th – Grands and Family (4-12 w/grandparent/parent)

If anyone is still looking to donate to the **Western Kentucky Tornado Relief**, please go to https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/disaster-relief/, or contact Leah in the office and she will be happy to place your donation for you. At this time, the need is not for food or clothing, but for financial donations.

**St. John United Church of Christ Regular Events**

Weekly Events:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Event** | **Day** | **Time** | **Location** |
| Handbell Choir Practice | Sunday | 9:00am | Sanctuary |
| Worship | Sunday | 10:00am | Sanctuary |
| Bible Study Afternoon | Tuesday | 1:00pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Bible Study Evening | Tuesday | 6:30pm | Mt. View Terrace |
| Chancel Choir Practice | Wednesday | 6:15pm | Choir Room |
| Feed My Sheep | Thursday | 4:30pm | Outside |
|  |  |  |  |

Monthly Events:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Event** | **Day** | **Time** | **Location** |
| Board of Christian Nurture | 3rd Wednesday | 5:00pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Board of Deacons | 1st Sunday | 11:00am | Fellowship Hall |
| Board of Elders | 2nd Thursday | 2:30pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Board of Property & Finance | 2nd Tuesday | 5:00pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Euchre | 3rd Thursday | 2:00pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Blood Pressure Sunday | Last Sunday | 11:00am | Nurse Goodheart’s office |
| Church Council | 3rd Thursday | 5:45pm | Fellowship Hall |
| Bible Study | 1st Wednesday | 2:30pm | NorthGate Park Retirement |
| Communion | 1st Sunday | 10:00am | Sanctuary |
| Missionary Sewing | 1st Wednesday | 10:00am | Fellowship Hall |
| Donut Trail | 2nd Tuesday | 8:30am | Church lobby |
| Lunch Bunch | 2nd Sunday | 11:00am | Various locations |
| Work-ship Day | Last Saturday | 8:00am | Church |
| Men’s Group | 1st Monday | 6:00pm | TBD |

**February Birthdays and Anniversaries**

**Birthdays**

Feb 8 Jean Pabst

Feb 12 Jennifer Bray

Feb 21 Joe Clay

Feb 21 John Lower

Feb. 27 Rick Caudill

Feb 27 Carol Nieman

Feb 28 Jim Bunning

Feb 28 Walt Seebohm

