

## **The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL)**

The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) has made significant strides in empowering women and supporting communities through transformative programs. Serving approximately one million church members and nearly three million beneficiaries annually, CCSL is committed to breaking barriers and promoting women's leadership across various sectors.

A key initiative is the Women's Desk, which focuses on training, mentorship, and enabling women's active participation in church capacity building, community development, leadership, and economic sustainability. Through this platform, CCSL equips women with the essential skills needed to take leadership roles in society.

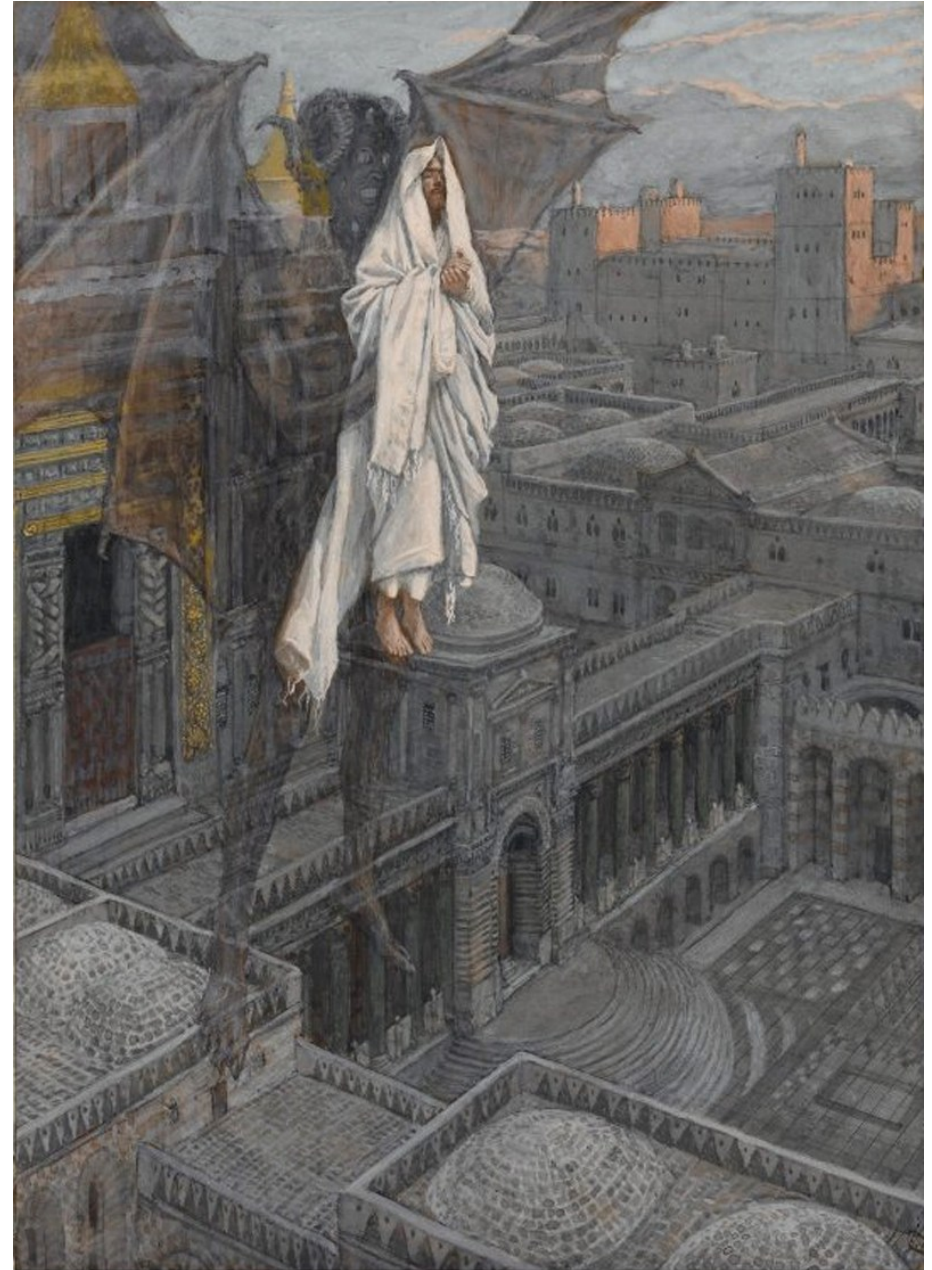
One notable program is the Council's microcredit initiative, established in 2020, which supports participants in the Village Savings and Loan Groups (VSLGs). This program includes 20 groups and empowers women to establish small businesses, provides finance education, improves access to clean water, and promotes community development. The microcredit program has proven to enhance women's leadership, business skills, and literacy.

In Kamara Town, women from the VSLG worked together to build a church and a school, which were previously unavailable in the community. Because of the lack of educational infrastructure, children had to travel long distances to attend school and often started school later than usual. With a school now in their community, children can begin their education at the appropriate age, and parents find peace knowing their children are safe and learning close to home.

In Campbell Town, a widow faced significant challenges after her husband's death, particularly around land ownership. Through the microcredit program, she secured a loan to formalize her land ownership. With the necessary documents now in hand, she proudly owns the land and has built a small house.

The program's impact is profound, with 70% to 90% of women contributing significantly to their households' welfare. These women not only focus on their personal growth but also dedicate themselves to supporting and mentoring other women in their communities. This shared commitment to uplifting others is a core value of the VSLGs.

<https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2025-Mission-Moment.pdf>



# St. John's United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 794, 401 N Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008

Sunday Christian Education 9am      Worship 10:30  
Office Hours: Tues – Thurs, 9am-Noon    stjohs401.org  
(815)544-2977      stjohsucc401@gmail.com

Pastor:      Rev. Muriel Morley Jahn      815-544-2977  
                                 murielmorley@gmail.com  
Pastoral Associate:    Beth Carson      815-979-0473  
Minister of Music:    Mary Albrecht      815-547-7503  
Choir Director:      Jeanne Anderson      815-985-2652

**WELCOME VISITORS!** Thank you for coming! Please sign a pew card to place in the offering plate.

**WORSHIP:** When reading this bulletin Leader Speaks Plain Font, Everyone Speak Bold Font

**Nursery:** Children are welcome in all aspects of worship. The nursery provides an alternative space so kids and parents can both get what they need from worship. Children are encouraged to check in with their adult before going downstairs with the nursery attendant.

### *You Are Not Alone*

The following support groups meet regularly at St. John's

- The Belvidere Group (AA) meets at everyday at 7pm. Women's Group meets Mondays 5:30pm
- T.O.P.S. Mondays 11am



Delicious Fundraiser



Amazon List



T-Shirts

## Announcements

- ✚ Thank you to all who helped and shopped at the Spring Eggstravaganza!
- ✚ March 24-31 Pastor Muriel on Sabbath Pastor Beth is on call for all Pastoral Care.
- ✚ Hybrid All Church Meeting April 6th, 11:30am come in person or join us on Zoom Meeting ID: 881 6955 9220 Passcode: 296899
- ✚ Spring Rummage Sale Donations will start being accepted on March 30th. Please bring items to the work room off the kitchen. The Sale will be Friday, May 2nd, 9am-3pm and Saturday May 3rd, 9am-Noon.
- ✚ Fellowship Meal April 13th after worship
- ✚ Easter Breakfast is April 20th at 9am. We still need juice and fruit/fruit salad
- ✚ Community Meal Every 3rd Wednesday 5p-6p!
- ✚ Every 3rd Sunday of the month, St. John's leads services at Heritage Woods at 3 pm.
- ✚ Blessing Box No canned foods or anything that may contain water and freeze in this weather.
- ✚ Paper Angel Closet needs Toilet Paper, Women's Deodorant, Bleach, Shampoo, and Dish Soap. See the Amazon List for regular need updates.
- ✚ Menards Ministry: Please bring in any unused Menards rebates or even receipts. We use these rebates for projects around the church.
- ✚ Open Door Fundraiser: We are still collecting money to upgrade our parking lot doors. Our goal is to collect enough money to automate the doors and make it a double entry to hold the temperature in the office area.
- ✚ We are putting in an order for Midwest Spices. Each mix is \$5 and St. John's gets \$3 of the dollars! Also check out the fundraiser QR codes on page 2.

**More about the Cove Art:**

“Jesus Carried up to a Pinnacle of the Temple “

- ⇒ Date: ca. 1886-1894
- ⇒ Artist: Tissot, James, 1836-1902
- ⇒ Medium: Watercolor
- ⇒ Held in the Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY

"...when his (Tissot) carefully researched collection of 350 watercolors depicting the life of Jesus was first published as a book in 1896, it found a large and enthusiastic audience. No one who had followed his previous career could have anticipated that this painter of urban life in Paris and London would undertake the project of painting virtually every event in the Gospels.

The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ project took nearly ten years to complete. When it was done, it chronicled the entire life of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament in a series of 350 watercolors. To research the project Tissot traveled to Egypt, Syria, and Palestine in 1886–87, and again in 1890.

While in the Holy Land he closely observed the landscape, the vegetation, the architecture, and the manner of dress, and filled sketchbooks with what he saw. He talked with rabbis and studied Talmudic literature as well as theological and historical volumes. He believed that there was still a remaining “aura” in the places where the Gospel events took place, and he spoke of having mystical experiences that added to his careful research. What he wanted to create was something as close as possible to an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus." [from Terry Glaspey's "75 Masterpieces Every Christian Should Know"]

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/diglib-fulldisplay.pl?SID=20250319984184828&code=act&RC=54302&Row=19>

**Famished: Service Prayers for the first Sunday in Lent** was written by the Rev. Ruth Garwood, a transitional pastor in the Heartland Conference, a certified facilitator of Sacred Conversations to End Racism, and a certified InterPlay leader.

**Prelude****Announcements****Choral Introit “Step by Step”**

**O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.**

**O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.**

**I will seek you in the morning,  
and I will learn to walk in your ways . . .**

**and step by step you'll lead . . me,  
and I will follow you all of my days.**

**Responsive Welcome Statement**

At St. John's United Church of Christ, we are Living Outwardly & Valuing Everyone!

**We live and work amid God's love!**

In that spirit, we extend love to all who come into our midst, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, nationality, skin color, culture, differing abilities, age or political affiliations, to participate fully in all aspects of church.

**Our ministry is to bring the Good News of Christ's love to all.**

We work in God's name to tear down walls and build community,

**to walk with each other through all of life's circumstances,**

to provide for those in need,

**to offer comfort to the hurting and the sick,**

and to uplift the brokenhearted.

**Where we fail, we ask for God's forgiveness.**

May the Holy Spirit and our siblings continue to challenge us to do better.

**No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!**

**Call to Worship**

Are you restless and unsettled? This place is for you.

**Let us worship God!**

Are you hungry for love and hope? This place is for you.

**Let us worship God!**

Are you searching for direction? This place is for you.

**Let us worship God!**

Do you have love to share? This place is for you.

**Let us worship God together!**

**Invocation**

**Whether we feel alone, or accompanied, God is with us. Let us open ourselves to recognize God's presence within us and among us. Amen.**

**Hymn #18 "Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer"**

**United Church of Christ Statement of Faith #885**

**Children's Time "Friends with Bad Advice"**

**Pastoral Prayer – The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn #209 "O Love, How Vast"**

*(v. 1,3-5 tune: Gift of Love)*

**Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

**Gracious God, you hold us, but in times of stress, we fear that we are all alone. We hunger for easy comfort, even knowing that our appetite will return. We aim for power over uncertainty, forgetting that control is an illusion. Forgive us for choosing distraction to escape from chaos. Bring our focus back to you, to your word, your presence, and your child Jesus. Amen.**

**Words of Grace**

God reaches out to us, eagerly drawing us close, forgiving our sins through God's unending grace. In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

**Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Ghost,  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**Scripture** Luke 4:1-13

**Sermon** "Famished"

**Invitation to Generosity**

**Moment for Mission** One Great Hour of Sharing

**Musical Offering**

**Doxology**

**Praise God, through whom all blessings flow,  
Praise God, all creatures here below,  
Praise God, above ye heavenly host.  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**Prayer of Dedication**

**Dear God, use these gifts, and our lives, to feed and nourish, spreading your love where it is most needed.**

**Hymn #252 "Savior, like a Shepherd"**

**Benediction**

**Postlude**



General Giving