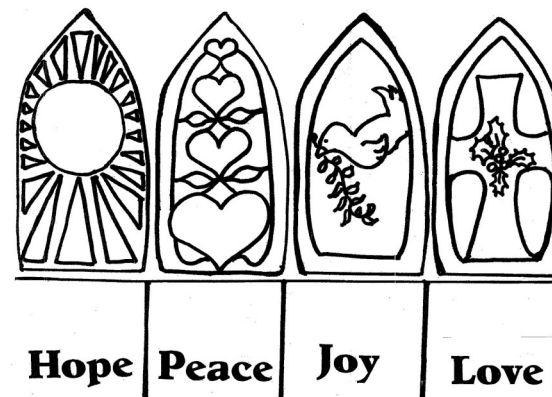


ADVENT 2025

The liturgical calendar calls us to remember expectation. While our memories of the days preceding Christmas may include anticipating gifts and festival gathering around meals and decorated trees, that is not the memory Advent amplifies. While Epiphany greets us at the dawn of a new year, memories of midnight toast and kisses does not frame that season. Lent may evoke shudders as we consider how difficult it may have been to forgo that favorite practice, menu item, or other thing in order to share in the sacrificial activity of Christ. Yet, if that struggle fails to generate empathy for the suffering of our neighbor on our block and across the world, the sacrifice was empty. A sunrise service on Easter Sunday morning may transport our imagination to the empty tomb, but that shocking moment led to uncertainty, discovery, and an empowered movement that launched on the Day of Pentecost and continues today.

The future of the church faces threats. While some have the reasonable fear of closing church doors, the more urgent and salient problem is the church that has lost its way, its voice, its witness, and its commitment to embodying good news in the world as Christ's agents in the world.

The call to remember expectation is a call to hope, to agency, and to activation in a world in need of conduits and co-creators of good news. In the anchoring text for the liturgical year, Jesus cautioned and encouraged their followers to "keep awake." The command encompasses attentiveness, alertness, and readiness. The context of the passage emphasizes the anticipated return of Christ, the Chosen One. Could the Body of Christ reclaim its mantle and mandate to embody God's love and liberating power in the world? Could that be the return we expect...to the movement to follow the way of Jesus in spirit and in truth...not to give us an escape to heaven but to realize the kingdom on earth through our collective, Spirit-led salvific acts in the name of Jesus? Are we prepared and willing to be that church?



November 30, 2025

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

- ✦ **Adult Sunday School** resumes January 11th.
- ✦ **Coffee Hour** next Sunday at 9:30am.
- ✦ **Christmas Eve Worship** will be at **4pm**. This is a change from the past years.
- ✦ **Every 3rd Sunday of the month**, St. John's leads services at **Heritage Woods** at 3 pm. Join after their service for time to socialize with the residents and meet some great people.
- ✦ **Community Meal** every third Wednesday of the month from 5p-6pm.
- ✦ **Blessing Box** non perishable are welcome. Make sure any items in cardboard have an inner layer of protection to prevent creatures from contaminating the food. As temperatures drop we need to avoid items in cans.
- ✦ **Paper Angel Closet** needs toilet paper, paper towels, women's deodorant, bleach, shampoo, and dish soap.
- ✦ **Menards Ministry:** If you have 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.

Advent Litany from: https://www.pbucc.org/images/pbucc/ministerial_assistance/2025-Promotional-Resources/advent_1.pdf

Offertory Prayer from: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/toda-la-tierra-espera/first-sunday-of-advent-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/first-sunday-of-advent-year-a-offertory->

Scripture

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Matthew 24: 36-44

Sermon— “Hope”**Moment for Mission****Pastor's Discretionary Fund****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— unison

**Ever-Watchful God, you call us to live not in fear,
 but in faithful anticipation. As we offer these
 gifts, we do so as people preparing our hearts,
 our hands, and our world for your coming reign.
 We confess that we often cling too tightly to our
 comforts and schedules, forgetting that your
 kingdom calls us to loosen our grip and lift our
 eyes. Awaken us, Lord, to the “someday” you are
 already shaping through our love, our justice,
 and our generosity. Let these offerings be signs
 of readiness, trust, and joy as we wait—and
 work—for your future to
 break into our present. In
 the name of the one who
 comes, Jesus Christ
 our Lord. Amen.**

**Hymn #379— Come We That Love
 the Lord**

Benediction**Prelude****Announcements****Choral Introit— “ Soon and Very Soon”**

**Soon and very soon we are going to see the King!
 Soon and every soon we are going to see the King!
 Soon and every soon we are going to see the Kin-
 Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
 We're going to see the King!**

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 iden-
 tity, 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 cir-
 cumstances,**

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 chal-
 lenge us to do better.**

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

Invocation

**O God of Deep Space and Time, we come togeth-
 er to worship. Like the Magi who journeyed far by
 the wisdom of the stars, we now enter this sa-
 cred season of Advent. Some of us come ready
 to share hope, while others are on the path to**

find it. Some of us bring a spark or a kindling, while others the memory of stardust on our skin. May you bless us just as we are—however dawn or dusk we feel today—to guide us to discover the cosmos enfleshed among us here and now. Amen.

Hymn #122– Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Lighting of the Advent Wreath– The Prophecy Candle

Hope- Isaiah 9:2 –“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.”

Litany of the Advent Candle

One: My kin in Christ, as we gather to light the first candle of the Advent wreath, let us bring with us the companion of hope.

All: Living action.

One: What sounds could those loving actions make, friends? Perhaps it is the first birdsong in the morning or dishes being washed at the evening community meal.

All: The ding of a text bearing good news or the ring of church bells calling us to come together.

One: What sights and scents might such actions have? Maybe ships carrying formula and lentils through waters of violence; the smell of coffee shared on the protest line, or in a church basement

All: Or a mountain bridge restored after the storm, and the sweet earthy notes of a balsam tree by the fire.

One: This Advent season, let us be companions of hope.

(Light the first candle)

All: Embodying our “yes” to God in what we do, what we sense, what we choose to pay attention to.

One: Accompanying despair, but not becoming it.

All: Living into our “Amen,” that it may be so here today and tomorrow. Amen.

Hanging of the Greens

Pastoral Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer

Hymn #573– Lead On O King Eternal

Prayer of Transformation and Grace

O God, help us to be stewards of hope, remembering to use our ancestral knowledge to deal with today’s challenges and our own personal struggles. When we need to be held accountable, let both the river and the bridge show us the way. When we do not take action because we think it won’t matter, let song harmonies help us hear our part in the whole. And when we need second, third, and countless chances, may the stars remind us that we can return to our wholeness again and again. O Handmaid of Hope, may your grace bring us home. Amen.

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.



General Giving