

Community and Care

From the many letters and stories the Pension Boards has received from those touched by gifts from The Christmas Fund, we share these words: "It's wonderful to feel cared for. The amount of the help is not as important as the fact that there's a tangible way the collective church wants to strengthen your foundation."

- The Rev. Joan Smith Retired UCC minister,
Christmas Fund giver and receiver

Thanks to your generosity, last year The Christmas Fund provided over \$1.7 million in pension and health benefits, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired clergy and their families. Every gift came from people like you. This year, please give what you can to continue supporting those who have devoted their lives to serving others.



December 28, 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 stjohns401.org
(815)544-2977 stjohnsucc401@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. Right now we do not have a nursery attendant.

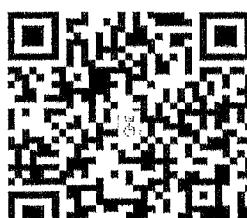
You Are Not Alone

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



Delicious Fundraiser



Amazon List



T-Shirts

Announcements

- † **Adult Sunday School** resumes January 11th.
- † **Coffee Hour** next Sunday at 9:30am, sponsored by Beth.
- † **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. Please NO canned items that can freeze and thaw with the temperature changes.
- † **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.

Worship Resources adapted from: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/toda-la-terra-espresa/first-sunday-after-christmas-day-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes>

Moment for Mission
The Christmas 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

Steadfast God of refuge and promise, even when the world makes no room, even when fear seems stronger than hope, you are with us. In the flight to Egypt, in the cries of grief, in the fragile beginnings of new life, you make a way. Receive these gifts, O God, as signs of our willingness to make room for your kingdom among us. Use what we bring—not just our treasure, but our time, our voices, our compassion—to heal what is broken, to protect the vulnerable, and to embody your saving love. In the name of Jesus, our Light in the shadows. Amen.

Hymn #129— “Good Christian Friends Rejoice”

Benediction

Postlude



Prelude

Announcements

**Choral Introit— #125 “Angels We Have Heard on High”
 (Verse 1)**

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— Responsively

Beloved, we have waited, watched, and witnessed the coming of the Christ child. As we gather today on the other side of Christmas, we might be tempted to ask, “What now?”

We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

In this season of Christmas, we remember that though Christ has come among us, the good news of freedom for captives, flourishing for the poor, and

power returned to the disempowered does not reign in so many places.

We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

With Mary and Joseph, we listen for God to show us how to protect and advocate for the vulnerable among us.

We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

As we gather to worship today, may God bind us together in love, empowering us to live as followers of the Christ child who declare good news wherever we go.

We gather today as people who wait, watch, and work for the day that all the earth awaits. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Hymn #144—“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”

Children's Time

Pastoral Prayer – The Lord's Prayer

Hymn #487—“Children of the Heavenly Father”

Prayer of Confession—unison

Gracious God,
we would like to be among those who saw the coming of the Christ Child,
those who dropped all that they were doing and traveled to worship the coming of God's love into this world.

We would like to be those who cared for God in infant vulnerability;
who tickled and cuddled and comforted the growing child, that he might know love and safety.

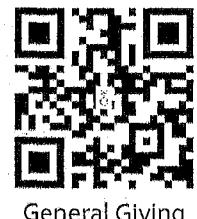
And yet, merciful God, we must recognize all the times we are more like Herod.

Whenever we, in our actions or in our inactions,

find our own need for control more compelling than the needs of others for health and safety. Whenever we cling to the security of our privilege, rather than advocating for the rights of the oppressed.

Whenever we are complicit in the harming of innocents for the sake of profit, or power, or because we fear to know, and to change, the injustices of this world.

Loving God, we confess our sins against you and one another, and pray that you will fill us with your light, that we may live our lives as true disciples in your name, without counting the cost. In the name of Christ, the one who showed us the way, we pray. Amen.



General Giving

Assurance of Pardon

God's light is present in this world. Present in the Christ child, born to lead us out of darkness.

Present in the star, in all that guides us to love. God's light is in the world, and the darkness did not overcome it. God's grace is in the world, and our missteps will not overcome it. We are loved, we are forgiven. Alleluia! 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.

Scripture

Matthew 2: 13-23

Sermon—“Angels of Salvation”