

*St. John's United Church of Christ*  
-Shining God's Light Where All Are Welcome-

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December 21, 2025

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10:00am—Worship



“We gather in the season where the darkness grows longer and the daylight fades. We gather on the precipice of this story we know by heart, the one we still have to understand, the one that pulls us in, over and over again, year after year, the one that comes to us in new ways, and all the ways we remember from before. We gather in anticipation of the invitation God has for each of us, to find our place in this new and ancient story, to say YES, again, this day, together.” The Power of Yes

“What’s so scary about a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger? Everything, if you are Joseph.” Erin Martin

“Each Advent, God extends a fresh opportunity to try again to be guided by love.” Stephanie Paulsell

Generous God, give us signs from the depths and the heights. Amen

**Leading Worship: Pastor Margaret, Lynn Grear**

**Last Sunday Attendance: 47    Offering: \$6,446.50**

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P.O. Box 288 – 448 Rice St. Elmore, OH 43416  
Pastor—Margaret Mills  
Pastor Emeritus—John W. Bock  
Ministers—All the Members of St. John’s

Church Office Hours  
Office Administrator—Erica Baker  
Office hours by appointment

**Church Phone:** 419-862-3511  
**Church Email:** st.johnsuccelmore@gmail.com  
**Pastor’s Phone:** 440-487-2549  
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## The Order of Worship

St. John's United Church of Christ

December 21, 2025

### GOD GATHERS US TOGETHER

*Prelude: "Stars Over Bethlehem" - Peery*

*Lighting of the Candles*

*\*Call to Worship*

One: To love is the greatest gift bestowed upon us. It is a surrender to God's holy power.

**All: God loves us, despite all our mistakes, so we pray for the patience of hope!**

One: To be loved by God is the right of every living thing. This love is the sun and the rain, it is the beginning and end of all.

**All: God loves us even when we neglect our neighbors, so we pray for the strength to bring peace.**

One: God's love is always a promise and a responsibility, and we are given this love freely. God demands nothing from us, yet knows we are capable of greatness.

**All: God loves us in the midst of destruction and despair, so we pray to share a vision of joy.**

One: Love is a sacred vow God has made to us, a rainbow in the sky, a baby in the manger.

**All: God loves us just as we are, and we give thanks and whisper amen.**

*\*Opening Hymn: "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" #153*

*\*Prayer of Invocation (in unison)*

**Lord of all life and all seasons, help us open our hearts to hear the words of promise and love that you send to us. Like Joseph, may we trust in your abiding love and power. Prepare us to receive your gift of grace and peace. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen**

*\*Invocation Response*

"What Does the Lord Require of You"

**What does the Lord require of you,  
What does the Lord require of you.  
Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God.  
To seek justice, and love kindness,  
And walk humbly with your God.  
To seek justice, and love kindness,  
And walk humbly with your God.**

## THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

**Lighting the Candle of Love -  
The Little Family**

Reader: Today we light the first, second, third, and fourth candles of the Advent wreath. Each candle has a meaning. The first candle is HOPE, the second candle is PEACE, the third candle is JOY, and the fourth candle is LOVE.

Reader: God is no longer a distant God, but is here and now. As Joseph trusted in the message of God's angel, so we can trust in God's message of love.

Reader: John 13:34 – Jesus said to them, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Prayer (in unison) **"Loving God, your mercy and compassion endure forever. Open our hearts, that we may receive your love; and following the example of your Son, spread that love to a love-starved world. Through Jesus Christ, who loved us to the end. Amen."**

### WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

*A Story for All Ages: "An Angel Appears to Joseph"*

Anthem—Songbirds

"Celebrate Jesus"

*A Message for Today:*

**The Power of Yes: Joseph Said Yes**

Isaiah 7: 10-16

Matthew 1: 18-25

### WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

*Invitation to the Offering*

All that we have is the Lord's. All that we may become and receive is in God's hands. For the sake of the love that is ours when our bonds grow deep with others, we give generously for the well-being of this community of faith and of the world.

*\*Doxology "As With Gladness" #236 vs. 3*

As they offered gifts most rare at the manger rude and bare,

So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,

All our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

*\*Prayer of Dedication (in unison)*

**Holy God, you bless us with many gifts, you retrieve us from despair and fear, you visit us with surprising proclamations, and you intend for us good things. We thank you for your steadfast love, for sending signs of assurance, and for the gift of faith. Use our gifts to bring comfort and justice to those in need, reforming the ways of our world for the sake of new life. Amen**

## **WE SHARE OUR COMMON LIFE**

*Announcements and Concerns may be emailed to: mills92445@gmail.com, texted to: 440-487-2549, or call into: 419-862-3511*

## **WE REST IN PRAYER WITH GOD**

*Call to Prayer*

We come today with arms wide open, ready to meet God's precious son. God's love for us is so full that God sent a fragile babe to share God's holy word, knowing that he would face pain. In our prayers we ask God to prepare us for his coming, that we may be messengers of God's abundant love. Hear us as we pray.

*Pastoral Prayer*

One: Celebrating the coming of the One who brings the reign of God to all people, let us pray for the world God loves, the Church God calls, and all the people around the world, according to their needs.

**All: Hear our prayer!**

*Silent Prayer*

*Words of Assurance*

The light of God's love shines upon each of us in the gift of God's love, Jesus Christ. This is given for you. Rejoice! You are loved by God, now and forever. Amen

*The Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

*Prayer Response*

"Emmanuel, Emmanuel" #178

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.  
God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.

## **SENT FORTH TO SERVE**

*\*Closing Hymn* "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates" #176

*\*Benediction*

Place your trust in God, for God is with you. Listen carefully for God's loving whisper in this time – the words will give you healing and hope. Go in peace, walk in love and may God's peace and love always be with you. Amen

*\*Postlude* "Christmastime" - Larson

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**—Join us on December 24th, Christmas Eve, to celebrate and worship together! Music will begin at 6:30pm with a service beginning at 7:00pm.

**SOUPER BOWL OF CARING**—Dava Warner is leading the Souper Bowl of Caring initiative at St. John's! It is a program run through a nonprofit called Tackle Hunger that focuses on mobilizing communities to fight food insecurity together. Starting January 11, Dava and our Faith Formation teachers will shine light on food insecurity and allow us to collect money and food items. Check the January Beacon for more information!

**PARSONAGE OPEN HOUSE**— The yearly tradition of an open house at the parsonage during the Christmas season will happen this year on Saturday, January 3rd. Since Christmas actually begins on December 25th and January 3rd isn't Epiphany yet (January 6th), we'll have the open house on the 9th day of Christmas. Bring a snack to share, beverages will be provided.

**HONOR WORKERS** want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We will meet again in February.

**FAITH FORMATION NEEDS YOUR HELP!** Rachel and Jamie are taking donations in the Sunday School Room for snacks (Goldfish, fruit snacks, cookies, etc.) as well as new crayons and markers. Please feel free to leave them directly in the classroom. THANK YOU!

**MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY** join us at 7:00pm in the Council Room every Monday night!

**HOME COMMUNION:** If you wish Pastor Margaret to bring communion to your home, please call 440-487-2549.

**AA MEETING** is every Thursday evening from 7:00 - 8:00. We are so glad to have them meet in our Fellowship Hall.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS CONT.

**DECEMBER LOOSE OFFERING** will go to the Christmas Fund

**DECEMBER FOOD PANTRY** item of the month is tomato juice.

**BELL RINGERS** We are still in need of 2 more bell-ringers for the Christmas season (and longer if possible)! If you enjoy hearing the bells ring on Sundays and can count, we'll teach you the rest! It's not hard and we always have fun! Please, Please consider joining us for rehearsals on Wednesday evenings at 7:30-8:30. Thank you!

**"OFFICE HOURS" at Christy's** will not be held again until January 16th. Christy's is closed for cleaning and to give the staff a holiday break beginning on December 22. They will reopen on January 16.

### IN OUR PRAYERS

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WISH TO HAVE YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM THE LIST OR IF ANYONE WISHES TO BE ADDED. PLEASE WRITE THOSE REQUESTS ON A PRAYER CARD.  
THANK YOU!

**Nursing Home/Rehab:** Mary Sue James, Al Amstutz, Nancy Weidner, Zoe Moore, Lois Rymers

**At Home** — Joanne Busdeker, Carlton Giesler, Doris Klaustermeyer, Cindy Calhoun, Heidi Holub, Lois Rader, Catherine Aldrich (Sue Applegate's friend), Joanne Price, Sherry Sherman (Pastor Tim's wife), McKinley Blausey, Jamie Irwin (Lois Rader's granddaughter), Dave Mate (friend of Paul Holewinski) and Debra Mate (Dave Mate's sister), Bob Hensel, Betty Walker, Helen Hollis (friends of Bill Verbryke), Ken Moore, Jerry and Dolores Beck, Janet Ottney, Paul Holewinski, Marvin Kates, Tracy Crone, Rachael (neighbor of Sue Applegate.), Shawn Meager, Becky Truman, Jennifer and Joe Shamy, Sandra Shaffer, Russ Krumnow, Jim Krumnow, Jim and Jane Garner, Amy M, Lois Pelly, Loren Sampson, Jeanette Tangeman, Jeff and Nancy Wegman, Tom and Sharon Crozier, David Reimer, the Fielding family, Sharon and John Virtue, Karen Nolen (friend of Jamie Verbryke), Ron Dangler, Kim Applegate, Briann, Rosemary Acha, Don Brimmer (Deb Ferguson's brother), Dolores Neeb

**Service Men & Women:** Kyle Babka, Dr. Samuel L. Preston III, Captain Benjamin Wideman

## POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS

### **In Memory Of:**

Loved Ones—Lee Sankiewicz  
Gary & Linda Whiting—Marge Whiting  
Judy L Myers-Kuhlman—Richard Kuhlman  
Howard & Margaret Kuhlman—Richard Kuhlman  
Edward & Irma Kuhlman—Richard Kuhlman  
Roy & Amanda Japsen—Richard Kuhlman  
Our Loved Ones—Barbara & Richard Bruntz  
Ric Neeb—Kendra, Brad, & Cassidy Buchanan  
Tim Buchanan—Kendra, Brad, & Cassidy Buchanan  
Loved Ones—John & Carol Bock  
Loved Ones—Joyce Bruntz  
Jill Snyder—Family (Busdekers)  
Donald & Carolyn Sampson—Family (Busdekers)  
John & Margaret Reiners—Pastor Margaret  
Grace & Duncan Trueman—Pastor Margaret  
David W Reiners—Pastor Margaret  
Loved Ones—Judy Suto & Family  
David Suto—Judy Suto & Family  
Alton & Edna Giesler—Bill & Barb Schwartz  
Loved Ones—Bill & Barb Schwartz  
Marilyn Alvarez—Bill Verbryke  
Bob & Harriet Verbryke—Their Children (Bill V)  
Dave Verbryke—Brothers & Sisters (Bill V)  
All Our Loved Ones—Dawn & Jim Wilburn

### **In Honor Of:**

Jim & Nola Owen—Kendra, Brad, & Cassidy Buchanan  
Loved Ones—John & Carol Bock  
Robert & Elizabeth Reiners—Pastor Margaret  
Zak, Jessica, & Milena Mills—Pastor Margaret  
Chris, Lindsey, Lily, & Zak Robison—Pastor Margaret  
All of Our Loved Ones Still With Us—Dawn & Jim Wilburn

### **Grateful For:**

Lynn Grear—Pastor Margaret  
Jim & Dawn Wilburn—Pastor Margaret  
Ron Busdeker—Pastor Margaret  
Erica Baker—Pastor Margaret

