

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

December 28, 2025

10:00am—Worship



The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self — all your wishes, and precautions — to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is remain what we call “ourselves,” to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be “good.” We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way — centered on money or pleasure or ambition — and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. That is why the real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in. And so on, all day. We can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments the new sort of life will be spreading through our system; because now we are letting Him work at the right part of us. It is the difference between paint, which is merely laid on the surface, and a dye or stain which soaks right through. When He said, “Be perfect,” He meant it. He meant that we must go in for the full treatment. It is hard; but the sort of compromise we are all hankering after is harder — in fact, it is impossible.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Leading Worship: Paul Holewinski, Lynn Grear

Last Sunday Attendance: 42 **Offering:** \$3,662.00
Christmas Eve Attn.: 107 **Offering:** \$1,719.01

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
Pastor's Email: millsm92445@gmail.com

<https://www.youtube.com/@StJohnsUCCElmore>
<https://facebook.com/StJohnsUCCElmore>



The Order of Worship

St. John's United Church of Christ

December 28, 2025

GOD GATHERS US TOGETHER

Prelude: "People Look East" by Larson

Lighting of the Candles

**Call to Worship (Psalm 24)*

One: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

All: Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

One: The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

All: They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him.

The Lord is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates, lift them up, you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in.

**Opening Hymn: "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" #198*

**Prayer of Invocation Romans 8: 31-39 (in unison)*

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For we are convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**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.**

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Old Testament:

Job 5: 1-27

New Testament:

1 Corinthians 3: 10-23

Gospel:

Matthew 6: 19-34

A Message for Today:

Foolishly Faithful by Paul Holewinski

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Invitation to the Offering

We come to worship like King Solomon, with seeking hearts. Our prayers are filled with questions of what is right or wrong, hearts yearning to know what to do, or how to live in God's world. When in doubt, we can return to gratitude. Noticing, knowing, and naming all the ways we are blessed can provide clarity. Now is the time in our worship together that we take a moment to breathe in gratitude and exhale generosity, sharing with the church and community in mission and service.

**Doxology Jude 24-25*

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

**Prayer of Dedication (in unison)*

O God who gathers more, and still more, people to your table; a table that is not contained by our one church, but extends across varied worship spaces, across diverse cultures and communities bless the gifts that each of us brings today. May they strengthen bodies and nourish spirits, and be used for your glory.

WE SHARE OUR COMMON LIFE

Announcements and Concerns may be emailed to: millsm92445@gmail.com, texted to: 440-487-2549, or call into: 419-862-3511

WE REST IN PRAYER WITH GOD

Call to Confession

God of Grace, you have gifted us with a world of abundance; a land of plenty; a country where all can have enough. We come before you this day to thank you for this prosperity and to repent from our apparent inability to share this wealth. God, we declare our own complicity in systems that sustain some of us, while forsaking many others. And we come before you to seek your forgiveness, even as we pray for your justice. Righteous God, you hear the cry of the poor. You listen to those who do without, as many spend recklessly. Be with us this day Lord. Hear our prayers. Touch our hearts that we may be faithful witnesses and effective voices for justice. God of mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Prayer of Confession Psalm 51

Have mercy on us O God according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out our transgressions. Wash away all our iniquities and cleanse us from our sins. For we know our transgressions and our sins are always before us. Against you have we sinned and done what is evil in your sight so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Cleanse us with hyssop, and we will be clean. Wash us, and we will be whiter than snow. Create in us a pure heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and grant us a willing spirit to sustain us.

Assurance of Pardon Micah 7:18-20

Who is a God like you who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be faithful to Jacob and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

Pastoral Prayer

Please respond with the following:

Responses (in unison)

- (1) Lord we give thanks for your blessings.**
- (2) Lord, we place our trust in You.**
- (3) Lord we welcome you into our lives.**
- (4) Lord we will rejoice as we walk your path into the future, knowing You are all ways with us.**

Silent Prayer

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.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (in unison)

To The One who calls upon our hearts thank you for the unity of our congregation, and thank you for the blessing we have received this year, bringing us together with love. May we continue to grow and accept others as we want to be accepted, blessed be those who believe, we thank graciously You O Lord, for before us is feast and not famine. For health, for unity, for understanding, for love that we may share our bounty in the season of cold, and find warmth in each other. Blessed be, Amen.

SENT FORTH TO SERVE

**Closing Hymn* "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart" #113

**Benediction*

May the wind rushing through the trees cleanse you of stress and worry.
May the rains wash away your sorrows.
May the flowers open each day and bless you with their fragrant beauty.
May the screech of the hawk instill in you a sense of freedom and courage.
May the warmth of the sun on your skin bring you joy.
May the light of the moon guide you along your path.
May the stars above fill you with curiosity and wonder.
May the crickets song endow you with peace.
May you be open and receptive to all of the healing powers of God,
Above all else,
May you always...

**Postlude* "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" by Rice

Special Music

"Safety Dance" by Men Without Hats, Rhythm of Youth, Statik Records (c) 1982

"Call to Confession" by Mari Castellanos, Policy Advocate, Justice and Witness Ministries, UCC

"Benediction" by Kristen Abram

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY LOOSE OFFERING will go to utility bills for the needy.

JANUARY FOOD PANTRY item of the month is peaches.

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