

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

February 22, 2026

10:00am—Worship
Reception of Members



“If temptation were all about blatant wrongdoing, it would be far easier to avoid.” Maggi Dawn

“As I grow older, much older, I will experience many things, and I will hit rock bottom again and again. Again and again I will suffer; again and again I will get back on my feet. I will not be defeated. I won't let my spirit be destroyed.”
Banana Yoshimoto

Powerful God, fill us with your Spirit and your Word. Amen

Leading Worship: Pastor Margaret, Lynn Gear

Last Sunday Attendance: 36 Offering: \$2,715.00

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

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The Order of Worship

St. John's United Church of Christ

February 22, 2026

THE RECEIVING OF NEW MEMBERS

Introductions and Opening Words

Questions of the New Members

- Is it your desire to become a member of this church?
- Will you be faithful to this community?
- Will you challenge this community to be the best version of itself and to live up to the things we say we believe?
- Will you allow yourself to be changed, shaped and transformed by this community, living into your called identity as a beloved child of God?

Words of Thanksgiving

**Questions of the Congregation*

- Will you be faithful to these new people as they join our congregation?
- Will you challenge these new members to be the best versions of themselves, and to help them live up to the things they say they believe?
- Will you allow yourself to be changed, shaped and transformed by these new members, living into our called identity as a beloved community of God?

**Congregational Welcome*

We welcome you with joy into our community of faith. We promise that when we walk through these doors, we will treat each other like family and as beloved children of God. We believe that we are stronger united together than as individuals, so we pledge to share our support in the work to which we feel called: striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, and bringing hope to those most vulnerable.

Words of Welcome and Proclamation

In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of St. John's United Church of Christ, and as your pastor, I extend to you the hand of Christian love, welcoming you into the company of this local church.

Welcome by a Member of St. John's Council

As a member of St. John's Council and on behalf of the members of St. John's United Church of Christ, I welcome you as members of our beloved community. We promise you our friendship, support and prayers.

To the Congregation

Please join me in warmly welcoming these individuals into our church family.

Songbirds - "All Who Believe"

GOD GATHERS US TOGETHER

Prelude: "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" - Berry

Lighting of the Candles

**Call to Worship*

One: After he was baptized by John, Jesus went by himself to the wilderness where he was tempted.

All: **In those forty days in the desert, Jesus was faced with hunger, doubt and temptation.**

One: Today, we begin to journey with Jesus through the season of Lent, which brings us to face some of our own weaknesses and temptations.. Let us be led by the Spirit, even into the uncomfortable places.

All: **Let us worship God and walk the journey together, seeking the spirit as our guide and companion along the way.**

**Opening Hymn:* "Be Thou My Vision" #502

**Prayer of Invocation (in unison)*

God, you know our hearts. You have knitted our inmost being and you know our deepest desires, fears and worries. Help us to journey during this Lenten season into a new awareness of your presence in our lives. Save us from our own temptations, so that we may more freely follow you. 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.**

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

A Story for All Ages: Different: A Great Thing To Be

A Message for Today: Into The Wilderness

Genesis 2: 15-17; 3: 1-7
Matthew 4: 1-11

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Invitation to the Offering

The season of Lent invites us to take stock of and deepen our spiritual practices. How might God be inviting us to deepen our spiritual practice of generosity in this season? Let us offer whatever gifts we have to resist the tempter's lies of scarcity and turn toward abundant life and flourishing for all.

**Doxology - Oh Bless the Gifts*

**O bless the gifts our hands have brought;
And bless the work our hearts have planned.
Ours is the faith, the will, the thought;
The rest, O God, is in Your hands.**

**Prayer of Dedication*

We give you thanks and praise, O God, for the free and abundant gift of grace you have given us in Jesus Christ. Let the simple gifts of our offerings and our lives be a sign of our unending gratitude for your undying love; through Christ our Lord. Amen

WE SHARE OUR COMMON LIFE

Announcements and Concerns may be emailed to: st.johnsuccelmore@gmail.com, texted to 440-487-2549, or call 419-862-3511 and leave a message.

WE REST IN PRAYER WITH GOD

Invitation to 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!

Pastoral Prayer

Silent Prayer

Words of Assurance

Wild God of wilderness, as we devote these forty days to you, shape us by your Holy Spirit into the image of Christ our Lord, so that we may be ready, by your grace, to confront the power of death with the promise of eternal life. 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

"O How He Loves You and Me" #270

O how he loves you and me,
O how he loves you and me.
He gave his life—what more could he give?
O how he loves you, O how he loves me,
O how he loves you and me!

SENT FORTH TO SERVE

**Closing Hymn "I Know Whom I Have Believed" #407*

**Benediction*

Go now, and live in the spirit of your baptism, even when you are led into wild and hard places. With repentance and trust, give yourselves to God, and with fasting and prayer, strengthen yourselves against the ways of the tempter. And may God enfold you in tender and lasting love. May Christ be beside you in times of struggle. And may the Spirit guide you back to the path whenever you stray. Go in peace and walk in love to serve the Lord.

**Postlude "There Is a Balm in Gilead" -Thyngerson*



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

NEW MEMBERS: It gives us great pleasure to introduce to you our newest members:

David Ferguson
Deborah Ferguson
Marjorie Mair-Hansen
Dayna Huffman
Eric Huffman
Kelsey Kaylor
Evan Shurtz
Rebecca McClure-Shurtz
Dava Warner

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRST LENTEN MEAL & MEDITATION will take place on February 25th. The Honor Workers will be providing a meal of lasagna, salad, bread, and dessert on Wednesday, February 25th at 6:00pm. Hymn singing at 6:45, Longing for Wholeness at 7:00.

SONGBIRDS will rehearse after the Lenten services on Wednesdays from 7:30-8:15. **BELLS** will meet after Sunday services beginning March 1 from 11:15-12:00.

COUNCIL DECISION: Some names have been on the Prayer list in the bulletin for a very long time. Some of you have shared when we can take names off but the list keeps getting longer. Council decided to follow the lead of other churches and remove names after a month on the list unless we are told otherwise.

HONOR WORKERS will meet again March 10 @ 7:00 PM to learn about the "Barn Quilt Trail" with Martha Jess. Hosted by Glenneth Elkins. All are welcome.

"OFFICE HOURS" at Christy's continues on Thursday mornings from 9:00 to noon. Come for conversation, food, and a beverage anytime during the morning.

FEBRUARY LOOSE OFFERING will go to help the needy pay their utility bills.

FOOD PANTRY NEWS: The last few months have brought many neighbors to the pantry. Just a note we served 38 families during the month of January. Thanks to everyone in the community for your generosity.

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

UPCOMING LENTEN EVENTS:

2/25: Lenten Meal & Meditation (Honor Workers)
3/04: Lenten Meal & Meditation (Faith Formation)
3/11: Lenten Meal & Meditation (Songbirds & Bells)
3/18: Lenten Meal & Meditation (Jim & Dawn Wilburn)
3/25: Lenten Meal & Meditation (Jim & Dawn Wilburn)
4/02 @ 7:00pm: Maundy Thursday service
4/03 from 12:00pm-3:00pm—Good Friday Reflection
4/05 @ 7:00am: Sunrise Easter Service
@ 10:00am: Easter Worship

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY Our next Bible Study begins February 16th. Its focus is on the life of David. He records his weaknesses and struggles but also was a man of great faith. Everyone is welcome to join us Monday evenings at 7:00 in person or on Zoom.

FEBRUARY BEACON & ANNUAL REPORT have been sent electronically and there are a limited number of printed copies of each on the back counter.

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

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!

Prayers from Congregation: Cal Jennings, Andrew Barringer (diagnosed with ALS), Timothy (Mossman) Phillips in NICU and his family

Hospitalized: Sharon Crozier, Bob Kuhlman (Bay Park)

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, 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, Sue Applegate, Mary Ann Zolman, Phyllis Brimmer (Deb Ferguson's mother), Michael Barringer

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