St. John's United Church of Christ

-Shining God's Light Where All Are Welcome-

October 11, 2026

10:00—Worship
11:15—Fellowship
Blessing of the Animals



Leading Worship: Pastor Margaret Mills, Lynn Grear,

Last Sunday Attendance: 46 **Offering:** $2,889.00

www.uccelmore.org
https://www.youtube.com/@StJohnsUCCElmore
https://facebook.com/StJohnsUCCElmore



Church Phone: 419-862-3511
Church Email:
st.johnsuccelmore@gmail.com
Pastor's Phone: 440-487-2549
Pastor's Email: millsm92445@gmail.com

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 Maven—Erica Baker
Office hours by appointment



The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea. They share in the fortunes of human existence and have a part in human life. God, who confers gifts on all living things, has often used the service of animals or made them reminders of the gifts of salvation. Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards made part of the covenant with Noah. (Genesis 9: 9 - 10) The Paschal Lamb recalls the Passover sacrifice and the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 12: 3 - 14) A giant fish saved Jonah; (Jonah 2: 1 - 10) ravens brought bread to Elijah; (1Kings 17: 6) animals were included in the repentance of Nineveh; (Jonah 3: 7) and animals share in Christ's redemption of all God's creation. And of course we remember the stories of the animals at the manger, and the humble donkey that carried Jesus into Jerusalem. We, therefore, invoke God's blessing on our animals. As we do so, let us praise the Creator and thank God for setting us as stewards over all the creatures of the earth." umcdiscipleship.org (edited)

The Blessing of the Animals is a tradition inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, known for his deep love of all God's creatures. It is held near Oct. 4, St. Francis's feast day.

God of Creation, we give you thanks for all you have created. We ask for divine protection over the bond between humans and the natural world. Remind us of our biblical responsibility to care for, protect, and respect all living creatures on earth. Amen



The Order of Worship

St. John's United Church of Christ

October 11, 2026

GOD GATHERS US TOGETHER

Prelude: "The Friendly Beasts" - Medieval English Carol

Lighting of the Candles

Gathering Words - An Invitation to All

Come and worship all you who love and serve the Lord - outsiders and insiders, old-timers and new-comers, the young, old and in-between. Come as you are, for this is God's house - a house of prayer for all people, and God welcomes each one who comes. So whether you are worshiping here on site or at home around your table with your pet to be blessed…know that God's compassionate love is poured over you this day no matter where you are.

**Call to Worship*

One: All dogs and cats, large and small:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: All rabbits, hamsters and guinea pigs:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: All goldfish, guppies, and swimming creatures:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: All parakeets and budgies and singing birds:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: All horses, cows and sheep:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: All lizards, and crawling creatures:
All: Praise the Lord!
One: Every animal in the sky, the sea and the forest:
All: Praise the Lord!

**Opening Hymn*: "All Things Bright and Beautiful" #30

**Prayer of Invocation (in unison)*

God, our Creator, help us to love all creatures as our kin, all animals as our partners on Earth, all birds as messengers of praise, all small beings as expressions of your mysterious design. As we enter your presence with thanksgiving and hope, remind us that you have formed us as your creations, your creatures, your critters. You join us on the journey of life through valleys, upon mountains, and on the plains. We seek your wisdom, encouragement, and grace. Reveal your will and display your glory among your people as we worship your holy name. 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.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

A Story for All Ages **Rainbow Fish**

Praying Together:

Loving God, we thank you for those creatures who live alongside us as our companions and friends; for their loyalty, love and trust which enrich our lives and give us joy; teach us the value of kindness, the power of mercy, the strength of gentleness; and create in us a new spirit of humility and joy as we see your Spirit in the face of your creatures. And now, bless, O God, these creatures and fill our hearts with thanksgiving for their being. Amen

Bring up your animals (if we are outside), or pictures of your animals, or a treasured stuffed animal at this time.

Blessing of the Animals

One: _____ may you be blessed in the Name of God who created you. May you and _____ enjoy life together and find joy with the God who made you.

All: You were created by God, and you are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together, and continue to be a blessing to each other.

A Prayer of Remembrance (in unison)

We remember our animal companions who are no longer with us. We give thanks for the gifts they gave us and the variety of ways they enriched and blessed our lives. We are confident that our Creator continues to care for them. Amen

**Song*

"A Place in the Choir" (see insert)

A Message for Today:

Parables of the Animals
Genesis 1: 26; 29-30
Psalm 148
Matthew 10: 29-31

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Invitation to the Offering

The heavens and the earth, the sun and moon and stars, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea – all things belong to God, and to God we return our gifts in gratitude.

**Doxology* - "I Sing Praises to Your Name" #660

I sing praises to your name, O Lord, praises to your name, O Lord
For your name is great and greatly to be praised;
I sing glory to your name, O lord, glory to your name, O Lord,
For your name is great and greatly to be praised.

**Prayer of Dedication (in unison)*

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. From your goodness we have these gifts to offer – and we lift up our hearts in thanksgiving for the companions and creatures you have entrusted to our care. Receive our offerings, our service, and our love, and help us to honor you by protecting the vulnerable, the creatures great and small, and cherishing the earth. We ask this through Jesus 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

In love God created us and all creatures, and in love God sustains us, day after day. So it is with confidence that we bring our prayers to God, knowing that we are heard, and that God will respond. So be silent. Be still. Be aware. In your own hearts the Spirit is at prayer. Listen and learn. Open and find. Heart-wisdom, Christ. And so we pray:

Pastoral Prayer

Silent Prayer

Words of Assurance

One: Whether dog lovers, cat lovers, horse lovers, hamster lovers, or not lovers of animals, we surely belong to one another in the peace and unity of God. In that peace and through that world-wide unity we are made whole, healed, and forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God. 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 trespasses/sins/debts, as we forgive those who trespass/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 - "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" #489

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
Send us love, send us power, send us grace.

SENT FORTH TO SERVE

**Closing Hymn:* "Let All Things Now Living" #22

**Benediction*

May God, who created the animals of this earth, continue to protect and sustain us all, now and forever. And may the love of God assure you, the hope of God guide you, and the peace of God sustain you as you go receiving and extending God's grace in the world.

**Postlude:* "All Creatures of Our God and King" - Faber

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FALL GATHERING: On October 25th, right after church, the Faith Formation team is hosting a trunk or treat event complete with hot dogs and a bouncy house. More information will be in the October Beacon but SAVE THE DATE.

HONOR WORKERS: The next meeting of the Honor Workers will take place on Tuesday, November 10th at 7:00pm. Join Barb Schwartz for a lesson in flower arranging!

SAVE THE DATE: CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER—The Annual Chicken and Biscuit Dinner will take place on Saturday, October 17th from 4:00-6:00pm. Drive-Thru only, $15/meal, includes: chicken, biscuit and gravy, tossed salad, homemade cranberry sauce, applesauce, and pie.

LOOSE OFFERING: We have loose offering envelopes next to the offering plates by the doors. The loose offering that you put in the plates is not for our general operating fund but for our benevolent institutions. For October, the loose offering goes to Sunshine Communities.

SONGBIRDS AND BELLS—THIS WEEK ONLY: This week only, practice for Songbirds and Bells will be on Thursday, October 15th at 6:30 for Songbirds and 7:30 for Bells. See you there!

PASTOR ON THE PORCH: See you in the Spring!

BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE COLLECTION: Thank you for your participation and for spreading God's Word!

PLASTIC BAGS: Keep them coming – we are well on our way to our second 250 lbs that will take us half way to our bench.

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY: We know Mondays can be long and you may not want to venture out again, but did you know you can join our Bible Study online? We offer Zoom participation, too! Just email Sharon Arndt at dsarndt@aol.com and she will send you the link!

2027 OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE TABLE IN THE COUNCIL ROOM.

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.

OCTOBER FOOD PANTRY ITEM is Deodorant Soap.

OCTOBER LOOSE OFFERING goes to Sunshine Communities.

SUNSHINE COMMUNITIES (Northwest Ohio) is a non-profit based in Maumee, OH. Founded more than 75 years ago, it supports children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. They provide residential care (including campus homes and neighborhood group homes), vocational training, therapeutic and clinical care, recreation, and adult day services. Also part of the Sunshine Communities is Georgette's Grounds and Gifts - a fair-trade coffee and gift shop. Sunshine Studios offers a storefront of art and classes for the community, all while employing Sunshine artists with developmental disabilities who teach about and sell their art. Both Georgette's and the Studios can be found on Conant Street in Maumee.

OFFERING: Since we are not passing the offering plates, you are invited to place your offering in the plates by the doors to the sanctuary. If you didn't have a chance as you entered, there are plates by the doors as you leave. Thanks for your giving.

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.



Bereavement: Family of Dolores Beck, Family of Nate Walker (Pastor Margaret's great-niece Rebecca Goetz Walker's husband), Family of Steve Schneider, Rose/Scott families for the loss of a beloved wife to a rare form of cancer, Family of Nancy Weidner

Hospice: Dolores Neeb

Hospital: David Brimmer

Nursing Home/Rehab: Mary Sue James, Al Amstutz, Zoe Moore, Elizabeth Reiners (Pastor Margaret's aunt)

At Home: Joanne Busdeker, Carlton Giesler, Doris Klaustermeyer, 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, Ken Moore, Janet Ottney, Paul Holewinski, Rachael (neighbor of Sue Applegate,), Jennifer and Joe Shamy, Saundra Shaffer, Russ Krumnow, Jim Krumnow, Jane Garner, Jeff and Nancy Wegman, Tom & Sharon Crozier, Sharon and John Virtue, Karen Nolen (friend of Jamie Verbryke), Kim Applegate, Briann, Phyllis Brimmer (Deb Ferguson's mother), Mike (Susan Cole's friend's husband), Kayla (Branden Rizzo's sister), Matt Karlovec, Tracey Floyd, Loren Sampson, Liliana Rankin (relative of Pastor Margaret), Nan Card, Jill Stinebaugh, Rosemary Acha, Rev. Jim Garner

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

Statement of Faith

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

*The original (traditional) version of the **UCC Statement of Faith** was adopted in 1959 by General Synod and is widely regarded as one of the most significant Christian faith testimonies of the 20th century. The Statement of Faith in the Form of a Doxology was authorized by Executive Council in 1981.*