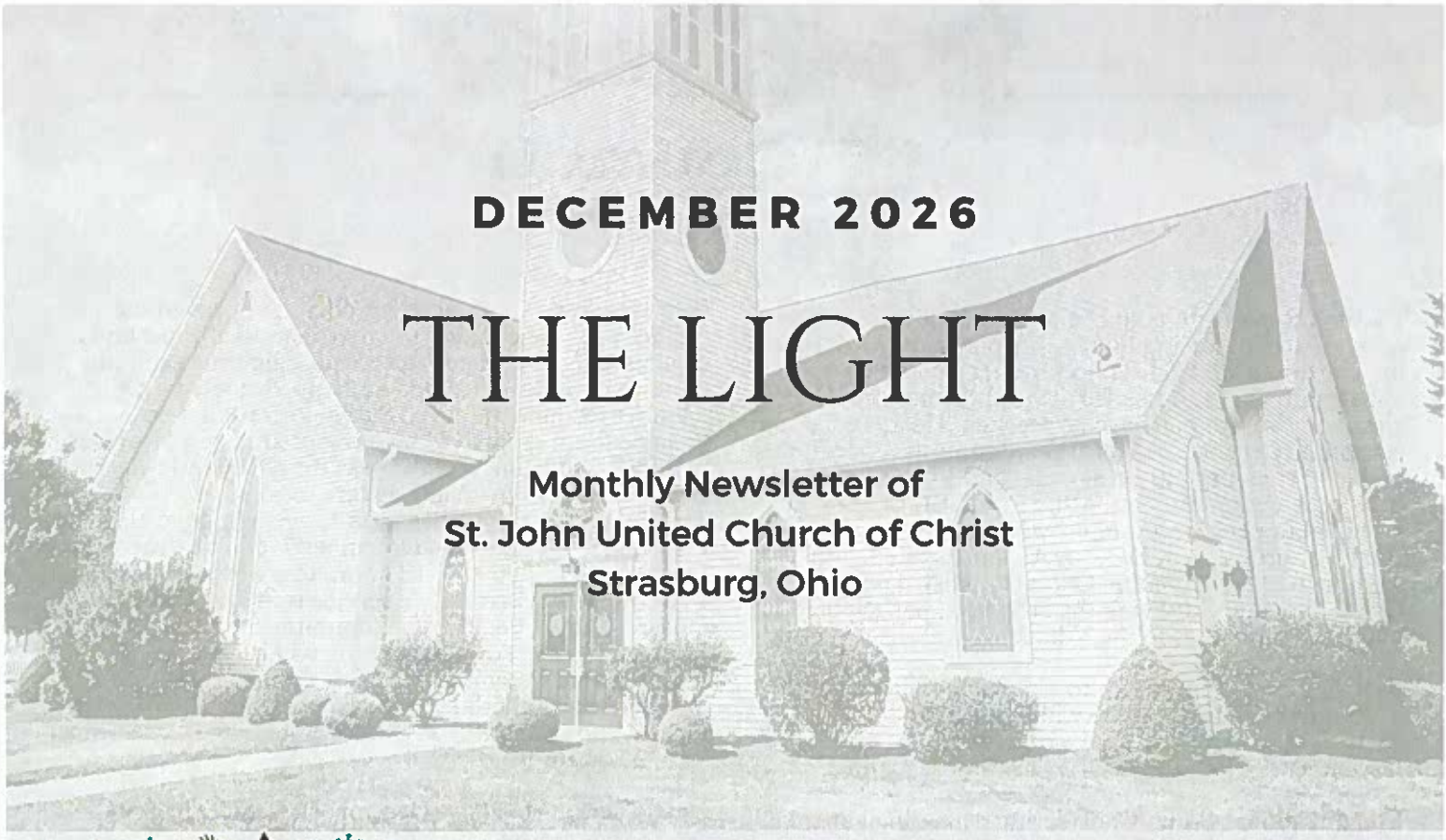


**DECEMBER 2026**

# THE LIGHT

**Monthly Newsletter of**
**St. John United Church of Christ**
**Strasburg, Ohio**


ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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WORSHIP SERVICE 9:30 AM
ONSITE AND ONLINE
FACEBOOK
YOUTUBE
@STJOHNSTRASBURG

SUNDAY SCHOOL - 10:45 AM

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
TUESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY
9:00 AM - 5:00PM

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

**By Jason Rissler**

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Philippi said this, "I always thank my God every time I remember you." Philippians 1:3. In this Thanksgiving season as I reflect on what it is that I am thankful for, I think of you, the church at St. John. I am truly grateful for you and grateful that God has called me to serve with you as partners for the gospel.

I am thankful for your love and care. You show this towards me and my family and towards each other. It is a gift to be part of such a caring community of people looking out for each other.

I am thankful for the many ways that so many of you are serving the church and community. It is one of the greatest blessings for a pastor. Too often I hear stories of pastors who are "doing all the work" by themselves in their church. That is certainly not the case for us and I am grateful.

I am thankful for your generosity to the needs in our church, our community and around this world. This generosity reflects God's heart.

At this Thanksgiving, I am truly grateful for you! God is at work among us. It is a joy to serve together.

Happy Thanksgiving
Merry Christmas
A blessed New Year!

# Council Notes

**Pastor's Report -** In addition to the usual visits with individuals in nursing homes, hospitals and with shut-ins, Pastor Jason held services at Hennis and Park Village nursing centers. He also led the new members class and did pre-marriage counseling. He attended many community events such as athletic contests, coordinated and led Strasburg pastor meeting and FCA as well as providing communion monthly to First Lutheran. He attended in person Community on Ministry meeting at First Congregational UCC in Akron, assisted with support for the upcoming Cantata, assisted with GriefShare and Surviving the Holidays, participated in planning Christmas in the Village

**BOCE -** The summer trip to Cincinnati will be July 18-22. On December 13, there will be caroling followed by a party. The youth Christmas program will be on December 20. Practices will be December 6 and 13.

**Congregational Care -** Considering delivering chocolates to shut-ins.

**Fellowship -** Serving cake for the new member service. Working with the Music and Worship Committee to serve a meal to those performing the Cantata on December 6.

**Finance -** We are ahead of budget for the year. Court ordered restitution payment has been received. Money market accounts are earning 3.7%.

**Missions/Outreach -** The trees are up for giving gifts and socks or mittens.

**Music and Worship -** Jesey Meche accepted the choir and handbell director positions and will start in January.

**Property -** Leaves have been cleaned up by Chad Bonifant.

**Sanctuary -** Christmas decorations, except for trees, are up. The trees will go up November 24. Poinsettias will be placed December 23.

**Sound and Electronics** - The new headset for Pastor Jason is in service.

**Old Business** - The sign by the office is completed and the front sign is partially completed by Synergy Signs. After viewing estimates, council decided to proceed with the project to remodel the social hall at an estimated cost of $60,000. A blood drive will be held at the church Dec 8.

**New Business** - Council reviewed and approved the budget with the changes to choir, handbell choir and organist salaries. The Maxx Electric lighting estimate remains on hold. Accepted and approved new BOCE member recommendation, Sally Dorn for a 2-year balance term. Approved and accepted Jessey Meche as handbell and chancel choir director effective January 2027. The St. John Thanksgiving meal is on Thanksgiving, November 26 at noon. The Live Nativity is Decemer 12. Set-up is December 7, cookie drop off is December 11, 9:00 AM-12 noon, tear down is December 14 at noon. Christmas Eve service is at 7:00 PM with music starting at 6:30 PM. Committee reports are due January 10. The Annual meeting will be January 31. Approved new members: Beverly Courtwright, Cindy Snyder, Liz Timberlake, Linda Ward and Ellen Whyde. Pastor Jason vacation days: November 26-27, December 8,15, 25-31

**Next Council Meeting** - December 17, 2026, 6:00 PM.

**We communicate regularly through e-mail and text messages. If you are not receiving these and would like to, please let the church office know.




St. John UCC Welcomes Five New Members
November 22, 2026

L to R: Pastor Jason Rissler, Ellen Whyde, Beverly Courtwright, Linda Ward, Liz Timberlake, Cindy Snyder

Did you know that we have an online giving option? To give online, go to stjohnstrasburg.org or use the QR code. Thanks for your generosity!

# UPCOMING EVENTS

# December 2026

### *Men's Monthly Breakfast - December 11, 8:00 am*




The group will meet at the church with a breakfast served. The group will study the book of James. If you haven't yet joined, this is a great time!




### *Senior Luncheon - December 10 , Noon*

The next Senior Luncheon is on December 10th at noon in the Social Hall. A ukelele group will be playing Christmas music for us that day. The lunch plan includes Ham Loaf, Sweet Potatoes and Mandarin Jello Dessert. Reservations are requested by the Friday before the luncheon each month.

## Dates to Remember

**December 6 - Christmas Cantata 2:00 PM**




**December 12 - Strasburg Live Nativity, Christmas in the Village 5:00 PM-7:00 PM**



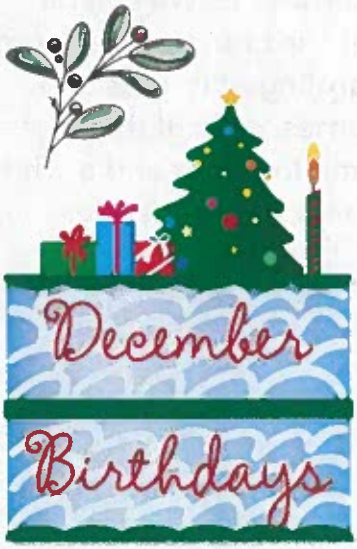
**December 20 - Children's Christmas Program**




**December 21 - Blue Christmas at Strasburg UMC 7:00 PM**

**December 24 - Christmas Eve Service 7:00 PM**

**Pre-Service Music 6:30 PM**




2 - Bev Santman (90th)
7 - Dan King
9 - Mary Ann Howell
12 - Audrey Baker
13 - Harold Bayer
14 - Martha Wade
19 - Kathie Courtney
19 - Kathie Lanzer
31 - Arvada Everhart

### ACOLYTES

Dec 6 - Landon Dayton
Dec 13 - Gavin McPherson
Dec 20 - Nora Sexton
Dec 24 - Hannah Rissler
Dec 27 - Ty Palmer

### LAY LEADERS

Dec 6 - Vickki Hinebaugh
Dec 13 - Steve Chaney
Dec 20 - Kelly Henry
Dec 27 - Jeanette King

### SPECIAL MUSIC

Dec 6 - Chancel Choir
Dec 13 - Handbell Choir
Dec 20 - Piano Trio (Vickki Hinebaugh, Elaine Scatizzi and Twila Lampe)
Dec 27 - Joy Diehl



### GREETERS

Rick Timberlake
Liz Timberlake

### USHERS

Jerry Murphy
Jim Rowe
Rick Timberlake
Kathy Osler




## FCA at SHS

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes meets at Strasburg High School the 1st and 3rd Fridays at 7AM. All students are welcome to attend. The planned speakers for December are David Greene on the 4th and there will be a Christmas Breakfast & Program on the 18th.




## Children and Youth Christmas Program

The Annual Children and Youth Christmas program will be during the worship service Sunday, December 20th. Rehearsals for this program will be held during the Sunday School hour on December 6th and 13th. Even if your children are not typically in Sunday School, they are welcome to participate if they attend the rehearsals and let Heather Rissler know of their interest.






## Christmas Carols

**The Board of Christian Education is encouraging all to join in singing Christmas Carols for our shut-ins on December 13. We will be meeting at the church at 3:30 pm then caroling at homes and nursing homes. We will then meet at the church for pizza and a white elephant gift exchange.**







"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

*Matthew 1:21, NIV*









# Advent Reflections
## by
## Heather Rissler

Advent has always been a time to wait. When I was younger, anticipation was like a flame inside of me, growing warmer and brighter as the calendar edged closer to December 25th. Waiting was filled with traditions that kept us from idly waiting for that special morning– tagging a pine tree at the nearby Christmas-tree farm, then eventually cutting it, dragging it into the house, getting it to stand upright–passing boxes of ornaments down the attic stairs to find our homemade treasures tangled together, and at school, we practiced singing Christmas carols standing closely together on the risers until our parents came to watch us perform. We crafted wreaths with macaroni noodles, ribbons, and glitter. In the evenings, while my mom prepared supper, I lay near the wood-burning stove and watched all the blinking lights fill our living space while Burl Ives sang to me from the record player. No doubt for my mother, that time of year was less peaceful than I remember. "There is a lot to be done," she said. Now, it is my turn to make the lists and carry on the traditions that made December so special. Whether my kids are little or big, It is a time of year that I get lost in the preparations, forfeiting that sense of wonder I had as a child.

When I am confronted with the question: "Are you ready for Christmas?" I never know quite how to answer. Getting ready makes me feel worn and depleted, the opposite of how we are meant to receive the King of heaven born to us. I want my heart to be wide-open and running towards the stable, welcoming Jesus and celebrating his love for us. But, sadly, by December 24th, I am tired and more like a flame that is being extinguished rather than one that burns bright and ready for Christ to come.

For those of you who have lost that sense of excitement and traded it for a spirit of exhaustion. Look up and find the stars again on a clear night, shake yeast from a jar, make a loaf of bread, waiting for it to rise, remembering why Israel was so desperate for their savior. Light candles and read the Christmas story with someone. Immerse yourself in Advent, instead of letting consumerism swallow you up. The lists will always be there. There will always be things that need to be done, but make room for Jesus, the prince of peace. He is the most holy and beautiful gift we could give and receive.


















St. John Members:

I greatly enjoyed the good food that Susan Murphy brought me from the soup and sandwich lunch. Thanks to all involved and thanks to Susan for delivering it and the church info.

Hank Grove





GIVE LIFE. SHARE LOVE.

**BLOOD DRIVE**

**Versiti Blood Drive**

Add a little hope to your holiday plans! Join us for our blood drive at St. John on Tuesday, December 8 from 1:30-5:30 PM. Your donation can make a lifesaving difference for patients in our community. Schedule your appointment today:

https://donateblood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/11653098



St John UCC Strasburg Holidays in United States

Dec 2026 (Eastern Time - New York

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29<br>Advent Begins<br>9:30am - Worship -<br>10:45am - Sunday School | 30<br>7pm - Scout Troop | 1<br>8am - Pipe Organ Tuning<br>11am - Machelle Miller<br>1pm - Tiger Paw Packing<br>6pm - Cub Scout Den | 2<br>7:30am - Business Leader<br>5pm - BOCE<br>5:30pm - Handbell<br>7pm - Chancel Choir | 3<br>2:30pm - Action Now<br>6pm - Music & Worship | 4 | 5 |
| 6<br>9:30am - Worship<br>10:45am - Sunday School<br>2pm - Christmas Cantata<br>3pm - Luncheon for | 7<br>Set up for Live Nativity<br>7pm - Scout Troop | 8<br>Pastor Jason vacation<br>9am - Congregational<br>2pm - Versiti Blood Drive<br>6pm - Cub Scout Den | 9<br>Food Bank Pick up<br>7:30am - Business Leader<br>2pm - Park Village Service<br>5:30pm - Handbell | 10<br>12pm - Senior Luncheon | 11<br>8am - Men's Breakfast<br>9am - Cookie Drop off for<br>11am - Machelle Miller | 12<br>5pm - Christmas in the |
| 13<br>Happy birthday!<br>9:30am - Worship<br>10:45am - Sunday School<br>3:30pm - Caroling and | 14<br>12pm - Take down<br>7pm - Scout Troop | 15<br>Pastor Jason vacation<br>6pm - Cub Scout Den | 16<br>7:30am - Business Leader<br>9:30am - Finance Mtg.<br>1:30pm - Hennis Service<br>5:30pm - Handbell<br>7pm - Chancel Choir | 17<br>6pm - Church Council | 18<br>11am - Machelle Miller | 19 |
| 20<br>9:30am - Worship -<br>10:45am - Sunday School | 21<br>7pm - Blue Christmas<br>7pm - Scout Troop | 22<br>6pm - Cub Scout Den | 23<br>7:30am - Business Leader<br>5:30pm - Handbell<br>7pm - Chancel Choir | 24<br>7pm - Christmas Eve | 25<br>Christmas Day | 26 |
| 27<br>9:30am - Worship<br>10:45am - Sunday School | 28<br>Pastor Jason vacation<br>7pm - Scout Troop | 29<br>Pastor Jason vacation<br>6pm - Cub Scout Den | 30<br>Pastor Jason vacation<br>7:30am - Business Leader<br>5:30pm - Handbell | 31<br>Pastor Jason vacation | 1<br>New Year's Day | 2 |