

MAY 2026

THE LIGHT

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

ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
516 N. WOOSTER AVE.
STRASBURG, OH 44680

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WWW.STJOHNSTRASBURG.ORG

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

On March 7 and April 18 I had the privilege of attending a preaching class in Dayton with Steve Chaney, Cole Hutchison and Derek Rissler. The class was taught by Dr. Meghan Good. It was an excellent learning opportunity. The next part of the class will be finishing a sermon and presenting it at St. John over the next months. Dr. Good will review the sermon and give input for improvements. As I watch each one work on their homework and engage in the class, my heart is encouraged. I felt similarly as I participated in the community service led by the Strasburg FCA. The God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob, the God of Peter, James and John, is the God we serve today. This is the God who is at work today! We look forward to all that God has in store.



**The cost of participation in this class was provided from an endowment account in place to train our young people for ministry.



Council Notes

Pastor's Report - Pastor Jason made many home, nursing home and hospital visits, as well as holding services at Hennis and Park Village nursing centers. He officiated at a funeral and three baptisms and attended many meetings within the church and community with many more scheduled. He will attend the second of two preaching classes with three other members. They will be scheduled to share the sermon they wrote with the congregation. Heather Rissler will lead a 5-week Bible study on Thursday mornings April 30-May 28 using the book "Anxious for Nothing" by Max Lucado. An OSU student has asked for a Chicago mission trip support.

BOCE - There were two applications for the Christian Scholarship and each will receive a \$500 scholarship. There will be a meeting for everyone going to the adult work trip to Cincinnati following the May BOCE meeting. A car wash on May 30 will benefit the youth Cincinnati trip. There is a circus theme for the VBS which will be held at UMC June 15-18, 2026. Each church will contribute \$300 for expenses.

Congregational Care - A celebration of life memorial service is scheduled for Warren Welz on May 16. Geraniums will be purchased to take to shut-ins.

Fellowship - A Ladies luncheon will be held May 3.

Finance - Monthly reports were reviewed and approved. Our request to the Haman Fund for the stained glass windows was not approved.

Missions/Outreach - Missions and Outreach committees met and have merged and will meet monthly on the third Thursday beginning May 21. Currently packing 44 Tiger Paw Packs.

Music and Worship - There will be no meetings through the summer months.

Property - New switches have been installed on furnaces. A leak in the narthex ceiling will be repaired. Stairway to basement railings will be stabilized.

Sanctuary - Decorations have been placed for spring. Geraniums will be placed for Pentecost.

Sound and Electronics - Nothing to report.

Old Business - The congregation approved the restoration project for the stained-glass windows. An estimate of \$4,560 was approved from RLA Excavating to create a new 22 x 100 space for 11 parking spaces in the grassy area across the street. A new office computer has been installed.

New Business - A new countertop and sink for the ladies' restroom has been donated by Tower Industries. An Earth Day outside clean-up day will be held April 22. Shrubs need to be removed at the parsonage. Mulch will be spread May 16.

Next Council Meeting - May 21, 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.



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!



May 2026

Men's Monthly Breakfast - May 8, 8:30 am

The group will meet at the church with a breakfast served. A book study of Max Lucado's, "Ten Men of the Bible: How God Used Imperfect People to Change the World" will take place.



- ACOLYTES**
 May 03 - Gavin McPherson
 May 10 - Ty Palmer
 May 17 - Landon Dayton
 May 24 - Hannah Rissler
 May 31 - Nora Sexton

LAY LEADERS

- May 03 - Denise Borter
 May 10 - Abbey Hutchison
 May 17 - Becky Reymond
 May 24 - Art Lampe
 May 31 - Jeanette King

SPECIAL MUSIC

- May 03 - Twila Lampe
 May 10 - Vickki Hinebaugh and Elaine Scatizzi
 May 17 - Handbell Choir
 May 24 - Joy Diehl and Gary Garber
 May 31 - Handbell Choir and Chancel Choir



The next **Senior Luncheon** is Thursday, May 14 at 12:00 noon. The menu includes a hot dog with coney sauce, cole slaw, chips and a brownie. Emily Crilley will share information on the Strasburg library and her experiences. Please RSVP to the church office by Friday, May 8.



Speaker Series

The Life Learning Speaker Series will continue May 14, at 6:00PM with Ruth Ann Martin (Pastor Jason's mother) as guest speaker. Ruth Ann will be sharing information on downsizing and decluttering our lives. This informative series is open to all, so please invite your friends. Please RSVP on the sign-up list in the Gathering Room or call the church office. There are no presentations scheduled for the summer months.



Camp Washington Work Trip May 21-24

The Board of Christian Education is planning a weekend service opportunity for our congregation to assist our friends at Washington UCC in Cincinnati. The group will be doing preparation work for the summer children's program. The work will include cleaning, moving, setting up rooms and some maintenance/repair jobs. There will be something for every skill level. Please let John Gerber or Cole Hutchison know if you are interested in attending. This is a great opportunity to meet the church there and serve together with them.

GREETERS

- Bev Santman
 Vickki Hinebaugh

USHERS

- Steve Chaney
 Cole Hutchison
 Al Osler
 Kathy Osler
 Jim Rowe
 Chuck Wahl

Youth Summer Service Trip to Cincinnati - June 7-11.

Campership

The Board of Christian Ed. offers financial assistance for students K-12 who are planning to attend camp this year. Please turn in paid receipts to the church office by May 15th to get reimbursed. Reimbursement amounts will be determined by the number of applications and available funds.

If you have any questions, please see Heather Rissler.



"GriefShare helps you understand that each person heals in their own way and time—and that's okay."

Donna



GriefShare™

God is your refuge
& strength –
Psalm 46:1

The GriefShare program started again on Friday, February 13, 1:00-3:00 PM and will continue through May 15. Grieving is a normal response to the loss of your loved one, but grief can also be unpredictable. Your GriefShare group will help you learn how to cope with the daily challenges of grief.

You can register for this session by calling the church office or Deb Burrier at 330-413-0685.

Ladies Gathering

The Ladies Gathering will be held on Sunday, May 3rd at 1:00 pm in the social hall.

The menu includes: Stuffed Chicken Breasts, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Green Beans, Fresh Fruit with Dip, Blueberry and Strawberry Delight, Rolls and Beverages.



Vacation Bible School
Strasburg VBS will be held June 15-18 at the Strasburg United Methodist Church. There is a circus theme this year.

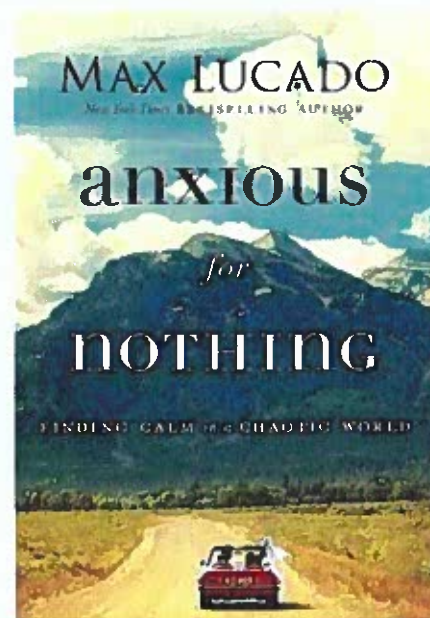
MAY



- 1 - Evelyn Smith
- 3 - Sue Miller
- 11 - Jim Harper, Sr.
- 23 - Jeanne Sauernheimer
- 25 - Lynda Bales
- 25 - Deb Burrier
- 25 - Sue Lalewicz
- 26 - Wanda Miller
- 29 - Harold Grove
- 31 - Sue Rieger

Heather Rissler is offering a 5-week study based on Max Lucado's book, "Anxious for Nothing" Thursday mornings April 30 through the end of May at 9:30 AM. The study is similar in format and a good follow-up to the last series. The cost for the book is \$15.

Please contact the church office at 330-878-5113 to register.



Our youth will be at the church on Saturday, May 30 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon to wash your car. This fund raiser is to help with expenses for the Camp Washington Summer Service Trip to Cincinnati.



Strasburg American Legion Chicken BBQ

The Strasburg American Legion will have their chicken BBQ from 10:00 AM to noon in Malcuit's Parking lot on May 3, June 7, July 12, August 9, and September 13.

Thank You!

Thank you to Ruthie Dreher for the Easter flowers in memory of Bub. And thank you Mary Ellen Gurney for bringing them.
Audrey Baker

To all the good and loving people of St. John Strasburg,

Thank you for your generous gift in celebration of my birthday. Together we are feeding the hungry, clothing the poor and blessing the children. Your commitment to partner with us in these ministries is bringing the kin-dom of God near.

Much love & appreciation,
Pastor Melissa
Camp Washington

Dear Pastor Rissler,

We wish to extend our sincere thanks for your support of The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County. We are thankful for your donation of \$500 dated March 6, 2026. Your gift will help us achieve our mission to assist families and individuals in a faith-based environment to achieve stability, sobriety, and permanent housing. Your gift represents a recognition that all of God's children deserve dignity and respect and the ongoing ministries and programs provided within our walls, will change lives and create hope.

We are blessed by your support. Contributions from the church community are vital to our ability to serve those in need. Please know that your generosity and commitment are making a vital difference in the lives of many people in our community.

Sincerely,

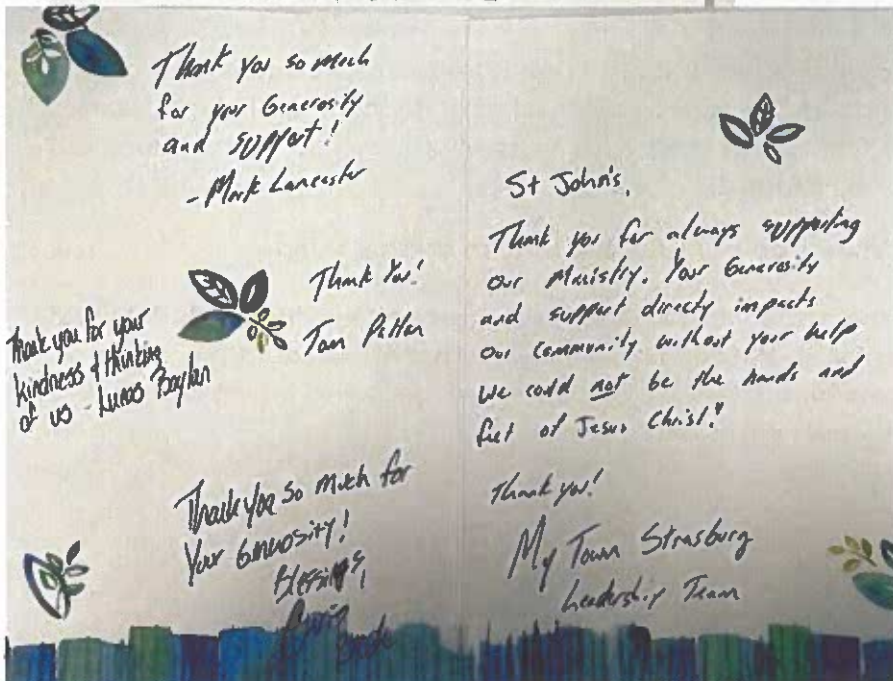
Rev Joe Svancara Calvin White Matt Ritzert Co-Chair
Board President Executive Director House of Hope



Celebrating Our Latino Neighbors

During our Sunday morning worship on April 26, we had guests with us to help us get to know our Hispanic neighbors in our county. This service included special music, a message, a testimony and a delicious meal following the service. Thanks to Dan and Jeanette King for helping to pull this service together.

As a follow-up to this service, Dan will be leading a Tienda Tour of two Guatemalan stores in Dover on May 5 (Tue) - 7:00 pm. Meet at the store "La Bendicion" at 209 S Wooster Ave. (next to Speedway gas station) Space is limited to 20 - please sign up on the sheet in the Gathering Room.





Reflections by Heather Rissler

In our most recent Thursday morning Bible study, we began a series called “Anxious for Nothing” by Max Lucado. This subject of anxiety has exploded in recent years as it relates to mental health.

The question we might ask is: why? Why are young people, particularly, struggling with this more than ever before?

One thing I think we can agree on is that having computers at our fingertips, while helpful, may be a significant part of the problem. Applying boundaries when it comes to our devices could help, although it is easier said than done. In my own case, when I have placed time limits for social media, I have unfortunately overridden them on too many occasions. Maybe the best thing to help eliminate the stress of being connected to a data source is to simply turn it off. “Go touch grass!” as they say.

Tish Harrison Warren, in her book titled “Liturgy of the Ordinary,” writes: We move in patterns that we have set over time, day by day. These habits and practices shape our loves, our desires, and ultimately who we are and what we worship.

Examining her own habits, Ms. Warren was able to realize that they were, in a way, damaging her, making her “less alive, “less human,” and “less able to give and receive love throughout the day.”

As one small experiment, she exchanged the habit of waking up with her smartphone and instead made the bed first thing in the morning. Slowly, this allowed her day to be imprinted differently and shifted her priority to give the first moments of the day back to God rather than consuming a barrage of information from her phone.

I copied and pasted this practice into my own routine, and although I have not followed it perfectly, I have noticed that it shifts my mindset as I begin facing the day. Instead of diving headfirst into texts, emails, and news feeds, I quietly set about a few chores or sit with a cup of coffee, leaving my phone out of sight.

Colossians 3:2 says: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Perhaps one tool that can replace some of the anxiety in our lives is inventory—reviewing our habits and rhythms so they better reflect God’s desires for us. We can replace habits that are dragging us down or propelling us in the wrong direction with new habits that free up our headspace and heartspace, filling them, instead, with God’s truth.

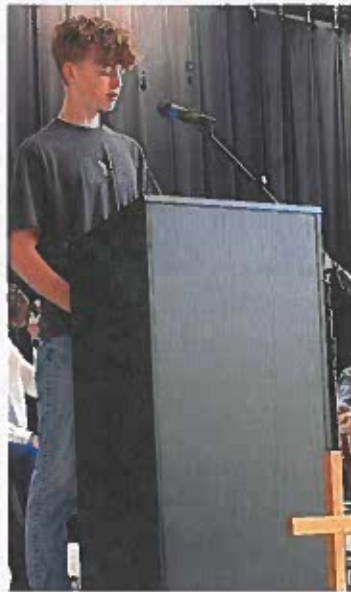




Caden Hutchison led worship



Brennan Rissler talked about what being in FCA means to him



Hudson McKenzie read Scripture



Mady Boylan, Mary Jane Aul's Granddaughter brought a message



Kylie McKenzie gave a children's message



**FCA led Community
Worship Service
April 19, 2026**



Tessa Bitikofer, daughter of Josh and Stacy Bitikofer, is set to graduate from Kent State University on May 9, 2026. She will earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. Currently, Tessa is employed as a patient care assistant in the Emergency Department at Union Hospital. Upon successfully passing her State Board examinations, she plans to continue her career at Union Hospital as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Department. Tessa aims to pursue a Master of Science in Nursing. She is particularly interested in obtaining her master's degree to qualify as a clinical instructor for aspiring nurses.

Tessa Bitikofer



Cole Hutchison is a 2026 graduate of Aultman College of Nursing, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Upon graduation, Cole will be working in the intensive care unit at Cleveland Clinic Mercy Hospital. He also plans to continue his education at the University of Akron to pursue a DNAP (anesthesia degree).

Cole Hutchison with Cyndi Martinez, Academic Advisor



Drew Osler is the son of Chad and Tammie Osler of Pickerington and the grandson of Al and Kathy Osler. Drew will be graduating from Otterbein University on May 3. He majored in Communications with a minor in Sports Management. During Drew's time at Otterbein, he earned four varsity letters in cross country and served as a captain his final two years.

Drew Osler



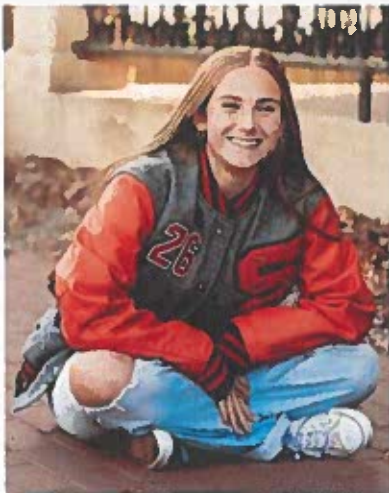
Carter Pratt, son of Chris and Becky Pratt, will graduate with his Master's Degree in Economics from Miami University of Ohio on Sunday, May 17th. This past December, he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor Degree in Data Analytics and a minor in Economics (Honors). After graduation, he will begin his professional career as a Pricing Analyst with Progressive Insurance.

Carter Pratt



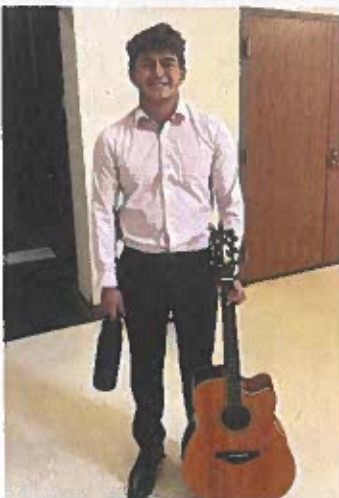
Evan Rissler graduated from Kent State Tuscarawas on December 10, 2025 with an Associate degree of applied nursing. Evan is the son of Jason and Heather Rissler. In February Evan moved to Phoenix, Arizona and is currently working for Pristine Auctions.

Evan Rissler



Hanna Henry is the daughter of Matt and Sarah Henry and granddaughter of Larry and Mary Ann Howell. Hanna will be a 2026 Strasburg High School graduate where she lettered in band and was on the honor roll for four years. She served as color guard captain, a Buckeye Ambassador and on the National Tech Honor Society. She also was a state qualifier for the Ohio BPA Leadership Conference her Junior and Senior year. Hannah will attend the Tusc Branch of Kent State University majoring in Early Childhood Education.

Hanna Henry



Caden Hutchison is graduating from Strasburg High School where he was a four year letterman in golf, two year letterman for track and served for three years in the FCA Leadership program. He plans to attend Kent State University-Tusc Campus and become a financial advisor.

Caden Hutchison



Kylie Marie McKenzie, the daughter of Josh and Missy McKenzie, will graduate with honors from Strasburg High School on Sunday, May 17. During her high school career, she earned twelve athletic letters as well as four academic letters. Kylie is the class of 2026 Salutatorian. She is a member of leadership team for the Strasburg chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, as well as a member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Youth to Youth, National Honor Society secretary, and a delegate to Buckeye Girls State. She also enjoys helping the American Legion at their chicken barbeques, reading, sewing, babysitting and coffee breaks. Kylie will attend The University of Mount Union in the fall, where she will major in biology in the honors program, and run track and cross country for the Raiders.

Kylie Marie McKenzie



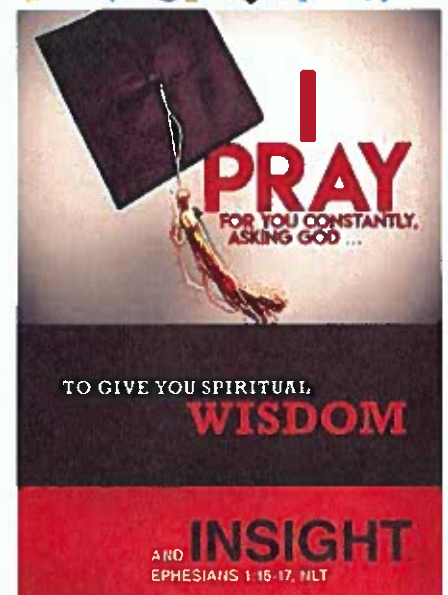
Sarah Reynolds is the daughter of Christopher and Jennifer Reynolds and granddaughter of Jim and Shirley Kuecher. She will graduate from Tusky Valley Middle-High School in Zoarville, Ohio on May 22nd, 2026. She will be graduating Summa Cum Laude with an honor's degree. During her four years of high school, Sarah participated in concert and Marching Band, National Honor Society, Hope Squad and President of her Senior Class. Sarah plans to attend Miami University (Ohio) this fall, pursuing a degree in political science with a minor in philosophy, with and intent to go to law school.

Sarah Elizabeth Reynolds



Violet G. Thomas is the daughter of Josh and Nancy Thomas of Strasburg. She is Valedictorian of the 2026 graduating class. She participated in Speech & Debate, Track and Volleyball while at Strasburg. Violet is continuing her education at Miami University in Ohio and majoring in Pre-Med/Biochemistry with plans to continue on to medical school and become a doctor.

Violet G. Thomas



TUSCARAWAS COUNTY



REVIVAL



Night

5/30/2026

 802 WARDHILL DRIVE STRASBURG

FOOD, BEVERAGES, GAMES, WORSHIP,
FELLOWSHIP & GUEST SPEAKER GABE BOGUE
DOORS OPEN AT 5! EVENTS STARTS AT 6

St John UCC Strasburg Holidays in United States

May 2026 (Eastern Time - New York

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26 9:30am - Worship: 10:45am - Sunday School	27	28	29 7:30am - Business Leader 5:30pm - Handbell	30 9:30am - *Anxious for	1 1pm - GriefShare Class	2
3 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Sunday School 1pm - Ladies Gathering	4 3pm - Tiger Paw Packing	5 6:30pm - Faith Family	6 7:30am - Business Leader 5pm - BOCE 5:30pm - Handbell 6pm - Camp Washington	7 9:30am - *Anxious for 2:30pm - Action Now 6pm - Music & Worship	8 8:30am - Men's Breakfast 11am - Machele Miller 1pm - GriefShare Class	9
10 Mother's Day 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Sunday School	11 Organ tuning 9am - Congregational	12 9am - Congregational	13 7:30am - Business Leader 2pm - Park Village Service 5:30pm - Handbell	14 9:30am - *Anxious for 12pm - Senior Luncheon 6pm - Life Knowledge	15 Reifensneider Party Set 1pm - GriefShare Class	16 8am - Mulch, etc. 1pm - Memorial - Warren 4pm - Reifensneider
17 Confirmation 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Sunday School	18 6:30pm - Faith Family	19 6:30pm - Faith Family	20 7:30am - Business Leader 9:30am - Finance Mtg. 1:30pm - Hennis Service 5:30pm - Handbell 7pm - Choir Practice	21 Camp Washington Work Trip 9:30am - *Anxious for 5pm - Missions/Outreach 6pm - Church Council	22	23
24 Camp Washington Work Pentecost/Communion 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Sunday School 3pm - Andrea Lancaster:	25 Memorial Day 10am - Grad Party	26	27 7:30am - Business Leader 5:30pm - Handbell 7pm - Choir Practice	28 9:30am - *Anxious for	29	30 9am - Car Wash-St. John
31 8:45am - Choir Warm-ups 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Sunday School	1 Call Access Solutions for	2	3 7:30am - Business Leader 5pm - BOCE 5:30pm - Handbell	4 2:30pm - Action Now 6pm - Music & Worship	5 11am - Machele Miller	6