

# *the* INFORMER

Extending God's Love & Grace | An Open & Affirming Congregation



## Annual Congregational Meeting:

**January 25, 2026**

Please stay after worship on January 25<sup>th</sup> for our Annual Meeting. We will hear short reports from the Council President, Pastor Jenn, and the Treasurer. Look for more information mid-January.

## DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

**a Tasting Event Fundraiser Saturday, February 7, 2026**  
**7:00 - 9:00 pm**

**\$25 per person in advance, \$30 at the door,  
\$175 per table of 8.**

### Entries by Local Chefs & Home Bakers

Includes: samples delicious chocolate desserts,  
hors d'oeuvres & drinks, and silent & live auction

All proceeds benefit the  
missions of St. John UCC



Top Tier
\$2,500
8 tickets
Middle Tier
\$1,000
6 tickets
Intermediate Tier
\$500
4 tickets
Foundation Tier
\$250
2 tickets



## **Year-End Reports due by Wednesday, January 7th**

### **Attention All Secretaries & Treasurers of Church Organizations/Boards/Committees**

Please turn in your annual reports to the church office no later than Wednesday, January 7, in order that they may be included in the Annual Report to the congregation to summarize your group's activities during 2025. We publish both a financial report and a secretary's report for each organization/board/committee/group in the church. You can email your report to the church office at [office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org).



**Thank you, St. John's for participating this year in the Giving tree. It is always so overwhelming to see the need in our community as well as an organization that we support as a church. This year we were able to serve 10 Hoyleton children and 4 families that are part of the Collinsville school district. In total we brought in 145 gifts. Your generosity during the Christmas season is noticed and appreciated.**

An end of the year thank you to all those who helped deliver the Meals on Wheels in 2025. Jerry & Dorothy Young and Dale & Bonnie Farrington have replaced Ken & Phyllis Waltermire and Ed & Lois Bluemner, two long time volunteers, who retired from many years of service to this ministry. Thank you also goes out to Vicki Donovan, Shere & Harry Dapron, Keith & Joy Honegger, and Dave Sheahan & Jean Nicolussi for delivering during the week of Christmas with smiles and a Merry Christmas. We are always in need of additional drivers. Please consider joining our team and enjoy the benefits of serving others. It is only one week commitment, four times a year. Let Vicki know if you are interested in more information.

**Thank you to all who helped create and distribute around 36 Christmas Care bags for our St John friends who cannot always attend services: St John Adult Day Care for decorating the bags, Vicki Donovan for oranges, Confirmants for individualizing Christmas Cards, and Evening Circle for cookies, candy and visiting our friends. The deliverers included Fay Fults, Vicki Donovan, Karen Take, Sharon Deutsch, Sharon Hall, Rae Brill, Joyce Achenbach, Diana Poole, Nancy Fitzgerald, Dena Bieser, Jane Pfaff, and Joy Honegger's carolers. Your Christmas spirit as well as the goodies were appreciated by all those who were visited.**

We watched the Cantata from Seattle where we spent the Christmas holidays. What a glorious worship experience! We are grateful for our great choir and Laurie Voss who spent weeks rehearsing the music and for the Audio-Visual Team who enabled us to participate remotely. The Celtic band and additional voices added to a wonderful service. Alan and Cindy did an exceptional job reading with expression to tie everything together. Most importantly, Jenny King imagined an inspirational service and then made it happen, which took hours of planning and organizing and rehearsing. We all know and appreciate Jenny's musical talents, but this cantata and so much of what Jenny brings to our congregation also reflect her deep faith. Thank you to all. Nancy and Bill Berry

## Coming Soon!!



We are looking for YOU! If you are over 70 years of age, YOU are Invited to attend an organizational meeting for our “senior” church members who are truly “the Pillars of St. John Church”. Most of you have had many life experiences, fond memories of the church, and you may be looking for ways to socialize with others. This is not a committee, but an opportunity to engage in new activities and visit with other “pillars”. If you are curious or have any interest at all, please join us in Faith Hall on Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 1:30 p.m. to discuss and develop this special group of special people! Refreshments will be served! Contact Sherry Skelton or Nancy Berry for more details.

To access the St. John UCC Collinsville YouTube channel, use the following link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDLLWhGXkkfbmGscZ-hallg>

Look for: St. John United Church of Christ Collinsville, IL



### **Home Communion Available**

Do you worship from home on livestream or YouTube? If you want to participate in communion at home, there are pre-filled cups available in the church office!



Do you have pictures of St. John UCC events, programs or one of our missions on your phone? We'd love to see them! Amy will use these photos to spread the word on how we help the community, and she will use some in the Annual Report. Please send photos to Amy by email, [office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org) or text 618-973-7771.

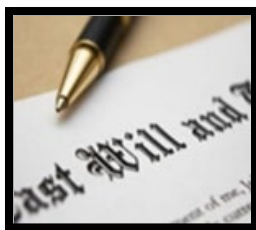
## Sunday Attendance



November 2025	9:30 am Worship	Digital Views YouTube	Sunday School
November 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dana's Celebration	150	146	13
November 9 <sup>th</sup> Pastor Miranda's Call Sermon	134		23
November 16 <sup>th</sup>	91	60	12
November 23 <sup>rd</sup>	106	69	13
November 30 <sup>th</sup>	88	62	8
<u>Sunday Average</u>	<b>114</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>14</b>



# Gifts to the Church



**Have you remembered  
St. John United Church of Christ,  
Collinsville, in your  
Will or Final Bequest?**

## General Fund

- In memory of Frank Higgeson and Gene Richardson from Rose Richardson.
- In memory of Bob Graham from Kay Klatt, and Fay Fults.
- In memory of Phyllis Bethel from Fay Fults.
- In memory of Jennis Klaas from Fay Fults.
- In memory of Alene Schuette from Fay Fults, Nancy Fischer, and Stu & Tammy Craig.
- In memory of Dorothy Burg from Fay Fults.

## Financial update

November brought an encouraging shift in St. John's financial picture. The General Fund recorded a surplus of **\$26,466**, the strongest month of 2025. This one month reduced the year-to-date deficit from **-\$54,948 to -\$28,481**, giving us welcome momentum as we approach year-end.

### Envelope Giving: Encouraging Progress

Envelope Giving in November totaled **\$49,367**, one of the highest November levels in recent years. This response arrived at an important moment and reflects the steady commitment of our congregation.

While giving remains below our annual target and below last year, November's improvement was significant. Continued strong support in December will help us maintain this positive trajectory.

### Expenses Remain Under Budget

Total November expenses were **\$34,600**, well below the monthly budget. Savings continue from:

- The Associate Pastor vacancy, and
- Careful management of ministry and operational expenses.


Facility costs were elevated this month due to a required repair on one of the elevators, but overall spending remains well controlled.

### Overall Position

As of November 30, the General Fund deficit stands at **-\$28,481**, a substantial improvement from earlier in the year. December has traditionally been our strongest giving month, and with continued generosity, we are hopeful for a solid finish to 2025.

**Thank you for your faithful support of St. John's ministry and mission.**

# The Empty Bowl



## Collinsville

**Save the Date**  
**May 6, 2026**  
**Volunteers will be needed!**

Winter weather *could* be just around the corner. In the event of hazardous weather conditions, there is a possibility that in-person worship services may be cancelled for the safety of our members and staff. Cancellation notices will be listed with the following news networks: FOX 2, KMOV-4 and KSDK-5 as well as on the St. John Church's Facebook page. Of course, whether or not church is cancelled, please rely on your own good judgement as to whether it is safe for you to venture out!



Our book club has chosen the next book we will be reviewing  
**The Four Winds** by Kristin Hannah

Texas, 1921. A time of abundance. The Great War is over, the bounty of the land is plentiful, and America is on the brink of a new and optimistic era. But for Elsa Wolcott, deemed too old to marry in a time when marriage is a woman's only option, the future seems bleak. Until the night she meets Rafe Martinelli and decides to change the direction of her life. With her reputation in ruin, there is only one respectable choice: marriage to a man she barely knows. By 1934, the world has changed; millions are out of work and drought has devastated the Great Plains. Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as crops fail and water dries up and the earth cracks open. Dust storms roll relentlessly across the plains. Everything on the Martinelli farm is dying, including Elsa's tenuous marriage; each day is a desperate battle against nature and a fight to keep her children alive. In this uncertain and perilous time, Elsa—like so many of her neighbors—must make an agonizing choice: fight for the land she loves or leave it behind and go west, to California, in search of a better life for her family. *The Four Winds* is a rich, sweeping novel that stunningly brings to life the Great Depression and the people who lived through it—the harsh realities that divided us as a nation and the enduring battle between the haves and the have-nots. A testament to hope, resilience, and the strength of the human spirit to survive adversity, *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.

Everyone is welcome. Plan on reading the book prior to attending the book review. Bring your thoughts and come share in the discussion. We plan on meeting on Tuesday afternoon **January 20th at 1:00 p.m.** We are meeting in the Parlor. We hope you will join us.

## Wurst Markt 2025

This was a challenging year for Wurst Markt. On the afternoon before our first planning meeting, we found out that the CHS Homecoming Parade would be on Thursday, October 16, at 4:30 p.m. The same day that we had scheduled Wurst Markt! The parade would shut down Clay Street during our busiest time! After much discussion at our first planning meeting on Tuesday, August 26, we decided that we would change the date for Wurst Markt to Wednesday, October 15.

**A big thank you to everyone** (volunteers and customers) for making the change of date work in your schedule. We can't have Wurst Markt without all our wonderful volunteers! Thank you also to the members of the Wurst Markt Committee: Anita Whittington, Dena Bieser, Rae Lee Brill, Paul Werner, Norb Kniepp, Mark Waltermire, Pam Waltermire, Amy Rhymer, Bill Lindsey, Leslie Mussallam, and Barb Kusmierczak. Every year, these folks go above and beyond to make Wurst Markt happen.

In **2026**, we will be having Wurst Markt on the third Thursday in October again. Please mark your calendars!

**Thursday, October 15, 2026**

For the 2025 Wurst Markt, Sausage Sales were **524 pounds** with a pickup date of Tuesday, October 14. For Wurst Markt, we served **752 meals** by drive thru on Wednesday, October 15.

As you can see there are some discrepancies in the calculations of revenues and expenses, if you would like further information, please contact me or Amy in the office.

Barb Kusmierczak

### Accounting System

**Revenues** **\$15803.00**

Pie Donations \$1420  
Food \$11,908

Sausage Sales \$2475

**Expenses** **(\$9753.44)**

Barb-pies, sauerkraut, bags,  
containers, butter (\$1503.32)

Kohl Wholesale. (\$2301.90)  
Reimb. Non Wurst Markt \$465.01  
Troy Frozen Foods (\$6346.31)  
Publicity (\$66.92)

**Profit** **\$6049.56**

### Barb's Figures

**Revenues** **\$17224.00**

Pie Donations \$1420  
Meals \$11,724

Sausage Sales \$2740

**Expenses** **(\$9525.74)**

Barb-pies, sauerkraut, bags,  
containers, butter (\$1503.32)

Kohl Wholesale (\$1609.19)

Non Wurst Markt (\$692.71 - \$47.70 = \$645.01)  
Reimb. Non Wurst Markt \$645.01

**Profit** **\$7698.26**

## Confirmation

**Meets Sundays after worship in the Parlor.**

- January 4 – What is our Denomination?
- January 11 – St. John UCC History
- January 18 – No Class
- January 25 – No class, Annual Congregational Meeting

### Choir Practice on Wednesdays

**C.O.P.s** (Children of Praise)

5:30-6:00 pm in the choir room

**Handbells** 6:00-7:00 pm

in the balcony

**Adult Choir** 7:15-8:30 pm

in the choir room



## Faith Walking

January Prayer Theme: Peace I Leave With You  
-John 14:26-31

6:30 – 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

November Mileage: 491 miles

Greeters help you log your progress!

Free-Will Offering. The Faith Walkers have set a goal of 7,000 miles to walk in 2026! They need your help! There will not be a Friday Birthday Cake Day in January, it will be in February.

No Walking: 1/1 (New Year's Day, 1/6 (Lifeline Screening) and 1/19 (MLK Day)

Contact Pastor Jenn for Questions 618-344-2526

## Pickleball

**Put Your  
Game Face On!**

Mondays from  
5:30-8:00 P.M.

Learn the game while you play!

**A free-will offering will be accepted.**

Questions: Contact Norb Kneipp at  
345-7270 or Dana at 344-2526



**The Christian Unity of Prayer for 2026** centers on the theme:

*"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4).*

Prepared by the Armenian Churches, it traditionally takes place January 18-25 in the Northern Hemisphere.

Please pray:

Help us, Lord, in being a light as we live and work with one another.

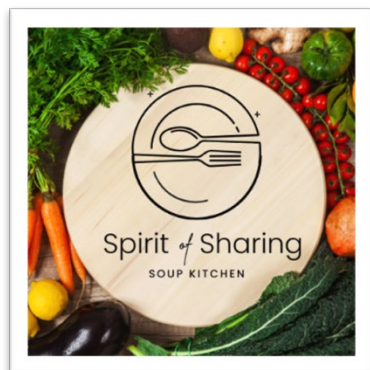
Let the world see you and your love within each of us. Grant us the understanding and patience to unify as worldly neighbors and bind us together with compassion in our hearts. Amen.

## Winter Wonderland Christmas Bazaar Recap

Our third Christmas Bazaar was a success! We had 27 vendors, over 200 guests, live music by Jenny King, the St. John Choir, violinist Olivia S., and Denise G. and the Mother of Perpetual Help Choir and musicians. Delicious food was served by a local Girl Scout Troop, the vendors reported that they loved our hospitality and the fellowship, and lots of fun was had by all! Many of the vendors were asking if they can sign up for next year already! Homework Help & Hoops made \$1,864!

## Donate New or Gently Used Christmas Decorations for Next Year's Christmas Bazaar!

When putting away your Christmas items and you find you'd like a change or receive a Christmas platter you do not need as a gift, please consider donating it to the church for next year's Christmas Bazaar! We need items that are better than the items we sell at the rummage sale. Your donations can be dropped off in the Faith Hall Kitchen during January.



## S.O.S. Soup Kitchen – Bring in the New Year by Serving

The next time St. John Church will be hosting S.O.S. is Thursday, January 1, 2026. Look in the Narthex for a sign-up sheet on December 28 to volunteer and bring food or contact John Green or Jim Achenbach for more information.





January 2026

We finished up the 2025 school year with an HHH Family Christmas Party on December 9. Families enjoyed eating dinner with our tutors and hearing about their child's progress this semester. After dinner, families made Christmas ornaments, and took turns sitting on Santa's lap. Thank you to Jerry, Dorothy, Abe, Leslie, Stephanie, Marilyn, Keith, Joy, Sokun and Jeffery for helping host this outreach event!

### **HHH Tutors Needed for Next Semester!**

HHH resumes on Tuesday, January 27. We need several volunteers able to tutor for one to three hours, from 3:00-6:00 on either Tuesdays and/or Thursdays. We are losing many of our NHS students who have spring sports! The children we tutor are 1st-6th graders.

**Please let Mandi Voegele, know if you can help!**

[hvh@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:hvh@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

### **Hello Friends,**

I am honored to be taking over as program director for Homework Help and Hoops (HHH) in the new year! I am thankful to have spent recent weeks training under Dana Callahan on all the moving pieces necessary to carry on such an amazing program. I've seen how the after-school tutoring classes positively impact so many young people in our community, both students and tutors alike. I also look forward to working with all of the fantastic volunteers from St. John and around the region as we feed and encourage K-12 youth at our 13<sup>th</sup> annual HHH Summer Camp in 2026!

Let's learn, play and grow together,  
Mandi Voegele

**WE WANT  
YOU!  
YES, YOU!!**

### Looking for a Way to Serve? Join St. John UCC Council

Do you feel called to serve the church?  
Do you want our ministries to grow and reach a wider community?  
Have ideas you want to share?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, please prayerfully consider how God is calling you to be part of the life of St. John.  
If you are interested, contact the church office  
at 618-344-2526 for more information.



Please contact Pastor Jenn if your youth are interested in attending this event. It takes place out at DuBois Center. Registration closes on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

Questions??  
Contact Jillian Mayer at [jill@stpaulonline.org](mailto:jill@stpaulonline.org) or 618-939-7123

If inclement weather causes us to postpone this event, it will be held on February 14th-15th

# Frostbite Fun Youth Event

## January 17 - 18th, 2026

All youth in grades 6-12 are invited to attend this ISC youth event at our camp, DuBois Center.

Weather permitting, horseback riding is available for \$25/person.

### 2 Ways to Participate

**Single Day (\$50): Saturday 10 am to 7 pm**  
**Overnight (\$100): Saturday 10 am to Sunday 11 am**

St. John UCC: Three Pillars that Define Us as a Church in the...

# Heart of the Community



- Creative Worship & Music**  
We value excellent preaching, a variety of music styles and instruments, and creativity in our worship! Please share your interests and gifts- all are welcome to be a part of praising God!
- Multi-Generational Care**  
We always strive to widen our welcome and care so all people in the community feel engaged, valued and connected, whether you are a newcomer or long-timer- we love that you are a part of us!
- Youth & Community Outreach**  
We recognize children and youth are the future of the church and they are the heart of our community. Our programs help kids and their families, and people of all ages in need. Our outreach allows us to share Christ with actions and love as well as words!

### Staff & Leadership

**Rev. Jennifer Sowell**, Senior Pastor,  
618-250-7983  
[pastorjenn@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:pastorjenn@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

**Amy Rhymer**, Pastoral  
Assistant/Communications  
[office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:office@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

**Jenny King**, Music Director  
[music@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:music@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

**Laurie Voss**, Accompanist

**Mandi Voegele**, Outreach Director  
[HHH@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:HHH@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

**Leslie Musallam**, Christian Education

**Mike Liljegen**, Council President  
[churchcouncil@stjohnucc-collinsville.org](mailto:churchcouncil@stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

**Paul Ham**, VP, Trustee Chair

**Jon Hester**, Treasurer, Deacons Chair

**Ginger Schantz**, Secretary

**Nancy Berry**, Elders Chair

**The Learning Tree Preschool**,  
618-344-2562

**St. John Cemetery**, 618-344-0749

**St. John's Community Care**,  
618-344-5008

January 2026



## COLLINSVILLE FAITH IN ACTION

233 North Seminary Street, Collinsville, IL 62234

Volunteer Caregivers: 618-344-8080

Answers on Aging: 618-344-7788

The Elder Connection: 618-799-9085

Fax: 618-344-3227

*"Serve one another in love." Galatians 5:13*

**The mission of Collinsville Faith in Action is to provide services and information to community members ages 60 and up to promote dignity and independence.**

Elder Connection is a monthly gathering of our valued and wise elders. We learn to paint at local craft shops, listen to performances by local choirs and performers, and make connections with others in our community. In 2026, the luncheons and planned activities will be held on the second Wednesday of each month. There is no fee to participate, but reservations are required. To reserve your place (and request transportation if needed), please call Collinsville Faith in Action at 618-344-8080 during the first week of the month. There is no charge for this program, but spots fill up quickly, so call today!

Volunteerism has been linked to both happiness and health! At Collinsville Faith in Action, we provide volunteers with training and flexibility. Many of our volunteers have been with us for years and transition to different forms of volunteering that all benefit our older neighbors, friends, and families. If you'd like to learn more about how volunteering at CFiA can be customized to your schedule and your skills, please call Karen Saravia at 618-344-8080 or complete a volunteer application at [Become a Volunteer | Faith in Action \(www.fiacollinsville.org/volunteer\)](http://www.fiacollinsville.org/volunteer).

Lisa Ciszczon Brennen, Executive Director

Collinsville Faith in Action is a 501c3 organization funded by donations and grants. Faith traditions and churches within our community support us by referring volunteers. The interfaith volunteers provide services to older community members.



### St. John's Community Care Free Medical Equipment Loan Program



Don't forget about the **Free medical equipment loan program** to help those in need. This program is available at the Collinsville location and is open to anyone who requires equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, bath chairs, crutches, canes, and more. For more information, call 618-344-5008 or visit our website at [www.stjohnscc.org](http://www.stjohnscc.org).

2026

January

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	01	02	03
04 8:30 pm Bible Study 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am-12:00 pm Confirmation	05 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 9:00 am Miriam's Ministry 5:30-8 pm Pickleball	06 No Walking Life Line Screening 7:00 pm Evening Circle	07 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30 pm C.O.P.s 6:00 pm Bells 6:00 pm Quilting & Crafting 7:15 pm Choir	08 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30-6:00 pm S.O.S. 7:00 pm Deacons	09 Office Closed 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	10
11 8:30 pm Bible Study 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am-12:00 pm Confirmation	12 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 9:00 am Miriam's Ministry 5:30-8 pm Pickleball	13 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	14 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30 pm C.O.P.s 6:00 pm Bells 6:00 pm Quilting & Crafting 7:15 pm Choir	15 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30-6:00 pm S.O.S. 6:30 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Council	16 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	17
18 8:30 pm Bible Study 9:30 am Worship	19 Office Closed Martin Luther King Jr. Day No Walking	20 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	21 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30 pm C.O.P.s 6:00 pm Bells 6:00 pm Quilting & Crafting 7:15 pm Choir	22 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30-6:00 pm S.O.S.	23 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	24
25 8:30 pm Bible Study 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Annual Meeting in Sanctuary	26 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 9:00 am Miriam's Ministry 5:30-8 pm Pickleball	27 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	28 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 1:30 pm Pillars of the Church 5:30 pm C.O.P.s 6:00 pm Bells 6:00 pm Quilting & Crafting 7:15 pm Choir	29 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking 5:30-6:00 pm S.O.S.	30 7-9 & 11-1 Faith Walking	31



307 West Clay Street  
Collinsville, IL 62234  
618-344-2526  
[www.stjohnucc-collinsville.org](http://www.stjohnucc-collinsville.org)

# *the* Informer

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