



# FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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**Pastor Rosemary Captain**



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Recently I came across an interesting article. I realize that we read the Gospel story of the baptism of Jesus last week. However, I learned quite a bit from this essay. It was written by my friend Biblical Scholar and historian, Father Roger Karban. There are a few mentions of practices in his denomination, but you can skip over those.

Peace, Pastor Rosemary

## **WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDON RIVER?**

**As a Catholic youth**, I knew Jesus was the Son of God, so when this Sunday's gospel came around I assumed God prompted John to offer baptism, and prompted Jesus to ask John for it, so God could say "You are my beloved Son," so the evangelists could record that, so we'd all believe it. Pretty tidy logic, right?

Well now I'm a Catholic senior citizen, very senior. I've come to believe that **God laughs at our need for tidiness**. Rather, God takes advantage of historical events, prompting prophets to make surprising interpretations of them, prompting us to question what's going on and how it all works together. Questions are okay, if only because we honor God by using our God-given brains. And we honor our community by sharing our questions honestly.

I first assumed that the Old Testament was about Jews having a Gentile problem, and the New Testament was about Christians having a Jewish problem. But there's a subtext in the New Testament, a problem that had to be described discreetly. It was that **both Jews and Christians had a Roman problem**.

The Judea where John the Baptist and Jesus grew up had become a province of Rome. Rome was the Empire of militaristic suppression, of arrogant swagger, of callous enslavement, of

frat-boy debauchery, of utter contempt for "barbarians" on their borders. Rome had learned to be slightly tolerant of the native civilizations of some of their provincials, but they were always letting them know who was boss. The most convincing display of Rome's might was the crucifixion, and they held the right to impose it exclusively.

But in Judea, the occupiers **went too far when they built Roman-style bathhouses around the Jerusalem Temple.** Talk about insulting all that is holy! John was the son of a Temple priest. He could not abide this sacrilege. His response was to offer an alternative to the obnoxious Roman baths. It wasn't in the city but in the Jordan River, the original – and highly symbolic – border of the Promised Land. Many, many Judeans followed him to the Jordan and bathed there, cleansing themselves of Roman imperial filth and decay, of humiliation and grief. Jesus of Nazareth joined John in conducting the ritual elements of this bath. And he succeeded John, inheriting some of John's disciples when the Bather was executed.

### **And Our Baptisms?**

To the extent that this is an accurate picture of the origins of Christian baptism, it offers an alternative energy and direction to the routine renewal of our baptismal commitments. Even if all you do is "bless yourself with holy water" at the entrance of church, it's a reminder to declare you want to be cleansed of imperialistic filth and decay, cleansed of the desire to dominate others, free of the urge to dehumanize them, loosed from the bonds of guilt, whatever the source. Saint Paul took this imagery even further: Baptized into Christ, he says, you died and **were buried** (immersed) with Christ and **have been raised** with him to a new life.

## **DUBOIS QUILT**

This year's DuBois raffle quilt will be at St. John on February 9. St. John UCC Mascoutah makes a children's quilt every year. They make a circuit to selected UCC churches in the area to sell chances on the quilt. The Mascoutah church then matches whatever the quilt takes in on the raffle. All proceeds go to Camp DuBois. This is a great way to make your donation to DuBois go farther!

See you **on Feb. 9!**

## FEBRUARY USHERS

February 2  Ginny Ganschinetz, Sue Ganschinetz

February 9  Tom & Jan Miller

February 16  Tom & Jan Miller

February 23  Judy Schmitt, Sue Williams

## AMONG OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS:



2/2 Christopher Captain

2/4 Tyler Underwood

2/5 Elisabeth Kistler

2/10 Conner Brink

2/11 Ivy Schneider

2/23 Sue Ganschinetz

2/27 Aaron Eisenhauer

## REMEMBER THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO WORSHIP WITH US



Becky Ballard  
1211 Moreland Apt 12  
Belleville IL 62223

Jeanette Brown  
5904 Perrin Rd  
Fairview Heights IL 62208

Jackie Canterbury  
105 W Julie St Apt C  
Shiloh IL 62269

Ivy Schneider  
213 Merriweather Ln  
Fairview Heights IL 62208

Yvonne Weber  
200 St Clair Dr  
Fairview Heights IL 62208

Rosemary Williams  
201 S Belt W Apt 110  
Belleville IL 62220



## COUNCIL NOTES

- We had our required annual meeting on Sunday, January 26.
- The membership of the Council will not change. Each of the members who are up for reelection has agreed to serve another two-year term.
- Re-elected to Council for a two-year term are Ginny Ganschinetz, Russ Hartmann, Nancy Eisenhower and Jan Miller. Remaining to finish their terms are Judy Schmitt, Sharon Banjavcic, and Lew Thomasino.
- January was a trying month for dealing with snow. Sunday worship was cancelled on January 5th. A couple of people we know who do snow removal had equipment issues and were not able to clear the parking lot. We were able to find someone who agreed to clear the lot this time only in order to have service on January 12<sup>th</sup>..

## CIRCLE NEWS

First I would like to "Thank" everyone who donated and bought from the church craft table in December; the thank you was omitted from the January newsletter.

After our January meeting we signed Valentine's for Seniors and they were taken to PSOP in Belleville to hand out.

Our next meeting will be February 9th after church in the L-Room. We will sign Valentine cards for our shut-ins at that time. Spring offering envelopes will be ready to hand out to members at the February meeting.

It was decided to have the messages for 31 days in a jar, as a spring fund-raiser. They will be available sometime in February (stay tuned).

Let's hope February is a little warmer and less snow than January!

Eileen Gammon, Co-Chair

### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

The heart is the happiest  
when it beats for others ❤️

**HAPPY VALENTINES DAY TO ALL!**

Carol Bulva





## JUSTICE 100 CAMPAIGN 2024, FINAL REPORT

A big thank you to all of the congregation for the support given to the Open and Affirming Coalition's Justice 100 Campaign. We surpassed our goal of \$1000 and donated \$1176 to the cause! Thanks, Judy

Dear St John UCC Members:

Thank you so much for thinking of the needy in our area by providing donations and food to our pantry. The Food Pantry board is overwhelmed with the generosity of your congregation. It was very clear that your congregation is devoted to helping the less fortunate. We can never adequately thank you for all that you do for us. You are making the lives of many of our clients a little less desperate. Please accept our thanks and gratitude to each and every person in your congregation.



Sincerely, JoAn Nader, Fairview Heights Area Food Pantry Board



**PRAYER LIST:** Becky Ballard, Urban and Mary Lou Baum, Ronald Bopp, Jackie Canterbury, Lisa Captain, Donna Dougan, Marilyn Paul, Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber.

### **SPECIAL NOTE:**

The 2024 giving statements have been mailed out. If you have not received yours, please let the office know, we will generate another one for you.

## **FELLOWSHIP TIME**

There are still eleven more open opportunities to host the Fellowship Time following communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month. A list of open Sundays is posted in the fellowship area. Take a look, we all look forward to that time together!

# February

2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Service of Word & Sacrament 10 am Fellowship time after worship	3	4	5	6 Zoom Bible Study @ 6:30pm AA Meeting	7	8
9 Worship 10 am Circle after worship  DuBois raffle quilt	10	11	12 Zoom Council Meeting 7 pm	13 AA Meeting Quilters 9-2 Zoom Bible Study @ 6:30pm	14 HAPPY VALENTINES DAY! 	15
16 Worship 10 am Choir rehearsal 9 am Choir sings at worship	17 HAPPY PRESIDENT'S DAY	18	19	20 Zoom Bible Study @ 6:30pm  AA Meeting	21	22
23 Worship 10 am	24	25 Quilt Show Mtg 7 pm	26	27 Zoom Bible Study @ 6:30pm  AA Meeting	28	