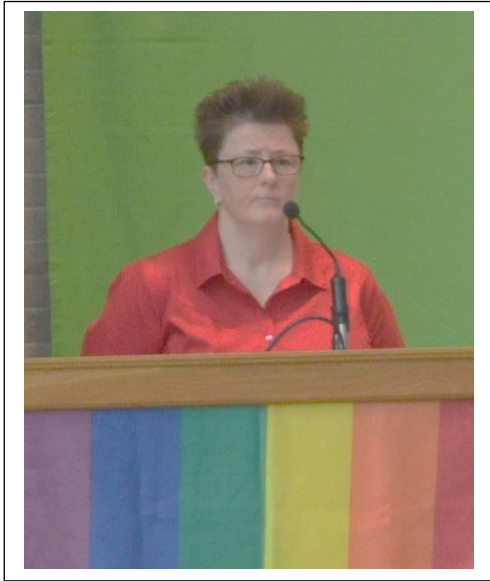


July 19, 1022



There's a short list of people who could fill in at the last minute if Rev. Mitra is unable to preach for some reason. Our Spirit Award goes to **Rita Volz** who did just that last month. You might not have expected it from her quiet and reflective manner, but she didn't miss a beat. It was a wonderful effort, and she sent us home inspired and refreshed.

Rita, the worship team chair, seems ready to pitch in wherever needed, no matter how difficult the job. She helped with the production of Sunday services on tech, sound, and video when we were still figuring out how to do it. She is a worship associate and she and her wife, Lorrie Hayes, are part of the minister's sabbatical team. In the past, she has helped with the annual pledge campaign and our Pride service in 2019. Coordinating an outdoor concert and handing out flowers for the flower service, thinking up ways for us to gather outside during the Covid shutdown - there is no end to the ways that she uses her creative ideas to support St. John's.

In the greater community, Rita is involved with the Germania Society and volunteers with their fundraising, as well as allowing Lorrie to rope her in with Democratic organizing efforts and various candidate campaigns. She is the kind of person who looks for the best in others and brings it out. Thank goodness she is a member of St. John's!



Aug 2, 2022

We offer a warm and convivial Spirit Award to **Rich Overturf** for his service as Kitchen Coordinator. Coffee Hour after service is a treasured tradition at St. John's but managing so that everything in the kitchen works, all ingredients are available each Sunday, and we have volunteers to support Jeff, our caretaker, is no small job. Rich takes it on with his generous heart, even though, in spite of the flexibility of the tasks, the sign-up sheet often looks sparse.

And that's not all he does. As a contributing member of the church, Rich has been trained to be a Pastoral Care Associate. He makes a difference to members who seek someone special with whom they can discuss personal issues. He has also been part of the safety team, the choir, and a member of LAFS (Lively After Fifty). He is part of a St. John's team regularly helping to distribute donated food to immigrants in Springdale.

Rich really enjoys bringing people together, but it was Ann Schuur who brought him to us! She married him here at St. John's. We've heard that he plays guitar and a mean bass fiddle and upright bass, loves jazz and square dances as well. Could those talents make volunteering to help with coffee more enticing? Whether he dances and plays or not, we know that being on Rich's team or seeking him out to talk will be well worth your time.



August 23, 2022

This week's Spirit Award winner is one of our Golden's, **Bill Luerssen**. We deem him golden because among other things, he has been a church member for over 50 years. He joined St. John's in 1966 after graduating from Purdue University and taking a job at Procter & Gamble. He retired from P&G after 30+ years, but luckily, he hasn't retired from us. Quite the contrary! He is now co-chair with Joetta Prost for the new Continue the Legacy capital campaign.



Apparently, asking for money is not the hardest task Bill has ever taken on for St. John's. Yes, he has led or co-led pledge campaigns many times, been board president three times, spent years on the property team and still sings in the choir, but those jobs are tame compared to changing light bulbs. Next time you are in the sanctuary, look up. Bill changes the burned-out lights up there by climbing up to the roof and rappelling down. It is easier now, but in the not-so-distant past, just to get to the roof, he would crawl out a

window casing, climb up a metal rung ladder, and walk all the way up the slant to get to the upper roof.



He has always loved our building, including "every scrap of dust" and he has combined his engineering brain with his zest for making it more beautiful many times. For years during the holiday season, Bill was in charge of the Great Wreath. He designed the pulleys to get it up on the building face. He is the "go to" person for building tours, knowing all sorts of secrets about our sacred space. Here's a fun fact for the more derring-do of you. If you ask, he'll take you to the roof. After all, he can always use a light bulb assistant.

As we contemplate what's possible with the capital campaign, we're certainly glad Bill's a high-flyer!

August 30, 2022

This Spirit Award winner has appeared several times before in group awards - no surprise - since she is quite a charismatic instigator. Her broad smile generates participation. This time, we're putting **Joetta Prost** in the spotlight all by herself. As co-chair of St. John's Capital Campaign, a member of the Master Planning team, and Pledge Campaign coordinator for at least three years, you know she's not squeamish about doing a hard job if it makes a difference to us.

Speaking of hard jobs, she is a master 'computer clicker.' From the very beginning of virtual services Joetta trained and managed ushers, and she continues to be a key player for those at home. With the greatest of ease, she switches from streaming to Zooming in Sunday services and congregational meetings so that all St. John's voices are heard. During the darkest days of Covid, she coordinated a team to facilitate CommUUnity calls almost every day of the week. She made sure that we had much to talk about and no one was forgotten. She is also our liaison with Unitarian Universalists everywhere, leading the Wider UU World (denominational affairs) and represents us on the UU Council of Greater Cincinnati.



St. John's welfare is not her only avenue of contribution. Joetta is active with the KY UU Justice Action

Network (KUUJAN). She worked on campaigns to elect Amy McGrath, did text banking to help get former felons the right to vote, and goes regularly to Frankfort to try to get support for things like banning conversion therapy. In her work with Boone County Historic Society, she researched lynchings in the county. By the way, on Sept. 15 at the main Boone County library, Joetta will be speaking on "Universalist Churches: Complex History Before and After the Civil War."

Like a Pied Piper for good that you just can't resist, Joetta's smile leads us all to care more and do more, laughing all the way!

October 2, 2022



Meet the man behind the wall fix dilemma, our 'endurance specialist' and Spirit Award winner, **Matthew Cowperthwait**. Matt has chaired the St. John's Master Plan Steering Committee since 2021 and took over just before our grand Master Plan was sidelined by the need for extensive repairs to the building. There's a good reason his team members call him "Fearless Leader". He calmly faced facts. Our front wall is deteriorating, and something had to be done. Much consultation ensued and decisions were made. Then, in 2022 the team found out that it will cost more than twice what we thought to fix it. Yet far from bemoaning the new situation, he and his team went back to work to find solutions. Matt's thoughtful and well-organized presentation has made each of

those solutions clear, giving us the benefit of fact-based, concrete choices. Everyone interested has had a chance to be heard before the vote and no matter the outcome, we know we can count on him to lead us through to resolution.

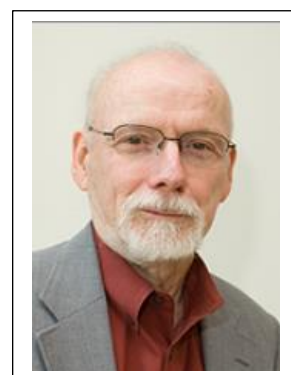
Church volunteers don't often face such difficult issues in their tenure, but Matt has had more than his share in the past few years. As a new Board President in 2019, it became his job to request police aid to keep the congregation safe from the threats of a mentally ill person who wished us harm. In 2020, it was Covid that threatened us. Matt had to make the decision to close St. John's doors for the duration. He secured the government loan that allowed us to keep our precious staff in the interim. Through it all, with the cat or baby Theodore on his lap, Matt furthered St. John's work over Zoom. To this day, his wicked sense of humor, positive attitude, and firm determination continues to keep us balanced.

Triathletes train to achieve endurance, strength, and speed, and Matt loves the sport. His long-time devotion to crossing the finish line no matter what the obstacles serves us well. As he tells his wife, Ashley, "If you want to see change, you can't just wait for others, you have to put in the time and the work yourself." Matt, we are grateful that you put your words into action for the good of St. John's.

October 25, 2022

Howard Tolley is being recognized with a Spirit Award for his unwavering support of the St. John's Men's Group, which held its annual retreat last week. Howard was a founding member of this vital group that meets monthly for dinner and discussion. Over 30+ years, he has fostered the space of relationship and understanding that continues to mean so much to the men of St. John's.

Howard has been in the forefront promoting relationships and understanding in many social justice arenas. For more than 50 years, he worked for racial justice as an educator, as a non-violent but strident organizer, and as a member of the American Association of University Professors fighting systemic racism. He was also one of the founders and earliest organizers of the Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio state action network.

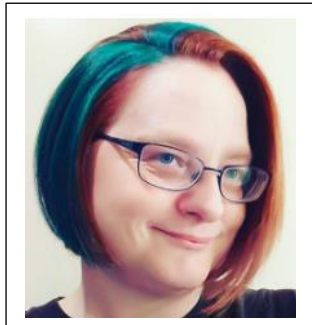


In response to worldwide human rights violations, Howard wrote books, journal articles, and lectured, both nationally and internationally. With the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights, he organized an

online program for teaching human rights at the university level. When he retired from the University of Cincinnati as a professor of political science, he earned a law degree and served the American Arbitration Association as an arbitrator and the Ohio State Employment Relations Board, as a fact finder and hearing officer. And among other things, he is a leading voice against the death penalty in Ohio.

We have benefited greatly from Howard's participation in many capacities at St. John's from teaching RE to children and adults all the way to serving on the board. His expertise and backing of our social justice initiatives has helped us widen our reach. He is gracious in answering questions from any concerned group and helps to support local equality and justice causes here or in his and Nina's winter Arizona home community. We are grateful to know and honor you, Howard, and we'll all be wishing you a very happy birthday on Oct. 30!

November 21, 2022



This Spirit Award goes to Nicole Stanforth, our rainbow-haired burst of enthusiasm. We honor her for the outstanding job she's done over the years in teaching us about how to understand and fight suicide. This year alone, representing St. John's, her walking team, "Side with Love," raised \$2,234.00 for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

When Nicole is not busy raising her two children, running her business, "Bookaholic Bookkeeping," reading, participating in money raisers or organizing impromptu walks, Nicole hangs out at the Ohio Pet Sanctuary. Not only does she volunteer there, but she also brings cats home to foster. At St. John's, she counts the attendees of services and is a regular at our game night. She particularly enjoys playing Tripoley (a card and poker chip game) and is willing to take on all comers.

With her bright smile, loving heart, and her uplifting spirit, she is an especially inspiring Mental Health Advocate. As one friend reported, "When you feel broken, it's easier to push through if you have a good girlfriend like Nicole around."

Thank you, Nicole, for the difference you make.

December 27, 2022

A much-deserved Spirit Award goes to our St. John **KUUJAN (Kentucky UU Justice Action Network)** team and those who supported them. The main issue to champion was abortion rights. One initiative that could make a difference was contacting ex-felons who might not know they had the right to vote. A proliferation of postcards and yard signs went out - some with links for checking ex-felon voting status and including the link for registration - some explaining the implications of voting "yes" for the constitutional amendment ending the right to an abortion and giving it a resounding "no."



According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of the population of Kentucky lean toward the Republican party and of those, 54% are Evangelical Protestants. In June, immediately after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the State Legislature banned abortion. As you can see, the battle for defeating that ban in the November primary was decidedly uphill. Despite that, voters in Kentucky firmly rejected the issue that denied abortion rights under the state constitution!



Those at St. John's who contributed to the fight are too numerous to name but Wanda Crawford, Joetta Prost, Debbie Potochnik, Linda Heath, and Roberto Henriquez were in the forefront. A heartfelt thank you to all who fought that important battle for women's rights.