



**JESUS
PAGAN**

St. John's **CONNECTIONS**

A monthly update from the people of St. John's UCC, Fullerton

Volume 16 • Issue 135 • December 2023

“Garland, Sinatra and Us!”



Not long ago, someone brought some old Christmas cards with the chancel of St. John’s decked out in red with gorgeous poinsettias, wreaths and garlands, and I could almost hear the songs of the season coming through the card. The simple beauty and the message of love and care shared in lyrics and melody have a way of touch even the most cynical soul at the core.

Christmas music almost always brings up nostalgic memories of days gone by where life seemed simpler, maybe even somewhat happier, and the music often causes my eyes to fill with tears and my voice to have a bit of a lump in my throat. One such song is the classic, *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, the musical equivalent of a warm hug. This gently melancholic tune sings out a narrative of festive hope, telling of a nostalgia for past times – “happy golden days of yore” – and faith in the future – “From now on, our troubles will be out of sight.”

Judy Garland, the shining star of Hollywood’s Golden Era, sang it first for a scene in *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944) in which her character comforts her younger sister, Margaret. Garland objected to the original lyrics, apparently, saying they were too depressing and if she were to sing them, “Margaret will cry, and they’ll think I’m a monster.” Eager to please their leading lady, Hollywood executives requested a rewrite.

Today, two versions are popularly sung. There’s the version lyricist High Martin tweaked for Judy Garland – “Someday soon we all will be together, if the fates allow. Until then we’ll have to muddle through somehow” – which is a rather poignant listen this year, as many families around the world are physically apart, by war, being refugees or immigrants. There’s also a later version by Frank Sinatra, who asked Martin to sprinkle a little festive joy on that rather downbeat line for his Christmas album. And that’s how ‘Hang a shining star upon the highest bough’ came to replace Garland’s melancholic lyric.

Now you know the story, here are the full original lyrics...

Have yourself a merry little Christmas.
It may be your last.
Next year we may
all be living in the past.

No good times like the olden days.
Happy golden days of yore.
Faithful friends who were dear to us
will be near to us no more.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas.
Pop that champagne cork.
Next year we may
all be living in New York.

But at least we all will be together,
If the Lord allows.
From now on, we'll
have to muddle through somehow.
So have yourself a merry
little Christmas now.

And here are the ones we sing today...

Have yourself a merry little Christmas.
Let your heart be light.
From now on our troubles
will be out of sight.

Hang a shining star upon
the highest bough,
And have yourself a merry
little Christmas now.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas.
Make the Yule-tide gay.
From now on our troubles
will be miles away.

Here we are as in olden days,
Happy golden days of yore,
Faithful friends who are dear to us
Gather near to us once more.

Here we are as in olden days,
Happy golden days of yore.
Faithful friends who are dear to us
Gather near to us once more.

Through the years we all
will be together,
If the fates allow.
So hang a shining star upon
the highest bough,
And have yourself a merry
little Christmas now.

Through the years we all
will be together,
If the fates allow.

As we come to tell the story of God's love, born anew into our world through the Christ Child, Jesus, may we be stirred once again in our memories of hope, peace, joy and love in this Advent season, to share the immeasurable blessing of God's message of good news for all people... "to you is born in the City of David, a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord!" May we share this life changing message in our words and deeds, and sing the song of hope, whether in Judy's version or Frank's, and let us be those who...

"Worship, Love and Serve
~ No Matter What!"

Yours in grace and hope,

Steve Davis

Rev. Steven Davis, Senior Pastor



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On The Cover...



JESUS PAGAN

You may have seen me in the back of the church or running around fixing technical issues. My love for technology allows me to understand and utilize it to help ensure that our systems stay running.

I always wanted to have services available for members that can't make service, and to open our church for everyone to enjoy. COVID came around and that thought became a reality pretty quickly. I love the fact that we can leverage technology to spread the St. John's love for all to enjoy. I will continue to utilize my skills to help out where I can and promise to worship, love, and serve....no matter what!

Convalescent & Homebound Residents

People who would welcome receiving a greeting card:

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Shirley Abel | Sally Gibson | Dale Millham |
| Phyllis Ambearle | Ron and Sally Glass | Karen Moyer |
| Anita Beil | Gus Geissing | Marilyn Piskula |
| Clarence Biehn | Roberta Haberern | Marietta Seyfried |
| Marion Brown | Lucille Hicks | Madeline Slivka |
| Sandra Diefender | Geraldine Keim | Bert Smith |
| Shirley Downing | Adrienne Kiesbar | Jolene Weaver |
| Jeanne Fischl | Emma Repp Kuczek | Nancy Weaver |
| Milton Focht | Jean Litzenberger | Bonnie Weikel |

To protect privacy, please contact the church office for a listing with mailing addresses.



Music at St. John's

For some reason this month I had a really hard time coming up with something to talk about. I know, unheard of for me! I thought of a few options, one was this would be the perfect opportunity to advertise for the choir and try recruiting new members for January. Second option I thought was, well it's the holiday newsletter, so what about sharing a story of a Christmas Carol and the origin of that carol. I essentially felt very uninspired and realized that the deadline to submit something was fast approaching.

Then it hit me—it's soon to be Christmas, and what is the most familiar Christmas carol that everyone knows—answer? SILENT NIGHT! No, I am not going into the origin story of the carol, instead I got to thinking of the first couple of phrases of the hymn that we always sing...

"Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm, all is bright."

Yes, we all know these lyrics. Lyrics that I am sure we all can say from memory. My mind took me somewhere with these phrases. How can this beautiful carol be sung and meant, when there is so much discord, anger, fear, and unknown in our world today, let alone our very lives? How is it possible to find joy and peace in this beautiful song when you're currently mourning a loved one? Or when memories of a loved one still weigh heavy on your heart? How is anything calm or bright when you're worrying about how to afford to pay your mortgage or electric bill for the month? Nothing about these circumstances brings calm or makes a situation bright.

As we struggle with these challenges of life, one has to wonder and ask ourselves: isn't this essentially what the story of the Nativity is all about? After all, didn't Mary struggle? Didn't it take God sending an angel to Joseph to bring him peace and calmness? Weren't Mary and Joseph rejected by an innkeeper and forced to find shelter in a manger where animals lived?

As we prepare for yet another holiday season, the quest for the perfect gift often tops our to-do list. Yet for some, this time brings a touch of sadness. Remember, even when our hearts feel heavy and challenges loom large, there is still a beacon of hope. It was during that 'Silent Night, Holy Night,' when all was calm and bright, that we received enduring gifts of hope, courage, faith, and love. Born from the nativity of Jesus, these gifts inspire us to look forward to a brighter tomorrow.

I hope that you will be able to join our church community on December 17th for our second annual Service of Nativity, lead by Pastor Emerita Becky Beckwith, beginning at 6pm. Through this service, I hope you will take the opportunity to breathe, relax, and find the beauty and calmness of the season ahead us.

Wishing you a blessed and Merry Christmas and Happiest of New Years,

Patrick

Service of the Nativity

An Evening of Music, Prayer, and Reflection



December 17, 2023 - 6:00pm
575 Grape Street, Whitehall PA 18052
(610) 264-8421



OUR ADVENT/ CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Worship Celebrations In December

8:30am Adult Faith Formation - Friendship Sunday School Class

9:30am Worship / Children's Faith Formation with Sunday Social time following worship

11:00am Confirmation Class and other Youth

November 22, Wednesday, 7pm, Thanksgiving Eve Service

St. John's gathers for worship the evening before Thanksgiving to share our gratitude in worship together. We hope to have a special guest share our evening message of giving thanks. Come and worship as we gather together to ask the Lord's blessing.

"D&D" in Advent!

No, it's not the kid's "D&D" game! Join us on Thursday evenings for Advent Dinner & Devotionals, as we share soup and bread, favorite songs and something to give us encouragement in this season of good cheer! Mark your calendars for Thursday evenings and come join the fun!



November 30, Thursday Dinner 6pm & Decorating 7pm, "Hanging of the Greens"

Help share an evening of fellowship and festiveness as we prepare our hearts and the sanctuary and other spaces for the Advent Season! As we decorate with Christmas in mind, the Advent preparations invite us to prepare our worship and our lives to welcome the Christ Child! Come join us in Fox Hall for food (soup and bread) provided by our Music Ministry, and fun for one and all decorating the sanctuary and other spaces!

Advent Dinner & Devotionals will continue on Thursday evenings at 6pm in Fox Hall on December 7, 14 and 21 with volunteers signing up to share soup and bread. We will share around the tables, sing and enjoy a meditation together.

December 3 - First Sunday in Advent

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Advent Through the Movies - "Meet Me in St. Louis" (HOPE)

Preparing our homes and lives for the holiday season can be draining. Changes challenge us and we find ourselves looking, desperate, for hope. Hear the pleas of the Psalmist and the promise of God, "Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

December 7 - Advent Dinner & Devotional, 6pm

December 10 - Second Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 40:1-5 & Mark 1:1-8

Advent Through the Movies - "Family Stone" (PEACE)

The challenges and pains of life often lead people to grief and despair, rather than experiencing comfort and peace through our faith. God's message of hope has been shared through the prophets and evangelists to remind us that God IS with us, creating peace.



December 14 - Advent Dinner & Devotional, Thursday at 6pm

December 17 - Third Sunday in Advent

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 & John 1:6-8, 19-28

Pastor Emerita, Rev. Dr. Becky Beckwith leading worship!

“Joy! Joy! Joy!” and “Who Are You?”

We are thrilled to welcome Pastor Becky to share the JOY of Advent with us while Pastor Steve and Bill are with family in Texas for their youngest son’s graduation from Texas Tech University! Come and celebrate the JOY God brings to us in the Christ Child, the Word made flesh that lives among us!

December 17, 6pm, Service of the Nativity

This music and scripture celebration of faith will draw us closer to Bethlehem’s manger and the promise of God to be “Emmanuel, God with us.” Come share with family and friends as the St. John’s Music Ministry leads us in worship.

December 21 - Advent Dinner & Worship, Thursday at 6pm

A Quiet Christmas (Longest Night / Blue Christmas) Come to St. John’s at 6pm for soup and bread, then we will journey to Asbury UMC. The community is invited to a “Quiet Christmas” worship service at Asbury United Methodist Church (1533 Springhouse Rd., Allentown) on December 21 at 7pm. The service is especially designed to offer God’s hope and healing in the midst of grief, relationship/job loss or other life transitions/events. The service will include hymns and special music, Scripture and reflection, prayers and candle lighting. All are welcome!

For more information, please contact Rev. Evelyn Stupp, estupp@asburylv.org, or Pastor Steve.

December 24 - Fourth Sunday in Advent (9:30am worship)

Luke 1:26-38

Advent Through the Movies - “Love Actually” (LOVE)

The chaos of “the most wonderful time of the year” sometimes leaves us wondering if LOVE can be found in the promise of God

and in our relationships with each other. If “All You Need Is Love” is true, how can we find and experience the invitation of the season to not simply “endure” the holiday, but embrace it’s greatest gift, LOVE. LOVE ACTUALLY IS ALL AROUND!

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service of Carols, Communion and Candlelight (6pm worship only)

Isaiah 9:2,6 & Luke 2:1-12

Advent Through the Movies - “Elf” (The CHRIST Child)

Buddy the Elf doesn’t fit in and doesn’t seem to meet anyone’s expectations, yet very presence of Buddy transforms the lives of people all around, making them take another look at what really matters to them. The Christ Child of Bethlehem’s manger caused the people of his generation to look differently at God’s promise to bring them salvation. That message continues to transform lives still today.

Come share in holiday movies, that guide us to God’s promises of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in the gift of the Christ Child for us all!

December 31 - New Year’s Eve (9:30am worship)

Share in a casual Sunday of worship. Wear something you received on Christmas Day or come ready to embrace and “ooooo and aaaah” over something cherished. We will sing more of our favorite Christmas carols and hear a story to remind us how important our relationships with each other are, no matter what our age, as we celebrate God’s love in our lives.

A Christmas Story - “A Cup of Christmas Tea”

by Tom Hegg (Author), Warren Hanson (Illustrator)

This heartwarming poem brings the true meaning of Christmas joyously to life. Reluctantly, in the midst of the Christmas rush, a nephew’s decision to visit his ailing and elderly Great Aunt, brings him memories of past holidays and the realization of how the human spirit can triumph over adversity. While there, peace, love and the wonderful Christmas spirit surround the two of them as they share a cup of Christmas tea.



Sunday Social Following Worship

Following worship, we enjoy lingering and talking with each other, and with refreshments, the conversations bring even greater joy! If you would like to “host” a Sunday Social time in Fox Hall, contact the church office or sign up on the red display board in the parlor.

Get to know some new friends. Keep the fun and friendship going each Sunday and visit with Colleen Kulhammer about our kitchen area use for information and support.



2024 Budget Approved

At the Fall Congregational Meeting held on Sunday, Nov. 12 during the morning worship service, the congregation voted to approved the 2024 Budget. Our sincere thanks to Sue Weldner, Treasurer, and the Stewardship and Finance Committee members for the information shared and the observations about how God continues to grow our capacity post COVID. Copies of approved budget are available upon request to the Church Office.

Sue Weldner shared the following highlights for 2024 over 2023:

- 4% overall increase in income in projected
- 4% increase in weekly offerings
- 5% increase in fundraising events income (Coming back to pre-pandemic levels)
- 4% overall increase in expenses
- 2% salary increases; health insurance increase est. at 5%
- \$16k "excess" revenue is projected (While we are working toward ability to grow additional staff positions, we are not there yet.)



Need A Lift?

Some weeks, we all need a little extra support, and with our elevator still inoperable for the time being, some have not been able to come to worship on site since they cannot use the elevator to get to the sanctuary or to Fox Hall. Here's how you can help!

Our own Pastor Dave Mohr called recently to ask if there would be persons willing to help with some extra support, perhaps a stabilizing arm or a strong back, to help people with extra equipment get into the sanctuary from the steps on the Grape Street entrance. Could you help carry their walkers? Could you help with a steady arm to help navigate the steps?

We're asking for able-bodied persons to help others needing some assistance to be watching for those who "need a lift" to not only boost spirits, but also lend a hand. We hope you'll lend a hand or two and help others participate in worship while the elevator is being repaired.





Scan, Support & Sustain
BECOME AN AUTOMATIC CONTRIBUTOR!

Our generosity and faithfulness has been changing lives for over 120 years! St. John's continues to share the love of God through the regular support of our members and friends. Our ability to meet the needs of our church and community depend on the difference each one of us makes through our gifts.

As Automatic Contributors, your gifts maintain the consistent support needed to meet the expenses of ministry opportunities and to grow beyond meeting basic needs to making new ministry efforts possible. Automatic Contributors support St. John's when present for worship and when traveling or unable to attend.

There are currently 48 giving units participating.

The process is easy and anyone on church staff can help you get started if you have questions or concerns.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE! Will you become an automatic contributor for 2024?



"YOUR CHECK ARRIVED JUST IN TIME!"

Each year, the Pension Boards receives many notes and letters of thanks from retired United Church of Christ pastors, their surviving spouses, and children, letting us know what a difference your gifts to the Christmas Fund have made in their lives. Here are just a few excerpts:

"On behalf of my mother, I would like to thank you for the generous check from the Pension Boards. She has recently moved to assisted living at the age of 101! She was choir director at her church up until last year and was playing the organ for worship services once a month for the past 20 years. As a member of the UCC, I have often contributed to the Veterans of the Cross offering and it is wonderful to know my Mom is a beneficiary."

"What a joy to receive a check from the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance as a surprise Christmas gift! My wife (88) and I (95) thank you! It will help greatly in paying our bills at year's end."

"I want to thank you for the generous \$500 that was given to me by your Board. It really has been appreciated as I paid my house taxes for the winter. It would have been a very difficult burden without your check."

"Your check arrived just in time! It helped pay for a much-needed repair to my car, which I rely on since I live in a remote area and need transportation to medical appointments. I feel blessed to be remembered by you and the members of our UCC churches!"

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

Give online at www.christmasfund.org.

A Message from Our Conference Minister

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." ~ Ephesians 4:11-13



Dear Friends,

All my life I have found important causes and agencies to pour my energy. Sometimes this has been as a staff person and sometimes as a volunteer. The church cannot survive without individuals stepping forward to volunteer for leadership, committee and team roles within the congregation and the Conference. Apostle Paul reminds the church in Ephesus that we are all called, but not all for the same roles. Some are pastors, some are teachers, and some roles are not defined by the ancient letter.

What are you being called to do within the congregation to which you belong or within the Conference, or even in the national setting? Where is God calling you? I know we are all busy. Our lives are full of commitments to work, to family, and to the activities our families are engaged in. Yet perhaps the hour or two you spend in a volunteer role in your congregation can make a profound difference in the lives of congregation or community members.

As we walk our journey of faith, we can sometimes feel ill-equipped to take on a volunteer or leadership role. I remember something that was said to me when I was wrestling with the call to be a pastor. I was told, "God doesn't just call the equipped, God equips the called." I am sure a more famous person than my local church pastor said that, but it is his words that inspired me to seriously begin my path to authorized ministry.

So, my friends, if God is calling you, if a neighbor or congregation member is calling you, move into that task, that role, that call with the confidence that God is with you. God will equip you. God will lead you into a future where you can bloom.

Blessings, Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates
Published in "This Week in PNEC" – Nov. 2, 2023

Do You Belong to Our Redner's Save-A-Tape Program?

St. John's receives 1% back on all Redner's grocery receipts that are submitted. If you are not a member of Redner's Save-A-Tape program, please join—then make sure you use your customer card when you check out. The grocery chain does have some guidelines we need to follow. The whole receipt must be submitted, and it must say "Save-A-Tape" on it. If you use a charge card and do not want any numbers to show on the receipt, you can black them out. In addition, please check at customer service to make sure you are using a current customer card as some of the cards have been updated. If you have any questions, contact Karen Stoitsits at (610) 262-0746 or email littlekdr@yahoo.com. You can mail your receipts to the church office or deposit them in a jar on the table in the lounge area.



Nut & Fruit Sale - We Have Extras!

For those of you who didn't place an order, we have extra items available to purchase. Choose from deluxe mixed nuts, pecan halves, whole cashews, pistachios, nut & fruit mix, harvest medley mix, sweet & salty trail mix, chocolate raisins, chocolate bridge mix, and malted milk balls. Prices vary from \$12.00 to \$13.00. Stop by the lounge area before or after worship and see Carol Raszler to make your purchases.

Homemade Chocolate Candy

You still have until Sunday, November 26, to order semi-sweet peanut butter balls and semi-sweet coconut cream balls from Ginny Brokenshire. The cost is \$14.00 a pound. An order form can be found on the table in the lounge area or accessed from the church's website at <https://bit.ly/45Na1X3>.

Checks are made payable to St. John's UCC, Fullerton. **Pick-up will be on Sunday, December 17.** If you have any questions, contact Ginny at home (610) 439-0443 or her cell (720) 909-5848.

Men's Breakfast Group



The Men's Breakfast Group of St. John's meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Hamilton Family Restaurant located at 2027 Hamilton St. in Allentown. Our next meeting is on **December 2 at 8:30am**.

We would be pleased to have you join us. If you would like to know more about this group, please contact Bob Bold at (610) 393-6123 or email QVRRBold@aol.com

Applebee's Hamburger and Fries coupons are still being sold as a fundraiser for St John's. They are \$10.00 each. They do not expire, and can be used at any Applebee's in the Lehigh Valley. I will be picking up the coupons shortly to distribute to everyone. Get your order in soon! Money is due at time of sign up. Please see Kenda. (484) 358-7453 or email kpcatalini@aol.com



Deadline for January Newsletter

If you would like to contribute an article for the January newsletter, please email your single-spaced submission in PDF, DOC, RTF or plain text format to: - newsletter@sjuccf.org by Sunday, December 3.

Photos or graphics for your article should be sent as attachments to your emailed submission. Please do not embed them in the file.

Authors, some helpful newsletter guidelines are here:

<https://stjohnsuccfullerton.org/stylenotes>

“Fun-Raising” Events at St. John’s

Saturday, Dec. 2 – Bus Trip to NYC – We’re sold out! To everyone who made a reservation, enjoy your day in the “Big Apple.” Contact Brian Strauss.

Nut & Fruit Sale – Extras are still available. See Carol Raszler before or after worship.

Homemade Chocolate Candy – Semi-sweet peanut butter and coconut cream balls.
\$14/lb. Deadline to order is Sunday, November 26. Pickup is scheduled for December 17. Contact Ginny Brokenshire.

“Burgers for a Cause” – Applebee’s \$10 coupon is good for a gourmet burger and fries.
Good at any Applebee’s at any time. See Kenda Catalini to purchase a coupon.

Scrip Gift Card Sales – Pickup for those who placed an order is Sunday, December 10.

Weis & Giant Gift Cards – 5% comes back to the church with your purchase of grocery gift cards. See Tom Moyer or Carol Raszler.

Redner’s Receipts – 1% comes back to the church when you send your entire grocery receipt to the church. Be sure It says “Save a Tape” on the receipt. Collection basket is also on the table in the lounge. See Karen Stoitsis.

COMING IN 2024:

Friday, Mar. 15 – St. Patrick’s Gift Card Bingo – Doors open at 6:00.

Game begins at 7:00. Tickets \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door. See Tom Moyer.

Sunday, May 26 – IronPigs Party Porch – 6:35 p.m. \$39. Contact Tom Moyer.

Tuesday, Aug. 6 – IronPigs Grandstand – 7:05 p.m. \$13. Contact Carol Raszler.

Contacts:

Mike Borgman	(610) 502-0913	
Ginny Brokenshire	(610) 439-0443	ginny@posleader.com
Bill Castello	(651) 492-1399	stars@sjuccf.org
Kenda Catalini	(484) 358-7453	kpcatalini@aol.com
Amy Fiedler	(610) 657-0654	alfiedler@yahoo.com
Brian Fisher	(610) 762-1134	brianfish2001@yahoo.com
Tom Moyer	(610) 432-3372	tommoyer54@gmail.com
Carol Raszler	(610) 393-7572	crazler@aol.com
Brian Strauss	(610) 248-9119	strauss1975@aol.com

Holiday Shopping Starts Here at St. John's

Our selection of crafts can be purchased on the following dates:

Sundays, November 26 & December 3

Before and After Worship – Lounge Area

Looking for household furnishings for the holidays? We've got Christmas and Fall t-towels, table runners, stocking stuffers, cross-stitch finger-tip towels, stockings, wine totes, coasters, Santas, angels, ornaments, snowmen, and more!

Have a new baby or children in the family? We've got cross-stitch and cloth baby bibs, knitted baby sweaters, burping cloths, tooth fairy pillows, boo boo bunnies, quilt blankets, American Girl doll sweaters, stuffed animals, and more!

Need birthday or thank-you gifts? We've got wine totes, wine coasters, cork hot plates, table runners, cross-stitch finger-tip towels, bread cloths, kitchen towels, potholders, dishcloths, friendship bunnies, church cookbooks, 12-bean soup mix, and more!

Something New! We've got casserole totes, bowl cozies, clothespin bags, cloth shopping bags, patchwork table runners, tissue boxes, pillowcases, bookmarks, and "what-not" baskets!

If you have any questions or need any of these items, contact Carol Raszler at (610) 965-4299 or email craszler@aol.com





REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

PASSIONATEPENNYPINCHER.COM



God Is Still Speaking...

with Verso-Chat Bible Study - Wednesdays, 9:00am

Our Lectionary reading study has moved into the new YEAR B cycle of readings with the start of the Season of Advent. Since we began this weekly study almost in 2022, we have completed 2 of the 3 reading cycles which cover significant portions of scripture that we share through worship each week. You're invited to participate and help influence our experience of worship!

Join the conversation on Wednesday mornings at 9:00am and learn from the insights and ideas we share with each other. Look at scripture with us and consider the themes being shared in worship to deepen our faith.

ALL are welcome to enhance your experience by joining our weekly Verso-Chat Bible Study. Each week is it's own contained experience to discover God's "still speaking" words. You will find the "Verso Chat" LINK BELOW and on the website to participate. Let's study and chat about the verses of scripture together!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81571428042>



Lady PEEPS

POSITIVE, EXTRAORDINARY, ENCOURAGING, PRAYERFUL SISTERS

The Lady PEEPS Women's Group will meet on Tuesday, December 19th at 6:30pm in Fox Hall. Our theme will be HOW SWEET IT IS as we have fun experimenting with and creating holiday cupcakes together. We will be learning about different icings and cake toppings from around the world. Come enjoy a fun and relaxing evening together with this special group of St. John's ladies.

Colleen Kulhamer



Why did Rudolph have to attend summer school? Because he went down in history.

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas? It's Christmas, Eve!

How do sheep say Merry Christmas to each other? Fleece Navidad.

What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party? Freeze a jolly good fellow!

What did the wise men say after they offered up their gifts of gold and frankincense? Wait, there's myrrh.

What did the bald man say when he got a comb for Christmas? "I'll never part with it!"

Why do reindeer like Beyoncé so much? She sleighs.

Knock, knock! Who's there? Anna. Anna who? Anna partridge in a pear tree.

December Birthdays

If you have an upcoming birthday or notice an omission, please update the church office.

12/01 Barbara Thomass	12/18 Amanda Kaiser
12/02 Andrew Mill	Andrea Leibensperger
12/03 Austin Sommer	12/19 Daniel Schlenker
12/04 Phyllis Ambearle	12/20 Annamarie Barrall
Myles Silfies	12/22 Michael Agrippine
12/05 Carol Buskirk	Robert Sherman
Nancy Weaver	Walter Walenta
12/08 Elijah Fox	Joanne Ziegler
Kelsey Gallagher	12/24 Sally Gibson
12/09 Craig Bryant	Daniel Reid
Rylee Schmoyer	12/25 Michael Kulhamer
Ryan Weiner	12/26 Paul F Geissinger
12/10 Donna Brown	Christopher Kuhns
Rev. Cliff Herring	12/28 Anne Welsh
Rudolph Kaintz	12/29 Debra Hausman
12/11 Rachel Pollitt	Mary Ann Knauss
12/12 Keith Fox Jr.	Dennis Pascoe
Kim Hillegass	Fay Salivonchik
Steven Schlenker	12/30 Kerry Geissinger
Kaitlyn Weidner	Faith Schaffer
12/13 Melissa Szoke	12/31 Frank Csaszar
12/14 Jo Ellen Wexler	



December Wedding Anniversaries

If you have an upcoming anniversary or notice an omission, please update the church office.

Joseph Trippett & Anne Welsh
12/11/10

Barbara Thomas & Eugene
Gallagher
11/9/02

Walter & Janice Walenta
12/27/09

Gerald & Patricia Yanavok
12/28/11

Peter & Regina Mohr
12/29/84

Adam & Emma Rarich
12/31/17





The Christmas Fund For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

*"From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." ~
John 1:16*



The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross is an annual UCC offering that expresses our thanks to retired and active UCC pastors and lay church workers and their families facing financial need; providing direct assistance to supplement pensions; help with the cost of medical insurance; a thank you gift at Christmas; and funds to meet emergency needs.

This year's Christmas Fund theme is "Grace Upon Grace," from John 1:16. Join with others in the United Church

of Christ to help return grace upon grace to those who have given so much to each of us and to our churches by giving generously to this year's Christmas Fund.

With the printed edition of this newsletter is an insert and special offering envelope for The Christmas Fund. Please place your donation in the offering plate, mail it to the church office, or donate online or by text. Be sure to specify "The Christmas Fund" in the memo section. The offering will be received on Sunday, December 17, and will continue until the end of December.

“Operation Santa” Mitten Tree Project

We will continue to receive donations for “Operation Santa” until Sunday, November 27. You will find the Mitten Tree in the lounge area. If you would like to sponsor a gift for a senior resident at Phoebe Ministries, please take a red or yellow mitten. If you would like to sponsor a gift for a child and a family at Valley Youth House, please take a green or purple mitten. Make your checks payable to St. John’s UCC, Fullerton and be sure to specify Phoebe and/or VYH in the memo section. Put your donation in the offering plate, mail to the church office, or give online or by text.

Whitehall Food Pantry

Donations are needed for the pantry’s Christmas meals. For the months of December, the food pantry is asking for donations of canned turkey gravy, canned cranberry sauce, and canned vegetables. The pantry also hands out grocery store gift cards for its patrons to purchase a turkey. A shopping cart can be found in the coatroom area by the sanctuary where you can place your donations. Monetary contributions are always accepted and can be forwarded to the church office, placed in the offering plate, or given by online or text giving. If you would like to volunteer at the food pantry, please contact Gary Black at gary.t.black@outlook.com or at (484) 274-2405

How Did St. John’s Family Do?

Recent Outreaches	Oct 2023	YTD 2023	YTD 2022	YTD 2021
Our Church’s Wider Mission	\$1,046.00	\$10,543.00	\$12,734.90	\$15,086.30
Neighbors in Need	\$105.00	\$145.00	\$334.00	\$471.00
Whitehall Food Pantry	\$210.00	\$3,465.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,395.00
Hawaii Relief Fund	\$20.00	\$ 810.00	N/A	N/A
Ukraine Relief Fund	\$165.00	\$1,665.00	\$3,565.00	N/A
General Disaster Relief	\$295.00	\$575.00	N/A	N/A
TOTALS	\$1,841.00	\$20,350.00	\$20,188.25	\$20,633.35

Mission Outreach giving for October 2023 totaled \$1,841.00 and YTD giving totaled \$20,350.00

General Disaster Relief Fund Middle East Special Appeal

The United Church of Christ, through Wider Church Ministries, has issued a special appeal for humanitarian aid to people affected by the war in Israel and Palestine. The war, which was declared on October 7, has already claimed thousands of lives and tens of thousands of people have been injured. Approximately a million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced with no place for them to go. Half of them are in emergency shelters set up by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. It is increasingly difficult for citizens to find safe space, as even hospitals have sustained damage. Food, water, fuel, and electricity have been cut off. Convoys of trucks carrying humanitarian relief await the opportunity to bring much-needed relief into Gaza from Egypt.

If you would like to support UCC's emergency aid to the people



affected by the Israel-Hamas War, please send your contribution into the church office, place in the offering plate, contribute online or by text. You can also find General Disaster Fund envelopes on the table in the lounge area. Be sure to put "Middle East Support" in the memo section. Contributions will be received for the month of December.

Pastor Steve has these words to say about the people affected by this war:

"As the conflict continues to intensify, with now over 10,000 Palestinians killed in response to the 1,400 Israeli lives lost and the 240 hostages continuing to be held by Hamas, the solidarity of humanitarian response to people suffering is inspiring. While many of us support Israel's right to defend itself against the terrorist attacks of Hamas, at the same time, many of us are moved with compassion for the plight of innocent people simply trying to live in peace, to escape the bombing and endure the trauma of the devastation of their lives and homeland.

I urge us all to make this Israel-Hamas War and the plight of hostages and the innocent people of Palestine part of our daily prayer and our personal response by reaching out to our national legislators to share our concern for humanitarian relief. Too much aggression and an overwhelming response leave few options for people of goodwill, medical aid and care to bring support in meaningful ways.

As we come to the season that calls us to prepare the way for God's hope, peace, joy and love to be born anew in the world, may our efforts demonstrate our commitments to these calls for compassion and the ongoing work of justice and peace. Thank you for your prayerful discernment and your heart of mission and love for all of God's people."

Whitehall-Coplay Hunger Initiative

WCHI and the Faith-Based Community are providing free meals to low-income Whitehall-Coplay households on the first Sunday and third Tuesday of each month from 4pm to 6:30pm – Dine-in Only.

Date	Church	Address	Phone
Sunday, December 3	Muslim Assoc. of the Lehigh Valley	1988 Schadt Ave., Whitehall	(703) 346-8698
Tuesday, December 19	Whitehall Bible Fellowship Church	3300 Seventh St., Whitehall	(610) 434-8661
Sunday, January 7	St. Peter Roman Catholic Church	4 So. 5 th St., Coplay	(610) 262-2417
Tuesday, January 16	To be determined	-	-



Update on Other Mission Outreaches

Thank you to everyone who contributed to **Neighbors in Need** in October. A total of **\$145.00** was received. This year's theme focused on environmental justice. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund an array of local and national initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. One-third of the offering also supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries.

We express our gratitude to everyone who sponsored this year's CROP Walk and our walkers—**Amy Feidler, Cindy Reck, and Karen Stoitsits**. A total of **\$1020.00** was received. CROP Hunger Walks have become community-based events held in cities across the United States, raising dollars to support the global mission of Church World Service to eradicate hunger and poverty. Twenty-five percent of the funds raised stay within our local community to support the Ecumenical Food Bank and the Lehigh Conference of Churches' Conference Kitchen.

The final amount of donations received for Hawaii Disaster Relief amounted to **\$865.00**. Your donations were sent to the Hawaii Conference to offer assistance in recovery efforts from the wildfires that devastated Maui and other parts of Hawaii in August.

In October donations to the General Disaster Relief Fund went to World Central Kitchen for its work in providing meals, food, and assistance to Ukraine and surrounding countries. We are happy to report that **\$550.00** was sent to WCK.

If God is Calling You...

We need volunteers to help at the Whitehall Food Pantry on the 4th Monday of every month. The food pantry is located at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 3900 Mechanicsville Rd. in Whitehall. Morning hours are 9am to 11:30am to help sort, put away, stock shelves, and arrange food for the evening's distribution. Evening hours are 5:30pm to 8pm to assist the food pantry patrons with their selections and help load their cars. We serve about 35 families. Contact our food pantry liaison Gary Black gary.t.black@outlook.com or (484) 274-2405 to become part of our team.

Does the news of those suffering from catastrophic disasters (wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods) here and around the world give you an incentive to reach out and help? Do the injustices of those victims caught in the middle of senseless wars prompt you to act and respond? Does the plight of the homeless and discrimination on multi-levels call you to find ways to make changes? Then we could use your input and vision on St. John’s Mission Committee. We meet about six times a year, most recently by Zoom. Feel free to contact Pastor Steve or any member of the committee to become part of our Mission Outreach Team.

Thank You Notes

Dear Friends,

Thank you for making our 2023 shoe collection a success. We exceeded our goal of 5,000 lbs. (200 bags) and ended up with 5,517 lbs. (228) bags. Each contained 25 pairs of footwear—shoes, boots, stilettos, slippers, flip flops, etc. This shoe collection fundraiser will support our July 2024 international mission trip to help construct permanent housing for families in La Florida, Peru. Our church mission statement notes, “Together we serve with joy and love!” Thank you for helping us serve.

Sincerely,
Mission Trip Team—Peru ‘24
Frieden’s UCC
Oley, PA



**St Johns UCC Fullerton - Statement of Finances
OCT 2022**

Income	Electronic	10/2/2022	10/9/2022	10/16/2022	10/23/2022	10/30/2022	Total
Offerings for Operating Expenses	\$6,442.09	\$5,433.25	\$2,526.00	\$2,879.50	\$2,543.80	\$2,482.00	\$22,306.64
Rental Income--Gross					\$1,225.50		\$1,225.50
Fundraising Income--Net of Exp		\$1,640.00	\$893.51	\$564.50	\$60.00	\$(315.81)	\$2,842.20
Endowment Interest			\$5,670.00				\$5,670.00
Flowers		\$66.00					\$66.00
Christian Education	\$5.00	\$51.00	\$92.00	\$12.00	\$41.00	\$37.00	\$238.00
Special Gifts							\$-
Total	\$6,447.09	\$7,190.25	\$9,181.51	\$3,456.00	\$3,870.30	\$2,203.19	\$32,348.34

Expense Summary	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pastoral Services	\$11,079.50	\$13,377.00	\$(2,297.50)
Staff Salaries & Expense	\$8,017.61	\$9,891.00	\$(1,873.39)
Property	\$1,565.66	\$3,226.00	\$(1,660.34)
Parish Programs	\$2,792.71	\$2,868.00	\$(75.29)
Total	\$23,455.48	\$29,362.00	\$(5,906.52)

	Month	Year
Total Income	\$32,348.34	\$236,111.56
Total Expenses	\$23,455.48	\$258,939.17
*****	Net	\$(22,827.61)

Mission Giving, OCT 2022

Our Churches Wider Mission	\$1,130.00
Neighbors in Need	\$284.00
Ukrainian Relief	\$120.00
UCC Hurricane 2022	\$341.80
Whitehall Food Bank	\$145.00
Total	\$2,020.80

**St John's UCC Fullerton
Fund Balances
For Month Ending, OCT 2022**

Account	Sep-22	Oct-22	Difference
Checking Account--KNBT	\$17,187.85	\$26,501.21	\$9,313.36
Giant Card Funds	\$744.51	\$1,569.51	\$825.00
Weis Card Funds	\$1,510.00	\$1,510.00	\$-
sub-total General Fund Assets	\$19,442.36	\$29,580.72	\$10,138.36
IN & OUT Account--KNBT Checking	\$72,565.27	\$76,343.03	\$3,777.76
Restricted/Property Money Market	\$31,864.93	\$31,865.21	\$0.28
sub-total Restricted Assets	\$104,430.20	\$108,208.24	\$3,778.04
Endowment Fund--KNBT	\$411,738.60	\$429,689.29	\$17,950.69
TOTAL ASSETS	\$535,611.16	\$567,478.25	\$31,867.09
Cornerstone Pavillion Loan	\$(85,550.57)	\$(85,550.57)	\$-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$(85,550.57)	\$(85,550.57)	\$-
NET FUND BALANCE	\$450,060.59	\$481,927.68	\$31,867.09



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December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>3 Newseiter Articles Due 8:30am Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class/ Youth</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 9:30am Staff Meeting 10:30am Visitation Committee 6:30pm Stewardship & Finance 6:30pm Service of the Nativity Rehearsal</p>	<p>6 9:00am Verso Chat with Pastor Steve 6:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm STARs Meeting 6:30pm Zumba class: Fox Hall 7:00pm Choir 7:00pm SAA-Recovery Support</p>	<p>7 6:00pm Dinner and Devotions</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2 8:30am Men's breakfast: Hamilton Family Restaurant 8:30am Bus trip to NYC</p>
<p>10 8:30am Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class/ Youth</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12 12:00 Staff Luncheon 6:00pm Elders 7:00pm Consistory</p>	<p>13 6:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Zumba class: Fox Hall 7:00pm SAA-Recovery Support 7:00pm Service of the Nativity Rehearsal</p>	<p>14 6:00pm Dinner and Devotions</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 9:30am Zumba class: Fox Hall</p>
<p>17 8:30am Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class/ Youth</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 9:30am Staff Meeting 10:00am Community of Practice 6:30pm PEERS</p>	<p>20 9:00am Verso Chat with Pastor Steve 6:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Zumba class: Fox Hall 7:00 Choir 7:00pm SAA-Recovery Support</p>	<p>21 6:00pm Dinner and Devotions 7:00pm Quiet Christmas at Asbury UMC</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 9:30am Zumba class: Fox Hall</p>
<p>24 8:30am Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour 6:00pm Christmas Eve Worship</p>	<p>25 Office closed</p>	<p>26 Office closed</p>	<p>27 9:00am Verso Chat with Pastor Steve 6:30pm Zumba class: Fox Hall 7:00pm SAA-Recovery Support</p>	<p>28 6:30pm Property Committee</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 9:30am Zumba class: Fox Hall</p>
<p>31 8:30am Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 10:30am Social Hour</p>						