



**BILL
MECKES**

St. John's **CONNECTIONS**

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

Volume 17 • Issue 147 • December 2024

“The Christmas Journey”

We all love a good story. Some of them stick with us and we love to hear them again and again. We bask in the familiar and nostalgic. We take delight in the nuance, the details which give us opportunities to place ourselves within these stories.

Several years ago I received a book by Donna VanLiere, bestselling author of *The Christmas Shoes* and *The Christmas Hope*. The new book shares the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The author writes, “The eighty-mile journey of a common carpenter and a simple peasant girl is one of the most enduring stories in history. As books go out of print and stories fade from memory, the journey of Joseph and Mary and her delivery inside a common barn continue to bless and inspire hope in people around the world.”



The story of the Nativity is alive in our modern world. We share the journey year after year as our own reminder that the journey which began more than 2000 years ago is still the most powerful series of events ever to touch the minds and hearts of people everywhere. The story is almost too familiar to us. We’ve conflated some other stories and actors into the sacred story. The greeting card companies and movie producers have painted quite the picture for us over the years. Somewhere along the way the cave have been cleaned up, the birth became painless, and the people involved were stripped of the fear and very real consequences of this birth. It seems we have conveniently forgotten much of what happened to make the journey possible.

Perhaps this Advent season, we too can be reminded of the anticipation, the concern, the struggle against the social stigma and family shame. Perhaps we too will recognize that they are required to make this journey. They didn't choose it. It was decreed that ALL should be recorded. This Advent, even if we find ourselves a bit hesitant or even reluctant, will we find "the reason for the season?" Will we make the journey into a familiar place with eyes open to the possibilities of what God might be preparing for us to do? Will we see how much is required of us as well, not in gift giving and pleasantries, but in coming to the manger as did the shepherds, to see this thing that had been made known to them? Will we come, knowing the demands on our lives to follow this Christ Child? to keep the couple safe? to protect the Child? to be sure his influence isn't just a noted story, but a living presence in our lives?

As we make "The Christmas Journey" for ourselves, may the anticipation of Christ's coming cause us to prepare our lives in new ways to not only experience what God is doing, but to participate in God's purposes for us and all the world. May we be ushered in to the fresh experience of the One who is born for us, who is God with us! And in our Christmas journey, may we be rooted in the love and life of our gracious, still speaking, still creating God. May we choose to love God, love our neighbors and love ourselves in our journey of faith. We are St. John's UCC, Fullerton, and...

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

Yours in grace and hope,

Steve Davis

Rev. Steven Davis, Senior Pastor



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On The Cover...



BILL MECKES

Hello everyone, my name is Bill Meckes. I became a member of St. John's about 19 years ago, shortly after moving to Fellowship Community in June 2004 (I am one of our homebound members connected through our Visitation/Congregational Care ministries). Before that, I lived in Lehighton, and earlier, my wife and I were part of a congregation in Richmond, Virginia. When my wife became ill, we decided to return here so she could receive the care she needed.

Joining St. John's was a welcoming experience for me. Pastor Becky was just coming in as the new pastor, and I appreciated how she guided the church through that transition.

We had meaningful meetings to discuss what the church needed, and I felt my voice was heard. From the start, I was warmly welcomed by the congregation, especially by many of the older gentlemen who took the time to talk with me. It's not always easy to walk into a new church and feel at home, but St. John's made that possible for me. Now, under Pastor Steve's guidance, I continue to feel connected and supported, much like I did when I first joined.

Even though my physical abilities now limit me from being as active in the church as I'd like, I still cherish the connections I have with the community. Pastor Steve, much like Pastor Becky did, has helped me feel connected and supported through his visits and our conversations. I enjoy the communications and visits from members like Carole, Kirby, Sharon, and Tom Moyer, who often helps me get around when I need to go somewhere. Taking walks around Fellowship Community allows me to see and talk with people, keeping that social connection alive. Being part of St. John's has been a significant blessing in my life, and I'm grateful for the warmth, fellowship, and opportunity to share and learn from others.

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 8.

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

[Updated style guidelines here](#)

Music at St. John's

Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem

By: Dr. Maya Angelou



Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues. Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
over unprotected villages. The sky slips low and grey and threatening. We question
ourselves. What have we done to so affront nature? We worry God. Are you there? Are you
there really? Does the covenant you made with us still hold? Into this climate of fear and
apprehension, Christmas enters, Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope And singing
carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.

The world is encouraged to come away from rancor, Come the way of friendship. It is
the Glad Season. Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner. Flood
waters recede into memory. Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us As we make our
way to higher ground. Hope is born again in the faces of children It rides on the shoulders
of our aged as they walk into their sunsets. Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all
things, Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper. At first it is too soft. Then only half heard. We
listen carefully as it gathers strength. We hear a sweetness. The word is Peace. It is loud
now. It is louder. Louder than the explosion of bombs. We tremble at the sound. We are
thrilled by its presence. It is what we have hungered for. Not just the absence of war. But,
true Peace. A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies. Security for our beloveds and their
beloveds. We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.

We beckon this good season to wait a while with us. We, Baptist and Buddhist,
Methodist and Muslim, say come. Peace.

Come and fill us and our world with your majesty. We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian, Implore you, to stay a while with us. So we may learn by your shimmering light How to look beyond complexion and see community.

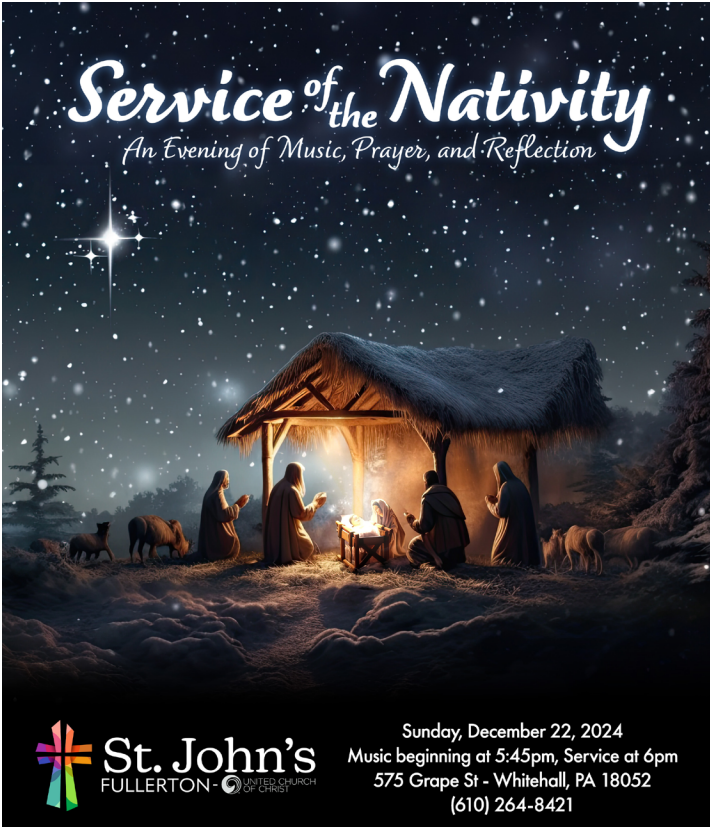
It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time. On this platform of peace, we can create a language To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other. At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ Into the great religions of the world.

We jubilate the precious advent of trust. We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope. All the earth's tribes loosen their voices To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers, Look heavenward and speak the word aloud. Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud. Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother. Peace, My Sister. Peace, My Soul.

Musically Yours,
Patrick



Service of the Nativity
An Evening of Music, Prayer, and Reflection

St. John's
FULLERTON • UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday, December 22, 2024
Music beginning at 5:45pm, Service at 6pm
575 Grape St - Whitehall, PA 18052
(610) 264-8421



for Children, Youth & Adults & Worship Celebrations!

Here's what we have to look forward to as we engage in faith formation and worship together.

8:30am Adult Faith Formation - The Friendship Sunday School Class meets in Rm 201, to accommodate those with physical mobility needs. All are welcome to topical studies, biblical reflection and group discussion, led by various class members. Anyone needing assistance, please use the Grape Street elevator entrance and come to the sanctuary level. There's always great conversation and some tasty treats to start your Sunday morning well! Contact Tom and Emilie Moyer for more information.

9:30am Children's Faith Formation - Children gather with the congregation in worship through the Children's message, then are let to Room 101 and our "mini theater" room for the weekly topic lesson. "HOLY MOLY" is our curriculum theme this year! We believe our children are blessings, and we want them to grow in our love and the love of God. The children's table is set up in the Parlor for activity if desired for those who choose to remain during worship with parent supervision for any children not participating in regular faith formation activities. "Kids Busy Bags" are also available at the welcome table.

Parents... **We have a new priority for children on Communion Sundays.**

Children who attend “Holy Moly” on the 1st Sunday of the month when the congregation celebrates the sacrament of Holy Communion will be brought back to the sanctuary to join their family in worship. We know some parents welcome their children participating in the sacrament. Others want their children to wait until they’re confirmed or until they have a stronger understanding of the meaning of this sacred meal of love and grace.

As St. John’s UCC, Fullerton, we observe an OPEN Communion Table, which means that ALL PERSONS, regardless of age or full understanding of the sacrament, are welcome to receive. After all, how many of us as adults in our faith can fully express or explain the significance of this sacred meal.

Children will have an abbreviated lesson on the first Sunday of the month to accommodate their participation in Holy Communion, as those who observe in participation or as those who receive in participation. We have both wine and grape juice in the trays to meet the needs of all.

9:10-9:25 Expanding Hospitality with Pre-Service Beverages -

During the season of Advent, Christmas and into the winter months of 2025, we want to welcome our worship participants with a warm beverage option BEFORE worship as well as our Sunday Social time following worship. As you arrive during this season, come enjoy a cup of coffee, hot tea or hot chocolate! Water will be available as always. Come to worship and let your body be warmed in our fellowship and friendship together.

If you’re interested in being a Hospitality Helper BEFORE worship, please contact Kay Chryst, or add your name to the sign up sheet on the red display board in the foyer.

9:30am Morning Worship - Our faith community gathers to Worship, Love and Serve every Sunday morning! We have a place for you, one and all, and YOU ARE... WELCOME HERE! We have created places in the congregational seating for those with mobility issues and assistance support. We are working to make our spaces and worship experience more accessible for everyone, including those with hearing impairment.

Join us each week in the gathering spaces, the classrooms, the sanctuary, online, and with Sunday Social time following worship in Fox Hall. We welcome you in to the experience of God's love through St. John's.

11am Confirmation Class for 7th & 8th Graders - Affirming Faith through Confirmation Class held in the third-floor Youth Room.

Confirmation Class participants will be visiting with you during our Sunday Social time. Please look for Nicholas Santee, Aiden Hannis and Lucas Williams in the minutes before we move to our class sessions each week, or on 4th Sundays when they generally have more time to connect with the congregation. Express your thanks for their worship participation and leadership. Join them in the journey of discovery to affirm their faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Confirmation sessions continue through the end of May with class lessons, worship experiences, service projects, church life, and learning with friends, leaders and mentors. These young men will look to YOU, the people of St. John's, to model what faith looks like. They will witness how you WORSHIP, LOVE and SERVE to create your own "No Matter What" kind of faith. What we live before them matters every single day!

As we make this Affirming Faith journey together, you are invited to pray for them by name, to share your encouragement with them. Get to know these guys and help them know who we are and how our lives have been changed in the love of God.

ALL YOUTH are welcome to come to the youth room during our Sunday Social time and share with our Confirmation Class as well as spend time with other youth and grow in your faith.

Family Fun & Movie Night - Just in Time for Christmas

Christmas activities begin early at St. John's as we present a Family Fun & Movie Night. Join us on Saturday, December 7, at 6pm in Fox Hall. A choice of several soups and breads is on the dinner menu followed by the movie "Polar Express," an animated film starring Tom Hanks. We suggest you bring comfortable lawn chairs to watch the movie. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary or contact the church office to let us know the number of people coming.

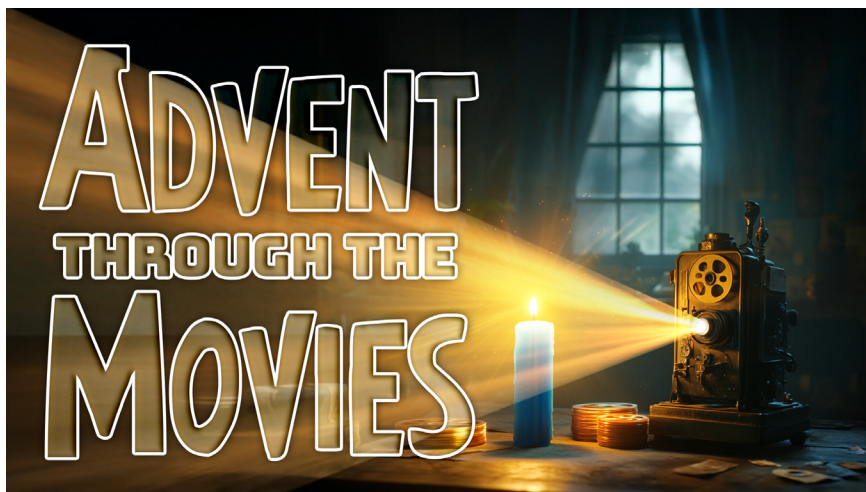


The movie Polar Express is about a young boy who has grown skeptical of Santa Claus. He is shocked to see a train stop outside his window on Christmas Eve, destined for the North Pole. When he accepts an invitation from the conductor (Tom Hanks) to climb on board, he embarks on a white-knuckle ride to Santa's headquarters, where he makes fast friends and learns an invaluable lesson about the true spirit of Christmas. The movie has wonderful messages about the importance of believing, the value of friendship, respect for leadership and courage, and the beauty of being kind to others. Additionally, the film features stunning animation and a captivating musical score that enhance the magical Christmas experience for viewers of all ages.

This event is perfect for families looking to kick off the Christmas season in a fun and meaningful way. Don't miss this cozy evening of food, fellowship, and a heartwarming holiday classic!

December Worship Series - Advent Through the Movies!

For years we have heard Advent messages with the familiar themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love for the Sunday worship focus. These Sundays invite us to a season of preparation and anticipation as we await the coming Christ Child. Over the last 20+ years, I've tried to introduce a twist in the stories to make their messages current with classic and contemporary holiday movies. I hope you enjoy this season as much as I do. I invite you to read the scriptures of our lectionary readings, and if you can, watch the movies in advance of Sunday morning worship. I will touch on the main plot of holiday films as they connect to our desire to anticipate with hope, to prepare with peace, to anticipate joy and to prepare for the birth of God's love in our lives in a fresh way this season.



DECEMBER 1

First Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion - HOPE

Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10,

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, Luke 21:25-36

HOPE - Christmas Chronicles (2018)

This story of sister and brother, Kate and Teddy Pierce, shares the Christmas Eve plan to catch Santa Claus on camera. It turns into an unexpected journey that most kids could only dream about. What are we hoping to experience in this season of anticipation? Do we

long for relationships to be renewed? Do we want some focus and light to brighten our days? Is there something that we wish we could experience again or perhaps for the first time that would inspire us? Come experience hope with us!

DECEMBER 7

*(Saturday, 6pm) - Join us in Fox Hall for Soup
and the film **The Polar Express (2004)***

Our Advent movie is Polar Express and those searching to know the real presence of the Christmas and have assurance that they still hear the timeless gift, whether child or adult. On Christmas Eve, a young boy embarks on a magical adventure to the North Pole on the Polar Express, while learning about friendship, bravery, and the spirit of Christmas. Come join us for food, friendship and a great film!

DECEMBER 8

Second Sunday of Advent - PEACE

Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79, Philippians 1:3-11, Luke 3:1-6

For Sunday worship, December 8, participants from our 2024 Women's Retreat will be leading us in worship with our Pastor Emerita, Rev. Dr. Becky Beckwith bringing the morning message. Hear their voices and spirit of peace lead us and welcome us to the presence of God with us!

DECEMBER 15

Third Sunday of Advent - JOY

*Zephaniah 3:14-20, Isaiah 12:2-6,
Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18*

JOY - Christmas with the Kranks (2004)

With their daughter, Blair, away in Peru, Luther and Nora Krank decide to skip Christmas all together until she decides to come home, causing an uproar when they have to celebrate it at the last minute. Have you had a time when you just wanted to sit out all of the "festiveness" and sometimes mass chaos of the holidays and just relax on a beach somewhere? Sound inviting? The reality is, people are counting on us, in both small and big ways, to bring the joy of being together, not only to our holidays, but to every day.

MORNING WORSHIP, DECEMBER 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent - LOVE

Micah 5:2-5a, Psalm 80:1-7,

Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-55

LOVE - The Bells of St. Mary's (1945)

At a big city Catholic school, Father O'Malley and Sister Benedict indulge in friendly rivalry, and succeed in extending the school through the gift of a building, changing hearts, inspiring hope and sharing love in its most pure form... giving selflessly.

SERVICE OF THE NATIVITY, DECEMBER 22, 6PM

Bring your neighbors, friends and family to share in this special musical and scripture telling of the Nativity story, with our combined choirs and guest musicians. We will share in beautiful singing and candlelight for this moving service.

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24, 6PM

The Christ Child with Carols, Communion and Candlelight

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, Psalm 96,

Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-15

I Heard the Bells (2022) is the inspiring, true story behind the beloved Christmas carol and the song's author. Known as America's Poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow leads an idyllic life...until the day his world is shattered by tragedy. With a nation divided by Civil War and his family torn apart, Henry puts down his pen, silenced by grief. But it's the sound of Christmas morning that reignites the poet's lost voice as he discovers the resounding hope of rekindled faith. In the story of the Christmas bells, we experience the story of hope renewed, of peace found, of joy reclaimed and of love embraced in the realization that God is present and alive, that God is with us!

DECEMBER 29

The First Sunday After Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26, Psalm 148,

Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 2:41-52

The Christmas Candle (story by Richard Paul Evans)

On a snowy Christmas Eve, a young man named Thomas on his way home for a family celebration realizes that the candle in his lantern is all but melted away. He stops in a chandler's shop filled with fantastic wax creations, but instead of admiring them Thomas scorns the chandler for wasting his time on sculptures that will only melt. The mysterious old chandler sells him a special Christmas



candle, and on his way home he sees new things in the candlelight. See how a cold-hearted man can change suddenly in light of Christmas. A cherished fable about love and charity.



The Lady PEEPS Women's Group will meet on Tuesday, December 17th at 6:30pm in Fox Hall. We will be talking about The Light Of the World as we watch the Christmas episodes from The Chosen. We will also have some creative fun with light and candles. Come enjoy a relaxing evening with the ladies of St. John's. Refreshments will be served and please use the elevator entrance.

Thank You Bob Czekner!

Many of you know Bob Czekner and the many ways he has shared his love for us through his labors of love at St. John's. For several years, Bob has served as one of our custodians to help with various maintenance tasks, grounds care and set up/clean up for events. Bob's recently came to the conclusion as he has been recovering from shoulder surgery and preparing for other surgeries to come in 2025, that it was time for him to retire from his custodial position with St. John's. Even though we joking said we wanted at least 5 years advanced notice, Bob has prayerfully considered what is best for him and for the church. Please join the St. John's staff and leadership in expressing your thanks to Bob for his many years of love and ministry. We are grateful for his service.

The Personnel Committee, Pastor Steve and the Coordinating Custodian, Michelle Gutekunst, will be making recommendations to meet the needs for supporting our ministry in the months to come. We are grateful to Sean Hartman who has stepped in and continues to fill this important role in our ministry staff.



Sensational Sunday Socials

Sharing With Friends After Worship

Enjoying time together with friends at St. John's is always a treat! Getting to do so where we meet new people, get to know each other and create stronger connections is why we gather.

If you've been part of a Sunday Social event after worship, you know how much fun it is to gather around the table with those you know as well as meeting new friends. Our Sunday Social events following worship provide the perfect opportunity to put a name and face together and get to know one another better. Come to Fox Hall following worship and share in the food and fun.



Host a Sunday Social as an individual, family or group and fill your space on the sign up sheet located on the red display board at the back of the sanctuary. Nothing elaborate is needed. Our gatherings have been both simple and extravagant. Some have had themes, while others simply brought out old favorites to share with coffee, juice and conversation, the savory and healthy and the sweet and indulgent.

Please take a look for available Sundays for the remainder of 2024 and sign up to help. Invite someone to partner with you. If you have enjoyed the love and efforts of others, consider signing up with a friend to help share this experience, or call the church office and let Alison know what Sunday you want to provide refreshments. Colleen Kulhammer is always happy to help orient you in the church kitchen.

Because Of You... in 2024!

Gratitude in Our Giving

Week after week, Pastor Steve has shared in worship examples of how our generosity is changing lives. We celebrate your shared faithfulness to God through the financial support of St. John's in our many areas of ministry. Our goal each month has been to meet or



exceed \$22,500 in monthly offering donations. We've only met that goal a few times, resulting in a deficit in 2024, even with great management of our expenditures for ministry. Sue Weldner reminded us all at our Fall Congregational Meeting of the simple ways we can meet our ministry needs and go beyond to change the trend we've seen as we've tried to recover from the pandemic, staff changes and challenging financial circumstances. Because of you... we've grown our ministry activities in exciting ways. Yet we still need to grow our participation and financial support.

As we share in this month of anticipation of the gift of the Christ Child, giving gifts as expression of our love for God and our love for each other, please consider how you might share an added gift of love to support the church as we end 2024. We currently anticipate a deficit in income over our 2024 expenses of about \$9,000. We don't want to see that projection become reality. This doesn't have to set us back. We can create a different way forward... because of YOU!

Please share your gifts this month or before the end of the year to help us erase our current projected deficit, ending 2024 strong and ready to thrive in 2025!

Convalescent & Homebound Residents

People who would welcome receiving a greeting card:

Shirley Abel
 Larry Albright
 Phyllis Ambearle
 Anita Beil
 Clarence Biehn
 Sandra Diefenderfer
 Shirley Downing
 Jeanne Fischl
 Milton Focht
 Sally Gibson
 Ron Glass

Gus Geissinger
 Roberta Haberern
 Lucille Hicks
 Geraldine Keim
 Adrianne Kiesbar
 Wilbur Kline
 Emma Repp Kuczek
 Jean Litzenberger
 Bill Meckes
 Gayle Mihulec
 Dale Millham

Karen Moyer
 Mary Jane Ott
 Marilyn (Jean) Piskula
 Madeline Slivka
 Bert Smith
 Leona Snyder
 Nancy Weaver
 Bonnie Weikel
 Arline Yoder

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



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1 8:30 Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class	2	3 9:30am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Stewardship & Finance	4 9:00am Verso Chat 12:00pm Painting 6:00pm Painting G 6:30pm STARs Com 6:30pm Zumba-Fo 7:00pm SAA-Recov 302
8 Newsletter deadline 8:30 Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class	9	10 1:30pm Staff Meeting 6:00pm Elders 7:00pm Consistory	11 9:00am Verso Chat 12:00pm Painting 6:00pm Painting G 6:30pm Zumba-Fo 7:00pm SAA-Recov 302
15 8:30 Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class	16	17 9:30am Staff Meeting 10:00am Community of Practice 6:30pm PEEPS	18 9:00am Verso Chat 12:00pm Painting 6:00pm Painting G 6:30pm Zumba-Fo 7:00pm SAA-Recov 302
22 8:30 Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour 11:00am Confirmation Class 6:00pm Service of the Nativity	23	24 9:30am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Office closed - 12:00pm Painting 6:00pm Painting G 7:00pm SAA-Recov 302
29 8:30 Friendship Class 9:30am Children's Faith Formation 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Social Hour	30	31 9:30am Staff Meeting	1 V

ember

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4	5	6	7
with Pastor Steve Group Group mittee Meeting x Hall eryl Support-Room	9:30am Visitation Committee 6:00pm Bell Choir 7:00pm Choir		8:30am Men's Breakfast at HamFam 9:30am Zumba-Fox Hall 6:0pm Dinner & Movie Night
11	12	13	14
with Pastor Steve Group Group x Hall eryl Support-Room	6:00pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Property Committee 7:00pm Choir		9:30am Zumba-Fox Hall
18	19	20	21
with Pastor Steve Group Group x Hall eryl Support-Room	6:30pm Property Committee 7:00pm Choir 7:00pm Quiet Christmas - Asbury		9:30am Zumba-Fox Hall
25	26	27	28
Christmas Day Group Group eryl Support-Room	Office closed		9:30am Zumba-Fox Hall

Inclement Weather Notices

If inclement weather requires cancellation of Sunday services, notices will be on Channel 69 news or www.wfmz.com/weather/stormcenter.

Highlights from Our Craft & Vendor Fair

Thank you to all who attended our Crafter and Vendor Fair on Saturday, November 2, and to all our many crafters and vendors. Buyers found a vast assortment to choose from: jewelry, cosmetics, hair accessories, handmade kitchen items, decorations for home and Christmas, pens, bird houses, wooden laser pictures and magnets, paintings, knitted and crocheted items, stuffed toys and animals, merchandise from national companies, and baked goods. Our church crafters, "Keeping You in Stitches," had a good day in sales - with St. John's realizing a net profit of over \$950.00.

We would be remiss if we didn't thank our kitchen crew who served soup, hot dogs, hamburgers, snacks, and beverages; to our bakers for the many delicious desserts; to our volunteers who helped set up and tear down tables; and a special thank you to Kenda Catalini for organizing the event. ([More photos on gallery page here](#))



We Have Extras! – Nut & Fruit Sale

Thank you to everyone who placed orders and came for pickup at the pavilion on November 16. 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, honey cashews, nut & fruit mix, dark chocolate cranberries, harvest medley mix, sweet & salty trail mix, chocolate raisins, chocolate bridge mix, and malted milk balls. Prices vary from \$12.00/lb. to \$13.00/lb. Stop by the lounge area before or after worship and see Carol Raszler to make your purchases.

Upcoming Pastie Sale

We have a Pastie Sale scheduled for 2025. Pick-up dates will be Thursday, March 27, from 6pm to 8pm in Fox Hall and Sunday, March 30, after worship. Choices will be the same with 10 different kinds of meat pasties, 2 melts, and 3 fruit turnovers. Prices will also remain the same with prices on the meat and melt pasties between \$7.25 and \$8.25 and the fruit turnovers at \$4.25. An order form will be in the January newsletter and will appear shortly on the ["Forms" page of the church's website](#). Deadline to place orders is Sunday, February 23. Contact Carol Raszler (610) 393-7572 or craszler@aol.com if you have any questions.

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 7 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

Giving Made Easy!

St. John's ministry participants now have the ability to use debit/credit card payments for all our many activities and opportunities! You've asked us to make giving even easier. Now we have secure, encrypted transaction systems, onsite at St. John's or by using our website.

Want to buy some Giant or Weis Gift Cards for your groceries? Want to purchase your IronPigs game tickets? Want to go on one of our bus trips? Ready to purchase candies? pasties? nuts? or flowers? Bingo tickets? You're in luck! It's easy! Be sure to visit with Alison, Michelle, Tom, Carol or Pastor Steve and we will help you get started. All we need is you and your card!

Join the Bucket Brigade

Hurricanes Helene & Milton Disaster Relief

Just weeks apart in September and into October, two powerful hurricanes battered southeastern United States, causing widespread devastation and impacting countless lives and communities. Over 250 people have perished; towns, homes, and businesses were destroyed; roads and bridges were wiped out; and people were left without shelter, water and electricity.



In response to this disaster, UCC Disaster Ministries and Church World Service mobilized to provide immediate and long-term support to those affected. Our church has mobilized too. The Mission Committee and our new Confirmation Class are committed to helping others who have been affected by this disaster, and we need your help.

Three other churches (Christ UCC Lowhill, Good Shepherd UCC in Boyertown, and St. John's ECLA in Whitehall) are partnering with us by collecting specific items for CWS's Emergency Cleanup Bucket Kits. Our commitment at St. John's is to collect the following items:

- 5-gallon clean-up bucket with resealable lid (if used, please scrub clean). No buckets that held chemicals of any kind. No screw lid.

- Scrub brush with or without a handle.
- 6-9 oz. bottle of non-aerosol insect repellent. Pump spray bottles must have protective covers. Packs of 10-20 insect repellent wipes are also acceptable.
- Two pairs of heavy-duty, waterproof dishwashing gloves. Latex-free, non-surgical. Durable for multiple use.

Donated items can be placed in the basket and on the table in the coatroom area by the sanctuary.

In addition, you can also make a monetary donation for UCC Disaster Ministries with checks payable to St. John's. Contributions can be sent to the church office, put in the offering plate, or give online or by text. Be sure to put Hurricane Relief in the memo section



Applebee's Burgers-For-A-Cause Gift Cards

Buy a card for \$10 and use it at any area Applebees' for any burger and fries on the menu. Applebees' burgers are priced from \$13 to \$19, so you will save money. Cards do not expire and make great stocking stuffers! See Tom Moyer or Carol Raszler.



New Payment Options

Credit & Debit Cards Now Accepted

The Stewardship and Finance Committee is excited to offer credit and debit card payments for activities, fundraising, and events at St. John's UCC. This provides greater convenience for your contributions, while ensuring all transactions are encrypted and secure.

Understanding the Fees

To provide this convenience, St. John's incurs the following fees:



Major Credit/
Debit Cards: \$0.45
transaction fee + 2.85%
processing fee

American Express:
\$0.45 transaction fee +
3.5% processing fee

Previously, St. John's covered these fees. To continue offering this convenience, we now ask that you add the \$0.45 transaction fee and cover the applicable processing fee when making card payments.

How You Can Help

By covering these small fees, you help us provide secure and easy payment options without compromising our ministry's financial health. Your support ensures that we can continue to offer seamless transactions for all our events and activities.

Thank You for Your Support

We hope you find the ability to use credit and debit cards beneficial in supporting the ministries of St. John's UCC. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the church office.

Grocery Shopping is as Easy as A, B, C

Whether you drive to the grocery store to shop, order online, or have your groceries delivered, we all need groceries. Do you realize that by purchasing Giant and Weis gift cards and by saving Redner's register tapes you are contributing money to St. John's?

For every Giant and Weis card sold, the church receives 5% back. You also get discounts for gas at both stores. Gift cards can be purchased through the church office or by seeing Tom Moyer or Carol Raszler every Sunday morning before or after worship.

For every Redner's tape collected, the church receives 1% back from its "Save-A-Tape Program." The Redner's tapes can be mailed to the church office or placed in a collection jar found on the table in the lounge area. We recently received checks for \$52.46 and \$50.83, representing the 1% giveback on your sales. Thank you to Karen Stoisits for compiling the tapes and forwarding them to Redners.

It's an easy way to give financially to the church. Think of St. John's every time you go grocery shopping or need to fill up your car.

SaveAround Lehigh Valley Coupon Books 2025 are Here!

Coupon books offer hundreds of deals like buy one get one free and 50% off, plus a 12-month Savings App with over 400,000 local and national offers—save on the go.

SaveAround coupons help you save on restaurants, food, clothing, sporting goods, shoes, recreation, services, hotels, and car rentals while supporting St. John's church. They make perfect gifts and feature top local merchants. A sample copy is available on the lounge table.



Each book costs \$25. Please make checks payable to St. John's. After receiving your book, read the front cover to register the App for thousands more savings on your phone nationwide. Order online, by text, from the church office, or see Carol Raszler any Sunday before or after worship.

Family Fun & Movie Night

Just in Time for Christmas



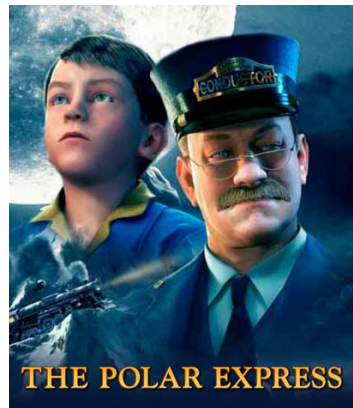
Join us on Saturday, December 7, at 6pm in Fox Hall for an evening of food and fun, featuring a selection of soups and breads, cookies and hot chocolate, and the beloved movie “Polar Express” starring Tom Hanks. Bring comfortable lawn chairs to enjoy the movie under the stars and take part in our festive activities throughout the evening.

Rumor has it... St. Nick might visit St. John's! Bring the kids for photos with Santa Claus. Youth and families, we invite you to BELIEVE in the magic of the season. Enjoy engaging conversations with fellow community members and share in the joyous holiday spirit.

Polar Express tells the story of a boy who discovers the true spirit of Christmas on a magical train ride to the North Pole. The film highlights the importance of belief, friendship, courage, and kindness, enhanced by stunning animation and a captivating score. It's a perfect family-friendly movie that brings everyone together to celebrate the holidays.

In collaboration with parents, youth, church leaders, Confirmation leaders, and our Senior Pastor, we're excited to start the season with this movie night. Join our first quarterly gathering—more youth events are coming! Help us create something great for our youth through God's work. Your participation helps strengthen our community bonds and supports our youth programs.

Yes, this is the second time we mention it in this newsletter - make your plans now!



Upcoming “Fun-Raising” Events at St. John’s

Saturday, December 7 – Family Movie Night – “Polar Express” animated movie starring Tom Hanks. Soup & bread meal at 6pm followed by movie. Sign-up sheet on bulletin board at rear of sanctuary. Suggest bringing comfortable lawn chairs for viewing movie. See Pastor Steve or Bill.

Sunday, December 8 or After – Scrip (Raise Right) Gift Card Sale – Pickup orders before or after worship. See Carol.

Applebee’s “Burgers for a Cause” – \$10 coupon entitles you to a gourmet burger and French fries. Good at any location. No expiration date. Makes a great stocking stuffer for Christmas. See Tom.

SaveAround Lehigh Valley Coupon Books 2025 – Discounts to restaurants (dining and fast-food), stores, sporting goods, fun recreation, reliable services, hotels, car rentals, etc. Cost \$25. Good all year. See Carol.

Giant & Weis Gift Cards – Church gets 5% back. See Tom or Carol.

Redner’s Register Tapes – Church gets 1% back. See Karen.

WHAT’S COMING IN 2025:

Family Feud Game Night – Saturday, February 8

Mardi Gras Gift Card Bingo – Friday, February 28

Pastie Sale – Pickup Thursday, March 27 & Sunday March 30

Comedy Night – Saturday, April 26

Kentucky Derby Gift Card Bingo – Friday, May 2

IronPigs Party Porch – Sunday, May 25

Community Yard Sale – Saturday, June 21

IronPigs Grandstand – Tuesday, August 5

Block Party – Saturday, September 6

Look for future announcements of Red Robin Dine & Donate Night, Phantoms Hockey Game, Basket Social, and Bus Trip to Ocean City, NJ.

COMMITTEE CONTACTS:

Mike Borgman (610) 762-8959 (Chairperson)

Ginny Brokenshire	(610) 439-0443	Tom Moyer	(610) 432-3372
Bill Castello	(651) 492-1399	Carol Raszler	(610) 393-7572
Pastor Steve Davis	(610) 264-8421	Karen Stoitsits	(610) 262-0746
Amy Feidler	(835) 210-5944	Brian Strauss	(610) 248-9119
Brian Fisher	(610) 762-1134		



God Is Still Speaking...

with Verso-Chat Bible Study - Wednesdays, 9am


The lectionary readings to prepare us for the seasons of Advent and Christmas guide us this December and into the new year! Using the Revised Common Lectionary readings for the Sunday worship services, <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>

Verso-Chat helps us experience the beloved community of God and the Spirit of God speaking to us and through us.

Our weekly studies continue on Wednesday mornings, exploring the scriptures which always help us to discover our “still speaking” God. Verso-Chat is another great Faith Formation option to help us grow. Maybe you’re not a “Sunday School” person or don’t feel like you know much about the Bible. Questions are welcomed in our study time! We laugh! We learn! We grow in our faith together! We welcome you to this time of sharing with us.

ALL are welcome to enhance your experience of worship 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>



VERSO-CHAT

Decorating For Advent

November 24 & 27 following worship

We love the holiday decorations and festiveness they bring to St. John's! You are invited to come help make our church a more warm and welcoming place for the Advent season and Christmas as we decorate around the building. Following worship on Sunday morning (November 24) and Wednesday evening (Thanksgiving Eve, November 27) we will decorate around the building and in Fox Hall, then in the sanctuary. Our Property Committee often gets things set out for us, but we need helping hands labor to help make it all come together.



Please plan to stick around. Then, enjoy the whole Thanksgiving weekend with your family and friends! We look forward to seeing



December Birthdays

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

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



December Wedding Anniversaries

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

12/22/1990

Barbara Thomas & Eugene
Gallagher

12/27/2009

Walter & Janice Walenta

12/28/2011

Gerald & Patricia Yanavok

12/29/1984

Peter & Regina Mohr

12/31/2017

Adam & Emma Rarich





Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities, and health premiums, and Christmas “thank you” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.



This year’s Christmas Fund theme is “And an angel of the Lord appears to them, and the glory of God shone around them” from Luke 2:9. The fund this year ensures more ministers, church workers, and their families receive the loving support of the church in their moment of deepest need.

Enclosed with 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 “Christmas Fund” in the memo section. The offering will be received on Sunday, December 15, and will continue to the end of December.

Operation Santa “Mitten Tree Project”

We will continue to receive donations for “Operation Santa” until Sunday, November 24. 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 yellow or purple mitten. If you would like to sponsor a gift for a child and a family at Valley Youth

House, please take a turquoise or pink 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

The pantry will be handing out grocery store gift cards for its patrons to purchase a turkey or ham for their Christmas meal. Monetary donations can be forwarded to the church office, placed in the offering plate, or given online or by text. We are also collecting canned sweet potatoes, canned corn, cake mixes and any other non-perishable food items you would serve at your Christmas meal. They can be placed in the shopping cart found in the coatroom area by the sanctuary.

Should you consider volunteering in the morning or evening of the fourth Monday of the month, please contact Gary Black (484) 274-2405 or gary.t.black@outlook.com

Whitehall-Coplay Hunger Initiative

WCHI and the Faith-Based Community are providing free meals to low-income Whitehall-Coplay households on the 1st Sunday and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. WCHI will post a meal reminder on Facebook and Instagram and state if it is an inside sit-down meal, take out, or a version of both. The meal being served will also be posted. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Karen Haberern, Program Chair, at (610) 730-3184. The host churches are as follows:

Date	Church	Address	Phone
Sunday 12/1	St. John the Baptist (Social Hall behind the School)	3024 S. Ruch St., Whitehall	(610) 730-8067
Tuesday 12/17	Whitehall Bible Fellowship Church	3300 Seventh St., Whitehall	(610) 434-8661
Sunday 1/5	St. Peter Roman Catholic Church	4 S. Fifth St., Coplay	(610) 262-2417
Sunday 1/21	Whitehall Active Community Center	2301 Pine St., Whitehall	(610) 533-1357

Update on Other Outreaches

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Neighbors in Need in October. A total of \$210.00 was received. This year's theme focused on mental health. 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 supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries.

The Climate Hope Voter Pledge Campaign came to a close in October. Thank you to those who returned their Climate Pledge Cards and to those who submitted their pledges online. The UCC is looking ahead to a nationwide day of action as climate champions come together to visit the district offices of congress members on Valentine's Days to address critical climate legislative issues.

We express our gratitude to everyone who sponsored this year's CROP Walk and our walkers—Amy Feidler, Jennifer Rarich and son Rowan, Susan Rarich, Cindy Reck, and Karen Stoitsits. A total of \$1,365.00 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.

How Did Our St. John's Family Do?

Mission	Oct 2024	YTD 2024	YTD 2023	YTD 2022
Our Church's Wider Mission	\$ 784.00	\$10,748.00	\$10,543.00	\$12,734.90
Whitehall Food Pantry	\$ 80.00	\$ 2,655.00	\$ 3,465.00	\$ 1,200.00
Neighbors in Need	\$ 180.00	\$ 210.00	\$ 145.00	\$ 334.00
Hurricane Disaster Relief	\$ 569.00	\$ 629.00	N/A	N/A
CROP Walk*	\$ 30.00*	\$ 280.00*	\$ 600.00	\$ 60.00
Mitten Tree – Phoebe	-0-	-0-	--	--
Mitten Tree – VYH	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00	--	--

* Additional funds were received payable to CWS/CROP Walk. The total amount contributed was \$1,365.00.

Mission Outreach giving for October 2024 totaled \$1,793.00 and YTD giving totaled \$15,742.00

Join the Bucket Brigade

Be sure to [read the article](#) in this newsletter about how you can help the victims of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. In partnership with three other churches, St. John's is collecting specific items for Church World Service's Emergency Clean Up Bucket Kits. In addition, we are also accepting monetary contributions which will be forwarded to UCC Disaster Ministries. Checks should be made payable to St. John's with Hurricane Relief in the memo section.

Keystone - Together We Are Stronger

At the the Penn Northeast Conference Fall Meeting, delegates voted in all four conferences by over 90%, with the PNEC vote being 98.6% to lead the way forward. We resoundingly affirmed that Together We Are Stronger! The motion for merger now moves forward to the UCC General Synod in July 2025. If our new Keystone Conference boundaries are approved, the process for merger will move forward as planned. Please go to <https://psec.org/keystone> for additional information about all that is planned for the establishment of The Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ.



St Johns UCC Fullerton - Statement of Finances
Oct 2024

Income	Electronic	10/6/2024	10/13/2024	10/20/2024	10/27/2024	Total
Offerings for Operating Expenses	\$6,183.72	\$2,626.00	\$1,524.00	\$1,807.00	\$1,607.00	\$13,747.72
Rental Income--Gross	\$1,325.50				\$200.00	\$1,525.50
Fundraising Income--Net of Exp	\$(1,083.73)	\$430.00	\$775.00	\$1,145.00	\$1,640.00	\$2,906.27
Endowment Interest	\$5,898.00					\$5,898.00
Flowers					\$25.00	\$25.00
Christian Education	\$20.00		\$60.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$110.00
Special Gifts						\$-
Total	\$12,343.49	\$3,056.00	\$2,359.00	\$2,967.00	\$3,487.00	\$-

Expense Summary	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pastoral Services	\$10,219.91	\$10,793.00	\$(573.09)
Staff Salaries & Expense	\$8,797.64	\$9,027.00	\$(229.36)
Property	\$1,900.72	\$2,961.00	\$(1,060.28)
Parish Programs	\$1,229.87	\$2,179.50	\$(949.63)
Total	\$22,148.14	\$24,960.50	\$(2,812.36)

	Month	Year
Total Income	\$24,212.49	\$238,629.29
Total Expenses	\$22,148.14	\$246,875.38
*****	Net INCOME	\$2,064.35
		\$(8,246.09)

Mission Giving, Oct 2024

Our Churches Wider Mission	\$784.00
Neighbors in Need	\$180.00
Crop Walk	\$30.00
UCC General Disaster Relief	\$569.00
Whitehall Food Pantry	\$80.00
Total	\$1,643.00

St John's UCC Fullerton
Fund Balances
For Month Ending, Oct 2024

Account	Sep-24	Oct-24	Difference
Checking Account--KNBT	\$31,391.74	\$34,759.56	\$3,367.82
Giant Card Funds	\$808.72	\$1,448.64	\$639.92
Weis Card Funds	\$871.50	\$281.50	\$(590.00)
sub-total General Fund Assets	\$33,071.96	\$36,489.70	\$3,417.74
IN & OUT Account--KNBT Checking	\$52,681.08	\$54,435.85	\$1,754.77
Restricted/Property Investments	\$78,463.00	\$78,679.00	\$216.00
sub-total Restricted Assets	\$131,144.08	\$133,114.85	\$1,970.77
Endowment Fund--Quadrant	\$522,418.00	\$506,206.00	\$(16,212.00)
TOTAL ASSETS	\$686,634.04	\$675,810.55	\$(10,823.49)
Cornerstone Pavilion Loan	\$(82,798.07)	\$(82,671.90)	\$126.17
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$(82,798.07)	\$(82,671.90)	\$126.17
NET FUND BALANCE	\$603,835.97	\$593,138.65	\$(10,697.32)



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The
December 2024
edition of St. John's
CONNECTIONS
is sponsored by
Bob Bold

In honor of his granddaughters,
Katie - Andrea - Julia