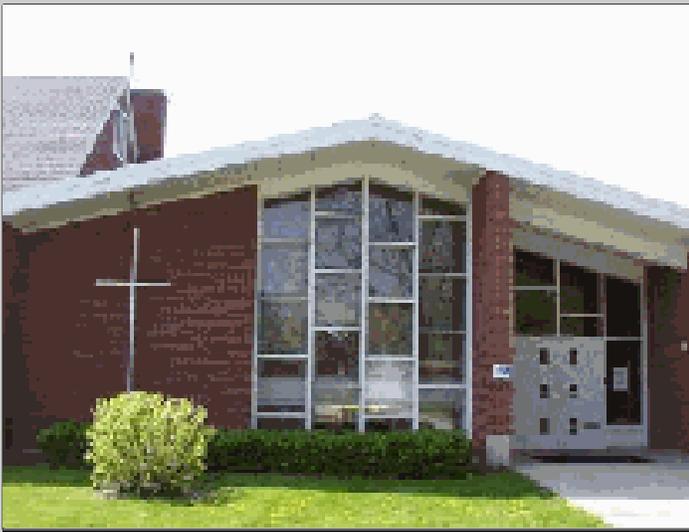




The Rocktonian

Newsletter of
Rockton United Methodist Church

November 2020



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Worship With Us on Sunday Morning

Due to the cold weather and the current construction in our sanctuary, **we are only worshipping by livestreaming our service on Facebook at 9:00am Sunday morning.** Join us by clicking on the link provided on our website. If you receive our church news by email, the link will be provided in Pastor Howies's email with the Saturday Bulletin sent each week as well. In that same email there will be a link to join the **Adult Sunday School class at 7:00am each Sunday morning on Zoom.**

Mission Statement

Grow FAITH in Jesus Christ.
Share LOVE with others.
Give SERVICE to our neighbors.

Visit Our Website

www.rocktonumc.org

From the Pastor's Pen



Upcoming Sundays:

Nov. 8th – The Practice of Risk-Taking Mission and Service – **Veterans Day Recognition**

Nov. 15th – The Practice of Extravagant Generosity – **Stewardship Sunday**

Nov. 22nd – Fruitfulness and Excellence

Nov. 29th – The Hope of all Hopes – **Advent Week 1**

As we continue in this crazy year that has seen the worse pandemic in 100 years, racial division and strife, divisive politics and a good share of natural disasters from hurricanes to wildfires, let us not lose heart, but to continue to keep *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).*

In our call to do no harm and keep each other safe, we must continue with our Live-Streaming only services until restrictions are lifted and we can safely meet in person again. But we are still together in spirit as we lift our hearts, voices and spirits together in worship, prayer and fellowship, through the gifts of technology that we have available.

One thing that would be helpful for us in being the church together would be to find ways to have participation from you in reading Scriptures, giving a greeting, recording music or other potentially creative ideas that will show a sense of togetherness in spirit. Consider this Scripture below and think how you may be able to contribute to the building up of the saints of our church. If you are willing to contribute with our Sunday services, please reach out to me and I can help you with setting up a recording through your smart phone, if you need help.

“What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Keep on keeping on and go forward in the Love & Peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

Pastor Howie Snyder



We can not be together to honor our Veterans this year. So if you can, take a moment and give our Vets a call or drop them a note to thank them for their service!



Ron Zoeller

Greg Leden

Bruce Muench

Phil Faivre

Troy Vail

Tom Hilgeman

Richard Colby

Eldon Hamilton

Loren Floto

Merle Sprague

Dan Davis

Bob Lawhorn

Roy Croisant

Freedom Is Not Free

by Major Kelly Strong

I watched the flag pass by one day, it fluttered in the breeze,
A young man in uniform saluted it, and then he stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform -- so young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert, he'd stand out in the crowd.
I thought how many men like him had fallen through the years?

How many died on foreign soil?

How many mother's tears?

How many pilots' planes shot down?

How many died at sea?

How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?

No, freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night, when everything was still.

I listened to the bugler play and felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times that taps had meant "Amen"

When a flag had draped a coffin of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children, of mothers and the wives

Of fathers, sons and husbands, with interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard at the bottom of the sea,

Of unmarked graves in Arlington.

No, freedom is not free.



Congregational Care Team



November 2020

As we continue in this confusing (scary, disturbing - take your pick) times the Congregational Care Team is not able to go visit those who would like to have a visitor. We are ready and able but the government will not let us into the Independent living or nursing homes here in Winnebago and surrounding Counties. Sooooo - our personal visits are no more!

Here is where I, once again, have to ask you wonderful members of Rockton United Methodist Church to help us out. If you know of anyone (member or friend or acquaintance) who needs a cheery message, please call them or write to them so they don't feel lonely. If you yourself are lonely, please call a friend or drop them a line. Our prayers are for this Covid-19 virus to soon be under control. In the meantime, please call, write, pray, smile, to as many as you can. Together we can make someone a bit happier to hear from you. (and don't forget to wash your hands)

See you next month!

Mary Louise Muench
Co-ordinator Congregational Care Team
815-623-7556

Uganda Student Sponsorships

For \$25 you can supply one Uganda student's school uniform, supplies, and a year of education. If you would like to be part of this mission work, please contact Christine Gustafson at cmguspt@yahoo.com or call/ text @ 815/871-5888.

If writing a check for this mission, please make it out to the Rockton UMC and write Uganda in the memo line.

Thank you for your partnership in this venture! The children and their families are so grateful for our financial support as well as the prayers of Rockton United Methodist Church.

God bless you!!

Christine Gustafson



What's Up With the Building? November 2020



With the reconstruction completed, what's up with the building is now a matter of getting the finishing touches done. Those touches will be up to us to complete either by the Trustees contracting with someone or church members coming in to do the work.

The painting is finished in the Sanctuary, Bell Room, and the narthex/stairs. The chancel area was not a part of the reconstruction so we will have to pay for that as a separate project if we want to have it painted to match the rest of the church. Given the height of the walls we are looking for professionals to do this. The only quote so far has been kind of pricey so this project is still up in the air (sorry, bad pun). The tile floor under the pews is in dire need of having the old wax striped off and new wax applied. Also, the Fellowship Hall needs to have the carpets shampooed. These last two jobs are very doable and the Trustees have already received quotes to do both of these projects. The carpeting has been ordered and is expected sometime during the first week in November.

The last week of October, found several members of the Building Committee coming in to remove the tacks and staples from the floor left behind after the old carpet was removed. They are doing this in very small groups for Covid safety but not alone when ladders are involved. That job is progressing nicely and could very well be done before November. Thanks to Sharon and Jerry Ruff, Alan Bridgeland, and Donna Chambers for their work bending backs to get out all the tacks. There is also a great amount of dust (some of which is stubborn having been there awhile) which has to be removed before the carpet is installed. One of the worst places is the dossal behind the cross. Darlene Matlock and Nancy Bielma are planning to get what they can but we will still need some folks willing to get up on a ladder to reach the high spots. To those who came in to help who are named and to whose name didn't get in this article, bless you for your action to make our physical church better than ever!

When all that is done, there will still be a need to move the organ and other furniture back in place and install the pews. Obviously, there is still much to be done so please, monitor your email, read the Saturday Bulletins and other church communications for opportunities to help. We're getting close but when it will be finally done will now depend on those of the congregation who are able to step up and see it to completion.

John Carleton
Chair of the Building Committee



**Fire Prevention Week
was October 4 - 10**



Donna Granath and Nancy Bielema, representatives from our Fellowship Committee, delivered the annual Appreciation Baskets to the firefighters of the Rockton Fire Protection District. We are thankful for the service they provide

for our community and look forward each year to purchasing, filling, and delivering those baskets. There is much history between our church and our firefighter neighbors across the street and they look forward to these gifts coming to them each year during Fire Prevention week!



News from Missions

The Missions committee took a Chili supper to the Veterans Drop in Center on Monday, October 26th.

They are always so delighted to receive the meal. Due to the pandemic, we do not serve the meal. Not being able to serve the meal and spending some time visiting with veterans is sadly missed. Thank you to everyone on the committee who prepared and provided food to make this mission possible.

Judy Schellenberger



A special thank you to Sisters in Christ for jars of homemade soup that have been delivered to members of our congregation. Judy Davis has taken on the task of delivering this

nourishing meal to many who have been medically challenged recently or have been shut in for some time.

Thank you Judy for your dedication to this project. You have brought joy to many!

We Celebrate All Saint's Day

On Sunday, November 1st, we celebrated the lives of those that have departed from us in the past 12 months.. As we lit a candle in their honor, we also observed a moment of silence remembering their faithful contributions as part of our congregation. We will be contacting a family member to see that the candle from Sunday's service is delivered to your family.



Dihl Wecker (August 9, 1940 - December 22, 2019)

John Bates (October 23, 1930 - January 3, 2020)

Dawn Miller (July 21, 1923 - February 10, 2020)

Fred S. Peterson, Jr. (August 15, 1920 - March 30, 2020)

Annie Kress (August 21, 1934 - April 9, 2020)

Frances Koehmstedt (July 28, 1925 - July 5, 2020)

November 2020

Worship Service until further notice:

Each Sunday at 9:00am Live-streaming on our Rockton UMC Facebook

These events are happening every week using ZOOM:

- **Sunday School meets every Sunday morning at 7:00am - 8:00am with Mark Alcorn facilitating**
- **Study Group every Thursday evening 6:30pm - 7:30pm with Pastor Howie facilitating**

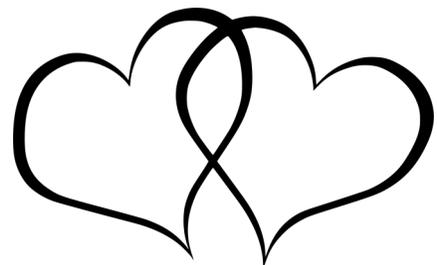
Check our website for all links to these events: www.rocktonumc.org

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Abby Hellinga	16 Jerry Ruff
Gretta Wulf	Kelsey Wulf
2 Abbie Stevens	18 Bob Lawhorn
3 Mark Koehmstedt	24 Loren Floto
6 James Shotliff	28 Gayle Lovejoy
7 Sue Miller	29 Phyllis DeGraff
8 Keith Knoespel	
14 Lori Oostendorp	
15 Jill Knoespel	

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

3 Leigh and Joanna Geddes
3 Art and Darlene Matlock
6 Eldon and Carol Hamilton
18 Brian and Sheri Zimmer
25 Ron and Phyllis DeGraff





Many thanks to all of you that shared your stories, traditions and recipes for this Thanksgiving edition of the Rocktonian. As you are reading, may you feel joy in the memories recalled, pride in treasured recipes shared, and laughter in those things that were “teachable moments” in our lives. May all members of our church family feel blessed and grateful in this upcoming Thanksgiving season.

From Suzanne Boomer

These salads are good to serve at Thanksgiving and also on Christmas Eve.

Twenty-four Hour Salad

- 1 cup mandarin oranges(drained)
- 1 cup pineapple tidbits(drained)
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1 cup sour cream

Mix all together and refrigerate overnight.

Cucumber Salad

- 1 large cucumber (peel and slice thin)
- 1 medium onion (peel and slice thin)
- 1 Tbs. salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup water
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- Fresh or dried dill weed to taste

Place the onions, cucumbers, and salt in a bowl and cover with cold water and refrigerate 2-3 hours. Drain well. Add sugar, vinegar, water, pepper and dill weed (to taste). Mix well and refrigerate until serving. Drain. Sprinkle with dill before serving. Serves 6

From Judy Davis

This recipe was in the last cookbook produced by RocktonUMC. The Wisconsin Power and Light chose it for one of their recipe pages but in that magazine they put 3 carrots instead of 3 cups of carrots as it calls for!

I love this recipe because it is also good cold the next day as a kind of relish or cold salad. I like it for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Carrot Apple Raisin Bake

- 3/4 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup honey
- 3/4 tsp.cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 lemon
- 1 large baking apple sliced thin (I use Granny Smith)
- 3 cups carrots, thinly sliced

Combine raisins, honey, cinnamon, salt, and the juice of half the lemon. Mix in the 3 cups sliced carrots and the sliced apple. Place all in a baking dish. Thinly slice the remaining half of the lemon and layer on top of the casserole. Cover tightly and bake at 375 degrees for 1 hour or until carrots and apple are tender. Serves 6

From Gloria (Scott) Halvorsen

I WAS BORN on Thanksgiving Day in 1954 at the old Beloit Hospital on Olympian Boulevard. Mom had awakened early that morning to prepare her side dishes for the family dinner at Grandma's house in Shirland, but she soon realized that I had plans to make my appearance. She shook Dad awake and whispered, "Dale, it's time to go to the hospital."

Once Mom was settled in the maternity ward, Dad found a payphone and placed an operator-assisted call to Grandma to let her know that the Thanksgiving gathering may not go as planned. When Grandma answered the phone, the operator said "Beloit, Wisconsin calling", followed by a man's voice saying, "Well, I guess we won't be able to make it for dinner today." Grandma panicked, wondering who in the world she had invited to dinner who lives in Beloit. "Who is this?" she finally asked. "Mother!", my Dad exclaimed. "It's Dale! Dawn is in labor and we're at the hospital!"

I was born at 12:00 noon just as the turkey dinners were being delivered to the new mothers. That sounds like something I would do, doesn't it? Arrive in time for pumpkin pie.

AS FOR MY FAVORITE Thanksgiving recipe, I have never been very handy in the kitchen. I don't even have a recipe box, nor do I own a cookbook, nor have I ever hosted a holiday meal. MY favorite recipes are the ones that my sister Gail has collected. And I have learned, over the years, that if I can swing an invitation to HER house for Thanksgiving, all will be well with the world.

From George Halvorsen (Husband of Gloria (Scott) Halvorsen)

IT WAS EARLY Tuesday morning, two days before Thanksgiving in 1956. My U.S. Army platoon had just arrived in New York by ship. We had been in Germany for the past year during which time I had purchased a BMW motorcycle which would be my transportation back home to Fox Lake near Antioch, Illinois. I disembarked and went immediately to the ship's cargo area to claim my motorcycle which had been securely crated for the oceanic journey. I called home to tell Mother that I had returned stateside, but with the temperatures being unseasonably cold, and with me on a motorcycle, I most likely would not be home in time for Thanksgiving. She was disappointed, to say the least.

By Wednesday morning, I was somewhere in Ohio. I spotted a truck stop with several 18-wheelers in the parking lot and, by that time, I was ready for a warm meal. It had been snowing, I was cold, and the motorcycle ride was getting a little rough. Still wearing my uniform, I must have looked pretty miserable as I took a seat at the restaurant counter with the other men. "Where you headed?" one of them asked me. When I told him I was going home to Antioch, Illinois for Thanksgiving, he said, "You'll never make it, not on that bike, not in this weather." After a rather long silence, he said, "I'll tell you what. I'm heading home to Minnesota. Let's load your bike in the back of my big rig and you ride along with me. I could use the company."

We drove all day and all night, straight through. By the wee hours of Thursday, Thanksgiving morning, we were rounding the south side of Chicago. By 4:00 a.m., we were rolling into Antioch. We pulled off the highway, unloaded the BMW, shook hands, and my trucker friend continued on toward Minnesota. It had been snowing and the bike was slippery on the wet road, but I was only a half-mile from home. Our family's lakeside neighborhood was quiet. As I hummed along, I saw that Uncle Joe's yard light was lit, but Grandma's house was totally dark and Uncle Art's house was dark except for a dim porch light. But I could see that there was a light on in our kitchen. Mother was awake, probably making pies.

When I walked through the back door, somewhere in between the tears and the hugs, I was finally able to sputter, "I'm home, Mother. Happy Thanksgiving." I said, "Should I wake up Dad and brother John?" Mother said, "No, not yet. I want to spend some time with my boy."

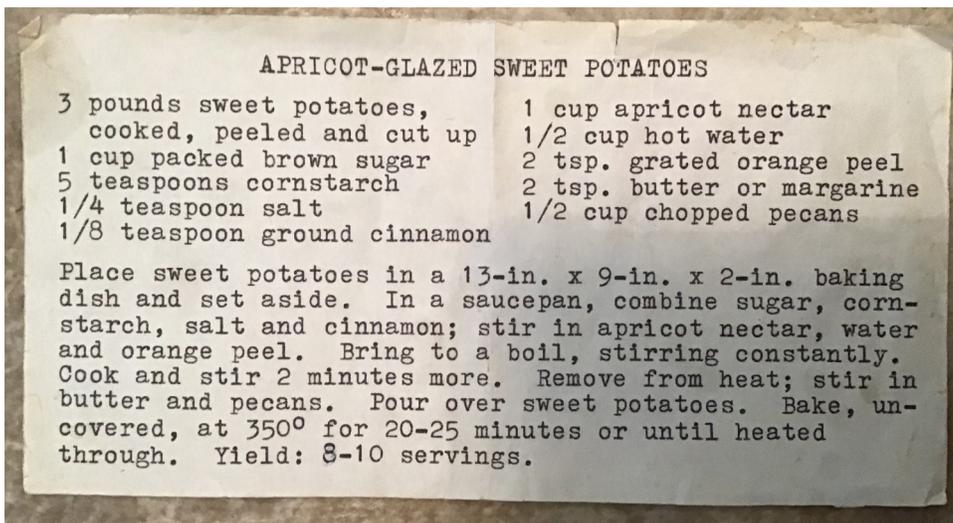
From Peg Hayelan

Wayne and I spent many winters at Rio Valley Estates in Weslaco, TX. Each Thanksgiving our winter community would hold a potluck in the fellowship hall that was attended by the full-time residents and those of us that were considered "Winter Texans" (200-250 people). Many years ago Wayne saw this recipe for "Apricot-Glazed Sweet Potatoes" in a magazine. After a very tasty trial, it became a tradition for him to make this dish for the Thanksgiving pot-luck for most of the last winters we spent in southern Texas.

When Wayne died in October 2014, I didn't return to Texas that winter and my sister, Donna, graciously invited me to be with her family for the holiday. I have continued Wayne's tradition of making this recipe every year since with Donna's family.

A special Thanksgiving I will never forget was our family gathering at Donna's on Thanksgiving 2014, just a month after Wayne had died on October 29th. My sister set a place for Wayne at the table with a lighted candle on his plate. She also wrote a beautiful prayer in his memory that she read before we enjoyed our delicious meal.

Wayne's
Sweet Potatoes



From Bruce Muench

Thanksgiving Thoughts

The best Thanksgiving is always the next one coming up. I will write a new prayer of thanks to read to the crowd that is present and they will have to listen. They have to listen because they can't start eating until I'm through.

This is not entirely correct. Some illegal nibbling has been taking place on the turkey in the kitchen while I was slicing it up. This is not being done just by kids, but by older adults also. Each year I threaten to cut off fingers while wielding the sharp cutting knife, but they know I won't. I don't want blood in the dressing.

This coming Thanksgiving, November 27th, will be at our daughter Nancy's house. She will warn us as usual, "Don't look in any of the other rooms. I haven't had a chance to clean up yet". She has been saying this for the past fifteen years.

Each couple brings a special dish every year. Over time, we have all processed the dishes that a particular woman does best and that one becomes her elected duty. For Dorothy, it is pumpkin pie, for Heidi the cranberries. Cindy brings her green beans and for Debbie it's the baked squash. Nancy has to get up early to start the turkey. This year we will have a new dish to appraise. A Japanese friend of mine is coming to dinner and she has volunteered to bring along her own dish. We don't know what it will be, but are hoping it won't be squid or kelp. If it is, I'll offer a Buddhist prayer so as to maintain perpetual harmony.

An original writing (11/17/03)

From Irene Ulferts

Thanksgiving for the Amelia and Carlton Williams family is always a huge celebration! When I was 4 or 5 years old, we had our family of six kids (Carol wasn't born yet), grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins sitting around a large table. My most vivid memory was of my Dad standing at the head of the table. He said a very nice grace and then began to carve a huge turkey. He would put a slice on a plate and it would be passed around the table until all had a plate and then the eating began! Does anyone ever do this any more?

When we moved to the farm on Yale Bridge Road, I was a Freshman in High School. We had an old farm house with a big kitchen and dining room. We filled the house with grandparents, sons-in-law, new babies and always a few neighbor kids. Everyone was welcome.

When Mom and Dad moved into their new house our family was growing with new marriages and babies. We set up tables in the basement for the kids and the grown-ups stayed upstairs. My boys didn't care as long as they had lots of Grandma's fresh baked rolls!

When Mom passed away, we continued our tradition by moving our Williams Family Thanksgiving gathering to the Tree House in the big new Northwood Café at our Williams Tree Farm. I wish you all could see the amount of food we have - turkey, ham, every side dish you can imagine, salads, beautiful pies and deserts. We even have a table full of hors d'oeuvres. My niece makes a large bread turkey with dips, cheeses, relishes, etc. It is a feast before the feast! I make 5 recipes of the corn casserole recipe included here - and there are never any leftovers! My sister and I peel 50 pounds of potatoes for mashing. We all do our share and it is a lot of work but well worth it.

I am now the oldest member of the family so I make the rounds giving hugs to everyone. The last few years we've had over 100 family members in attendance, representing five generations - starting with Mom and Dad who, of course, are with us in spirit! What a grand tribute to our parents!

Most families, after we eat, hike out to the woods to cut their Christmas tree. There are wreaths, fudge, tree ornaments, and gifts galore to purchase. Some take a ride on the hay wagon. It really is an old fashioned Thanksgiving!

Cheesy Corn Casserole

1/2 cup butter	3 eggs, beaten
1 small onion - chopped	1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 of a green pepper - chopped	1/4 tsp. sugar
1 17oz. can creamed corn	1 tsp. pimento, chopped
1 17oz. can whole kernel corn (do not drain)	1/2 pint sour cream
1 pkg. Jiffy corn muffin mix	1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Saute butter, onion, green pepper. Pour into 9x13 casserole. Add beaten eggs, corn, muffin mix, salt, sugar, and pimento. Add sour cream to other ingredients and mix. Sprinkle with grated cheese. Bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Serves 12

(Sadly, due to COVID-19 we have to cancel our gathering this year)

From Judy (Geddes) Cunningham

I remember the year that our church cooked and served Thanksgiving Dinner to anyone who wanted to come and it was free. Our Geddes families were very involved in the cooking, both the day before and the day of, and of course the cleanup. I believe it was in the 90's. It was a chance for a single parent and her son to give back because there was never enough money for all the needs we had.

From Pastor Howie Snyder

Nicole's Country Apple Pie recipe is quite different from any other apple pie I've ever had. But I absolutely love it!

NIKKI'S COUNTRY APPLE PIE WITH CHEESE CRUST

Crust:

3 1/2 cups flour	1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup sugar	1 egg yolk
1 cup butter	1/3 cup ice water
1/2 cup shortening	

Combine flour, sugar, butter and shortening. Mix until course (with mixer). Add cheese. Add egg yolk and water. Mix until just combined. Form into two round disks. Wrap in plastic wrap and put in fridge for 30 minutes.

Nut filling:

3/4 cup ground walnuts	1/4 tsp vanilla
2 Tbs firmly packed brown sugar	1/4 tsp fresh lemon juice
1 Tbs milk	1 Tbs butter or margarine, softened
2 Tbs beaten egg	

Combine nuts, brown sugar, milk, egg, vanilla, lemon juice and butter. Spread evenly over bottom of unbaked pie shell

Apple filling:

5 cups peeled and sliced Granny Smith apples (about 6 medium apples)
1 tsp fresh lemon juice
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 Tbs all-purpose flour
1 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp salt
2 Tbs butter or margarine

Place apples in large bowl. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Combine sugar, flour, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Sprinkle over apple slices. Toss to coat. Spoon over nut filling. Dot with butter.

Moisten pastry edge with water. Lift top crust onto filled pie. Fold top edge under bottom crust and flute.

Wisk 1 egg yolk and 1 Tbs sugar together. Brush top of crust. Cut slits in top crust for escape of steam. Cover top edge of pie with foil to prevent overbrowning.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake one hour and 10 minutes. Cool one hour.

From Sharon Ruff

As you prepare the food for the dinner on Thanksgiving, it is always good to have a little something for breakfast. Make these Cinnamon Rolls the night before and have them ready to warm up in the morning. There is nothing better than a warm cinnamon roll and a great cup of coffee! I had the opportunity to share this recipe with Sisters in Christ and had a great time teaching them the secrets to making an easy cinnamon roll.

Ingredients:

5 cups all purpose flour	1 1/2 cups water
1/3 cup sugar	6 Tbs butter
6 tsp. Fleischmanns rapid rise yeast	1 egg
1 tsp salt	

Combine 2 cups flour, sugar, dry yeast and salt in a bowl and stir until combined. Place water and butter in a microwave safe cup or bowl. Microwave on high in 15 second increments until warm, but not hot to the touch (121-130 degrees F) Butter won't completely melt. Add the egg to the butter mixture, and pour into the flour mixture. Beat or mix at medium speed for 2 minutes. Stir in the rest of the flour so that the dough will form a ball. Knead on a lightly floured surface until smooth and elastic (about 3-4 minutes). Dough should spring back when lightly pressed with 2 fingers. Cover with a towel and let rest for 10 minutes.

Combine 1 1/3 cups sugar and 3 tsp cinnamon in a small bowl and set aside.

Roll dough into a 10"x15" rectangle using a rolling pin. Spread 3 Tbs of softened butter on the dough. Sprinkle with sugar/cinnamon mixture. Beginning at the long side of the rectangle, roll up tightly. Pinch seam to seal. Cut into 12 equal pieces. Place cut side down in greased 13"x9" baking dish. Cover with a towel. Let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for 25-30 minutes or until rolls are golden brown. Frost with the Buttercream Frosting.

Buttercream Frosting

1lb confectioner's sugar (3 1/2 cups)	1/3 cup cream
3/4 cup room temperature butter	1 Tbs vanilla

Put the butter in a saucepan and cook over medium low heat stirring occasionally until the milk solids in the butter caramelize and darken. Be careful of splatters! Once the butter has darkened, transfer to a bowl and chill until almost solid. The brown butter will be slow to cool and thicken. Make sure to do this step in advance. Cream the butter in a mixer bowl. Add in the powdered sugar gradually and beat together.



From Gail Johnson

I spent 33 years teaching in the Rockton School District with all but four of those years teaching Kindergarten. The world of a 5 year old in this community is, for the most part, very simple and innocent, where they believe what their parents teach and model for them at home is the same way the world should be for everyone. Keep that in mind as you read my story.

I wanted to make the Thanksgiving holiday an exciting learning experience for my class, so each year I paired my classroom with a class of older students. The Kindergarteners learned about the Pilgrims and the 4th graders studied about the Native Americans. For the month preceding Thanksgiving, we met once a week to exchange information and plan a Thanksgiving feast when we would eat together. I would provide the turkeys and we divided the remaining ingredients and paper products among the students.

I arrived on the day before Thanksgiving vacation at 5:30am to get the turkeys in the roasters. Parents came to the classroom around 9:00am to gather tables and chairs from other classrooms, enough to seat 45 children. They helped the children prepare the food, (mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, fruit salad, Stovetop dressing, rolls and butter), set the table and make their hats. All was ready. The principal was carving the turkeys and the 4th graders were on their way from the other building so we took our seats to await their arrival.

I suddenly realized that it was very, very quiet and the children were all staring at me. I was almost afraid to say the words, but I asked, "What's going on?" One of them said, "We are all waiting to see who you are going to pick!". Of course my question in reply was, "Who I'm going to pick for what?". And they surprised me when their response was "to say the prayer." Every parent in the back of the room immediately turned to look at me and hear my reply.

I thought for a moment and finally gave a simple explanation. I told them we could not pray out loud in school but we could pray inside our heads and with our hearts. I said I would watch the clock for 1 minute. If they wanted to say a prayer, like I was going to do, then they could bow their heads and think of that prayer in their heads. If they didn't want to say a prayer, they should just sit there respectfully until I said "Amen". Every head at those tables was bowed, moms were crying, and as for my prayer... I thanked our Lord that I was lucky enough to have this particular group of students to nurture and educate. It was going to be a great school year.

