

faith

in action

DECEMBER 2023
NEWSLETTER
Edition 266



**We are a Community,
seeking to be in stride with Christ.**

Pastor's Corner

We are only too aware of how violence, domination, grief and despair are impacting our world right now- through the wars in Israel/Gaza and Ukraine, civil strife in many other nations, the impact of natural and human-made disasters. And once again it is Advent, where we prepare our hearts to welcome Christmas, the coming of the Christ into the world.

We will once again use A Sanctified Art materials for Advent worship and prayer. This year the theme is called "How does a weary world rejoice?" When I first saw it, I breathed in a deep sigh, indeed, yes, that is where I am living right now!

The theme explores Luke 1 & 2, which begins the story of Jesus by interweaving Christ's birth with the parallel story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist. As the writers looked closely at both of these birth narratives told side by side, they saw the full scope of human emotions: isolation, fear, disbelief, as well as connection, trust, and joy.

In studying the scriptures, they asked out loud, "What is the message we will need to hear this season?" The end of a poem by pastor and writer Sarah Speed summarizes the daily acts of kindness we can bring to our neighbors:



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Pastor's Corner (cont)

How does a weary world rejoice?

*I would guess
soul by soul
and day by day.
But if you ask me,
I bet most of it counts.*

(Sarah Speed, 12-24-2021)

I am excited to dive into this theme. The writers continue their introduction: How does a weary world rejoice?

“Joy is often a companion to many other emotions. We can feel joy in addition to feeling many other things at once: grief, anticipation, anxiety, excitement, disappointment, exhaustion. Perhaps many of us live with the myth that joy is not something we deserve—or that it is wholly out of reach. But our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God. Can you tether yourself to that deep truth? You deserve to feel joy—fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary. Our joy is better when it is shared.

“This theme of course alludes to a line in the familiar Christmas hymn, “O Holy Night,” which has an interesting history. The song was originally written by a French poet who was atheist, and the music was supplied by a Jewish composer. The hymn was later translated into English by an American Unitarian minister. In the 1800s, it became a popular hymn for Christian abolitionists due to its justice-focused language in verse 3. Like Mary’s song, the Magnificat of Luke 1: 46-54, the hymn reminds us that justice and joy belong together. Sometimes our joy is an act of resistance. And so, this Advent, we will hold space for our weariness and our joy. We will seek a “thrill of hope” in our hurting world. We will welcome joy—even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice.”

The Themes we will explore from Dec 3 through January 7 are these

Dec 3- We acknowledge our weariness- that should be easy!

Dec 10- We find joy in connection- this happens to be our Christmas dinner day!

Dec. 17 -We allow ourselves to be amazed- Christmas happens every year, do we forget to be amazed that God comes to us in the baby in a manger?

Dec 24 at 10 am- We sing stories of hope- our Christmas Eve morning service is the 4th Sunday of Advent- we will have brunch and carols in the annex that Sunday morning.

Dec 24 at 7 pm-We make room- our traditional Christmas Eve service.

Dec. 31- We root ourselves in ritual- during Christmas week, we ponder the rituals that feed our faith and our humanity. Nancy Meyer recently reminded us that rituals of giving thanks around the table are very important to connect us to faith and to one another.

Jan. 7-We trust that we are beloved- we remember Jesus’ baptism and our own. We trust that by grace, we belong to God and are beloved of God through Jesus Christ.

Bring your weariness, your prayers, your kindness and your joy to the manger this holy season.

Pastor Ann

News & Notes:

The Session calls a meeting of the congregation on **Sunday, Dec 3, 2023** at the end of worship to elect elders and deacons to the class of 2025, to act on the pastor's terms of call, and to review the budget for 2024.

You will also be asked to jot down any thoughts you may have about our "What's Next" discussions and any ideas you have as we discuss a possible shared ministry with St John United Church of Christ (sharing a pastor between the 2 congregations). The team from each church will meet on **Dec 10 at 4 pm** to continue discussion.

Presbyterian Women and Friends will meet **Monday, Dec 11 at 10 am** to put together gifts for our home centered folks. Please bring 2-3 dozen cookies (home-baked or bakery cookies) for the gifts and for a cookie exchange. Be sure to bring a container to carry your cookie varieties home! The Deacons will deliver the gifts on their visits this month.

COME ONE! COME ALL!

Our annual Christmas luncheon will be held **Sunday, December 10th**, after the church service. Please bring a side dish and/or dessert to share. Sandwiches and beverages will be provided.

The program will include a presentation by the kids, recognition of staff, and carols to celebrate the season! See you there!

Sunday, Dec 17th, 5 pm We are invited to meet at St. John UCC Fellowship Hall for Christmas caroling at the local assisted living centers, nursing homes, and private homes of our homebound, and then gather afterward at the church for a light meal. Then, depending upon how many of us there are, either split up and go to the various places our folks are, or go together. Then when we are done, regather at the church for a little fellowship and food. Are you game?

There will also be a "live nativity" at Triangle Park from 4-7 pm sponsored by St Mary and St John the Evangelist Churches. Stop by to see the manger scene with real people and animals!

CHRISTMAS EVE is the 4th Sunday of Advent- we will meet for 10 am worship in the annex for a carol and prayer service with brunch. Bring a goodie or easy dish to share. We did this Christmas Day last year (Sunday) and it was well received.

Our Traditional Christmas Eve service will be at 7 pm.

For "Staples from the Stable" giving this year, the Deacons voted to receive donations to "Pay down lunch bills" at our Defiance County Schools. You may have seen the suggestion that instead of paying for the coffee or hamburger of the person in the drive-in behind you as an act of kindness, give a donation to help a child cover his or her lunch bill. Some families don't qualify for free lunches, and find themselves short too. Please mark your donation for the Deacons Staples from the Stable. Many thanks.

We have also gathered school supplies from our inventory to help counsellors refresh school supplies in January.

December Birthdays

16 ~ Meredith Mickey
20 ~ Gary Bishop
20 ~ Nancy Black
25 ~ Pat Allgire
27 ~ Sandy Dunlap



29 ~ Roger Emerling
29 ~ Beth Sigg
30 ~ Jacob Black
31 ~ Alton Myers

Thank you to ***Ann Culver*** for sponsoring
the ***December*** newsletter. This enables us to print the newsletter in color.

Highlights of the Session Meeting November, 2023 ~ Your Session at work

Free copies of *Psalms of Wonder* by Carrie Wallace and Khoa Le were received from Presbyterian Office of Christian Formation. Pastor Ann shared one of the entries as a devotional.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Ann Culver and her family on the death of Floyd. He passed to the church eternal on October 24, 2023 and his memorial service was held at the church on Nov. 17, officiated by Pastor Ann, with a lunch after the service among the coats.

There was correspondence with Father Melwin Dsouza of St. Mikes on the Ridge affirming Samantha Mae Beatty's baptism on Jan. 12, 1992 by the Rev. John Hess at the church.

A meeting of the congregation is called for December 3, 2023 to act on the report of the nominating committee to elect elders and deacons, class of 2025, to approve the terms of call for the pastor, and to review the 2024 budget.

We recognized Pastor Ann in appreciation during October. And that appreciation continues.

Judith, Fausto's wife, will need surgery on her other knee. If you want to help the family financially, please contact Rich Reid. His phone and email will be the same.

It is time for annual reports. Pam will contact each group with details.

In the continuing discussion of what is next for us, Beth Sigg and Curtis Richards and others who wish to join a planning committee will meet with St John UCC on Sunday Dec 10 at 4 pm at St John. Ann will put a card in the bulletin asking for questions/concerns.

On Motion: to elect Beth Sigg as clerk for 2024. **So approved.** Thank you, Beth, for being willing to do this. Pam will work with you in transition.

Marsha provided the financial reports. There were a couple questions which will be clarified.

Garden Team- Mike Peffley cleaned up the garden. Curtis & Rich put away produce stand. Many thanks!

Tools for Schools report: Ann will form a steering committee in January '24 to continue this work. There are three people from FPC, 1 from the State Bank GIVES and hopefully one each from St Mary, St John UCC and Zions Lutheran, as well as Citizens in Action. Grant writing will start right away.

Highlights of the Session Meeting November, 2023 ~ Your Session at work

Coats for Christmas—1311 coats were collected and processed, 950 were distributed in Defiance, 280 went to Cherry Street, picked up by Bob Joseph and team at the end of the distribution., 71 kids coats are stored for next year. Approximately 50 people worked, including our youngest so far. Participating on the distribution days were St John, St Mary and St John Catholic, State Bank GIVES, Democratic Women, Citizens in Action, friends of the church. People are fired up! We thank our deacons and workers for their faithful leadership and are excited for year 37. The Gideons came, the Tinora Middle School student council donated hats, scarves and gloves. Many others knit and crocheted items.

Rich provided thank you cards and Pam Retcher will send them.

The deacons will look at a meal schedule for the new year and see if anyone is willing to cook a monthly meal.

The Care team will visit people on Dec. 20 or 21st, taking the PW gift. Jeanne will look for the small live Christmas trees that were given several years ago.

Care packages will go out to our military and college students at the end of January. We'll check with Cara and Curtis to see if the youth group is interested in helping again this year.

The deacons will plan an agape meal for March 28, Maundy Thursday.

Work has started in the craft room and We Kirk Room with sanding and the application of a mold inhibiting primer. Foyle will look for blinds. Craig Richards is working on repairing the pneumatic basement door opener.

The Christian Education team will start signing people up for dinners for WeKirk & Youth this winter and spring. Thanks to all who have participated in the fall. This is so helpful as our leadership transitions directly from work and the kids and youth love the fellowship and nutritious meal.

Thanks to Kristal, who led worship with the "Rich" Nooma video on Sunday, Nov. 26, 2023.

December 24th will feature a 10 am brunch with advent carols and prayers, the 7 pm traditional Christmas Eve service and on December 31st the New Wineskins Band will play again. What a blessing to have them healthy and back together! The Advent theme is *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?* provided by A Sanctified Art.

The new office assistant Stacie Wagner began Oct 1 and will continue her work at Northwest Realty. She has the software needed to work from their office also when she has time.

Joel presented salary budgets for 2024, sharing a comparison of 2023, the PCUSA 2024 minimums, and the committee's recommendations for 2024. Staff increases were approved. Session will vote on a finalized budget soon.

Thanks to Sue King and the nominating committee for their work putting together the following slate of officers to be presented at the congregational meeting. And thanks to all who agreed to serve.

Christmas dinner will be December 10 after worship with a program by WeKirk. Charlie will lead singing. Beth has a team together and ready. Everyone is asked to bring a dessert or side dish to accompany hot chicken sandwiches. PW will recognize the staff and Santa will appear.

Highlights of the Session Meeting November, 2023 ~ Your Session at work

From Presbytery: Ann reports that everyone is in tune to the idea of being in a time of profound change. The concepts from the Tod Bolsinger seminar came up in most reports. The next meeting of the MVP will be on zoom in February.

The joint meeting of session and deacons will be December 19 with supper provided by Pastor Ann (Beth will help) with session and deacons (old and new) at 6 pm.

***From the clerk: Rich and I are forever grateful for the friends we have made here, for how you all have encouraged our faith and nurtured our family, and how we as a church have been able to work together to shine God's light everywhere we can. Thank you for the beautiful and heartfelt sendoff. You will always be in our hearts and prayers.



Level 3 snow emergency

Worship is cancelled and the church is closed.

Level 2 snow emergency

Church is open, everyone should exercise caution

Attend church based on your personal situation and your comfort level, without obligation.

Level 1 snow emergency

Church is open, everyone should exercise caution



Attend church based on your personal situation and your comfort level, without obligation.

If school is cancelled because of fog, Wednesday evening activities will proceed as planned.

If school is cancelled because of conditions that won't improve during the day, Wednesday evening activities will be cancelled.



December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 <i>Worship</i> 10:00 am <i>Holy Communion</i> <i>Congregation meeting at end of worship</i>	4 AA 12 noon	5	6	7	8	9
10 <i>Worship</i> 10:00 am <i>Christmas luncheon after worship</i>	11 AA 12 noon PW&F 10:00 am	12	13	14	15	16
17 <i>Worship</i> 10:00 am <i>Holy Communion</i> <i>St John UCC Caroling</i> 5:00 pm <i>Live Nativity Triangle Park</i> 4:00 pm-7:00 pm	18 AA 12 noon	19 <i>Joint Deacons and Session Meeting</i> 6:00 pm	20 <i>Deacon calling</i>	21	22	23
24 <i>Worship</i> 10:00 am Annex <i>Christmas Eve service</i> 7:00 pm	25 AA 12 noon 	26	27	28	29	30
31 						

Food Drive - Staples from the Stable - donations to pay down lunch bills