



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

Pastor's Corner

The year 2023 went by fast for me! Now to 2024 and the changes ahead for us all. The old saw is "The only thing that is constant is change." That certainly holds true.

Our daughter got Cat Tarot cards for Christmas for fun- she volunteers at a cat shelter and the cards are hilarious. I played and one of the cards drawn was "Death" (facing away from me). The card pictured a vacuum- and if you know cats, then you know the vacuum is tantamount to a death machine, never mind the Roomba ads. (in Cat Tarot, The Devil Card is a dog) I have never had a cat that would ride a vacuum. So, what does the Death card facing away mean? It means facing change. For the cat, know that the vacuum will change the terrain, but not kill you.

Here's the Information about the card- think like a cat here: "like the vacuum, the death card makes a lot of foreboding noise, but doesn't exactly portend doom...Change is inevitable, and while resistance is not necessarily futile, it can certainly be counterproductive. The carpet is getting vacuumed whether you like it or not. Why not get out of the way." Why not see what happens.



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Pastor's Corner (cont)

In 2024 we embark on an experiment for a terrain change in ministry. It does not portend doom. We have a Shared Ministry team between our church and St John UCC who will work together on a plan to share a pastor into the future. Pastor Jim Brehler retires just after Easter, and sometime in April, by May 1, I will be the shared pastor for First Presbyterian Church and St John UCC. Between now and then, this shared ministry team will work out the details, especially worship times for each congregation and how the financial terms of call will be shared. This initial time is an experiment to see how it works; if both parties are satisfied, then the two churches would look for a pastor to share into the future.

I have had some experience in this; my first parish was a 2- point charge- when I came, they had been sharing a pastor for 40 plus years. I was pastor of a shared ministry between a Presbyterian and a Lutheran Church for almost 10 years in Hobart OK. All of those congregations are still active.

As you know, our congregation runs a deficit budget annually and pledges bring in new money that basically covers staffing and *some* of the rest of the budget. We rely on legacy gifts for our Christian Ed. ministry and other expenses. Sharing the cost of a pastor will certainly cut into that deficit.

We still have legacy gifts that can be used; the session has preserved the Stauffer Fund over the years and it is still substantial, along with some smaller bequest monies we can begin to use. We also have Defiance Area Foundation monies that can be used for major repairs and mission. We managed to put on a new roof without a capital campaign by using some of these resources; they remain for us to use, as needed.

Some of the ideas floated to help us get better acquainted with the congregation at St Johns in a shared ministry include having joint worship services on 5th Sundays, keeping the Auglaize Village service going, and making an effort to invite one another to activities. PW & F has had this practice for some time, and many of you are acquainted with the good folks at St John UCC. They already have been helping us with Tools for Schools and we can help them more with their Little Pantry project.

Change is an opportunity to grow in faith, service and hope. I am encouraged by the Spirit that this is the right move for us, and will enhance the ministries of both congregations. Last year I began to sense that my call to this church was to help you determine "What's next!" and in the Session, we have been carefully considering just that. I encourage us all to engage this change in the spring, try it on, tweak it, and move forward!

Pastor Ann

News & Notes:

Thank you all for the generous Christmas gift! We will make good use of it both for need and for fun. Your gift helped us get tickets to the OKC Thunder at the Detroit Pistons basketball game this month (for fun) Go Thunder!

In lieu of sending out Christmas card greetings, Pastor Ann & Norm have given a gift in your honor to World Central Kitchens and their mission to feed people wherever disaster hits. They come to natural disaster sites to help. They remain active in the Ukraine and in Israel and even Gaza to provide meals using community resources and helping reset food service in devastated areas.

News & Notes:

WeKirk and Youth begin meeting again this month. If you can help fix a kid-friendly meal for about 12 people and deliver it to the church by 6 pm on a Wednesday, it is most appreciated. Our leaders come directly from work, and table fellowship is a good way to begin the meeting time. There is a sign- up sheet on the bulletin board outside the sanctuary, or call Pastor Ann to sign up.

Church Dinners

Our January Church dinner on Wednesday, Jan 10 will be hosted by the Deacons. The menu is pancakes and sausage supper. We ask for a donation to offset the cost of the food- suggested \$5 per person or \$ 15 for a family. We are looking for cooks for April 10 and May 8. Thank you to Jennifer Bates for heading up our March 13 meal.

Pizza and Program is scheduled for Wednesday, January 24. Pizza service begins at 5:30 pm. Donations received offset the cost of the pizza.

Mission Matters

The Tools for Schools Steering Committee includes 3 people from our church plus 4 or 5 other community leaders especially from the organizations which helped us this past summer. We have a good outline of tasks thanks to the good recordkeeping by Rich and Pam Reid. We also have inventory to begin with and some money too. This Steering Committee will get the ball rolling for this summer's Tools for Schools drive and distribution. Look forward to hearing from them soon.

Meanwhile, we will take some items to Defiance Elementary and Middle Schools on Jan. 8 for re-start. You know the pencils get broken and lost and crayons may be all used up, etc.

Once the money counters and Deacons know the totals, we will make a determination of how to distribute the special offering for **Paying Down School Lunch Bills**. Some families who don't qualify for the free lunch program nonetheless have some trouble keeping up with these bills. The counsellors will determine how to use the funds given.

Valentine Boxes for our College Students

This term we have 3 college students-Seth Erford, Brandon Morgan, Kara Retcher to whom we will send a valentine box of study help goodies. If you want to contribute money, contact Jeanne Peffley. Please put any items to donate in the Conference room by Sunday Jan 28 and we will get the boxes packed.

Installation of Elders & Deacons on Sunday Jan. 7

Thank you to Pam Reid and Susan King for their service on Session, Rich Reid and Sigrid Emerling for their service as Deacons this past year. We welcome the new class of 2025: Curtis Richards & Foyle Solether on Session and Nancy Black, Barbara Florke and Jeanne Peffley as Deacons.

Beth Sigg is now our Clerk of Session, Marsha Karr is our Treasurer. Nancy Black will moderate Deacons' meetings, Pam Retcher will be the recorder and Jeanne Peffley will continue as Deacon Treasurer.

We give thanks to God for these who have answered the call to service for and with this congregation for 2024.

January Birthdays

05 ~ Jordyn McBride
13 ~ Rich Reid
13 ~ Linda Wagner
14 ~ Mike Peffley
20 ~ Maureen Barber



20 ~ James Sigg
24 ~ Evan Bates
25 ~ Lynn Peters
27 ~ Morgan Smith
30 ~ Morgan Peffley

January Anniversary

08 ~ Jeff and Jane Barber

Thank you to **Sandy Dunlap** for sponsoring the **January** newsletter. This enables us to print the newsletter in color.

Recipe Corner

RED PEPPER CRACKERS

From Pastor Ann via Wright family, Tulsa OK

Liven up your soup or snack. This was very popular at our joint Session/Deacons Meeting in December. A holiday favorite at our house.



1 box saltines (salted or unsalted)- open and place all crackers in large container with a lid

Mix:

1 1/3 cup canola oil

1 pkg ranch dressing mix

1 tsp ground red pepper

1 tsp red pepper flakes

2 tsp garlic powder

Pour over the crackers, close lid.

Turn the container every 5 minutes for 30 minutes then let set over night or for several hours. Repack crackers in a clean container.

This poem has really touched my being. It's all about taking in change. – Pastor Ann

The Skylight

Seamus Heaney

*You were the one for skylights, I opposed
Cutting into the seasoned tongue-and-groove
Of pitch pine. I liked it low and closed,
Its claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof
Effect, I liked the snuff-dry feeling,
The perfect, trunk-lid fit of the old ceiling.
Under there, it was all hutch and hatch,
The blue slates kept the heat like midnight thatch.
But when the slates came off, extravagant
Sky entered and held surprise wide open,
For days I felt like an inhabitant
Of that house where the man sick of the palsy
Was lowered through the roof, had his sins forgiven,
Was healed, took up his bed and walked away.*

From the collection Opened Ground (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux)



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.



January 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner 6:00 pm</i>	4	5	6
7 <i>Worship 10:00 am Holy Communion Installation of Elders & Deacons Put away Christmas decorations</i>	8 <i>AA 12 noon Deacons deliver school supplies Tools for Schools Steering Committee 5:30 pm</i>	9	10 <i>Church dinner by the deacons Deacon meeting following WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner 6:00 pm</i>	11	12	13
14 <i>Worship 10:00 am</i>	15 <i>AA 12 noon</i>	16	17 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner 6:00 pm</i>	18 <i>Shared Ministry Team Meeting 4:30 pm</i>	19	20
21 <i>Worship 10:00 am Holy Communion</i>	22 <i>AA 12 noon</i>	23	24 <i>Pizza & Program 5:30 pm WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner 6:00 pm</i>	25 <i>Session Meeting 7:00 pm</i>	26	27
28 <i>Worship 10:00 am</i>	29 <i>AA 12 noon</i>	30	31 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner 6:00 pm</i>			

Food Drive - Soup and crackers