

The Disciple

The Good News of St. John soars like an eagle!

St. John's United Church of Christ
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Volume 16, Issue 9

November 15, 2016



Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. What is your idea of the bare necessities needed for you to have a good travel experience? Do you love to go camping? Do you need a tent or camper? What do your accommodations need to provide you for a good stay? Must you have luxury linens and spa quality shampoo, or are you content with the basics of a Motel 6? Is breakfast provided and if so, does it need to have a “hot” option? Is cruising the only way to go?

I ask these questions as I reflect on an article I read regarding the unsanitized version of the Christmas story. The article reminded me that the first Christmas journey was one of long, difficult, messy days of travel.

Beginning with the angel Gabriel visiting Mary, and the announcement that she would conceive a child by the agency of the Holy Spirit, instead of the usual means of conception, the story of Jesus' birth is complicated. It's messy. Joseph feels betrayed. After all, they were engaged and she is pregnant and he knows he isn't the father. She is an unwed mother and that just wasn't supposed to happen to “nice” girls. Unlike today, when most people hardly blink an eye at a child born outside of marriage, in those days it was a huge deal.

Once Mary and Joseph iron out the wrinkles of their situation (with the help of divine intervention), the government requires them to take an unexpected trip to Bethlehem. It's messy, walking or riding a donkey or sitting in a cart, making sure there is food, water and funds for necessities, worrying about thieves and strangers.

Bethlehem is overcrowded, and the presence of the Roman army is clearly felt as soldiers oversee the census process. Into this scene comes a travel-weary couple, seeking a place to rest. It's obvious the mother is going to deliver her baby at any moment. The bare necessities are provided – shelter and food.

Imagine the smell of the animals in the stable, the scent of hay and manure, the noises of livestock eating. Our images of the Nativity are sanitized. Every portrayal is of a well-rested, healthy, relaxed mom, even though she's just given birth. There are no stinking piles of freshly deposited excrement.

The wonderful part of this story isn't the miracle of childbirth or the fact that Mary agreed to be Jesus' mother or that Joseph stuck by her.

The miracle of Christmas is that God loved us enough to send Jesus, God's own child, into our messy, disturbing, chaotic, imperfect world. What's even more amazing is that Jesus still comes to us here with us in the world as it is in 2016 – giving us hope, peace, joy and love. No matter how messed up we are, whether we are hoarders or OCD neatniks, poor or rich, ill or healthy, Boomer or Millennials, LGBTQ or straight, male or female, city dweller or suburbanite, Christ comes to us. No matter who we are or where we are on life's journey, the Christ child comes to us. That is Good News.

Wishing you the blessings Christ brings. Merry Christmas.

Pastor Karen



December 4-2nd Sunday of Advent-Isaiah 11: 1-10; Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19; Romans 15: 4-13; Matthew 3: 1-12
December 11-3rd Sunday of Advent-Isaiah 35: 1-10; Psalm 146: 5-10; James 5: 7-10; Luke 1: 47-55
December 18-4th Sunday of Advent-Isaiah 7: 10-16; Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19; Romans 1: 1-7; Matthew 1: 18-25
December 25-Christmas Day-Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14 (15-20)

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Holiday Schedule

- Nov. 27—Holy Communion
- Nov. 27—Advent Breakfast and Workshop, 9:30am
- Dec. 18—Annual Reports Due
- Dec. 18—Christmas Pageant during the service
- Dec. 18—Christmas Caroling, 12-3pm
- Dec. 24—7:30pm, Christmas Eve Service
- Dec. 25—**Christ is born! Worship service 11am**

Looking Ahead to 2017

- Jan. 8—Coming of the Magi and Holy Communion
- Jan. 15—Annual Congregational Lunch and Meeting following worship

Adult Forum

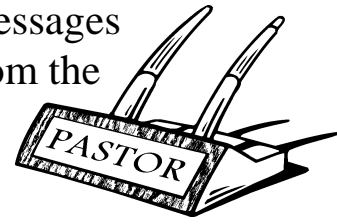
Join us each Sunday morning for challenging and informative programs in Adult Forum. We gather in the Trinity Room for coffee and fellowship at 9:30am. We share joys and concerns around 9:45am and begin the program shortly thereafter.

COME JOIN US!

- Dec. 4—Today we begin an Advent video series that is a little different for our Adult Forum. It includes storytelling and music by Pastor Matt Rawle who loves to tell an old story in a new way. Called “The Redemption of Scrooge”, the series is based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Bill Falla will lead the first segment.
- Dec. 11—We will view part two of our video series.
- Dec. 18—Pastor Karen will lead part three of our video series.
- Dec. 25—**No Sunday School or Adult Forum,**
- Jan. 1—**No Sunday School or Adult Forum,**

More church parking in the lot off Walnut Street across from the parking deck to the west of St. John's.

Messages
from the



Advent Breakfast and Program

Jesus is coming, the angel proclaims. Listen to the story of Mary and the angel Gabriel. Craft an angel. Take a coloring page home for later enjoyment. Eat a wonderful breakfast of pancakes, sausage, fruit salad and beverages. Join us at 9:30am, Sunday, November 27, 2016 in the social hall. Please sign up on the sheet in the Great Hall or call the church office with your RSVP.

Thanksgiving Eve Service Cancelled

The Community Thanksgiving Eve service at St. Paul's Lutheran Church has been cancelled.

Light the Advent Candles

Good news! We have new refillable Advent candles, so that means no more embarrassing struggles with candles that won't light. We are looking for families, friends, individuals or groups who are willing to light the Advent candles as we count down to Christ's birth. Pastor Karen will provide you with a brief script, which will include a Bible passage. There is a sign-up sheet in the Great Hall or see Pastor Karen.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion will be served Sunday, November 27, at 11am.

Christmas Pageant

Our children and youth are presenting the annual Christmas pageant, Sunday, December 18, at 11am. They will be rehearsing their parts beginning November 20. Please be sure your child or grandchildren are at chapel on Sundays at 9:30am so they can participate.

**MESSAGES FROM THE PASTOR ARE CONTINUED ON
PAGE 3.**

Stewardship Committee Message
If you have not returned your Covenant cards yet,
please do so as soon as possible

Christmas Caroling

Bring a bag lunch and your enthusiasm as we share Christmas carols with our homebound members. We will eat at 12:30pm on December 18 and leave around 1pm, returning to the church around 3pm.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning Services

O Come, All Ye Faithful to our services celebrating the birth of Christ. Invite your friends and family to sing your favorite carols. Share the candle glow. Hear the Good News that our Savior is born. Our Christmas Eve worship will be held December 24 at 7:30pm.

Come as you are on Christmas morning, December 25, for worship at 11am. Wear a robe, your slippers, jeans, comfy clothes. We only ask you to come dressed decently covered. Bring a bell to ring every time you hear the word *joy*. We'll have bells here in case you forget.

There are No Adult Forum, Chapel or Sunday School classes on December 25 and January 1.

Annual Reports Due

Our annual reports are our historical record of activities and represent the life of St. John's UCC. It is important that we have the names of committee, board and group participants as well as statistics and data.

While putting together our one hundred fiftieth anniversary celebrations, our annual reports provided insight and much needed information. Please get your annual reports to Sue in the church office by Sunday, December 18. You can submit them by email or hard copy.

The Jubilee Breakfast Ministry

Once again, Zion UCC and we are partnering to provide a hot breakfast, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings at Zion UCC. Virginia Schlegel, a recent Moravian Seminary graduate with experience in retail and social work, has been hired as the part-time coordinator of this ministry. This important ministry is supported by volunteers and gifts from many churches and organizations. People are needed to greet, prepare food and clean up. Go to the Jubilee Breakfast Ministry Facebook page for more information.

Pastor Karen on Vacation

Pastor Karen will be on vacation Monday, December 26 – Tuesday, January 3. The Rev. Richard Guhl will be preaching on New Year's Day. For pastoral emergencies, please contact the church office or Jeff Rissell.

Serving Those in Need

The Warming Center for homeless men and women in Allentown is an emergency winter place of refuge and safety for homeless people with nowhere else to go. Everlasting Life Ministries will operate the Center during this cold weather season. The Center was to open on November 1 but due to some hold-ups it hasn't yet opened. Zion UCC is providing temporary emergency sheltering for the time being. The Center is planned to operate until late April 2017, if the necessary volunteer help and funding is received. The Center is located at 1000 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, in Allentown (at Fountain Park and Pool House) Volunteers (men and women) are needed to help with getting people settled and doing intakes between 6:30pm-10pm. Other volunteer help is needed cleaning the facility each day between 7-9am and administrative work doing data entry from intakes, and phone calls to help the homeless guests make connections with services they urgently need. There will always be a paid staff member on duty, and so we do not expect volunteers to work there alone. There are additional volunteer opportunities to help monitor the Center on holidays and between midnight and 8am (and once again, we do not expect volunteers to work alone). Please contact Gary Millspaugh at: Everlastinglifeministries @ptd.net or call E.L.M. at 610-776-4009.

The Warming Center is also in need of toilet paper and paper towels, as well as health kits with an assortment of small health-care items.

We Get Thank You^S

Thank you to our secretary, Sue Lyons, for all her behind the scenes work for Stewardship.
From, *The Stewardship Committee*.

ANNUAL ADVENT OFFERING: NEIGHBORS IN NEED

Every year during the season of Advent, St. John's receives the **Neighbors in Need** offering, which supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects (ucc.org/justice). Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties and environmental justice.

Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's **Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM)**. Today there are twenty UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM, which is an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S.

Neighbors in Need helps make another world possible. It needs our support. Please use the enclosed envelope for your offering. You can put it in the collection plate any Sunday during Advent.

Feed Our Sheep 2016

Thanks to all of you who so generously support the Feed Our Sheep program. We sent packages to five of our young members: Taylor Fillman in Utah, Telisa Gardner in New York, Emily Ferrol in Florida, and Abby and Kelly Garrigan in Philadelphia. Most of the snacks were donated by the Fillman family, so a special thank-you goes out to them.

Our young ladies received card games, duct tape, some toiletries, candy, tea, noodles, pens, scotch tape, gloves, sweet and salty snacks and the annual cleaning rag. As usual, a little note was tucked inside, reminding them all that we miss them and that they're in our prayers. Thank you, St. John's, for holding onto the slender thread that connects them to their home church.



The time is here to order poinsettia plants to be placed in the church on December 18 for the Christmas Pageant and on Christmas Eve. Order forms are available in the Great Hall.

You can fill out the form below to order your poinsettias and bring it or mail it to Sue Lyons at the church (36 S. Sixth St., Allentown, PA 18101) before **December 5**. It is preferred that you bring or mail the form, but if you call the office, please be prepared to give all the information on the form to Sue. This will help assure accurate listing in the bulletin.

Please submit this form with the exact wording you want printed in the Christmas bulletin.

Please **do not write "Same as last year"** and please print.

Poinsettia or Poinsettias to be placed.....

In Memory of: _____

or

In Honor of: _____

Placed by: _____

Number of Plants you wish to buy: _____

Please indicate with a check mark or number:

For Pick-Up _____ For Shut-Ins _____

Price: \$7.00 (**Orders must be in by December 5, 2016**)

If placing payment in an envelope on the offering plate, whether it is cash or check, please include this slip and indicate "Paid" on this slip. If writing a check, please write out to "St. John's United Church of Christ" and mark the memo line "for poinsettia."

You may fill this order blank out and pay later if you wish. Thank you.

Stewards of the Earth

America Recycles Day was November 15, but every day is an opportunity to be good stewards of the earth by both using less and being informed about what can be recycled.

A great start is to use canvas or other reusable bags when grocery shopping.

We who live in Allentown are so fortunate as we have a wonderful recycling program located at 1400 Martin Luther King Drive. It is open 24/7 and accepts almost everything one could think of, or they can direct you where you can dispose of items that are not collected on your weekly pick-up day. Their telephone number is **610-437-8729**. Even if you are not a resident of Allentown, you can avail yourself of this site for recycling.

Electronic recycling is open to Allentown taxpayers only and is located at 1401 Oxford Drive. Computers, keyboards, monitors, printers, scanners, laptops and televisions* can be brought here but only on the first and third Saturdays of each month from 9am to 12 noon.

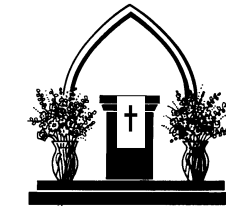
There are other TV recycling options, but many have fees. Nancy Kramer-Moyer has more information. Please feel free to contact her with questions: 610-434-0534.

P.S. Bethlehem recycling center on Illick's Mill Road accepts Styrofoam, but only the large packing pieces (nothing that has been in contact with food or drink or the packing popcorn).

**Only one projection TV or two regular TVs per vehicle per day.*

Buy Your Christmas Greens at Dan Schantz

Think DAN SCHANTZ when decorating for Christmas while, at the same time, helping raise funds for St. John's! The tickets will be good to use through December 24.



Altar Flowers

- December 4**—"In Memory of my brother, Gerald 'Tink' Egan", given by Trudi Egan.
- December 11**—"In Memory of my parents, Frederick and Isabella Kramer", given by Allan and Nancy Kramer-Moyer.
- December 18**—"In Memory of my Grammy, Lorraine Beltz", given by Sonya Middleton.
- December 25**— Poinsettias given in honor and memory of many.

We thank all who have graced our altar with flower tributes!

Christmas Card Project

St. John's is once again participating in the Christmas Card Project with the help of our missionary, Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek, sending cards to our sister churches in the Fukushima area of Japan. We will have cards available to be signed in the Great Hall, at the Advent Breakfast and at Fellowship Hour. We are also asked to pray for the churches, and information on these congregations and their prayer concerns will be posted in the Great Hall.

If anyone has a few left-over Christmas cards, please give to Trudi Egan for this project.

The deadline for next month's newsletter articles are due on Monday, December 5.

October	Year to date				Avg. Worship Attendance for Month
	Current	Benevolence	Property	Totals	
2016					60
Member's Giving:	\$58,181	\$23,150	0	\$81,331	
Endowment Used:	\$34,560	\$0	\$76,160	\$110,720	
2015					46
Member's Giving:	\$45,150	\$17,655	\$0	\$62,805	
Endowment Used:	\$51,149	\$3,200	\$73,305	\$127,654	

In search of...

....folks willing to host the “fellowship time” after a Sunday service. You do not need to purchase the refreshments. Speak with Trudi Egan if you have any questions about hosting. Please use the appropriate sign-up sheet in the Great Hall if you are willing to help.

.....folks willing to sponsor the **Worship Bulletin**. You can dedicate a weekly bulletin in memory of someone, or in honor of a person or group of people or in recognition of an event. The cost is \$15. Your sponsorship will help defray the annual cost of the weekly bulletins!!! Please see Bruce DeLong or Jeff Rissell if you would like to sponsor a week or two.

Allentown Area Ecumenical Food Bank

The Food Bank is in need of the items listed below. The items most needed are written in capital letters. Please keep this list in mind when you are writing your shopping list: CEREAL, TUNA, CANNED FRUIT, JELLY, peanut butter, Jell-O, pudding, any kind of canned or dried beans (baked, white, kidney, garbanzo, etc.), soups, canned meats, vegetables, macaroni & cheese, and pasta. Monetary donations are also welcome. Your monetary donations enable the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank to purchase food from the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Pathways Donations Needed

Toiletries and personal-care items like shampoo, conditioners, soaps, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shaving cream, disposable razors, etc. Sample sizes and the types you find in hotels and motels are fine.

Bike Works

Bike Works is often in need of toilet paper, paper towels, and disposable plastic gloves.

There are containers in the Great Hall each Sunday for donations to each of the above organizations. So, when you are out grocery shopping, please remember to pick up and bring to the church an item or two for the Food Bank, Pathways and Bike Works.

Our Ministry with Central Elementary

CALLING ALL BAKERS

Baked goods are needed to sell during the Parent-Teacher on November 21 and 22 to raise funds for school supplies and activities. Please wrap them in individual packages for sale. Please see Bonnie Falla if you can help with this effort.

MONTHLY ITEM COLLECTIONS

We are continuing to collect children’s coats, mittens or gloves, and hats and scarves through the month of November. In October we donated eleven coats, twenty three pairs of mittens or gloves, twenty five hats and four scarves. **Thank you** to everyone who has donated these very important gifts to date. **Thank you**, too, to Rick Guhl for delivering them to Central. Let’s see what we can accomplish in November!

Coming up in December: Tissues and Chap Stick

BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION

Thank you to all of you for bringing in your labels or Box Tops for Education! They raise much-needed funds for Central. You may bring in any and all types of “education” labels you see on products such as General Mills, Kleenex, Campbell’s Soup and Pepperidge Farm. Collection boxes for the education labels can be found in the Great Hall, in the hallway by the door to the back parking lot and in the church office. **We collect year-round. Thank you for your on-going support!**




MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

If you would like to become more involved at Central or if you have any questions about our outreach to them, **PLEASE CONTACT WENDY WILLIAMS AT 484-225-6708 OR windwend1@gmail.com.**

Please Give to the Curtis Fund

This Fund has been helping members of our St. John's family for decades. It assists members in need when they have financial emergencies. It is supported by contributions from us, the members of St. John's, and has been an extremely important source of emergency funds for years. Place your donations in the beautifully handmade church in the narthex on Sundays. We need to grow this fund so we can continue to help our family members!

December 2016

	 <p>Dec. 5– Louise & Matthew Gutt Dec. 24– Felicia & Bud Knerr</p>				1	2	3
<p><u>December Birthdays</u></p> <p>2 – Esther Heinze Marian Strapak 4 – Dolores Rehrig Melissa Gillenwater 5– Christina Brensinger Sophia Steinberg 6 – Kyle Smith 11 – Erica Morris Erin Dopera 12 – Linda Scavo 15 – Carla Solt 18 – Nancy Adams Nicole Saylor 19 – Lewis Lang 21 – Lillian Garreffa 22 – Jennifer Moats 24 – Nicholas Sablich 31 – Janet Cook</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Adult Forum 11:00a Worship 12:00n Fellowship</p> <p>Deadline for Poinsettia Orders</p>	<p>5</p> <p>4:00p Disciple deadline</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7:00p Elders</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7:00p Chancel Choir</p>	8	9	10
	<p>11</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Adult Forum 11:00a Worship 12:00n Fellowship</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>9:30a Disciple mailing</p> <p>7:00p Consistory</p>	<p>14</p> <p>7:00p Chancel Choir</p>	15	16	17
	<p>18</p> <p>9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Adult Forum 11:00a Worship- Christmas Pageant 12:00-3:00 Bag Lunch and Christmas caroling to homebound</p>	19	20	21	22	23	<p>24</p> <p>Christmas Eve</p>  <p>Music 7:00pm Worship 7:30pm</p>
	<p>25</p> <p>No Chapel or Sunday School. 11:00a Worship 12:00n Fellowship</p> 	26	27	28	29	30	31
							<p>New Year's Eve</p>

S M T W T F S