

The Disciple

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

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

Volume 20 Issue 5

August 28, 2020

From the Pastor's keyboard

Grace and Peace St. John's,

As I write this, I am preparing to take a vacation from August 21 through September 7. Hopefully, when I return, the world will not be in the midst of a major crisis as it was when I returned from my last time away during the earlier part of the pandemic in mid-March. I am looking forward to being renewed and replenished during this time away.

One thing this pandemic has reinforced for me is that there are some days when we must take it one hour at a time, one day at a time. Although businesses have reopened, many of us are still feeling the impact of the pandemic and life has not returned to "normal." I am reminded of this every time I have walked into a store with purpose, only to realize that I don't have a mask on and then I quickly return to my car to retrieve it. Although these kinds of things are what we must do in order to follow the recommended state and local guidelines, they are still not "normal" things to have to do as we attempt to live our lives.

I am very thankful that God has walked with us through this pandemic and that to date, no members or staff of the congregation have contracted COVID. As we navigate this "new (ab)normal," there are a few updates I'd like to share with you.

We are preparing to offer livestreamed services and have purchased the equipment. We are still waiting for a few backordered items to come in. Once we receive everything, Steve Henderson, our A/V support person, will set things up and we can begin livestreaming.

New and large parking lot signs were installed in early July along with our new electronic sign. We learned shortly after installation that the sign has a faulty part. The company is working to order new parts and to make the necessary repairs *asap*. In case any of you are wondering why the new sign is not “on,” this is the story behind the *why*.

In July, the Christian Ed committee revamped Vacation Bible School and bags filled with goodies were prepared for children and distributed. The bags contained arts and crafts, Bible activities, and food items to cover five days of meals for children. The bags were a real hit! Check out the thank you letter signed by Ralph and Doris Todd’s granddaughter, Piper, which has been reprinted in this newsletter.

Many of you have continued to financially support St. John’s during our physical separation from one another and we thank you for your commitment, generosity and faithfulness in the midst of these uncertain times. Your support helps us reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and promote loving fellowship with our neighbors. Please continue to support the church as you are able. If you have not done so yet, consider mailing a personal check to the church or donating via our website. You can also give electronically from any mobile device or smartphone using the GivePlus+ app.

Regarding our virtual worship services, which will continue for the time being, we have moved to using ZOOM for our virtual meetings. ZOOM works in essentially the same way as GoToMeeting but offers a few more features that are of use to us and it is more economical. The biggest reason we are using ZOOM now is that they have addressed their security issues, so it is a safer platform to use now with value added features.

In the fall, the Consistory will explore if/when we return to in-person worship. We are not rushing into anything in order to remain responsible and to ensure the safety and health of our staff, members and visitors. While virtual worship does not replace the in-person experience, we have provided multiple ways for people to stay connected and to see one another.

As we enter the fall season and children return to school in various formats, and teachers navigate new learning environments and restrictions that compete with traditional teaching methods, and parents struggle to hold it all together, my prayer is that we can find ways of carrying out ministry within our neighborhood. Yes, we will have to use common sense and be safe and responsible, but I am aware that the need is great in many households in our community. We have an opportunity to extend the love of Christ beyond our virtual and physical walls. Seek God for the ways that you are being called to serve in this moment and together, we can minister to those around us and support our neighbors in these (ab)normal times.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Emily

A Letter from the Conference Minister, The Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates

Dear friends,

Hope is a wonderful thing. It is a gift. Hope restored and renewed strengthens us and helps us face the challenges of the days we are facing.

Between a pandemic which has claimed more than 174,000 lives in the US; the pandemic of systemic racism, white supremacy and white privilege that continues to plague our siblings of color; the political, spiritual, and emotional divides which seek to separate us, natural disasters plaguing our nation and others, there is much which drains our hope. Yet, we are called to be people of hope. Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminds us: "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power (Ephesians 1:17-19).

In all these challenges, there is good news. Churches are continuing to worship and celebrate their faith. Communities of faith continue to do the work of mission and ministry in communities addressing the needs of those around them. Ministers are finding new ways to provide pastoral care and leadership. Worship attendance, at least virtually, have increased. Safe church practices have been recreated and redesigned to include social distancing, wearing masks, taking temperatures, avoiding congregational singing, changing greeting, offering and communion practice, and following CDC guidelines for cleaning and sanitizing.

I continue to be so proud of the worship and work taking place in our churches, the leadership of our pastors and the covenantal commitments being honored. You are each and all a blessing to me.

I have one more reason to hope in these days. Those of you who have been following my husband Steve's health issues. I am so happy to share with you that he is in a COVID step down unit following three asymptomatic weeks and a negative COVID test. We are making progress and I am thrilled to be sharing this with you. Thank you for your continued prayers. I am so grateful for your support.

Friends keep the faith. Hang on to hope. Feel the presence of God. Walk together.

Blessings, Bonnie

Installation of Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates, PNE Conference Minister

Bonnie's installation date has been moved from June 28 to November 7, 2020, as part of the PNEC Fall conference meeting.

Greetings Friends! This is a Call to attend our Penn Northeast Conference Fall meeting on Saturday, November 7, 2021. We will gather at 9:00 a.m. Our Meeting will be a Virtual Zoom Meeting and run from 9 am to 2:30 pm.

The Meeting's Theme is ***Moving Forward***

Scripture: Isaiah 43:19

Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand new.

It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is!

I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands.

The meeting will begin with the **Celebration of Installation of our Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates**. The Service will include

the UCC Conference Ministers from the other five Conferences in the Middle Atlantic Region with special music.

The Installation will finish approximately at 10:15 a.m. and the Business portion will begin at 10:30 a.m.

Business Items will include:

- Vote on the 2021 Conference Budget
- State of the Conference Address
- Vote on a slate of Nominees for Conference delegates for General Synod
- Recognition of Committee and Board members and the Moderator who are completing their terms
- Recognition of Pastors' Anniversaries of their Ordination, New Pastors, & a Time of Remembrance
- Recognitions of Church's Gifts to OCWM and Five for Five

Hope you can virtually join us! -- Doug Taylor, Moderator

Iowa Storm Recovery

On August 10, an inland hurricane, also known as a “derecho,” ripped through parts of Iowa and Illinois. Iowa sustained extensive damage and there are still thousands of homes without electricity. Some families have lost everything and are living in tents.

We are fortunate to be a part of a church that works to provide aid and support whenever there is a major crisis. The UCC disaster recovery ministry team in Iowa has shared that the best way we can assist is to send money directly to Iowa.

St. John’s is a giving church and we are asking that if you are led to help Iowa, you may do so by giving a donation. If you choose to write a check, be sure to put “Iowa recovery” in the memo line. If you are giving electronically from our website or via the GivePlus app, you will see an option for *Iowa storm recovery*. We will collect donations for this particular emergency over the next 4 weeks.

Our siblings in the Midwest need our prayers AND our financial support during this time of great need, in the midst of this pandemic. Thank you for supporting this cause, as you are able and as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

-Pastor Emily

Getting to Know You

We would like to introduce Sherry and Steve Henderson, among our newest members at St. John’s. They found us through our website and appreciated our relative diversity and ONA status. They bring a spirit of warmth, enthusiasm and willingness to help.

Steve grew up in California. Sherry and her mom moved from Pittsburgh to California when Sherry was 16 after her dad died. They met in high school and

became sweethearts. After high school they both joined the Air Force. Sherry could not continue due to health issues, but Steve made it a 20-year career. They married, then were assigned from California to Colorado, to North Dakota, to Spain, then Florida, England and New Jersey. Steve had special short assignments that took him to Korea, Saudi Arabia, the Azores and Iceland!

They have a son, Steven II, daughter-in-law Jacki and two grandchildren, Nathan, almost 6, and Madeleine, aged 2. They met at Indiana University of PA (IUP), both having a love of music. Steve and Sherry had been band parents for their son when he attended North Burlington High School and was in the marching band playing the sax as does his dad. Eight years ago, the younger Henderson moved to Sweden where they teach at the International English School.

Steve works as an engineer at Thermo-Fisher Scientific. In his off time, he enjoys audio-visual technology, and we at St. John's are very grateful! Sherry has returned to higher education and is earning a degree from LCCC. She enjoys writing; when she was young, she had a typewriter and wrote her own sports newspaper, which her Dad would read! Both Sherry and Steve love sports. She played basketball and volleyball and ran track and was the statistician for her high school football team. Steve ran, swam, surfed and now kayaks and is an avid snowboarder. Sherry is a super Pittsburgh fan and Steve loves his teams from California but says he is also a Pittsburgh fan "thru marriage"! Caring for their home near Jordan UCC as well as their pets, especially Kona, their 4-year-old German Shepherd, takes much of their time.

Both Sherry and Steve grew up in "fire and brimstone" churches and just wanted a church that welcomes everyone, teaches about the love of Jesus and is truly a "come as you are" church.

They both believe in living by the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want to be treated. Also, when people reveal to you who they are, believe them and meet them where they are. Steve especially believes, "when you know better, do better!" We are very blessed to have Steve and Sherry as part of our church family!

Our Ministry with Central Elementary School

We've been collecting school uniforms, virtually, over the summer, by making donations through our website or sending checks into the church office. We're collecting through the end of August. The cost of a uniform is \$20 and you're welcome to give that amount, or whatever you're able to. The exciting news is that, as of July 31st, we've given \$783 toward uniforms! That will buy school uniforms for 39 students at Central. Thank you to everyone who has contributed. In September, we will be collecting 750 journal notebooks, 750 individual pencil sharpeners, and 750 packs of index cards. So, to give to the children at Central Elementary please donate through the St. John's website or send a check to the church office. We're learning new ways to do ministry in the heart of the city.

BETHANY CHILDREN'S HOME ANNUAL OFFERING

"Bethany Children's Home has been providing abused, neglected and abandoned youth residential care in a safe, secure and supportive home-like environment since 1863. Started as an orphanage, we continue to work with our communities to provide children and youth a safe place to learn how to be a kid, develop life skills and help them overcome their challenges.

We have expanded our services to provide the Helping Hands program to temporarily shelter unaccompanied children who have crossed our borders to enter the United States. These children are seeking to reunite with their families who already reside in the U.S. Many are victims of human trafficking and/or have come from very dangerous environments. The children, infants through eighteen years of age, are in desperate need of a safe and appropriate shelter while seeking reunification with their family members.

These children, arriving with nothing, will be supplied with the necessities and small comforts that are needed while in our care." —-Bethany Children's Home

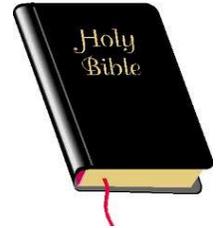
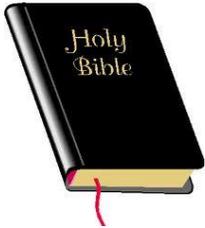
Please consider supporting St. John UCC's longstanding offering to Bethany. The offering will be received during September. You can send a check to St. John's with "Bethany Children's Home" in the memo line or you can use the Donate button on our website. Thank you.

ADULT FORUM RETURNS! (ZOOM— style) on September 27, 2020

The last Sunday of each month will be designated for Adult Forum Bible studies, beginning at 9:45am and ending at 10:30am. Claudia will email a ZOOM invite for these sessions. If you have any questions about logging on to ZOOM, contact Claudia (610-433-0146).

Our first Bible study will be conducted by Reverend Bill Falla on September 27. We will look at the Book of Ruth to get an Old Testament view of the issue of diversity. BYOB (bring your own Bible)!

We also hope to have an outside speaker every other month, beginning in October. On October 18, Reverend Dr. Bonnie Bates, our PNEC Conference Minister, will visit us via ZOOM to speak about her trip to India in February, 2020. Join us!



Lectionary Readings for September 2020

September 6 - Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 12: 1-14; Psalm 149; Romans 13: 8-14; Matthew 18: 15-20

September 13 – Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 14: 19-31; Psalm 114; Romans 14: 1-12; Matthew 18: 21-35

September 20 – Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 16: 2-15; Psalm 105: 1-6, 37-45; Philippians 1: 21-30;
Matthew 20: 1-16

September 27 –Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 17: 1-7; Psalm 78: 1-4, 12-16; Philippians 2: 1-13; Matthew 21: 23-32

as of 7/31/2020	July			
	Current	Benevolence	Property	Totals
2020				
Members' Giving:	\$44,500	\$14,353	\$5,880	\$64,733
Endowment Used:	\$49,596	\$0	\$58,521	\$108,117
2019				
Members' Giving:	\$43,423	\$15,851	\$560	\$59,834
Endowment Used:	\$43,423	\$0	\$65,516	\$108,939



St. John's UCC
Short Sleeve T-Shirts



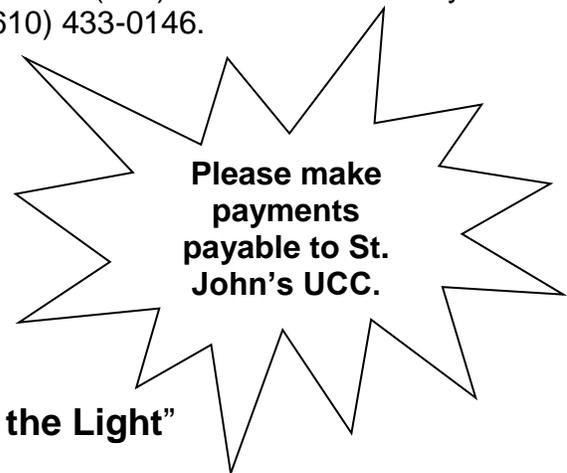
St. John's Bags

St. John's UCC Order Form

	T-shirts \$20	Long Sleeve Shirt \$23	Bags \$12	1 Shirt + 1 Bag \$30	2 T- shirts \$30	2 Long Sleeve Shirts \$40	2 bags \$20
Small							
Medium							
Large							
X-Large							
XX-Large							

Additional sizes may be available upon request. Please see or call Linda Lenhart for additional information. She may be reached via email at l lenhart@ptd.net or by phone at (484) 223-9177. You may also contact the church office to place your order at (610) 433-0146.

Name: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____



All proceeds will go to the new **"Sharing the Light"** sign for the church.

September 2020



- 3 Nancy Rissell
- 4 Katrina Schuler
- 7 William Falla
- 9 Alan Cloak
- 12 Cassidy Bell
- 18 Leslie Hein
- 21 Byron M. Cook
- 27 Keith Lenhart
Marjorie Cloak

Adult Forum
9:45am

Celebrating 
An Anniversary This Month

9/03 – Kelly and Tom Rissell
9/08 – Jeanette and Dick Schmoyer
9/09 – Shirley and James Bartynski

9/09 – Lynn and Alan Cloak
9/09 – Karline and Jay Mosebach
9/17 – Barbara Silfies & Gary Gumlock

		1 7pm Elders GoToMeeting	2 8am Prayer Call via GoToMeeting	3 7pm Happy Hour via GoToMeeting	4	5
6 11am Virtual Worship 12 noon GoToMeeting Fellowship	7  Church office closed	8 7pm Consistory GoToMeeting	9 8am Prayer Call Via GoToMeeting	10 7pm Happy Hour via GoToMeeting	11	12
13 11am Virtual Worship 12pm GoToMeeting Fellowship	14 6:30 pm The Dialogue	15	16 8am Prayer Call Via GoToMeeting	17 7pm Happy Hour via GoToMeeting	18	19
20 11am Virtual Worship 12pm GoToMeeting Fellowship	21	22	23 8am Prayer Call Via GoToMeeting	24 7pm Happy Hour via GoToMeeting	25	26
27 11am Virtual Worship 12pm GoToMeeting Fellowship	28 6:30 pm The Dialogue	29	30			

S

M

T

W

T

F

S

Visit us at www.stjohnsuccallentown.org

Like us on Facebook at St John's UCC Allentown