

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 23 Issue 30

March 2023

Howdy St. John's Family,

I'm sure I'm not the only person that feels like 2023 is flying by! The last week of February marked the beginning of the Lenten season, so we are officially in Lent! Last month we celebrated Candlemas, a Holy holiday that recognizes Christ's light in our homes and our lives; we mentioned that it is between the Winter solstice and the Spring equinox, which means after Candlemas the amount of sunlight increases! During the season of Lent, our daylight will continue to lengthen as we draw closer to Easter. That is actually where we got the word *Lent*, from an Old English word with Germanic roots that meant, *to lengthen*.

In the United Church of Christ and other Christian denominations, we use Lent as a time to Fast, Pray, and Give! Fasting is abstaining from something and using that time or energy to focus on your relationship with God! This could be fasting from a distraction or unhealthy habit, but in recent years many folks have used this time to 'take something up', like starting a new devotion, meditation, or taking walks. Prayer is a central focus of the Lenten season as we strive to grow a deeper and richer relationship with Christ our Savior! And finally, giving is another central focus, giving not only of our earthly treasures, but also giving of our time and our talent. Volunteer somewhere, send a card to a friend, get involved in a local cause, and remember Christ's example to us as servant leader.

This Lenten season, I would like to invite you to participate in two different opportunities, one here at St. John's UCC and one Conference wide! On March 19, 26, and April 2 the Youth will be joining with the Adult Forum in the Trinity Room for an intergenerational Bible study, during the Sunday School hour. We will discuss some of the familiar stories that lead us to Easter morning; and each week is independent of the others so if you miss one you can still participate in the following week. The other opportunity is a Virtual Lenten study run through the Penn Northeast Conference and open to all of the conferences in Pennsylvania! I

wrote this study to help guide our discussion as we look toward the future and continue to build connections with one another! I'll be co-leading the study with members of the Visioning and Discernment Team. For more information see the advertisement graphic in *The Disciple*, or contact the office. Have a blessed Lenten season!

-Pastor Becky Sausser

Consistory Report

The consistory meeting was held on February 14 at 7pm in the Trinity room and on Zoom for participants unable to be there in person. Pastor Becky opened the meeting with devotions. The minutes from the January 13 meeting were passed. The Treasurer's report was shared and accepted. Pastor Becky asked if she could anoint the Board for the work they will do, the date will be determined for this later. She provided an update on visitations and the organization she has brought to the homebound list to make it more manageable. She offered thanks to Allan and Nancy Kramer-Moyer who have agreed to help with visitations for some of the traditional homebound folks. Pastor Becky shared that our Facebook, website, and Google page rank well compared to other churches in the area. She is continuing to research digital evangelism for targeted advertisement. She concluded by talking about the Lenten season and sharing a service project that the church will participate in.

Bonnie Falla reported on the March Benevolence offerings that will be collected, including One Great Hour of Sharing and Amigos de Guatemala. Lynn shared the Fellowship update on the up-and-coming events. There was a discussion about beginning to fundraise for the capital improvements that were shared at our Annual Meeting. Jeff Rissell gave an update from the Property Committee; we have now received the estimates for the roof. The estimate for the railings in the sanctuary prompted further discussion and it was decided that Jeff would set up a time for the Consistory to meet with the contractor. Judy Garrigan shared a Christian Ed report, four youth and one adult chaperone (Cassidy Bell) will be going to the PNEC Youth Retreat. The youth are going bowling on March 3. Under old business we need to affirm our Secretary Janet Cook, and our Treasurer's Cindy Danenhowe and Cassidy Bell. A motion was made and passed. There was a brief discussion on the Child Abuse Prevention Plan that Pastor Becky

wrote and was reviewed by our lawyer. This plan was drafted at the request of our insurance company. A motion was made to approve the plan and it passed. Under new business we elected new officers to the Consistory. Trudi Egan was elected as Vice President, and Jeff Rissell was elected as President. The next meeting is on March 14 at 7pm. Pastor Becky closed the meeting in prayer and the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

March's Special Mission Offering

Our Special Mission Offering for March is **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)**. Every year for over 70 years, churches from many denominations have received the OGHS Offering on one Sunday in Lent. This offering tends to the needs of those who suffer just as Jesus ministered to the needs of those who suffered. Today, whether it be from natural disaster, poverty, or war, we are there with them in their time of need through OGHS. Our gifts provide well pumps for clean water, seeds and training for sustainable agriculture, food, medical kits, school supplies, temporary shelters, and safe housing projects. Whether the suffering is on the other side of the world or here in the United States, OGHS funds are working to relieve that suffering.

This year we are especially focused on the tragedy in Turkey and Syria where more than 33,000 individuals have perished. Our OGHS' dollars are currently supporting the humanitarian efforts there and will continue to as long as the need exists.

Watch for OGHS stories in bulletin inserts during the month of March leading up to our One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on March 19. You may use the Special **OGHS Envelope** found in the Narthex; the blue envelope in the pew, as designated on your regular offering envelope or by using the Donate button on the Church Website. However you choose to give, please prayerfully consider doing your part to minister to the most vulnerable of God's children. Thank you.

AMIGOS DE GUATEMALA: Our 2023 Lenten Offering

Once again, we will be collecting our Lenten Offering for **Amigos de Guatemala**. They will be visiting with us on March 12 to make a presentation in Adult Forum as well as to present the mission moment during Worship.

This year we celebrate and give thanks for the completion of the project, which was dedicated on Dec. 14, 2022. Almost immediately, its impact was felt by the community as 70 children were served by their Vacation Bible School.

St. John's has been and continues to be a major supporter of this mission effort. Please continue to support this effort by your prayers and financial assistance. You can use the Lenten Offering envelopes found in the Narthex or the blue pew envelopes, or by using the Donate button on the church website. Thank you for your support.

WE GET THANK YOU'S

Here are excerpts of thank you notes from recipients of St. John's Community Benevolence grants from 2022: "We are so thankful that you have awarded us the grant (\$5,000 grant). We are a safe place for the neighborhood children and they enjoy coming where we can offer them fun learning activities after school and during summer. We can offer these programs to families and it's because of You." (The Neighborhood Center) "Thank you to everyone on the Benevolence committee and at St. John's for your generous support of the kids of Bike Works. We so appreciate your kindness now and throughout the year in so many ways. (\$2,020 Community Bike Works)

Important Dates:

Worship Information – March Sermons

March Sermons

- March 5- Second Sunday in Lent
 - Reading 1: Genesis 12:1-4
 - Reading 2: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
 - Call to worship: Psalm 121
 - Title: The Promise.
 - In Genesis we hear God's promise to Abraham, and in Romans we are reminded that the promise of eternal life and salvation is for all peoples through Jesus Christ!
- March 12- Third Sunday in Lent
 - Reading 1: Exodus 17:1-7

- Reading 2: John 4:5-42
- Call to worship: Psalm 95
- Title: Living Water.
- In Exodus we see Moses bring water from a rock through the power of God; in our gospel we hear about the woman at the well and learn the great truth that Christ is the living water!
- March 19- Fourth Sunday in Lent
 - Reading 1: 1 Samuel 16:1-13
 - Reading 2: Psalm 23
 - Call to worship: Resources
 - Title: Anointed.
 - In 1 Samuel we hear about the unexpected call of David to be anointed as king; in Psalm 23 hear the promise anew that God anoints each of us with wonderful and unexpected blessings.
- March 26- Fifth Sunday in Lent
 - Reading 1: Ezekiel 37:1-14
 - Reading 2: John 11:1-45
 - Call to worship: Psalm 130
 - Title: Dry Bones.
 - In Ezekiel we hear the story of the valley of dry bones with fresh eyes; in the gospel we see Christ raise Lazarus from the dead!

Announcements:

ADULT FORUM

Adult Forum looks forward to more fun during Lent! Please join us Sunday mornings before worship for a variety of studies and programs. We begin to gather in the Trinity Room at 9:30 and start our program at 9:45 with a sharing of joys and concerns.

March 5 – We will get an update from our friends at Central Elementary School. Megan Obleschuk, Community School Coordinator, always has great stories and an energetic presentation and we are excited to have her with us again.

March 12 – St. John’s has been a supporter of the Amigos de Guatemala since the beginning, and we look forward to our yearly Lenten visit with them. Roger Heim

will share the latest news. This is a wonderful opportunity to see our financial gifts at work in the world.

March 19 and 26, and April 2 – Pastor Becky and the youth join us for our popular intergenerational Bible study. This is always a great time.

April 2 – On Palm Sunday we will finish our intergenerational study with an activity. Come find out what fun Pastor Becky has planned for us!

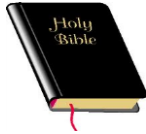
April 9 – Happy Easter! Rev. Bill Falla will lead us on an exploration of baptism, inspired by our conversation with Bill during our Advent Bible study.

April 16 – Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk returns to update us on what is happening in our city. We had an excellent discussion with Mayor Tuerk on his previous visit. Bring your questions and concerns.

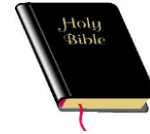
Hope to see you at Adult Forum!

Live-Streaming

We believe the technical problem with the streaming sound has been resolved. If anyone still has a problem, please call the church office, and let them know.



Lectionary Readings for March 2023



March 5 – Second Sunday in Lent –

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17;
John 3:1-17; Matthew 17:1-9

March 12 – Third Sunday in Lent –

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11;
John 4:5-42;

March 19 – Fourth Sunday in Lent –

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

March 26 – Fifth Sunday in Lent –

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

Annual Easter Candy Fundraiser

Save the Easter Bunny some work!

Make plans to purchase delicious, homemade Easter Candy.
(Don't forget to order extra for family/friends/neighbors.)

Last day to order: March 19

Pickup date: Palm Sunday, April 2

Orders may be phoned in to the church office (610-433-0146) or placed in the indicated box in the Great Hall.

All payments to be made at time of pickup.

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Cost:

Peanut Rolled Cream Eggs (dark chocolate):

_____ # of ½ pound containers at \$9.00 each.....\$ _____

_____ # of 1 pound containers at \$18.00 each.....\$ _____

Peanut Butter Eggs (milk chocolate):

_____ # of ½ pound containers at \$9.00 each.....\$ _____

_____ # of 1 pound containers at \$18.00 each.....\$ _____

Coconut Cream Eggs (dark chocolate):

_____ # of ½ pound containers at \$9.00 each.....\$ _____

_____ # of 1 pound containers at \$18.00 each.....\$ _____

Assorted (all 3 types):

_____ # of 1 pound containers at \$18.00 each.....\$ _____

Total Cost: \$ _____

Thank you for your support!

Soup Sale

Sunday, March 12, 2023

Chicken potpie soup
Ham and cabbage soup
Winter vegetable soup

Pints and quarts will be on sale in the Trinity Room after worship.

Easter Flower Order Blank

Please print and submit this form with the exact wording you want printed in the Easter Bulletin.
Please do not write "Same as last year".



Easter Flowers to be placed.....

In Memory Of: _____

Or

In Honor Of: _____

Placed By: _____

Price: Lilies \$9.50 Mums \$9.00 Tulips \$7.00 (Orders must be in by Tuesday, March 7, 2023)

Number of Plants: Lilies _____ Yellow Mums _____ Red Tulips _____ Yellow Tulips _____

Please indicate with a checkmark or number: For Pick-up _____ For Shut Ins _____


(If placing a flower-order envelope in the offering plate with this slip and payment, whether cash or check, please indicate "Paid" on this slip. Make checks out to "St. John's UCC" and write "Easter flowers" on the memo line. You may also submit this order form now and pay later. Thank you)

March 2023



- 3 – Julian Pyle
- 5 – Felicia Knerr
- 6 – Barbara Silfies
- 7 – Cole Heffelfinger
- 11 – Priscilla Bowersox
- 18 – Evrett Heffelfinger
Avery Heffelfinger
- 20 – Kelly Garrigan
- 21 – Paul Quinn Sr.
- 22 – Shekira Pyle
- 25 – Keith Nash
Jacob Pyle
- 27 – Maverick Rissell
- 30 – Caryn
Bronfenbrenner
Alexis Gillenwater

Celebrating 
An Anniversary This Month

			1 9am Prayer Call Virtual Lent Study	2 Food Bank	3	4
5 11am Worship	6	7 Elders Meeting 1pm	8 9am Prayer Call	9	10	11
12 11am Worship	13	14 Consistory Meeting 7pm	15 9am Prayer Call Virtual Lent Study	16	17 	18
19 11am Worship Intergenerational Bible Study	20	21	22 9am Prayer Call	23	24 Food Bank	25
26 11am Worship Intergenerational Bible Study	27	28	29 Virtual Lent Study	30	31	

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March – Named for the Roman god of war. This was the time of year to resume military campaigns that had been interrupted by winter.

To whoever installed the railing by the steps to the side of the altar, please contact Pastor Becky at 570-581-0594 or revsausser@gmail.com. She needs to ask some questions.

Visit us at www.stjohnsuccallentown.org

Like us on Facebook at St. John's UCC Allentown