

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 23 Issue 32

May 2023

Howdy St. John's Family,

As I was enthusiastically cleaning my office (which always gets a little chaotic during Holy Week) I was joyously contemplating Christian unity! This Lenten season the theme that tied all of our passages together was looking at familiar things with fresh eyes. This year I found myself drawn to Peter, a major player in Holy Week! From his unwillingness to let Jesus lower himself and wash Peter's feet, to Peter's denial of Christ three times, I have been honing in my biblical bifocals and setting my gaze on this complex disciple.

We remember that Peter wasn't always Peter; he began his life as Simon. It was only when Peter was the first disciple to state that Jesus was the Messiah that Jesus renamed him Cephas, Peter, the rock (see John 1:42). Peter is such a cool guy to look at in our scriptures because we get to see his passion through his reactions, like the anger he felt in the garden where he cuts off Malchus's ear to the joy of meeting the resurrected Lord! We watch him become this strong and loyal friend who accepts the great commission to share the gospel. I was just rereading 1 Peter, which is a short and very manageable letter if you want give it a reread. This was a letter that was intended to be sent out to the churches across Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey. The people in Asia Minor were gentiles who had become Christians, and now they were sort of displaced, spread out across the land, disconnected, and oppressed by the rulers in the area. Peter blesses them, and tells them about the unity that they have with all of Christianity through Jesus Christ!

The overarching theme in 1 Peter is that through our belief in Jesus Christ, we are connected to the full body of Christ, the church! We have a new family identity as part of the family of God, and we are called to witness to others about this amazing thing to help give others hope! It is in this unity with Jesus and with

one another that we find hope that one day, we can make it on earth as it is in heaven, a just world for all! Easter always reminds me that we are a resurrected people, and the power of the Holy Spirit that rose Jesus from the grave lives in us! So be bold, be brave, and listen to where that Spirit is calling you! (And thanks for allowing me this mini-sermon in place of my usual pastoral letter!)

-Pastor Becky Sausser

Consistory Report

The Consistory meeting was held on April 11 at 7pm in the Trinity room. Tom Raub led devotions, and minutes were taken by guest secretary Becky Bronfenbrenner while Janet Cook is out of town. The minutes were approved. In the minister's report Pastor Becky shared that Anointing the Consistory will now be part of the tradition of St. John's. Holy Week went well; the cross from Emmanuel was a wonderful addition. There were 80 people on Easter. Letters were sent inviting additional Emmanuel folks to Holy Week. Pastor Becky and the Elders have been working to get Church Windows, our membership software, up to date. Our website saw a burst of activity for Holy Week and Pastor Becky continues to work to make the website more prevalent on Google's algorithm. VBS will be the weekend of July 15, more details to come soon. Fellowship and Fundraising chair Lynn Cloak reported that the candy sale raised \$900! The annual church picnic has been scheduled for June 25 at Bucky Boyle Park. Property chair Jeff Rissell shared the information discussed at the Property & Finance Meeting last month, and that they will have estimates for the roof soon. Christian Education Committee member Pastor Becky reported that Youth Sunday will be June 11. The Treasurer's report was accepted.

Under Old Business Pastor Becky shared some estimates from Allegra Marketing team for a postcard to be sent out in the surrounding neighborhood. Discussion ensued and it was decided that the Consistory would like to see a map of what specific locations would receive mail before deciding. Under New Business Pastor Becky shared that there was a chairlift available to a good home, but no one knew anyone that needed it. The church was contacted about the opportunity to receive six gravesites, but after discussion it was decided we would decline the offer. Jeff Rissell shared some options for updating our handicap parking spaces and it was decided that we will have two handicap spaces moved to the top of the lot near 6th street alongside the staff parking. Jeff Rissell shared the estimates for

the air-conditioning units, which need to be replaced, and requested the Consistory grant permission to take the money from invested funds, and then replace that money when the capital campaign is launched; this was approved. Pastor Becky brought up that the kitchen has been abused in the past and requested advice on what to do. It was suggested that only church members be allowed to use the kitchen and outside groups would have access to the social hall, but not the kitchen. This was approved. The next meeting will be on May 9, 2023, and devotions will be led by Nancy Kramer-Moyer.

A2A Update

In 2022 St John's began the important process of working toward becoming an Accessible 2 All congregation (A2A)! This is the terminology used by the United Church of Christ to identify churches who have, "made the commitment to be physically and attitudinally welcoming of people with disabilities". Even after the huge accomplishment of putting in our beautiful railings in the sanctuary, our work is far from over! At the Consistory meeting on April 11 they discussed putting two additional handicap spaces near the top of the parking lot (closest to 6th Street) near the staff parking. These spaces will grant easier access to the front of the building. If you are interested in serving on the A2A team, or have any suggestions for ways to improve our accessibility, please contact Pastor Becky, and thank you all for your continued support and engagement as we strive to make St. John's a haven for everyone!

Phoebe Ministries Mission Offering

As has been our tradition at St. John's, we will once again on Mother's Day take a mission offering in support of **Phoebe Ministries**. This organization founded by the Reformed Church in 1903 continues to serve Allentown and Eastern Pennsylvania as a mission partner of the UCC.

Phoebe's stated mission reads: A community of faith, called by God, to enrich the lives of our seniors, their families, and the communities we serve. They are guided by this mission to provide compassionate care to those in need regardless of their ability to pay. In 2021, they provided more than \$15 million in charitable care to their residents. How can they do it? The Mother's Day offering is a major source of funding that the UCC churches provide.

So once again on Mother's Day, May 14, we will have the opportunity to support this worthwhile ministry. You may donate as part of your regular Sunday offering, the blue pew envelopes, the special Phoebe envelopes, or the Donate button on our website. For the first two, be sure to designate Phoebe Ministries. Also, you may contribute anytime in May.

Please prayerfully consider supporting this vital mission effort. Thank you.

Strengthen the Church Offering

One of our May Special Mission Offerings is **Strengthen the Church**. Pentecost Sunday is the day we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples and the beginning of their ministry. This is why Pentecost is also referred to as the birthday of the Christian Church. It is also the reason that the United Church of Christ has chosen this Sunday for its **Strengthen the Church Offering** which will be our Special Mission Offering for June.

Strengthen the Church Offering reflects the shared commitment of the UCC congregations to help one another strengthen their ministry. Funds administered by the National Office are used for leadership development, new church starts, youth ministry, and local church innovation such as online streaming of worship, just to name a few.

Just as the Holy Spirit empowered those disciples to strengthen the early Church, we hope that the Spirit might move you today to help strengthen the ministry of the UCC. While the focus is on Pentecost, May 28 you may donate anytime in June using your weekly offering envelope, special envelopes found in the Narthex or the Donate button on our website.

Thank you for considering to help in continuing St. John's support of this vital ministry.

Important Dates:

Worship Information – May Sermons

May Sermons

- May 7
 - Reading 1: Acts 7:55-60
 - Reading 2: John 14:1-14
 - Call to worship: Psalm 31
 - Title: A place for us.
 - This week we hear the comforting words that Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us in heaven, paired with the jarring story of the stoning of Stephen.
- May 14
 - The Rev. Rick Guhl will be our guest minister this week while Pastor Becky is out of town.
 - Title: "The Travail of This Pregnant Moment."
- May 21- Ascension of the Lord Sunday
 - Reading 1: Luke 24: 44-53
 - Reading 2: Acts 1:1-11
 - Call to worship: Psalm 47
 - Title: You Raise Me Up.
 - This week we look at two accounts of the ascension of Christ as we receive Jesus' call to make disciples of the earth anew!
- May 28- Pentecost
 - Reading 1: Acts 2:1-21
 - Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
 - Call to worship: Psalm 104
 - Title: Rise Up, O Flame!
 - This week we celebrate Pentecost! The promised Holy Spirit descends on the apostles and many who witness these things believe in Christ!

Announcements:

Church Picnic

The annual church picnic will be at Bucky Boyle Park June 25 following the 10am service! Arrive for 11! Sign up on the bulletin board in the narthex!

This year our annual church picnic returns to Bucky Boyle Park! The picnic will take place on June 25 following our 10am service. If you aren't able to attend the service, please come for 11am. This is a covered dish social that will include pulled pork and hot dogs, games, beverages, access to the splash pool and the rest of the park! If you are interested in attending, please sign up using the sign-up sheet in the Narthex with the number of people attending and what covered dish you will bring. You may also call the church office to sign up. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Becky or Lynn Cloak for more information.

ADULT FORUM

Summer is coming! Here are the happenings at Adult Forum until our summer break. Please join us on 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.

April 30-Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk has rescheduled his visit with us to update us on what is happening in our city. We had an excellent discussion with Mayor Tuerk on his previous visit and look forward to hearing from him again.

May 7-All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir! The Lehigh Valley Zoo is a wonderful place to explore the incredible variety of critters our Creator has provided. Amanda Shurr, President and CEO of the zoo will share what is happening there and some exciting future plans.

May 14-Bloom is a local nonprofit group providing sanctuary and healing to women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. They will be joining us in conversation about their work.

May 21-What would you like to see at Adult Forum?? We love suggestions all year, but this annual brainstorming session is always tremendously helpful, so please join us!

Thanks for another great year!
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 May 2023



May 7 – Fifth Sunday of Easter –

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16;
1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

May 14 – Sixth Sunday of Easter –

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20;
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 21 – Seventh Sunday of Easter –

Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35;
1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

May 28 – Pentecost Sunday –

Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23

A very special thank you to the folks from Emmanuel UCC for the many generous donations that they have made to the church! These donations included the beautiful cross we had in the sanctuary during Holy Week, and a number of kitchen supplies, appliances, pans, and much more!



May 2023



- 4 – Shinea Pyle
- 4 – Subrina Pyle
- 5 – Alexander Cloak
- 13 – Shirley Bartynski
- 14 – Abby Garrigan
- 20 – Lynn Cloak
- 23 – Hawthorne Rissell



May 21 – Allison and Richard Hausman
 May 26 – Ralph and Doris Todd
 May 27 – James and Rebecca Bronfenbrenner

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

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June – Named for the Roman goddess Maia, who oversaw the growth of plants. Also, from the Latin word maiores, “elders,” who were celebrated during this month

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.

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