

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 24 Issue 41

February 2024

Howdy St. John's Family,

February is the shortest month of the year, but this year is a Leap Year! During 2024, my pastoral letters are focused on taking a deeper look at the epistles in our New Testament; last month, we kicked things off with Paul's letter to the Romans, and this month we delve into First Corinthians! Corinth was an important port city during this time, where folks would come from all over to trade and exchange goods. There were also a number of temples in the area to different gods, like the Greek and Roman gods Apollo and Artemis. To start his ministry in Corinth, Paul spent about a year and a half there, forming relationships with people and sharing the good news about Jesus! We know this because of the reports in Acts 18. After Paul left Corinth to continue his work spreading the gospel, he received reports that folks were struggling in Corinth. Paul's response was to send this first letter to the people of Corinth.

1 Corinthians can be broken down into five main points of focus. Chapters one through four focus on the division that the young church is experiencing. Paul's solution to their conflict and growing pains is to try looking at everything through the lens of the gospel, like those popular bracelets, WWJD (what would Jesus do). After defining the problem, what would the solution look like if Christ were responding? The division was happening because folks in the church had begun to fight about which teacher to follow, Paul, Apollos, or Peter. Paul reminds them that the church is not a popularity contest because the church is centered on Jesus as the head of the church!

Chapters five through seven look at sexual immorality. There were folks casually sleeping with workers from other temples; one man tried to have relations with his stepmother, and so Paul reminds them that these things aren't right. Christ was raised from the dead and our bodies will also be resurrected in the end of days, so it's not our own body anymore, but is dedicated to and belonging to Christ. In chapters eight through ten, the conflict that Paul addresses is whether or not people can eat meat that was sacrificed to other gods at other temples, like public barbecues. Paul says our allegiance is to Jesus as Lord, so if there are people who might be confused by you eating that meat then avoid it. The example he gives is that if people see a Christian eating this meat, they might mistakenly think it's okay for Christians to worship other gods.

Chapters eleven through fourteen reveal that there were a number of people who were making worship a confusing experience by speaking in tongues, often over the lessons that were being taught. Paul helps them think about the purpose of this gathering; if you are

gathering to receive God's spirit together, then you should be working as one, like a human body, working to build up the church together. The highest value in the gathering should be God's love! Chapter fifteen reviews the evangelion and the good news of Christ's death and resurrection, and Paul closes with the final greeting in chapter sixteen. Let us carry forth the love and light of Christ to the world as the body of Christ, moving and working in the world!

-Pastor Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

The Consistory meeting held on January 9, 2024, was moved from in-person to zoom due to inclement weather. The meeting began promptly at 7:04pm and opened with joys and concerns. Nancy Kramer-Moyer's devotional focused on the works of the Green Team. The minutes from December, 2024, were approved. Under the minister's report, Pastor Becky reported her housing allowance for 2024; it was approved. Pastor Becky reported that Christmas Eve went well, our service was advertised on Facebook, our website, our electric sign, and a banner on our railing. Andrea and Pastor Becky mailed out several handwritten invitations to Friends of St. John's, as well as visitors from throughout the year. Following the Christmas Eve evening service, Nancy Kramer-Moyer took poinsettias to some of our homebound folks; thank you, Nancy, and Alan! Pastor Becky and Andrea worked to update our website for the new year, including adding our business hours to several locations on the website. There will be a virtual Lenten study occurring on Wednesday nights at 7pm throughout the Lenten season. This study was written by Pastor Becky and will be open to all four conferences located in Pennsylvania as we work together to explore the possibilities of merging. February 18 will be the Lenten Breakfast, so mark your calendars.

Under Fellowship and Fundraising, Lynn Cloak reported that there were fellowship events following each of the services on Christmas Eve, including a hot cocoa bar at which a gallon of hot chocolate was enjoyed. The annual luncheon held on January 14 featured a turkey dinner with pudding for dessert. The Nuts and Truffle sale raised over \$700; the exact figure will be in the next report. Under property, Jeff Rissell reported an update on the lights in the sanctuary. The painters that we had previously used were able to bring a 20-foot ladder and change the light above the choir loft. The property committee is currently researching what equipment would be most beneficial to rent in order to change the other lights. Under Christian Ed, Pastor Becky reported that the Christmas pageant was a success. Future events for the youth include a pizza and movie night, and a hike in the spring with members of the Green Team. Jim and Cassidy presented the treasurer's report, and it was accepted. Under personnel, Jeff reported that there was nothing to report. Rick Guhl from the Green Team reported on the up-and-coming events for the team, including the devotional that is currently running from January through February, available on our website. Under benevolence, Jim Bronfenbrenner shared that the benevolence grant checks were mailed.

Under new business, Lynn Cloak reminded folks that there will be CPR/AED training on February 4 with a rain date of February 11. Under new business, dates for the annual church picnic were discussed, as well as the location. Nancy Kramer-Moyer and Pastor Becky will work together to make a reservation as soon as possible and communicate the date.

The nominating committee shared that Ralph Todd and Nancy Rissell are nominated to serve as elders, and Missy Repash and Janet Cook have been nominated to serve as consistory members. Our next meeting is February 13 at 7pm in the Trinity room; Pastor Becky will lead devotions. Pastor Becky offered a closing prayer, and the meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.

-Pastor Becky Sausser

February Special Mission Offering

Our Special Mission for February is **Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley**. For almost 50 years, Turning Point has been offering compassionate care and shelter for victims of domestic violence and partner abuse. Unfortunately, the need has not significantly decreased over this period.

St John's has supported Turning Point over the past years by donating money and items to support their services and shelter. This month, we ask you to continue this support by donating items on their Wish List (found on the Mission Bulletin Board in the Great Hall) and/or making a monetary contribution. The monetary contribution may be made either by using the blue pew or weekly offering envelope (be sure to designate Turning Point) or the Donate Button on the church website.

Thank you for considering helping to continue St. John's support of this vital ministry.

AMIGOS DE GUATEMALA: Our 2024 Lenten Offering

Once again, we will be collecting our Lenten Offering for **Amigos de Guatemala**. Lent begins this year on February 14, so we will be collecting in both February and March this year.

Last year, we learned about the completion of the project, which was dedicated on December 14, 2022. Almost immediately, its impact was felt by the community, and we look forward to learning more about their activities this past year. We are presently in the process of scheduling a visit with their representatives to make a presentation in Adult Forum as well as a Mission Moment during Worship. So, stay tuned!

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

February Sermons

- February 4
 - Reading 1: Mark 1:21-28
 - Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
 - Call to worship: Psalm 111
 - Title: What is Clean?
 - Summary: In our gospel, we see the healing of a man with an unclean spirit; in our epistle lesson we hear Paul's thoughts on allyship.

- February 11
 - Reading 1: Mark 1:29-39
 - Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23
 - Call to worship: Psalm
 - Title: You Want to Pass It On.
 - Summary: In our gospel, Jesus heals many people; in Paul's letter to the people of Corinth he implores them to join him in proclaiming the gospel.
- February 14- Ash Wednesday
 - Reading 1: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
 - Reading 2: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
 - Call to worship: Psalm 51:1-7
 - Title: Ashes and Broken Hearts.
 - Summary: The prophet Joel calls on the Hebrew people to rend their hearts; the gospel of Matthew reminds us about the meaning of almsgiving.
- February 18
 - Reading 1: Genesis 9:8-17
 - Reading 2: Mark 1:9-15
 - Call to worship: Psalm 25
 - Title: Baptism.
 - Summary: This week we see the story of Noah's ark juxtaposed against the baptism of our Lord. We will explore how water and Spirit conspire together to consecrate us for the work to which we are called.
- February 25
 - Reading 1: Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16
 - Reading 2: Romans 4:13-25
 - Call to worship: Resources
 - Title: Faith and a Promise.
 - Summary: In Genesis we see a promise made to Moses, and in the letter to the Romans we see that this promise has come to fruition through Jesus!

ADULT FORUM

Greetings! You are all invited to join us Sunday mornings before worship for a variety of studies and programs. Bring your friends! We gather in the Trinity Room at 9:30am for coffee or tea, then begin our program at 9:45am with a sharing of joys and concerns.

This is what we have planned for February:

Feb. 4 - An intergenerational opportunity to explore The Lord's Prayer together. We always have a great time when Pastor Becky and our younger folk join us!

Feb. 12 - Back by popular demand--our annual Bible study with Lois Mease! Lois's topic will be "Metamorphosis", based on the story of the Transfiguration in Mark 9:2-9. Sounds intriguing, Lois.

Feb. 18 - Please join us in the Social Hall for our Lenten Breakfast at 9:30am. Yum!!

Feb. 25 - Penny Fey will discuss her work with *Step By Step*. The organization has been providing support services to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, mental health, and autism spectrum disorders since 1977. Please come to hear more about the important programs and services they provide.

In Adult Forum on January 14, we learned about an upcoming opportunity to further learn about our Jewish sisters and brothers. Here is the information:

“Introduction to Judaism” is an engaging 6-session course for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish life through a Reform lens. The course will be held on consecutive **Tuesdays, March 12 through April 16, 2024, from 7 – 9pm** at Congregation Keneseth Israel at 2227 Chew Street in Allentown.

Open to all, these classes are meant for individuals and couples from Jewish and various faith traditions and cultural backgrounds, as well as those who have had no religious upbringing. The course is perfect for interfaith couples, those raising Jewish children, spiritual seekers, individuals considering conversion, and Jews who want a meaningful adult Jewish learning experience.

The course will be team-taught by Rabbi Shoshanah Tornberg and a variety of Jewish educators. Each 2-hour class will begin with an overview of the topic and, following a short break, will conclude with an interactive session where students can delve deeper into the subject matter. Topics include the Bible and other sacred texts, the importance of Shabbat, Jewish culture, life cycle celebrations, and Zionism, Israel, and the Holocaust. Concluding right before Passover, the final class will include a model Seder with instructions on how to prepare this ritual feast for your home.

Security will be onsite, and registration is mandatory; no walk-ins will be permitted. Light refreshments will be served each week and will correspond to the subject matter – so come and taste the Challah, Babka, and such Seder delicacies as charoset, matzo, and of course gefilte fish. The cost for the six sessions is \$30.00. For payment options or questions, please call Martina Obenski at 610-966-3226.

Announcements

Lenten Dates

- February 14 – Ash Wednesday Service 7:30pm
- February 18 – Lenten Breakfast 9:30am
- March 10 – Daylight Savings Time Begins
- March 24 – Palm Sunday Service 11am
- March 28 – Maundy Thursday Service 7:30pm
- March 29 – Tenebrae Service 7:30pm
- March 31 – Easter Morning Service 11am

Consistory Supports 60-Day Spiritual Challenge

Join us during February as we engage in a 60-day challenge of Scripture readings and prayer. We want all of us to exercise our spiritual powers for personal growth, for discerning where God is leading us as a church, and for the sake of our troubled world.

The Consistory said, "Yes!" to this challenge at its October meeting. We hope you will too. Watch for more details in upcoming newsletters and announcements.

60-day Challenge Reflection

Rick Guhl shared the following response to the January 13 entry; to look out your window at Creation and tell what you notice, at our Annual Meeting.

I see gray clouds with patches of blue sky. The sun is there but mostly hidden. Bare trees, but the evergreens are true to their name. The grass has patches of green, yellow, and brown. I see soil, rocks, and raindrops. I see people hurtling by in their cars, sidewalks, and houses (not disparaging human activity in creation). I see desolation; I see hope. I see the cycle of nature. I see wind chimes signaling the gathering breeze. I see the brown of South Mountain. I see winter.

What do you see?

The Assessments Are Coming! The Assessments Are Coming!

Unlike Paul Revere's ride warning of British troops on the march, the Green Team is announcing a way of preparing for the future. For ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. We will be assessing how all the activities of our church affect our environment and invite you to do likewise for your household.

These assessments will ask us to do three things. **First**, what are all the things we are doing now that relate to our impact on the environment. **Second**, what are all the good things we are doing now? **Third**, what areas do we need to work on that will reduce our carbon dioxide emissions and increase our environmental sustainability?

We will conduct these assessments during February and March; leading up to an after-worship service luncheon meeting on **Sunday, April 7**, when we will discuss what we have learned. From there we will work on developing action plans for what we could do in the upcoming year.

Rest assured that the Green Team will not leave you floundering in this process. We will be providing you with tools to help guide you through it. The Consistory has agreed that the church will undertake this process, and we invite all of you to do the same for your household.

We, on the Green Team, acknowledge that this process might make you anxious, irritated, or unnerved. These are very normal human emotions. We also know that our Creator God, who blesses us with this good earth and commands us to care for it, will surround us with the love of Christ. We will hear the words; "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Weekly Prayer Group

Each Wednesday morning from 9–10am St. John's hosts a Prayer Call via Zoom. The main purpose of this ministry is to offer folks an opportunity to gather in prayer to share joys, and concerns, and to pray for one another. All requests are lifted during the call. It is a spirit-filled gathering and fun!

After the prayer call, a prayer chain is generated and sent out to folks who have requested to receive it. The only information written is that which the participants have agreed to have shared.

If you wish to join one time, occasionally, or regularly, contact Andrea or Pastor Becky in the church office (610-433-0146). To learn more, feel free to speak with Nancy Kramer-Moyer. All are welcome, at any time!

2024 Easter Candy Sale

Our annual Easter candy sale will take place on the two Sundays prior to Easter:

Sunday, March 17, and Palm Sunday, March 24.

Our delicious, homemade peanut rolled cream eggs, peanut butter eggs and coconut cream eggs, will be offered along with an Easter basket assortment, including some new items.

No orders will be taken for this sale.



4 Conference Lenten Study Looking Back to Look Forward

The Penn West, Penn Central, Penn Northeast and Penn Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ cordially invite you to participate in this virtual Lenten opportunity! Meeting each Wednesday in Lent at 7pm, this Bible Study explores the foundations of our identity as Christians and members of the UCC as we explore what the future may hold! Each week is unique so if you cannot attend every date you can still participate in as many as you are able. **If you have any questions, or you would like to participate in this study, please email pattyr@pniec.org to receive the link.** Thank you!

February 21: Unity and Foundation

February 28: United Church of Christ

March 6: Lent in Context

March 13: The Priesthood of All Believers

March 20: Communion

February 2024



Celebrating 
An Anniversary This Month

2/13 Cheryl & John Phillips
2/22 Allan & Nancy Kramer-Moyer

- 2 – Susan Hoffert
- 3 – Robert Fegley
Jasmine Ferrol
- 4 – Joshua Pyle
- 5 – Richard Guhl
Susan Cook
- 6 – Bryon Cook
- 7 – Robert Zeky
- 8 – Todd Saylor
- 9 – Henry Dopera
- 13 – Linda Ferrol
Becky Sausser
- 14 – Jennifer Hinkle
- 15 – Zackiryah Schuler
- 20 – Rebecca
Bronfenbrenner
- 24 – Donovan
Hausman

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Food Bank	2	3
4 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	5	6 Elders Meeting 1pm	7 9am Prayer Call	8	9	10
11 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	12	13 Consistory Meeting 7pm	14 9am Prayer Call Ash Wednesday Service 7:30pm	15	16	17
18 Lenten Breakfast 9:30am 11:00am Worship	19 Office Closed	20	21 9am Prayer Call Zoom Bible Study 7pm	22	23 Food Bank	24
25 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	26	27	28 9am Prayer Call Zoom Bible Study 7pm	29 Leap Day		

Check out our website: <https://stjohnsuccallentown.org/> If you found this, contact Pastor Becky to be entered to win a gift card.
Follow us on Facebook by searching St. John's UCC Allentown (our logo is a picture of the church)

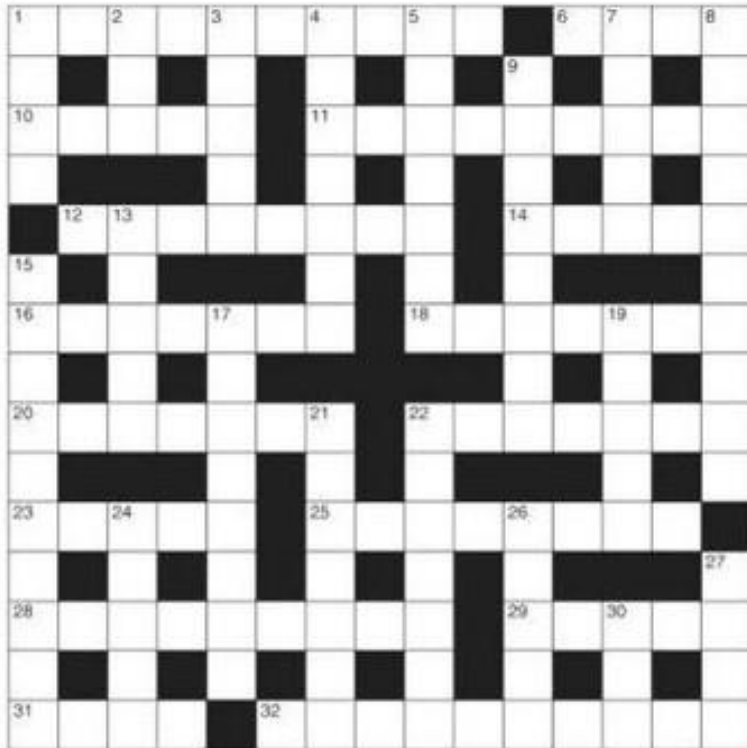
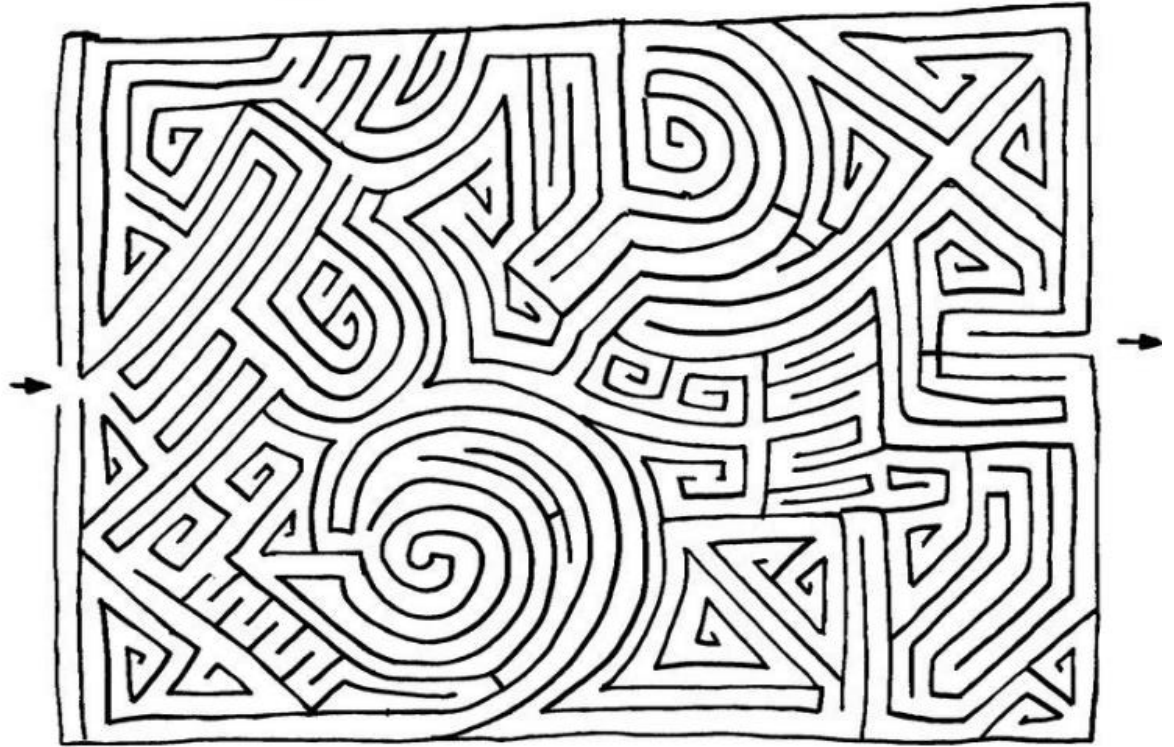
Crossword 3

ACROSS

1. Talkative person
6. Motorway off-ramp
10. Cathedral, ... Dame
11. Slanting lines
12. Ticketed
14. Japanese seaweed roll
16. Pierced with fork
18. Every evening
20. Annoyed
22. Nuclear process
23. Vanilla slice topping
25. Railway bridges
28. Take apart
29. Was gloomy
31. One-on-one fight
32. Carry out (crime)

DOWN

1. Dollar division
2. Appropriate
3. Here, ... & everywhere
4. Overrun (with disease)
5. Continually (2,3,2)
7. Bone photos (1-4)
8. Giving evidence
9. Delivers (goods)
13. In existence
15. Tolerant (4-6)
17. Weight unit
19. Discredit (reputation)
21. Dedicated admirer
22. Sudden outburst (5-2)
24. Agenda item
26. Unfulfilled
27. Rim
30. Ham & ... soup



		7	1				2
1		8	5				
		9		3			4
	8		2		6		
			9		8		6
3			6		8		
					5	9	7
7					9	2	