

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 24 Issue 42

March 2024

Howdy St. John's Family,

Throughout 2024, I will be utilizing my pastoral letter in *The Disciple* to help us learn more about the letters and the stories that come after our gospels and the book of Acts. My initial thought had been that I would be able to combine the first and second Corinthians into one letter last month, but as you can see that didn't happen! When Paul sent his first letter to the church in Corinth, there were a number of people who rejected it, leading to him deciding to visit the church and provide more instruction. We know this occurred because he references the visit in 2 Corinthians 2:1. The people of Corinth see the error of their ways and reconcile with Paul, returning to the fold. This second letter comes as a reassurance from Paul that he still loves and cares for the community, and he even had some additional instruction on how to be in the church!

2 Corinthians can be divided into three main sections; chapters one through seven focus on Paul reconciling with the Corinthians who had initially rejected his teaching. In chapters eight and nine Paul focuses on teaching about generosity, and then in chapters ten through thirteen, Paul issues a challenge to the remaining rebels in Corinth who are still rejecting his teaching. Let's look at the first seven chapters and talk about why the people of Corinth rejected Paul in the first place. Paul wasn't wealthy; he was often in trouble with the law because of the radical message of love that he taught! As Christianity gained traction, it became apparent to a number of speakers and false teachers in the area that they could utilize pieces of this Christian message to gain affluence and power. Chapter two focuses mainly on Paul explaining how judging someone's worldly wealth is a distorted view of the Christian message; true Christian leadership is not about status or promotion, it is about dedicating your life to Christ! In chapters eight and nine when Paul talks about generosity it is because the people of Corinth have been so involved in their interpersonal conflict that they have forgotten to live generous lives. Paul reminds them, "for you know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that even though he was rich for your sake he became poor". Just as we see in our gospels, when we care for the least of these we are caring for Christ Jesus.

Finally, let's talk about the last three chapters and Paul's challenge to the false teachers. In 11:5 and 12:11 Paul jokingly calls them the "super-apostles", which I find hilarious! These teachers were charging lots of money for claiming to be biblical experts and having deeper knowledge about Jesus. Paul doesn't argue with them, he just points out that if they want to try to compare credentials, Paul is going to come out on top, because he is coming as a

representative of Jesus Christ. These other teachers may claim to know a lot, but the people of Corinth could look at their actions to see if they really aligned with people who have given their entire life to the mission of Jesus Christ. That's my takeaway from our study on 2nd Corinthians, that I want to lead a life that makes it transparent that I am committed to the mission of Jesus Christ! Give 2 Corinthians another read and let me know what you think!

-Pastor Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

The Consistory meeting, which was originally scheduled for February 13, 2024, was postponed until February 15, 2024, due to snow. The meeting began at 7pm and acting President Jeff Rissell welcomed the new elders and deacons. Joys and concerns were shared, and a devotion on "soul friendship" was shared by Pastor Becky. There was a review of the minutes, and the minutes were approved. Under the Minister's Report, Pastor Becky provided a brief description of what a Consistory does. Pastor Becky shared that she was interviewed for a "How to Church" video series on community engagement sponsored by the PNEC. She shared that folks have really enjoyed the weekly email, *St. John's Corresponds*. Information is now shared via the weekly email, Sunday morning announcements, Facebook, the electric sign, and services are advertised in the newspaper. Pastor Becky shared that the Lenten study, which will occur on Wednesday nights, will begin February 21. There are two Lenten devotionals available; the Green Team devotional, and a 40-day devotional written collaboratively with ministers from the Penn North and Penn South conferences. Pastor Becky also announced that she is working collaboratively with a coach, Lisa Withrow, and the elders to create a time in October when the congregation will be able to look at planning for the future. More information to come.

Under the Fellowship Committee, Lynn reported a successful Annual luncheon. She also reported that on February 4 there was an American heart association CPR/AED certification class, at which a number of our members were certified. Lynn shared that "Fat Sundaes" was a success on February 11, and that the annual Lenten breakfast at that time was planned for February 18. The Green Team will be hosting a potluck lunch on April 7. The church picnic will be held on June 16 at Waldheim Park. The Easter candy sale is underway, and candy will be sold on Sunday, March 17, and on Palm Sunday, March 24. Under Property, Jeff Rissell shared that a completed list of upcoming project ideas will be shared at the meeting on February 25, following the service. Under Christian Ed, Pastor Becky reported that the confirmation class will be re-organizing the Resource Room as their community service project, and the youth are working on their up-and-coming youth Sunday. The Treasurer's report was received and accepted. Jim Bronfenbrenner extended his invitation to anybody that would like to meet to discuss how to read a budget. Personnel had nothing to report. Under the Green Team, Rick Guhl shared a proposed self-audit to be shared with the congregation; more information will be coming soon.

Under old business, Jeff Rissell shared that the capital improvements will be discussed on Sunday, February 25. The congregation will provide feedback on possible improvements. Under new business, Pastor Becky shared that she had been contacted by the Phantoms

Hockey Sales Office about a quickly approaching date for youth to attend the game. After discussion, it was decided that we will look at other possible dates for a family event for the church. The election of new officers was held. Nancy Rissell was nominated and elected President. Janet Cook was nominated and elected Vice President. The slate of nominees put forth in the annual report were elected. Becky Bronfenbrenner has agreed to serve as the new secretary. The next consistory meeting will be held on March 12, 2024, at 7pm; all are welcome!

March 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 victims of disasters as well as those displaced by violence and poverty. **One Great Hour of Sharing** funds will be used to address the immediate humanitarian needs as well as the underlying causes of those needs. Here **OGHS** asks us to **Share our Light**.

Watch for OGHS stories in bulletin inserts during the month of March, leading up to our One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on March 10. 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 2024 Lenten Offering

Once again, we will be collecting our Lenten Offering for **Amigos de Guatemala**. Lent began 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, or the blue pew envelopes, or by using the Donate button on the church website. Thank you for your support.

March Sermons

- March 3
 - Reading 1: Exodus 20:1-17
 - Reading 2: John 2:13-22
 - Call to worship: Psalm 19
 - Title: Flippin Tables!
 - Summary: In Exodus we examine the 10 Commandments, and in the gospel, we see Jesus cleanse the temple. Join us to learn what these passages have in common and what they can teach us about our lives in 2024!
- March 10
 - Reading 1: John 3:14-21
 - Reading 2: Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Call to worship: Psalm 107
 - Title: Love Came Down.
 - Summary: In our gospel passage we revisit one of the most familiar verses in scripture, in Ephesians we hear the truth about life in Christ Jesus!
- March 17
 - Reading 1: Jeremiah 31:31-34
 - Reading 2: Hebrews 5:5-10
 - Call to worship: Psalm 51
 - Title: The New Covenant.
 - Summary: In Jeremiah we learn about the promise of the new covenant, in Hebrews we learn that the new covenant is in Jesus!
- March 24- Palm Sunday
 - Reading 1: Mark 11:1-11
 - Reading 2: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29
 - Title: Hosanna!
 - Summary: This week we celebrate Palm Sunday! Jesus' triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem marks the beginning of Holy Week!
- March 28- Maundy Thursday 7:30pm
 - Reading 1: Exodus 12: 1-14
 - Reading 2: John 13: 1-17, 31b-35
 - Title: Holy, Holy, Holy.
 - Summary: On this night we remember the Lord's Supper and the sacred act of Jesus washing the disciple's feet.
- March 29- Tenebrae Service 7:30pm
 - The Tenebrae service consists of an arrangement of readings that will lead us through the story of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- March 31- Easter morning!
 - Reading 1: Mark 16: 1-8
 - Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11
 - Call to worship: Resources.
 - Title: He Arose!
 - Summary: Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and savior!

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 March:

Mar. 3-Our Pa. State Representative Peter Schweyer will be with us to share on the services and programs of our state government and the latest news from the 134th Legislative District. Bring your questions about Harrisburg.

Mar. 10-Are you prepared for snow, floods, and other disasters? Robin Richie from the Allentown Health Bureau will educate us on necessary steps for preparedness and tell us about other services provided by the bureau.

Mar. 17-Pastor Becky and our younger folks will join us once again for a crash course on the church calendar. Always a great time!

Mar. 24-On Palm Sunday, the fun continues with another intergenerational morning study of the crucifixion and Holy Week.

Mar. 31-Happy Easter! He has risen indeed! Bill Falla will lead us in a Bible study he calls "Easter: The Redemption of Creation". We will look at Easter as having cosmic significance, not just human significance. Bill always inspires good conversation.

COMING IN APRIL! Everyone remembers or has heard about Hess's Department store. It was a special place in Allentown and Kate Kareha has been collecting Hess's memories for The Patio Podcast. She will be with us to talk about the podcast and share some great stories. There might be an opportunity for you to share a Hess's memory and have it preserved on the podcast, so please think about your own memories!

Announcements

Lenten Dates

- 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

60-Day Challenge Reflections

By the time you receive this newsletter we will likely have completed our 60-Day Challenge of prayers, Scripture readings, and reflections. We are now ready for our next step: a churchwide audit of the ways we impact our environment. But before we go there, I want to take a step back and reflect on the challenge we just undertook.

So, I'm going to share with you some of my own thoughts sparked by the various offerings.

Day 2: an image of the Pillars of Creation nebula. I'm reminded of the words of astronomer Brian Cox, who said that we are the only evidence of consciousness in our galaxy. We are both insignificant on a vast scale and important beyond calculation... as is our home, Earth.

Day 10: Psalm 42 - Thinking about the adverse effects of climate change can disquiet our souls and leave us feeling downcast and helpless and hopeless. We (I) need to be reminded of our relationship to God and God's people. Thinking of my family, Madeline and Julie and Brandon's four children keeps me going.

Day 13: Look out at Creation: 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 rocks, soil, and raindrops. I see desolation and I see hope in the cycle of nature.

Day 24: Habakkuk 3:4 How does Christ sustain us and all creation? Nature, undisturbed, will basically self-regulate. Healthy ecosystems will include a rich diversity of plants and animals and microorganisms. They will recycle waste products, and death will nourish new life. When wolves, for instance, were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park, they led to a remarkable transformation. By controlling the deer and elk, they allowed trees and grasses to return, for rivers to slow, providing habitats for beavers, birds, and fish. Christ has a transforming power, too, creating a new social/economic environment not based solely in the acquisition of things or the domination of others.

These are just a few of my (Rick Guhl's) thoughts. The Green Team and I would love to hear yours. Feel free to send them to me at rickguhl@gmail.com or to the church office.

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.



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@pnec.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

March 2024



Celebrating 
An Anniversary This Month

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

- 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

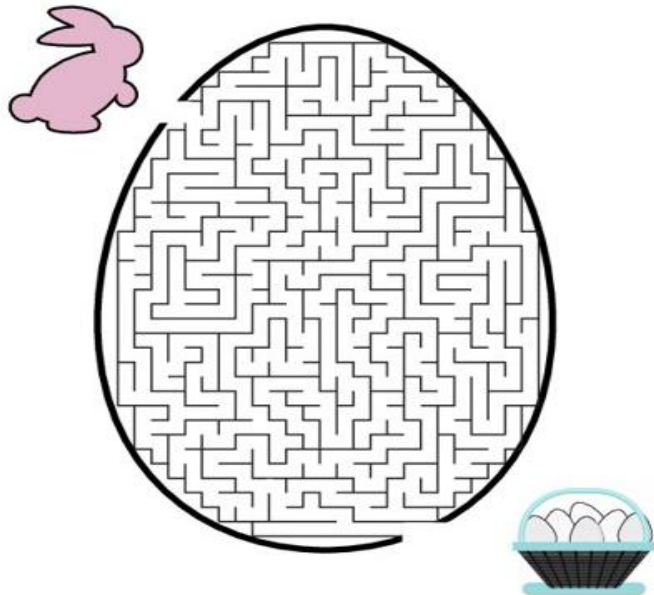
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	4	5 Elders Meeting 1pm	6 9am Prayer Call	7 Food Bank	8	9
10 Daylight Saving Begins 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	11	12 Consistory Meeting 7pm	13 9am Prayer Call	14	15	16
17 Saint Patrick's Day 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Easter Candy Sale	18	19	20 9am Prayer Call	21	22 Food Bank	23
24 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum Palm Sunday Service 11:00am Easter Candy Sale	25	26	27 9am Prayer Call	28 Maundy Service 7:30pm	29 Tenebrae Service 7:30pm	30
31 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum Easter Service 11:00am						

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)

Lenten Word Search

G	Y	P	R	E	P	A	R	E	F	E	S	V	E
R	K	S	F	E	C	I	F	I	R	C	A	S	F
I	D	C	S	I	H	O	L	Y	W	E	E	K	G
C	Y	N	N	E	P	U	R	P	L	E	S	T	O
C	P	P	S	I	N	T	E	S	N	S	N	O	
P	E	N	A	N	C	E	E	O	O	F	F	R	D
N	R	L	P	O	I	H	V	I	N	I	E	R	F
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E	G	T	I	S	S	I	E	R	R	V	O	N	A
C	R	O	S	S	D	S	G	R	I	A	I	F	Y
A	H	S	E	A	S	O	N	R	R	E	C	N	S
G	N	I	T	S	A	F	F	O	R	T	Y	S	G

- ASHES
- PENANCE
- GOOD FRIDAY
- GIVING
- CROSS
- FORTY
- PREPARE
- HOLY WEEK
- FORGIVENESS
- FISH
- PRAYER
- PURPLE
- SACRIFICE
- SEASON
- FASTING
- STATIONS



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