

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 24 Issue 43

April 2024

Howdy St. John's Family,

This year my pastoral letters each focus on a different letter from the New Testament as we explore what happens after the Gospels and the book of Acts. This month we are looking at Galatians! Paul wrote this letter to a number of churches in the region of Galatia; we know he had a personal connection with these churches because his missionary journey is documented in the book of Acts. This letter is a really great example of the early church figuring out what it meant to *be the church*. Although Jesus was Jewish, by the time that Paul was writing this letter, there were just as many non-Jewish Christians as there were Jewish Christians. This was a good thing! But it did spark some debate among the communities, the biggest question of which was, "did the early Christians need to convert first to Judaism?" This is where the letter to the Galatians comes in, because Paul needed this community to understand that the good news of salvation through Jesus was for **all** people!

In the first two chapters of Galatians, Paul provides an overview and summary of the Gospel message. One of the main arguments from these Jewish Christians was that if people weren't adhering to the laws of the Torah and becoming circumcised, they weren't really following the faith. In chapter two, verse sixteen, Paul says, "people are not justified by the works of the Torah, but rather by the faith of Jesus the Messiah, and we have faith in the Messiah Jesus!". *Justified* is a really important word in the Torah, because it means that you are "declared righteous" and in a right-relationship with God. Chapters three through four talk about who is included in this new holy family under Christ's death and resurrection (spoiler alert: it's all of us!). This promise of being part of God's holy family may have started with Abraham, but through the sacrifice of Christ, everyone who accepts this gift of salvation is made a part of God's holy family! The circle widens and we are all welcome as children of the king!

This would satisfy a number of people, but Paul knew that it would not satisfy the dissenters who firmly believed Christians must first convert to Judaism. That's why in chapters five through six, Paul explains that it is through the transformational power of the Holy Spirit that people will learn to live out the law. When Jesus was asked what the most important law is, he explained that it was to love the Lord your God, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Humans may not be able to overcome the things that lead to death on their own, but Jesus did! When we live Christ-centered lives, they begin to reflect that light onto the world, and the result is what Paul calls, "the fruits of the spirit". This will help us to become people of joy,

love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Just like real fruit, we need to cultivate it, and stay committed to it. I pray that this has encouraged you to cultivate these fruits of the Spirit and be blessed! -Pastor Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

The Consistory meeting held on March 12, 2024, began promptly at 7pm. We opened with a time of joys and concerns and then reviewed the minutes from the February 15 meeting. The minutes were approved. Under the minister's report, Pastor Becky shared that we would be welcoming a new member on St. Patrick's Day, June was unfortunately not able to attend that service. Pastor Becky reported that holy week is approaching quickly and that the dates for the special services appeared in the newsletter, the weekly email, the website, and our Facebook page, and these announcements will be connected to our electronic sign soon. Easter bags were made for the traditional homebound folks at St. John's and Pastor Becky will be delivering them in the time leading up to Easter. Copies of our church brochure were printed. Pastor Becky shared that even though this is a building update, she wanted to report it under her pastoral report: Pastor Becky and Andrea have allocated three spots for Keenan House employees to rent monthly. This money will be utilized for parking lot maintenance.

Under the Fellowship and Fundraising Committee, Lynn Cloak shared the highlights from recent fellowship opportunities, and Lynn shared all the success that has occurred so far in the candy sale. Ralph Todd shared an idea for a fundraiser, and we will discuss it further next month. Under the Property Committee it was shared that the final estimates required for our capital campaign discussion are in the works. Under Christian Ed, Pastor Becky reported that the youth Sunday date will be announced soon, and that the confirmation class was working on their community service project. The Personnel Committee reported that they had a successful annual meeting with Lois, Becky, and Andrea. Under the Green Team committee, it was shared that Rick will be preaching an Earth Day sermon on April 21, and it was shared that we would like to encourage everyone to attend the April 7 potluck event. Under old business it was shared that as soon as the final estimates are compiled, the people interested in participating in the capital improvements discussion will meet. There was no new business. The meeting ended promptly at 7:40pm with a prayer from Pastor Becky. The next meeting will be on April 9; all are welcome to attend. Respectfully submitted, Rev. Becky Sausser

April Special Mission Offering

One of our Special Mission Offerings for April focuses on helping people within our congregation - **the Curtis Fund**.

During **April**, we will be collecting donations for the **Curtis Fund**. The Curtis Fund, founded by longtime member, William Curtis, provides emergency financial aid for members of our congregation who find themselves in financial distress due to an unforeseen emergency. We will have an opportunity to make our contributions anytime during April.

Please prayerfully consider donations designated to the **Curtis Fund** along with your regular church offering, or by using the blue pew envelopes or the Donate button on the Church website.

Central Elementary

Our second Mission Offering will be collecting sneakers, tissues, toiletries, and underwear for **Central Elementary**. These items may be put in the Central Box in the Narthex for delivery to the school. If you wish, you may make a monetary donation to purchase these items using your regular offering envelopes or the blue pew envelopes. Be sure to designate Central Elementary on your donation.

Thank you for supporting either, or both, of these efforts.

Rick Guhl took the following items, with an estimated total value of \$750, to Central Elementary School for their students:

14 Deodorants	1 Bag of Candy
12 Toothbrushes	4 Pairs of Sneakers
9 Tubes of Toothpaste	27 Pairs of Gloves
8 Bars of Soap	13 Caps
10 Bottles of Shampoo	24 Sets of Underwear
6 Packages of Sanitary Pads	5 Pairs of Socks
13 Boxes of Tissues	2 Winter Coats
3 Packages of School Supplies	

Thank you to all who donated!

March Sermons

- April 7
 - Reading 1: Acts 4:32-35
 - Reading 2: 1 John 1-2:2
 - Title: I See the Light!
 - Summary: Following the resurrection of our Lord on Easter morning, we follow the works of the early church in the book of Acts. In 1 John we see the good news, that Jesus is the light of the world!
- April 14
 - Reading 1: Luke 24:36-48
 - Reading 2: 1 John 3:1-7
 - Title: Breakfast at Jesus's.
 - Summary: In our Gospel we see the risen Lord appear to his disciples and make them breakfast. In 1 John we explore the importance of following Christ.

- April 21
 - Guest preacher the Rev. Rick Guhl will deliver a poignant Earth Day sermon on behalf of the Green Team!
- April 28
 - Reading 1: Acts 8:26-40
 - Reading 2: 1 John 4:7-21
 - Title: Widening Circles.
 - Summary: In Acts we hear an early conversion story, and in 1 John we learn that God is love! What connects these stories and how do we understand them in 2024?

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 April:

April 7-Karen Berard, Executive Director of The Neighborhood Center will join us with an update on their programming. The Center continues to serve over 100 youth ages 4-18 years. St. John's has long supported this work through our benevolence grants.

April 14-The Penn Northeast Conference has been working on creating videos to educate and inspire congregations. We will be watching the newest "How to Church...I wish I Knew More About Community Engagement" and we will see some familiar faces--our own Rev. Becky Sausser and Rev. Janet Newett.

April 21-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. Learn more and listen at <https://www.hesspatiopodcast.com>. Tune in to Season 1, episode 12, to hear a story from Trudi.

April 28-Jessica Armbruster, Education Manager, Allentown Bureau of Recycling, will be with us to share best practices for a better environment. Bring some questions on recycling and reusing!

Announcements

Important Dates!

April 7 – Green Team Audit Potluck will take place after service.

May 4 – Intergenerational Hike

May 12 – Confirmation Service 11am

May 19 – Pentecost Service 11am

June 16 – Church Picnic at Waldheim Park

Join Us in Our Green Audit

On Sunday, April 7th, our church kicks off its **Green Audit** with an all-member **Potluck Lunch** hosted by our Green Team. One part of this audit will look at current practices of St. John's that impact the environment. Out of this audit, the Green Team and Consistory will develop an action plan guiding us in ways to meet the climate change challenges. But there's a second part, which involves all of you.

Yes, you too will be invited to conduct an audit of your own household's environmental impact. We've created a simple tool to conduct it. This tool helps you look at your home energy consumption, transportation, water usage, waste disposal, and leisure activities. We encourage you to engage your whole household in doing this.

At this kickoff luncheon, Rick Guhl will explain the whys and wherefores of the audits. We want and need the participation of all our members, because the future depends on us, and the choices we make today. So, bring your questions as well as your appetites. There will be a signup sheet at church for what food you will bring, or you can call the office to let us know.

So, mark your calendars for **Sunday, April 7th**. Bring some food to share, but, most of all, bring some **hope**.

Weekly Prayer Group

Each Wednesday morning from 9 to 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!

April 2024



2 – Gary Gumlock
 4 – Cindy Dannenhower
 James Bartynski
 5 – Courtney Fillman
 8 – Richard Brensinger
 11 – Brenda Saylor
 14 – Julius Pyle
 15 – Wendy Williams
 16 – Susan Fegley
 Charles Gillenwater III
 18 – Cindie Penzes
 19 – Megan Van Ingen
 20 – Judith Guhl
 26 – James Saylor
 30 – Judy Garrigan

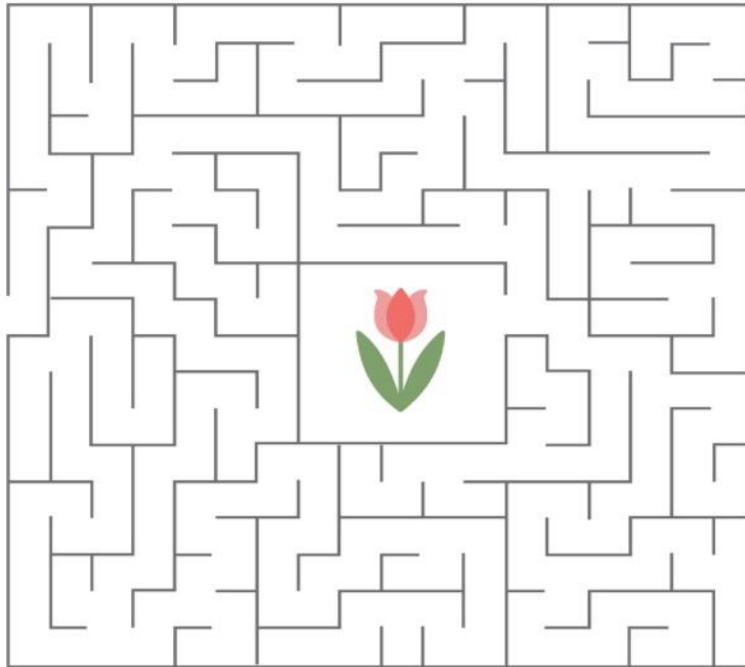
Celebrating 
 An Anniversary This Month

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Elders Meeting 1pm	3 9am Prayer Call	4 Food Bank	5	6
7 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Green Team Potluck after service!	8	9 Consistory Meeting 7pm	10 9am Prayer Call	11	12	13
14 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	15	16	17 9am Prayer Call	18	19	20
21 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	22	23	24 9am Prayer Call	25	26 Food Bank	27
28 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	29	30				

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)

Happy Spring!

START HERE



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WORD SEARCH

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BEE
BLOSSOM
BUD
BUNNY

BUTTERFLY
CHICK
EGGS
FLOWER

GRASS
KITE
LADYBUG
LAMB

LILY
NEST
PUDDLE
RAIN

SEEDS
SPROUT
TULIP
WORM

