

# The Disciple



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

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

Volume 24 Issue 47

August 2024

Howdy St. John's Family,

Here at St. John's UCC, Allentown, we take the month of August to ask questions! Questions are an important part of our faith journey! On August 7 we will have a book study on Skye Jethani's *What if Jesus was Serious?* This book describes itself as a "visual guide to the teachings of Jesus we love to ignore". Our sermons during the month of August focus on questions submitted by members of our congregation, and this year we have some amazing questions! In our pastoral letter we are going to explore what Paul was trying to teach the church in Thessalonica, his first letter to the Thessalonians!

1 Thessalonians is believed to be the first letter from Paul, and its origin story actually begins in the book of Acts, when Paul and Silas go to the Greek city of Thessalonica. Paul and Silas shared the good news of the gospel and within weeks of arriving, many Jewish and Greek people gave their lives to Jesus! The Christians of Thessalonica ended up being persecuted because the Roman Empire believed the teaching that Jesus was the ruler above all rulers was an attack on the emperor. Paul and Silas ended up having to flee from the city to save their lives! This letter was the first chance Paul had to communicate with them after his departure, and since then the community had been flourishing and doing really well! This letter has two main parts, praise for the faithfulness that the church in Thessalonica has shown to Jesus, and then a challenge from Paul to continue to grow and stretch! Each section is sandwiched between a prayer from Paul.

Chapters one and two celebrate the bravery of the church because not only have they overcome persecution from the empire, but they have also remained loyal to Jesus despite being surrounded by people worshipping other gods. Paul also notes that he and Silas wish to visit them again! In chapters three and four, Paul encourages them to continue to grow by following the teachings of Jesus, and to become committed to love and service. In 4:9-12 Paul expresses a desire for the church to be able to take care of themselves, but also to be charitable and take care of the community. Chapter five focuses on the hope found in Jesus and how this hope motivates faithfulness! The first letter to the Thessalonians reminds us that following Jesus is a **countercultural** approach to life. By following Christ's example and trying to lead lives that reflect Christ's love, we may be suspicious to those who would rather take the easy road and spread anger and hate. We know that hope is found in Jesus Christ, and just like how Paul encouraged the young church to grow in that love, we are also called to grow in hope and love! -Rev. Becky Sausser

## Consistory Summary

There is no Consistory Report for the month of August. The next Consistory meeting will be on September 10 at 7pm.

## August Special Mission Offering

By the time you read this, school will be opening in about one month. That means **Central Elementary**, with all its needs, will be back in session with more students than last year. Therefore, as our August Special Mission Offering, we will be collecting monetary donations to be used to meet what they feel is their greatest need/needs.

Monetary donations can be included with your regular offering, the blue pew envelopes or by using the Donate button on our website. Be sure to designate it for **Central Elementary**. Also, as specific needs are made known to us, we will make them known to you, providing you with another avenue for your support. Won't you please find a way to help St. John's UCC continue this vital ministry. Thank you!

## August Sermons

Ask in August

- August 4
  - Reading 1: John 6:1-14
  - Reading 2: Luke 22: 14-20
  - Title: What is Communion?
  - Summary: How did the original church understand Communion? Let's talk about that!
- August 11
  - Reading 1: Matthew 18:15-20
  - Reading 2: Galatians 3:19-29
  - Title: How do I love *them*?
  - Summary: Jesus tells us to love one another as He has loved us! What do we do when that feels like a challenge? Join us this week as we explore this hot button issue in our second week of 'Ask in August'!
- August 18
  - Reading 1: Deuteronomy 30: 11-20
  - Reading 2: John 17:1-5
  - Title: What is eternal life?
  - Summary: We have heard "eternal life" talked about in our Bibles, but what does that really mean? Let's dive into the language Jesus uses and learn more!
- August 25
  - Reading 1: John 14:1-7
  - Reading 2: Revelation 7:9-17
  - Title: What about other religions?
  - Summary: Today we discuss Christianity, and its relationship to other religions.

# Announcements

## Important Dates!

August 18 – Lehigh Valley Pride 2-7pm.

### 2024 Calendar

- August
  - August 7- Book Study of “What if Jesus was Serious?” by Skye Jethani, held in the Trinity room.
- September
  - September 8- Rally Day Breakfast, 9:30am in the social hall.
  - September 15- First day Confirmation/Sunday School and first Adult Forum.
- October
  - October 6- Planning Meeting Luncheon to be held in the social hall following the service
  - October 13- CROP Walk (Allentown).
- November
  - November 3- All Saints’ Day.
- December
  - December 1- Advent Breakfast/First Sunday in Advent.
  - December 15 or 22- Youth Pageant.
  - December 24- Christmas Eve service.

## Climate Crisis

Climate crisis work is complicated and deep. Intricate layers of science, public policy, economics, history, geography, corruption, and greed impact all the layers. They feedback onto each other changing and adapting as they do so. It is a dynamic, intricate, complicated system. Its complexity and seriousness are enough to drive one to despair. We know carbon emissions trapped in the atmosphere warm the earth. To prevent an overheated earth, and the dire consequences of that, we must cut carbon emissions. How to do that drives the conversation and the urgency.

Our congregation has just finished a personal audit of our family’s energy usage; a vehicle to see our personal carbon footprint. With consistory support, we are beginning to look at our church’s energy use and its carbon footprint. Decisions, personal and congregational, will be made based on this data.

We are not acting alone in this situation. The United Church of Christ has been taking actions on behalf of the climate. At a gathering of climate-concerned citizens and activists last July, I learned that the UCC was the only major denomination to have fully divested from fossil fuel investments. When asked if there were any UCC members in the audience, I was the only one. I felt a surge of pride being part of this leading-edge church.

The UCC Pension Board (PBUCC) uses social responsibility investment practices to manage their investment portfolio. Social responsibility investment practices are

internationally accepted guidelines and norms to determine the environmental, social, and governance impacts of corporations and invested assets and do not rely on anecdotal evidence. (*Sustainable Investing*, The Pension Board, UCC, page 20.) The PBUCC seeks out fossil free investment vehicles. (page 16.)

Personal investments, money market accounts, and retirement accounts, can be evaluated using these practices. Congregational endowments and investments can be re-evaluated as well. The earth is heating up too quickly. Social responsibility investing is a tool to act on behalf of the climate. Submitted by: Carol Wikerd

### **Community Bike Works hosted the National Youth Bike Summit**

The 2024 Youth Bike Summit was held at Muhlenberg College and was a huge success! Youth and adults learned and rode together. The Youth Bike Summit is committed to helping youth find their voice through the power of the bicycle, and this year's conference theme, "Youth Lead the Way", underscored the importance of youth empowerment. Nearly 300 participants—from the Lehigh Valley, New York, and Boston to Chicago, Texas, and California—spent three days learning and riding together, building skills and developing relationships that will support them as they grow as riders, advocates, and citizens.

YBS2024 kicked off with a range of recreational rides on Friday, June 14, led by members of the Lehigh Valley Cycling Club. Early Saturday, attendees heard from national cycling advocate Randy Neufeld, who grew up in Allentown's Franklin Park, and a passionate youth panel. Randy urged every participant to make six new friends over the weekend, as a way to build lasting connections. That theme of building long-term connections was repeated across the Summit.

Mobile workshops offered opportunities to read *Bicycling magazine*, try the track at the Velodrome, explore ways to calm traffic on Bethlehem's Broad Street, or experience a bikes and boating adventure with Wildlands Conservancy. Workshop tours of Community Bike Works' Franklin Park and Keck Park hubs were also popular.

On Sunday, a Big Ride from Muhlenberg College, along the Delaware and Lehigh Trail, to Bethlehem's SteelStacks, allowed attendees to experience our local landscape and celebrate their new relationships. The Coalition for Appropriate Transportation supported the ride and helped make sure all bikes were road-ready, and Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk welcomed participants and led the 10-mile ride. With SteelStacks as a backdrop, YBS concluded with speakers Nathan Reigner, PA's Outdoor Recreation Director, and Elizabeth Allen of Afros in Nature reinforcing the themes of leadership, inclusion, and sustainability.

Excerpts taken from *Community Bike Works* newsletter.

Published in St. John's *Disciple* by permission.

## **Battle Borne Food Share Program**

Many of us come to church on a Sunday and may end up back at the building for an evening meeting, but only a handful of folks from our congregation get to see the amazing ministry that goes on during the rest of the week. One example is Battle Borne Inc, one of the nonprofits that we house here at St. John's United Church of Christ, Allentown. They work closely with veterans, helping to meet their needs and providing community. On the fourth Wednesday of every month, we join with Battle Borne and other community volunteer groups to feed over 60 veteran families with the Food Share Program. Volunteers join to package meals that are then picked up by veterans and their families. The whole thing happens in less than four hours' time, but each month over 60 veterans and their families are impacted by this charity. If you want to learn more, or you would like to volunteer to help with the food share program, contact Pastor Becky Sausser, or visit the Battle Borne website for more Information.

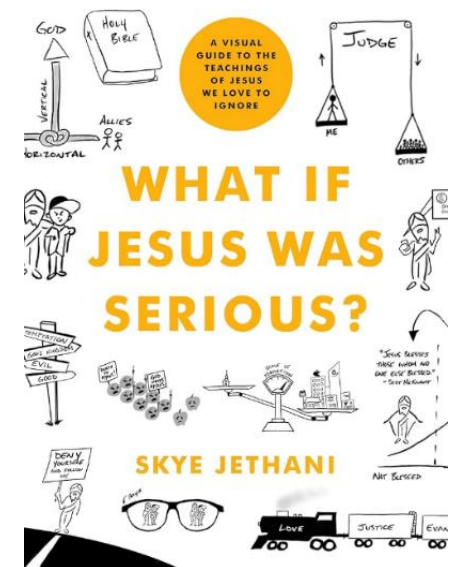
Respectfully Submitted by Pastor Becky Sausser  
(See photos of the program to the right)



## **Summer Book Study**

This summer we will be reading Skye Jethani's *What if Jesus was Serious?* This delightful (and brief) book offers a "visual guide to the teachings of Jesus we love to ignore". This book explores the Sermon on the Mount and seeks to challenge our assumptions about Jesus' teachings and determine how to apply these teachings in today's cultural reality. And yes! It has pictures!

If you are interested in being a part of this study, please pick up a copy of the book or contact the church office for a copy. Read the entire book by August 7, and then join us on August 7 at 7pm in the Trinity room for light refreshments and a discussion on *What if Jesus was Serious?* Led by Pastor Becky



## **Resource Room**

The St. John's UCC Resource Room is located directly across from the Trinity Room. Judy Garrigan proposed that the empty room could be renovated into a room full of resources for folks who come seeking help! With lightly used clothing and household goods, toiletries and nonperishable food, the St. John's Resource Room now helps an average of 7-10 folks monthly to get connected to immediate resources. Additionally, Pastor Becky and Andrea have resource lists and training in helping connect folks in need to the many nonprofits and resource groups in the area. They have even helped people apply for housing and rent assistance.

One of the unexpected blessings of having the Resource Room is the way that it has connected our church more meaningfully to our immediate community. It has also helped us to strengthen our connection to the other nonprofits that call St. John's home. We have been able to work collaboratively with Guardianship, Battle Borne, and the NA/AA groups to connect with folks in need! Although we can always use lightly used household goods and clothes, what we really need right now is financial support. Please consider making a monetary donation so that we can purchase the most frequently requested items. Thank you!

- Respectfully Submitted by Pastor Becky Sausser

## **Lehigh Valley PRIDE!**

Come join us on Sunday, August 18, from 2-7pm at the SteelStacks (101 Founders Way, Bethlehem, Pa.) for Lehigh Valley Pride! This year's theme is "We Deserve PRIDE!" Sponsored by the Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, we will once again join with the other Open & Affirming churches from the Penn Northeast Conference to remind our LGBT+ siblings that Jesus loves them! If you are interested in helping to run the booth, please contact Pastor Becky. See you there!

# August 2024

 <p>2 – Doris Todd William Hein 4 – Kim Meitzler 5 – Yvonne Fillman 9 – Bruce DeLong Sr. Megan Edwards 10 – Noah Dopera 11 – Anna Mae Schul 13 – Nancy Kramer- Moyer 14 – Lisa Hoffert 20 – Carol Wikerd Stacey Dannenhower 24 – James Moran 27 – Jeanette Schmoyer 28 – Allison Hausman</p>	<p><b>Celebrating</b>  <i>An Anniversary This Month</i></p> <p>8/14 – Byron &amp; Janet Cook 8/16 – Bonnie &amp; William Falla 8/26 – Richard &amp; Judith Guhl</p>						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 <b>Food Bank</b>	2	3
	4 <b>10:00am Worship</b> <b>Green Team Meeting</b> <b>after service</b>	5	6	7 <b>9am</b> <b>Prayer Call</b> <b>Summer Book</b> <b>Study 7pm</b>	8	9	10
	11 <b>10:00am Worship</b>	12	13	14 <b>9am</b> <b>Prayer Call</b>	15	16	17
	18 <b>10:00am Worship</b> <b>Lehigh Valley Pride!</b>	19	20	21 <b>9am</b> <b>Prayer Call</b>	22	23 <b>Food Bank</b>	24
	25 <b>10:00am Worship</b>	26	27	28 <b>9am</b> <b>Prayer Call</b>	29	30	31

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).

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- SALT
- GINGER
- SAGE
- PAPRIKA
- OREGANO
- ROSEMARY
- BASIL
- CAYENNE PEPPER
- DILL
- CUMIN
- BAY LEAF
- TURMERIC
- CLOVES
- FENNEL
- ALLSPICE
- STAR ANISE
- TARRAGON
- NUTMEG
- CINNAMON
- THYME



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