

The Disciple



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

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

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Howdy St. John's Family,

I hope this finds you in good health and good spirits! It is the most wonderful time of the year! It fills my heart with so much joy seeing the Christmas trees in the Trinity Room, the boughs of holly in the sanctuary, and the smiles on everyone's faces in our congregation. This year I set out to talk about every book in the New Testament, and this month we continue that journey with Paul's letter to Titus! Now, Titus was a Greek Christian who had worked closely with Paul for a number of years planting churches and dealing with emergencies. Titus is a good friend to have! Paul assigned Titus to go to Crete, which was no small ask! Have you ever heard someone being called a cretin as an insult? It comes from the people of Crete during this time, who were so notorious for being liars and cheats that the Greek word *kretizo*, meant "to be a liar" and "to be from Crete". Tough break!

Why would Paul ask Titus to go there? Well, Crete also had a number of important port cities, where the trading of goods and ideas occurred, which in Paul's opinion made it the perfect place to plant some churches. There were some churches there already, but they had been corrupted by leaders claiming to be Christians. In Paul's opening line, we see that he identifies Jesus as the God who "does not lie". Now, that seems like a really weird thing to say but Paul was trying to establish the difference between Jesus and the Greek god Zeus. The people in Crete claimed that Zeus was actually from Crete, and Zeus was notorious for lying and cheating to get his way. Paul wants to establish that Jesus is completely different!

Paul's recommendation to Titus for a plan of attack is to begin with leadership! Titus is to raise up elders from the community who will move in ways of integrity and honor. They should be leaders who are able to share the good news of Jesus Christ with their community. The false teachers who had been at work in Crete had taught the people bad habits, and were making Christians look like immoral drunkards. To counteract this, Paul describes an ideal family, with older adults leading by example, encouraging young men and women to be hardworking and faithful members of society. The Christian message will be attractive to their community when people see this completely different value system based on generosity and grace. This is the grace that is found in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

In chapter 3, Paul writes a poem about what the new humanity could look like. It's not going to be easy for the people in Crete to live countercultural lives of faith, but they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit! Paul closes by telling Titus he will send another one of their colleagues to provide backup, and then the letter closes. This may seem like a strange letter to

read as we are about to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but consider this: celebrating Jesus Christ's birth has become countercultural. The rest of the world may want to monetize this holiday, but the boldest and bravest thing that we can do is to share the hope, joy, love, and peace of this season. Merry Christmas! - Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

The Consistory meeting was held on November 12 at 7pm in the Trinity Room, led by VP Janet Cook. After sharing joys and concerns, Tom Raub led devotionals. The minutes from the October 8 meeting were approved. Under the Minister's report, Pastor Becky reported that she is still reviewing the information from the successful meeting on October 6, which focused on planning for the future. The four Pennsylvania conferences voted to merge at the conference meeting held on November 9. Pastor Becky will be at an NGLI event on November 17 and the guest minister will be Jeremy Lau. Covenant cards are due November 24. There was no new business. Under committee reports, Lynn Cloak shared that the Fellowship Team celebrated Bonnie Falla's 80th birthday. Decorating the Trinity Room will occur on November 27. The Advent Breakfast is scheduled for December 1. Under the Fundraising Committee, Lynn Cloak reported that the Nuts and Truffles sale production is underway. The next hoagie sale has been announced. Under Property it was shared that work was done on the flat roof. There was a zoom meeting held on November 11 to discuss the up and coming Capital Campaign. Under Christian Education, Pastor Becky reported that the youth pageant will be on December 22. The Treasurer's report was presented by Jim Bronfenbrenner and accepted. Under Personnel, it was shared that there will be more interviews for the Administrative Assistant position. Under the Green Team, Rick Guhl shared a list of recommendations from the Green Team and asked that the Consistory receive it. The report was received. Under Benevolence, Tom Raub shared that the meeting was a success and presented the final list of grant requests for approval by the Consistory. It was approved. There was no old business. The next meeting will be held on December 10 at 7pm with devotions led by Ralph Todd. Pastor Becky led a closing prayer and the meeting concluded at 7:35pm.

-Respectfully submitted by Pastor Becky

December Special Mission Offering

Our Special Mission Offerings for December focus on helping people within our congregation and denomination---**the Curtis Fund and Christmas Fund** (formally Veterans of the Cross).

During the four Sundays of **Advent**, 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 Advent, but it will no longer be taken on Christmas Eve as it has been in the past.

On Christmas Eve, our Special Mission Offering will go exclusively to the **Christmas Fund**. This is one of the Five Designated Mission Offerings of the UCC. It's purpose, as with the Curtis Fund, is to meet unexpected financial needs of retired UCC clergy who because of their employment histories have insufficient pensions to meet their needs.

In this season, when home and family are so important, these offerings focus on helping our Church family, near and far, to meet their needs throughout the year. Please prayerfully consider making a donation along with your regular Church offering, the blue pew envelopes or by the Donate Button on the Church website. Thank you.

-Respectfully submitted by Bill Falla

Central Elementary

Central Elementary will be requesting monetary donations for clothes emergencies. They will also be requesting hats, coats, and mittens as the weather gets cooler. Any other 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.

Adult Forum

Greetings! You are all once again invited to join us Sunday mornings before worship for a variety of studies and programs. And 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 December:

December 1-Join us for Advent Breakfast at 9:30am in the Social Hall to kick off the Christmas season with this fun event!

December 8-Sherri Binder, Executive Director of Ripple Community, will be with us to share the progress of the multipurpose facility at the property donated to them by Emmanuel UCC. This organization continues to expand its services to those who need a hand.

December 15-Bill Falla will lead us in an Advent study titled "Another View of Christmas" based on the Gospel of Matthew. We always have a terrific conversation with Bill!

December 22 and 29-Adult Forum will be on our holiday break. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and stay tuned for more interesting things to come in 2025.

Tales from the Resource Room

During Andrea's last week serving as our Administrative Assistant, we had a young man in his 20s stop by the office seeking help. He had been trying to get a job, but without access to the Internet, or an address, he was running into a lot of difficulty. He was cold and hungry, and really needed somebody to give him a chance. We got him some warmer clothes, fed him a hot meal, and called up the job agencies in the area to find out who would be able to help him.

We gave him a bag of food, and helped him find his way to the job agency. He came back a few weeks later to tell me that he had a job, and although he wished they would give him more hours, it was a start! We gave him some more food and some blankets to help while he gets himself established. He told me he felt terrible asking for help a second time, and I explained to him that this is what we are here for! I invite you to join with me and praying for this hard-working and determined young man. May God guide his steps and bless him.
-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

December Sermons

- December 1- Advent Breakfast First Sunday in Advent
 - Reading 1: Jeremiah 33:14-16
 - Reading 2: Luke 21:25-36
 - Title: Hope.
 - Summary: Today we read two passages that highlight hope and creation while lifting up Jesus as the Messiah!
- December 8- Second Sunday in Advent
 - Reading 1: Malachi 3:1-4
 - Reading 2: Luke 3:1-6
 - Title: Peace.
 - Summary: Today we see Malachi talk about the refiner's fire and John the Baptist preparing the way; what do these two seemingly unconnected passages tell us about peace?
- December 15- Third Sunday in Advent
 - Reading 1: Isaiah 12: 2-6
 - Reading 2: Luke 1:39-45
 - Title: Joy.
 - Summary: Today we follow Mary as she visits her cousin Elizabeth. What can this story tell us about joy in 2024?
- December 22- Fourth Sunday in Advent and Youth Pageant
 - Today our incredible youth will be performing a wonderful Christmas pageant!
- December 24- Christmas Eve
 - Join us this Christmas Eve for a celebratory service filled with love, hope, joy, and peace!
- December 29- Pastor Becky is away this week. Our message will be delivered by Amanda Muechette.

Advent Breakfast

Let's get in into the Christmas Spirit!

When: December 1 at 9:30am

Where: St. John's Social Hall

Enjoy a hot breakfast, including pancakes with blueberry compote or syrup, sausage rounds, fruit salad and beverages. After breakfast there will be a fun Christmas activity!



Bible in a Year

Have you ever wanted to read the Bible in a year, but felt like it was too difficult even to try? Personally, I try not to recommend products unless I have tested them myself. That is why I feel confident when I tell you about the app “ReadScripture”, which was assembled by The Bible Project team. This app is completely free and can be downloaded onto any device. It pairs informative videos with daily scripture readings to help you read the entire Bible in one year! I have spent the last calendar year reading the entire Bible through from beginning to end, and even though this is something that I have done several times in my life, I found that this app made the process more approachable than ever before. It uses the ESV (English Standard Version) of the Bible, but you could easily use the app to keep track of your progress in your own study Bible. If this is something that you have always wanted to try, I would highly recommend downloading the “ReadScripture” app, and be sure to tell me how your Bible journey goes!

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser



December 2024

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	 2 – Esther Heinze 4 – Melissa Gillenwater 5 – Sophia Steinberg 6 – Kyle Smith 11 – Erin Dopera Erica Morris Phillips 12 – Linda Scavo 18 – Nicole Saylor 20 – Thomas Lance 21 – Lillian Garreffa 31 – Janet Cook	1 Advent Breakfast 9:30am 11:00am Worship	2	3 Elders Meeting 1pm	4 9am Prayer Call	5 Food Bank	6
	8 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	9	10 Consistory Meeting 7pm	11 9am Prayer Call	12	13	14
	15 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	16	17	18 9am Prayer Call	19	20	21
	22 9:30am Sunday School No Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Youth Christmas Pageant	23	24	25	26 Office closed	27 Office closed Food Bank	28
	29 No Sunday School No Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Guest Minister Mandy Mueschett	30 Office closed	31 Office closed				30

Check out our website: <https://stjohnsuccallentown.org/>

Follow us on Facebook by searching St. John's UCC Allentown (our logo is a picture of the church)

Christmas Riddles!

1. What do snowmen call their offspring?
Answer: Chill-dren.
2. Knock knock! Who's there? Tree! Tree who?
Answer: Tree wise men.
3. Why didn't the stocking eat Christmas dinner?
Answer: He was stuffed!



Please enjoy this photo of our Chocolate Truffle Crew! Allan Kramer-Moyer, Sue Fegley, Ralph Todd, Nancy Rissell, Missy Repash, Trudi Egan, Al Cloak, Mayra Estremera, Judie Guhl, taken by head Chocolatier Lynn Cloak!