

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 25 Issue 10

October 2025

Howdy St. John's Family,

Are you ready for Revelation 2, Electric Boogaloo? Here we go! We left off having read up to Revelation 16 but did not really get the opportunity to unpack everything. We remember that John was using historical references and symbols as a sort of code to be able to speak to the churches without being identified by anyone outside of the seven church communities. This allowed him to critique the current political climate and speak to justice. In chapters 12 to 14 we sort of glossed over the *symbols* or the *signs*. In chapter 12, for example, we have a story about a dragon and a woman fighting in a cosmic battle. The woman is the church community, and the dragon is the oppression they are experiencing. John is saying that nothing on earth, not even the Roman Empire, can separate them from the love of Jesus.

In chapter 13 John references some of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel to speak to the economic propaganda machine that is being used by the Roman Empire to control the masses. This is the part where we get that mark of the beast, 666, that would be on everyone's forehead or hand. John is making an Old Testament reference to the shema, the prayer of allegiance to God found in the book of Deuteronomy. This 'anti-shema' is John saying that people will place their government allegiances above their devotion to the true God. This is where the cool code stuff comes in, because if we look at the Greek and Hebrew, we see that the letters had numeric values. So, if you add up the letters that spell NERO, CAESAR, and BEAST, you end up with 666. John is not saying that Nero is the only example, but one of many examples where people place a nation above God, like Babylon, Rome, and onward.

In chapter 14 we see two expressions of Christ's return. The first is the slain lamb of God returning with a diverse army representative of the many nations of Christians. They conquer Babylon, which represents any nation placed above God. Then, in the second half of the chapter, we see Jesus return to harvest the believers, like a farmer harvesting grain. The whole idea behind these images is setting up the choice between following Christ and following the world.

We finish off in chapters 15 and 16 with the number seven popping up again. There are seven divine bowls that are poured out like the plagues in the exodus story. When we get to the sixth bowl, we find that our dragon friend has returned. Here John talks about a battle in a field called 'Armageddon.' Armageddon was an actual place; it was a plain in Northern Israel where a number of battles were fought in the history of the Hebrew people. We see this in

Ezekiel, and if we look at the writings of Ezekiel, we see that it is a message of God conquering the rebellious nations.

Okay, deep breath, we are almost there! In chapters 17 to 21 we see John return to the theme once more of the fall of Babylon, the final battle, and the creation of the new Jerusalem. This was not meant to be a prophecy about an *actual battle*, but a commentary on the way that this cycle repeats over and over again in history. When unjust nations rule with oppression and rebel against justice (like Babylon, and Rome, etc.) they will eventually fall. **Christ's people will *always* continue to fight to create a just world for all.** Christ's people will always work to make it more on earth as it is in heaven. And when they succeed in the name of Christ, the new Jerusalem will reign. This will look like a marriage between heaven and earth! Everyone will live in peace and harmony with God. The presence of God and the lamb will permeate every square inch of this new world.

That is the whole kit and kaboodle. Revelation is a symbolic vision of hope! It's not a playbook for the end of the world, but a reminder that when history repeats itself and we have another evil empire on our hands, good *will* win. Jesus is greater than the highs and lows, and the lamb of God will always triumph. So, I guess the moral of this strange vision is to rest in the hope found in Jesus Christ, Amen and Amen!

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

The Consistory meeting was held on September 9 at 7pm in the Trinity room. After joys and concerns, Nancy Kramer-Moyer led devotions. The minutes from the June 10 meeting were approved. Under the Ministers report, Pastor Becky shared that the youth collaboration for a multi-church pizza night was a success. Four churches joined together for pizza and a movie. This year the Sunday School Chapel will have a breakfast table with breakfast items available for our youth. Pastor Becky shared the internship covenant that was approved last year so that the current consistory could review it. This summer we had three children baptized from our wider community. These families had been turned away by other churches. St. John's UCC will continue to be open and welcoming to everyone who wishes to have their child baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Under Fellowship Committee, Lynn Cloak reported that the annual picnic was a success. A cake was shared on June 8 for the confirmation celebration. Special cupcakes were shared on June 29 in celebration of another completed task in the Step-by-Step Building Renovation work. Strawberry cupcakes were made for July 27 when we celebrated another step completed in the Step-by-Step Building Renovations. Anonymous donations were collected by Lynn to celebrate Pastor Becky becoming a foster mother; the money was earmarked for a membership to the Lehigh Valley Zoo. Additional funds were given for school supplies. On August 10 the VBS Carnival service was a success with hot dogs, ice pops, and other treats. In June the hoagie sale orders were taken, and orders were delivered on August 10. There is a pulled pork BBQ sale planned for October 5.

Under Property, Barney Cook shared his offer to research different options to fix the cement steps out front. He will report back to the Consistory. Under Christian Education, Pastor Becky shared that she will be working with other pastors to create a youth coalition for large group activities. The Christmas Pageant will be about Christmas around the world and will take place on December 21. Jim Bronfenbrenner presented the Treasurer's report. Under Personnel it was reported that Omayra's contract was not renewed through Job Connections Inc. Personnel will now be working with Allied. Under the Green Team, Nancy Kramer-Moyer reported that the Green Team book study was a success. There will be a cleanup in the community on October 26. Under Benevolence it was reported that the invitations have been sent to nonprofits to apply for the grant. Nancy Rissell reported that for the Scholarship Committee, they met with a lawyer and are fine-tuning a draft of the scholarship application. This scholarship would be for members of our congregation. The next meeting will be on October 14 at 7pm. Anyone who wishes to attend virtually, the link will be sent the day before.
-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

October Special Mission Offering

Our Special Mission Offering for October is **Neighbors in Need. Neighbors in Need (NIN)** supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts and direct services. In 2025, 26 grants were awarded to churches to run such programs.

The remaining third is used to support our Native American neighbors within the UCC. This is accomplished by NIN's support of the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Currently, there are 21 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban multi-tribal congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The funds are used to support the ministries of these congregations. CAIM also serves as a resource for more than 1,000 individuals from other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations throughout the U.S.

We would ask that you prayerfully consider giving generously to support these ministries of justice and compassion throughout the month of October. You may do so by writing a check to St. John's UCC-Allentown designated for NIN, making it a designated part of your weekly offering or by using the DONATE button on our website. Thank you.

-Respectfully submitted by Bill Falla

Central Elementary

Central Elementary will be requesting monetary donations for clothes emergencies. 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.

ST. JOHN'S UCC, ALLENTOWN, NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP

Come one and all to an **intergenerational** outdoor clean-up **near and around the church**, sponsored by the Green Team!

- When: **Sunday, October 26, at noon**, after worship.
- Who: Able-bodied youth, adults, and children.
- How: Allentown Recycling Center will provide us litter tongs, brooms, dust pans, trash bags, safety vests, and gloves.

We will gather for a drink and snack after church and then go out in teams (3 to 4 people) to designated areas near and around the church.

Dress in **casual clothing**, appropriate for the weather, and walking shoes.

Please let the church office know if you are interested in participating so we can get enough equipment from the city of Allentown.

We will be out about 30 to 45 minutes and **return to church for lunch** and then home!

Be proud of Allentown and inspire our neighbors!

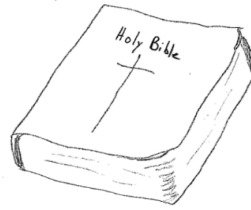
Tales from the Resource Room

When we began asking for suitcases for the resource room, some of you were scratching your heads and wondering what we could possibly do with them. I would like to tell you in this month's issue of *Tales from the Resource Room*. The most common use for these suitcases is to aid our unhoused brothers and sisters by carrying their belongings. One gentleman shared with me that the suitcase he received from us will allow him to carry his possessions with him to work so he does not need to worry about them being stolen. The Guardianship Support Agency, which operates within our building, has also benefited from the suitcases being in the resource room. Guardianship has both donated to and utilized the resource room for some of their ministry. Last month, they were able to take one of the suitcases and give it to a person who was using garbage bags to carry their possessions. Thank you to everybody who has donated to the resource room in the past, and thank you to everybody who continues to donate what they are able. **As things grow colder outside, we could use jackets, sweatshirts, and thick winter socks.** Blessings!

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

Bible Bites

with Pastor Becky



Bible Bits

It is scary season, and that means we are going to look at something creepy in our Bibles! This is for anyone who found the 'Ask in August' sermon on angels to be fun and not too scary. Have you seen the memes of the "Biblically accurate angels" with their scary wheels made of eyeballs and their menacing spherical shape? This isn't just a funny gag from the internet; these depictions are based on descriptions from our Bible. Most often these depictions are referencing Ezekiel, a book considered to be so terrifying that ancient Hebrew people had it rated PG30! The English word "angel" is borrowed from the Greek word "angelos", which means messenger. In the Hebrew, the word is "mal'ak", which also means messenger. They are sent to bring divine messages to folks. But with descriptions like these, it is little wonder that people freaked out every time an angel showed up with glad tidings of great joy. Check out the description for yourself in Ezekiel chapter 1, verses 4 through 28, for a special Halloween treat!

-Respectfully submitted by Pastor Becky Sausser

Adult Forum

October Sermons

- October 5
 - Reading 1: Jeremiah 8:18-9:1
 - Reading 2: Luke 16: 1-13
 - Title: The Dishonest Manager.
 - Summary: We remember the parable of the talents, but how many of us remember the parable of the dishonest manager? This week we deep dive into this parable from Luke.
- October 12
 - Reading 1: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7
 - Reading 2: Luke 17:11-19
 - Title: Pack a Lunch.
 - Summary: Join us this week as we look at men with leprosy, displaced peoples, and packing your lunch? If you want to see how Pastor Becky connects all these ideas, join us on Sunday morning!

- October 19
 - Reading 1: Luke 18:1-8
 - Reading 2: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
 - Title: Squeaky Wheels of Justice.
 - Summary: This week we revisit the parable of the woman who used her persistent pestering to bring about justice in her community.
- October 26- Pastor Becky is away doing something Halloweenie.

Green Team Book Study

For three sessions in August, Rick Guhl and Bill Falla hosted a discussion on *Cathedral on Fire: a church handbook for the climate crisis*, written by Brooks Berndt, Minister of Environmental Justice for the United Church of Christ. This short 54-page study guide was thoughtfully written. It focused clearly on the emergency faced by the world and the potential of an activated Church to make a profound difference in the outcome of that emergency.

Berndt used the metaphor of a grand cathedral inspiring awe and wonder for the natural world. This world is overheating due to carbon levels accumulating in the atmosphere, thus trapping heat as a blanket encircling the earth. Berndt posits that the Church, coming from a place of faith and calling for a fresh perspective, can make the difference for this world that is hot and getting hotter. After each of the seven chapters, Berndt presents several discussion questions to appreciate the deeper and larger issues. Action Plans, things people can actually do to inspire change and open a fresh perspective, are offered at the end of each chapter.

For example, in Chapter 3, Liberating Scripture to Liberate the Planet, I found his reinterpretation of the context and translation of the word *dominion* to be particularly meaningful. Traditionally, the word has meant that humankind (man) was to be the primary beneficiary of all the natural world resources, thus effectively reinforcing the hierarchy of domination. But a more accurate translation of the word in context means having a caretaking function; more like a gardener caring for all the unique beings and resources in the garden of God's creation.

Following Berndt's conversation on transformation, a new theology emerging from a time of intense struggle and painful uncertainty, he asks, "Toward what possibilities is God calling us in this crisis situation?" (pg44)

One answer to this call Berndt says is focus on the youth. Youth are leading the generational justice movement as prophets. Youth are calling for and demanding action. Possibilities are emerging. The Church is being reborn as a modern Pentecost movement, spreading the mission of a new vision for the world.

Submitted by: Carol Wikerd
Green Team

Important Dates

- . October 5- Pulled pork BBQ & Coleslaw Sale
- . October 19- Crop Walk
- . October 26- Green Team Community Clean Up
- . November 2- All Saints' Day
- . November 30- First Sunday in Advent
- . December 21- Christmas Pageant
- . December 24- Christmas Eve service 7:30pm



4 Churches joined together at St. John's UCC for a youth group pizza and movie night in August! The group made their own pizzas and then watched the movie Ratatouille in the sanctuary with freshly popped popcorn!



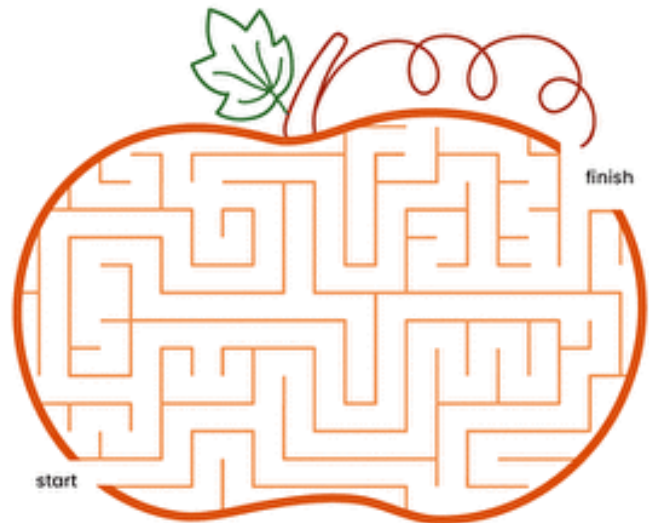
October 2024

 HAPPY BIRTHDAY 7 – Keith Morris Delia Phillips 8 – Trudi Egan 9 – Cheryl Phillips 14 – Melissa Repash 19 – Thomas Raub 20 – Brenda Saylor 22 – Du’Quan Stellinburg 27 – Bonnie Falla 29 – Sterna Klingborg	Celebrating  An Anniversary This Month 10/06 – Robert and Susan Fegley 10/17 – Bruce and Florence DeLong 10/26 – James and Brenda Saylor						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9am Prayer Call	2 Food Bank	3	4
	5 World Communion 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Pulled Pork BBQ Sale	6	7 Elders Meeting	8 9am Prayer Call	9	10	11
	12 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Hoagie Distribution	13	14 Consistory Meeting 7pm	15 9am Prayer Call	16	17	18
	19 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship CROP Walk Following Service	20	21 Benevolence Committee Meeting 7pm	22 9am Prayer Call Veteran Food Share Program	23	24 Food Bank	25
	26 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Green Team Clean Up	27	28	29 9am Prayer Call	30	31 Halloween!	

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)

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4			8		7		6
	9					8	4
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Halloween Word Search

Q M T J V M P L P L S W R Y N Y
S B R L E F W H X B V C L P K W
P H P Q V F T O S H T F X H X H
O B F H D J I J N O T E L E K S
O R Q C A N D Y I F U Q I O O B
K G H O S T S L K J J E N D O S
Y M Z L G J F C P H E K Y J X Y
I T E C O S T U M E S L A H X A
V G A X B K L M U M M Y H A K S
E A A B L Z S T P P I B U L H M
D M W F I T P A R T Y Q G L C U
A E Y Q N U G E S S L H Z O T S
S S B J E C C R F F K X P W I Y
T R I C K U P T J A S L Z E W E
F T Z Q W P X B J Q A B I E U W
M T V C R J K U D T M U S N H O

BOO
GAMES
HALLOWEEN
PARTY
SPOOKY
WITCH

CANDY
GHOSTS
MASK
PUMPKINS
TRICK

COSTUMES
GOBLIN
MUMMY
SKELETON
TREAT

