



The Disciple

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

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

Volume 26 Issue 1

January 2026

Howdy St. John's family,

Over the last two years I've been using this monthly letter as an opportunity to dive a little deeper into the letters of the New Testament. I have had so much fun reading and summarizing the scriptures, and hopefully you have enjoyed reading as I *nerd out* about the Bible. As I was contemplating the twelve months in this year, I was reminded that there were twelve tribes in the Hebrew Bible... that's why this year I'm going to be using each month as an opportunity to talk about the twelve tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob that they were named for, and what some of their most important traits are.

Today we kick things off with Reuben, who was the first born of the twelve sons of Jacob. Most often when you have an oldest son, you can pretty much assume that they are going to be the ones who receive the largest inheritance and take over to rule the family at the death of the patriarch. This is not the case with Reuben. If we read the places in Genesis where Reuben is mentioned directly, we see that he was *a thoughtful guy*, as he has been seen picking flowers for his mother, and convincing his brothers *not* to murder Joseph. There was that whole selling him in the slavery thing, but we will stick a pin in that for now. The real reason that Reuben did not receive his expected inheritance is because he laid with his father's concubine, Bilhah. This was against the book of Leviticus and a taboo thing to do.

So, what do we need to know about the tribe of Reuben? One of the most important things to know is that the tribe of Reuben was part of what would become known as the lost tribes of Israel. We see that after the rule of King Solomon, David's son, the tribes are split into northern Israel and the kingdom from southern Judah, where Jerusalem was. This is something we will learn more about as we journey through the twelve tribes. Fun Fact: on the breast plate of the high priest, which we see described and crafted in Exodus 28, Reuben is represented by the ruby, or carnelian jewel. - Rev. Becky Sausser

Consistory Summary

Our December Consistory meeting was held on December 9 at 7pm in the Trinity Room. After a time of joys and concerns, Ralph Todd led devotionals. The minutes from the November 11 meeting were approved. Under the Minister's report Pastor Becky reported that the Prayground seems to be working well! Hand-written invitations have been sent to visitors

from the year cordially inviting them to our Christmas Eve service. Gift bags have been assembled and will be brought to homebound folks. The Resource Room reorganization is in process, and this will be one of the places to focus on during the February Green Team Clean up. Under new business, Pastor Becky shared a request form from the nonprofit MothersDaughters@Heart, a group that provides workshops, mentoring, youth leadership, team building, sports mentoring, and entrepreneurial development. The Consistory agreed to invite the nonprofit to come speak at our February meeting. Under the Fellowship Committee, Lynn Cloak shared that the Advent Breakfast was a success. The Trinity Room has been decorated, and a special fellowship time was held for the Pageant Sunday and Christmas Eve services. Under Fundraising, Lynn Cloak shared that the annual truffles sale raised \$901.00. Our hoagie fundraisers will be quarterly in 2026. A soup sale is planned for January.

Jim Bronfenbrenner shared the Treasurer's report and it was accepted. Under Personnel, Jeff Rissell shared that we are seeking a new Admin through Allied. Under Property, Jeff Rissell shared that the light bulbs in the sanctuary were replaced in December. Under Benevolence, Bonnie Falla shared that the grant letters are being written and checks will be mailed during December. Nancy Rissell shared that the Scholarship Committee will have the youth scholarship ready to go for the spring. The next meeting will be held on January 13, 2026, at 7pm in the Trinity Room.

– Respectfully Submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

January's Special Mission Offering

Our Special Mission focus for January is Central Elementary School. We will be collecting various items that they have requested to meet student needs. These include: winter apparel; shampoo, conditioner, body wash, clothes (children's size 6-16), adjustable belts and shoes (adult 5-8). Additional items can be found on their Amazon Wish List. You can find their Amazon link in the weekly St. John's Corresponds. You can drop off your donations in the Central box in the Narthex. You can also donate money using the weekly or blue pew envelopes or the Donate Button on the website. Be sure to designate your contribution for Central Elementary.

Thank you for helping us support St. John's efforts in this vital ministry.

-Respectfully submitted by Bill Falla

Tales from the Resource Room

During the month of November, we paused donations to the Resource Room so that we could re-organize and assess what we have. Initially, when we began gathering resources for this room, we gathered a little bit of everything! We didn't really know what the specific needs of our community were until folks started coming to the building and telling us what they needed. After roughly two years of listening, we have been able to better understand what items are needed and what items are just taking up space in the Resource Room. Next month in February the Green Team will be holding an indoor cleanup. Please consider volunteering as

we go through the church to clean, organize, and declutter! My hope is that we will have enough volunteers so that we might also be able to get more organized in the Resource Room and create a working space that would allow us to help people more efficiently with dignity and love.

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

Bible Bites

with Pastor Becky



Have you heard of the devotional practice called "Scripture Writing". It is being re-popularized by YouTubers like John Miles and Patty Wilbanks, but this is a very old practice. We often take for granted the fact that we can get easy access to Bibles in their physical and digital form, but this was not always the case. If we go back a few hundred years to our pioneer ancestors, we see that many people writing home to their families would ask them to send letters with scripture verses, and even whole chapters of the Bible when possible. These handwritten copies of scripture were treasured. There are now a plethora of journaling Bibles and study Bibles available at the click of a button. Please give it a try if it sounds like something that would be a meaningful experience for you, and the next time you see your Bible on your table or bookshelf, remember how blessed you are.

January Sermons

- January 4- Epiphany
 - Reading 1: Matthew 2:1-12
 - Title: Epiphany
 - Summary: This week we celebrate the Epiphany, when the light of the world was revealed to the Gentiles. Paul shares the truth of Christ in Ephesus. How does this speak to us in 2026?
- January 11- Baptism of the Lord
 - Reading 1: Isaiah 42:1-9
 - Reading 2: Matthew 3:13-17
 - Title: Baptism of the Lord
 - Summary: This week we revisit the incredible moment when the Spirit came down upon Christ like a dove at the Lord's baptism!
- January 18
 - Reading 1: John 1:29-42
 - Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

- Title: On the Test.
- Summary: In the gospel of John, we see the prophecy come to pass through Jesus, the Lamb of God! In 1 Corinthians Paul summarizes the gospel for the people of Corinth.
- January 25
 - Reading 1: Isaiah 9:1-4
 - Reading 2: Matthew 4:12-23
 - Title: Called by Name.
 - Summary: Jesus calls you by name! We are called to this work, and we can't do it alone.

Electronic Giving Information

I love making my life easier! Every night I set the coffee machine up so I can simply hit a button in the morning and enjoy my fresh cup of coffee. Most of my bills and donations are set to be paid automatically and I love it! If you are like me and you want to make your donations to St. John's UCC online, all you have to do is visit our website and click on the "Donate" button in the top right corner. This will take you to a secure page where you can make a one-time donation, or make an account for weekly, monthly, bi-weekly, or semi-monthly donations! When "checking out" you have the option to cover the cost of us receiving the donation. This cost is small for the donor, only a small percentage of your gift, but for the church it adds up quickly; we deeply appreciate everything and anything you are able to tithe. Thank you!

ADULT FORUM

Happy New Year! This is a great time 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 9:30 for coffee or tea, then begin our program at 9:45 with a sharing of joys and concerns.

January 4-Holiday break...Happy New Year!

January 11-Lois Mease joins us for her always delightful Bible study. Her theme will be, "Open to the Spirit," the role of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of Jesus, based on Matthew 3:13-17.

January 18-Pastor Becky will guide us through another Bible study, sure to once again raise some interesting discussion.

January 25-We will be viewing the second session of "The Rock, The Road, and The Rabbi" that was cancelled for snow. Later sessions will continue in the new year. In this six-session study, Kathie Lee Gifford invites you to join her as she visits sites in Israel that have impacted her life. As she shares her story, coauthor Rabbi Jason Sobel, provides fascinating details that make the story of the New Testament come alive.

Step-By-Step Essentials Building Renovations

Things are looking brighter at St. John's, and it isn't just that the days are growing longer! We have successfully replaced the lightbulbs in the sanctuary! This project was completed by Haller Enterprises. This is the same company that replaced the lights in the great hall that shine outward onto 6th Street through the large stained-glass image of Jesus. We will be celebrating these incredible steps soon!

January 2026

 HAPPY BIRTHDAY	Celebrating 100 <i>An Anniversary This Month</i>						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Office Closed	Office Closed	Office Closed	1	2 Food Bank	3
5 – Stephanie Heffelfinger Richard Hausman 8 – Jeffrey Krapf 9 – Bennet Bronfenbrenner Jasmine Hernandez 10 – Jaleesa Hein-Cooper 12 – Jeff Rissell 18 – Kendall Heffelfinger 22 – Taylor Fillman 23 – Marissa Bortz 26 – Karen Dopera 30 – Emily Ferrol Max Bronfenbrenner 31 – Glenn Kent	4 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	5	6 Elders Meeting 1PM Choir 10am	7 9am Prayer Call	8	9	10
	11 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	12	13 Consistory Meeting 7pm Choir 10am	14 9am Prayer Call	15	16 Food Bank	17
	18 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship Annual Meeting	19	20 Choir 10am	21 9am Prayer Call	22	23	24
	25 9:30am Sunday School & Adult Forum 11:00am Worship	26	27 Choir 10am	28 9am Prayer Call	29	30	31

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

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

