

The Disciple



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

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

Volume 26 Issue 8

August 2026

Howdy St. John's Family,

It is August which means we are learning about Asher! Asher is the eighth son of Jacob and the second son born from Zilpah, who had been Leah's handmaiden. His name means "happiness" or "blessed" depending on how it is being used in the sentence. As we discussed in previous months, Leah and Rachel gave their handmaids to Jacob so that the maids could continue to have children on Leah and Rachel's behalf. We see in Genesis 30:13 that Leah is actually the one who names Asher and his brother Gad. Rachel's maidservant Bilhah ends up in a similar situation, but unlike Bilhah, Zilpah is later listed among Jacob's wives. This could mean that she was elevated in her position within the family unit.

Back to Asher! He is the younger brother of Gad, and he is best known for abundance. When the tribes settle into the Promised Land, the tribe of Asher settles along the Mediterranean coast. The land is fertile and still has a massive olive oil production industry to this day. Fun Fact, Asher's daughter Serach is the only granddaughter of Jacob mentioned in the Bible! Serach isn't the only famous daughter from the tribe of Asher; if we jump forward to the gospel of Luke chapter 2, verse 36, we meet Anna, a prophetess from the line of Asher who recognized the baby Jesus and began to tell everyone about him.

During the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE (Before Common Era), the tribe of Asher becomes one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Where did they go? The tribes were scattered into other countries after the conquest, and many were absorbed into other cultures and peoples. This is what makes it so interesting when Jesus has the conversation with the woman at the well, because she is a Samaritan woman, and a member of the lost tribes. When Jesus and the woman at the well discuss the history and rift between the Jewish people and the Samaritans, Jesus is using it as an opportunity to call the lost tribes back. Everyone is welcome to a relationship with Jesus and Jesus bridges that gap that history or society would try to tell you is unpassable. This is what I have learned from the tribe of Asher; that you can be blessed with abundance and still be lost, AND that above everything else, Jesus is calling you home.

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

August Sermons: Ask in August

- August 2- Communion, why do we do it that way?
 - Reading 1: Matthew 26:26-30
 - Title: Come to the Table!
 - This week we look at some of the traditions around communion and discuss the symbolism behind them. We will also have communion!
- August 9- How do years' work? Timelines and more!
 - Reading 1: 2 Peter 3:8-13
 - Reading 2: Isaiah 46: 8-11
 - Title: Where does the time go?
 - This week we are looking at some passages that speak to how time works in the Bible as we explore how to understand timelines!
- August 16- What parts of the Bible are historically accurate?
 - Reading 1: Ephesians 1:3-14
 - Reading 2: Writings from Josephus
 - Title: Dialogue with Documents
 - An important part of history is how documents dialogue with one another, giving validity and more context. Is our Bible in dialogue with other historical documents? Let's explore together!
- August 23- How does UCC polity work?
 - This week our incredible intern, Mandy Muschett, will be preaching a sermon on the polity of the United Church of Christ!
- August 30- Any Questions?
 - Join us for the stunning conclusion of Ask in August!

Announcements

Important Dates!

- July 26 – Last day to sign up for hoagie sale
 - delivery – Sunday, August 2
- August 30 – Lehigh Valley Pride 1pm – 7pm

Bible Bites

with Pastor Becky



Bible Bites

Once while researching a funny part of the Bible, I came across this quote. I think in the gospel of Matthew chapter 21 is funny; this is where the disciples are sent by Jesus to bring him a donkey and her unriden colt for his triumphant arrival into Jerusalem! This is to fulfil the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9, but some artists have had fun depicting Jesus as riding on two donkeys at once (see below). This is where I came across Rev. Benjamin Cremer who wrote, *“We want the war horse. Jesus rides a donkey. We want the eagle. The Holy Spirit descends as a dove. We want to take up swords. Jesus takes up a cross. We want the roaring lion. God comes as a slaughtered lamb. We keep trying to arm God. God keeps trying to disarm us.”* This is one of that epiphany style noticing’s that calls us to look at our lives and examine the places where we are “arming God”, but ignoring the fact that God is trying to disarm us.

-Respectfully submitted by Pastor Becky Sausser



Tales from the Resource Room

Imagine this... a stranger comes to your home and breaks all the windows and kicks in the door, and when you try to get help, people side with your attacker? That is the reality for some of our siblings struggling with homelessness right now. There have been a number of folks that came to our resource room just this year with stories of cruel treatment and harassment. In August 2025 the homeless encampment near Jordan Creek was cleared due to concerns of it being a flood zone. Now, in April of 2026 they cleared another encampment near Fountain Park without offering an alternative solution. This is a very complicated situation, and I appreciate that there are a number of factors that go into fixing the larger systemic issues at play, but I wanted to share this with you all because people have been coming to St. John's UCC who have experienced this cruelty first hand.

How can I help? First and foremost, pray for our community! We are called to be a people of witness, and we need to pray for the vulnerable and needy in our community. Consider tithing your time, talent, and or treasure. If you have time and talent, consider knitting winter hats to restock our resource room for winter! If you have time and treasure, consider checking out our weekly email for an updated list of needed items for the resource room. If you only have time, please pray for our ministry at St. John's and for the vulnerable populations in our community. Thank you for all that you do, and God bless!

-Respectfully submitted by Rev. Becky Sausser

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. If you would prefer to contribute an item, you can find **Central's Wish List** on the weekly *St. John's Corresponds*.

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, long-standing ministry. Thank you.

Submitted by Bill Falla



The Earth as our Home

As I mentioned in June I want to reflect on the idea of home. More specifically, the idea of home as it relates to the care of the earth. With apologies to Pastor Becky, the word for home in Ancient Greek is “oikos”. (We can ponder its relationship to yogurt at another time.) Oikos for them referred to the house, the household, the property and their relationships. It is in that sense that it serves as the root for our words: economy/economics and ecology. Ecology provides us with a link to science as it is an important contributor to Environmental Science.

Ecology is the study of the relations of humans to their environment, including other humans, with the goal of maintaining healthy sustainable relationships. If we were to think of Christian Ecology, as might be practiced by St. John’s, we would include our relation to our Triune God---the one who created us to be stewards of our home (this garden that God created for us and asked us to till). It was a place where everything was good (healthy and sustainable) and we as stewards are called by God to care for and maintain it.

The story of the Fall can be read as a failure to do this. In spite of this, our calling has not changed, Our challenge now becomes what sort of stewards, called by God, shall we be?

Submitted by Bill Falla

Hampton Fire Article

On Wednesday night, June 24, 2026, a fire in Allentown offered a sobering reminder that emergencies can happen in the heart of our community at any time. While many of us watched from a distance, Allentown firefighters and other first responders moved toward the danger. They worked under difficult conditions to protect lives, property, and the surrounding neighborhood.

Responding to a fire is physically demanding work. Firefighters may spend hours wearing heavy protective equipment while facing intense heat, smoke, stress, and exhaustion. Bottled water is not simply a convenience at a fire scene; it is an essential

resource that helps firefighters remain hydrated, alert, and safe while carrying out their work.

That is why our bottled-water drive is such a meaningful example of “Ministry in the Heart of the City.” The water collected through this ministry will be donated to the Allentown Fire Department to help replenish the supply used during fires like the one on June 24 and during other emergencies throughout the city. Each donated case of water is a practical expression of gratitude and care for the first responders who serve our neighbors every day.

Ministry in the heart of the city means paying attention to the needs directly around us and responding in ways that are both compassionate and useful. Sometimes ministry looks like prayer, worship, or words of encouragement. At other times, it looks like a case of bottled water placed into the hands of firefighters who have spent hours working in dangerous heat. A simple donation becomes an act of ministry when it helps protect those who are protecting our community.

The Allentown fire also reminds us why strong relationships between churches, first responders, community organizations, and disaster-response ministries matter. If residents are displaced or additional needs emerge, the Disaster Response Ministry of the Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ may be called upon to assist survivors, connect families with resources, or support the community through the recovery process.

We have seen this kind of ministry before. Following the February 2026 Hotel Hampton fire in Easton, members of the Disaster Response Ministry, particularly volunteers from the Mountain Valley Association, helped survivors navigate assistance available through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. I had the honor of serving alongside this team as we listened to survivors’ stories, helped complete applications, gathered necessary documents, and connected people with additional resources. The work was about more than paperwork; it was about compassion, presence, and helping neighbors find a pathway toward stability.

Disaster ministry begins before a team is formally called into action. It begins by preparing, building relationships, supporting those on the front lines, and gathering resources that can make a difference when an emergency occurs. Our bottled-water drive embodies that spirit of readiness and partnership.

Every bottle of water donated says to the Allentown Fire Department: we see you, we appreciate you, and we care about your safety. Every case helps replenish a vital resource. Together, these donations become a visible sign of what it means to practice Ministry in the Heart of the City—faith moving beyond the walls of the church and taking the form of service, gratitude, and love for our neighbors.

Submitted by Amanda Muschett

August 2026

 2 – William Hein 4 – Kim Meitzler 5 – Yvonne Fillman 9 – 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	Celebrating <i>An Anniversary This Month</i>  8/14 – Byron & Janet Cook 8/14 – Bonnie & William Falla 8/26 – Richard & Judith Guhl						
	SundayMondayTuesdayWednesdayThursdayFridaySaturday						
							1
	2 10:00am Worship Hoagie sale delivery	3	4	5 9am Prayer Call	6 Food Bank	7	8
	9 10:00am Worship	10	11	12 9am Prayer Call	13	14	15
	16 10:00am Worship	17	18	19 9am Prayer Call	20	21	22
	23 10:00am Worship	24	25	26 9am Prayer Call	27 Food Bank	28	29
	30 Lehigh Valley Pride! 1PM – 7PM	31					

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).



August Word Search

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

	5				3	7		
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9	7	4		8	6	1	2	3
3	8	6	1	4		2	5	7
7		5						
	4	9	7		2	8	3	6
5				7	4		9	8
	9		3		1			2
2				9		3		1

BIKING	POOL	READING	FRIENDS
POPSICLES	SNOW CONE	RELAX	TRAVEL
SUMMER	ICE CREAM	LEMONADE	FUN

