



St. John's United Church of Christ
500 West Main Street, Lansdale Pa. 19446

Enlightener

January, 2021 Vol. XLI, No. 01

St. John's Member and Friends,

We have heard all the adjectives to describe the year 2020 -- unprecedented, challenging, difficult, unusual, crazy -- the list goes on. This time last year, none of us could have imagined how different 2020 would be. Our lives were turned upside down, and words like pandemic, quarantine, social distancing, Covid 19, and safety protocols became a part of our daily vocabulary. We have grown weary of it all, but persevered, and with vaccines on the horizon, we have hope.

When shelter-in-place orders occurred in March, St. John's leadership quickly acted to provide quality recorded worship services on-line and cd's of worship were delivered to the homebound. Soon after, noon Wednesday Chime Concerts began, providing a welcome respite in the safety of one's car. Rev. Sue stayed connected to you through special mailings, Pastor's Updates via email, The Herald and the Enlightener -- all providing hope during many uncertain days.

The life of the church continued in spite of the events around us. Andrew Paulson was hired and began his ministry at St. John's on June 14; he was not intimidated by the challenge of Zoom rehearsals and recordings and Artist Series concerts. We observed Rev. Sue's 40th anniversary in ministry with a "drive through" celebration on June 3 at noon. Although the weather became severe and passed through in a matter of minutes, it did not dampen the spirit of the occasion. Rev. Addie reached out to St. John's young people with VBS Take Out and the Carry-Out Connection Sunday School program. On September 20, in the safety of the outdoors and social distancing, St. John's observed Celebration Sunday, held a Basket Raffle, and recognized David Furniss for his many years of music ministry and congratulated him on his retirement. And on December 6, St. John's celebrated White Gift with a walk-through in the sanctuary and viewing the Holy Family located safely in the elevator entrance. All these occasions and more provided hope for the present and in the future.

Church staff, Council and the Covid Team spent countless hours discussing and planning the best and safest ways to gather and worship. Our hope for the future is when it is safe to do so, we will gather again for in-person worship in the sanctuary. In the meantime, we must be patient. And as a reminder, the Sanctuary is open on Thursdays for 20 minute visits. Call the office to reserve a time slot at 1:00pm, 1:30pm, 2:00pm or 2:30pm. The number of persons in the sanctuary at any one time will be limited.

In 2020, seven baptisms were performed safely in very small gatherings in the sanctuary and outdoors, and two young people were confirmed outdoors with family and Council members in attendance. In 2020, St. John's mourned the deaths of 23 members and friends.

We all miss the days of seeing our friends' smiles, hugging each other or shaking hands. We have seen how this virus has shut down businesses and ended employment, and sadly how many people have become sick or have died from it. It has been a tough year for our community and world on so many levels. A song, a favorite of my parents, gave me hope in the beginning of the pandemic, and still does today. Written by Bill and Gloria Gaither, I pray the lyrics of "Because He Lives" will give you hope for the year ahead:

God sent his son, they called him Jesus,
He came to love, heal and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.
Because he lives
I can face tomorrow
Because he lives
All fear is gone
Because I know he holds the future
And life is worth the living
Just because he lives

Lisa Delp

JANUARY



End of Year 2020 in Church Council



Were You There?



Thirty Years Ago: Our UCC Conference minister, Rev. Peter Doghramji, gave the sermon during morning worship.

Twenty-five Years Ago: St. John's program for stepfamilies began on January 4 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM, with plans to meet for six consecutive weeks.

Twenty Years Ago: One of the activities during the celebration of St. John's 125th anniversary was the funding of new pew cushions for the sanctuary.

Fifteen Years Ago: The Philadelphia Association of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference held its first Epiphany Choirfest at Tabernacle UCC, 3700 Chestnut Street, in the University City neighborhood of the city. This event took the place of the traditional Advent Vespers.

Ten Years Ago: Congregants and friends were invited to a "Communication as a Tool for Evangelism" workshop led by Charlene J. Smith, Minister for Evangelism and Vitality, from the UCC offices in Cleveland, Ohio. The workshop was held at Living Water UCC, 2006 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia.

Five Years Ago: St. John's Library added a complete Bible on CD, King James Version, and several DVDs by John Hendricks of recent programs and activities at St. John's.

One Year Ago: A request by the AGM Committee was made in Council to ensure all charities involved receive a minimum donation to make it worth their while to participate in the Alternative Gift Market. A motion was approved to supplement AGM charities involved to reach a minimum amount of \$400 for one year.

Financial Report: Sandy and Bob Taylor, Cotreasurers:

Considering the pandemic that continues to plague us all, November was a surprisingly good month for St. John's financially. Our November income of \$42,789 exceeded our expenses of \$41,335. Yes, our expenses were well below budget as a result of careful stewardship by many. A net positive month under the present conditions is great! We are still behind year-to-date by \$40,667 (or 8.2%), but we are anticipating another positive month in December. Thanks to all of you who have supported St. John's throughout this difficult time.

November contributions to "Our Church's Wider Mission" (OCWM) totaled \$4,206. A good month, but year-to-date we are still about 7% behind our pledged giving pace to OCWM. A good December in this regard also may allow us to close the gap; we generally have done so in past years. Please continue to support this work; its importance is increased by the pandemic. Please feel free to share your questions or concerns with our Cotreasurers, Sandy and Bob Taylor.

Staff Reports:

Rev. Dr. Sue Bertolette, Senior Pastor:

I continue to reach out to our homebound members via phone, as well as to those who have been hospitalized or are rehabbing following surgery. Along with Pastor Addie, I continue to create In-Touch Tuesday videos. Making plans for worship and special Advent and Christmas services has been challenging as we navigate the ever-changing waters of the pandemic. At present, our plans to provide in-person worship opportunities on Christmas Eve are being altered due to the surge in coronavirus cases in our area. A "Pastor's Update" will be sent out via email this week to update the congregation on the new plans.

Rev. Addie Stong, Associate Pastor:

We created, assembled, and gave away all 40 Advent Carry-Out Connection Sunday School bags to St. John's families!

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The feedback from parents and kids has been positive and encouraging and they are doing a wonderful job of sharing photos on our Facebook page!

Thanks to the generous contributions of our members, we have loads of white gifts to send to Urban Promise, Old First UCC, and Mitzvah Circle. I have sorted the gifts and coordinated with both drivers and receivers to make sure the gifts get where they need to be! Special thanks to Mary Billy, Walt and Bonnie Weber, and Don and Sally Atkiss for their help!

We successfully met with our 2020/2021 Confirmation class of five wonderful young people and their parents via Zoom for our initial informational gathering.

Staff focuses quite a bit of time and energy, and a tremendous amount of heart and prayer, on discerning what is the best next move and way forward for our community. Part of our work right now is paying attention to the news, to the concerns of St. John's folks, and to our own gut feelings about the reality of what we are navigating. We spend a lot of time communicating to make sure people stay informed and connected.

Speaking personally, I continue to value writing, planning, and recording meaningful worship experiences, writing and recording In-Touch Tuesday videos, planning and assembling Sunday School boxes, and, of course, caring for and supporting you, the people I have been called to love and to serve, in whatever ways I can!

Andrew Paulson, Minister of Music:

The all-virtual December Artist Series Concert, *Savior of the Nations, Come*, involved the Chancel Choir and Friends, United Ringers, Brass Ensemble, and Children's Choir. Concert plans for 2021 are yet to be determined. Worship services continue successfully in a virtual format, with all main ensembles being featured at different times throughout the holiday season. Ensembles will continue rehearsing in a virtual format until it is safe to do otherwise. The final Wednesday chimes concert of 2020 will occur on December 23, followed by a break during the winter months.

Abbie Lampe, Minister of Music for Children and Youth:

Zoom choir is held each week. The choir participated in the cantata on Sunday and will record an anthem for Christmas Eve. Rehearsals will resume in January after a short break.

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Lisa Delp, Office Administrator:

Since the November Council Meeting, St. John's has helped several families in the community with expenses: \$500 for fuel oil for a family, \$424 toward rent for a family, and approximately \$325 in grocery, gas, and Walmart gift cards for several families. I anticipate more requests as the Christmas holiday nears. Many gifts were received in the office from members and friends who were not able to attend the White Gift celebration.

Board Reports:

Deacons

Thirty-six poinsettias have been placed in the chancel and around the church building in the hope that there will be members visiting on Christmas Eve.

Trustees

Leroy continues the interior painting. A wireless microphone was purchased for Andrew to facilitate safe distanced recording.

New Business:

Bill Leslie has accepted the position of Council Vice President. Judy Leslie will step down from Elders. Barb MacMullen will continue to as a Deacon but will step down as Chairperson.

Council will be working collectively via Zoom into 2021. There is no immediate need to find a Chairperson for Elders or Deacons; however, a point person for those Boards will be needed. Trustees will continue to maintain the building. Educators will continue with Carry-Out Connection for children.

Rev. Mark Bethalah contacted Rev. Sue about possible assistance for their ministry in India. Pastors of small village churches have not been paid since there have been no in-person services during the pandemic. A one-time \$2,000 donation from the GEM Fund for Vision and Mission Ministries was approved by Council. COVID-19 numbers in the community are on the rise. Lisa stated the number reserving spots for in-person services on Christmas Eve Day is very small. A decision will be made in preparation for Rev. Sue to send an Eblast with updates on Christmas Eve Services. Approximately 110 people participated in the White Gift service walk-through over the 2-hour time period. Many thanks to the hospitality team members and the Holy Family of Jessica, Matt, and Isabel Carson.

ARTICLES DUE FOR FEBRUARY ISSUE
DEADLINE: JANUARY 10

Leaders: Please provide articles for these coming events for the next *Enlightener* issue:

- ℵ Ash Wednesday
- ℵ Lent

All submissions to the *Enlightener* must include your name and phone number and be typed or printed. Submissions can be placed in the *Enlightener* bin in the Church Office (bottom bin) or emailed to erickinsey46@gmail.com. If you have questions, please call Eric Kinsey at 215.513.2237.

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Below you will find the chancel flower donation list for January 2021. Please review this list and contact the church office if you would like to remove, add, or update any information on the list.



Reminder—The requested donation for the chancel flower listing is \$25. Thank you!

January 3

In memory of Marie Evans's January 6th birthday from her daughter, Jeane, Bob Fritz, and family
In memory of Yvonne DelCiotto's January 6th birthday from her husband, Joe

January 10

In memory of Richard R. Schmidt's January 10th birthday from his cousins Bob and Jane Keim
In memory of Eileen Crockett Laird's January 13th birthday from her sister Pat and Jonathan and Ken Rieker

In memory of her husband Bill's birthday from Nancy Roberts

January 17

In memory of Pat Salter's birthday on January 17th from her family

January 24

In memory of Lorraine Badger's January 24th birthday from her daughter, Susan, and John Hendricks

In memory of Ethel Shellenberger's January 25th birthday from Lorene Ahrens

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Betty Kramper, Bonnie Weber's mother; Jeffrey Mininger, husband of Sally Mininger (known to most of St. John's family as Sally Tornero, mother of Heather and Rebecca Blake and Kim Christner); Bob Vass, husband of Rachael Long; Ron Huisenga's brother-in-law; Ruth Moyer, Jean Beggs's sister; and Gene Rhodes, husband of Joan and son-in-law of former St. John's pastor, Harold Ditzler, who passed away recently.



Journeying in Faith

A new year has started for our "Journeying in Faith" at St. John's. But as our Stewardship theme declares, it is "Through Thick and Thin" that we approach 2021.

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank all of those who participated in the Stewardship campaign in circumstances that we would not have imagined. Yes, the approximately 65 who responded with their Covenant cards was a significant drop in the number of responses, about 40% less than usual. There was a definite decrease in the cards that indicated giving as "I/We are able" as opposed to specific dollar amounts. Not having on-site services is the main reason.

The purpose of the Covenant campaign is twofold: to access your financial commitment for the coming year and, as a congregation, to bring forth those commitments as a symbol of unity during worship. Mailing in or dropping off your card simply did not have the same resonance. Without a doubt, the response should return to the usual number next year; without a doubt, your commitment to St. John's will still be strong.
Karen Methlie, Stewardship Chair



New from the Pews

As I write to you at the end of 2020, I can say with certainty that, in all my years as St. John's church mouse, I have never experienced a year like the one to which we are

bidding farewell. I suspect each of you can say the same! Best-laid plans went by the wayside, celebrations were postponed or radically altered, and the isolation experienced by many was as debilitating and devastating as the virus that upended everything. Many of you have lost loved ones, jobs, or sleep as you labored on the frontlines and in the trenches to save lives and keep the economy going.

As we look toward a new year, I think we would be wise to do what Pastor Sue and Pastor Addie invite us to do every week as we enter into worship: take a deep breath . . . or two, or three. Flipping the calendar page will not suddenly make everything better. Yes, there is hope, and light at the end of the tunnel, but we are not there yet, and we are still going to need to be patient, vigilant, careful, and willing to look out for our vulnerable neighbors as we step into 2021.

God has given us a new year but, keep in mind, every year is made up of months and weeks and days . . . and we can only live one day at a time. Jesus knew what he was talking about when he admonished his followers with these words: "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Mind you, he shared these words after reassuring his listeners that if God lovingly takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (and I am pretty sure Jesus added mice to his list of seemingly insignificant critters about whom God cares!), surely God will take care of us. To experience this gift and promise, though, we need to put God first in our lives, and doing that takes some intentionality and determination.

I figure, without all the usual hustle and bustle of the holiday season, I have time on my hands to carefully consider just how I will step—or scurry—into the new year. The slate is blank, the page is bare. I get to decide what little paw print I will leave on each page of my life's story, and so do you. Pandemic or no pandemic, we always get to choose how we will live the lives God has given us. May we choose wisely and carefully, making decisions that cause God to rejoice and God's people to be glad!

AMOS

Summary of Last Month And YTD Income And Expense	Nov 2020	Jan–Nov 2020
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Counters Discrepancies	6.00	6.00
Current Tithes/Offerings	31,508.20	332,624.64
Church School Current	50.00	50.00
Event Income/Fundraisers	900.00	3,938.00
Flowers	195.00	1,895.00
Investment Income	0.00	5,890.00
Rental Income	2,250.00	26,565.00
Use of Building Income	0.00	1,388.00
Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income	62.00	1,248.26
Interest Income, Savings Accounts	0.93	21.54
Total Income	34,972.13	373,626.44
Gross Income	34,972.13	373,626.44
Expense		
Salaries and Benefits	33,330.92	380,198.98
Elders Expenses	294.53	3,040.48
Deacons Expenses	473.46	2,873.59
Educators Expenses	311.89	1,395.09
Trustees/Building Expenses	351.32	11,609.63
Building Operation Expenses	3,049.77	43,887.17
Operating Expenses	3,522.84	49,878.53
Miscellaneous Expenses	0.00	1,512.26
Total Expense	41,334.73	494,395.73
Net Ordinary Income	-6,362.60	-120,769.29
Budgeted Transfers From Investments	7,817.33	80,100.63
Net Ordinary Income Plus Transfers	1,454.73	-40,668.66
Other Income/Expense		
Other Income		
Artist Series Income—Special	1,455.00	4,420.00
Benevolence Offerings	5,259.00	56,351.02
Special Accounts	3,979.00	55,719.68
Alternative Gift Market—Miscellaneous	5,377.00	5,377.00
Soup Sales	0.00	1,298.00
Total Other Income	16,070.00	123,165.70
Other Expense		
Benevolence Disbursements	5,053.00	60,627.92
Special Fund Expenditures	793.04	29,933.41
Alternative Gift Market	0.00	44.47
Artist Series Fund Expenditures	0.00	1,092.75
Immediate-Needs Expenses	0.00	16,895.00
Total Other Expense	5,846.04	108,593.55
Net Other Income	10,223.96	14,572.15
Net Income	3,861.36	-106,197.14
Net Income Plus Transfers	5,316.09	-26,096.51



Merry Christmas from the St. John's Artist Series!

Watch for the February Enlightener for an announcement regarding the next Artist Series event.

Patrons of the 2020-2021 St. John's Artist Series

Benefactor (\$200+)

A Friend, Lynne Bartholomew, Sandy and Scott Brown, Dennis and Ruth Ellman, Suzanne and Don Franks, David Furniss, Ken and Bonnie Hales, Leroy and Linda Horst, Phil and Wendy Hunt, Anne and Eric Kinsey, Bill and Judy Leslie, Rick and Wendy O'Connor, Dan and Lillian Panachyda

Sponsor (\$100-199)

Lorene Ahrens, Sue and Bob Bertollette, Marie Carota, Amy and Andy Faga, Bob and Jean Fehnel, Debby and Steve Hendricks, Lynn and Marilyn Hurley, Kim and Garen Paulson, Robert and Sandra Taylor, Scott and Liz Vanderburg

Donor (\$50-99)

Don and Nicole Groff, Susan and John Hendricks, Ruth Kinsey, Mary Lynne and Ray Snyder

Friend (\$25-49)

Ruth Moyer, Pricilla Ponist

While the concert series may be virtual, your support is still needed!

Please consider becoming a patron at any of the following levels:

Benefactor (\$200+) Sponsor (\$100-199) Donor (\$50-99) Friend (\$25-49)

Name as you would like it to appear in Artist Series Programs _____