



*“Like a shepherd you feed your flock, gathering the lambs and holding them close, and leading mother ewes with gentleness.”  
-Isaiah 40:11 (The Inclusive Bible)*



Beloved Church Family,

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” The Advent/Christmas season is upon us. Lights and decorations are going up everywhere we look, Christmas songs are playing in stores and restaurants, and holiday sales are everywhere on the TV, in our mailbox, and on our social media feeds. We’re compiling lists for all the things we need to complete before the parties, concerts, and family celebrations. Plus, there are so many things to buy and/or make before the big day – Christmas itself.

Although this time can be magical and filled with joy and wonder, it can also be a source of abundant worry. Do I have enough money for all the presents and food I need to buy? Can I get all this done in time? Will my family be able to all be together for the holiday? How can I make this Christmas perfect for my family?

It can also be a time when sadness and loneliness creep into our hearts and minds. We miss the glow of holidays past. We miss the people who are no longer with us. We miss the sunlight and dread the growing darkness. “Blue Christmas” names a very present reality for many in our communities this time of year when expectations can run high and resources run low.

These realities, coupled with the US Surgeon General’s advisory that names loneliness and isolation as an epidemic, signal that the most important thing we can prioritize this time of year isn’t the meal, or the decoration, or the presents – it’s our *presence* with one another that is most important. We are called to be present and to remember God’s presence with us always.



In scriptures like the one above from Isaiah 40, we are reminded that God’s presence is with us, gathering us in and guiding us with gentleness. And, in Advent, we are reminded of the amazing choice God made to come to earth and be present with us in the physical body of Jesus. As we remember the miracle of Christ’s presence among us, we also heed the call to be the gift of presence for our loved ones, for our communities, and for those who need it most.

Throughout the Advent season, we will listen to God’s word and receive the invitation to be present with hope, peace, joy, love, and light. We will lean into these themes during worship each week, but there will also be ways that we can practice the gift of presence throughout the season. Here are a few ideas.

- 1) You can sign up to light the advent candles and lead our opening liturgy one week.
- 2) You can volunteer to ring the bell on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> at the IGA to raise funds for the Salvation Army drive. Over 80% of this money stays in Trenton to help folks in need right in our own back yard.
- 3) You can donate money to help fund the Snack Pack Program and make sure that children throughout Clinton County have enough food to eat on the weekends when school lunches aren’t available. (More info further into this newsletter).
- 4) You can bring pajamas for the children at Kindercottage.

- 5) You can sign up to host fellowship hour one Sunday, and ask for help if you need it.
- 6) You can send a card, make a phone call, or visit with a loved one or community member who might be feeling lonely this time of year.
- 7) You can share your presence at the Rainbow Christmas Concert on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM.

There are so many opportunities for us to truly be the presence of Christ for each other this time of year, AND, our presence might just be the exact present someone needs. My prayer for each of you this Advent and Christmas is that you remember that God is with you now and always, that you feel the glow of Christ's light in your life especially on the darkest days, that you know how important your presence is in the world, and that you do not need to have the best decorations, biggest family, or most expensive presents to make others happy. Your presence is the best gift of all.

*In Love and Hope,  
Pastor Christy Smith*

## Advent Fund Drive for the Snack Pack Program

This Advent Season, you are invited to help us feed the children of Clinton County by giving to our fund drive for the Clinton County Snack Pack program, which is run by our sister in Christ, and member of St. John UCC, Jenn Thompson. Her ministry helps to **feed over 200 children locally** each weekend during the school year. These children receive free or reduced-price lunches through school during the week but are left without resources on the weekend. To help fill this hunger gap, the Snack Pack Program steps in and delivers shelf stable food that is either fully ready to eat or is simple enough for kids to prepare.

This vital ministry is not inexpensive. **It costs \$17 each month to feed one child** on the weekends, so it costs **\$170 to feed one child for the whole school year.**

To help meet this need, **St. John UCC is setting a goal to raise enough funds to sponsor 10 children** for an entire school year. This means we are hoping to raise **\$1,700** for the Snack Pack Program. To keep track of our progress each week, we will have a poster in worship with a Christmas Tree printed on it. Each week, we will place an ornament sticker on the tree for every \$17 dollars we've raised. Our goal is to have 100 ornaments on the tree by Christmas Day. **There will be a special gift box (see picture) next to our normal offering plate to receive your donations for this Fund Drive. Please make any checks out to St. John UCC and write Snack Pack in the memo line.**



Together, we have the ability, the faith, and the heart to make a huge difference in the lives of 10 children – God's children – in our community. I'm excited to see how we rise to this challenge and meet our goal together!



## St. John Prayer List

Chris Bates	Jed Bates	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann
Marian Funk	Denise Hamilton	Pauline Kraemer	Marian Nelson
Rogers Family	Connie Zimmers		

Cathy Haller (continuing health concerns)  
 Orville Rinderer (continuing health concerns)

Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Ken Fritz	(Cathy Haller's brother)
Rich Fritz	(Cathy Haller's father)
Leo Funk	(Marian Funk's great grandson)
Richard Haller	(Cathy Haller's brother-in-law)
Roik Hockenberger	(Heather Netemeyer's father)
Logan Miller	(Ron & Kimberly Tremmel's son)
Crystal Minton	(Kim Tremmel's deceased friend's adopted daughter)
Craig Wheeler	(Kim Tremmel's friend's husband who has cancer)
Tammy Press	(Marian Funk's niece)
Connie Shildt	(Marian Funk's sister)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)



Pastor Christy will be in the office Tuesday - Friday from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM but will make appointments if needed. Contact her by calling her cell phone at 618-973-3040. To contact Bev Adams, the church office administrator, please email her at [stjohntrenton@gmail.com](mailto:stjohntrenton@gmail.com) or call 224-9828 Monday through Friday.



### DECEMBER Birthdays

**Randy Rinderer** December 1  
**Jamie Truscott** December 1  
**Scott Mohme** December 3  
**Cory Williamson** December 8  
**Jordan Groennert** December 8  
**Evan Bair** December 8  
**Caren Hodges** December 13

**Matthew Koentz** December 15  
**Tim Materkowski** December 19  
**James Gilomen** December 19  
**Nathan Kunz** December 19  
**Charlie Bair** December 20  
**Gary Schwend** December 31  
**Hank Henderson** December 31

### DECEMBER Anniversaries

**Karen & Frank Kunz** December 2  
**Maggie & Adam Gerstner** December 5  
**Ron & Kimberly Tremmel** December 5

**Brandy & Jerry Sells** December 7  
**Tim & Kassie Fisher** December 21  
**Mary Lou & Del Lurtz** December 30



#### DECEMBER COUNCIL MEMBER ON DUTY

Hank Henderson



# Virtual Worship Services

Virtual services continue for those wishing to attend. We want to make worship as convenient as possible for our members and the community. Please see our website or our Facebook page for the Zoom link.

- To call in with phone audio only, call
- **1-312-626-6799** and then the meeting ID:
- **8436488110** followed by the pound sign.
- Password, if needed, will be: **62293**

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- *To everyone who gave food items for the Thanksgiving Baskets*
- *To those who came to the Trenton Council of*

*Churches Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service*

- *To Mike Williamson and Russ Heuberger for their "behind the scenes" work*
- *To the Christmas Elf who came by and decorated the new tree in the narthex*

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## OFFICE CLOSURES



The office will be closed on Monday, December 25 and also Monday, January 1 for the holidays.

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**CONGRATULATIONS** to Justin Groennert and Shannon Schuetz! They were married on Saturday, November 25 in

Aviston, Illinois. Justin is the son of John and Lisa Groennert and the grandson of Betty Sappington and the late Richard Sappington. The couple is living in Aviston, Illinois.

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Please keep the family of Don Stalcup, who passed away November 28<sup>th</sup>, in your prayers.

He was known by many in the community and was a friend and neighbor of Hank and Laurie Henderson and their children.

## Trivia Corner

This month's trivia is about events before the birth of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke.



1. Whose conception was first announced to his parents by the angel Gabriel? (Hint: it wasn't Jesus) Super bonus points if you can name the mom and dad of this baby.
2. Days after Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she would conceive a child before her marriage to Joseph, who did she go to hastily tell?
3. What happened when Mary greeted this person?
4. After the first baby was born, what prophecy did this baby's dad give? Bonus point if you know how this prophecy and the season of Advent are related.
5. Why did Joseph and Mary have to travel while she was pregnant with Jesus? Bonus if you know why specifically they had to go to Bethlehem.
6. What happened after Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem?

Answers are on page 6

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## Advent Candle Lighting

Advent begins December 3rd and we are in need of people or families wanting to light Advent candles and read on December 24th, for the Christmas Eve Service. If you would be able to do the lighting and some reading, please sign up on the sheet in the narthex.

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## BOOK CLUB

The Book Club will be meeting on Wednesday, January 10, to discuss two fictional novels, "The House in the Cerulean Sea" by TJ Klune and "Remarkably Bright Creatures"

by Shelby Van Pelt. Klune's book tells of a government official who travels to an orphanage on a distant island to determine if six magical children are likely to bring about the end of days. Van Pelt's book is of a recent widow, her son's mysterious death and how an octopus unearths the truth for her. Both books are in the library for check out.







## Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship

The J.O.Y. ladies will pack up cookies for those members who need a little extra holiday cheer. If you can, please bring two dozen cookies to church on Sunday, December 10. The ladies will repackage them and deliver the cookies in time for Christmas.

The SUV rolled out for Kindercottage on Tuesday carrying the following items: 12 rolls of toilet tissue, nine rolls of paper towels, 3275 baby wipes, and 425 diapers. In addition, there were 18 boxes of mac and cheese which the staff immediately packed in the Thanksgiving basket they were preparing. The staff passes along Thanksgiving wishes and thanks for your generosity. We always take PJs in December. The babies are sizes 18 months to 2T. Bigger kids are 2T, 3T, 4T, and 6X. Finding unisex pajamas makes it easier to be sure everyone gets a pair that fits and has a new pair for Christmas morning. The December trip will be on December 19.

## FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

**The next Fellowship Breakfast will be Tuesday, December 5 at 8:00 AM at Good Ol' Days in New Baden.** Come join us for an enjoyable breakfast with others. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome!



## *I'm Dreaming of a St. John's Logo*



The Council is interested in collaborating together to create a logo for our church. This logo would be used on emails, advertising, newsletters, and on social media. Logos are meant to help identify an organization. It would help to evoke certain feelings, identities, and missions associated with our church community and hopefully become a point of connection with the community.

Would you like to be a part of the creation process? We'd love to collaborate with you to dream and create a logo with you! We invite you to share what you envision this logo to look like. What ideas, feelings, ministries, etc. would you like to see shared through the logo? What do you want the logo

to say to the community about who we are, what we believe, and what we're about? And, if you have creative talent, we'd love to see any drawings you come up with.

We're hoping to have some ideas by the annual meeting in January that we can discuss together as a congregation. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing what ideas you have for our logo.



## Council Meeting Highlights – November 21, 2023

- Planning a support project for advent for Snack Pack Program.
- Would like to design a church logo. The logo would represent who we are as a congregation. Will need input from congregation important. Would like any artistic contributions.
- Tentative date for Annual Meeting January 28, 2024. Would also include budget meeting.
- Beginning to work on budget. Input from members welcome.
- Next council meeting date is Tuesday, December 19 at 6:00 PM.

# ISC News



With the retirement of the Illinois South Conference's communication director (Lynnette Schuepbach) at the end of the year, the Conference is looking to fill this part-time position immediately. If you or someone you know is passionate about the mission of our Conference, has experience in creating and designing communication materials such as newsletters, websites, and social media posts, is committed to helping the Conference stay up on the current technology tools and trends, and would be an asset to the Illinois South Conference team, please send your resume and a portfolio of your work to our Conference Minister, Rev. Shana Johnson at [sjohnson@iscucc.org](mailto:sjohnson@iscucc.org) or our Executive Administrator, Debbie Kesner at [dkesner@iscucc.org](mailto:dkesner@iscucc.org) for the job description, qualifications we are looking for in the right candidate, and more information about this exciting ministry opportunity.



## Trivia Corner Answers

1. "But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.'" Luke 1:13
2. "In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth." Luke 1:39-40
3. "For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy." Luke 1:44
4. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins." Luke 1:76-77 Bonus: The season of Advent begins a four week period of preparation for the nativity of Jesus Christ at Christmas. The Advent Season is all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's birth in the world as it is today.
5. "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered (to pay taxes). Luke 2:2 Bonus: "Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David." Luke 2:4
6. "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room." Luke 2:7

## Rainbow Preschool News

Happy Thanksgiving! As I sit here and write this newsletter, I can't believe how fast the month has flown by! It seems just like yesterday we were wearing our pj's to school and celebrating Halloween and then we blinked and here we are celebrating Thanksgiving.

Our students have had a busy month of learning. We celebrated Veteran's Day and had the day off to celebrate and honor all the men and women who serve and have served to protect our freedom and our country. In honor of Veteran's Day, we read the story "A Yellow Ribbon for Daddy", colored the American flag, made a heart using red, white, and blue construction paper to honor our Veterans and made a red, white, and blue star necklace.





Our MWF students have been hard at work learning to write their first and last names, learning their addresses and telephone number, identifying, and writing letters of the alphabet, and writing their numbers from 1-20. Our TU/TH students have been learning to write their first names, identifying the letters of the alphabet and numbers 1-15. Both classes continue to work hard on learning shapes, the sounds that each letter makes, and so much more.

Pastor Christy came in and read the stories “Bone Soup” and “God Gave Us Thankful Hearts.” Both classes really enjoyed the stories and listened very well and asked questions after the stories where read.

We had our second share day of the year. We asked each of the students to bring in something they are thankful for to share with their classmates. Everyone did a good job listening and where very patient when their classmates shared what they brought.

Happy November Birthday to Remi K. on November 12<sup>th</sup> and Ms. Misty on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Our students have been busy rehearsing the songs that they will perform at our Christmas concert. We are asking that both classes attend school on Friday December 15<sup>th</sup> so they can practice together before their performance that evening. More information about this will be sent home.

**Reminder**

**Reminder**

**Reminder**

A few reminders for December:

- Please make sure your child has a warm jacket, hat, and mittens. Weather permitting; we will continue to go outside.
- Tuition is due by Thursday December 7<sup>th</sup> and Friday December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Tuesday/Thursday class to attend school Friday December 15<sup>th</sup> to practice with the Monday/Wednesday/Friday class. All students need to be at school by 8:30 and will be dismissed at 11:30. More information will be sent about the evening concert.
- Tuesday December 19<sup>th</sup>- Last day of school for Tuesday/Thursday Class and Wednesday December 20<sup>th</sup> for the Monday/Wednesday/Friday class.
- Christmas break- Thursday December 21<sup>st</sup> Tuesday January 2<sup>rd</sup>. Class will resume on Wednesday January 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Just a reminder with winter coming, if Wesclin school district cancels school due to weather we will be closed as well. You will receive a text or an email letting you know.

If you ever have any questions or concerns about your child, please get in touch with me.

Hope you all had a great Thanksgiving!

Ms. Misty



*And have a*



Merry Christmas  
&  
Happy New Year!

## CHRISTMAS FUND

Among the many letters and notes the Pension Boards receives from recipients of gifts made possible by contributions to the Christmas Fund were these words from a retired clergywoman in Kentucky:

“Each year in the face of your unwavering faithfulness it becomes harder to know how to thank you! In such an unpredictable time with not only aging, but Covid and violent world events, faithfulness and something I can count on that brings concrete relief to ease the burden is a blessing.

“You have stood by me and given me financial help when I needed it. It has allowed me to live in a sustainable way where I, too, can show the faithfulness of God to my neighbor and the world. Thank you from the heart!”

Last year, because of your gifts, the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.3 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Please give as generously as you are able this year!



### ***In 2022, gifts to the Christmas fund enabled:***

Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)

Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)

Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)

Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

*The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Please consider a donation to this fund. We will be accepting donations on Sunday, December 24th or you can donate anytime on our website [www.stjohntrenton.org](http://www.stjohntrenton.org).*

## 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OFFERING

We will be collecting for Our Church’s Wider Mission on Sunday, December 31st. Donation envelopes are in the narthex. Donations are also accepted on our website.



*Ministries, and Pension Boards.*

*OCWM funds the work the United Church of Christ does in its Associations and Conferences (such as our very own Illinois South Conference) and in the national and global church. OCWM funds are invested in programs, resources, and tools needed to keep local UCC churches strong, effective, and growing. Programs and resources such as Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General*

***WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!***