

“For everything there is a season  
and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to break down and a time to build up;  
a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance”

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 3b-4**

Beloved Church Family,

During the first half of 2024, I’m taking time through these newsletter articles to dive into some of the meaningful aspects of my Sabbatical time last Summer. Last month, I focused on the organizational practices and readings I found helpful, and this month, I’d like to talk to you about balance. As I write this, I’ve been reading up on how hot air balloons work for my sermon on Sunday. There are several different facets to the process of flying one of these colorful balloons, but the theme that connects all of them together is “Balance”.

Heat is the main source of power for the hot air balloon. The fire heats the air within the balloon, and the hot air rises above the cooler air outside the balloon. This heat is balanced by vents built into the top of the balloon and the opening at the bottom. When you want to adjust how fast the balloon is rising or want to begin to descend, you can open the vents to balance the hot air inside with the cold air outside.

In addition to these two elements – heat and vents – there is also the ballast that helps bring balance. The ballast is weight that is either tied to the outside of the basket or stored within it, and some of it can be released to either speed up ascent or slow down descent. The weight also serves as a steadying balance to the movement of the air, so that the balloon isn’t tossed or flipped by the whims of the wind. The balloon needs all these things to help it successfully function in the world. It needs the heat to uplift it, the vents to lower it, and the ballast to stabilize it.

Everything on earth exists in a delicate balance, whether it’s rock plates that push against each other in the depths of the earth, tall trees that have roots to hold firm and tops that sway with the breeze, or tiny bees that gather their food from flowers while also helping those flowers reproduce and spread. It is awe-inspiring to look at all of the intertwining and intricate systems in the world that God envisioned and created.

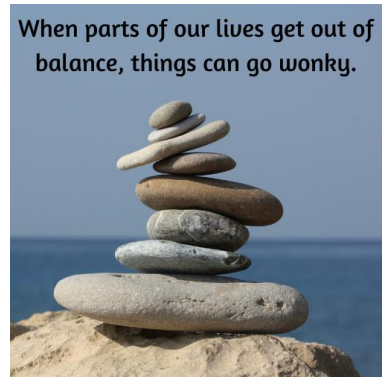
However, we know from lived experience that this balance God created isn’t always well kept, and sometimes, things go wonky. The pressure in the earth becomes too strong, the plates shift, and the earth quakes. A tree bends so much from the winds of a storm that it’s trunk snaps and it falls to the forest floor. A product made to help crops survive also ends up hurting bees, and there are fewer bees to help propagate plants. We cannot hope to control all aspects of balance on earth, but, we know that there are things we *can* do to help take care of this precious earth God entrusted to us.

The same is true for our own lives. We, like a man-made hot air balloon or a God-made ocean, need balance to function well or be well. When parts of our lives get out of balance, things can go wonky. And so, it is important to be aware of the pressures that are present in our lives, creating tension like the plates moving against one another in the earth. What bends us so far that we might break like a tree in a storm? What sends our lives into a tailspin like a hot air balloon without ballast?

These are things I pondered, prayed about, and worked on last summer on sabbatical. There are so many things that happen in our lives that we cannot control. Sometimes life takes a turn in a direction we could never anticipate. However, with God’s help and wisdom, there are also many things we *can* do to help bring balance to our lives in the midst of life’s twists and turns. Here are a few tips I have found helpful, and you might find some truth in them too.



- **Make a list of priorities** – there is a limit to our resources, whether it’s time, finances, or energy. Create a list of what is most important to you and make sure to set time aside for those things throughout your week.
  - o **Include time with God** – God is a stabilizing and grounding force in our lives. Jesus often took time away with God to re-focus himself on what matters and seek wisdom. This time with God helped to steady him during the storms of life, and as Christ’s disciples (aka: students), we are called to follow his example. Nurturing our relationship with God every day – whether it’s for one minute or one hour – helps us bring balance in our own lives. You can read a daily devotional, turn to a random scripture, talk to God, or sit in silence as you listen for God’s voice.
  - o **Include self-care** – We have often been taught that taking care of ourselves is selfish, but there is a difference between caring for yourself and *only* caring about yourself. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. That means we *must* love ourselves, too, if we are to love our neighbors well. As they say at the beginning of every flight, “Please put your own mask on first.” When you are well cared for, you are much more capable of caring for others.
- **Create boundaries** – Once you’ve decided what is most important in your life and what is essential to your balance and wellbeing, create loving boundaries around those things. This process can be difficult because when we say “yes” to the things that really matter it means saying “no” to something else. While we might want to say “yes” to everyone and everything, it’s simply not possible. Learning how to respond with a healthy and loving “no” to some things is necessary if we hope to leave room for the important things that bring balance to our lives. (This also means we need to be respectful of other people’s boundaries as they try to leave room for their priorities.)
- **Identify what energizes you** – There are going to be tasks in our lives that are necessary, but also drain us of energy. Do you loathe doing laundry? Is stepping foot in the store the bane of your existence? Would you rather eat dirt than clean the litter box again? In the case of a balloon full of nice, hot air, these undesirable but necessary activities can act like the vent that opens and lets all the air out. We can feel deflated, zapped of energy, and unable to fly on. And so, it is necessary to identify activities and things that fill you up. What helps fill up your balloon with enough heat to rise again? Feeling drained after doing the dishes? Set aside time to sit down and dive into a book you’ve been wanting to read. Feeling emotionally zapped after a long, but necessary meeting? Take 15 minutes for a relaxing walk outside. Allow yourself the time and space to re-energize with a favorite activity. Your body, your mind, and your spirit will thank you.



To be sure, these aren’t things I was able to master over one summer, but they are life-giving seeds that have been planted, and I hope to nurture them as I continue to move and grow in this one beautiful life I’ve been given by God. I’m so thankful for the opportunity and space to seek out these important nuggets of wisdom, and I hope they can inspire and help you as much as they have for me.

*With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith*



*Mid-Lenten Service: March 6 at 6:00 PM*

*Maundy Thursday: March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM*

*Ecumenical Easter Sunrise @ St. John: March 31<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 AM*

*Easter Service & Communion: March 31<sup>st</sup> at 9:30 AM*



## St. John Prayer List

Chris Bates	Jed Bates	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann
Cathy Haller	Denise Hamilton	Leon Jones	Pauline Kraemer
Marian Nelson	Billie Rinderer	Orville Rinderer	Rogers Family
Mickey Williamson	Connie Zimmers		

Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Ken Fritz	(Cathy Haller's brother)
Richard Haller	(Cathy Haller's brother-in-law)
Logan Miller	(Ron & Kimberly Tremmel's son)
Tammy Press	(Marian Funk's niece)
Connie Shildt	(Marian Funk's sister)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)
Craig Wheeler	(Kim Tremmel's friend)



Pastor Christy is usually 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. Bev Adams, office administrator, will usually be in the office 9 AM to 3 PM, Monday through Friday, but her schedule may vary. Please contact her at [stjohntrenton@gmail.com](mailto:stjohntrenton@gmail.com) or call 224-9828 .

### MARCH Birthdays



<b>Lauren Holloway</b> March 4	<b>Kris Schaeffer</b> March 20
<b>Bev Rogers</b> March 6	<b>Tish Bates</b> March 21
<b>Rick Nelson</b> March 9	<b>Pehg Zeller</b> March 24
<b>Owen Szpila</b> March 9	<b>Harper Gerstner</b> March 24
<b>Mike Williamson</b> March 12	<b>Lonna Patton</b> March 25
<b>Cheryl Bair</b> March 15	<b>Stan Clark</b> March 27
<b>Jedediah Bates</b> March 15	<b>Nicole Wernle</b> March 27
<b>Chris Becker</b> March 19	<b>Lucas Haller</b> March 27
<b>Jeral Szpila</b> March 19	<b>Gracie Johnson</b> March 29
<b>Laura Wesselmann</b> March 19	<b>Deb Athmer</b> March 31



### MARCH Anniversaries



**Billie & Orville Rinderer** March 1  
**Mike & Mickey Williamson** March 3



**MARCH COUNCIL  
MEMBER ON DUTY**



Lonna Patton

# 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 the J.O.Y. ladies for putting on another phenomenal Ash Wednesday program!*
- *To everyone who have been helping manage all the rummage sale items*
- *To all who helped out with the Chili & Soup Drive-Thru*
- *Special Thanks to Teresa Bopp for donating the beef for the chili and soup*

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## FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

The Fellowship Breakfast is the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 AM at Good Ol' Days in New Baden.



So mark your 2024 calendars for March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, July 2,

Aug. 6, Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5 & Dec. 3. Come join us for an enjoyable breakfast with others. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome!

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## Chili/Soup Drive-Thru Report



Quarts sold:134 (81 soup & 53 chili)  
Total Sales: \$1363 (includes \$23 in donations)  
Expenses will be advertisements

## Trivia Corner



This month will have questions from Exodus 32 when Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving God's commandments and instructions.

1. When Moses did not come down from Mount Sinai after several days, what did his brother Aaron tell the people to give him? Bonus if you know what he made with these items.
2. What was God's reaction to what was made?
3. What did Moses then say to God?
4. What was Moses' reaction to what was made?
5. How did Aaron justify what he did?
6. What was the punishment that God gave?

Answers are on page 5

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**Congratulations to Sinjon Zimmers and his family** as he was baptized on Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

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## POP UP SUNDAY SCHOOL

March 17, 2024,

The Real Story of St. Patrick  
NO Snakes, NO Leprechauns, NO Pot of Gold

- Real Shamrocks
- Shamrock Shakes
- Green Kisses Matching Game
- God's Green Wonder



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## GREETING CARDS



Don't forget to sign the greeting cards in the vestibule when you come to worship service on Sundays. The Sunshine Ministry appreciates your help in keeping connected with members

# Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship



For the first time Kindercottage asked for trash bags and the congregation of St. John delivered 385 trash bags on February 21. 108 rolls of toilet tissue were also delivered along with 3 reams of copy paper, 60 pencils, and 48 bottles of hand sanitizer. Late in January, the director called with an emergency request for diapers and we were able to deliver 3 cases of diapers the next day. Next delivery date is March 20<sup>th</sup> and Kindercottage has asked for paper plates, paper napkins and plastic utensils. Thank you to all who help with this mission project.

## CHURCH FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

**Brotherhood Fast-Break-er! Free Fellowship Breakfast**  
**Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>-Immediately following worship**

**Biscuits & Sausage Gravy - Egg Scrambles - Pork Sausage - Potato Casserole**

The gentlemen cooks of the St. John's Brotherhood would like to invite everyone attending worship on Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> to join them for another FREE 'fast breaking' breakfast immediately following the morning service. So set aside the morning gruel and cold porridge of Lent and on the morning of Palm Sunday plan on enjoying some hot food and warm fellowship. We look forward to seeing you!

## RUMMAGE SALE

There are rummage sale items coming in and being sorted, but if you still have a closet or a cabinet in need of cleaning out, now is the time to do it! In order to accommodate those who wish to bring in items, the vestibule is open Tuesdays and Thursdays through the month of March. *So bring your clean and serviceable books, household items, clothes, bedding, knick-knacks, decorations, toys* (no large items at this time and please no weapons or ammunition) and drop them off in the vestibule on any Tuesday or Thursday and we will do the rest. We appreciate your donations and look forward to another successful fundraiser.



## BOOK CLUB



The Book Club will be meeting on Wednesday, March 13, to discuss their newest pick, *Braiding Sweet Grass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer which is available for check out in the church library. As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on "a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise." Check the library for availability.

## Easter Flowers

If you would like to help decorate the church by purchasing a plant in honor, memory or celebration of a loved one or occasion, please fill out the order form with this newsletter and send it to the church along with a check or cash for the amount. Lilies are \$13 while tulips and hyacinths are \$12. Orders must be turned in by March 10<sup>th</sup>.



# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



The theme for VBS will be Camp Firelight and will take place at the First United Methodist Church on June 3, 4, 5 from 6-8 PM and June 6 from 6-6:30 PM for our Family Night. We will need volunteers to do many things and we will need children to attend. Exact details are still being planned. Watch the bulletin and the April and May newsletters for information on VBS and the Pop Up Sunday School days at St. John.



## Council Meeting Highlights – February 20, 2024

- Prayer bench is being donated by the Campbell Family
- Discussed needing to begin a long-range financial plan
- Confirmation is planned for May 12, 2024
- Lenten soup supper March 6
- Breakfast served by the men on March 24 after the service
- St. John hosts the sunrise service and breakfast this year



## Trivia Corner Answers

1. Aaron told them to "Take off the gold rings...and bring them to me." Bonus: Aaron melted the gold and made a calf statue which the people proclaimed their god. Exodus 32:1-4
2. God had wrath that was "hot against them and I may consume them." Exodus 32:10
3. Moses reminded God he had just saved the people from Egypt and to remember the promise given to the ancestors to multiply their descendants and to give them land to inherit. Exodus 32:11-13
4. When Moses saw the people dancing around the golden calf, his "anger burned hot and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it." Exodus 32:15-20
5. Aaron said that the people were wicked and asked him for gods to be made. Exodus 32:22-23
6. God sent a plague on the people because they made the calf. Exodus 32:35

## Rainbow Preschool News

### *Goodbye February and Hello March!*

Our students have been very busy bringing in items for the alphabet box and sharing what they brought for the letters we are working on for the week. If your child forgets to bring something we always remind them to bring it the next day they are in class, or we can help make something. Both classes have been doing a fantastic job bringing their homework back. By the time you read this we will have completed the letters A thru L.



Our MWF students performed at the JOY Ash Wednesday service, and they did a wonderful job performing. Thank you to everyone that came to see our students perform. Thank you to the JOY club for asking our students to perform and for the delicious cookies.

Pastor Christy stopped by and read God Gave Us Love and The Littlest Valentine. Students enjoyed both stories and love having Pastor Christy come in to read. We are looking forward to seeing what stories she brings in to read next month.

Our MWF students have been working on learning their address, birthdays, and telephone numbers. They have also been working on writing their letters and numbers, learning to tell time, and much more. The Tuesday/ Thursday students have been working on writing their first and last names, completed many alphabet projects, cutting projects, number projects, same or different worksheets, and coloring projects.



## Happy February birthday to:

Savannah P. on February 6<sup>th</sup>  
Trent L. on February 7<sup>th</sup>  
and Ezlynn B. on February 20<sup>th</sup>

Over the next few weeks, we will be doing assessments with the M/W/F class to see how they are doing and to see what things they need to work on before heading off to kindergarten in the fall. Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is in full swing. If you have not turned in your registration form for next school year, please do so as soon as possible. If you know anyone that would be interested in sending their child to Rainbow, please have them contact us. Our first day of school is still to be determined.

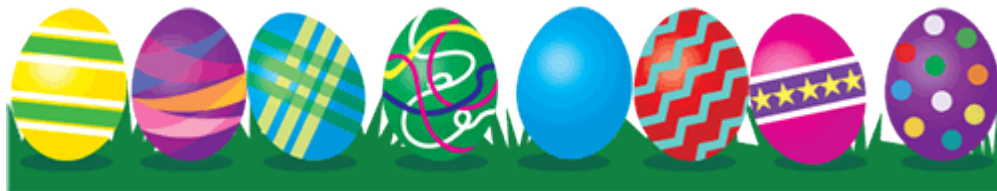


### Friendly reminders

- Tuition is due by Monday March 4<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday March 5<sup>th</sup>
- Picture day is Thursday March 7<sup>th</sup> and Friday March 8<sup>th</sup>
- Book orders are due March 11<sup>th</sup> (you can go online and submit your order)
- Please make sure your son/daughter brings a jacket. Weather permitting; we will try to go outside.
- Spring break is Thursday March 28th to Monday April 1st. Class resumes Tuesday April 2nd.
- End of the year program Wednesday May 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm
- Tentative last day of school TBD

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me!

*From Ms. Misty*



# Share the Light through One Great Hour of Sharing!

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

**OGHS offering will be taken on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Envelopes are in the narthex for your convenience.**

*Don Pedro Antonio Maldonado lives in the countryside of Honduras where he works on his crops and coffee plantations. In 2019, when the pandemic lockdown happened, it was difficult for Don Pedro and his family to access food and supplies needed to maintain their harvests. His wife even suggested she leave for the U.S. to find employment and help make ends meet. Despite their challenges, Don Pedro and his wife decided they would hold on to their deep faith and stay together in Honduras. Following this decision, they received the blessing they had been hoping for when Church World Service (CWS) and local partner CASM with funding assistance from One Great Hour of Sharing invited them to participate in a food security program. Through the program, Pedro received chickens, a piglet, sheep, and a cow, was given intense training in caring for these animals and also learned how to start a vegetable garden.*

*Today Don Pedro invites his neighbors to his home to share what he is doing. He says, "I teach them by doing the job, not just giving them theory. They see that if I can do it, our community, which faces limitations, can do it too." He added that since joining the program, his family has made a good income that will allow them to maintain a happy life together in their country. Don Pedro credits all of his success to God. His gratitude and desire to share these blessings makes him a blessing to the rest of the community. His family can stay planted where they are and share the light in their community.*





## Order Your Easter Flowers

\*Please use this form to order plants for the altar on Easter Sunday.

**\*Forms MUST be turned in no later than March 10!**

I/We would like to order the following plant(s) for Easter:

Lilies at \$13.00 per plant

Tulips at \$12.00 per plant

Hyacinths \$12.00 per plant

I/We would like the plant(s) to be listed in the bulletin as follows:

**Your Name:**

**Given by (Individual or Family):**

**In Memory/ Honor/ Celebration of:**

**Amount to be paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

(Put “Easter Flowers” on the memo line of your check)

**You may place your order form and check in the collection plate at church,  
or mail it to St. John UCC, 21 N. Walnut Street, Trenton, IL, 62293.**

*Thank you for sharing the beauty of your flowers with us!*