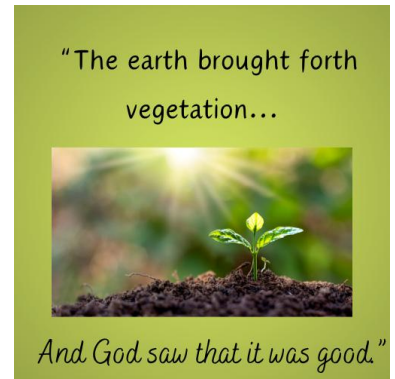


“Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.”

And it was so.

The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.” – Genesis 1:11-12



Beloved Church Family,

For the last few months, I’ve been taking the opportunity to share some of my sabbatical experiences with you. In February, I shared some of my journey pertaining to growing in my organizational skills, and last month I talked about the search we are all on to find balance in our lives. As we move into April and see the earth bursting into life around us, I think it’s the perfect time to talk about the soul-filling experience of spending time with God in nature.



I love creek walking. It was one of my favorite pastimes at my parents’ property in Ava, IL when I was younger. We still lived in O’Fallon then, but my parents had purchased some property in Ava (that we refer to simply as, “the farm”). My dad would go there on the weekends to farm, hunt, and work on conservation projects with his high school buddies. However, my mom was working full time and taking night classes then, and my sister and I had busy schedules with band, school, and friends, so the three of us ladies didn’t make it down to the farm much. When we did get to head down for the weekend, though, I tried to go walking in the creek whenever the weather allowed.

The creek weaves its way throughout the expansive property, and so, as a kid, there was always a new part to splash in and explore. There was one spot, however, that I went back to repeatedly. It’s a bend in the stream that, at the time, was enfolded by trees and brush. The water was a little deeper there, and I could swim in its cool water on hot days, but there was also a nice, pebbly beach I liked to sit on and look at the small rocks. To add to all of this, a large tree had fallen away from the creek and its big maze of twisting roots had lifted up and shown itself, like a piece of art, to the beach. It was a place of peace, exploration, wonder, safety, and reflection.



What I remember most about this spot, though, are the prayers I sent out there. I would make tiny, rudimentary rafts out of leaves or twigs, and I would send my whispered prayers away on the current until they were out of sight around the bend. Or, I’d tell my prayers to a particularly unique rock and then throw it into the creek like an offering. I always felt so serious and rather grown up creating my own rituals and sending out prayers in my quest to connect to God on the banks of the creek.

I went to church with my family nearly every week, and we sat alongside our extended family and church family as we worshiped God and learned about Jesus in that beautiful place. From my vocation as a pastor, you might be able to guess that I still really love Sunday worship and cherish the beauty, safety, and community found in the church sanctuary. However, a truth I knew even as a child praying on the banks of the creek is that God’s sanctuary extends far beyond the walls of our buildings. The first sanctuaries ever created were made by God’s own hand and can be seen in the beauty of nature all around us.





This summer, while I was on sabbatical, we spent a lot of time with God out in nature, and I allowed myself to lean back into that wonder and awe I had as a child. I enjoyed time on the beach in TX, played in the waters of the Black River in Southern Missouri, relaxed in hot spring-fed pools in Glenwood Springs, and stood in awe of the Grand Canyon that had been sculpted by the Colorado River over millions of years. Out of all the places we were able to go, however, my favorite by far was visiting Zion National Park and going “creek” walking again for the first time in a long, long time. I must admit, it was much more taxing navigating the Virgin River than it was in our small creek in Ava, but the experience was just as holy. As I lifted silent prayers along our hike, I couldn’t help but remember our little creek and the prayers

it carried for me.

In the midst of the busyness of life, it’s so easy to miss the many places we see God every day. But, I would guess that each of us has come upon a sight in nature that broke through the hustle and bustle of your day and made you stop to marvel at God’s amazing handiwork. It might have been sunbeams breaking through the clouds, the beautiful watercolors of the sky at sunset, a cardinal sitting outside your window, a tree with bright flowers in bloom, a vast, green field filled with golden tasseled corn stalks, a bright rainbow after a storm, or any of the other amazing wonders of nature we are blessed to encounter.



This month, when God is bringing new life to the world all around us, I encourage you to keep your eyes open for those signs of God’s handiwork. When you find one, take a moment to stop (when it’s safe to do so) and offer a small prayer of thanksgiving for the beautiful sanctuary God has given us. And, may God use these sacred moments to bless and sustain you through any April showers, struggles, or setbacks this month might bring.

With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith



Thank you to everyone who participated in the Mid-Lenten Gathering Event and the Maundy Thursday Service in the chapel.

Special thanks to our worship team, Bonnie Arentsen, Laurie Henderson and Pastor Christy, for making the season of Lent special and spiritual.

We appreciate their work.

Mid-Lenten Gathering Event

Maundy Thursday Service



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)
Kurt Joseph	(Pastor Christy's friend)
Logan Miller	(Ron & Kimberly Tremmel's son)
Wendy Patterson	(Pastor Christy's cousin)
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 or call 224-9828 .



Birthday Blessings

APRIL Birthdays

Jennifer Rogers April 2
Kimberly Tremmel April 2
Aria Szpila April 5
Lainey Johnson April 6
Ken Graul April 7
John Roach April 7
Justin Groennert April 7
Lesley Koentz April 10

Erin Klein April 15
Karen Kunz April 16
Karen Krueger April 20
Mark Peters April 24
Garrett Wesselmann April 26
Matt Schaeffer April 27
Sydney Bair April 30



APRIL Anniversaries



Tim & Cheryl Bair April 16
Deb Sherman West April 16
Alex & Brenna Von Bokel April 17



**APRIL 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 have been continuing to help haul, carry, sort and categorize items for our rummage sale*

- *To Mike Williamson for all his maintenance work behind the scenes*

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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.

Breakfast dates: 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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Trivia Corner

After Moses was given the 10 Commandments from God, he was then told to make a place for the tablets. Questions this month are about making this place.



1. Why did God want this place made and what did God call it?
2. What items did God ask for in offering to make this place?
3. Who were the two men that Moses said God named to make this place?
4. Why did God choose these two men?
5. What other items were made to put in this place?

Answers are on page 5

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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



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HEARTFELT THANKS!

Bev Rogers would like to say she appreciated the time that she had getting together with her church family at the Mid-Lenten get together on March 6. It happened to fall on the same day as her birthday and she was touched by the cake brought by her daughters and feels that the singing of "Happy Birthday" by everyone was the best present ever.



♥♥♥♥ Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship ♥♥♥♥

The March trip to Kindercottage was completed on the 20th of March. The staff had requested paper and plastic ware for meal time. We delivered 698 plates, 426 spoons, 948 forks, 2180 paper napkins, and 58 cups. In addition, five rolls of trash bags that didn't make the February deadline were delivered. **The request for April is cleaning supplies. Anything you use at home can be used for cleaning at Kindercottage.** April will be our last delivery for the spring. During the months of May through July we will concentrate on the need for Brown Bag Lunches to feed the children of Trenton. That mission generally starts the day after Memorial Day with St. John going first in the rotation. There will be a need for monetary donations as well as donations of fresh fruit and veggies. Sweet treats are needed each week also. But we won't forget Kindercottage. We will gather school supplies to deliver early in August in time to get them to the kids before the school bells ring. You can start looking for the usual school supplies: pencils, glue, crayons, markers, etc. The donations from Trenton are always eagerly and thankfully received.

RUMMAGE SALE



We are coming down to the wire with the time that items can be donated, but if you still have a closet or a cabinet in need of cleaning out, now is the time to do it! The vestibule will continue to be open Tuesdays and Thursdays until April 11th. Donations will be closed by April 14th to give the rummage crew time to set everything up. *So bring your clean and serviceable books, household items, clothes, bedding, knick-knacks, decorations, toys* (please no weapons or ammunition). For furniture, please contact the office to arrange a time for drop-off. A sign-up sheet is out in the narthex for anyone who would like to help. We appreciate your donations and your time and we look forward to another successful fundraiser.



BOOK CLUB

The Book Club will be meeting on Wednesday, May 8, to discuss their newest pick, “*Tom Lake*” by Ann Patchet which is available for check out in the church library. A synopsis of the book: In the spring of 2020, Lara’s three daughters return to the family’s orchard in northern Michigan. While picking cherries, they beg their mother to tell them the story of Peter Duke, a famous actor with whom she shared both a stage and a romance years before at a theater company called Tom Lake. As Lara recalls the past, her daughters examine their own lives and their relationship with their mother, and are forced to reframe their understanding of the world they thought they knew. “*Tom Lake*” is a meditation on youthful love, married love, and the lives parents have led before their children were born. Both hopeful and elegiac, it explores what it means to be happy even when the world is falling apart.



Council Meeting Highlights – March 26, 2024

- Accepted resignation from Heather Netemeyer as music director.
- Discussed plan of replacement for Heather.
- Very appreciative of everyone who helped with Lenten Services and fellowship breakfast.
- Working on a survey to help with evaluation of church and setting goals.
- Next meeting date is Tuesday, April 23 at 6:00 PM.



Trivia Corner Answers

1. God said to Moses “They shall make me a sanctuary **so that I may dwell among them**...I show you... the pattern of the **tabernacle**...so you shall make it. They shall make an **ark**... You shall put the covenant that I am giving you into the ark.” Exodus 25:8-10, 16
2. Let whoever is of a generous heart bring the LORD’s offering: **gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen; goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, and fine leather; acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and gems**...” Exodus 35:4-9

3. Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the Lord has called by name **Bezalel**...and **Oholiab**...Exodus 35:30 & 34
4. **He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer** in blue, purple, and crimson yarns and in fine linen or by a weaver—by any sort of skilled worker or designer. Exodus 35:31-35.
5. “A **table** of acacia wood (and everything that goes with the table), a **lamp stand**...and all its utensils of pure gold , an **altar of incense** of acacia wood, **anointing oil** and the pure fragrant incense **the altar of burnt offering** of acacia wood...” Exodus 37:10 to 38:1



Another month has quickly passed by, and the school year is almost over. We hope everyone had a wonderful Easter and were able to spend it with family and friends.

By the time you read this we will have completed the letters A-R of the alphabet. Our students continue to do a great job listening and saying the letters after their classmates share what they brought for the letters we are doing for the week. Homework has been going very well, our younger students continue coming in each morning and tracing their first and/or last name. Our students in the M/W/F class have been working hard on learning their addresses and telephone numbers. Both classes have completed many projects ranging from alphabet, adding, color, cutting, numbers, and patterns.

In the weeks to come, I will be doing an assessment with our students who will be attending kindergarten in the fall. This helps us to find out what our students know and what they can work on at home over the summer to prepare them for the next chapter, kindergarten.

Thank you to Renee Stienmann from RMS studio for coming in and taking pictures.

Pastor Christy came in and read “Who is My Neighbor” and “Maybe God Is Like That Too”. We are looking forward to the month of April and to see what stories she will be reading to our classes.

A huge thank you goes out to the Rainbow Preschool Board for purchasing the book “Maybe God Is Like That Too” for each student as an Easter gift. Each child was excited to have their own copy of this wonderful book that Pastor Christy read to them.

Happy March birthday to Cam D. on March 14th. If your child has a summer birthday, an email was sent with a date that we will be celebrating your child’s birthday.

We are still enrolling students for the 2024-2025 school year. If you or anyone you know would like more information about our program, please have them contact me via email at rainbowpreschooltrentonil@gmail.com or by contacting us via facebook.



Reminders for April

- Tuition is due Thursday April 4th and Friday April 5th.
- End of the program is set for Wednesday May 15th at 7 pm. More information will be sent home at a later date.
- The last day of school for Tuesday/Thursday students is Thursday May 16th and Friday May 17th for Monday/Wednesday/Friday students.

From Ms. Misty



HELP WITH OUR BLOOD DRIVE

St. John will be hosting the American Red Cross on Monday, April 15th from 12:00 to 5:00 PM for a spring blood drive. **You can help in three ways:** 1. On the Sunday before we will need people to **set up the chapel** for the blood drive (no need to sign up, just stay after service to haul tables and chairs), 2. **Sign up to work** during the blood drive (sign-up sheet is in the narthex) 3. **Donate blood** by going to redcross.org to register. Click on “find blood drive” and enter zip code 62293.



Trenton Community Blood Drive

St John's United Church of Christ

Chapel
21 North Walnut
Trenton, IL 62293

Monday, April 15, 2024
12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For an appointment call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org

Bring a photo ID or your blood donor card, or two other forms of ID.

Eat a healthy meal and drink an extra 16 oz. of water and fluids before the donation.

Spring into action: Come give blood April 8-28 for a \$10 e-gift card to a merchant of your choice. PLUS, automatically be entered for a chance to win a \$7,000 gift card, there will be two lucky winners! Terms apply: rcblood.org/spring

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App