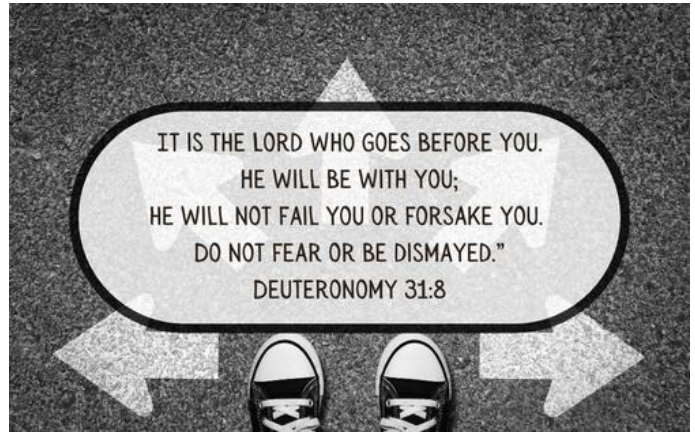


Beloved Church Family,

Being lost is scary. Anyone who has personally been lost or had to look for a lost child knows this to be true. I remember an occasion when I was very young (maybe 3 or 4) and got lost just a few blocks from home. Without letting my mom know, I went walking with two older neighbor girls, and for reasons I can't remember, I ended up alone on an unfamiliar street. Most of that experience is hazy as I look back, but I *do* remember feeling very, very afraid. What I remember most about that day, though, is the sound of my mom's voice calling from our front porch just a few streets away. It was her familiar (and rather upset) voice that helped me find my way home again. I knew that I was in deep trouble, but I was also just so glad to have gotten on familiar ground once again.



I believe many of you might, as you read this, be recalling similar experiences – moments when you have been lost or searching for someone who is lost. The racing heart, shallow breaths, and frantic thoughts come quickly in situations like this, and until we find that reorienting point – whether it's a sign, a voice, a face, or a familiar landmark – that feeling of dis-ease is hard to shake.

For the last month, we have been focusing on a journey through the important places in the Christmas story – Rome, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and the Stable. It covered many miles and offered us many lessons from both the places and the scriptures associated with each one. Along the way, we reflected on themes of longing, waiting, simplicity, humility, and care. However, what happens now that that part of the journey is done, and we've made it to Bethlehem and to the stable? As we move from the season of Advent into the 12 days of Christmas and then onto Epiphany, new parts of the journey continue for each of us. We all stand at a crossroads of sorts, as we find ourselves at the intersection of one year and the next.

Throughout Advent, we've had a map, and we've had familiar landmarks and well-walked routes to guide us, but what happens now as we move into a new year filled with unfamiliar territory? There is no map that we can follow. There is no paved road before us with ready-made signs and mile markers. It can feel frightening to look around and not know what lies ahead or which direction to take. Just like when we are physically lost, being spiritually, mentally, or emotionally lost can bring those familiar feelings of panic. What if we find ourselves somewhere we didn't want to go? What if we misstep and mess up? What if we lose ourselves and can't discern a way forward?

Friends, this is the gift of Epiphany. It is a festival we celebrate every year that commemorates the day the magi from the east found the young Jesus. It represents not only Jesus' manifestation on earth through his birth, but also his manifestation to the world beyond his own religious community. These wise people from the east traveled long and far following their intuition and a star that shone over their destination. And in the same way, we find ourselves privileged to be gifted with intuition, with wise ones by our side, and with the light of Christ as our guide.

It can feel overwhelming to stand on the threshold of a year filled with the unknown. But, as we are reassured in the scripture above from Deuteronomy, there is not a single place we could go that God will not be. God goes before us into an unknown future and offers us signs, wisdom, intuition, hope, and light to help us discern a faithful way ahead no matter what landscape surrounds us. With Creator, Christ, and Spirit as our guiding light, we can stand at this crossroads with faith that we do not go into the next phase of our journey alone or without direction. And, if you feel yourselves growing anxious or feeling lost, take a moment to pause, to breathe, and to reorient yourself. There is a voice, a sign, a light waiting to guide you, refocus you, and strengthen you for the journey ahead.

*With love and hope,
Pastor Christy*



For Those Who Have Far to Travel
-An Epiphany Blessing
by Jan Richardson
From her book "Circle of Grace"



If you could see the journey whole,
you might never undertake it,
might never dare
the first step that propels you
from the place you have known
toward the place you know not.

Call it one of the mercies of the road:
that we see it only by stages
as it opens before us,
as it comes into our keeping,
step by single step.

There is nothing for it
but to go,
and by our going
take the vows the pilgrim takes:

to be faithful to the next step;
to rely on more than the map;
to heed the signposts of intuition and dream;
to follow the star that only you will
recognize;

to keep an open eye
for the wonders that attend the path;
to press on
beyond distractions,
beyond fatigue,
beyond what would tempt you from the way.

There are vows
that only you will know:
the secret promises for your particular path
and the new ones you will need to make
when the road is revealed
by turns
you could not have foreseen.

Keep them, break them,
make them again;
each promise becomes part of the path,
each choice creates the road
that will take you to the place
where at last you will kneel

to offer the gift most needed—
the gift that only you can give—
before turning to go home by another way.



St. John Prayer List

Our Local Church Family

Chris Bates	Tish Bates	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann
Cathy Haller	Denise Hamilton	Pauline Kraemer	Mary Lou Lurtz
Marian Nelson	Lonna Patton	Billie Rinderer	Orville Rinderer
Rogers Family	Mickey Williamson	Lois Winkler	Connie Zimmers

Elaine Dupuis	(Mickey & Mike Williamson's friend)
Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Ken Fritz	(Cathy Haller's brother)
Richard Haller	(Cathy Haller's brother-in-law)
Angie Jones	(Pehg Zeller's friend)
Kurt Joseph	(Pastor Christy's friend)
Wendy Patterson	(Pastor Christy's cousin)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)
Craig & Lori Wheeler	(Kimberly & Ron 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. Beverly Adams, office administrator, will usually be in the office 9 AM to 3 PM, Monday through Friday, but her schedule may vary. Contact her at stjohntrenton@gmail.com or call 224-9828.



JANUARY Birthdays

Maddie Henderson January 2	Marian Funk January 18
Michelle Bopp January 5	Jim Arentsen January 20
Cameron Wuebbles January 7	Bryan Wernle January 20
Leon Jones January 10	Barbara Nelson January 22
Lois Roach January 10	Kaeden Tobin January 22
Gay Kuhn January 13	Laurie Henderson January 28
Trudy Kline January 16	Aaron Becker January 28
Teresa Von Bokel January 17	Hudson Szpila January 29
Tim Bair January 31	



JANUARY Anniversaries



John & Sharon Logan January 13

JANUARY COUNCIL MEMBER

Ron Tremmel



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**



- *To all our volunteers who helped ring the Salvation Army bell for the Trenton Council of Churches in December*

- *To everyone who helped us reach our goal of \$2000 for the Snack Pack Lunch Program*

- *To all who purchased poinsettias and helped make the church look festive for our Christmas Eve service – a complete listing of the dedications is in this newsletter*
- *To all who contributed to the Christmas Fund and Our Church’s Wider Mission*
- *To the members who participated in the Paper Bag Christmas Pageant (see pictures further in this newsletter)*



De-Hanging of the Greens

We will be taking down the Christmas decorations on Sunday, January 12, (the first Sunday after Epiphany) after the 9:30 AM church service. Boxes and tubs will be placed throughout the church to help with the task. We hope everyone will be able to stay to help out.

FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST



The Fellowship Breakfast is the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 AM. We will be switching venues from Good Ol’ Days in New Baden to **Hank’s Bowl in**

Trenton. We hope you can join us for an enjoyable breakfast with others. It’s a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome! **Mark your 2025 calendars for these dates: 1/7, 2/4, 3/4, 4/8, 5/6, 6/3, 7/1, 8/5, 9/2, 10/7, 11/4 & 12/2.**

The church office will be closed on January 1 for New Year’s Day.



ARMY ENLISTEE: Kameron Fisher, son of Kassie and Tim Fisher, and grandson of John and Pehg Zeller, has enlisted in the Army and will train as a 68W Combat Medic. He leaves in mid January for Fort Sill, Oklahoma for basic training. After that he reports to Fort Sam Houston, Joint Base San Antonio, for medic training. Kameron is a graduate of Northern Michigan University and has worked as an EMT at Michigan Medical Center in Midland, MI. Most recently he was part of a search and rescue team along the Appalachian Trail stationed at Great Smoky Mountain National Park in Cherokee, NC.



CONDOLENCES to the family of David Berberich who passed away on December 8, 2024.

David is the brother of Marvin Berberich, a member of St. John UCC.

CONDOLENCES also to Marian Funk and her family on the passing of her niece, Tami Press on December 23, 2024.

GREEN BEAN PANTRY DONATIONS

Donations that are collected for the Green Bean Pantry are taken to West Gate **on the 1st Wednesday of the month** The Pantry donation tub is in the narthex under the quilt rack. If you wish to drop off donations on Tuesdays when the vestibule is open, please make sure you mark that they are for the pantry. Thank you for thinking of others!



♥♥♥♥ Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship ♥♥♥♥

TRIP TO KINDERCOTTAGE: The request for pajamas for Kindercottage was met with great enthusiasm and the response was terrific. John Zeller delivered 89 pairs of pajamas in all the right sizes on Tuesday. The director of Kindercottage asked for the delivery a day earlier than scheduled because the children were entertaining their parents with a Christmas pageant on Wednesday. This gave the staff an afternoon to sort and display the pajamas so parents could choose something appropriate for their kids on pageant day. Pajamas not chosen that day go in the clothing pantry. Kindercottage runs for needy children. There were some school supplies sent along and Elaine and Pehg sorted through little boys' clothing delivered for the rummage sale to fill an emergency request for winter clothing for Kindercottage. The Boardroom at Kindercottage was filled with items donated to make the children's Christmas all it should be including food for families in need. Thank you for your response to kids at Christmas time.



Advent Fund Drive for the Snack Pack Program

This Advent Season, we asked for donations to the Clinton County Snack Pack Program. Our goal for this Advent Fund Drive was to have at least \$2000 by the end of December.

We wanted to report that as of 12/29/24 we reached our goal of \$2,118 in donations!

Thanks to all for the very generous donations you have given, and filling the “cabinet” with stickers representing the food provided in weekend lunches for area school children. We could not have done it without your dedication to this program.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 26th** after the church service. The budget will also be discussed for approval at this time. Annual reports are due by Sunday, January 12, 2025! If you are the person responsible for submitting your committee's report, please have it in to the office by then. The following committees and organizations will be submitting reports: Building & Grounds, Christian Education, Memorial Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee, Rainbow Preschool, Sonshine Ministry, St. John Quilters, Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship & Worship Ministry.



The report will be ready by Friday, January 17th and will be sent out by email and will also be available in the church narthex. If you want to be on our email list, send your request to stjohntrenton@gmail.com. If you want a paper copy sent to you, call the office at 618-224-9828.

DONATION STATEMENTS

Donation statements will be going out on Friday, January 10th as the church books close on Thursday, January 2, 2025. Just a reminder that you can always donate on our website www.stjohntrenton.org. Click on "Support Our Church." Forms are in the office if you wish to set up giving through your checking account. We appreciate all you give to keep the mission of St. John UCC going. Thank you!



A Paper Bag Christmas

Thank you to all who participated in our Christmas Pageant on December 22nd. Numbers were chosen randomly by our participant actors and the numbers corresponded with a character and costume. Pastor Christy then read the story of Jesus' birth which was acted out by our members.



Characters in order of appearance: Margie Bopp (Micah the Prophet), Mark Peters (Gabriel the Angel), Jo-Allison Rogers (Mary), Laurie Henderson (Joseph), Jenn Thompson (Elizabeth), Michelle Bopp (Mean Innkeeper), Maddie Henderson (Kind Innkeeper), Susan Heiser (Donkey), Billie Rinderer (Jesus), Pehg Zeller (Shepherd), Madeline Truscott (Shepherd), Kim Tremmel (Sheep), Ian Henderson (Heavenly Host), Cora Eckert (Star), Hannah Thompson (Chicken), Lonna Patton (Cow), Justice Zimmers (Cow), Sinjon Zimmers (Magi), Teresa Von Bokel (Magi), Kassie Fisher (Magi), Eli Truscott (Bethlehem Star), Steve Feldmann (Herrod)

Rainbow Preschool News

I hope all of our students are enjoying their holiday break with their families and I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas!

Both classes had a busy month filled with fun painting projects, completing a variety of Christmas projects, making presents for their parents, singing Christmas songs, and reading many Christmas stories.

We would like to wish the following students happy birthday: Grayson D. December 3rd, Naomi R. December 11th and Reese L. December 27th. Thank you for bringing in treats to share with your classmates.

Pastor Christy came in and read the stories “Room for A Little One” and “Twas the Evening of Christmas.” Our students love story time with Pastor Christy and always look forward to the books she brings in to read. We are looking forward to seeing what stories she brings in to read in the New Year.

On the last day of school students got to wear their favorite Christmas pj’s and watched the movie “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.” Students also enjoyed going on a gingerbread man and reindeer hunt inside the classroom.

We are excited about Christmas break and being able to spend time with our families, however we will miss our students over the next two weeks. School will resume on Monday January 6th for our MWF students and Tuesday January 7th for our TU/TH students. When students return we will start the alphabet box and continue sending homework home. More information about the alphabet box will be sent home when students return to school.

Ms. Lisa and I would like to thank everyone for the gifts. We are so thankful to have such wonderful families and students at Rainbow.

❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️ Reminders for January ❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️

- ❄️ School will resume on Monday January 6th and Tuesday January 7th.
- ❄️ January tuition is due Thursday January 9th and Friday January 10th
- ❄️ No school- Monday January 20th- Martin Luther King’s birthday
- ❄️ Please remember to send a coat, gloves/mittens, and a hat with your child.
We will continue to go outside, permitting.
- ❄️ If Wesclin cancels school due to snow, we will be closed as well.
- ❄️ When watching the news for school cancellation, please look for Wesclin School District
- ❄️ An email/text message will be sent out notifying you that school is cancelled, and it will be posted on the preschool Facebook page. A message will also be sent out on the Reminder app.
- ❄️ The alphabet box will start on Monday January 27th and Tuesday January 28th.

❄️ Registration paperwork for the 2024-2025 school year will be sent home in late January/early February. Please fill out and return as soon as possible.

❄️ Make sure to check out our Facebook page Rainbow Preschool for pictures and videos to see what our students have been doing.

We hope you all have a safe and healthy Christmas with your families, and we will see everyone in the New Year!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Misty and Lisa



Frostbite Fun
2025 Youth Event

If inclement weather causes us to postpone this event, it will be held on February 15th-16th.

January 18th - 19th, 2025

Calling all junior & senior high youth!
Join us as we learn to live out loud
and put our faith in action!!!

2 Ways to Participate
Single Day (\$50): Saturday 10 am to 7 pm
Overnight (\$100): Saturday 10 am to Sunday 11 am

Registration opens on CampWise December 1st.
Registration closes on January 5th.

Each church is responsible for providing the necessary chaperones for the event.

Questions? Contact Jill Mayer (618) 939-7123

Horseback riding will be available!

The Illinois South Conference is hosting a youth event at DuBois Center for youth in 6th-12th grade. Pastor Christy and Cora will be going on Saturday, January 18th, and we'd love to have our youth come along, too!

When: Saturday from 10am-7pm;

What: Youth Event focusing on living out loud and putting our faith in action;

Cost: \$50; Horse Riding is available for \$25.

Please let Pastor Christy know if any youth or adult chaperones are interested in participating. Registration ends on January 5, 2025. We do have a scholarship available for youth to attend if cost is an issue.



Poinsettias were placed by:



Donald Bair placed two poinsettias
*In memory of Patricia Lee Bair
And Carol Christine Bair*

The Bopp Family placed four poinsettias
In memory of Carl Bopp, Carl Peter, Evelyn Thurman and Dorothy Peter

Marian Funk placed a poinsettia
In memory of her sister, Connie Schildt

The Gilomen & Ottensmeier Families placed a poinsettia
In memory of Bernice Gilomen

The Family of Susan Heiser placed two poinsettias
In memory of Rick Heiser, Bob & Marthann Day and Jack & Maybelle Heiser

Hank & Laurie Henderson placed a poinsettia
In memory of Elaine & Dan Meyers

Eileen Hoffmann placed a poinsettia
In memory of Olin Hoffmann

Marc & Elaine Hoffmann placed a poinsettia
In memory of family members Hoffmann, Wevers, Gunn, Carrothers and Reno

Marian Nelson placed a poinsettia
In memory of dearest husband Arvid Nelson

The Rogers Ladies placed a poinsettia
In memory of John/Dad

Jenn & Hannah Thompson placed a poinsettia
In memory of Grandma Faye

Kimberly & Ron Tremmel placed a poinsettia
In memory of Our Parents

The Von Bokel Family placed two poinsettias
*One in memory of
Carl Bopp, Evie Thurman, Dorothy Peter and Carl Peter
And the other in memory of
Ralph & Mary Jane Von Bokel*



John & Pehg Zeller placed two poinsettias
In memory of Jim & Ruth Kuhn and Harry & Cele Zeller

