

*“When (Jesus) had finished speaking, he said to Simon,
‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’”*

Luke 5:4

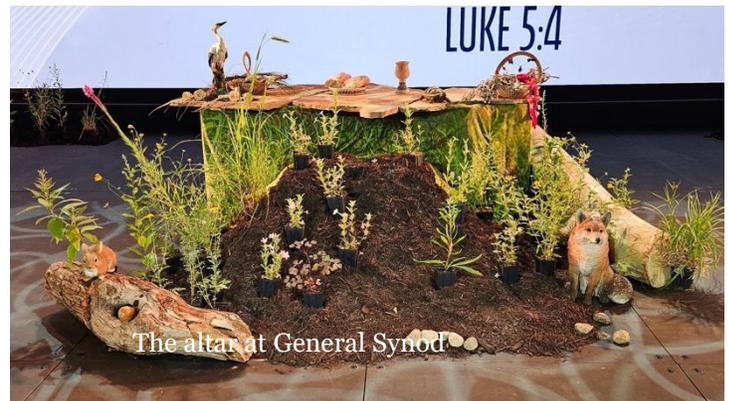


Beloved Church Family,

As I write this, I am healing from a bout of Covid-19. Although it is the summer season, and many folks are heading to the lake or to the coast to catch some waves, I was really hoping to not be a part of the summer “covid wave” this year. I hope you all have had better luck at avoiding it than I did; although, I know many of you are still recovering from other “waves” we’ve had in our area these past few weeks – whether it was the wave of flooding or the horrible heat wave that followed.

As for the covid, I might have picked it up in Kansas City, where I was blessed to travel with my friend and colleague, Rev. Tarrah Vaupel, for the UCC’s General Synod. But, even if I did come home with this uninvited covid “souvenir”, thankfully, we were also able to pick up some wonderful things on the trip, too.

First and foremost, the multiple worship services at General Synod were such an amazing gift. The theme for this year’s gathering was “Into the Deep”, and it focused on the story from Luke 5, in which Jesus calls the first disciples. Jesus was preaching by a lake when he saw two boats on the shore with fishermen washing their nets alongside them. He asked one of the fishermen, named Simon, to take him out a little ways on the boat, and while seated there, Jesus taught the crowd. When he was done teaching, he asked Simon to put out into the deep water, and let down their nets for a catch. Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” Miraculously, their nets came up so full of fish that the nets were ripping, and even when they called for help, and they had pulled the fish into two boats, the boats themselves were beginning to sink. Sometimes, it can feel like we, in the mainline protestant church, are like those tired fishermen...working hard without seeing much come of it. As such, it was such a gift to be reminded that Jesus isn’t done here. Jesus continues to call us out of our comfort zones “into the deep” where exciting, fruitful, and challenging ministry is waiting. Multiple preachers took on this theme of “Into the Deep” through various lenses over three different worship services, and they’re available to watch. If you are reading this on a computer or other device, you can click the links below. If you are reading this on paper, you can go to <https://www.ucc.org/gs-livestream/> and find the links there.



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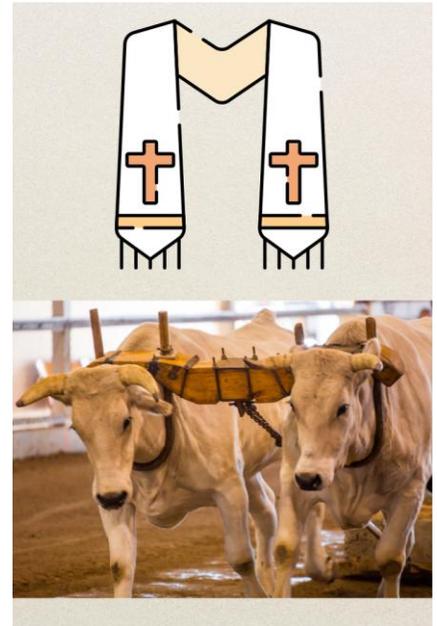


Here are the messages from...

- [Rev. Marilyn Pagan-Banks](#) on July 11, 2025
- [Rev. Karen Geogia Thompson](#) (our General Minister and President) on July 13, 2025
- [Rev. Antony Coleman](#) on July 15, 2025

These messages take the imagery of deep water and weave it together with images of the deep roots found in prairie grass and other native plants. They are challenging and inspiring messages, and I encourage you to listen to them with a spirit of openness when you find yourself with a little extra time.

The second element at General Synod that added blessings to our trip was the community. Being a part of the tight knit community found in local churches is one of the greatest gifts, in my opinion. But, it is also nice, from time to time, to remember that we are connected in a vast network of churches across the country. Many of these churches are just like us, working hard to do the best they can with the resources they have to make a difference. While we can look around at times and wonder if what we're doing is making a difference, when we remember that our efforts here in Trenton, IL are joined by the efforts of faithful folks in little towns all across our land, we start to see a much bigger picture of the impact we can have as the Body of Christ. Looking around at the crowd at General Synod, it brought to mind the symbolism of the stoles pastors wear around our shoulders during worship. The stole is meant to remind us of the yokes farm animals sometimes wear to plow or pull other heavy machinery. Usually, yokes hold two animals side by side, and the design means that the animals are not having to do all the work alone. They share in the labor. The same is true with ministry. There are other ministers walking beside us, helping to carry the load, and the yoke helps us remember that when things get hard.



We are not alone...a colleague is just a phone call away. This is what I thought of at synod – how it isn't just pastors that need to remember we aren't alone. Churches need this reminder, too. Community is life giving and healing. We are supported and joined by around 4,600 other churches, and the community we form together is a powerful one.

The third blessing I picked up at General Synod ties into the gift of community, and it is collaboration. Outside the main gathering and worship area was a giant room called the marketplace. In it, 60-70 organizations had set up booths to showcase their ministries. Of course, some also sold goods, like clergy robes, stoles, theological books, handcrafted crosses, and fair-trade goods. When we walked through the marketplace, though, collaboration was the name of the game. Each organization highlighted ways that we can work together to make a difference, whether it was the Climate Action table that offered ways to access webinars and letter writing campaigns concerning climate justice, the Mental Health Network table that had free fidgets next to handouts about becoming a "WISE" congregation that welcomes folks with various mental health needs, or the Small Town and Rural Churches table that handed out information concerning the growing need for collaboration and



community among churches in small or rural towns. For obvious reasons, I felt a particular pull to that last stall, and I was thankfully able to attend a workshop put on by this group. The numbers they shared were pretty staggering. Of the 4,600 congregations in the UCC, 93% have fewer than 400 members. Half of those have fewer than 100 members, and half of *those* have fewer than 50. While these numbers might be sobering, they are also encouraging, because it is a reminder that we are not alone. With the formation of the Small Town and Rural (STAR) coalition at this year's

General Synod, it also means there is a dedicated community geared toward nurturing collaboration between small town churches and creating resources specifically for folks like us. How amazing is that?!

These are just a handful of the blessings of attending General Synod. If you'd ever like to hear more about the work of the wider church (both Conference and National levels), or if you'd like to hear more about my experience at General Synod, please reach out. I would love the opportunity to share with anyone about the wonderful gifts of inspirational worship, community engagement, and encouraging collaboration. Thank you again, for the opportunity to go and experience Synod this year. It was truly transformative.

With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith

St. John Prayer List

Our Local Church Family

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

Our Extended Friends & Family

Elaine Dupuis	(Mike Williamson's friend)
Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Ken Fritz	(Cathy Haller's brother)
Richard Haller	(Cathy Haller's brother-in-law)
Sylvia Hoerchler	(Curt Wesselmann's aunt)
Wendy Patterson	(Pastor Christy's cousin)
Michelle Toennies	(Deb and Dan Athmer's niece)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)
Craig & Lori Wheeler	(Kimberly & Ron Tremmel's friends)
Dean Zurliene	(Curt Wesselmann's uncle)



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.

AUGUST Birthdays



Tim Fisher August 4	Martin Graul August 16
Brian Kunz August 4	Myla Wernle August 17
Karen Koch August 7	Darla Bair August 22
Clayton Holloway August 10	Jill Rogers August 22
Ray Feldmann August 13	Steve Feldmann August 24
Emma Haller August 14	Cathy Haller August 30
Cora Eckert August 15	Rylee Toennies August 30

AUGUST Anniversaries



Brian & Lynn Kunz Aug. 5	Lesley & Bill Koentz Aug. 13
Bonnie & Jim Arentsen Aug. 6	Joey & Sarah Feldmann Aug. 16
Darrell & Darla Bair Aug. 6	Teresa & Jeff Von Bokel Aug. 26
Ken & Donna Graul Aug. 8	Pehg & John Zeller Aug. 28



**AUGUST COUNCIL
MEMBER ON DUTY**
Elaine Hoffmann



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 all the sorters and organizers of the rummage sale once again for your dedication*
- *To Rev. Gary Kniepkamp for stepping in for Pastor Christy while she was away at General Synod*



- *Dear congregation, Thank you for helping me go to Horse Camp at DuBois Center! I had LOADS of fun and I made friends this year. It rained a bunch, but we still got to ride horses nearly every day. I almost fell off while we were riding bare back, but I held on! It was a blast. Thank you so much!*
Sincerely, Cora

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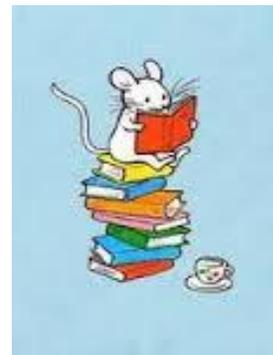
On Sunday, August 31st, we will be taking a special offering for Our Church's Wider Mission which was the focus of Pastor Christy's newsletter article for

July. This is a special offering where 80% of our contributions stay in Southern Illinois for our Wider Mission though our conference. Envelopes are included in your newsletter and will be available in the narthex. Thank you!

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BOOK CLUB

The Book Club will be meeting September 10th at 1:00 PM to discuss *Culpability* by Bruce Holsinger.



Synopsis: A novel about a family of five (mom, dad, teen and tweens) who are in an accident in their autonomous minivan. During the family's recuperation after the accident, the family confronts some moral dilemmas triggered by the crash. *Culpability* is not only a family drama; it is also an exploration of the moral responsibility and ethical consequences of AI.

The Book Club will also be meeting in November regarding the book *The Music of Bees* by Eileen Gavin.

Synopsis: A novel about three lonely strangers (a new widow, a paraplegic teenager and a young out-of-work man with severe social anxiety) in a rural Oregon town who are each working through life's curveballs, and are brought together by happenstance on a local honeybee farm where they find surprising friendship, healing—and maybe even a second chance—just when they least expect it. This is a hopeful story about the power of chosen family.

These two books will be in the library for checkout starting in August.

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FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

The Fellowship Breakfast is the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 AM at Hank's Bowl in Trenton.



Breakfast dates: Aug. 5, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4 & Dec. 2. 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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♥♥♥♥ Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship ♥♥♥♥

During the summer we have been asking for school supplies. Anything your children or grandchildren need at school is needed by the kids at Kindercottage. We will be taking the supplies to Kindercottage on Monday, August 11th. The vestibule will be open for donations on Tuesdays and Thursdays which will also coincide with the set up for the next Rummage Sale (see below). It has been a generous year of giving toward the children who rely on Kindercottage for preschool, day care, and a safe place before and after school.

Our work with the Brown Bag Lunch Program has been very important. We had all the volunteer slots filled up including Emily, a young high-school student from Nevada who was visiting her grandmother and needed to get some service hours in for her school. The work was not long or hard and we were glad to help Emily get some time put down. A final count of how many lunches we packed over the summer will be available after school starts. Thanks to everyone for their help with this program.

IMPORTANT RUMMAGE SALE DATES

August 26 & 28 – Vestibule will be open 10 AM to 3 PM.

Tuesday, September 2 – Last day for donations

September 1, 2 & 3 – Help is needed to sort and price @ 10:00 AM

Thursday, September 4 – Open from 5 PM – 8 PM (Full price)

Friday, September 5 – Open from 8 AM – 1 PM (Full price) and 2 PM – 6 PM (Half price)

Saturday, September 6 – Open from 9 AM – 1 PM (\$4 Brown Bag Sale)

Help will be needed for the four shifts of the Rummage sale on September 4, 5, and 6. Cashiers, floaters, upstairs managers, elevator operators, and clean up volunteers are needed desperately. A sign-up sheet will be in the Narthex or you can call the office to sign up. Leave a message if there is no answer.



BLESSING OF BACKPACKS



August is a busy time for children and young adults alike. On **Sunday, August 17**, we are inviting students and teachers to bring their backpacks, schoolbags and/or briefcases to worship that day for a "Blessing of the Backpacks". We want them to know that, as a community of faith, we will support them in their efforts to learn and grow in their academics as well as on their spiritual journey. Please join us on August 17 for worship and for a blessing of the backpacks!

Planning Meeting

There will be a Wurstmarkt planning meeting after church service on Sunday, August 10th. Please attend if you can!



Rainbow Preschool News

Rainbow Preschool is finishing up summer vacation and will start the 2024/2025 school year on Monday, August 11. In preparation for that and to give students a good start to the year, we will have an open house on Friday, August 8 from 6:00 to 7:00 PM.

We are still enrolling students in our Monday/Wednesday/Friday program for children ages 4-5 and our Tuesday/Thursday program for children ages 3-4. If you know anyone that would be interested, please have them contact me via email at rainbowpreschooltrentonil@gmail.com, Rainbow Preschool Facebook page or by calling the office at 618-224-9828. Our returning students and new students will receive an email in August regarding open house dates and information regarding the 2024-2025 school year.

Everyone please have a safe and healthy summer! We will see everyone on Monday August 12th and Tuesday August 13th.



TrentonFest 2025

Friday, August 15 & Saturday, August 16
at Trenton Community Park

Live Music, Food, Carnival Rides, Pickleball Tournament, Glow Fun Run

👉 Parade will be Saturday, 8/16 at 4:30 PM 👉

Trenton Fest Parade

This year, the folks of St. John UCC are invited to walk as a part of the parade. We've not been a part of the parade in several years, and last year I heard a few folks expressing interest in getting back in there and showing our excitement as members of St. John. We will be carrying a banner and handing out candy and fliers that highlight our worship and upcoming events. Participants are invited to wear their red St. John shirts (or any red shirt). We would like to have someone drive along behind us, either in a side by side, golf cart, or something similar, so that we can carry cold water along for our walkers and help anyone that might get tired along the route. The parade starts at 4:30pm on Saturday, August 16th, and I'll send out more information when I know where we are in the lineup and where we need to meet. If you're interested in walking with St. John or if you have a vehicle you could lend to the cause, please let the office or me (Pastor Christy) know.

Thanks!

