

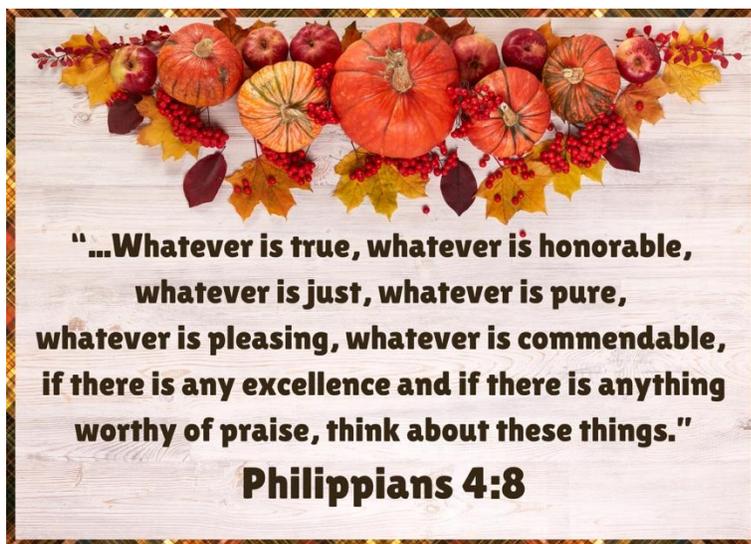
Beloved Church Family,

“Why aren’t there more people in church?” This is a question I’ve heard echoed across the theological world. Whether it is asked by a member of a local congregation or a leader at the denominational level, people across the US and beyond are offering up this same lament. We look around at the changing landscape of Christian community, and it’s only natural to compare it to “the way things used to be”. We think back and fondly remember years filled with Sunday school, children’s choir, VBS, and mission trips. We reflect on days – just a few decades ago – when the sanctuary felt crowded and fellowship groups were full. We compare our view of

“now” to our memories of “then”, and often, the “now” doesn’t seem to measure up. The question of “why” becomes our close companion.

Although it’s difficult, there isn’t a singular reason we can point to for dwindling attendance numbers. Each person or family has their own reasons, and in many cases, we won’t ever know what those are. Of course, it’s natural to want to assign blame...to provide some reason and fill in the gaps of the story. We think someone *must* have done something wrong to cause the rift, and sometimes, that *is* the case. It *is* good to be self-reflective and make sure we are doing our best to be welcoming. When we don’t know a reason, however, our assumptions of blame (on “us” or “them”) leave us with feelings of frustration or shame that aren’t productive. No matter the reason, we are called to hold folks with compassion and understanding.

In the scripture I chose for this month, Philippians 4:8, Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to focus on lifting praise for the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable. He said, “If there is any excellence, and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” This month, as we prepare to celebrate thanksgiving, I wonder if, like Philippi, shifting our own focus could be a good way to lift our gratitude to God even in the midst of the questions that haunt us. If only for a month, instead of focusing on what we are lacking, I think it would be a powerful exercise to focus our attention on the things that bless us and give us hope in the church. Instead of dwelling only on feelings of loss, we can lift up feelings of gratitude. We can meet “Why aren’t there more people in church?” with “Why do I love church?”



Beloved ones, what do *you* love about church? Throughout November, I encourage you to “think about these things”, and I am going to create a space in the Narthex, where we can display our answers as a congregation. Feel free to write on the form below and either mail your answers in or bring them with you to church. You can also email us (either the office email or mine) with your answers, and we will happily add it to the display. I’ll start by briefly sharing a few of my own answers here.

- I love that **church is a family**. I felt this when I was a child in O’Fallon, and I’ve been blessed to feel this deeply here at St. John. Church connects us in ways that aren’t describable than any other word. Family – whether biological, chosen, or church – is woven together by a love that helps us be present with each other in a powerful way, whether we are celebrating one another’s joys or lamenting one another’s sorrows. Church holds us together.
- I love that **church reminds me of God’s love in the midst of life’s difficulty**. Overall, I’m really happy with where I am in life. I love my family, I love my friends, and I love my work. But, even

the happiest of us is subject to the twists and turns of life. And let's be honest, the world is twisting and turning with abandon right now with our politics, violence, and uncertainty. I need church to remind me that God is our anchor, holding us fast in the midst of the waves. Church reminds me to be still and remember who God is.

- I love that **church calls me back to myself each week**. When I'm feeling angry, frustrated, or bitter, church holds a mirror up before me that reminds me to be humble and challenges me to look at life's frustrations through God's eyes. Church reminds me to be forgiving and compassionate when my heart is harboring judgements of others...and of myself. Church is a place of healing.

Thank you, St. John, for embodying these blessings for me, for others in our church family, and beyond. I can't wait to hear why church is important to you.

*With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith*

**NOVEMBER 2025 - ST. JOHN UCC, TRENTON**

**WHAT I LOVE ABOUT CHURCH...**

*'...Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.' – Philippians 4:8*

# St. John Prayer List

## Our Local Church Family

Jim Atwood	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann	Denise Hamilton
Hank Henderson	Marc Hoffmann	Pauline Kraemer	Mary Lou Lurtz
Marian Nelson	Lonna Patton	Rogers Family	Lois Winkler
Connie Zimmers			

## Our Extended Friends & Family

Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Shannon Farrell	(Pastor Christy's cousin)
Sylvia Hoerchler	(Curt Wesselmann's aunt)
Rev. Tarrah Vaupel	(Pastor Christy's friend)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)
Craig & Lori Wheeler	(Kimberly & Ron Tremmel's friends)
Dean Zurliene	(Curt Wesselmann's uncle)



*Our condolences to the family and friends of Marvin Berberich who passed away Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. Funeral service was at Moss Funeral Home with Fr. Patrick Peter officiating. Interment of cremains was at Trenton Cemetery. Memorials may be made to St. John United Church of Christ, 21 N. Walnut St., Trenton, IL 62293.*



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 be in the office 9:30 AM to 4 PM, Monday/Wednesday/Friday. Contact her at [stjohntrenton@gmail.com](mailto:stjohntrenton@gmail.com) or call 224-9828.



## NOVEMBER

### Birthdays

<b>Larry Biggs</b> Nov. 1	<b>Frank Kunz</b> Nov. 15
<b>Dwight Faitz</b> Nov. 3	<b>Kathryn Klein Schultz</b> Nov. 24
<b>Samuel Lucas</b> Nov. 6	<b>Tim Stempel</b> Nov. 26
<b>Bonnie Arentsen</b> Nov. 8	<b>Del Lurtz</b> Nov. 28
<b>Anthony Robison</b> Nov. 8	<b>Shelby Atwood</b> Nov. 30
<b>Darrell Bair</b> Nov. 15	<b>Marie Bair</b> Nov. 30

## NOVEMBER

### Anniversaries

**Deb & Dan Athmer** Nov. 7  
**Lana & Jarrod Tobin** Nov. 14  
**Tish & Christopher Bates** Nov. 15  
**Chelsea (Bair) & Will Simmons** Nov. 17  
**Justin & Shannon Groennert** Nov. 25



## NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEMBER ON DUTY

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**

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- *To those who helped with the blood drive*
- *To Pastor Christy, Lonna Patton and Elaine Hoffmann for being delegates and representing St. John UCC at the Illinois South Conference Annual Meeting*



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**CONFIRMATION:** Our next confirmation class will be on Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. We will be learning

about the prophets. **Our first Mentor Day will be Wednesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM,** and all of our mentors are invited to attend that class with their confirmands.

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**HANGING OF THE GREENS:** We will be gathering after worship on Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> to decorate our building and sanctuary for Advent and Christmas.



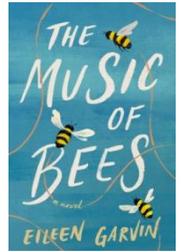
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**GREEN BEAN FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS:** A red tub is in the Narthex for donations for Trenton's Green Bean Food Pantry. If you have any packaged food items you would like to donate, you can bring them during office hours or on Sunday morning. Thank you!

## BOOK CLUB

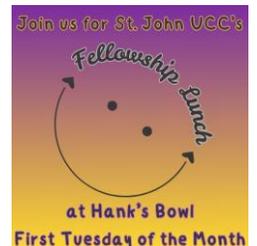
Our Book Club is currently reading "The Music of Bees" by Eileen Garvin. It's a novel about three lonely strangers who are brought together by happenstance on a local honeybee farm where they find surprising friendship and healing. This is a hopeful story about the power of chosen family.



We will be meeting to discuss it on Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM. We meet during the day because it works for the folks already participating in Book Club, but if you would like to participate, and that time doesn't work for you, let Pastor Christy or the Office know. We'd love to be able to include you! This book is in the library available for checkout.

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**Fellowship Lunch dates for upcoming months in the year: Nov. 4 & Dec. 2 at 11:30 AM.**



Come join us for an enjoyable meal with others. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome!

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**Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, November 2nd so set your clocks back one hour before going to bed Saturday night!**

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**The church office will be closed on November 27th and 28th for the Thanksgiving Holiday**

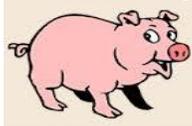
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## POINSETTIA ORDERS

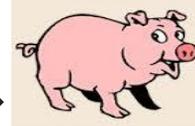
Help decorate the church by purchasing red poinsettias in honor or memory of a loved one.



Price will be \$13.00 per plant. Checks can be made out to St. John UCC with "poinsettia" in the memo. Order forms are in this newsletter and also in the narthex. **Please place your order by Sunday, November 23rd.**



## ◆ Wurstmarkt News ◆



Another Wurstmarkt is behind us and the accounting is still being tabulated but we do have an initial profit of over \$8,000! We had a great turn out – both in volunteers and in customers – and we appreciate each and every one of you! The work doesn't just happen on Wurstmarkt weekend, so we would like to acknowledge the continued dedication of Pehg Zeller, Jo-Allison Rogers, Margie Bopp, and Laurie Henderson for ALL the pre-dinner planning that starts in August, goes through September and finishes up in October. However, four people cannot do it all so the following is a list of the “village” of members, family & friends of St. John UCC who took time on a beautiful weekend to help out:

Bonnie Arentsen	Dustin Atwood	Cheryl Bair	Marie Bair
Tim Bair	Margie Bopp	Courtney Davis	Tyler Davis
Cora Eckert	Steve Feldmann	Kassie Fisher	Tim Fisher
Ken Fritz	Marian Funk	Donna Graul	Lisa Groennert
Jake Guthrie	Abbi Haller	Cathy Haller	Hank Henderson
Laurie Henderson	Russ Heuberger	Corrie Klein	Jacob Klein
Shane Nollau	Kim Nollau	Lonna Patton and her Sister	
Billie Rinderer	Jennifer Rogers	Jo-Allison Rogers	Betty Sappington
Rev. Christy Smith	Lana Tobin	Kaeden Tobin	Kimberly Tremmel
Ron Tremmel	Clinton Truscott	Maddie Truscott	Emily Von Bokel
Teresa Von Bokel	Steve Wallace	Curt Wesselmann	Josh Williamson
Mike Williamson	Bentley Willman		

Special thanks to Teresa Von Bokel for donating the beef and Ken Graul for donating the apples. The follow up meeting to discuss how this year went and concerning our endeavors for next year will be on November 9<sup>th</sup> after Sunday service.



## Totenfest

We are celebrating Totenfest on Sunday, November 2nd during worship. Totenfest is a tradition in the German Evangelical Church that allows space for us to remember and honor the members of our church family who have died in the past year. During this service, we light candles for our dearly departed to remember that their spirit still shines among us. This year, we are honored to remember:

- ☞ *James “Jim” Gilomen*
- ☞ *Melba Bassler*
- ☞ *Margaret “Mickey” Williamson*
- ☞ *Marvin Berberich*
- ☞ *Kurt Joseph (Pastor Christy’s Friend)*
- ☞ *Mary Faith Henderson (Hank Henderson’s Mother)*
- ☞ *Matt Henderson (Hank’s Uncle)*
- ☞ *And Loved Ones of the Kuhl and Koebel Family*



## ECUMENICAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE



Please mark your calendars for the Trenton Council of Church's annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical service. It will be hosted by Trenton First United Methodist Church on November 20th starting at 7pm. Our own pastor, Rev. Christy Smith will be the speaker, and we will recognize the Trenton Knights of Columbus with this year's Appreciation Award. We hope you can join our local church community as we give thanks for all that we have.

## PAJAMAS FOR THE CHILDREN OF UNI-PRES KINDERCOTTAGE

For the last several years, we have collected pajamas for Uni-Pres Kindercottage families at Christmas, and this year, we are excited to be able to do this again. Aimee Hart, the Executive Director of Kindercottage has sent us a list of **53 children who need PJs for Christmas**. She's sent each child's first name, gender, age, and size along with which kids are in sibling groups in case someone wants to get matching family pajamas.



There is a **signup sheet in the Narthex**, where you can write your name next to the children you'd like to buy for. We will have a decorated Christmas box in the narthex where you can leave your donations. Thank you for all the ways you've supported this wonderful organization in the past, and thank you for helping spread some joy for these families on Christmas morning.

## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Each week during Advent, we invite individuals, friends, or families to participate in worship by reading the opening liturgy and lighting the Advent Candles. If you would like to volunteer for a week, there is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. The dates are:

- Advent 1 – November 30 at 9:30 AM – Candle of Peace*
- Advent 2 – December 7 at 9:30 AM – Candle of Joy*
- Advent 3 – December 14 at 9:30 AM – Candle of Love*
- Advent 4 – December 21 at 9:30 AM – Candle of Hope*
- Christmas Eve – December 24 at 7:00 PM – Christ Candle*



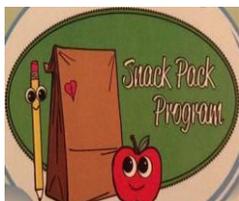
## Salvation Army Bell Ringing

The Trenton Council of Churches is asking for bell ringers for the Salvation Army at the Trenton IGA. St. John has two days again this year: *Tuesday, December 2nd and Wednesday, December 3rd from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM both days*. Please sign up for a 1 or 2 hour shift (or team up with a buddy and split it for 1 ½ hours each) on the Bell Ringing sheet which will be in the narthex starting November 9th. We appreciate any and all help. Thank you!



## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Offering

On Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> we will be taking a special offering for the Clinton County Snack Pack Program which serves the Wesclin School District. This program provides weekend Snack Packs for kids to take home from school - kids who may otherwise go hungry. You can also donate online at our website <https://stjohnucctrenton.org/> Thank you for your generosity.



# Rainbow Preschool News

October Highlights and Announcements

## Happy Halloween and October Reflections

Happy Halloween! It's remarkable how swiftly the month of October has passed. After two months of the school year, our students have already accomplished and learned a great deal.

### *October Learning Activities*

Throughout October, our students have been actively involved in various educational activities. They learned essential fire safety lessons, participated in numerous alphabet and counting activities, and celebrated Halloween by completing various projects. Cutting projects helped further develop their fine motor skills, and the classrooms were filled with excitement as we read several Halloween-themed books to prepare for the festivities.

### *Classroom Progress*

Our Monday, Wednesday, and Friday students are progressing well with writing their first and last names. They are learning to identify numbers up to 30 and identifying uppercase and lowercase letters.

Our Tuesday and Thursday students have been working on writing their first names, learning the letters of the alphabet, and more. Both classes continue to work on cutting skills by completing different creative projects.

### *Special Visitors and Community Appreciation*

We were delighted to welcome Pastor Christy, who read "Room on the Broom" and "Bone Soup" to our classes. Her visits are always eagerly anticipated by the children, who thoroughly enjoy the stories she shares.

The Sugar Creek Fire Department graciously visited both classes to discuss fire safety. The children listened closely, answered questions, and had the exciting chance to sit inside the fire truck. We look forward to inviting the fire department back next fall for another educational visit.

We extend our gratitude to Monique Liguori-Weinberg for her generous donation of pumpkins to both classes. Each student picked out a pumpkin, decorated it, and took it home in time for Halloween celebrations.

### *October Birthdays*

- Floyd B. - October 8th
- Harper W. - October 16th
- Lyle J. - October 19th
- Aubrey B. - October 26th

### *Halloween Celebration*

Halloween was celebrated at Rainbow Preschool with a pajama day at school and a special viewing of a Halloween movie, making the day memorable and fun for everyone.

## **Important Reminders for November**

- As the weather changes, please ensure your child brings a jacket. We will continue outdoor activities as long as the weather permits.
- November tuition is due.
- No school on Tuesday, November 11th, in observance of Veteran's Day.
- No school Wednesday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, and Friday, November 28th for Thanksgiving break.

**Ms. Misty, Rainbow Preschool Director**

## **Blameless?**

by [Bob Thompson](#) | published on Oct 28, 2025

*I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me?*  
Psalm 101:2 (NIV)

I didn't care much for Psalm 101 when I turned to it recently for devotional reading. The writer seems self-absorbed, arrogant, and condescending. Who can truly claim to "lead a blameless life" anyway? And who is this psalmist to demand that God will show up? Now!

On the heels of these pompous words, the psalmist seems rather condescending about everyone else. "Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him I will not endure." Good luck finding friends. I often forget to read the titles of psalms first. This one is "Of David." Or "About David" or just "Davidic." This psalm is by or for the monarch – a politician.

I know I should pray for candidates and officeholders, but it's hard to find the right words. Do I have to pray for all of them, even those I consider a grave risk to my country, state, or municipality? Or is this a moment to pull out the psalms of curse? "Get 'em, God!"

Psalm 101 helps. It helps because David was one of those leaders with an infamously mixed legacy. And Psalm 101 – whether it is a prayer by David or for David – begins by addressing the God of love and justice (verse 1), asking God to be close precisely because of a monarch's unrivaled power. The psalm prays for blameless leadership and, when such leadership fails (and David's reign was far from blameless), the psalm prays for truth-telling advisors to hold the king accountable for justice in the land.

That helps me. I can pray that today's leaders will pray Psalm 101.

And I can pray Psalm 101 for them as I vote, I advocate, I work, and I influence my part of the world.

### **Prayer**

God, make me closer to blameless. And please, please, show up. Preferably, now. Amen.



### **About the Author**

Bob Thompson is a retired UCC Pastor living near Wilmington, North Carolina, and President of Faithful and Welcoming Churches of the UCC.