



Beloved Church Family,

Ever since I can remember, my favorite worship service of the year has been the one on Christmas Eve. Something magical happens every time we light our candles in the midst of the darkness and lift our voices to sing “*Silent night, holy Night. All is calm, all is bright.*” For many people, that moment becomes what some call a “thin space”, where the Spirit’s presence feels so close, and the Love of God seems to wrap around us.

“Silent Night” made its debut in 1818, and has been warming Christian hearts ever since. This year, as we move towards our beloved Candlelight Service and the birth of our Savior, we will be taking a deeper look at the Christmas Carol that has brought us comfort for generations. Each week of Advent, we will take time to sit with one of the verses of “Silent Night”, and alongside Holy Scripture, we will explore the themes of peace, joy, love, and hope.

- **Advent 1 – Sleep in Peace – Candle of Peace**

- Verse 1 - “*Holy infant so tender and mild. Sleep in heavenly peace.*”
- Scripture - Isaiah 9:6 - “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

- **Advent 2 – Glories Stream – Candle of Joy**

- Verse 2 - “*Glories stream from heaven afar. Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia*”
- Scripture – Luke 2:8-9 – “Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.”

- **Advent 3 – Redeeming Grace – Candle of Love**

- Verse 3 - “*Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace.*”
- Scripture – John 1:14, 16 – “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

- **Advent 4 – Let Us Sing – Candle of Hope**

- Verse 4 - “*With the angels, let us sing Alleluia to our King.*”
- Scripture – Matthew 2:1-2a – “In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?”



Alongside our Advent journey of singing the Love of God through “Silent Night”, we will also have the opportunity to share the Love of God by helping to feed food-insecure children in our area. **From Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, we will be collecting money to support the Clinton County Snack Pack Program.** This will be our third year focusing on this mission for our Advent fundraiser, and with food prices rising, the need in our communities is greater than ever.



The Snack Pack Program supplements food on the weekends for children who qualify for reduced price or free lunches at school. Each child is sent home with an opaque shopping bag filled with ready-to-go snacks and easy-to-prepare meals. This way, children don't have to rely on adult help in order to eat. It costs approximately \$230 to feed each child over the course of the school year, and there are over 200 children across our county who are currently receiving help. That's over \$46,000 for 10 months. **This year, our congregation is setting a goal to feed 10 children by raising \$2,300.** Each week, we will put an ornament on the tree for every \$23 raised, and we will have met our goal once we have 100 ornaments!

I am continually amazed by the love our church has for the children of our community, and I am so thankful that I have the opportunity to engage in this ministry beside you. I look forward to walking through this season of Advent with you – both in worship and in service to the community – and I pray that each of you has a December filled with glimpses of God's love.

*With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith*

***Every ornament  
on the tree  
represents \$23  
raised.***



***Let's hit the  
goal of 100  
ornaments!***

*thank you*

# St. John Prayer List

## Our Local Church Family

Jim Atwood	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann	Denise Hamilton
Marc Hoffmann	Pauline Kraemer	Mary Lou Lurtz	Gary Nelson
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 sincere condolences to the family of Karen Krueger, who passed away on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Karen was a long-time, faithful member of St. John UCC and she will be missed by her daughter Tish Bates, her son-in-law Chris Bates and her grandson Jedediah Bates. Visitation will be Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 9:00 to 10:30 AM at St. John UCC with a memorial service after at 10:30 AM.



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.



## DECEMBER Birthdays

<b>Randy Rinderer</b> December 1	<b>Matthew Koentz</b> December 15
<b>Jamie Truscott</b> December 1	<b>Nathan Kunz</b> December 19
<b>Scott Mohme</b> December 3	<b>Charlie Bair</b> December 20
<b>Cory Williamson</b> December 8	<b>Liam Feldmann</b> December 26
<b>Jordan Groennert</b> December 8	<b>Gary Schwend</b> December 31
<b>Evan Bair</b> December 8	<b>Hank Henderson</b> December 31

## DECEMBER Anniversaries

<b>Karen &amp; Frank Kunz</b> December 2	<b>Brandy &amp; Jerry Sells</b> December 7
<b>Maggie &amp; Adam Gerstner</b> December 5	<b>Tim &amp; Kassie Fisher</b> December 21
<b>Ron &amp; Kimberly Tremmel</b> December 5	<b>Mary Lou &amp; Del Lurtz</b> December 30



## DECEMBER COUNCIL MEMBER ON DUTY

Billie Rinderer



# 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 those who came to the Wurstmart follow up meeting. We appreciate your input.*

- *To everyone who donated to our last-minute call for the Green Bean Food Pantry Thanksgiving baskets. The donations of pie crusts were delivered to the pantry. Thank you for your generosity for families in Trenton!*

- *To everyone who helped decorate the church for Christmas*

## CONFIRMATION



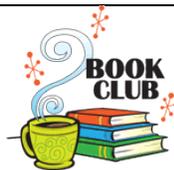
Classes for this month will be on Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM. We will be learning stories about Advent,

Christmas, the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son from the New Testament.

## 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

Book Club will be Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM. Our chosen book this month is "The God of the Woods" by Liz Moore. 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 would love to include you!



## Fellowship Lunch

dates for upcoming months into the new year: Dec. 2, 2025, Jan. 6, Feb. 3, Mar. 3, Apr. 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, Aug. 4, Sept. 1 Oct. 6, Nov. 3 and Dec. 1, 2026 at 11:30 AM.

Come join us for an enjoyable meal at Hank's Bowl in Trenton. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome!



**The church office will be closed on December 25th and January 1st for Christmas and New Year's Day.**

## Financial Abuse/Scam Educational Presentation



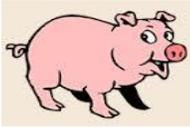
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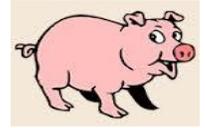
will be hosted at St. Mary Catholic Church on Friday, December 12th at 9:30 am in the parish center. Learn common warning signs, how to protect yourself and loved ones and where to seek help if concerns arise. This session is free and open to all. Please join us as we work together to safeguard our community.



You can even check out our chair yoga class being held before the presentation beginning at 8:30am.



# St. John Wurstmarkt 2025 Financial Report



	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
<b><u>Income</u></b>					
Ticket sales	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carryout sales	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Drive Thru	\$5,592.00	\$5,824.00	\$6,832.00	\$8,025.00	\$8,685.00
Quilt raffle	\$1,392.00	\$1,877.00	\$1,677.00	\$1,487.00	\$1,363.00
Donations	\$677.00	\$2,480.83	\$2,392.87	\$3,259.29	\$2,858.80
Meat sales	\$1,129.00	all in misc	all in misc	all in misc	all in misc
Country store	misc/meat	\$654.50	\$817.00	\$730.00	\$1,003.00
Misc. food sales	<u>\$664.00</u>	<u>\$1,519.00</u>	<u>\$1,302.25</u>	<u>\$1,397.10</u>	<u>\$1,054.00</u>
	\$9,454.00	\$12,355.33	\$13,021.12	\$14,898.39	\$14,963.80
<b><u>Expense</u></b>	<u>\$3,703.18</u>	<u>\$5,114.80</u>	<u>\$4,859.04</u>	<u>\$5,682.07</u>	<u>\$6,812.33</u>
<b>Profit</b>	\$5,750.82	\$7,240.53	\$8,162.08	\$9,216.32	\$8,151.47

*Thank you again to everyone who helped with the Wurstmarkt.  
We couldn't have done it without the wonderful community of people who show up!*



## 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. Please have the pajamas at the church by December 7<sup>th</sup>. 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.



## 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!



## CHRISTMAS FUND



The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Please consider a donation to this fund. We will be accepting donations on Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>.



## Rainbow Preschool News

### *Happy Thanksgiving!*

As I sit here and write this newsletter, I can hardly believe how quickly the month has passed! Our students have been busy and engaged in a variety of meaningful learning experiences throughout November.

### *Veteran's Day Activities*

We took time to recognize and honor all the men and women who serve and have served to protect our freedom and our country. In celebration of Veterans' Day, our students listened to the story "A Yellow Ribbon for Daddy," colored pictures of the American flag, and created heart-shaped crafts using red, white, and blue construction paper. These activities provided wonderful opportunities for students to show their gratitude and respect for our Veterans.



### *Thanksgiving Reflections*

As Thanksgiving approached, we discussed the reasons behind the holiday and encouraged our students to share the things they are thankful for. The children completed a variety of Thanksgiving-themed projects, which allowed them to express their gratitude and creativity.

### *Classroom Learning Highlights*

- MWF Students: Our Monday, Wednesday, and Friday students have been learning to identify their birthdays, practicing both letter recognition and writing, and working on writing numbers from 1 to 30. They are also developing their skills in recognizing beginning and ending sounds.
- TU/TH Students: Our Tuesday and Thursday students have been busy learning to write their names, recognizing the letters of the alphabet, and identifying numbers from 1 to 15.

Both classes continue to work diligently on learning shapes, understanding the sounds that each letter makes, and other fun learning activities.



## Special Story Time

We were delighted to have Pastor Christy visit our classroom to read "God Gave Us Thankful Hearts" and "What Do You Do with A Chance?" The children thoroughly enjoyed both stories, listened attentively, and enthusiastically shared what they were thankful for and their favorite parts of the book.

## November Birthdays

Happy November birthday to Bailey S., who celebrated on November 11th, and to Ms. Misty, on November 22<sup>nd</sup>

## Reminders

- Please ensure your child has a warm jacket, hat, and mittens. Weather permitting; we will continue to go outside for activities.
- December tuition is due on Thursday, December 4th, and Friday, December 5th.
- Christmas break begins Monday, December 22nd and runs through January 2nd. Classes will resume on Monday, January 5th and Tuesday, January 6th.

*With appreciation,*

*Ms. Misty Straeter, Preschool Director and Ms. Lisa Netemeyer*



*Come Join Us!*

# **About Those Christmas Lights**

by [Rachel Hackenberg](#) | published on Nov 26, 2025

*Thus says the Lord: Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. – Jeremiah 31:2a, 4b-5 (NRSV)*

I love Christmas lights. String them across your windows on the day after Thanksgiving—fabulous! Weave them through trees and bushes in your yard on the day after Halloween, even—delightful!

Bring on the small white lights, twinkling through long winter nights. Let there be colorful bulbs wrapped around gates and fences, blazing like commercialized Northern Lights. Shine a light on upside-down Santa Claus legs in the chimney. Turn on the bright nose of a blow-up Rudolph. Set up a glowing display of candy canes or penguins or baby Jesuses. I'm here for it!

But please, no matter how early you indulge in the joyful glow of Christmas, I'm begging you now: don't be in a rush to put away all that bright plastic immediately after December 25th. Let the light linger. Allow a bit of garish decor to carry the joy of Christmas into January. Perhaps even February.

Because I, for one, continue to need beacons of hope long after the Christmas presents have been put away. I continue to long for a glimmer of wonder long after the Christmas tree has dropped all its needles and foiled the vacuum's best efforts.

The good news that leads us like a reindeer's red nose through Advent; the good news that delivers extravagant joy at Christmas; that same good news does not dim with the dawning of December 26th. That same good news is no less captivating, no less ostentatious, no less foolish and fun just because the stores end their holiday sales.

Keep those Christmas lights burning a little longer this year, remembering that the good news is like a long and loud tambourine dance, an outrageously abundant feast, and a bright light of love that outshines every grief and injustice.

## **Prayer**

Keep the lamp within my soul trimmed and burning, O Faithful God, so that my joy in your love overflows.



## **About the Author**

Rachel Hackenberg serves as the publisher for [The Pilgrim Press](#).

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