



Beloved Church Family,

Over the last couple of years, there's been a fad emerging for end-of-the-year wrap ups. It started about 7 years ago with Spotify's "wrapped" list that highlights each user's most played songs of the last year. With each passing year, more and more companies have jumped on the "wrap up" bandwagon, and this year, it's honestly been a bit overwhelming. With additional list offerings from Apple Music's "Replay", YouTube's "Recap", and now even Amazon's "Delivered", it's hard to tell what sorts of companies will jump on board next.

Although it's strange at first glance, I *do* understand why it's popular. This is the time of year for reflection. We are all looking back at the year and taking stock of where we've been, what we've accomplished, what new things we've tried, and even what missteps we've made along the way. At a time when we are already cataloging our personal "wrap up" of the last year, it can be fun to see glimpses of little things we might not otherwise pay attention to. (Like that my most played song in 2024 was Donny Osmond's "I'll Make a Man out of You" from Disney's 1998 movie, *Mulan*.)

Reflection is only one half of what we do, though, as one year ends and another begins. We also look to the future. Usually, this involves thinking about what changes we'd like to make. We set goals, make plans, and promise ourselves that things will be better this year – that we will exercise more, eat better, drink enough water, work more efficiently, and keep up with important tasks. And after promising ourselves all these things, we wonder which changes we'll be able to follow through on.

Sometimes, though, there are changes on the horizon we might feel nervous about. These are shifts that have come about organically, and the changes they bring aren't "good" or "bad" – they're just...different. What has us on edge could be a friend who is moving away, a child that is shifting into the next phase of their life, or a loved one that has surgery coming up. The nerves we feel when faced with these changes are natural, especially when they're outside our sphere of control.



Here at St. John, there is one of these organic shifts happening this month, and it involves this newsletter. It's not a "good" change or a "bad" change – just different. Starting this month, our newsletter will be shifting from a monthly model to a quarterly one, at least temporarily.

Our longtime Office Admin, Bev Adams, will be retiring in the spring, and we've been in the process of slowly reducing her hours each week in preparation for her departure. After Wurstmarkt in October, Bev went from working Monday through Friday to working Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. As the New Year begins, there will be another transition, and she'll only be in the office Mondays and Wednesdays.

We will, of course, eventually hire someone new to cover the Office Admin position, but in the meantime, I have voluntarily taken on a few office tasks during the transition. With this new shift beginning in January, however, Bev will not have the hours necessary to publish a Newsletter every month, and that's a task I won't be able to cover.

After talking with the Council, we've decided on a quarterly newsletter model. At least for this year, there will be a full Newsletter in January, April, July, and October. Each one will cover a three-month span and include as much information as we can. Then, during the other months, instead of a full newsletter, we will send out a single page, up-to-date calendar of events.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1, we are reminded of the seasons of life that come and go over the years. Without each season, the one that follows isn't possible. Without fall, there's no winter. Without winter, there's no spring. And without spring, there's no summer. Each one has its blessings and challenges, but every stage lays the groundwork for the next and helps usher in what is to come.

This is a new season for us at St. John, and there will surely be times of joy and times of pain. It's always hard to say goodbye to people we've come to know and love, and we have all come to love Bev - not just for the things she does for us in the office, but also for the wonderful person she is. We also know that retirement is a time of great joy and is reason for celebration! So, we will walk through this season together with God by our side, and we will send Bev off into her season of retirement with gratitude and joy in our hearts.

May each of you feel God's presence as we walk into this new year together.

With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith



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)



Congratulations to Jordan Groennert and Katherine Pickerill-Groennert on the birth of their baby girl, Elise Ann Groennert! Elise was born on Tuesday, December 30th, and all are doing well. Grandparents are John and Lisa Groennert; great grandparents are Betty Sappington and the late Richard Sappington

Advent Fund Drive for the Snack Pack Program

This Advent Season, we asked for donations to the Clinton County Snack Pack Program with a goal of \$2300 by the end of December.

We wanted to report that as of 12/28/25 we exceeded our goal with \$2,576 in donations!

Thanks to all for the very generous donations you have given, and filling the "tree" 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.





Poinsettias this year were placed by:



Donald Bair: *In memory of Patricia Lee Bair and Carol Christine Bair*

Lonna & Steve Feldmann: *In memory of Ray & Corrine Feldmann and Lonnie & Loretta Patton*

Marian Funk: *In memory of Loved Ones*

The Gilomen & Ottensmeier Families: *In memory of Jim & Bernice Gilomen*

The Family of Susan Heiser: *In memory of Rick Heiser and Robert & Marthann Day*

Marc & Elaine Hoffmann: *In memory of Loved Ones Lost*

Trudy Koebel: *In memory of Loved Ones of the Kuhl-Koebel Family*

Betty Sappington: *In memory of All Deceased Loved Ones*

Kimberly & Ron Tremmel: *In memory of Our Parents*

Jeff & Teresa Von Bokel and Family: *In memory of Carl Bopp, Evie Thurman, Dorothy Peter & Carl Peter and Ralph & Mary Jane Von Bokel*

Mike Williamson: *In memory of Red & Vera Kuhn, Charles & Dorothy Williamson and Mickey Williamson*

John & Pehg Zeller: *In memory of Ruth & Jim Kuhn and Cele & Harry Zeller*
We appreciate the festive decorations they offered.



Thank you

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

***To all who contributed to the Christmas Fund*



***To the members who participated in the Paper Bag Christmas Pageant (see pictures)*

Mary meets with Elizabeth as they express joy that they will both have babies.



Top: As the Friendly Innkeeper, Rude Innkeeper and Donkey look on; Joseph and Mary welcome Baby Jesus into the family.



Bottom: The Heavenly Host, Shepherds and the Archangel Gabriel proclaim the birth of Christ along with The Twinkling Star.



The sheep and the lamb also welcome Baby Jesus.



Top: The chicken, cow and bull were the other animals that came to welcome Baby Jesus. The bull had his own caretaker to get over his shyness at being with such a great multitude.



Bottom: The three wisewomen were guided by the Bethlehem Star which announced the Baby Jesus to the world.



Top: King Herod arrived on the scene to ask about the Baby Jesus

Bottom: Our cast of characters as the story continues...



1st row: Lisa Groennert (Cow), Lonna Patton (Shepherd), Maddie Henderson (Sheep)

2nd row: Bonnie Arentsen (Chicken), Logan Albat (Bethlehem Star), Eli Truscott (Rude Innkeeper), Trudy Koebel (Joseph)

3rd row: Hank Henderson (Twinkling Star), Susan Heiser (Elizabeth), Jennifer Albat (Kind Innkeeper), Angie Hubert (Donkey), Courtney

Koebel (Wisewoman), Teresa Von Bokel (Wisewoman), Cora Eckert (Archangel Gabriel)

4th row: Pehg Zeller (Shepherd), Tyler Davis (Heavenly Host), Steve Feldmann (King Herod), Kimberly Tremmel (Wisewoman), Laurie Henderson (Mary), Jo-Allison Rogers (Baby Jesus)

Special Mention: Harrison and Jamie Truscott (Bull & Caretaker – The bull was done with being in front of everyone by the end of the program so the caretaker took him back to their seat)



PICTURES FOR NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY

On Sunday, January 11th from 10:40 AM to 12:50 PM and Tuesday, January 13th from 3:30 to 5:20 PM, we will have a photographer at the church to take pictures of individuals, families, and staff for an updated church directory. Sign-up sheets are in the Narthex. Everyone who comes for a picture will receive the digital copy of their photo, so this is a great opportunity to get updated pictures! With that digital copy, you can order prints from whatever photo website or store you prefer, and if you're not sure how to do that, Pastor Christy or Bev will be able to help you.

If you don't want to come in for an updated picture, but you would still like to be a part of the directory, you're welcome to send in a current photo of yourself or your family. If you have questions, please let the office know.

De-Hanging of the Greens

We will be taking down the Christmas decorations on Sunday, January 11, (the first Sunday after Epiphany) after the 9:30 AM church service. Boxes and tubs are placed throughout the church to help with the task. We hope everyone will be able to stay to help out. We will be working around the area where the pictures will be taken.

Fellowship Time

The Fellowship Lunch is the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 AM at Hank's Bowl in Trenton. We hope you can join us for an enjoyable lunch with others. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome! **Mark your 2026 calendars for these dates: 1/6, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7, 5/5, 6/2, 7/7, 8/4, 9/1, 10/6, 11/3 & 12/1.**

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 25th at 10:30 AM** after the church service. The budget will also be discussed for approval at this time. Annual reports are due by Sunday, January 11, 2026! 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 16th 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 9th as the church books closed on Friday, January 2, 2026. 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!

LOOKING AHEAD

FEBRUARY

February 1: The Happy Quilters of St. John UCC, Mascoutah, will be selling raffle tickets for their DuBois Center quilt before and after church service. Proceeds will be donated to DuBois Center.

February 5: The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive at St. John from 12:00 to 5:00 PM. You can go on <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive> to sign up to donate.

February 7: St. John will be having our annual Drive-Thru Chili Dinner fundraiser.

February 18: Women's J.O.Y. Ash Wednesday Program at 9:00 AM and Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 PM.

MARCH

March 11: Mid-Lenten meal in the chapel at 7:00 PM.

March 19-21: Rummage Sale Fundraiser – We are now accepting donations so you can call the office to arrange a time you can bring your donations to the church and take down to the basement area. If you leave a message, we will get back to you.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

January

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

Council Member: Ron Tremmel

February

Feb. 9 Jarrod Tobin
Feb. 11 Dorothea & Tom Louden
Feb. 16 Lois Clark
Feb. 17 Orville Rinderer
Feb. 18 Billie Rinderer
Feb. 20 Kassie Fisher
Feb. 25 Greg Erdmann

Council Member: TBD

March

Mar. 1 Billie & Orville Rinderer	Mar. 19 Jeral Szpila
Mar. 4 Lauren Holloway	Mar. 20 Kris Schaeffer
Mar. 6 Bev Rogers	Mar. 21 Tish Bates
Mar. 9 Rick Nelson	Mar. 24 Pehg Zeller
Mar. 9 Owen Szpila	Mar. 24 Harper Gerstner
Mar. 12 Mike Williamson	Mar. 25 Lonna Patton
Mar. 15 Cheryl Bair	Mar. 27 Stan Clark
Mar. 15 Jedediah Bates	Mar. 27 Nicole Wernle
Mar. 19 Chris Becker	Mar. 27 Lucas Haller
Mar. 19 Laura Wesselmann	Mar. 31 Deb Athmer

Council Member: TBD



Holiday Greetings

We hope that all of our students are enjoying their holiday break with their families and that everyone had a wonderful Christmas. Over the past month, both classes at Rainbow Preschool engaged in a variety of exciting and meaningful activities. Students had the opportunity to express their creativity through painting projects and completed several Christmas-themed crafts. They also made special presents for their parents, sang Christmas songs together, and enjoyed reading a selection of Christmas stories.

Birthday Celebrations

We want to extend warm birthday wishes to three of our students: Reagan K., who celebrated her birthday on December 8th; Erika F., whose birthday was on December 12th; and Michael F., who also celebrated on December 12th. We appreciate everyone who brought treats to share, which helped make these birthday celebrations extra special for all the children.

Special Story Time

Students were excited to have Pastor Christy come in to read, and she read the stories "Nighty Night Baby Jesus" and "Twas the Evening of Christmas" to our students. Her visits are always highly anticipated, and our students truly enjoy the books she brings to share. We look forward to discovering the new stories Pastor Christy will share with us in the coming year.

Last Day of School Activities

The final day of school before the holiday break was filled with festive fun and excitement. Students came to school in their favorite Christmas pajamas and watched the movie "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The day included a gingerbread man and reindeer hunt inside the classroom, and several other entertaining games that everyone enjoyed.

Special Thanks

We want to express our gratitude to Marian Nelson, Robert Vaninger, the J.O.Y., and all others who generously donated to the new playground equipment. Thank you also to Carl Gilomen for the wonderful handmade toys donated to the preschool. The students are thoroughly enjoying the new toys!

Looking Ahead

While we cherish the time spent with our families during the Christmas break, we will miss our students over the next two weeks. School will resume for MWF students on Monday, January 5th, and for TU/TH students on Tuesday, January 6th. When classes begin again, we will introduce the alphabet box and continue sending homework home; more details about the alphabet box will be provided upon our return.

Ms. Lisa and I are sincerely grateful for the thoughtful gifts we have received. We feel truly fortunate to be part of such a wonderful community of families and students here at Rainbow Preschool.

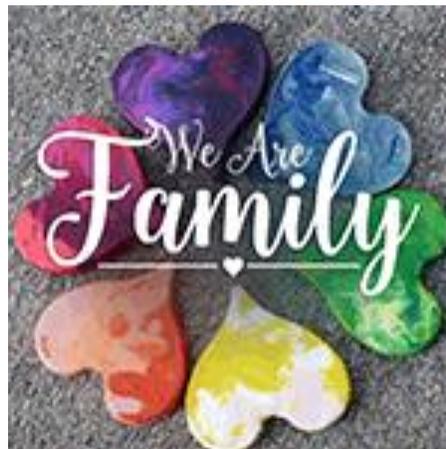
Reminders for January

- School will resume on Monday, January 5th, and Tuesday, January 6th.
- January tuition is due Thursday, January 8th, and Friday, January 9th.
- There will be no school on Monday, January 19th, in observance of Martin Luther King's birthday.
- Please remember to send a coat, gloves or mittens, and a hat with your child, as we will continue to go outside when possible.
- If Wesclin cancels school due to snow, Rainbow Preschool will also be closed. Keep an eye out for Wesclin School District announcements about cancellations on the news.
- If school is canceled, you will receive notifications via email or text message, and updates will also be posted on the preschool's Facebook page and sent through the Reminder app.
- The alphabet box will begin on Monday, January 12th, and Tuesday, January 13th.
- Registration paperwork for the 2026-2027 school year will be sent home in late January or early February. Please complete and return it as soon as possible.
- Be sure to check out our Facebook page, Rainbow Preschool, for photos and videos showcasing our students' activities.

Final Wishes

We wish all our families a safe and healthy Christmas, and we look forward to seeing everyone in the New Year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Misty and Lisa



DAILY DEVOTIONAL

January 3, 2026

A Prayer for a Leader

Talitha Arnold

Give the king your justice, O God. - Psalm 72:1a (NRSV)

I am deeply grateful for the timeless wisdom of our faith and especially for today's psalm. Written 30 centuries ago for the coronation of a king, Psalm 72 is a prayer for any leader at any time.

"Give the leader your justice, O God," the psalm begins—or as Eugene Peterson's *The Message* translates it, "Give the gift of wise rule." The psalm continues its prayer: May this leader advocate for the poor, provide rescue to those in need, save anyone at risk from violence, be compassionate to those who are alone, and crush the oppressors. ("Come down hard on cruel tyrants," in Peterson's version.)

The psalmist affirms that a leader must exercise their power with gentleness and consideration, "like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth" (72:6). Throughout a leader's term of office, the psalmist prays, may there be an abundance of goodness and peace. The psalmist ends by encouraging the people to pray for the leader "without ceasing."

I agree. In this fraught and messy time, we need to pray for our leaders—whoever they are. Psalm 72 is a good place to start.

Prayer

God of all nations, help us heed your psalm. Give our leaders—and us—your justice, your compassion for the poor, and your passion for peace. Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Talitha Arnold is Senior Minister of the United Church of Santa Fe (UCC), Santa Fe, New Mexico.

She is the author of [Mark Parts 1 and 2](#) of the *Listen Up! Bible Study series* and *Worship for Vital Congregations*.



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