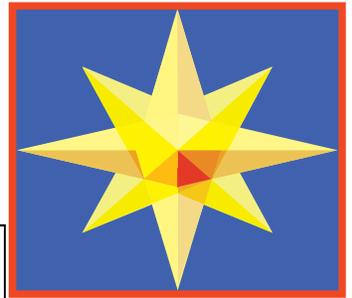


THE EAGLE DECEMBER



Sunday, Dec. 2, 10:00 a.m., Worship, Communion
 Sunday, Dec. 2, 5:00 p.m., Congregational Christmas Dinner
 Sunday, Dec. 9, 10:00 a.m., Worship
 Sunday, Dec. 9, 11:00 a.m., Fellowship Hour
 Tuesday, Dec. 11, 6:15 p.m., Selinsgrove Center Party
 Saturday Dec. 15, 7:30 p.m., BVS Christmas Concert
 Sunday, Dec 16, 10:00 a.m., Worship
 Sunday Dec. 16, 3:00 p.m., BVS Christmas Concert
 Tuesday, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m., Men's Westbranch Chorus Concert
 Sunday, Dec. 23, 10:00 a.m. Worship
 Monday, Dec. 24, 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship
 Tuesday, Dec. 25, 12:00 p.m., Christmas Day Dinner
 Sunday, Dec. 30, 10:00 a.m., Worship



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The Christmas story is really two stories.

It is both the story of what God has done and also the story of what God can and will yet do.

What God has already done, of course, is the story of the nativity--of Jesus' birth in a stable; of shepherds and Wise Men humbling themselves before him; of the star standing over Bethlehem, silently marked the significance of the infant; of an entire world caught up in the angels' promise of a new age.

This is the story of God's love for people, a love that results in the rare birth of an extraordinary man. It is the story of the selfless introduction of God's own Son to a world that may not care and that may not listen. It is the story of God's continuing efforts to restore the people to their chosen obedience, to call them back to their roots as the people of the Lord.

The second dimension of the Christmas story, however, is for the most part not so easy to discern or define. It is that which suggests what God can and will yet do.

At this level, what is to be understood in the nativity is not only the fact that God has come but also the promise that God still comes to those who will make room.

If nothing else, Christmas is the annual reminder that God desires to bring to birth in our lives something extraordinary--something that will fill us and satisfy us, something that will enliven us and empower us, something that will nurture us and sustain us.

The Christmas story really is two stories--a historical one and a personal one, an "outer" one and an "inner" one.

As we honor, remember, and celebrate the former, let us be fully aware of the power and the promise of the latter.

Hoping that your Advent season leads you to the experience of this birth into the eternal, I remain,

Cordially,

Bob Stoudt

LOOKING TO JANUARY

It is proposed to begin a new Confirmation Class in the new year, in the interest of making sure that the next eligible group of St. John's youth might be able to make the several field trips that constitute the core of Pastor Bob's approach.

So far, three have indicated an interest to be part of this Class--Erin DeSantis, James Donlin, and Addie Miller. (If there others out there, please let us know as soon as possible, so that they might be included in our planning!)

The first session for this Class will be Sunday, January 6th, immediately following worship, with subsequent Class sessions starting at roughly 11 a.m. each week and running for an hour. The Rite of Confirmation itself will occur on Pentecost Sunday, June 9th.

Over the five months in between these beginning and ending dates will be an assortment of learning experiences connected to the world of religions of which we are a part, with special concentration on Judaism, Islam, and the various main branches within Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism). And there are those ever-popular field trips, in which any interested adults in the congregation are invited to share as well.

For the progress that this Class will be making, be sure to keep your eye on future issues of *The Eagle!*

DECEMBER VOLUNTEERS

Ushers: **BRENDA / DON ADAMS, RICK MABUS**

Lock-up Person: **MARK BROUSE**

Lay-Reader: **DEB CATHERMAN / BETH MOSER**

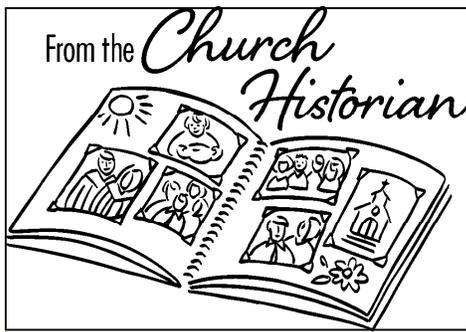
Preparation of Communion Elements: **ANNA BROUSE / DIANNA SPICKLER**

DECEMBER	Children's Church	OPENER/FLOWER DEL.
2	LIZ DeSANTIS	SUE GEMBERLING
9	DON ADAMS	
16	ANGIE DONLIN	
23	LIZ DeSANTIS	
30	LINDA WILLIAMS	

DECEMBER	FLOWER SPONSORS	Acolyte	Drivers Route 1*
2			BAISH
9	KAY/GARY NOTTIS	JAMES DONLIN	ADAMS
16	BRENDA/DON ADAMS	ADDIE MILLER	ADAMS
23	JANET/MIKE ROBERTS	ERIN DeSANTIS	ADAMS
24	LOLA/BILL FULLER		
30			BAISH

DECEMBER	GREETERS
2	MARTHA/BRUCE RAUCH
9	DOT/ART BOWER
16	TESS/FRED GROOVER
23	LINDA & WAYNE WILLIAMS
30	COLLEEN ROSS/LINDA SARTWELL

If you need a ride to church, please contact Ron Zug (570-523-3987) who schedules the drivers.



“Red Book” Memories XII

“Something Special”

As I sat down to write this edition of “Red Book” Memories, I was struck by the fact that the Advent and Christmas seasons are almost upon us. Then, certain lyrics from the song, “Christmas Time Is Here,” entered into my mind. The first were: “Snowflakes in the air. Carols everywhere. Olden times and ancient rhymes. Of love and dreams to share.” These were followed by: “Sleigh bells in the air. Beauty everywhere. Yuletide by the fireside. And joyful memories there.” Ah, Christmas Time!

These lyrics remind us that there is “something special” about the Advent and Christmas seasons associated with the sights, sounds, and smells we experience at this time of year. No doubt, all of these things working together to help us recall pleasant memories, and to draw us closer to our family and friends, to our church, and to our God. Think about it.

Soon, the Sanctuary of our church will be decorated with bright lights that highlight the themes of Advent. There will be Christmas trees in the Chancel, Narthex, and the Fellowship Hall. A Nativity scene will appear on the Sanctuary altar. Then, we will be singing seasonal hymns and preparing for the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas Eve, an event that will be marked by arrangements of poinsettias, carefully selected pieces performed by the choirs, and the smell of candles burning as we sing “Silent Night.” How does all of that make you feel?

Of course, that “something special” isn’t just experienced in our church during Advent and Christmas. It can occur at other times, as well. Think about how the Sanctuary appears on Easter morning, the music that is sung, and the smell of lilies. Don’t these things also bring forward good memories and a sense of nearness to God? Our “Red Book” tells us that when our congregation observed its 150th anniversary, special events took place throughout the year that also engaged the senses, including carefully prepared meals, music, and readings from the church’s history during worship services.

Interestingly, it is at these times that our worship attendance reaches its highest numbers. Further, there is also more participation in church activities by congregational members and others. It wasn’t so long ago that extra seating had to be arranged in the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve and Easter services. Even our “Red Book” comments on the past necessity for two Easter services and how worship attendance at Easter sometimes exceeded 460!

Some would say that more people attend Christmas Eve and Easter services because of family visits or tradition. However, church consultants, such as Pierre Babin, assert that worship done well, involves all of the senses. Sight, sound, and smell help to create an environment where our deepest yearnings for purpose, acceptance, hope, and new life can potentially be met. They foster the presence of the sacred and the possibility of life-giving encounter with God. Consequently, worship services that engage the senses draw more people to them and inspire greater participation in church-related activities. Perhaps, that is the real reason for higher attendance numbers on Christmas Eve and Easter at St. John’s.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to capture that “something special” we feel during special church occasions, and to make it a part of our year-round worship services? Some congregations do so by intentionally changing the appearance, sounds, and smells of their worship spaces to match church seasons through the use of special cloths, symbols, plants, music, and more. Usually, this is done by a small team of committed and creative individuals, working with their pastor. And since these things can help to enhance the experience of worship, increase service attendance, and foster participation in other aspects of congregational life, maybe that is something we might try at St. John’s. It’s food for thought and just might be what we need to bring about the kind of renewal we are looking for as we prepare for our next 100 years and the celebration that will be coming in 2024!

Gary Nottis

LOOKING FOR A FEW FRIENDS

Thanks to the generous OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) giving in 2016 and 2017, Penn Central Conference was able to finish the year "in the black," permitting it to support the important work that it does with local churches (like helping them in their search and call of a new pastor!), Associations, and the wider Church.

Also close to home, Conference reports that it is making good progress in achieving the four goals outlined in its 2017-2020 Strategic (Missional) Plan, including revitalization of congregations, leadership development, fund and donor development, and addressing community/justice concerns. All these efforts are sustained through continued support of OCWM on the parts of churches and individuals.

Accordingly, the members and friends of St. John's are invited to participate in this year's "Friends of Penn Central Conference OCWM Campaign," which began October 20th and will conclude on December 31st.

If personally you are interested in demonstrating your "friendship," please make a donation before year's end. You can make your check payable to St. John's UCC, and we will in turn remit the proceeds to Penn Central Conference. Or, if you prefer, you can direct your check to the Conference Office (900 South Arlington Avenue, Room 227A, Harrisburg, PA 17109), with "OCWM/Friends of Penn Central Conference" written on the memo line.

In any case, many thanks for your support of the Conference in its various ministries carried out in our name!

THANKS
from the
HEART

Dear St. John's Quilters,

This is a small note to say a BIG THANK YOU for your generous gifts of Lap Quilts & Afgan for our residents.

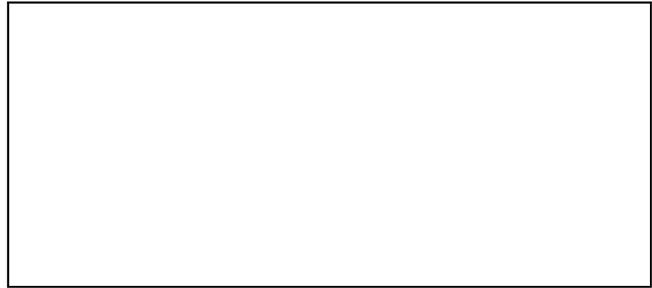
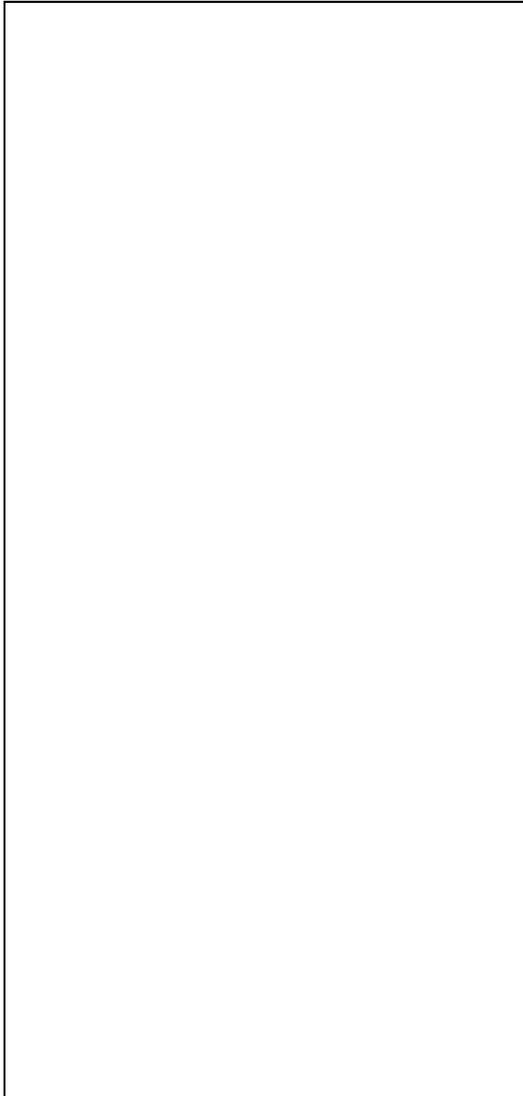
You can't imagine how thrilled we are to receive them since it is now getting cooler and some of our folks ask for them!

We thank God for folks like you who think of Rolling Hills. Your gifts and prayers are much appreciated.

With many thanks and God's blessings!

Activities, Pam and Ann





ANOTHER ORDINATION

The members and friends of St. John's are invited to share in the ordination of DiAnn Baxley into the Christian ministry.

The service is scheduled for the afternoon of **Sunday, December 2nd**, at neighboring Dreisbach Church, beginning at **3 p.m.**

If interested, please feel free to attend this joyful event.

Warm Up Your Carols and Start Baking Soft Christmas Cookies!

It's not too early to start thinking of Christmas. As *Red Book Memories* pointed out, one of our long-time traditions is celebrating Christmas with residents at Selinsgrove Center. We can always use more people. This year's party will be **Tuesday, December 11, departing the East Lot at 6:15PM.** Come join us and experience the joy of Christmas! Talk to Anna Brouse if you have any questions. Even if you can't come, your cookies would be appreciated! Please put them in the kitchen by Sunday, Dec. 9.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers This Morning (please contact the church office, at 524-7606, with any updates):

At Home- Sid Bowersox, Mary Stover, Walter Swineford, Merdyth Updegraff.

Shut-In/Homebound- Ann Beasom, Peg Brouse (Rm#256, BVLV), Leona Fertig, Pearl Fisher, Seneca Foote, Bill & Lola Fuller, Gary Hackenberg (Riverwoods, E-420), Louise Heistand, Bill Hoban (recovering from surgery), Lois Hummel, Evelyn Mabus, Ethel Moser, Shirley Seese, Alda Wagner.

In our Prayers - Christine Sartwell, Larissa Young



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Christmas approaches. Along with it is the anticipation of the annual gathering for worship on Christmas Eve, which this year falls on Monday.

Always a popular and meaningful experience, this year's 7 p.m. service will focus on the telling of the Christmas story, both in the readings of the season and in the singing of the many great carols.

The evening, of course, will be highlighted by the candle lighting ritual.

Do plan to be part of the congregation that evening!

“Singing Mary’s Song”

You are invited to join with the adult Christian education class during the month of December as we explore the devotional book, *Singing Mary's Song: An Advent Message of Hope and Deliverance* by John A. Stroman. This four-part series will help you gain a deeper understanding of the Advent journey, as seen through the eyes and experience of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Each program will take place in the Library at 9 AM on December 2nd, December 9th, December 16th, and December 23rd. The Advent themes of (1) hope, (2) fulfillment, (3) liberation, and (4) good news will be considered through a focus hymn, scripture and book readings, reflection, and prayers. The series book also includes daily devotionals and prayers to be used during Advent and Christmas.

Remember:

There is no cost for any class materials.

You don't need to make a commitment to participate every Sunday. Just come on those Sundays when the topic is of interest to you.

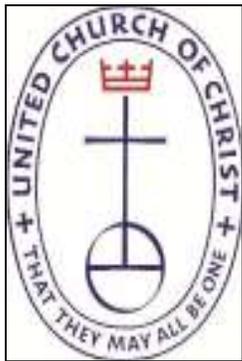
Let this poignant journey with Mary to Bethlehem enhance the wonder and joy of the Advent season for you. We hope to see you there!

Rejoicing Spirits

The sanctuary rang with joyful voices and many rhythm instruments on Thursday, November 8th during the Rejoicing Spirits worship service. We welcomed 6 special worshipers along with 3 of their helpers who enjoyed singing praises to our Lord. First Baptist church, Lewisburg led worship - Pastor Jillian shared the message, Rev. Mackenzie Scott led the singing, Broderick Miller played the violin and read one of the Bible verses, Anne Murcek played the piano and Lisa Scott read other bible verses. They were a great team who brought the spirit of God into our worship.

We look forward to a special Christmas service on December 13th when Rejoicing Spirits worship service is celebrating in December. Volunteers are always welcome to help as greeters, providing refreshments, set-up, clean-up and providing hospitality to our special worshipers!

Special Note: Rejoicing Spirits is an innovative ministry that works to enrich the faith lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends and other supportive community members.



WORSHIP HOURS
Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.
Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Visit us on the Web!
www.stjohnslewisburg.org



St. John's United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

1050 Buffalo Road
 Lewisburg, PA 17837
 Phone: 570-523-0162
 E-mail: stjohnsucc@ptd.net

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here!



The Communion offering for **December** is dedicated to **Phoebe Ministries**.

The Communion offering for **January** is dedicated to **LEAF Fund**.

Special December offering, is dedicated to **Bethany Homes!**

Thanks for your continued support of St. John's missions!



Our annual Christmas dinner will be held on **Sunday December 2, at 5:00 PM.** in fellowship hall. Please bring a dish to share. Meats and beverages will be provided. Perhaps a special visitor from the North Pole might join us for a time of singing and joy. Please come and enjoy a time of fun, food, and fellowship!!!



JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER!

We will be having Christmas Day dinner with appetizers, turkey, ham, potatoes, veggies, stuffing, cranberry sauce, dessert and so much more. Come at noon, we will eat when everyone is there. Anyone is welcome. However we just need to know how many are planning to come, so we can set enough places. Please call Linda Sartwell - 570-966-1101 or Gary and Kay Nottis - 570-523-7137 or Don and Brenda Adams - 570-412-5332, if you plan to attend.