



For us Americans, the month of November is synonymous with the holiday of Thanksgiving, the thought of which immediately flushes into consciousness the themes of gratitude and appreciation.

The occasion perhaps also embarrasses us a bit, however, with the realization that this may be the only time of our year when we intentionally entertain the idea of needing to return thanks. Why, I wonder?

There are perhaps two things that can be identified, the first being that we often have a tendency to see our lives in bleaker terms than is accurate or fair.

This insistence that our glass is half-empty rather than half-full leads us to concentrate on the negatives and deficits rather than on the positives and surpluses that are there as well. A focus on the needier side of things easily translates itself into a rather jaded, cynical, even depressed view of life itself.

To the extent that we dwell on what's wrong with and what's missing in our lives, there is no felt-sense of gratitude to be expected. The holiday of Thanksgiving will come and go, serving only as a painful reminder of why we despair in the first place, missing all the while the blessings which are part of our lot as well.

The second thing, perhaps more difficult to affirm, is that life, including its struggles and stresses, is quite acceptable just the way it is.

Surely, there is no question about the troubles and the suffering that afflict every life in one manner or another, at one time or another. Yet there is also no doubt concerning the steadfast trust in the Eternal One who is superior to all the otherwise passing difficulties that come and go in our lives. No matter what "bad" thing may come, there is a very Good One who stands with us. This sort of faith offers a weighty counter-balance to the attitude that life is only ever half-empty.

All this is underscored in John Steinbeck's little novelette, *The Pearl*. The story concerns a dirt-poor Mexican Indian who discovers a very large natural pearl in the waters off the shoreline near his hut. He dreams of all the wonderful ways that this lucky find will change his life for the better--new clothes, new house, new boat, a good education for his young son (sounds like us, huh?). Despite his lofty dreams, however, his new-found fortune brings him only misery--the jealousy and enmity of his neighbors, even the eventual death of his son.

At a key point in the dialogue, Steinbeck has one of his characters quip to the effect, "They say that people are never satisfied. They are wrong. What sets human beings off from animals is their ability to be content with what they have."

In a powerful few sentences, shedding light upon our own questionable evaluation of the "good life" as being the one which offers the greatest number and the most expensive toys as a part of it. Any animal, we are being told, can crave and accumulate without end. Only the mature, healthy human being can see and celebrate the immense blessing in what is, whatever that may be at the moment.

The message to us, then, on the upcoming occasion of this Thanksgiving is twofold: (1) What we don't have is not as bad as we imagine, and (2) What we do have is far more satisfactory (and potentially satisfying) than we sometimes think.

Wishing you well as you consider what exactly Thanksgiving 2018 means for you, I remain,

Cordially,
Bob Stoudt

NOVEMBER VOLUNTEERS

Ushers: **DIANNA SPICKLER, ROGER SPICKLER, LINDA WILLIAMS, WAYNE WILLIAMS**

Lock-up Person: **ROGER SPICKLER**

Lay-Reader: **ANGIE DONLIN / RITA GRIFFITH**

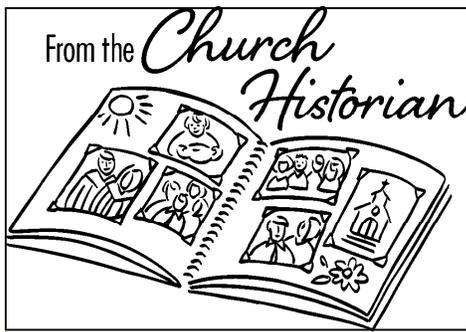
Preparation of Communion Elements: **TESS GROOVER & RUTH RICHARD**

NOVEMBER	Children's Church	OPENER/FLOWER DEL.
4	LIZ DeSANTIS	LINDA SARTWELL
11	LINDA WILLIAMS	
18	ANGIE DONLIN	
25	DON ADAMS	

NOVEMBER	FLOWER SPONSORS	Acolyte	Drivers Route 1*
4	DIANNA/ROGER SPICKLER	ADDIE MILLER	BAISH
11	SHIRLEY SEESE	JAMES DONLIN	BAISH
18	JANET/RON ZUG		BAISH
25	BRENDA/DON ADAMS	ERIN DeSANTIS	ADAMS

NOVEMBER	GREETERS
4	MARTHA/BRUCE RAUCH
11	DOT/ART BOWER
18	TESS/FRED GROOVER
25	LINDA & WAYNE WILLIAMS

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



“Red Book” Memories XI

“Equipping the Saints”

Throughout our 194-year history, the congregation of St. John’s has worked to equip Christ’s people for works of service and the expansion of Christ’s church. While many of our previous pastors have contributed to this effort, the vast majority of this preparation has taken place within our Christian Education programs. This is something that we need to celebrate and remember. It is an important aspect of the church that we need to revitalize.

Our “Red Book” tells us that as early as the pastorate of Rev. Henry Harbaugh (1843-1850), when our congregation built its first sanctuary; St. John’s had a Sunday school of 150 participants. That was quite an achievement for a church that reported a membership of 100 members! Obviously, the Christian Education program of Rev. Harbaugh’s day was drawing on more than active members..

Our Christian Education program continued to flourish throughout the coming years, providing religious instruction, social activities, and community outreach opportunities for children, youth, and adults. As proof, consider that the average Sunday school attendance was 211 in 1957 and 243 in 1963. There can be no doubt that the dedicated Sunday school teachers of St. John’s and the curricula they used were important assets to our church, as well as the Lewisburg area.

Unfortunately, Christian Education at St. John’s has gradually diminished over time, right along with average Sunday worship attendance and financial resources. Decreasing numbers of children, youth, and adults choose to participate in Sunday school, and even fewer individuals express interest in teaching classes. This is due, in part, to the reality that Christianity no longer dominates our society, as it once did. Many people now question the relevance of the Christian message to their lives, especially in light of the growing presence of other faith traditions. Further, the proliferation of Sunday morning social and sporting activities, as well as the increasing demands of modern life also take away from the time once spent on Christian Education.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to Christian Education is its historic focus: teaching the basic tenants of our faith tradition. This worked well in the past. However, it does not meet the needs of today’s children, youth, and adults. Individuals are not so much interested in the basics of Christianity as they are in the life, teachings, and way of Jesus. What does his message mean today?

Studies show that successful Christian Education programs now place their emphasis on making disciples of all people for Jesus. This means that participants not only learn about Jesus, but also put his teachings into practice through a variety of real-world, hands-on experiences offered at different times during the week. Additionally, such programs train church members how to take part in various congregational ministries, such as pastoral care, mission, and community outreach. They also offer a number of Bible studies and life-issue classes (parenting, aging, etc.) to members and non-members, alike, as well as alternative worship services.

At St. John’s, we have experimented with such approaches for equipping the saints in recent years. The successful “Life Tradition Study Group” (2004-2010) provided opportunities for members and non-member to explore issues of faith, spirituality, and life-challenges. Participants engaged in outreach opportunities, such as the donation of Spanish-language Bibles to the prison at Allenwood. Our current children’s Sunday School and its garden project are another example. And then, there have been Rev. Stoudt’s evening classes on Jesus, Spirituality, Islam, and the Gospel of Thomas.

This approach holds the promise of revitalization for our Christian Education program. It can deepen our faith, draw people to us, and demonstrate to others how Christianity is relevant to their lives. Let’s continue to experiment with these things for the wellbeing of our church and as a tribute to the hard work and commitment of our past Christian Education teachers. It’s all about discipleship!

Gary Nottis

THE NEXT SCHEDULED "TOWN MEETING"

Per the adopted strategic plan for Penn Central Conference, it is suggested to move from a total of eight Associations to four. That would increase the amount of contact among our congregations while reducing the amount of Conference staff time required to service various committees at the Association level.

As part of the Central Association, St. John's Church is one of the area UCCs that would be affected by an official yoking with the Northern Association, which covers the area extending west to State College and north to the New York State line.

Discussions have been ongoing for several months between the Executive Committees of Central and Northern Associations, in order to explore what "birthing" a new combined Association might look like, and the respective Committees on Ministry from these two Associations have also already been working cooperatively.

Not wanting to get too far ahead of ourselves, a "town meeting" of our several Central Association congregations has been called for the morning of Saturday, November 3rd, at Trinity Church, Watsontown, for the purpose of presenting the details of where things stand and soliciting feedback as to where we go next. The meeting is slated to start at 10 a.m. and conclude by 12 noon.

Anyone interested in the possible upcoming changes are encouraged to share in this informative gathering.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING COMING SOON!

Immediately following worship on the morning of Sunday, November 11th, St. John's will hold one of its annually scheduled Congregational Meetings.

This one concerns the formal consideration of the 2019 Budget and, for the first time, the election of all officers and committee persons under the newly-adopted reorganization of the congregation.

Be sure to remain after worship on that date to share in these congregational actions.

THANKS
from the
HEART

Thank you for your congregation's gift to Phoebe! Because of your gift, Phoebe is able to meet the needs of older adults through diverse residential options, care and educational programs.

Warm regards,

Stacey L. Prohaska, Exec. Dir./Philanthropy

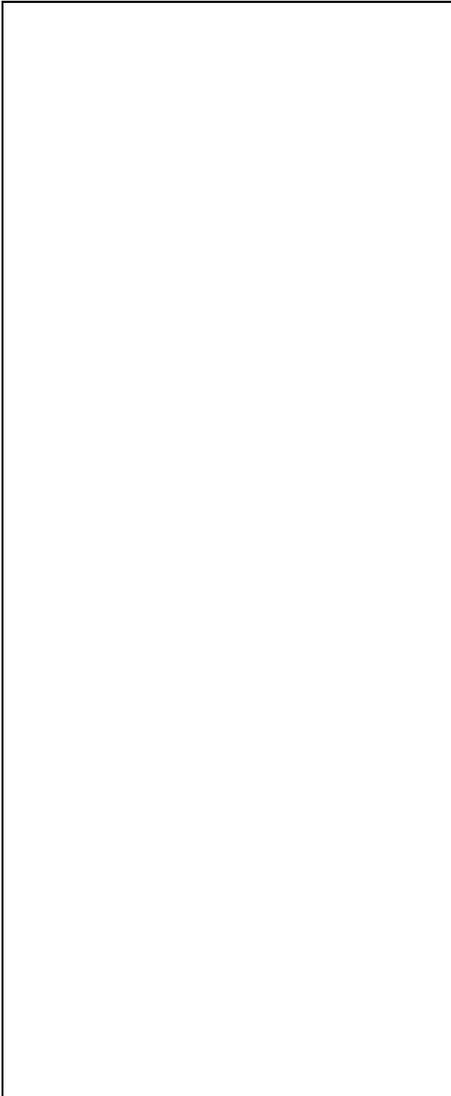
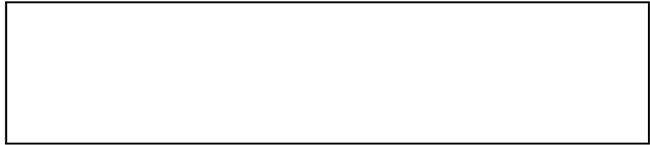
Dear Members of St. John's,
Thank you for your recent gift to the United Church of Christ Homes Benevolent Fund. Without your contributions, UCC Homes would not be able to provide valuable assistance to those in need!

Sincerely,

Victoria M. Velez

Dir. Public Relations





YES, IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

What time of the year, you might ask?

Why the ending of Daylight Saving Time, of course, which occurs in the wee hours of Sunday, November 4th.

When you retire for the night on that date, be sure to remember to set your clocks back one hour, and claim that extra hour of sleep.

That means that you will arrive for worship the next morning much better rested than usual!

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 at 6:15PM**. Come join us and experience the joy of Christmas! Talk to Anna Brouse if you have any questions.

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

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

Shut-In/Homebound- Ann Beasom, Peg Brouse (Rm#256, BVLV), Leona Fertig, Pearl Fisher, Bill & Lola Fuller, Gary Hackenberg (Health South Rehab/Pleasant Gap Rm. 223), Louise Heistand, Lois Hummel, Evelyn Mabus, Ethel Moser, Shirley Seese, Alda Wagner.

In our Prayers - Christine Sartwell, Larissa Young





A "RETREAT" FOR ALL ST. JOHN'S LEADERS

A short but timely "retreat" is being scheduled for all newly-elected officers and all members of our six primary Working Committees, in order to provide a running start to our reorganized look in 2019.

This special time-together will take place on the morning of Saturday, November 17th, starting at 9 a.m., in our Fellowship Hall, with coffee/tea and donuts. It will adjourn by 11:30.

Under the leadership of Pastor Bob, the agenda, among other matters, will include the refining of the general job descriptions for each of these committees and the sharpening of the specific focus for their work in the coming year.

All our leadership for the coming year are strongly encouraged to share in this important time together!

THE ADULT CLASS TAKES SHAPE FOR NOVEMBER!

We will continue to meet and get a new perspective on some of the "Bad Girls" and "Bad Boys" of the Bible throughout November. Were these individuals really so bad or just weak and challenged? How are their stories still relevant, today? Can they teach us how to discover a better and deeper faith?

Classes will take place in the Library at 9 AM, each Sunday in November. The "Bad Girls" and "Bad Boys" we will consider in November include:

- Potiphar's Wife (November 4th)
- Jephthah (November 11th)
- The Woman at the Well (November 18th)
- Samson (November 25th)

Every Sunday morning discussion will focus on a particular individual, enhanced by Bible study and instruction. 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.

Needed: Someone to Host the December Coffee Hour

Remember those delicious zucchini treats, the mini pulled pork sandwiches, the fruit-salads in a cup, and all the tasty cheeses and cookies? And what about the after-church fellowship, so important to our revitalization? December is an important month in our church calendar and it is the season of sugar plums and other treats. Currently, we are in need of someone to host the December Coffee Hour. Please consider volunteering. If you have never done one before, there are plenty of seasoned members to help you.

Rejoicing Spirirts

An adaptive worship service to provide people with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to worship in a 'shush-free' environment.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH, at 6:30 p.m.



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

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

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



The Communion offering for **November** is dedicated to **Hoffman Homes**.
The Communion offering for **December** is dedicated to **Phoebe Ministries**.
Special November offering, is dedicated to **Neighbors in Need!**
Thanks for your continued support of St. John's missions!



We will celebrate **ALL SAINTS DAY** on **Sunday, November 4, 2018**.
During the worship service, we will honor those who have passed during the past year, by a candle lighting ceremony.
This service is open to all to honor the memory of loved ones passed.



Help is needed to ready the Church for Christmas! We will "Deck the Halls" on **Sunday, November 25th, at 2:00 p.m.**
Please come out to enjoy some fellowship and fun, while hanging the greens!