



EMBRACING LOVE

St. John's United Church of Christ
An "Open and Affirming" Congregation
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Rev. Alice Rauch, Pastor

The Service: 10:00 a.m.

March 30, 2025

(Let us be silent and prayerful as we prepare ourselves for worship.)

MISSION STATEMENT OF ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Remembering that God calls us through Christ to be ministers with each other, St. John's United Church of Christ, as inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit, seeks: To be inclusive and accessible to all people; To provide loving service to all of God's people through mission and ministry; To strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

Rooted in tradition, progressive in our outlook.

Prelude

Announcements and Prayer Concerns

Opening to Lent - Opening to God

Sung response:

**Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

Sung response:

**Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart,
I want to see you, I want to see you.**

***Prayer:** Awe-inspiring God, we come together this day because we need to be reminded to see through the lens of delight. Too often, we forget that we are made to delight in the diversity and abundance of Your gifts. Open us to perceive anew. Inspire us to receive our surroundings with awe. Forgive us when we get complacent, when we choose routine over opportunities for new experiences. Be with us on this journey as we seek again to marvel at Your works.

Sung response:

**Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!**

*The Peace

*As a people forgiven and freed, we reach out to lift others up, offering the peace of Christ.
Peace be with you! And also with you!*

*Hymn *"His Eye Is On the Sparrow"* #475

Words for All - Especially Children

Anthem *"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"* arr. Ringwald

Scripture *Excerpt from Psalm 36*

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer (sinned and sinned against us): **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Celebrations and Joys

*Singing Our Gratitude (tune Doxology)

**Praise God, Creator of us all, Praise Christ, by whom we hear our call,
Praise Spirit, that which sets us free, Our awe is yours, the One-in-Three.**

*Dedication of Gifts and Offerings: **Loving God, as we offer these gifts, we are reminded of Your boundless love and mercy, exemplified in the parable of the prodigal son. Just as You welcome us home with open arms, may these offerings reflect our desire to serve others and bring them closer to Your embrace. Bless these gifts, that they may help reconcile, heal, and restore lives, bringing glory to Your name. Amen.**

*Hymn *"Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing"*

#303

*Benediction

*Postlude

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

(Please contact the church office, at 570-523-0162, with any updates)

Ongoing Needs- Anna Brouse, Betty Hackenberg, Jean Hartman, Kristian K., Christine Sartwell, Leslie Shearer, Dianna Spickler, Linda Williams, Wayne Williams, Rev. Sharon Von Blohn.

Mostly Homebound- Ann Beasom, Peg Brouse, Bill Fuller, Ethel Moser, Ann Louise Snyder, Joanne Stahley.

Immediate Concerns - The Family of Richard Berry, Ed Crow, Rev. Sally Dries, Richard Furman, Bill Geyer, Craig Hoffman, John Marshal, Pam Mabus, Ken Miller, Sue Miller, The Family of Ken Moore, Todd O'Neil, Pastor Gary Nottis, Alice Savidge, Renee St. Clair, Cyndi Weaver.

CHANCEL FLOWERS - are given by Pastor Gary Nottis in celebration of Kay's birthday.

THIS MORNING

St. John's is pleased you have joined with us today. We hope that you have found this time to be a blessing. **Please sign** the attendance book located in the Narthex (and kindly include your mailing address/telephone number and/or email) or fill out a Welcome Card (located on the Welcome Table in the Narthex) and introduce yourself to the people who are worshipping around you. If you are looking for a new church family and are interested in knowing more about St. John's, please indicate that following worship to the Pastor or one of the greeters.

THIS WEEK

Monday, March 31	9:30 am 4 pm 7 pm	Kinder Music (PAR) LENTEN BOOK STUDY (GP) BVS Rehearsal (FH)
Tuesday, April 1	9:30 am 10:30 am Noon 7 pm	Kinder Music (PAR) Willowbrook Strings (PAR) Soup & Scripture Christ Lutheran Church Men's Westbranch Chorus (CHRM)
Wednesday, April 2		
Thursday, April 3	8:30 am 9 am 1:30 pm 7 pm 7 pm	WW (FH) TOPS (CR) Trailside Troubadours (FH) BUILDINGS/GROUNDS (GP) Women's Barbershop (CH.RM.)
Friday, April 4		
Saturday April 5		
Sunday, April 6	9:00 am 10 am	CHANCEL CHOIR (CH.RM) WORSHIP, CHILDREN'S CHURCH

FUTURE

NEED A RIDE TO CHURCH - Rides to Church services are now available for folks. If you're in need of a ride to one of our services, please call the Church office (570) 523-0162 by at least the Friday prior to needing a ride.

MONTHLY MISSION OFFERING - March's communion offering is dedicated to OGHS and our annual Easter Basket project which provides food for 15 local families.

CHANCEL FLOWER CHART - The Chancel Flower Chart is located on the table in the Narthex. Please consider sponsoring a Sunday or two for flowers.

LAY-READERS NEEDED - There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for Lay-readers. Please sign up for a month or split a month with someone.

WEEKLY SOUP & SCRIPTURE SERIES - Each Wednesday, at noon there will be a soup and scripture series presented by the Lewisburg Ministerium and Council of Churches, located at Christ Lutheran Church, on South 3rd St., in Lewisburg. The series runs for 6 weeks, every Wednesday at noon except the **First week of April, when it will be held on Tuesday, April 1st. at noon**, same location.

SECOND SUNDAY SOCIAL - will be held on Sunday, April 13th, immediately following the worship service. Join us in Fellowship Hall for Tom Rich's presentation; Railroads & Railroaders: A story lies behind each photo.

THE OUTWARD SIGNS

March 23, 2025

Easter Baskets - \$80.00; Building Use - \$200.00; Current Expenses - \$1,265.00;
Davy's Cards - \$100.00; Dumpster Redo - \$250.00; Giant Cards - \$100.00;
Improvements/Maintenance - \$20.00; Loose Offering - \$30.00;
Memorial Fund - \$50.00; OCWM - \$320.00; St. John's Quilters - \$15.00;
UCC Cornerstone - \$45.07;

GRAND TOTAL - \$2,475.07 THANK YOU!!!

St. John's United Church of Christ

1050 Buffalo Road, Lewisburg, PA 17837 -- (570) 523-0162
Worship 10:00 a.m. Office: Mon.- Fri. 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Website: www.stjohnslewisburg.org Email: stjohnsucc@ptd.net

It is a privilege to serve you today . . .

Rev. Alice Rauch, <i>Pastor</i>	Todd Hummel, <i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Rev. Gary Nottis, <i>Pastoral Care Assoc.</i>	Staci & Shannon Prutzman, <i>Greeters</i>
Todd R. Hummel, <i>Dir. Of Music / Organist</i>	Keira Aulenbach, <i>Acolyte</i>
Todd R. Hummel, <i>Bell Choir Director</i>	
Hannah Loughhead, <i>Chancel Choir Director</i>	Brenda Adams, Don Adams, Sue Baish, Barry Catherman, Alicia Graybill, Lisa Graybill, Linda Sartwell, Dave Smit, <i>Tech Team</i>

CCLI #20796546 One License #738455-A

Available to you, if needed, are Quiet Rooms for adults and children, where the service can be seen and heard. Also available are phonic-ear hearing units, large print bulletins, and large-print Bibles. Ask any greeter or A/V team member.

LIVESTREAM OF SERVICE - We are live streaming the worship service on both Facebook and YouTube. If you would prefer NOT to be seen on the live stream, please ask a greeter to be seated in an area that is not visible by the cameras.
(Quiet room or elsewhere in the Sanctuary)

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 30, 2025

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Embracing Love

For centuries, renowned artists have captured the varied emotions among the characters in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, depicting on canvas and in stone the forgiving father, the bitter brother and the repentant prodigal.

If you were to pick up a brush on this the fourth Sunday in Lent, which of the characters would you paint first? Who would it be that you — answer honestly now — relate to the most? The one extending forgiveness or the one bitter because that forgiveness has been extended. Or maybe you are putting on those ancient sandals, trekking back home to make amends?

Don't worry too much about your answer, because over the course of our lives we will find ourselves identifying with each of these characters. There will be times where we are grace-filled, times where we begrudge forgiveness, and times where we are truly sorry for the things we have done.

Famed Dutch artist, Rembrandt, has two versions of the prodigal son in which he painted in his lifetime. The first was done while he was a young man at the height of his fame and domestic bliss. With a loving wife, children and an audience who clamored for his work, Rembrandt had it all. It's not surprising that at this time in his career he depicted himself as the prodigal without a care in the world, a woman seated on his lap, and a drink lifted high in his hand.

Life though changed for the artist. His children and wife died. His wealth was gone, as were his patrons who once commissioned works created by his hands. Rembrandt returned to the prodigal son for one of his last paintings before his death. Only this time, each brushstroke revealed a man who knew all too well what it meant to be broke and broken.

Great artists create from what they know in life. Rembrandt was no exception, capturing in his prodigal son paintings a joy that was fleeting and sorrow that was soul crushing. It would be the latter that would become the artist's most well-known painting.

And in the end, Rembrandt found himself running home into the loving arms of God. He died on Oct. 4, 1669, and was buried with no family and no fanfare in a grave set aside for paupers that was owned by the church.

We will all someday find ourselves running into the arms of a loving and forgiving God, who will welcome his prodigal children — always. But for now, how do we get better at extending this holy and healing forgiveness to others? How do we not become bitter? How do we find the strength to make the amends we must make? How would a great artist paint us right now in such a story of grace?

Praises to You, O God, who never turns Your back on us — no matter how far from home we have ventured. Embrace us now with Your love and may that love soften our hearts to the point where we our arms begin to open wider to all Your children who are lost and lonely. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

