

Joy of *ST. JOHN'S*



Advent Invitation

MAKING ROOM FOR THE HOLY

The Advent season is upon us! This year our focus is "Making room for the Holy." The holidays are always filled with cookie baking, family gatherings, mailing Christmas cards, writing letters, shopping ... and lots of eating! Sometimes we miss the holy invitation we find during Advent to slow down, to create calm, and to allow God to move in our lives.

Here's what we can do:

Sign up for our daily Advent Prayers at stjohnsjx.com. Each day you will receive an emailed prayer designed to help you re-focus and remember the reason for the season!

Join in each Wednesday at noon for Centering Prayer. Pastor Judy will lead us in a brief practice both in-person

in our sanctuary and on Zoom. The recorded meditations will be posted to our Facebook page and can be viewed on demand. Centering Prayer is a time of quiet, when we open our hearts and minds to God.

Gather with us each Sunday, either in-person or on Zoom. Each week our message will challenge us to make room, to clear the clutter of our minds and hearts, and to seek God's word for us today.

Sing with us on Wednesday, December 15! (Masks will be required -- no exceptions!) Our Healthy Congregations group is sponsoring a night of Carols & Cookies. We will meet in the sanctuary at 6:30 PM to sing all our favorite carols together, then each attendee will receive Christmas Cookies to go!

Worship with us on Christmas Eve at 7 PM as we welcome Jesus through song and drama. Our Christmas program "It Wasn't the Hilton, You Know!" revisits the inn and the stable where Jesus was born. Participants of all ages and all ability are welcome! We will have one practice on Wednesday, December 22 in-person and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome!

Breathe! Practice this breath prayer: as you breathe in, say silently "Welcome." As you breathe out, say silently "Jesus." Remember, you are a House for the Holy! Welcome, Jesus.



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LET THERE BE LIGHT

Advent is the beginning of the Church year. It always feels like the end, as we count down the days until Christmas and the daylight hours become shorter -- but for Western Christians it is the beginning. Our worship calendar begins with Advent: preparing for the birth of Christ.

The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus* which means "arrival." It signifies the arrival of the Light of the World. In Greek, the word used is *parousia*, which means "presence." I find it interesting that we are awaiting the arrival of the Light, which has been present with us all along -- we just haven't been aware. In Genesis 1:3 God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. It was the first of God's declarations; the Light was present even before the sun (v. 14).

Each holiday season our homes, neighborhoods and churches are decorated with lights. As the days grow darker, our celebratory lights grow brighter. We are all innately drawn to the light, which chases away the darkness.

During our worship services we will light the candles on the Advent wreath. This is a practice that started in the early 19th century. The four candles mark the passage of the four weeks counting down to Christ's birth. The violet candles represent Hope, Peace and Love; the candle representing Joy is pink. In the center

of the wreath is the Christ Candle, which will be lit on Christmas Eve. We celebrate the arrival of the Light of the World with candlelight.

Why are we so attracted to light?

Maybe it is because light affirms life. No matter how dark our days may seem, the tiniest glow of light carries hope. The flicker of a candle eradicates just a bit of the darkness around us, and reminds us that in the end, life prevails. The darkness cannot win.

This year, as the darkness of another year of pandemic, economic struggle, health problems and family issues surround us, let's focus on the light. Advent invites us to celebrate the Light of Christ which surrounds us and protects us. The light will prevail; the darkness will not win!

Christmas Blessings, Pastor Judy

New Members

MEMBERSHIP CLASS DEC. 12

Pastor Judy will offer a membership class following worship on Sunday, December 12. This brief conversation will include information about St. John's and the United Church of Christ denomination. If you are curious about membership or just curious about St. John's, you are welcome to join in this class! Those who choose to become members will be welcomed into the life of the church during our morning worship on December 19. Please text or call Pastor Judy to sign up for the membership class at 260-668-9173.

Jesus said,
"I am the light
of the world.
Whoever follows me
will never walk in
darkness but will have
the light of life."

John 8:12



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*Happy
Birthdays!*

December Birthdays

TIME TO CELEBRATE!

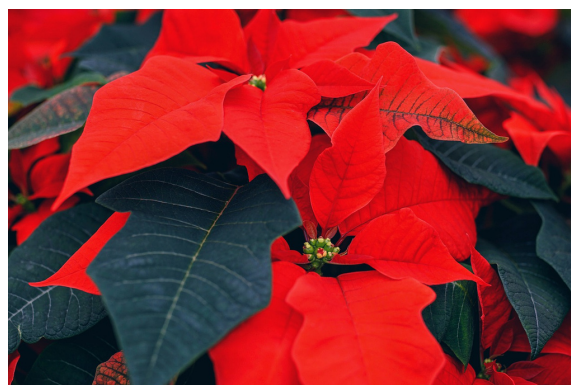
- 3 - Robert Dinges
- 4 - Barb Byrum
- 6 - Marjorie Hockstetler
- 7 - Latasha Canter
- 8 - Robert Harkness
- 19 - Mae Covington
- 28 - Harry Wilson



Poinsettias

LAST CHANCE TO ORDER

Advent is here! Honor and remember your loved ones with a poinsettia. There is still time for your order! Please contact Evelyn at the church office. This year poinsettias cost \$10.



Christmas Food Baskets

DISTRIBUTION DECEMBER 20-22

Our church is already receiving calls for help with Christmas meals! We are currently collecting monetary donations and canned/boxed goods for at least ten Christmas Food Baskets.

We will assemble the baskets on December 19 for families in our neighborhood and our church family. Items needed include potatoes, gravy mix, cranberry sauce, biscuit mix, canned vegetables, cake mixes and frosting ... anything that you enjoy at your holiday dinners! Bring your checks and donations to the church office.

Questions? Please contact Carl.

Advent Prayers

DAILY EMAILS DECEMBER 1-24

To help prepare for Christmas, daily prayers will be sent to all who subscribe. Pastor Judy and Elder Jan Janke have compiled brief prayers that will help us create room for the holy in our hearts during this Advent season. If you would like to receive a daily prayer during December, please visit stjohnsjx.com to subscribe, or contact Evelyn at the church office.

December Calendar

DECEMBER 1,8,15,22 -
CENTERING PRAYER AT
NOON

DECEMBER 8 - COUNCIL
MEETING 6PM

DECEMBER 8 - DND
GAME NIGHT 6PM

DECEMBER 15 - CAROLS
AND COOKIES 6:30 PM

DECEMBER 17 - FOOD
PANTRY 10AM-12PM

DECEMBER 20 - FOOD
BASKET DISTRIBUTION

DECEMBER 22 - DND
GAME NIGHT 6PM

DECEMBER 22 -
CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
PRACTICE TBA

DECEMBER 24 -
CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 7
PM

*"The voice of one crying out
in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord
... and all flesh shall see the
salvation of God.'"*

- Luke 3:4,6

Samaritan Fund

BECOMING GOOD SAMARITANS

St. John's is working to help our neighbors! We continue to receive calls for help with rent, electricity and water bills, and food.

In November, we received 5 requests for help with eviction, 5 requests for Consumers shut-offs, and 4 requests for water shut-offs.

Checks were requested and sent out for 4 utility shut-offs, 1 housing assistance, and 4 evictions.

Thanks to a generous donation, we were able to contribute an extra \$400 toward eviction assistance this month.

"Sometimes when we are generous in small, barely detectable ways it can change someone else's life forever."

—Margaret Cho

Food Pantry

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

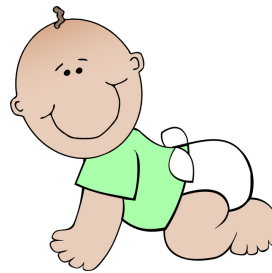
Our Community Food Pantry served 130 persons on November 19. Under Carl Robinson's leadership, the Food Pantry distributed 2600 pounds of food. Many thanks to our faithful team of volunteers! The next Food Pantry will be Friday, December 17, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.



Hats, Mittens and Scarves

COLD WEATHER IS HERE!

We will be providing the community with hats, mittens, gloves and scarves during the winter months. Please bring your donations to the church office and Carl will hang them outside for those in need! Thank you for your generosity.



Baby "Sprinkles"

EXPANDED BABY SHOWER NEEDS

Each month our Baby Shower team is participating in the Food Pantry, offering baby items, clothing, diapers and more to moms in need. The goal is to journey with the moms and babies who participated in the annual Baby Shower. Last month 31 families received items! Due to this increased need, we are receiving ongoing monetary donations for the purchase of car seats and other essential items. If you are unable to contribute financially, perhaps you can help staff the baby room during the monthly food pantry. Please contact Donna Benedict at the church office to find out how you can help!

All Hands on Deck!

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Want to help?
Here's what you can do!

- Pray for St. John's congregation every day: pray for wisdom as we move forward, compassion for one another, and success for our outreach and missions.
- Assist with the Food Pantry on the third Friday of each month.
- Donate time or money to the Samaritan Fund.
- Volunteer to be an Usher.
- Offer your musical gifts.
- Notice who's missing from worship ... and reach out with love.
- Call a friend to say hello, and let them know you care about them!



Rev. Judy Goodrow

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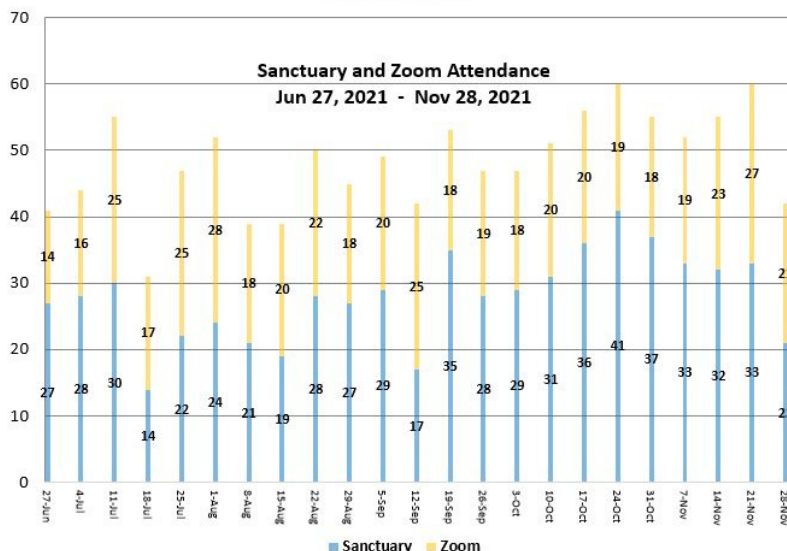
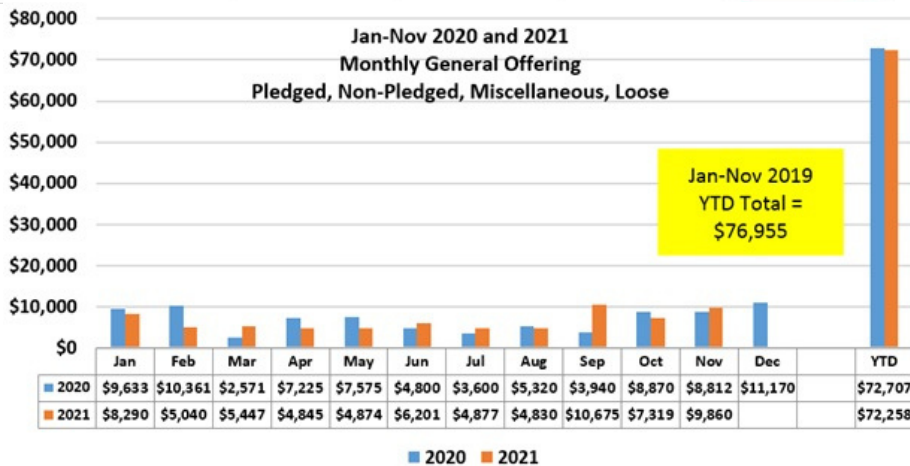
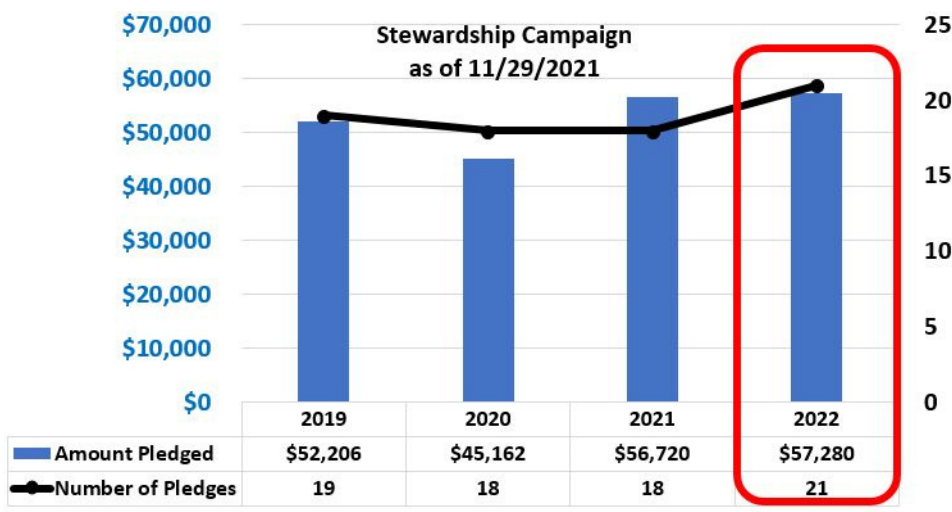
Healthy Congregations

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!



Our Healthy Congregations group continues to meet and discuss how our church can be both adaptable and relevant to the changing needs of our congregation and to spiritual seekers in our community. In November the group discussed presenting "Carols and Cookies" as a special Advent opportunity to spend time together in song. We will meet in our sanctuary on Wednesday, December 15 at 6:30 PM to carol together. **Masks are required!** Everyone will receive some Christmas Cookies to go! Everyone is invited to participate in our Healthy Congregations group. We'll continue our conversation on January 19. I would love to see you there!

—Pastor Judy



Council Update

The Church Council met on November 10 and the following business was discussed:

- There are council positions that remain open;
- The constitution review committee has downsized the church committees from 13 to 6;
- The United Center for Caring added Tami Farnum from CAA to the board;
- A new online bookkeeping service will be used;
- Our sanctuary speakers require an update;
- Security measures for the sanctuary equipment are needed.

The slate of officers for 2022 are:

- Gary Reasoner, president
- Linda Miller, past president
- David Chesney, vice president
- Bert Steck - financial secretary
- Miriam Dorsey - secretary
- Gene Johnson - treasurer
- Michele Wilson - worship
- Carl Robinson - ministry support

These positions are still open:

- Pastoral relations (Harry Wilson)
- Stewardship Chair
- Ministry Support Team
- Delegate - 1
- Christian Community and Care Team

Full minutes are available in the church office. The next Council meeting will be December 8 at 6 PM via Zoom.



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*Reach up,
Reach in,
Reach out!*



Affix Address
Label Here

*Whoever you are, and wherever
you are on life's journey ...*

*There's a place
for you here!*

St. John's

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

reach up, reach in, reach out

stjohnsjx.com