

Joy of ST. JOHN'S UCC



Christmas Eve

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 7 PM

We will celebrate the birth of Jesus at our traditional Christmas Eve service of readings and carols at 7 PM on Saturday, December 24.

Our Advent theme is Reflecting the Sacred. You'll begin to see mirrors decorating our worship space to help us remember that wherever we go, we shine the light of Christ into our world.

On Sunday, December 25, we will offer a Zoom-only worship experience. This will allow our staff members and volunteers to spend the day with their families while offering everyone an opportunity to worship together.

Night of Christmas Music

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 6:30 PM

Come sing with us! Our Night of Christmas Music will begin at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, December 13. Led by Janet Middlebrook at the piano and featuring Ron Middlebrook, we will sing all our favorite Christmas songs. Christmas cookies will be served too! This fun event will be in-person and on Zoom. Watch for the link in the Weekly Digest.



Toy Giveaway

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Dungytreet Foundation, assisted by St. John's UCC, will adopt ten families this Christmas, providing toys for children.

Collection boxes have been placed in five retail locations and funding has been secured to purchase additional toys if needed.

The toys will be distributed to parents on Tuesday, December 20 prior to our monthly Community Dinner. Any unused toys will be donated to our Baby Sprinkles ministry, which is also giving away toys to families in need. If you would like to support this effort, bring new, unwrapped toys to SJUCC and place them in the box in the hallway.



IN THIS ISSUE

Christmas Services
Night of Christmas Music
Toy Giveaway

The Pastor's Screen
Winter Book Study

December Calendar
Community Dinner
Special Needs Dance
Advent Drama
Be the Blessing

Mission Updates

Attendance and Giving
Council Update
Poinsettia Order Form

From the Pastor's Screen

ACCEPTING ADVENT

Arriving on the island of Dominica was exciting. There's a narrow, short airstrip that's tricky to maneuver on a good day. This wasn't a good day. A storm had been forecast which kept us grounded in Miami for almost an hour. We all cheered when the plane got cleared for takeoff, but as we neared our destination, we flew right into the storm. It had moved, ferociously, right into our path. The pilot apologized for the bumpy ride and instructed, "Prepare the cabin for landing." But we didn't land.

As the plane approached the airport, a sudden gust of wind buffeted us. The pilot had to abort the landing and took the plane straight up, trying to get us out of the tempest. Everyone became alarmed at the sudden change, and the passengers grew quiet. I glanced out the window and saw the tiny airstrip far below us. *That's where we should be*, I thought.

Maybe not. What if where we are is exactly where we should be?

Advent is a time filled with "shoulds" for many people. We should buy gifts, we should attend family gatherings, and we should decorate, bake cookies and send cards. A 2012 study found that 45 percent of adults would prefer to skip the holidays altogether. We feel the lack of time and money and we dread family get-togethers. We would prefer to jump straight to January.

We believe we *should* be happier. But at this time of year, for many, the loss

of loved ones is keenly felt: "They *should* be here ... it's not the same without them."

Advent invites us to accept. Accept where we are. Accept where our church is. Accept the loss of people and traditions we love. Once we let go of "should" and lean into "accept," we can find the sacred in every place, in every moment, in every face.

As the plane soared upwards, I felt the power of the storm. If we had landed, we would have crashed. Where we were – thousands of feet above Dominica – was exactly where we should have been. Eventually, we landed, and everyone aboard cheered.

We too are exactly where we should be. Hooray! This Advent, as we await the Christ Child, let's practice acceptance. No money for gifts? We'll write a letter instead. Too much to do? We'll learn to say "No." Mourning loved ones? We will carry them with us.

Let's notice Christ all around. The ride may be bumpy, but we are right where we should be.

Fasten your seatbelts, Pastor Judy

Book Study

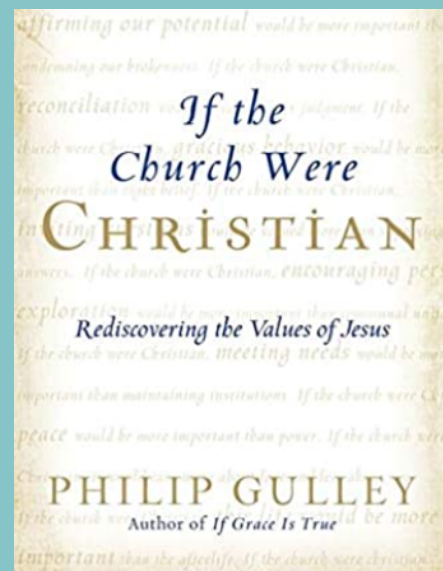
BEGINS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

Our winter book study will be *If the Church Were Christian* by Philip Gulley. Gulley is a Quaker minister who raises significant questions about the church's role and practice. If you would like to participate, used books are available online for about \$6, or we can order new books through the church office for \$13. Our first monthly meeting will tentatively be December 11 following worship.



And Mary said:
"My soul
glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices
in God my Savior"

Luke 1:46-47 NIV



St. John's UCC
801 S. Mechanic
Jackson, Michigan
49203

stjohnsuccjackson
@gmail.com

stjohnsjx.com

517-784-7580



December Birthdays

TIME TO CELEBRATE

- 11/30 - Padmini Canter
- 3 - Robert Dinges
- 6 - Marjorie Hochstetler
- 7 - Latasha Canter
- 8 - Robert Harkness
- 19 - Mae Covington
- 28 - Harry Wilson

Be the Blessing

ENVISIONING 2023

Our 2023 Stewardship Drive is drawing to a close. We all received an invitation to be the blessing as God called us in Genesis 12:3. Thank you for responding. If you haven't, please return your pledge card by December 31.

Join with us to "Be the Blessing" as we bless our community and beyond. Pledge cards may be mailed in, emailed or placed in the offering box.



Community Dinner

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Our next Community Dinner will be Tuesday, December 20 at 6 PM.

Last month more than 50 people attended our dinner. This is a great opportunity to meet and form relationships with families right here in Partnership Park. Many thanks to the United Center for funding these events. Mark your calendar and join us!

Advent Drama

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Calling all actors! We are planning a brief skit for our Sunday, December 18 worship service.

There will be minimal practice required and one dress-rehearsal. Please let the church office know if you would enjoy participating.

Special Dances

DEC 17 SPECIAL NEEDS DANCE

Our Special Needs Dances continue under the leadership of Linda Miller and her team. In both October and November more than 100 persons participated at each event.

The Christmas Dance will be December 17. If you would like to help, please bring donations of snacks to the church office or contact Linda Miller for more ways to be involved.



December Calendar

DEC 2 - LEARNING ENRICHMENT & ARTS (LEAP) 1:30-3:30 PM

DEC 4 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM WITH REV CHERYL BURKE

DEC 11 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM BOOK STUDY 11:45 AM

DEC 13 - NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC 6:30 PM

DEC 14 - COUNCIL 3 PM

DEC 16 - FOOD PANTRY AND BABY SPRINKLES 10 AM-12 PM; LEAP 1:30-3:30 PM

DEC 17 - SPECIAL NEEDS CHRISTMAS DANCE 7 PM

DEC 18 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM

DEC 20 - COMMUNITY DINNER AND TOY GIVEAWAY

DEC 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 7 PM

DEC 25 - ZOOM WORSHIP ONLY 10:30 AM

JAN 1 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM



Samaritan Fund

BECOMING GOOD SAMARITANS

In November 2022 we had 3 requests for help with rent; 1 payment was issued. One person requested water bill assistance; 1 payment was issued. We received 2 requests for help with a motel stay and 3 gas money requests which were referred to other agencies. There were 6 requests for emergency food; all 6 were given emergency food. Four participated in the Showers for Homeless program. Donations for the Samaritan Fund are always appreciated.

Food Pantry

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

Our Community Food Pantry was held on November 18 and continues to serve families in need. Last month we provided 3600 pounds of food and served 193 individuals, representing 483 family members. We are so grateful for Carl and our faithful team of volunteers. The next Food Pantry will be Friday, December 16, from 10 AM to 12 PM.

Poinsettias

ORDER BY DECEMBER 12

We will soon order poinsettias to decorate our chancel. If you would like to honor or remember a loved one, please complete the order form on the next page and return it to the church office by Dec. 12. Cost is \$12 each.

LEAP

LEARNING ENRICHMENT AND ARTS

LEAP students, teachers and volunteers will gather Friday, December 2 and 16 from 1:30-3:30 PM in the Social Hall at SJUCC. In November, the children tried out the new volleyball net -- with a beachball! On Dec. 16 the children will have a holiday party. Cookies and treats (made without peanut butter) are needed. Contact the church office or Michele Wilson if you can help.

LEAP is funded by grants from the United Center for Caring.

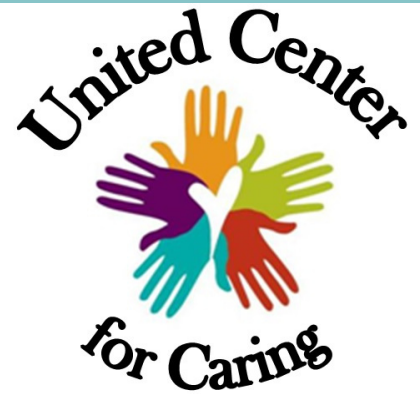


Baby Sprinkles

KIDS' CLOSET AND MORE

Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet has added a toy room! Parents can choose a toy for each child when they visit. The Kids' Closet provides clothing up to size 14, in addition to baby items, infant clothing, and diapers. Last month 37 families received items, serving 72 children.

We appreciate donations. Come see us in action on December 16 at 10 AM.



Be the Blessing

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Here's what you can do to be a blessing:

- Invite friends to church.
- Attend the Community Dinner.
- Help with the NHL Initiative or LEAP.
- Pray for our church every day!
- Return your 2023 pledge card.
- Donate time or money to the Samaritan Fund or Food Pantry.
- Bring diapers and donations for the Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet.
- Volunteer to be an Usher.
- Sign up for Coffee Hour.
- Offer your musical gifts.
- Notice who's missing from worship ... and reach out with love!



Rev. Judy Goodrow

260-668-9173

pastor@stjohnsjx.com

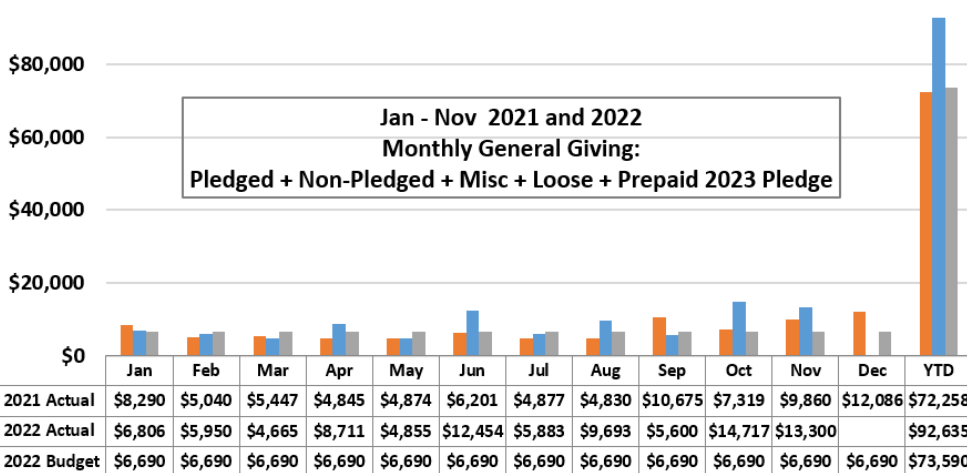
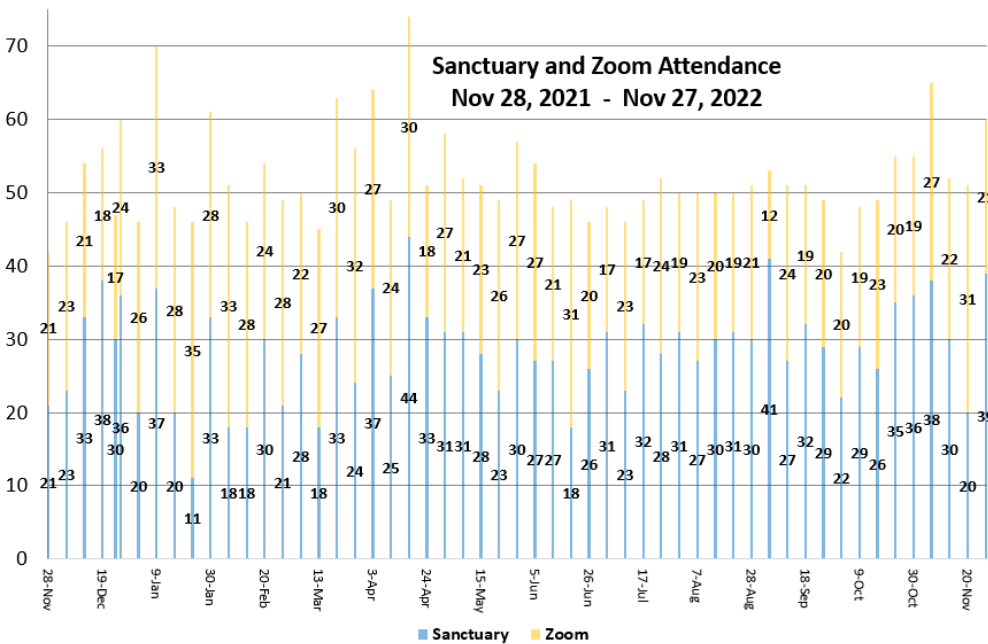
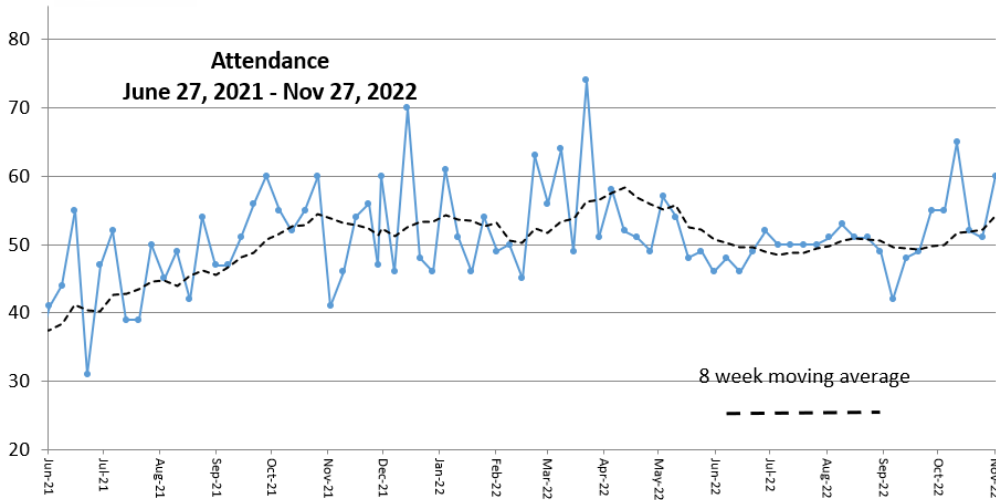
kjgoodrow3kids@gmail.com



POINSETTIA ORDER FORM



ORDERED BY _____
 QUANTITY (\$12 EACH) _____ TOTAL PRICE _____
 IN HONOR OF _____
 IN MEMORY OF _____



Council Update

The Church Council met November 9 and the following items were discussed:

- A policy was adopted for cash income to be counted by two persons
- Our advertisement in the Blazer will continue at a cost of \$50
- A nominating work group was formed, headed by Vickie Steck, for 2023 council positions
- A preliminary six-month contract will be prepared for MyPlace for their baking start-up; the contract will be reviewed by council at the December meeting
- Outdated signage was discussed; it was noted that United Center for Caring needs an outdoor sign
- The church's fence and roof on the east side was damaged by wind; Carl Robinson will obtain quotes for repairs.

Meeting minutes for past meetings are available in the church office. The next Council meeting will be December 14 at 3 PM in person and via Zoom.



As we journey through Advent, let's be intentional about reflecting the love and light of Jesus throughout the season. Merry Christmas!

St. John's UCC
801 S. Mechanic Street
Jackson Michigan 49203

Postage

stjohnsuccjackson@gmail.com
stjohnsjx.com
517-784-7580



Affix Address
Label Here

Encouraging people to

reach up to worship God,



reach in to strengthen faith, and

reach out in service to others.

St. John's

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Love God ♥ Love People ♥ Serve Both

stjohnsjx.com