

Joy of ST. JOHN'S UCC

Spring Retreat

JUNE 2 - 3

Mark your calendars now for our upcoming spiritual retreat! We are partnering with Westminster Presbyterian Church as we plan our time together.

What's the goal of this retreat? Times are changing. Everything is changing! How do we strengthen our faith in the midst of change? We're going to find out! You won't want to miss this opportunity to strengthen your faith and relationships and feed your soul.

We will gather at Camp DeSales in Brooklyn on Friday, June 2, for our initial gathering. Overnight accommodations are available at the Lawrence Lodge for those who want to stay for the night. The main portion of the retreat will be offered on Saturday, June 3. Following the retreat, our leader will be our morning speaker during our Sunday worship service on June 4, and Westminster Presbyterian will be joining us for worship.

Participants will have several attendance options: Friday night session, Friday and Saturday, and the Saturday session only. Staying overnight is optional for all -- if you're more comfortable sleeping in your own bed, you can go home Friday night and



come back Saturday morning. More information and registration will be available soon.

Our next planning meeting will be March 14 at 6 PM on Zoom and in person. During this meeting we will choose our theme and title. Watch for updates and mark your calendars for this special time!

Welcome, WPC

COMBINED WORSHIP MARCH 19

St. John's UCC has invited Westminster Presbyterian Church to worship with us on Sunday, March 19 here on the corner of Biddle and Mechanic.

Following their invitation to us last month, we are excited to practice radical hospitality -- which means we may not be able to sit in the same pew or park in the usual place. Everyone will be wearing name tags to worship, and everyone will be greeters. If you can help with coffee hour -- making coffee or bringing in snacks -- please let the office know.

Let's warmly welcome our friends from Westminster, in person and on Zoom.



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From the Pastor's Screen

DECONSTRUCTION

"Rob Bell is going off the deep end!" the Elder said.

I was sitting in our Sunday morning adult bible study. There were six of us around the table in an Evangelical church, and somehow the conversation had turned to a new book by Rob Bell called, "Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived." I was startled by the Elder's words, and I silently responded from a place deep inside. "If Rob Bell is going off the deep end, I'm going, too."

In his book, Bell states, "Millions of Christians have struggled with how to reconcile God's love and God's judgment ... What if the story of heaven and hell we have been taught is not, in fact, what the Bible teaches? What if what Jesus meant by heaven, hell, and salvation are very different from how we have come to understand them?" After reading this quote from the book's jacket, I was intrigued. My process of deconstruction had begun.

Deconstruction is the critical analysis of philosophy, theology, or conceptual systems. According to author Keith Giles, our Christian faith is usually built around concepts believed to be truth, such as scripture, the church, hell and judgment, and the approaching end times. As children we were taught to accept religious ideas about ourselves, the world, and God. As adults, the church often encourages us to cling to those beliefs, even when life unfolds in opposition to them. We find ourselves

in cognitive dissonance when our beliefs don't line up with our experiences.

When that happens, we are faced with a choice: Cling ferociously to our beliefs OR examine them to see if they are ... well, believable. It's difficult work, and it can be frightening because we build our lives around our faith. Our deep beliefs provide structure to our world.

Imagine a house of cards. In the bottom layer of cards are those basic beliefs about the afterlife; we believe that only Christians go to heaven. Then we meet a beautiful soul who is agnostic, or Buddhist, or Muslim, and our belief is challenged. Releasing those foundational beliefs will cause the entire house of cards to collapse. We no longer know what is true, and we don't know what to believe. My Fundamental Christian friends call this the "slippery slope," and they avoid it at all costs.

Let's not avoid it. Let's pursue it.

The United Church of Christ was formed by faithful people who asked difficult questions like "who is harmed by this belief?" We don't tell people what to believe. Instead, we encourage each other to stay open and curious. If we continue to believe the same way for decades, we're not growing -- we're not asking the deep spiritual questions that emerge from authentic living.

Questioning is scary. Deconstruction is like riding Niagara Falls in a barrel. It's a scary, wild ride, and we simply don't know where we'll end up. Only God knows -- and God promises to meet us there. Once we've gone "down the slippery slope" and "off the deep end," we find the One who never leaves us nor forsakes us, waiting patiently.

Love Wins!

Pastor Judy



[God] has said,
"I will never leave you
or forsake you."
So we can say
with confidence,
"The Lord is
my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone
do to me?"

Hebrews 13:5b-6 NSRV



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March Birthdays

TIME TO CELEBRATE

- 1 - Linda Chase
- 1 - Peter Woodruff
- 2 - Dawn Benedict
- 10 - Linda Canter
- 16 - Penny Smeltzer
- 17 - Julie Leece
- 20 - Rose Johnson
- 22 - Leslie Cummings
- 22 - Wanda Beavers
- 24 - Darryl Hackworth
- 26 - Paul Kalbarczyk

Sunday, March 12



Special Dances

MARCH 25 AT 7 PM

Our Special Needs Valentine Dance was cancelled due to the Emergency Shelter here at SJUCC. The St. Patrick's Day Dance will be March 25. Help is needed for decorating before the event and clean up afterward. Snacks and monetary donations are also appreciated. If you would like to help, or just come have fun, call the office.

Community Dinner

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

Cooks and servers are needed for our next free Community Dinner on Tuesday, March 21 at 6 PM. Last month our attendance was low (25), but we are grateful for the leftover food which fed our overnight Red Cross shelter guests.

Many thanks to the United Center for funding these events. Mark your calendar and bring a dessert to share!

Lenten Fund Drive

SAMARITAN FUND

Lent has traditionally been the season when we support our Samaritan Fund. We continue to help our community with rent, utility assistance, and emergency food. During the five remaining Sundays before Easter, please consider making monetary and food contributions to this much-needed fund. Emergency food includes canned meats and soups with pull-tops, macaroni & cheese and ready-to-eat pasta. Thank you for sharing!



March Calendar

MAR 3 - LEAP 1:30-3:30 PM

MAR 5 - WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION 10:30 AM
LENTEN READING
DISCUSSION 11:45 AM

MAR 6 - ARC BLOOD DRIVE

MAR 7 - NHL MEETING 10:30 AM

MAR 7 - COUNCIL 3 PM

MAR 10 - OFFICE CLOSED

MAR 14 - RETREAT PLANNING
6 PM ZOOM AND IN PERSON

MAR 12 - DAYLIGHT SAVING
ITME BEGINS

MAR 17 - FOOD PANTRY/BABY
SPRINKLES 10 AM-12 PM
LEAP 1:30-3:30 PM

MAR 19 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM
WITH WESTMINSTER GUESTS
LENTEN DISCUSSION 11:45 AM

MAR 21 - COMMUNITY DINNER
6 PM

MAR 25 - SPECIAL NEEDS
DANCE 7 PM

MAR 26 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM;
LENTEN STUDY 11:45 AM

MAR 28 - CENTERING PRAYER
5 PM SANCTUARY

APR 2 - PALM SUNDAY

Samaritan Fund

BECOMING GOOD SAMARITANS

In February we had 6 requests for help with rent; 2 payments were issued. Two people requested water bill assistance; 0 payments were issued. We received 8 requests for help with Consumers bills; 3 payments were issued. We received requests for help with a motel stay and gas money; these were referred to other agencies. There were 6 requests for emergency food; all 6 were given emergency food. Two participated in the Showers for Homeless program. Donations for the Samaritan Fund will be collected during Lent.

Food Pantry

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

Our Community Food Pantry was held on February 17 and continues to serve families in need. Last month we provided 1750 pounds of food and served 92 individuals, representing 186 family members. We are so grateful for Carl and our faithful team of volunteers. The next Food Pantry will be Friday, March 17, from 10 AM to 12 PM.



Caroline Zangwill distributed diapers at the MLK Center Black History Event.

LEAP

LEARNING ENRICHMENT AND ARTS

LEAP students, teachers, and volunteers will gather Friday, March 3 and 17, from 1:30-3:30 PM in the Social Hall at SJUCC. LEAP will be in session two Fridays per month through June 2. Several field trips are planned. Grandparents are needed -- and you can be one! LEAP is funded by grants from the United Center for Caring. Call the office if you can help.

*Be Still
and Know*

Centering Prayer

TUESDAY, MARCH 28 AT 5 PM

Seven brave souls participated in our first Centering Prayer session last month. We felt the rich history of prayer that has saturated our sanctuary as we quieted our hearts and minds. We will meet again for prayer on March 28 at 5 PM. After a brief conversation we will pray silently for 30 minutes. Let's invite God to join us!

Baby Sprinkles

KIDS' CLOSET AND MORE

Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet provide clothing up to size 14, in addition to baby items, infant clothing, and diapers. Last month 25 families received items, serving 39 children.

We appreciate donations. Come see us in action on March 17 at 10 AM.



Be the Blessing

**SOMETHING
FOR EVERYONE**

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

- Pray for our spring retreat
- Invite friends to church
- Attend the Community Dinner
- Help with the NHL Initiative or LEAP
- Pray for our church every day
- Donate time or money to the Samaritan Fund or Food Pantry
- Bring 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!



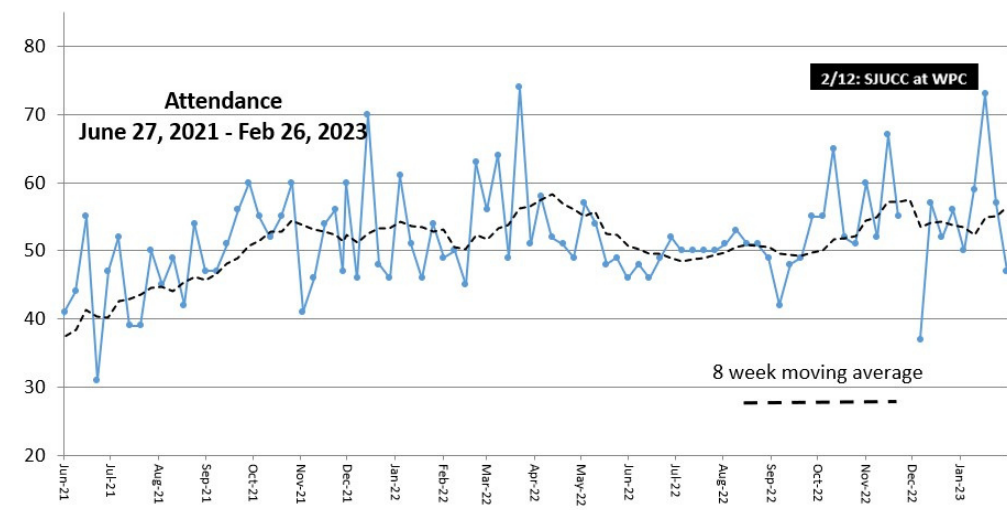
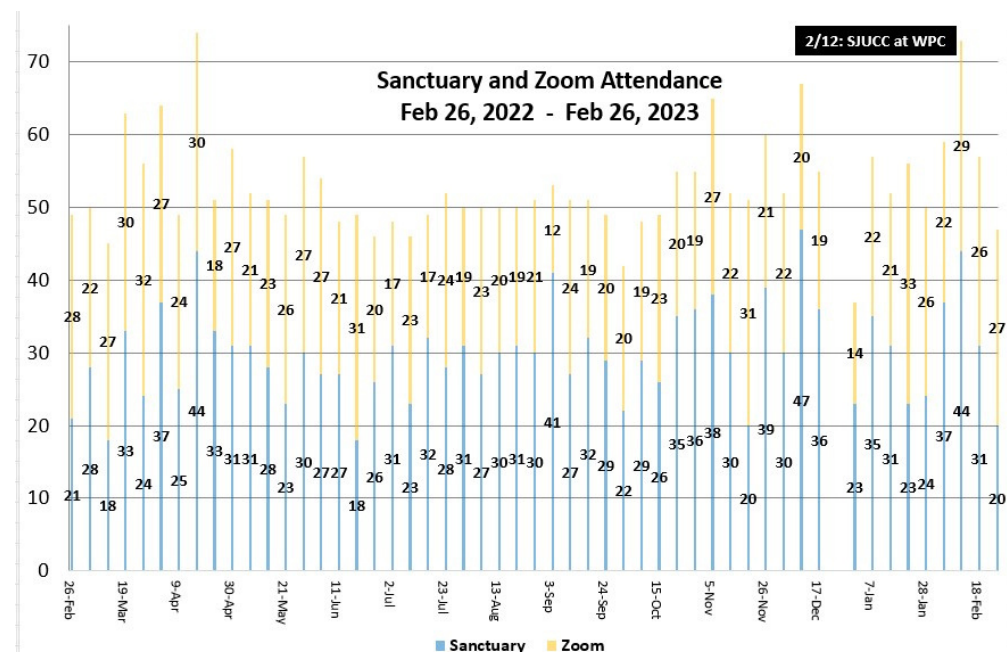
Rev. Judy Goodrow
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American Red Cross Shelter

EMERGENCY SHELTER DUE TO POWER LOSS

Following the ice storm on Ash Wednesday, the American Red Cross opened a shelter here at SJUCC. Thirteen to twenty people stayed around the clock until February 27. We shared our kitchen, social hall, and showers for those in need, and helped feed them too! Many thanks to the ARC and Carl Robinson for staffing the shelter.



Council Update

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

- Creation of a coffee bar in the Fellowship Hall was discussed and tabled
- Two volunteers will assist in connecting audio zoom attendees for worship and meetings
- Vender list was approved for automatic bank check payments
- Council president, secretary and treasurer will be signers for bank accounts and one signature will be required for transactions
- Church van maintenance will be discussed in March
- The spring retreat scheduled for June 2-3 will be at DeSales
- Caroline Zangwill and Richard Poor were welcomed to the council

Meeting minutes for past meetings are available in the church office. The next Council meeting will be March 7 (Tuesday) at 3 PM in person and via Zoom.

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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

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