

Joy of ST. JOHN'S UCC



Advent Begins

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

A new Christian church year begins on December 3, the first Sunday of Advent. Our Advent theme this year is *Glow*, which is the name of the UCC Advent devotional book. Each week we will light Advent candles, and we will enjoy special music throughout the month. On December 3, Jan Janke will be our morning speaker.

On Sunday, December 24 we will have two worship services. Our morning service will begin at 10:30 AM, and our evening candlelight service will begin at 7 PM. Both services will be similar, so you can choose which one to attend -- or attend both! The morning service will include a Christmas Cookie Carry-in for coffee hour. The evening service will end with the traditional singing of Silent Night aglow with candlelight. Both services will be available on Zoom.

The church office will be closed from December 25-30 to allow our staff to enjoy the holiday. On December 31, Evelyn Park will be our morning speaker. The office will be closed on January 1, 2024.

Let's *Glow* with the light of Christ this Advent season!



Myrrh Project

MISSION PROJECT SUCCESS

St. John's UCC and Westminster Presbyterian Church together provided 67 dinner boxes to the Jackson community, serving 310 people for Thanksgiving! Thank you for helping our community families enjoy the holiday.



Miriam Brown Dorsey received an award for her dear friend, the late Janice Sweet Fairley, at the MLK Award Banquet October 8.



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From the Pastor's Screen

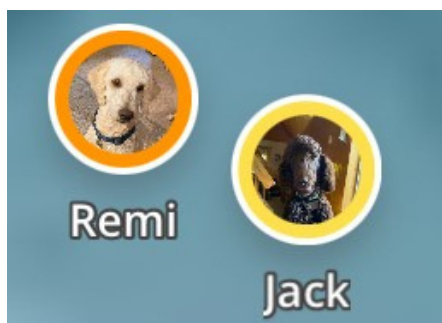
CERTAIN SAFETY

A year ago, when Keith and I adopted our standard poodle Jackson, our older dog Remi decided to run away with his new playmate. On two occasions we found both dogs a half-mile from home. Who knows what thoughts were in those little dog brains? They felt like running, so they ran.

We bought two GPS collars for the dogs and set up a virtual dog fence surrounding our property. The dogs can go wherever they want, within limits – and the whole time I can watch them on an app on my phone. Remi's little face moves around the screen as I follow him wherever he goes, from the comfort of my warm house. Jack's doggy face is usually close by. If they get near our property limits, their collars chime a warning sound. If the dogs go past the boundary, their collars give them an unpleasant buzz. If we want them to come home, their collars will whistle, and they come running. It's heavenly! We don't have to worry about our boys. They stay safe.

God doesn't need a cell phone app to keep us safe. Everywhere we go, God sees us. If we're working, or worrying, or napping in the sun, we are always under God's watchful eye. If we get too far away, a little chime might slow us – it might be a phone call, a medical report, or a note from a loved one.

If we persist in moving away from God's Spirit, we might get a little nudge – an uncomfortable feeling what warns us to stop. A prick of conscience,



a word of warning, a frightening dream, or a friend's admonition.

We're free to wander. We can explore, enjoy, choose, build, help, create. Then God whistles, and our days end. We find ourselves on God's back porch, waiting at the door. The lights glow with warm welcome. We pass through the door, and it closes. We are home. We are safe.

We were safe all along. We just didn't know it.

Frederick Buechner wrote, "Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid." Even when terrible things are happening, we are always connected to God. We are never far from God's presence. Even if we run away from God, we are seen. We are safe. Like little doggy faces on a cell phone.

You are so very loved.

Chime!

Pastor Judy

Oh! For the Love of Christmas Music

WEDNESDAYS AT 2 PM

Come sing along with Ron and Janet Middlebrook in our sanctuary for an hour of music every Wednesday. Requests are welcome. Ron and Janet will lead us and entertain us -- and lift our spirits. Plan to sing with us each Wednesday at 2 PM.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord,
you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?

Psalm 139 :1-10 NRSV



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December Birthdays

TIME TO CELEBRATE

- 4. Marjorie Hochstetler
- 7. Latasha Canter
- 8. Robert Harkness
- 28. Harry Wilson

If your birthday does not appear on our list, please contact the church office at 517-784-7580.

VISION 2025

UPDATE AVAILABLE

Watch for the Vision 2025 update. A complete summary of the team's work will be mailed and emailed to everyone. Copies of the report are also available for pickup in the Fellowship Room. The next Vision 2025 meeting is December 13 at 1:30 PM.

Enneagram and Centering Prayer

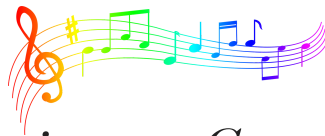
FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH

Participants from WPC and SJUCC met last month to begin our enneagram discussion. In December we'll be talking about enneagram 9's, followed by 30 minutes of Centering Prayer. No book purchase necessary. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 4 PM. Join us for the discussion, the prayer, or both!

Special Needs Community Dance

DECEMBER 23 7-9 PM

Our November dance was a huge success. Many thanks to Linda Miller, Carl Robinson, Art Bonner, Barb Parks, Linda Canter, Louis Cubille, and all those who make this event possible. Our next dance is December 23 -- and Santa will be there! (Thank you, Bob Neustifter!)



Christmas Caroling

JACKSON MEDICAL CARE FACILITY

Westminster and St John's will soon be singing Christmas Carols for the residents of Jackson Medical Care Facility in the main event room. Would you like to sing with us? Please call the office if you are interested. All voices and talent levels welcome! Date and time to be announced.

Partnership

WESTMINSTER AND ST JOHN'S

We are moving forward with an official partnership with Westminster Presbyterian Church. The Partnership and Discernment groups are breaking into working subcommittees to include more congregational members in the planning process. The groups' recommendations will go back to the Presbyterian Session and the SJUCC Council. The subcommittees will include members of both churches in the areas of Finance, Staffing, Building & Grounds, Worship, Mission, and more. Participants from both churches continue to meet.

December Calendar

DEC 3 - WORSHIP SERVICE
HOLY COMMUNION 10:30 AM

DEC 5 - ENNEAGRAM
DISCUSSION 4 PM;
CENTERING PRAYER 5 PM

DEC 6,13,20 - OH! FOR THE
LOVE OF MUSIC 2 PM

DEC 7 - FOSTER CARE PARTY
IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM

DEC 10 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM

DEC 11 - DUNGYTREE! FOOD
DRIVE IN COMMUNITY ROOM

DEC 13- VISION MEETING 1:30
PM; COUNCIL MEETING 3 PM

DEC 15 - FOOD PANTRY AND
BABY SPRINKLES 10AM-12 PM

DEC 17 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM

DEC 20- COMMUNITY DINNER
6 PM - DESSERTS NEEDED

DEC 23 - SPECIAL NEEDS
DANCE 7 PM TO 9 PM

DEC 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE
WORSHIP 10:30 AM AND 7 PM

DEC 25-30- OFFICE CLOSED

DEC 31 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM



Bring warm hats, scarves and mittens to the church office. Bob Neustifter will keep our outdoor line stocked. Thanks, Bob!

Meijer Simply Give Program

PROGRAM CONTINUES

We can all help fund our food pantry by purchasing \$10 Meijer Simply Give gift cards now through December 30, 2023. Our participating Meijer is located on East Michigan Avenue. Meijer will double their gift for all cards purchased on December 16. Pick up a card soon and help fund our pantry!

Food Pantry & Baby Sprinkle

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our Food Pantry & Baby Sprinkle was held on November 17. We provided 3500 pounds of food and served 140 individuals, representing 360 family members. Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet served 37 families and 75 children. The next Food Pantry and Baby Sprinkle will be December 15 from 10 AM to 12 noon.

Let's Eat!

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

More than 55 persons attended our Community Dinner in November, when we had breakfast for dinner! We ran out of desserts, so please mark your calendar today to provide a dessert for our next dinner December 19 at 6 PM.

Thank you to our cooks, servers, and cleanup crew! If you want to join the fun, and enjoy some great food, plan to join us!

Samaritan Fund

ARE YOU OUR NEXT COORDINATOR?

We are so grateful to Donna Benedict for coordinating the Samaritan Fund for the past several years! We are looking for our next coordinator to give Donna some time with her family. Could it be you? It requires 4-6 office hours per week, including computer use, record keeping, and phone calls.

In November our Samaritan Fund received many requests for aid. Our program is temporarily on hold until we find a dedicated volunteer; meanwhile we are continuing to take applications for assistance. Ten people received emergency food from our food pantry, and showers were used 25 times last month.



Toy Drive

PLEASE DONATE A NEW TOY

Our Baby Sprinkles team would like to give toys to needy families this year. Each family here at St. John's is asked to donate a new toy -- or funds to purchase a new toy. Please bring new, unwrapped toys to the church by Sunday, December 10, and place in the Toy Box in the Fellowship Room.



Be the Blessing

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

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

- Invite friends to church!
- Bring a toy for Baby Sprinkles
- Buy a Simply Give card
- Visit the Little Book House
- Support MyBakery
- Complete your pledge card
- Attend the Community Dinner
- Help with the NHL library
- Pray for our church
- Volunteer for 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

260-668-9173

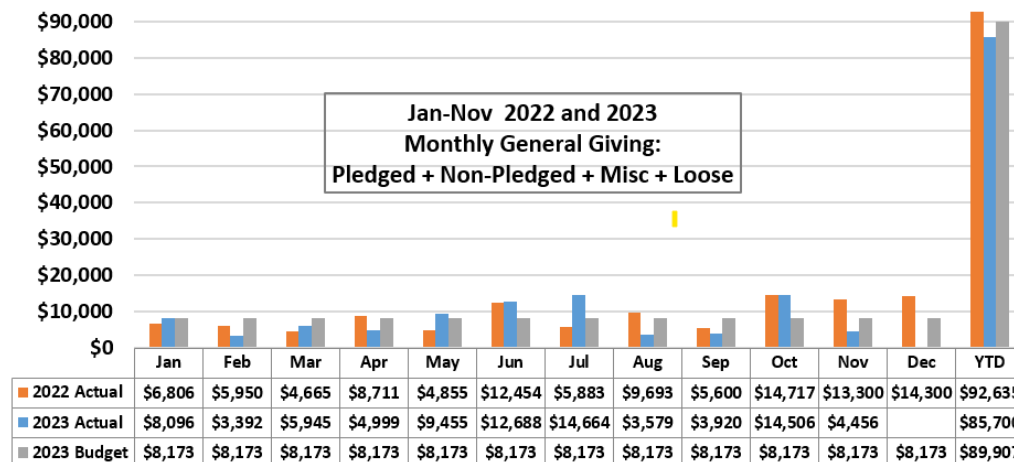
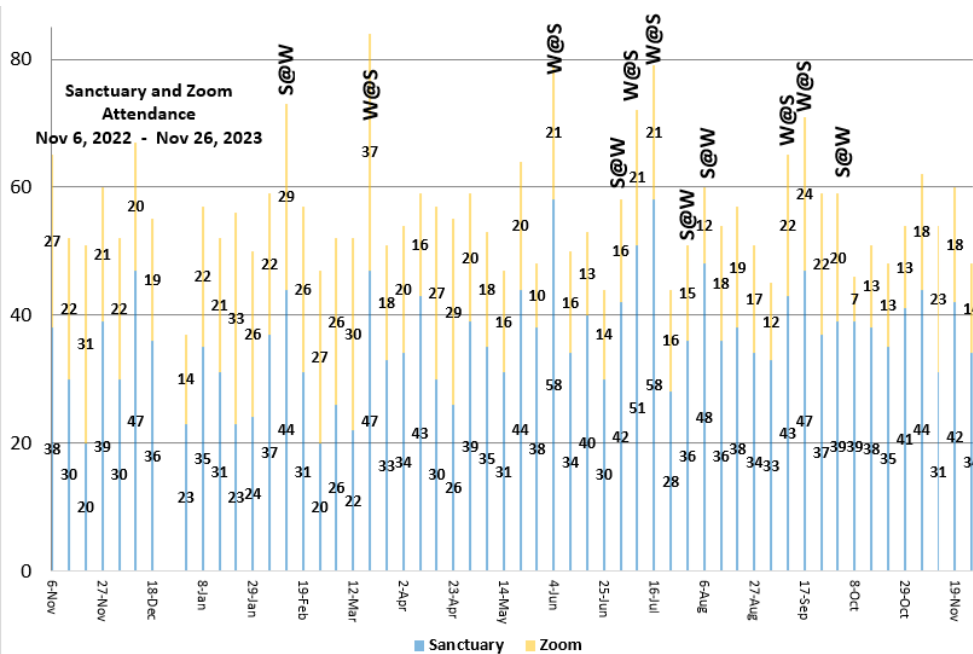
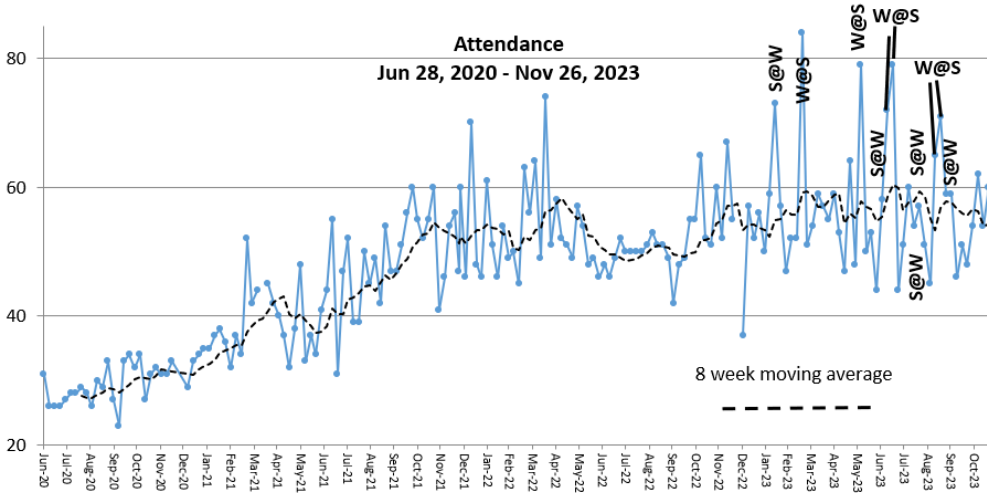
pastor@stjohnsjx.com

kjgoodrow3kids@gmail.com

Social Justice and NHL Initiative

SERVING THE CHILDREN AT INTERFAITH SHELTER

Two volunteers from SJUCC will share stories, activities, and music with the children at Interfaith Shelter this month. Cindy Osborne and Michele Wilson have partnered with the shelter to provide activities for children and parents on Thursday, December 14 at 5:30 PM. Cindy and Michele would like to provide families with Christmas cookies too -- so YOU can help! Please contact the office if you have cookies to share.



Note: \$12K of total 2023 Pledged Amount was donated in 2022 - will not appear on this chart

Order Christmas Poinsettias by December 10. The cost is \$12. Please call, mail, or email the church office this week to purchase your poinsettia.

Name: _____

Quantity: _____

\$12 each for a total of \$_____

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____



Council Update

The Church Council met on November 8, and the following items were discussed:

- Attendance for October was 27 (at WPC), 46, 51, 48, 54.
- Love Temple is still considering renting space at SJUCC.
- Judy Goodrow asked that council either prioritize her duties to bring hours in line with pay or increase salary to align with 35 hours per week. This issue was referred to the pastoral relations working group.
- Changing the name of the building to Partnership Place was discussed, and a working group will present this name at the January congregational meeting.

Meeting minutes for past meetings are available in the church office.

Our next Council Meeting will be December 13 at 3 PM in person and via Zoom.

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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