



St. John's United Church of Christ Newsletter



December 2019

From the Pastor

"Xmas"

Years ago, even before I went to Seminary, I stood in front of a large group of Pastors and told them in late October that "already we are preparing ourselves for the celebration of Christmas, the birth of Christ." And I added, "It's "Christmas" not "Xmas". My intentions were good, but I was also ignorant of the fact that the "X" in Christmas is actually the Greek, "Chi" and is the first letter of the title "Christos" in New Testament Greek, which means Christ. "X" (Chi) and the Greek, "P" or Rho" or "R" in English, symbolizes Christ. Embarrassing. Be that as it may in the vernacular English, the "X" has become in our society, a replacement of the person of Christ in the celebrations of Christmas. If we listen to the radio, playing already in November, we hear "Chestnuts Roasting on An Open Fire" and "Silver Bells" and "I'm Dreaming of A White Christmas" and of course, "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer". But very little about Christ. As if Christmas carols or songs are all about Christmas nostalgia or Christmas from yesteryears. It's not like I don't like those songs, because I do, but they are not Christ centered as the traditional Carols, "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear", "Hark the Herald Angels Sing", "Joy to the World", "O Come All Ye Faithful", and of course, "Silent Night." And if we mention Advent hymns or carols, the average person on the street says, "Ad...what? What does that mean?"

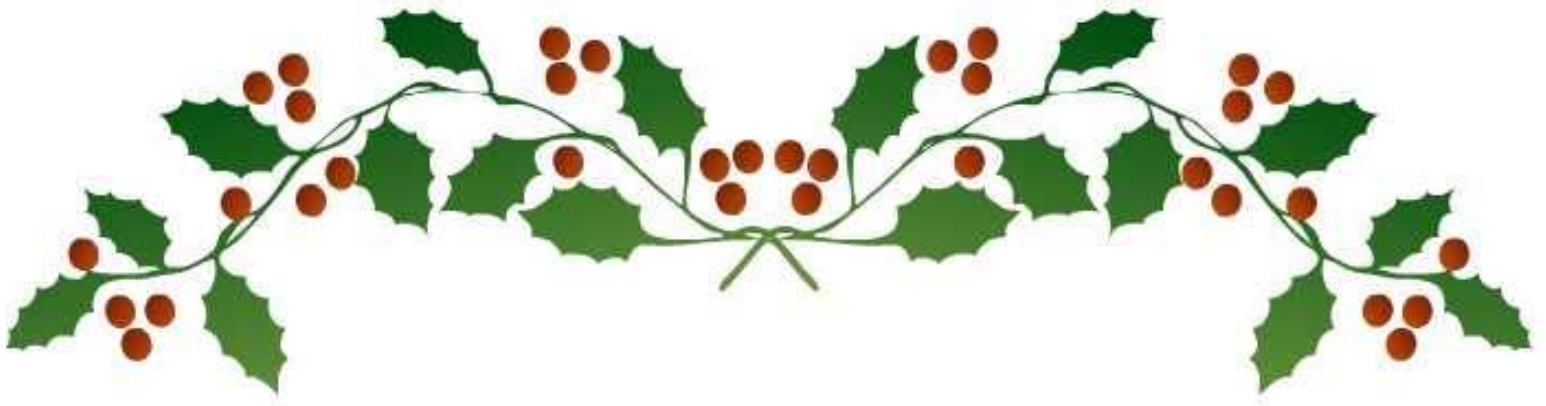


Which is to say I am concerned that a secular understanding of Christmas has replaced the Christ centered one. Do you know what "Christmas" means? "Christ-Mass" or "Christ's Mass", the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Christmas Eve in which we participate in the Body and Blood of Christ incarnate, who entered human existence, being born in a cave stable in the humble village of Bethlehem. And if we say, as much of the secular world seems to think, "It's all a fairy tale, an old legend or myth". We are missing something very important, very profound about the nature of God who was born among poor shepherds in a feeding trough, and fled Bethlehem with his parents as political refugees to Egypt. As Christians in a sometimes foreign, secular world, we need to sing the carols, worship God faithfully, read the Biblical stories to our children and grandchildren, and say, "Merry Christmas" in greeting to others, and support the needs of the poor and refugee who come to our country escaping for their lives. Inclusivity has its place, but we must also never forget that we are "Christened" with the mark of Christ at our baptism and called to proclaim the gospel to all the world in word or deed, however simple that may be.

The bumper sticker "Keep Christ in Christmas" although making the same mistake I did all those years ago, is essentially right in its meaning in today's society. Let's do just that.

A blessed Advent, and a Very, Merry Christmas from my family to yours,

Pastor Ray



Prayer Calendar

Pray for all those with diseases

Pray for the Church worldwide

Pray for the hospitalized

Pray for our nation

Pray for our choir

Pray for children

Pray for justice

Pray for Consistory

Pray for love

Pray for all children to grow in faith and
trust in Jesus Christ

Pray for the congregation and our future

Pray for your neighbors

Pray for the PA Southeast Conference

Pray for peace in our Nation

Pray for our staff

Pray for your family

Pray for a community free of violence

Pray for the nations of the world

Pray for world peace

Pray for human rights

Pray for the poor

Pray for students

December Birthdays

11 Corrine Miller

13 Gabriel Jachowski

13 Doris Selwitz

13 Marissa (Challenger) Wells

15 Nicole (Stepp) Clark

19 Linda Brignola

19 Larry Challenger

21 Tracy Staley

24 Kathi Woodruff

25 Brian Kappel



| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|--------|--------------------------|
| * Social Affairs | 50 | 48 | -4.0 | -2 | to better reflect actual |
| Social Security | 2,735 | 2,805 | 2.6 | 70 | 7.65% of part-time wages |
| Supply Organist | 600 | 600 | 0.0 | 0 | no change |
| Supply Pastor | 1,000 | 1,000 | 0.0 | 0 | no change |
| Telephone & Internet | 2,400 | 2,400 | 0.0 | 0 | no change |
| Treasurer (Stipend) | 200 | 200 | 0.0 | 0 | no change |
| Water, Sewer, & Trash | 648 | 648 | 0.0 | 0 | no change |
| Total Church Budget | 173,302 | 177,322 | 2.3 | 4,020 | 2.3% overall increase |
| * Our Church's Wider Mission | 4,044 | 3,000 | -25.8 | -1,044 | 25.8% decrease |
| Total Budget | 177,346 | 180,322 | 1.7 | 2,976 | 1.7% overall increase |
| Weekly Budget | 3,411 | 3,468 | 1.7 | 57 | 1.7% increase |

* supplemented by memorial funds and special direct donations

Notes for 2020 Proposed Budget Changes:

| | |
|---|--|
| Pastor | 3.0% increase in (Salary + Living Allowance) plus Pension, Social Security and Medicare offset, and Life and Disability Insurance directly tied into (Salary + Living Allowance) per PSEC Guidelines |
| Health, Dental, and Vision Insurance for the Pastor | 3.0% increase for Health Insurance, no change for Dental, and no change in Vision premiums |
| Part-time Staff | 3.0% increase for Church Administrator and for Director of Music; less hours worked for Sexton than budgeted so no increase, but proposed 40 cents an hour increase in Sexton hourly wages |
| Copier | 2.3% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Christian Ed. & Religious Lit. | 40% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Electric | 8.2% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Gas | 6.8% increase to better reflect actual costs |
| Insurance | 3.1% premium increase |
| Miscellaneous | 28% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Office Expense | 16% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Postage | 10% decrease to better reflect actual costs |
| Social Security | 2.6% increase; 7.65% of part-time staff wages |
| Total Church Budget | 2.3% overall increase |
| Our Church's Wider Mission | 25.8% decrease |
| Total Budget | 1.7% overall increase, \$57 per week increase |

MORNING AND EVENING WEEKLY PRAYERS

Week of Sunday, December 1 - First Sunday of Advent

Household Prayer: Morning

Lord God, you have woken me from sleep; the night is gone, the day is here.
Enable me to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and help me to live honorably this day,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

God, my Savior, you are even nearer now
than when I first learned to trust in you.
Help me to lay aside the burdens of the day
and rest in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
my strength and my salvation. Amen.

Week of Sunday, December 8

Household Prayer: Morning

As I rise, O God, I give you thanks for safety in the night,
for rest from my labors, for another day in this creation.
Turn my eyes toward what is noble. Teach me to see hope where it is veiled.
Give me the wisdom to desire the good. Help me to love not only those I encounter
but myself as well, for with you, I know my many frailties and failings.
Let peace reign. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

As I end this day, Holy One, I give you thanks for the richness of my hours:
for family and friends, for people with whom I work and play,
for my neighbors, for those who fill this world with music and art,
for those whose needs remind me of my blessings
and whose skills make me grateful for differences.
Guard us all, O God, and keep us in your embrace
until the daylight comes. Amen.

Week of Sunday, December 15

Household Prayer: Morning

Holy God, at the dawning of this day new life blossoms like the crocus,
and fresh promise wells up like a spring. As I go forth in your presence,
confirm my resolve to worship you, strengthen my hands to serve your people,
and keep me always in your holy way; through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Mighty God, my soul rejoices at the great things you have done this day—
giving daily bread for my hunger, showing endless mercy for my sin.
As you have blessed my ancestors bless and keep me this night;
in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Week of Sunday, December 22

Household Prayer: Morning

Giver of light, in the light of your Christ I see myself clearly as your child.
I rise in thankfulness for you are present when I sleep and when I am awake.
I rise to come to you in the hours of joy and in sorrow.
I rise to live this day in your wisdom, without fear, without acrimony,
but with charity toward those I meet and toward myself when I find I am wanting.
Lead me into your desire for me this day, O Lord. Let me know your love is deep and abiding;
in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Giver of rest and silence, in you I take refuge when the shadows deepen
and the time of sleep has come. I thank you for the ventures of this day,
for friends who helped me and for those who sought my help,
for the skills you planted in me to hone and use,
for the strangers whose lives enlarged mine today
and whose insights enrich my life. Keep me safe from harm as I sleep
and bring me to a new dawn with strength to work and rejoice;
in Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Week of Sunday, December 29

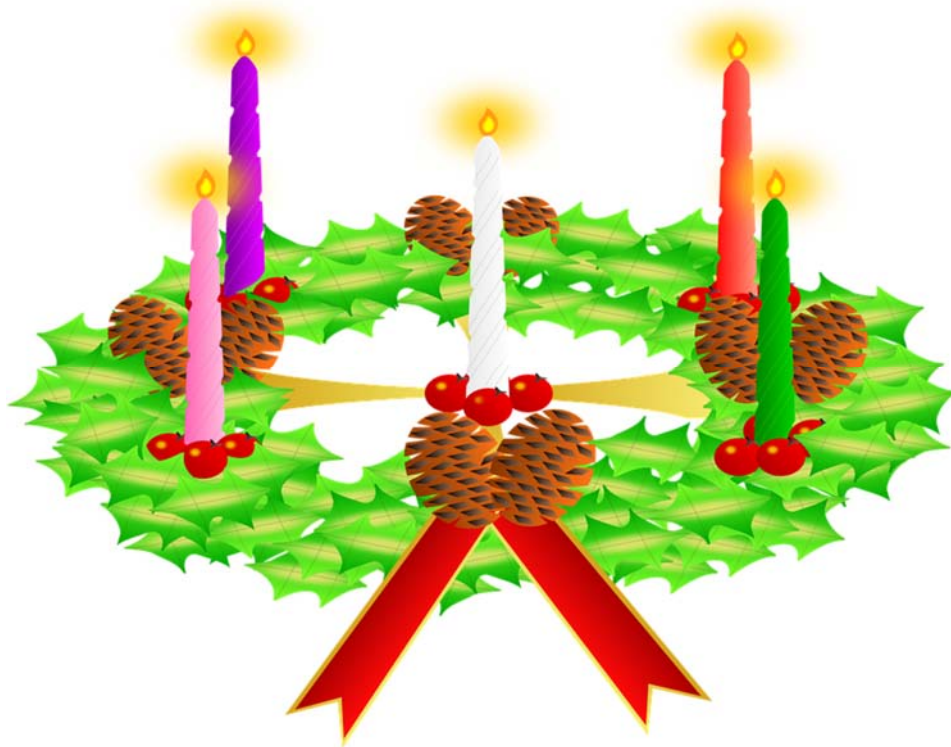
Household Prayer: Morning

Creator God, as I begin this day, open my eyes, my ears,
all my senses to the beauty around me. Help me to see how mountains and trees
rise up in praise of you. Help me to hear how the birds of the air,
the whales in the deep, and the wild animals on the ground
sing your praises. Help me to join another, or many others,
in praise of your glory not only today, but even forever. Amen!

Household Prayer: Evening

Loving God, as the evening comes, and with it the moon and shining stars,
I know that you are the Light in every darkness. Shine, then, upon anyone
who is troubled this night. Shine, then, upon the troubles I have known.

Help me to put my trust in you, for I am your child,
and you have come to help me; you help all whom you have drawn close.
I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, my brother and Savior. Amen.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominations for 2020:

- Nominated for a three year term on the Endowment Fund committee are:
 - ◊ Mike Hendricks
 - ◊ Ginny Filipovic.
- Nominated for consistory:
 - Elders:
 - ◊ Randy Bottonfield - 3 year term
 - ◊ Joann Cooper - 3 year term
 - Deacons (2):
 - ◊ Open for consideration at the time the bulletin was printed.
- The congregation will vote on these nominations at the special meeting on December 8th immediately following the worship service.

Christmas Poinsettias:

- **Deadline to order is December 15th**
- Price is \$10.00 each for a 6" pot consisting of 4-7 flowers.
- Please print legibly on the sign-up sheet in Gruber Hall.

Directory Updates:

- The 2020 Directory will be sent to print in January.
- Please take a moment to look through the directory and send any updates or corrections to Ginny via email at stjohnsucc.secretary@gmail.com, or voice mail at 610-933-5311.
- A copy of the directory can be found on the table in the rear of Gruber Hall.

Special Offering - The Christmas Fund

- The Christmas Fund offering will be taken on Sunday, December 22nd. Please use the envelope in the bulletin on the 22nd.
- This fund supports the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.
- You can view information on this offering at: www.christmasfund.org.

CHURCH SERVICES

Thursday: 6:00 p.m. - Evening Prayer / Holy Eucharist

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. - Coffee Hour
10:00 a.m. - Morning Prayer
Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sunday

December 24th : Christmas Eve Service

- 7:00 p.m. - Music of St. John's: Pre-service Christmas Music
- 7:30 p.m. - The Nativity of Our Lord - Holy Communion and Candlelight Service

RECURRING EVENTS & MEETINGS

Wednesdays: 11:00 a.m. - Bible Study

Thursdays: 6:45 p.m. - Bell Choir Rehearsal
7:30 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal

Fridays: 10:00 a.m. - Bulletin Folding

Consistory Meeting - 2nd Monday of every month. - 7:00 p.m. - Leiby Chapel

Diversity in Action Board Meeting - 2nd Tuesday of every month - 7:00 p.m. - Leiby Chapel

Diversity in Action Meeting - 3rd Tuesday of every month - 7:00 p.m. - Gruber Hall

No December meetings are scheduled for Diversity in Action. They will resume in January.

Relay for Life - 3rd Wednesday of every month - 6:30 p.m. - Gruber Hall

MEETINGS

December 1st - 11:30 a.m. - Steering Committee - Leiby Chapel

December 8th - 11:30 a.m. - Congregational Meeting - Gruber Hall

December 9th - 7:00 p.m. - Consistory Meeting - Leiby Chapel

December 15th - 11:30 a.m. - Elders - Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Review - Sanctuary

EVENTS

December 14th - Graham Cracker House - 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Gruber Hall

- Attendees, please register using the sign-up sheet in Gruber Hall.
- Ingredients are needed. A sign-up sheet is also in Gruber Hall. NOTE: NO PASTURIZED EGG WHITES, please. They do not work in the recipe.

DONATIONS

Noisy Mission

- This month's Noisy Mission will support **Ann's Heart (Code Blue Overnight Emergency Warming Center)**.
- Ann's Heart is on a mission to provide a place of welcome and human services to all Phoenixville area people. Their vision is to utilize existing spaces on the grounds of Sacred Heart Church & School buildings to provide support and other services for persons most in need in our community. Ann's Heart is intentional about identifying needs created by gaps in services already provided by the local community, and to fill those needs when possible.
- **St. John's is also collecting food items. A bin is located in Gruber Hall. The following items are accepted:**

Highest Priority Needs

- ◇ Toilet Paper (Septic Safe)
- ◇ Paper Towels
- ◇ Lysol Disinfecting Spray & Wipes
- ◇ Canned, single-serving, pop-top soups, pastas or chili
- ◇ Gift cards to: ACME, BJ's, GIANT, or Redner's (Used to purchase milk, etc.)
- ◇ Men's & Women's Travel Size Toiletries (Soap, Shampoo, Conditioner, etc.)

Other Supply Needs

- ◇ Disposable, Microwave Safe Soup Bowls (16 oz Size - Non-Styrofoam)
- ◇ Disposable, Microwave Safe Plates (Non-Styrofoam)
- ◇ Disposable Soup Spoons
- ◇ Disposable Utensils
- ◇ Disposable Cold Drink Cups
- ◇ Disposable Hot Drink Cups
- ◇ Facial Tissue (Boxes or Individual Packs)
- ◇ Daily Shower Cleaner (Spray)
- ◇ Multipurpose Cleaner (Clorox Spray or Similar)
- ◇ Tall Kitchen Garbage Bags
- ◇ Large Black Garbage Bags (33 Gallon)
- ◇ Large Clear Garbage Bags (33 Gallon)
- ◇ Medium Clear Garbage Bags (13 Gallon)
- ◇ Laundry Detergent Pods (No Scent / Color)
- ◇ Dryer Sheets (Non-Scented)
- ◇ Hand Sanitizer (Wipes or Gel)
- ◇ Nitrile Gloves (Large or X-Large)
- ◇ Men's & Women's Deodorant
- ◇ Men's & Women's Underwear (NEW - All Sizes)
- ◇ Men's & Women's T-Shirts (All Sizes)
- ◇ Men's & Women's Sweatpants (All Sizes)
- ◇ Men's & Women's Undershirts (All Sizes)

Wings for Success

- Wings for Success is a Chester County, PA based 501c3 non-profit organization providing apparel, advice and advocacy to women in need in our community since 1997. They have served over 11,800 women of all ages and circumstances from Chester County and the surrounding areas.
- **Please hang all items on the coat rack in the downstairs foyer.** Purses and shoes can be left on the shelf above the rack.
- All items must be on hangers.

Bethany Children's Home

- St. John's is supporting A Special Holiday Collection for Bethany Children's Home.
- Bethany youth are between 10 and 19 years of age.
- All items must be **unwrapped, new and "age-appropriate"** with the consideration of parental warnings, modesty, and safety.
- A bin is located in the back of Gruber Hall for your donations.

Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS)

- The donation items this month are assorted **holiday-related** food items.
- A bin is located in the back of Gruber Hall for your donations.

Redner's Tapes

- Please donate your Redner's receipts to St. John's.
- We receive 1% of the value of the tapes.
- A bin is located above the mailboxes.

The Legend of the Candy Cane

Along with candles, wreaths, stars, bells and mistletoes, another ubiquitous decorative item for Christmas, which is also a favorite with children, is the candy cane. In fact, the candy cane is so popular that it is one of the most visible items in any decoration, for Christmas or not. The candy cane is simple, eye-catching, and what's more, it's tasty. Though candy canes come in many flavors, the most popular and common flavor is peppermint and cinnamon. Candy canes can be hung with colorful ribbons and can be used to decorate almost anything, from an entire room to a cake or a Christmas tree; they add a very playful touch to everything. And like all other facets of Christmas, this J-shaped, red and white candy also has an interesting story, legend if you may call it, behind it. As so, the origin and symbolism of candy cane is steeped in myth.

The Legend

It is widely believed that the candy, which earlier was straight as a stick, was given its distinctive J-shape by a German choirmaster. It is said that during service one evening, the children were being very loud and noisy, creating quite a ruckus and not paying any attention to the choirmaster. To keep them quiet and still for the nativity ceremony, he gave them a long, white, sugar candy stick. Since giving chocolates and candies at church was considered sacrilegious, he bent these sticks at one end to make them look like a shepherd's cane and thus, attached a religious significance to them. In Christianity, Jesus is regarded as the Good Shepherd and so, the staff is considered to be a sacred symbol. The Staff also represents the shepherds who came to visit the infant Jesus.

The candy cane became popular when, in 1847, a German-Swedish immigrant in Wooster, Ohio, who liked candy canes a lot, decided to string them on his Christmas tree as decorations. The idea soon caught up became quite a fashion in no time. By 1900, candy canes, which were earlier only white, came in red stripes, and with peppermint and cinnamon flavoring. Of course, now it's a popular tradition everywhere.

The candy canes became a much sought-after Christmas-decoration item as the 'hook' in the candy made it easier to hang them on the Yule trees, and the unique shape made it an eye-catching attraction.

Symbolism

Traditionally, the only symbolism that was associated with the candy was that of the shepherd's staff. But now, there is a modern allegorical interpretation of the candy cane. It is said that since the candy cane, when inverted, becomes J-shaped, it is a direct representation of Jesus Christ. The white color of the candy denotes the purity of Christ while the stripes represent His sacrifice and the whipping he received at the hands of the Romans, the color red symbolizing his blood. It is believed that even the peppermint flavor of the candy is so because it is similar to hyssop which, according to the Old Testament, symbolizes purification and sacrifice.

**ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
315 GAY STREET
PHOENIXVILLE, PA 19460**

Address Update

If you have a permanent or temporary (college, extended vacation, etc.) change of address, please give this information to the church office:

Name: _____

New Address: _____

Phone: _____ Permanent ____ Temporary ____ from / / to / /

Applies to just the above name ____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

St. John's United Church of Christ

315 Gay Street, Phoenixville, PA 19460-3722

E-mail for Pastor: huskidog@aol.com

Pastor's Cell Phone: 484-624-2463

E-mail for Admin.: stjohnsucc.secretary@gmail.com

Church Office Phone: 610-933-5311

Website: www.stjohnsucc.online

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stjohnsucc

Church Office Hours: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm Tuesday – Friday

Rev. Raymond Jachowski, Pastor

Matthew Valent, Director of Music

Virginia Filipovic, Church Office Administrator

Robert P. Verish, Sexton

Doris Selwitz, Organist Emerita

Ministers: Everyone