
OCTOBER 2020, VOLUME 33.10

The Messenger

St. John's United Church of Christ



From the desk of the Council President

Recently I attended the 56th Annual Meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC. For those who are not familiar with its organization, the UCC is divided into conferences, and each conference is divided into associations. St. John's is in the Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference.

As you might imagine in today's environment, the Annual Meeting was held online via Zoom. Every evening the attendees had the opportunity to participate in topic discussions and presentations vital to the current life of today's church.

A Message from the Church Council President

On Tuesday night the presenter was Jill White and the topic was “Being Church in the Midst of a Pandemic and Building for the Future”. Jill is with the Church Building & Loan Fund at UCC headquarters in Cleveland, and presents programs designed to help churches define who they are and why they are what they are. She also helps provide statistical demographic data to help guide local churches to a deeper understanding of their neighborhoods. In exploring different ways to “be the church,” all of the attendees wanted answers to the question of how can we continue in this hybrid world of digital/building/mission church participation. All of us are looking for someone to tell us what to do next to be successful. However, Jill asked a profound question Tuesday night – one I’d like to ask each of you to ponder. Jill asked, “What is your church’s WHY? Meaning, why does your church continue to exist? What drives the congregation forward? Once you define your church’s WHY, then you can build your vision.”

That pretty much stopped me cold. I sat there and thought, “Wow! What is our ‘why’? Why do we continue to exist? What is our reason for being?” In 2020 and moving into the future, by necessity we are and will continue to “do church” differently. But to be effective, St. John’s must understand its “WHY” and be able to articulate what keeps us together and drives us forward.

I hear some of you now, moaning and shaking your heads, and saying “Oh geez, I feel another visioning session coming on.” To be fair, we have done that at least three times in the past 12 years. Most of us know about our German roots and how St. John’s developed to be a spiritual haven to the immigrants of the past, providing a sense of community and comfort to those in a strange land. Our German traditions have continued for over 175 years, and we see their touches in our beautiful sanctuary and stained glass windows as well as our annual (returning after the pandemic) German dinner celebration. The “WHY” of St. John’s during its early years was clear; we were here to provide a safe haven for those who came to Richmond, continuing to feed those 19th Century immigrants’ spiritual needs, and encouraging them to successfully become part of the community around us.

A Message from the Church Council President

But times have changed, and never more dramatically than over the past seven months. Time always changes, we know, but sometimes we don't recognize the passing. We may doze as the years go by, doing what we always do, feeling comfortable. More recently, however, the change has been radical and very visible, causing society and St. John's to change quickly, which is never comfortable. Quick change is like a birth, it is messy and painful. But also like birth, it brings forth new life and new possibilities.

What will those new possibilities be? What is the passion of St. John's existence? What is our "WHY"? In Simon Sinek's book, "Start with Why", he talks about how articulating clearly the passion of an organization will energize everyone to work towards its purpose. He tells how great leadership inspires those around them to be better. Like a pebble thrown into a pond, by the time the ripples get to the shore they are several times larger than when they started.

As I've said before, this pandemic is a Pentecost moment for St. John's and every mainline church in the world. We are being forced into the 'street' out of our soft, comfortable lives, and into the birth of something new. As Isaiah prophesied, speaking for God in 43:19:

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

What is St. John's new thing? We must come to our "WHY", the passion that drives us forward, and go through the pain of re-birth. We must understand the purpose of St. John's being exactly where it is at this time. God promises to never leave us as we, being God's hands and feet, move forward to do this new thing, whatever it may be.

Peace

Dreama Terrill

October Devotional

As the fall season is upon us, one of my favorite songs comes to mind. It reminds me of the gifts that God has given us and encourages us to be thankful for what we have, especially during the difficult times of the recent months. We are quick to forget how blessed we are in our daily lives. These words always brings me back into focus.

Godspell "All Good Gifts"

Written by John-Michael Tebelak & Stephen Schwartz

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand
He sends us snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain
The breezes and the sunshine and soft refreshing rain
All good gifts around us, are sent from Heaven above
So thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord for all His love
We thank Thee then, O Father, for all things bright and good
The seed time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food
No gifts have we to offer for all Thy love imparts
But that which Thou desirest, our humble thankful hearts
All good gifts around us, are sent from Heaven above
So thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord for all His love

I really wanna thank You, Lord.

David Craig

Congregational Life & Care

The Congregational Life Committee will meet after church on October 25th. Please note this is a change from our last meeting. The Committee is working on an outreach program to our members. If you have any changes to your address, telephone numbers, email address, please do keep us informed by calling the office or send an e-mail to Melissa at office@stjohnsrichmond.org.

Any pastoral issues can be addressed by Rev. Beverly Lindsey. We thank her for her love and dedication to St. John's over the last 7 months.

If there are any members who would like to join us on the Congregational Life and Care Committee, we would love to have you. Please contact Betsy Bighinatti.

Guest Preachers:

October 2020

October 4th - The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson is the Associate General Minister (AGM) for Wider Church Ministries (WCM) and Operations in the United Church of Christ and Co-Executive for Global Ministries with the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is an inspiring preacher and theologian, who shares her skills and gifts in a variety of settings nationally and internationally, often using her poetry as a part of her ministry.

October 11th – Josh Rockett

Josh Rockett is the Program Manager at ACTS RVA. Prior to working for ACTS he was the Director of Outreach at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and is a licensed preacher in the Episcopal Church. Josh grew up in West Michigan, and lived in Chicago for 13, until moving to Richmond in 2018, and is still getting used to the very warm summers. He is the cofounder of Beer and Hymns Chicago (www.beerandhymnschicago.com), a lover of music and collector of vinyl records. He lives in Church Hill with his wife, Abbey, and dog, Dylan.

October 18th - Jeff Jacobs

Jeff Jacobs is in his 11th year at St. John's, after moving to Richmond from DC with his now-husband, a Richmond native. Jeff currently serves on Church Council and several Council committees, the Endowment Board, and is a church Trustee.

October 25th - the Rev. Dr. Valerie Carter Smith

Rev. Carter is the Executive Director of the Women's Missionary Union of Virginia. She received her Masters of Divinity Degree at Virginia Union and her Doctorate in Ministry from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond.

October Mission of the Month:

5 for 5

St. John's has proudly provided support to the UCC annually through our denomination's 5 for 5 campaign. Since we have been worshipping remotely we have had to rethink how we continue this tradition. During the month of October our mission will be support of the UCC through three of these offerings. Our mission donations this month will support One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), Strengthen the Church and Neighbors in Need (NIN). Here's some information about each of these offerings:

OGHS supports disaster relief, the development of ministry, and refugee/ immigrant ministries.

NIN supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the US. Funding is provided for immediate needs such as food, clothing and utilities.

Strengthen the Church supports the expansion of ministry and growth of local congregations. Part of this offering goes toward leadership development among youth and young adults in the UCC.

As you can see these offerings are important to keeping our denomination strong and thriving.

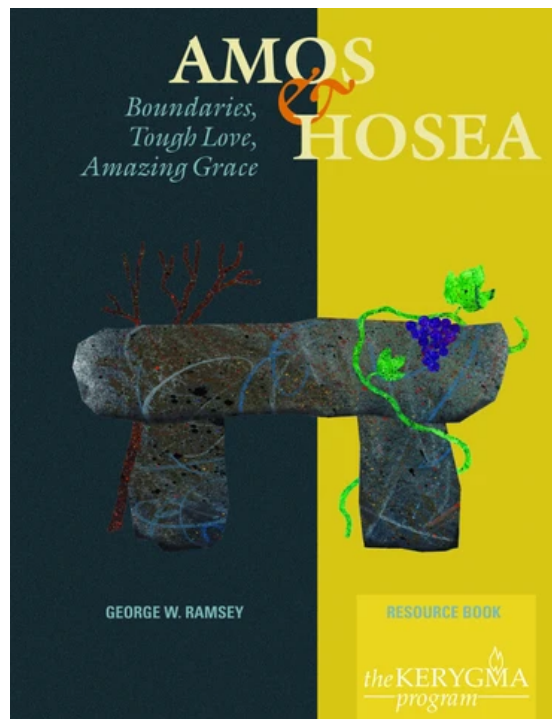
Please lend your support!



Wednesday Bible Study

All are invited to attend our Wednesday Night Bible Study from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Zoom. We are exhibiting a powerful spirit and energy as our beloved community is coming together to study the Word. All our invited and affirmed (even if you weren't able to attend previous sessions).

We will be finishing our study on the Gospel of Matthew. Our next study will be on the prophets Amos and Hosea which are particularly pertinent in these times. We will be using the Kerygma Bible Study entitled: *Amos & Hosea: Boundaries, Tough Love, Amazing Grace*. Kerygma says, "This study challenges study groups to join the prophets in being boundary-crossers; to cross the boundary between religion and politics, or that boundary between "us" and "them." Amos' and Hosea's message is surely relevant for a society such as ours, divided on issues of theology, politics, economics, government, and morality. We need to hear about God's tough love and amazing grace which are extended by the Lord to a people who have often broken the divine heart."



Wednesday Bible Study

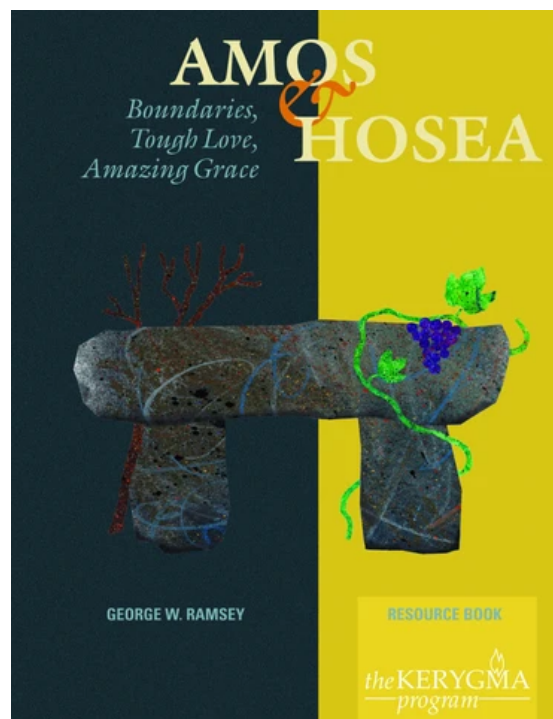
The link to purchase the study guide directly from Kerygma is:

<https://kerygma.com/collections/ot/products/amos-hosea>

It can be purchased with lower shipping if you have Amazon Prime. The link for that is: <https://www.amazon.com/Amos-Hosea-Boundaries-Tough-Amazing/dp/1882236661/>

If you have any questions please contact Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, or email him at sesiefert@gmail.com.

A new Zoom link will be shared via email in advance of the October 7th Bible Study meeting. We welcome anyone dialing in on the phone who wants to be recognized to introduce themselves since we can only see phone numbers on the screen.



October Announcements

World Communion Sunday October 4th

On October 4th, St. John's will be participating in a World Communion Sunday service involving about 15 churches in the Potomac Association of the UCC.

Marcie Agee and Rev. Erin Burnette from St. John's are participating in this pre-recorded communion service, which will be broadcast on our regular Zoom platform. Please plan to join us for this beautiful communal worship experience, and remember to have available some bread or cracker and juice to partake in communion.

Potomac Association Fall Meeting October 17th - Racial Justice Discussion

The Potomac Association of the UCC, of which St. John's is a member, will be holding its Fall Meeting by Zoom on October 17th at 9:30 AM. The agenda includes leadership and committee reports, as well as intentional conversations around "Re-Imagining the Church", to include a racial justice discussion. If you are interested in participating, please contact Marcie Agee (at marcie.agee@gmail.com) or Dreama Terrill (at (804) 297-6705).

Special Congregational Meeting October 18th

The Church Council calls you to attend a special Congregational meeting after church on October 18th. The items on the agenda include consideration of an amendment to the church Constitution to explicitly authorize meetings by Zoom or other electronic means; election of David Craig as a member of Church Council to fill the unexpired term of Scott Siefert, who recently moved to St. Paul, Minnesota; and consideration of a resolution to authorize a series of transactions to enable St. John's to take advantage of a Virginia Historic Tax Credit ("VHTC") program in connection with its ongoing renovation projects.

October Announcements

When the Congregation approved an initial \$850,000 in expenditures from the sale of the parking lot in July 2018, to install a new heating/cooling (HVAC) system for the church, upgrade the elevator, and make other needed infrastructure improvements, it was with the understanding that the Trustees would create a limited liability company ("LLC") to enable the church to sell historic tax credits to a potential investor. St. John's UCC Renovation, LLC was created earlier this year. With significant renovation work now nearing completion, in order to complete this transaction, which should yield as much as \$150,000 for the church, it is necessary to transfer the church property to the LLC, lease it back for a nominal fee for approximately three years (as required by the tax laws), sell the tax credits to an investor, obtain Circuit Court approval for the transaction, and then at the end of the required three-year period transfer the church property from the LLC back to St. John's. While this sounds like a complex series of steps, it is the established way for churches to take advantage of the historic tax credit program, and is a course that has recently been followed by a number of Richmond-area churches, including First Baptist, St. James Episcopal, St. Paul's Episcopal, Centenary Methodist, and Second Presbyterian. There will be an opportunity to discuss this transaction and ask any questions you may have after church on October 11th, and in the meantime you may feel free to contact Jeff Jacobs at (202) 361-9887 or jwjacobs9@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

Fellowship Luncheon October 20th

Following on the success of last month's outdoor Fellowship Luncheon, during which 14 of us enjoyed seeing each other (with masks on except when actually eating), the next luncheon will be held at 1:00 PM on Tuesday, October 20th. We will meet at the outdoor picnic area at Deep Run Park, located at 9900 Ridgefield Parkway in Henrico. Please contact Beth Stiegler, at (804) 475-7340, to let us know that you'll be coming. If you are interested in placing an order for a \$10 box lunch from Sally Bell's Kitchen, including a sandwich, side, deviled egg, cheese wafer and cupcake, please contact Jeff Jacobs at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887.

October Announcements

Covid Victim Memorial Service November 1st

Please mark your calendars for an All Saints' Day memorial service for those who have died from Covid-19, to be held outdoors in the St. John's side yard at 2 PM on Sunday, November 1st. This will provide an opportunity to memorialize those who have died and pay tribute to those who have survived and those who care for those affected by the pandemic.

Sunday Protest Vigils Are Still on!

Several people have indicated that they would like to continue, so the Sunday Protest Vigil is on again! We look forward to seeing anyone who is able to attend on Sundays at 5:00 p.m. on the front steps of the church. Please come out to support members and friends of St. John's UCC as we support peace, justice and the Black Lives Matter movement in a peaceful way. Bring yourself and bring a friend. If you have a sign, please feel free to bring it. We will also have signs available. We are wearing our mask and observing social distancing as we stand in solidarity on the front steps of the church. Please feel free to call Terrie Pendleton at 804-840-2623. We look forward to seeing you whenever you are able to attend.

Parking at St. John's

If you have driven to St. John's recently, either for the Sunday afternoon protests or to drop off or pick up items from the church, you have probably noticed that the parking spaces in the alley have been marked for St. John's use only, and 26 spaces around the perimeter of the apartment building garage are marked with a "CH" for St. John's use. During the week, many of the alley spaces are being used by our construction contractors, but many of our indoor spaces are being used by apartment residents. We are working with the apartment manager to make sure that those spaces are cleared of non-St. John's cars. You may remember that in our former parking lot, we used to hang special tags from our rear-view mirrors to identify our cars as belonging to St. John's members and visitors. When you are next at the church, please pick up an orange hang tag from the table inside the back door (at the foot of the stairs leading to the Parlor), and use it whenever you park at the church. This month we will start having cars without tags towed from our parking spaces. Please contact Jeff Jacobs at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887 if you have any questions.

October Announcements

Farewell to Chris Wing and Scott Siefert

On September 6th, St. John's bid a fond but bittersweet farewell to Chris Wing and Scott Siefert as they prepared to move to St. Paul, Minnesota, where Scott will pursue his journey towards ordination in the United Church of Christ. We are glad that Chris and Scott will maintain their membership and relationship with St. John's, and with our appreciation for their service to St. John's while in Richmond we wish them well in their new home. For those who have inquired, their new address is:

2164 Jefferson Ave
St Paul, MN 55101

Finance and Stewardship Update

Thanks again to all who have been donating to the works and ministries of the church while we have been worshipping online and by telephone. This month we will be launching our stewardship campaign for 2021, based upon the First Letter of John, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7. Across our Christian movement, we embody God's love in at least three ways: Love of Children, Love of Neighbor and Love of Creation. You will be hearing more about these themes in the next several weeks. The work of our congregation to manifest God's love in the world is only possible because of the generous volunteer and financial support of our members and friends. The Finance Committee will be holding a discussion of the proposed 2021 budget after church on October 25th, and we are looking to have pledges in by November 8th, Pledge Sunday. Please respond when you receive your pledge card, either by mailing it back to the church or by calling your pledge in to Stewardship Chair Jeff Jacobs, at (202) 36-9887. Thank you for your consideration!

Remember that checks can be sent to the church at 503 Stuart Circle, Richmond, VA 23220, and donations can be made online at <https://bit.ly/stjohnsdonations> for church operations and missions. The October Missions of the Month are three UCC missions -- One Great Hour of Sharing, which supports disaster relief and refugee/immigrant ministries; Neighbors in Need, which supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the U.S. by providing food, clothing and utilities support; and Strengthen the Church, which supports the expansion of ministry and the growth of local UCC congregations. If you have any questions about church finances or online donations, please feel free to contact Stewardship Chair Jeff Jacobs at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887.

Virtual CROP Walk for Hunger

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2020

The Walk is virtual, but the need could not be more real!
You are *really* needed to raise money and awareness.

2020 marks the **50th anniversary** of the Richmond CROP Walk for hunger. A “CROP Walk Week” will begin on **Sunday November 8th, 2020** with an online kickoff event, and run through Sunday, November 15th. During that week, walkers can participate as individuals or do “micro walks” in teams of 4-5 people, masked and socially distanced. Walkers are encouraged to share their walks via social media platforms.

To register as a walker, sponsor a walker or to make a donation go to:
www.crophungerwalk.org/richmondva/StJohnsUCC

As part of our **50th Anniversary** observation, every walker is encouraged to raise at least \$50. As in prior years, donations to support walkers may be made online to Church World Service by using the above link or by mailing a check payable to “CWS/Crop” to the walker you are sponsoring.

The work of Church World Service and our local hunger agencies continues – and with the possibility of a global famine on the horizon, raising money for vulnerable people is more needed than ever. 25% of the money raised in the Richmond CROP Walk will be given to support the work of three local agencies: Shalom Farms, CARITAS and the Peter Paul Development Center.

We hope that you will join and/or support the St. John’s UCC team of walkers – virtually - as we continue our shared commitment to stand up for the poor, the forgotten, and those left behind. The CWS Spring CROP Hunger Walks were down nearly \$1 million this year. It is urgent that this fall we continue to raise funds to provide permanent solutions to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

If you have questions or want to help with this year’s “walk,” please contact Beverly Lindsey at revbevlinlndsey@gmail.com or 804-275-7165.

Voting This November

Tuesday November 3rd is Election Day. In addition to the Presidential race, Virginia is electing a Senator and Congressional representatives from all the Virginia Congressional Districts, so it is a big, important election.

Polling places will be open from 6 am to 7 p.m. that day. Anyone in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote. Some form of ID is required, though as of this election it does not have to be a photo ID and can be a bank statement or utility bill that shows your name and address.

Because of the Coronavirus, many voters may be concerned about going to the polls on the actual voting day. People who are concerned can vote absentee. In the past you have needed a reason to vote absentee but starting in November Virginia has no excuse absentee voting.

There are two ways to vote absentee.

Early Voting in Person:

You can vote early at your local County registrar's office beginning 45 days before Election Day and ending the Saturday before Election Day. You can find your registrar's location by going to <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/>. This has a link to the Registrar's information. To vote early in-person do the following:

- Starting 45 days before Election Day, visit your local registrar's office or a satellite voting location in your county or city to vote early. The Saturday before Election Day is the last day to vote early.
- You do not have to have a reason or fill out an application to vote early.
- At the registrar's office or satellite voting location, you must provide your name and address and show an acceptable form of ID or sign an ID Confirmation Statement.
- Accessible equipment and/or curbside voting is available upon request.

Voting This November

Absentee Voting by Mail

The same link: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/> has information on requesting an absentee ballot to be mailed in. There is a link on the page to request one. To do this you will need your driver's license number. Once you apply for an absentee ballot, please be aware that what you receive back in the mail from the Registrar's Office IS YOUR BALLOT. That means, you cannot lose it and get another one. If you do not mail your ballot in and decide to vote in person on Election Day, you must bring your absentee ballot together with the absentee envelope with you. **One way or another, the ballot and accompanying envelope you get in the mail must be accounted for.** In addition, once you vote absentee, you cannot ask to change your vote.

If anyone reading this is unable to access the website to request an absentee ballot, please contact Kathy Freise at 804-512-8559. She can get you an application to request one.

The deadline to request an absentee ballot for the November election is October 23rd, but it is good to request it as early as possible. The ballots must be postmarked by November 3rd to count, but again it is safest to return them as early as possible.

Voter Registration

The last day to register to vote in the November election is Tuesday October 13th. If you have not voted in a recent election you should check your registration to make sure that you have not been purged from the voter rolls. You can register, or check your registration status at <https://www.vote.virginia.gov>.

There will be a Voter Registration drive at the church on Sunday afternoon September 20th, as part of the UCC Faith and Democracy Sunday observance. Social distancing will be observed, and masks will be required.

Voting This November



VOTE YOUR VALUES

**REGISTER TO
VOTE BY 10/13**

Point your smartphone camera here



We are working with

WHEN WE ALL  VOTE

&

ROCK  THE VOTE

to shift the culture about voting

**ELECTION DAY
is Tuesday,
November 3rd**

You can vote early in
Virginia between
Sept. 18 - Oct. 31

and we're all free to
vote absentee

You are eligible to vote if you

- are a U.S. citizen
- are a Virginia resident
- are at least 18 years of age on/before Election Day
- had your voting rights restored if convicted of a felony or declared mentally incapacitated

**Are you registered to vote at
your current address?**

elections.virginia.gov/voterinformation • virginiainterfaithcenter.org/civic-engagement

October 2020 Calendar

Thursday, October 1st, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 4th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Wednesday, October 7th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, October 7th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, October 8th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 11th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Sunday, October 11th, after worship - Missions Committee

Monday, October 12th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, October 14th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, October 14th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, October 15th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 18th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Wednesday, October 21st, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, October 21st, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, October 22nd, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 25th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Sunday, October 25th, after Worship - Congregational Life and Care

Wednesday, October 28th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, October 28th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, October 29th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

October Birthdays

October 1st - Chris Wing

October 3rd - JoAnn Jellison

October 6th - Martha Cook

October 7th - Mary Will

October 9th - Rob Osborn

October 11th - Anna Oxenham

October 18th - Anne Dunnsbury

October 19th - Dorothy Cook

October 20th - Sandy Higgins

October 21st - Donovan Martin

October 22nd - Sarah Allen

October 23rd - Andy Trent

October 24th - Brittany Totty

October 26th - Daniel Martin

October 30th - Billy Poarch



St. John's United Church of Christ

St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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