

September
2024

The Eagle

ST. JOHN'S CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Candy Scorsone
worship & music

Shirleen Besch
social ministry

Brian Hirschey
finance



Looking ahead...

Pastor Scott has returned.
Join us on September 8th
@ 9:30AM as we thank
Pastor Debi and welcome
back Pastor Scott.
two services resume 9/15

A Note from Pastor Debi

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Sabbatical Pastor at St. John this summer. I have been so blessed getting to know our congregation more deeply. You have been welcoming, encouraging and gracious.

As I think back over the past three months, I realize that we accomplished what we set out to do: "hold the fort" while Pastor Scott enjoys time away. But we've done more than that. In worship, we have been delighted by focusing on various aspects of God's creation while being challenged with the truth that we have not been faithful to our call to care for the earth and her inhabitants. We explored some of the miracle stories in the Gospel of Mark, and pondered the questions: What happened? What did it mean? Why does it matter? All in all, a challenging set of biblical texts and questions. I have been grateful that the congregation has participated in my conversational preaching style where everyone creates the sermon together. A little nerve wracking for the preacher, but it means the sermon is a living thing in which we are all invested! The worship highlight of the summer for me was the laying on of hands we did in late August. The feedback I received makes me believe that it was very meaningful for you, too.

Aside from worship, we had some adventures this summer. Our St. John Cemetery Prayer Walk, in the middle of a heat wave, offered history and stories, prayer and community. As we wandered among the grave markers, two young fawns watched us. It was an afternoon of peace, reflection and recognition of the constancy of the cycle of life and our connections to generations which came before and those yet to be born. Our midweek campfires and sing-a-longs were filled with sugar (those s'mores – my teeth hurt thinking about them!), song and laughter. We saw another side of our administrative assistant Brigid Monica who led us in song, regaled us with stories and shared her love of music. I wonder whether we might continue these gatherings this winter in front of the fire in the Gathering Space.

A portion of my time and energy this summer was spent on administrative tasks such as updating the rental agreements and making recommendations for how St. John manages that function. We switched phone and internet providers which solved a variety of problems that had plagued us for some time. I have documented all the happenings this summer for Pastor Scott so he does not return to any surprises.

Thank you for giving Pastor Scott the opportunity for refreshment and renewal. Thank you for embracing my ministry and for the laughter and the tears. St. John is a special community filled with warm and wonderful children of God. It's good to know that there is room for everyone here where we can bloom where God has planted us!

Gratefully,
Pastor Debi

A NOTE FROM PASTOR SCOTT

Dear Friends,

I am returning to St. John with a grateful heart. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity you provided me and my family over these last few months. Thank you for your patience, understanding, support, and prayer. I am also beyond grateful for Pastor Debi and her steady, pastoral leadership during this critical chapter. I am grateful to our leadership, volunteers, and retired pastors who each stepped up to carry on our mission. Thank you all.

The next few weeks will be filled with storytelling. I can't wait to reconnect and hear how you are, how things are going. The rest was needed - more than even I knew. Still, I missed so much about serving as the pastor of St. John and participating in our ministries. Mostly, I missed you.

As my sabbatical neared a close, I took some time to jot down the biggest things I hoped to take away from this blessed time. Below are my top 10 remembrances. I wasn't going to share them with anyone (let alone the world) but I offer them now with the hope that if you notice me forgetting (and I inevitably will), that you'll help me remember. I also hope that maybe one or two of these might help each of you in some small way.

It's good to be back. Thank you again.

REMEMBER...

SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

1. remember...

that you're here & you're taking up space.
so be here
& be still.

2. remember...

to sabbath routinely.
do not underestimate rest.
remember we gain strength in times of recovery.

3. remember...

to not apologize for being human.
don't resent your limitations.
don't expect apologies from
or hold onto resentments for
others.
remember they're human too.

4. remember...

that life is a lot.
schedule what you can, when you can
with reason and rationality.
you cannot be in two places at once.
remember remembrance #1.

5. remember...

when in doubt,
pray.
or go ask a child,
they're usually right about these sorts of things.

6. remember...

to be yourself.
that chameleon thing
only works in nature.
don't lose yourself pretending to be someone you are not.

7. remember...

to be as gracious and gentle with yourself and yours
as you are with strangers in the world.
also, remember to be more gracious and gentle
to strangers in the world.

8. remember...

you're hurt
(even though you pretend not to be)
and everybody else is hurt too
(even though they pretend not to be).
remember you're all healing.

9. remember...

that you are loved and forgiven.
remember to love and forgive.

10. finally, remember...

to breathe.
...
(you don't *really* have to remember this one,
but it helps.)

peace + love, psdh

COUNCIL UPDATE - JUNE

The meeting began shortly after 7PM. The agenda and minutes were approved. A devotion was held around the 148th Psalm. The council heard a reflection from Richard Rohr and spent time discerning where we've seen God in creation.

Pastor Debi shared the following report... I began my work after worship on May 26 when Pastor Scott departed for his 3-month sabbatical. Per our contract, I am in the office Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 AM – 1 PM (or as needed). I am contracted for 15 hours per week plus Sundays and am using every minute of that time either at church or working at home. Two weeks down, 12 to go and I believe things are going well. Brigid and I have established a wonderful working relationship with lots of laughs. The woman is funny and smart! Some St. John members have stopped by to say hello which I welcome. I attended the prayer group on May 29 and plan to attend again this Wednesday. I met with two members of Buildings and Grounds to review some questions about rental policies. We have some recommendations that will be shared at the Council meeting on June 11. I attended Synod Assembly with Pastor Charlie Greene on June 3-4. In addition to my regular pastoral duties, over the summer I will work on two projects: compiling a listing of all our online accounts (log ins and passwords), bank accounts and investments, and any other information about accessing essential information when the person who knows it is unavailable. Pastor Scott requested that this project happen while he is away. Brigid and I will be leads. The second project was suggested by Kathy Wood and involves putting together a document that outlines all our committees and ministry opportunities with descriptions of what they do and who to contact. Kathy and I will work on this with administrative help from Brigid. Challenges: we cannot identify who is administrator of our Facebook account so I can have access. No one seems to know the person listed (John Schmidt). Can anyone help?

Pastoral Acts: June 7 – graveside interment service for Ethel Semrau at St. Matthew's Cemetery June 22 – wedding of Megan Bruning and Austin Smith. Pastoral Counseling – 1 session with another meeting scheduled on June 11. I am enjoying being back in pastoral ministry and look forward to what is yet to come.
Pastor Deborah L. Turley

The Committees offered the following reports...

Social Ministry – we continue to serve at Friends of Night People.

Christian Education – A flyer has been created which will be shared in the fall newsletter. Sunday School will resume 9/15 for grades pre-K - 4.

Fellowship – We celebrated Pastor Scott's send-off and Pastor Debi's welcoming. Plans are in motion for the council dinner and church picnic.

Worship & Music - We are learning a new song and Larry is doing a great job leading. Cindy is accompanying the service. The Worship Assistant should find a second communion assistant.

Building and Grounds - A meeting was held. Benches were built, trees planted, and work continues in the courtyard.

Finance - Things are going well. Our revenue exceeds expenses. Mortgage contributions came in. Building use is doing very well! We received \$4,300 from the pancake breakfast. Money is coming in for trees for the cemetery.

In the business portion Karen Thompson invited St. John to participate in the "Living Green Festival." A Prayer Walk at the St. John Cemetery was proposed. A campfire at church was planned. The meeting adjourned and the Lord's Prayer was shared at 8:18PM.

COUNCIL UPDATE - AUGUST

The council meeting began shortly after 7PM. After the agenda and minutes were approved, devotions were held. The council members shared where they'd seed God in the last week and Pastor Debi led in prayer.

Pastor Debi provided the following report... It has been a fun and busy summer at St. John. Here are the highlights of how I have spent the majority of my time and energy:

- **Worship** – We did a 6-week series on Creation that included special children's messages, planting seeds and watching them grow, interactive sermons, a display of blue fabric, plants and a water fountain "flowing" out of the font as well as a large globe of the world which sat in front of the altar. We used some video and other sound effects to engage with the various aspects of creation that were highlighted each week. Hymns, prayers and preaching reflected the theme for each week.

During August, we have explored 4 of the miracles Jesus performed in the Gospel of Mark. We will finish our time together on Labor Day weekend Sunday with a service designed to give thanks and get ready to welcome Pastor Scott back. I have received very positive feedback about worship this summer and have been blessed to preach and preside.

- **Pastoral Care** – I provided a few sessions of pastoral care with members; hospital visit to a member having a neurological procedure; began conversations with a 9-year old child about Holy Communion preparation at her request; made phone calls to check on members

- **Administrative Tasks** – rentals took up time throughout the summer as several renters either damaged property or failed to comply with the agreement. I changed one policy by requiring renters signing the agreement to do so in person so they can see the space, ask questions, and understand that they do not have access to the entire facility. The nursery is often used during events and it is typical for it to be left in disarray or with damaged toys or equipment left behind. I worked often with Rick and Paul to discuss how we could tighten these issues up. We revised the rental agreement for the main building, created a new one for the OMC and wrote a memo with some recommendations for the future. Paul can discuss in detail with the Council.

The internet was very unstable and unreliable this summer. ARC and Lutheran Charities complained and there were days when neither Brigid nor I had internet access. After investigating, I determined that we lacked sufficient band width for all the demands and we changed our service to Verizon. We got twice as much bandwidth and greater online security for less money. It was a win-win and there have been no complaints since the installation.

- **Events** this summer included the car show and basket raffle, Prayer Walk through the St. John Cemetery, church picnic, fellowship dinner, campfire and sing-a-long on August 1 with another planned for August 28.

The executive committee reported the approval of sealing the parking lot, repairing the boiler, and making improvements to the OMC. Surplus funds from previous years were used to cover the costs.

The committees offered the following reports...

Christian Education – We are changing the introductory session for Sunday School to 9/15 at 9:30AM (between services).

Fellowship – The church picnic was a success. Thank you to Aris, Claire, Barb, and Jason for all the work they contributed. We will recognize the transition from Pastor Debi to Pastor Scott after service on 9/8. Other key leaders who helped us get through the summer will also be recognized on the 8th.

Worship & Music - We had a wonderful summer full of great music and worship. We owe a great deal of thanks to Larry and Rick for everything they did. Without them, worship would not have been possible. Many thanks also, to Grayson for filling in while Cindy has been away. Finally, thanks to Pastor Debi for correlating music and worship so well. We are looking forward to welcoming back Pastor Scott.

Building & Grounds - The parking lot was sealed and striped. Concrete was laid for the additional OMC sidewalk. Furnace repair is in progress. A little library was installed near the playground. Penny continues her courtyard work. The congregational "wall" bricks still need to be installed.

Finance - The car show made approximately \$2,500. \$2,300 has come in for the mortgage on the OMC. Weekly income is under budget but that is not overly concerning. Our revenue still exceeds expenses by approximately \$26,000.

COUNCIL UPDATE CON'T.

In the business portion of the meeting, rental agreements were discussed. Several issues were raised including but not limited to... the rental agreement policy, messes and damage, security concerns, insurance questions, etc. It was noted that our regular tenants are not the concern. The amount of time one-time rentals consumes on our office and pastor exceed what is expected. It is taking up a great deal of office work to organize all of the events. The Boy Scouts have also been using the OMC without communicating it to the office. The council decided to cease all one-time rentals at this time. It will be discussed with Pastor Scott returns.

Concerning Pastor Scott's return... there will be one service on September 8th to welcome him back and thank Pastor Debi for her ministry. Pastor Scott will transition back to full-time ministry at a measured pace - initially with office hours Tuesday - Thursday, working from home on Fridays and off on Mondays.



"CALLED OR NOT CALLED, GOD IS PRESENT."
vocatus atque non vocatus deus aderit is a quote Carl Jung inscribed above the door to his home to remind his guests of the sacredness of the space. Jung's point was not that his home was a church, but rather that God is present even in places deemed mundane. This inscription has been placed in chapels, homes, and churches around the globe.
In the OMC this Latin quote reminds all guests (at least those brave enough to google it) that this space is holy. Bidden or not bidden, God is present. If you haven't seen it yet, please check out the OMC with its many improvements including more trees, expanded sidewalks, our donor wall, & more.

DID YOU KNOW THAT OUR CAMPUS AT ST. JOHN IS USED NEARLY EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR?

IN ADDITION TO OUR OWN MINISTRY, OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS WE HAVE INCREASED OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY BY WELCOMING IN LUTHERAN CHARITIES OF WESTERN NEW YORK TO OUR CAMPUS. ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH THE ARC OF ERIE COUNTY AND HAVE SOUGHT CONTINUOUSLY TO PROVIDE THEIR AGENCY THE SPACE THEY NEED TO LET THEIR MISSION AND SERVICES FLOURISH. MOREOVER, TWO LOCAL START-UP, SMALL BUSINESSES USE ST. JOHN AS THEIR HOME BASE. WE ARE ALSO THE HOME OF THE AMHERST GARDEN CLUB, SCRAPBOOKING GROUPS, AND OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.

OUR SIKH BROTHERS AND SISTERS FROM ACROSS MAIN ST. HAVE COME TO RELY ON OUR CAMPUS FOR THE EVENTS THEIR SPACE WON'T ACCOMMODATE. AND LET'S NOT FORGET OUR CUB & BOY SCOUT TROOPS.

THE USE OF OUR SPACE AND CAMPUS HAS INCREASED EXPONENTIALLY OVER THESE LAST FEW YEARS AND WE'RE PROUD TO PLAY A PART IN THESE SERVICES AND MINISTRIES. WHILE THE COUNCIL WORKS OUT SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF ONE-TIME RENTALS, WE GIVE THANKS FOR OUR PARTNERS IN MINISTRY AND THEIR SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY. LIVES ARE CHANGED AND PEOPLE ARE SERVED BECAUSE WE HAVE THE COURAGE AND CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY TO OPEN OUR DOORS AND SHARE OUR SPACE.



Sunday School

Dear Sunday School Families,

In September, our Sunday School program will look a little different. Sunday School will take place during the 8:30 service. Children will start the service with their families. Pastor Scott will give a children's sermon then the children and teachers will head out to the Gathering Space for the lesson and activities. Children will return to their families for Communion.

We will also begin using a new curriculum from Sparkhouse. The new curriculum includes digital resources like lesson videos and downloadable leader guides. The leader guide is super user friendly and includes reproducible activities to accompany each lesson.



SEPTEMBER 15 2024

Sunday School Kickoff

Volunteer information session in the Gathering Space while the kids have a fun day

Social Ministry will be having their initial meeting on Sunday, September 29th at 9:30am in the conference room. Social Ministry focuses on St. John's outreach within the community and meeting the needs of others. St. John members have always been incredibly supportive and generous within our community and it is wonderful to see how much this generosity truly impacts others. If you are interested in participating or finding out more information, please join us for the meeting or contact Shirleen, 716-242-9371.



WE PRAY FOR
TEACHERS,
FACULTY,
STAFF, ADMIN.
& STUDENTS

Let us pray for all who are beginning a new school year,
that both students and teachers
will be blessed in their academic endeavors.

We pray for safe schools.

Almighty God, you give wisdom and knowledge.
Grant teachers the gift of joy and insight,
and students the gift of diligence and openness,
that all may grow in what is good and honest and true.

Support all who teach and all who learn,
that together we may know and follow your ways;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Creative Ministry

Creative Ministry will begin meeting for this year on September 11th at 10:00 until about noon. This group is open to anyone who likes to make small items that will be donated to local agencies. This past year we have made and donated items to local nursing homes, Roswell Cancer Inst., Compass House, Wings Flights of Hope and Family Promise. Small quilts have also been given to individuals on the St. John prayer list.

You do not have to sew to join us. The fellowship is always fun and there is plenty to do for everyone who comes to work. We meet the 2nd Wednesday of each month from September until May. New people are always welcome.

If you have any questions, please contact
Pam Figel: kfigel@aol.com or
(716)639-0235.



Port Pillows donated to Roswell Cancer Institute



Example of a lap robe

Veterans Fund Drive

I am delighted to report that we have collected a total of \$810.00 this year and have delivered 162 \$5.00 Tops Gift Cards to our local

Packard VA Clinic

1325 Main St. Buffalo, NY.

Many Thanks to St. John for making it possible for us to surpass this year's goal.

God Bless You!

Deb Francis





Singing Under the Stars

We met in the OMC with our lawn chairs and enjoyed s'mores as we sang together some old favorites and enjoyed learning some different "old favorites" with the help of lyric sheets in binders.



September



Audrey Eckhardt 09/02

Paul Swanson 09/02

Al Kaye 09/03

Jill Rainero 09/03

Matthew Rosa 09/03

Jill Szykowny 09/03

Charlene Gifford 09/04

Jerry Szykowny 09/04

Lisa Bogart 09/05

Connor Wark 09/05

Matthew Krueger 09/07

Brian Roll 09/07

Haley Parker 09/08

Kerri Zehler 09/08

David Campbell 09/11

Beatrice Lawniczak 09/13

Andy Licht 09/13

Kate Hannon 09/17

Judith Nitchke 09/17

Janice Svec 09/17

Diana Brock 09/18

Vikki Hirschey 09/18

Kim Roll 09/19

Janet Cooper 09/25

Marlene Hooper 09/25

Betty Williams 09/25

Jean Yanik 09/25

Justin McMullen 09/26

David Pawlowski 09/26

Thomas Leach 09/27

Matthew Roll 09/28



St John Prayer List

Hospitalized and Homebound

Colleen Gunning, Ann Henry

Loss and Bereavement

Friends & Family of Tim Kachelmeyer

Healing, Comfort & Special Concerns

Jim Pankow, Kate Olson, Jeffrey Gifford, Bob Tiffany, Gayle Bosch,
Jerry Szykowny, Jennifer Ekberg, Judy Yendall, John Sivak, Millie Webb, Rich Traina,
Jane D'Agostino, Christine Bosch, Russell Burning Sr., Rick Bosch, Sheri Steinman

Harold Weigel, father of Danielle Schmitt
JoEllen Blickensderfer, neighbor of Laura Kachelmeyer
Tomoni Steinhilber, niece of Barb and Bob Tiffany
Mckenna McDonough, family of Laura Kachelmeyer
Freddie Roy, great nephew of Midge Davis
Diane Manning, mother of Mike Manning
Brian Smith, friend of St. John
Charlie Ryan, nephew of Kate & Jim Olson
Evelyn Ullrich, daughter of CJ and Danielle Ullrich
Joe & Ginger Ward, friends of Marsha Irmer
Jennifer Nesfield, friend of Deb Francis
David McCarty, son of Pat McCarty
Maria DeNapoli friend of Marsha Irmer

Peggy Adessa, friend of Judy Nichke
Audrey Crimian & Amy Riemenscheider,
sisters of Candy & Jim Pankow
Christie Guadagno, family of Bobbie &
Rich Traina
Bonnie Beebe, friend of Sue Hadala
Colleen O'Connor friend of Jean Delamere &
Barb King
Phylis Dryden, sister-in-law of Lee Dryden
Kristine Kelly, niece of Lee Dryden
Carol Dixon, sister of Joni Coté
Jen Diakun, daughter of Kate & Jim Olson
Miriam Benson, friend of Kate & Jim Olson
Adrienne Granitz, friend of Marsha Irmer

For the Sake of the World

- To increase our responsible stewardship of creation
- For wise governing dealing with political tension, suffering, and peace in our country and all countries at war.
- Healing, comfort and strength for those seeking refuge from natural disasters
- For the unhoused, and all who suffer from hunger, loneliness, violence, racism, antisemitism, abuse in any form, coercion, and addiction.
- For the youth, who struggle with anxiety and other issues of mental health.
- Those who grieve over mass shootings.
- For those who have no one to pray for them.

Military

Matt Newman, Drew Steinhilber, Ben Hoyt, Maj. Kurt Wasilewski, Mike Ferguson

Please contact Deb Francis of the Gathered In Prayer Group if you have any prayer concerns you wish to add to the list at (716) 512-5513 or beaconseeker52@gmail.com.