

St. James United Church of Christ

Newsletter
December 2016
Volume 1, Issue 4

News from Pastor Ken

Contents

News from Pastor Ken	1 - 2
Upcoming Events	1
Prayers Needed	3
Outreach Ministry	3
Birthdays	4
Anniversaries	4
Spiritual Growth	4
Earthly Gift Ministry	4
Worship Ministry	4
Fellowship - Ministry	5
Kid's Page	6
Altar Care	7
Communion Servers	7
Advent Readers	7
Scripture Readers	7



Newsletter December 2016

Greetings to all! Happy New Year and Merry Christmas!

I know it sounds odd hearing these well wishes in this order but that is how it goes in the Liturgical calendar. In fact, I am a little late in my offering. According to the Liturgical calendar the church New Year officially began Sunday November 27 with the first Sunday in Advent. For all of you keeping score this begins year A.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ December 4 - Communion Sunday
- ◆ December 8 - Women's Christmas Fellowship and Pot Luck supper
- ◆ December 13 - Council Meeting
- ◆ November 16 - Fox Fire Farm Trip
- ◆ December 17 - Euchre
- ◆ December 18 - Communion Sunday
- ◆ December 21 - Blue Christmas
- ◆ December 24 - Christmas Eve Service at St. St. James at 7:00pm and 11:00pm
- ◆ December 25 - Christmas Service at St. Paul 10:00am.

Year after year my understanding and appreciation for Advent continues to grow. I have come to recognize that Advent is to Christmas what Lent is to Easter. It is a time of spiritual preparation and discernment. It is that time when I consider this incredible gift that I am about to receive and how I would like to use it. I like to think of this Christmas time gift it as an unlimited gift card that we can use anytime and anyplace to shape and guide our lives. But like all gift cards, they only give us benefit if we use them.

I think my Christmas' have become richer and more fulfilling as year after year my Advent practices become richer and more intentional. I use Advent as a time of spiritual centering, reflection and preparation for the year to come so when Christmas gets here I am really ready. Not necessarily on the outside but on the inside. I think part of what use to (and still can) make me crazy about Christmas is that I thought everything needed to be just right on the outside in order to be right on the inside, including gifts, decorating the house, the tree, the lights, the dishes, the...the..., the.... You see, I can make myself stressed just thinking about it. And in the course of potentially becoming overwhelmed about the outside, it becomes easier to forget to prepare and make ready the inside. The heart and the spirit of Christmas.

News from Pastor Ken Continued

So once again I have gathered my meditation materials and have been making my short list of any specific things I am seeking God's direction about in my life. I have also printed my sunrise/sunset calendar and stuck it to the refrigerator in preparation for fasting. As many of you know I fast (nothing to eat or drink from sunrise to sunset) the purple seasons of the church calendar. Please don't do this without discussing it. However if you would like to join me in spirit for a day in prayer, meditation or whatever practice you use to center your spirit, I would enjoy sharing that with you. I continue to be excited about the journey ahead. This year I invite you to join me in re-arranging our priorities and sharing with me in ways to more fully enjoy Advent and therefore Christmas.

First, slow down and take time to remember what this season is truly about. It is time for thinking about our individual relationships with God and listening for what it is God would have us to do and who it is that God would have us to be. It is a time of prayer, reflection and discerning. It is a time for considering and acting on how it is you want God to impact your life. I also need to be reminded to expect the unexpected.

Secondly, Advent is the beginning of the new church year. It is a season for appreciating what is, together with the hope of what is to come. I look with anticipation toward this New Year both in my personal life as well as in the life of St James. This has been an exciting year of growth and transition for me and our St James family. There continues to be an exciting sense of energy and anticipation. I invite you to pray and prepare for what God is calling you individually and we as a community at St James to be and to do in the year ahead.

Third, Advent is the gateway to Christmas and all the joy and anticipation that comes with it. As I stated earlier, I am aware that during the holidays we are sometimes consumed with trying to do life perfectly. It seems that no matter how much we do or how hard we work there will always be a couple things more we could have done. Is not that the way life is. I think the key to happiness during the holidays as well as throughout life is to slow down, plan for what you can plan, do what you can do, and then relax and take time to enjoy the ride, knowing that things are always going to turn out a little differently than the plan. Make sure to leave room for the Spirit to do its thing.

During this time of Advent, I invite you to follow that simple formula, plan a little, do a little, and enjoy, remembering that the biggest gift that you will receive is not under the tree. It is the gift of God's unending love for you, the gift of boundless, unconditional, unearned, mercy, grace and forgiveness. So sit a moment, wait a while, take a deep breath, expect the unexpected and then prepare to open the Gift that will transform your life forever. Expect a miracle.

Remember that whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are held in God's unconditional love, boundless mercy, and unending grace. And there is a place for you here at St James.

May you know the love and grace of God in your life. May your heart and life be filled with the Spirit. Merry Christmas!!

Take care and be well, Peace
Ken



Prayers for....

Karen Marie	George
Sue	David
Scott,	Deborah
Mimi	Lynn
Dan	Mel Bandlow
Kathy	Johnnie
Rich	Diana Licari
Maraleen	Paul
Doug	Peggy
Gordy	Bobbie
Jack Bishop Sr. & Jr.	Marion

Outreach Ministry

Kids in Distress

Current needs are as follows:

Boys and Girls -Jeans/pants, underwear sizes 3-12

Socks sizes all sizes through adult **except** girls 10-12

Desperate need of shirts/tops for girls 6-8

Winter is coming, in need of coats, hats, boots and gloves all sizes.

Hygiene items (soap, deodorant, shampoo, etc.)

Blue Water Area Rescue Mission - B-WARM

Blue Area Rescue Mission is in need of cleaning supplies and paper products. Collection bin (B-WARM) is in the church basement.

B-WARM provides emergency shelter and mission program 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the homeless of St. Clair County as well as a discipleship program.

Members Needed

St. James is looking for 3 to 4 members to serve a three year term on the **Church Council** beginning on January 1, 2017 (no specific office). Please notify any church council member if interested. We also are in need of a person to fill the position for **Parish Life Leader**.

St. Augustine Richmond Food Pantry

In need of... brown or turkey gravy, boxed stuffing, jam/jellies, cake mixes, frostings, boxed potatoes, boxes of granola bars.

Happy Birthdays in November

Dec. 3 - Frank Tringali
Dec. 6 - Kim LaDuke
Dec. 11 - Ashley Beattie
Dec. 25 - Jeff Bandlow
Dec. 25 - Ken Gadd
Dec. 28 - Jeff LaDuke
Dec. 28 - Robin Lyszczyk
Dec. 31 - Steph Bachelдор

Happy Anniversary's in November

Dec. 16 - Kris and Wally Dombrowski

Spiritual Growth Ministry

In need of adults to volunteer and assist Sue Tews in providing our young folks with Sunday School. Sign-up our provided in the basement.

Discussion group studies will begin again in January and will be centered on Prayer and Meditation. Further details will follow in the coming month.

Earthly Gifts Ministry

Financial Goal Report

November Financial Goal Report

The goal for November is \$6000.00. Total contributed was \$2759.50 which includes \$237.50 from the euchre event. Please remember St. James during this great Christmas season since our financial obligations still need to be met.

Worship Ministry

Holiday Service Schedule

December 21st, Blue Christmas - 7:00pm Service

December 24th, Christmas Eve at St. James - 7:00pm-Shared Service

December 24th, Christmas Eve at St. James - 11:00pm-Shared Service

December 25th, Christmas Morning at St. Paul- 10:00am-Shared Service

January 1st, New Year Day Lessons & Carols at St. James-Shared Service

Signup sheets are provided in the basement for a free and feel good stewardship of being an Usher/Greeter, Liturgists, communion server or an Altar Care person.

The Discretionary Fund

Did you know this fund is utilized to provide assistance for rent, utilities, medical supplies, food and transportation to doctors, etc?

This is generated from the loose change collected the first Sunday of each month. Please empty your pockets and change purses that day in order to meet the needs of our church and community.

Advent Readers Needed

We are looking for church members to read the Advent Scriptures and light the Advent Candles on November 27th, December 4th, December 11th and December 18th.

Sign-up sheet to read and light the candles is on a clipboard in church basement.

Fellowship - Ministry

Christmas Tree Walk

8061 Marsh Road

Algonac, MI

Friday, December 16, 2016 - Meet at 7:00pm
at the ThumbPrint News Parking Lot (address above)

View over 170 decorated Christmas Trees on three levels (handicap access to 1st floor only) in a beautiful 9000 sq. ft. log cabin.

Tickets bought by November 30th are \$12.00 for adults, \$6.00 for child (age 2-15), under 2 are free. Tickets bought on December 1st and later are \$15.00 for adults, \$8.00 for children 2-15, under 2 are free. Call 810-794-2300 for tickets (they will be mailed to you) or buy at ThumbPrint News that night.

Includes: Free hot cocoa and cookies, bus ride to the house and back to the parking lot (every 10-15 minutes)

Christmas Shoebox Items Needed for 2017

First I would like to thank everyone who helped with this project, from donating items and money, sorting out items, filling boxes and making the boxes. **We filled 90 shoeboxes for 2016 and were able to collect all funds needed for mailing at a cost \$630.00**

This is going to be a year round Fellowship Ministry project for 2017. The items to be collected for the shoeboxes are as follows: toys, plastic tote bags with handles, school supplies, notebooks, coloring books, crayons, pencils, pens, erasers, pencil sharpeners, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, washcloth, combs, socks, hats, gloves or mittens and always \$7.00 for mailing costs.

If you are not a shopper, you can still donate to this worthy cause by providing a cash donation.

My goal is to fill 100 shoeboxes next year. Please buy when things are on sale or at end of season. Donation tubs will be located in the church basement for collection.

Roof Collection

St. James will be collecting funds to offset the cost of the new roof estimated at approximately \$26,490.00 (including cost of lift). Please earmark all donations for this purpose on your check/envelope. Funds will be coming from Trust Fund to be repaid monthly from donations received. A new fund raising thermometer will be placed in the church lobby designating funds received.

Kid's Page
Color the Birth of Jesus Christ Picture



Altar Care

Betty Robertson

Communion Servers

Prepare - Bev Kulman
Servers - Devon Klomp
Bev Kulman

Ushers & Greeters

December 4 - Open
December 11 - Open
December 18 - Open
December 25 - Open

Scripture Readers

December 4 - Open
December 11 - Open
December 18 - Open
December 25 - Open

Advent Readers

First Sunday of Advent
Sunday, November 27th:

Second Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 4:

Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 11th: Roberta Fisher

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sunday December 18th:

Scripture Readings for December

<p>Sunday, December 4 Isa 11:1-10 Ps 72:1-7, 18-19 Rom 15:4-13 Matt 3:1-12 Vision of Peace</p>	<p>Sunday, December 11 Isa 35:1-10 PS 146:5-10 or Luke 1:47-55 James 5:7-10 Matt 11:2-11 Heartbeat of Justice</p>
<p>Sunday, December 18 Isa 7:10-16 Ps 80:1-7, 17-19 Rom 1:1-7 Matt 1:18-25 God With Us</p>	<p>Sunday, December 25 Isa 9:2-7 Ps 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14 (15-20) A Great Light</p>



St. James United Church of Christ
9008 Meisner Road
Casco, MI 48064

Phone:
(586) 727--1623

Fax:
(586) 27-0833

E-mail:
kgadd@ourstjameschurch.org

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Ourstjameschurch.org



Newsletter