

The Country Church Herald

...Proclaiming the Word of God

ST. JAMES UCC
13312 Pioneer Road
Newton, WI 53063
920.693.8100



ST. MARK'S UCC
W1307 Orchard Road
Cleveland, WI 53015
920.693.8361

PASTOR: Rev. Dr. Patrick Schultz

DECEMBER, 2023

December 3rd —

Building Fund Sunday

St. Mark's: 9:00am Worship
Sunday School 9-11 (rehearsal)
St. James: 10:30am Worship Service
Practice/Sunday School 9-11:30am

December 17th —

St. Mark's: 9:00am Worship
Sunday School 9-11 (rehearsal)
STM Sunday School Program 4:00pm
St. James: 10:30 Children's
Christmas Program
9:00am Program Practice

December 25th—

CHRISTMAS DAY

St. James: 9:00am Worship with Communion
No service at St. Mark's today.
No Sunday School at either church

December 10th —

Christmas Fund Sunday

St. James: 9:00 Worship
Sunday School/Practice 9-11am
St. Mark's: 10:30am Worship
Sunday School 9-11am (rehearsal)

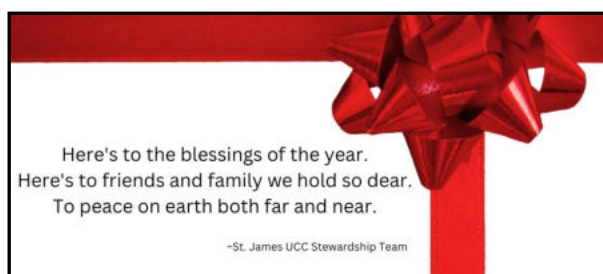
December 24th —

CHRISTMAS EVE

St. James: 10:00 am Christmas
Caroling Service
No morning service at St. Mark's
St. Mark's: 4:00pm and 7:00pm
Communion served at both services
No pm service at St. James.

December 31st—

St. James: 9:00 am Worship
St. Mark's: 10:30am Worship
No Sunday School at either church
*St. Mark's Choir-rehearse at 10am



Here's to the blessings of the year.
Here's to friends and family we hold so dear.
To peace on earth both far and near.

—St. James UCC Stewardship Team

Sunday bulletins & links to prayer requests are posted under the 'Messages' link on our church website: <https://www.stmstjucc.org/>

Worship Services are recorded weekly and uploaded to our church YouTube channel: St. Mark's & St. James UCC

ST. JAMES CONSISTORY

November 6, 2023 6:30 pm

- The meeting was called to order by President Jackie Mueller. Members present were Jason Riesterer – Vice-President, Sheila Hemb – Treasurer, Tammy Serketich – Secretary, Jamey Binversie, Wendy Meyer, Scott Henschel, and Pastor Patrick Schultz.
- Absent: None
- Prayer led by Pastor
- Motion to approve the Secretary's Report made by Wendy and seconded by Jason
Motion carried.
- Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report made by Tammy and seconded by Wendy
Motion carried.
- Pastor's Report:
Mission/Vision Committee – scheduled for Saturday 11/11; will cancel due to funeral at St. Marks and will reschedule.
Home Visits – No new requests
- Building and Grounds: -Steeple is leaking. Tammy to email David to find out who did addition/repairs. Fire inspection letter; will research and check back next meeting.
- Committee Reports:
Vision of Hope: Next meeting Monday, November 27
Stewardship Committee: Will meet in December
Christian Board of Education: Meeting Sunday, November 12. Christmas program to be held 12/17/23.
Service Committee: Nothing new
Audio Visual: Jason purchased surge protector and new microphones.
- Old Business:
Safe Sanctuary helper – Need helpers at St James, Pastor will have Karen put a flyer in the newsletter.
Consistory Nominees – We have contacted several members and are still in need of two replacements. Will continue checking with members and report back next meeting.
160th Church Anniversary – 64 Church attendees and 40 people stayed for fellowship.
Special thanks to Mary Ann Vogel for her presentation and Pastor and Karen for their assistance with the Power Point, Choir for their special music and committee members for snacks and refreshments.
Memorial Sunday – will be held Sunday November 26. Ronald Henschel memorial candle is ready. Thank you to Heidi Belitz for making candle.
Snowplowing – Jason contacted Bill and confirmed his willingness to take care snow plowing again this winter
- New Business:
Christmas Candy Bags – Tammy and Wendy will fill 20 bags for Christmas program on 12/17.
Suggestions: Rice Krispie bars, Apple, fruit.
Set date for putting up Christmas trees – Set up scheduled for November 25th at 7:00 am.
Miscommunication regarding 1st Sunday of Advent.

CONSISTORY MINUTES CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE....

ST. JAMES CONSISTORY, con't

(New Business continued...)

Review Member list – discussion held and will update deaths, moves and new member
Update Committee lists for Annual Report – Tammy to work on this
Review Usher list – Discussion to keep same month and just rotate chairperson
Review communion/check supplies. We will go back to serving communion in the pews
as well as again taking offering in the pews.
Koreans – Jackie met with them Sunday; everything is going well

- Congregation concerns: No new concerns at this time.
- Next meeting date: Monday, December 4, 2023; 6:30 pm
- Motion to adjourn made by Tammy and seconded by Pastor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Tammy Serketich, Secretary

DECEMBER GIVING TO OUR UCC MISSIONS



December 3rd is Building Fund Sunday - as always, we continue to have general Building expenses that are paid throughout the year. Your support is appreciated and needed.



December 10th is Christmas Fund Sunday - The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial

Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Learn more at pbucc.org. Gifts to the Christmas fund make an immediate impact on those who have so faithfully served us over the years.

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Hemb, St James Treasurer
Judy Steinbeck, St Mark's Financial Secretary

ST. MARK'S CONSISTORY MEETING

November 1, 2023

The meeting was called to order on November 1, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. Members present were Glenn Grunwald, Judy Steinbeck, Linda Schroeder, Ben Grunwald, Julie Herrmann, Pastor Schultz, and Larry Perronne. Janell Davis was absent. Pastor led us in prayer.

Judy presented the financial report and Larry made a motion to accept the report as presented and Linda seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Larry made a motion to accept the Secretary's report as presented and Linda seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The Mission/Vision team sent out surveys and results are coming in and will be reviewed at both churches. The next step will be to review the data and work on the congregational leadership assessment.

Background checks have been completed as of November 1st for safe sanctuary which includes Sunday school teachers, Pastor Schultz and Brenda Schultz.

Resealing of the parking lot and the bell tower projects will be put on hold until 2024.

Plans were confirmed for Mission Fest.

Candles will be ordered for each individual family and a letter will be sent to those who have lost family members inviting them to Memorial Sunday on November 26th when their loved ones will be recognized.

We will be reviewing the budget at the December meeting.

We discussed the need for candidates for replacement of consistory members.

Glenn will be asking church employees if they are willing to continue to work next year.

Linda will be helping to coordinate families for the Adopt a Family project for holiday gift giving.

There will be a sign-up sheet to be an usher or a greeter.

Candlelighters are also needed each Sunday. If you are willing to help, please contact a consistory member.

Our next consistory meeting is December 7th at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Herrmann
Consistory secretary



Some of these cards were dropped off at church, so I thought I'd share. There are a few on display at each church, plus some papers with more information.

~Karen



Our most heartfelt sympathy is extended to the family of Kenneth Dirks, member of St. Mark's, who entered into Eternal Life on November 29th. Kenneth will be missed by our church families.

Kenneth E. Dirks, age 86, of Town Mosel, passed away peacefully on Friday, November 3, 2023 surrounded by his loving family. Kenny was known for his sense of humor, jovial laugh and his ability to spark a conversation with anyone.

He was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin on April 24, 1937, to the late Elmer and Alvira (Grunwald) Dirks. Kenny was a 1955 graduate of Sheboygan Central High School. After graduation he served in the United States Air Force from 1955-1959 as a jet mechanic.

In 1958 Kenny was united in marriage to Shirley Erickson at First Lutheran Church in Mesa. They had celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary shortly before Shirley's passing on April 28, 2008. The couple moved to the Cleveland area in 1959.

He drove in State "Truck Driving Championship" competitions for many years. Kenny won 3 State Championships and went on to Nationals. He was a recipient of many other truck driving awards. After retirement, he remained with the trucking groups as a judge. Kenny was a charter member and past president of Wisconsin's Association of Truck Driving Champions. He had 37 years accident-free driving with the American Trucking Association. He was a retired member of the Teamsters Union Local 75.

He drove for Gateway Transportation then Yellow Freight, retiring in 1995. He was a charter member of the Lakeshore Driftbusters Snowmobile Club. He also was a longtime member of St. Mark's UCC, Cleveland, WI, serving on various boards.

Outside of trucking, Kenny enjoyed traveling throughout the country. Some memorable trips included Hawaii, Alaska and vacationing in Mesa, Arizona. He was an avid fan of NASCAR.

Welcome Little One



Introducing...

Daphne Jane Lutze

Daughter of David & Megan Lutze

Born October 22, 2023

11:29pm

21 inches, 7lb 12 oz

**St. James Sunday School
Christmas program
practice is as follows:**

Sunday, December 3:

Program practice at 9am.
Sunday School during
church (after children's
message)

Sunday, December 10:

Sunday School during 9am
church (after children's
message). Program practice
10am to 11am

Sunday, December 17:

Program practice at 9am.
Christmas Program during
the 10:30 am church service.



St. James:

**10:30am Sunday,
December 17th**

St. Mark's:

**4:00pm Sunday,
December 17th**

**St. Mark's Sunday School
Christmas program
practice is as follows:**

Sunday, December 3:

Program practice 9-11am

Sunday, December 10:

Program practice 9-11am

Sunday, December 17:

Program practice 9-11am

Our Christmas program is at
4:00pm.

*Please arrive by 3:30pm

**There is no Sunday School at either
church on December 24th or 31st.**



Christmas Caroling
Sunday Morning
Service at St. James,
10 am, December 24th!



**ST. JAMES HELD A SPECIAL SERVICE ON NOVEMBER 5TH FOR
THEIR 160TH ANNIVERSARY**

Special thanks to Mary Ann Vogel for the presentation. Additional thanks to Karen and Pastor for all their help scanning pictures and putting together the powerpoint, Cindy and choir for the special music and all who prepared refreshments.





What better way to brighten up those middle of the week early dark evenings than to lift your voice in song at choir practice (and share fun and laughter with friends at the same time!)? Both St. James & St. Mark's would love to have more voices join their choir, and you don't even have to know how to read music!

Talk with Randy or Cindy Sohn at St. James, Kathy Jurk at St. Mark's, or any choir members to get more information.

ST. JAMES CHOIR

Rehearsal will be held:

Wednesday, Dec. 13th, 6:30pm



ST. MARK'S CHOIR

Rehearsals will be held:

Wednesday, December 6th, 7pm

Wednesday, December 13th, 7pm

Wednesday, December 20th, 7pm

Sunday, Dec. 31st 10:00am (before the worship service)



ALUMINUM CAN TAB COLLECTION

Who enjoys a cool canned refreshment here and there?

Well did you know by just removing the tab, you would be helping raise money for the Ronald McDonald House.

That's right....if you have noticed a plastic tab collection container in the back of St Mark's church, that's where they can be brought and once a year turned in at the annual Ronald McDonald house that happens at the Broughton Marsh campground the second Saturday of October every year. There is a Facebook page "Happy Campers" that has more statics and pictures of the event or you could reach out to Glenn or Terri Grunwald who would be the one's collecting and taking them there.

There is some friendly competition of which team can collect the most...last year, the team we are a part of, collected over 347 gallons of tabs alone, which was a new record of amazement of how many come together for a great cause.

Give it a thought, just before you dispose of your can, take the tab off and make it more worthwhile than just putting it in the trash.

One small act of kindness, can make a huge difference.

ST. JAMES CONGREGATION,

We have received the names of five individuals from the Department of Health and Human Services. These five individuals could really use our help. Their lists are short but important. We are asking for your help in fulfilling the lists provided for the three women and two men.

The tags are on a table in the Narthex rather than on a tree downstairs as in the past. Please wrap your gifts and attach the tag for identification. Return items to church by Sunday, Dec. 17th, please.

Any questions, please contact Deb La Duke.

Thank you everyone for your kind hearts and generosity!!



St. Mark's 2023 Giving Tree Adopt-a-Family

You can either sign up on the link below or grab an ornament off the Giving Tree in the entryway at church. Both lists are identical – regularly updated.

All gifts are due at church by Sunday morning, December 17th. Please wrap the gift(s) and write on the label who the gift is for and what the contents are. Gift cards do not need to be wrapped.

If you have questions or need help signing up, reply to this message. Here's the link to sign up online:

<https://bit.ly/sharegifts2023>

QUILTING AND SEWING FELLOWSHIP

Several years ago, a large group of people met over time to make quilts that a mission team took to Re-Member in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Besides producing many beautiful quilts, we built fellowship and service among our group, along with wonderful memories. I'm hoping to again gather people together once or twice a month to sew or quilt in service of one or more charities. Not everyone needs to be a sewist. I'm happy to teach anyone who wants to learn. We will also need people to do pressing and cutting.

***This is for both St. Mark's & St. James.**

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please let me know. *

What day/days and time of day work best for you?

What causes could we support? I have some ideas, but would like to hear of causes near and dear to you.

Lori Roelse
920-946-3540
laroelse@gmail.com

AS WE EXCITEDLY LOOK FORWARD TO REMEMBERING CHRIST'S BIRTH, WE ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO SOME FUN EVENTS WITH OUR YOUTH!



We will meet at St. Mark's on Sunday, December 10, at 5:30 for a regular youth group gathering, and on Friday, December 22 at 6:00 p.m. at St. James for our annual Christmas Party!

Christmas Party info: There will be an ugly sweater contest, Christmas song karaoke, and a white elephant gift exchange as well as other fun games. Please bring your favorite holiday appetizer as we will have had dinner at home before.

Other winter events to look forward to: I will schedule our annual visit to Sunburst soon for some great snow tubing, and I do hope that we can participate in a high school/college age retreat at Daycholah this winter as well. Sledding at Vollrath bowl will happen this winter, too.

I look forward to hearing your ideas for fundraising for our retreat, Last year we put together some baking mixes in canning jars to sell. What ideas do you have for this year?

Blessings to all of you as you approach your final exams for the semester! Know that Patrick and I are praying for each of you!

If you have any questions, please contact Brenda Schultz.





ST. JAMES SERVICE COMMITTEE UPDATE:

Our Bunco ladies met on Thursday, November 16th. We had 17 attendees and as always, fun and fellowship! Thank you to Barb and Deb for sponsoring our prizes. We will be taking a break over winter and will meet again in Spring. Thank you, Ladies! Watch for announcements for other social get togethers after the holidays.

ST. MARK'S~ SIGN UP FOR USHERING!

You may either sign up on the paper in the church entry, sign up Online at <https://bit.ly/usher2024>, or email Karen at stmstjoffice@gmail.com and let her know which month you want and she will sign you up.

As of this writing, the following months are available: March (3 spots), April (3 spots), May (4 spots), July (3 spots), August (4 spots), September (2 spots), October (2 spots), December (4 spots), January 2025 (1 spot), and also 4 ushers are needed for the Mid-Week Lenten Services (there are no confirmands at St. Mark's this year).



IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME AGAIN...

The church annual meetings will happen in January, meaning all documents for the Annual Report are going to be due in about a month:

St. Mark's—Tues., Jan. 2nd (meeting is Jan. 14)

St. James—Tues, Jan. 9th (meeting is Jan. 21)

The documents should be sent to me ready to publish—just the way you want it.

Please send just one final copy of your report. It gets confusing when I get multiple copies. Email them to: stmstjoffice@gmail.com (I'll take them before January if they're ready).

St. Mark's Christmas Cookie Exchange

What is better than Christmas cookies? Having several different varieties!

If you would like to participate in a cookie exchange, sign up on the sheet in the church entry. Package your cookies in groups of 6 in bags, boxes, or plates. Signups are due by Saturday, December 9. I will let you know by Sunday, December 10 how many half-dozens to bring. Have your cookies at St. Mark's by 9:00 am on Sunday, December 17. After the church service, you will have a beautiful assortment of cookies to take home. A maximum of 12 people may participate.

If you would like to bring extras for Pastor to take along on his home visits, that would be welcomed as well.

Please let Lori Roelse know if you have any questions, 920-946-3540.

Merry Christmas! And Happy Baking!







SUPPORT THE MISSION TEAM To Elliot County, Kentucky



KWIK TRIP CAR WASH CARDS



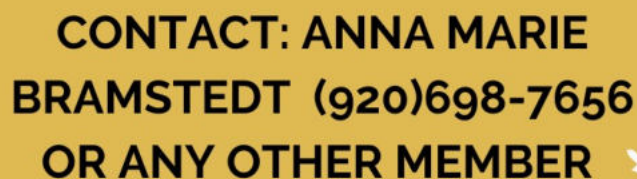
**\$36 FOR 5 ULTIMATE CAR
WASHES (VALUED AT \$50)**



It's that time of year! Time to gather those last-minute gifts and stocking stuffers for family, friends, teachers, co-workers, you name it. It's the perfect gift for any driver; salt and cars don't mix!



**Available
NOW through
Dec. 22nd!**



**CONTACT: ANNA MARIE
BRAMSTEDT (920)698-7656
OR ANY OTHER MEMBER**





Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization

BULLETIN BITES

DECEMBER, 2023

- ◇ As we approach the end of the year, we reflect on the impact SCIO has made in Sheboygan County. Your generosity has been instrumental in helping homeless women with children at Bridgeway, addressing food insecurity at the farmers market, and restoring connection through supervised visitation. To ensure we continue this momentum into the coming year, we invite you to consider a year-end financial contribution. Together, we can make an even greater impact. Your donation, no matter the size, will contribute to positive change and help us achieve our goals. Thank you for being a valued member of the SCIO family. We appreciate your ongoing support and wish you a joyful holiday season.

Here's the donation link: <https://www.sheboygancountyinterfaith.org/ways-to-give/>

- ◇ The holidays are in full swing here at Bridgeway! We are just starting to deck those halls!! As we get going with that, we are still in need of batteries of all sizes and 13-gallon garbage bags. Additionally, we could really use some paper napkins.
- ◇ The Winter Farmers Market has begun! First and third Saturdays from 9am-12pm at the First Congregational Church UCC, 310 Bluff Avenue. We have new farm and craft vendors, plus the return of all your favorite season vendors. The winter market offers fresh produce, meat, eggs, bread, bakery, honey, syrup, preserves, microgreens, coffee beans...plus, prepared food! See you there!
- ◇ Guess what is happening in 2024? The farmers market is celebrating 35 years and the Bridgeway & Beyond transitional living program turns 25 years old! We hope you will join us at the spring gala in May and summer market to help celebrate these milestones. Thank you for your ongoing support for these important programs!
- ◇ New Staff at SCIO! Please join us in welcoming some new folks to the SCIO family. Claudette Brandell has returned and will be working with our families at Trisha's House and aftercare as Case Manager II. Lorrie Ruiz has joined Bridgeway as Case Manager I and will be supporting incoming and current Bridgeway families. Kathy Skipper started in November, filling the important role of Office Administrator. We are excited to grow the Leadership Team and the SCIO mission!

ST. JAMES USHERS

DECEMBER and CHRISTMAS

*Tammy Serketich
Tom & Nancy Nye
Karie & Jeremy Ladwig
Alivia Maxey
Hannah Schmitz
Kendra Schmitz
Lee & Terri Schmitz
Tanya Wasmer
Abigail Peterson
Amanda Wasmer
Allyson Wasmer

**January Ushers will be
published next month.**

ST. MARK'S USHERS

DECEMBER & CHRISTMAS

Mike Scharl
Wyatt Scharl

JANUARY

Bruce Mansker
Karen Mansker
Chris Schnelle
Brenda Miota

READERS

Dec. 3 — Sandy Perronne
Dec. 10— Scott Siekman
Dec. 17— Lori Roelse
Dec. 24— none needed
Dec. 31 —Jacob Grunwald

HOSPITALITY

Dec. 3 — Sandy Perronne
Dec. 10 — available
Dec. 17 — Margene Reyer
Dec. 24 — none needed
Dec. 31—Margene Reyer



VISION OF HOPE-ST. JAMES

"Application for Funding" forms are available in the narthex, from VISION OF HOPE Committee members, or under "More" on our church website. We welcome specific requests as well as your suggestions for using our semiannual gifts from the Wagner Foundation.

STUDENTS! Use this form for tuition help (currently \$1,000) each year.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

<u>St. James</u>		<u>St. Mark's</u>
46	Oct. 29	joint service
64	Nov. 5	45
Joint service	Nov. 12	51
33	Nov. 19	43
34	Nov. 22	joint service
48	Nov. 26	45

ST JAMES DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Ellen Mae Surfus
- 10 Scott Weinfenbach
- 16 Keith Mauk
- 24 Jenny Riesterer
- 25 Raymond Henschel
Noel Wippermann
- 27 Ethen Lutzke
Payton Faith Beck
- 28 Tim Russart
- 31 McKenna Jo Fitzgerald
Galen LaDuke

ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 William & Dorothy
Mueller
- 31 Jeremy & Karie
Ladwig

Happy belated birthday
to Allen Jones.

He celebrated another
trip around the sun on
November 9th.

If you or a family member are
in need of pastoral care, please
contact Pastor Patrick at
920-693-2858 or leave a
message on the church's
answering machine at:
920-693-8361.

*Pastor Patrick has designated
Tuesdays & Fridays as his day
of Sabbath and his day out of the
office During those two days
each week, you may contact
him in case of an emergency
only at 608-352-9544.*

Confidentiality laws make it
difficult for pastors to obtain
information about anyone in
the hospital. If you or a loved
one will be in the hospital,
please call the church office
920-693-8361 or contact Pastor
Patrick at 920-693-2858.



ST MARK'S DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Tyler Bramstedt
Jim Taylor
- 7 Ben Grunwald
- 10 Brianne Vandoske
- 11 Jacob Grunwald
- 13 Andrew Roelse
- 16 Janell Davis
- 22 Michael Scharl
- 24 Lee Sixel

ANNIVERSARIES

- 28 Mike & Amy Summers

Please report any
corrections or additions
on the birthday and
anniversary lists to
Karen in the church
office:

stmstjoffice@gmail.com

Get your last
taste of
summer!



Brat Fry Fundraiser

December 9th

9:00 a.m. - ?

Piggly Wiggly

1411 Eastern Avenue,
Plymouth

Sponsored by
Trinity Fellowship
Church, Waldo

Opportunities in our Church Community



Our 21st Year!

Living Nativity

Come! Celebrate the birth of Jesus!

*See and hear a live 15 minute outside presentation
of the Christmas story with animals.*

Friday, December 1st - 6-9 p.m.

Saturday, December 2nd - 6-9 p.m.

Sunday, December 3rd - 4-7 p.m.

Signed Presentations for the Hearing Impaired

Saturday, December 2nd at 6, 7, & 8 p.m.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

441 Millersville Ave
Howards Grove, WI
stpaulshowardsgrove.org

Join us in our gym for cookies, warm drinks and
musical entertainment. See a display of beautiful
nativities in the commons.

FREE Admission, Parking and Refreshments



Trinity Fellowship Church Cookie Walk

425 N. Lyndon Street, Waldo, WI

Saturday, December 9th

8 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Cookies \$8.00 per pound

Candy \$9.00 per pound

Homemade cookies, candy, and baked
goods made by members of Trinity
Fellowship Church.

"Cookie Walk" is sponsored annually by the Fellowship Team.
All proceeds go toward mission projects of the church.



Dear friends,

I greet you in a spirit of joy as we prepare to gather with loved ones around our Thanksgiving tables to celebrate family, friendship and faith. We share gratitude for the beauty and bounty of Earth, remembering those who first belonged to these sacred lands. We affirm once again the importance of those two precious words: "Thank you." And so, I thank you for your presence in the United Church of Christ and for the gifts and grace you bring to your beloved congregation.

On Sunday, many of us sang Fred Pratt Green's hymn "For the Fruit of all Creation." Since then, I have been humming the traditional Welsh tune and pondering the last verse:

For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.

For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.

For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,

Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

These are complicated times – in the world, in the workplace, in the life of the Church – with lots of weighty questions and few simple answers. The reality of life challenges many spiritual "truths." God calls us to be peacemakers and caretakers of Earth. The scriptures speak of justice, kindness and generosity. But wars rage, Earth groans, and the ways of the world seem to bend toward inequality, intolerance and greed. It's easy to feel hopeless and wonder what difference we can make.

Yet amid these confounding contradictions, our faith teaches us to take on a spirit of gratitude. After all, "love has found us, thanks be to God." Bathed in the love of Christ, our minds are open. Our hearts are full. Our hands are extended. Our gestures are generous. In small, but profound ways, we can indeed bring love to this fragile and broken world.

I pray you will have a chance to grace some aching soul with your goodness in the coming days.

Thanksgiving blessings to you all.

The Rev. Franz Rigert
Conference Minister