St. Johns United Church of Christ

527 N. William Street, Marine City, MI 48039

# News from Pastor Ken



Greetings to all! Merry Christmas and a belated New Year!

I realize that it sounds odd hearing these well wishes in this order but that is how it goes in the church world. According to the Liturgical calendar the church New Year officially began the last Sunday in November this year with the first Sunday in Advent. For all of you keeping score this begins Liturgical year B.

Maybe more this year than previous years with all that has gone on and with a continued air of uncertainty, I continue to appreciate Advent more with every passing year. When I think of what Advent is all about, it is helpful for us to consider that Advent is to Christmas what Lent is to Easter. It is a time of spiritual preparation and discernment. It is that time when we can consider this incredible gift that we are about to receive and how we would like to use it. I like to think of the gift of Christmas as an unlimited gift card that we can use anytime and anyplace to shape and guide our lives. But like all gift cards, it only benefits us if we choose to use them.

I think my Christmas’ have become richer and more fulfilling as 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 perfect 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 anxious just thinking about it. And while 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.

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The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to a targeted audience. A school newsletter can be a great way to develop a strong relationship with parents.

First choose a short title for your newsletter— something like "School News," or “Back to School.” As you choose the title, also take time to think about the newsletter’s theme. What important messages do you want to send parents and families?

Next, establish how much time and money you can spend on your newsletter. These factors will help determine how frequently you publish the newsletter and its length.

Use the body of your school newsletter to keep parents apprised of major assignments and class events, as well as any of school district news. Also share news for specific grade levels, and tell parents about upcoming events, new faculty, and school policies.

## Dear Parents

So, for years it is first things first. Heart and spirit first and then allow some time to put up a little tree, a few decorations, and a little bit of shopping. Just as a note, I do not buy things people will not use just because I do not know what they need. Ah…. Christmas

So once again I am gathering my meditation materials and have been making my short list of specific things, I am seeking God’s direction about in my life. It is important for me to use this as a time and season of reflection and preparation. 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 prioritizes and sharing with me 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, contemplation and discerning. It is a time for considering and acting on how it is you want God to impact your life. I want to remind you 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 our life together and as a community of faith. This has been an interesting year of growth and transition for me and our church family. As we make our way through this year there is cause for a cautiously 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, 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 even in “normal times” 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 can 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.

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

**\*\*Live streaming of Sunday Services will continue at 9:00am on the St. James Facebook page.\*\***

**Live streaming of Sunday Services will continue at 11am. from St. John’s Facebook page.**

**Pastor Ken Newsletter Continued**

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## Happy Birthdays in December

**Prayers For ……**

Joy Irene L.

Bill Bobby

Ben H. Michelene

Dawn Sis

Shirley Don & Lois

Sandy Trisha

Tom & Brenda

Families of St. John & St. James

12-6 Christina Galvin

12-6 Mary Galvin

12-19 James Reynolds

12-25 Kenneth Gadd

12-26 Loretta Prange

12-29 Giuseppina (Josie) Hilsinger



**Military Prayer List**

I will be including a list in the newsletter of our men and women in the military, to acknowledge those who serve and to pray for their safety. Please submit your love one’s, family member or friend’s name, rank, and branch of service to be placed

on the list.

Josh Bieske Staff Sgt. US Air Force

Alex Tite Private US Army

Joshua Bieske Sgt. First Class US Air Force

**Worship Ministry**

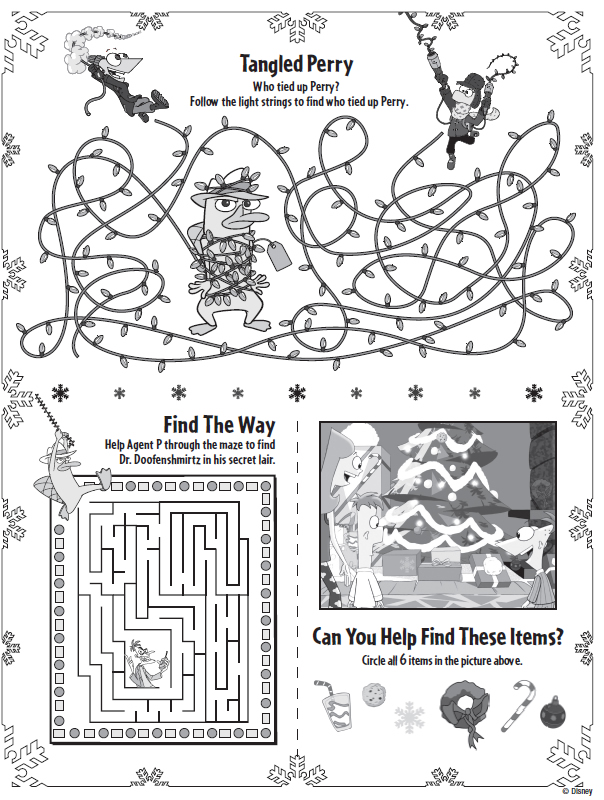
**Volunteers Needed**

**Please sign-up**

Please consider signing up for the ministries of Usher/Greeter, Liturgists, Communion Servers, and Altar Care.

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**Kid’s Page**



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Merry

Christmas



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**Meeting Minutes / Reports**

St. Johns United Church of Christ

Council Meeting **MINUTES**

October 12, 2020

Council Members Present: Georgia Phelan, Dorothy Schultz, Carolyn Hosford, Don Weichert, Shari Faucher, Katie Phelan, Lynn Andrews, Pastor Rev. Ken Gadd

1. Call to order: 6:32 pm
2. Opening Prayer: Pastor Ken
3. Roll Call: see above
4. Approval of Agenda: Add 6e vi-Power washing, 6e vii-Utility shut off. Motion to approve agenda with additions: Shari. Second: Dorothy. Motion carries.
5. Minutes of last meeting: Motion to approve minutes: Dorothy. Second: Shari. Motion carries.
6. Standing Reports
   1. Treasurer’s Report
      1. QuickBooks update: Looking to begin implementing new program in 2021.

Motion to approve: Lynn. Second: Don. Motion carries.

* 1. Financial Secretary’s Income Report

Motion to approve: Lynn. Second: Katie. Motion carries.

* 1. Mary Martha Guild. MMG met on September 30. No future meetings have been scheduled as of yet.

There will be a bake sale along with our 2nd annual Chili/potato dinner, which will be curbside pick-up only.

* 1. Sunday School. No report.
  2. Pastor’s Report
     1. Memorial service is scheduled for October 30th. Motion by Dorothy to have a Memorial service.

Second by Carolyn. Motion carried.

* + 1. Blessing of the pets went well. 6 dogs, 3 cats and a turtle.
    2. Ken has ordered calendars for 2021.
    3. Council needs to discuss whose council term is coming to an end. (Carolyn, Lynn, Georgia).

We will discuss more at future Council meetings.

* + 1. Christmas schedule. Our tentative schedule at this point, is December 21, Blue Christmas Service at 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Services: 4:00 p.m. at St. John’s,

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* + 1. 7:00 p.m. at St. James’, and a Communion Service at 11:00 p.m. at St. James’. Ken will check with both churches to see what each congregation would like to do.
    2. The Wednesday zoom meetings are going very well, with 2 more scheduled.
  1. Building and Grounds
     1. A scheduled church closing is set for November 2-November 7. Kurt Schultz will wash, strip, and wax the floors during this time. We will try to take down tables and chairs after the Sunday (November 1) service.
     2. Insurance review: Ken was informed that our breaker box is not safe and needs to be replaced to continue coverage. Kurt Schultz is getting together 3 quotes.
     3. To-do list: A copy of the list will be sent to everyone on council.
     4. Critter report: Two caught and trap will be set up again.
     5. Draft use agreement: In progress.
     6. Power washing: Especially the northside of church, and Georgia is willing bring in a power washer.
     7. Utility shut-off: Don has given an information sheet to all council members with locations of utility shut-offs. One will be posted in the office and one in the furnace room.

1. Unfinished Business
   1. Attendance is consistent with 10-15 people attending Sunday service.
   2. Live streaming: Uploading seems to be the issue, and we may want to consider switching to Comcast for a better upload speed. Ken will check with St. James, who use Comcast and see how the upload speed works for them.
   3. Chili/potato dinner: Advertising has been on Channel 6, as well as Facebook and posted flyers. Bake sale will be outside with call-in orders and curbside pick-up for dinners.
   4. Neighbors -in Need: No information yet.
   5. Volunteers needed: Council is needed to step up and fill in, usher, a liturgist, etc.
2. New Business
   1. AA group: Due to the lack of attendance, one of our AA groups may be folding. Should we just let the group offer a free-will donation because they are taking in less funds? Don will contact both AA groups and see what we can do to help them continue to use our facility. Motion to give Don authority to negotiate with the AA groups by Shari. Second by Dorothy. Motion carried.
   2. P.O. box: Dorothy checks our P.O. box frequently, and we do feel, because of its convenience, that it should be kept. Cost is $46.00 for 6 months.
   3. Usage of church: Council agreed to let Lynn Andrews use the church for a function with around 20 people attending.
   4. Policy & Procedure book: Don will see to it that Georgia gets the book for review.

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1. Adjournment. Motion to adjourn at 8:03 pm by Dorothy. Second: Carolyn. Motion carries.

Next meeting: November 9, 2020; 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by Lynn Andrews

Secretary

**October 2020 Treasurer’s Report**

Beginning Cash Balance         $85,907.30

Receipts                                     $4,260.42

Expenses                                    $4,887.32

Ending Cash Balance                $85,280.40

Savings                                      $75,584.51

Checking                                    $9,695.89

Total                                            $85,280.40

CD                                               $8,859.07

Net Gain/Net Loss                    This Month           Last Month             To Date

                                                      -$846.90               $3,406.67                $2,559.77

Grand Total                               $94,139.47

Respectfully Submitted by,

Dorothy Schultz

Treasurer

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**Additional Activities**

**Sunday Services**

We are still trying to provide streaming service on Sunday mornings at 11:00am. If it is not available on our Facebook page, please try St. James’- it is the exact same service.

**Council Meetings**

Church Council meets on the second Monday each month. Their next meeting is November 9th at 6:30pm.

**Sunday School**

Sunday School is not scheduled until further notice.

**Mary Martha Guild**

Mary Martha Guild met on September 30th. Quilt tickets are still being sold with proceeds to their Scholarship Fund. Their next meeting has not been scheduled at this time.

**Grace of God Prayer Group**

No meetings until further notice.

**Health & Vitality Meetings**

No meetings until further notice.

**Coffee Donations**

There is a container on the counter by the coffee pots for freewill donations to help pay for the cost of Coffee Hour. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

**Advent and Christmas Schedule**

Sunday, December 6 – Second Sunday in Advent – Communion Service – St. Johns at 11am

Sunday, December 13, Third Sunday of Advent – St. Johns at 11am.

Sunday, December 20 – Fourth Sunday in Advent – Communion Service – St. Johns 11am

Monday, December 21 – Blue Christmas Service at St. James 7pm.

Thursday, December 24 – Christmas Service with Holy Communion at St. Johns at 4pm

Thursday, December 24 - St. James Services with Holy Communion 7pm (11pm service at 7pm)

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**Food Pantry**

God’s Grace Through Prayer, our St. John’s Prayer Group, is sponsoring a Pantry Box.  The box is in the Fellowship Room.  We are accepting any non-perishable items.  These will be donated to the Downriver Helping Hands and other organizations in the area.  Please help support those in need in our Community.  Thank you!

**Message from St. Johns Council President**

I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving, whatever that looked like at your house. At mine, Mike and I enjoyed each other’s company (again!). I did cook a Thanksgiving dinner, but we dropped half of it off to our son’s family, giving them a bit of a break during this challenging time for their young family.

The Council recently sent our regards to past President Kurt Schultz after a medical scare he experienced. He developed a blood clot that sent him to the ER, but we’re happy to report he is recovering nicely. He had volunteered to strip and wax our Community Room floor and still intends to do so, but this will wait until he’s at 100% again. Our electrical system upgrade, which is also being overseen by Kurt, is still on the schedule but has been delayed while awaiting parts to arrive. Many kudos to Kurt for always seeing to our building needs.

It looks like our long-awaited transition to QuickBooks for our bookkeeping needs is on the horizon. Many thanks to Pastor Ken for locating a laptop computer for us, getting the software, and now seeing to it our data is installed. This will make our Treasurer’s job much easier and we will no longer need two positions to handle this important work.

Speaking of positions- we are currently accepting nominations for Church Council. We have three positions opening up and I sincerely hope some of you will consider supporting St. John’s in this way. Please let me know if you’re interested or have any questions.

As a final follow up to the Chili Potato Dinner, I’d like to thank my co-chairs, Carolyn Hosford and Miriam Guyor. Also pitching in, either in preparation or at the event, were: Donna Beardon, Shari Faucher, Lynn Andrews, Lynn Reh, Pastor Ken (chief pot scrubber!), Adele Klaasen, and Joe Valla, who also lent us, once again, his large canopy. I would like everyone to also know we tried to be as environmentally sensitive as we could in this effort; we utilized eco-friendly take out containers and recycled all the cans from the tomatoes and beans.

And while I’m extending thank yous, we have wonderful volunteers here at St. John’s- it’s hard to tell where the list starts and ends, although I don’t think it ever really ends! Here are a few:

Bill & Mary Galvin- put up our Christmas tree and brought down other decorations from the attic.

Mike & Georgia Phelan- landscaping fall clean up and exterior washing of north entryway.

And these wonderful members who work “behind the scenes” every week:

Loretta and Nelson Prange- Communion wine; Sandy Fritz- linens; Kurt Schultz- Facebook recording of service each Sunday. Let me know if you see someone who deserves a little recognition!

To wrap up for this month, Advent is here. If you would like to light the Advent candles before a Sunday service, the sign-up sheet is in the community room. My warmest wishes for a safe and holy Christmas season to every one of you! Let us all strive to keep the Christ in Christmas for ourselves and those around us 😊

Georgia

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**Scripture Reading for December**

**Sunday, December 6 Sunday, December 13**

**Second Sunday of Advent Third Sunday of Advent**

Isa 40: 1-11 Isa 61: 1-4, 8-11

Ps 85: 1-2, 8-13 Ps 126 or Luke 1; 46b-55

2 Peter 3: 8-15a 1 Thess 5: 16-24

Mk 1; 1-8 Jn 1: 6-8, 19-28

**Messengers of Christ**  **Shouts of Joy**

**Sunday, December 20 Sunday, December 27**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent First Sunday After Christmas**

2 Sam 7: 1-11, 16 Isa 61: 10-63:3

Luke 1: 46b-55 or Ps 89: 1-4, 19-26 Ps 148

Rom 16: 25-27 Gal 4: 4-7

Luke 1: 26-38 Luke 2; 22-40

**Birthing a Promise**  **Long-Awaited Gift**

**St. Johns United Church of Christ**

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We’re on the Web!

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DECEMBER

NEWSLETTER