

**JULY 5 - WORSHIP-COMMUNION - 10 AM**

**JULY 6 - SUMMER BOOK STUDY - 6:30 PM**

**JULY 7 - VBS PLANNING MEETING - 6:30 PM**

**JULY 12 - WORSHIP - 10 AM**

**JULY 12 - PICNIC - 11 AM**

**JULY 13 - SUMMER BOOK STUDY - 6:30 PM**

**JULY 18 - COMMUNITY HARVEST - 10 AM - NOON**

**JULY 19 - WORSHIP - 10 AM**

**JULY 19 - FUTURE READY CHURCH VISION SESSION - 11 AM**

**JULY 20 - SUMMER BOOK STUDY - 6:30 PM**

**JULY 26 - WORSHIP - 10 AM**

**JULY 26 - AUGUST 1 - HC SPIRIT CAMP**



stjohnslouisburg.org

Louisburg, PA 17837

1050 Buffalo Road

St. John's UCC





As we move deeper into our summer theme of transformation, July invites us to reflect on the ways God continues to shape us through relationships. Transformation is rarely something that happens in isolation. It happens as we learn to turn fear into trust, strangers into neighbors, and division into reconciliation. It happens as we practice the holy work of being in community and living in love.

For people of faith, community is more than simply being together. It is a way of living that reflects the heart of God. To be in community means we choose presence over distance, compassion over suspicion, and grace over judgment. It means we make room for one another's stories, struggles, and gifts. In a world that often rewards division and quick dismissal, the church is called to be different. We are called to be a people who listen deeply, care generously, and love boldly.

This calling feels especially meaningful as our nation marks its 250th birthday. Anniversaries are not only times to remember where we have been; they are also invitations to consider who we are becoming. What if this moment became more than a celebration of history? What if it became an opportunity for each of us to help shape a more compassionate future? What if we chose, in simple and practical ways, to become agents of healing, mercy, and hope?

That is the spirit behind the United States of Kindness Challenge. Between now and the end of 2026, I invite every member of our church community to commit to 250 acts of kindness. Some acts may be big, but many will be wonderfully small: writing a note of encouragement, checking in on a neighbor, offering forgiveness, sharing a meal, speaking kindly when it would be easier to stay silent, welcoming someone new, or helping without being asked. Kindness is not weakness. It is love made visible. It is one of the clearest ways we embody our faith in everyday life.

This challenge is meant to be joyful, but it is also meant to stretch us. Kindness takes intention. Love takes courage. Community takes effort. If we are serious about moving from fear to trust, from strangers to neighbors, and from division to reconciliation, then we must be willing to practice those values in real and consistent ways. One act at a time, we can become the kind of people - and the kind of church - through whom God's transforming love is made known.

So let this be our challenge for the months ahead: 250 acts of kindness by the end of 2026. Keep track if you would like. Share stories along the way. Encourage one another. Most of all, do not underestimate what God can do through one kind word, one generous act, or one open heart. Communities are changed this way. Lives are changed this way. We are changed this way.

Let us be people who are truly in community and fully alive in love. And let us begin now.

*Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*

Love in Christ,

Pastor Alice

## “Red Book” Memories Continued XLIV

### *“VBS Days”*

Have you seen the signs - those brightly colored banners popping up outside of various church buildings? They're announcements of upcoming Vacation Bible Schools (VBSs). They show up every summer, much like Sunflowers and Black-eyed Susans.

I have fond memories of Vacation Bible School in my childhood. They were days filled with outdoor activities, sing-alongs, arts and crafts, laughter, summer picnic foods, and, of course, Bible study. I always looked forward to Vacation Bible School. It was a highpoint in my long-ago summers. Can the same be said for you?

Vacation Bible Schools have been a part of church life for many decades. They originated in the late 1800s to keep immigrant children safe in New York City. By the 1920s and 1930s, VBSs gained popularity and became widespread when major denominations adopted standardized curricula, growing from roughly 5,000 schools in 1922 to over 20,000 by 1950. It was during those earlier times that Vacation Bible School was regularly incorporated into our church's annual schedule.

An examination of St. John's past newsletters reveals that our congregation has been involved with Vacation Bible Schools since at least 1939. From that time until 1969, our church joined with other Lewisburg congregations to have a cooperative Vacation Bible School. It was a project organized by the people of St. John's and Beaver Memorial United Methodist Church in Lewisburg. But it was also supported by Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Evangelical United Brethren, Lutherans, Mormons, and Presbyterians. Our participation in that community VBS was continuous. However, according to our “Red Book,” there were three years in the 1950s when the community VBS was not held and our church had its own.

St. John's provided financial support, food, and teachers to those earlier community VBSs. Our teachers usually worked with kindergarten-aged children or slightly older. What's more, they worked in different downtown churches, depending upon the year.

After 1969, our church continued to partner with the Methodists and Lutherans until 1993. Starting in 1994, our congregation began to once again offer its own Vacation Bible School. For the most part, our VBSs were based on published curriculums that had different themes each year. For instance, our 1995 VBS was, “Exploring God's Kingdom: Adventures in Prayer.” Other years were focused on such offerings as “Awesome Adventure: Exploring God's Deeds,” “Sonrise Ballon Adventure,” and “Animal Crackers.” At different points, our Christian Education committee even prepared its own VBS programs and materials and joined with Dreisbach, UCC, in this summer Christian education opportunity.

Of course, each of these VBS programs was structured like the ones I remember, with those outdoor activities, sing-alongs, arts and crafts, Bible study, and more. No doubt, they were memorable for all who took part in them. Surely, those memories are happy ones.

In recent years, we have not had Vacation Bible Schools with the regularity that we once did due to a lack of children and even the COVID pandemic. But we are now seeing a return to VBS programs under the leadership of our current pastor, Rev. Alice Rauch. Indeed, this coming August, we will be having a VBS program (August 5-7) called, “All Things Bright and Beautiful.” It will focus on how God blesses us through the gifts of creation. It should be a wonderful experience.

Vacation Bible School programs are vital for churches as they serve as powerful community outreach and provide a period of equivalent spiritual education that takes months to cover in standard Sunday School. They plant seeds of faith for children through engaging, multisensory experiences. Vacation Bible Schools have played an important role in the life of St. John's. They certainly played an important part in my life. Oh, those VBS days! What memories!

– Gary Nottis

### Summer Study on Prayer

Connie Stumpff and Pastor Alice will co-lead a study about Prayer Methods and Practices. We will be sharing material from two books (Seven Ways to Pray - Time Tested Practices for Encountering God by Amy Boucher Pye and Kneeling with the Giants by Gary Neal Hansen) and other resources. We will begin on July 6, 2026, continuing for the next two weeks (July 13 and 20), skipping a week and then resuming for August 3, 10 and 17 at 6:30 pm. in the Gathering Place with ZOOM available for those who need it. Please sign up in the narthex

### "All Things Bright and Beautiful" - Vacation Bible School Experience

**Dates: August 5, 6, and 7, 2026. Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

**Come be a part of God's Green Team!!**

Join us as we learn to care for God's creation through Bible stories, games, snacks, crafts, and hands-on garden experiences (weather permitting). Designed for those up to grade 8. Youth helpers are welcome!!

Children under age 3 should have a parent/guardian present.

Registration Forms Available in the Narthex

Registration Deadline: July 25, 2026

Intergenerational Celebration Night: August 7 - garden tours, worship, and snacks for all!

### St. John's Weekend Retreat at Central Oak Heights - **Mark Your Calendars**

From Letting Go to Renewal!

We will be staying in the Missionary Cottage that holds 15 people

Dates: September 11, 12, and 13, 2026

More details coming soon!!!



HC Spirit Camp - We are excited to invite you to be a part of another HC Spirit Camp at Hartman Center Campground in Milroy, PA. Come and enjoy a time away from daily life and time in community in the beauty of God's creation. The theme for the week is "In the Wilderness;" we will be focused on wilderness stories from the Bible and our own wilderness experiences and how God is with us during those times, through nature, other people and holy moments. Camp is for all ages!! There is a camp for you. Brochures are available in the narthex OR information and registration can be found at [hcspiritcamp.org](http://hcspiritcamp.org). A 30 percent scholarship is available through the Keystone Conference. We hope you can join us!!!



07/04 Dreese, Darryl  
 07/06 Bower, Dorothy  
 07/07 Brouse, Robert  
 07/08 Laudermilch, Carol  
 07/12 Kugler, William  
 07/18 Zug, Janet  
 07/24 Ledgerwood, Bill  
 07/25 DeSantis, Erin  
 07/28 Fennell, William  
 07/28 Rich, Mary Lou

07/27 Dreese, Donna & Darryl  
 07/29 Aepli, Donna & Forrest  
 07/30 Meckley, Bonnie & Dennis  
 07/30 Brown, Sharon & Clair

### Congratulations, Graduates!

It is a St. John's tradition to recognize and celebrate the high school graduates of our congregation. This year, we are celebrating two graduates: Andrew Derr and Tyler Loughhead.

Andrew Derr graduated from SUN Tech in New Berlin, and from Mifflinburg Area High School. At SUN Tech he studied Masonry and was the Vice President of the Masonry Class. His Skills Team came in third place in the regional competition. While in school, he participated in a variety of sports, including football and lacrosse. He is currently working for MidState Paving using his Masonry skills. Andrew is the grandson of Pastor Alice and Palmer, and the son of Leslie Rauch and Jeremy Brooks, and Jimmy Derr.

Tyler Loughhead graduated from Mifflinburg Area High School. While in school, he enjoyed playing lacrosse, and has spent his senior year working with a local surveyor getting field experience. He will be attending Alfred State College for the upcoming fall semester to earn an associate degree in land surveying, with the potential to continue on to a bachelor's degree. Tyler is the son of Lisa and Alicia Graybill, and Jared Loughhead.

Your church family is proud of you and your accomplishments. We celebrate you for reaching this milestone in life. We pray for all good things to come your way, and for God to be with you on your journey through life. Congratulations!

### YARD SALE 2026

The annual yard sale will be **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND.**

You can put your donations in the garage or the chapel parlor.

For more detailed information, please contact Linda Sartwell, Penny Cooper, or Dee Ledgerwood.



## The Wired Word

### How the Bible can help us process current events

Do you struggle to keep pace with our quickly changing world? Does the news leave your head spinning and you wonder how to make sense of it all? Enter the Wired Word email newsletter. This weekly email highlights two current event stories alongside relevant scripture readings. It provides thought-provoking questions and commentary that will enhance your spiritual practice, AND your dinner conversation!

Here are some Wired Word topics from the past month. If you missed them, consider looking back through your email and giving them a read.

May 28 - Teens Bond Over Hatred, Kill Three in Mosque  
Stephen Colbert Heads Out the Door

June 4 - Additional Funding Requested to Secure Houses of Worship  
Pope Leo Issues Encyclical in Support of Humanity

June 11 - As World Cup Begins, Soccer Is Compared to Religion  
Farmers, Scientists Seek to Learn From Nature

June 18 - Research Reveals That Men Are Losing Friends  
Two Women Seek a Stable Faith in a World of Trauma

While the news isn't always sunny, the Wired Word newsletter always provides a path toward HOPE. It includes concrete steps you can take, so you're not just consuming the news but responding to it. It's important to have this guidance and inspiration as we move through modern life as Christ's disciples.

Please contact the church if you'd like to receive the Wired Word email each week. Our church's subscription to the Wired Word is provided by Christian Education funds as a benefit to all who are interested.

### Second Sunday Social on a Break for July and August

We will be pausing our Second Sunday Social programs for July and August to make room for other fun and exciting times! July 12<sup>th</sup> will be the Church Picnic, and August 9<sup>th</sup> will be the worship service at Central Oak Heights. Thank you to all of our wonderful presenters, attendees, and food contributors. We'll see you in the fall!

# JULY VOLUNTEERS

Lock-up: SYLAS WILDE

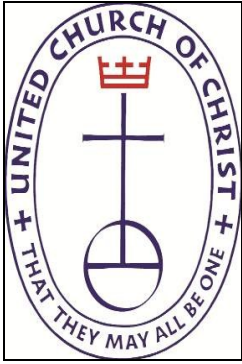
Lay-Reader: BETH MOSER

Preparation of Communion Elements:

JULY	CHILDREN'S CHURCH	OPENER/FLOWER DEL.
5	DURING WORSHIP	LINDA SARTWELL
12	DURING WORSHIP	
19	DURING WORSHIP	
26	DURING WORSHIP	

JULY	FLOWER SPONSORS	Acolyte
5	JANET & MIKE ROBERTS	Keira/Kora Aulenbach
12		Keira/ Kora Aulenbach
19	BETH MOSER	Keira/ Kora Aulenbach
26		Keira/ Kora Aulenbach

JULY	GREETERS
5	BETH MOSER
12	"
19	"
26	"



**Worship: 10:00 a.m.  
Indoors or online  
via Facebook or YouTube**

Visit us on the Web!  
[www.stjohnslewisburg.org](http://www.stjohnslewisburg.org)



**St. John's United Church of Christ  
An Open and Affirming Congregation**

No matter who you are, or where  
you are on life's journey, you're  
welcome here!

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**MONTHLY COMMUNION MISSIONS**

July – Donald Heiter Center

August – Union County Food Bank

September – William Cameron engine Company

October – Neighbors in Need\*

November – Devitt House

December – The Christmas Fund \* (Veterans of the Cross)

Walk (Hunger)

Thanksgiving Baskets

Christmas Food Baskets

AND Bethany Children's

Home Holiday Gifts

(aka White Gifts)

Christmas Eve Offering – Operating Fund

\* denotes Five of Five special offerings

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP 10:00am WORSHIP	29 1:00pm Community Harvest (KTCHN)	30 9:00am TUESDAY TRUDGERS (FH) 10:30am Willowbrook Strings (FH) 7:00pm Men's Westbranch Chorus (FH)	1 9:00am GARDEN HARVEST (GRDN)	2 8:30am WW (FH) 9:00am PEO (GP) 9:00am TOPS (CR) 10:00am CHRISTIAN ED. COMMITTEE (ZOOM) 1:30pm Trailside Troubadours (FH) 7:00pm Building & Grounds (GP) 7:00pm Women's Barbershop Chorus (CH.RM)	3 OFFICE CLOSED	4
5 CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP 10:00am WORSHIP	6 12:00pm Lewisburg Garden Club Board (PAR) 1:00pm Community Harvest (KTCHN) 6:30pm SUMMER BOOK STUDY (GP)	7 9:00am TUESDAY TRUDGERS (FH) 10:30am Willowbrook Strings (FH) 6:30pm VBS PLANNING MEETING (GP) 7:00pm Men's Westbranch Chorus (FH)	8 9:00am GARDEN HARVEST (GRDN)	9 8:30am WW (FH) 9:00am TOPS (CR) 1:30pm Trailside Troubadours (FH) 7:00pm M.A.S.H. (GP/ZOOM) 7:00pm Women's Barbershop Chorus (CH.RM)	10	11
12 CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP 10:00am WORSHIP 11:00am CHURCH PICNIC (FH/PAV)	13 9:00am ST. JOHN'S QUILTERS, KNITTERS & MORE (CR) 12:00pm Lewisburg Garden Club (FH) 2:00pm WORSHIP/MUSIC (GP) 6:30pm SUMMER BOOK STUDY (GP)	14 9:00am TUESDAY TRUDGERS (FH) 10:30am Willowbrook Strings (FH) 7:00pm Men's Westbranch Chorus (FH)	15 9:00am GARDEN HARVEST (GRDN)	16 8:30am WW (FH) 9:00am TOPS (CR) 1:30pm Trailside Troubadours (FH) 7:00pm CONSISTORY (ZOOM) 7:00pm Women's Barbershop Chorus (CH.RM)	17	18 10:00am COMMUNITY HARVEST (FH)
19 CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP 10:00am WORSHIP 11:00am FUTURE READY CHURCH VISION SESSON (FH)	20 8:30am Kindermusik (PAV) 6:00pm Evan. Empty Arms Group (CR) 6:30pm SUMMER BOOK STUDY (GP) 7:00pm FINANCE/PERSONNEL (ZOOM)	21 8:30am Kindermusik (PAV) 9:00am TUESDAY TRUDGERS (FH) 10:30am Willowbrook Strings (FH) 7:00pm Men's Westbranch Chorus (FH)	22 8:30am Kindermusik (PAV) 9:00am GARDEN HARVEST (GRDN)	23 8:30am Kindermusik (PAV) 8:30am WW (FH) 9:00am TOPS (CR) 1:30pm Trailside Troubadours (FH) 7:00pm Women's Barbershop Chorus (CH.RM)	24 8:30am Kindermusik (PAV)	25
26 CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP 10:00am WORSHIP	27	28 9:00am TUESDAY TRUDGERS (FH) 10:30am Willowbrook Strings (FH) 7:00pm Men's Westbranch Chorus (FH)	29 9:00am GARDEN HARVEST (GRDN)	30 8:30am WW (FH) 9:00am TOPS (CR) 1:30pm Trailside Troubadours (FH) 7:00pm Women's Barbershop Chorus (CH.RM)	31	1