

ST. JOHN

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

MAEYSTOWN, ILLINOIS

The Visitor
January/February
2024

Reason to Celebrate

Last year's mission was to go deep into our faith. Calling out Christian Light as the new reality of Christianity. We took specific actions to meet this goal in our church. We brought back the Wednesday Bible Study group; we started a new ministry called the Wednesday Warm Up with Tim and Pastor on Facebook to keep us going throughout the week, which has been well received with an average of 200 viewers weekly. We also changed our format completely for Confirmation Class. Mrs. Sheryl Prange is the primary teacher and her emphasis is supporting the Confirmands to make a deep and lasting connection with their faith and church. The program is also extended to be a two-year program giving much more time to cover the material and walk with the students in this journey to becoming adult Christians. We are also starting to see encouraging signs in our church attendance, not only the increasing numbers but the frequency that our members are attending church. Another effort to deepen our faith was taken some time ago by our Sunday School. They teach from a curriculum that follows the lectionary; in other words, the same scripture being preached on Sunday morning. With these new implementations, along with the strength of the Pew Sisters, Bible studies are going a long way to us deepening our faith journey.

We also challenged our members to not let up over the summer months, asking our members to commit to going to church if they were in town, to keep their faith and the church strong over the summer. The challenge was to keep summer attendance above 100. I am very happy with that remarkable commitment to keeping our faith deep and strong. All the efforts and commitment to keep our faith strong came together in our last quarter of the year when we really came into our own with strong attendance and participation.

Looking out to the new year after such an inspirational 2023 gives me reason to dream of what is next for our strong faith community. Proclaiming what God is doing in our life and community is the way we honor God's gift. Our human nature is to be dismissive or take a wait and see attitude. "While one good year and especially one good quarter does not constitute a reason to declare we have arrived at a new place in our journey;" in essence, dismissing the movement of the spirit is the quickest way to stop the spirit. Instead, we want to proclaim what God is doing! As your pastor, when I look out and see so many churches struggling to recover from COVID with very few children and many programs still not running it makes me profoundly grateful to our many strong leaders in our church and our current and past church councils that have not only brought us through COVID but brought us out of it! I am also deeply grateful to our members that stayed strong when there were many Sundays with a half full church. Lastly, but certainly not least, I am thankful for the families that have moved mountains to get their families back into the rhythm church. When are families live their faith by honoring God in Sunday worship it shows on their children's faces and in all our faces the love of Christ shines. I never want to be without that Sunday morning gift again! So indeed, let's proclaim a new year in the Lord, let us shout from the roof tops the gift it is to be a part of this wonderful body of Christ!

Thank you and Bless you all!

Pastor

DECEMBER CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES - December 11, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by President Christy Muertz. Pastor Poole opened the meeting with a prayer. Those in attendance were Drew Watts, Amy Rohlfing, Lisa Schwarze, Susan Koesterer, and Fay Ross. Absent was Mark Rey and Cheri Langsdorf.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 13, 2023 MEETING

The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed. There being no changes or corrections, a motion was made by Lisa Schwarze and seconded by Drew Watts to accept the minutes. Motion carried.

REVIEW/APPROVE TREASURER'S REPORT/BILLS/TIME CARD/PASTOR'S EXPENSES

The treasurer's report/bills/time card and Pastor's expenses were presented and reviewed. There being no changes or corrections, a motion was made by Lisa Schwarze and seconded by Fay Ross to accept the reports as presented. Motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor shared with the council how grateful he is for all of the help from everyone getting people to come back to church since Covid. He acknowledged how difficult it was to get through Covid and the years that have followed. It is always a work in progress, but he gave praise for all of the programs and organizations we have and to all of the people that make those programs happen. Each and every program is so vital the overall health of our church. He also shared with us some ways that we can better communicate with our church members when they reach out to us with concerns or problems.

Pastor presented the information from Corner Stone Funding regarding the loan for the solar panels. We will be getting the loan at 5% interest if we decide to use them. There is quite a bit of information needed to complete the application, but Pastor will work on that to get it completed. A motion was made by Amy Rohlfing to use Corner Stone Funding for the project and was seconded by Lisa Schwarze. Motion carried.

Pastor reminded the council that there will be a meeting December 17, 2023 after church to present and vote on the budget for 2024.

SOLAR POWER

Christy reported on the title search for the property where the intended solar panels are to be placed. After much discussion she had with the County, the title work for the property was found and there is no need to do a title search. We were given the OK to go ahead and get the building permits required.

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

The committee will be getting together to discuss some plans to have in place for an emergency, should one arise.

MAPLE TREE

Council members have received concerns from congregants that the maple tree was cut down in haste to make way for the solar panels before the solar project was approved. The council reviewed their minutes to recount the discussion of the tree. Our members can follow the notes regarding the tree going back to August and the continued discussion each month that followed in the council minutes, which were posted in the Visitor. The tree was determined to have significant damage with large dead branches back in the August council minutes. In September the motion was made to have it removed. The rest of the council minutes follow the process. When the concern was brought to Council President, Christy Muertz, she reached out and spoke to Eric from GRP/Wegman Company, the company installing the solar system, regarding the location of the solar panels in relationship to the maple tree. Eric confirmed that the tree removal was not necessary for the functioning of the solar system. The council hopes this background helps answer any questions about the process of the tree removal.

GREG BACKES/STONE WALL

Greg was present at the meeting to explain to the council the work that is proposed to be done behind the church and along his driveway. A drawing from the contractor was passed around for each council member to look at and ask questions. The council members have previously taken a look at the area in question and understand the proposal. Sean O'Reilly with Outdoor Renovations will be doing the work. He will be using the existing stones to complete the job. Some key notes: The historic process of building a stone wall, such as the many you see in Maestown and our current wall that we are addressing, is called "dry stacking." The council confirmed that the wall will be rebuilt with this historic method of dry stacking, using the existing stones. Approximately six feet of the wall will be curved to add a greater access for Greg. The curve also adds value to our current wall, which goes beyond the grade, making it weaker. Using the dry stack method required, gives long term stability and will have the ground stacked against the stone to add further stability and force it to hold in place. The curve will follow the contour of the ground and maintain a continued force against the back side of the stone. A motion was made by Susan Koesterer and seconded by Fay Ross for Greg to proceed with repairing the wall at his expense. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

The council discussed a proposed 3% raise to be given to Nichole Koch and Lynn Hicks. A motion was made by Amy Rohlfing and seconded by Fay Ross to give the raises as proposed. Motion carried.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Drew Watts and seconded by Lisa Schwarze to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm. Pastor closed the meeting by leading us in the Lord's Prayer.

Sandy Tutka, Secretary

JANUARY 2024 CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by President Christy Muertz. Pastor Poole opened the meeting with a prayer. Those in attendance were Drew Watts, Mary Rey, Susan Koesterer, Lisa Schwarze, Cheri Langsdorf, & Sandy Tutka. Absent was Amy Rohlfing and Fay Ross.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 11, 2023 MEETING

The minutes from the December meeting were reviewed. There being no changes or corrections, a motion was made by Cheri Langsdorf and seconded by Lisa Schwarze to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

REVIEW/APPROVE TREASURER'S REPORT/BILLS/TIME CARD/PASTORS EXPENSES

The above reports were presented and reviewed. There being no changes or corrections, a motion was made by Drew Watts and seconded by Susan Koesterer to accept the reports as presented. Motion carried.

SPECIAL LETTER

A letter addressed to the church council and Sunday school director was received from Sue Taylor, Treasurer for Women's Fellowship. The letter was outlining expenses incurred by Women's Fellowship for supplies used, that go to support all church organizations throughout the year. With the rise in costs for all supplies, they are asking that the church council and Sunday School share in the cost of the supplies. The amount requested for this year is \$362.15 from each organization. A motion was made by Mark Rey and seconded by Drew Watts to reimburse Women's Fellowship this amount from the church. Motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor gave a year end recap on the past year's activity in the life of the church. Over all he is very pleased with the attendance in church and the number of children that are attending. We all agreed, we cannot stop or let our guard down now. We have to keep promoting coming to church and all our church has to offer.

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

Cheri Langsdorf presented an Emergency Protocol "plan" which she has put together in case of an emergency during service. The new plan will be handled by the church council members and they will put any emergency action in to place should an emergency arise. Each council member will be aware of the action to be taken and advise parishioners on the direction to be taken at the time of the emergency.

SOLAR POWER

The contract has been signed for the solar panels to be installed and the Cornerstone loan papers have been signed and submitted. A possible installation date could be somewhere by summer 2024.

The annual meeting will be held January 28, 2024.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Lisa Schwarze and seconded by Cheri Langsdorf to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm. Pastor Poole closed the meeting by leading us in the Lord's Prayer.

Sandy Tutka, Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING TO APPROVE THE BUDGET FOR 2024

December 17, 2023 - The meeting was called to order by President Christy Muertz at 11:30am. and opened with a prayer from Pastor Poole.

There being no discussion or questions on the budget, a motion was made by Barry Hoffmann and seconded by Chrissy Eckerty to accept the budget for 2024 as presented.

A motion was made by Cheri Langsdorf and seconded by Adam Tyberendt to adjourn the meeting at 11:40am. Pastor Poole led us in the Lord's Prayer to close the meeting.

Sandy Tutka, Secretary

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP - NOVEMBER 2 2023

Women's Fellowship was called to order by President Faye Birk. 15 members, and Pastor were present. Alice Drobisch and Carol Shanks were guests from Hoyleton to tell us about the capital campaign for the new campus being built at Hoyleton. Homes for Healing is the name of the project that will be built to replace the old buildings and houses that have been used for up to 129 years. It was a very informative report on the project and funds that are needed to make the project work.

Sue gave the treasurer's report with the balance of \$3692.05 at the end of October. Motion made by Nancy and Sharon to accept the treasurer's report. Motion Carried.

Ellen read the minutes from the October meeting. Joyce and Connie made the motion to accept. Motion carried. Under old business the pie stand was discussed. We had 63 pies to sell and sold all of them. Sue thanked Joyce for being around at the close to help with taking down the stand and helping to move everything back to the hall.

Since the ice maker in the refrigerator works when it wants to, we have been getting ice from the fire department and they are ok with that. Sue and Connie volunteered to keep the ice stocked. Thanks to them for stepping up to do that.

The quilt show and raffle were discussed and a motion to put the funds from the quilt raffle (which will be going on from December 3 through Fastnacht) will be put to Homes for Healing at Hoyleton. The motion was made by Connie and seconded by Marrietta. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Sue and Linda to pay Pastor \$100.00 for the Halloween party in Maeystown. Motion carried.

Upcoming dates – Decorate the church and hall for Christmas – December 1 at 8:00 AM. Make Shut in bags and deliver – December 2 at 8:00 AM. Christkindlmarkt and quilt show December 3. Cookies are needed for the shut in bags and quilts and doilies are needed for the quilt show. Joyce will be setting up the Angle and Nutcracker displays on the stage again this year.

There are 30 tables signed up for the Christkindlmarkt so the hall should be full again this year. Connie and Anna made the motion to add \$100.00 from the treasury to the money from the tables for the children's Christmas presents. Motion carried. Pat has been in touch with the House of Neighborly Service for the list of families that are needing help.

Sue made a motion to donate \$250.00 to Homes for Healing/Hoyleton every year for the next 5 years. We are no longer sending money to the New Athens Home since it closed so we will do this instead. Brenda seconded. Motion carried. Birthdays were celebrated by Pat, Yvonne, Connie, and Ellen.

Sue and Pat made the motion to adjourn. Motion carried. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

This and That.....

Thank You

Thank you to everyone that took the time to mail Carol Bay a Christmas card. It really brightened her holiday.

Please keep the following in your prayers:

- *Dave Berg Sr. is receiving treatment to ensure his cancer does not return.*
- *Mona Mothershead is receiving treatments for her cancer.*
- *Victoria Ripplemeyer's Sister-in-Law, Natalie Watson is facing an aggressive cancer. Please keep Natalie and her family in your prayers.*
- *Florence Feldmeier is now recovering in the nursing home in Columbia.*
- *Dennis Knobloch is receiving chemo and will be having surgery for stomach cancer in the coming weeks. He has a great team of doctors and they are optimistic in their treatment plan and success.*
- *Herman Watts is in the hospital with several challenges.*
- *Tina Lloyd is fighting cancer.*
- *Bill Tutka is experiencing more dementia.*
- *Carol Bay is doing much better and loves your cards!*
- *Kaylee is getting stronger every day! Thank you for all your prayers!*
- *Tim Branson in his battle with cancer.*
- *Scott Stoeckel, as he battles cancer.*
- *Reyesmae Brown, she is 3 yrs old, has autism and now seizures.*

- *Denise Farmer as she seeks answers for some neurological issues.*
- *Please continue to pray for Sandy Baum.*

Announcements:

- Quilt raffle tickets are available in the entrance to church. \$1/ticket or \$5/6 tickets
- 2024 Offering Envelopes are available for pick up in the back of the sanctuary.
- Fastnacht is February 13, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. Please contact Lisa Schwarze if you would like to help. Tickets will be available at the door that night.
- Fastnacht - Items will be needed for the Country Store (baked goods, hand work, etc). Please call Cathy Hoffmann, 939-8322, with any questions.
- St. John and Zion are being honored at the Hoyleton Honors Banquette Feb 23rd. Please join us in a great evening! Please let Pastor know you are interested.

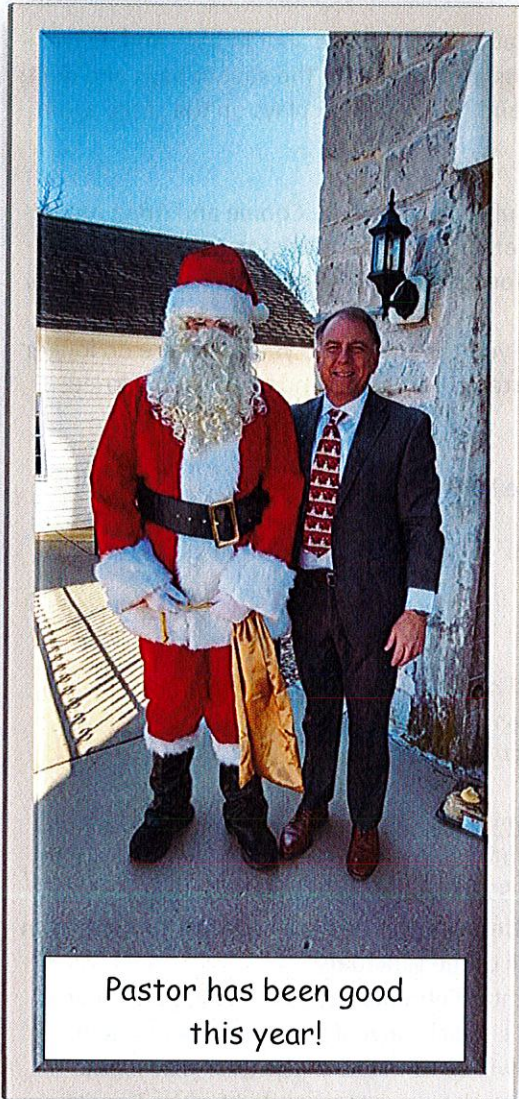
Scholarship Fund:

Here is the updated link for the scholarship this year. We will stop accepting applications on April 14. <https://bit.ly/SJCScholarship>

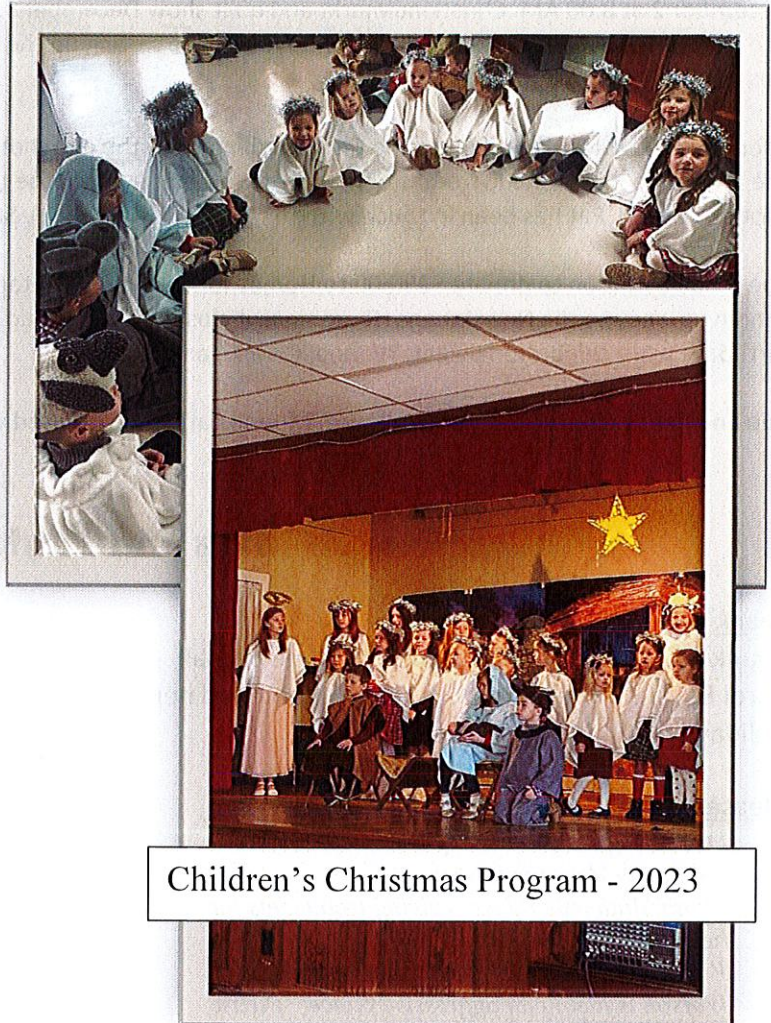
Thanks!
Michelle Vogt

General Fund Financial

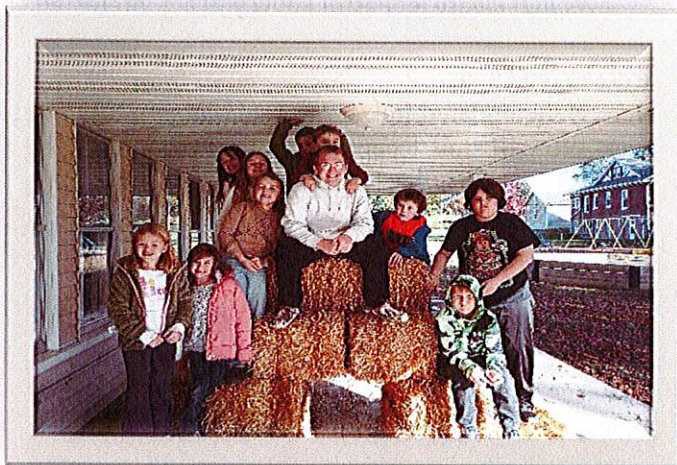
November 2023 Beginning balance:	\$31,179.84;
Income	\$14,129.29;
Expenses	\$18,015.33;
Ending Balance 11/30/23	\$27,293.80



Pastor has been good
this year!



Children's Christmas Program - 2023



After School Program