

ST. JOHN

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MAEYSTOWN, ILLINOIS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT **and** **January – February 2021 Visitor**

Dear Congregation,

The past year has brought much change to our church.

During this year, the church council has continued to look for new and inspiring ways to reach everyone in our church. I know none of this can replace the traditional church we have all grown to love. Recorded services posted online have allowed us to reach far beyond Monroe County. Many current or past members who moved away have now been able to watch the church services.

During the summer, we had some amazing outdoor services that were broadcast through Facebook Live for those unable to attend. The Christmas Eve service at our church has always been a great tradition. Even though this year's Christmas Eve service was somewhat different, we had an amazing number attend the outdoor service.

Through many generous donations and church members' hard work, the church hall kitchen has a new commercial stove, new lighting, relocated ductwork and plumbing, and a new ceiling. Someday soon I hope we will be able serve another wonderful meal from this upgraded kitchen. I continue to be amazed by the dedication and generosity of our church members.

Charley Eckerty
Council President

The following will serve as the *January/February Visitor* inasmuch as the Annual Report has taken priority. We will continue with *The Visitor* with the March 2020 issue.

Attention High School Seniors!

Calling all seniors!!!

If you are graduating high school this year, please submit your application for the church's scholarship. This is a \$1,000 scholarship that will be awarded to a member our church.

The link to apply is
<http://bit.ly/SJCScholarship>.

All the information you need is included in the link. Please feel free to share this information with anyone who may need it!

The Scholarship Committee

Thank you Notes:

♦♦ My Dear St. John's Friends,
I am humbled beyond words for your support and love while on my cancer journey. I share my story with you, as one of *HOPE*...one of *FAITH*...one of *LIFE* guided by our Lord and am confident I am not on this road alone.

Four years ago, many of you know, I was diagnosed with tongue cancer and had undergone surgery, radiation and chemotherapy to fight the disease. I was feeling confident that I had done everything possible to ensure the "wolf" would stay away from my door. During the April COVID outbreak, I noticed a sore spot under my jawline. After a CT scan and several visits with specialists, it was decided that the problem was a salivary gland issue and according to the scan, "nothing to worry about". In July, I was able to have the surgery necessary to remove the salivary gland. Three days later, my world came tumbling down around me again, when the pathology report revealed the "wolf" was back. This time, in both my tongue and the salivary glands.

The emotions I felt...shocked, sad, scared and confused filled my being as I prepared for the next leg of my journey. I connected with several wonderful surgeons who explained "the good, the

bad and the ugly" of what was ahead for me, if I chose to fight the beast! Guided by my faith, my will, and my family, I underwent surgery in August. Following 8 days in the hospital, weeks of healing, and eating only pureed foods – I struggled to regain my ability to both eat and speak while preparing for the treatment regimen ahead.

Immunotherapy was the treatment chosen, and although the side effects have proven to be minimal, the therapy continues two years, receiving infusion every three weeks. I have been blessed with great therapists for both Speech/Swallowing and Lymphedema that have been helping me regain my confidence and the ability to get as close to my "before" as possible.

Life sends you challenges that force you to grow as a person, and although this is a road I would have loved to pass by, it has taught me so much. How to drive comfortably on 270 ☺.....along with patience, *trust*, compassion, strength and "leaning in" to my faith – to name a few.

As I continue this journey, I feel the many prayers said and am comforted by the kindness shown by my special friends – my church family. Thank you so much for your support as the **November 5th Sunday** recipient. Your gifts will make a difference in my life and continued care.

I am Forever Thankful!
Pat Brandt

♦♦ Thank you so much for the beautiful gift bag that the Women;s Fellowship put together. I really love all that is in it. Thank you again!

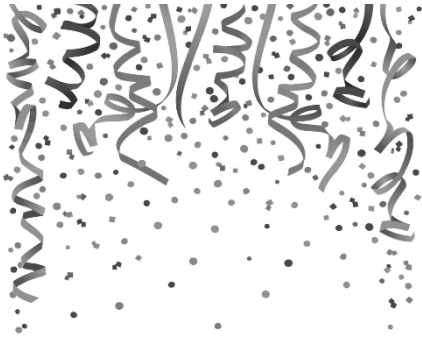
Yvonne Gilbert

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Toni Michels	Jan. 4	Melissa Mothershead	Feb. 1
Joseph Feldker	Jan. 4	Laura Ann Wilson	Feb. 2
Bob Edler	Jan. 4	Dorothy Mueller	Feb. 3
Tina Marie Buchanan	Jan. 4	Aaron Voelker	Feb. 3
Andrew Stafford	Jan. 5	Darren Knobloch	Feb. 4
Rebecca (Becky) Coats	Jan. 8	Isaac Larson	Feb. 4
Alisha Stafford	Jan. 8	Theodore Klinkhardt	Feb. 4
Amanda Rusteberg	Jan. 9	Wade Goldschmidt	Feb. 6
Michael Scott Schultheis	Jan. 10	Jerry Johner	Feb. 6
William Michael Manning	Jan. 10	Susan (Gale) Branson	Feb. 6
Justin Sam Boman	Jan. 11	Doug Schilling	Feb. 7
Danny Hoffmann	Jan. 12	Olivia Christine Hicks	Feb. 8
Aaron Brigance	Jan. 12	Rita Hoffmann	Feb. 9
Lyle Schwarze	Jan. 14	Easton James Birk	Feb. 9
Justin Rohlfing	Jan. 14	Quinn Brigance	Feb. 10
Jennifer Faus	Jan. 14	Kimberly Sue Esker	Feb. 11
Samantha Boman	Jan. 14	Crickett Johnson	Feb. 12
Ellis Kruse	Jan. 14	Caroline Vera Mueller	Feb. 13
Bradley Matthew Wilson	Jan. 15	Vicki Taake	Feb. 13
Nancy Reed	Jan. 16	Amanda Schweigert	Feb. 15
Rigby Whitlock	Jan. 16	Dennis Trost	Feb. 16
Maxine Steingrubey	Jan. 17	Allen Stafford	Feb. 17
Jeremy Hill	Jan. 17	Charlotte Hesterberg	Feb. 17
Barb Stafford	Jan. 19	Lauren Schellhardt	Feb. 17
Reid Eugene Matzenbacher	Jan. 19	Gene Rohlfing	Feb. 18
Brenda Rey	Jan. 20	Sydney Hicks	Feb. 18
Faye Birk	Jan. 21	Sebastian Lee Albert Nilges	Feb. 18
Debbie Eckart	Jan. 22	Sophia Ann Marie Nilges	Feb. 18
Jessica Liefer	Jan. 22	David Henerfauth	Feb. 19
Luke Edler	Jan. 22	Emily Marie Richeson	Feb. 19
Pam Roseman	Jan. 22	Dolores Guetterman	Feb. 20
Hudson Brandt	Jan. 22	Gregory Floarke	Feb. 20
Randy Hicks	Jan. 23	Tim Henerfauth	Feb. 22
Michael Leber	Jan. 24	Derek Edward Knoll	Feb. 22
Arthur Rusteberg	Jan. 24	Glenn Voelker	Feb. 23
Sarah Schmitz	Jan. 24	Freeman Borcharding	Feb. 23
Elena Hurst	Jan. 24	Anita Muertz	Feb. 23
Scarlett Hurst	Jan. 24	Paul Hill	Feb. 24
Joyce Kuergeleis	Jan. 25	Jason W. Dilley	Feb. 24
Jonathon Edward Liefer	Jan. 25	Jeffrey Williams	Feb. 25
Rylee Elizabeth Rosenkranz	Jan. 25	Kate Mueller	Feb. 25
Jon Matzenbacher	Jan. 26	Lucas Blackwell	Feb. 25
Paula Hoefft	Jan. 26	Millie Pearl Liefer	Feb. 25
Amanda Braun	Jan. 26	Ally Melching	Feb. 26
Garrett Ross Stitzel	Jan. 27	Melanie Lee Russo	Feb. 27
Trudi Rohlfing	Jan. 28	Zailey Levin	Feb. 27
Darlene Yancey	Jan. 29	Grace Wischmeyer	Feb. 27
Linda Hirsch	Jan. 29	Brad Juelfs	Feb. 28
Monty Jackson	Jan. 29	Chris Koester	Feb. 28
Isabella Hicks	Jan. 30		
Judy Edler	Jan. 31		
Rowan Schilling	Jan. 31		
Carrie Turner	Feb. 1		

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Paul & Wendy Hill	Jan. 4
Brian & Brenda Johnson	Jan. 15
Don & Ellen Edler	Feb. 2
Robert & Sue Taylor	Feb. 2
Gene & Amy Rohlfig	Feb. 16
Jay & Lesa Mueller	Feb. 21
Allen & Shirley Stafford	Feb. 22
Jennifer & Noah Klinkhardt	Feb. 29



Visitor December Financial Report:

Balance	\$147.11
Income	
Jim Bundy	\$10.00
Glenn & Nancy Voelker	\$20.00
Expenses	
U. S. Postmaster	\$53.06
Ending Balance	\$124.05

Christmas is a time of giving. Thank you, Jim, Glenn & Nancy for your Gifts.

Happy New Year to All!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Faye Birk, Treasurer

This is an excerpt written by Kitty O'Meara during the pandemic. It has gone viral on social media. Ms. O'Meara suggests perhaps something other than darkness can come from isolation.

“And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still.

“And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.

“And the people healed.

“And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

“And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Closing Remarks from Your Pastor

Stop and Choose!

I have never been so proud of our little county church! It is clear to see after reading this year's annual report that each one of our organizations found a way to rise to the challenges of the year. Our members never checked out and never stopped supporting their church. We have 450 members and each and every one of you make us a stronger church. Clearly our members have chosen to support their church this year when the need was so evident. In every new year I write an article sharing my vision for the coming year standing on the accomplishments of the past year. This year more than ever I am teaming with visions of our thriving congregation.

However, before we go head long into a visioning rant let me invite you to stand in the clearing that this year has given us. The clearing that came when we had to clear our schedules, the clearing that happened when we stopped. We stopped the running, we stopped needing to go in ten different directions. We stopped eating on the run. We started eating family meals again, we started having family game nights. We started checking on neighbors. We started watching over one another. Make your own list what this year has provided for your family. Before we jump into the new year let's take a moment to choose carefully what we want the restart to look like. Do you really want to go back to what we had, or is there gifts we have reconnected with that are so precious that they deserve protecting and fighting for? Be ready because the world will go back into full swing, all fighting for your time, talent and treasure. And if you are not careful the family, community, faith will all find themselves in the rear-view mirror of your life.

Standing in this moment in time ask yourself where am I called by God to give of my time, talent, and treasure? We have a wonderful Sunday School program because Michelle and her team of teachers have made it a priority. They made sacrifices and have given of their time, talent, and treasure. The same is true of Laurie and her Mission team. Marcia and Andrea and our choir members. Charlie and the Church Council, the Cemetery Board, The Women's Fellowship and the list goes on and on. Their commitment stitches together this community that gives so much to so many. In this clearing of what truly matters we invite all of them and each of you to choose anew what you feel is worthy of your precious time. Listen for the call of God, and if you discern in your heart that God is renewing and

building up in you the spirit to serve the church, then take up the task again and join in doing the joyful mission of serving. However, if in this time of discernment, you find your heart lacking in zeal for serving in your church you have the full support of your church and your Pastor to explore where you most want to give of your so very precious gift of your time.

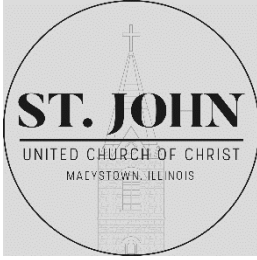
Ministers and lay leaders often forget to choose the path they find themselves on and get dreadfully burned out. It is in the choosing that we are also given the gift of renewal, the life spring of living water that Jesus promises is received when we powerfully chose to take up his cross and lay down our life, but if we dig in because we feel obligated, we negate the power of his gift. So, take the freedom to powerfully choose your leadership. I certainly have and invite you to do the same.

This is the year we have had to stop. If you have found that in the stopping you gained priceless time to be with one another, to be with your family, having the simple pleasures that was lost in the endless running, then take stock and before starting again choose carefully. I believe in my heart that God has given us this time as a gift to see clearly what is most important, and I have confidence in our members to make the important choices for their family's growth and welfare. We have been given a glimpse at not only the power of God to reshape our world, but we have been given this moment to stop and choose what is most important to us.

I can see what is most important to me is how I can serve our country church and I cannot wait to see what God has in store for us. Let us build on the foundation that has been being laid now for generations. I want to see our children thriving and growing, young and old coming together to worship and celebrate what God is doing in our lives. We are alive and thriving and it is absolutely a joy working with all of you! Building the Kingdom of God in our little corner of the world. Thank all of you for what has turned out to be one of the most meaningful years I can remember.

Bless You!

Pastor



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Pastor's Cell Phone: 618-340-2372

Website: www.maeystownucc.org

pastorpoole123@gmail.com

“Like” us on Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/maeystownucc>

Thought for the day:

As long as we have memories, yesterday remains.

As long as we have hope, tomorrow waits.

As long as we have love, today is beautiful.

(Anonymous)