



ST. JOHN
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 MAEYSTOWN, ILLINOIS

The Visitor
October 2023

This article called “Church First” is written to put in the local paper. I would love to get your feedback. I could not be more pleased with the commitment all of you have made to put church first in your life. Last year and this summer have been such an inspiration as we fought to recover from the pandemic. We are closing in on pre-pandemic attendance and on some fronts, we are stronger than before. Thank you for building a strong faith community!

Church First

I would love to hear from you. Should church come first? I am convinced more than ever that church is essential to being a healthy individual, family, and community. Going to church is both a deeply spiritual practice that brings peace into our lives and a commitment to bring grace and love into the world. People will often compare the Christian initiative to living the golden rule, and that is a great starting place but what we, as people of faith do, is bring the power of God’s love to transform the world we live in! However, when you take church out of the equation, society and the people we love suffer. We are living in a crisis; teen suicide has doubled in the past decade and mass murder has become common place.

Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents Doubled in 10 Years

May 1, 2023, at 7:58 a.m.

By Amy Norton HealthDay Reporter



(HEALTHDAY)

Suicides among the youngest U.S. teenagers were rising for years before the pandemic — with school stress, social media and guns standing as potential factors, according to a new study.

Researchers found that between 2008 and 2018, the suicide rate among 13- and 14-year-olds nationwide more than doubled — from roughly two deaths per 100,000 teens in 2008, to five per 100,000 a decade later.

SOURCES: Sarah Wood, MD, professor, pediatrics, interim chair, department of women's and children's health, Schmidt College of Medicine, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton; Joseph Feinglass, PhD, research professor, medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago; Annals of Pediatrics and Child Health, March 19, 2023, online

Talk to a teen or adolescent and they will use words like anxiety, depression, and hopelessness to describe their life. They are living in a world with intruder drills in school, a world that is plugged into media and social media 24/7, a world hyper focused on violence.

ABC News

There have been more mass shootings than days in 2023, database shows

The United States has experienced 484 mass shootings so far this year.

By [Kiara Alfonseca](#)

September 4, 2023, 9:24 AM

What we put into our minds finds a way to become our values and those values shape our society. Violent movies are not new but the level of violence and the number of violent movies has greatly increased. When John Wayne killed a man, it was not the gruesome spectacle of blood, brains, and guts it is today. The fantasy played out in violent movies and video games today is beyond any kind of norm, for every feel-good movie we have ten kill'm up movies. Our cultural icons are so far from any kind of reality. I love the show Yellowstone starring Kevin Costner, I love his character in this show, but it is a thing of fiction, thank goodness. I do not know about you, but I almost never have to take someone to the "train station." As a matter of fact, I do not know anyone in my whole life that has had to take someone to the "train station." Now you and I can separate fiction from reality. But in a society that is out of balance, I am afraid we are feeding the wrong messages to the most vulnerable. Rambo, Jason Born, and all the rest do not exist in the real world, any true soldier will tell you they would not last a day in combat. The social ills of violence and teens struggling to cope affect all our children dearly. If I put a graph in this article it would look like a perfect X, with church participation dropping on one line and the social ills increasing on the other. How do we counteract all the wrong messages that our children are bombarded with?

We currently address these crises by doubling down on preventive measures, suicide hotlines, extra counselling at school for children not coping well, and we lay all the responsibility on the shoulders of the school system. I am thankful for their work, but they cannot handle all of this and should not be expected to. We as a society are only treating the symptoms of a systemic breakdown in society. When God is not at the center of your life you have nothing but anxiety. No hope, no true love, only shallow platitudes. In the absence of the authentic thing, we look for love and security in all the wrong places. Our sense of purpose is based on countless false narratives. Is the church the solution to the social challenges we face today? The Church is not perfect, but let's not cut it short. The church has always made its purpose to be the love of Christ and does its best to live out the commandments to serve the needs of most vulnerable and society at large. Take a moment and imagine a world without the direct contribution of the Church. All the first colleges were started by the church. The many hospitals you and your loved ones so dearly need would not exist. The first elementary schools were a church initiative. Our very country was shaped by the faith of our founding fathers and mothers. There is not a church in Monroe County that does not do a profound amount of good for our community, from youth programs, food pantries, backpack programs, special meals, the list would go on for days.

However, churches are suffering, and churches are dying at the rate of one every day in this country because society at large undervalues their place in each of our lives and society. How many churches can you count that have closed over the past decades in Monroe County? That number will likely be staggering over the next 20 years if something does not change. Church is no longer first but one of many commitments compared to a time not so very long ago when most business closed on Sunday. Sundays were reserved for church and rest, spending time with family and friends. Sunday morning service was often followed by a family meal, children playing with their cousins, while the adults spent time visiting. It did not matter how late you were up the night before; you would be in church in the morning. Church first, life is a gift, and one respects the giver by honoring God in worship. As progress has made so much possible it has also brought us away from our roots and deep understanding of who we are and more importantly whose we are.

The depth of a family's faith life is a direct correlation to the commitment they make to it. That is the reason church used to be first and all else came after, but in a society that no longer holds church as its center makes church life extremely difficult. *Do I go to the baby shower that they scheduled for Sunday at 11 or go to church with my family?* The list goes on! Keep the sabbath holy is no small commandment and has the power to shape a community and hopefully a country.

I leave you with this heartwarming story of my children's great grandparents, two devout Christians that changed the hearts and minds of their community.

Grandma Merry was an excellent example of living out this transformational love in her community. She and her husband Mr. Merry lived on a small farm just outside St. Peters, Mo., on their little idyllic farm, complete with the quintessential clapboard farmhouse, amazing vegetable garden, and house and garden framed by colorful flowers of every kind. Kathrine and Ken raised their three children on this small but productive little slice of heaven. The railroad tracks along the south side of their property during the 1930's and '40's brought trains carrying hoboes, men riding the rails looking for work through the depression. The Merrys didn't have much but could always spare a meal for the men from the rails when they asked for something to eat. Word spread up and down the tracks and the flow of men needing some of Grandma's cooking grew. At one point her neighbors gathered to talk with Mrs. Merry. "Mrs. Merry you must stop feeding these men, they are a danger to you and your children!" Grandma Merry kindly invited them into the kitchen and offered them some of her sweet tea. She listened for a while as they insisted that she stop feeding these dangerous hoboes riding the rail. Grandma Merry thanked them for their visit and for their concern but informed them that if hungry people came to her door, she would feed them. She was thankful to God that she had ample food from her garden and livestock. I am sure her guests felt a bit bewildered by Mrs. Merry's graceful but firm response to their insistence. The Merrys gained standing and respect in their little farm community. They later started and were charter members of the First Baptist Church of St. Peters. The Merrys brought the transformation power of Christ's love into the lives of those around them and changed more lives than they could ever imagine.

I tell this story often and find that others have similar stories of beloved family members feeding the Hoboes. Such stories of love and grace are a great example of people living a faithful life. The point that often gets missed is the part of them putting church first in their lives. The Merrys and your ancestors that expressed the love and grace of Christ for their children, grandchildren, and community to see could not be separated from God or the practice of worshiping God on Sunday morning. Let our ancestors guide us into a deeper faith and healthier society for our children's sake. **Let there be a movement to put church first! Let that movement begin with us!**

Blessings,
Pastor Poole



St. John's UCC Church Council Minutes - September 11, 2023

President Christy Muertz called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m. Pastor Poole opened the meeting with a prayer.

GLENN/LINDA COATS BUILDINGS

Linda Coats presented to the council a photo and facts to support evidence that the storage sheds in question are on church property. The Coats have owned their property since 2007, with the assumption that the sheds were on their property, as previous owners had assumed. The council gave Linda a letter acknowledging St. John's Church of Maecystown, IL as the owner of the sheds, but that the council has no problem with the Coats using them for storage, understanding the church is not liable for any damage to the contents should the existing sheds be destroyed or damaged. Linda would like to have her attorney look at the letter we gave her and she will get back to us by our October meeting.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 14, 2023 MEETING

The minutes from the August 14, 2023 meeting were reviewed. There being no additions or corrections a motion was made by Lisa Schwarze and seconded by Fay Ross 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 additions or corrections, Cheri Langsdorf made a motion to approve the reports and Amy Rohlfing seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor thanked the council and expressed his gratitude for the attendance in church over the summer, but reminded everyone of being vigilant of how important it is to keep families involved and not to take anything for granted. The importance of keeping families coming to church and kids coming to Sunday school can't be stressed enough. Keep promoting the importance of St. John's Day to bring our families together. It was suggested that perhaps we call it our "church picnic."

Six new members will be joining the church on Sunday, September 17, 2023. We need to give them our support.

Pastor spoke about some remodeling that is needed in the parsonage bathroom. He asked for \$500.00 to make some changes needed to update the current bathroom. Cheri Langsdorf made a motion to give the \$500.00 to Pastor to make these changes and Fay Ross seconded the motion. Motion carried.

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

Not all members of the emergency protocol committee were present, so it was decided to table any discussion until the October meeting.

MAPLE TREE

The council approved to have Todd Bradshaw cut down the maple tree by the church hall. He is volunteering his time.

SOLAR POWER

Sr. Sales Engineer, Erik Merker was present from GRP/Wegman Company headquartered in Bethalto, IL. He presented a very thorough explanation on how solar power is used, the fees, rebates, costs, etc. The prices quoted should be good through the end of 2023, but he will get that in writing to Pastor. Dwight Asselmeier and Don Edler were present at this meeting, as they both have solar power panels on their property and they were able to ask questions relating to the usage and how it has affected their utility bills. The council discussed ways to approach the financing, fund raising, etc. for the solar panels. Several council members will be gathering more information on interest rates and report back to the council.

A motion was made by Lisa Schwarze and seconded by Fay Ross to adjourn. Pastor led us in the Lord's Prayer to close the meeting at 8:10p.m.

Sandy Tutka, Secretary

Women's Fellowship – May 4, 2023

The May 4th Women's Fellowship meeting was called to order by President Faye Birke with 16 members and Pastor. Pastor opened with a prayer.

The treasurer's report was read by Sue with a balance of 2190.47. The motion was made by Joyce and seconded by Nancy to approve. Motion carried.

The secretary's report was read by Ellen and Cathy, and Connie made the motion to approve. Motion carried.

The windows in the hall were cleaned by several members before the meeting and the curtains were rehung. Thanks to all the ladies that came early to get this job done and to Joyce for taking down the curtains and washing them.

Connie reported that the food drive for the back pack program is under way and will continue through the month of May. Some donations have been coming in.

Sue displayed the 2 carts and new pancake dispenser that the Women's Guild purchased. Thanks to Sue for purchasing and assembling the carts.

The Hike and Bike will be on Saturday May 13th and fruit will be needed for the runners. The balance of the food will be supplied by St Joe. Pastor commented that he had all the helpers needed.

The luncheon for the 45 + people from Germany and relatives in the area for May 9th was discussed and the food was discussed. 13 members volunteered to bring sides for the meat tray and pulled pork. Set up will be at 10:30 and the luncheon will be served at 11:30.

New business was assigning workers for the last 2 after school snacks and the hostess schedule was passed around for any changes to the coming year.

Pastor mentioned that he had enough workers for Bible School which will run from May 30th through June 2nd. He also commented on the "Can do attitude" of our church. Everybody just pitches in and gets things done which he greatly appreciates.

May, June, July, and August birthdays were celebrated. Happy birthday was sung to Nancy, Marietta, Sharon, and Twila.

Nancy and Anna made the motion to adjourn and the motion carried.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Ellen Edler. Secretary

Announcements and Other News

Announcements:

- We welcomed 6 new members in the life and family of St. John UCC on September 17! Our new members are: Michelle Burns, Laura Goldschmidt, Kyle & Meaghan Kipping, Lynda Morrison, and Lucas Smothers.
- If you have a life event, such as a new baby or a loss of a loved one, and would like this included in the Visitor, please email Nicole at maeystownucc@gmail.com so she can get it added to the Visitor.
- We pray with the family of Carmelita Sensel who went to be with our Lord on September 11.
- We pray with the family of Derek Stellhorn who passed away unexpectedly on September 18.
- Congratulations to Paige & Adam Jackson on the birth of their daughter, Josephine “Josie” Diane Jackson on September 20.

Upcoming Events:

- Pew Sisters will meet on Monday, October 16 at 6:30 p.m. at Lisa Maurer’s house. They will be studying Romans 10:14-11:36.
- Women’s Fellowship on October 5 at 12:00 p.m.
- First Responders Sunday is October 29. We will honor all First Responders during our worship service.
- Halloween in Maeystown is Sunday, October 29. Meet at Hank & Lilly’s at 4:30 p.m.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who sent cards, Pastor Poole and everyone who visited me at my new home in O’Fallon, MO. I really appreciate each and everyone of you. It means a lot to me.

Special Birthdays:

- Linda Sutter celebrates her 79th birthday on October 7, and Ross Mueller follows suit two days later on October 9.
- Connie Esker turns 63 on October 9.
- On October 15, Linda Schmidt will turn 75 while Elaine Knobloch will turn 70.
- Janie Houston will celebrate her 72nd birthday on October 16.
- Jim Bundy turns 77 on October 18, while Judy Schmuck turns 73 the same day.
- Anna Massie turns 74 on October 19, while Bonnie Schwarze turns 62 on that day.

- Rosemarie Upchurch, Dana Hicks, and Annette Morwick all share a birthday on October 26 with the former turning 84 and the latter turning 59 and 56 respectively.
- New member Lynda Morrison celebrates her 63rd birthday on November 2.
- Pat Brandt turns 69 on November 4.
- Raymond Reed celebrates his 79th birthday on November 6, while Connie Turner celebrates her Platinum Jubilee birthday the same day.
- Marlene Wild and Fay Ross share a birthday on November 8 and turn 73 and 72 respectively.
- Mark Rey turns 65 on November 9.

Special Anniversaries:

- Belated Happy 1st Anniversary to Lucas & Vanessa Smothers. Their anniversary was September 24 but was accidentally left out of last month’s Visitor.
- John & Phyllis Hoefft will celebrate 53 years of marriage on October 10.
- Glenn & Nancy Voelker will celebrate 51 years of marriage on October 21.
- Ben & Darlene Yancey will celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary on November 8.
- Charlie & Faye Birk celebrate 47 years of being married on November 13.

Prayer List

- *Derek Stellhorn passed away suddenly. Please keep Konnor and the family in your prayers.*
- *Carol Bay is recuperating from a couple of falls at her new home.*
- *Kaylee is getting stronger every day! Thank you for all your prayers!*
- *Debbie Barnes has heart concerns.*
- *Bob Sales, Sr is on hospice. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.*
- *Tim Branson in his battle with cancer.*
- *Scott Stoeckel, as he battles cancer.*
- *Renesmae Brown, she is 3 yrs. old, has autism and now seizures.*
- *Aileen Neeley in your prayers as she battles cancer.*
- *Denise Farmer as she seeks answers for some neurological issues.*

The After School Program is looking for snack donations

A list of suggested items is below.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Cookies (all kinds) | 10. Potato Chips |
| 2. Cheese Balls | 11. Pretzels |
| 3. Canned Icing | 12. Powder Sugar Donuts |
| 4. Doritos | 13. Chocolate Covered Donuts |
| 5. Popcorn | 14. Little Debbie Cakes |
| 6. Cheese in a Can | 15. Fritos |
| 7. Ritz Crackers | 16. Rice Krispie Treats |
| 8. Graham Crackers | 17. Surprise Us |
| 9. Boxes of Brownies (We will make them that day) | |



Acolyte Schedule:

October

- 8 - Dallen Edler & Lilly Carron
- 15- Jake Coats & Caden Huddleston
- 22 - Drake Coats & Jackie Keller
- 29 - Kaylee Muertz & Maddie Huddleston

November

- 5 - Rowan Schilling & Chloe Carron
- 12 - Cody Schmitz & Tanner Rosenkranz
- 19 - Lucas Blackwell & Evan Hill
- 26 - Hudson Brandt & Ashlyn Crouch

Visitor Report

Beginning Balance -	\$271.28
Income -	\$310.00
Carla Feldmeier -	\$100.00
Florence Feldmeier -	\$30.00
Carla Feldmeier -	\$30.00
David & Lauren Hesterberg	\$150.00
Expense -	\$57.58
U.S. Postmaster -	\$57.58
 Ending Balance -	 \$523.70

Sunday School – Checking Account

Beginning Balance -	\$811.02
Income -	\$536.00
Offering -	\$36.00
Nancy Schilling -	\$500.00
Expenses –	394.46
Children’s International -	\$66.00
Michelle Vogt -	\$328.46 (Sunday School Literature)
Ending Balance -	\$952.56

Sunday School – Savings Account

Beginning Balance -	\$7478.27
Income -	\$0.00
Expenses -	\$0.00
Ending Balance -	\$0.00

Everyone’s generosity is so very much appreciated. Thank you all very much.

Faye Birk, Treasurer

Faye Birk, Treasurer

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to...

Bradley Koesterer Oct. 1
Brylee Rohlfing Oct. 1
Adam Eckart Oct. 2
Kelsey Schmitz Oct. 2
Wyatt Schreder Oct. 3
Alex Knoll Oct. 5
Matthew Brandt Oct. 5
Dallen Edler Oct. 5
Levi Wittenbrink Oct. 5
Nancy Voelker Oct. 6
Sheri Dilley Oct. 6
Mike Krebel Oct. 6
Vanessa Smothers Oct. 6
Whitney Stitzel Oct. 6
Linda Sutter Oct. 7
Janey Berg Oct. 7
Jennifer Coats Oct. 8
Graham Knobloch Oct. 8
Steve Lawler Oct. 8
Connie Esker Oct. 9
Ross Mueller Oct. 9
Trey Rohlfing Oct. 13
Owen Carron Oct. 14
Kaiden Wilson Oct. 14
Linda Schmidt Oct. 15
Elaine Knobloch Oct. 15
Janie Houston Oct. 16
Ben Hoefft Oct. 16
Kristy Busch Oct. 17
Jim Bundy Oct. 18
Drew Watts Oct. 18
Judy Schmuck Oct. 18
Lauren Brigance Oct. 19
Bonnie Schwarze Oct. 19
Anna Massie Oct. 19
Wade Wittenbrink Oct. 19
Alexandra Rippelmeyer Oct. 21
Tyler Barnes Oct. 22
Gwendlyn Panzau Oct. 22
Mary Branson Oct. 24
Megan Schaefer Oct. 24
Jolene Ann Keller Oct. 24
Derek Hoffmann Oct. 24
Sydney Finch Oct. 25
Dana Hicks Oct. 26
Rosemarie Upchurch Oct. 26
Annette Morwick Oct. 26
Adalynn Huddleston Oct. 26
Jenney Berg Oct. 27
Krista Wandro Oct. 27
Colten Huddleston Oct. 27
Andrea Kennedy Oct. 28
Amy Rohlfing Oct. 29
Payton Dilley Oct. 29

Wendy Hill Oct. 29
Sydney Kuergeleis Oct. 30
Brian Eckart Oct. 31
Candy Eckart Oct. 31

Jennifer Rosenkranz Nov. 1
Susan Hoffmann Nov. 2
Justin Knobloch Nov. 3
Kathy Goldschmidt Nov. 4
Pat Brandt Nov. 4
Renee Steibel Nov. 4
Garrett Rohlfing Nov. 4
Lauren LaFollette Nov. 5
Josh Reinhardt Nov. 5
Maclain Naumann Nov. 5
Raymond Reed II Nov. 6
Connie Turner Nov. 6
Ethan Russell Nov. 7
Marlene Wild Nov. 8
Fay Ross Nov. 8
Riley Skaggs Nov. 8
Ryan Nolan Nov. 8
Markee Voelker Nov. 9
Mark T. Rey Nov. 9
Donny Muertz, Jr. Nov. 11
Cheri Langsdorf Nov. 12
Lisa Schwarze Nov. 12
Olivia Prange Nov. 12
Nathan Birk Nov. 13
Jake Coats Nov. 15
Katie Marie Ries Nov. 15
Knox Brian Tyberendt Nov. 15



*Happy
Birthday
To
All*

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY to....

Wayne & Sherry Stitzel	Oct. 3
Alan & Debbie Wischmeyer	Oct. 4
Brandon & Emily Kruse	Oct. 4
Jon & Becky Matzenbacher	Oct. 6
Justin & Kristin Knobloch	Oct. 6
Todd & Betty Levin	Oct. 6
John & Phyllis Hoefft	Oct. 10
Jared & Rebecca Coats	Oct. 10
Brian & Shannon Eckart	Oct. 10
David & Anita Muertz	Oct. 12
Grant & Jennifer Coats	Oct. 13
Colby & Lauren Jensen	Oct. 18
Frank & Mary Graham	Oct. 20
Tony & Amy Stirnaman	Oct. 20
Glenn & Nancy Voelker	Oct. 21
Charlie & Chrissy Eckerty	Oct. 21
Eric Brellinger/Kelli Monroe	Oct. 22
Gregory & Jessica Floarke	Oct. 24
Paul & Emilie Nilges	Oct. 24
Nathan & Julie Birk	Oct. 25
Ben & Lindsey Hoefft	Oct. 25
Matthew & Lauren Schellhardt	Oct. 25
Bill & Laurie Manning	Oct. 27
Jeff & Ashley Melvin	Oct. 30
Matt & Victoria Rippelmeyer	Oct. 30
Charles & Becky Schaefer	Nov. 1
Brad & Kate Edler	Nov. 1
Bradley & Laura Wilson	Nov. 2
Tim & Mary Headrick	Nov. 3
Toni & John Michels	Nov. 3
Ben & Darlene Yancey	Nov. 8
Jeremy & Renee Steibel	Nov. 8
Charles & Faye Birk	Nov. 13
Jeremy & Katie Ries	Nov. 14

5th Sunday Offering for October

The 5th Sunday Offering for October will go to Cannon Dickerson.

Cannon is the 5-year-old son of Billy & Casey Dickerson of Valmeyer and just started Kindergarten. Cannon was diagnosed with B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia.

Per his family, he is doing pretty good with his treatments and has only missed a week of school due to being sick. He is on year 2 of a 3-year treatment. His family said he is being so strong and handling it better than they could have imagined. At the same time, he's only 5-years-old and he's scared and sad. He doesn't understand why they are there, why so many people "mess" with him on a daily basis, or why he is in and out of the hospital and treatments.

His family asks for everyone to send all the prayers and good vibes/wishes his way. He has a long road ahead, but his family said they know God has him and Cannon will get through this. His family said there are many trips to the hospital for treatments and stays when his little body can't handle the treatments, in addition to all the medical bills and medication he must take.





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Send email updates, photos & group descriptions to maestownucc@gmail.com

Church: 618-458-6940

Pastor's Cell Phone: 618-340-2372

Website: www.maestownucc.org

pastorpoole123@gmail.com

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

Thought for the day

*God gave you a fingerprint that no one else has so that
you can leave an imprint that no one else can.*