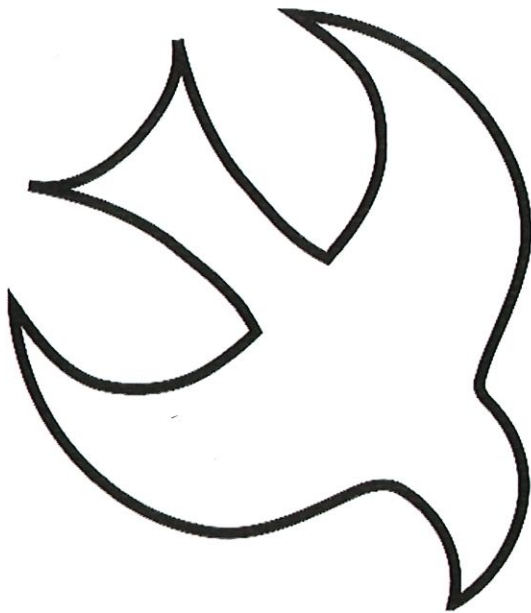
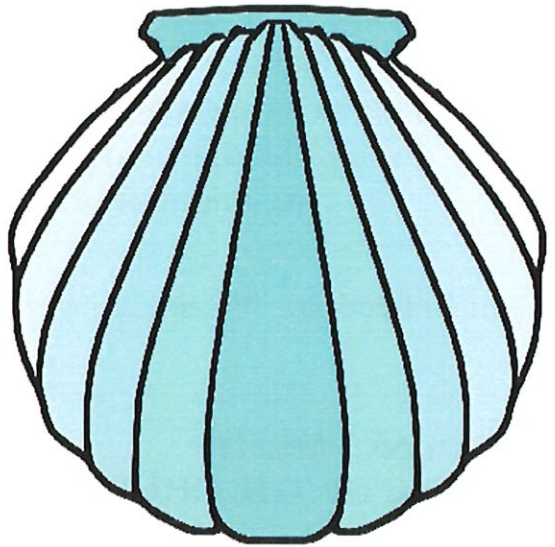


*I baptize
you with
water...*



*but he will
baptize
you with
the Holy
Spirit.*

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

December 10, 2023

We welcome all who are visiting with us today.

It is good to have you in worship with us. Please introduce yourself to
Pastor Phil this morning and let us know if there is any way
we might be of service to you or your family.

Silent Reflection: "Peace and justice are two sides of the same coin."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELLS

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: The day of God is coming; lift up your voices.
Cry out with the strength God provides.

ALL: We await God's coming day with anticipation.
We seek the peace and patience God provides.

ONE: Comfort, comfort my people, says our God.
Speak tenderly to my suffering people.

ALL: We will prepare the way for One who is coming.
We look forward to baptism in the Spirit.

ONE: God will feed us like a shepherd.
God will gather us in gentle, caring arms.

ALL: God's hand is upon us in blessing;
We are welcomed by God's steadfast love.

* HYMN *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

THE ADVENT WREATH – PEACE

Lighting the Candle

Advent Song

1. Light the advent candle, one: Now the waiting has begun;
We have started on our way, time to think of Christmas day.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.
2. Light the advent candle, two: Think of humble shepherds, who
filled with wonder at the sight of the child of Christmas night.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Copyright: © 1998 Mary Lu Walker ...

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*unison*)

God of glory, we confess that we have not recognized you in our midst nor listened for your voice. Our faith is fragile, and our iniquity goes unrecognized amid our massive self-concern. We have lived as if we have no need to account for the life we have been given. Our church is focused more on our own survival than on its mission in the world. We come to you today with sincere repentance for our neglect. We have failed to prepare the way for Christ's entry into our everyday environment. Pardon and change us, we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

GLORIA PATRI

A TIME FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US

Prayer for the children (*unison*):

We send blessings upon our children for all God's love,
all Christ's friendship and all the caring of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song Response

Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying, Send us love, send us power,
send us grace.

SCRIPTURE:

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Mark 1:1-8

HYMN *Soon and Very Soon*

523

© 1971 Bud John Songs, Inc.; Crouch Music Corp.

SERMON

HYMN *Blessed Be the God of Israel*

158

Words: 1973 Michael Perry - The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions); Music: 1983 Hope Publishing Company

INVITATION TO OFFERING

GIVE THANKS:

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One, give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ his Son. And now let the weak say, "I am strong," Let the poor say, "I am rich," because of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*unison*)

While we are waiting and preparing for Christ to appear, we are seeking, O' God, to act as faithful followers. May our offerings extend the promise of salvation to people whose lives are broken by neglect, abuse, bad choices, and sinful ways. May these gifts offer hope to all whose suffering and loss seem too heavy to bear. May our church be a listening, caring presence for all its members, and through us for all those we meet in our work and leisure. Amen.

PRAYERS OF OUR CHURCH/SILENT PRAYERS/LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER RESPONSE Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face; and the things
of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

SERVING YOU TODAY

Council Person Kevin Hollis
Accompanist Melissa Anderson Taylor

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

St. John's: Don Koenig, Cindy Roll, Roy Roll, Kelly Weyant, and Margie Foxworthy's son Sean and stepson Dustin, and the family of Gladys Houston

St. Jacob: Sandy Autry, Carol Casperson, Lori Foley, Carolyn Masterson, Gail Miller, Ronald Rujawitz, Jane Schmidt, Jerry Schmitt, and Carol Zweck

IL South Conference: Each week the churches of the Illinois South Conference are asked to pray for congregations and their pastors and other ministries of the UCC. This week we are asked to pray for:

Church & Pastors

-Nashville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Beverly Kahle

-New Athens St. John UCC, Rev. Dr. Robert (Cathy) Koch

Retired Pastor

-Rev. Chris and Lena Edwards, Converse, TX

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Peggy Bohnenstiehl, Dec. 10
Barbara & Roger Baer, 41 years, Dec. 11
Bradley Goetter, Dec. 13

CHURCH ATTENDANCE, December 3, 2023

St. John's – 18 St. Jacob – 30

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor's office hours: Tuesday through Thursday: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
(Mondays by appointment)

Secretary's office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

St. Jacob Phone: 618-644-2142 / St. Jacob E-mail: stjucc@hometel.com

Website: stjacobucc.org

Pastor Phil Barbier: Phone: 314-312-2347 / E-mail: pastor@hometel.com

FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS

As we approach the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, the need for food assistance always grows. In preparation for this holiday season, below are updated lists of items needed by our local food pantries. Donation baskets are in the sanctuary at St. John's & St. Jacob.



Requested items for St. John's (For Lebanon Matthew 25:40 Ministries): Canned goods including: vegetables, fruit, beans, soups, stews, pasta, chili, and tuna. Boxed goods including: pasta & noodles, rice, mashed potatoes, cereal, oatmeal, stuffing, and mac & cheese. Other pantry staples including: flour, sugar, peanut butter, jelly, pasta sauce, BBQ sauce, ramen, cake mix, Jello, and pudding. Nonfood items including: trash bags, storage bags, paper towels, toilet paper, dish soap, toiletries.

Requested items for St. Jacob (Ministries Unlimited): Jiffy corn muffin mix, yams, pie filling, Jiffy pie crust mix, peanut butter, pasta, chili beans, instant potato packets, rice 1-pound bags, & instant rice

Portions reprinted [or adapted] by permission of United Church Press from *Gathered by Love* by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1994 by United Church Press.

CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS

TODAY: Bus trip to Winter Wonderland (Tilles Park), departs at 3 p.m.

WEDNESDAY: ELFs meeting, 10 a.m.

WEDNESDAY: St. Jacob Council meeting, 7 p.m.

DEC. 17: Children's Program, during 10:15 a.m., worship, St. Jacob

DEC. 19: St. John's Council meeting, 7:15 p.m.

DEC. 24: No morning worship at St. John's or St. Jacob

DEC. 24: **CHRISTMAS EVE** services -- 4 p.m. and 10 p.m., St. Jacob

DEC. 24: **CHRISTMAS EVE** service -- 7 p.m., St. John's

DEC. 25: **CHRISTMAS** no worship service

DEC. 26 - JAN. 1: Pastor Phil will be out of office.

DEC. 31: No worship at St. John's

DEC. 31: Informal service at St. Jacob, 10:15 a.m., (degreening church)

ST. JACOB NEEDS COUNCIL MEMBERS

St. Jacob needs members to serve on the church council. Currently we have only 10 of the 12 positions filled. Three of those 10 members will finish their term at the end of this year, which will leave us with five positions vacant for 2024. Please consider volunteering, it's really a small commitment of your time, as the council meets just once a month for about an hour, and then serves as the council person for one month to assist at worship. The success of our church depends on volunteers like you. For more information call the church office, 618-644-2142.

ON-LINE GIVING OPTION

An on-line giving option has been added to St. Jacob's web site. Currently you may select this option by visiting the web site at: <https://stjacobucc.org/> and clicking on "RESOURCES" and then "DONATE." In the future, there will be an option to choose to donate on the main banner/page as well.

SNOW SHOVELING

Winter weather will be here before you know it. Please volunteer to shovel the church sidewalks. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the Narthx. Thank you!

***** THE UPPER ROOM** (Jan-Feb) magazines are available on the table in the Narthx at St. Jacob.

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people! says your God. Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God! Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

A voice was saying: "Call out!" And another said, "What should I call out?" All flesh is grass; all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field. The grass dries up and the flower withers when the Lord's breath blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass dries up; the flower withers, but our God's word will exist forever.

Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion! Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem! Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" Here is the Lord God, coming with strength, with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him and his payment before him. Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock; he will gather lambs in his arms and lift them onto his lap. He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

SECOND LESSON: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Lord, you've been kind to your land; you've changed Jacob's circumstances for the better. You've forgiven your people's wrongdoing; you've covered all their sins.

Let me hear what the Lord God says, because he speaks peace to his people and to his faithful ones. Don't let them return to foolish ways.

God's salvation is very close to those who honor him so that his glory can live in our land.

Faithful love and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed.

Truth springs up from the ground; righteousness gazes down from heaven.

Yes, the Lord gives what is good, and our land yields its produce.

Righteousness walks before God, making a road for his steps.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Look, I am sending my messenger before you.

He will prepare your way,

a voice shouting in the wilderness:

*"Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight."*

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."