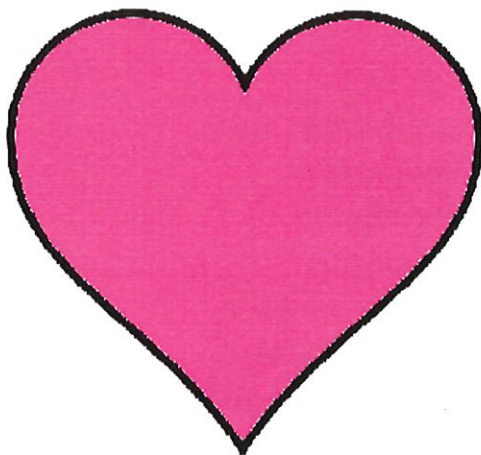


*Our mouths
were suddenly
filled with
laughter;*



*our
tongues
were filled
with joyful
shouts.*

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

December 17, 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: "When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace; whenever it is full it runs away in streams."

~ Charles Spurgeon

WELCOME ANNOUNCEMENTS RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELLS PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: God is in our midst; do not fear.

God rejoices to renew our lives in steadfast love.

ALL: God gathers us for this time of worship.

God claims us and promises us a home.

ONE: Trust in God who is our strength and life.

Give thanks to God, the source of our salvation.

ALL: We will sing praises and exalt God's name.

With joyous shouts, we will tell of God's glorious deeds.

ONE: Rejoice in God, whatever your circumstances.

Remember the good fortune God has shared with you.

ALL: We will not worry as we seek God's peace.

We open our hearts and minds to God's leading.

* HYMN *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart*

THE ADVENT WREATH – JOY

Dian & Ty Gansmann

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.
3. Light the advent candle, three: Think of heavenly harmony;
Angels singing “Peace on earth” at the blessed Savior’s birth.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
Candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

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CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*unison*)

All-knowing God, we confess our worry and anxiety over unimportant matters. We admit the fears that make us defensive instead of loving. We acknowledge our resentment over losses we have sustained and oppression we have suffered. We recognize that we have been far more concerned for our own welfare than for the building up of Christ’s body, the church. In our congregation, we have focused on survival more than service. We look for what we can gain more than for what we can give. Re-establish your rule among us, we pray, and save us from ourselves. 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.

SCRIPTURES:

Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

HYMN *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*

156

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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*)

In our unworthiness, O God, may we yet bring worthy gifts to honor the Messiah. May the brokenhearted be led to enriching new celebrations. May the lowly among us come to know their true worth as persons chosen by you to do great things. By your mercy, may the hungry be fed not only with bread but also with opportunities to feed others. We give ourselves as your servants, for no gift is complete without personal commitment. Thank you, God, for expecting great things of us. Our spirits rejoice in the coming of our Savior. 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.*

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

SONG	<i>Angels We Have on High</i> (First verse)	188
SONG	<i>O Little Town of Bethlehem</i> (First verse)	180
SONG	<i>The First Noel</i> (First verse)	229
SONG	What Child is This (First verse)	184
SONG	Joy to the World (First verse)	179
SONG	We Wish You a Merry Christmas	Insert

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

SERVING YOU TODAY

Council Person	Kevin Hollis
Liturgist	Don Yann
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

St. Jacob: Sandy Autry, Carol Casperson, Lori Foley, Carolyn Masterson,
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

-New Hanover Zoar UCC, Rev. R.J. Morgan

Retired Pastors

-Revs. Jan Dashner and Robert Goddard , O'Fallon, IL

-Rev. Robert Tripp, Effingham, IL

CHURCH ATTENDANCE, December 10, 2023

St. John's – 7 St. Jacob – 36

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

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Brittany Frank, Dec. 17

Germaine Rehg, Dec. 18

Tiffany Duncan, Dec. 19

Cameron Woods, Dec. 19

Carol Casperson, Dec. 20

Lauren Gansmann, Dec. 22

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

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CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS

TUESDAY: 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 you serve 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.

VOLUNTEER LITURGISTS AT ST. JACOB

We are looking for volunteers willing to read scripture, no long-term commitment, just one Sunday at a time. Everyone from the congregation is invited to take part in helping lead worship. There is a sign-up sheet located on the table in the Narthx.

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: Psalm 126

When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. It was even said, at that time, among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them!" Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, and we are overjoyed.

Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste!
 Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts.
 Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!

SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Don't suppress the Spirit. Don't brush off Spirit-inspired messages, but examine everything carefully and hang on to what is good. Avoid every kind of evil. Now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him; and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept intact and blameless at our Lord Jesus Christ's coming. The one who is calling you is faithful and will do this.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

This is John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

John confessed (he didn't deny but confessed), "I'm not the Christ."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

John said, "I'm not."

"Are you the prophet?"

John answered, "No."

They asked, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied,

*"I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,
 Make the Lord's path straight,
 just as the prophet Isaiah said."*

Those sent by the Pharisees asked, "Why do you baptize if you aren't the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John answered, "I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. He comes after me, but I'm not worthy to untie his sandal straps." This encounter took place across the Jordan in Bethany where John was baptizing.

WE WISH YOU A **MERRY** CHRISTMAS!

1. We Wish You a Merry Christmas!
We Wish You a Merry Christmas!
We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
2. We Wish You Joy.
We wish you good cheer.
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
3. We Wish You a Merry Christmas!
We Wish You a Merry Christmas!
We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

