

The Spirit

Volume 86 No. 11 December 2025



**A publication of St. John's United Church of Christ
Chambersburg, Pennsylvania**

From Pastor Caroline

Christmas was typically my favorite holiday growing up, even though my dad would say that “the Christmas tree was Martin Luther’s worst idea.” To be fair, we always had a live tree and he once (or twice) had to use duct tape to keep the tree in the stand. The festive nature of Christmas appealed to me- and it still does. There is something comforting about candles and cocoa, decorating and baking, and seeing lights shine in the darkness.

I’m reading Ben Cremer’s devotional “*Solace: The Birth of Hope in a Time of Longing*” this year, inviting us to slow down, listen deeply, and rediscover the solace and hope of Advent in our time of longing. I highly encourage adding something similar to your spiritual practice in this season of preparation, centering us as we await the coming of Christ.

The Advent calendar that I bought this year is filled with trial-size bags of spice. Spices add flavor and complexity to our food. The Reverse Advent Calendar is one way that we can help others to have food to eat, food that tastes good and nourishes both body and soul. You can learn more about this project on page 25; contact Roxanne to request a copy.

With hope, peace, joy, and love, we find our way forward, knowing that God is with us. That is what “Emmanuel” means: “God with us.” Our Advent-Epiphany worship theme “The Will to Dream” is rooted in prophetic imagination, the sacred practice to see beyond what is and move toward what could be. The will to dream is, indeed, a “persistent courage to imagine, resist, and rebuild a better world” – the kin(g)dom of God. With vigilant hope, prophetic peace, unexpected joy, and merciful love, we will be inspired, sustained, and empowered this Advent, as the light of Christ comes into the world, getting ever-brighter the closer we get to Christmas. The birth of Jesus is embodied promise and Christ is the light that shines in the darkness, a light that cannot be overcome (John 1:5).

Make sure to have these St. John’s events on your calendars: Christmas Ornament Making on Monday, December 1; Cookies for Kids (f/k/a the Cookie Walk) on Saturday, December 6; Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 7; and Bell Fest on Sunday, December 14.

Midweek Advent services at our partner congregations in the Conococheague Mission Cooperative (CMC) will be held on Dec. 3, 10, and 17. See page 14 for details and locations.

And, St. John’s will host a community “Blue Christmas” service on Sunday, December 21 at 3 pm. At Blue Christmas, we come together in quiet, contemplative worship to share our burdens, our sadness, our fears, and gather courage to move onward and forward.

Our Christmas Eve worship will be at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary (the musical prelude will begin at 6:15 pm). This will be a blended service, with both contemporary and traditional music. We witness to the light of Christ and take that light back out into the world.

In the midst of uncertainty, anxiety, and pain, we choose love: for God and our neighbors.

Let us wait. Let us watch. Blessed Advent, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year!

Peace, Pastor Caroline



MUSIC MINISTRY

History of Handbells

Handbells really started many years ago with simple gourds which were struck with a stick of wood. Eventually they were crafted with clay, wood and stone. Small metal bells can be traced back to 3000 BC in China and larger bells were present before the birth of Christ.

Hundreds of years later in the middle ages the handbell was changed into a form more akin to what we now know and indeed handbells were then one of the basic musical instruments of the church of the day. The modern handbell was developed by Robert and William Cor in England during the early seventeen hundreds and later into what we know and use today. In the United States the Schulmerick company started to make handbells in the early 1960's. In 1974 the Malmark company also started to manufacture handbells. Both companies are located in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Would you like to hear many handbells played together? Well, the chance is coming to St. John's UCC on December 14 at 7 PM.

We will have four handbell choirs all playing together to make beautiful music. Come and hear our concert!

Gary Crum

New Members: Denise Skipper and Perry Skipper



Denise: I am currently living in Chambersburg, but am originally from Bedford. I have been married for 40 years to my wonderful husband Sam. I was a special education teacher for 33 years in Mt. Union. I retired 10 years ago. I love to read and I love going to my new church. Thanks for making Perry and I feel so welcome.

Perry: I am living in Chambersburg with my parents who need my help. I do a lot of the housework and heavy lifting so my mother can take care of my dad who is sick. I love sports, especially the Cubs, Penn State, and the Steelers. I am also very interested in politics and keep up with what's happening everyday. Thanks for welcoming me!



New Members: Holli Burton and Jen Hudzinski

Jen (she/her) is a native of Franklin County, brought up in the Mennonite Church. Holli (she/her) is from Louisiana, raised by a Southern Baptist Minister. Their vastly different backgrounds were both deeply rooted in faith, and as they rear their two teenagers together (Key (they/them) and Jamie (he/him)), it is important to them to maintain that foundation while providing a safe and open minded environment in which they and their children can flourish. Both Jen and Holli are both intellectual and enjoy theological discussions, homesteading research, medical debates, and more. They homeschool their children. The family currently live in McConnellsburg, braving the mountain each week to attend church.

New Members: Clyde and Sarah Shiraki

Clyde and Sarah Shiraki joined our faith community from Hilo Coast UCC in Honolu, HI. Shortly after they joined St. John's UCC on November 9, Sarah had a hip replacement. A brief bio and photo of them will be shared in the January Spirit. Please keep Sarah (and Clyde) in your prayers in this time of healing and recovery.

Denise and Perry joined St. John's on October 26, while Holli, Jen, Clyde and Sarah joined on November 9. Please warmly welcome them!



If you are interested in joining St. John's, please contact Pastor Caroline!



St. John's Nursery School

Merry Christmas!

Our Nursery School children and staff are excited to celebrate the Christmas season! There will be fun-filled Christmas themed lessons and crafts all month long. We will end the year with class Christmas parties planned by our wonderful room parents. St. Nick will even be stopping by!

Thank you for your continued support of our Nursery School. Our Butcher Shoppe fundraiser was a success again this year! Friendly reminder that cookie dough and coffee may be picked up starting Wednesday, December 3rd at noon. Orders will be labeled and placed in the Parlor refrigerator.

Butcher Shoppe Sub and Pizza tickets will be available to purchase through the Nursery School until Wednesday, December 17th .

On behalf of the Nursery School Ministry and Staff, we would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Kari Rock, Director



Church Office Hours:

**Monday - Friday
9:00am - 3:00pm**

**Church Office will be closed on
Thursday December 25
and
Friday December 26
in observance of Christmas**

**Office Administrator: Tonya Schwartz
Email: manager@sjucc1811.org**

**Office Assistant: Rochelle Moyer
Email: assistant@sjucc1811.org**

Phone: 717-263-8593



Salvation Army Angel Tree

The Angel Tree is our “First Fruits” for December 2025. The Salvation Army is working hard to make sure as many children (and families) have a happy holiday season. Please, consider how you can help make the holidays a bit brighter for kids in our community this year. All gifts should be delivered unwrapped in gift bags by **Thursday, December 4**. These gifts will be blessed in worship on Sunday, December 7.

Hoffman Homes Holiday Gift Program

St. John's is a long time supporter of Hoffman Homes, located outside of Littlestown, PA. Hoffman Homes is a non-profit organization that provides both inpatient and outpatient behavioral health treatment, educational services and other county-funded residential-based services to youth, young adults, and their families across the commonwealth. Several St. John's UCC folks have served on the Board in the past, including Rev. Glenn Schultz, Mary Moyer, and Lee Powell. Pastor Caroline is a current Board member. St. John's is helping with the Holiday Gift Program, spreading holiday cheer to the youth and young adults in care, making some of their holiday wishes come true. A tree with these tags is set up in the church office. Gifts/gift cards are both accepted, with the following guidelines:

-Do not wrap the gifts. Simply place each youth's gift(s) in one bag and attach the gift tag provided for each youth.

-Do not provide items that could potentially be dangerous to these youth (i.e. spiral bound journals and/or sketchbooks, glass, mirrors, pencil sharpeners, etc.). Art sets are okay. Staff will remove potentially dangerous items for safety. If you are uncertain about an item, please reach out to Hoffman Homes at 717-359-7148.

These gifts/gift cards are due back to St. John's by **Monday, December 1**. Pastor Caroline will arrange transportation of these items to Hoffman Homes by December 3.

THANK YOU for your support of these programs!

LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!!

It's time to celebrate the tremendous progress made on our St. John's Future Together strategic plan adopted in November 2023. Efforts to engage in changes that take place in our collective lives urge an openness to transformation in assessing how we might enhance the fulfillment of our mission as a faith community.

The end "paperwork document" highlighted the five areas of concentration or themes that we as a congregation supported in the strategic plan. Those five themes were:

- Spiritual Deepening
- Energize Participation
- Community Engagement
- Congregational Care
- Financial Sustainability

With achieving a near 2/3's success in implementation of 19 goals and a 90 multi-step action plan, LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE! A re-visioning faith community that impacts on each of the five focus areas is impressive. You have participated in and supported this journey in a myriad of ways, whether that be by direct engagement in activities, prayers for the members and friends of St. John's and our community at large, participating in worship in person or virtually, financially contributing to the church and support to the various fundraising activities and projects, etc. You have supported the mission of St. John's – "to grow in love of God and neighbor."

As we move forward into 2026, your continued engagement, in whatever ways you can, are important. The current Council is working on seeking your input into ongoing planning as St. John's continues those action steps that have proved enhancing to our mission, tweaks those that may need revision, and adding new steps as prompted by your input.

The task seemed formidable when you adopted this strategic plan in November 2023. Our vision on our website reads: "We are called to love, to learn, to worship and to witness in Christ as a congregation that welcomes everyone and seeks service that will advance God's realm on earth."

CONGRATULATIONS – LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!! Thank you, one and all, as we move forward in continuing with the Future Together strategic plan, aligning with our mission, vision, and values.

Sunday
Dec. 14, 2025
7:00 pm

ChambersBellFest



The Bells of St. John's
Gary Crum, director

with handbell choirs from:

First Lutheran Church of Cham.

Park Ave. United Methodist Church

Messiah United Methodist Church (Ship.)

St. John's United Church of Christ, 1811 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA

Staff Christmas Gift

It is the tradition at St. John's United Church of Christ to have a special offering envelope designated for Christmas Gifts for Church Staff. Our staff are a true blessing to our church and if you want to take part in this please submit this to the church office and in the MEMO line of your check be sure to say "STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFT". We need this by **Sunday, December 7, 2025** in order for our staff to receive this by Christmas. Thank you!



The poster has a dark blue background. At the top, there are pine branches and a string of warm white lights. The text is centered and uses a mix of white serif and script fonts.

THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE MISSION
COOPERATIVE PRESENTS:

*Blue
Christmas*

EXPERIENCING HOPE AND HEALING
IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21
@ 3 PM
ST. JOHN'S UCC
1811 LWE
CHAMBERSBURG, PA 17202

Monday Meditation

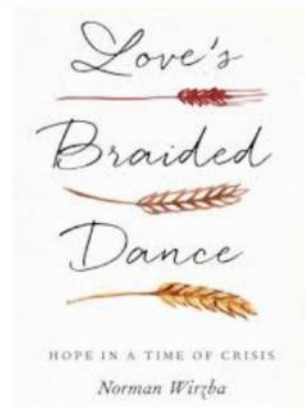
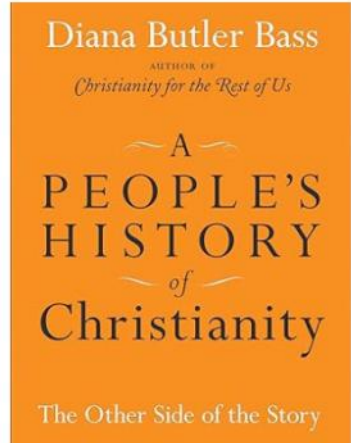


Join us for Chi Gong/Zazen silent body energy,
and soulful meditation

Mondays, 10 am in the Parlor
Room 104

Contact Henry Hopper
with any questions

The Monday afternoon book group will be wrapping up their study of “A People’s History of Christianity” this month (December). It has been an interesting and enlightening journey! We will pause for Christmas and New Year’s. Our next read will be “Love’s Braided Dance: Hope in a Time of Crisis” by Norman Wirzba. Discussion of this book will begin on Monday, January 12, 2026. Check out News in the Pews for each week’s reading assignment. Everyone is welcome!



News from the Mercersburg Association

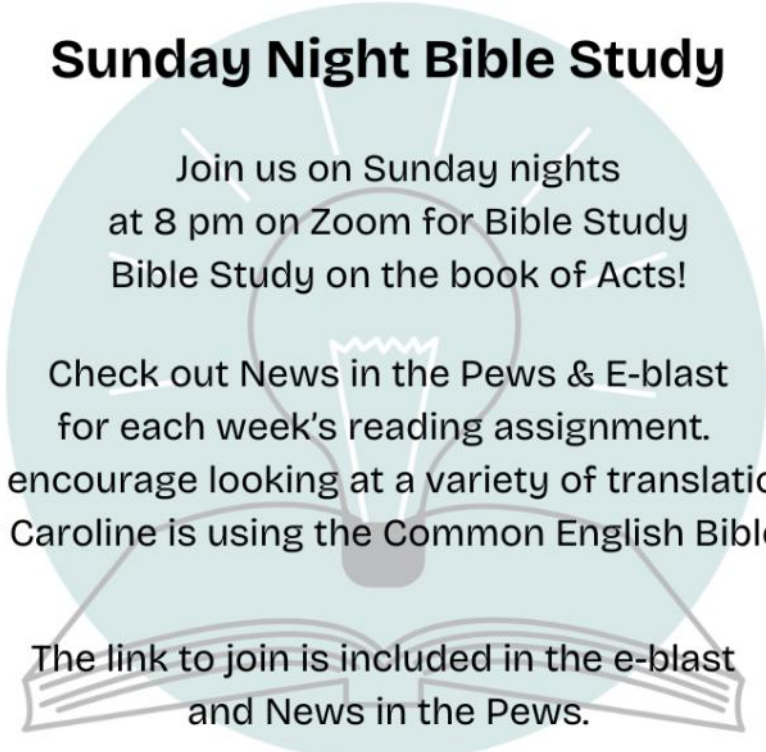
Many thanks to Jerry Thomason and N. Erin Hartman for serving as lay delegates to the Mercersburg Association Fall meeting on Sunday, November 2. There was much discussion on the transition to the Keystone Conference, with Rev. Dr. Carrie Call speaking to us about the various moving parts (joys and challenges) that are involved in living into this new chapter in the life of the UCC in Pennsylvania.

Jerry Thomason represented our church at the closing worship and celebration of the Penn Central Conference on Saturday, November 15.

The Keystone Budget meeting was held on Saturday, November 22, with both Jerry and Erin joining Pastor Caroline as delegates for this virtual gathering.

More will be shared in the coming months as the Executive Committee (Pastor Caroline and Jerry Thomason both serve on this) organizes other events for clergy and laity.

Sunday Night Bible Study



Join us on Sunday nights
at 8 pm on Zoom for Bible Study
Bible Study on the book of Acts!

Check out News in the Pews & E-blast
for each week's reading assignment.

We encourage looking at a variety of translations;
Pastor Caroline is using the Common English Bible (CEB).

The link to join is included in the e-blast
and News in the Pews.

CRAFT NIGHT

Decorative Clear Christmas Ornaments



Monday, Dec. 1 - 5:00 PM - Room 202
\$5.00 for each. You can make up to 3.
Supplies are provided.

SIGN UP IN LOBBY!



St. John's United Church of Christ, 1811 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg PA

CONOCOCHIEAGUE MISSION COOPERATIVE

Midweek Advent Services

Wednesday, December 3, Mont Alto UMC

10 S Main Street, Mont Alto, PA 17237

Wednesday, December 10, St. Luke Lutheran

2695 Luther Drive, Chambersburg, PA 17202

Wednesday, December 17, Scotland Fellowship Church

4040 Main Street, Scotland, PA 17254

All services will be held at 7 pm

DECEMBER 15, 2025 | 6:30 PM

BIBLE & A BEER

Theological conversations
Rich discussion
Powerful testimony

Join us at 6:30 pm at
The Trojan Diner & Sports Bar!
1121 Lincoln Way E
Chambersburg, PA 17201

Bring your questions,
Invite your friends!





CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

We are now taking orders for poinsettias to decorate the Sanctuary for the Christmas Eve Service.

If you would like to donate a poinsettia, please complete the form and return it to the church office by **Monday, December 1, 2025. Cost - \$15.00 each**

Donor's name: _____

(as it will appear in the bulletin insert)

I would like to order _____poinsettias to be placed:

_____ In memory of:

_____ In honor of:

_____ To the Glory of God

Thank you for your support.

Please arrange for your flowers to be picked up.

Please include your payment with this form and return it to the church office by

Monday, December 1, 2025. Make checks payable to St. John's UCC.

It's Time for Poinsettias!



They are beautiful and add so much to the Christmas Eve Service!

But what happens to the flowers when the service is over? As noted on the order form, the purchaser is to take their flower(s) after the service or make arrangements for someone else to do it for them.

Otherwise, the flowers will simply wilt and not be used.

SO PLEASE remember to pick up your poinsettia after the service or **make arrangements for someone** to do

this for you. They make wonderful gifts to friends, neighbors, or someone you have been thinking about. Thank you for doing your part in helping to take care of these special flowers.

-The Altar Flower Team of Congregational Care

Fellowship Meal

Fellowship Hall

After worship on Dec. 28, 2025

This will be a POT LUCK meal

Beverages provided

Save the date!

WINTER Warmth DRIVE



Helping families in our community stay warm and well-fed this winter



Healthy Food NOW - January 16



- Apples, Potatoes, Carrots, Cabbage, and Winter Squash
- Whole Grains
- Seasonings & Cooking Oils
- Boxed Meals & Canned Goods
- Flour, Sugar, & Baking Soda

**Donations
Needed**

- Condiments
- Peanut Butter
- Shelf-Stable Milk
- Pasta/Pasta Sauce

Winter Gear NOW - January 16



- Mittens & Gloves
- Winter Hats
- Socks
- First Aid Kits
- Deodorant
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Tissues & Paper Towels
- Toothpaste
- Laundry Detergent
- Soap (*hand, dish, & body*)

**Donations
Needed**

Monetary Gifts also welcome

Donations will go into our Community Impact Fund, which supports programs across Franklin County.



**Give Online
Today**



uwfcpa.org/GiveWarmth

Thank You Sponsors!
Herbruck's Blue Springs
Middletown Valley Bank

Where do I take my donations?

To any of the community collection sites during their business hours. Check out the map!



**Collection
Site Map**



Sign Up Now for Cookies for Kids (aka Cookie Walk) on Saturday,
December 6! Sign-up sheets are in both lobbies.
Contact Roxanne Davenport or Harold Collier with any questions.

COOKIES FOR KIDS

Saturday, December 6

9 am - 12 pm

Fellowship Hall

Holiday treats to be sold by weight

Cookies \$10/lb | Candy \$12/lb

***All proceeds to benefit children
in our community!***

Bake your favorite holiday cookies,
make your signature holiday candy & share the
recipe to benefit a good cause.
Bring your cookies to the kitchen
on Dec. 5 from 6-8 pm
Sign up in the lobby!





Christmas Eve



St. John's United Church of Christ

December 24, 2025

6:15 PM Prelude in the Sanctuary

6:30 PM Christmas Eve service in the Sanctuary,
blending contemporary and traditional styles

All are welcome as we celebrate Christ's birth!

Use Parking Lot A for the Sanctuary
SJUCC 1811 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg PA 

Winterfest Dance **DJ Frank Hancock**

Saturday, January 24, 2026

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

St. John's Fellowship Hall

Donations accepted



St. John's United Church of Christ
1811 Lincoln Way E. Chambersburg PA 17202
Parking Lot B

Introducing St. John's New Office Assistant



The Personnel Committee is pleased to announce that our new Office Assistant Rochelle Moyer joined the team at St. John's on Wednesday November 19, 2025.

She will be working Monday through Friday from 9 am -1 pm.

We expect her diverse work experience will be very beneficial to St. John's UCC. She is excited for this new opportunity and is eager to get started.

Rochelle has over 10 years of experience in finance, customer service, and accounting, along with a strong background in website and social media management. She's passionate about providing excellent support and helping operations run smoothly. Outside of work, Rochelle enjoys spending time with her husband of eight years and their son. She coaches his soccer team, runs a small cake pop business, and loves an adventure such as theme parks, the beach, and spending time with their three dogs.

When you have time, please consider stopping by
and welcoming her to St. John's.

Ladies **LUNCHEON**

Eight ladies had lunch at the Italian Village restaurant in Greenvillage on Wednesday, November 12. Plans were made for the Christmas gathering. Lynda Pound has reserved the Chinaberry Room in Northgate at Menno Haven. Please try to join us on Wednesday, December 10. **IMPORTANT– It will be a busy time, so PLEASE PLAN TO ARRIVE ABOUT 15 MINUTES EARLY TO EASE SERVICE.** Thank you!

Please RSVP to Bev Peters to indicate if you will be joining the group.



MENS BREAKFAST

We will be meeting **Thursday, December 4 at 7 am** at Texas Lunch (108 LWW, Chambersburg, PA).

We look forward to seeing any and all for December's Breakfast.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/03 Jeanne Welch

12/04 Stephanie Brown

12/05 Mary Moyer

12/05 Chani Wolfe

12/08 Judith Patterson

12/09 Virginia McCright

12/13 Mary (Alison) Hopper

12/14 Pete A'zary

12/16 Judy Knepper

12/17 Olivia Myers

12/20 Roberta Peters

12/21 Bernice Tosten

12/22 Gloria Crum

12/23 MaryLee Yaukey

12/24 Michael Brechbill

12/26 Holly Hoover

12/27 Connie Evans

12/29 Mark Hoger

12/30 Randall Kegerreis

12/31 Jared Leister





Youth News December



December Dates

7 Church School 8:45

Family Caroling and potluck 1:00 PM

14 Church School 8:45

20 Christmas Eve Pageant Rehearsal 10:00

21 Church School Christmas Party 8:45 Youth room

(All classes will start in their classroom and pick up is in the Youth room)

24 Christmas Eve Pageant arrive 6:15pm

******Reverse Advent Calendar Boxes due******

28 NO CHURCH SCHOOL but there will be Children's Corner during worship

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Heifer International Mission Project run by the Youth in November. A grand total and list of the animals purchased will be announced by the first of the year. We are role models for our young showing how God's love can be shared.



Fa La La La La



The Youth and their families will be spreading Christmas Cheer again this year through song as we plan to travel around to our shut-in church family members. This is open to anyone who would like to join us!! Working with Congregational Care, we will visit and sing on December 7th leaving the church at 1:00. We will end back at the church around 4:15 to share in a covered dish social. RSVP to Roxanne or sign up on the Youth bulletin board.

Reverse Advent Calendar Mission Challenge

So, what is a Reverse Advent Calendar you might ask. Well, you know an Advent calendar is a countdown to Christmas where a gift is received each day up until Christmas. A reverse calendar teaches our young to give each day rather than to receive. During this season of preparing our hearts to receive the gift of the Christ child we can model that idea of sharing God's love through giving to others. A Reverse Advent Calendar has been created to fill a box of nonperishable food items to be donated to the Food pantry at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, part of the SCCAP program. This program feeds more than 150 families each month in Fayetteville, Mont Alto, Waynesboro and South Mountain.

Families, church groups and church ministries are being challenged to fill a box and model this spirit. Last year we filled 17 boxes!!!! This year the need is even greater. Wrapped boxes will be available or any box can be used. All boxes are asked to be delivered to our church by Dec. 24th so they can be blessed at the Christmas Eve service. The Youth will deliver these and tour the Food Bank on Dec. 27th, meeting at the church at 10:00 am to load. A pizza party will be held at Carretti's LWE, afterwards.

Silent Night... Holy Night

The story and characters are the same, but the actors change. This year there will only be one Christmas Eve Service. A Blended family centered candlelight service will be at 6:30 in the Sanctuary. We will portray the story again. Actors are needed (older youth and maybe some adults may be asked to shadow, in costume, our newer younger children) so look for the sign up on the Youth Bulletin Board or see Roxanne.

Rehearsal will be on the 20th at 10:00 in the Sanctuary.
Costuming will be done after rehearsal.

Committee & Ministry Chairs 2026

Camp—*MaryLee Yaukey*

Children & Youth Ministry—*Roxanne Davenport*

Community Engagement—*Harold Collier*

Congregational Care—*Eileen Shaffer*

Facilities Ministry—*Tom Harrison*

Fellowship—*Sue McMurtray*

Finance—*Scot Orndorff*

Library—*MaryLee Yaukey*

Nursery School—*Linda Zeger*

Personnel—*Lisa Fair*

Prayer Shawl Ministry — *N. Erin Hartman*

Safe Church Compliance—Safe Church Compliance Steward, *Sarah Herbert*

Safe Church Response—Safe Church Compliance Steward, *Sarah Herbert*

Safety and Security—*Tom Kinton*

Spiritual Life—*Lloyd Beers*

Technology and Media Ministry—*Calvin Frantz*

Worship/Music Ministry—*Gary Crum*

Want to serve
on a Ministry or Standing
Committee?

These groups would
welcome you and
your talents!

Speak to these leaders or
Pastor Caroline today to
learn more and join them!

2025 COUNCIL

Moderator Team

Tom Harrison, **Past Moderator**

Harold Collier, **Moderator**

Diana Kongkeattikul, **Moderator Elect**

At Large Members

Jill Miller

Dale Myers

Eileen Shaffer, **Secretary**

Harold Wissinger

Additional Non-Council Positions

Scot Orndorff, **Treasurer**

Jerry Thomason, **Assistant Treasurer**

Dick Rebok, **Authorized Check Signatory**

Sarah Myers, **Head Deacon**

Dwight Sollenberger, **Head Elder**

Sarah Herbert, **Safe Church Compliance Steward**

Pastor

The Rev. Caroline E. Saxton

Sunday Worship will be at 10 am (Offered In-Person and on YouTube)

Communion Dates:

Sunday, December 7, 10 am, Sanctuary & Livestreamed

Sunday, January 4, 2026, 10 am, Sanctuary & Livestreamed



“To grow in love of God and neighbor”

St. John’s United Church of Christ

**1811 Lincoln Way East
Chambersburg, PA 17202**



Phone: 717-263-8593

Fax: 717-263-9010

Website: www.sjucc1811.org

Office Hours: Mon — Fri from 9 AM — 3 PM

