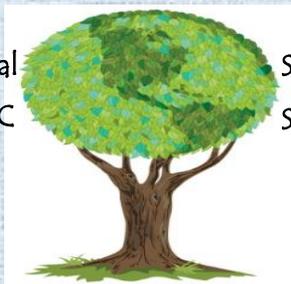


THE TRI-COUNTY PARISH CIRCUIT RIDER



Canton Ecumenical
Ward UMC

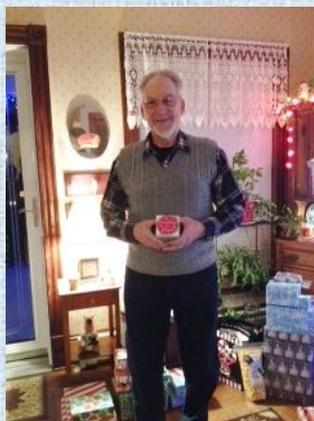


St. John's UMC
Shunk UMC



JANUARY 2016 EDITION

Parsonage Open House 2015



The annual Open House at the Parsonage was held on December 14, 2015. Door prizes were won by the following: Warren Strout, Don Blazer, Jeanie Scott, Donna Stone, Doug Seeley, Crawford Holmes, Carl Sutton, Quinlan Abercrombie, and Karen Robertson (the little deer!) Cailin Robertson won the prize for counting all the decorated trees. (She was exactly right!!) Food and fellowship was enjoyed by all in attendance! Pastor Jerry is already planning next year's festivities!! (This isn't a surprise to anyone, is it?..)

Photos courtesy of Paula Schmidt

The Parish Office Address is:

The Tri-County Parish:
103 North Center Street
P.O. Box 313
Canton, PA 17724
(Second Floor of Canton Ecumenical Parish)

The Office phone number is:
(570) 673-5294

(Please make sure all correspondence is clearly marked with P.O. Box 313 as without it, it is undeliverable by the US Postal Service and will be returned.)

Be sure to check out our new and improved website! There are pictures, videos, event calendars, birthday lists, past and present editions of the Circuit Rider and more!
Go to:

www.tricountyparishumc.yolasite.com



Like us on Facebook! (Tri-County Parish)



Parish Office Hours:

Pastor Jerry Schmidt:

Monday - Thursday
9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Certified Lay Minister Candidate

Kathy Miller
Wednesday

12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Administrative Assistant

Paula Schmidt:
Monday – Thursday
9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Office Hours are subject to change due to emergency calls or other unexpected events.

Parsonage phone number:
570-673-8232

Pastor Jerry's cell phone number:
717-571-1159

Pastor Jerry's e-mail address:
Pastorwho@aol.com

Kathy Miller's Contact Information:
570-398-7672 (Home)
570-916-7691 (Cell)

E-mail address:
kaydeemi@hotmail.com

Paula's e-mail address:
(Parish business)
tricountyparishumc@gmail.com

The Circuit Rider is a monthly publication of the Tri-County Parish.

Contributors:

Suzi Fisher, Kathy Miller,
Jerry and Paula Schmidt, Donna Strout,
and Andrea Sutton.

Items for the newsletter can be sent to your church's contact person or by e-mail to Paula at:

tricountyparishumc@gmail.com

(Please do not send items to Paula's AOL address)

The Deadline for the February 2016 issue is
Wednesday, January 13, 2016.

The Circuit Rider is available by e-mail. If you would like to have your copy delivered by e-mail, please contact the parish office or send an e-mail to Paula at:

tricountyparishumc@gmail.com.

Please help us conserve paper!

The Circuit Rider is also available at:

www.tricountyparishumc.yolasite.com.

If a member of your family or a friend is hospitalized, please contact the parish office (673-5294) as soon as possible. (you can leave a message after office hours) Pastor Jerry and Kathy would like to make a visit, but since hospitals discharge patients so quickly, we need to know as soon as possible when your family member is in the hospital. Also, if you or a member of your family would like to receive Holy Communion at home, please let us know so Pastor Jerry can arrange a visit. No one should go without this important sacrament in their lives.

Pastor's Ponderings

By Jerry Schmidt

Greetings in the Name of the Newborn King, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, The One who resides in our Hearts,

There are not enough good things to say about the Christmas season. We spend Advent preparing for it, and as a distraction, we shop, cook, bake, and do a host of other preparations. When it comes right down to it, many people spend all of Advent getting ready for one day of Christmas, instead of celebrating Christmas all twelve days

The Christmas tree, Nativity scenes, Advent wreaths, colorful lights, door wreaths...all of these things are a reminder of the birth of this newborn child who was born with the purpose of saving us from our own downfall and sins.

As a pastor, I know that I have to get ready for the next season of the church year. So, it is a struggle to live in the moment of this season while preparing for the next. Can you name the next season? Epiphany is right around the corner after we celebrate the 12th night of Christmas on January 5.

As we fast approach a new year, let us pause to reflect on all the things that we got right. We are open to receive brothers and sisters in Christ. We are giving people who keep hope alive for many in our community, and around the world. We share the love of Christ, and the knowledge of God. We can fellowship like no one else.

Did you see yourself in the previous paragraph? Maybe there are aspects of your lives that are not quite up to the bar set for us. Here is the Good News! It is not too late! We can make improvements in our lives, attitudes, acts of works, and faith journeys all the while we are living this life that is a gift from God.

God never tells us to stop trying. When we come upon a block wall in our lives, we can go another way. Many of you have done this in life. A friend or family member has left you no choice but to turn aside, but that doesn't mean that we become hard-hearted people of God. No, we change our direction and focus on other aspects of life, and needs, that we see next to us that we hadn't seen before.

God opens our eyes to new possibilities every day! The question for us is: how will we meet those needs, or at least help to meet them? We have money, but we also have talents, voices, and gifts to offer that have minimal cost to us.

What do you see as a new thing that you can do as we get ready to celebrate a new year, new church season, Epiphany, and then Lent which leads to Easter. These seasons of the church eventually run full circle from Jesus birth to His fulfillment of the prophesy when He takes our sins to the grave, and then rises again for our sake.

So, you can see how important it is to fully celebrate the season that is here right now. There will be enough time to prepare for the next. God wants our attention here and now, every moment of every day.

You are a blessing to me, your Pastor, and to a community in need of prayer. Consider what God is asking of you as you navigate the path set for you by this same God of peace, hope, joy, and love.

Blessings to you all, 

Minister's Musings

By Kathy Miller

Happy New Year! Really? Already? Where did 2015 go so quickly? I hear that remorseful refrain frequently among the over-60 crowd like myself. Maybe you have heard my reply before, but I have decided that there is a mathematical concept to time. My youngest grandchild, Ellen, will be four the tenth of this month, so now a year will be 1/4th of her life. I just turned seventy, and now a year will be 1/70th of my life. While a year seems like a long time to her, to me it seems much shorter. Fortunately, God gives us all the same number of days, hours, and minutes in every year. But how do we use them? The prophet Haggai tells us: "Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little, you eat, but never have enough, you drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'" (Haggai 1:5,6 NIV) God had called Haggai to prod the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from exile to finish rebuilding the destroyed temple. Instead, they had placed more emphasis on building their own homes.

I would encourage all of us to consider where we should spend extra time this year. Online I found a list of questions for us to ponder – resolutions, if you will. Let me share a few that I chose as particularly important.

What's one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?

What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your family life this year?

What is the single biggest time-waster in your life, and what will you do about it this year?

What is the most helpful new way you could strengthen your church? Remember, the church is not a building. It is you as a member of the Body of Christ.

For whose salvation will you pray most fervently this year?

What's the most important way you will, by God's grace, try to make this year different from last year?

What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?

What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter most in 10 years? In eternity?

What's the most important need you feel burdened to meet this year?

Who is the person you most want to encourage this year?

What's one thing you could do this year to enrich the spiritual legacy you will leave to your children and grandchildren?

What book, in addition to the Bible, do you most want to read this year?

To what need or ministry will you try to give an unprecedented amount of time or money this year?

What one biblical doctrine do you most want to understand better this year, and what will you do about it?

As a congregation and a parish, are we ready to "Rebuild the Temple"?

As your associate minister, I, too, will prayerfully seek answers to these questions. Let us all pray that together we will move into this New Year seeking God's guidance to be a source of His light in this oft troubled world.

In His Name, 

Shunk News

By Suzi Fisher

Sunday School begins at 10 AM every Sunday. It's a great way to start you day of worship!

Bible Study with Pastor Jerry will resume Thursday, January 28, 2016

Jan. 10 - Mission Sunday collection.

Jan. 17 –Baby Bottle Campaign begins to benefit the EMPCC. Baby Bottles will be available to fill with your “Pocket Change” and/or checks made out to EMPCC. The campaign will end in March.

December was a very wonderfully busy time! Thank you, Carol Miller, for the fun games and heading up the Gift Exchange. There were lots of yummy goodies to enjoy before heading home. Pastor Jerry & Paula hosted the Annual Christmas Open House at the parsonage. It was very nice with lots of Tri-County Parish fellowship! Thank you to Pastor Jerry, Paula, Kathy & Joe!!! *We appreciate all each & every one of you do for us....God bless you!!!!*

So now we are starting the New Year. Let's not forget the wonderful gift God sent us in December with the birth of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!

WISHING YOU MANY BLESSINGS IN THE NEW YEAR!!!!!!

Canton Ecumenical News

By Paula Schmidt

Our Monthly Dinner will be held on Tuesday, January 12 at 5:00 p.m. This month featuring Roast Pork with Sauerkraut or Béarnaise sauce. Dinner includes, entrée, mashed potatoes or rice, vegetable, beverage, and dessert. The cost is \$6.00 per person and take-outs are available. Come and bring a friend!

The Canton Food Pantry item for January is saltines. Thank you for your faithfulness to this local ministry, helping people in need right here in our community! Your generosity is greatly appreciated by the needy in our town.

On Sunday, December 20, we gathered for our annual Christmas Party. This year was even more special as we celebrated the 63rd Wedding Anniversary of Orin and Florence Finogle. Thank you to those who provided the food and did the planning for this event.



More CEP News

Earlier in the month on December 6, CEP had its annual Chrismon service during worship. Narration was done by Pastor Jerry with Bev Madigan at the piano, and a solo, “I Wonder as I Wander” was performed by Brian Greenough. It was a moving service and very inspiring to everyone.



(Photos courtesy of Beverly Wright)

To hear the CEP Quintet from Christmas Eve, (Ken Robertson, Beverly Madigan, Paula Schmidt, Jerry Schmidt, and Brian Greenough) sing “Good Christian Men Rejoice” (First two verses only, sorry, my phone ran out of memory so it cut off the last verse...) go to: https://youtu.be/2Vq_NdfnCp0. You can also find it on the CEP page of the Parish website, tricountyparishumc.yolasite.com.



A surprise 70th Birthday Party was held at CEP for our Associate Minister, Kathy Miller after the worship service on December 27. It was arranged by her husband and family, aided by Donna Strout and others from CEP.

Happy Birthday, Kathy!! (and many, many more!!) We are so glad you are here with us!!

Photo courtesy of Brian Greenough.

Ward News

By Paula Schmidt

The children of Ward Church's annual Christmas Program was on Sunday, December 20 during the worship service. It was entitled, "Christmas Gifts". Participants included, Lyle, Levi, and Link Vermilya, Noah and Sam Shedden, and Kylie Landon. The children ended their program with the song, "What Shall I Give Him?" The adult choir sang "Jingle Bells Medley". Thank you to Ruth Morse and Dana Vermilya for putting the program together. The children also helped light the advent wreath as part of Story time with Jean O'Connors. Cookie hour followed this special service.



Photos courtesy of Paula Schmidt

St. John's News

By Andrea Sutton

2015 has come to an end, but not before members of St. John's had a chance to welcome the new born king, Jesus Christ!

We would like to thank Alexis Baldwin, Alyssa Blazer, Carol Kneller, Kameron Stettler, Alexis Doud, Fern McNett, and Denny Vermilya who were part of the Christmas band which played every Sunday during the month of December. It really added to the service. Thanks also to Sydney Crawford for her special music. Thank you also to Dorothea Doud for decorating the sanctuary.

On Dec. 19 members of the Sunday school and church members got together at Kelley's Restaurant for a wonderful evening of food, fun, and fellowship. Around 30 friends gathered and enjoyed a meal of chicken or roast beef with desserts being provided by our resident chef and baker, Dorothea Doud. The cake and cheese cakes were delicious and decorated beautifully. (see page 9 for pictures)

The following Sunday, the adults in Sunday school were given a token of appreciation from their teacher for everything they do for him, not only in Sunday school, but throughout the year.

What would the Christmas season be without a play or program telling the reason for the season. The children also played the bells under the direction of Dorothea Doud. To add to his many talents, Denny Vermilya wrote the script for the play and it was right on. The children and young adults in Sunday school did a fine job. This was followed by a fellowship hour of cookies, punch, vegetable pizza provided once again by our in house chefs, Dody, Fern, and many more.)

The children in Sunday school also had a Christmas party with games, food, and gifts. It was well attended and thank you to those who helped in any way. Small gifts were given to the children on the Sunday before Christmas from the church. A sock tree and food were also donated to those in need during this season of giving.

Outside the church, members of the Tri County Parish were invited to an open house at the home of their pastor and his wife, Jerry and Paula Schmidt. If you went home hungry, it was your own fault for the table was set for royalty and we all enjoyed the wonderful treat. Their home was also beautifully decorated in every room. Thank you to both for keeping the parsonage so well maintained. It was good to see members of the other churches as well as friends from the community. It is nice to know that the Schmidt's touch the lives of not only their parishioners, but residents throughout the town.

Can you believe that by the time you are reading this newsletter it will be 2016? I ask the Lord to bless each and everyone reading this, and wish all a very happy, blessed, and healthy New Year.

Remember Jesus is the reason for every season! If it wasn't for His birth, there would be no Easter and He would not have risen. Thank God He did, for now we ALL can have salvation and eternal life.



St. John's
Christmas
Party
2015



St. John's Christmas Program and Party Pictures



Pictures and video courtesy of Dorothea Doud. To watch the video of the Children singing "Jesus is the Answer", go to: <https://youtu.be/8eDbNZuCMY>, or visit the St. John's page of our website at www.tricountyparishumc.yolasite.com

Beyond New Year's resolutions — make 'faithful intentions'

By Laurens Glass, Submitted by Suzi Fisher

1. Count to 10

Your mother was right — or, maybe it was my mother — but anyway, counting to 10 is an age-old axiom for a reason. Our first reactions to things may be influenced by how stressed we are at the moment, what just happened in that meeting or where our blood sugar levels are hovering. Do you really want to snap at someone because you are mad at someone else? Especially, if that someone else is yourself?

Taking a few seconds to think before speaking takes discipline and practice. But taking time to respond when you feel emotional is a spiritual exercise that will help you be more centered and more caring. Make sure you eat first.

2. Breathe

But I am! Right? Breathing is an involuntary response of the body. One that happens regardless of whether we're aware of it. But breathing can become shallow or quick when we are anxious or stressed — and that is when we need oxygen the most.

There are over 30 verses in the Bible that mention breath and they seem to often be connected to or representative of Spirit, of God.

The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. — Job 33:4

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

“Receive the Holy Spirit. — John 20:22

Mindful breathing is essential to our spiritual life because it connects our heads with our bodies and our bodies with our hearts. When I feel afraid or physically sick, I breathe 10 times as deeply and calmly as I can and remind myself that it will be OK. And it is.

3. Think positive thoughts

I read that human beings think three or four negative thoughts to every positive one. My friends admit to beating themselves up for their shortcomings or worrying to the point of distraction about the future.

When things are going wrong, that's the most difficult time to be positive — and sometimes you just have to go to bed! But a steady stream of hopeful or reassuring thoughts can help bring us back to the truth that we are not alone.

“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13) or simply, “It's going to be OK!” are better thoughts to think than, “I'll never be able to do it!” Thinking on the true and good thing (Philippians 4:8) is far better than allowing fear to overcome you. No matter how bad the situation is, remember you are loved beyond measure.

4. Love (and forgive) yourself

One of my favorite Bible verses ever, but one that has taken years for me to comprehend is “love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27, among others). What does that really mean? I struggled with thinking loving the self was, well, selfish. Now, as an adult, I understand that you cannot love and accept others if you do not love and accept yourself. You cannot express unconditional love if you do not first practice it with yourself.

There is a beautiful song by the Bluegrass band Mountain Heart that lists the writer's transgressors and his success in forgiving them. Notice the last line.

I forgive my daddy for missing half my life,

I forgive my momma for holding on too tight,

I've forgiven friends, strangers, neighbors, family,

Everybody... everybody... but me.

Holding on to guilt can impact relationships because it blocks the flow of communication, of love itself. Practice grace — with yourself. You can't truly live your life until you do.

(Continued from page 11)

5. Love one another (and forgive the ones you can't forgive)

Such a simple directive. Such a beautiful philosophy. Did He really mean the ones we disagree with, too?! Learning to love in the manner Christ intended is more of a lifetime goal than an immediate accomplishment. The progress sneaks up on you over months, years, sort of like when I gave up the perfection of Yoga Magazine and settled for "getting better." Which is a nice verb phrase whose synonyms include "rejuvenate, restored and released."

Forgiving people who have hurt us may well be the most difficult task we are asked to perform as Christians. But if you keep "carrying all that anger, it'll eat you up inside," as Don Henley sang. The subtitle of the Rev. Adam Hamilton's book on forgiveness is, "[Finding Peace Through Letting Go](#)," and it means just that. And just know...it's a process. Accept where you are with it.

6. Pray — right where you are

I tend to agree with writer Anne Lamott that prayers are usually "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" or "Help me! Help me! Help me!" But as I grew spiritually, I began to pray for other people when I myself was hurting. It's been a powerful practice that has changed my perspective about what others go through and how many blessings I actually have.

A daily devotional, like the one offered at [The Upper Room](#), a [book of prayers](#) from around the world, "[A Bead and a Prayer](#)," (as explained by United Methodist author, Kristen Vincent) and even crying, are all ways you can connect with God.

Pray. Pray in the way that works for you. If you haven't in a while, if you don't believe it works... then pray that. God's not afraid of your doubt. Praying is something you can do *wherever* you are.

7. Be grateful — and be joyful

I woke up one morning when all I wanted to do was cry, and I heard clearly in my head:

This is the day that the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)

So, I played "Happy" by Pharrell Williams, instead.

Gratitude is a spiritual practice that will change your life. It's not just that it shifts your focus from what you don't have to what you do have. It can lift your spirits in such a way that helps you cope when you are down.

Joy is an inside job but it can be inspired by external things. Music. Children. Nature. Art. Find them.

8. Think of the other fellow

That is what my mother used to say. "And you'll feel better." ?

When I was little, I thought doing things for others was about, well, others. It was the right and proper thing to do, but I wasn't sure it was necessarily fun. But as an adult, I realized it did far more for me than it ever did for anyone I ever helped.

The [Wesleyan tradition](#) holds that faith and good works belong together. "We offer our lives back to God through a life of service."

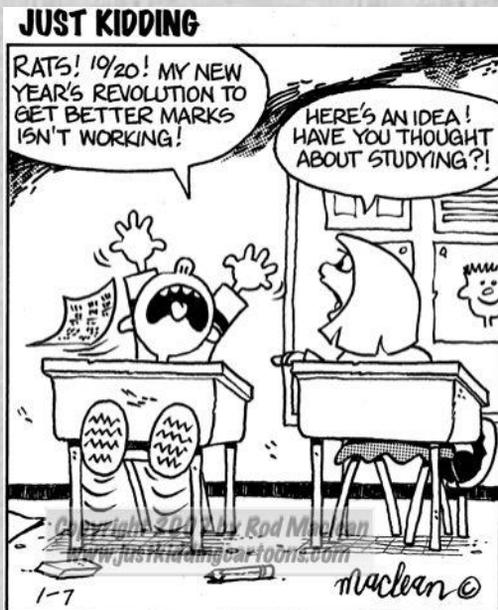
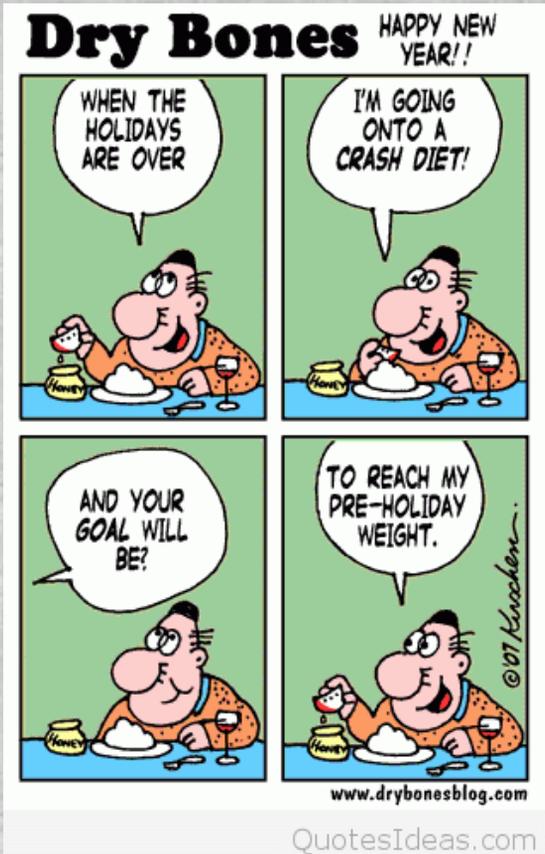
You cannot help someone else and not be changed yourself. Which may be the coolest paradox of "do unto others as you would have done unto you." Try it.

You don't have to master all spiritual practices this week or even this year. But you can earnestly strive to be more spiritual at any point in time. It is an on-going practice. A resolution you can re-make daily.

Happy New Year.

Laurens Glass is a content producer for United Methodist Communications. She can be reached at LGlass@umcom.org or 615.742.5405.

You Gotta Laugh!



“The first time I sang in the church choir, two-hundred people changed their religion...” ~Fred Allen~

17th Year of Faith, Fun, and Friends

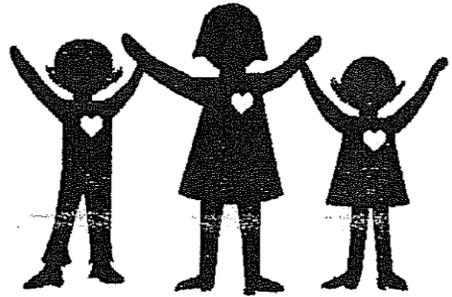
Girls Gathering for God Overnight Retreat

February 5 & 6, 2016

7 pm Friday to 3 pm Saturday

First UMC, Muncy

602 S. Market St., Muncy PA 17756



Theme: **"Empowering Girls to Care"**

"You let us rule everything your hands have made. And you put it under our power." Psalm 8:6 (CEV)

Featuring a live concert by Riser Crew

All girls in grades 7 thru 12 are Welcome

Registration Cost \$25.00 per teen girl

Includes Friday night pizza, Saturday breakfast & lunch and 2016 GGG long sleeve t-shirt

Registration Deadline January 20, 2016

For details and registration information, contact your youth leader, youth group president, or local United Methodist Women President. They received a complete registration packet in November.

Or go to www.susumc.org and click on the Ministry Resource Packet or go to the Ministries pull down, then to SUSUMC Ministries and click on UM Women.

**Get a cool T-shirt ~~ Worship ~~ Learn ~~ Grow Spiritually
Workshops ~~ Have a great time ~~ Make new friends**

Contact person - Flo Waybright 717-225-5933 girlsgatheringforgod@comcast.net
Registrar - Donna Ream 717-843-8309 donnamr@peoplepc.com

This event follows Safe Sanctuary Policies adopted by the Susquehanna Conference United Methodist Women. Contact Cathy Berkey Conference UMW president for a copy 570-696-2907



Sponsored by Susquehanna Conference United Methodist Women
Susquehanna Conference UMC, 303 Mulberry Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Open House Recipes

Each year after the Open House I am asked for recipes, which I gladly share anytime, just ask! Here are a few of the most requested recipes! Enjoy!

Cranberry Delight Spread

Ingredients:

1- 8oz. Package Cream Cheese, softened
2 tablespoons Orange Juice
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons grated orange peel (or the zest of one orange)
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 cup chopped dried cranberries (craisins)
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts or pecans

Directions:

In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, orange juice, sugar, orange peel and cinnamon on medium speed of an electric mixer until fluffy.

Stir in the chopped cranberries and the walnuts (or pecans). (save a few for garnishing the top) Place in a serving bowl and garnish with chopped walnuts and cranberries. Serve with crackers.

Almond Joy Bars

Ingredients:

5 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature
6 tablespoons light brown sugar
1 1/4 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
14 oz. can of sweetened condensed milk
14 oz. of shredded coconut
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
20 Hershey's ® kisses
Slivered almonds

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a 8 or 9 inch square pan with aluminum foil and spray with cooking spray.

In a small bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until combined. Add the flour and salt. Carefully mix to combine until it resembles chunky bread crumbs. Transfer into the prepared pan and press mixture into an even layer. Bake for 8 minutes.

In a large bowl, combine the condensed milk, coconut, and vanilla. Spread over the baked crust and bake for another 20 – 25 minutes until it begins to brown.

Melt the chocolate chips and kisses either in a double boiler until smooth or melt in the microwave. Pour over cooked coconut bars and spread into an even layer. Before it hardens, top with slivered almonds. (if desired). Allow to cool, then refrigerate until the chocolate is hardened, about an hour. Cut into squares.

More Open House Recipes

Chocolate Goopy Butter Cookies

From Paula's Home Cooking

Ingredients:

1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Confectioner's sugar, for dusting
1 (18 oz.) box moist chocolate cake mix
(I've used Dark Chocolate and Red Velvet to name a few)
1 (8oz.) package cream cheese at room temperature
1 egg
1 stick of butter at room temperature

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl with an electric mixer, cream the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Beat in the egg. Then beat in the vanilla extract. Beat in the cake mix. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours to firm up so that you can roll the batter into tablespoons and then roll them in confectioners sugar. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet, 2 inches apart. Bake 10 – 12 minutes. The cookies will remain soft and gooey. Cool completely and sprinkle with more confectioner's sugar, if desired.

Bacon Ranch Cheese Ball

Ingredients:

2 (8oz.) packages of Cream Cheese, softened
1 pound of bacon, cooked, crumbled
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, grated
1 tablespoon dry ranch dressing mix
1/4 cup green onions, finely chopped (optional, I didn't use)

Directions:

Combine cream cheese and cheddar cheese together in a large bowl and mix together. Sprinkle in ranch dressing mix, then fold in 3/4 cup of bacon and the green onions (if used).

Pour remaining bacon and about another 1/2 cup of grated cheddar cheese on your work surface. Use your hands to form a ball with cream cheese mixture, then gently roll in bacon and cheese.

Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or until firm. Serve with crackers or fresh veggies.

Privilege of Prayer

By Annalou Wren

From Gospel Herald and the Sunday School Times; Winter Quarter 2015-2016

Simply put, prayer is my most favorite privilege of all that I experience as a Christian. I grew up saying the required prayers of my family's religious background. I still remember saying prayers that I had memorized and being told that I was forgiven of my sins. I did this without much thought.

Years later, by God's merciful grace, I found salvation in Christ. I understood my need for the Savior Jesus Christ and realized that eternal life is received through faith alone, not through the works of my faith. (Ephesians 2: 8 – 9)

The best way to grow in faith and sanctification is to read and study God's Word diligently and regularly. I was amazed when I read it the first time and discovered verse after verse that drastically and marvelously changed not only my life, but my prayers as well.

Imagine reading, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:7). That is just what I had been doing – praying as "heathens" do. I asked the Lord what I could do to change that.

"Ask, and it shall be given you." (Matthew 7:7). I found a study on prayer that greatly impacted my prayer life by helping me understand that in Christ I was now a "new creature" (II Corinthians 5: 17), with the Holy Spirit dwelling inside me (Ephesians 3: 16 – 21).

The apostles left their families, homes, and work, sacrificing everything to be with Jesus day and night for three years. They saw Jesus slip quietly out of view at dark, not to return until morning light. They knew He went to be alone and spend time in prayer with His Father.

When He returned, they watched Him go through each day reaching out and drawing in multitudes with waiting arms. He performed miracles and healings as simply as breathing. His generous, infinite love poured down like rain, embracing everyone.

His disciples learned that His time spent in prayer was a source of that love, that incredible power and miraculous blessing. They must have understood; why else would they have asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11: 1 – 4)?

Jesus' reply was, "When ye pray, say, Our Father." Thus begins the first lesson on what prayer is and why we ought to pray. We pray to have an intimate relationship with our Almighty God. When we address Him as "Father," we must be sure we are His children. Only His children have a right to cry, 'Abba, Father' (Romans 8: 15) as Christ did (Mark 14: 36).

Christ then continued, "Which art in heaven" (Luke 11:2) causing us now to envision God in the heavenlies with Christ at His right hand (Mark 16:19). We too will dwell there in perfect union with Them one day. Our heart's desire should long for that home rather than fall prey to the temporal and tempting life we endure here.

His words, "Hallowed by thy name" (Luke 11: 2) cause us to worship and adore God as Creator and sovereign King.

This needs to be our first offering in prayer, lifting our hearts in adoration, not supplication. I have to work hard on this point, but using some of the psalms helps. The psalms are richly filled, recounting all that the Lord has done and will do in our lives. Meditating on some of the words leads us to cry: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." The only way we can know what God actually wills for each of us is to be a serious student of His Word. Therein lies all we need to know to please and obey Him.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14: 6). That sums it up very well. Jesus is the subject, the answer, and the reason for our prayers. It is His kingdom that will come and His will for our lives that matters, not our own.

When Jesus said, "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3), He taught that He is able to give us what we need every day. We will not suffer want or wish or worry for or about tomorrow (Matthew 6: 34). The Lord knows every little heart's desire and concern, and He cares more than we could ever care about ourselves.

Then the Lord said, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." (Luke 11: 4). This can be the most challenging. So often we just do not want to forgive. Again, the Lord was teaching not what words to repeat but rather the meaning of what our prayers should actually accomplish when we utter them.

Our Father knows only too well what unforgiveness can do to a heart and life. He watches over a whole world not just our little corner, and sees what happens when we let a root of bitterness fester. It can and will affect a family, neighborhood, whole church, or workplace.

While our minds and hearts wrestle with the above struggle, how perfectly we are let into His next phrase or plea, "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:4). Notice that He did not say, "Get us out of temptation" once we have chosen to rush into it.

The "evil" refers not only to this world, but also to the devil, who seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8).

The Lord's Prayer is not just words to say over and over. Rather, it is an outline of how and why to pray. We will know how to pray by knowing His Word well and obeying it as every new truth sinks in and convicts us to do so. Knowing how to pray is to awake each morning believing God, rejoicing and praising Him first. How to pray is to forgive whatever we have suffered by another not just once but time and time again (Matthew 18: 22).

Jesus' upholding power is another key reason to pray: "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18: 1). Hopefully, the best reason for all of you to pray is that it will ignite a constantly growing desire for deeper intimacy with Christ every time you kneel, stand, or sit and pray.

JANUARY

JANUARY



Tri- County Parish Events - January 2016



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 	2 <i>Katie Rathbun</i> <i>Barbara Boyd</i>
3 Epiphany Sunday <i>Beverly Wright</i>	4 <i>Katrina Dean Sharrow</i>	5 Twelfth Night <i>Jill Ward</i>	6 Epiphany	7	8 <i>Bertha Mae Bagley</i>	9
10 The Baptism of the Lord	11	12 <i>Susan Shedden</i>	13	14 <i>Brenda Holland</i>	15	16 <i>Roger Hickok</i>
17 <i>Marsha Krause</i> <i>Evie Doud</i> <i>Marcia Wilson</i> <i>John Deljonavan</i> <i>Jaylee Ward</i>	18 Bishop's Retreat Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Martin Luther King Day	19 Bishop's Retreat	20 Bishop's Retreat	21	22	23 <i>Carol Miller</i> <i>Scot & Lisa Abercromb</i>
24	25 CEP Bible Study 1:30pm	26 Ward Bible Study 9am TCP Bible Study resumes 7pm <i>Ken & Phyllis Quail</i>	27	28 Shunk Bible Study 1 pm	29	30
31						

All events are subject to change.
Birthdays and Anniversaries are in italics.

Tri-County Parish January Birthdays and Anniversaries

Canton Ecumenical

2- Katie Rathbun
3- Beverly Wright
4- Katrina Dean Sharrow
17- Marsha Krause

Anniversaries

None

Ward

2- Barbara Boyd
5- Jill Ward
12- Susan Shedden
14- Brenda Holland
17- Jaylee Marie Ward

Anniversaries

23- Scot & Lisa Abercrombie

St. John's

16- Roger Hickok
17- Evie Doud, Marcia Wilson,
John Deljonavan

Anniversaries

None

Shunk

8- Bertha Mae Bagley
23- Carol Miller

Anniversaries

26- Ken & Phyllis Quail



If you have corrections or additions to this list,
contact Pastor Jerry or Paula immediately so we
can keep this list as accurate as possible.

Lectionary for January 2016

January 3:(Epiphany Sunday)

Isaiah 60: 1 – 6
Psalm 72: 1 – 7, 10 – 14
Ephesians 3: 1 – 12
Matthew 2: 1 – 12

January 10: (The First Sunday after the Epiphany)

Isaiah 43: 1 – 7
Psalm 29
Acts 8: 14 – 17
Luke 3: 15 – 17, 21 – 22

January 17: (The Second Sunday after the Epiphany)

Isaiah 62: 1 – 5
Psalm 36: 5 – 10
1 Corinthians 12: 1 – 11
John 2: 1 – 11

January 24: (The Third Sunday after the Epiphany)

Nehemiah 8: 1 – 3, 5 – 6, 8 – 10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12: 2 – 31a
Luke 4: 14 – 21

January 31: (The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany)

Jeremiah 1: 4 – 10
Psalm 71: 1 – 6
1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 13
Luke 4: 21 – 30



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