

THE KERK

St. John's Reformed Church, 126 Old Post Road North, Upper Red Hook, New York 12571

Phone: 845-758-1184; Fax: 845-758-3675; email: office@stjohnsreformed.org

DECEMBER 2024

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Minister's Musings

As we begin this season of Advent together, I thought it would be good to introduce our Theme, "Words for the Beginning" as we enter into it together. Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new.

Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end. When we ourselves navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown.

The folks at Sanctified Art have crafted an Advent series filled with blessings, with the words we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. There are words that they imagined Mary would speak to her newborn son. What scriptures and stories would she impart to him? What lessons would she teach him as he grew? And so, the weekly themes may feel like the lessons we teach to children, but in reality, these are lessons we continue to learn and relearn as adults.

They may sound like the messages we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies or sacred rituals. There are intentionally selected scriptures that may be frequently used in weddings, ordination services, or baptisms. And so, this is an invitation to you to enter this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

As you journey through this season, may you find words for belovedness and hope. May you find words for beginning again. For no matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, love is your beginning.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier
Minister of Word and Sacrament

Faith & Education



Bible Study

Bible Study this Advent season will concentrate on four prophets - Jeremiah, Malachi, Zephaniah and Micah, meeting Wednesdays, December 4, 11, & 18 at 10:15 a.m. These prophet passages are included in the Revised Common Lectionary which can be found on St. John's website or in the guides found on the table in the fellowship hall. Anyone interested in chatting about these scriptures or learning more about their context can attend. Bible Study will resume on January 8 at 10:15 a.m. after the holidays.



Children's Program

Advent is upon us, and we have children's resources and Advent calendars as well as devotion guides for families, teens, and adults, too. Mrs. Wambach will be using little activity booklets entitled, "Guess Who's Coming for Christmas!" as Christmas draws near and other Leader curriculum guides as she shares the Christmas scriptures with the children. On December 22 we hope to role-play parts of the Nativity story during worship. Invite your young neighbors to participate with us. We will celebrate Epiphany on January 5, recognizing the gifts of the Magi presented to young Jesus.



Book Club

Book Club will meet in December to discuss, "In the Time of the Butterflies", by Julia Alvarez. Date TBA. Book suggestions for 2025 are welcome. Anyone who has read the book or listened to it is welcome to join in the discussions.



St. John's Monthly Prayer Service meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m., in the sanctuary. The next monthly prayer service is December 3. Prayers are offered for St. John's missions, for the local community, for those on the prayer list, for those who are unable to gather with the congregation for worship, for personal prayers, and for anyone in need of God's love. For more information, please see *James Walrath*.



Blooming in Faith Women's Fellowship meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the fellowship hall. The next meeting is December 4, at 7 p.m. We gather for fellowship and to create art. For more information, please see *Elizabeth Young*.



Scudder Circle Ten ladies of the Scudder Circle gathered for a meeting on November 7th. Karen Roberts shared soup preparation facts from all around the world including the times when Jesus walked the earth. She came prepared with a delicious fish soup attempting to use as many ingredients as possible that might have been on the menu during the time of Jesus. Mary Bayer shared a vegetarian recipe for Sweet Potato, Carrot, Apple and Red Lentil soup showing all the ingredients including fresh ginger, black pepper, cumin, chili powder and paprika. After cooking the ingredients the soup was pureed with an immersion blender. Desiree Albizu spoke of how she saves and uses chicken bones and leftovers along with some simple techniques to prepare her delicious Chicken and Rice soup. We all feasted on the soups along with homemade breads provided by Mary. We now are more prepared for our "Soup Sale Season" which will commence on Sunday January 5th.

Our December 5th meeting will be at Noon at CJ's Restaurant in Rhinebeck. A sign-up sheet is on the table in the Fellowship Hall. There will not be a meeting in January. We will resume at 1:00 pm on Thursday February 6th.

As you begin your holiday shopping, please consider the merchandise available through RADA Cutlery. There is a link on the St John's Reformed Church website and our group receives a small commission for sales processed via that link.

The Scudder Circle meets 9 months of the year on the first Thursday of the month and is open to all women who are associated with St John's Reformed Church. If you have an idea for a program of interest or if you might be willing to present a program to our group please speak to Desiree or Mary. We welcome your ideas!



Shepherds

Thank you to those in the congregation that attended the Shepherds skit on November 3rd and for those that brought a dish to share. It was a lovely luncheon thanks to you!



The CHRISTMAS BAZAAR & LUNCH WITH SANTA was a HUGE Success! Thank you to all who volunteered and helped in any way. \$1001 was collected in donations!

A note from the Arts & Crafts Ladies

Thank you everyone who contributed items for sale, volunteered their time to set up and cleaned up, helped with sales for the Christmas Bazaar. Thank you for your support in your purchases. Our profits, \$168, from this sale were turned over to the Church's General Fund. Thank you so much! JoAnn Fisher and Eileen Zeliph.



Mission and Outreach

Thank you to each one of you for your love and support for our missions.

Hurricane Relief: The M & O Committee would like to thank the congregation for their donations to help the hurricane victims of both Helene and Milton. World Central Kitchen and World Vision received \$220 each. If you would like to contribute to either organization, please write it in the memo line on your check, or on the envelope if cash, which organization you would like to support, or just hurricanes and we will split the monies between the two.



Winter Coat & Boot Drive 2024!

Thank you to everyone who donated winter items. The food pantry families were able to select from a variety of items. They are appreciative of your love and support. Thank you again!



Adopt a Christmas Gift

Mission and Outreach's Adopt a Christmas gift for our food pantry families has begun. Our Food Pantry families have filled out the Christmas Present Registration forms. The M & O Committee has received the forms and our secret Santas have started to shop for the items. There's still time if you would like to participate. For those not fond of shopping, monetary donations are most welcomed. For more information, please see Serena Winchell or any member of the Mission and Outreach Committee. Thank you!

A Blessing Bag Idea from M & O Committee

We may not encounter homeless people in our community as often as those who live in larger cities, but we can be prepared to help those in need in this small way. A Blessing Bag contains practical, mostly non-perishable items such as a bottle of water, granola bars, crackers and snacks, beef sticks, tissues, wipes, socks, gloves, deodorant, a toothbrush and toothpaste, whatever you feel appropriate for the areas you travel. The bag could be as simple as a Ziploc, or maybe a mesh bag with a drawstring. Perhaps the winter's mice might get to the food first, but those items can be replaced. You may want to place a small Bible or New Testament or other booklet of inspiration in the bag as well. Be creative and be prepared to bless someone.

Fresh Flowers in the Church Sanctuary



If anyone would like to place fresh flowers in church, there are a few easy ways to do it!

1. Purchase flowers, or 2. Cut flowers from your garden, or 3. Send the church office a donation.

Vases are available in the kitchen cabinets to the left of the refrigerator. Flowers can be arranged in a single vase; however, double vases are best for communion Sundays. Flowers need to be in place by 9:45 a.m. If you want a dedication in that Sunday's bulletin, please contact the church office at 845-758-1184.



Thank you to all who purchased poinsettia plants in memory or in dedication to your loved ones. The list of names will be in the January Kerk and also in the Christmas Eve bulletin.



Volunteer Drivers

To all who recently signed up on the sheet about driving members to their doctor appointments, I will be coordinating the rides when needed. If I hear of a person needing a ride, I will speak to the person and then contact one of you.

Thank you for doing this. I feel the need will arise at some point.

God Bless,

Eileen Zeliph-Shepherd Coordinator



Streaming Sunday Services:

To access the Sunday Service, go to our website (www.stjohnsreformed.org) and click on the YouTube Live icon. We are no longer using Zoom to stream our services. Thank you to Doug and Wayne for fixing the church's internet streaming hardware so we can experience the video portion of the service.



Help Wanted

The technology committee needs some help running the live stream for our services on Sunday mornings. The change to YouTube Live is significantly easier than using Zoom. The task of running the stream consists of three separate skills, cameraman, computer setup and shut down, and audio operator. The cameraman task involves which picture from one of two cameras is being sent YouTube, and setting where the camera needs to be aimed. One camera is always set to a wide angle shot. When that camera is selected the cameraman presses a button to select the shot needed next (Sermon, piano, organ, choir, communion table) and presses a button at the appropriate time to switch the streaming camera. No computer skills are needed to do this job.

The audio operator needs to press a scene button to switch from voices to hymns, and musical scenes. This operation also calls for muting the pastors microphone at appropriate times and letting the lectionary speaker talk. This job requires a lot of your attention and can be noticeable if you miss a cue as to when the scene needs to change. No computer skills are needed for this job.

The computer job requires knowledge of normal Windows operations. We use two programs, one that loads the camera buttons when the computer is first turned on after the cameras come on. The second runs YouTube Live streaming, this program is started when the computer is on after the cameras are running. Once this program is on we need to click on a manage stream button, fill in the name we use for our YouTube Live stream, and then press start. After that we press start record and we are streaming. Nothing has to be done while the stream runs. At the end of service we press end record, then stream end and are done. We then shutdown the computer.

You can learn one or more tasks at your own rate. We can use the help. Once you are trained it would be best if you operated your skill at least once a month to retain the skill. The more skills you have the better, but we welcome all help we can get. You need to be there about 9:30 on Sunday mornings to make sure everything is running and stay in the balcony until after the end of the postlude (Organ music played at the completion of the service). If you are interested come up and visit Doug and Wayne in the balcony before or at the end of a Sunday service.

The Technology Committee



PROPERTY COMMITTEE – CAN YOU BELIEVE DECEMBER IS HERE ?

This is the final issue of the Kerk for 2024. We are in the season of Advent and Christmas and the New Year are right around the corner. The Property Committee has been very busy with many of the usual repetitious tasks during the past eleven months through the hard work of not only committee members, but other folks who have pitched in to help.

The difference as most of you know was the addition of some unexpected tasks that were added to the load. Here is a status of those additions to the normal workload: 1) An improved drainage system to replace the faulty downspout and dry well from the kitchen roof was completed and the sidewalk to the west kitchen door was replaced. 2) The replacement of deteriorating fuel tanks under the sanctuary was put out to bid and a slab was poured to accept the new tanks in a new location. New tanks are to be installed soon. 3) Parsonage fire: Property and Finance have been working with the insurance company, the fire cause and origin inspector, ServiceMaster, who will do the cleanup of all house contents, and eventually, the contractor who will do the repairs of the damage. This is a very complicated process, but with hard work, love and support of the congregation of this church, and with the help from the Lord, these tasks and others will be completed.

A Happy and a Blessed New Year from the Property Committee to all who worship and support this wonderful House of God.



*“Thank you all for your prayers, calls, and cards during my husband’s recent hospitalization. God Bless the St. John’s Reformed Church’s Family!
Eileen and Ron Zeliph”*

Draft Consistory Minutes – November 21, 2024

Present: President - Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier, Vice President - Desiree Albizu
Elders - Glenn Countryman, Elizabeth Young, Absent- Elder Terry Laibach
Deacons - Eileen Wambach, Clif King, Pete Fenaroli, Laurie DeCiutiis, Mary Hennessy

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 by Pastor Alisha. She opened the meeting with prayer and provided a devotion focusing on Advent.

Motion made, seconded, and carried (M/S/C) to approve the minutes and agenda.

Pastoral Report: Pastor Alisha reviewed all meetings, administrative tasks, and ministry being undertaken during this past month. This month was incredibly difficult and challenging due to the parsonage fire on October 27. She is very grateful that her family are safe and for all the love and support that she received from the congregation. She also thanked Glenn Countryman and Denis Doyle for all their work with the church's insurance company to proceed with the process claim. Due to the fire, the October 27 worship service was cancelled. John Roberts was gracious and offered to preach on November 3. Rev. Kendra has organized meetings with colleagues to provide support for Pastor Alisha. In December, the newly elected Consistory members will be invited to our December meeting to be introduced and for exiting members to provide an overview of their role and responsibilities.

Motion M/S/C to approve Pastoral Report.

Financial Review: Glenn Countryman reviewed the October Narrative that explains the month's income and expenses. He also asked if there were questions on the Profit and Loss Report. Desiree Albizu inquired about a missing entry (bible purchase). It will be referred to members of the Finance Committee. **Motion M/S/C to approve Financial Review.**

Committee Reports:

Faith and Education: Desiree Albizu stated Bible Study this Advent season will concentrate on four prophets. These prophet passages are included in the Revised Common Lectionary which can be found on St. John's website or in the guides found on the table in the fellowship hall. Advent resources for families, teens, adults, and children are available. Mrs. Wambach will be using little activity booklets entitled, "Guess Who's Coming for Christmas!" as Christmas draws near and other Leader curriculum guides as she shares the Christmas scriptures with the children. On December 22 we hope to role-play parts of the Nativity story during worship. Invite your young neighbors to participate with us. We will celebrate Epiphany on January 5, recognizing the gifts of the Magi presented to young Jesus. Book Club will meet in December to discuss In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez. Date TBA. If anyone has book suggestions, please speak to Desiree.

Fellowship: Elizabeth Young noted that during this month, our congregation has been faced with challenges, but we continue to have strong fellowship. Our weekly attendance and involvement in coffee hour remains strong. This month we saw a presentation and luncheon from the Shepards. We are getting ready for the Christmas Bazaar.

Finance: Glenn Countryman provided a financial review to Consistory. Questions were answered successfully. He stated that Emily Halstein, President of JEM Accounting Solutions, Inc. has been hired to review our books and make suggestions on best practices and reporting. She is not doing an audit. Six members of the Finance Committee met with Emily on 11/20/24, providing her with an overview of our finances. Topics discussed were the deacon's fund, cemetery property and funds, appointing a treasurer to report and attend consistory meetings, our newly formed Investment committee and its purpose, our bill paying methods, generating reports, and best practices of communication. The minutes of the meeting will be sent out later.

Mission and Outreach: Laurie DeCiutiis reported that \$220 was sent to World Central Kitchen and World Vision for hurricane relief. Donations for this mission are still coming in. The Winter Coat and Boot Drive is still active. The Adopt a Christmas Present project continues. Serena has cards from the food pantry families' forms, and they are being adopted by the congregation. Gifts will be given out in December.

Property: Glenn Countryman reviewed the many projects being undertaken by the committee and specifically highlighted the church oil tank issue. Property has been advised that the fuel oil tank needs to be cleaned out, removed and replaced with a new one. Due to the urgency, an email vote was distributed to Consistory members. See PCR#1 under special reports. Glenn and George (Hop) Michael laid a concrete floor in preparation for the new tanks. Hop was praised for his efforts for fixing the downspout on the corner of the kitchen which was obstructed by tree roots. See the Property report for details.

Parsonage Fire- Glenn provided an update on the parsonage. Property and Finance have been working with the insurance company, the fire cause and origin inspector, ServiceMaster-who will do the cleanup of all house contents, and eventually, the contractor who will do the repairs of the damage. This is a very complicated process. Please address your questions to Glenn C.

Worship: Peter Fenaroli reported that Sunday attendance this month has remained steady between 50-60. The Choir performed 1 anthem on November 17th. Joey conducted the choir. The choir will sing an anthem on 12/1, the first Sunday of Advent. Zoe will be providing music on Sunday December 15th. Joey's position is fully funded for 2025 based on the currently proposed 2025 budget. Worship continues to encourage the congregation to participate in a voluntary fresh flower supply rotation for Sunday services. It has had only a few participants.

Technology: Michael Fleming has volunteered to help with YouTube and sound for worship services.

Motion made by Glenn Countryman, seconded by Elizabeth Young and carried to approve all committee reports.

Working Recommendations and Special Reports:

FCR#1: Finance recommends consistory place Judy Rockefeller's bequest of \$48,883.35 in a short-term CD (Rhinebeck Bank) with the goal of it being placed into the endowment fund according to her wishes.

Motion seconded by Elizabeth Young and carried to approve this recommendation.

FCR#2: Finance recommends consistory approve the removal of Eileen Wambach and the addition of signers, Kayla Bell, Laurie DeCiutiis, & Kristi Colburn to the Deacon's Fund account and the addition of Mary Bayer & Kristi Colburn to the Cemetery account.

Motion seconded by Glenn Countryman and carried to approve this recommendation.

PCR#1: Property Committee recommends purchasing 2 new oil tanks at a cost of \$11,292 as outlined by Petro representative.

Email Vote: Eight Consistory members gave approval, and one member abstained.

Motion was approved, seconded, and carried.

Bernice and Roger Leonard Scholarship

Desiree initiated a conversation pertaining to this scholarship. She had questions.

1. Should it be listed as an endowment?
2. When and why was it changed to an endowment? If it's an endowment, we would have to follow the endowment requirements. The Finance Committee needs to clarify this.

Desiree reached out to Rev. Doug Leonard (son of Bernice and Roger) to ask him “What he feels that the scholarship should read and should we redefine it”. Questions also included can it go to more than one student? Historically, there were many seniors involved at SJRC. Presently, there are less students attending church. Also, can it be given to a student who does not attend Red Hook CSD. The scholarship requirements also state that it’s to be given to a senior who is pursuing a career in the service industry. Do we need to redefine that? Desiree would like to revisit this topic after discussions are completed by the finance committee and with Rev. Doug.

Motion M/S/C to approve adjourning the meeting after prayer.

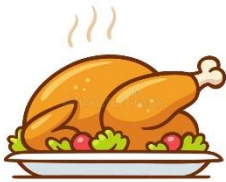
Desiree closed the meeting in prayer. Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.
The next regular meeting of consistory is December 19, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristi Colburn
Clerk of Consistory



Deadline for the January Kerk is December 23

Personal ads of no more than 3 lines will be accepted for \$1 per issue. Business ads in the form of a business card to be photocopied will cost \$5 per issue. If you would like to receive the Kerk by e-mail (a little more reliably on time than the paper version being mailed to your home) e-mail the church and let us know; office@stjohnsreformed.org.



SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, January 11, 2025

St. John’s Reformed Church is having a turkey dinner.
Peta Bartles and Al Trezza are preparing a tasty dinner.
More information will be available in the very near future.



Financial Report

Narrative to Consistory for October 2024:

Month of Oct

Income:	\$22140.01
Expenses:	\$14914.07
Net:	\$7226.74

Year to Date

Income	\$191,559.94
Pass Through	\$23,255
Net Income	\$168,004.94
Expenses	\$192,477.61
Prepayments	\$1169.530
Net expenses	\$191308.08
Net	-\$23,303.14

A donation of \$10,000 was received in October towards general expenses. A donation of \$20,000 was received in October and placed in a short-term CD, until Finance Committee's Investment Policies are settled. The \$20,000 will be placed in the fund recommended by the donor once the policy is adopted.

Judy Rockefeller Bequest of \$48,883.35, was received on November 4, 2024. See David Mitchell's letter stating the desired use of the bequest. See November's consistory minutes.

A stock donation of 10 shares of Eli Lilly was received on November 6. The Net is \$7582.

The committee that is working on the Finance and Investment policies held its first meeting on November 18th. Once the policies are refined the recommendations will be given to consistory for its decisions and approval.

The endowment funds must be changed to align with IRS and NY requirements. This will require not only consistory approval, but also congregational approval.

The maximum withdrawal from the Endowment fund for 2024 will be calculated in light of the oil tank replacement costs. It may increase the \$10,000 it is currently set at.

The review of our bookkeeping with Emily Halstein started on November 20th.

Motion 1: The Judy Rockefeller Bequest be placed in a short-term CD until such time as the Finance and Investment policies are approved. Once the policies are approved the final disposition of the bequest will be decided by consistory.

Motion 2: Finance recommends consistory approve the addition of signers Kayla Bell, Laurie DeCiutiis, & Kristi Colburn to the Deacon's Fund account, Eileen Wambach be removed from the Deacon's Fund account, and the addition of Mary Bayer & Kristi Colburn to the Cemetery account.

2024 Deficit Update

By the end of September there was an operating deficit against expenses of \$31,000. In October there was a generous gift that reduced it to \$23,000. The November reports have not been calculated yet, however there was another generous gift of securities that should reduce the deficit to a more manageable \$16,000. November and December tend to be a time of greater giving and hopefully it will lead to satisfaction of all 2024 expenses.

Did You Know: St. John's Congregation has a long history of resilience?

Over 225 years ago the congregation of the Red Church in Tivoli made a bold move. They decided that it was important to move eastward to build a new church on the Post Road, the main north-south road between New York and Albany. The challenge to maintain and sustain this Upper Red Hook church has been a constant endeavor ever since, an effort spanning generations. This congregation has endured the struggles of a Civil War, two World Wars, as well as actions in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. There were uncertain economic times during the Great Depression, recession in the early 1970's with stagflation in the late seventies. More recently a world-wide pandemic presented a different type of challenge while introducing a new round of inflation.

Last month was another "rough patch" in our congregational journey, but it's the rough patches that help us reflect on how God provides for this "Church on the Post Road". First and foremost, our minister's family is safe and provided for. Our community of friends and neighbors put out the fire, saving the historic parsonage. And, as for over 225 years, there is a dedicated congregation, each member possessing an array of gifts and talents, all working together for the greater good to glorify God.

We have challenges. In addition to the missions to serve our community and beyond, there's a parsonage to restore, church oil tanks and gutters to replace and a budget deficit to satisfy. These are just part of the current list for the current congregation to address. We've been given everything needed to be successful, and our history helps to reassure us that we're up to the task.

The Finance Committee

Calendar

Worship Service

Sundays **10 a.m. in person** and join us on YouTube Live.

Access our website, (www.stjohnsreformed.org), scroll down on the page and click on YouTube Live icon. You can continue to access the weekly bulletins by clicking on the dropdown box "worship service" and select bulletins. Each Sunday's bulletin and announcement page are posted.

Children's Ministry Program Sundays at 10 a.m.

Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs. (off site), Fri.-Sabbath Day

Kristi Colburn, Administrator Mon., Wed., Fri., 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Tues. & Thurs. 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Michele Zagorski, Financial Consultant working remotely

Food Pantry Distribution Mon. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wed. 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Bible Study Wednesday at 10:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall

DECEMBER EVENTS/MEETINGS:

Monthly Prayer Service Tuesday, December 3, 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary

Blooming in Faith - Women's Group Wednesday, December 4, 7 p.m. in the FH

Scudder Circle Meeting Thursday, December 5, 12 noon, at CJ's Restaurant in Rhinebeck

Men's Breakfast Saturday, December 7, 8 a.m. location to be determined

Book Club. will meet in December, Date TBA, book to discuss, "In the Time of the Butterflies", by Julia Alvarez, in the fellowship hall

Finance Committee Meeting Monday, December 9, 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall

Property Meeting Tuesday, December 10, 7 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Old Dutch Village Garden Club Thursday, December 12, at 12:30 p.m. in the FH

Blue Christmas Service Wednesday, December 18, 7 p.m., at Christ Church Episcopal

Elders Meeting Thursday, December 19, 7 p.m. in Room 3

Consistory Meeting Thursday, December 19, 7:30 p.m., in the fellowship hall

Boy Scout Leader's Meeting Thursday, December 19, at 7 p.m. in room 4

Role Playing the Nativity at Sunday's Worship Service, December 22, in the sanctuary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service Tuesday, December 24, at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary

Christmas Day Wednesday, December 25, Deacon's Fund Food Pantry & the Church Office are closed.



Shepherds Page

DECEMBER 2024

CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS

So many Christmas songs have special meaning as well as heartfelt memories. Several songs and stories that I'd like to highlight that reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. The first song is C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S. If I remember correctly, Perry Como sang this. "When I was a youngster, Christmas meant one thing that I would be getting lots of toys that day. I learned a whole lot different when mother sat me down and taught me to spell Christmas this way....

C is for the Christ child born upon this day, H is for herald angels in the night, R means Our Redeemer, I means Israel, S is for the star that shown so bright, T is for the three wise men, they who traveled far, M is for the manger where he lay, A is for All He stands for, and S means shepherds came. And that is why there's a Christmas day."

The other story is about a soldier's deck of cards, and it goes like this. "This story is about a soldier in the North Africa Campaign in World War II. After heavy fighting, the men returned to camp. The next day, being Sunday, the Chaplain had set up a church service. The men were asked to take out their Bibles or Prayer Books. The Chaplain noticed one soldier looking at a deck of cards. After Service, he was taken by the Chaplain to see the Major. The Chaplain explained to the Major what he had seen. The Major told the young soldier he would have to be punished if he could not explain himself. The young soldier told the Major that during the battle he had neither a Bible or a Prayer Book so he would use the deck of cards and explained: You see Sir when I look at the ACE, it tells me that there is one God and no other. When I see the 2, it reminds me that there are two parts of the Bible, the Old and New Testament. The 3 tells me of the Trinity of God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit. The 4 reminds me of the Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When I see the 5, it tells me of the five unwise virgins who were lost and the five were saved. The 6 makes me mindful that God created the Earth in just six days and God said that it was good. God rested on the Seventh Day. As I look at the 8, it reminds me that God destroyed all life by water except for eight people, Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives. When I see the 9, I think of the nine lepers that God healed, there were ten in all but only one stopped to thank him. The 10 reminds me of the Ten Commandments carved in stone by the hand of God. The Jack makes me remember the Prince of Darkness. Like a roaring lion, he devours those that he can. When I look at the Queen, I see the blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. As I look at the last card, the King, it reminds me that Jesus Is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

There are 365 spots on a deck of cards and that is the number of days in each year. There are 52 cards to a deck and that is the number of weeks in a year. There are 12 picture cards and that is the number of months in a year. There are four different suits in a deck and that is the number of months in a quarter of a year. So, the young soldier then said to the Major, You see, Sir, that my intention was honorable. My deck of cards serves as my Bible, my Prayer Book, and my Almanac. A deck of cards should most importantly remind us that we need Jesus 365 days, 52 weeks, and 12 months a year. We should pray "4" others always. May you never look at a deck of cards the same way." This song was a narrative. It was done by Tex Ritter, Wink Martindale, and T.Texas Tyler. Please remind yourself, use these symbols to appreciate 'why there's a Christmas Day!' Also, don't worry about the PRESENTS under the tree but enjoy PRESENCE around the tree.

Hope all have a Blessed Christmas Season. Remember Jesus is the Reason for The Season. Respectfully submitted, JoAnn Fisher- Shepherd
May the peace of Christ Be with you all – Eileen Zeliph-Shepherd Coordinator

Shepherds Ministry serving St. Johns Reformed Church

**Desiree Albizu
Mary Hennessy
Marie Votava**

**Kayla Bell
Linda Neilson**

**JoAnn Fisher
Amie Parker**

**Denise Gilhooly
Stan Tremper**