



January 2024

JOURNAL

4th Quarter 2023 Retrospective

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2024

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Kate Beatty

Bill Browder

Kathi Horne

Anne Koehler

Rucht Lilavivat

Lee Phillips

Allen Pickel

Catherine Phillips, Clerk

Bill Archer, Finance Officer

McKenna Cox, Chancellor

Reneau Dubberley, Treasurer

A message from the Rector

I do not call you servants any longer,... but I have called you friends...

(John 15:15)

On a snowy and very cold weekend, your vestry and I, along with Deacon Cathy, gathered for retreat in the mountains of North Carolina to discern our mission and goals for 2024 and get to know one another.

This verse from John's gospel served as the starting point for our meditations, discernment, and work together. "I do not call you servants any longer...but I have called you friends..." Along with the gifts of peace, love, and joy which Jesus bequeaths and bestows upon us, Jesus also gives the gift of intimate friendship with him.

What does it mean to be friends of God? Like an intimate friend, God entrusts us with the deepest desires of his heart. And the inmost desire of God's heart is for us to know and share with others the healing power of love in a lonely world, whoever the "other" might be. "I have called you friends." Jesus says to his disciples. And he was also described by some as a "friend of tax collectors and sinners." And he also said "Love one another as I have loved you." Be a friend as I am and have been a friend to you.

The healing gift of love and friendship is a gift we can all offer. To one another. To strangers. To people in need who we serve. The need for friendship crosses all boundaries. The gift and joy of friendship can too. This is our vision and goal for 2024. We will we live into our mission and build our ministries so that we can grow in friendship with God, each other, and with people in need who we serve.

What kind of community do we want to create together? During our retreat, the vestry articulated and embraced a vision of St. John's as a diverse, compassionate community, centered on love for all people, a community in which all feel welcome and cared for and in which the gifts of all are called upon and honored. I hope this vision inspires you too; we all have something beautiful to add to this beloved community we will create together.

I give great thanks for the vestry of St. John's, for their leadership, wisdom, creativity, and generosity. And I look forward to growing in friendship with God, with you, and with the people we serve this year.

Faithfully,

Rev. Laura



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A Year in Review from the Annual Report (Rev. Laura)

Following is a snapshot of the past year and our life together as God's people. I encourage you to take a look at the full "Annual Report" that was distributed at the annual Parish meeting in November. You can view it by scanning the QR code at right or go to [stjohnstn.org/Publications/2023 Annual Report](http://stjohnstn.org/Publications/2023%20Annual%20Report)



Rally Day and Ministry Fair

Journalist and memoirist John Blake was our guest speaker; he inspired and fed us with his personal story of reconciliation, dismantling racism, and healing. The ministry fair was a lively event and great success, filling the narthex, chapel and hallways with the joy and energy of discovering new ways to learn, grow, participate, and enrich friendships among our fellow parishioners.

New Ministries Born

This year we saw the birth and growth of new ministries and fellowship opportunities in all areas of our life together.

Outreach: In partnership with Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), St. John's sponsored and welcomed the Sakhi family, refugees from Afghanistan, and have been supporting them in their resettlement in Johnson City. Two other members of their extended family have also immigrated under our sponsorship.

We marked the one year anniversary of our Streetside Food Pantry.

Though still a small percentage of our total budget, we more than doubled the budget for our outreach ministries.

The Pastoral Care Committee launched the Flower Ministry, which has been a beautiful and powerful expression of the ties of love, compassion and care that bind us together. Reaching out and going out in this simple, faithful, and powerful way is another example of love in action, and has touched hearts and brought encouragement to many people.

In Worship, we added a Blue Christmas service during Advent and held a healing service each Wednesday in Lent.

We now offer the sacrament of healing once a month at both Sunday services. Several new people have joined our liturgical ministries teams.

Other new ministries launched or reborn this year include Earth Guild, "Open Book" Book Club, Seamless Circle, and Library Guild. The Young Adult group is thriving. Greeters now serve at both Sunday morning services to welcome everyone who comes in our doors. Acolytes attended the National Acolyte Festival for the first time in many years. Additionally, a "small but mighty" group went on pilgrimage to visit a series of icons in North Carolina.

Organ Installation and Dedication

Among the many highlights and accomplishments of this year, the installation and dedication of the new organ and completion of the organ capital campaign stand out. We have acquired a beautiful new instrument, and we have done so without going into any debt. Thank you to all who have helped make this happen, start to finish.

Behind the Scenes: Great Faithfulness

New ministries, new growth and blossom ... but underneath is the steady drumbeat of great faithfulness and behind the scenes are the people who quietly keep church going day after day, week after week, year after year, generation after generation.

Thank you. Thank you for offering yourself – your gifts, your energies, your wisdom, your compassion, and your prayers, as God continues to nurture us to grow as a community of love offering hospitality and healing to all.

Life Transitions and Celebrations

Baptisms *We receive you into the household of God...*

Cathy Osborne, Craig Osborne

Confirmations *Strengthened, O Lord, for your service...*

Jennie Kate Carr, Daniel Cutshall, Chris Honeycutt, Finnigan Lilavivat, Cathy Osborne, Craig Osborne, Elizabeth Stillwell, Jeremy White

Marriages *Dearly Beloved...*

Michael Leslie Winfield and Rita Elizabeth Treanor Plemmons,
Charles Bradley Kinser and Aniela Kasprzak Suit

Deaths and Burials *For those we love but see no longer...*

Charles Pittman Cole, Evelyn E. Gatley Huyck, James Don Swartz, Carl Walter Sweatt, Bert Coates Bach

Message from the Senior Warden, Tom McGinnis

As one of our 2023 initiatives, the vestry started a welcoming program whereby at least one member of the vestry would be stationed at each service to welcome all, whether newcomers or oldtimers. We are hoping that our efforts will foster a movement of welcoming *throughout* the parish, so that everyone would make the effort to welcome each other and introduce themselves to anyone who they don't yet know.

Due to our small number and numerous other commitments, such as choir and serving in the altar party, we have not always had a member of the vestry to serve as a greeter at every service. Nonetheless, the vestry has committed to continue our program in the coming year, and we invite any interested members of the parish to join the ranks of official greeters. St John's has always been a welcoming church, and we hope this will only increase that perception.



Children's Education, Rae Grosserode



Children's Sunday School is going strong! In the fall we studied several prophets, as well as a few other Old Testament figures from the time of the conquest and exile of the Jewish kingdoms.

During the season of Advent we learned about many of the important people in the story of the Nativity.

This quarter we'll find out more about what the adult Jesus taught, with a close look at the Sermon on the Mount. Our curriculum is sequential, *but each lesson stands alone, so any child can join us any Sunday!* And don't forget to check out our bulletin board (in the hallway by the stairs) to admire the kids' terrific art responses.



Earth Guild, Shelley Stahlman



Happy New Year from St. John's Earth Guild! We take our lead from the mission priorities and ministries of General Convention, which in 2018 passed 19 resolutions in support of stewardship of the environment and creation care. In reviving the Earth Guild at St. John's, we are dedicated to prayerfully considering and implementing actions that support St. John's, individually and corporately, in becoming better stewards of God's Creation. So there are two parts: education and action. Collectively, even small steps can have a big impact.

Additionally, we hope to organize some group hiking opportunities in 2024 to enjoy the beautiful nature that surrounds us in east Tennessee. Watch for announcements in the weekly e-news, and please share your suggestions for activities and outings!

To learn more and/or to join the Earth Guild e-mail list, contact Shelley at shellstahl@hotmail.com or 423-725-2822.

Year-end Tax Tip*

If you have not taken all or part of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA account, you may be able to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution QCD directly to St. John's Endowment Fund.

The purpose of the Fund is to enable the Parish to fulfill its mission more completely by developing ministries beyond what is possible through its annual operating funds solely for the purpose of promotion, advancement, maintenance and support of the exclusively religious or charitable purposes of St. John's Episcopal Church. Endowment Committee members are Suzanne Donaldson, Bill Fryar and Emily Bidgood.

To learn more about the Endowment Fund and how to make a contribution, contact Suzanne Donaldson at sdlynx68@gmail.com or 423-292-6413. *Note: As this is not meant to be tax or legal advice, please consult with your financial advisor, CPA, or attorney regarding your specific situation.

St. John's Episcopal Church Endowment Fund is governed by The Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) which gives clear direction on the investment and spending policies of the fund.

Blessing of the Pets October 3



Annual Parish Meeting, November 17



At the annual parish meeting on November 17, leaders of ministries shared highlights of the year. Lots of good information, good food and fellowship.

It was a lively event, held in the Great Hall, capped off by Rev. Laura presenting rocks – and potatoes – to several individuals in appreciation

for their volunteer work that is essential, yet for the most part, is behind the scenes.

For the full report covering programs, ministries, worship, Christian education, faith formation, music, facilities, finance, administration, and more, visit

[stjohnstn.org/Publications/2023 Annual Report](http://stjohnstn.org/Publications/2023%20Annual%20Report)



Organ Dedication and Recital, November 17

Our nave was filled to capacity for the performance by renowned organist Tate Addis.

His repertoire demonstrated the vast amount of tonal colors and dynamic levels the instrument has to offer.



Organ builder Patrick J. Murphy came from Pennsylvania to celebrate the occasion with us.

Meeting and greeting, honoring and welcoming, with pancakes of course!



Sadaf & Reshad



Zarlasht & Sodaba

Nothing says "Happy to meet you" better than a pancake breakfast hosted by the men of St. John's.

The occasion, on November 5 between services, served as an opportunity for all in our parish to meet our new friends from Afghanistan and vice versa.



Frank & Benny on kitchen duty

Nine Lessons & Carols, December 17

What has become an annual tradition at St. John's has its roots at King's College, Cambridge, where the first Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was held on Christmas Eve 1918. For our program this past December, we had readers from our local community as well as the parish. The music was beautiful, and a lovely reception followed. Thank you to all who participated and helped put the program together.

Nativities from around the World

For the month of December, over 250 nativities collected from around the world were on display at St. John's and Central Baptist Church. The display was in large part the personal collection of the late Pattie Browder, wife of Dr. Bill Browder. Thank you, Dr. Browder, for giving us the opportunity to host the display. And thank you to Bucky Farnor and John Edwards, for so artfully setting up the exhibit as to showcase the unique nature of each nativity.



Christmas Services

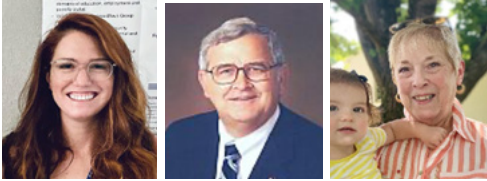


Thinking of You: Well-wishes & Condolences

The Flower Ministry is in full-bloom at St. John's! Since August 2023, volunteers have arranged and delivered 75 bouquets plus 12 Christmas baskets to fellow parishioners. If you would like to participate in this ministry, or if you know of someone who would be comforted by this expression of pastoral care, please contact Jackie Mabrey at jackiemabrey@gmail.com or 423-791-4619.

Similarly, dozens of "care packages" have been sent to away-from-home students. To share names and addresses of students and/or military personnel who would enjoy receiving a care package from their home church, contact Rita Plemmons Winfield at retp62@gmail.com or 423-388-5051.

Vestry News




Congratulations to our newly-elected Vestry members, pictured at left: Kate Beatty, Bill Browder, and Theresa Bryant.

These three join six vestry members who have remaining terms: Tom McGinnis, Kathi Horne, Anne Koehler, Rucht Lilavivat, Lee Phillips, and Allen Pickel. Vestry Officers for 2024 are

Tom McGinnis (Senior Warden), Theresa Bryant (Junior Warden), Reneau Dubberley (Treasurer), Catherine Phillips (Clerk of the Vestry), and Bill Archer (Finance Officer).

Many thanks to those whose vestry terms expired at the end of 2023: Bill Archer, Hugh Webb, and Rita Plemmons Winfield. We also thank Bob Cooper, who served for six years as our Finance Officer and Chair of the Finance Committee, for his wise and gifted leadership. Bill Archer has agreed to fill those roles beginning in January 2024.

 In case you're wondering, this Journal as well as past issues can be viewed in full color at stjohnstn.org/Publications

St. Nick, Bishop of Myra, came to visit with us again this year! Did you see him?



Return Service Requested

