



ST. JOHN'S JOURNEY

LIVING IN HOPE † UNITED IN FAITH † LED BY LOVE



February 2024

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Pastor's Corner

Dear people of St. John's,

Finally winter has appeared along with the colder temperatures and snow. Seems to me, each winter, we are confronted with the dilemma of, do we cancel church or do we attempt continue with a service, depending on weather conditions. In my opinion it is always better to err on the side of safety, especially when the roads and walkways are snow covered and slippery.

We have gone through another year and our annual meeting laid out the groundwork for another successful year. I have never experienced a better annual meeting and our vestry and other church leaders must be proud of their accomplishments, not only for the church, but for every member of St. John's. To be successful all members are called to contribute and it is plain to see....They have.

Despite the weather conditions we are approaching Ash Wednesday and Lent, probably faster than most of us would appreciate. Epiphany will be concluding with Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain-top, along with Moses, Elijah, and three con-

fused disciples. We also hear the voice from the cloud, "listen to him."

The readings include images of light and mountains. In the Bible, significant religious events occur on a mountain, because God was described as dwelling above the earth, and when appearing, only coming down as far as the top of a mountain. Today people speak of having "mountain-top experiences," when experiencing a significant spiritual event.

God is not only brilliant light, but also a cloud. In the Bible the cloud is a mysterious sign of the presence of God. You could say, it is as if God covers the earth, brings life, affects much, and then suddenly vanishes. You could also say, as a cloud, God rains down the waters of baptism.

Lent is a season of repentance, renewal, and baptism. Yes, we will have baptisms on Easter Sunday; however, I invite each of you to read (BCP, 264-265, and BCP, 379. The prayer book has given us a



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St. John's Journey is published monthly. We're looking for your photos and articles. Please email them to "stjohnschurchdryden@gmail.com" with the word "Newsletter" in the subject line. Deadline for March is February 23



Happy Birthday!

Kathy Wagester
Ida Lynn Dodd

Vestry Notes

Dear Friends,

We had a wonderful Annual Meeting on Jan. 21st. Great pot-luck (of course), good exchange of information and some ideas to carry forward. There's a summary of the meeting and a year-end Treasurer's report in this issue. I think we're off to a good start for the year.

Can you believe Lent is about to begin? I thought we might have a special Valentine's/Shrove pot-luck the Sunday before Ash Wednesday (Feb. 11th). Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day this year (February 14) and service will be at 6:00 pm. And we have some classes coming up. Fr. Harold will start some Taste & See classes with a Lenten theme. The first session will be on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 6pm. And Deacon Beckett

will hold a class on Sunday, Feb. 25th on LGBTQ+ 101. And if you want to help Beckett and Kay out at the Inclusion Center, there's a work day scheduled for Saturday, March 2nd that sounds like fun. Good food is guaranteed. And the company will be outstanding!



As you will see later, we have a full Vestry and volunteers for the Diocesan Conventions later this year. I am so grateful for everyone who helps us with these efforts. And for everyone who sees something that needs doing and just makes it happen. We've had a great year even when we couldn't see how that might happen. But the Holy Spirit was working for us all the while. I'm excited to see what the Spirit has in mind for 2024.

Peace & Blessings,

Becky

Pastor's Corner continued. . .

master plan for our Lenten observances. The mention of joy is the most important. Joy and renewal by Word and sacraments are as important as prayer, fasting, and self denial.

The first day of Lent has its own special liturgy, which hopefully you will read. We are called to remember a deep holy tension on Ash Wednesday. We are called to remember we are creatures who are invited into eternal life by a loving God. We are

called to remember we are sinners and we are made of dust and we will return to dust. Let Ash Wednesday sit in the tension of being dust and a beloved child of God. Both are true and Ash Wednesday calls us to remember.

My thoughts and prayers are that you will experience a thoughtful and holy Lent.

In God's Love,

Rev. Harold +

Inclusion Center Work Day – Let's go North!

When: Saturday, March 2nd 9AM – 5PM

Where: Mio, Michigan – roughly 2.5 hours from Dryden
If folks are interested, we can arrange for an overnight stay Friday night and return Saturday evening.



Review of the Annual Meeting

Many of us met on Sunday, January 21st for our Annual Meeting. The first part of the meeting focused on Vestry elections and Diocesan Convention delegates. The results are:

Vestry Members Rotating Off (with our gratitude for their generosity)

Ina Dockham

Wes Wagester

New Vestry Members: (with our thanks for their willingness)

Mary Cameron

Neil Hargrave (returning after a year as Vestry Secretary)

2024 Vestry Members and Designations:

Becky Foster	Sr. Warden
Jack Dodd	Jr. Warden
Clerk	Neil Hargrave
Secretary	Connie Ogg
Treasurer	Andrea Carstens
At Large	Mary Cameron
	Russ Underwood

Delegates and Alternates to the Diocesan Conventions

Delegates	Alternates
Neil Hargrave	Mary Cameron
Kaye LeClaire	Becky Foster
Beth Ann Tesluk	Connie Ogg
Russ Underwood	

Thanks to these folks for volunteering their time and consideration for this very important series of Conventions.

The Sr. Warden Report included a pictorial review of 2023's key events and experiences. The key words for 2023 were *Dismayed, Sustained and*

Blessed. The surprising departure of Fr. Tom Manney was certainly dismaying but St. John's was sustained throughout the year by Rev. Mary Jo Schuetz, Rev. Barb Cavin and special liturgies. Our concerts, garage sales, Xmas Bazaar and outreach continued to do well. But most important, this congregation was a blessing throughout the year. Each of us tried just a little harder to be there for each other. The end of the year brought the blessing of having Fr. Harold join St. John's.



2024 will include more concerts, community events and outreach. We hope to have a Sunshine Service again this year. And Fr. Harold is already lining up Lenten Classes for Feb. and March. We are planning a post-service class on February 25th on LGBTQ+ 101 facilitated by Beckett LeClaire. And we may have a field trip March 2nd to help Beckett and Kaye's fix-up/clean-up work at the Inclusion Center in Mio. So far, the new year looks like fun!

The Jr. Warden report was appropriately lengthy. Jack Dodd and Ida Lynn have been very busy this year with multiple projects – Finishing installation of the mechanized bell, creating a new cross for our Easter service, painting the front sign, sprucing up the garden spaces, refurbishing the Narthex ceiling and cleaning up the paneling and generally organizing the space, continued efforts to improve our wiring and bring things up to code, getting the sanctuary doors refinished and hung. And then there's the ongoing battle with weeds in our parking lot! We all appreciate the work these two members have done. There was a special recognition in the meeting to let them know we see and value their contributions.

In 2024, there will be continued work on the Narthex – some light colored paint on the upper walls to brighten up the space, more wiring work for a new light in the Narthex and separate breakers for the furnace and sump pump in the basement, investigating the cost of painting OR siding the exterior of the church, initial estimates for blacktopping the parking lot. And there's always unexpected items that appear during the year. There's no doubt that the building and grounds are in good hands.

Annual Meeting Review Continued

Treasurer's Report – This is covered in another article. Bottom line looks great! Budget for 2024 was approved.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Harold expressed his joy in being part of St. John's and outlined some of his plans for 2024. He talked about the Lenten classes, a chance to use "Enriching Our Worship" in our liturgy, his enthusiasm for going out to visit folks who can't always get to church. He is beginning a weekly prayer service at The Bell's assisted living facility in Almont this month. This could definitely grow!

General Discussion/Suggestions:

Kathy Wagester asked for a volunteer for the Card Ministry.

Connie Ogg asked that we include BCP page number references in our service bulletins.

Kitty Underwood suggested that we place copies of the bible in the pews – perhaps one per pew.

Many thanks to the participants for their careful attention and for the MARVELOUS pot-luck that everyone enjoyed. I can't wait to see what 2024 has in store for St John's.

LGBTQ+ 101 Class

Sunday, February 25th

After Service

Facilitated by Rev. Deacon Beckett LeClaire

Many of us don't even know where to start learning about this topic. Deacon Beckett will help us with that and especially give us ideas about what would make members of this community feel that we truly welcome them to our family of faith. We've been trying to get this scheduled for months now. This is something you don't want to miss.



Ash Wednesday

February 14th

Service: 6 pm

Valentine's/Shrove Sunday Potluck

When: **Sunday
February 11th After
Service**

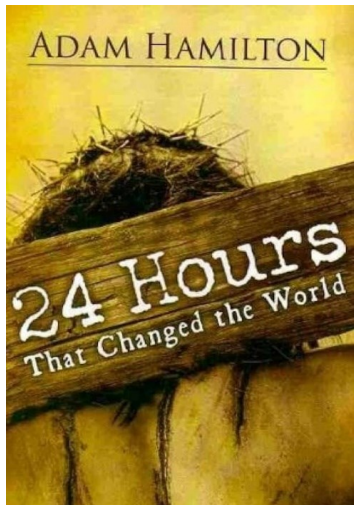
Let's have a chance to share sweet things with each other before Lent begins. If you're feeling like pancakes, go for it! Or if you want to bring something Valentiny, by all means! Or maybe you could do both! This will be our last chance until the end of March (Easter)!



Remember St. John's in your will:

Please consider helping the mission and ministry of St. John's by remembering the church in your will. You can do so by using the following wording:

"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to St. John's Episcopal Church, a non-profit church, with the current address of 4074 S. Mill St., Dryden, MI 48428, and its successor, the greater of \$ _____, or _____ percentage of my gross estate, to be used in such manner as determined by its vestry."



Taste & See - Lenten Classes

Fr. Harold plans to hold a series of gatherings focused on the book “24 Hours That Changed the Word” by Adam Hamilton. The book itself is “40 Days of Reflection” with a short chapter and prayer for each day of Lent. There is a companion video that we will watch that will open up discussion for the group. And we’ll have some light nibbles as part of the evening.



Treasurer’s Report

We finished 2023 with a totally awesome bottom line.

Pledge Donations: We had some donations **well above** amounts originally pledged. 2023 donations were \$7,000 higher than expected. The generosity of this congregation is amazing. Total Income includes funding from the Curacy Pgm and our concerts.

Expenses – The biggest expenses were:

Diocesan Tithe	\$6,718
Parish Administrator Wages	\$6,300
Utilities	\$5,332
Building Insurance	\$3,831
Supply Priest	\$3,468
Music Director Wages	\$2,615

Year End 2023	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Better or Worse than Budget
Income	\$59,200	\$71,572	\$12,372
Expenses	\$59,751	\$52,904	\$6,846
Unspent Funds	-\$550	\$18,667	\$19,218

Budget Breakers – Over budget

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising & Web 	\$1,509 Over by \$509	You would be surprised how expensive newspaper advertising is. We will try to be smarter about where and when we use them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education - Adult 	\$972 Over by \$472.58	This is from the College for Congregational Development that Becky & Ina attended in July. Info from the Diocese came well after our 2023 budget was set. We do not plan to attend in 2024



Budget Helpers – Under budget

• Utilities	Under by \$1,668	Thank you, Mother Nature! This is always difficult to predict. Better under by a bunch than over by a bunch
• Lawn/Snow/Trash	Under by \$ 1,349	This is related to minimal snow removal last year. Similar to the point above – difficult to predict.
• Maintenance	Under by \$1,143	Some of the work done this year came from Restricted Funds so this account was not utilized much.
• Office Supplies	Under by \$1,035	We had a couple of lucky breaks with supplies this year. 2024 budget is lower

Restricted Funds

These funds represent donations with specific instructions OR funds for projects that we have been saving for and using when appropriate. These funds are different from budgeted accounts which use pledge donations when needed to pay the bills. We maintain Restricted Funds monies in the bank.

The Salary Allocation Account was a place holder to allow us to “pretend” we were spending money on Clergy salary even though we did not have a priest yet. That way we kept our budget as a whole ready to accommodate that expense when the time came. We will discontinue that approach in 2024 and use normal budget expense accounts to pay salary related costs.

Largest Donations	Largest Disbursements
Curacy Program - \$11,017	Curacy Program - \$12,382
Salary Allocation -\$14,388 from monthly budget allocation. This will be discontinued in 2024	Bell Project \$23,850
Bell Project - \$10,000	OTR - \$864
Christmas Bazaar Proceeds - \$1,415	Vestments \$852
Al Siever’s Memorial Donation \$5,000	



Current Balances

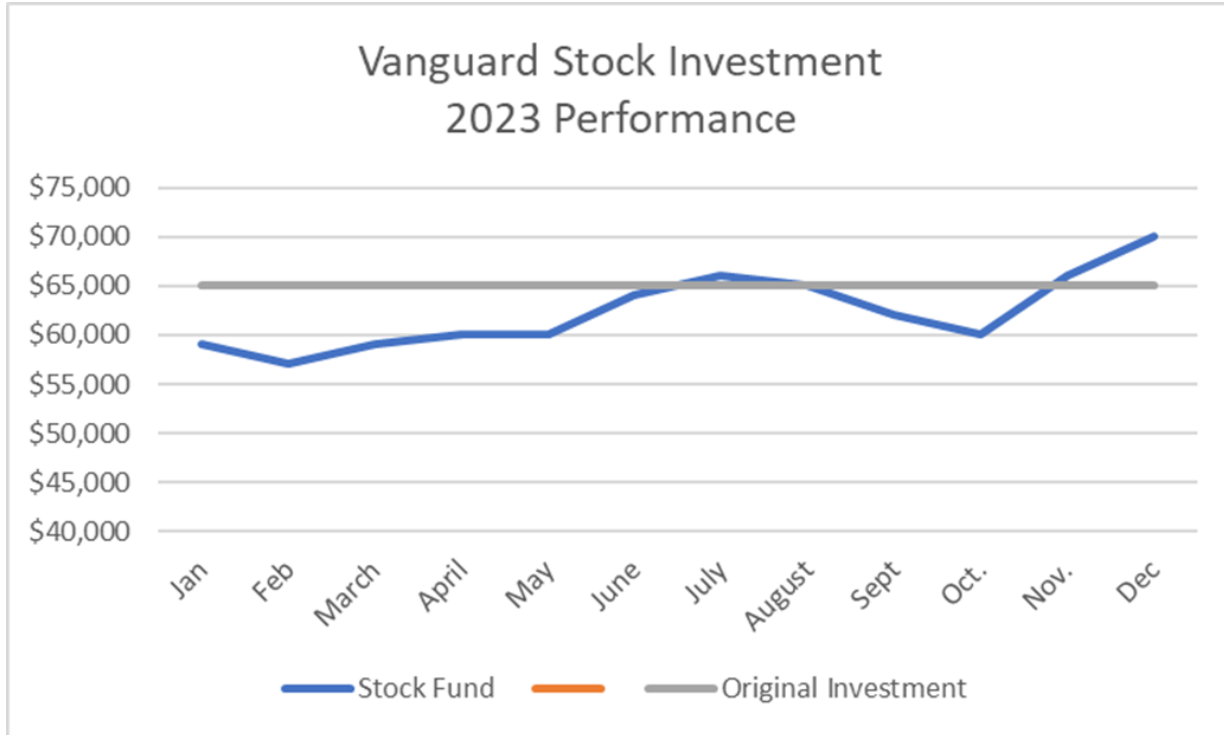
2024 Budget

	2024 Estimate	Change from 2023 Actuals	
Pledge Donations	\$66,000	-\$624	Many of our members have increased their pledge levels. Many thanks
Expenses	\$64,650	+\$4,900	This increase is from the addition of Clergy Compensation to our other expenses.
Unspent Funds	\$1,350	A Lot!!!	But that’s because we had such a bounty in 2023. Modest assumptions for 2024 keep us in the black.

The detail for the proposed budget was shared at the Annual Meeting and is available to those who were absent. There is some wiggle room here for modest increases in some of the accounts. The proposed budget was approved by the congregation.

Investments

Vanguard Stock Fund



Another volatile year but the uptick in December has us above initial investment or \$65,000 with a return on that original investment of 7% and 14% since the beginning of the 2023. Current value of this account is \$69,607.

CD Investments

This reduces exposure to market volatility while continuing to grow our funds.

We are trying to find the right balance between stocks and CD's.

CD Holder	Rate of Return	Duration	Amount Invested	Maturity Date	Funds Generated
Vanguard	4.75%	12 months	\$21,000	Feb. 2024	\$998
Oxford Bank	5.27%	8 months	\$10,000*	May 2024	\$351
Oxford Bank	5.35%	12 months	\$10,000	August 2024	\$535

Total amount in stocks and CDs is \$109,607. Funds in checking account – just under \$40,000

The goal for these funds is to eventually fund some or all of clergy payroll with dividends. We may also need these funds for major projects or emergency repairs.

Overall – we are in very good shape financially. Many thanks to all who have been faithful in fulfilling their pledges and to those who have been so generous with unexpected donations. God bless us, every one.

Recipe

Hash Brown Casserole

From Connie Ogg

Ingredients:

- 2# bag of shredded hash browns
- 1 c Diced Onion
- 1-2 cups Cheddar Shreds
- 1 pt Sour Cream
- 1 can cream of celery or chicken soup
- 1 stick of butter



Directions:

Mix together Cheddar Shreds, Sour Cream, Soup and Butter in a casserole dish and heat in the oven until cheese and butter are melted. Stir in potatoes and onion.

Bake at 375 degrees for 1 hour. If desired, top with more cheese or crushed potato chips near the end of baking time.



Ministry Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lector</u>	<u>Eucharistic Minister</u>	<u>Crucifer</u>	<u>Worship Leader</u>	<u>Video</u>	<u>Counting Member 1</u>	<u>Counting Member 2</u>
Feb 4	Tammy			Neil	Sherry		Russ
Feb 11	Wes	Neil	Jack	Fr Schneider	Wes	Russ	Becky
Feb 18	Ina			Rev. LeClaire	Becky	Neil	Jack
Feb 25	Kay	Jack	John	Fr. Schneider	Ina	Jack	Connie
Mar 3	Neil			Becky	Ida Lynn		
Mar 10	Jack	Rev LeClaire	Neil	Fr. Schneider	Sherry	Connie	
Mar 17	Rev LeClaire			Kitty	Wes		Becky
Mar 24	Kay	Mary	Jack	Fr. Schneider	Becky	Russ	Becky

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