



## ST. JOHN'S JOURNEY

*LIVING IN HOPE + UNITED IN FAITH + LED BY*



January 2024

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## Pastor's Corner

Dear people of St. John's,

Happy New Year! A new year has arrived and like the year before it, we approach this new year with much anticipation. Many of us begin January 1<sup>st</sup>, with goals, hopes, dreams, and sometimes even a plan, to accomplish things we feel are important in our lives. This list of resolutions can be endless, and could include exercise routines, dieting, progress at work, and more time spent with family. Goals and resolutions are a great way to start the year and it is hoped we can maintain a balance to achieve them.

For Christians, the start of a new year arrives with reminders to refresh ourselves with the glorious promises God has made to his people through his word, the Bible. A new year is a chance to renew our commitments to seek God and to share the "good news" of Jesus Christ with others and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The Scriptures are foundational truths which each of us believe. They are beacons of hope, not only for the new year, but also for our eternal future with God. I pray we can all make this new year the start of an eternity changing journey with our heavenly Father.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their participation in our Advent Study. We traveled a journey of approximately eighty miles, walking the road to

Bethlehem. We accompanied Joseph and Mary to Jesus' Holy birth place. The road we traveled was not nearly as difficult as the one the Holy Family traveled. Each participant learned fascinating insight on the most amazing moment in church history. Please plan to make the Advent Study a part of your Christmas plans this year (2024).

We are also planning a Lenten Study, hopefully with videos and study guides. It would be great to maintain the same attendance as the Advent Study. Please plan to attend. More information will follow.

We are also anticipating a baptism for Easter; Not just one, not two, but four. It is pleasing to know God is at work in our community and in this small church. Praise the Lord!

As the people of your hand and the people of your church, we approach you, God, in deep humility and deep gratitude. May we be a reflection of your image in all that we are and all that we do. We are in awe of your glory and majesty.

In God's Love,

Rev. Harold +



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## Editor: Becky Foster

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 February is January 26th.



**Happy Birthday!**

Linda Neros

## Vestry Notes

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I hope your Christmas and New Year celebrations were festive and not too tiring. December at St. John's was a wonderful and busy month. I think that's evident from the pictures you'll see in this issue. I am so grateful that so many people join in to help when they see the opportunity. There are many to thank and I try to do so, but if I missed someone, please forgive me and know that the gratitude is there.

January is a new start for a new year. This year, our Annual Meeting will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month, January 14<sup>th</sup>. We plan to have a pot-luck before the meeting proper. I hope all of you can join us. It's a fun gathering and we need your input and support. I'll cover 2023's achievements and memorable moments and discuss what 2024 might hold then. If you have anything you would like to discuss, please let me know and I'll be sure to include it in the agenda.

My new year's prayer is one of gratitude for being part of such a wonderful congregation and I pray that each of us feels God's love and presence in the coming year.



Peace & Blessings,

*Becky*



**Annual Meeting: Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>  
after Eucharist Service**

It's time for us to review 2023 and talk about 2024. The meeting will be in the Parish Hall and include a pot-luck, so it's bound to be good. Mark your calendars and be sure to come.



## Remember St. John's in your will:

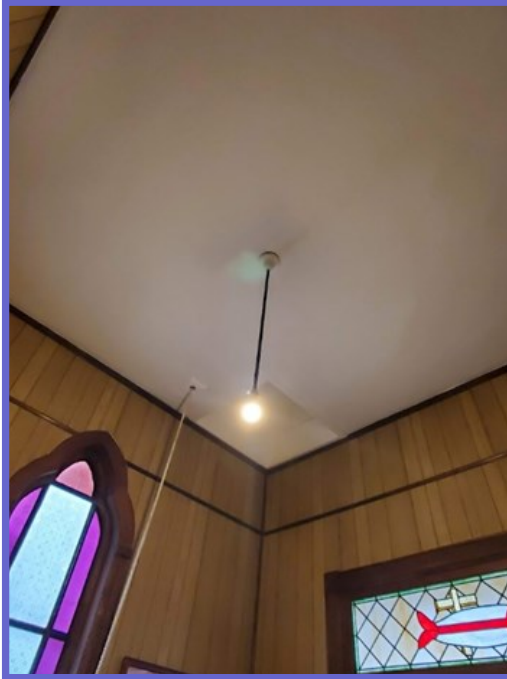
Please consider helping the mission and ministry of St. John's by remembering the church in your will. You can do so by using the following wording:

"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."

## Have you noticed the Narthex?

The room at the top of the ramp, just inside the front door?

You may remember how the Narthex ceiling was cracked and stained from a water leak years ago. Jack Dodd has been steadily resurfacing the drywall and finally got to where he could paint. And while he was doing that, Ida Lynn started organizing the table, spray painted the stool, rehung our pictures (the large picture was only hanging on the wall by a thread!) and THEN she cleaned and waxed the paneling until it just glowed! What a way to welcome new people to our church. A great big THANK YOU to Jack and Ida Lynn.



**This is the improved ceiling. A new light fixture is coming in the New Year.**

**Notice the stacking organizer for all the envelopes and handouts – so much easier to use.**



**It's welcoming and peaceful. And looks so much bigger!**



## Congratulations Wes!

The Lions of Michigan have selected Wes Wagester to receive the S.A. Dodge Distinguished Service Award. This is the highest award that the Lions of Michigan presents. The motto of the Lions Clubs International is "We Serve", the first three letters spell WES. Congratulations, Wes. We can't imagine anyone who would be more deserving.

## Wanted: Delegates to Diocesan Conventions in 2024



We need people to sign up to represent St. John's at both of these meetings.

This year is special. There are TWO diocesan conventions.

First Convention: Location: Grand Blanc

Date: Saturday, March 16

Focus: Deciding vote on merging Eastern & Western Dioceses

Second Convention: Location: Mt. Pleasant

Dates: Friday & Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

Focus: Work generated by March decision and normal diocesan matters.

The first meeting is an easy drive. The second will probably mean an overnight stay but St. John's will cover the cost (assuming this is approved at our Annual Meeting). Please consider volunteering as a primary delegate or as an alternate. There are important decisions being made and St. John's needs to participate. Thank you.

November 2023	Monthly Budget	Monthly Actual	Better or Worse than Budget	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Better or Worse than Budget
<b>Income</b>	\$4,933	\$7,385	<b>\$2,452</b>	\$54,267	\$66,186	<b>\$11,919</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	\$5,008	\$3,082	<b>\$1,925</b>	\$54,743	\$47,480	<b>\$7,263</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	-\$74	\$4,303	<b>\$4,377</b>	-\$476	\$18,706	<b>\$19,182</b>

### Financial Updates for Financials through November 2023

November is the most recent month to be reviewed by the Vestry. The basic figures (full numbers only, rounded up) are above:

Pledge donations for November significantly higher than expectations. This is due, in part, to some members donating extra this month. Our YTD income continues well in excess of budget. We are so grateful for this ongoing support.

Expenses for the month were lower than budget expectations. Warmer weather has helped a bit both for utilities and for snow clearing. Even if December shows higher spending, we'll be in great shape for year end.

The YTD Net Profit number continues to be amazing! What an abundance financial blessings!

#### Restricted Accounts

Al Seivers' family donated \$5,000 in his memory saying to use it as we needed. The Vestry voted to use some of these funds to add a new

figure to our outdoor nativity set. We will be sure to let Al's family know about this gift in Al's memory.

#### Vanguard Investment Account – as of November 30, 2023

Vanguard Total Stock ETF – Current value \$66,113. Up quite a bit from last month and above our original investment by about \$5,000.

CD - \$21,000. Annual rate of 4.75% maturing Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. This will remain stable until next year when interest is added to the amount. Automatic reinvestment of CDs isn't offered at Vanguard. The principal amount for a maturing CD will automatically sweep to the linked money market at maturity. Clients who wish to reinvest must purchase a new CD.

Total value of account is \$87,261.

#### CD at Oxford Bank –

\$10,000 CD at annual rate of 5.35% maturing in August 2024

\$10,000 CD at 5.27% annual rate (actual yield for 8 months is 5.18%), maturing in May of 2024.



## Christmas Bazaar – We Sold Lots of Stuff!



dled the cash box with skill and patience) and everyone else who helped out. The event raised about \$1,400 – much of it free will donations so that is impressive! We'll do it again next year. While you're taking down your Christmas decorations, maybe set some aside while you remember it? I know that's what I need to do!

As you can see, we had several tables covered in Christmas decorations as well as tables of baked goods AND local honey to sell. At the start of the morning, it looked a little daunting. And then the people started to arrive. There were times when it was quite busy and times when it was pretty quiet. Many shoppers were local but some were from a distance. And some were repeat attendees. Thanks to the many hands that made this day possible. Ina, Connie, Dianne, Yvonne, Mary and John (who handled the cash box with skill and patience) and everyone else who helped out.

## Longest Night Shines



Once again we gathered on the longest night of the year to honor feelings of loss and sadness during the holiday season through prayer and song. Lighting the candles to remember those who we miss is a poignant moment and a beautiful one.





## Christmas Eve

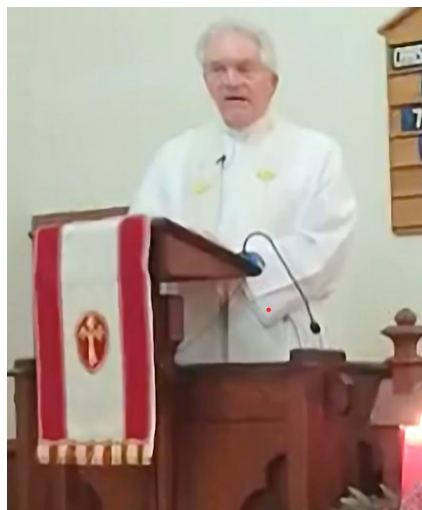


We now have flameless candles for the windows thanks to Mary Cameron. Lovely glow and no fire worries.



Audrey LeClaire brought Baby Jesus to the front and placed Him in the manger.

Sorry for the blurry image – my screen shot tools couldn't adjust.



Fr. Harold's first Christmas Eve at St. John's





Christmas morning, some of us gathered for a pot-luck brunch. In true St. John's style, the food was delicious and abundant. Everyone put on some festive décor and we had a white-elephant gift game after we were too full to eat any more. It was lots of fun! Maybe we'll do it again next year.

## Christmas Day Brunch



By the way, the mimosas were non-alcoholic AND delicious

Dianne Bishop and her son Dave in festive attire



Jack and Kathy working on the scratch-off lotto games they won in the White Elephant.



Notice the clean plates and the smiles. It was a scrumptious brunch.



Wes and Ida Lynn plotting more fun for Next year...



*A possible New Year's resolution may be to improve your prayer life. This article has several suggestions that can be used together or in smaller chunks. Are you up for it?*

## A Simple Method To Strengthen Your Prayer Life

by [Jesse Johnson](#) from The Cripplegate website

Today I want to share with you a simple way to deepen your prayer life. It requires discipline, time to pray (of course), and a desire to grow in godliness.

I learned this method of prayer during my first semester at seminary, when I found myself enrolled in prayer class. In retrospect it makes sense that a seminary would have a class on prayer, but at the time, I found it surprising. Even more surprising was the grading system. Most of our grade was derived from our daily prayers. We had to pray for an hour a day—every day—then record our prayers in outline form, turn them in, and the professor would grade them.


When confronted with the syllabus, I was shocked by two things, and I assume they are the same two things you are thinking of. First, is it even right to grade someone's prayers? Turns out, the answer is *yes*, it is right. Or at the very least, it was helpful. Dr. Ross cup would slap cheesy prayer right out of class. I remember one student (now pastor Tony Arnds) say, "My paper bleeds it has so much red ink on it." The red ink was daring us — "Go on," it would say. "I DARE you to say, 'Lord just be with so-and-so.' What does that even mean?"

Over the semester, I learned to be thankful for the grading. It helped make my prayers precise by challenging me to think through what it is exactly I'm doing in prayer. What am I asking for, and why? It turns out that knowing a theologically precise professor with his apparently infinite supply of red ink was on the reading end of my prayers helped make me pray in a more thoughtful way than if I was simply praying to God. Obviously there is much wrong with that sentence, but somehow it was the truth—or at least it was the reality of Dr. Ross cup's prayer class.

The second surprise: AN HOUR? How am I supposed to pray for an hour a day? Doesn't he know that I'm a super busy seminary student? And, no, we weren't allowed to split it up. An hour, all at once. That was just the way it was.

At first, the idea of praying for an hour was daunting. I didn't really know where to begin. Stop watch, check. An hour of time set aside...ok...Dear God...ummm...ok, its been 30 seconds. This isn't going well.

One of our assigned books for that class helped. It was [An Hour that](#)

[Changes the World: A Practical Plan for Personal Prayer](#), by Dick Eastman. In it, he suggests that Christians should make it their aim to pray for an hour a day. He derives this suggestion from [Matthew 26:40](#) , where Jesus asks, "Could you not watch with me for one hour?"

Eastman says the best way to pray for an hour is to split up the hour into 12 blocks of five minutes, then pray with a timer, and pray through the different blocks, five minutes at a time. Now Eastman gives his 12 blocks of time (praise, waiting, confession, Scripture, watching, intercession, petition, thanksgiving, singing, meditation, listening, and a second round of praise):

I put this into practice, and over the course of the years, I have morphed the list. So while my twelve blocks have changed, I still use the same basic approach to prayer. Here is what my list looks like now:

1. Praise
2. Confession
3. Thanksgiving
4. Intercession (things in my own life)
5. Petition (for others)
6. Missions
7. Church
8. Evangelism
9. Family
10. Scripture/Meditation
11. Prayer through the passage
12. Singing



So practically, this is what it looks like. I'll close the door in my office, grab my list (I have this written on the front page of my Bible), and while I have graduated from the timer approach, I do still keep one eye on a clock. Then I spend five minutes doing each of the following:

**Praise**—if you are familiar with the ACTS acronym, the first twenty minutes basically follows that. I'll spend five minutes praying in light of God's attributes. I'll focus on one or two that are particularly

*Continued on page 9*





Using memorial funds for Donne Lou Haynes and Al Seivers, we found new additions for our outdoor nativity scene – a shepherd AND a camel. Now the three kings have an easier time getting to the manger. The whole scene itself is just lovely – especially at night. I just love how the shadow of the stable shines on the front of the church.



## The Nativity Scene Has Some New Faces!

**Praise**—if you are familiar with the ACTS acronym, the first twenty minutes basically follows that. I'll spend five minutes praying in light of God's attributes. I'll focus on one or two that are particularly on my mind that day. For these five minutes I try to pray like David in [2 Samuel 7:18-29](#).

**Confession**—Here I spend some time confessing sins to the Lord. I examine my heart and pray that God would reveal sins of both commission and omission, that I then bring before the Lord, confident of his forgiveness.

1. **Thanksgiving**—at around the ten minute mark, I begin thanking God for things that he has done and prayers that he has answered. It actually takes self-control to hold this section off, as my thanksgiving often creeps into my praise. But I aim for it here.

2. **Petition** (my own life)—at this point, I pray for things for my own life. I ask for wisdom for what is going on at home, at church, or for events I have coming up even that day.

3. **Intercession** (for others)—I have a little journal that I've used to keep track of prayer requests from other people. I'll spend time praying through it, or through our church's prayer list. I keep this focused on others.

4. **Missions**—Here I pray for our church's missionaries, and particularly for the ones that my wife and I support. Honestly, this is probably my favorite part of the hour. I love thinking about how the God who hears my prayers from Washington DC is the same God who rules the Chadian desert, the Genevan suburbs, and Bhutanese mountains. All the stars are above me, but under him, and I know that our missionaries in many ways depend on our prayers.

5. **Church**—After praying for our missionaries, I then pray for the two ministries I'm involved in: Immanuel Bible Church and The Master's Seminary. I pray for our elders, and church unity. I pray for the professors and the students. This five minutes goes pretty fast.

6. **Evangelism**—Then I turn my attention to evangelistic opportunities. This is probably the hardest for me, because these five minutes are the hardest to keep them from being redundant. It can easily seem that I'm praying for the same people day-in and day-out.

7. **Family**—I've added this section in the last few years. I've found it helpful to keep my prayers for my family all in one section. I pray for my daughters, for my wife, for our parenting. There is no shortage of stuff to pray for here.

8. **Scripture Meditation**—This is first time I open the Bible; I've found that if I open it earlier, I have a hard time getting back to praying. I'll read a Psalm or a prayer, or maybe a chapter from a prophet, and then just focus on what the Lord was doing in that prayer, and imagine how it was answered.

9. **Scripture prayer**—Then I'll go back and spend five minutes praying through the passage I'd just been meditating on. Thanking God for what he did, and asking God for things in my own life that reflect on how I see his will in light of the chapter I've just spent five minutes meditating on.

**Hymn**—I'll close by either singing (if I'm alone in the office) or by prying through the lyrics of hymn.

*Voila*—one hour of prayer.

If you are having a hard time deepening your prayer life, let me commend to you this approach. Your list of may vary—you might like some of Eastman's categories that I vetoed for example. The point is that a large chunk of time is quickly filled when it is divided. The act of dividing up your prayers makes you more intentional and thoughtful about their content. And, as I learned from Dr. Rosscup, the more precise your prayers, the more you appreciate the answers.

# Ministry Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson Readers</u>	<u>Eucharistic Minister</u>	<u>Crucifer</u>	<u>Worship Leader</u>	<u>Videographer</u>	<u>Vestry Counter 1</u>	<u>Vestry Counter 2</u>
1/7/2024	Kay			Becky	Wes	Neil	Jack
1/14/2024	Jack	Mary	John	Fr Schneider	Becky	Jack	Connie
1/21/2024	Mary			Kitty	Ina		
1/28/2024	Margaret	Rev LeClaire	Neil	Fr Schneider	Ida Lynn	Connie	
2/4/2024	Tammy			Neil	Sherry		Russ
2/11/2024	Wes	Neil	Jack	Fr Schneider	Wes	Russ	Becky
2/18/2024	Ina			Rev LeClaire	Becky	Neil	Jack
2/25/2024	Kay	Jack	John	Fr Schneider	Ina	Jack	Connie

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