



ST. JOHN'S JOURNEY

LIVING IN HOPE † UNITED IN FAITH † LED BY LOVE



March, 2024

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Pastor's Corner

March 2024

Dear people of St. John's,

For March, the weather certainly has not been winter like. These warm days are refreshing; no cold hands, and a breath of warm air for the soul. It makes Lent somewhat bearable as we travel with Christ on his journey to the cross. I hope you have been successful with your Lenten disciplines. Whether you gave up or added something...or both...I pray you will continue on your journey.

We have been asked to pick up our cross and follow Jesus. Crosses have not always been popular. When executions by crucifixion were commonplace in the Roman Empire, Christians were understandably horrified by the cross. Only after Emperor Constantine outlawed crucifixions could the early Christians adopt

the cross as a symbol of God's grace. We must be willing to walk God's way, by faith, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

You will find your daily faithful choices, your faith expressed through your everyday actions, will bring blessings you have never imagined until they appear.

Are you in need of a point of reference? Hikers who find themselves lost in the wilderness often return to a point they last knew as a point of reference. Actually it's not a bad image for repentance. When you repent it is not so much an act of self abuse, as it is turning around to face the direction you came from. God *Continued from page 1*...will be gracious to all who have gone astray, and we are blessed to know God will be gracious. Can we be gracious enough to turn ...*Continued on page 3*



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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 March is February 23



Happy Birthday!

Dianne Bishop
Darlene Herden
Harvey Taylor
Mark Wagner
Sue Thornton
Evelyn Sunich

Vestry Notes

Dear Friends,

Now that it's March, I can finally start enjoying the "new year". January and February are full of year-end activities like the Annual Meeting, annual reports for the Diocese and the National Church and then there's Income Taxes! It seems like all I do for the first two months is review and report on the prior year. No more – although being in Lent for almost the entire month of March does subdue my exuberance a tad. However, I think we can celebrate a little even so.

As you'll see, we had a pretty busy February including a Taste & See Class, a quietly inspiring Ash Wednesday service, a wonderful 80th birthday party for Kathy Wagester, a class on LGBTQ+ Inclusion and a string of coffee hours and pot-lucks that were culinary achievements.

The class on LGBTQ+ Inclusion has given me a lot to think about. This is new territory for me. Maybe for you too. I don't really understand it all but I came away with this. People in the LGBTQ+ community face prejudice that is not too different from racism, sexism, age-ism and other ism's our culture has used to exclude certain people from full participation in society. Most people today think of those days of bigotry as dark times. And the stains, although fading,

are still with us. As children of God, we need to lighten the darkness of our time. Each one of us is beloved of God. Each one of us has gifts and



talents to share. Making someone deny who they are is wrong. Preventing someone from expressing who they are as a complete human being injures all involved. As Christians, we have an obligation to support these people and see them as human beings created by God, deserving of our respect and love. That's my perspective. Not everyone sees it that way. There are different views in our society, possibly in our congregation. What I like about the Episcopal Church is that although it has not always embraced inclusion easily, it is a church that does not give up on the process of learning, discussing and listening for guidance from the Holy Spirit. I am confident we as a church will find our way here too.

March events include a trip up north to work on the Ausable Inclusion Center, Holy Week and Easter, and our Taste & See classes. No Seder Meal this year – Passover comes after Easter so it just doesn't work. Next year, right?

Spring is a time of unfolding and unveiling. I hope you enjoy these days of change and discovery. Hmm... Maybe that's what Lent is all about?

Blessings & Peace



Holy Week Services Schedule



Maundy Thursday – March 28th at 6:30. Includes foot washing



Good Friday – March 29th.

**Stations of the Cross in the afternoon.
Service at 6:30.**

Continued from page 1... around when we are lost and return to God's goodness as our point of reference? Or will you stay wandering in land which is lost.

We are all familiar with the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus and they can seem old-fashioned and antiquated. They tell people not to covet oxen and make idols. Just because they were given to Moses over 3000 years ago, does not mean they are irrelevant today. Have you ever noticed the Ten Commandments can be broken into two parts? The first four commandments speak about how we are to relate to God. The second six commandments tell us how to relate

to one another. In these ten lessons, we are offered a glimpse of life in God's kingdom. Which commandment (s) are we living each day?

Lord, look down with your mercy on your people Lord, and grant to those whom you have nourished with your Word and Sacraments may bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

I pray you all will have a Holy Lent.

In God's Love,

Rev. Harold



Stations of the Cross from St. Bart's Mio

Sometimes sad events are sources of growth and blessings. Closing St. Bart's of Mio was definitely a sad event. But the congregation can take comfort in seeing the facility transformed into the Ausable Inclusion Center – a much needed resource for the community. Deacon Beckett and Kay worked with them to find new homes for some of their cherished items such as the Stations of the Cross. We at St. John's are blessed to receive these lovely carvings for our church. We are currently preparing frames for the stations and will hang them in the church before Good Friday. Fr Harold will be leading reflections on the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday afternoon. And they will be available year round for private reflection as well. Let us remember the people who sent them to us and pray that blessings come to those who used to call St. Bart's home.

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."



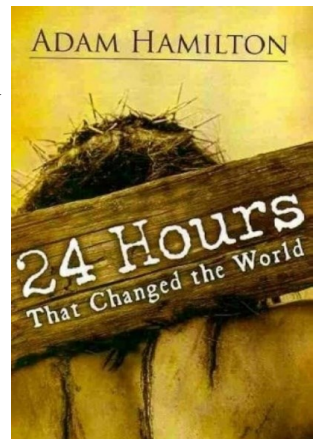
Ash Wednesday

Remember you
are dust...



Taste & See - Lenten Classes

Fr. Harold will continue our Lenten study session using 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 is excellent. Those who attended the first session learned several things that were surprising. Did you realize that Judas might have been sitting at Jesus's side during the last supper? That was a position of honor! I'm pretty sure we'll have other discoveries this month. You can join these sessions at any time and the food is always great. Mark these dates and times – you'll be glad you came!



Wednesday March 6th at 6PM

Wednesday March 20th at 6PM



Friday, March 8th at 2pm

Dave Herndon will be buried at Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly with a chance to gather and remember at a local restaurant afterward. The cemetery has requested we **arrive by 1:45**. If you plan to attend,

please contact Becky Foster by **Sunday March 3rd** – We need to provide a headcount to Darlene for planning purposes.



Potential National Girl Scout Cookie Sales Winner at St. John's Dryden!



And another sale goes in the books! Audrey LeClaire makes yet another sale of Girl Scout cookies at St. John's. She doesn't know it but we're really softies when it comes to that smile and those dimples. She could sell us just about anything. But Thin Mints and Lemon-Ups are a good start.

LBGTQ+ Class – A Start in the Learning and Growing Process

St. John's was privileged to have Deacon LeClaire provide an overview of the different facets of the LBGTQ+ community and the challenges they face in our culture. There was a lot of information to digest. One person said it was like drinking information from a fire hose. However, we learned enough to know we need to learn more. Deacon Beck suggested a few books for further discussion.

"*UnClobber*" by Colby Martin sounded like a good next step. Here's a quote about the book:

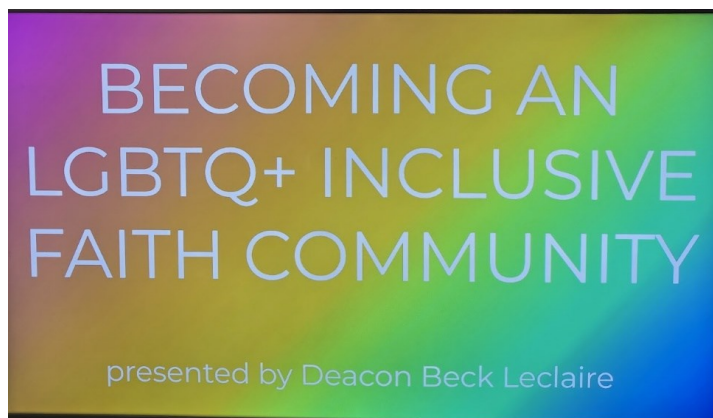
"A poignant and moving memoir of a pastor who lost a job to find grace-filled community, and a deep and incisive survey of the 'clobber passages' of the Bible, Colby Mar-

tin's *UnClobber* is a compelling and profound journey that draws both heart and mind deeper into the kingdom of God."

Maybe we should have a book study after Lent. What do you think?

We had a good turn-out for this discussion. Deacon Beck did an outstanding job – and there were thoughtful questions from the participants. The Holy Spirit was definitely there.

Based on our Baptismal Covenant, these are the "norms" for the Ausable Inclusion Center.



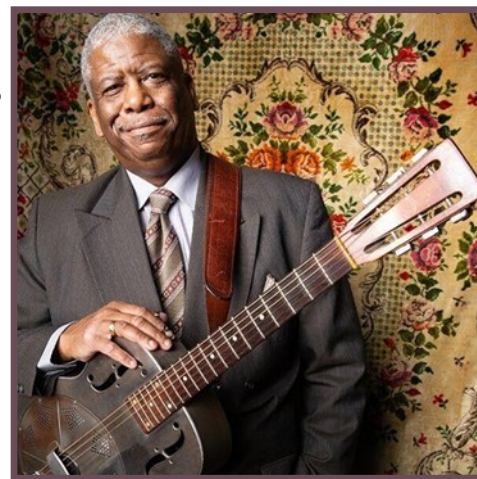
We are so excited to bring Rev. Robert Jones to our music concert series. This man can sing and play folk, gospel and blues! And he is a superb storyteller. He has performed internationally and has often partnered with Matt Watroba who joined us last spring. This is going to be a very special concert. So clear your calendars!



May 11th at 7PM

The late legendary Detroit Free Press columnist, Bob Talbert wrote about Robert: "Perhaps the world's most highly educated blues musician, an ordained minister, a longtime DJ, and a living encyclopedia of blues history, the Rever-

end Robert Jones is comfortable among juke joint loud talkers, fancy-hatted church ladies, and PhDs alike."



Just saying – you don't want to miss this!!!

Financial Updates for Financials through January 2024

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

January 2024	Monthly Budget	Monthly Actual	Better or Worse than Budget	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	Better or Worse than Budget
Income	\$5,500	\$6,152	\$652	\$5,500	\$6,152	\$652
Expenses	\$5,387	\$5,712	\$325	\$5,387	\$5,712	\$325
Net Profit	\$440	\$113	\$327	\$440	\$113	\$327

Our monthly pledge donations were higher than budget expectations so we're off to a good start.

Expenses outran budget levels this month. In some cases, we had some unexpected charges.

The Diocese charged us for the background check that was required as part of the placement process for Fr. Harold. T&N Lawn Services bundled several months of invoices into one which was delivered in January.

In other cases, the time of year has something to do with what "over budget" really means. Our budget program takes the annual budget amount and divides it by 12 to arrive at the monthly budget allocation. If an account has regular monthly payments, this approach is a good one. For accounts that have sporadic payments – like advertising for Christmas services – then it looks "over budget" for the month but, as future month's allocations add up, the account becomes more in line with the original intent. Examples of this are:

Advertising & Web – \$589 for print ads. Annual budget is \$1,200 but the monthly is only \$100. So this account is "over budget" but will smooth out by year's end if managed correctly.

Adult Education - \$197 for the Lenten Study program. Annual budget is \$300 but the monthly

Bottom line – still in the black although lower than budget expectations.

Vanguard Investment Account – as of January 31, 2024

Vanguard Total Stock ETF – Current value \$73,034. A nice increase

CD – Our \$21,000 CD matured in January with \$998 in interest. The Vestry agreed to re-invest these funds in another CD at 5.4% maturing in February 2025.

Total value of account as of 02/12/2024 is \$95,283.

CD at Oxford Bank –

\$10,000 CD at 5.65% maturing in August 2024

\$10,000 CD at 5.27% maturing in May of 2024.





What about? What happens if..... Questions about the March Diocesan Convention Vote

In 2020 Eastern & Western Dioceses formed a joint task force to investigate the issues and options associated with forming one diocese from two. This team of brave and dedicated people have been touring both diocese and holding discussion sessions with anyone who wanted to ask questions or share ideas. Most of this was captured in their final report and in the FAQ section on the diocesan website. The special convention on March 16th will be the culminating vote on the question of juncture. What follows is an excerpt from the FAQ that discusses what might hap-

pen. The full FAQs are available on the diocesan website at <https://eastmich.org/resources/building-bridges/> under the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Are we different politically, culturally?

Analyzing and summarizing the responses, it was clear that the two dioceses share common values and priorities and articulate a common identity, our understanding of who we are as Episcopalians and people of faith in this corner of the world, including how you would think of our “political” expression. And based on what we’ve heard and studied, our answer to the question (of culture) is “yes, in some ways” but also, “no, not really” in other ways. The truth is that both dioceses have several cultures within them. Neither diocese is “uni-cultural” and yet, values between the dioceses are remarkably similar.

These common themes informed the development of a common mission and vision statement, which is included below:

MISSION STATEMENT

Called by Christ to proclaim and embody God’s boundless love for all creation, we grow:

- *Collaborative communities of faith, walking the journey together;*
- *Innovative ministries, stretching beyond our walls;*

Courageous disciples, striving to transform systems of injustice.

We nurture relentless hope for a world longing for mercy, restoration, and peace.

VISION STATEMENT

A world transformed, in which all God’s children are unconditionally welcomed, cared for, and loved.

What happens if the vote is “yes”?

If the conventions vote for juncture during the Special Convention on March 16th, we move into these steps:

- Spring - finalize and submit the proposal for the new diocese to the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church
- June - General Convention gathers in Louisville, Kentucky and will be asked to vote to affirm our decision of juncture (*The following applies if General Convention does affirm.*)
- Summer - start of transition into the life and structures of the new diocese (such as migrating bookkeeping and developing a new seal and logo).
- October 18-19, 2024 - the First Diocesan Convention of the new diocese at Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mount Pleasant

The structures and practices of the new diocese continue to evolve and develop as we live beyond our Season of Practice into our Season of Being.

What happens if the vote is “no”?

If the conventions vote no during the Special Convention on March 16th, we are separate dioceses. While we could still collaborate in many ministry areas, operating as deeply integrated as we are in this Season of Practice isn't sustainable long term without doing some further structural alignment. Leadership bodies of both dioceses would have to determine how best to address next steps around members of our shared staff, our bi-diocesan task groups, shared ministries and other currently shared areas of diocesan life.

What will happen with our bi-diocesan staff if we vote no?

Our separate leadership bodies will have to determine whether our bi-diocesan positions are sustainable as fully-shared, as two part-time but separate positions, moved to one diocese and not the other, or something else. This could create some vacancies and/or realignment of portfolios and changes to diocesan offerings and programming. We currently employ 13 full-time and part-time shared staff members.

What would the period look like between General Convention and the first diocesan convention of the new diocese?

We would not officially be one diocese until we would meet for the first diocesan convention in October 2024. At that first convention, we would celebrate! We would also elect convention officers, formally adopt (with the opportunity to amend) our Constitution and Canons, adopt a budget for 2025, elect members of various diocesan leadership bodies and other work that has to do with the first steps of actually being one.

This transition phase would continue for a while as we work toward intentionally evolving and aligning our processes, staffing, and the means by which we would serve together as one diocese. We would also get to work on some fun things that most people don't experience often, like the development of a new diocesan seal.

What would our new name be?

We don't know yet! The name will be part of what is included in the Agreement for Union that will be voted on in March.

After all this study and discussion, what does the Building Bridges Committee recommend?

Two people from St. John's have been involved in this long exploration – Neil Hargrave and Deacon Beckett LeClaire. Our delegates to the March convention are Neil Hargrave, Russ Underwood, Beth Ann Tesluk and Kay LeClaire. We plan to have time for discussion and questions following service on March 10th. And I'm sure any of our delegates will be happy to talk with you about this. Let us all pray that the Holy Spirit guides our decision.



WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER.

we are

- Honoring financial gifts by structuring and channeling funds for mission-based ministries both locally and diocesan-wide.
- Renewing our people by reducing duplication of roles and processes, freeing up time and talents among us.
- Fostering innovation by engaging creativity, technology, and new models of being community.

we are

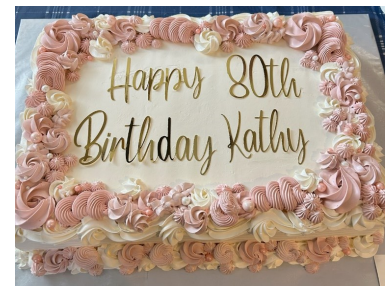
- Equipping communities of faith and people of all generations to be Christ's presence on the ground, in their communities, and at home.
- Offering an expansive and contextual approach to calling and forming church leaders, collaborating with seminaries and other partners throughout The Episcopal Church.
- Engaging local, state-wide and global efforts to challenge and transform systems of injustice for the sake of all of God's children.

we are

- Offering more diverse expertise, life-experiences, and cultures.
- Gathering a broader range of gifts and skills to faithfully address the challenges we face.
- Committing to speak the truth in love, helping name and break through inhibitive patterns and practices that exist within our individual dioceses.
- Navigating through storms, tapping our resilience, finding collective strength to speak prophetically to the church and the world.
- Leaning into the common prayer which unites us and embracing the best of what we all give to this Body.

Guess who just had a birthday!

It was a great party for a super special lady. Thanks to Kathy and Wes for inviting us to celebrate with the family. She's a blessing to all who know her.



The happy couple in earlier years. The smiles haven't changed a bit!



Wes and Fr. Harold – maybe swapping sea-faring stories? And a table full of party-hardy folks from St. John's there to wish Kathy (and Wes) all the best.

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>
03/03/2024	Mary			Becky	Ida Lynn	Connie	Russ
03/10/2024	Jack	Rev LeClaire	Neil	Fr. Schneider	Sherry	Russ	Jack
03/17/2024	Rev LeClaire			Kitty	Wes	Jack	Becky
03/24/2024	Kay	Mary	Jack	Fr Schneider	Becky	Becky	Neil
03/28/2024 (6:00 pm)	Wes	Rev LeClaire		Fr Schneider		Neil	Connie
03/29/2024 (6:00 pm)	Ina	Rev LeClaire	Neil	Fr Schneider		Connie	Rudd
03/31/2024	Margaret	Rev LeClaire	Neil 9	Fr Schneider	Ina	Russ	Jack

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