



The Messenger

St. John's Episcopal Church

Springfield, Missouri

December 2024, Issue 140, No. 12

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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Bishop Provisional

The Right Reverend Diane Jardine Bruce

Rector

The Reverend Ronald Keel

Director of Music

Kevin Grice

Senior Warden

Victor Matthews

Junior Warden

Jan Rorrer

Parish Office: (417) 869-6351

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CHRISTMAS LITURGIES

Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 8th, at 10:30 a.m.

Blue Christmas

Wednesday, December 18th, at 6:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Family Mass

Tuesday, December 24th, at 4:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Carol Sing & Vigil

Tuesday, December 24th, at 10:30 p.m. & 11:00 p.m.
(Facebook Live)

Christmas Day Mass

Wednesday, December 25th, at 10:30 a.m.

Please watch for further details in the weekly inserts and on our website:
stjohnsspringfield.diowestmo.org.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Advent is a season of preparation as people anticipate the coming of Christ in the Incarnation. Penitence is part of that preparation. The sacrament of penance is officially called "The Reconciliation of a Penitent" in *The Book of Common Prayer* (page 447). If you would like to receive this sacrament, please contact the church office to schedule an in-person appointment or Zoom meeting. Father Ron is available to hear confessions but encourages all to consider if they need this sacrament in this time of anticipation.

St. John's Ladies' Christmas Luncheon

St. John's Ladies' Advent Luncheon will be on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at noon. For an accurate reservation number, please give Melissa a call (417 440-0288) by December 6.



Interim Rector says Hello ... and More

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Dear Ones,

While I have been with you during the months of October and November and our joint ministry together is now underway, I should take this opportunity, in our monthly *Messenger* to more fully introduce myself and to identify and share my understanding of what our new relationship means and how I envision our working together.

These first two months have been full of ministry, worship and service, the hallmarks of St. John's Church. Saturday/Sunday worship, mid week services, the Chili Cook-off, fund raising for outreach ministry; Vestry, staff and committee meetings ... we are, indeed, underway in our new relationship.

Interim Rector, by definition, means that I will be with you for a limited time of pastoral transition. The Agreement we share is between St. John's Church and me with overall review and approval by the Diocese of West Missouri. We anticipate an undefined period of being together with the understanding that the Interim period can, by mutual agreement, be extended or time limited. It is important to note that I will not become a candidate for the permanent Rector position nor have direct involvement in the search process.

And so, we are off on a new time of being the church together. I know this is quite a change after Father David Kendrick's many years with St. John's Church. Such a successful long-term pastorate is a wonderful testimony to your work together.

As we begin, please know that I am committed to helping the church be, above all else, faithful to Jesus Christ. In addition to performing all the usual tasks of ministry, I'll be working with the Vestry and you, the congregation, on the tasks of Interim Ministry and will share more specific information about these tasks as they get underway.

Broadly outlined, however, the **Goals** for this interim period are to:

Continue and maintain a healthy congregational life.

Provide continuity of congregational leadership.

Examine everything the church is doing.

Develop operating objectives, identified through a goal-setting process with organizational leadership.

Provide preparation for the arrival of a new priest /Rector.

You can see from these **Goals**, that the coming months will be characterized by thoughtful, prayerful and challenging opportunities. I commit to working diligently and steadily toward the accomplishment of these energetic and worthwhile ministry and service activities. Please pray for me, and for all who will be a part of this important effort of being the church together and preparing for the future of St. John's Episcopal Church.

With every good wish for a happy, healthy and Christ filled future, I am joyously yours,

Ronald D. Keel
Interim Rector





Fr. Jesse and the 12 Days of Christmas



In 2001, Jesse Mutugi, a priest in the Anglican Church of Kenya, left his wife Teresa and 1 year old son Joe, to journey to the United States. His destination was Drury University and his purpose was to pursue an associate degree in Social Science. With no transportation and very little money, he found St. John’s close by and began attending. Fr. Jesse worshipped regularly at St. John’s and became friends with parishioners, and the rest is history. Soon after Fr. Jesse returned to Kenya, the wine ministry from St. John’s was born.

With the generosity of St. John’s parishioners, God has blessed that communion wine ministry—and Jesse’s parishes grew from one to four! One former parishioner liked to say every Sunday he knelt to receive communion here, he would remember there was another Christian in Kenya kneeling to receive, too, because of St. John’s generosity.

Fr. Jesse has used that generosity as a teaching tool for his “Christians.” We are the example he uses to teach his people what God’s love can accomplish and how grace can manifest itself in thinking of others. St. John’s has learned that it truly is more blessed to give than it is to receive. God has indeed blessed St. John’s. We may be small in number, but with God’s grace and blessing we accomplish big things with Outreach to our neighbors and the world.

St. John’s Outreach Ministry Group continues to provide wine for the four rural parishes in Kenya served by Fr. Jesse Mwaniki with our “12 Days of Christmas” collection. You are encouraged to mark each day of this season by donating bills or coins in the number of that day. Watch for this season’s giving calendars, coming soon, or call the church office.



Altar Flowers: A Glorious Part Of Our Christmas Ministry

As the joy of Christmas approaches, we can all contribute to the special beauty of the occasion by making a gift for the wonderful poinsettias that will fill our church. If you would like to give thanks for a joy in your life or particularly remember an individual who is now among our dear departed, please consider contributing for the Christmas flowers.

Please make your check payable to St. John’s Episcopal Church and write “Christmas Flowers” on the memo line. Your envelope may be mailed to the church or turned in to the office. Provide the following information. Please print clearly.

Given by: _____
In memory of: _____ (or)
In thanksgiving for: _____

In order for the Christmas Offering Booklet to be prepared, please submit envelopes no later than Friday, December 20.

You can help supply this important enhancement for our festive worship!



What Exactly is Blue Christmas?

I wrote this out of my interest and desire to understand what the “Blue Christmas” service is, and I hope it interests you as well. The phrase “A Blue Christmas” was first documented in 1900 in a letter from Lord Kitchener about the deaths of more than 500 British troops during the Boer War in South Africa. The song “Blue Christmas” was first recorded by Doye O’Dell in 1948. However, Elvis Presley’s version, recorded in 1957, is the most famous and was part of the “Elvis Christmas Album” that receives significant airplay to this day. The popular Christmas song conveys melancholy and sadness during the holiday season. The holiday season can serve as an emotional reminder of what once was. Navigating the festivities of Advent and the Christmas season without a cherished presence can intensify feelings of grief and loneliness.

The lyrics of “Blue Christmas” describe a person spending Christmas alone, missing a loved one, and feeling down while others around them are celebrating. A sample of the lyrics includes, “I’ll have a blue Christmas without you. I’ll be so blue just thinking about you. Decorations of red on a blue Christmas tree.” The song captures the painful emotions that many feel amid the joy and festivities of the holidays.

The tradition of Blue Christmas church services began in the United States around 1990. The first Blue Christmas service is believed to have occurred at the Episcopal Church of the Advent in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1989. This service was created to provide a space for people experiencing grief, loss, or sadness during the holiday season. The Episcopal Church, along with other Christian denominations such as Catholics, Methodists, and Lutherans, adopted this practice to help congregants cope with the emotional challenges of the holidays. Various churches call their Blue Christmas service “Longest Night Service” since the tradition has always happened on or around the longest night of the year, the Winter Solstice, December 21st.

Over the years, the observance of “Blue Christmas” in Episcopal and other Christian churches has grown in popularity to make space for the full range of human experiences and emotions during a challenging time of year. The songs and the services built around it have become an essential part of the liturgical calendar for congregations seeking to provide care and support for those in need.

The “Blue Christmas” service typically includes lighting candles, having moments of silence, and readings that acknowledge the pain and struggles we all have experienced to some degree or another. The goal is to offer comfort and hope and to remind individuals that they are not alone in their sorrow. The Episcopal Church embraced the “Blue Christmas” tradition, with many parishes offering these services to provide comfort and community for those struggling emotionally during the holiday season. “Blue Christmas” services have become a common way to provide a space for people to acknowledge and work through difficult emotions around the holidays. By candlelight, tears may be shed, broken hearts given space to be broken, and we can all come together as brothers and sisters to acknowledge the “hopes and fears of all our years.”

Philip Mothersead

Enjoying Parish Generosity

The Outreach Ministry Group would again like to thank our very generous parishioners for filling the Thanksgiving baskets for the three local (Bowerman School District) families we are continuing to assist at special times of the year. Because we have emphasized food for these baskets, we will also focus on cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items for the Christmas baskets. Please continue to help. It really makes a difference for both parents and children.

During this joyful season, we also wish to celebrate the wonderful generosity of the members of our congregation who have given so much to the special projects we have focused on throughout the year. As we look ahead, during the Twelve Days of Christmas we again plan to have a collection to purchase communion wine for Fr. Jesse’s four rural congregations in Africa.

Your continued generosity is very much appreciated!





Notice of Annual Meeting

St. John's will conduct its Annual Meeting in the parish hall on **Sunday, January 26, 2024, at 12:30 p.m.** Prior to the meeting, a potluck lunch hosted by the Vestry will be served after the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Meat and beverages will be provided, and parishioners are asked to bring a dish to share. At the meeting, the congregation will elect new Vestry members for three-year terms and will receive annual reports from the wardens, treasurer and committee chairs. Watch for more information in the weekly bulletin insert and the January *Messenger*.

Nominating Committee for Vestry Candidates

At the Parish Annual Meeting on January 26, 2025, three persons will be elected to the Vestry to fill vacancies created by the expiration of terms. Persons elected will serve a three-year term, ending in January of 2028. Under the Parish Bylaws, the retiring Vestry members may not be candidates for election to the Vestry until 2026.

The Bylaws state: "Each member of the Vestry shall be sixteen years of age or older and in good standing and shall have contributed regularly to the financial support of the Church for at least six months immediately prior to the meeting at which he or she is elected which fact shall be determined by the books of the Treasurer of the Parish, in case any question arises with reference thereto, and shall be conscientiously attached to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Church" (IV.2). Persons who meet these requirements and are interested in serving the Church in these important positions of leadership and responsibility are asked to make themselves known to the Nominating Committee. They will meet January 5th, 12th and 19th.

Thank you,
Clerk of the Vestry

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE IN JANUARY

Annual departmental reports are due no later than **January 20**, in the parish office. The following people should be sure they have submitted their reports. Please use an **e-mail attachment**. Contact the church office if you need assistance.

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| • Wardens | • Pastoral Care |
| • Treasurer | • Parish Health |
| • Altar Guild | • Planning & Budget Committee |
| • Choir Director/Organist | • Chief Usher |
| • Stewardship Committee | • St. John's Gift Shop |
| • Christian Formation | • The Breakfast Club |
| • Church School Committee | • The Shepherd's Group |
| • Endowment/Legacy Committee | • St. Clare's Guild |
| • Memorial Committee | • The Green Team |
| • Outreach Ministry Group | • The Search Committee |



Green Team

Green Team was instituted at St. John's in 2019. While the premise of the ministry was large—be good stewards of the Earth, our tiny island home among the vast firmament—our beginnings were humble. We started out taking over the Adopt-A-Street litter pick up along Division Street between Summit and Campbell that had been the province of The Brotherhood of St. Andrew. We also looked at ways to make coffee hour more sustainable by cleaning, setting out and encouraging the use of reusable ceramic cups, or bringing your own to hang on the wall for use every Sunday.

We moved on to writing articles for *The Messenger* that might educate us all in sustainable practices in our gardens and homes. We hoped to tie us to environmental movements around the globe, at least in thought and word, if not deed. We took a good hard look at our church grounds and thought of ways to decrease the amount of lawn and increase the number of native plants as opposed to non-native species, thus encouraging native pollinators, which in turn attracts birds to keep them in check. While the lofty idea of a labyrinth has languished, the rectory landscaping and corner sign plantings, along with replacing aging trees, is our move in that direction, the success of which we hope to see with each new spring. It will be a testament to our planning and patience, especially if it is attractive, easy to maintain, and saves money on water, which we hope to brag about.

The past several years we have promoted a theme each year to concentrate on and give purpose to our plans. 2024 encompassed the out-of-sight, out-of-mind topic of native bees, specifically solitary bees like the Mason bee, which are far more proficient pollinators for native species than non-native honey bees because they do not have hives that they take pollen and nectar back to for the use of the hive. They simply go from plant to plant, busy as bees.

Towards the end of January 2025, we shall round off this theme by having a Mason bee house kit building and seminar session for those who are interested. A speaker from Missouri State University will give the presentation and, for those who have ordered a kit, we will put them together and learn how to maintain them so that they are a benefit to the bees and not do more harm than good. This would be a wonderful opportunity to invite guests, especially young people. Green Team will be deciding on the date of the presentation and which kit to order by December 8th and will publish this in the January *Messenger* and weekly bulletin inserts between then and the date of the seminar.

Thank you in advance for your participation, interest and sharing. In the grand scheme of things, small actions can have great consequences.

Choosing Our Path

God wants us to follow him, yet gives us the freedom to choose what path we will take and whom we will serve. As we stand at the crossroads of life, God continually reaches out to us through his Word. In Jeremiah 6:16 we read, “Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” Daily we are at the crossroads of life. The choice we make is our own. As Yogi Berra said, “When you get to a fork in the road, take it.” The road we take will have eternal consequences. Will we choose God’s way or the ways of the world? With God’s help, our answer can be like Joshua’s: “Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Joshua’s choice was that he and his family would be servants and stewards of the Lord. When you reach the crossroads in life, you will hear God’s call, “Follow Me.” The call to serve yourself and the ways of the world will be loud and boisterous. If you do not reject God’s call and you follow, as Jeremiah did, the ancient paths, you will turn away from your self-interests and focus on ways to serve the Lord. Your lifestyle will reflect your relationship with him. As followers of Jesus, we acknowledge God’s ownership and love. We become stewards of what he entrusts to us. As followers of the Lord, we see others as brothers and sisters in Christ. We live with an eternal perspective.

Return Service Requested

The Messenger
a Newsletter of
St. John's Church



Remembering Special Dates & People

Birthdays

Dec. 1 Dee Ogilvy
Dec. 2 Teresa Ollis
Dec. 3 Latesa Carter
Dec. 4 Peggy Busch
Dec. 7 Mary Newman
Dec. 9 Paul A. Schneider
Dec. 12 Deloris Hurt
Dec. 15 Mary Ann Arnall
Dec. 19 Gretchen Becker
Dec. 20 Fr. Philip Parham
Dec. 22 Janice Hancock
Dec. 25 Brett Jeffreys
Dec. 26 Diana Schweitzer
Dec. 28 Rachel Becker
Angela Shubel

Anniversaries

Dec. 7 James & Mary Newman
Dec. 21 Terry & Mary Branscom
Dec. 22 Larry & Patti Goforth

Faithful Departed

Dec. 1 Evan Keller
Dec. 2 Jack Hogan
Dec. 3 George Edwards
Zilpha Moon
Dec. 5 Edgar Fendlason
Doolin Gorman
John Goss
Dec. 6 Phil Hargiss
Dec. 7 Matt Patton
Nina Vanderhoof
Dec. 8 Angus Kinnard
Dec. 10 Emary Elizabeth Lembcke
Fred Moon
Vivian Schaller
Dec. 11 Conley E. Buchholz
Dec. 12 Carson Valhdick
Dec. 13 Mary Jeanette Simons
Dec. 14 Lawrence W. Ollis
Charles Roop
Frances Roop
Dec. 15 Ben Henderson
Mary Elizabeth Howell
Dec. 16 Joseph Follis
Dec. 17 Nile James
Martha Winn
Dec. 18 Ralph C. Young
Dec. 19 Richard Mears
Dec. 20 Richard Harvates
Trudy Jones

Dec. 22 Sherlu Walpole
Dec. 23 Elmer Anderson
Lottie Moskowitz
Robert L. Wilhoit
Dec. 25 Richard (Rick) Woolery
Dec. 26 Gertrude M. Baker
Susan Young
Dec. 27 Paul McCarthy
Barbara Jane Smith
Dec. 28 Lugenia Lester
Kevin McAndrews
Dec. 31 Marie Braig
Leila McGregor



Reminder

When Springfield Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather, the Wednesday night program will also be cancelled. However, Mass will be said as scheduled.

