



The Messenger

St. John's Episcopal Church

Springfield, Missouri

September 2025, Issue 141, No. 9



September

Bishop Amy Meaux visits St. John's!

September 6 & 7



Bishop Amy will be the celebrant at this Saturday's, 4:00 p.m. Mass, which will be followed by a fellowship BBQ. Then, Bishop Amy will celebrate and preside over a baptism and confirmations, during the Sunday 10:30 a.m. Mass, with a celebratory cake during coffee hour.

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Save the Date! Annual Chili Cook-Off

Join us for the Chili Cook-Off on October 19, starting at 5:00 p.m. The event will benefit Women's Medical Respite, which provides recuperative care for unsheltered women. The Outreach Ministry Group is suggesting a donation of \$5.00 that evening. Please sign up if you would like to bring a pot of chili. Then there will be plenty of varieties to enjoy and vote on with your dollar bills. Hot dogs, drinks and desserts will be provided. There will also be gift baskets and other items to bid on. Watch for more information in the weekly bulletins and the October *Messenger*.



St. John's Episcopal Church

Bishop

The Right Reverend Amy Dafler Meaux

Interim Rector

The Reverend Ronald Keel

Director of Music

Kevin Grice

Senior Warden

Victor Matthews

Junior Warden

Linda Robertson

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ALTAR FLOWERS

OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE ADVENT

Now that summer and vacations are ending, your thoughts may turn to giving special thanks for a joy in your life or to particularly remembering an individual who is now among our dear departed. A gift of altar flowers is an especially good way to put those thoughts into action. There are a few Sundays that have not yet been reserved before we enter Advent. Each Sunday, beautiful arrangements of flowers for the two vases cost a total of \$50. It is also possible to arrange with another family to share a particular Sunday by each funding one vase for \$25. There are sign-up sheets on the bulletin board in the hall near the glass doors. Please be sure to pay for your altar flowers before the Sunday you have requested. Altar flowers are a wonderful contribution to our worship!



From the Interim Rector

September 2025

To the Membership, Wardens and Vestry of St. John's Episcopal Church,
Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is with both joy and sadness to announce that I will complete my time as Interim Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, effective September 30, 2025.

Since October 1, 2024, it has been my deep privilege to serve alongside you during this important season of transition. Together, we have sustained the worship and pastoral life of the parish, strengthened lay leadership, and supported the faithful and prayerful work of your Search Committee and Vestry as they have discerned a new Rector to lead this community into the next chapter of its ministry.

With that sacred work now drawing to a close, it is appropriate to prepare for the completion of my ministry among you. I remain fully committed to supporting a healthy and faithful handoff and will gladly collaborate with you to ensure a smooth and grace-filled transition.

I give thanks for the opportunity to serve St. John's during this interim season and hold you in my prayers as you look with hope and expectation to the future.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

The Rev. Ronald D. Keel
Interim Rector
St. John's Episcopal Church



It's not easy being green...

When you go to the garden center to purchase your plants for fall, look past all the fancy doubled and frilled chrysanthemums and choose daisy (single) mums, asters or sunflowers for your display. You will delight the pollinators looking for late season nutrition.



Living a Disciplined Lifestyle

The intimate relationship that Jesus establishes with us and through which we are enabled to grow is nurtured by a disciplined lifestyle that incorporates spiritual disciplines. Examples of spiritual disciplines are praying, worshiping, fasting, serving, and giving. Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, writes “God has ordained the disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us.” The spiritual disciplines that we develop will put us where Jesus can work within us to transform us and use us. By grace, God works through these disciplines to mold us and change us into stewards who can bless others as we’ve been blessed.

Another benefit to spiritual disciplines is that they help us to acknowledge our dependence upon God. God is our power source, so we need to stay connected to God. Spiritual disciplines train us to stay connected. In his Word, God promises never to forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Although God promises never to leave us, we can sever that connection at any time. However, without that connection with him, we are no longer able to live as his children and as his stewards. Because spiritual disciplines remind us continually of God’s sovereignty and our need for God, we should incorporate spiritual disciplines into our lives.

In addition, spiritual disciplines help us evaluate our spiritual condition. If we aren’t practicing spiritual disciplines, we need to question why we aren’t. Without spiritual disciplines in our lives, we are depriving ourselves of an intimate relationship with Jesus, and we will not be able to practice a pleasing stewardship lifestyle.



Outreach Ministry Group

Isabel’s House Crisis Nursery provides safe, trusted care that is free for children whose families face difficult circumstances. Their mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect. Over 5,000 children and 2,000 families have been served since it was established in 2007. Isabel’s House is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Children from birth to twelve years old are cared for in a child-centered environment by trained staff. Meals, clothing and hygiene items are provided. The children participate in a variety of activities and continue to go to school.

Emergencies such as loss of housing, domestic violence, emotional distress, loss of utilities or medical problems may impact the ability to care for a child. Family advocates work with parents and caregivers to develop personalized plans to address the crisis.

You can support this organization by donating new items from their wish list during September. Some suggestions are kids’ shampoo, conditioner, sensitive skin body wash, baby shampoo, kids’ toothpaste, stuffed animals, school supplies, baby clothes, socks and underwear. You may also write a check to St. John’s with “Isabel’s House” on the memo line.

The Gift of Growing Smaller

Ego and Aging as Spiritual Practice

Ego and aging don't always go well together. What if the point of growing older isn't to become more but to become less? Not less meaningful. Not less visible. But less entangled in the endless performance of self. In a culture obsessed with identity, productivity, and public personas, spiritual aging offers a countercultural path: the invitation to grow smaller.

Freedom from the Ego's Grip

Ego is often misunderstood. It's not pride exactly, nor confidence. It's the psychological scaffolding that holds together our sense of self. And for much of life, it serves a purpose: helping us build careers, navigate relationships, and survive in a world that rewards assertion.

But in later life, the ego can become a trap. It insists we matter only as long as we're accomplishing, acquiring, or being admired. It whispers that slowing down is a sign of failure. That rest is weakness. That surrender is a loss.

Yet the spiritual traditions suggest otherwise.

In Buddhism, the path to awakening is marked by non-attachment to self. The more we loosen our grip on the ego, the freer we become. Jesus, too, taught that real strength comes through surrender. "Whoever finds their life will lose it," he said, "and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

This is not nihilism. It's a more profound knowing. A freedom that emerges when we release the need to be seen as necessary.

The Spiritual Wisdom of Smallness

Growing smaller isn't about shrinking from life. It's about reorienting our lives around values that transcend the ego: compassion, humility, silence, and simplicity.

Psychologist and author Connie Zweig, in her work on the inner journey of aging, notes that the greatest obstacle to spiritual maturity is often the ego's resistance. "The ego doesn't age well," she writes. "It clings to its image and rejects decline."

But the soul thrives in quieter places. In humility. In not needing to have the last word. In being present without performance. This is the paradox of aging well: the more we release our grip on who we think we should be, the more we become who we are.

Consider poet David Whyte's observation: "Maturity is the ability to live fully and equally in multiple contexts." When the ego loosens, we stop needing to control the narrative. We learn to hold complexity, to grieve and celebrate simultaneously, to feel diminished and more whole at the same time.

One elder who exemplified this quiet strength was Fred Rogers, better known as Mister Rogers. Though he became a cultural icon, he never let celebrity shape his soul. He avoided flashy opportunities and focused instead on stillness, integrity, and heartfelt presence. His famous line, "It's you I like," was never about performance, it was about essence.

His life reminds us that visibility doesn't have to mean ego. It can mean presence.

Practices That Weaken the Ego, Strengthen the Soul

How do we live into this shift? It begins with awareness. Here are a few soul-centered practices that guide the way:

- **Daily reflection.** Ask: Where is my ego driving me today? Where can I let go?
- **Service without spotlight.** Offer kindness without credit. Do something generous and tell no one.
- **Spend time without filling it with noise or accomplishment.** Let the quiet teach you.
- **Let go of one thing that no longer serves your soul.** A possession. A habit. An expectation.
- **Breath awareness.** Notice the urge to prove or defend yourself. Inhale. Exhale. Return to presence.
- **Gratitude for the unseen.** Appreciate the value of things that go unacknowledged—like patience, like humility.

- **Sacred text or prayer.** Return to a simple verse or mantra that centers you in something greater than yourself.

Aging well, in this light, is not an achievement but a softening.

The Intersection of Ego and Aging

As the research shows and tradition affirms, ego and aging are deeply intertwined. Letting go of ego isn't just a spiritual idea, it's a proven path toward resilience and meaning in later life.

Science Supports the Shift

Research in later-life development affirms this inner turn. A study published in *The Journal of Gerontology* found that spiritual growth in older adults is linked to psychological well-being, particularly when it involves relinquishing ego-based striving. Self-awareness helps break habitual patterns that no longer serve us—especially those rooted in fear or performance. A 2021 [meta-analysis published in *The Journals of Gerontology*](#) affirms that ego-integrity—rather than self-enhancement—is one of the clearest indicators of well-being in older adults.

Another study in *Psychology and Aging* noted that wisdom in later life is associated with self-transcendence, a value that increases as self-enhancement declines.

In other words, what mystics have long taught is beginning to be confirmed by science: meaning deepens when the ego steps aside.

A Life That Echoes

The irony of growing smaller is that it leaves a bigger imprint. The elders who move us most aren't the loudest or most decorated. They are the ones who carry presence. Who listen more than they speak. Who make space for others. Who hold the sacred in everyday life.

To grow smaller is to remember what matters. To become less concerned with legacy and more attuned to love. To see clearly, speak gently, and live lightly.

“Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real,” wrote Thomas Merton. In those few words, he captured the quiet paradox of spiritual aging: that letting go can make us more whole, more human.

To walk humbly in later life is not to disappear—it's to become more deeply visible to the soul.

In a world of noise, this is spiritual resistance.

And for those walking the path of aging, it is holy ground.

The above was adapted from spiritualseniors.com

Philip Mothersead, Parish Health Ministry



From the Fairs and Festivals Committee

(members of the Springfield, Ozark and Branson Episcopal Churches)

Opportunity to help cleanup part of our environment with the James River Basin Partnership:

Cleaning a Section of Galloway Creek

Date: September 20th

Can accommodate: 10–30 people.

Meeting place: Sequiota Park at 9 am (3500 S Lone Pine Ave, Springfield, MO 65804)

Clean up: Beginning at 9:30 we will work south downstream towards Republic Road. Depending on how many volunteers and how quickly they pick up trash, we may not make it all the way to Republic Rd and that is fine. We can turn around at any point our volunteers would like to.

James River Basin Partnership: will provide pickers, gloves, and bags. We can take all our garbage bags to one place, and they will also coordinate trash pickup.

Things to Bring:

- Closed-toed shoes
- Hat/sun protection (whatever keeps you comfortable outside)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Water bottle

Please note: If water levels are high or temperatures are extreme, we may have to cancel. The possible rain date is September 27th. Contact Melissa Gallian if you wish to volunteer: 417 440-0288; melissa.gallian@gmail.com



St. John's Episcopal Church
515 E. Division St.
Springfield, MO 65803

Return Service Requested

The Messenger

**a Newsletter of
St. John's Church**

Remembering Special Dates & People

Birthdays

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| September 1 | Karen Daniel |
| September 2 | Patti Crowe |
| September 3 | Lee Schmidt |
| September 4 | Prae Gamel |
| | Matthew Gray |
| | Christopher Roop |
| September 5 | Amelia Schweitzer |
| September 6 | Rhonda Axtell |
| | Donna Strothkamp |
| September 7 | David Nelson |
| | Mary Yarber |
| September 8 | Ron Daniel, Jr. |
| September 10 | Larry Goforth |
| September 11 | Danny Madson |
| September 12 | Jason Becker |
| | Michelle Sage |
| September 15 | Shanna Robertson |
| September 16 | Martha Cutting |
| | Larry McMillen |
| September 17 | Julia Merica |
| September 18 | Corbin Blomberg |
| | Sherry Iott |
| September 19 | Britaney Johnson |
| September 21 | Terry Greer |
| | Rachel Taylor |
| September 22 | Nadine Gentry |
| | Patricia McCall |
| September 23 | Bruce Ratcliff, III |
| September 26 | Jennifer DuVall |
| | Corey Mays |
| September 30 | McKenzi Payton |
| | Allison Wall |
| | Christopher Wilhoit |

Anniversaries

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| September 7 | Rob & Bridget Close |
| September 8 | Ben & Pat Schultz |
| September 12 | Eric & Jill Vahldick |
| September 13 | Blake & Cinnamon Smith |
| September 14 | Donald & Stephanie McCoy |
| September 21 | Douglas & Ashley Patton |
| September 24 | Tom & Alnita Mulvihill |
| September 26 | Pat & Donna Strothkamp |

Faithful Departed

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| September 1 | Joe Brown |
| September 8 | Vickie Snider |
| September 9 | Bill Gamel |
| September 10 | Arthur W. Beck |
| | Jim Burroughs |
| | J. J. Sand |
| September 11 | Charles H. Evans |
| September 12 | William R. Webb, II |
| September 13 | Vincent Bondi |
| September 14 | Elaine Crabtree |
| | Homer Ingenthron |
| September 15 | Eliza White |
| September 16 | William Decatur |
| | Phillip Vicory |
| September 18 | Jerrold Bachus |
| September 19 | Leva L. Hiler |
| September 21 | Mary Bondi |
| | Norbert Bondi |
| September 22 | Eleanor Webb |
| September 24 | Andree Leshner |
| September 25 | Dorothy Mason |
| | Gladys Moon |
| September 26 | O. Kenneth White |
| September 27 | Charles Alfred |
| | David Bradley |
| | Virginia Haszelbart |
| September 30 | John R. Duckworth |
| | Sarah J. Cogswell |