



The Messenger

St. John's Episcopal Church

Springfield, Missouri

December 2025, Issue 141, No. 12

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St. John's Episcopal Church

Bishop

The Right Reverend Amy Dafler Meaux

Rector

The Reverend Benjamin George-Thoms

Director of Music

Kevin Grice

Senior Warden

Victor Matthews

Junior Warden

Linda Robertson

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Advent & Christmas Liturgies

Fr. Ben's Installation Mass

Saturday, December 6th, at 4:00 p.m.
(Watch Live)

Blue Christmas

Wednesday, December 17th, at 6:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Mass

Wednesday, December 24th, at 5:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Carol Sing & Vigil

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

Christmas Day Mass

Thursday, December 25th, at 11:00 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. Reconciliation is part of that preparation. The sacrament of confession 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. Father Ben is available to hear confessions and encourages all to consider if they need this sacrament in this time of anticipation.

St. John's Ladies' Christmas Luncheon

The Ladies' Luncheon is December 9, at noon, at Red Lobster. Please come join us for this annual event. Please let Melissa know if you are going to be there by December 5 so the reservation number can be accurate for the restaurant. Phone: (417) 440-0288; email: melissa.gallian@gmail.com.



Holy Mundane Musings

Dearest St. John's,

By now, Advent is well and truly begun. As we begin a new liturgical year and the calendar of the Church starts the cycle over again, I can't help but wonder about the ways in which the Church calendar and the civil calendar interact with each other. Some seasons match up better than others and make perfect sense in the way the natural world also tells the story of the Gospel. For instance, how fitting is it that Easter, the Christian Passover, occurs in Spring? How wonderfully appropriate that the natural world awakens to new and verdant life as we remember our own passing over into new life in Christ, the resurrected and glorified life of Christ that we share through baptism.

Likewise, we might think of the many agricultural parables heard in the season after Pentecost and how they coincide with the long growing season. As farmers tend their crops, we tend our souls in a time where the passing of time itself is a figure of our sometimes-slow Christian journey growing into a fuller stature of Christ. The parallels are astounding and confirm that all of creation truly does speak the glory of God.

And then we have Advent. There's the hustle and bustle of contemporary commercialism, the pressure of external expectations, events and their demands on our time, and, for some, the heightened sense of isolation and an escalation of depression which seem to be the menu of the season. The parallels seem harder to find.

As we enter into this "New Year" of the Christian Church, I hope and pray that perhaps we might take a chance on living the Church's calendar instead. This time of year, from the Church's perspective, we're asked to cultivate hope and patience. Our gaze is directed forward to the still awaited Second Coming of Christ, our final hope, as we also wait expectantly, actively, with the Virgin Mary for the hope of the nations to be delivered. This calls to mind, to me at least, that "to hope" and "to wait" are the same word in Spanish: *esperar*. I'll add to the mix Hebrews 11:1 which says, "Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see" (CEB). The idea of both hoping and waiting can be so closely linked together.

This Advent, what are some ways you can answer the Church's invitation to enter into an active waiting? A waiting that doesn't mean you are sitting still and doing nothing?

How can you cultivate hope as we wait to see our Christ's glorious appearing? How does he appear and show up in the supermarket, the next holiday function, in the waiting line at the pharmacy, and in the other various small and still moments of our ordinary lives?

What are some ways that we can enter into Advent authentically and faithfully, even if it runs counter to what is so often demanded of us this time of year?

How can we keep the calendar of our faith and resist the temptations of overexertion while we wait patiently and with hope for Our Lord's appearing in our hearts?

I remain ever yours in Christ,

Fr. Ben





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 19.

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



The Water Glass Effect and The Poison Arrow Effect

I had a psychology professor who shared this powerful lesson with our class. He holds up a glass of water and asks us how heavy it is. The class answers with a variety of figures: 8 ounces. 12 ounces. 16 ounces. The professor shakes his head:

“The absolute weight of the glass doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold onto it. If I hold it for a minute, nothing happens. If I hold it for an hour, my arm will begin to ache. If I hold it all day long, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. Well, the weight of the glass hasn't changed, but the longer I hold onto it, the heavier it becomes.”

The professor continued with the deeper lesson:

The stresses and the worries of life are like this glass of water. If you think about them for a little while, there's no problem. Think about it for a little bit longer, it begins to hurt. If you think about them all day long, you'll feel paralyzed, incapable of doing anything.

Always remember: Put the glass down. Most of the burdens we feel in life come not from the weight of what we're holding, but from how long we choose to hold them.

Think about this in our own life:

- It's not the weight of the argument itself that bears down on us. It's the weight of replaying it again and again.
- It's not the weight of the mistake itself that cripples us. It's the weight of revisiting it repeatedly.
- It's not the weight of the regret itself that stops us. It's the weight of ruminating over it repeatedly.

Stress, anxiety, fears, and tension. They all get heavier with time. And the harder we squeeze the glass, the faster it happens. As we hold onto them, they compound the weight of their burden on us.

The burden is not from the weight of what we are holding, but from how long we choose to hold it. Put the glass down.

There is a similar story called “The Poison Arrow Effect”:

Imagine someone struck by a poisoned arrow. A doctor is called to remove the arrow, but the man stops him. “Not so fast! Before you remove it, I want to know who shot me. What town or village does he come from? What kind of wood was his bow made from? Was it a crossbow or a longbow?” While he asks the questions, the poison takes hold and he dies.

The implication is that we think we need *more information* to solve our problems when all we really need is *more action*. The trap is becoming more challenging in our modern era where information is abundant. But information alone is never enough. Information is nothing without action. The information meant to push you forward can quickly start to hold you back. Struck with the poison arrow, you feel a surge of satisfaction from learning that your attacker was from a nearby village, that his bow was made from oak, and that it was a longbow and then, we are dead, because the information *we wanted* had become a distraction from the action *we needed to take*. Don't allow information-gathering to get in the way of action-taking. The next time you're in an overthinking loop, ask yourself: Do I really need more information, or do I simply need to act on the information I already have?

It's not the poison arrow that kills us; it's ruminating too much.

Philip Mothersead





Notice of Annual Meeting

St. John's will conduct its Annual Meeting in the parish hall on **Sunday, January 25, 2026, 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 25, 2026, 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 2029. Under the Parish Bylaws, the retiring Vestry members may not be candidates for election to the Vestry until 2027.

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 start meeting soon: watch the announcements for the schedule.

Thank you,
Clerk of the Vestry

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE IN JANUARY

Annual departmental reports are due no later than **January 19**, in the parish office. The following people and group leaders should be sure they have submitted their reports. Please use an **e-mail attachment**. Contact the church office if you need assistance.

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



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. Please continue to help as we collect for this year's Christmas Baskets. It really makes a difference for both parents and children. Watch for the sign-up list on the corkboard and help us make their holiday brighter!

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!



CAROLERS IN PLAID AT THE “WRAPPED IN PLAID” SPRINGFIELD CHRISTMAS PARADE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13 PARADE BEGINS AT 2PM

Join other Episcopalians in caroling in Springfield's Christmas parade.

**Dress in your finest Christmas plaid timeless tartans,
cozy flannels, festive checks, or even holiday pajamas.**

**We're bringing the warm, joyful spirit of a cozy Christmas
to downtown Springfield.**

**We are also looking for donations of wrapped candy
to pass out along the parade route.**

Contact Melissa at 417 440-0288 or melissa.gallian@gmail.com to sign up.

Convention Happenings

The Diocese of West Missouri held its annual convention on November 7 and 8. The convention was held at the cathedral in Kansas City. St. John's was represented there by Fr. Ben, Linda Robertson, and David Westervelt. Among the items discussed was the budget for the upcoming year. We were pleased to see that the apportionment for St. John's was reduced by a little more than \$14,000.

Other things at convention included a eucharist on Friday evening, followed by a reception. Saturday was the time for the business session. Besides the budget, elections were held for several diocesan committees. Elections were also held to elect representatives from our diocese to the General Convention in 2027. General convention is held every three years.

There is some hope that next year's diocesan convention will be held in the southern part of the diocese. If it is, it most likely will be in Springfield. The convention eucharist is open to everyone to attend. If you want to attend the business sessions, you can. However, the only people who would be recognized to speak are the delegates from the churches and clergy.

If you have ever wanted to see how the business of the diocese is handled, I encourage you to attend the convention and listen to the discussions. Come to the convention and experience different aspects of the life of the Diocese of West Missouri.

David Westervelt

From The Treasurers

The treasurers, along with the vestry, thank you for keeping your pledges up to date. We are all dedicated to being the best steward of the funds you have entrusted to us. We are now starting to compile a new year's budget for the many ministries here at St. John's, and your pledges help us to accomplish that. The treasurers would like to take a moment and remind you of the many ways you can contribute to the church. There are things like altar flowers so we can have flowers at the altar most weeks. During the school year, part of our choir is made up of the Choral Scholars. This is not a budgeted item. So, if you like the beautiful singing you hear, perhaps a contribution to the Choral Scholars is for you. There is an endowment fund which was started many years ago so that St. John's can continue to thrive in the future. Did you know that the endowment fund was started with \$125.00? And today it continues to work so that those after us can have services like we do today. If you would like to know more about the endowment, please reach out to me or to Karen Horny, Linda Robertson, or Kim Westervelt who are members of the Endowment Committee.

Finally, as treasurer, I would like to mention the ways you can contribute. St. Johns is set up to receive payments from PayPal, directly from your bank account and, of course, by putting funds into the collection plate. Did you know that when you have reached 70 ½ years of age you can contribute from your IRA and it would be tax free? See your financial advisor if you need help or information. If you need help setting up payments from your bank, please see me, and I will supply you with the information needed. Thanks for your support of St. John's.

David Westervelt, Treasurer



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

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. 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
Dec. 24 Tim & Beth Wilkinson

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. 29 Barbara Daniel
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.

