

2023 Annual Report



ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH



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Senior Pastor

PASTOR DAVID GLESNE

One word has repeatedly come to mind as I look back on the year that was and where the momentum of God's Holy Spirit is empowering this congregation.

That word is GROW.

It is a simple word but it is also one of our four key value words: Worship, Love, Give, Grow. These four biblically-based values have guided us well through the struggles of COVID and the cultural and societal reorientation that has followed in its wake. Over a year ago, we celebrated our 150th anniversary. We took some time and looked back and gave thanks; this past year has taken that focus and moved it forward. It's all about where God is leading us now. In ways, big and small, growth is happening all over and through St. John's.

I noted something odd this summer: our in-person attendance numbers were remarkably strong. This trend continued into the fall with a robust number of individuals who were not only showing up for worship but growing in service and knowledge! By year's end, if my math can be trusted, we are up nearly 23% with our in-person worship

numbers and remain consistent with our online presence.

These signs of growth are not only in worship. They are all over this congregation in every area of ministry!

“but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.”

EPHESIANS 4:15-16

Let me guide you into reading each page of this report. We have been blessed to have Dean Brown as the congregation's president this year, and I love his observations about the growth in relationships and community. Fred and his maintenance crew and the Tuesday Tee Time guys have done a fantastic job of not only keeping the place looking good but also in a way that enables its use by so many. Gudrun highlights the myriad ways that we as a congregation develop, encourage, and nurture spiritual care amongst our members and others. Dave highlights the continued growth of our Sunday morning studies and small groups. Kerri also connects with small groups as part of her job of growing connections from first visit to membership and beyond. The Mission's team report is always a joy. While many

ministries have been going on for years, they continue to grow in scope and impact through our many ministry partnerships. Amy and Emily report on our youth programs' steady and deepening growth. Finally, financially, we are growing steadily

even in these uncertain times; your generosity as members of St. John's enables us to grow in ministry daily and in hundreds of ways—a special thanks to Steve BeMiller for his time as treasurer over these last few years. Don't worry; he is leaving these matters in good hands as Tammy Fahling takes over. Finally, the growth that has happened, resulting in the ordination and the calling of Pastor Lyn Ahearn as Associate Pastor for Community Care, plants many more seeds for what will come next!

There is more, of course, but I promised myself I'd keep it short. Please read the reports. As you do, you will see signs of amazing God-given growth, as each part “promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.” Thank you for a great year, and I look forward to where we will grow together in God's grace in the year ahead.

Associate Pastor

PASTOR LYN AHEARN

What an amazing, whirlwind and grateful year to serve at St. John's! As part of completing my Internship, the year began with taking a seminary class online through the winter/spring, as well as continuing to meet with the internship committee, preaching, and leading a new DivorceCare class. In August I was approved by the Synod as a Candidate for Word and Sacrament Ministry, followed by a meeting with Bishop (Emeritus) John Roth, who then determined he would submit my name to St. John's. I am so grateful to all who supported us through this journey, especially all who served and attended the Ordination celebration on October 22! What a humbling and holy time this has been.

With my call as Associate Pastor of Community Care, a few areas of leadership have changed. While I continue to serve as leader of Congregational/Pastoral Care, I am also serving as a pastoral leader for the Mission Outreach team. I look forward to this relationship moving forward.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

There are so many active parts to our Congregational Care ministry. I am so grateful for Gudrun Dunt, Member Care Coordinator, who keeps so many care programs going.

I am grateful for the visits that all of our BeFriends have provided to our members. They truly are a

valuable connection to our homebound members and those going through grief or illness.

Other areas of pastoral care are the *Caring Connections* devotions, home visits, hospital visits, and presiding at funerals. *Journeying Through Grief* booklets are mailed to provide information and encouragement to those who are grieving.

We will begin our third session of GriefShare soon. I pray that this continues to be a viable ministry that brings comfort to the community. Last spring we also held our first DivorceCare class, which was also my Internship project.

Prayer Ministry is an integral part of how we care for each other. Prayer chain, Thursday prayer group, and the prayer shawl ministry all focus on communicating our praise and needs to God.

During 2023, I presided at nine member funerals and two non-member funerals (with connections to St. John's members). It was exciting to perform two baptisms!

We also held a Women's Breakfast gathering which was well received! We will be continuing this ministry in 2024 and hopefully will be received well as an educational, fellowship, and encouragement to those attending.

Please see the Congregational Care section for the many more activities that provide care for all involved!



Council President

DEAN BROWN

After an event-filled 2022, St. John's wasn't done with celebrating and growing as we moved on through 2023.

RELATIONSHIPS

I believe that a main focus of St. John's is relationships—our relationships with God and other people. One of my biggest joys has been watching all the fellowship taking place in our church. The friendliness and welcoming nature of our members is one of the main reasons people join St. John's (70 new members in 2023!). Every time a committee or work group meets, there is positive socialization happening. The Gathering Area outside the Worship Center has become THE place to connect before and after services. You can't go wrong with coffee, donuts, and good conversation. Social activities ranged from small group Bible study groups to a Hoedown to Faith on Tap, as well as other numerous organizations that help to make our church thrive and grow. When it comes to establishing good and meaningful relationships, I think we're on the right track at St. John's. I encourage everyone to find a way to join in.

CALL COMMITTEE

When it was decided we needed to hire a new Associate Pastor, a Call Committee was formed to find and recommend a candidate. Members of this impressive committee were Scott Fahsbender, Pastor David Glesne, Elizabeth Haines, Grace Hanson, Cheri Miller, Marty Tarmann, Nannette Wagner, and myself. After doing its due diligence the Call Committee recommended our own Deacon Lyn to the Council for consideration. The Council then recommended Lyn to be called by the congregation. The congregation, in turn, unanimously voted to extend the call to Lyn Ahearn. By the way, it took Lyn less than two seconds to accept the call. Heartfelt thanks to Shari Buckellew for her invaluable support.

PASTOR LYN

A major highlight of 2023 was Pastor Lyn's ordination celebration. Yes, her long journey to become a pastor finally culminated in her ordination. We can officially call her PASTOR Lyn, now! Her ordination was immediately followed by her installation as our Associate Pastor. In fact, it was so immediate both



events took place during the same beautiful service. What a fantastic and inspiring occasion it was! The procession of area pastors who joined in the service was nothing short of breathtaking. I'll never forget the sheer joy of watching our dear deacon become our new Associate Pastor; Lyn's smiles were beacons of light.

A WELCOMING PLACE

People and groups from across our community have found our church to be a welcoming place to hold meetings and events. Events such as blood drives and musical concerts and groups such as pickle ball and Holiday Spectacular rehearsals have found a friendly home at St. John's.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Our synod elected a new bishop, Pastor Greg Busboom. The weekend of October 21/22 Bishop Busboom visited St. John's as a way of getting to know congregations in the Synod, and he was available to facilitate Pastor Lyn's ordination and installation. Bishop Busboom returned to St. John's to tour the facility with the eye of holding the 2025 Synod Assembly here. And, it looks like that's going to happen!
- David Johnson and Jolie Hoffmann were reelected to the Congregation Council. Jolie will serve, again, as Council Secretary.
- The Congregation Council authorized the formation of a subcommittee to address marketing issues.
- A worship strategy/focus subcommittee and a youth/parent forum examined our current practices, seeking input from congregation

members on ways to most effectively move into our future.

It is abundantly clear that the people of St. John's continue to do God's work in numerous ways. We are a caring and welcoming people! Our efforts are a blessing to the world, our community, and each other.

It's been an honor and my good fortune to serve as your Congregation Council President this past year. Throughout the year I've enjoyed the opportunity to work with Pastor David, Deacon/Pastor Lyn, and Shari Buckellew, as well as our incredible church staff. Their positive contributions to our congregation are truly immeasurable. I've also had the great good fortune to work with the outstanding members of the Congregation Council. Their individual commitment and leadership has been awesome.

Congregation Council Members: Steve BeMiller (treasurer), Dean Brown (president), Tammy Fahling, Pastor David Glesne, Jolie Hoffmann (secretary), Randy Holthaus, David Johnson, Connie Moll, Joel Murphy, Carlton Potts, Mark Scott (vice president), and Carla Snell.

Noah's Ark Preschool

SHERRI LEWIS

For more than 45 years, Noah's Ark teachers and staff have been inspiring learning for children and families. While attending Noah's Ark, children learn readiness and social skills needed to prepare them for their school journey. *Creative Curriculum*, a researched play-based curriculum is used to guide teachers' lesson plans and activities, as well as *Second Step*, a social/emotional curriculum that teaches children social skills and respecting one another's likes and differences.

Noah's Ark continues to be a ministry and early childhood education program where St. John's members and families from our community can

enroll their young child. Noah's Ark provides an opportunity for non-member parents to learn about programs and events held at the church by receiving fliers and social media updates.

Our enrollment is a diverse group, attracting families from many different cultures. During their time at Noah's Ark, families build supportive relationships that will be kept for years to come.

It is a blessing to be in the St. John's church building and have so many resources available. In 2023 we received a state grant to help purchase a new fence for our playground. Together with money from a state grant and our Fund-a-Foot-of-Fence-for-Forty-Dollars Campaign, we were able to install a new fence around the playground, which will help to keep our students safer for many years to come.

Thank you to all St. John's families and staff for their contribution. Collaborating with church members is one of our biggest resources. Did you know that some of our board members are church members? Also, church volunteers refinished some of our wooden playground equipment.

If you are interested in getting involved or know someone who is looking for an early learning program for their child or grandchild, please spread the word!

Children's and Youth Ministries

AMY RADEMACHER AND EMILY LEWIS

Children and Youth Ministries has had a very busy and successful year! We are finding some new rhythms with programs and events and are enjoying increased attendance and engagement from both children, youth, parents and volunteers! Our programs have grown in numbers and we look forward to continued progress in 2024!

SPRING 2023

- JoyZone continued to meet each Sunday morning during the 10:30 AM worship service in the Parish Life Center. We began discussions about the future and more permanent space for this growing program. Thrive for junior high students was held each Wednesday evening with learning, service, and fellowship events. Chaos for senior high students also met weekly on Wednesday evenings for fellowship.



- 8th grade students began their Confirmation journey, including two retreats throughout the semester with their parents and mentors.
- All three ministries had children and youth that were involved in Midweek Lenten Worship services as readers and greeters, candle lighters, musicians, and singers.
- Junior and senior high students hosted an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter morning. The youth stuffed hundreds of eggs with candy and they were hidden on the northeast lawn. About 75 children and their families participated in the hunt on a sunny Easter morning!
- The Holy Communion program consisted of two learning workshops and one creative workshop and was attended by 13 students between 4th and 8th grade. The Holy Communion Worship Service was held on Sunday, April 2.
- Junior and senior high students held several fundraising events to raise money for both Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center (LOMC) retreat and Work Camp attendees. The two ministry groups hosted the Nelson's Chicken Dinner in April and the Garage Sale in May. In total, the fundraisers reaped about \$8,000 in donations!



as the large group leader for the first time, and enjoyed being able to interact with the kids and volunteers in that role each day! Many staff and congregation members served as station leaders, crew leaders, kitchen crew, hospitality team members, and on the decorations team. Children brought offering each day for the Zambia Education Fund, exceeding our goal of \$1,000 by raising over \$2,500! The kids and congregation were blown away! On Sunday, June 18, the VBS kids and volunteers helped during the 10:30 AM worship service by leading the congregation in some of the songs they learned during the week.

- One of the highlights of this year's Senior High Ministry was the impactful mission trip attended by two dedicated students. Wendy Klessig and

SUMMER 2023

- Vacation Bible School was a huge success! Seventy children and about 80 volunteers participated in the SPARK VBS program June 12-15. Amy served



Emily Lewis chaperoned the trip to West Virginia. Work Camp served as a transformative experience, providing students with an opportunity to apply their faith in a real-world context while fostering a sense of service and compassion. The students also participated in group meals and worship, small group devotion, and Bible study, as well as plenty of time for fellowship and fun.

- Amy chaperoned four junior high students for a 5-day camp at LOMC in Oregon, Illinois, in July. It was great fun for all involved with plenty of time in the outdoors enjoying God's beautiful world! The students engaged in daily Bible study and prayer but also had plenty of time for typical summer camp activities—outdoor games, campfires, canoeing, hiking, swimming, crafts and more! The group came back a little sore from so much walking, a little chewed up from mosquitoes, and a little more tan than when they had left, but more importantly, closer to each other and to God! It was a blessed week!
- Chaos continued to meet weekly through the summer on Wednesday evenings, while Thrive and JoyZone were on hold for the summer. Pew Projects were offered for children ages 3 years through 5th grade during the 10:30 AM worship service in lieu of JoyZone.

FALL 2023

- We were thrilled to kick off the new school year with a new home for JoyZone. After much discussion and a summer full of hard work, moving, and decorating, we opened up the Nursery Wing for JoyZone classrooms at the beginning of September! Students gather in the largest room for large group and then go to the smaller classrooms for art, music, theater activities, games and bible lessons. It has been a wonderful space for the kids



and for our volunteers. We enjoy being on the same level as the Worship Center and the Gathering Area—it makes for quick and easy drop-off and pick-up for parents and allows the kids to be part of the hustle and bustle of Sunday mornings! JoyZone has about 50 children registered with about 25-30 attending each week. This fall we had a rotation of about 15 volunteers helping on Sunday mornings, as well as a group of volunteers coming each Tuesday to help prep for the weekend lessons. It is such a blessing to have a thriving, active group of children and adults in our JoyZone program!

- Thrive has about 40 students registered this year and attending with five small group leaders helping to facilitate each week. Thrive meets weekly on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8 PM and rotates each week between learning events, fellowship events, and service events. This year we are taking a different approach to the learning portion with a new curriculum and a new large- and small-group format. Students are still learning the basics of the Old and New Testament and the Lutheran Catechism but in a more student-friendly approach. It must be working because we have a full house pretty much every week! The kids are showing up and bringing their friends and their Bibles. We can't ask for much better than that!
- Senior High Ministries placed a special emphasis on understanding the enneagram, a powerful tool for self-discovery and interpersonal dynamics. The study delved into the nine different personality types, helping participants gain insight into their own behaviors and motivations. Through discussions, and reflective sessions, our students explored how their unique personalities relate not only to each other but also to their relationship with God. When not on campus, we spent time as a group deepening our connections to one another. We spent time going to dinner, rock climbing, bowling and participating in service projects to help better our community.
- Eleven 9th grade students completed their Confirmation journey on Sunday, October 29, in celebration during the 10:30 AM worship service.
- Youth Ministries hosted a lock-in for junior and senior high students on Friday, November 1. Twelve students came and enjoyed time playing games, doing crafts, playing hide-and-seek, watching movies, and, of course, eating a ton of junk food! Emily and Amy finally called for lights out at 1 AM, and they all plopped in their sleeping

bags on the floor of the Parish Life Center! The next morning, they were up and ready to eat—pancakes, sausage, fruit, and juice were on the menu for these kids that never seem to fill up! It was such a fun weekend and a joy to see our youth enjoy our church and make themselves right at home!

WINTER 2023

- Junior and senior high students participated in the Midweek Advent Worship services on Wednesday evenings. Students served as readers, greeters, candle-lighters, and actors in skits.

Adult Education

DAVE BOLLMANN

Adult education is a relevant part of ministry life of St. John's. Drop-in small group learning continues through the use of several resources, including *RightNow Media*. Two small group studies continued in 2023 held on Sunday mornings between services. One class focused on studying that week's lesson from the Lectionary and the other a Video Forum. Special small groups met during Lent to discuss the book *Grace* by Max Lucado.

In-person groups met regularly including a Friday morning men's Bible study, and Monday evening women's group. The Wednesday evening men's

group also met in-person and socially. Kaffehuset and Faith in Life on Wednesday mornings continued to have strong attendance.

Finding ways to continue to expand Adult Education is an area of focus for 2024. An all-church book read will occur during Lent and additional small group ministries are in the works for the coming calendar year.

Congregational Care

GUDRUN DUNT

FELLOWSHIP AND MEALS

Women's Ministry

Heart for God Women's Ministry Breakfast— We were blessed with a wonderful morning of connection and fellowship as 60 ladies enjoyed breakfast, wonderful music, and inspiring message from Pastor Lyn Ahearn, and an opportunity to work on a craft.

Kaffehuset

Kaffehuset attendance continues to be strong with an average of 30 attending this once-a-month program. Coordinators Dawn Conway and Linda Fisher have done an excellent job of planning informative and entertaining programs.





Pastor Lyn Ahearn Ordination

What a wonderful celebration for St. John's as Pastor Lyn was ordained as Associate Pastor of Community Care in October. The reception held following the service was well attended and became a "loaves and fishes" moment as we ran short on cake. There was such a spirit of joy as members and guests celebrated officially welcoming a new pastor to St. John's.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Flu Clinic

A successful flu clinic was held in September with a total of 69 individuals being immunized. Thank you to St. John's member Melanie Beedle and Hy-Vee Pharmacy for helping keep the congregation healthy.

PRAYER

Thursday Prayer Gathering and Prayer Chain

The Thursday Prayer Group continues to be a highlight of the week for this team of prayer warriors. We continue to meet via Zoom praying through the weekly Prayer Focus, as well as numerous other prayer concerns submitted by St. John's members, family, and friends.

St. John's Prayer Chain also continues its important work, praying through many requests over the course of the year. God has been so faithful in the answers he provides.

CHRISTIAN CARE

BeFriender Ministry

St. John's BeFrienders continue to be a vital part of pastoral care at St. John's. We currently have 28 individuals serving in one-on-one relationships, covering hospital and home communion visits. BeFrienders continue to meet monthly for support and continuing education. Continuing education topics this past year include Listening Postures, and Ministering to those Suffering with Depression,

Dementia, and Anxiety. During the summer months BeFrienders read and discussed the book *Everyday Spirituality* by James Hazelwood.

St. John's pastors are instrumental in the strength of this program by identifying individuals who would benefit from visits by a BeFriender. Their open doors and ongoing support and encouragement to those serving in the BeFriender role is much appreciated.

Blue Christmas Worship Service

We were so pleased to once again offer the Blue Christmas Service in December. More than 40 individuals attended. We heard many positive comments about how meaningful and reflective this service is for those for whom the holiday season can be difficult.

Caregivers Ministry

Caregivers continue to meet twice a month to prepare cards for those celebrating milestone birthdays and anniversaries, baptisms, weddings, as well as those experiencing illness.

Caring Connections and Daily Blessings

Caring Connection letters to St. John's senior members and *Daily Blessings* continue to be well received by the congregation.

DivorceCare

Pastor Lyn Ahearn led a DivorceCare group in late spring. It has been a number of years since St. John's had an active ministry for individuals who are navigating the challenges of divorce. We will be evaluating next steps for this ministry.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The prayer shawl ministry continues to support St. John's members and local cancer centers with prayer shawls, prayer squares, and hats. The ministry donated pink prayer squares for the Pray for the Cure event held at St. John's in September. In 2023 members made 40 prayer shawls, 188 prayer squares, and 88 hats. Thirty-eight lap blankets were donated to St. Johns. A few were given to a local cancer center and the remainder were kept to present to infants when baptized. Prayer Shawl members look forward to continued service and fellowship in 2024.

Sanctuary Mental Health Course

We were so pleased to be able to offer The Sanctuary Course which equips churches to become sanctuaries where people with mental health challenges feel safe, supported, and have a

sense of belonging. We had eight participants complete the course. The videos and training materials were excellent. We look forward to offering this course again in 2024.

SPLASH Cradle Roll

Twenty-two families received *SPLASH* curriculum each month. Focused on the faith formation of children birth through age three, families receive a monthly newsletter, parenting ideas, a bible story, prayer, and worship suggestions. A total of 33 families have completed the program for at least one of their children since 2019.

Wedding Ministry

St. John's had one wedding in 2023. I am grateful to our team of dedicated and detail-oriented wedding coordinators Beth Colan, Kelly Heim, Lori Laughlin, Diane Murphy, and Margarete Winland, all who support couples through the planning, rehearsal, and wedding day.

GRIEF AND LOSS

Journeying Through Grief

Journeying Through Grief materials were sent to 38 individuals in 2023. This Stephen Ministry series is sent at intervals of three weeks, three months, six months and 11 months following the death of a loved one.

Funeral Ministry

St. John's pastors conducted 13 funerals with four held in the busy weeks leading up to Christmas. I am thankful for our team of funeral luncheon coordinators who navigated a busy season with grace and flexibility. Their ministry allows grieving families time and space to share memories and fellowship with one another.

GriefShare

GriefShare is a national program that takes place in 13 self-contained sessions. Our second GriefShare group of 13 participants completed the program in the spring. The journey of grief has many ups and downs. Knowing that there are others on that journey has provided comfort and support, as well as the development and deepening of friendships. It has truly been an honor to journey alongside those who are grieving.

MEMBERSHIP AND NEW PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

While St. John's was blessed with the addition of 70 new members, we did experience a net membership loss of 202 members. St. John's

Constitution requires that the membership roll be reviewed each year and that individuals who have not actively participated in the past two years be placed on inactive status. During the COVID pandemic, we made the decision not to inactivate any members. In essence we played catch-up when we reinstated this practice in 2023.

It can be said that St. John's is not the same congregation that it was pre-COVID. There are many new faces coming from many denominational backgrounds and sometimes no church background at all. As a staff we have had conversations about how to assist people in getting to know others. The decision was made to create an in-house pictorial directory. Kerri Cordray and I worked with several volunteer photographers to offer photo booth opportunities with the goal of uploading new pictures into the ShelbyNext database. It was a fun and fruitful process and hopefully will be helpful for those who call St. John's their church home.

Connections

KERRI CORDRAY

NEW MEMBER PROCESS

In 1977 Lanny Wolfe wrote a hymn called, *Surely the Presence of the Lord*. If I were to summarize this past year through a song, I would choose this one. A few of the lyrics include, "Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place; I can feel his mighty power and his grace. I can feel the brush of angels' wings, I see glory in each face." I believe that God is actively at work in and through St. John's. One area of great blessing can be found in the welcoming of new members. The membership process has evolved into a relational process of getting to the know each individual/couple/family through a personal meeting between Pastor David and me. We met with seventy individuals who were received into membership at St. John's. When asked what makes St. John's the church home for you, many responses include, "the genuineness of the people," "it's a welcoming, friendly place," "the joy of the Lord is felt here," and "I felt accepted, valued, and truly welcomed, just as I am." Receptions were held in April and November as a way for the new members to connect with fellow new members, Council, and staff.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

Last spring during Lent, Pastor David encouraged people to connect with groups to read and discuss

Grace by Max Lucado. Nine groups formed and committed to studying the book and engaging in discussion. Four of these groups were newly established. In the fall, a group of newer members, five couples, became a new small group. Their purpose being to build new relationships and establish spiritual growth. They have committed to meet monthly and rotate homes for their meetings.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS AND RECEPTIONIST TEAM

An amazing volunteer coordinator team of fourteen people work behind-the-scenes to schedule, communicate, train, and equip members to serve in worship. These areas include greeters and hospitality, holy communion prep and serving, lectors, ushers, technology, and a coffee hub. When combining the volunteers serving on each of the teams, a total of 264 people are actively involved in one or multiple areas of worship volunteerism.

Another wonderful team to mention is the weekly receptionist team. These dedicated people serve 3-6 hours each week welcoming guests, answering phone calls, and serving in various roles behind the scenes.

A special thank you to all who have served so faithfully and sacrificially in this past year! Praying the presence of the Lord will continue to fill hearts and lives as we begin this new year!

Coordinators: Jim Click, Dawn Conway, Debra Cruise, Jan Dosen, Linda Fisher, Grace Hanson, Michelle Harris, Bill Leary, Chris Magnuson, Diane Murphy, Melissa Plassman, Betty Trimble, Julie Williams, and Margarete Winland

Receptionist Team: Ann Ament, Lynn Carpenter, Bill Leary, Diane Murphy, Betty Trimble, Debbie Whelton, and Sharon Wunderlin

Congregational Life

A newly developed team was created to organize and structure St. John's fellowship events under one coordinated umbrella. The team consisting of volunteers and staff, carefully consider each planned event and align the details according to St. John's four values—worship, grow, love, and give.

FAITH ON TAP

More than one hundred people participated in meetings for drinks and food at local breweries this summer. Faith conversations occurred and new relationships were formed. A special thank you to Diane and Joel Murphy for coordinating this wonderful fellowship ministry.



MEALTIMES

Another highlight from this past year was the implementation of Mealtimes held prior to midweek services during the Lent and Advent seasons. During the Lenten season, an average of sixty-five people consistently gathered for the meals before heading into worship. Those who gathered enjoyed meeting new people and the fellowship opportunity provided through the evening meals. The Advent season allowed us to expand and provide a noontime meal and service option in addition to the evening meals and services. Lisa Myers and Gudrun Dunt coordinated a simple soup lunch, and a team of volunteers coordinated the evening meals. Both times were well attended, with eighty people on average at either the noon or evening meal. Adding the meals helped to boost the midweek worship attendance. A win-win!

HARVEST HOEDOWN

A wonderful team met and planned a fall congregational event, Harvest Hoedown. The event took place on October 21, and included a chili cook-off, hayrack ride, games for all ages, children's costume parade, live music, and crafts. Approximately 160 people attended the event. People were engaged in conversation with one another and actively participated in the activities.



ONE WORSHIP CELEBRATION

An end of summer worship celebration and fellowship event took place on Sunday, August 13. This special event offered a combined worship service with fellowship, food, and games for the entire family following the service. Food trucks provided the meal and games for all ages, including GellyBall in the Parish Life Center, were a huge hit. Attendance for the service and fellowship was over 350 people!

Team Members: Cyndee Brown, Shari Buckellew, Kerri Cordray, Gudrun Dunt, Pastor David Glesne, Betty Hope, Ayna MeKuria, Sara Mieczkowski, Lisa Myers, Amy Rademacher, Michelle Schneider, and Nannette Wagner



Mission Outreach

We are so blessed to be able to share St. John's love through our local and global work. Our team and congregation volunteers work with our ministry partners throughout the year on a wide variety of projects, and 2023 was another successful year.

LOCAL

The Big Give

Three large "Gaylord" boxes full of food were collected for the holiday to donate to Home Sweet Home Ministries.

Center for Hope

A Lenten collection of diapers, paper products, and cleaning supplies was held.

Faith in Action

Faith in Action is an interfaith non-profit ministry. Volunteers provide transportation rides at no cost to seniors in the Bloomington Normal Area and have expanded into LeRoy, Lexington and Chenoa. FIA also offers friendly visitors and callers and grocery shopping. St. John's Lutheran church has a total of nine care receivers and 37 volunteers at this point. The church also made a donation to help with computer upgrades. In 2023 FIA served 397 people, with 10,475 services-medical transportation trips. FIA has a total of 375 volunteers who served 11,806 hours and drove 95,719 miles. It is supported by their church partners, federal and local grants, and fundraisers. In 2023, Faith in Action's Volunteer Blessing was held at St. John's.

Giving Tree

Three local organizations received 759 total items for the 2023 Giving Tree project. These were Center for Hope, Bright Point, and Home Sweet Home Ministries. Lots of volunteers helped make tags, fill out the tags, check in gifts, and deliver gifts. Home Sweet Home received 40 backpacks filled with toiletries, phone chargers, and Walmart gift cards, along with some warm socks and journals.

Integrity Counseling

Integrity Counseling, a community-based, non-profit counseling agency was the recipient of our Christmas Eve offering and we were able to donate \$3,200 to this office that maintains a "pay-what-you-can" service.

Local Housing Coalition

In 2023 the lack of affordable housing and the rising cost of living in Bloomington/Normal led to an

increase in requests for local emergency assistance. St. John's staff members Shari Buckellew and Lisa Myers participated in the McLean County Housing Coalition to better understand the current crisis and development partnerships in an effort to more effectively help those who do not qualify for assistance elsewhere. St. John's hosted a forum for the faith-based community presented by Mid Central Community Action. Forty people from a dozen churches and organizations attended. As a result of these conversations, St. John's has coordinated with Safe Harbor, Home Sweet Home, Mid Central Community Action, St. Vincent DePaul, the Regional Office of Education, Cruisin' Out of Poverty, and others to support individuals and families who are homeless or precariously housed. In 2023, \$9,253.83 was disbursed for rental assistance, utility bills, hotel stays, bus passes, and more.

Midwest Food Bank

St. John's continues to be a critical partner of the Midwest Food Bank by furthering the mission of providing food for those in need. Our members volunteered more than 300 hours in 2023 and will continue to do regular volunteer projects in 2024, usually on Tuesday evenings once a month. St. John's budgeted a donation of \$1,000 to help with Hope Food Packs which are for kids who are in need of food over the weekends.

Red Cross

Three Red Cross blood drives were held in 2023, collecting 131 units, averaging 45 donors per drive. All food provided while donors recover is donated by faithful St. John's members.





Safe Harbor

Meals were prepared again this year for Safe Harbor. We so appreciate our St. John's members who show up to provide a good meal and have done so for so many years. There were at least four families who served in 2023 that had not served previously. Unfortunately the food costs have risen and we are feeling that strain with this program certainly.

GLOBAL

Hopedale Growing Project

St. John's members donated more than \$8,000 for the rental of the farmland in Hopedale, Illinois. The soybean crop was sold and will net somewhere between \$33,000 and \$35,000 in January. Growing Hope Globally contacted the Hopedale Mennonite Church earlier this fall and has made some changes in the program the Hopedale Growing Project is supporting. For the past five years, our two churches have supported Zimbabwe Mwenezi. That project is now fully-funded by the Mennonite Central Committee with a grant. Therefore, after some discussion, it was decided that Peru Castrovirreyna will be the recipient of Hopedale proceeds. The 2023 crop proceeds will be used for this project. For 20 years, St. John's partnership with Hopedale Mennonite Church has supported

sustainable agriculture in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and now Peru. Since inception, the project has raised more than \$550,000 and helped some 10,000 people.

LIRS Hope for the Holidays Card Project

Another successful year for this project through Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services where volunteers helped screen, pack, and mail 9,573 cards, including Spanish language cards. St. John's contributed and wrote 1,300 of that total.

Lutheran World Relief

We had another fantastic year of support from St. John's members in October. Fellowship time and lunch were available in the Fellowship Hall thanks to lots of hard work from many volunteers. Outside, two semi-trailers were filled by volunteers who unloaded visitors' cars and trucks and then loaded it all onto the trucks. A total of 5,548 quilts, 580 baby care kits, 3,933 school kits, 3,161 personal care kits in 1,723 boxes were donated. Over \$15,000 was collected for Lutheran World Relief from the participating churches. St. John's alone donated 273 quilts, 630 school kits, 627 personal care kits, and \$2,000!

Zambia Pastors' Children Education Fund

Once again, St. John's demonstrated their support for this project and donated more than \$12,000 to cover the cost of education fees for the children of ELC-Zambia pastors. Our VBS kids also donated their offerings to this project. In October, the Mission Outreach team found out that twelve new pastors had been ordained in Zambia.

Mission Outreach Team Members: Chris Ayers, Steve BeMiller, Gloria Jameson, Lynn Carpenter, Connie Moll, Mabel Lux, Jim Dumouchel, Terry Houchin, Julie Holliday, Steve Pruett, Vickie Robertson, Pastor Lyn Ahearn

Property Committee

FRED RENDER

Property Committee maintains and protects all congregational property and provides a safe environment for our members and guests. Responsibilities include keeping updated facility use guidelines and recommendations for long-range facility use.

This is the second year in the newly remodeled building. We are handling the expanded cleaning and maintaining well, thanks to the diligent work of the staff. Our facility has a lot more outside groups renting space, which gives St. John's more exposure to bring in new members.

We have painted the older parts of our facility to match the remodeled and new edition. There has

been new landscaping, seeding, and improving the look of the grounds. Thanks to the Property team and to the Tuesday Tee Timers and their shepherd Dave Lowe for keeping the grounds looking good and for all the other projects they do to keep our facility looking great! I am very humbled and honored to work with the St. John's staff and congregation. A very special thanks to Lynn Spaid for helping maintain the mowers, donating a landscape trailer, repairing the snow plow, allowing us haul landscape waste to his property and burning it, and many other things he does.

Facility Staff: Myron Adams, Carolyn Kern, Ed Embree, and Fred Render.

Property Committee Members: Kip Iverson (team leader), Roger Haab, Marvin Rasch, Dave Schaffer, Lynn Spaid, Jim Click (secretary), and Randy Holthaus (council liaison)





Finance Committee

The finance committee oversees the financial affairs of the congregation to ensure they are being conducted effectively and in accordance with financial best practices. In 2023 the Finance Committee closely monitored the financial activities of the operating, building, and endowment funds. Improving investment rates and a more stable economy resulted in investment gains in the endowment fund and an opportunity to receive better rates on our investments in the operating fund.

We are very thankful to the families who remembered St. John's with estate gifts. We received three gifts into the endowment fund totaling more than \$175,000.

The monthly stewardship mailing and the quarterly *InTouch* newsletter continue to be used to communicate monthly financial results and the impact of the congregation's stewardship of time, talent, and financial giving.

This year's fall stewardship theme was "Inspired to Give" coordinating with the sermon series of the same title. We received 219 pledges totaling \$991,135 as of the end of 2023 which is an increase of more than 5%. In addition to annual pledges many members continue to give through online recurring contributions.

Please see pages 18-21 for the Financial Statements.

Finance Committee Members: Steve BeMiller (treasurer), Dawn Conway, Tammy Fahling, Pastor Glesne, Elizabeth Haines, Roger Hellman, Tim Kelly, Randy Petersen, and Shari Buckellew (staff)

SPECIFIC ACTIONS OF NOTE

1. Reviewed and monitored monthly finances. On budget giving and slightly below budget spending resulted in a small net surplus for the year.
2. Giving to the Vision 2020 project (building fund) continues to be recorded separately and used to pay our monthly payments of \$28,710. It is anticipated that giving directly to the building fund, along with reserves, will cover the mortgage payments through 2024. Mortgage payments will be combined into the operating budget in 2025.
3. We were informed in December 2023 that Grinnell Mutual will cancel our insurance in 2024. We are working with our independent insurance agent to have new policies in place prior to any lapse in coverage. As a result, we increased the 2024 budget for insurance substantially in preparation for a potential likely increase.
4. New energy contracts were signed, resulting in a decrease in energy costs.
5. Endowment Fund accounts were reviewed and monitored, communicating with our PNC investment advisor.
6. The committee reviewed and recommended a balanced budget for 2024.
7. The committee reviewed and monitored Noah's Ark financial reports resulting in financial stability and continued effort to rebuild their financial resources.

Columbarium

Requests and inquiries about the ability to increase the number of characters on the niche face to incorporate maiden names, longer sir names, or nick names were received in 2023. The Columbarium Board invited Mark Ifft from Pontiac Granite Company to discuss best practices and limitations due to the size of our niches. Based on his professional recommendation and after much discussion, it was determined by the board to uphold the current maximum as the standard for our 8" x 8" niches.

The committee members asked staff to research the possibility of providing a small wall of 12" x 12" niches to accommodate this type of request. Quotes from two companies were reviewed. The cost would range from \$23,000-\$60,000, depending on the number of niches and size of the wall. Due to the overall cost and the required increased cost of these niches to purchasers, it was decided that the board should actively seek input from the congregation throughout 2024 to determine interest and better evaluate our need and ability to pay for larger niches.

The board would like to offer special thanks to Linda Redmon, Laura Veal, Fred Render, and

Myron Adams for maintaining the beauty of the Memorial Garden, and a special thank you to Vern Veal who will be leaving the board after many years of dedicated service.

Board Members: Brent Anderson, Gary Brandenburg, Dean Brown, Pastor David Glesne, Elizabeth Haines, Sharon Hellman, Sue Stombaugh, Vern Veal, and Fred Render, Shari Buckellew and Lisa Myers (staff)

2023 COLUMBARIUM ACTIVITY

- 2 niches sold
- 15 engravings completed
- 8 inurnments

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Niche Sales	\$ 2,000
Deposit returned	(1,300)
Engraving Earned	2,300
Donations	825
Total Income	\$ 3,825
Engraving Completed	\$ 3,200
Urns purchased	1,021
Fees	10
Total Expenses	\$ 4,231
Net Income (loss)	\$ (406)
Cash in Bank 12/31/2023	\$ 48,991.15
Restricted Cash	
Prepaid Engraving Fees	\$ 17,315.00



Statement of Activities

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

Account	Operating Budget
RECEIPTS	
Gifts and Offerings	\$ 1,341,000
Mission and Work Camp Appeals and Fund Raisers	44,500
Total Contributed Income	\$ 1,385,500
Ministry Fees	\$ 17,600
Miscellaneous Income	
Parking Lot and Facility Rentals	17,500
Total Non-Contribution Income	\$ 35,100
Interest and Dividend Income	
Investment Value Change	
Endowment Transfer	46,000
Total Investment Income	\$ 46,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 1,466,600
DISBURSEMENTS	
Benevolence—Synod and Community	\$ 100,000
Global and Local Missions	38,400
Mission Trips	12,950
Total Benevolence and Missions Disbursements	\$ 151,350
Adult Discipleship Ministry	\$ 2,100
Children's and Youth Ministry	13,550
Parish Life Ministry	9,300
Guest Experience Ministry	1,200
Stewardship Ministry	500
Worship Arts Ministry	17,050
Total Direct Ministry Disbursements	\$ 43,700
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 973,000
Other Personnel Expenses	14,050
Office/Administrative Expenses and Technology	85,600
Facility and Grounds	74,400
Insurance and Life Safety	24,500
Utilities	100,000
Mortgage Interest	
Total General Operating Disbursements	\$ 1,271,550
Total Disbursements	\$ 1,466,600
NET SURPLUS	

Operating Actual	Building Fund Vision 2020	Memorial Fund	Endowment Fund
\$ 1,361,055	\$ 389,515	\$ 9,645	\$ 176,520
51,227		250	
\$ 1,412,282	\$ 389,515	\$ 9,895	\$ 176,520
\$ 14,714			
1,578			
21,684			
\$ 37,976			
\$ 8,483	\$ 6,812	\$ 520	\$ 46,108
2,703		80	102,478
\$ 11,186	\$ 6,812	\$ 600	\$ 148,586
\$ 1,461,444	\$ 396,327	\$10,495	\$ 325,106
\$ 100,000			
42,916		\$ 883	
4,914			
\$ 147,830		\$ 883	
\$ 1,819			
10,578			
14,789			
731			
711			
14,993			
\$ 43,621			
\$ 966,020			
12,322			
82,014		\$ 150	\$ 7,703
69,131		17,336	
27,558			
77,241			
	\$ 206,859		
\$ 1,234,286	\$ 206,859	\$ 17,336	\$ 7,703
\$ 1,425,737	\$ 206,859	\$ 18,369	\$ 7,703
\$ 35,707	\$ 189,468	\$ (7,874)	\$ 317,403

Statement of Financial Position

DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Operating Fund December 31, 2023	Building Fund December 31, 2023
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash and Investments	\$ 704,313	\$ 332,493
Fixed Assets		
Building and Land	\$ 17,987,468	
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(6,422,118)	
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 12,269,663	\$ 332,493
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Prepaid Pledges	\$ 56,959	
Temporarily Reserved Funds	10,829	
Construction Loan		5,263,265
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 67,788	\$ 5,263,265
INTERFUND TRANSFERS	\$ 52,653	\$ 608,797
EQUITY		
Total Equity, Beginning Balance	\$ 12,635,398	\$ (5,729,037)
Transfer Completed Building Project		
Current Surplus (Deficit)	35,707	189,468
Non-Cash Items—Depreciation Expenses	(521,883)	
Total Equity, Ending Balance	\$ 12,149,222	\$ (5,539,569)
TOTAL LIABILITIES, INTERFUND TRANSFERS AND EQUITY	\$ 12,269,663	\$ 332,493

Membership Summary

Baptized members at the end of 2022	1,765	Members removed 2023	272
Members received 2023	70	Death	19
Baptism Children (15 and Under)	14	Removed by Action of Council	215
Baptism Adult (16 and Up)	1	ELCA Transfer	8
Affirmation of Faith	25	Non-Lutheran Transfer	3
ELCA Transfer	10	Other Lutheran Transfer	0
Non-Lutheran Transfer	10	Other (Personal Request, Stat. Adjust.)	27
Other Lutheran Transfer	10	Net membership loss	202
Request for Reinstatement—Adults	0	Baptized members at end of 2023	1,563
		Confirmed Membership at End of 2023	1,274
		Baptized Members (Un-confirmed)	292
		Children of Baptized/Confirmed members who have not been baptized	20
		not counted in total baptized members	

Memorial Fund December 31, 2023	Endowment Fund December 31, 2023	All Funds
\$ 33,769	\$ 1,494,201	\$ 2,564,777
		\$ 17,987,468
		(6,422,118)
\$ 33,769	\$ 1,494,201	\$ 14,130,126
		\$ 56,959
		10,829
		5,263,265
		\$ 5,331,053
\$(11,450)	\$(650,000)	
\$ 53,093	\$ 1,826,798	\$ 8,786,252
(7,874)	317,403	534,704
		(521,883)
\$ 45,219	\$ 2,144,201	\$ 8,799,073
\$ 33,769	\$ 1,494,201	\$ 14,130,126

Average Weekly Attendance

Faith and Life Adult Bible Study	19
Children's Choirs	9
Adult Bell Choir	10
Adult Choir	20
SES Musicians	5
COJ Musicians	30
Adult Sunday Morning Classes	22
JoyZone Children's Ministry	30
Junior High (Thrive)	35
Kaffehuset	30
Nursery	N/A
Senior High (CHAOS)	10
Senior High Work Camp	4
Worship	387

Additional Information

Adults Participating in New Member Process	50
Member Funerals	11
Non-member Funerals	2
Weddings	1
Confirmation	9
First Communion	15



ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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