



ST. JOHN

EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Stewardship Campaign 2023

“Growing in Faith Together at St. John”

In the heart of York, St. John Episcopal Church stands as a beacon of faith, hope, and love. For generations, our church has nurtured the spiritual growth of its congregants and played an essential role in the well-being of our community.

This year’s stewardship theme honors our rich legacy and beckons us to build upon our many gifts: Growing in Faith Together at St. John (GIFTS). As we journey together in faith, may GIFTS serve as a reminder of God’s grace in our lives and motivate us to become a source of grace for others. May it inspire us to embody generous stewardship in all that we do. This year, please join us your support of Stewardship 2023.



Growing
In
Faith
Together at
St. John

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP 2023

From the Rector



Growing in Faith Together is not just a convenient theme but also a way of life. Stewardship is woven into the fabric of this vibrant congregation, where members recognize their role as stewards of God's gifts. Through Christian formation, community engagement, and responsible financial management, St. John continues to thrive, nurturing the faith of our members and making a positive impact on the world around us. As we look to the future, our inherited legacy becomes an invitation to continue Growing In Faith Together.

I invite you to consider how St. John has been a source of growth for you. How have you grown in faithful worship, expansive formation, enriching relationship, or engaging service? Each of these focal areas represents a touchstone of growth at St. John. Collectively, they beckon us to a path of growth that encompasses every aspect of our lives.

When Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of God, he often used imaginative stories of growth. He described God’s Kingdom as a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large tree and provides shelter for the birds of the air (Matt. 13:31-32). He described it as yeast that mixes with flour until it becomes fully leavened (Matt. 13:33). He described the Kingdom as seed that gets scattered indiscriminately yet seeks to grow wherever it can (Matt. 13:1-9). They’re all images of growth that invite us to deeper growth in our Christian lives.

How has St. John fostered your growth in Christ? Where might God be inviting us to greater growth? As we embrace a theme of "Growing in Faith Together at St. John" we recognize that this journey requires the collective effort of our faith community. Your increased financial support is a tangible way to invest in our shared mission, to nurture our faith, and to continue growing as a community. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to a life of growth together at St. John.

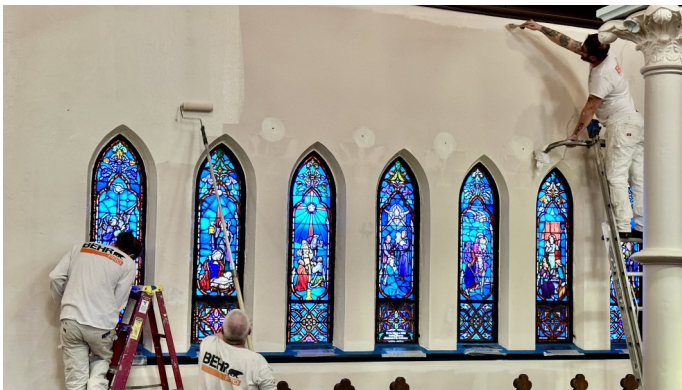
Worshipping Together

Worship is central to the life of Christian communities. It is the primary means through which our faith is nourished and expressed.

For more than 250 years, the people of St. John have maintained a rhythm of worship and praise of God in Christ. We strive to be a beacon of Christ's light within our city, an oasis of God's love in a confused world, a dwelling place for the Kingdom of God.

Worship undergirds and gives strength and meaning to all we do as a community. Our highest calling is to gather in praise and thanksgiving to the God who gives us life.

Jesus promised that whenever two or three are gathered together in his name that he will be in the midst of them. Everyone is invited and welcome to come and gather at St. John as we worship in the presence of the risen Christ.



This year we made significant strides in the care and development of our most sacred spaces. During first quarter of 2023 we completed installation of a new heating and cooling system in the Nave, with huge increases in efficiency and huge decreases in noise. Once the new system was up and running, we painted the full interior of the Nave, supported by revenue from last year's ICONS exhibit. In addition, we completed Phase One of improvements to our audio equipment which provided marked improvements for those joining us either in-person or online.



Over the summer, the steps at our historic entrance were completely rebuilt to provide easier access and a more stable footing. Our historic railings were also incorporated into the new design. The rebuilt entrance fits seamlessly into our existing aesthetic.

As we entered the fall season, we gathered in the Memorial Garden to rededicate this sacred space for a new generation of service in our community. Thanks to an outpouring of generosity, we were able to install a needed plaque, refurbish existing name plates, and establish a modest reserve to sustain this site of communal prayer, lament, and consolation.

Learning Together

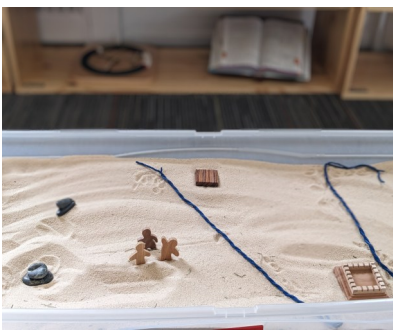
Godly Play



With a heartfelt commitment to nurturing the spiritual growth of the next generation, the church has created a welcoming and inclusive environment where young individuals and families can explore their faith and connect with their community.

One remarkable aspect of St. John's youth and family ministries is the incorporation of Godly Play, a unique and hands-on approach to religious education. This innovative method, inspired by the Montessori philosophy, allows children to engage with sacred stories, symbols, and rituals in a profound and personal way. Through the Godly Play program, young minds are encouraged to explore their spirituality at their own pace, fostering a deep understanding of their faith and a genuine connection with the divine. St. John stands as a beacon of faith, offering a nurturing and enriching environment for youth and families.

Through our youth and family ministries, as well as the creative teaching approach of Godly Play, we provide the support and resources needed to help the next generation grow spiritually, deepen their connection with God, and strengthen their bonds with one another.



Adult Forum

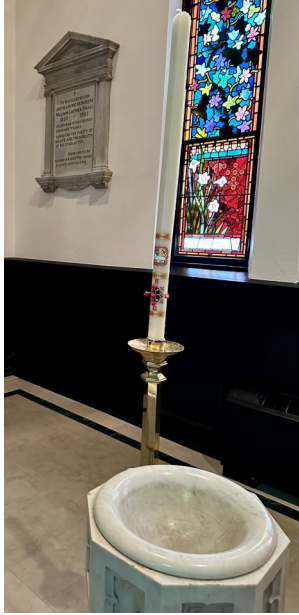
Our weekly gatherings for Adult Forum between Sunday liturgies represent a clear expression of our commitment to Growing in Faith Together. Over the past year, Fr. Eric and our Ministry Associate, Ivan Ruiz-Swartz, have alternated topical offerings covering a broad spectrum of Christian faith and life. Focal areas this year included: The Incarnation, Christian Witness, 10 Commandments, Easter Triduum, Anglican Spirituality, "Living the Resurrection" by Eugene Peterson, "Falling Upward" by Richard Rohr, Female Saints, and The Virgin Mary.

In addition, we have been thrilled to welcome St. John parishioners as presenters at Adult Forum. In February, Judy Bowen, offered a two-part series on "Life as a Mystic" and "The Healing Curve." In May, Zack Hearn, shared about the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which works to educate, equip, and engage Episcopalians to better understand public policy issues and learn more about official church policies.

Our Ministry Associate, Ivan, has also maintained our monthly forum, Nourishing Soul & Body, which invites all comers to Evening Prayer in the chapel, potluck supper in the parish hall, followed by a brief presentation and spiritual conversation.



Serving Together



Growing in Faith Together includes both our service in Christ to the broader community as well as our service in Christ to each other. In our Baptismal Covenant we promise to *seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourself*. This type of service includes the myriad expressions of fellowship and community activity at St. John, ranging from our weekly After-Worship-Fellowship in the Parish Commons, to Mardi Gras, Palm Cross Folding, a Revs ballgame, Trunk or Treat, and Brats & Brew. Each of these activities represents an opportunity to seek and serve Christ in each other as a living communion, as a family of faith, helping us to grow in self-giving love.

The baptismal covenant also calls us to *strive for just and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being*. This type of service, often called outreach, includes our hands-



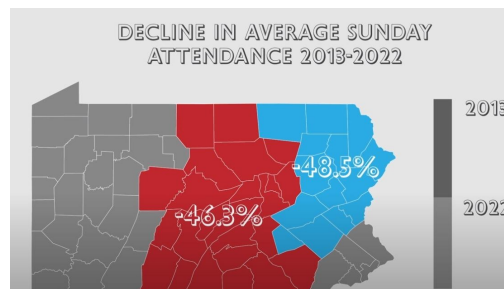
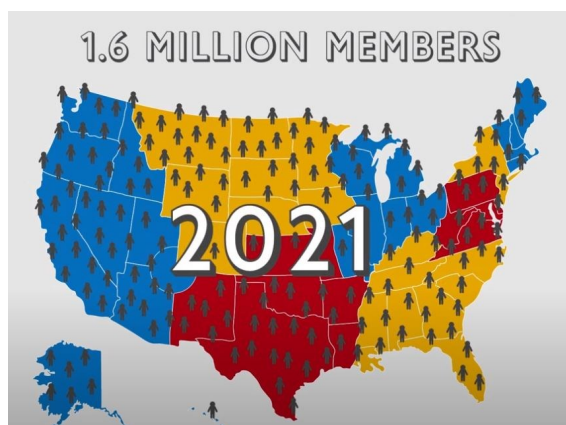
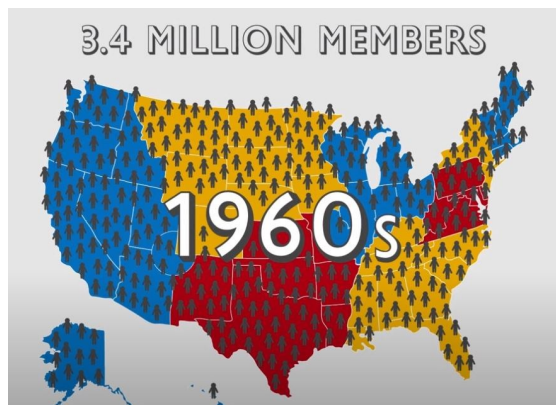
-on service of meals at Our Daily Bread, our feet-on service in the CROP Walk to address global hunger, and our financial or material donations to a variety of community agencies. Over the past two years, our growing relationship with York's New American Welcome Center has allowed us to provide laundry services and day-to-day necessities for hundreds of Haitian families who have fled dire circumstances at home to seek a new home in York. These acts of serving together allow us share the Good News of God's light and love with those experiencing hardship and uncertainty in a beautiful yet broken world.



The challenges facing every church

The Episcopal Church has faced a significant decline in membership and average Sunday attendance over the past 60 years. In 1960, the church boasted a national membership of 3.4 million members. By 2021, membership had dwindled to less than half that amount at just 1.6 million national members.

A relatively steady decline in average Sunday attendance took a dramatic downward turn in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2020-2021, the national average Sunday attendance plummeted by 35% and the return to regular in-person services has been a struggle for many churches. Attendance at St. John has mirrored national trends with average attendance post-COVID approximately 25% lower than pre-COVID levels.



The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania experienced 46.3% decline in attendance from 2013 to 2022, which raises significant questions about the long-term viability of some of the 61 congregations in our diocese. Based on recent trends, approximately 20% of parishes within the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania may face financial or demographic challenges that could jeopardize their existence within the next five years. These diocesan realities reflect larger shifts in religious participation that all Christian denominations are experiencing at the national level.

Despite these challenges, increased financial giving remains a stabilizing force as churches learn to adapt in a shifting landscape. Over the last five years, the Diocese has experienced an impressive 19% increase in pledging from its members. This increase in financial support suggests a strong commitment from the faithful to their local congregations and the broader diocese. St. John is no exception. We have experienced meaningfully higher levels of pledging-per-member in recent years, which has provided a significant source of stability in the midst of shifting trends.

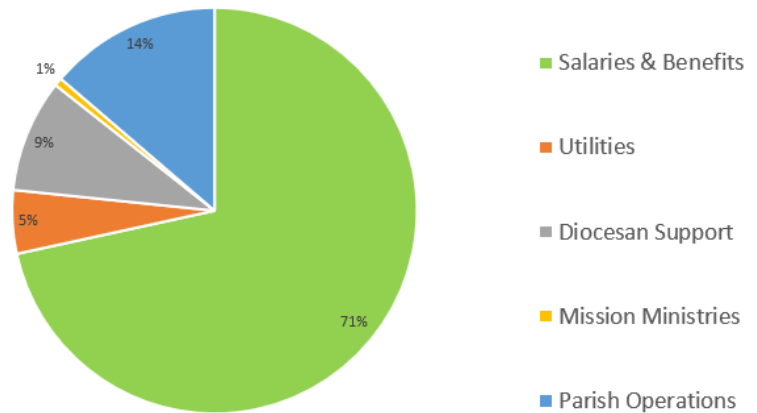
The Episcopal Church's declining membership and attendance reflect significant cultural shifts in religious participation, however the commitment of our existing members demonstrates a determination to address these challenges through faithful adaptation in our ministries and institutional structures. Thanks to you, St. John remains well-positioned to continue building on more than 260 years of Christian worship and service in York.

A look at our parish

The Vestry is charged with managing the financial life of the parish. This process begins in the fall as the Finance Committee presents a preliminary budget for Vestry review. The Committee reviews the current year's performance, as well as input on potential changes to benefit expenses, utility costs, and other items. Our goal is a balanced operating budget. Salaries and benefits are the largest portion of budgeted expenses at over 70%.

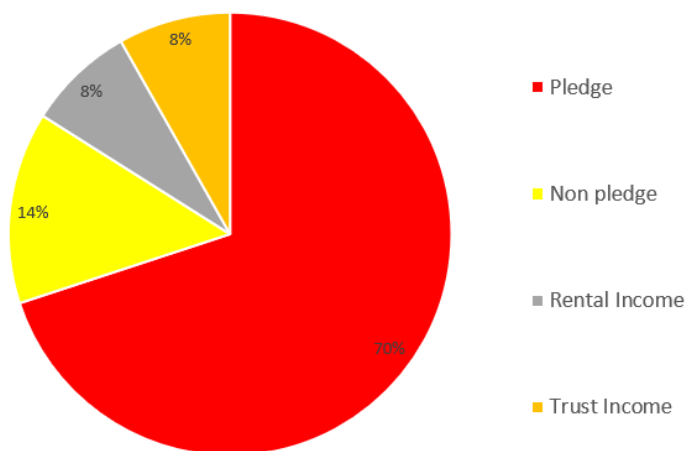
Tight expense control limits our funding for parish operations and mission ministries. For the most part our expenses are fairly predictable. What is more uncertain is our revenue projections. To have a balanced budget we need revenues equal to our expense plan. Much like expenses, we use prior year to build a baseline for our revenue projection. Pledge income represents about 70% of total revenue. This is why our stewardship campaign is so important. Pledges provide necessary revenue to commit to our expense budget. If pledges are insufficient, then we must lower expenses. And since the majority of our expense budget is comprised of salaries, it means operating with less staff.

2024 Preliminary Expense Budget



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The one principle that surrounds everything else is that of stewardship; that we are the managers of everything that God has given us.
— LARRY BURKETT

2024 Preliminary Revenue Budget



Rental Income and Trust Income tend to be consistent at about 16% of budgeted revenue. Non-pledge revenue (plate offerings and gifts) amounts to 14%. In recent years we have been blessed with a generous parish family. Our pledge revenue has consistently increased, allowing us to maintain a healthy budget. And this year we are relying on your continued help. The Vestry will approve our budget as preliminary Stewardship numbers come in. If the pledges are below projection, we will have to reduce expenses, however if we hit our goal, we are able to move forward with our plans for 2024.

Parish Operations and Stewardship

Our parish is alive and vibrant. None of this can be accomplished without operating funds to support it. The Vestry is committed to operating our parish within our financial means. It is up to us as a parish family to support the mission of our church. Financial offerings are important for our parish budget, however we never want our budget to become our sole focus. Instead, we want to focus on the joy of giving. Maya Angelou said "I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver." Stewardship 2023 is our annual operating gift. We hope that you will consider increasing your commitment for the coming year so that we can continue to make a greater impact in our community and parish.



“Secret to fund raising revealed” Tom Russell - Stewardship Committee Chair

This is a story that I have told on a number of occasions. And upfront, I want to apologize for it's redundancy. But as my close it's the best that I have got! So here it goes.

For those that don't know me, I've been a member at St. John's since the late 1980s. We transferred our membership from St. Andrew's because we wanted our children to have a good Christian formation. "This is our church!"

My day job is to help run Junior Achievement, a non-profit that helps provide economic education to children. In my role, I am the "head fund raiser". I spend a large part of my time asking the business community for money.

In this role, I've learned an important lesson about "the ask". I'm going to share the secret with you. It has three important points. #1 you have to do it, you have to ask. #2 you have to help people understand what we call the "why". Why should I give. And #3, you have to get out of their way.

Let me begin. Now, more than ever, we need you to help support the ministries and outreach of St. John's thru our annual operating budget. Without your support our parish budget is going to have to be cut. With your support, we can work on growing our parish.

Let me pause for a moment...o be clear...that was my ask. We need your support! I am asking you to give to St. John's.

Ok...let's talk about the "why". Truthfully, I think this answer is a bit more complex. It takes on a more personal emphasis, because I think each of us have our own thoughts about "our church" and why we would support it.

But let me get spiritual for just a moment. We chose "growing in faith together at St. John's" as the theme for this year's campaign because of its meaning.

In the words of one Christian, we are all invited to: Let God practice generosity through you as his beloved child. In this way alone, God who has already made you generous, will make you perfectly like Him...filled with great possibility and lasting joy. The decision has been made. You are generous. Your Amen is all that is needed.

So my "why" to you is don't do it for us...don't give for the church... give for yourself!

Ok...this is where I usually screw up. I keep talking. I keep trying to add more to the "why". I try to explain the outcomes of giving or of not giving. Simply put, I talk too much.

The secret to "the ask" is #3 get of their way. Let the individual reflect on the ask and make their own decision. That's what I'm about to do. Let me end with a prayer.

Abundant God, you made us in your image and breathed in us a spirit of generosity that is both gift and response. Move us, we pray, to give as we have received-abundantly, generously, and joyfully that our common ministry may ever bear witness to your unfailing grace. In the name of the Three in whom we are One, Amen.

