



inTouch

Engaging and re-engaging members & friends of St. John's



BLESSED TO BE

a Blessing

Celebrating 150 years

PART 2

WRITTEN BY DAWN CONWAY

150 Years and Counting...

St. John's members and friends gathered on Friday, December 9, 2022, to begin a weekend of celebrating 150 years since our congregation had its start as the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bloomington, Illinois, which was started by a group of Swedish miners and their families.

The Anniversary Gala was attended by more than 170 people. The Gathering area was filled with food, fun, laughter, and jazz, provided by the Brian Choban Jazz Quintet. It was a festive event that the founding members likely could not have imagined 150 years ago.

We were honored to include former pastors and families, including Pastor Knight and Susan Wells, Pastor Jim and Karyl Reents, Pastor Christine McNeal, Lois Skillrud and family, Jackie



From left, Pastor Knight Wells and his wife Susan, Sarah Nelson and husband Jay.

Remmers, and a special guest who has past connections to St. John's. Pastor Laura Koppenhoefer's daughter, Sarah Nelson, and her husband, Jay Nelson, were overjoyed to join in the celebration. Pastor Laura and her husband Rod were members of St. John's and instrumental in helping start the contemporary service, formerly known as Community of Joy. Sadly, Pastor Laura and Rod have both

passed away. Sarah posted on Facebook how honored they were to be included in this event and "what a gift it was to talk to so many who loved my parents so dearly."

The evening ended in the Worship Center with stories from our members, shared through a Reader's Theater, and an appearance from Dan Brady presenting a proclamation from the Illinois House of Representatives. He also shared some history of his close ties to the Skillrud family, growing up in the same neighborhood. (I would guess these may have been edited by John and David!)

The celebration weekend concluded with a special worship service on Sunday, December 11, with messages from former Pastor Knight Wells, Central/Southern Illinois Synod Bishop S. John Roth, and of course, Pastor David Glesne. The service was a wonderful reminder of our history and the continuation of the journey for the next 150 years and more.

The Anniversary Committee, a dedicated group of long-time and newer members, collaborated, shared stories, and researched many historical (and some hysterical) documents from St. John's archives that were lovingly (for the most part)

stored in many secured areas of the church, as well in some members offices and homes! Displays were scattered throughout the church giving background and history of St. John's 150 year journey. Banners were also created for the Gala and will remain in the Gathering area.

Just as our founding members had hopes, dreams, and wishes for the future of their congregation 150 years ago, so do the current members and friends of St. John's. Many that I spoke with continue to enjoy the wide range of activities and programs that St. John's offers along, with various worship styles. While some of these look similar to those years ago, others look different and continue to evolve with changing needs and times that impact our members and community.

Three St. John's families—Hills, Jamisons, and Hotopps—have shared their stories and some hopes and dreams for the next 150 years of St. John's journey.

Marie and Roland Hill Family

The Hills joined in 1953 while Roland was serving in the Army in Korea. They raised their three children at St. John's and many of their grand- and great-grandchildren—*four generations*—have also been part of St. John's over the years. Marie and Roland were active in many aspects of the church, including serving on both the 100th and 125th Anniversary Committees! St. John's has provided many friendships and support to their family since 1953, from celebrating the birth of their children, baptisms, confirmations, and weddings to comfort and prayers when Roland was ill and ended his earthly journey. Marie said, "St. John's has been our church when things were good and when things were bad. It is not the building, but the people of God who matter to us." Her hope for the future is that more members will attend in person and that some of the younger members will continue to become more engaged in the work



See more of the Hill Family Tree
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and caretaking of St. John's. She reminded me that use of our time and talent, "the big Ts," are just as important when your treasures are limited.

Debbie and Dan Jamison Family

The Jamisons began their journey at St. John's in 1983 shortly before they were married. They have celebrated the birth of two sons and a grandson, baptisms, and confirmations while at St. John's. Both have given of their time and talents by serving as captains of the former Vikings social groups, Sunday school teacher, Thrive guide, ushers for worship, and with Lutheran World Relief, sewing school bags and helping load trucks. They hope for the next 150 years, "that St. John's can continue and possibly broaden our current ministries. We also feel the need to encourage involvement by the younger members to carry on the established traditions and also bring their fresh ideas to the table."

Lindsey and Kevin Hotopp Family

The Hotopps were married in 2008 at St. John's. They celebrated the birth and baptism of their twins with the members of St. John's. Lindsey and Kevin have been active helping with the nursery, Joy Zone, Vacation Bible School, Worship Arts and Stewardship Teams, as well as serving communion and coffee set up. Their children attend Sunday School and sing in the children's choir. The family has many fond memories of activities and worship services that have helped develop family traditions. Lindsey and Kevin hope "to see the children's programming continue to grow and thrive over the next 150 years. We also hope that St. John's will continue to look for ways to serve the community and spread God's Word."

Overall, it is clear that regardless of what stage in life our St. John's families are in, the hopes and dreams are similar—to continue to serve our community, spread God's Word far and wide, and live out his first and greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and with all your strength," and by his second commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31)





Mission Impact

WRITTEN BY JIM DUMOUCHEL

Christmas Card Collection

St. John's worked successfully for the second year with Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services (LIRS) as a regional hub for the Hope for the Holidays project. A group of members collected, sorted, screened, and processed thousands of Christmas cards for the many immigrants and refugees in detention centers throughout the United States. St. John's members received over 7,000 cards from 70 states. Over 6,700 cards were distributed to 18 detention facilities—4,800 in Spanish and 2,400 in English. St. John's members alone gave over 550 cards!

Giving Tree

Center for Hope Outreach Ministries, Home Sweet Home Mission, and Children's Home + Aid (Adopt-a-Family) were the recipients of St. John's 2022 Giving Tree. There were 262 gift tags on the tree and online for members to take and purchase wishlist gifts. Results of St. John's generous giving:

- **Center for Hope Outreach Ministries** received 139 gifts for children and adults.
- **Home Sweet Home Mission** received 30 packages containing toiletries, a portable phone charging stick, a journal/planner with a pencil, and a \$10 Walmart gift card. 15 were for women and 15 for men.
- **Children's Home + Aid** received more than 200 gifts for all ages and two families (one with eight people, one with nine people).

A big thanks to the volunteers who worked on this program! Thrive groups created the tags for the tree, five volunteers shopped for gifts using donated gift cards, 12 volunteers sorted and organized the gifts, and four volunteers delivered the gifts to the three agencies. And finally a big thanks to all the members of St. John's for their generous support of this program!

Amazon Smile

Since its inception in October 2013, AmazonSmile has donated \$355.78 to St. John's (as of November 2022). When people shopped on Amazon through Amazon Smile, Amazon donated 0.5% of eligible expenses to a charity of the shopper's choice. Thank you to everyone who took advantage of this program. Unfortunately, Amazon has announced the program will end in February 2023. Amazon shared in a statement, "After almost a decade, the program has not grown to create the impact that we had originally hoped. With so many eligible organizations—more than 1 million globally—our ability to have an impact was often spread too thin. We will continue to pursue and invest in other areas where we've seen we can make meaningful change—from building affordable housing to providing access to computer science education for students in underserved communities to using our logistics infrastructure and technology to assist broad communities impacted by natural disasters."



Learn more about LIRS

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Dear Mary & Martha

WRITTEN BY DIANE HALLER

Mary and Martha were sisters, who, along with their brother Lazarus, were friends of Jesus. They had different perspectives as to how to serve and show their faith in God. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and put Him first before her other obligations. Martha opened her house to Jesus but was distracted by all of the preparations that needed to be done.

Are you a *Mary* or a *Martha*? Perhaps a little of both? Both had admirable qualities and were loved by Jesus. However you answered, Mary and Martha would like to hear from you! They are here to answer your questions. Below are a few questions the *inTouch* Advisory Board compiled:

1. There will be an election of the bishop at the 2023 Synod Assembly. What is the process of electing a new bishop?
2. Why are St. John's utility bills so high? What can be done to help alleviate the problem?
3. Who are St. John's prayer partners? How are they determined?
4. What is the process of becoming an ELCA pastor? Will Deacon Lyn be able to remain at St. John's after her ordination? Is it a possibility?
5. What is the musical background of the vocalists and instrumentalists that participate in our church services?



Submit your vote or ask another question

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT **Lisa Myers**

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH HAINES



This quarter, we turn our focus back to St. John's staff. Lisa Myers' talents and skills are many. She is good with numbers and loves kids. She can cook for 100+ and is drawn to gardening and yard work. No matter what the job is, she takes pride in her work.

Lisa grew up in Secor (near El Paso) and has lived in Illinois her entire life. Like many of us, she likes going to a lake or the ocean for restoration and relaxation. It's usually a lake in Ohio or a beach in Florida. Lisa is married and has two sons, both of whom are married. They grew up at St. John's. Her older son is in Savannah, Georgia, after a stop in Asheville North Carolina; her younger son is in Chicago.

Lisa comes by her cooking chops honestly. Her first job was as the salad prep person and then hostess at Red Lobster. She has done finances for a

school district, working at Kingsley Junior High school and then Benjamin Elementary School.

Her positions at St. John's have been varied. She started in 2003 as the part-time Kitchen Coordinator to cook food for DinnerTime on Wednesday nights. She corralled volunteers so that up to 100 people had a tasty dinner before they went on to various activities at church. She also coordinated the food for Festival of Faith celebrations, which fed the entire congregation. She noted there were several celebrations, including pastoral ordinations, for which she served. Few know the value of volunteers more than Lisa from her time coordinating DinnerTime.

Lisa has been full-time at St. John's for seven years. A few years ago, she was asked to bring her finance skills to bear. She handles transactions (contributions,

tracking) for both St. John's and Noah's Ark Preschool. Most recently, she's assumed responsibility for the Columbarium and is now the community connections coordinator, working with PATH, Center for Hope, and other local social service agencies.

This most recent role in her portfolio, feeds her service passion. She has done a lot of service as a volunteer at Safe Harbor, Bed Blitz, and Midwest Food Bank. Now, she'll be coordinating our efforts with all kinds of charitable organizations to help those who are in need. She'll now be able to "feed" a different group of people through Christ.



WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH HAINES

Financial Stewardship in 2022 (and a peak into 2023)

Stewardship is a combination of time, talent, and treasure, and St. John's staff and volunteers try to maximize the return on your investment of these components of Stewardship. Thank you to all who have contributed to the many ways St. John's impacts our congregation, our community, and our world.

As we cross over from 2022 to 2023, it's time to take a closer look at the financial results of St. John's Stewardship for 2022. Last year, 234 pledges totalling \$990,000 were received; \$987,000 in pledges were actually given, which represents a 99.92% follow-through on that commitment. A total of \$372,000 was received in unpledged giving for total giving of \$1,359,000 in 2022. As we all work our budgets, we know every dollar counts, and your gifts are appreciated! In our church home we've experienced rising utility costs, just as we have in our own homes.

This year, 208 pledges have been received so far, totalling \$930,845. Over the years, we've seen an increase in the number of giving units opt for electronic giving; roughly half of those who do so also provide a pledge. St. John's saw 62 giving units increase their pledge from 2022! While we're all dealing with price fluctuations, it's truly wonderful to see the commitments made for the coming year.

Thank you for your role in spreading God's love to others!