



inTouch

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



Stewardship 150

ELIZABETH HAINES

Stewardship in the church is best expressed by the three Ts—time, talents, and treasures. While our annual pledge campaign is primarily focused on treasures, providing time and talents toward worship, programming, and leadership, helps further our reach to more of God's children.

The Finance team prepared a balanced 2022 budget proposal with anticipated giving of \$1,344,000.

Thank you to those who have pledged toward the 2022 budget! We've received pledge cards from 213 people/families totalling \$965,574 as of the end of calendar year 2021. In addition, we have a number of people/families who give electronically. Some have sent in a pledge card to confirm or increase their commitment. Each year, we receive additional gifts totaling between 12-17% from those who do not pledge nor give a recurring

gift. If you give electronically and have not sent in a pledge card, please do and consider increasing that pledge in honor of our 150th Anniversary!

We are pleased to report that of the pledges received, 75 increased their pledge and 27 pledged for the first time. Those two groups together constitute 48% of the number of pledges to date. A pledge allows for better planning and managing of funds received. Once again, the members of St. John's Lutheran Church raised the bar to help the church help others.

A phenomenal example of that was the almost ONE TON of food donated by our members for The Big Give last fall. The food was part of the 2,500 Thanksgiving meals that were given to people in need in and around our community.

Another is our participation with the Giving Tree in December, which allows those who may not receive a Christmas gift to do so. In 2021 a total of 464 gifts were purchased by St. John's members and friends to help 88 people in our community!

Thank you for all you do to help St. John's and partner organizations help people experience the love of Christ.



Scan the QR code with your phone camera to watch a video about last year's Big Give.



We want to hear from YOU!

Please let us know how we are doing and what you would like to learn in future issues.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dawn Conway
conway.dawn@gmail.com
Elizabeth Haines
elhtnthaines@gmail.com
Roger Hellman
hellmanroger@msn.com
Sara White
swhite56@yahoo.com

You can also submit your questions for Mary and Martha or suggestions to intouch@stjohnsbloomington.org.

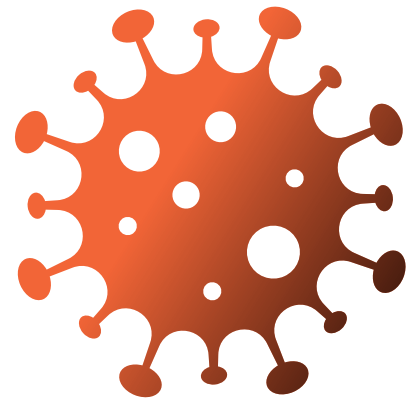


Dear Mary & Martha

Dear Mary and Martha,
When will we be back to “normal”?
I miss the usual St. John’s activities and events that I am accustomed to!
Paul

Dear Paul,
We are in a time of transition in many ways. As we keep our hearts and our minds open to hear what God is calling us to do, we will see that there is a “new normal” that requires us to be flexible and open to new ideas. As you know, this is challenging for my sister Martha who likes to be prepared. I hope as we transition to our new worship space, redesigned activities, and a changing world, that we listen more intently to God. We know that God will provide us with not only what we need, but also the guidance to navigate this “new normal.”
Peace and Blessings,
Mary

Dear Paul,
As difficult as it is for me to admit, I do believe that my sister Mary is on the right track. I am taking time to prepare myself for some of the changes by being informed of St. John’s programs. I have a range of face coverings that I can wear to different activities. I am also reading the St. John’s Weekly News so I can participate in an event or activity that sounds interesting. I am ready to become reengaged and will do so with new purpose and thoughtful discernment. I have experienced transitions in my life and with the love and support of my sister Mary and other family and friends, along with my faith in God, I have navigated those challenging transitions with only a few scars!
In His Name,
Martha



POSITIVE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

ELIZABETH HAINES

You read that headline correctly. There have been positive things to come out of this virus that continues to negatively impact so many people in the world. We are not alone. Early Christians had all kinds of horrible things to deal with—plagues, pestilence, and power-hungry rulers. Yet, they were able to find the resources and faith to persevere. And so did we!

WORSHIP

What brings greater comfort than confessing your sins and being forgiven? It is the spiritual cleansing that all Christians crave. Each week, we’re reminded of the sacrifice Jesus offered for our salvation and of the grace we receive daily. During the pandemic, we confronted the restrictions, and worship services were streamed. When we returned to in-person worship, we continued streaming our services, allowing those who cannot be in the building to attend worship.

LOVE

Prayer groups had been in place prior to the pandemic, but more were put into service since the virus had prevented people from meeting. Our most senior members were contacted by phone, e-mail, or letter to stay in touch.

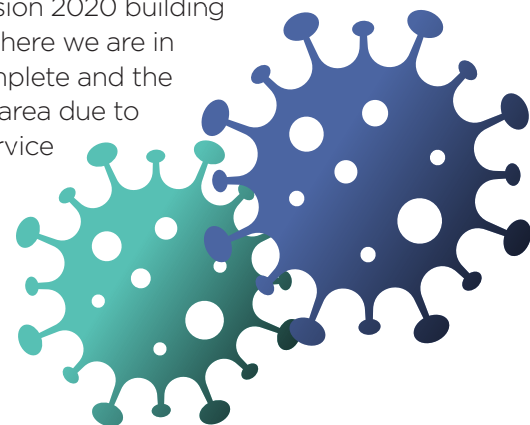
GROW

Church business couldn’t be conducted in the typical fashion at the start of the pandemic. Just like many businesses, our pastors and staff worked from home. Staff, mission leaders, and council became skilled in meeting via Zoom! Our staff continues to find new ways to extend our reach into the community and the world.

GIVE

Is there a better example of managing through change than the giving from our congregation? Not only did we give for the regular budget items, but we also committed to pledge for the Vision 2020 building project. That all started in 2020 and here we are in 2022 with the renovated offices complete and the new Worship Center and Gathering area due to open at the Celebration Worship Service on February 27!

So, while there are still plenty of negative impacts of COVID, we can be proud of our ability to roll with the punches. Not even a pandemic can sever our ties to God and one another!



Lutheran World Relief

VICKIE ROBERTSON

Things were closer to normal in 2021 for St. John’s Lutheran World Relief efforts. We’ve never stopped collecting donations and hosting the Ingathering each October, even during the pandemic. This year, it was nice to have people from other churches linger a little longer in the parking lot to visit with our volunteers. The mood seemed to be a little more animated and at ease. We had plenty of volunteers! More than 60 St. John’s members came throughout the day to help load, greet guests, and direct traffic. It was especially nice to see many new members who were volunteering for the very first time!

This event is a favorite for many of the small churches that participate. Because so many of the very rural congregations are getting smaller, many of them work together to load their boxes at regional stops and then they are driven to St. John’s on the last Saturday each October.

St. John’s has participated in this mission for more than 35 years. All generations take part. Quilters create, small groups and junior-high kids pack, families donate supplies and help pack the trucks. All are welcome to help!

These materials will be sent across the world from two LWR warehouses in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Baltimore, Maryland. Over the past few years, personal care kits from St. John’s have gone to Mali, Guinea, Lebanon, and Zambia. Quilts have travelled to Lebanon, Angola, and El Salvador. School kits have helped children in Senegal and Honduras, to name just a few. Quilts are often used for warmth, shelter, or to carry belongings from one place to another. The school supplies you donate often mean the difference in whether or not a child can attend school, and the personal care kits include basics such as a comb, towel, and soap.



If you would like more information on how to make a difference locally, contact Vickie Robertson, jbv.robertson@gmail.com.

Scan the QR code with the camera on your phone to learn more about quilts and kits.

At St. John’s Ingathering

1,755 boxes were packed

CONTAINING

5,605 quilts

3,571 school kits

3,093 personal care kits

\$12K for Lutheran World Relief

Another \$12,000 was given in donations for Lutheran World Relief. St. John’s alone donated 238 quilts, 437 personal care kits, 530 school kits, and \$1,500!





St. John's Lutheran Church
 1617 East Emerson Street
 Bloomington, IL 61701



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Ed Embree Facilities

Ed Embree was born in Richmond Virginia and while still a young child, moved to Illinois with

his family. The family joined St. John's in the 70s and have been a steady presence at our church since then. Ed has always appreciated and cares deeply for his church. His faith plays a significant role in this young man's life.

Ed is an independent paint and drywall contractor having founded his business, Triple E Painting and Dry Wall Services in 2005. He enjoys serving the people of Central Illinois, many of whom are members at St. John's. In 2012, Ed joined the staff at St. John's as a Building Maintenance Associate. You'll find Ed working around the building or property on most Sunday and Monday evenings.

The Bible story of Isaac and Rebecca along with sons, Jacob and Esau, has always fascinated Ed. Ed's passionate love of nature makes it easy for him to relate to Esau, and he finds the story intriguing.

“To draw people in, we must reach out.”

Ed's passion for nature and wildlife is remarkable. He expresses concern as a nation's progress promotes encroachment on these treasures. He states, "You can't and shouldn't lay concrete everywhere." In his free time, Ed enjoys hunting, fishing, and all activities that allow him to escape into nature. Hiking and canoeing are high on his list of things he most enjoys. Ed has been fortunate to travel quite extensively. A recent trip, along with his parents, Eff and Anita and sister, Annalea, to Norway elevated that country on Ed's list of beloved places, and he looks forward to returning there someday.

When asked about his dreams for our world and more specifically, our church, Ed replied that he dreams of a world where we all can co-exist, enjoying fulfilled lives safely. Ed appreciates St. John's presence in the community and would like to see even more involvement. "To draw people in, we must reach out."