FEBRUARY 2026 • VOL. 77

# THE EVANGEL

*The official publication of St. John's Episcopal Church*

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Dear People and Friends of St. John's,

Our annual meeting is behind us – and it was a wonderful way to see how we are growing as a community! There were folks who have been a part of St. John's for over 40 years, and some for whom Sunday was their first visit! – We were also aware of "empty seats" at the proverbial table - those who have entered the nearer presence of God during this past year, and those who have moved to other places. What remains constant, though, is that St. John's is a community of people dedicated to our mission of seeking and serving Christ in all people, through our worship and our service. THANK YOU!!

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday -February 18 – and we will once again have Eucharist with the imposition of ashes at NOON and at 6 PM. There will also be "Ashes to Go." We will have a Lenten Conversation Group on the following Wednesday evenings during Lent – at 7 pm. (After Coffee Hour on Sunday, February 15, we will burn our palms from last year's Palm Sunday celebration – to make our ashes for Ash Wednesday.)

Now grab a cup of coffee and settle in for some reading (all printed below).
· We have a letter from our Presiding Bishop, Sean Rowe.
· Jim Thurston has written a wonderful reflection on St. John's "Past, Present, and Future" that is well-worth the read.
· The Cochranes are settling into their new home in Kentucky and left us a lovely letter (with their new address) before they headed off.

May we all find a way to nurture the Divine Spark that dwells within each of us – and to share that Light of Christ with the world.

Blessings to all.
Sr. Diane+

## Minutes, December 2025 Vestry Meeting

Saint John's Episcopal Church
Minutes of November16, 2025 meeting

Meeting came to order at 11:30 AM

Present: Liz Brockman, Kevin Davidson, Clancy DeLong, Dan Eichinger, Jerry May, Sam Raisanen (guest), Jim Thurston, Brenda Rau (guest)

Brenda Rau gave an update on potential changes to St. John's phone system. The Outreach Committee is suggesting utilizing an electronic transfer assistant to answer and route incoming calls to St. John's office. The decision tree for this system would route appropriate calls for economic assistance to Listening Ear, calls of spiritual, emotional, personal nature would be routed to Rector Diane or Deacon Jess, business calls would go to the office assistant.

The vestry will accept quotes for setting up and providing this type of service.

Pastoral report: Rector Diane's report was given by Dan Eichinger.
o Thanksgiving Day Eucharist will be at 10:00 AM followed by a potluck Turkey Dinner for all who wish to stay and join in the festivities.
o The evening of Dec. 21, 2025, St. John's will host Advent and Carols.
o Rector Diane is writing grants to help fund Deacon Jess's position with St. John's.

Treasure's report: Clancy Delong
o There has been a delay in the audit, but it should be available in the next 7 – 10 days.
o In the future St. John's should be able to use an internal committee to annually review St. John's financial accounts. By using such committee, St. John's should be able to get by with having a full audit every 10 years.
§ As retiring treasurer, Clancy volunteered to serve on the committee.
o Choir Director, Eric Vinciguerra, has requested $1,000 for the purchase of new music folders.
§ By consensus the Vestry determined to delay this purchase.

The Vestry went into closed session to review the 2026 budget. The 2026 budget will be presented during the 2026 Annual Meeting in January.

Property report: Jerry May
o The structural evaluation has been completed, and WTA is currently writing its report.
o Cody's Property Care of Mt. Pleasant will be providing snow removal for the upcoming winter.

Next meeting; The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Dec. 21, 2025. Dan will send out a Doodle Poll to determine an alternate date.

Respectfully submitted,
Jerry May

**Treasurer's Report**
**St. John's Episcopal Church Annual Meeting**
**January 2026**

**The detailed financial report for 2025 and the budget for 2026 are shown on the following pages, concluding with the restricted funds activities and balances for 2025.**

**Financially, St. Johns had a very strong December on record, virtually eliminating the forecasted deficit. A special thank you to our parishioners.**

**The 2026 budget shows a deficit of $23K, up from last years $18K deficit. A good part of this is due to attrition. The vestry is actively addressing ways to grow and decrease our deficit. We are adding a campus minister, Jess Hart, to the budget. Great news though. Funding sources in this report will show the position will have no financial impact on this year's budget.**

**We did receive two substantial gifts for the year. $25K for the Peter Byrd Rodenbeck Fund to assist our music program and $20K in gifts to financially assist with a campus minister.**

**Please pray for Rev. Sr. Diane and The Vestry as they explore new options for enhancing our mission and outreach.**

**Below are the year-end cash balances:**

**<u>Year End Balances</u>**

**Cash and investment balances on December 31, 2025 are as follows:**

**Isabella Bank - Checking ..... $ 54,070.74**
**Members First CU - Savings ..... $ 6.98**
**Members First CU - CD 03-27-27 ..... $ 22,007.51**
**Members First CU - CD 07-22-26 ..... $ 89,688.12**
**Members First CU - CD 05-30-26 ..... $ 15,319.13**
**Endowment Fund Investment Account ..... $ 129,734.35**

Clancy

## Remember Our Homebound Members

**Drop a card to our parish members who are homebound.**

**Emelia Parker**
**(Alex's House)**
616 Boothbay Ct.
Beavercreek, OH 45430

**Nancy Rivard**
Comfort Care
1945 Churchill Blvd.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

**Margaret + Harry Kuhn**
temporary address
Serene Gardens of Clarkston
Room 108
5850 White Lake Rd
Clarkston, MI 48346

**Martha Rarick**
362 E. Baseline Rd.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

## St. John's Prayer Group

**If you wish to add or remove names from the Prayer List, please call Sr. Diane Stier, 989- 807-0215, the church office, or email Pamela Dingman: pamela.dingman@gmail.com. Thank you.**

## Pastoral Care

**Just a reminder: you should let the parish office know if you are ill and wish to receive a call from the Rector.**

## February Birthdays

| | |
|---|---|
| Dan Eichinger | 02/01 |
| Rex Dingman | 02/16 |
| Brenda Rau | 02/17 |
| Eric Vinciguerra | 02/18 |
| Jasmine Eichinger | 02/20 |
| Marian Matyn | 02/22 |
| David Dingman | 02/25 |

## February Anniversaries

Weekly Schedule:

Sunday 10AM: Holy Communion: In Person or Facebook or YouTube

Wednesday 7PM: Connections Conversations by Zoom

Thursday 8PM: Compline (Night Prayer) by Zoom

Coffee Hour Schedule:

| | |
|---|---|
| February 1 | Clancy and Pat DeLong |
| February 8 | Pamela and Ford Dingman |
| February 15 | Dave and Jen Dingman |
| February 22 | David and Nancy Kinney |

## Lay Ministers:

| | Lector | Prayers | Acolyte |
|---|---|---|---|
| February 1 | Barb Sheperdigian | Mary Stewart Kiesgen | AdamBaker |
| February 8 | David Kinney | Sharon Bolton | Matthew Kinney |
| February 15 | Brenda Rau | Ulana Klymyshn | Peyton Eichinger |
| February 22 | Linda Susan Beard | Denise Keeler | Misha Proctor |

Greeters

| | |
|---|---|
| February 1 | The Eichinger Family |
| February 8 | Sharon Bolton and Laura Cochrane |
| February 15 | Clancy and Pat DeLong |
| February 22 | Pamela and Ford Dingman |

# February Calendar

**Sundays:**
**02/01, 02/08, 02/15, 02/22**
10am Holy Communion (In person, Facebook, & YouTube)

**Mondays:**
**02/02, 02/09, 02/16, 02/23**
6:30pm GA

**Tuesdays:**
**02/03, 02/10, 02/17, 02/24**
6pm Recovery 360

**Wednesdays:**
**02/04, 02/11, 02/18, 02/25**
6pm Tai Chi with Judy
7pm Weekly Connection via Zoom

**Thursdays:**
**02/05, 02/12, 02/19, 02/26**
4pm Choir practice
8pm Compline via Zoom
Office Closed

**Fridays:**
**02/06, 02/13, 02/20, 02/27**
Nothing on these days

Living Compass

Living Well Through Lent 2026

*Cultivating Healing and Wholeness in Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*

A Living Compass Seasonal Resource

**Lent begins February 18th! The Living Well Through Lent booklets have arrived. They can be found by the entrance to the church and on the announcement table by the side entrance.**

**Isn't it lovely to share love? If you would like to spread some good feelings, please consider sending valentines to our homebound friends! Below are their names and addresses.**

Emelia Parker
(Alex's House)
616 Boothbay Ct.
Beavercreek, OH 45430

Nancy Rivard
Comfort Care
1945 Churchill Blvd.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Margaret + Harry Kuhn
Serene Gardens of Clarkston
Room 108
5850 White Lake Rd.
Clarkston, MI 48346

Martha Rarick
In Care of: Crestwood Village
2378 S. Lincoln Rd.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

# Past, Present, and Future. Thoughts from Jim Thurston

Pat and I became members of St. John's in 2010 and during our church journey we learned about many wonderful things about St. John's.

This church is full of history, beginning with its land acquisition, church founders, rebuilding workforce, historical site designation, visionaries, and current church community. We have a bold history that provides for a bright future. It is with the visionaries that I wish to explore.

After we blended in with the church community we began to hear about the Past visionaries that helped us become who we are today.
My first encounter was about the Reverend John H. Goodrow and his spouse Sally. Their compassion for others in need was well known and eventually developed into a volunteer workforce dedicated to helping people with spiritual and financial needs. To this day, the Goodrow Fund brings about feelings of comfort and satisifaction, long past the program's ending.

Another visionary ahead of her time was Sandy Wood. Her creation and dedication to the Clean and Bright Laundry ministry at St. John's was astounding. To this day we remember her with every load of clothes that our guests do at our church.

I also recall two more visionaries from St. John's who are past and present minded in helping others: Tim and Liz Brockman. They were active with helping others. Even though Tim has passed, Liz keeps what Max and Emily's did for others with a very active People Helping People program.

The above examples are only a few of our impressive past. Let's explore our Present.

After the passing of a very dynamic priest, Wayne Nicholson, St. John's called the Rev. Sr. Diane Stier to the forefront as our next church leader. She has continued to bring us along the path of helping others spiritually and in building relationships with others. She has taught us that we are the hands and feet of God and that God is within each of us. Her sermons reflect the Gospel and how we can spread God's word with our words as we transform them into action. She is a visionary in real time. With her guidance we have grown our presence within church and outside our walls. Here are just a few of the things we do in the present to serve others.

We serve others by:

- Providing a welcoming environment to all who enter our church.
- Being present by volunteering at ICRH ( Isabella County Restoration House).
- Providing space for others to hold events.
- Exploring frequent alternative church services.
- Providing Choral Scholars a place to sing their hearts out.
- Having exceptional music.
- Developing collaborative endeavors with the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, Listening Ear, other churches, clergy, and human service organizations.
- Adorning an altar with beautiful linens and flowers.
- Presenting a pleasant building and grounds for the community.
- Electing a vestry council to help with everyday functions of St. John's.
- Livestreaming of Sunday's church service for those unable to attend church in person.
- Providing community opportunities for food, clean clothes, and showers at no cost to the guest.
- Preparing generous assortments of food and beverage after church for coffee hour.
- And last but not least, a church community that makes all of this happen.

I know we have more so please forgive me if I missed a function. So let's talk about the Future. The future is exciting.

Our past and present are guiding us into the future. The relationships we build today are assisting with a mission of helping others. We are beginning to gather others into the fold for similar items that we have at St. John's. We provide leadership in the community and a place that many believe to be a safe space for help and understanding. However, we can't do this alone. Your help is needed by keeping an open mind, heart, and providing a helping hand at times. We need others to grow a volunteer workforce that will allow for the sharing of duties. Here are a few future events that are being discussed:

- Collaborative efforts with other churches and Listening Ear to to assist community members with spiritual needs, and occasional physical and financial assistance.
- Explore fund raising events with other churches and possibly businesses to build community support structures for housing, food, and financial assistance to those needing such help.
- Continuing efforts for relationship building with the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe.
- Open doors to the LGBTQ2S+ and the PFLAG organization with monthly meetings that provide a safe space and advocacy.
- Continue partnering with Listening Ear to help build community trust of the efforts that a faith based has to offer for those that shy away from religious organizations.
- Exploring opportunities to partner with other churches for young adult Sunday School enrichment.

These future items are the beginning of a brighter future for many community members.

In closing, St. John's has a vibrant past, generous present, and an exciting future. Thanks so much for being a part of this community.

## FROM PRESIDING BISHOP SEAN ROWE: DEATH AND DESPAIR DO NOT HAVE THE LAST WORD

DEAR PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH:

LIKE JESUS, WE LIVE IN FRIGHTENING TIMES. HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY BEGAN, AS WE HEARD IN TODAY'S GOSPEL READING, WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS IMPRISONED BY AUTHORITIES WHO WANTED TO SILENCE HIS PREACHING AND PROPHESYING.

JESUS KNEW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EARTHLY POWERS PERSUADE HUMAN BEINGS TO FEAR ONE ANOTHER, REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS STRANGERS, AND BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND. IN JESUS' TIME, THE POWER OF THESE DIVISIONS MOTIVATED JOHN'S BEHEADING AND JESUS' OWN DEATH ON THE CROSS AT THE HANDS OF ROMAN AUTHORITIES.

IN OUR TIME, THE DEADLY POWER OF THOSE DIVISIONS IS ON DISPLAY ON THE STREETS OF MINNEAPOLIS, IN OTHER PLACES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. AS HAS TOO OFTEN BEEN THE CASE THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US ARE BEARING THE BURDEN, SHOULDERING THE GREATEST SHARE OF RISK AND LOSS, AND ENDURING THE VIOLATION OF THEIR VERY HUMANITY.

BUT WE DO NOT GRIEVE WITHOUT HOPE. THE CHRISTIAN STORY IS FULL OF PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN FRIGHTENING AND BRUTAL TIMES, AND WHO FOLLOWED JESUS' CALL THAT WE HEARD IN CHURCH TODAY. HIS PROCLAMATION TURNS US AWAY FROM THE FEAR BORN OF SIN AND DEATH AND TOWARD THE KINGDOM OF GOD, TOWARD CHRIST'S MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, RECONCILIATION, AND LOVE. "FROM NOW ON, THEREFORE, WE REGARD NO ONE FROM A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW," THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH (2 CORINTHIANS 5:16), EXHORTING THEM TO REJECT THE DIVISIONS OF THEIR TIME IN FAVOR OF BEING AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

THIS IS GOD'S CALL TO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH NOW, AND IT IS NOT AN EASY ONE. IN THE UNITED STATES, WE NO LONGER LIVE IN A TIME WHEN WE CAN EXPECT TO PRACTICE OUR FAITH WITHOUT RISK, AND WE ARE CONFRONTING WHAT VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES OF FAITH HAVE EXPERIENCED FOR GENERATIONS. OUR RIGHT TO WORSHIP FREELY AS ONE CHURCH, COMMITTED TO THE DIGNITY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING, HAS BEEN CURTAILED BY THE FEAR THAT TOO MANY IMMIGRANT CHRISTIANS FACE WHEN THEY LEAVE THEIR HOMES. PEACEFUL PROTESTS, A RIGHT LONG ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION, ARE NOW MADE DEADLY. CARRYING OUT THE SIMPLE COMMANDS OF JESUS—FEEDING THE HUNGRY, CARING FOR THE SICK, VISITING PRISONERS, MAKING PEACE—NOW INVOLVES RISKS FOR THE CHURCH AND GRAVE DANGER FOR THOSE WE SERVE. AS CHRISTIANS, WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS CHAOS AND DIVISION IS NOT OF GOD, AND WE MUST COMMIT OURSELVES TO PAYING WHATEVER PRICE OUR WITNESS REQUIRES OF US.

IN THE COMING YEARS, OUR CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO BE TESTED IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE WAY AS WE INSIST THAT DEATH AND DESPAIR DO NOT HAVE THE LAST WORD, AND AS WE STAND WITH IMMIGRANTS AND THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US WHO RESIDE AT THE HEART OF GOD. WE WILL BE REQUIRED TO HOLD FAST TO GOD'S PROMISE TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW, BECAUSE OUR CALL TO FOLLOW GOD'S LAW SURPASSES ANY EARTHLY POWER OR PRINCIPALITY THAT MIGHT SEEK TO SILENCE OUR WITNESS.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE IN THE CENTER OF THE STORM, PLEASE KNOW THAT I AM PRAYING FOR YOU AS YOU EMBODY THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN YOUR MINISTRIES AND COMMUNITIES. TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE WATCHING WITH CONCERN AND FEAR, I ASK YOU TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN PROTESTS AND DETENTION, FOR THOSE WHO WITNESSED THEIR DEATHS, AND FOR EVERYONE WHO BEARS AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS MOMENT, THAT THEY MAY EXERCISE WISDOM, RESTRAINT, AND COURAGE. PRAY TOO, ESPECIALLY IN THE DAYS TO COME, FOR THE WITNESS OF OUR CHURCH IN THESE TIMES AND FOR A HEDGE OF PROTECTION AROUND ALL THE BELOVED CHILDREN OF GOD WHO LIVE IN FEAR THIS DAY.

THE MOST REV. SEAN ROWE
PRESIDING BISHOP
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Tom and MaryEllen Cochrane
McCready Manor, Apt.121
St. Andrews Retirement Center
300 Stocker Drive
Richmond, Kentucky 40475
757-532-0591 (Tom's cell)
757-532-7663 (M.E.'s cell)

January 18, 2026

Dear St. John's Friends,

Our hearts are heavy as we try to find a way to tell you that we have loved being in your midst for the past ten years. We have appreciated your warmth and your friendship, and we will miss you – each one.

Our new home will be in Richmond, Kentucky, near our older daughter, Ashley, and her family. Richmond is located south of Lexington and just north of Berea where Ashley, Jeff, and Sylvia have lived for many years.

When you travel down I75 through Kentucky, we hope you will stop to visit. We will be very close to the interstate highway.

In the meantime, please know that we are grateful for you, and we pray for the best for you and those you love.

We will return frequently to visit with Laura. You may see us more often than you expect!

With special love for all,

Tom MaryEllen

The 2026 Altar Flower Calendar is posted in the Lantern across from the elevator. Please consider a Sunday that is a good date for you to honor or remember a loved one and sign up to provide altar flowers. Flowers are a wonderful addition to worship! You may use flowers from your garden or a store and arrange them yourself, or arrange with Elliot's or Norm's Florist to do arrangements and they will deliver to the church.

Thank you!

# FEED THE NEED

## **Food Insecurity** Community Response

### HOST A COLLECTION

Host a nonperishable food collection at your organization or business and we'll help you get connected with your local food pantry for a pickup or dropoff.

Dropoff items at one of our United Way offices or directly at a food pantry.

**Montcalm/Ionia Office:**
110 E. Main Street, Stanton

**Isabella Office:**
524 E. Moster Street, Mt. Pleasant

**Gratiot Office:**
525 N. State Street, Alma

### MAKE A DONATION

Scan the QR code, visit our website (unitedwaygcm.org) to donate, or text UNITEDWAY to 26989.

**NEED HELP?** CALL 211 TO BE CONNECTED WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE RESOURCES NEAR YOU.

UNITED WAY
Greater Central Michigan

Has anyone noticed the new website!?! I am very excited to announce that we were awarded a Grant from the Diocese's Digital Ministry Taskforce to upgrade our outdated website! The Digital Ministry Grant is designed to "help congregations deepen our digital presence – to make it more engaging, accessible, and sustainable. To remain relevant, accessible, and invitational for generations to come, our congregations must continue to invest in digital platforms as vital spaces for ministry."

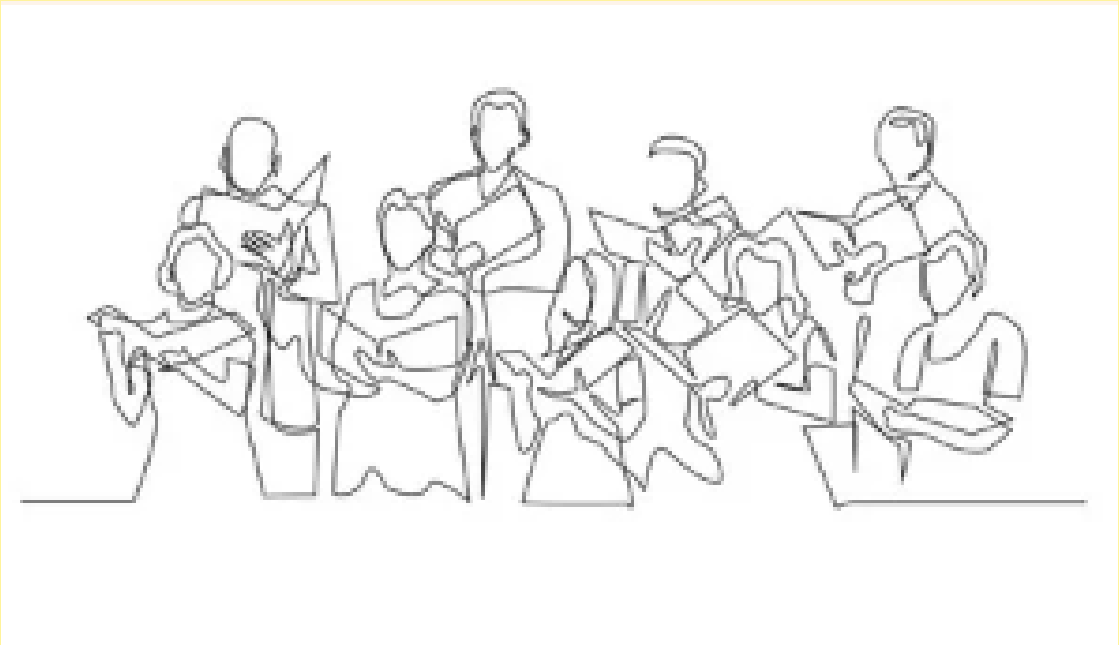
We won one last year that we used to install a speaker in the nursery so people who need to use it during the service can still hear everything in the sanctuary.

This year it came around again, and I submitted a grant to upgrade our website. It was in bad need of a refresh and the current platform it is on is not being actively supported. We used the grant money for a web developer to move to a better technical platform and give us an improved design.

We can still make changes, so if you have any input on the design or for additions, please let me know!

www.stjohnsmtpleasantmi.com

Alice Ciccu



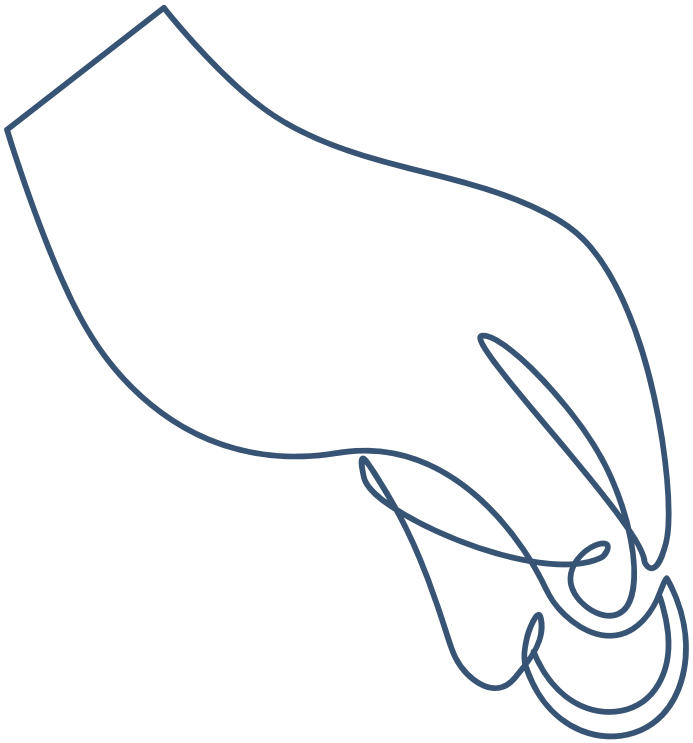
**St. John's Choir**

Sing for Sunday morning service, September through Pentecost (May), with a weekly rehearsal.

Practices will be on Thursdays from 4-6pm.

**New voices welcome!**

*Contact Sr. Diane if you are interested in any of the ministries!*



# Different ways to give...

**We now have four different ways to give back to the church. You can now drop off at the church, mail your offer to the church, or give through "Giving Tools." Here are the details on how to give:**

**1. You can come to the Church office and drop it through the mail slot.**
**2. You can mail your offering to the Church, 206 W Maple, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858**
**3. You can give online by visiting the Giving Tools link on our website, or by scanning the QR code below.**

# Saint John's Episcopal Church

**206 West Maple Street Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858**

**Phone: 989-773-7448**

**E-mail: saintjohnsmp@gmail.com**

**Website: www.stjohnsmtpleasantmi.com**

**Facebook: St. John's Mount Pleasant**


**St. John's Mission:**

St. John's Episcopal Church, with God's help and in the Episcopal Church tradition, lives to proclaim the Gospel of Christ by ministering through worship, outreach, fellowship and education. We welcome all who enter our doors, and we support the diverse callings of each member as we seek to serve Christ in every person.

**Rector:**

The Rev. Sr. Diane Stier, 989-807-0215
The Rev. Jessica A Hart, Deacon
Organist: Ethan Kindle
Choirmaster: Eric Vinciguerra

**2026 Vestry Officers**

Sr. Warden: Dan Eichinger
Jr. Warden: Jerry May
Treasurer: Clancy DeLong
Co-Treasurer: Lynne L'Hommedieu,
Vestry Clerk: Lara Raisanen

**2026 Vestry Members**

Clancy DeLong
Elizabeth Brockman
James Thurston
Kevin Davidson
Lara Raisanen