

60th Anniversary
Book of Memories
December 8, 2020



St. John's Episcopal Church
Austin, Texas



60 years of history, of change, of people coming—staying—leaving—returning. Lives started and ended within the walls and heart of St. John's Episcopal Church. It is good to remember our past, our growing into who we are. It is also good to look forward to our future. When asked to compile this Book of Memories, I was overwhelmed! However, with the assistance and contributions of dedicated members of this parish, the book has come together. Thanks so much to the contributions of Bill Cox, our “unofficial” Historian and keeper of photos and trivia; Petra Perez, our worthy translator, who has put in many hours; Deacon Victoria, proofreader extraordinaire; and all those whose stories contained in this book illuminate and bring to life the Story of St. John's. And, credit must be given to our Interim Rector, The Rev. Ann McLemore, without whose encouragement this effort may not have taken shape. It is with gratitude and hope that I offer this Book of Memories to you.

Fay Jones, Editor
December 8, 2020

60 days until 60th anniversary of St. John's Episcopal Church

Here is a 60 day calendar of all kinds of activities, thoughts, prayers as preparation for December 8, 2020. For sixty days we can work through our gratitude, faith, and vision all offered to us by “God’s help”. Have a bit of fun along the way – Ann +,
your Interim Rector

<p>OCTOBER</p> <p>9</p> <p><i>Pray for a neighbor today</i></p> <p>Day 1</p>	<p>10</p> <p><i>Call an old friend</i></p> <p>Day 2</p>	<p>11</p> <p><i>Take a deep breath and count to ten</i></p> <p>Day 3</p>	<p>12</p> <p><i>Think about your first visit to St. John's</i></p> <p>Day 4</p>	<p>13</p> <p><i>Wash a window in your house today</i></p> <p>Day 5</p>
<p>14</p> <p><i>Learn how to say LOVE in sign language</i></p> <p>Day 6</p>	<p>15</p> <p><i>Read about Teresa of Avila, commemorated today</i></p> <p>Day 7</p>	<p>16</p> <p><i>Pray for your Vestry</i></p> <p>Day 8</p>	<p>17</p> <p><i>Spend 10 minutes outside today</i></p> <p>Day 9</p>	<p>18</p> <p><i>Attend a virtual service by Facebook at 10am or 12pm</i></p> <p>Day 10</p>
<p>19</p> <p><i>St. Luke, the Physician – pray for your doctors</i></p> <p>Day 11</p>	<p>20</p> <p><i>Do you have old pictures of St. John's to share?</i></p> <p>Day 12</p>	<p>21</p> <p><i>Help a neighbor today</i></p> <p>Day 13</p>	<p>22</p> <p><i>High Feast Day – eat something special at home</i></p> <p>Day 14</p>	<p>23</p> <p><i>St. James, brother of Jesus – call a sibling today</i></p> <p>Day 15</p>
<p>24</p> <p><i>Walk our labyrinth or read about labyrinths</i></p> <p>Day 16</p>	<p>25</p> <p><i>ZOOM to church for coffee hour at 11am</i></p> <p>Day 17</p>	<p>26</p> <p><i>Clean a closet today</i></p> <p>Day 18</p>	<p>27</p> <p><i>Read a book from or about the 1960's</i></p> <p>Day 19</p>	<p>28</p> <p><i>Pray for the church treasurer</i></p> <p>Day 20</p>
<p>29</p> <p><i>Set up a home altar for "Day of the Dead"</i></p> <p>Day 21</p>	<p>30</p> <p><i>Light a candle of hope</i></p> <p>Day 22</p>	<p>31</p> <p></p> <p><i>Treat yourself today</i></p> <p>Day 23</p>	<p>18</p> <p><i>Attend a virtual service by Facebook at 10am or 12pm</i></p> <p>Day 10</p>	<p>2</p> <p><i>Remember a family member you have lost</i></p> <p>Day 25</p>
<p>3</p> <p>VOTE!</p> <p><i>And pray for the process</i></p> <p>Day 26</p>	<p>4</p> <p><i>Pray for peace and patience in our country</i></p> <p>Day 27</p>	<p>5</p> <p><i>Write a short story about St. John's</i></p> <p>Day 28</p>	<p>6</p> <p><i>Name your favorite place on the St. John's campus</i></p> <p>Day 29</p>	<p>7</p> <p><i>Pray for the Senior and Junior Wardens</i></p> <p>Day 30</p>

<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>8</p> <p><i>Give thanks for our musicians</i></p> <p>Day 31</p>	<p>9</p> <p><i>Name your favorite outreach ministry</i></p> <p>Day 32</p>	<p>10</p> <p><i>What has ZOOM taught you about church?</i></p> <p>Day 33</p>	<p>11</p> <p><i>Do you have a St. John's t-shirt? Pray for a family member who is a veteran.</i></p> <p>Day 34</p>	<p>12</p> <p><i>What do you love about Morning Prayer?</i></p> <p>Day 35</p>
<p>13</p> <p><i>Learn the Lord's Prayer in Spanish</i></p> <p>Day 36</p>	<p>14</p> <p><i>Give thanks for our ZOOM masters</i></p> <p>Day 37</p>	<p>15</p> <p><i>Pray for Presiding Bishop Michael Curry</i></p> <p>Day 38</p>	<p>16</p> <p><i>Read or write a letter to a child</i></p> <p>Day 39</p>	<p>17</p> <p><i>Pray for our Vergers – name them</i></p> <p>Day 40</p>
<p>18</p> <p><i>Who puts The Bridge together? Pray for her</i></p> <p>Day 41</p>	<p>19</p> <p><i>Name a US President who was Episcopalian</i></p> <p>Day 42</p>	<p>20</p> <p><i>Light a candle to honor a former member of St. John's</i></p> <p>Day 43</p>	<p>21</p> <p><i>Buy wildflower seeds for the church grounds</i></p> <p>Day 44</p>	<p>22</p> <p><i>When and where were you baptized</i></p> <p>Day 45</p>
<p>23</p> <p><i>Write a prayer to yourself</i></p> <p>Day 46</p>	<p>24</p> <p><i>Phone a friend today</i></p> <p>Day 47</p>	<p>25</p> <p><i>Help mow or weed at 8am or bring donuts or pray</i></p> <p>Day 48</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Thanksgiving Day <i>"Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart"</i></p>	<p>27</p> <p><i>Take a dish to a shut-in neighbor</i></p> <p>Day 50</p>
<p>18</p> <p><i>Attend a virtual service by Facebook at 10am or 12pm</i></p> <p>Day 51</p>	<p>29</p> <p><i>Happy New Year! Advent 1</i></p> <p><i>Phone a friend</i></p> <p>Day 52</p>	<p>30</p> <p><i>St. Andrew</i></p> <p><i>Offer special prayers for Bishop Doyle</i></p> <p>Day 53</p>	<p>DECEMBER</p> <p>1</p> <p><i>Be a faithful servant of God's bounty – give a gift</i></p> <p>Day 54</p>	<p>2</p> <p><i>Pray for St. John's Deacon, Victoria</i></p> <p>Day 55</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Future fund <i>Donate \$1 for each year at St. John's</i></p> <p>Day 56</p>	<p>4</p> <p><i>What are you thankful for in 2020?</i></p> <p>Day 57</p>	<p>5</p> <p><i>Pray for the Church, BCP p 816</i></p> <p>Day 58</p>	<p>6</p> <p><i>Pray for the mission of the Church, BCP p 816</i></p> <p>Day 59</p>	<p>7</p> <p><i>Pray for your new Rector, Minerva Skeith</i></p> <p>Day 60</p>

John and I met in the church choir at St. Alban's in El Paso. We married in June, 1983 and moved to Austin. Both John and I wanted to look for a church to attend in Austin, and several months after moving here, we found St. John's near Palm Sunday, 1984. We had only attended a few months when John got an internship out of town. Father Seth Deleery came to me and gave me his phone number saying that I could call at any time while John was away. It was this gentle touch that made me want to stay at St. John's. We both joined the choir and members of St. John's became our extended family. Most of our closest friends are members of St. John's.

Our children, Dan and Sarah, became active members at St. John's as they grew up. Both were acolytes, took part in the youth group, and were part of the instrument musical groups during services. John and I have both been on Vestry, and we have worked with many of the ministries at St. John's. In 2014, I began the Refugee Ministry and was filled with joy at the outpouring of assistance from St. John's parishioners.

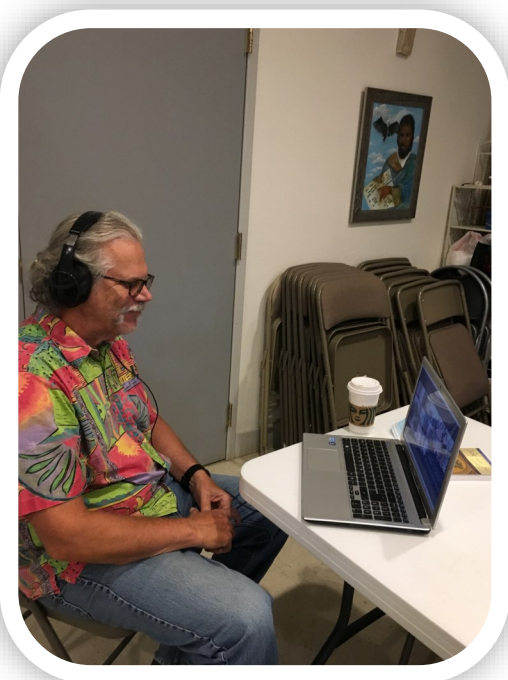
Over the 36 years we've been part of St. John's the community is what draws us. They are with us in our joyous moments, they prop us up when stressed or worried, they hold us in their arms in times of grief. We were blessed to find such a caring and loving community.

Laurie Williams



John Williams' St. John's Story

My family and I have lived in Austin for 37 years, and for almost all of that time, St. John's has been part of our life. St. John's took care of my wife Laurie when I was out of town in the summer of 1984 and she came to church on her own. St. John's baptized both of my children, Dan and Sarah, and helped us raise them to be people whose lives have focused on serving others. St. John's has gifted me with all of my best friends. St. John's has made a pretty good musician out of me. St. John's has led me from one blessed experience to another as I have attended services and participated in its outreach and other programs over the years. St. John's church community has always extended its love and care to me and my family. God bless our church community and lead us from strength to strength in bringing Christ's love to the world!



Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Seminarians

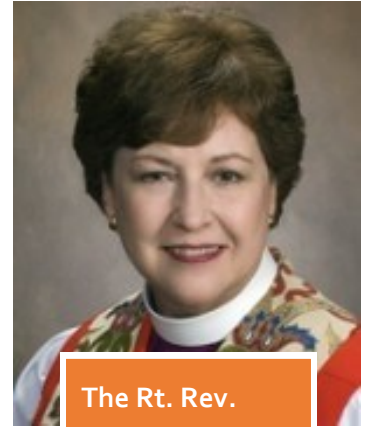
Oh, My!



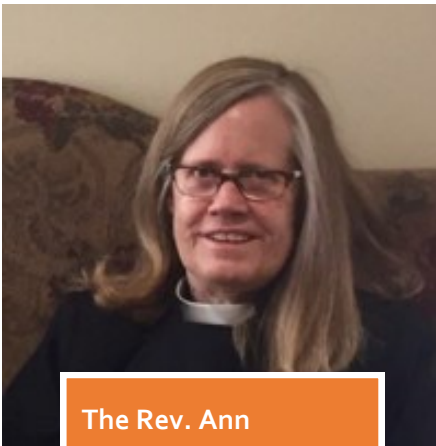
The Rt. Rev. Andy
Doyle



The Rt. Rev. Kai
Ryan



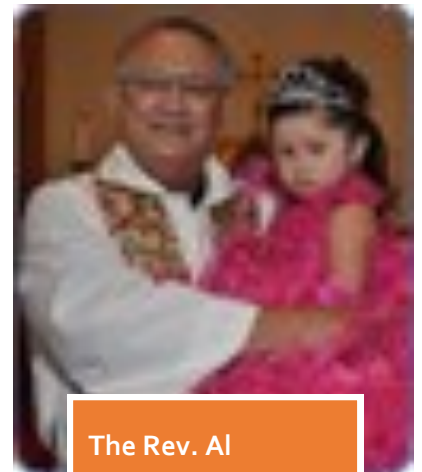
The Rt. Rev.
Dena Harrison



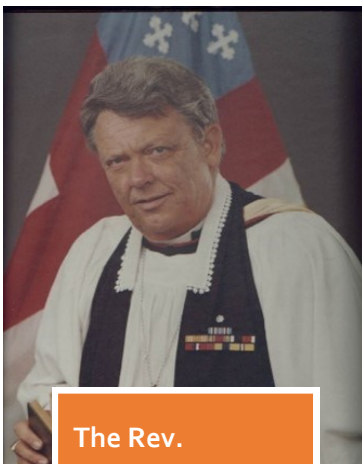
The Rev. Ann
McLemore



The Rev. Dr.
Matt Seddon



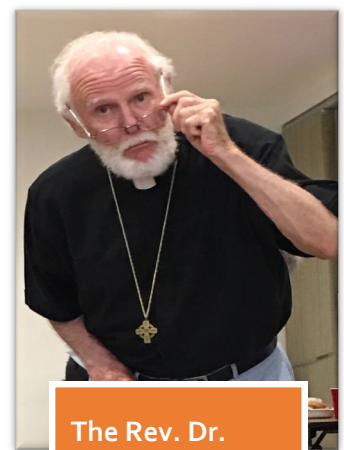
The Rev. Al
Rodriguez



The Rev.
Malcolm Riker



The Rev. Paul
Taft



The Rev. Dr.
David Beer, Ret.

Deacon Victoria in her own words ...

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord!

Baptismal Promise: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? (BCP 305)

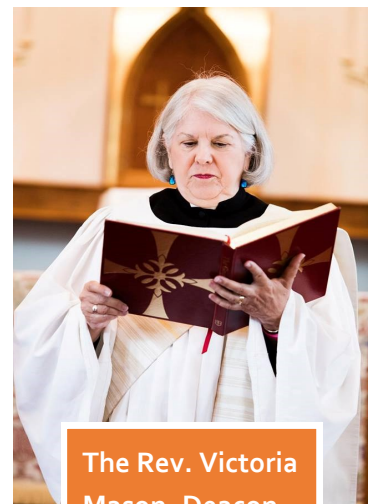
Deacon Ordination: Will you look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need? (BCP 544)

In February 2007, Bishop Wimberly ordained me as a deacon. In the Examination of a deacon the bishop says, ““God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. ... You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.” (BCP 543) This instruction has truly come to fruition this year through the need for racial justice.

Every General Convention of The Episcopal Church since 1976 (except 1982) has passed resolutions condemning racism and authorized programs to counteract this form of injustice. The current expression of implementing these directives is the Becoming Beloved Community movement of The Episcopal Church.

My role as a deacon in this initiative is being a facilitator and convener. This is an important distinction for a deacon. A deacon provides servant leadership, encourages the parishioners who follow a call to serve Christ in a ministry, and uses her gifts to support the ministry. The viability of the ministry depends on the active participation of the congregation. At some point, the deacon’s role is to step away as the ministry continues to fulfill its mission under lay leadership.

In Ephesians 4:7, St. Paul says that “each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” I thank God for the gift of diaconal ministry and specially to serve Christ here at St. John’s. Together we will “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” (BCP 236) the issues of racial justice to prepare for how we may “seek and serve Christ in all persons.” (BCP 305)



The Rev. Victoria
Mason, Deacon

Seminararians come and go, but some never leave!



Minerva Skeith



Rohani Weger 2010



Les Jackson



Laurie McKim



Karen Crawford

ANSWER: This week's question asked about one of our Seminararians from the 1980's. The Reverend Pete Jones did his Seminary field work at St. John's in 1982 and 1983. Pete was the husband of our own Fay Jones! Sadly Pete passed away in 2007.

“Doom, despair and agony on me. Deep, dark depression, excessive misery. If it weren’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all. Doom, despair and agony on me.” You may remember that lyric from the TV show Hee-Haw. March 2018, that was exactly my state of being. Life took a turn and bit me on my, well you know where. I knew a change had to be made. A change that could only be made with God’s help.

God has continued to keep me going in the face of adversity, even if it was me that created it. I knew there had to be a church home for me. After some deep soul searching, I recalled a lovely memory. For two years when I was a young teenager, I attended an Episcopal Church in my hometown. I assisted an elderly lady during the service. I felt at peace and happy at those services. A Google search of the Episcopal Church’s website reminded me of that happy and peaceful time.

Finding an Episcopal Church was the easy part. I had driven by St. John’s hundreds of times since moving to Northeast Austin in 2006. I made an appointment with Father Matt. On the day of the meeting, I met Nancy and sweet little Mia. Father Matt was warm and welcoming. He listened and answered all my questions. He invited me to attend the Good Friday service the following week. When the meeting was over, I knew that I was on my way home. Home in every part of my heart and soul.

The Good Friday service on March 30, 2018 began to ease my heart aches. I met Mary Ann that day. On Sunday, I attended the service and Mary Ann was there. A familiar face. She invited me to Coffee Hour. From that day forward, finally, a sense of belonging, new friends, and peace. Here I am almost three years later. A short-timer, I know, but it feels like it has been forever. Forever in the best way. For this earthly life, I am finally home.

Anne Faithful

Bill Cox – 39 years at St. John's

A new engineering position with Schlumberger brought Bill, Debbie, and Michael (age 8 months) to Austin in November 1981. We left Beaverton, Oregon and found a house in north Austin, and we asked our Realtor if she knew of any nearby Episcopal Churches. She mentioned a church on Parkfield Drive near Kramer Lane.

In 1981, St. John's was a small church, located in a smaller version of what we now call the Parish Hall and filled with young families with lots of babies and children. Fr. Seth Deleery had just arrived, and the congregation had recently built an addition which, among other things, was intended to make the building "look like a church." It was a good fit for us.

I am a cradle Episcopalian whose parents had always been active in the Church, and Debbie and I met at the Episcopal Chapel at Rice University. I guess it was in our DNA to become active at St. John's---we both became lay readers, Debbie joined the Altar Guild, and I was convinced to run for a position on the Bishop's Committee which turned into becoming Junior Warden. My major accomplishment that year was installing smoke alarms.

In the summer of 1984, Debbie was pregnant with Diana and we learned that Fr. Seth had been re-assigned to a new role in the Diocese. We really wanted Fr. Seth to celebrate at Diana's baptism, and he baptized her when she was 11 days old. Fr. Murray Powell soon arrived, and he became not only our Priest but also a close friend. Murray and Sarah were starting their family, and they often joked about wanting us to take good care of Diana's dresses so we could then hand them down to Katie.

St. John's continued to grow and we continued to remodel the old building. Eventually, in 2004, our beautiful "new" church opened. Debbie was twice elected to the Vestry, including time as Bishop's Warden. Michael and Diana grew up in the church, were active in the youth groups, and served as counselors at Camp Allen in the summers. Bill Beare introduced me to the emerging role of Verger – he first described it as an adult acolyte – and I eventually went all-in and joined the national Vergers' Guild in 2005 and became a Fellow of the Guild in 2017.

I retired from Schlumberger in 2012 and my role at St. John's quickly expanded to fill any free time that I might have hoped for during retirement. We knew that Fr. Al was approaching retirement age, and we needed to start preparing for supply priests and the search for a new Rector. I started writing "customaries" – documenting how we did things at St. John's – to serve as a starting point for our supply priests and eventually our new Rector. Also about that time, Bill Beare asked me to take up the "parish historian" role that he held for many years. I am honored to continue that role in Bill's memory.

I have also taken a technology and communications role for St. John's – preparing the Sunday bulletins and helping manage our web sites and Facebook and YouTube pages. In 2015, I started recording sermons to publish online and in response to the COVID 19 pandemic started livestreaming and publishing online services, Bible study classes, and fellowship gatherings. I really look forward to being able to return to in-person gatherings.

Overall, it has been a good run and I look forward to what the upcoming years bring.

Pandemic 2020
We moved into the Chapel



Pandemic 2020

We opened up the Chapel



Pandemic 2020

We started in-person Holy Eucharist outside



Pandemic 2020
And finally moved into the Church
on 1 Advent



Texas priest David Peters pays tribute to legendary church planter with 70-mile prayer walk around Austin to visit the 8 churches planted by The Rev. Malcolm Riker.

This week's question asked about three other Episcopal Churches that were founded by the Reverend Malcom Riker about the same time as he founded St. John's. The churches are St. Matthews, on Steck Avenue near Anderson High School, St. Mark's, on Bee Caves Road in Westlake, and St. Luke's, on Ranch Road 620 on the shore of Lake Travis. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John---the four Gospel Churches of Austin.



As you have heard, December 8, 2020 will be the 60th anniversary of the founding of St. John's Episcopal Church. As part of the celebration, we will be recounting some of the history of St. John's, in the form of trivia questions--one question each week between now and December. Nothing tricky---and nearly all the answers can be found in our history book that can be downloaded from our web site or Facebook fellowship group page. No prizes, other than bragging rights! Please enter your answer as a comment to the post. The next week, we'll post the answer and tell you a bit more about the subject.

Have fun!

Here is the latest trivia question for our celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of St. John's. Enter your guess as a comment post the answer in the next Bridge. *(Can you find the answers in this Book?)*

The Reverend Malcom Riker organized three other churches in the Austin area at about the same time as he organized St. John's. What are the names of the four churches, and what is unique about this group of churches?

St John's has not always been in its current location. Where was St. John's first located, and approximately when did we move to our current site? Bonus Question: What was the original name of the street on which St. John's is located?

There is one stained glass window at St. John's. Who is depicted on that window?

Prior to 1981, St. John's did not have a full-time priest---we shared a priest with one or more other Episcopal Churches in Austin. Who was our first full time priest? Bonus question---what important fixture at St. John's was acquired and installed while this person was our priest?

We are blessed with a wonderful music program. Approximately when did Philip Riley start as our Choirmaster and Organist? Over the years, St. John's has been blessed with many students from the Seminary of the Southwest who have done their field work here. One seminarian from the 1980s has a very special connection with a current member of St. John's. Who was that seminarian, and who is the current member?

Many of the fixtures at St. John's were crafted by parishioners. David Leitch in the 1980s and David Petersen in more recent years crafted much of the beautiful wood furniture and wall details in the Church and Parish Hall. Steve Kriechbaum, a jeweler by profession, designed and built the large cross over the altar. Two of our former priests were also wood craftsmen who designed and built fixtures in the church. Who are these former priests, and what did they build?

Before Jamaica, St. Johns had a (more or less) yearly festival called "Fall Fest." When was the first Fall Fest held?

When did St. John's become a Parish (as opposed to a Mission) in the Diocese of Texas? Who was our priest at that time?

Several paintings in the Church and Parish Hall were created by one of our current parishioners. Who is the artist?



The first service held in our current church building was NOT a Holy Eucharist service. What was it, and when (month and year) was it held?

The kneelers at the communion rail are all embroidered with icons representing Saints of the Church. Who does this kneeler represent?



Under the leadership of Fr. Al Rodriguez, we held occasional Spanish language or bilingual services as early as 2002. When did we start holding a Spanish language service every Sunday afternoon?

The Labyrinth on our property was constructed in 2013 and is actually the second labyrinth in that location. When was the first one built, and what materials were used?

St. John's began live streaming our services on Facebook in March, 2020. Approximately how long has St. John's had a presence on Facebook? Bonus Question: When did we start recording and publishing Sermons on YouTube?

November 2020

From Ronda Hall and Paula Foy:

We have attended St. John's for about 5 years.

Paula is retired from the University of Texas. Ronda is employed at UT as an academic advisor.

We have been together since 2004. We were married on 8/3/2015, one month after the Supreme Court Decision to allow Same-Sex Marriage.

Paula was confirmed in the Episcopal Church in her early 20's. Ronda grew up in the Methodist church.

Although Ronda grew up in Indiana, she has lived in Texas for 40 years. Paula lived many places during childhood but claims Texas as her home (Austin since 1977).

"Just because", we wanted to share a picture of our Rescue Cat, Ross! You get a sneak peek at him as the cover for our Christmas cards this year!

Activity at Saint John's:

We both sing in the choir. We have both served as Audit Committee members.

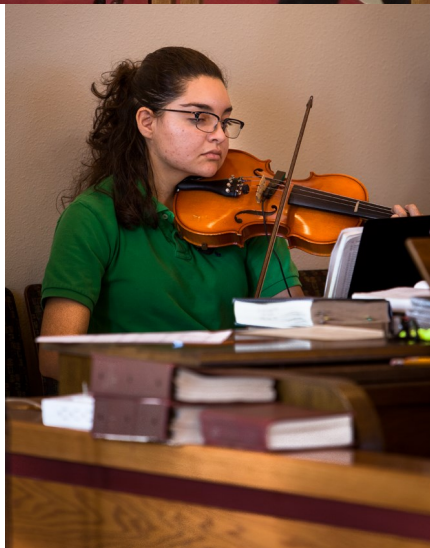
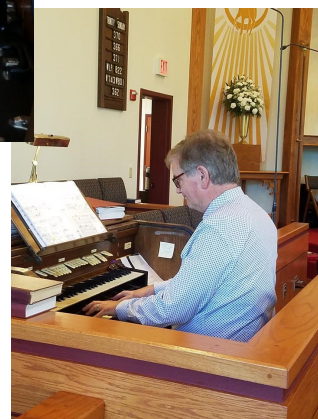
Currently, Paula is serving on the Vestry. She is a member of the Altar Guild, and is a Co-Facilitator (with Sandra Ward) for a Sacred Ground Dialogue Circle. Previously (for about three years), she delivered food from St. John's donations to St. John's Community Center.

We are so happy to be part of this wonderful community.

Happy 60th Anniversary, St. John's!



We celebrate with music



In January 1978, Jimmy and I left our home in Syracuse (23 inches of snow in backyard) with Claudie, Jamie, 4 Scotties and a Husky in our station wagon and headed for Austin. The trip took 5 days as we shed our winter clothes along the way.

When July came, Jimmy said it was time for us to get back to church. We lived half way between St. John's and St. George's. 4th of July weekend we came to St. John's (Quonset hut and dirt gravel lot). Needless to say, we never made it to St. George's. Mrs. Gracey greeted us graciously. About 30 attended regularly.

Claudie and Jamie have been baptized and confirmed here. Jimmy baptized. Claudie married. Kylie baptized and confirmed. Nathan was baptized. Jimmy's memorial service.

Palm Sunday 1982, we had our first service with the choir with Philip at the mighty Wurlitzer.

Many changes have taken place with the different remodelings to the Quonset hut and a brand new church.

Many folk and friends have come and gone over the 42 years. We went from mission to parish when we all drove to Tyler for Diocesan Council to celebrate. Now several new organizations and ministries have been formed.

We have had 6 different vicars and priests. Fr's Bob, Seth, Murray, Paul, Al, Matt, interim Rev. Ann, and now we welcome Mother Minerva with open arms.

Where else would anyone want to attend church?

Lyn Burns



We Play Together!



We moved to Austin in 2014 from Bartlesville, OK where we attended a wonderful parish, St. Luke's Episcopal Church. I feared we would never again feel as much a part of a welcoming parish as we did there.

After moving to the Austin area, we began attending churches in different communities that were closer to Leander where we were living at the time. We now live in Pflugerville. We were used to having coffee hour after the service, which gave us time to really know our fellow parishioners but most of the churches we visited had only a coffee pot at the door for people to take a cup with them as they left.

We attended St. John's a couple of times and were welcomed warmly by the parishioners who invited us to coffee hour after service. About the second or third week we attended, Annette VanDover approached us and said, "Would you like to request your letter from your previous church, or would you like me to?". That made us laugh and told her that we would be happy for her to make the request. We have never regretted making that move and are happily settled in at St. John's.

Frank and Karen Rukovena



In 1977, David, Natasha and I moved to Austin where David had been accepted to enter Seminary. Before that we had both been teaching in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and our daughter Natasha was born there. We, like other new seminary families, “church hopped” and discovered Saint John’s to be the most to our liking. Seth Deleery was the minister in charge (actually the first full-time one); he and David remain friends and still meet regularly for a Starbucks.

Because I was a seminarian’s wife, with an M. Ed In Education, the principal of Saint Martin’s Lutheran School felt I was qualified to be a church teacher, and I taught there for ten years. I was further pleased to have Natasha as a pupil in my new school. David taught English part-time at UT while a seminarian. We continued to attend Saint John’s, although after he was ordained in 1980 and became a supply clergyman we were at a lot of different churches on Sundays. Sometimes he was at a church for just one Sunday, sometimes at the same church for almost a year.

However, we have always been happy to be part of Saint Johns on occasion, and for the past ten years regularly. We feel blessed to have known a lot of fine people—some now departed—from Saint John’s. We continue to miss Helen Gracy, John Sweeny, Don and Valerie Cox, Joel and Janice Treadwell, Barbara Williamson, Jerry Jackson, Bill Beare, Ron Dyer and others. But we rejoice in having so many dear friends in the current congregation—all of you!

David and Ruth Beer



ANSWER: This week’s question concerned some of the paintings that can be found around the Church and the Parish Hall. The artist for these paintings is Ruth Beer, wife of the Reverend Dr. David Beer. The Bonus Question asked who is depicted on the stained glass window in the Chapel. That window shows St. John the Baptist, not our patron St. John the Evangelist. The window was donated to St. John’s in the 1970s and has been in its current location since the original building (now parish hall) was remodeled in 1988.



I first came to St. John's in 1982. I had just been transferred from Houston, had just gotten moved in to a house on Cooper Hill, and realized that it was time to find a church. However, I knew nothing about Austin churches, except for a few folks at St. George's that I had met through Cursillo, but for some reason didn't really feel a call to there. So, I decided to visit other local Episcopal churches, and started my search in the only way available in those days – I sat down at my kitchen table with an Austin map and the Yellow Pages (the 1982 equivalent of Google and Maps) and started looking up churches and marking their locations on my map. I didn't want to travel very far, but you can imagine my shock when I found that the location of St. John's was really, really close to my new home! I had no idea that there were any nearby churches, much less Episcopal ones. With map in hand (no GPS yet) I found the little A-frame building and visited what was to become my church home. Confirmation that I was called to be there happened when I discovered that one of my closer co-workers was already a member.

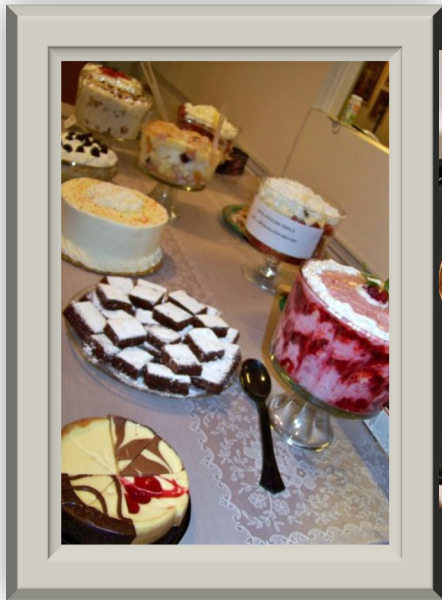
Marvin Rasmussen

I first came to St. John's as a guest of my good friend, Marvin Rasmussen. We met through our Cursillo ties, and discovered that we were treasurers of our individual parishes. Immediately I felt welcome at St. John's, such warmth I felt as I was meeting the members of the church. As Marvin's and my relationship developed, I found myself attending St. John's with Marvin almost every Sunday and, at some point, realized it was my church home. Because we were both so very busy with jobs, (and I with my daughter) we planned to go to a JP to get married and celebrate later. WELL, Judy Ingram found out, and informed us that we were getting married at St. John's, and that the congregation would take care of the reception! So, we planned the wedding, and the congregation provided an absolutely beautiful covered dish reception!!! Marvin and I had so much fun – what a beautiful beginning to our marriage. Since then the congregation has been wonderful support to both us and our marriage.

And on another note - we're still having fun.

Sheri Rasmussen

We Eat Together!





For most of St. John's parishioners, the St. John's buildings have always been there in their current form, but what most don't know is that many of the additions and improvements that have converted the Parish Hall building from a double-wide mobile home were done by members of the mission. These projects did not always go smoothly. The first modification that had been completed shortly before I arrived in 1982 was the addition of the A-frame, and the folks who built it had many stories. The story I wish to share is about one the expansions done several years later. At that time, the altar was located where the chapel is now and the nave was what is now the large meeting area. However, the nave was much narrower: the outer wall of the building was where the folding doors of the smaller meeting room and the children's area are now, and just outside was a covered porch about half the width of those current rooms. The DIY project was to enclose that porch and remove part of the wall so as to make a small nook for the organ and choir. Just a few months earlier, our then resident plumber had connected the building sewer to the city line, which finally took us off the original septic tank system. However, the location of the septic tank had been forgotten! The porch was about two inches lower than the floor of the nave, so a truck-load delivery of concrete was arranged to fill it in, with the wet concrete being poured in directly through the windows of the new outer wall. During the pour, the septic tank was revealed when the delivery truck fell into it! Fortunately, the tank was empty, the truck was able to get out of the hole without a tow, and the driver kindly helped out by filling in the tank with the unused portion of the concrete load! The project was successful and that floor is still in use today.



We celebrate through the years and changes



I have always loved music and I grew up a faithful Methodist, but when I took a church music course in college I decided that God might be an Episcopalian! So imagine my delight in August of 1979 when I began work as organist at a sweet mission called St. John's, tucked in the back woods of north Austin. When I arrived I asked to see the music department, and was escorted to the back of the little chapel where I found a small but serviceable electric organ, a hymnal, and a frayed book of organ pieces called Vesper Chimes, and that was all!

Fast forward to 2020 and we see a far richer picture, although so many things are on hold because of our current health crisis. We have a wonderful pipe organ, handbells, a superb piano, and a stellar choir that is outgrowing their seating area. (What an amazing problem to have!) We have a praise band, a liturgical band, and a full contingent of musicians for our Spanish language service. Each year the choir hosts our parish talent show, gathers for a hymn singing night, and goes Christmas caroling. We sing at the Drive a Senior Benefit Concert each December, attend the Diocesan Choral Festival in Houston, and have been part of combined choirs at diocesan council meetings and the 2018 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, held here in Austin.

In addition to a rich musical diet, St. John's also holds family connections for me. I met my wife, Cay Shaw Riley, here and our daughter, Sarah, grew up in the church. I will wager that Sarah covered more substitute acolyte shifts than any other kid in the history of this place! My in-laws, Barbara and Julian Shaw, were members here in their final days.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the clergy, staff, and seminarians through the years. And of course I am thankful for so many treasured friendships.

St. John's has been a consistent blessing in my life for over four decades. I know our future is bright and I have faith that we will raise the cupola singing God's praises again!

Philip Riley



We moved to Austin from Oregon in 1981 with our 9 month old son Michael (who eventually received the sacraments of confirmation and marriage at St. John's). Our realtor actually got us to St. John's for the first time. It was indeed about location, location, location, but we liked what we saw, became members, and have been here for 39 years now.

The theme for Vacation Bible school 1982 was that God is everywhere, not just in the church building. In my anniversary submission, I have decided to focus on a few fond memories of St. John's activities that took place away from the church.

One stop on the VBS tour was Innerspace Caverns in Georgetown. I remember how sweetly attentive Natasha Beer was to Michael. Natasha (daughter of Ruth and David Beer) now has two lovely young daughters of her own and has traveled the world.

One Saturday in the 80's members of the Altar Guild met at the home of Valerie Cox (Valerie and Don Cox were Terry's parents, and no, we are not related). There was a pool and a very nice champagne brunch, and we popped champagne corks over the fence into the neighbor's yard.

Our daughter Diana was baptized in 1984 when she was 11 days old. We scheduled the baptism before she was born so that Fr. Seth Deleery could celebrate before he left St. John's. She almost didn't arrive in time. Probably after Diana started Mother's Day Out, the bridge club was formed. Members were Karen Leitch, Judy Ingram (Steve Mudge's mother), Jean Reed, and Annette VanDover. We discussed many issues of the day, mostly related to St. John's. When Karen's daughter Ann (who was later confirmed with Diana and also married and had her son baptized at St. John's) was in kindergarten, we met at Karen's house so she could run to Good Shepherd to pick up Ann at the end of her school day.

Speaking of Diana, she played the French horn. One year she needed an accompanist for Solo and Ensemble competition, and Carol Fritz played the piano for her. That effort was special to me.

HEB provided another away from St. John's spiritual experience for me. For over 10 years, I picked up Ruth Kuykendahl, a regular attendant of the 8 AM service, from her apartment on Lamar and dropped her off with her grocery list at HEB. 30 minutes later I would come back and take her home with her groceries. During those brief car visits we discussed a lot of life at St. John's (Ruth did NOT like Rite II), and I learned that she was a very interesting, well educated, beautiful woman. I miss her, and I would never have known her so well if Fr. Murray Powell had not asked me to take on this important (for both of us) task.

I have no doubt that God works in mysterious ways and am thankful that He connected us with St. John's and all that implies.

Debbie Cox

We Worship Together



Twice a year, St John's orders living plants to decorate the church for our most sacred observances, Christmas Eve and Easter Day. You've seen them: a bank of red poinsettias at Christmas and a riot of unruly lilies at Easter. Behind those lilies are stories of peril.

Frankly, the pots of lilies are bad girls. They fall over easily, they grow mold, and they open their beautiful white blossoms when they bloody-well-please. Some years, the lily plants have no blooms, only buds, when we get them. Those years during Holy Week the lights in the sacristy stay on all night and the window blinds must be opened during the day, every day. Usually these bad girls come through with one or more of their distinctive bell-shaped flowers per plant by Easter Sunday. Occasionally it takes a carefully aimed hair dryer. Some Easters we are fortunate to see a multitude of open blooms.

And when those bad-girl lilies open, they have pollen stamens that need to be removed. The stamens in a lily are those strangely shaped protrusions that start out wet and green when the lily begins to open, progress to yellow and then become brownish—all in a matter of a few hours. The yellow or brown pollen eventually dries out, becomes airborne, and bothers people's sinuses. Thus, the stamen tips must come out without spreading sticky pollen dust on the lilies, the church, or its people. That process takes talent, luck, and fervent prayer.

Getting a lily plant to cooperate is about like getting a cat to cooperate. If it doesn't have the blossom-opening problem, it may have a stand-up problem. A lily plant grows according to its own patterns. That means the stalk can easily grow crooked enough to imbalance the pot. There are several ways to correct this. Sometimes a strategically placed rock in the pot will solve the problem. There are always enough rocks on the St John's property to find just the right one. If a rock doesn't work, it is time to look for a small, forked stick, which is harder to find. Such a stick can prop up the stalk of a lily and change the balance of the plant. Once in a great while, a really bad-girl Easter lily arrives so off balance that she requires both a rock and a stick.

And so it goes at St John's. Worshippers see the beautiful white lilies each year, like little girls clothed in Easter dresses. Those of us in the Altar Guild who cope with lilies know the level of unpredictability, the near-misses, and the trial-and-error it takes to make them worthy of decorating our church to the glory of God.



I came to St. John's after what I felt was a religious experience in 1996. I had left church behind 23 years before. I did not know where to start so I came to my father's church. I felt tears welling up when I heard the hymns and liturgy of my youth and remembered again the attention I had given to sermons. I was home but even though I had grown up son and grandson of Episcopal priests, I lacked some direction as to what this might mean to me. I read a lot and I knew that the "social gospel" was what resonated with me. It was not long before my dear departed friend and mentor, Bill Beare, found me and through his example and his constant lessons to me in "Christian formation", I found a calling for our Nursing Home Ministry. I went with him twice and the location we attended was shut down by the state. He tasked me with finding another and heading it up. OakCrest Manor Nursing Home was my choice. It was not a place for the elderly as the name implies. It was a place where persons with no money other than that provided through social services such as Medicaid and Social Security, who had mental and/or physical impairment came. Honestly, it was a dreadful place with poor treatment of the residents, a foul smell, and a sense of despair and grief throughout. After a few years, the physician in charge there bought the place and transformed it into a much more caring, clean, and amicable place. It was wonderful to see that transition.

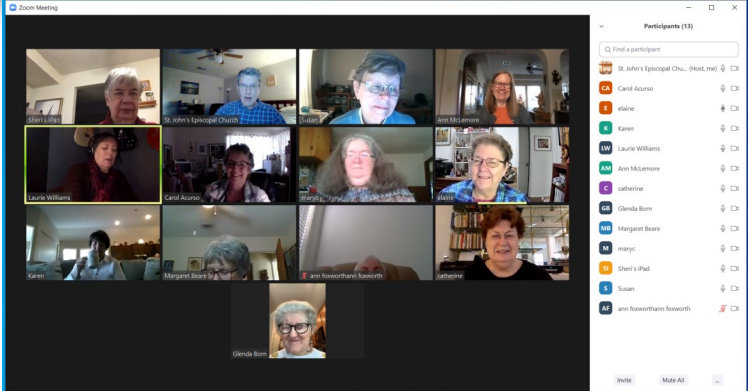
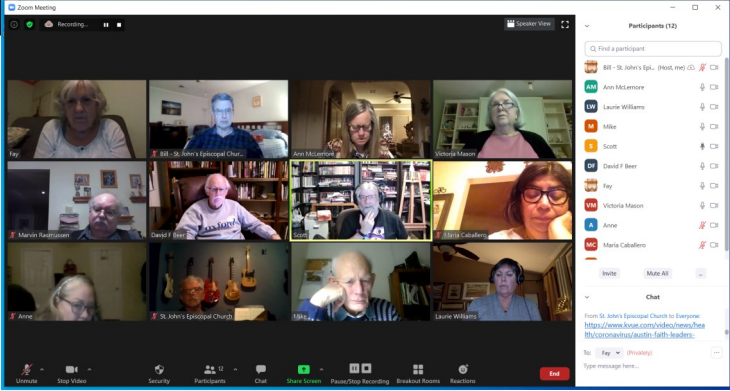
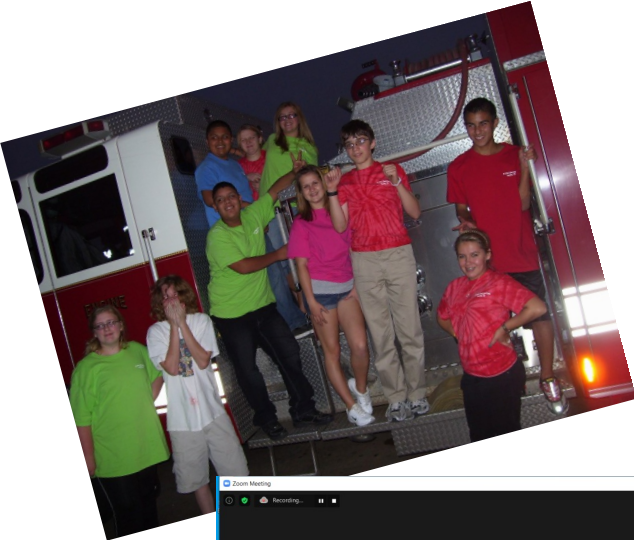
I have now been with this ministry some 23 years. In the first many years, our ministry was mostly me, Bill Beare, Judy Ingram, and Jane Powell with the Williams family members coming from time to time and playing wonderful music for the residents. Philip Riley always made the Christmas caroling party successful and still does. Noraa Jackson joined longer ago than I can remember, then Scott McFarland, our priests, and most recently John Williams, Paul Villareal and Claudie Cantu. Ever since I met my, now wife, Souzan Arashvand, she has never missed. And many others come occasionally and together we all share one thing – this time not just with these folks but for these folks. That distinction was part of my journey in becoming a Christian again.



Now with the Corona virus, we are not able to attend in love to these people in person. The staff is unable to report the condition or health of any of the residents there. This has left me longing for them and praying for their wellbeing until we can meet again. I look forward to our return and in the meantime, I will hold in gratitude all of the memories and friends that I have made. Thanks be to God. Amen

Mark Hartwell

We Learn and Serve



The second Sunday I came to St John's, I sat in the section farthest from the choir and lectern. It seemed a good place from which to observe whatever transpired. Here is what happened:

- * I sat in Roger and Ruth's regular seat, which they politely ignored and sat elsewhere.
- * Anne Reed entered with a cup of coffee at the Peace and hugged a lot of people with coffee in hand, then exited before the Eucharist, still holding the un-drunk coffee.
- * After the service, I waited for others to leave. Elaine Jackson, wearing a vestry badge, made her way to my spot and asked, "Am I supposed to know you?" I smiled, said no, of course, and explained.
- * Sheri Rasmussen, in matching green sweater and pants, came to ask for contact information. We agreed to meet at the Starbucks in Randall's that week so she could find out more information for the newsletter. I had to call and cancel later. We rescheduled—twice. She was gracious and agreeable through it all.

Little did I know that in one Sunday I had witnessed the warmth, grace, and good-will that are hallmarks of St John's.

Catherine Turner



Weekly Spanish language services on Sunday afternoon (typically scheduled for either 1:00 PM or 1:30 PM) began in November, 2007. Before then, we had occasional "experimental" Spanish language or bilingual services. Our first bilingual service was held on Friday, December 13, 2002, followed by a Texas chili and Mexican dish dinner. Regularly scheduled Spanish language services were introduced as a monthly event in May 2007, and in November, they became a regular weekly service.

We celebrate with our Latino members



1960-1980 - The Origins

- * St John's was established as a mission church on December 8, 1960 and accepted in the Diocese of Texas on February 22, 1961.
- * The Reverend Malcom Riker was the first vicar. During 1958-1960, the Rev. Riker organized his "Gospel" churches of St. Matthew's, St. Mark's, St. Luke's on the Lake, and St. John's, all in Austin.
- * The first location was a rented house near Lamar Blvd on Caddo Street.
- * The Diocese of Texas purchased the 5-acre site for our church in May 1962 and we started construction of the church building shortly thereafter. The original building was a simple flat roof structure, covering approximately the north half of the current Parish Hall. Contrary to legend and appearance, it was NOT a double wide trailer.
- * Our address was "PECUSA Street", for "Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA." This street would eventually be paved and renamed Parkfield Drive.
- * The first service in the new church was on March 17, 1963.
- * Rev. Riker left St. John's in 1964. During the late 1960's, attendance lagged at St. John's and there was serious consideration within the Diocese of closing the mission. In November 1968, a new Vicar was appointed, and St. John's began a slow recovery over the next several years.
- * During the late 1960s and 1970s, St. John's had several vicars, all shared with other churches in the Austin area.
- * The major church activity that started in 1979 was the first remodeling of the church building. While a major motivation was to add more space to the building, there was also a distinct desire to have the building "look like a church." The construction was done almost entirely by volunteer labor and was completed in 1980.

While we have a very complete written history of this timeframe --see http://www.austinstjohns.org/uploads/6/9/5/9/69593273/sjec_history_combined-september-2019.pdf, we have very few pictures from this time. If you have photos to share, please contact Bill Cox.

1995-2013 – Coming of Age as a Parish

- Fr. Taft guided St. John's through its early years as a parish, leaving in June 1998. In February 1999, the Reverend Albert Rodriguez became the second Rector of St. John's.
- The year 2000 saw us emphasizing the children and youth, and we added a youth director to our paid staff. Our youth director left in 2003 and youth activities were coordinated by parents and volunteers within St. John's.
- The building was getting very crowded so in 2001 we acquired our 2nd building--the portable classroom structure originally called the Youth Building and now called the Annex.
- We had our first experimental bilingual service on Friday, December 13, 2002 followed by a Texas chili and Mexican dish dinner. Bilingual or Spanish language services would continue sporadically for the next few years.
- During 2002 and 2003, a discernment process and capital campaign produced the plans and funding for a large new church building for St. John's. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the building were held on May 17, 2003 and construction continued through 2003 and 2004. The first service in the new church building was an Evening Prayer service in August, 2004. Formal dedication of the new building was held on September 12, 2004.
- The Spanish language service on Sunday afternoon was introduced as a monthly event in May 2007. In November of that year, it became a regular weekly service.
- The members of St. John's built our Columbarium and Memorial Garden in 2009.
- St John's has had a labyrinth on the property since roughly 2009. During the summer of 2013, the youth group, with help from several adult members of St. John's, completely remodeled the labyrinth and made it a signature part of our landscape.

2014-2020 – One Church, Two Languages, Many Pathways

- We now celebrate Hispanic traditions such as Our Lady of Guadalupe and Día de los Muertos. Our Fall Festival took on a distinctly Hispanic flavor and is now called “Jamaica” after a traditional street festival held in Mexican churches.
- Fr. Al Rodriguez retired from parish ministry in December 2013. In August 2014, the Reverend Matthew Seddon accepted the call to become the third Rector of St. John’s. During Fr. Matt’s tenure, our Hispanic ministry greatly expanded, and St. John’s continues to strive toward becoming a truly bilingual community.
- All communications from the church are now presented in both English and Spanish. To the extent possible, communications are also made available in Braille or similar formats accessible to the visually impaired.
- Several new outreach ministries have been established, most notably the Refugee Ministry and the Labyrinth Community Garden.
- We are actively involved in the racial reconciliation efforts covered by the Becoming Beloved Community initiatives of the national Episcopal Church.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we have transitioned to an online, virtual mode in which our weekly services are livestreamed on Facebook and our Christian Education classes and fellowship gatherings are via Zoom online meetings. We have greatly expanded our online presence on the Web, on Facebook, and on YouTube.
- In September 2020, we took our first tentative steps back to in person worship by starting limited outdoor Holy Eucharist services, alternating between English and Spanish.
- Fr. Matt left St. John’s in October, 2018 and, in April 2019, the Reverend Ann McLemore accepted the call to become our Interim Rector. Rev. Ann has faithfully guided us through the rector search process.

And may we never have another year like
this one!

