
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

2023 MINISTRY REPORTS



OUR MISSION

*Committed to living a faith journey that is
sacred, intentional, compassionate and inclusive*

LEADERSHIP

RECTOR

I greet you with the following scripture on my heart:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:3-9)

I learned of St. John's shortly after you posted the position for your next rector. Over the next months, the Spirit continued whispering about you in various ways. After my first interviews with Bishop David and Canon Anna and then with your vestry, I knew where the Spirit was leading. I give thanks to God that we both listened and find ourselves partnering in prayer, ministry, fellowship, and companionship today.

Believe it or not, it has only been two and a half months since my arrival. There has been so much activity and opportunity to get to know you that I feel it has been much longer – and that is a blessing.

Over the last two months of December, we gathered for:

- All Saint's Day with a beautiful ofrenda and ribbons to celebrate, honor, and remember those who have gone before us,
- Dinners, luncheons, and Bingo that allowed us to get to know one another,
- Meetings with the various St. John's ministry groups,
- Diocesan Convention and Clergy Conference where I got to know our delegates better and met both lay and other clergy in our diocese,
- Special evening services of Vespers and Blue Christmas in our historic chapel which nurtured and nourished those who attended, and
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services that brought joy to so many (I will note that being surrounded by children on Christmas Eve was a highlight for me).

It all culminated in a spectacular service of confirmations, receptions, and my installation as your Rector . . . but, technically that happened in 2024!

All of these opportunities have allowed me to learn that this is a congregation which, as Paul writes in his letter, is not lacking in any spiritual gift. Together this is a community that brings together a multitude of talents, perspectives, and ideas with great love and respect. In doing so, you strengthen one another and encourage each other to share the Good News of Christ in this place and beyond the doors of St. John's.

2024 will be a year of continued learning and transformation. There will be opportunities for growth and renewal. We will also face challenges. However, we will face them with mutual love, respect, and the strength of Christ on our side. It will take all of us praying, working, and playing together to accomplish our dreams.

With the knowledge of who we are, St. John's, it is with great faith, hope, and excitement that I know we can accomplish big things together. And, I am blessed to have the privilege to begin 2024 with you as your pastor, priest, teacher, and partner in ministry.

Grace and Peace, The Rev. Betsy McElroy

Deacon Reflection

2023 was a year of transition for all of us as we lived into the reality of functioning without a rector. I'm struck by how well we did. The parish showed a remarkable resilience and ability to adapt to new challenges with creativity and commitment. While it wasn't easy, we are the stronger for the struggle.

The Vestry under Margaret Meyers' leadership did a great job, especially with all the preparatory work for beginning the search for a new Rector. The results speak for themselves - Welcome Betsy!

Overall, we continued being the church, serving God, one another, and our community. Please be sure to read the entries in this annual report and give thanks for the many hands at work on our collective behalf (and the many hours!): from worship leadership/preparation, to community events, meals (like the Greg Wilson Memorial Men's BBQ), supporting Penny in the office, managing our finances, care/maintenance of our building and grounds, and so much more.

Below are a few highlights from 2023.

Fundraising

The Vestry explored new ways we might fundraise for the parish - like our Pondl Winery event (thanks again, David Lujan). The bake sale to support Holly Wilson's participation in the Episcopal Youth Event was a great success, too.

We also started hosting quarterly bingo games coordinated by Kathy Girard. We've had good turnouts for each, and folks have had a great time. And it's brought in new people to the church. A win/win situation.

Under the leadership of Beth Elwood, our Stewardship Committee participated in a 5-week training program in stewardship called Project Resource offered by the College for Bishops. The insights gathered will inform our future stewardship efforts.

Education

We were blessed to have several guest preachers this year: Mike Roberts and Joanne Kovac Roberts, the co-directors of ECCO; and Elder Toni McNeil from Faith in the Valley. Their insights and energy enriched us all. And hats off to Austin Bronson who preached on Youth Sunday.

Our Lenten series on *The Difficult Words of Jesus* by Amy Jill Levine generated lively conversation. Thanks to members of the Beyond Bias Team who assisted me in leading these sessions.

This fall our three-part series on the Doctrine of Discovery called "Columbus and Us: It's Complicated" brought in folks from Lodi, Stockton and Modesto. The guest speakers, David Stewart and Dr. Stephanie Beaver Guzman, were excellent. The program is being repeated this year during Lent at St. Anne's in Stockton.

Ruth Diekman has faithfully lead a scripture study series this year, too. Thank you, Ruth!

I was also busy this year leading new member classes. Phyllis Duarte was baptized in the fall. David Lujan was confirmed earlier this month, along with Austin and Ethan Bronson. And Katie Howard, John Richardson and the Salters family were received into the church in that same memorable service.

You can read more about education efforts by our Beyond Bias and Creation Care Teams in this booklet. Their efforts inform and inspire us to live more faithfully.

Community and Witness

St. John's continued its tradition of service to the Lodi community in a variety of ways, including our monthly Soul Kitchen, serving meals at the Salvation Army, and volunteering at the Lodi Access Center.

St. John's once again co-sponsored Lodi Pride Day organized by A New Lodi. Over 20 parishioners volunteered to staff the St. John's table during the event. Our participation has been a great opportunity to speak about the welcoming community at St. John's and has led to new folks joining the church!

Our Marriage Renewal Event for both gay and straight couples was promoted during Pride Day and we had a good response. Thanks to Andee Zetterbaum and the Beyond Bias Team for the idea and work to make it happen.

Last Spring, we also hosted the Camino de la Pascua organized by SJRAISE and the Diocesan Commissions on Racism and Creation Care. After their visit to the Lodi Access Center, the Caminantes, including Bishop David and Canon Anna, came to St. John's for a meal. We were delighted to have staff from the Access Center, Mayor Mikey Hothi, and other City government staff join us for the meal and presentation.

St. John's also joined with folks from many other congregations in the Love Lodi event in April. Volunteers from St. John's teamed up with staff from the City's Community Development Office to build planter boxes at the Lodi Access Center.

And around Christmas time we were sharing the joy of the season in many ways: a Coat Drive and an "adopt-a-family" with the Salvation Army, as well as hosting the "Families Helping Families" in cooperation with A New Lodi.

The best present for St. John's in 2023 was, of course, the arrival of Rev. Betsy as our new Rector. Her energy, enthusiasm, and deep faith are gifts to us all. We enter 2024 a growing congregation with outstanding leadership. Thanks be to God!

— Deacon Tom

SENIOR WARDEN

What a year it has been at St. Johns. If we take time to look back and think of all that we as a community have accomplished it's amazing. God has been good to us. A few thank you mentions are in order. Thank you God for bringing Deacon Tom to St Johns and for his continued commitment to our parish. The success we have had this past year is due in large part to Deacon Tom's tutelage. Hennie also deserves credit as she saw very little of her husband this year because he was helping guide our congregation to be the best we could be, while taking on the job as our spiritual leader and all that entails. God also heard our call for a dynamic and enthusiastic priest. We hit the jackpot when Reverend Betsy answered our call and joined us in November! Thank you to the 2022 vestry , under Beth Elwood and Kelly Olds who set up this year's vestry for success, luckily they also continued to be on the vestry.

The Annual Meeting last year was daunting, we had to discuss our financial woes, yet true to form, God and our members heard our concerns and jumped in. That meeting set the tone for the year, we were all in, all of us. God always provides, but I am continually heartened by the way our congregations steps up in big and small ways all the time.

Our church is not static, and continues to look for new ways to welcome and engage the broader Lodi community and we've done a good job. We, along with other churches in Lodi, signed up to support Family Promise an organization that works with churches to provide housing and meals for families that are unhoused. We started Bingo this year and it is now a quarterly event.

Don't forget February 4th is the next one. In October our own David Lujan hosted our Wine tasting event at his winery Pondl. Although we add new activities and ministries, our ongoing support of ongoing organizations is strong. The Salvation Army has been such a success that we have increased the number of times we serve a month. We support the Access Center with items collected throughout the year and some of our member's time and treasures. In April pilgrims walking the Camino De Pascua (which included some St. John folks), stopped at the Access center to hear all about it. In September and October Deacon Tom put on a 3-part series about Christopher Columbus and all that entails. The series Columbus and Us brought speakers into St Johns to talk about the history of Columbus Day. Soul Kitchen on the last Friday of the month continues to be a hit. We co-sponsored Lodi's Pride Day, our member participation at the Pride Day booth continues to multiply. Our willingness to look outward and share the love of Jesus has brought us immeasurable treasures with new members, greater name recognition and experiences that can't be measured. We've had a lot of high points, but unfortunately, we saw some of our most faithful and beloved members pass away. We are ever so grateful for their presence in our lives here at St. John's and pray that they rest in peace surrounded by God's love.

As the year comes to a close, we are sad to see Janie Williams and Paula James coming off the vestry. My deepest thanks to both for all their work this year. It really has been a joy. The vestry is well represented by members that mirror our congregation. I look forward to working with our newest members on continuing the positive momentum we've been experiencing.

On last thank you, we have accomplished a lot this year, and continue to look forward for new ways to encourage people to share and enjoy the love of St Johns. However, we are not the first or nor will we be the last to find new and old ways to grow our church and share God's love. I am mindful and very grateful to the members that have been with St. Johns for years, generations. We have a rich history of taking bold steps, think of moving the chapel! As we look forward to 2024 and beyond, be aware that we are here right now because of members and families that have gone before us. I invite all of you to build on that history and tradition.

It has been an honor and joy to serve as your Senior Warden this past year. Let's continue to let our light shine and bring light and hope to those around us.

Blessings, Margaret Meyers

JUNIOR WARDEN

We owe a great amount of gratitude and thanks to Aleathea Langone and to Ron Buck and their committee members for their faithful work to keep the grounds and buildings in great condition. Their work continues to demonstrate the love we all share for our buildings and grounds and for each other. Their service is one example of what each of us is called to do. THANK YOU Aleathea and Ron!

– Kelly Olds

ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

With "Rooted in Abundance" as the theme of our Fall Pledge Campaign for 2024, St. John's parishioners pledged in abundance. As a community we dug deep and tapped into the nourishing structure of faith and generosity shown to us by an extravagant God, a patient Shepherd, and a gathering Spirit who call us to extend our networks and share our gifts with the world.

With overwhelming gratitude, your vestry offers their sincere and humble THANKS to everyone for their new and continued generosity of TIME, TALENT, and TREASURE to St. John's year-round. Without your year-round stewardship, St. John's would not have a wonderful new, full-

time Rector – Reverend Betsy McElroy – joining us in partnership to do God’s work. Your ongoing support means we are able to operate and maintain our beautiful worship spaces and grounds, to have incredible church staff - Penny Wilson, Steve Weikle, and Kristy Wells, and the ability to expand St. John’s community outreach through existing ministries such as Creation Care and Beyond Bias, and resources to support and serve organizations such as The Salvation Army and Lodi’s Access Center ... and so much more.

With an abundance of generosity, hope and much love, together St. John’s will continue to thrive and grow in all that we do. For when we are rooted in abundance, we realize that our giving can be boundless as the Creation that gave birth to us all. Let us continue to share our gifts with others to the glory of God.

Faithfully yours,

Beth Elwood, Fall Pledge Campaign Chair

ADMINISTRATION

COUNTERS

On behalf of St. John's Church, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the following volunteers for counting, entering into computer and depositing in Bank of Stockton weekly: Sharon Farnsworth, Tom Gundershaug & Corky Kuykendall. We would like to welcome some new counters this year also: Stuart Kregel, Kelly Olds, Fred Hansen, Eric Goossens. A special thanks to Stephanie Pilcher for agreeing to assist Corky in the Asst. Treasurer role. Special Thanks to Sharon Farnsworth and Corky Kuykendall for picking up all the duties required after Chester George’s passing.

–Corky Kuykendall, Asst. Treasurer

WORSHIP

USHERS

Usher duties are very important. As greeters and handing out the morning bulletins, they are the first person(s) seen from the church, and they set the tone with a smile and a welcome. This smile and welcome are equally important to newcomers and our regulars! Thank you to all who helped with Ushering this past year, especially, David Diekman, Kelly Olds, Tom Gundershaug, Brad Huffman, Aleathea Langone, Debby Weberski, Paula James, Corky Kuykendall, Dick Williams and all who stepped in at the last minute. If you are interested in helping in this ministry, please contact Penny in the office.

--Penny Wilson

ACOLYTES

Acolyte, “follower,” or “one who helps” serves the Lord by helping the celebrant. Some duties are lighting and extinguishing candles, carrying the cross and torches, assisting the preparation of the altar for Eucharist, and bringing up the alms basins and gifts to the altar.

I would like to thank the following acolytes who served St. John’s this past year: Beth Elwood, Holly Wilson, Cheryl Nix, and Carlo Bagnasco. Also, thank you to Austin Bronson & Hannah Wilson who have moved on to college now.

Serving as an acolyte is a fun and easy way to be involved in the service and meet new people. We have adult acolytes as well as children acolytes, who are 9 years old or older. If you are interested in serving as an acolyte, please call me at 209-406-4183 or email me at syrobles@yahoo.com if you have questions or you are interested and we can set up a training.

–Stacey Robles Bagnasco

Additionally, Camera Acolyte is a very important part of our ministry team as it allows us to continue to live-stream and upload our services for more parishioners to view on Facebook and YouTube. A special “Thanks” to: Fran Bott, Austin Bronson, Holly Wilson, Corky Kuykendall and the Vestry Members who had to step in. And a fond welcome to Carlo Bagnasco for adding to this list of helpful camera acolytes! If you are interested in being trained for this ministry, please contact Penny in the office. Penny Wilson

SOUNDBOARD TECHNICIANS

Appreciation needs to be expressed to those who have served faithfully on the Sound Board during 2023. Thank you for your continued service: Steve Augusto, Perry George, Corky Kuykendall and Dick Williams. Unfortunately, we lost Chester this last year and he is missed greatly! Perry has stepped away from his duties, thank you for all your years of service. Thank you to our new comers, Stephanie Pilcher and Eric Goossens for your assistance with sound. Thank you Sara Olds for stepping in when needed.

–Penny Wilson

MUSIC MINISTRY

The St. John’s choir has been back to its regular schedule this year. We continued singing regular services throughout the spring and “casual choir” during the summer months during our traditional break from Wednesday rehearsals. In September we began regular Wednesday rehearsals with the time changing from 6:00 - 7:30 pm to 6:30 - 8:00 pm.

I am also happy to report that membership grew from 7 members last spring to 12 members currently, and I hope the growth continues because there is always room for more.

I look forward to working with our new rector and a new music committee in planning more music for our services beginning January 17, 2024.

–Steven Weikle, Music Director

ALTAR GUILD

The year 2023 was a year of change for St. John's. At the beginning of the year the church was adapting to the departure of Fr. Peter. The Rev. Linda Huggard and Deacon Tom were alternating services between the Eucharist and Morning Prayer, which meant Altar Guild was regularly changing the setup of the altar to adjust for the service.

In the Fall of this past year, the church was notified that a rector was being called to St. John's and we welcomed The Rev. Betsy McElroy. With the arrival of Rev. Betsy, St. John's returned to a schedule of Eucharists every Sunday.

Altar Guild has 10 loyal members setting up for Eucharist, weddings and funerals at St. John's. Thank you to Bunmi Olowoyeye, Aleatha Langone, Dee Mayfield, Paula Saubolle, Margaret Meyers, Cheryl Nix, Stuart Krengel, Jim Reeve, Peggy Moos and Anne Reeve. If there are any members of the St. John's community who would like to join this group, please contact either Anne Reeve or Peggy Moos. Service on the Altar Guild is most rewarding.

Respectfully Submitted,

—Peggy Moos and Anne Reeve

BREAD BAKERS

The Bread Bakers of St. John's are tasked with providing bread for all the services involving the Eucharist. This past year approximately 72 loaves of bread were baked and donated by the Bread Bakers. This is considerably less than the normal number of loaves due to the alternating of the Sunday Eucharist and Morning Prayer.

With the calling of Rev. Betsy McElroy to be the rector at St. John's, it is anticipated that the Bread Bakers will be contributing a more normal number of loaves. Each member bakes the bread on a monthly basis, providing at least 8 loaves of bread each month. Thank you to Carol Bower Foote, Paula Saubolle, Dawn Buck, Peggy Moos, and Anne Reeve.

Respectfully Submitted,

—Anne Reeve

MINISTER OF CEREMONIES AND LECTOR MINISTRIES

A Minister of Ceremonies "MC" is asked to assist the priest by making sure all our "players" are in place for the Sunday Service. If we are missing any personnel, they are asked to make sure it is filled. They also read the Prayers of the People. This person also directs questions prior to the service to the right person i.e., vestry person. A Lector is a lay person that comes from the pews to read the first two readings of the service. Thank you to all who participated in these ministries including Margaret Meyers, Anne Reeve, Stacey Bagnasco, Bob Gorczyca, Beth Elwood, Karen Olds, Carol Foote, Rosemary Cress, Charlene Martin, Hennie Van Konynenburg, Dave Shoemaker & Deddy Weberski.

— Penny Wilson

DESIGNERS' GUILD

Thank you to all your hard-working Designers Guild members, Kathy Girard, Barbara Warburton, Ejae Perry, Mandi Sager, Janie Williams, Allison Dooley and Dick Williams (who is always on call!). We are a small and mighty crew that offers a variety of beautiful and unique floral designs. It is always a pleasure to serve and design for special occasions such as weddings, funerals, holidays, and Sunday services. We look forward to the upcoming year and sharing our talents with you. New members ALWAYS welcome and NEEDED!

– Allison Dooley and Janie Williams

PASTORAL CARE

COLUMBARIUM MINISTRY

A Columbarium is a sacred place where the cremains of the deceased are inurned in a niche. At St. John's, we offer niches in the buttresses of our church, the Historic Chapel, and the Memorial Wall outside the Historic Chapel. Additionally, we offer a final resting place in the ground of our Memorial Rose Garden. Please contact Karen Olds with any questions or for purchase information.

– Karen Olds

EUCCHARISTIC VISITORS

In 2023, we were able to revive the Eucharistic Visitor Ministry. Members of this ministry take communion to parishioners who are unable to come to church on behalf of the entire congregation. Each Sunday, we say a prayer to send the Eucharistic Visitors out from the congregation to extend the love of Christ to those who want communion brought to them. Members of this ministry follow the service of "Communion Under Special Circumstances" as printed in the Book of Common Prayer. No special training or license is required to become a Eucharistic Visitor. Please contact Deacon Tom or Karen Olds if you are interested in joining this ministry.

– Deacon Tom

INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY

During the last year, the prayer concerns of our parish continued to be shared between our prayer coordinator and intercessors group via email and the St. John's Intercessors private Facebook page as requests were made. World In Prayer, a separate ministry of this church and Andee Zetterbaum, was distributed separately. A prayer, blessing, hymn, or poem was often included in the eMail and Facebook communication.

Beginning in 2024, we will again publish a weekly list via eMail with World In Prayer incorporated to our Intercessors gmail group. It may also be offered on the Ministry Table. Interim prayer requests will continue to be published via eMail and on Facebook as they are made. All members of the parish are invited to offer prayers for those listed. We have 68 intercessors on our intercessor group Mail list, some of whom no longer live in Lodi, and more who respond on Facebook.

Names are added to the prayer list according to the requests of parishioners submitted to the prayer coordinator via email, the church office, Intercessors private Facebook page, or phone. The

persons for which we pray are primarily current or past parishioners, and friends, family, or colleagues of parishioner families. Our lists average 50-65 individual or family names, 24 of which are shut ins, clergy, or persons in the active military.

Prayers for healing, courage, comfort, and support are requested for those in medical or emotional crisis; entering surgery, treatment, or rehab; facing a time of great uncertainty or trial. We pray for those who have died and their families, those who are in transition, as well as those who are awaiting the arrival of a new family member. We offer prayers for our church leaders and those who serve in the military. We celebrate with thanksgiving those who have recovered, passed through a time of trial, surgery, illness, or injury, and for the birth or adoption of a child. We also offer general prayers. This includes first responders and those impacted by natural disasters and those in harm's way in the areas of unrest or impacted by massive acts of violence in the US and overseas. We have added prayers for our country and its leaders. We may add new categories as the need arises or at special times of the year.

Countless requests have been made over the past year. Those who have felt the power of being supported in prayer have expressed deep appreciation for the time we take to invite God's healing love and guiding presence into their lives.. Those who pray are also drawn closer to God and each other. Thank you to all those who offer prayers in response to these requests.

Our policy is to retain names for healing and sustaining prayers for up to 60 days unless we are asked to keep them on the list for another period. Prayers for those who have died are usually retained for 30 days and celebrations of thanksgiving for 2 weeks. Parishioners are requested to contact Carol as soon as a name can be removed from the list or moved to prayers of thanksgiving prior to removal.

If you wish to be on the Intercessors' group eMail, please contact the prayer coordinator. If you or someone important to you is in need of prayer, the preferred ways to add a name to the prayer list are:

1) Call (or text to cell) coordinator Carol Bower Foote at 707-374-2124 (cell 916-897-0503) for time-sensitive, emergency requests. Contact cell if no answer at home.

2) Email st.johnsprayerlist@gmail.com (email is usually checked for new requests once daily) for non-urgent, non time-sensitive requests, or leave a voicemail.

3) Call the church office at 209-339-3381

Thank you ALL for your requests and prayers on behalf of those on our list.

– Carol Bower Foote, Prayer Coordinator

WORLD IN PRAYER

World In Prayer is probably one of the oldest and least well-known ministries of St. John's. Started in 2001 by St. John's member Andee Zetterbaum, www.worldinprayer.org provides a weekly summary of international news with accompanying prayers. The team that takes turns writing and posting the weekly prayers is comprised of 12-15 members, from several Christian denominations and two continents. In addition to those who access the prayers on the website, approximately 3,500 people receive them free by email. At St. John's, the prayers are appended to our weekly internal prayer list. In our increasingly fragmented and antagonistic world, it has become both more challenging and more essential to pray for all peoples in all nations, recognizing and honoring all as beloved children of God. We are blessed to be able to carry on this ministry.

– Andee Zetterbaum

MEMORIAL ROSE GARDEN

First of all, Thank you to Steve & Jan Manildi for the time spent each week deadheading, watering, weeding as well as help with the garbage cans. If I have missed anyone, thank you for your help. If you are interested in helping, please contact the office.

– Penny Wilson

FORMATION FOR ALL AGES

ONE ROOM SUNDAY SCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN CLASS AND NURSERY

2023 has been a challenging year in many ways as we all realize. Never the less, lessons and activities have been planned and prepared for each Sunday morning during 2023. Generally, the children's lesson corresponded to the Bible readings offered in church for that week. Parents have been encouraged to have children join them during the Communion Service.

The faithful teachers during 2023 have been Ruth Diekman, Peggy Moos, and Janie Williams. We would welcome assistance in various ways by others interested in working with St. John's children.

Unfortunately Child Care has not been offered. However, parents are welcome to use the facilities for nursery care when needed or appropriate.

– Ruth Diekman

PEOPLE OF FAITH STUDY GROUP

This group met on various Wednesday mornings, (twice a month) prior to Noon Day Prayer in the Chapel, during 2023. Our guide for this study was "Journey Through Luke", by Mike Raiter. We are grateful for the insights gained and the fellowship enjoyed, while reading through Luke.

Our current plan for 2024 is to select a new topic when we meet again on Wednesday morning, January 10, 2024. All are welcome to participate with this group, as they are able.

– Ruth Diekman

PARISH LIFE

COFFEE HOUR

Hosting coffee hour is a great way to get to know many other people and for them to know you. It is easy and fun to buddy up with someone to share the job! Thank you to all who hosted coffee hours for 2023. It is wonderful being able to gather together with friends. If you are interested in hosting a coffee hour, please contact the office or see the signup sheet on the hospitality table.

—Penny Wilson

GREG WILSON MEN'S BBQ GROUP

Our men's social dinner group returned to a more normal schedule in 2023 after the COVID pandemic. Our primary function is fellowship. We have also supported other ministries at St. John's financially and with manpower. We usually meet six times per year in the months of January, March, May, July September and November at 5:00 pm at the church. The BBQ dates are sometimes altered due to our facility use schedule. Our usual attendance has grown to about 15-20 men. We ask for a \$5.00 per person donation towards the cost of the main course, which is supplemented by side dishes provided by attendees.

Generally, in the Spring, we host the women of St. John's in thanks for all their efforts supporting St. John's. Watch the monthly newsletters and weekly bulletins for the our schedule. If you plan on attending, please get your name on the sign-up sheet on the Ministry Table. You can contact Dick Williams or John Ledbetter with your questions!

—John Ledbetter

OUTREACH

CREATION CARE

This past year St. John's Creation Care Team continued its efforts to promote environmental stewardship in keeping with the Episcopal Church's stated goal: to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Our activities included the following:

Quarterly **Creation Care Sundays** with liturgy and sermon focusing on environmental concerns:

Ongoing **recycling** of glass, aluminum, and plastic bags;

Research into the new state law about separating **organic waste** from trash and how best to implement it at church;

Continued replacement of **lightbulbs** in our sanctuary with energy-efficient LED bulbs (thanks to Steve Augusto);

Collection of data on our church's **energy and water consumption** in an Energy Star online tool, with hopes of completing an energy audit;

In February, a presentation about Antarctica and the recent cruise taken by Deacon Tom and Hennie and a talk about past exploration of the region by Pete Kregel;

In April, Earth Day Sunday with a display of eco-friendly products and a survey to learn about how members are changing habits to benefit the earth, which included a raffle of a bio-waste bin;

In May, participation in the dinner/reception for the diocese's Camino de la Pascua participants and a display table showing our past activities

In July, a showing of Dr. Katharine Hayhoe's online talk to our team on how better to communicate our concerns about environmental issues to family and friends;

In September, during the ecumenical Season of Creation, a talk by Jim Brunner from the California Native Plant Society on the many benefits of converting to native plants in the garden;

In October, an in-person blessing of the animals on Sunday afternoon at St. John's;

In November, a picnic at Jessie's Grove after church, to which all were invited to learn about a local destination and enjoy sitting at picnic tables and eating under the old oak trees.

In the coming year, we hope to continue promoting care of the earth and to add more advocacy of beneficial public policies. We invite anyone who would like to join the Creation Care Team to contact one of our members: Deacon Tom, Charlene Martin, Barbara Krengel, Elaine Sager, Steve Augusto, or Hennie Van Konynenburg.

– Hennie Van Konynenburg

BEYOND BIAS COMMITTEE

In August 2020, ten parishioners embarked on a 9 month journey with Deacon Tom Hampson to participate in the Sacred Ground series, a film-based dialogue on race and faith, offered by the Episcopal Church. The team met about every 3 weeks in person or on ZOOM over 10 program sessions. The group had the opportunity to meet with representatives from other non-profits and/or faith-based groups working toward social, economic, and legal justice for all. These groups include Faith In the Valley, A New Lodi, Breakthrough Project for Social Justice, SJRAISE (Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin (EDSJ) Immigration Commission), and the EDSJ AntiRacism Commission. After the series ended, the group made the decision to continue to meet and discern what God was calling us to do at St. Johns as a follow-up to our study. In 2022, we developed our mission statement of purpose to guide our activities and a new name for the group. Our ministry, reviewed with our Vestry, is now known as the Beyond Bias Team. We continued to meet about every 4-6 weeks in 2023.

We reviewed and honed our Mission statement in early 2023 and have shared that with you below. During this past year, we have also spearheaded and organized St. John's participation with a booth in Lodi Pride 2023. We led or participated in book/study programs at St. John's including "The Difficult Words of Jesus" , "The Four Vision Quests of Jesus" (from an indigenous perspective) in the Spring, and "The Doctrine of Discovery" in the Fall. One of our members participated in the Camino de la Pasqua sponsored by the Diocese and a number of our team attended the pilgrims' visit to the Lodi Access Center for homeless and the dinner and program held at St. Johns afterwards. Andee Zetterbaum of our team organized the Marriage Vow Renewal event (inclusive for ALL couples) in July. Charlene Martin of our team organized the Blue Christmas service in December. We helped out with the Intercultural Food Truck event in the Fall, including hosting a "tour" of our church and summary of how we worship and what we value. We had discussions related how to better publicize and 'get the word out' about what St. John's is doing and working to represent, including more effective use of social media. Also about how to better follow up on events where we collect information from people who might have an interest in learning more about St. John's.

In addition to events we formally participated in as a team, various members of our group shared their experiences and readings as a result of individual participation in on-line groups or other events related to inclusion and multi-cultural awareness throughout the year.

Looking forward to 2024, we are planning to participate in Lodi Pride Day and hold another Marriage Vow Renewal event as well as Blue Christmas. We are also working on developing a gender awareness/pronoun workshop for our parish in April as part of being more inclusive to members of the LGBTQ+ community. We are exploring new study programs and organizing a “field day” to visit a place or places of interest related to the area’s indigenous history. With the inclusion of Reverend Betsy, we continue to refine our mission and work toward creating a safe space at St. John’s for all to worship and explore their faith and what it calls us to be.

The Sacred Ground series has added a new Session 11 and reworked Session 10; we are discerning if and how we want to pursue these. The series is also now approved to offer outside the Episcopal Church so, with allies, we are looking at if, how, and where to invite participation in a new Sacred Ground group within and outside our parish.

We thank Hennie Van Konyenburg for being our scribe this past year. You are invited to speak with any of the currently active members including Deacon Tom, Andee Zetterbaum, Hennie Van Konyenburg, Charlene Martin, and Carol Foote. Brad Huffman was hugely instrumental in planning our participation in Pride Day, and we are coordinating with Kelly Olds of the Outreach Ministry. Our 2023 Beyond Bias Team Mission Statement is listed below:

Our baptismal vows call us to seek and serve Christ in all persons, and respect the dignity of every human being. We are called to work with others to stand against bias that results in exclusion, marginalization, and injustice.

The role of the Beyond Bias Team is to discern and embody a vision of what Beloved Community could be, and to invite others to join us.

We will do this by:

- Making space to become aware of and acknowledge the ways we have individually and systemically failed to do this, and their roots past and present.
- Engaging our congregation, making recommendations to our church leaders, making use of available educational and training resources, and fostering relationships with others in our community.
- Finding common ground and celebrating, valuing, and respecting differences among God’s children

-Submitted by, Carol Foote, 2023 Facilitator

SALVATION ARMY

In 2019, St. John’s began serving dinner at the Salvation Army’s Hope Harbor twice a month. As of January 2023, we are now serving dinner four times a month: first Monday, second Tuesday, second Saturday, and fourth Tuesday. Our volunteer base has grown to include many friends outside the parish and all are welcome. Every volunteer leaves with a smile on their face feeling as if they have received far more than they have given. Please call Kelly or Karen Olds if you are interested in joining this ministry.

– Karen Olds

Resolution on Repudiation on the Doctrine of Discovery

RESOLVED, that the Diocese commit to begin every meeting and gathering in the diocese, its parishes, missions and institutions, with a land acknowledgement, knowing that it is but one step towards recognizing the original inhabitants of this place called The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin. A land acknowledgement is a critical step towards working with native communities to secure meaningful partnership and inclusion in the stewardship and protection of their cultural resources and homelands.

RESOLVED, that the Office of the Bishop, in consultation with the Diocesan Council, develop a reporting tool for clergy and wardens of congregations and diocesan institutions to track our collective progress towards the goals and commitments outlined in this resolution.

[Language adopted by St. John's Vestry on Dec. 13, 2023: *St. John's acknowledges and honors the Yokut and Miwok people[s] upon whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as the resilience and strength of all our indigenous siblings around the world.*]

Resolution on Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of the Philadelphia 11

RESOLVED, that July 29, 2024 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Philadelphia 11 that the churches within Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin are encouraged to celebrate with Eucharist, prayers, celebrations and opportunities to bring attention to the significant ministry women have played through the ages, as well as today, and their hopes for a more empowered and engaged future;

Resolution on Diocesan-wide Recognition and Support of the work of Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD)

RESOLVED, that Parishes and Missions explore the ERD, Abundant Life Garden Project curriculum which is a children's faith formation program that can be expanded into a multigenerational program for worship and home experiences;

RESOLVED, that as encouraged by a 2009 General Convention Resolution, the parishes and missions of EDSJ annually remember and support ERD during the season of Lent through education, prayer and special offerings.

* The complete text of the Resolutions and other business of the 2023 Diocesan Convention can be found at <https://www.diosanjoaquin.org/diocesan-convention>

CHURCH STAFF

Rector:

The Rev. Betsy McElroy

Deacon:

The Rev. Deacon Tom Hampson

Parish Administrator:

Penny Wilson

Choir Director:

Steven Weikle

Pianist/Organist:

Kristy Wells

Nursery Caregiver:

None at this time.

Sexton:

Camerina Ibarra

2023 Vestry Members

Margaret Meyers, Senior Warden

Kelly Olds, Junior Warden

Fran Bott, Clerk

Stacey Bagnasco

Beth Elwood

Paula James

Charlene Martin

Debby Weberski

Janie Williams

Andee Zetterbaum

The Rev. Betsy McElroy, Rector

Worship: Sundays at 9:30 am

Office Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Thursday

1055 S. Lower Sacramento Road, Lodi, California 95242

209.369.3381 (voice)

stjohnslodi@sbcglobal.net † www.stjohnsoflodi.org