



A SERVICE OF  
*Light*

Sunday, December 31, 2023

**10 A.M. WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

All Are Welcome

We are so glad you joined us for the Service of Light and Reflection where we will consider this past year and prepare our hearts and lives for 2024.

**STJOHNSBR.ORG | @STJOHNSBR**

*Whether you are a guest or member, we invite you to scan the QR code to register your attendance so we know you're here and we can get to know you better.*



# WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## OUR MISSION

We are a Christian community called to share our gifts through worship, witness and service so that others will know God and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

## OUR VISION

Our church will be known as a center for feeding people spiritually and physically in our community.

## OUR CORE VALUES

We believe the following guiding principles make us a fruitful and spiritually intentional church:

- Fellowship: A sense of family, hospitality, and belonging to an open, accepting, and nurturing community.
- Caring: Loving response to needs of all people through empathy and compassion.
- Mission: giving of ourselves to meet and serve the needs of all others by faithful witness through our actions, servanthood and way of living.
- Spiritual Growth: Studying, understanding and growing in the word of God by Christ-centered prayer, worship and service through discipleship in action.

## OUR CONTACT INFO

230 Renee Drive | Baton Rouge, LA 70810

office@stjohnsbr.org | 225-766-4594 | stjohnsbr.org | @stjohnsbr

Office Hours: Monday thru Thursday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. - noon



**ST. JOHN'S**  
United Methodist Church

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*Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.*

# GUEST INFORMATION

Welcome to worship! We are glad you've joined us and hope you feel at home here. Whoever you are, wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome. Our ushers are happy to assist you in anyway. If you are feeling cold, shawls are available in a basket in front of the media desk in the back of the sanctuary. Restrooms are in the Narthex.

You are invited to participate in any of our activities, and to become a part of this community of faith and love.

*Thank you for being here.*

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

We fully welcome and love engaging children in worship! We include a special Children's Moment each Sunday.

- **The St. John's Prayground** is located in the front of the sanctuary. This is a place for children and their families to worship together, allowing children to more fully participate in the service. More details about the Prayground may be found on our website.
- A staffed **nursery** for infants through preschool is open every Sunday morning and is located next door in our Education/Administration building.
- **Changing tables** are located in the restrooms in the back of the sanctuary and in our nursery.
- Children are welcome to receive **Holy Communion**, which is served weekly at 8:30 a.m. and on the first Sunday of the month at 11 a.m. Our communion elements are bread and grape juice. Gluten-free elements are also available.
- **Sunday School** is offered for children starting at age 18 months through 12th grade from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

*Any questions? Ushers are glad to assist you.*

## ST JOHN'S CLERGY AND STAFF

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn  
*Lead Pastor*  
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Connor Dean  
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Bill Putzig  
*Custodian*  
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Brooklyn Hays  
*Nursery Worker*

# New Year's Eve Service of Light

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable.*

**Bold** indicates congregational response.

Please scan the QR Code to register your attendance.



## Gathering With the Angels

### Words of Welcome

Natalie Cooper

### \*Gathering Carol

*Angels From the Realms of Glory*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 220, vs. 1 - 4

### \*Call to Worship

Natalie Cooper

What a past year this has been!

**So much has happened;  
some wonderful and some very challenging.**

In all of this, God journeyed with us, guiding, healing,  
comforting, and rejoicing.

**We are filled with gratitude for God's presence with us.**

Today we are on the precipice of a new year.

**In all that is to come, we commit to trusting in God's love.**

Come and worship our newborn King – Jesus Christ,  
who leads us into the future.

**Together, we walk into this future as a faithful community of  
generosity, compassion, and joyfulness.**

### \*Our Sung Response

*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 240, vs. 1

### Lighting of the Advent Candles & Christ Candle

Connor Dean,  
Gabe Guillory

Because injustice and despair threaten to overwhelm us,

**We pray and will strive for hope.**

*The Candle of Hope is lit.*

Because hatred is still so strong, and because people  
all over the world are suffering,

**We pray and will share God's love.**

*The Candle of Love is lit.*

Because grief and loss weigh so heavily,

**We pray and will spread joy.**

*The Candle of Joy is lit.*

Because so many swords have not yet been beaten  
into plowshares,

**We pray and will work for peace.**

*The Candle of Peace is lit.*

God has come to us as a child.

**Christ is present in our world.**

*The Christ Candle is lit.*

Let us pray

**O God,**

**May the light and the fire from these candles  
burn away everything that is preventing the God of hope  
and peace and joy and love from being born among us.**

**Continue to guide us, comfort us,  
protect us, and tend to us**

**in all seasons and all times,**

**reminding us that,**

**by day and by night,**

**in the light and in the darkness,**

**you are with us Jesus Christ,**

**the Light of the World. Amen.**

## Candle Song

*Jesus, Name Above All Names*  
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2071

# *Expanding Our Understanding*

## A Reading From the Psalms

Psalm 48

## Children's Moment

Natalie Cooper

## Prayer for Illumination

Connor Dean

**Holy One,**

**We bring to you this day our past -  
with all that has happened in our lives,  
our hopes and our dreams,  
our successes and our failures,  
our gains and our losses.**

**We bring to you our present -  
lives filled with exhaustion, wonder, fear, concern.**

**We come to you with hearts open to receive your word for us,  
for the future.**

**We want to be part of your new heaven and earth,  
to serve you by serving others.**

**Speak to us, heal us, teach us, lead us,  
for we ask these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.**

**Song**

*In His Time*

The Faith We Sing Songbook 2203, vs. 1

*New Year's Eve Candle Lighting*

**Lights for the Past Year**

Natalie Cooper, Connor Dean

**First Candle**

We light this first candle remembering all who  
were baptized this past year,  
were confirmed in the faith,  
and who joined the church.

**This light shines so that all may continue  
to grow in their walk of faith.**

*The first candle is lit.*

**Candle Song**

*Away In a Manger*

The United Methodist Hymnal 217, vs. 3

**Second Candle**

We light this second candle remembering all those who have  
experienced grief and loss in their personal lives:  
the death of a loved one,  
the ending of a significant relationship,  
the loss of employment...

**This light shines for their continuing comfort and support.**

*The second candle is lit.*

**Candle Song**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

The United Methodist Hymnal 221, vs. 1

**Third Candle**

We light this third candle remembering all those who have shared in  
ministry in this place:

Clergy and lay leaders alike;  
our staff and ministry team leaders;  
musicians and tech team;  
those who served in congregational care;  
and those who reminded us of our wider community;  
those who visited hospitals, cooked meals or offered transport;  
servants in the Shepherd's Market;

teachers and leaders of Bible Studies and small groups;  
the faithful who serve in children and youth ministries...

**This light shines with the compassion of Jesus, as we strive  
to faithfully serve in his name.**

*The third candle is lit.*

### **Candle Song**

*Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 224, vs. 3

### **Fourth Candle**

We light this fourth candle remembering all those who have visited  
St. John's in recent times and decided to call this place, "home."

**This light shines in order that we continue to acknowledge  
and celebrate the joy of community and our call to hospitality.**

*The fourth candle is lit.*

### **Candle Song**

*Blest Be the Tie that Binds*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 557, vs. 1

### **Fifth Candle**

We light this fifth candle mindful of those who have called us to take  
risks in our walk of faith:

to create an inclusive and safe, open and honest church and  
community where all people are treated with dignity and seen as  
beloved children of God's.

**This light shines as a symbol of hope in the midst of both  
challenge and comfort.**

*The fifth candle is lit.*

### **Candle Song**

*I Want to Walk As a Child of the Light*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 206, vs. 1

### **Sixth Candle**

We light this sixth candle having each and everyone of us in mind,  
bearing each other in strengths and weaknesses, anxieties and hopes.

**This light shines on our personal pathway – both the places we  
welcomed and the places we did not want to go.**

**It will continue to shine for each and every one of us on the new  
pathways we will tread.**

*The sixth candle is lit.*

### **Candle Song**

*Blest Be the Tie That Binds*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 557, vs. 3

## Seventh Candle

We light this seventh candle for the countless blessings experienced this year.

Let us pause a moment in reflection and share our gratitude with God.

We welcome you to share something you are most thankful for from this past year.

*Joys and thanksgivings are shared aloud.*

## Candle Song

*Give Thanks*  
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2036

# *Releasing and Receiving*

## Invitation to Confession

Natalie Cooper

## Prayer of Confession

**O God, you are slow to anger and swift to have mercy;  
Forgive us when we treat time as a commodity or an enemy,  
when we abuse your gift of time.**

**In our fastness and our slowness,  
help us to keep pace with you.**

**Free us to live in your time, a new time,  
in which there is a time for everything under heaven,  
and slow is not too slow, and fast is not too fast.**

**Transform us into people who see time as a gift and a friend,  
who live as if we have time,  
because we know that your time will never cease.**

**Through Jesus we pray, Amen.**

## Words of Forgiveness and Grace

God is making all things new.

The past is over and done.

It taught us many lessons.

But God is the God of the future,  
new opportunities, new hopes,  
new dreams, renewed vision.

**God dwells with us to be our God.**

**We are not alone.**

**Thanks be to God.**

## \*Sharing the Love and Peace of Christ



# New Year's Candle Lighting

## Lights for the Future

Natalie Cooper, Connor Dean

We light this candle for 2024 - for the new year that dawns tomorrow.  
May it be a time of deep spiritual growth for us,  
a time for welcoming God's gifts and graces,  
a time for forgiving freely and loving unconditionally,  
a time for growing in virtue and goodness,  
a time that brings us closer to God and closer to one another.  
**This light shines on our journey forward into the new year.**

*The candle is lit.*

## Candle Reflection Time

*At this time, we invite you to come light a candle as a prayer intention for your journey into the new year. You may spend time in prayer at the kneeler rail and at your seat.*

## Prayer for the New Year

Natalie Cooper

**Eternal God,**  
you call us to ventures  
of which we cannot see the ending,  
on paths yet trodden,  
through perils unknown.  
Give us faith to go out with courage,  
not knowing where we go,  
but trusting that your hand is leading us,  
and your love supporting us.  
Following the way of Jesus, we pray now in his words ...

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.

# Responding to the Light

## Offering Our Tithes and Gifts to God

*We appreciate your generosity.  
Each gift enables us to be a blessing in our community.  
You may give online by scanning the QR Code  
or navigate to [stjohnsbr.org/give](http://stjohnsbr.org/give).*



## \*Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise God, all creatures here below:  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

## Prayer of Commitment

Connor Dean

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

**I am no longer my own, but thine.  
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,  
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.  
Let me be full, let me be empty.  
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.  
I freely and heartily yield all things  
to thy pleasure and disposal.  
And now, O glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.  
And the covenant which I have made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

# Blessing and Sending Forth

## Call to Action

Connor Dean

## \*Hymn of Discipleship

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 218, vs. 1, 3, & 4

## \*Benediction

Natalie Cooper

Go from this place to bring hope, love, joy and peace to all you meet.  
And remember that throughout time and in every season,  
God is always with you.  
**Amen.**

# *Worship Notes*

## **FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR**

The flowers on the altar are in celebration of Dale and Barbara Biggs 50 years of marriage on December 23. Congratulations, Dale and Barbara!

## **USHERS**

Ushers for today's worship service are Chris and Darren Stubbs.

# Announcements

## HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The church office will be closed through Tuesday, January 2. Regular office hours will resume Wednesday, January 3 at 9 a.m.

**The Shepherd's Market** will be closed until Thursday, January 4 when regular shopping hours will resume at 8 a.m.

## STAR WORD AND EPIPHANY SUNDAY

On Epiphany Sunday, January 7, we will receive a Star Word during worship as a gift from God and a guide in the new year. Inspired by the Magi following the star to Jesus, selecting a star word to meditate on throughout the year can deepen your self-reflection and prayer practices. We will hear testimonies from members of our congregation that morning who have found great meaning and significance to their Star Word this year. Join us in this spiritual discipline and for our first worship service of the new year.

## END OF YEAR GIVING

We would like to close the year with the joyful feeling of having met all our financial obligations, and to begin next year with renewed hope and confidence. We can do that with your help. As a church, we rely on strong December offerings, and this year is no different. **In this season of gift giving, we invite you to make a special year-end gift to the church.** Through your gifts, vital ministries of St. John's can continue.

Contributions can be made online ([stjohnsbr.org/give](http://stjohnsbr.org/give)), by mail, or during worship. We also accept stocks, bonds, securities, IRA charitable rollovers, and RMDs. Mailed contributions must be postmarked by December 31 to receive contribution credit for 2023. Online giving can be made until midnight on December 31. If you have any questions, please contact LeAnn Davis in the office at 225-766-4594 or via email at [leannDavis@stjohnsbr.org](mailto:leannDavis@stjohnsbr.org).

## THANK YOU FROM ST. JOHN'S STAFF

Heartfelt thanks go out to St. John's, from The Staff, for their generous gift of the love offering we received. The show of appreciation we receive all year makes this a great place to work for all of you.

## 2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN "CALLED TO COMMUNITY"

Thank you to those who have made a pledge for 2024. We celebrate the following:

- **105** individuals & families have pledged a total of **\$515,688**, so far.
- **57** households have increased their pledge for next year.
- **15** are first time pledged givers.

If you have not yet pledged, please consider joining your fellow St. John's family members who have increased their pledge from this year to next. Our 2024 budget includes a Spirit-led 13-14% increase, and your increased pledge will get us closer to our goal. You can complete a pledge card and turn it in during the offering or to the church office, or you can pledge online at: [stjohnsbr.org/pledge-2024](http://stjohnsbr.org/pledge-2024).

## GROCERY BAG SUNDAY JANUARY 7

Pick up a yellow bag as you leave worship today - Grocery Bag Sunday is January 7. If you are able, please add some items to your buggy and bring them back with you to worship on the 7th. Some items we are running low on are peanut butter, jelly, condiments, cereal, rice (small bags, please), drinks, and snacks.

## 2024 FLOWER CHART

The 2024 Flower Chart is up in the hallway of the Admin/Education Building. Almost the whole year is available to select a Sunday to honor or remember someone by putting flowers on the altar. Heroman's on Staring Lane has a key to the Sanctuary and will deliver your flowers to the church. Call the office for more information.

# Youth & Children's Ministries

## **SUNDAY MORNING CAFE TIME AND SUNDAY SCHOOL**

9:30-9:50 Cafe time for youth & children (K-12th) in Room 202

9:50-10:50 Children's & Youth Sunday School time

**NOTE: There will be no Sunday School on December 31. Our regular Sunday morning schedule resumes January 7.**

## **NEW YEAR'S EVE LOCK IN**

The St. John's youth group is hosting a lock-in for United Methodist Youth in and around Baton Rouge on **Sunday, December 31 beginning at 6 p.m. and ending Monday, January 1 at 8 a.m.** There is a \$10 registration/participation fee for the lock-in. The fee is due by Sunday, December 17. One youth group all the way from Amite will be joining us as well!

## **YOUTH PROGRAMMING FOR SPRING SEMESTER**

The St. John's youth group will start gathering on the first Sundays of each month from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m., beginning January 7, 2024. Throughout the spring semester, we will meet at the homes of different church members for intimate small group Bible Study, games, crafts, or other activities.

St. John's youth will also meet on the 3rd Wednesdays of each month throughout the spring semester. These Wednesday gatherings will be called "Wednesday Night Live" (or WNL for short).

Households with youth students will receive monthly calendars by mail to stay connected on upcoming events.

## **C.H.A.O.S. DATES FOR 2024**

**January 28, 4 p.m.** Join us for a family movie night in the Family Life Center. We will enjoy a hot cocoa bar as well! If you have any questions, please reach out to Connor.

**February 25, 4 - 6 p.m.** Bring your leftover Mardi Gras beads and join us for a craft night using upcycled beads! Dinner will be included.

**March 23, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.** St. John's UMC is hosting our annual Bunny Breakfast celebration - complete with pancakes, crafts, games, and an egg hunt. You won't want to miss out on this!

**April 28, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.** Save the date for this event... More info coming soon!

# *This Week at St. John's*

## **Sunday, December 31**

10:00 a.m. Worship Service, Sanctuary

6:00 p.m. Youth Lock-in FLC

## **Monday, January 1, 2024**

**THE SHEPHERD'S MARKET CLOSED**

**THE CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED**

6:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

## **Tuesday, January 2**

**THE SHEPHERD'S MARKET CLOSED**

**THE CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED**

6:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

## **Wednesday, January 3**

7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC

6:30 p.m. Women's AA Meeting, FLC-C

## **Thursday, January 4**

8:00 a.m. The Shepherd's Market

5:00 p.m. River City Quilt Guild, FLC

## **Friday, January 5**

6:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group,  
Founders' Parlor

7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC

## **Saturday, January 6**

12:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-C

7:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC

\*Family Life Center