

Advent

An invitation to *begin again*



Sunday, December 1, 2024
8:30 a.m. Worship Celebration

All Are Welcome

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. On this first Sunday of Advent, let us begin where God begins, with blessedness - ours and others. The prophet Isaiah declares that we are claimed by a God who calls our name. We are a blessing because we belong to God. When blessedness is our beginning, we begin to see the world – and others – through the eyes of a God who says: “You are precious in my sight” (Isaiah 43:4).

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.



stjohnsbr.org | @stjohnsbr | 230 Renee Drive Baton Rouge, LA 70810
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Welcome to St. John's United Methodist Church

GUEST INFORMATION

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. Restrooms are in the Narthex, located in the back of the Sanctuary.

Please take home a copy of our Welcome Brochure located in the Narthex or view it online at: stjohnsbr.org/welcome-brochure.

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.

St. John's Clergy and Staff

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn
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Cheryl Roubique
Nursery Coordinator

The Celebration of the Gospel

**Please stand as you are comfortable.*

Bold indicates congregational response.

Please scan the QR Code to register your attendance.



Prelude

Words of Welcome

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn

*Advent Affirmation

In our holy book, God says,
“Do not be afraid.”
“I have called you by name.”
“I will be with you.”
“You are precious and honored in my sight.”
At the beginning of the Advent season,
at the start of this week,
may we wrap ourselves in these words of affirmation.
May we begin again.
Let us worship our Holy God!

*Songs of Praise

Hail to the Lord's Anointed
The United Methodist Hymnal 203, vs. 1

He Came Down
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2085

Lighting the Candle of Hope

Laura and Stuart Hunt

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again?
Where do we start?

Let us begin with the good news!

Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing,
loved by a gracious God.

Let us begin with music and singing!
Let us begin with warmth and welcome.
Let us begin with hope.

Yes, let us begin with hope.

The candle of Hope is lit.

Today we light the candle of hope
to shine a light in a worn and weary world.
May this be our foundation.

May this be our fresh start.

May this be our new beginning.

May hope flow forth from here. Amen!

Advent Wreath Song

Sung to the tune of *Breathe on Me, Breath of God*

Kindle this flame of hope.
May it burn bright and true.
Lighting the way that is of God,
the journey we pursue.

Children's Moment

Pastor Lane

Prayer for Illumination

Margaret Sprunger

God of blessings,

**Once again, we find ourselves at the beginning of the month,
at the beginning of this Advent season,
at the beginning of this new day,
bringing our hearts to you.**

Meet us here, and offer your words of blessing.

With hope and curiosity, we listen.

With hope and curiosity, we dare to begin again.

Amen.

Words of Wisdom

Isaiah 43:1-7

For the Word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God.

Witness to the Word

"Born a Blessing"

Pastor Lane

*Hymn

This is a Day of New Beginnings
The United Methodist Hymnal 383, vs. 1, 2, & 4

*Sharing the Love and Peace of Christ

Offering Our Tithes and Gifts to God

Blessed

Music and lyrics by Vertical Worship
Duet: Connor Dean & Jane Walker

*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.*



*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!**

*The Great Thanksgiving

Come to this Table. All are welcome here.

We gather to catch a glimpse of God's presence among us.

Draw near, for love is hovering close.

God is all around us.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The blessings of God, our Creator, are shared.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

He Came Down
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2085

**He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
Hallelujah, forevermore.**

The congregation is seated as we recall the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, concluding with the Last Supper.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

We conclude with a prayer invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

The Lord's Prayer

Sharing the Bread of Life & the Cup of Blessing

Everyone is welcome to share in Holy Communion.

Communion will be served using the ancient means of "intinction" with only the pastor and servers touching the elements, or, if you prefer, you may receive pre-packaged elements. Our communion elements are bread and grape juice.

A gluten-free option is also available.

You are invited to stay at the chancel for prayer as long as you desire.

If you are a person with limited mobility, please let the usher know and someone will bring communion to you.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Margaret Sprunger

Nourishing God,

**Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much
has taken place to begin again,
that too many mistakes have been made,
and that the world is too far gone.**

**But then we come to your table
where all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed.**

And just like that, we have hope.

Just like that, we begin again.

Thank you for the gift of this fresh start.

**Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice
to remind us that it's never too late to begin again.**

In gratitude, we pray.

Amen.

Call to Action

We joyfully welcome all those who wish to become members of St. John's and invite you to come forward during the singing of the closing hymn.

*Hymn

I Want to Walk As a Child of the Light
The United Methodist Hymnal 206, vs. 1 & 3

Please bring donations for The Shepherd's Market forward during the singing of this our closing hymn.

*Benediction

*Postlude

Worship Notes

The Great Thanksgiving is adapted from "The Great Thanksgiving for Advent" from *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, using words and phrases from Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed's Liturgy for Words for the Beginning | Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

Ushers for the 8:30 service are Susan Johnston and Bobbi Marino.

After the 8:30 service, everyone is invited to the Family Life Center for coffee and refreshments.

Announcements

STAFF APPRECIATION GIFTS

An annual Christmas tradition at St. John's has always been saying thank you to our staff for all the work they do to make worship, ministries, programs, and events at St. John's possible.

If you would like to participate in thanking them, please put "Staff Appreciation" in the memo line of your check or on the offering envelope, if cash. You may also make your gift online at www.stjohnsbr.org/give (Select the "Staff Appreciation" Fund).

Deadline for staff appreciation gifts is Tuesday, December 17 for online and Wednesday, December 18 for checks and cash.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

As of November 27, we have received 99 pledges totaling \$541,035. We celebrate 47 households have increased their pledges and we welcome 13 new first-time pledging households. If you haven't turned in a pledge for 2025, please complete your pledge online (stjohnsbr.org/pledge-2025) or with a printed pledge card (available in the Office and Narthex) as soon as possible. Our aspirational budget for 2025 is \$687,102.

MEMBERSHIP ROLLS UPDATE

In January 2025, when the church reports its annual 2024 statistics to the Louisiana Conference, we are to report the results of a membership audit. We are in the process of going over our membership roll to remove those who might have moved to another church or another city and/or state. Both the first and second batch was published in the November 26 *Inside St. John's* newsletter. If you believe a name is being removed in error, please contact the church office with information by December 3 (office@stjohnsbr.org). The Church Council will vote on the membership update at their December 5 meeting.

COFFEE TIME SNACKS

If your last name begins with **L - N, Sunday, December 8** is "your" day to bring a snack for Coffee Time. Remember, this is just a much appreciated suggestion not an obligation. **Please bring your items in a disposable container or single-use dish, and take them to the FLC by 9:30 a.m.**

TODAY - YOUTH BIBLE STUDY

The Youth will meet today at 4 p.m. at the home of Troy and Sarah Prevot (242 Shady Lake Place W, Baton Rouge 70810) for their Bible Study.

UPCOMING CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

The Church Council will meet on **Thursday, December 5** in the Library. During their final meeting of the year, they will review updates to our congregational profile, approve revisions to our church membership rolls, and discuss the 2025 budget. Everyone is always welcome to attend Church Council meetings.

NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDS (ST. JOHN'S ANGEL TREE)

Opening Doors is offering us a chance to help brighten Christmas for children from two of our neighborhood schools, Wildwood Elementary School and Gardere Community Christian School, through their mission: Neighborhood Friends.

Choose a child's name from our Christmas tree during Coffee Time **today**. You are being asked to purchase two gifts for each student you choose: an item of clothing and a fun item (toy). Each gift should cost between \$20 and \$30. Wrap each gift separately following the directions on the instruction sheet you receive. Please bring the gifts back to the narthex on or before Monday, December 9 at noon.

GREAT TURKEY GIVEAWAY

The 14th Great Turkey Giveaway will be **Saturday, December 14** and takes place in the church parking lot. Volunteers of all ages and abilities are welcome - you are asked to arrive by 7 a.m.

Volunteers are also needed **Friday, December 13** in the FLC for setup and staging as everything, including turkeys, will be delivered on Friday sometime between 1 and 2 p.m. We will be staging the various areas and bagging items that go along with the turkeys so there will be plenty of work.

SEEKING CRAFT & BAKE SALE DONATIONS

If you have craft & baked items that you might want to donate to the United Women in Faith's Craft & Bake Sale on **Sunday, December 15**, please contact Deborah Cross-Young at 225-281-9470. This very worthy cause raises funds for local missions supported by UWF Circle of the Heart.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS HOSTED BY JEFFERSON UMC

Jefferson United Methodist Church (10328 Jefferson Hwy) will be hosting, "THE FIRST CHRISTMAS" a beautiful play that tells the story of the birth of Christ. Performances are **Sunday, December 15, at 2 pm and 6 pm** (show's duration is 75 minutes, with no intermission). Tickets, which are \$12 for Adults and \$5 for Children under 12, can be purchased at St. John's on December 1 or online at jumcbr.org. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to The Shepherd's Market food pantry. Thank you to Jefferson UMC for this generous partnership! We encourage you to support them with their Christmas production.

ADVENT PHOTO-A-DAY INVITATION

During Advent, we invite you to a spiritual practice of noticing images of hope, peace, joy, and love in the world. Our Photo-A-Day practice invites you to notice God within the world through a guiding word. You can download the daily word prompts at stjohnsbr.org/advent-2024 or get a printed copy at church. As you notice that word coming to mind during your day, take a picture and post it on social media, using #stjohnsbr in your post. Or you can use the daily word as a journaling process of noticing God! As a community practice, it's powerful to observe the various ways we uniquely encounter each word and God around us. Where will you see these words and reflections this Advent season as we begin again in our preparations for Christmas?

ADVENT FAITH STORIES

Be checking your Inbox on Wednesdays during Advent. An **Advent Faith Story** written by one of our very own St. John's family members will be emailed to you on Wednesdays via *Inside St. John's*. (If you do not get our Tuesday newsletter, call the office and Lynn will add you to the distribution list.)

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH A GIFT OF LOVE AND DEDICATION

This Christmas season, St. John's is offering two special ways to celebrate and honor your loved ones:

Poinsettia Dedications. Dedicate a poinsettia in honor or memory of a loved one for \$35.

These beautiful plants will adorn our worship space on Christmas Eve and may be taken home after our 6 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service.

Mission & Vision Dedications. For those looking to give a meaningful and lasting gift, consider making a \$35 donation to the Mission & Vision of St. John's United Methodist Church in honor of someone special. With this gift, you will receive a keepsake card to present to your loved one, letting them know a donation has been made in their name.

Both Poinsettia Dedications and Mission & Vision Dedications will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletins. Your gifts help support the work of St. John's, spreading Christ's love in our congregation and community.

To participate, you may complete the online form: stjohnsbr.org/christmasdedications or, if you prefer, printed forms will be available next week. Deadline to order is **December 18**. You may pay with a check/cash to St. John's UMC with "Christmas Dedication" in the memo line or you may pay online at stjohnsbr.org/give (Choose the "Other" Fund and then choose "Flower Fund" for Poinsettia Dedications or "Christmas Dedication" for Mission & Vision Dedications.)

Thank you for helping make this season one of generosity and love.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S FLYER

We are handing out flyers with information inviting you to join us for special programs, mission opportunities, and worship services during the Advent and Christmas season. We encourage you to take the flyer home with you today so that you can mark your calendar. We look forward to journeying through these sacred seasons with you. Additional flyers are located in the Narthex and office if you would like to pass one along to someone else.

This Week at St. John's

Sunday, December 1

- 8:00 a.m. Praise Team Warm Up, Sanctuary
- 8:30 a.m. Worship Service, Sanctuary
- 9:30 a.m. Coffee Time, FLC*
- 9:30 a.m. Upstairs Cafe, 202 Admin Bldg.
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School, Campus wide
- 11:00 a.m. Worship Service, Sanctuary
- 4:00 p.m. Youth Bible Study, Prevot's Home
- 4:30 p.m. Music Makers, Choir Room
- 6:00 p.m. Alleluia Ringers, Bells Room

Monday, December 2

- 7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC
- 9:00 a.m. Ladies' Covenant Group, The Founders Parlor
- 3:30 p.m. The Shepherd's Market Client Choice Food Pantry, FLC
- 4:30 p.m. Ladies' Covenant Group, The Founders' Parlor
- 6:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

*Family Life Center

Tuesday, December 3

- 8:00 a.m. The Shepherd's Market Client Choice Food Pantry, FLC
- 7:00 p.m. Pickleball, FLC
- 7:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

Wednesday, December 4

- 7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC
- 6:30 p.m. Ladies' AA Meeting, FLC-C
- 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir, Choir Room

Thursday, December 5

- 8:00 a.m. The Shepherd's Market Client Choice Food Pantry, FLC
- 5:30 p.m. Church Council, Library
- 6:00 p.m. River City Quilt Guild, FLC

Friday, December 6

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

Saturday, December 7

- 8:00 a.m. Run-off Election, FLC
- 12:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-C
- 7:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC



ST. JOHN'S

United Methodist Church

Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.