



St. John's Episcopal Church

76 Market Street

Salem, New Jersey 08079

856-935-1798

An Episcopal Parish in the Diocese of New Jersey

The Final Week of Pentecost 2024

Dear St. Johanians,

Greetings and God's peace be with you all. I write you as we approach the end of the liturgical year and prepare for Advent. I felt compelled to share all the places where hope is hiding in plain sight at St John's Episcopal Church as we enter this season of preparation for the coming Christ child.

Since arriving in January as your interim rector, we have welcomed into the Body of Christ seven individuals Bishop Sally confirmed or received three folks in the spring, and we mourned the loss of our sister in Christ, Gail Boyd. It's been a blessing to hear your story, share your journey for this season, and accompany many of you through challenging times. I continue to hold each of you in my prayers daily.

St. John's congregation is small, but it is undoubtedly mighty. The motto for our faithful few might as well be "Where there's a will, there's a way." Things always get done here. Behind the scenes, you and your siblings at St John's are setting tables, doing laundry, making copies, and doing all the hidden labor to ensure that life continues running smoothly even after 300+ years. The Holy Spirit inspires and guides us, the members, vestry, wardens, staff, and clergy, so everything that needs doing is done. What a beautiful testament to your love for Christ and The Church, the hope that keeps our doors open and our hearts overflowing with love.

It has been a joy to see how the committees and ministries that folks signed up for at St John's Day this summer have started to share the burden of doing ministry and sharing resources. For instance, recently, we hosted the Trunk or Treat Outreach event and followed it with prayer in the graveyard (with many thanks to Deacon Sally for leading). What a fantastic intersection between worship and neighborly love.

We are preparing for another opportunity for cross-pollination with the events **on December 7th**: The Salem Holiday Parade, The Yuletide Tour, and the ECW soup sale, which leads to the Secret Santa Shoppe and the Longest Night Service in Advent. We continue to focus our energy on worship, care, service, and stewardship (of our finances and property). In the coming year at St John's, there will be plenty of opportunities to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving our neighbors.

By God's grace and our forebears' generosity, St John's considerable investments yield over **\$350,000 per annum** in dividends. Wise investing and prudent planning allow our finance committee and vestry to plan the operating budget without requiring members to make pledges or run a traditional stewardship campaign. We will have our annual meeting to discuss the 2025 budget and plans on **January 26, 2025**. We will have one service at 9 am that day, followed by the parish-wide meeting. We will also have brunch to follow. In 2024, we included \$50,000 of pledged income from St John's members who prayerfully considered and made a monetary investment in St John's life, ministry, and mission. Thank you to those who have taken on this spiritual practice. Contact Eileen Miller at the church office if you plan to continue or want to start pledging, ask to receive giving envelopes, or you can set up electronic giving online through our website, sjsalemnj.org. If a pledge isn't part of your discipline, making a one-time gift for Christmas is an option. There are three specific ways you can give for Christmas. Donate funds for the poinsettias honoring, remembering, or celebrating loved ones. Give new gift items for the Secret Santa Shoppe. Give a special offering on Christmas Eve at one of our two services. The 4 pm Sunset service will include an all-ages pageant and the blessing of the creche, and the 8 pm Candlelight service will have a full choral Eucharist with festive hymns. The Christmas Offerings will be disbursed to the Rector's Discretionary Fund (as all loose cash offerings are at St John's). The rest will be gifted to The Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem in honor of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

Hope will continue keeping the joy of Christmas for all of its 12 days, so read along with me and all the other children of God as I read different versions of the Nativity Story through picture books on Facebook. Other formation opportunities this season include the continuing Sacred Ground Circle on Sunday morning and a new Zoom circle, which will meet on Tuesday evenings at 9 pm, beginning January 7th. Please contact me if you have any ideas about learning about scripture, faith, or prayer and would like to propose a Lenten program.

In the meantime, may Christ make room in all our hearts for love incomparable, and may the Holy Spirit continue to bless and keep you today, tomorrow, and always.

Your Sister in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "The Rev. Kimberly Reinholz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

The Rev. Kimberly Reinholz, Interim Rector