

# St. John's Good News



From Rev. John...

**Hear the Angels Sing**  
By The Rev. John Beach

*Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but of reflection. -Winston Churchill*

*The only real blind person at Christmastime is he who has not Christmas in his heart. We sightless children had the best of eyes that day in our hearts and in our fingertips. -Helen Keller*

This year has been exhausting, and often demoralizing. The wars in the Middle East, Ukraine, and in the U.S. Congress have had echo conflicts around many of our dinner tables. During global, municipal and domestic turmoil, we are silent for a moment at Christmas and allow this Holy Day to touch us and reorient our imagination.

In 1849, twenty miles from here in Wayland, MA, Edmond Spear was serving as a Unitarian pastor. He was a fierce abolitionist and had incurred the wrath of his congregation by preaching forcefully on the subject of slavery. He was suffering from a crippling depression in the aftermath of the Mexican American War and found it impossible to conduct worship. He had experienced personal tragedy in his life and spent months unable to get out of bed.

As Christmas approached, Spear began to write poems which expressed his longing for the presence of God. Although most of his poems have been lost to memory, one remains as one of the most well-known Christmas carols, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*. The carol stands in contrast to most of the other commonly sung carols. It does not mention the birth of Jesus. There is no mention of Bethlehem, Mary, Joseph, Magi, donkeys, shepherds, or mangers. He was inspired by hearing the angels sing in Massachusetts. I am particularly moved by second and third verses which are rarely sung.

*But with the woes of sin and strife The world has suffered long;  
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled Two thousand years of wrong;  
And man, at war with man, hears not The love-song which they bring; -  
Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife, And hear the angels sing!*

Contd.

**January  
2024**

**Sunday worship remains at 10am, in-person and virtually: All are welcome to participate, and seating capacity is now at 75. The service also continues to broadcast via Zoom, with weekly link options shared by email.**

Phone: 781-233-1242

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*And ye, beneath life's crushing load, Whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing way With painful steps and slow,  
Look now! for glad and golden hours Come swiftly on the wing; –  
Oh, rest beside the weary road And hear the angels sing!*

Those of us who are battling anxiety and cynicism, stop for a moment to hear the angels sing. This Christmas season I am personally grateful for the love demonstrated by our church community here at St. John's. I greet this new year with hope, courage, and joy which is such a precious gift. As the days finally get longer, I am reminded that the blessing in our wedding liturgy also applies to our life as a community:

*Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. Amen.*

Peace,

*John+*

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### [Litany for Christmas 2023](#)

For many years, Assistant Bishop Carol Gallagher has been writing a blog called *Mamabishop*. During Advent through Epiphany it includes "letters" from Mary to her mother and to Elizabeth, often including a litany. The letter at Christmas is based on Luke 2 and will include the litany below.

In offering it, she says, "I invite you to enter this season with an open heart and a loud 'yes' when God invites us to go and serve, carrying the Incarnate Christ with us."

Wondrous Creator, source of all life  
You bend yourself towards us in all seasons  
Bringing light to our broken, hidden places  
And joy in your constant, loving presence.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today.

We often stray away like lost sheep  
We are afraid, covered in anxiety  
We seek foolish solutions to our pain  
Yet you lean in and seek us at all times.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today.

The world turns to violence and destruction  
Yet You are our source of hope and freedom  
You set the prisoners free and feed the hungry

*Contd.*

And gather us all back home at your table.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today.

You turn our tears of sorrow into tears of joy  
And open our hearts to new and abundant life.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today.

Dark skies and cold winds will not keep you away  
You love us as good parents love their children.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today.

Oh Jesus, born in a humble and lonely place  
Visit us in our simple hearts, open to you this day.  
Lord, help us to carry your Incarnate love with us today. Amen.

—The Rt. Rev. Carol J.W.T. Gallagher

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Annual Meeting

**Sunday, February 4th ~ 11:30am**

Parishioners are encouraged to attend this important meeting to discuss achievements for 2023 and church goals for the New Year. The annual report, parish financials, and our budget will also be reviewed. We will elect officers, vestry, and delegates for the diocesan convention. If you are interested in serving as a vestry member or delegate, please contact the wardens or parish office. Your participation in this gathering matters, and is greatly appreciated.

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Every Child Deserves to Smile



Many thanks for the generous donations of grocery store gift cards, clothing, food and storage items. During December we delivered \$120 in grocery store gift cards, 3 boxes of non-perishable food items, and 2 bags of warm clothing. I also have heard that there is an elf among us that has delivered fresh fruit and cookies!

During the month of January, we are holding a COLD WEATHER CLOTHING DRIVE. If your post-holiday activities include a wardrobe makeover, we will gratefully rehome any clean, warm clothing (hats, mittens/gloves, jackets, boots, sweaters, pants, socks, PJs, etc.) for children and adults of all sizes.

We will also be collecting non-perishable food items; paper plates and bowls, utensils, can openers, and hygiene items, including soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, feminine products, razors, etc.

Donations may be left in the collection baskets in the vestibule.  
Questions may be directed to Jeanne Seaboyer.

Contd.

Community Outreach

**Saugus Fire Departments Annual Drive**

**Thank You!** In a time where there is great need, every little bit helps. Our collection of \$210 in gift cards was delivered to Ret. Capt. Bill & Carol O'Malley in December. The O'Malley's expressed great appreciation for the continued support of our parish members in helping to ensure joy rings for teens and tweens of struggling families in the Saugus community.



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Christmas Craft Fair Recap

On December 2, 2023, many parishioners participated in our first annual Christmas Fair, and St. John's rented 10 craft tables, also a first for us. We had a steady flow of the public.

The profit in 2022 was \$2,543 (including the cookout), and the return in 2023 was \$4,200 (an overall increase of 165%). All the profits from the tables were way up; a whopping increase of 356% for gift baskets raffles, resulting in a \$713 profit - an all-time high!

We always welcome your comments and ideas on how to make next year's fair even better. Many, many thanks to everyone who participated.

~ Donna Manoogian, Fair Chairman

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Report on St. John's 2024 Stewardship Ministry

I would like to thank everyone for your prompt response to our Stewardship Ministry for 2024. As of 12/20/23 we have received 53 pledges totaling \$90,252.00.

Here are the yearly amounts of our 53 pledges for 2024:

\$104, \$156, \$180, \$288, \$300, \$300, \$300, \$300, \$360, \$360, \$420, \$520, \$552, \$600, \$600, \$600, \$720, \$780, \$840, \$900, \$960, \$1000, \$1020, \$1200, \$1200, \$1200, \$1200, \$1200, \$1200, \$1320, \$1320, \$1320, \$1320, \$1380, \$1500, \$1800, \$1820, \$2080, \$2400, \$2400, \$2460, \$2640, \$3120, \$3120, \$3120, \$3300, \$3380, \$3600, \$3960, \$4680, \$6000, \$6240, \$6612.

More numbers:

21 pledges increased, 28 pledges stayed the same, 2 pledges decreased, 2 new pledges.

Two more people have signed up for ACH (Auto withdrawal from checking account) so we now have a total of 28 pledges on ACH. Thank you!

This total pledge amount of \$90,252 is approximately the same amount we received in 2023 in pledges. So we are holding fast - but not moving forward. This amount will enable us to continue to support a half time priest. All pledge envelopes have either been mailed or handed out. Please let me know if you did not receive envelopes. Thank you all for your support of St. John's. If you have any questions regarding the above information - please contact me.

~ Julia Aston, Stewardship Ministry 2024

### Word Search

Can you find these words associated with Winter?

K E V E R G R E E N Q F M V Q D X E  
 N K A F I R E W O O D T D R A F T Y  
 X D Q W H P O F Q T M J X Y T A H Q  
 G C I U E B V O Z E R O B O N X P D  
 Y N S V I T O B O G G A N R Q P I J  
 C I H P D L G B W I N T E R I Z E P  
 M E N F K Z T V M V S B C D C G L B  
 P V D S R U X B V B I A H V R N I O  
 M O J W U I D W V H A G A R K W Y F  
 O V L X U L G S L J V L G E Y G Z F  
 A E I A G N A I F U I N A R A Y U B  
 Y R B Y R D C T D V I N M C R A A O  
 L C D X N F U E E D W D H E L V N O  
 X O O M J B A W D D T S T Q D A G S  
 U A O H O C K E Y Z H S D Q E V V C  
 Z T H S M D L P F I U S S B S K R A  
 A J K S T S T K C L H C M U U D S R  
 N Y S K A T E O B Q S B O O T S F R

Balaclava ~ Blustery ~ Boots ~ Drafty ~ Evergreen ~ Firewood ~ Frigid  
 Hibernate ~ Hockey ~ Insulated ~ Overcoat ~ Polar ~ Quilt ~ Skate ~ Sledding  
 Toboggan ~ Winterize ~ Zero

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*Have a healthy and happy New Year!*

**Officers:** The Rev. John T. Beach, Priest-in-Charge, Brenda Caggiano and Daniel Casey, Jr., Wardens, Phil Littlehale, Treasurer, Paul Felci, Assistant Treasurer, and Kristina Palazzo, Clerk of the Vestry & Sexton

**Vestry:** Bill Bidmead, Sr. (2026), Dibby LeBlanc (2026), Duana 'Dee' LeMay (2024), Sandy Mears (2025), Donna Manoogian (2024), and Donna Manoogian (2024)