

CELEBRATING GOD'S STORIES

STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2024



A PLACE TO WRESTLE AND GROW – SUSAN DRAVES, ST. JOHN'S MEMBER

Susan Draves met her husband Mark in college while studying English. Having been raised by a doctor and a nurse, she was determined not to go into a medical field. However, a chance opportunity to observe a surgery changed that, leading to years as an operating room nurse. Eventually she became a Nurse Practitioner, helping pave the way for others to come.

Like so many others, Susan & Mark purchased a home in Beaufort which they visited regularly for several years before moving to the community permanently. During those years of traveling, they attended St. John's when in Beaufort and another church in Indiana. Despite attending that church regularly for years, they never became members there, feeling uncomfortable with its lack of diversity and rigid understanding of faith. When they moved to Beaufort, this led Susan to arrange a visit with Pastor Shannon.

When he visited Mark and Susan's home, she had her questions ready. She wanted to know if God's love extended to a recently deceased dear friend who was like a father to her, though he was of the Jewish faith. She wanted to know if the congregation was open to the leadership of women and to welcoming diverse people. She received affirmative answers to each of these questions, and in fact, clearly remembers that Pastor Shannon quipped, "If you are looking for a church that is rigidly dogmatic about faith, you need to keep looking."

Mark and Susan attended a new members class and soon joined St. John's. Susan appreciates finding a church home where members are encouraged to wrestle with difficult questions of faith. She repeatedly experienced that when we open our minds to hard questions and our hearts to other people, God opens our eyes of faith in new and life-giving ways.

Susan has participated in several congregation reading groups. She served as a discussion co-leader with Deacon Katie for one and is now preparing for another. She participated in a journey led by former Bishop Herman Yoos to Montgomery and Selma to explore questions of faith and anti-racism, finding the trip to be so life-changing that she is now part of a team planning to offer a similar opportunity to members of the Beaufort community.

The generosity of St. John's members and friends is what makes it possible to provide a place to ask questions, challenge ourselves, wrestle with faith, and allow God to grow our trust and faith. Thank you for your faithful generosity!

OUR GOAL – Our goal this year is simple. We need to increase generosity by \$1,000 or more per week in order to keep St. John's ministries strong so that stories like Susan's can continue to happen here. Together, we can create a congregation in which the work of God to bring joy and hope to our lives and our community is celebrated!

This graph displays two charts of our giving. The first shows how many gifts are currently being given at the indicated weekly amounts. The other shows how many gifts are needed in each level to reach our goal. As you look over the charts, prayerfully ask yourself the following:

- ➔ “How does my giving level compare with other ways I use my money?”
- ➔ “How adequately does my giving reflect my gratitude to God for all the blessings I have received?”
- ➔ “Where would I be if I doubled my offerings? And can I consider doing that?”
- ➔ “How much more could I give if I really wanted to?”

