



**2016 Spring Parish Council  
Holy Conversations  
June 14, 2016**

Tuesday June 14<sup>th</sup>, 18 members of the SJP community gathered for the Spring Parish Council meeting. After a brief opening prayer and a time to updating the SJP master calendar and sharing news between the vestry and various ministries, Priest Lisa invited us into an hour of “Holy Conversations.” Using a model of Appreciative Inquiry, we were divided into small groups of 4-5 each and asked a series of questions. We were then given time to reflect on our own and write our answers on post-its. That time was followed by group conversation.

Following are the questions and responses shared. The evening was full of wonderful stories including beautifully articulated moments of ministry as well as hopes and dreams for our bright future together. We give thanks for all those who attended and participated and look forward to offering this opportunity and garnering the results from an even wider group. We were reminded that it does in fact “take a village” to listen and respond to God’s dream for us all.

**Conversation #1: Remember a moment that was a high point; when you felt SJP was doing God’s work and fulfilling its mission.**

- Crossroads holiday dinner (cooking turkeys @ home, prep @ SJP, serve @ Crossroads)
- We left Holy Spirit after having children to find a church with more to offer children. My high points include my daughter becoming a Youth Representative to our Vestry, my son expressing how much he enjoys coming to St. John’s. These two events warmed my heart.
- I always remember this: I came to St. John’s in August, 2009. I knew only a few people through the Intro. to the Episcopal Church. My husband died in early October that year. I was embraced. People came to my husband’s funeral.
- The first time I took my granddaughter to Crossroads. I witnessed her talking to the guests. She was in a very different environment and she “fit in.”
- When I’ve seen the respect, caring and inspiration adults share with our children and young people...last Sunday’s service led by young people was an example of how they are interwoven into every service, special occasions and summer Vacation Bible School.
- The high point for me was the baptism of our daughter Madeline, because she was accepted into this community as a child of God. It felt like everyone in the parish was giving their love and support and acceptance of this child of two moms.
- Inspired by Sydney Good’s sermon last Sunday: a teenage girl with so much feeling and understanding and love of God.
- When our grandkids were baptized here.
- Coming together as a community getting ready for the opening of the Catechesis Atrium 1 (Sunday School); making materials, shopping for supplies, participating in a crafts nights etc.

- In 2004, SJP was fulfilling God's mission when we had 87 kids at VBS. A great many kids were from outside out church membership. We had about 20 walk-ins on the first day, and we got them all placed in their class and we had a great week! A handful of those families ended up joining our church.
- An icy and snowy day during my first winter: 8 or more people at the door shoveling, de-icing, and helping those who needed it out of cars and through the parking lot; others helping in the coat closet and down the hall to the ushers.
- Every time SJP offers outreach to the many different needs in the community: food pantry, food gatherers, Crossroads, Starfish, Salvation Army, Miss Millie's.
- Having my young granddaughter hear teenager Sydney Good's sermon last Sunday – she was amazed and took her words to heart, sharing excitedly with her parents. Her faith definitely has grown. Mine also.
- Calling a new priest in 2013. Vestry was united/focused. God was at the helm leading us. We were doing His work. We followed His direction. We listened. We acted. The congregation was energized and welcoming.
- Priest Lisa, a new priest with so many needy and clamoring people, came to bless my sick kitty, Miles! After I had described his condition she came to see in me at home in Westland bringing such comfort. She brought me a lovely icon picture of St. Julian with her cat and held Miles with such tender care. Surely God is in her heart and with her here.
- Moments include: My daughter saying, "But Ms. Sherry says I have to be there next Sunday to show the bishop about God." And, a chorus of little voices all in sync saying the Lord's Prayer.
- I came to this church years ago on a recommendation re: the Prayers and Meditation group. That experience was transformational for me. Prayer and Meditation is part of Alanon's 11<sup>th</sup> step. I met people who guided me further into relationship. I started to attend church and found the messages, music and atmosphere comforting. It felt as if I was meant to be here. That was eight years ago.

**Conversation #2: Name 3 things you value most about SJP (beyond our relationships with each other).**

- 1. Committed to including children in programming and worship. 2. Welcoming all – no exceptions (understanding individual needs and accepting them). 3. Worship service: liturgy, music, energy.
- 1. A place for youth/kids to share their talents and learn to serve. 2. A source of "consistency" from childhood to adult and city to city. 3. A place for me to serve others.
- 1. People respond to most all specific "asks" (invitation). 2. The unrealized potential of this place and people. 3. Generosity of spirit.
- 1. Music. 2. The altar and the view beyond the altar. 3. Our rector. (not necessarily in this order!)
- 1. Sense of community – welcoming all. 2. Outreach programs. 3. Growing, vibrant community.
- 1. Opportunity to serve. 2. Openness of community. 3. Teaching/awareness (with youth, with the parish, learning from Priest Lisa).

- 1. Many opportunities to grow spiritually (as a community). 2. Acceptance – age, gender, economics – nothing and no one is off limits or excluded/all are valued. 3. Traveling our spiritual journeys together.
- 1. Friendship 2. Messages – through email, bulletins, sermons, art and more. 3. Reminder that I am loved.
- 1. The love and warmth of all parishioners. 2. Involvement in Crossroads 3. The church – it's beautiful, and I feel a warmth of God within me.
- 1. Explanations of scripture. 2. Religious identity. 3. More forgiveness.
- 1. Priest Lisa's gifts: preaching, teaching, music. 2. SJP's hunger (led by Priest Lisa) to engage with the world outside our doors. 3. Watching my spouse grow to love SJP worship and community.
- 1. The predictable serenity of Sunday services. 2. Starting to see people from SJP out in the community. 3. The feeling of loving acceptance.
- 1. Uplifting Sunday services: Eucharist, music and sermon. 2. Men's Bible study. 3. Lisa's book recommendations including *Making Sense of the Bible* (and her class) and *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*.
- 1. Orientation toward discernment – lay/ordained. 2. Creative prayer and spiritually found in New Zealand Prayer Book, etc. 3. Progressive values/Acceptance (advocacy for mosque, S.O.A.P., Crossroads/Mariners Inn).
- 1. Place in the garden for me and my family! 2. Freedom to question, yet tradition and scripture. 3. Having a home and family here – the people and place.
- 1. Small group ministry that celebrates each other's journey. 2. Message and atmosphere of worship.

**Conversation #3: What will be SJP's most exciting and important accomplishments over the next 3-5 years?**

- Growth of Sunday school and youth group participation. Small groups – Bible study or something similar. Continue to include parishioners and their talents in the services and other activities.
- A healthy, realistic budget to do ministry with ample and adequate resources. Using the building to its utmost, including revenue building, such as adding a preschool. Increasing the size of Sunday school participation.
- Growing the number of young people and young families as members. Expanding our presence in the community. Creating an atmosphere where people will want to give generously and without conditions to support the parish financially.
- Being able to say that we've worked together to meet common goals. To become even more open and affirming than we are now. To have significant response for those who are fearful and/or in pain as well as to be able to just "be there."
- Growth of families. Increased connection of families and new families. Growing diversity of parish through a welcoming community.
- A full and vibrant group of young adults who reflect the knowledge, love and spirit of God as a product of their experiences at SJP and teaching ready to inherit! Ever more inclusivity and outreach, love and acceptance. Despite new age tech – love and continuity of ritual, prayer and tradition, scripture still intact.

- Being seen as a leader in progressive Christianity in Wayne Co. Growth is social justice work. Family ministry for all ages and all people.
- The church will expand and grow in membership and community leadership through various and creative outreach programs.
- Getting my spouse to join something. Adding more midweek/weekend worship opportunities. Building a well-attended adult Christian Education program.
- Growth to 500 members. Sending discerning candidates to seminary. Opening our food pantry to three days/week.
- Increase the people and children in our parish. Everyone will sign up for ACH payments. Property commission will have nothing to do, because all updates/repairs are done!
- Bring/being Christ in the community by serving the current members of SJP. Attracting and retaining new members and families to SJP. Being Christ through outreach in SE Michigan and Dominican Republic.
- A vibrant network of volunteers to help with all the ministries (back-ups and fill-ins). A reputation in the community as a place that loves and helps. A concrete, well organized yearly building maintenance plan.
- 100 new members. Financial stability. Have added a 2<sup>nd</sup> full-time priest.
- Music program that is bursting at the seams. Well utilized facility (larger community role). Mechanism to engage members in meaningful ways that fit into their particular lives.
- A place for youth to call home with the foundation of Sunday school and Youth Group with many members. Continuing awesome music ministry. Youth director in budget stability.