

Saint John's FESTIVAL OF NEW BEGINNINGS Catalog of Classes & Groups

Updated August 25, 2026

DISCIPLE ONE

Sundays 2:00 – 3:30pm
September 13 – April 18 (excluding holidays)
In Person
Led by Rev. Hilary Marchbanks, along with Chet and Liz Henry



*All are welcome -
invite your friends!*

Disciple One is a long-term Bible study delving into both the Old and New Testaments over 24 weeks. As we read, we'll learn some of the historical context and themes, and we'll explore what these ancient texts teach us about our relationship with God and the world.

This study gives an opportunity for an honest, inquisitive, and in-depth encounter with scripture. There is no prerequisite for this class.

This class is limited to 17 people. If registration is full, email Hilary to get on the waitlist.

Register at bit.ly/sjdiscipleone

BREAD & BELONGING: BIBLE STUDY TOGETHER (FULL 28-WEEKS)

Thursdays 6:30 – 8:00pm
September 17 – May 6 (28 weeks)
In Person and Online
Led by Shelley Walters, Javi Lopez-Shultz, and Midge Epstein

Gather with us weekly throughout the academic year for Bread & Belonging: Bible Study Together – a time of scripture study, fellowship, and prayer. Following the lectionary readings, we'll explore the Bible alongside reflections from a wide range of theologians and pastors, listening for wisdom from many voices. Together, we'll discover how scripture continues to feed us and how God is calling us to live with faith and love in community.

***You can sign up for the whole 28 weeks, or you can sign up for short sessions (dates listed below).
Register for the full 28-weeks at bit.ly/sjbreadbible***

BREAD & BELONGING: BIBLE STUDY TOGETHER (SHORT SESSIONS)

Session 1: September 17 - October 15 (Five weeks) - bit.ly/breadseptstart

Session 2: October 22 - November 19 (Five weeks) - bit.ly/breadoctstart

Session 3: December 3 – December 17: Advent (Three weeks) - bit.ly/breaddecstart

Session 4: January 7 - February 4 (Five weeks) - bit.ly/breadjanstart

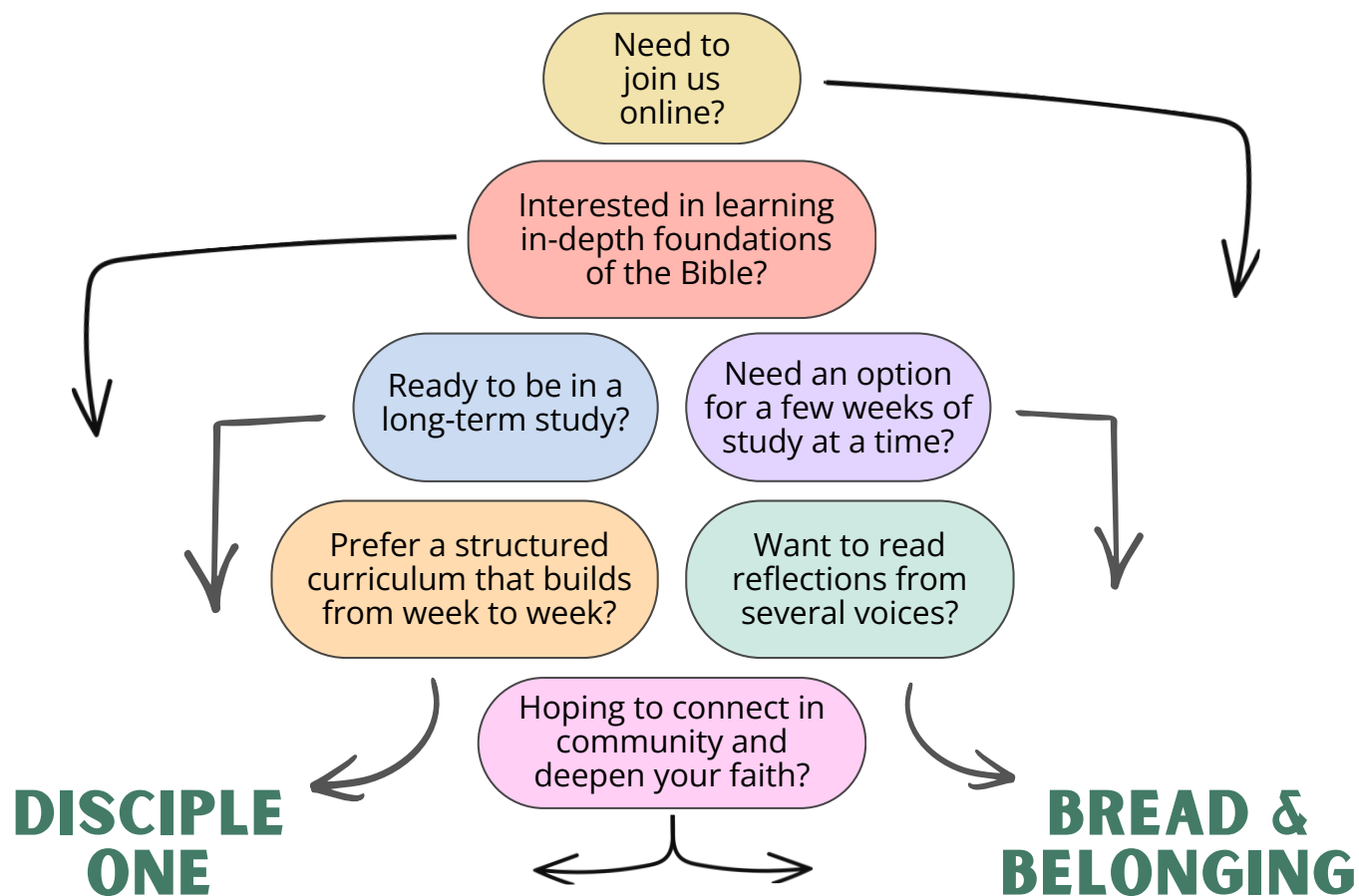
Session 5: February 18 - March 11: Lent (Four weeks) - bit.ly/breadfebstart

Session 6: April 1 - May 6 (Six weeks) - bit.ly/breadaprilstart

*Wondering which Bible study is right for you?
See reverse.*



Which Bible study is right for you this year?



SAINT JOHN'S LIBRARY

Our Library is full of books to expand your understanding, to listen to new voices, and learn something new!

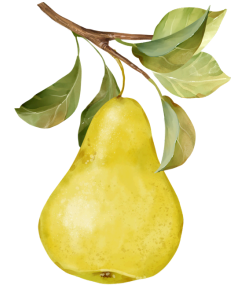
Come browse and check out books in Room 211 on Sunday mornings until 12:30pm or search our collection online at stjohnsaustin.org. The Library is under the Resources link.

Questions about the Library? please contact Jaci Walker at jgwalker4@gmail.com.



CONVERSATIONS IN LISTENING WELL

Sunday, August 30
2:00 - 3:30pm
In person and Online
Led by Jane Bost, Ph.D.



What does it look like to really listen – especially when we disagree?

At a time when tensions can run high and differences can quickly become divisions, this class will offer practical tools for listening with greater care, curiosity, and understanding. Together, we'll think about what helps people feel heard, what gets in the way, and how we can stay present when conversations become difficult.

Bring your questions, your experiences, or a scenario you have been wondering how to navigate. Led by Jane Bost, Ph.D., retired psychologist and former Associate Director of the UT Counseling & Mental Health Center, this workshop will help us practice listening in ways that make room for honesty, connection, and more thoughtful conversation.

Register at bit.ly/sjlisteningwell

CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT

Saturday, October 3
9:00am – 12:00pm (With optional lunch at noon)
In Person
Led by Robert Culbertson, Eva Jordan, and Shelley Walters

Our half-day contemplative retreat focuses on establishing contemplative practices that generate energy for personal healing and growth. When we carry these practices into the larger world, we provide positive support for our families and society.

No experience needed.

Suggested lunch donation is \$10. Childcare available on request.

Register for our October 3 retreat at bit.ly/sjcontemplativeoct

Save the date for our next retreat on December 5.

BREAD FOR OUR JOURNEY

Bread for Our Journey is an online approach to faith development you can do as an individual, in informal small groups – and it even includes activities for families.

This weekly collection of reflections is intended to deepen our understanding of scripture, to open our awareness of different voices and wisdom, and to broaden our spiritual practices that bring creativity and justice to our world.

Visit stjohnsaustin.org/ministries/bread-for-our-journey to receive this resource weekly.

SEASON OF HOPE

The Season of Hope is a series of conversations about faith, courage, and what it means to follow Jesus in our shared life today. An initiative of Saint John's Intentional Faith Development team and made possible by an Endowment Grant, the series began this spring with Amanda Tyler's talk on Christian nationalism and continues through speakers, books, and conversation as we look honestly at the challenges Christian nationalism poses for the church and consider how we can live out a different way – one grounded in justice, love of neighbor, and hope.

We hope you'll join us for one or all of the following events in our Season of Hope

BOOK DISCUSSION *THE ANTI-GREED GOSPEL*

Thursday, September 10
6:30 - 8 pm
Online and in person



As we prepare for our next speaker in our Season of Hope series (Malcolm Foley), we invite you to join us in a discussion of his book, *The Anti-Greed Gospel*. The book approaches the issue of understanding and responding to Christian nationalism in a very different way than the Amanda Tyler book. Foley asserts that "racism is not about hate and ignorance. It's about greed."

We will explore how Christian nationalism may also be understood by considering who stands to benefit from racism and blurring church and state for power. Read or listen to the book on your own, then join us to discuss and unpack Foley's teachings.

Sign up at bit.ly/sjantigreed

GUEST SPEAKER REV. DR. MALCOLM FOLEY

Saturday, September 19
10:00am – 12:00pm
In Person and Livestreamed online

What connects greed, racism, and Christian nationalism?

Join us with pastor and historian Rev. Malcolm Foley, PhD, author of *The Anti-Greed Gospel*, as he helps us explore how the pursuit of wealth and power has shaped racism in America, and how those same forces continue to influence our life together today.

As part of our Season of Hope guest speaker series, Foley will help us look more closely at what lies beneath Christian nationalism and consider how the church can respond. What would it look like for the church to choose love of neighbor over the pursuit of wealth, power, and control – and to build communities shaped by solidarity, justice, and shared flourishing?

Contribute your questions for Rev. Dr. Foley at bit.ly/questionsformalcolm

Sign up to join us in person at malcolmfoleyatsaintjohnsinperson.eventbrite.com
Sign up for the livestream link at malcolmfoleylivefromsaintjohns.eventbrite.com

SEASON OF HOPE CONTINUED

BOOK DISCUSSION - *THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISTS*

Tuesday, October 20
6:30 - 8 pm
Online and in person

Prepare for Brian Kaylor's November visit by reading his newest book, *The Bible According to Christian Nationalists: Exploiting Scripture for Political Power*, and joining us for conversation.

Kaylor, a minister, author, and scholar of political communication, examines the ways Christian nationalists use biblical passages, stories, and symbols to give religious authority to political ideas and agendas. Along the way, he helps readers recognize these distortions, understand why they can be so persuasive, and consider more faithful ways of reading and living out scripture.

Together, we'll talk about what stood out to us, what challenged us, and what questions we want to carry into Kaylor's visit. At the heart of the conversation is an important question: How can Christians resist the misuse of scripture and instead bear witness to the love, justice, and way of Jesus?

Read the book ahead of time, then come ready for a thoughtful and lively conversation.

Sign up at bit.ly/sjbibleandnationalism

GUEST SPEAKER REV. DR. BRIAN KAYLOR

Saturday, November 14
10:00am – 12:00pm
In Person and Livestreamed online



Rev. Dr. Brian Kaylor is a pastor, author, and editor of Word & Way whose work examines the ways Christian faith and scripture can be distorted in the pursuit of political power.

In his most recent book, *The Bible According to Christian Nationalists: Exploiting Scripture for Political Power*, Kaylor looks closely at how biblical language, stories, and symbols are used within Christian nationalism – and what happens when scripture becomes a tool for advancing a political agenda rather than shaping us in the way of Jesus.

As part of our Season of Hope Speaker Series, Brian will help us better recognize these patterns and consider what a more faithful Christian witness might look like: one rooted not in power or control, but in truth, justice, courage, and love of neighbor.

Join us for this important conversation about how we read scripture, how our faith shapes our public life, and how Christians can respond when the Bible is used to justify ideas that stand in tension with the Gospel.

Registration for this event is coming soon!

TRANSFORMING CHURCH CULTURE: BECOMING TRANS INCLUSIVE

Mondays, September 28 and October 5
6:30 - 8:00pm
In person only
Led by Hannah Knight

This study resource is designed to help your church become more trans-inclusive, to live into a future of greater love and affirmation.

It will cover some basic truths about transgender people. These sessions will ask you to engage in reflection and discussion guided by biblical scriptures, and to be better equipped to support transgender folks in your community. Each session includes two video lessons, no outside reading required.

Who is this class for: Anyone living in Christian community with a trans person, which is everyone at Saint John's! All backgrounds and identities welcome.

Sign up at bit.ly/sjtransinclusive

LGBTQ+ ALLY TRAINING

Two Options for Joining us:
Sunday, October 18, 4:00 - 5:30pm
OR
Monday, October 26, 6:30 - 8:00pm

Online
Led by members of our Rio Texas Reconciling Ministries Team

Join us for LGBTQ+ Ally Training, a single-session workshop designed to help us practice creating safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ people. Together we'll learn practical skills for becoming intentional allies – building understanding, comfort, and confidence in how we show up for others. If you are newer to the conversation, this session will introduce common language and terms as well as answer many of your questions. If you already have experience, it will deepen your awareness and practice.

This 1.5-hour training on Zoom uses the nationally recognized Safe Zone Project curriculum. This course is open to anyone in our conference, and all are welcome.

Please email Shelley@stjohnsaustin.org for more information.

FAMILY CAMP

January 7 - 10, 2027
At Camp Allen in Navasota, TX

What do teenagers and senior adults have in common?
How about young children and middle-aged parents?
Single adults and couples?



They are all a part of our church family, and we hope they will all consider joining us for our Camp Saint John's Retreat! Please save the date for our Camp Saint John's Retreat to be held January 7 - 10, 2027 at the beautiful Camp Allen in Navasota, TX. Whether you love board games, disc golf, music, volleyball, canoeing, or crafts, there is something for you at camp. Come spend tech-free time relaxing and getting to better know your SJUMC family.

SUNDAY MORNING FOR ADULTS AT 10:00AM



GOOD COMPANY



Looking for a place to meet other young adults, talk about real life, and explore faith together? This new Sunday School class will be a space for conversation, connection, questions, laughter, and whatever else comes up along the way.

Pastor Hilary, along with Maggie and Brian Wolfe, will guide the group with the book *Living Our Beliefs* as a resource to talk about United Methodist faith and what it might have to do with our lives.

What's a young adult exactly? We're thinking ages 18–35.

Whether you are brand new to Saint John's or have been here for a while, come be part of building this new community.

Good Company meets in the front room of 5906 Wynona.

JOURNEY CLASS

Journey is a Sunday School class for adults in their 30s through 50s who gather for thoughtful conversation about faith, scripture, social justice, and the issues shaping our lives and world. Join us for community, study, and discussion.

Led by Rev. Randy Knighten.

Journey meets in Room 210, upstairs in the main building.

OPEN CIRCLE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

Open Circle is for adults who seek to grow spiritually in a loving, supportive small group. As its name states, Open Circle is OPEN to everyone. We have members of all ages and life stages, from 40s on up. We generally follow the Bread for Our Journey curriculum that expands on the themes from worship each Sunday and provides thoughtful and inclusive material for lively and engaging discussions. As the spirit moves among us, our discussions cover the challenges of life, mission and ministry in our world, and personal testimony about spiritual growth. No materials or preparation for class is needed. You can benefit just by attending, listening, and joining the discussion as you are comfortable. This class does not expect you to attend every week - just come when you can. We rejoice when periodic attendees and visitors are in our midst! Shari Holland.

Journey meets in Room 201, upstairs in the main building.

PRIDE+

Pride+ is an affirming and safe space for friends who are LGBTQ+ and their allies, including those who have been alienated and/or harmed by church. We seek to grow in loving relationship with God, self, and others through authentic and respectful listening and sharing. Each week we spark conversation by means of a question, story, song or prayer. No matter where the discussion goes we stay curious and listen deeply as we seek the presence of the Holy in our everyday lives. Join us!

Pride+ meets in Room 208, upstairs in the main building.

SUNDAY MORNING FOR ADULTS CONTINUED

SEEKERS SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

This class primarily consists of adults aged 50 and above, including both single and married individuals, as well as people at various stages of their faith journey. Our goal is to provide a warm, casual environment where relationships can be developed and spirits can be nourished. All classes are available both in person and on Zoom. Our curriculum is based on the works of a variety of authors on a wide range of topics, including both biblical studies and current social issues. A rotation of volunteer class members leads lessons, which generally include a great deal of class discussion.

To build community, several social events are held each year. A weekly newsletter is provided to keep you up to date when you can't make it to class; a class directory is maintained to provide easy access to member contact information. The class supports various local, national, and international mission activities and also offers local volunteer service opportunities.

Seekers meet in the Fellowship Hall downstairs in the main building and online.

WESLEY SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The Wesley Class engages in Bible Study each Sunday. A book of the Bible is selected for study in detail. Modern commentary sources are used to compile the lessons. We alternate between Old and New Testament books. The study of each book may take several weeks to complete. We have discussions after the lesson is presented regarding relevance to modern daily life.

Led by Roy Walker.

Wesley meets in the Library Room 211, upstairs in the main building and online.

CHURCHWIDE ADVENT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Four Sundays, November 29, December 6, 13, and 20

10:00 - 10:50 am

In Person

Led by Shelley Walters



Advent invites us to enter a story that begins in a world marked by oppression, uncertainty, and instability – and to listen again for the angels' surprising message: "Do not fear."

Together, we will reflect on the stories surrounding Jesus' birth and consider what they can teach us about living faithfully in uncertain times. Through scripture, art, and conversation, we will name what weighs on us, look for signs of God at work in our world, and ask what it means to respond with courage, love, and hope.

This large class combines short, engaging reflections with small-group, round-table discussion time. Wherever you are on your journey – whether you're weary, curious, searching, uncertain, or hopeful – you are welcome to join the conversation as we practice a hope that is gritty, resilient, and rooted in the good news of Christ.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH CIRCLES

Welcome to a sisterhood of Christian purpose, discipleship and fun!
Our President this year is Cathy Barton and Vice President is Margie Smith.
Feel free to reach us at our emails catherineabarton2@gmail.com and margie@grirestx.com.

MIRIAM CIRCLE

This circle meets once a month at various times during the day and they host coffee hour socials twice a month. Their co-chairpersons are Carolyn Boyle, Pat Tippie, Frances Pierson, and Karen Norris. If you would like to drop in on a meeting and join them for coffee, please contact Frances at fperson1949@gmail.com, Pat at pbtp@netzero.com, or Carolyn Boyle at cboyleaust@aol.com.

HANNAH CIRCLE

This circle meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 10-noon in Room 208-209 in the main sanctuary building. The co-chairpersons are Emma Lea Mayton at emayton@gmail.com and Carolyn Beaird at carolyn@beaird.com.

ANNA CIRCLE

This circle meets the second Tuesday evening of each month at 6:30 pm in the blue Youth House at 5908 Wynona. Co-chairpersons are Joanne Tata at jtata1959@gmail.com and Melba Robbins at melbaredrose@yahoo.com.

Each circle has its own unique gathering of talented women. We have quarterly service projects throughout the year to continue our mission to support women and children in need.

We are glad you are seeking to know us better and we will do our best to stay in touch with you!

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH CIRCLES UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday August 29th 9:30 – 12:00noon

UWF Unit Gathering in the Great Hall (everyone is welcome to attend - not limited to women). We gather for breakfast, fellowship and information. Our speaker will be from the Southside Community Center. Those attending are invited to participate in our Service Project by donating travel-size toiletry items for Southside's clients.

On the 29th, we will have the opportunity to compile all of the decorated paper dolls for "Paper Dolls to Free Families" project. The dolls will be delivered to Congress in September.

Saturday September 26th 8:30am – 1:00pm

We are hosting the **UWF North District Annual Meeting**. UWF units from throughout the North District will gather for training and fellowship. Registration online via the North District.

Thursday, October 22 6:30 – 8:30pm

UWF Unit Gathering in the Great Hall (everyone is welcome to attend - not limited to women). We will gather for a Chili Supper and to enjoy our featured speaker – Pastor Hilary Marchbanks. Service Project will be announced.

Saturday, November 7th 10:00am - 12:00noon & 1:00 – 3:00pm

Day of Discovery is a fun opportunity to learn and grow together and help us fund mission projects. There are morning & afternoon sessions with a light lunch at noon (\$5 donation). Registration, class details, and the fee schedule will be available online via Realm.

Some of the classes include Pottery, Advanced Weaving, Mahjong, Gingerbread Houses, Paper Mache, Wills & Estate Planning Tips (lawyer-led).

Complimentary childcare will be provided upon request with registration.

UWF is a great opportunity to join others in Christian fellowship and service. We hope you will come join us!

ONGOING GROUPS

MEN'S COVENANT GROUP

Gather at Jim's at Burnet and 183 for breakfast, fellowship, prayer, study, and discussion. Every Friday at 7:00 - 8:00am.

Contact Paul Mollenhauer at pcmollenhauer@gmail.com for more information.

VETERAN'S GROUP

Veterans gather to share stories and connect with one another across different decades of service.

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm at El Mercado on Burnet Road for supper and community.

Contact Al Lindsey at alind88@gmail.com for more information.

SISTERHOOD OF STORYTELLING

The Saint John's Storytelling Sisterhood meets every Thursday at 10:00am at Susie Brown's home.

We write our memories during the week and share with our group at the meeting. Our purpose is about fellowship, providing a safe space and listening with love. Please join us. Susie can be reached at 972-816-1372 for text or call or brownsudan@att.net.

THREADERS

The Saint John's Threaders gather together to knit and/or crochet, to share enthusiasm for various fiber arts, and to support church ministries such as Congregational Care by making prayer blankets and shawls or hats for unhoused neighbors.

Meets in the church library twice a month on:

Second Thursdays 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Fourth Thursdays 1:30 – 3:00 pm

30S & 40S WOMEN'S GATHERING

Join us the first Thursday of each month – sometimes for lunch, sometimes for dinner – for a relaxed time of connection and conversation. This informal gathering is a great opportunity to connect and support one another.

Contact Hilary@stjohnsaustin.org for details.

THE MIDDLE PLACE



This new group is for those navigating transitions, including caring for aging parents or supporting adult children, as well as those simply seeking connection in this season. Some may be new empty nesters, while others may simply find themselves in a season of change.

The group will meet casually in Kathryn and Manuel Guerra's home for conversation, friendship, and support – no curriculum, no homework, just a chance to spend time together and see where the conversation goes.

Contact the Guerras for more info at 5guerras@gmail.com.

JOY (JUST OLDER YOUTH) SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES

In JOY, our senior adults enjoy fun, food, and fellowship together, gathering for regularly scheduled outings around town, Lunch Bunch meals, movie days, group walks, and more!

Join us for all of the JOY activities or pick and choose based on what's most interesting to you!

Contact katie@stjohnsaustin.org for more information.



JOY UPCOMING EVENTS

Indoor Walk at ACC Highland Campus Tuesday, August 25, 11:30 am

It's time for another climate-controlled indoor walk at ACC Highland Campus (6101 Highland Campus Dr.) with your JOY friends! Our next walk will be on Tuesday, August 25, at 11:30 a.m. Folks can meet there, just inside the main entrance (at the end of Denson Dr., facing Airport Blvd - see picture on registration page) or arrange to carpool from the church. Register to join us at bit.ly/joyaugwalk.

JOY Field Trip to LBJ Presidential Library Tuesday, September 1, 12:00 pm

Join JOY on Tuesday, September 1, for a visit to the LBJ Presidential Library to view their special exhibit, The American Experiment: Pursuing Our Promise. Ticket prices for the LBJ Library are: \$16/adult and \$12/seniors 65+. Free Visitor Parking is available in Lot #38. Register to join us at bit.ly/joylbjlibrary.

When registering, please indicate if you prefer to carpool from the church or meet there.

Morning Coffee at Genuine Joe's Wednesday, September 9, 8:30 am

Let's meet up for morning coffee and conversation at Genuine Joe's (2525 W. Anderson Ln., Suite 270) on Wednesday, September 9, at 8:30 a.m. Genuine Joe's shares space with Austin fave, Russell's Bakery!

Register to join us at bit.ly/joygenuinejoes.

Lunch Bunch at Honest Mary's Tuesday, September 15, 12 p.m.

Join your JOY friends for lunch at 12 p.m. on Tuesday, September 15, at Honest Mary's (4800 Burnet Rd.).

Register to join us at bit.ly/joyhonestmarys.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Children are a vital part of our community! Our nursery (ages 0–3) is staffed by trained caregivers, and children of all ages are welcome in worship with activity kits, Children's Time, Communion, and more.

Kids can also take part in engaging programs: During the 10:00 hour, children ages 4 through 3rd grade are invited to join us. Children gather for Sunday School in Room 103. Each week, children explore a Bible story through Godly Play, an imaginative, hands-on way of experiencing Scripture that invites children to wonder, ask questions, and discover the story for themselves.

Our Agape (4th and 5th grades) meet for Bible learning on Sunday mornings at 10:00am in Room 119 and also meet for fun activities a few Sunday afternoons a month.

For our schedule and to receive our children's ministry newsletter, please visit bit.ly/sjfamilynews or contact isabella@stjohnsaustin.org for more information.

YOUTH MINISTRY

At Saint John's, our youth ministry (6th - 12th grades) is a place where students can grow in faith, build lasting friendships, and explore what it means to follow Christ together.

Nearly every Sunday afternoon, our youth gather in the Youth House for fun activities, games, special events, a brief reflection time together, and more.

Join us in the Youth House Sunday morning during the 10:00 hour for Donuts and Discussion as we dig into the Scripture being explored in worship that Sunday.

We'd love to have you join us!

Sign up at bit.ly/sjyouthnews to receive our newsletters for details. Contact isabella@stjohnsaustin.org for more information.

