

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**St. James' Episcopal Church**

*knowing and serving God by serving others*

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# FROM THE RECTOR

We continue to be recipients of God's providence here at St. James' and we continue to serve our community in Christ's name! We are a blessed people, and we attempt to be a blessing to others. This generosity is reflected in not only our mission statement, *to know and serve God by serving others*, but also in our activities. There are many people to thank for all the hard work that goes on here at St. James'. I want to personally thank the efforts of our Rector's warden, Mrs. Sarah Deacle and our People's warden, Mrs. Marilyn Hastings, for their leadership to me and to the Church. To all members of the St. James' Vestry who have volunteered their time and talent to serve. Many thanks to the Leadership of Mrs. Barbara Bateman, Mrs. Candy Nyce, Mrs. Maggie Brownlee and Mrs. Tish Rodriguez who provide leadership for our Outreach House activities, and to all the volunteers that make that program such a vital part of the ministries here at St. James'. To all those who have given of their time and talent on our various committees such as building and grounds, parish life and communications, thank you for a job well done. We the people of St. James' continue to strive to be Christ-like in our community and to fulfill his commandments and the vows made at our baptism to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and minister to those in need. As I have stated in the past, these actions reflect the very best of the Episcopal Church and our Christian tradition. I could not be prouder to be a part of this community. As we approach this Annual meeting, I am reminded of all that God has done for us in our 11 years together in ministry. St. James,' continues to be richly blessed by God and we continue to bless others in Christ's name!

St. James' continues to recover from the devastating effects of COVID-19 with regard to Sunday attendance. We experience some growth in 2023 but we are still far from the average attendance before the pandemic. During this past year, we added 10 new families with 15 adults and 8 children for 23 new people who became members of our congregation with 6 people being removed from the roles due to death or transferred to another congregation. Our total membership increased from 662 members reported in 2022 to 686 members reported in the 2023 parochial report. We also had 6 baptisms in 2023. We saw our average Sunday attendance increase from 188 in 2022 to 199 in 2023. These numbers are bolstered due to the increase in online attendance. Our in-person attendance is hovering around 150 so far in this first quarter of 2024 and we are starting to see and uptick in these numbers. The 5:00 pm service is back up to around 35 and we have experienced a few services over 50 this last year. St. James' is one of the congregations in the Diocese of Pennsylvania that has weathered the pandemic and has experienced steady attendance and nominal contraction. This steadiness is also reflected in our pledge and plate receipts which remain at a point where we are able to meet our financial commitments and keep the ministry operating. You have my heartfelt thanks for your commitment to worship and to your financial support of St. James'.

St. James' is solidly a "program" Church engaged in our community in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ. Our music programs at St. James' are superb and we have been blessed by the Choir in their singing of anthems during worship. Ms. Lauren Exley, our Music Director and Organist, continues to do an extraordinary job with the music services at our 8:00 am Sunday service and we have been blessed with the singing of our Adult Choir members at many of the services. Our Christmas Eve and Easter services are second to none and she and all the members of the Choir need to be commended. As our Christian Education Director, Lauren maintains the high quality of

our Church School and I want to thank her for her leadership and to thank the efforts and commitment of all the Church School teachers. The Adult Christian Education classes, both the Wednesday night offerings classes as well as on Thursday morning Christ and Coffee class continue to be well attended. Thank you to our Postulant, Suzanne Clune for her leadership and the sharing of her knowledge at both the Wednesday nights Theology on Zoom meetings and at the Thursday 11:00 am Christ and Coffee gatherings. We are privileged to be able to raise someone of Suzanne's caliber to the priesthood and I am sure she will be a blessing to an Episcopal congregation in our Diocese.

We continue to be financially sound, and I must thank our Treasurer, Mr. Phil Tatem for his leadership and dedication to the financial health of St. James'. Thanks to his efforts and the efforts of those serving on the Vestry in finance, Mr. Chuck Rogers, and Mrs. Janice Tabbut, our financial reports are accurate and on time and all our bills are paid in a timely manner. This has been and continues to be accomplished by a phenomenal effort on their part. Thank you to all involved!

Our new Parish Administrator, Mrs. Sara Terenzi, is doing an amazing job in her role and in ensuring that the Church's bulletins and communication vehicles are operating and that all the timely information is being disseminated. Her untiring devotion to the ministries at St. James' and her devotion to me are to be commended. She is a remarkable organizer, and she has taken on many of the bookkeeping duties which has help us in the financial operations here at St. James'. Her constant attention to detail has enabled us to significantly reduce office expenses, most notably saving over \$4,000 annually on printing fees and utility bills compared to prior years. She has quickly ingratiated herself with the leadership and members of this church, and her infectious smile is a gift to all of us here at St. James'. St. James' is a busy place and her efforts to ensure that information on events and activities are disseminated in a timely manner is to be commended. Thank you, Sara!

I know that I am missing many of you who help to make St. James' the wonderful place that it is. Thanks to my Vestry for their leadership and support. It is my honor to serve as your Rector and I am looking forward to continuing the ministry of Christ in this place, by bringing "release to the captives" and taking care of the "poor, the helpless and the needy." I can't imagine what God has instore for us in 2024 and beyond!

Faithfully,

*Fr. Mike+*

The Rev. Dr. Mike Sowards  
Rector



# ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

- I. Opening Prayer
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Vestry and Delegate Introductions - Thanks to Harry Cornog, Iva Ferrell, Peggi Spinozzi, Chuck Rogers

Elections: Ryan Collins, Kathy Hutchinson, David Woodrow, Sue Rice

Vestry Class:

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026
Iva Ferrell <sup>^</sup>	Barbara Bateman <sup>*</sup>	Rob Samtmann <sup>*</sup>
Harry Cornog <sup>^</sup>	Francois Spinguel <sup>*</sup>	Sharon Hansen <sup>*</sup>
Chuck Rogers <sup>^</sup>	Sarah Deacle <sup>**</sup>	Gene Goff <sup>*</sup>
Peggy Spinozzi <sup>**</sup>	Marilyn Hastings <sup>**</sup>	Janice Tabbut <sup>**</sup>

\*Eligible for a 2nd Term      \*\*Cycling Off      ^Decided not to run

Deanery and Diocesan Representatives: Jon Yenney and Phil Tatem

- IV Recognition of *Servants of St. James'* Award the 2024 class
- V. State of the Parish Reports
- VI. Committee & Program Reports
- VII. Questions/Comments
- VIII. Rector's Summary
- IX. Closing Prayer & Adjournment



# RECTOR'S WARDEN

Submitted by Sarah Deacle

2023 was a good year for St James with some hard lessons. We are learning to flower in a drier post-covid landscape.

We are enjoying the new members that are joining us for worship and community (there has been a steady stream in 2023). We know we have a loving community to share with them, and Father Mike as Rector is truly here to guide us toward Christ and our mission: "to know and serve God by serving others." We have been incredibly blessed to have had the love and support of deacon Suzanne Clune throughout the year, as she discerned her call to the priesthood. And before we could miss prior deacon Lou Steffenhagen too much, we got to endorse him for Ordination to the Priesthood.

But we also had to acknowledge that our post covid finances are harder in a real way. We haven't bounced back as much as we had hoped. Treasure Phil Tatum and others have spent a lot of time helping the vestry understand our church's finances and where we stand. There has been a heater and windows to replace, technology to maintain, and many other smaller jobs that come with our stewardship of our building and grounds. Thank you church community for your help on those Blue Jean Sundays! We realized late in 2022 that we couldn't support the staff we had with current pledge levels, and the past year has been a process of adjusting to the loss of longtime Director of Parish Operations and Communications, Lisa Reinhardt, as we moved to a part time office administrator. Sara Terenzi was hired in late summer for that position and has been wonderful help. And we know how lucky we are that our amazing music and education director, Lauren Exley, was able to take leave with her new baby over the summer but be back on board fully to shepherd us through the fall and winter. And our Outreach House continues to thrive. Truly our flock is in good hands.

We are not the same church that we were 4 years ago, but some things never change - our commitment to Christ, and our love for one another. May we ever be so blessed.

# MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by Peggy Schiavo Spinozzi, Vestry Secretary

March 19, 2023

1. The meeting was opened with a prayer by Father Mike Sowards at 9:11am
2. The Agenda was presented, motion was made to accept it and was passed
3. Introduction of retiring Vestry members: Drew Beck, Josh Ilgen and Bill Kilgour are cycling off the Vestry this year having completed their terms and were all thanked for their service
4. Servants of St. James Recognition- This year we recognized the following people with a certificate and will have their names inscribed on a plaque
  - A. Rob Bradfield- for his work with AA, Vets in Recovery and his work with Outreach
  - B. Adele Ray- who at age 97 has been a church member for over 60 years as a church leader, worked with GFS and many other activities
  - C. Sally Templeton- who cheerfully helps others and tirelessly works on the Altar Guild as well as many other contributions to the church.
  - D. Nominations for Vestry Members- Sharon Hansen, Gene Goff and Rob Samtmann were elected to the Vestry by acclamation. Deanery and Convention Representatives- Phil Tatem and Jon Yenney agreed to continue as Deanery and Convention representatives. This was approved by acclamation.
5. Parish Membership- has been steadily increasing. In 2017 we had 526 members, 662 in 2022. During that period average Sunday attendance grew from 175 to 180 (220 with online viewers; our online presence has been an important factor with viewership in far-flung places and a large number of weekly viewers. Since the pandemic, Sunday attendance has been gradually increasing again.
6. Financial Overview- Phil Tatem reported that we had \$80K surplus last year due to a large bequest from the Alatha V. Sherrod estate (\$246K). Our operating deficit for the year was \$73K.
  - A. The Vestry has taken steps to decrease spending to address the deficit by reducing the parish administrator to part-time, decreasing our maintenance costs and taking steps to increase revenue and grants. We received about \$40K in grants last year.
  - B. 2023 Financial Planning - We had a fewer number of pledges and reduced total pledged amount giving us a projected deficit of \$29K for this year. Please pledge!
  - C. Our cash position is solid with fully funded endowment and cash cushion. Our income is derived from pledges (46%), bequests and special offerings (38%) and (5%) from Donations and Grants although these have decreased considerably since the height of the pandemic.
  - D. Expenses- Payroll (48%), Property & Operating Expenses (26%), Office & Finance (10%), Outreach (9%).

- E. Parish Giving- The parish covers the upkeep and maintenance of the Outreach House; food is bought with grants and donations. We also send money to the Diocese as part of our obligation to them. A small portion of our funds goes to the Rector's Discretionary Fund for his use to help others as needed.
  - F. Financial Assets- have held at a steady level over the years. Our goal is to increase pledges so that we do not have to dip into any of our funds for maintenance needs. Our funds are restricted and held in the Church Foundation where they are invested.
  - G. G. Importance of Bequests- Since 2011 we have been the beneficiary of about \$1.5 million. For reference, every \$100K yields \$4k in interest for our use. Please consider a bequest in your estate planning.
  - H. Church Audit- We are required to have a financial audit; cost is \$6K. We have a qualified accountant on the Vestry and hope that this internal audit will suffice. We have asked for an exemption from the Diocese.
- 6 New Rector's Warden- Sarah Deacle will be the new Rector's Warden and presented a look at how St. James' serves the Community by opening our doors to AA, Boy and Girls Scouts, vets in Recovery and the Community Garden. Within the parish, we serve each other with Book Club, Christ and Coffee, ECW, Youth Group, various types of communications, Theology on Tap and Coffee Hours as well as our other church events.

## 7. Committee Reports-

- A. Buildings & Grounds- Francois Springuel reported that all contracts were reviewed to reduce costs. In the future they will be on a 3 year cycle, then go out for bid and contractors will be switched if needed.

1 We switched our HVAC contract and arranged for a prospective eagle scout to patch driveway holes.

2 The B & G committee meets monthly and tries to get small projects done to defray costs.

3 The Glebe house roof and garage roof, doors and windows were replaced with a grant from the diocese. The future of the Glebe House is uncertain as there are many expensive inside repairs needed.

4 Exterior cameras were placed outside of the Outreach House due to dumping etc.

5 Cemetery Wall- A propane truck recently crashed into the wall; insurance claim has been filed however there are other parts of the wall in disrepair. Because this is a rare skill, rebuilding 30'-40' of the wall could cost as much as \$38K. We are looking at a reasonable solution for these repairs.

6 In the not-so-distant future, the heating systems of the parish hall and the church will need to be replaced.



## 8. Education-

A. Lauren Exley announced that we have 51 registered students in the Church School with 16 wonderful volunteer teachers. The theme this year is Worship.

B. Fr. Mike organizes Adult Education activities such as Christ & Coffee (in person group) weekly and Theology on Tap (weekly Zoom meeting).

## 9. Youth Group-

A. Lauren described the various activities of the youth group which are local in our church, in our diocese and sometimes in other states. They include movie nights, Friendsgiving, Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Youth Jam and the Pilgrimage to Navajoland.

B. Fundraisers to support these activities are the WaWa hoagie sale and pancake supper.

## 10. Outreach House-

A. Barbara Bateman stated that OH distributed over 36,000 pounds of donated and purchased food last year. We received a \$10K grant for food last year and a \$15K grant for non-food items this year. About 60-65 families shop twice each month.

B. At Christmas 119 children received Christmas gifts through the Mitten Tree.

C. Because visibility in the community is important a newsletter was sent out in the Fall which likely increased donations from various sources. We also get food from Kimberton Whole Foods, WaWa, several churches and many organizations.

D. Volunteers donated 2400 hours of their time last year; many from St James, and many from other churches and the community.

E. The clothing room is all donated clothes, nothing is purchased. Any clothing, textiles or shoes that are unusable are sent to Keystone Recycling which pays us by the pound. Last year we earned \$2,064 from clothing recycling.

F. Other things provided by OH are backpacks in the Fall, turkeys for Thanksgiving, coats for Project Warmth

11. Lauren Exley thanked the Vestry for providing her with a paid Maternity Leave.

12. Chuck Rogers acknowledged the hard work and time that Phil Tatum and Dale Pennypacker donate to keep the Church finances in order.

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:25am.

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Submitted by Phil Tatem, Treasurer

Financially, 2023 was a challenging year for St. James'. We had a \$104,630 deficit, higher than anticipated.

Income was below expectations. We had large shortfalls in pledges and donations (\$62,000). We also lost our prospective tenant for our upstairs space which resulted in a \$21,000 shortfall in rent. On the positive side, Outreach donations exceeded the budgeted amount by a wide margin, a result of successfully applying for additional grants, increased community fundraising efforts, and continued largess on the part of both the St. James' membership and our wider community. Our "Other" income was very high due to insurance payouts and Diocesan support for capital needs. These funds were offset dollar-for-dollar by covered expenses. The Hofsas Trust and our investments in the Church Foundation are continuing to yield a steady income.

Our expenses were higher than expected this year. The largest unplanned expense was for the new boiler for Platts Hall (which includes the basement and second floor). Most of the over budget items were offset by additional income: the Glebe House/garage remediation, covered by a grant from the Diocese; the cemetery wall reconstruction, offset by insurance; and increased Outreach House spending, paid for through increased grants and fundraising. We saved a significant amount of money as we transitioned to part-time administrative staff.

The vestry has taken steps to address the ongoing deficit and to enhance our revenue and further control our expenses.

## Revenue

- We signed a new tenant for the upstairs space with a significant increase in rent. The tenant has been vetted and work has begun on readying the space for occupancy this fall
- We are working with the Diocese to explore ways in which the Glebe House and attached property can be used to generate revenue for the parish
- We continue to search for and apply for grants for capital projects and Outreach funding

## Expenses

- We are looking for savings whenever contracts are renewed (generally a three-year cycle)
- We are working toward additional savings by transferring some work from our Accountant to our Administrative staff

Overall, our cash position is sound. Last years' surplus largely covered this year's shortfall and our we had sufficient cash to fund the rest. Our endowment remains well funded, allowing us to weather a financial downturn.

Pledging units decreased from 122 in 2022 to 112 in 2023, but our pledged income rose. Continued growth in both pledging families and pledge income are important for continued financial stability.

## Looking Forward

From a financial position, 2024 appears to be a transition year for St. James'. 2024 will continue to pose challenges. The approved budget for the year shows a deficit of \$77,000. The impact of the new tenant upstairs will not be fully felt until 2025 and subsequent years) while the cost to prepare the space will be borne this year and not all of that is reflected in the anticipated deficit.

The financial picture brightens looking forward to 2025 and beyond. We should see the full impact of our new tenant in 2025 and that will do a great deal to narrow the deficit. We continue to work with the diocese on a long-term plan to monetize the Glebe House and related properties. While it is too soon to predict what the impact will be and when it will be felt, I am optimistic that it will ultimately be of significant financial benefit to the parish.

The pandemic-induced slump in membership and pledging may have ended. We ended 2023 with 112 pledging units. This year we have 114, and that number tends to grow as new members join throughout the year. Also, our pledged income for 2024 is the largest it has been in any year other than 2020.

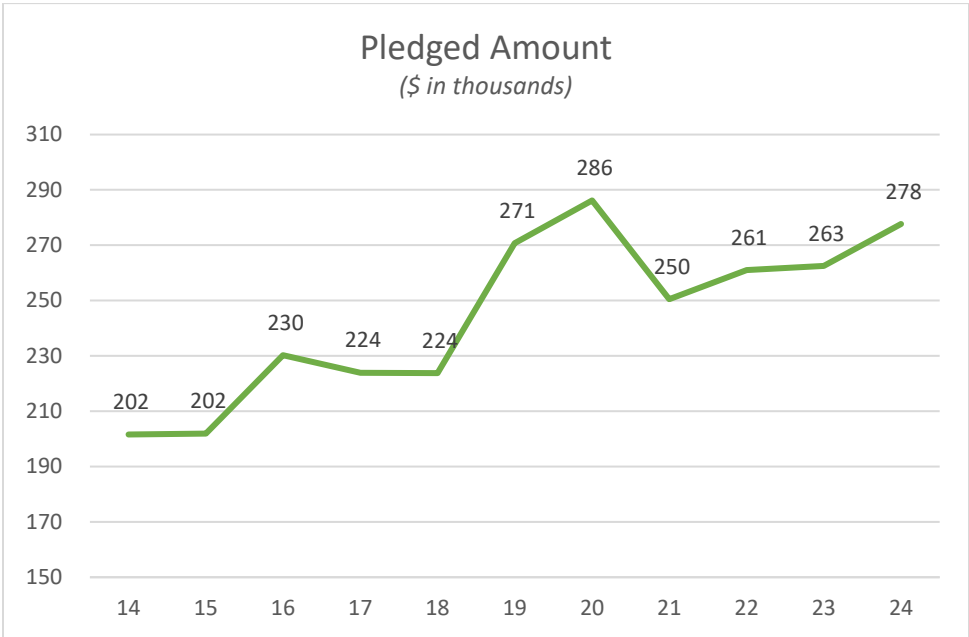
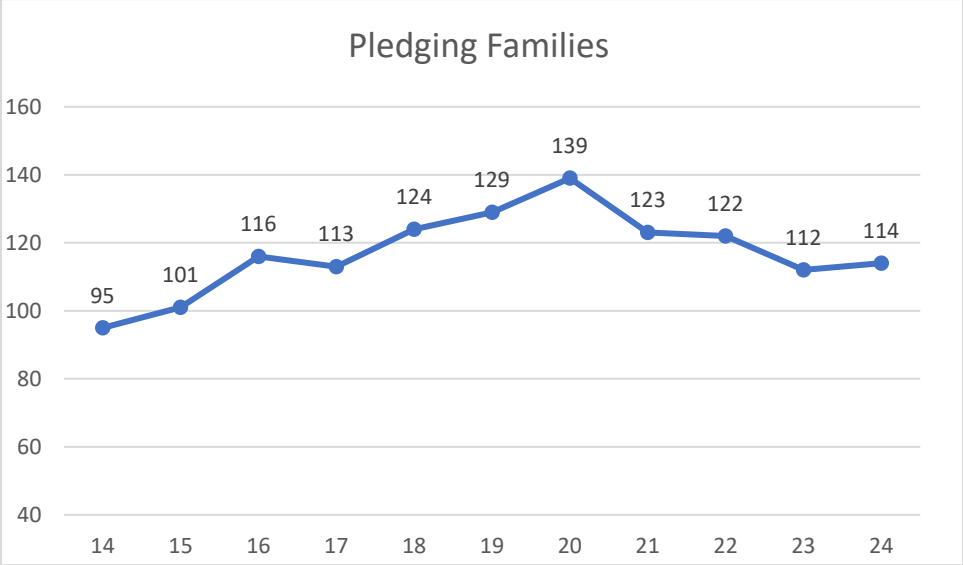
**Pledges continue to be the most important part of parish income.** Your continued financial support for St. James' is vital in allowing us to continue our mission "*to know and serve God by serving others*". If you have not yet returned a pledge card for 2024, please do so.

Charts and additional information can be found on the following pages.

# PLEDGING

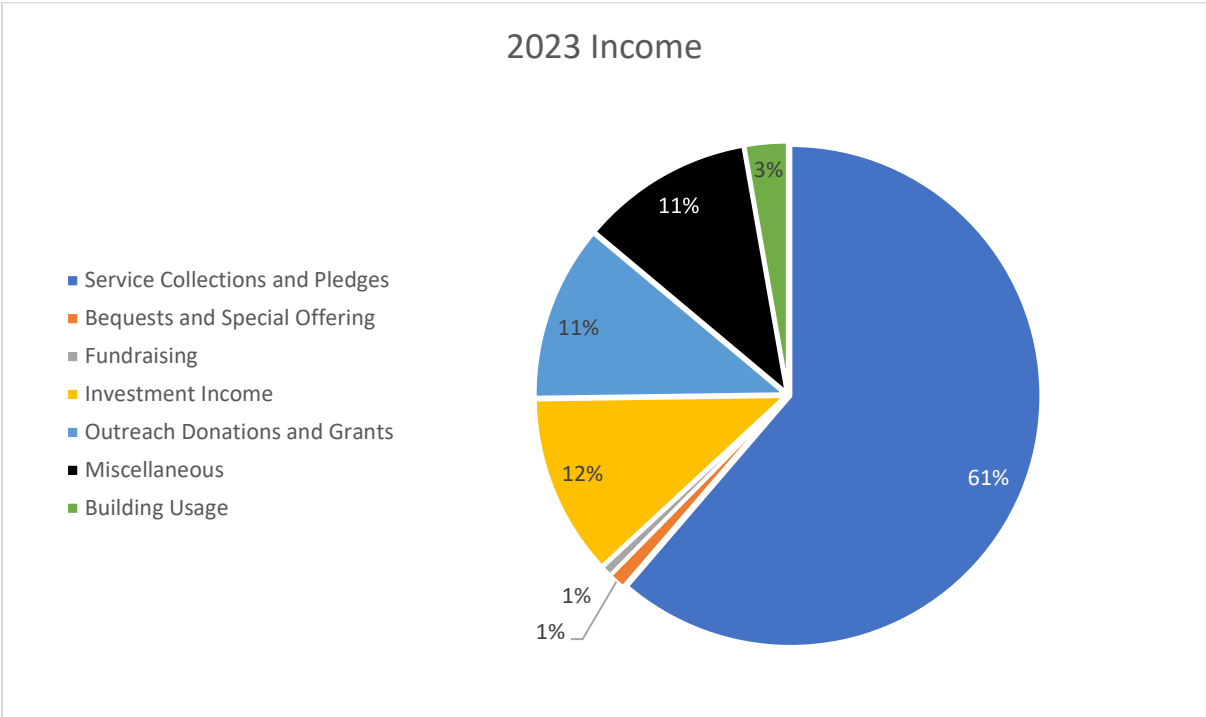
We had 112 pledging units in 2023, down from 122 last year. The total amount pledged increased from \$261,000 to \$263,000. Our actual pledge receipts were \$283,000.

We have 114 pledging families for 2024 (as of April 1st). This is an increase over last year. Our projected pledge income is \$278,000.



# INCOME OVERVIEW

Our 2023 income totaled \$477,738. As the chart shows, pledges are our largest source of income. **Pledging remains the cornerstone of St. James' financial well-being.**

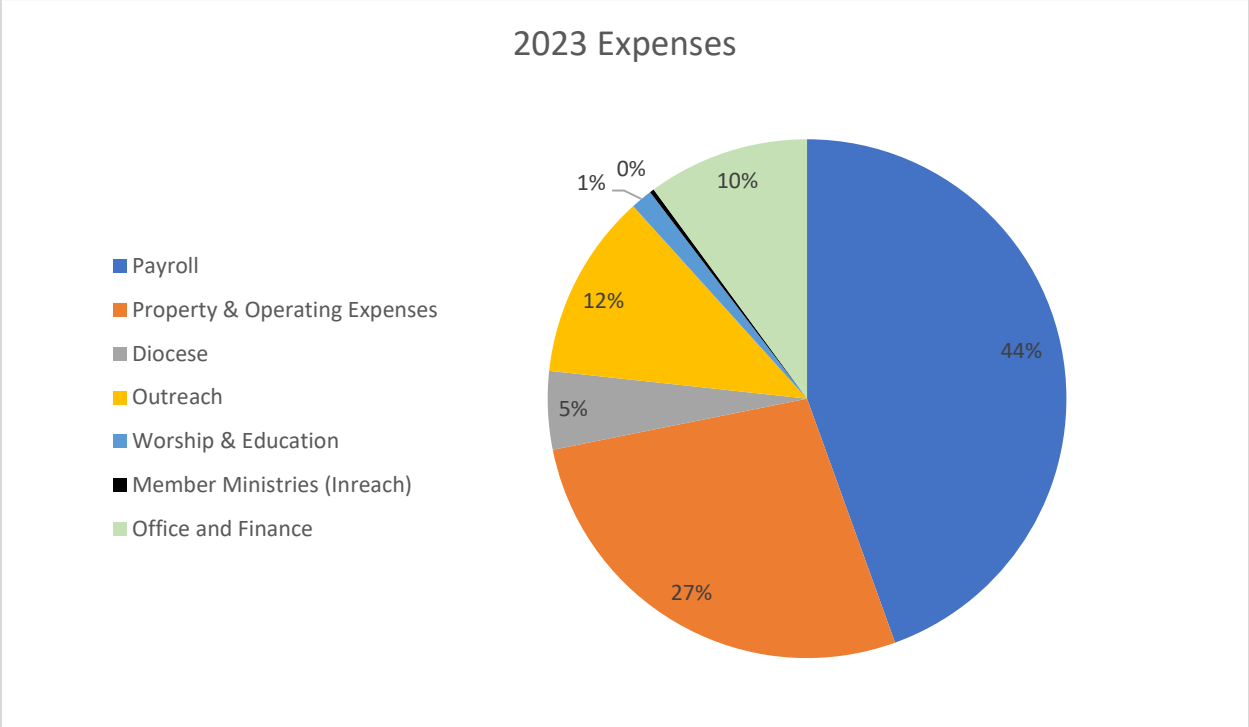


### 2023 Income Summary

Service Collections and Pledges	292,801	61%
Bequests and Special Offerings	5,249	1%
Fundraising	3,404	1%
Investment Income	55,798	12%
Outreach Donations and Grants	54,063	11%
Miscellaneous	53,173	11%
Building Usage	13,250	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$691,684</b>	<b>100</b>

# EXPENSE OVERVIEW

Expenses were higher than anticipated this year. Our largest unplanned, unreimbursed expense was for the new boiler for Platts Hall (which includes the basement and second floor).



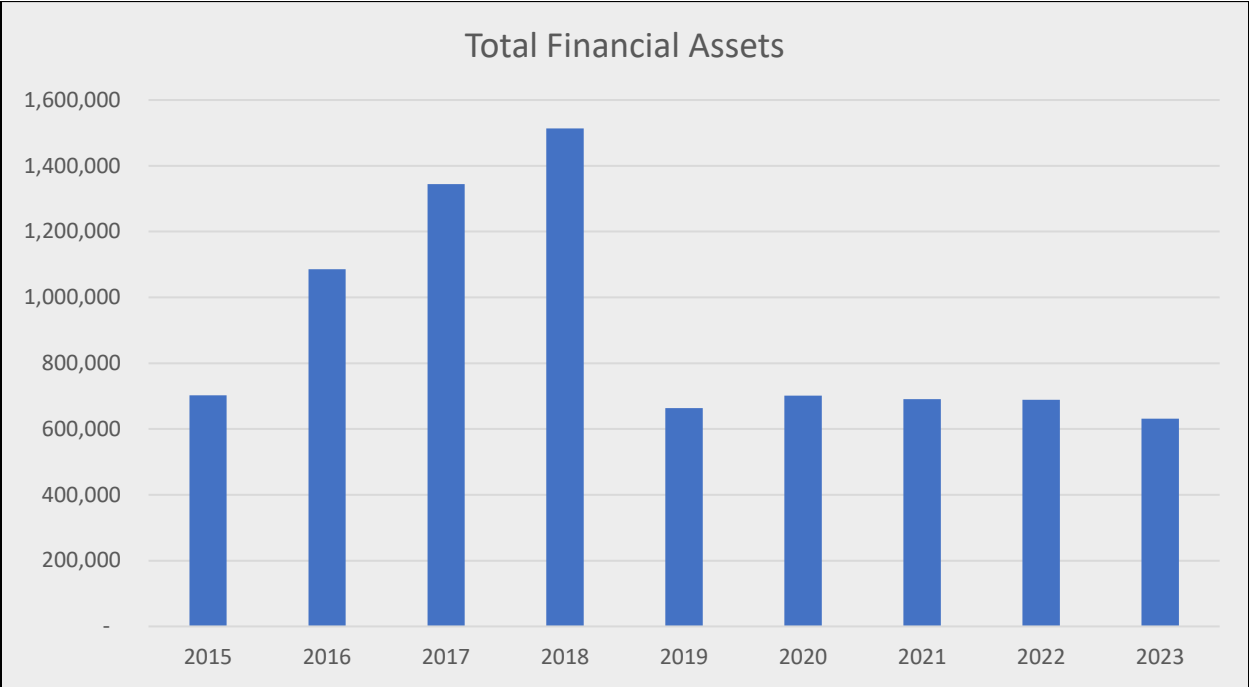
### 2023 Expense Summary

Payroll	259,128	44%
Property and Operations	159,304	27%
Diocese	28,384	5%
Outreach	67,551	12%
Worship & Education	7,851	1%
Member Ministries	1,593	0%
Office and Finance	58,660	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$582,471</b>	



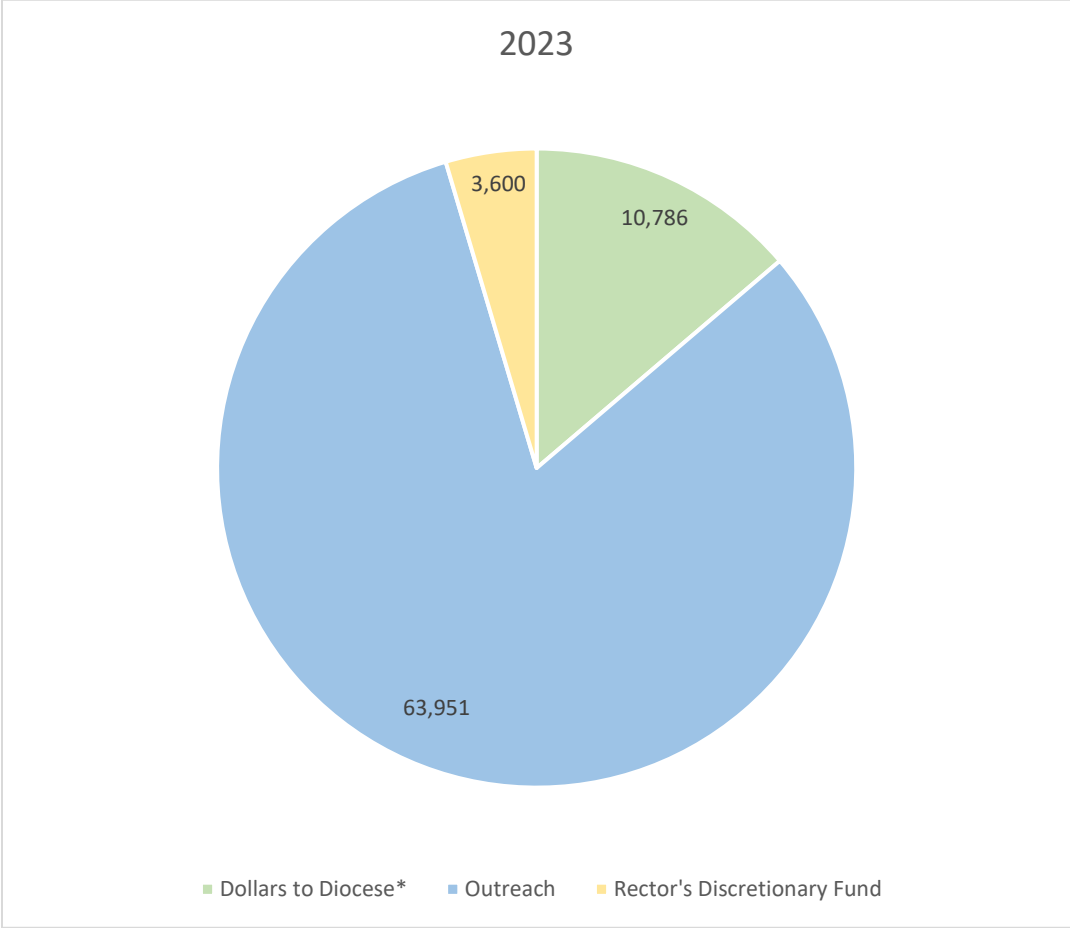
# FINANCIAL ASSETS OVERVIEW

Total Parish assets fell this year as expected given the deficit. Still, we retain a solid financial asset base going forward and our investments continue to provide us with additional income.



# GIVING OVERVIEW

Our commitment to serving others remains strong. We gave \$78,337 of our revenue to outreach ministries. This represents 16% of our income.



\* 38% of our 2023 Diocesan giving was used for Mission (vs operations) purposes

# BEQUESTS

Income from trusts and bequests continues to be an important part of our financial picture. Since 2011, estate income has provided St. James' with over *\$1.4 million* (see chart). Those funds have been crucial in maintaining the health of our parish plant and ministries. In addition, the Hofsas Trust set up for the benefit of St. James' by Robert and Ada Doris Hofsas generates approximately *\$34,000 annually* for general parish purposes.

Estate	Year	Distribution
Mary Cronmiller	2011	\$25,000
Dorothy Eschuk	2012	\$5,000
Mary Fields	2013	\$25,000
Kathryn Hansberry	2014	\$63,830
William & Muriel Elliott	2016	\$10,000
William Hammonds	2017	\$5,000
Deborah Marsteller	2017	\$753,203
Isabelle Pettit Seamann	2017	\$187,900
Grace Faber	2019	\$5,785
Georgette Griffith	2019	\$5,000
Robert & Ada Doris Hofsas	2019	\$59,247
Alatha Sherrod	2021	\$84,816
Alatha Sherrod	2022	\$243,531
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$1,473,311</b>

# BUDGET 2024

	TOTAL
<b>Revenue</b>	
400000 Service Income/Collections	334,400
401000 Special Offering Income	5,200
402000 Fundraising Income	5,000
403000 Capital Campaign Income	0
404000 Outreach Income	40,000
405000 Other Income	32,200
420000 Trust Income	35,000
430000 Investment Income.	16,000
440000 Interest Income	1,500
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$469,300</b>
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>\$469,300</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
501000 Education	32,400
502000 Member Ministries	4,000
502100 Worship	8,550
503000 Outreach	25,500
510000 Operating Expenses	134,475
520000 Finance & Administration	46,832
530000 Compensation	250,582
530500 Personnel Expense - Other	9,100
540000 Discretionary Expenses	3,600
550000 Outside Ministry Support	100
600000 Sacred Gifts	30,700
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$545,839</b>
<b>NET OPERATING REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ -76,539</b>
<b>NET REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ -76,539</b>

# BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Submitted by Francois Springuel, Gene Goff, & Harry Cornog

*Buildings and Groups would like to highlight the **Glebe House** in the 2024 Annual report for the following reasons:*

- While the Church was able to secure a grant for the Diocese to repair the roof on the Glebe house (as well as the garage) that state of the Glebe house is best described as poor.
  - Over the years the Glebe house was used as the primary site of the outreach house it sustained significant wear and tear and the church was not in a financial position to keep the building up.
  - These issues were exasperated as while the Glebe house allowed St. James to serve the community as an outreach house, the building was not designed for this use and thus experienced more wear and tear than had it been used for other uses.
    - It was for this reason that the Church embarked on the successful campaign to raise funds and build the new outreach building that we are using today.
  - Since the outreach house has moved to its new building the Glebe house has been used on and off by the Cub scouts as an additional meetings space.
  - Late Fall / Early winter the Heater in the Glebe house failed, this was not unexpected as based on engineering report commissioned by the Vestry the heating system in the Glebe house had reach end of life.
  - As a new heating system would cost ~\$25,000+ the decision was made by the Vestry to winterize the Glebe house to prevent damage from freezing pipes.
  - In addition to the need for a new heating system the Glebe house has significant deferred maintenance what would be needed before it could be used regularly, including address the fact that it is on well water that we do not believe is safe to drink.
- The above factors have required the Vesty to begin to think of the best future for the Glebe house. To that end the Vestry has engaged the Diocese Property committee for their assistance.
  - The Diocese Property Committee specializes in helping churches find new ways to use their property to help support the church and their mission.
  - The Diocese Property Committee's prefers projects that allow the churches to retain ownership of the property involved in their projects.
  - The Diocese Property Committee has funds available to it to help cover the start-up costs of their suggested projects, terms / repayments of funds would vary based on project.
  - The Diocese Property Committee is also open to partnering with neighboring property owners if by doing so would increase the viability of their proposed project.
    - The owner of the field connected to the Glebe house property has expressed an interest in partnering with St. James on a possible project.

- Currently the Vestry is awaiting feedback from the Diocese Property Committee on what suggestions they may have for the Glebe house and its attached property and thus no decision have been made.
  - The Vestry is open to additional ideas from the congregation.
  - The Vestry will provide an update to the congregation on any projects involving the Glebe house prior to making a final decision to ensure there is an appropriate opportunity for feedback.
  - The Vestry understands that the up-keep / cost of deferred maintenance for the Glebe house is significant and is working to find the best path forward that both preserves the Church's limited capital while maximizing our future options.



# A WORD FROM OUR SEXTON

Submitted by James Downam

2023 has been busy both with weekly maintenance and upkeep from last year's improvements.

Several windows were replaced this past year - thank you **Tim Kane contracting!** - and fresh paint has been given to areas that will be rented by a local nursery school.

We routinely perform the needed maintenance to replace lightbulbs, toilet seats, and things that just plain wear out from normal use.

I look forward to continuing to improve the building and grounds at St. James for all current and future parishioners.

# MUSIC PROGRAMS

Submitted by Lauren Exley, Director of Christian Education and Music

The Adult Choir enhances weekly worship through the singing of hymns and anthems. Music supports a rich worship experience and provides opportunities for both the singers and listeners to connect to their faith with a broader range of emotion. In addition to supporting congregational worship, the choir provides members with an opportunity for regular fellowship and helps singers of all abilities to improve their musical skills.

The Adult Choir rehearses regularly (Thursday nights, 7:30pm), preparing for Sunday anthems and other special events. Major works include an Advent/Christmas Cantata (at St. James') and Lenten Cantata (presented through the Collegeville-Trappe Ministerium's Lenten Series.)

If YOU are interested in joining the choir, please talk to Lauren, email [music@stjames-episcopal.org](mailto:music@stjames-episcopal.org), or simply stop by a rehearsal on Thursday at 7:30. We'd be happy to have you!

Our Adult Choir consists of:

**Soprano:** Val Coughlin, Betsy Springuel, Joanne Tatem, and Janice Tabbut



**Alto:**

Raelyn Campli,  
Carole Exley, Nadine  
Folk, Tanya Millet,  
and Janet Newman

**Tenor:**

Mary Martin and  
Chuck Rogers

**Bass:** Ron Davis,  
Bob Gannon, and  
Andrew Timinski

The choir spends the early portion of the year preparing for the Collegeville-Trappe Ministerium's Lenten presentation. In 2023, we rehearsed and performed a major work,

*It Is Finished*, a cantata by Mary MacDonald. The choir spends many hours both at their regularly scheduled rehearsals and extra Sunday rehearsals preparing for the performance. Due to generous donations, we were able to include the Blue Line Quintet and provide a moving musical experience for all who attended.

Due to the scheduling of Advent 4 on Christmas Eve in December 2023, the Choir presented a Christmas Cantata at the 8pm Christmas Eve service. The Cantata allowed for congregational singing, ensuring that those who attended had the opportunity to sing their favorite Christmas hymns. Through poignant narration and rich arrangements, the choir led a beautiful and meaningful Christmas Eve service.

The Adult Choir at St. James' forms the core group of musicians that work tirelessly to support worship in our church. Though there is never an expectation, several singers volunteer to lend their voices to multiple services. At busy times, such as Holy Week and the week of Christmas Eve, choir members gladly attend 3-4 services to better support worship. I am grateful to serve such dedicated and talented musicians here at St. James' Episcopal Church!

### ***All Parish Choir***

The All Parish Choir functions in a one-rehearsal/one-performance format. The choir meets a few times throughout the year and is open to all who might be interested in singing. No advance sign-ups are needed, and you do not need to attend every month to be involved...come when you can! Music is highly accessible (seriously, we learn it in 30 minutes!) and the goal is to joyfully come together in song.

Involvement in the All Parish Choir was low throughout 2023. My hope is to inspire intergenerational singing and provide an opportunity for young people to experience the joy of sharing choir anthems. One All Parish Choir day, I scheduled a piece that allowed for spontaneous youth participation through clapping. The youth that participated did not need to attend any pre-service rehearsal time, and yet they were able to experience the joy of sharing music. I hope to be able to use these types of pieces in the future.

### ***Junior Choir***

The Junior Choir is open to all Pre-K - 5<sup>th</sup> grade singers who would like an experience of singing for church.

Currently, we present anthems on Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday and rehearse for a set period of time before each performance. Music is

always accessible to both readers and non-readers, giving all a chance to participate.



### ***Teen Choir***

New for Fall 2023 was the inclusion of St. James' Teen Choir for 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade. As you can imagine, with so many groups to rehearse and perform, the scheduling of this choir was challenging. However, we settled on a schedule of bi-monthly rehearsals on Sunday mornings between the 8am and 10am

services, with anthem performances scheduled regularly throughout the year.

The choir included a core group of 5 singers, with some anthem performances featuring a smaller ensemble. The future of the Teen Choir is unknown, as extracurricular youth activities are difficult to accommodate, particularly in regard to choral singing that relies on regular attendance. However, the experience of singing in a small group and having the opportunity to perform a more difficult repertoire was appreciated by all! Having worked with several of these singers in the past, I enjoyed hearing their musical growth. I hope that we can continue the Teen Choir in years ahead and I will gladly work with the singers' families on scheduling.

### ***Fall Music Concert***

Our annual Music Concert was originally scheduled for Saturday, November 18, 2023. Unfortunately, a large portion of the choir ended up sick, and the event had to be

rescheduled for February 2024. (It was fabulous!) Look for more details in next year's annual report!

### *Christmas Pageant*



The 2023 Christmas Pageant was titled “The Good News of Christmas”. The format of this year’s pageant allowed for children of all ages to participate in a variety of roles. Our adult narrator Suzanne Clune narrated the show using a book by the same name. The dialogue of the show was spoken by our wonderful youth actors. Illness and scheduling changes interrupted the rehearsal process, but the show still came together beautifully! Thank you to all who support our annual Christmas pageant! The pageant was followed by a church party where students enjoyed a variety of Christmas crafts and ornament making. This year, the children first learned the history of St. Nicholas before having an opportunity to greet him and receive a special gift.

### *Soloists*

Members of the congregation are always encouraged to share their musical gifts in worship. Though my maternity leave did not allow many soloists to perform in Summer 2023, I have been able to include several soloists in the regular schedule of performances. Additionally, our young musicians were encouraged to share preludes before the 5pm Christmas Eve service. Thank you to all who have taken the time to learn extra music and share your gifts with the congregation!

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Thank you to all our musicians who lend your voices, your time, your instrumental talent, and your God given gifts to the music program! I am humbled to serve you and the congregation as we make beautiful music together. My future goals for the music program include providing a more regular opportunity for youth to come together and sing, continuing to challenge our singers with interesting and meaningful repertoire, and

finding a way to incorporate a regular use of handbells/chimes back into the program.  
Again, an extra “thank you” to all of our musicians. A director is no one without her choir.  
Thank you for allowing me to serve you.



# OUTREACH HOUSE

Submitted by: Barbara Bateman & Peggy Spinozzi

Vestry Liaisons - Outreach Commission

As food and housing costs increased in 2023, St. James' Outreach House continued to be an important source of assistance for our neighbors in need. At year's end 151 households were registered to receive services. Of those households, totaling 479 persons, 236 were adults 18-60 years, 69 were seniors and 174 were children. Many families shopped the permitted twice each month, while others visited only once or more sporadically as their needs dictated. Actual visits totaled on average 134 per month. Statistics for the year show the distribution of more than 35,000 pounds of donated food, diapers, personal care items, and cleaning supplies. Also distributed in addition to these in-kind donations were similar items purchased as needed using the \$ 3,000 monthly Outreach Food and Clothing Budget funded through grants and corporate/individual monetary donations.

The grants involved were \$15,000 from the Diocese of Pennsylvania and a \$10,000 grant from The Mission Fund St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Substantial resources (\$7200+) were gained through the Round Up at the Register Program from Kimberton Whole Foods and through an \$8500 food purchase credit provided by the Montco Anti-Hunger Network,

A \$1500 grant awarded in November by the diocesan ECW will cover the cost of 4 issues of the 2024 Outreach House Newsletter.

As in previous years, several special distributions occurred throughout 2023. In May the "Undie Sunday" collection provided over 400 pairs of men's, women's, and children's underwear for the clothing room. Box fans provided relief from summer heat to 20 households, August saw the distribution of school supplies, November distribution of



Thanksgiving turkeys, and in December Mitten Tree and Christmas Shop were well supported by the parish and community.

While school supply donations were down slightly this year over last specified cash donations allowed for the purchase of items in short supply. Backpacks and assorted supplies were distributed to 122 students.



As mentioned, the parish and the community once again assisted in generously ensuring that client families had gifts at Christmas. One hundred fifty-two children from 58 families received gifts through the Mitten Tree and 39 adult-only households were given \$25 Walmart gift cards. The Christmas Shop overflowed with community donated toys, games, and personal items allowing clients to secure gifts for friends and loved ones.

Still alive and well at Outreach House is a commitment to service. Volunteers work behind the scenes and/or with clients during shopping hours donating more than 2900 hours of time and energy over the year. The time commitment is entirely personal. Volunteers work weekly, monthly, or occasionally as fits their schedules Without our volunteers there could be no Outreach House.



If you are interested in joining the volunteer team, please contact Outreach House via email at [www.outreachhouse@stjames-episcopal.org](mailto:www.outreachhouse@stjames-episcopal.org) or by phone at 610-489-3481.

# EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

Submitted by: Sandy Hassinger

2023 was a busy year for ECW as we worked to accomplish the goals set forth during the previous year.

In keeping with the mission to maintain and spruce up the kitchen and Platt's Hall

- new, blue floral tablecloths were purchased and put to use over the spring and summer
- Curtains covering the open shelving under the counters in Platt's Hall were laundered, ironed and rehung
- Portrait of Reverend Platt was framed and hung in a place of prominence in the hall that bears his name
- Seasonal decorations, as well as new Christmas Tree decor were provided for the parishioners to enjoy

Our new goal approaching 2024 was established to replace the window treatments in Platt's Hall. Additionally, we established a second goal toward increasing member participation and relevance to more ladies in the church.

The Annual Winter Soup Sale was held February 25-26, with 60 quarts of soup being sold, for a profit of \$447.00

In mid-March, the first step was taken to address member participation with the publication of a survey for the women of the church. Unfortunately, despite multiple announcements by Father Mike, there were only 26 respondents.

At our April meeting, a new executive board was elected: President - Doreen Mayconich, Vice President - Diane Sartori, Treasurer - Jean Branco and Secretary - Sandy Hassinger.

The survey results were reviewed, and based on the responses indicating difficulty with the timing of the meetings, a decision was made to change the meeting time to Saturday mornings. We also welcomed guest Barbara Leiby to the April meeting. Barbara is a Wedding and Special Occasion Floral Designer who is a member of the Norristown Garden Club, as well as an award winning participant of The Philadelphia Flower Show. Barbara provided a presentation on flower arranging and how to make a supermarket bouquet look like a florist's arrangement.

In May, ECW hosted the Annual Afternoon Tea. In a change of format, select ECW members volunteered to "host" a table, and provided a themed table scape along with favors. Table themes included "Birds of a Feather", "Favorite Authors Take Tea", "Save the Bees", "Southern Tea", "Southwest Flair", "Teacup Fantasy", "Tropical Paradise" and "Viva Italia". These varied tablescapes enhanced the festive atmosphere where 44 participants enjoyed soup, salad, a variety of tea sandwiches, scones and assorted

sweet treats. Due to the generosity of the members of the Tea Committee in providing food, the event showed a profit of \$1,488.26. Additionally, a Tea Basket was raffled off and a \$200 donation was made to Heifer International.

After a summer break, ECW had our first post-summer meeting in October, with a change from Tuesday evening to Saturday morning. This change did result in several new participants at the meeting. In addition to planning for the replacement of window treatments in Platt's Hall, we also enjoyed a seasonal floral arrangement demonstration.

During the month of October, ECW participated in the Boscov's Friends Helping Friends fundraiser, with a profit of \$185.00.

Our December meeting was full of business as well as fun and fellowship. Another basket raffle plan was under way with 3 baskets available. The raffle resulted in a profit of \$690.00.

Members in attendance at the meeting brought gift cards for donation to the Outreach House. 27 gift cards were donated for a total value of \$270.00. We also had a wine gift exchange, a holiday game involving a reading of "Twas The Night Before Christmas, and a "Coffee Filter Christmas Tree" craft.

Average Attendance - 15

# YOUTH EDUCATION AND FELLOWSHIP

Submitted by Lauren Exley, Director of Christian Education and Music

## Church School

Throughout **Spring 2023** our classes completed Units 3 and 4 of our Cross Year curriculum, a series of lessons that centered on Worship in the Episcopal Church.



The Primary class discussed the importance of sacred items in worship, as well as learning how music enhances our spiritual life. The goal is to have our youngest learners recognize what they see and hear in worship.

The Elementary class learned about the people that take part in worship, including laity, bishops, priests, and deacons. A special emphasis was

placed on the importance of the laity and how children can serve the church at any age. They also explored the history of the Episcopal Church, including the key people and texts that have formed our worship practices and theology.

The Middle School class participated in an intensive study of the Episcopal faith, including an overview of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the importance of scripture study, feast days, prayer practices, the concepts of “scripture, tradition, and reason” and “the middle way”, and the church’s emphasis on common worship and liturgy.



The High School class completed 2 units from *The Teen Compass: Living Wellness* curriculum, which included a study of personal spirituality and stress resilience.



Students also completed a 7-lesson study on Climate Justice with a goal of recognizing their own role in caring for God's creation.

*Thank you to our teachers for Fall 2022 - Spring 2023!*

Primary (PreK - 1<sup>st</sup>): Karen Charpentier, Cat McElroy, and Katie Skonier

Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>): Laurie Collins, Sarah Deacle, and Beckie Licwinko

Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>): Carole Exley and Iva Ferrell

High School (9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>): Kathy Hutchinson, Jodi Kohar, and Laura Wingerter

Substitutes: Tammy Campi, Christina Ilgen, Lindsey Kulis, Jeannine Pinault, Wendy Wezner

Throughout **Fall 2023** our classes completed Units 1 and 2 of our Shell Year curriculum. This series of lessons prepared students for their future in-depth study of Baptism, which occurs during Unit 3.



The Primary class began the year with a study of Creation. In addition to learning the specific days of Creation and recognizing how God has brought life into the world, students were reminded that they are uniquely and wonderfully made by a God that loves them. Students also heard stories from Jesus' childhood and ministry, including how Jesus loved and cared

for his friends.

The Elementary class heard covenant stories from the Pentateuch, including Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, and Moses. Students learned the importance of promises and the history of God's covenant with God's people. Students also completed a study of Jesus' miracles, including the wedding at Cana, healing of the blind man, and raising Jairus' daughter.



The Middle School class learned about the covenant relationships found in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Jacob and Esau, Miriam, Joshua, Elijah, and Jonah. Students recognized how God was calling these covenant ancestors to a new life, and how God continues to call us today. Students also studied New Testament examples of people following God's call and recognized the importance of being obedient to God.



The High School class continued *The Teen Compass: Living Wellness* curriculum, studying the topics of Relationships, Rest and Play, and Handling Emotions. Students also began a 7-lesson series on Racial Justice, which encouraged students to live out their Baptismal Covenant and “strive for justice and peace among all people.”

***Thank you to our teachers for Fall 2023 - Spring 2024!***

Primary (PreK - 1<sup>st</sup>): Karen Charpentier, Cat McElroy, and Katie Skonier

Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>): Laurie Collins, Kathleen Fink, and Tanya Millet

Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>): Carole Exley and Iva Ferrell

High School (9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>): Jodi Kohar and Laura Wingerter

Substitutes: Kathy Hutchinson, Christina Ilgen, Lindsey Kulis, Jeannine Pinaula, and Todd Sisca

We currently have 50 students registered in Pre-K - 12<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2023-2024 school year, compared to 51 students in 2022-2023. According to the official registration, we are holding steady. However, throughout the year we have had new families join us, so I believe the number to be closer to 55. As always, a huge thank you to all of the families who make St. James' Church School a regular part of their family's faith practice!

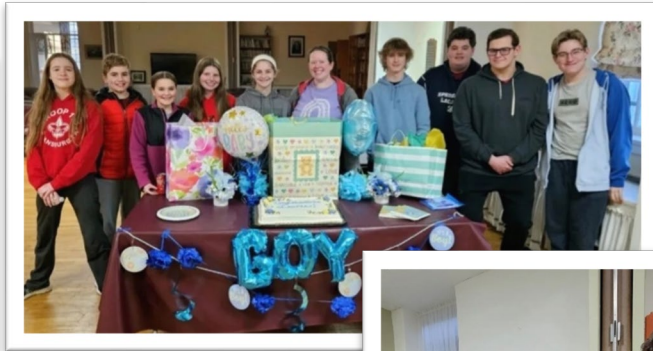
**Youth Fellowship Groups and Events**

*Youth Group (6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

Youth Group is an opportunity for youth to gather for fun, fellowship, and deep conversation and prayer. We meet an average of 1x per month. With a combination of serious discussion topics and fun events, youth group provides an opportunity for community building and learning. A massive thank you to Ryan Collins for assisting with youth group this year! In 2023...

We started our Instagram account!

We laughed our way through a game of Cranium: Bible Edition. The youth and a few wonderful adults surprised Lauren and baby (yet-to-be-named) with a surprise celebration!



We came back after the summer break and had a night of planning and prayer.





We were invited to a party at Monster Mansion and came dressed in our “monster-best” to determine who stole the potion!



We hosted an intergenerational Friendsgiving Dinner!





***Maundy Thursday Youth Event***

On Thursday, April 6, youth gathered following the Maundy Thursday service for a series of workshop style activities surrounding the events of Holy Week. In addition to



completing interactive scripture studies, students created their own set of Anglican prayer beads to support their faith journey and



made sacred objects out of clay.

***Easter Egg Hunt***

The Egg Hunt is open to all youth following the 10am Easter Sunday service. Students in PreK - 5<sup>th</sup> grade enjoyed the outdoor egg hunt while 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade participated in their own “glow-in-the-dark” egg hunt in the downstairs classrooms. Great fun was had by all!



### *Trunk or Treat*

Our annual “Trunk or Treat” event was held on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 - 7:30pm, with the All Hallows Eve service being held at 7:30pm. As always, it was a fierce competition to win the prize for “best trunk.” To no one’s surprise, it rained.



### *Chef's Club*

A new youth program began this year, created and supported by Kerri Timinski. Young chefs came together on a handful of Saturdays in the Fall to prepare treats for the following day’s Coffee Hour. Thank you to Kerri and to our creative youth for sharing their talents!





## *Youth Fundraisers*

Throughout the year, the youth run a variety of fundraisers to support their upcoming Pilgrimage cycle. In 2023, students worked at the Chicken BBQ dinner and Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, sold Wawa Hoagie coupons (which also supports the Outreach House) and offered to “pet-sit” for Blessing of the Animals.



Every year, I sit down to write this report and think “Did we do enough this year?” While I am always brainstorming new programs and new initiatives, I am proud of the schedule of youth events we currently support.


My future goals in Youth Formation and Fellowship include incorporating more fellowship for the Elementary age students, supporting new families in a more personal way, and creating opportunities to support faith formation at home.

Again, an extra “thank you” goes out to all of the adult volunteers. Church School and youth fellowship cannot happen without help. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our young people. I am grateful for your time, your caring hearts, and your willingness to share God’s love.

# ADULT EDUCATION

Submitted by Father Mike Sowards, Rector

There were two offerings for adults seeking a greater understanding of their faith last year in 2023. The first offering is our Wednesday night Zoom meeting entitled “**Theology on Zoom**” which meets between 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm. There we continued with our exploration of the New Testament, and we completed a reading of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians and we are in the last chapter of Ephesians right now.



**IT'S  
THEOLOGY  
ON ZOOM!!**

Please join Fr. Mike for a virtual  
Adult Christian education  
experience on Wednesdays  
at 7:30 PM.  
Let's discuss theology!  
Everyone is welcome!

We continued to investigate such things as: What is the theology being proposed in this Epistle? What were the issues facing the different communities (i.e. Rome, Corinth, Galatia and Ephesus)? How is its composition and style different from the other New Testament writings and/or epistles? We spend a lot of our time together reading

scripture and discussing what insights the Holy Spirit has given us. This class is still ongoing and will continue until the New Testament has been read in its entirety and then we will start with the Gospel of Matthew again.

The second offering is on Thursday mornings at 11:00 am and is entitled “**Christ and Coffee.**” In this offering, we meet in the Parish Hall over coffee and treats to discuss the lectionary readings for the upcoming Sunday. We look at the historical, cultural, and theological undertones of the readings and then we open up the floor for discussion and insight. We have had as many as 20 attend this offering and I am pleased with the tenor and vitality of the discussions. This is a Program Year class that begins each September and ends at the end of May.





# ALTAR GUILD

Submitted by Nancy Richards

The Altar Guild of St. James serves the church and assists the rector by preparing the altar for all church services including weddings, funerals, and church holidays.

Nine ladies and one gentleman have many different roles. Before services, members work in teams of two or three to place memorial flowers, set for eucharists, polish brass and silver, change liturgical hangings, and make sure readings and bulletins are in place. Afterwards, the volunteers launder the linens, wash wine glasses, and store communion vessels in the sacristy before leaving the church.

Our dedicated altar guild members are honored to serve such a beautiful and historic church such as St. James and to maintain the gifts we have inherited. Although we have several new volunteers, we would welcome new altar guild members to serve with us.

If you are interested in joining the altar guild, please contact Nancy Richards at 610-728-5649 or [n.richards2@verizon.net](mailto:n.richards2@verizon.net).

Questions about flower donations should be directed to Marilyn Hastings at 610-322-2556 or [Marilyn.hastings@verizon.net](mailto:Marilyn.hastings@verizon.net)



# USHER REPORT

Submitted by Francois Springuel

Ushers continue to serve at the 10 am service. We currently have 8 volunteers in the rotation and are always looking to add more. Ushers are being scheduled for all services during high holy days to help with seating and flow. Please let Francois know if you are interested in being added to the rotation!

# PARISH LIFE

Submitted by Sharon Hansen

This year's big event was the annual Chicken Barbeque - at which over \$2,000 was raised for the Pilgrimage fund! Looking forward, we hope to have more opportunities to celebrate faith & fellowship with our exceptional community here at St. James.'