



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1018 Farmington Avenue
West Hartford, Connecticut 06107

*The Annual Meeting of Saint James's Parish
will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024
at 11:00am*

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Agenda

The Annual Parish Meeting
Saint James's Episcopal Church
West Hartford, Connecticut
January 28, 2024
11:00 a.m.

Welcome and Call to Order	The Rev. Robert C. Hooper III, Rector
Reading of the Warrant	Ted Newton
Reading of the Minutes of the Last Meeting	
The Report of the Nominating Committee and the Election of Wardens, Clerk, Treasurer, Vestry members, and Diocesan Delegates	
The Senior Warden's Report	Ted Newton
The Junior Warden's Report	Tyler Smith
Report from Finance Committee	Mike Sherrill
Other Reports, as Distributed	
Old Business	
New Business	
Assistant Rector's Reflection on Outreach	
Conversation with the Rector	
Others Matters Arising	
Adjournment	

**The Annual Parish Meeting
Saint James's Episcopal Church
West Hartford, Connecticut
January 22, 2023
11:00 a.m.**

Welcome and call to order by the Rev. Bob Hooper.

Warrant read by Ted Newton.

Bob announced that an attendance list was in circulation.

A motion to accept the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes was made. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

Bob announced that all committee reports can be found in the 2022 Annual Report. The "Report from the Altar Flower Coordinator" is an exception. Last year's Altar Flower report was inadvertently printed, and therefore, the 2022 Altar Flower report will be updated at a later date.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Bob Hooper offered his thanks to those rotating off of Vestry (Jerrod Bowman, Douglass Compton, and Loretta Waldman). Bob then presented the nominations for next year's Executive Committee and the Vestry. Those nominations are as follows:

Sr. Warden: Ted Newton

Jr. Warden: Tyler Smith

Clerk: Kerri Raissian

Treasurer: Mike Sherrill

Diocesan delegates are the Junior and Senior Wardens.

Three-year term nominations: Chuck Kinney, Ruth Mitman (returning), Barbara Rua, and Bill Thompson.

A motion to accept the Executive Committee and Vestry nomination was made and unanimously approved.

Ted Newton presented the Sr. Warden's Report. Ted mentioned that he was very inspired by so many things at St. James's. In particular, a parishioner had recently remarked that St. James's was a "cardinal parish" in the Diocese. This is true because of our exceptional leadership, our intergenerational community, and our openness.

Ted shared that St. James's continues to give. In particular, we gave 200 Thanksgiving turkeys and 1,000 pounds of fresh produce to Hartford Catholic Worker. Our parish coordinated over 500 gifts to children through Grace Church. We provided Christmas

stockings to men in shelter. And in March we expect to expand our garden ministry via a greenhouse.

Ted remarked that St. James's was a place where all different generations come together, which is special. Where else could you see this mix of generations?

Part of the role of Sr. Warden is to monitor expenses, and ours are going to be greater in 2023. Joe and Alan joined St. James's in 2022, and in 2023 we will need to budget for a full year of their salary and compensation. We are so excited to have the benefits of their gifts and talents for a full 12 months. As it relates to our revenues, pledging units have gone up for 2023 over 2022, and if you haven't already pledged, please do so.

Our Vestry is an incredibly positive group. It's a group where everyone "gets stuff done." Ted offered his thanks to the outgoing members and those rotating onto the vestry. He also gave a special thanks to the Executive Committee. This group does a lot of hard work outside of vestry to ensure the church's infrastructure is in place. Thanks also to Bob and Priscilla. Thank you to the parish for all that you do to make us vibrant. We are all here together and the body of Christ together.

The Jr. Warden's Report was offered by Tyler Smith: Our building is very much open to the community – we've returned to pre-pandemic facility use. With increased use comes maintenance, which is already accounted for in our budget. We were able to get the church bells ringing, for which we are extremely grateful! We have identified a few projects for 2023, which include fixing the steps and having the floors refinished. At the same time, utility costs have also increased, and this brings budgetary pressure.

We also recognize you as assets to help us keep St. James's in great shape for our community and the community at-large. Thank you to those who come for spring and fall clean-up, that sell trees, and do other things to save us substantial amounts of money. Thus far, we've not had a lot of snow fall, but of course, this could change.

In his Treasurer's Report, Mike will address some utilities expense issues, which will affect our budget. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Mike Sherrill presented the Treasurer's Report. Mike said that his report had both "contrasts and challenges."

On the contrast side, our income came in \$28,000 higher than expected. However, our expenses were \$38,000 higher than expected. Overall, this created a \$14,000 gap or negative variance.

In terms of our 2022 revenues, our contributions or pledges have almost reached the \$600,000 budgeted amount. This speaks to your generosity, and this is what makes everything possible. Our facilities income was higher than expected – as more groups are using the building. This generates additional income, but it also allows us to serve the community. We also had a good fundraising year – specifically we had an awesome auction whose revenue was above what was expected.

In terms of our 2022 expenses, property was much higher than anticipated. In particular utility expenses were very high, especially our gas bill. We typically lock in a rate on 12/31/21, but we elected not to do that this year because the rate at that time was so high. We continue to monitor this and will decide the best time to lock in a utility rate for the long-term.

The 2023 budget process is under way. We expect it to be a challenging year. Some challenges persist, while others are emerging.

Mike took questions from the congregation:

Dick Wenner asked about our financing trend. Specifically, Dick asked how and when we might be able to expect to return to the endowment formula in the bylaws, and what are we doing to put St. James's finances back into a better position?

Bob answered the question by stating that we did run a deficit, which is very rare for us. We (the church's staff and Vestry) hold the exact same concern about the budget, but we must maintain a balance between fulfilling our ministry and our vitality. We have yet to finalize a budget for the year because stewardship remains outstanding. This is the largest stewardship budget we've ever had, but so are our expenses (many of which are not in our control). We will and are moving back to the formula-based approach for endowment draw, but we expect this to be a gradual return.

Bob reminded all parishioners that all St. James's Committee reports were contained in the 2022 Annual Report, with the exception of the "Altar Flower Committee" report.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Joe Rose shared a reflection that he shared with Vestry last week. Joe commented that after being here for nearly 5 months, one of the things he loves is St. James's heart for outreach. From reading MLK's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" to serving the community on MLK, it's been wonderful. In fact, on MLK Day, Joe, Bob, and about 12 other parishioners worked with Journey Home Connecticut to move 3 families into new homes. They helped move donated furniture, and it was clear that these donated necessities served as little pieces of dignity.

The first delivery was to a place in the North End of Hartford – an apartment on the 3rd floor. As the 12 strangers from St. James's moved furniture up the stairs, the recipients were visibly emotional. They (the recipients) shared their story. They had been violently removed from their previous home because of their sexuality. As a result, they'd been forced to live in a car for a year, and for too long they'd felt utterly alone and forgotten. They said, "I didn't think I'd ever sleep on a mattress. I feel so loved right now." Joe closed by remarking these acts show the abundance of God's love.

Bob then combined “New Business” and “Conversation with the Rector” into one section. Bob said he would first make some remarks and then he would open up the floor for questions or comments from the larger parish.

First, this is St. James’s 180th annual meeting. We are healthy, and this is a real blessing that creates a level of gratitude. Bob offered a huge thank you to the parish but also the people who came before us. Our rebuilding and emergence from the pandemic has been and is amazing.

Our parish is full of very new members to very tenured members. We parishioners that have been members for 1, 20, 30, 40, and 50 plus years. For example, Bernie Wilbur still attends every Wednesday morning faithfully. We are not a museum. Our parish has grown with more young people, and we see the growth and vitality of children. There have been changes alongside this. And this has brought a level of commotion and disruption. All those things happened, and you welcomed it.

By way of illustration of what St. James’s is like, Bob shared a story involving parishioner Rachael Desmond. One morning, a young mother and child sat in front of Rachael. A man sat behind Rachael. At some point, the man shushed the child. Rachael simply told him, “We don’t talk to children like that around here, we love them.” This is St. James’s.

The past year has been interesting. We have reopened, but not everyone is ready to fully engage with in-person worship. And that’s ok. We have made space to allow each of us to keep ourselves emotionally and physically safe. COVID is not over, but we’ve tried to handle this the best we could. People are watching online when they cannot be physically present and engaging in many other ways.

Our finances have lots of extenuating circumstances. We are seeking to find the right balance. Our fundraising has historically been events and stewardship. Those things will continue, but Joe is also doing grant writing – specifically around feeding and gardening. This presents a new world to us to gather resources and financial stability (and reduce our endowment draw).

We have also used our funds to finance several things, including the repairing of the bells, new cross, and other items. These expenses were “off budget.”

The nature and dynamic of the larger Christian community is changing, and we are experiencing this too. Our attendance is about half its previous size, but our income from pledges is up (St. John’s is having the same experience). We are seeing a larger crowd that comes more sporadically or experiences church in other ways. We must explore the “other ways” to be the church. We need to embrace this new paradigm. Church does not solely mean liturgy. The MLK Day experience Joe shared was church. Church is also making sandwiches, casseroles, and Wednesday night choir practice. Church is “one that bears God into the world.”

Bob ended by expressing gratitude for the parish's generosity. And in particular he thanked a few people: the priest associates, program staff, the office staff, the Vestry, a group of about 5 "people who get stuff done," the Altar Guild, acolytes, choir, and to everyone... because each of you almost always say "yes" the first time when you are asked to serve.

Bob called for any matters arising.

Liz Normand said that she is particularly grateful for the 3Ms programing provided by Priscilla and Alan. The kids feel very welcome here, and she loves that those opportunities are growing.

Blessing and adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,
Kerri M. Raissian

A Letter from the Rector The Rev. Robert C. Hooper, III

January 28, 2024
Annual Parish Meeting

Dear Friends,

I ALWAYS find these year-end/new year letters difficult to write. For one thing I tend to take a forward-looking approach to life and not backward-looking (some might say reflective.) Another reason I find them problematic is that 2023 was such a full year in the life of St. James's, and it is difficult to pick out the highlights for fear of forgetting something or someone important.

That said, I would rather reflect on the spirit of 2023 rather than the events. 2023 was our first full year back from the COVID pandemic and had a sense of urgency to it that I enjoy. We have always been a busy parish but 2023 felt like we were playing catch up and trying to do everything. From fantastic concerts to expanded outreach efforts, 2023 was a year with a very particular energy. While exhausting at times, it felt good, and it felt faithful.

The generosity, faithfulness, and energy of so many members of St. James's continues to amaze me. Every aspect of parish life from outreach to fellowship seems to be ever-expanding except for Sunday morning attendance. While many have come back to church since the pandemic, and we have welcomed some wonderful new folks into our community and baptized a bunch of babies and kids, regular Sunday morning attendance seems to no longer be a part of the regular flow of life for so many families. I know this is a trend in the wider church, but I hope we can reverse it here at St. James's. We have so much to offer each other and the wider world, and we cannot be fully us without YOU.

As 2024 begins, it is looking like it is going to be another year full of fellowship, worship, and outreach, marked by a number of wonderful offerings. I hope you will join us in serving God through God's people this year and encourage others to do the same.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob +", written in a cursive, informal style.

The Rev'd Robert C. Hooper, III
Rector

Report from the Senior Warden

THIS is my second report to you as senior warden. Last year, my report was inspired by the very positive and engaging vestry meeting that took place a couple of days before I wrote it, and reflected my core belief that what we experience at St. James's is hard to find anywhere else. This year I missed our December vestry meeting, but in reading the draft minutes and from my conversations with many of you, I am happy to report the positive and inspirational vibes I wrote about last year still abound!

With Bob's leadership, and the talents of Joe and Alan, our worship experience is robust and uplifting. It's wonderful to see the wide range of people in the pews every Sunday, including the energy and excitement of children of all ages. Our choir is magnificent. And I never get tired of hearing Bob welcome everyone to partake in communion, regardless of who they are and where they are in their spiritual journey.

In November, more than 70 parish families purchased 750 gifts for 150 children served by the Grace Church Food Pantry, and so many of you donated socks and toiletries, or money to purchase them, that we were able to deliver over 200 Christmas bags to The Open Hearth and McKinney Men's Shelter. These collective efforts reflect the spirit of generosity and sharing God's abundance that is prevalent in our parish.

Once again, our winter parish happenings calendar is filled with engaging events for the whole parish, including Joe leading a Martin Luther King forum reflecting on his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech during coffee hour on January 14, and related volunteer service opportunities the following day and during the week; our regular chili cookoff on the 20th and our Trivia Night on February 10 – not to mention Alan leading three coffee hour forums focusing on "big-picture" questions on the Trinity.

All this positive energy is boosted by a budget based on, and inspired by, your generous and faithful giving and stewardship of our full, engaging spiritual life at St. James's. Both the number of people and the size of the average pledge have increased over the last year, which is a testament to the special things that our parish is doing for our parish and community.

Our vestry is comprised of engaged and committed parishioners, many of whom serve in various additional capacities to enhance our worship and parish life and bring their unique and valued perspective and experience to our monthly meetings. Please join me in thanking our four outgoing vestry members – Adam Fisher, Jess Henning, Jonathan Lewis, and Deb Morton – for all their efforts over the last three years. I also want to again recognize Tyler Smith (Junior Warden), Mike Sherrill (Treasurer), and Kerri Raissian (Clerk), whose hard work outside of vestry meetings help ensure the integrity of the church's infrastructure, finances, and records.

One thing that I think helps define St. James's is how many parishioners contribute their time and talent to enhance our worship experience and parish life. Whether it's preparing the altar before and after the service; singing, ushering, reading or acolyting during the service; making sandwiches or hosting coffee hour after the service; planting, nurturing and harvesting produce in the Good News garden and greenhouse; bringing in food, school supplies, and toiletries for people in need; selling Christmas trees or volunteering to help with other fundraisers – your efforts reflect God's call for us to be active participants in service to others. As senior warden, I thank each of you for your work in making St. James's a vibrant worship community and a special place in our lives.

Ted Newton, *Senior Warden*

Report from the Junior Warden

2023 proved to be another successful year for St. James! The church continues to see record use. And we took on multiple improvement projects throughout the year. We started off 2023 with our sanctuary floor refinishing project. The floors had not been stripped in many years and were starting to show some age. After a lengthy undertaking, we were able to successfully complete the work and now the floors really “pop!” You may have also noticed that we are preparing the sanctuary for a much-needed new sound system that will greatly improve the sound quality. Additionally, the north exit now has a fresh new look because of a new paint job! Finally, we were able to purchase a couple of defibrillators for the church that have been installed.

As Spring arrived, we prepared the Walden side lawn for our “Good News Garden.” With the help of Joe Rose and many volunteers, we relocated the existing garden over the course of several weekends and planted many new vegetables with the goal of helping fight food insecurity in our surrounding communities. Many thanks to all of those who volunteered their time and energy to making the Good News Garden a reality. We look forward to many years of using the garden to support those in need. In addition to the Good News Garden, we were able to secure grant funding to help purchase a greenhouse. This summer we had the area where the old vegetable garden was located cleared and prepped for the installation of our greenhouse. In late August, the greenhouse was delivered and Joe, with a team of volunteers, helped raise the greenhouse. Thereafter, many of you have helped set up and prepare the greenhouse to grow various vegetables to help support our work. The greenhouse will allow us to grow more vegetables longer into the season. I want to personally thank so many of you who spent your weekends shoveling soil, hammering nails, pushing a wheelbarrow, and really getting your hands dirty. Without your help, the Good News Garden and the greenhouse would not be a reality. Both projects will help St. James’s support our mission for many years into the future!

As you may have noticed, the facilities are bustling! AA continues to use the dining room for meetings during the week. Additionally, Music Together continues to use the parish hall during the week and on weekends. We have also seen various outside groups use the parish hall for group meetings and other events. The biggest change is our partnership with Journey Home. St. James’s has worked with Journey Home for years. When the leaders at Journey Home expressed an interest in moving from its then downtown Hartford office location, St. James’s worked with Journey Home to lease them office space in St. James’s. The arrangement has been a great partnership, and we are happy to assist!

St. James’s also hosted some amazing fundraisers this past year. The Strawberry Festival was a wonderful event on a sundrenched Memorial Day weekend. And, after being rained out in 2022, the annual Fall Festival returned and was extremely well attended. Finally, we just wrapped up our annual Christmas Tree sale. This year we sold over 130 trees and wreaths! I want to thank all those who volunteered to make these events so successful!

As we look to 2024, we anticipate robust use of the facilities which really helps to add to the “buzz” around St. James’s. A large part of the maintenance budget in the past has been our energy costs. Given the increased facility usage, we have seen an increase in our energy costs. I am happy to report that after record rates last year, we were able to lock in a more favorable rate for the next 13 months.

Finally, in addition to all those who have volunteered to make St. James’s a special place, I want to thank and recognize our Sexton, Leon Fraser, who does an amazing job maintaining our church every day. It has been my privilege to serve as your Junior Warden. Thank you for the opportunity!

Tyler Smith, *Junior Warden*

Report from the Assistant Rector

Dear Beloved St. James's Family,

AS I approach the one-year anniversary of being a priest in the Episcopal Church, I want to start by saying that it has been an absolute privilege to walk, serve, and pray with you during the past 12 months. I feel blessed to be on this journey with you and your families. This has been one of the great joys and privileges of my life.

It was a busy 2023. There were many extraordinary places where I saw us working and growing with the Holy Spirit to help God's light break in.

Good News Garden and Greenhouse

It was an exciting year for the Good News Garden agrarian and feeding ministry, which we all participated in some way last year. In the spring, in a move symbolic of Jesus's call for us to embrace the upside-down nature of God's love, we turned over a huge section of the lawn to build four large planting beds on the Walden Street side of the church. In May, we all came together as a community on Rogation Sunday to lay hands on the soil and bless the vegetable garden. The kids of St. James's also got their hands dirty, planting a pollinator garden near the raised growing beds during KFC. On Wednesday mornings through the summer, our Good News Gardeners gathered for fellowship and the harvesting of tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, beans, and many other crops to be delivered to our ministry partners at the Hartford Catholic Worker. In 2023, we delivered more than 800 pounds of fresh vegetables to the Hartford Catholic Worker's critical feeding program in the food desert on the north end of the city.

In September, we had a greenhouse raising. (Yes, St. James's now has a greenhouse!) Several parishioners came together to help assemble a 10-by-18-foot solar-powered greenhouse at the location of the former community garden near the memorial garden. In addition to a more productive harvest, the greenhouse will allow this ministry to expand the number of months that it can provide fresh vegetables from four to nine. It will also allow the garden ministry to protect many of the crops currently being targeted by neighborhood wildlife by moving the crops inside. The greenhouse on the east side of the church building, standing as witness to our love for the earth and our neighbor in view of busy Farmington Avenue, will allow the parish to expand its Creation Care ministries in several practical but life-giving ways.

In addition to replacing even more of the church's resource-hungry lawn, the Good News Garden will create myriad opportunities for education, liturgy, centering prayer, and promoting justice for the hungry. The greenhouse arrived later than we anticipated, but we planted some experimental crops to see what would do best in the colder months.

A plaque honoring Ann Painter and her good and holy work in building and nurturing the garden ministry during her life was installed near the greenhouse. To help pay for the greenhouse, we received several donations and four grants to help pay for the addition of the greenhouse, including a \$520 Jack Spaeth Creation Care Grant and \$1,250 in grants from the Inter-religious Ecojustice Network. We will continue to seek grant funding for our work in the months ahead. Meanwhile, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut was so inspired by the work that we are doing at St. James's that it held its annual diocese-wide Community Garden Ministry Network gathering here in mid-January.

In addition to feeding the hungry, I have witnessed how the garden ministry has fed its 20 or so volunteers. When the greenhouse was put to sleep for the winter, several members of the group asked to continue meeting in some capacity during the winter. We are reading Meghan Murphy-

Gill's "The Sacred Life of Bread" together and are coming together for meals during the winter to discuss the book and plan for the spring.

In 2024, we will continue our work with the Hartford Catholic Worker while exploring new partnerships to get our vegetables to families struggling with food insecurity, including a possible collaboration with Grace Episcopal in Hartford to help establish a pay-as-you-can farmer's market at the A Place for Grace food pantry. We will also continue to explore new ways that the Community Garden can be used for education, spiritual formation, and worship.

Sacred Ground and Social Justice

In September, a group of about 20 parishioners came together for St. James's first Sacred Ground circle, where we committed to an 11-part film and readings-based dialogue series on racial justice that is grounded in faith. The seeds were planted in January when we gathered to read Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail together. It was a privilege to be in that space of awe, reflection, and heartbreak with so many of you. And it was obvious in the discussion that many of you saw the prophetic nature of King's observations on race and how his words still cry out for reconciliation today. Responding to one of our nation's great prophetic voices on that day, many of you asked when St. James's would get around to offering the Sacred Program, allowing our community to do the difficult but important work of looking at the history of racism in our community, our nation, and our church.

The Sacred Ground gatherings have opened hearts, invited authentic self-reflection, and germinated more ideas of how we, as a community, might better respond to the heartbreak and injustices in the world. All with a better understanding of where we have been and where God is calling us. Stay Tuned.

Healing Prayer Ministry

In the spring, we restarted our monthly healing prayer services, which take place on the first Wednesday of every month and have drawn as many as 15 participants. Our healing ministries, thanks to the leadership of Cheri Evans, also offer healing prayers during the Eucharist on the second and fourth Sundays of every month. If you are carrying a burden or need prayers for someone else struggling under the weight of sorrow or sickness, please feel free to join the prayer team at the back of the church during Communion on those Sundays. This ministry team has also sent out prayer cards and actively held those who requested it in their prayers. We are looking at additional ways to expand on this healing work in the new year.

Communications and Storytelling

In 2023, our 180th year as a parish, we expanded our efforts and reached into new areas of telling the St. James's story. We saw increased interaction on Facebook and Instagram. We also created a TikTok account. Of course, by storytelling, I'm not just talking about our growing internet and social media presence. This effort is about how we share the stories from our corner of the vineyard with each other, newcomers on Sunday, our neighbors, and anyone in need of hope and healing. I'm constantly amazed and thankful for the staggering amount of work we do together. At the same time, I think storytelling in community needs to be authentic, requiring us to be honest about what might not be working or where we need more commitment. In the coming year, Bob and I plan to explore new ways of sharing the St. James's story, including a possible revamping of the website and new storytelling features.

Please keep sharing your stories with me, with each other, and in our community. And please don't hesitate to let me know if you think there are new ways that St. James's should be telling our story

as we walk with courage and love and a sense of God's profound grace through the seasons of life together.

St. James's is a special place. This place has a faithful spirit with which people of all ages approach God's work in unity. You are all holy people with holy gifts.

I hope you see it: the way you care for each other; the way you welcome; the way you feed the hungry and seek justice; the ways you break bread together and laugh together; and your resiliency born of gratitude.

I can't wait to see how we answer where our stories take us in 2024.

Faithfully yours in Christ,
The Rev. Joseph J. Rose, *Assistant Rector*

Report from the Associate for Education & Music

AS I look back at the past year, I'm grateful for the spirit, energy, dedication, and hard work that have led to exciting growth in our programs and ministries. I think of Joe and his photos, video clips and media posts across a wide range of platforms; I think of the parents, caregivers and facilitators who have helped our children's choir programs grow to nearly 30 in number; I think of the lively discussions that characterize our coffee-hour forums; I think most of all of the music and the spirit of inquiry that fills the air at St. James's.

☞Education Highlights of the year included seasonal coffee-hour forums and a summer series on Musical Romanticism that built toward a memorable concert with cellist Owen Young.

- For Lent, we explored C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* for four Sunday-morning sessions, leading to an evening of vocal music that built on Lewis's themes. Bass-baritone Doug Williams was our guest artist in music by Purcell, Robert and Clara Schumann, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, and more.
- In the summer, we gathered on Monday evenings for a five-week evening series on Musical Romanticism. We divided the era into three smaller periods: the fantasy and "looking outward" that defined the early period; the Nationalism and Realism of the middle period; the power and "looking beyond" that characterized the late period. All of this culminated in a concert by cellist Owen Young that offered works from each period, including music by Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Saint-Saëns.
- The fall brought two opportunities: a series on Jesus in Art and Music to kick it off, and a two-week Advent meditation on Mary in Art and Music to close it out.

☞Music Highlights of the past year include hymn sings, concerts, regular appearances by our youngest children on Sunday mornings, growth in our chorister programs, the memorable contributions of our parish instrumentalists, and beautiful singing throughout the year by the St. James's Choir.

Concerts

- In addition to the recitals by bass-baritone Doug Williams and Boston Symphony cellist Owen Young mentioned above, I was delighted to be joined by internationally-celebrated violinist Colin Jacobsen for a concert in May. We played music of Bach, Vitali, Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Brahms. Thanks again to Joe for getting the word out across myriad platforms and drawing many to St. James's for the first time.
- Cellist Christopher Hill joined the choir in an evening of music by Gabriel Fauré for the Feast of All Saints. Called *Music of Remembrance*, the concert drew a large audience. It began with chamber music, including the *Élégie* for cello and piano, and ended with the composer's beloved *Requiem*, Opus 48. Interwoven with the music were poems read by Kerri Raissian.
- Later in November, I played a program of organ music dedicating our beautiful new chapel organ, given to us by parishioner Ron Coons. Music included several of Ron's favorites and an extended work by his former teacher Van Denman Thompson. We began and ended by singing hymns; Joe offered a blessing he wrote for the occasion and Martha Parish coordinated a festive reception.
- We capped the year with a Christmas Concert featuring our choirs and soloists, violinist John Kramer, readers Ann Uphoff and Jonathan Lewis, and pianist Thomas Tarutin, who joined me in a two-piano transcription of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto #4*. Chorister Anya Fisher offered a memorable solo moment, and it was a delight to see a full row of young singers for the final set.

Choirs

▪We continue to enjoy our Monday afternoons with our youngest musicians. Monday Music and More invites children ages 3-7 to gather for a 75-minute program that includes music, art, story-telling, movement, games, and more. These musical experiences build a strong foundation that in time, for those who choose, leads to involvement in our chorister program. We now welcome 18 young people each week and are deeply grateful to parishioner Lou Strillacci for her assistance.

▪Our Chorister group grew from five to nine members this fall. Last spring, our chorister group offered services of choral evensong both here at St. James's and, quite memorably, as part of a festival liturgy at Trinity College. It was a great delight to see our choristers and hear their beautiful voices at our Christmas Concert.

▪Finally, we continue to owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our signature St. James's Choir for the weekly beauty and inspiration they bring to worship. The group appeared at the Hartt School of Music festival Ode to Joy in the fall and were immediately invited back for next year's festival. I look forward to another year of music-making with this devoted and deeply gifted team.

The Rev. Alan C. Murchie, *Associate for Education & Music*

Report from the Director of Youth and Family Ministries

IT IS so nice to write my annual report soon after the Christmas Pageant. This year was the first year since 2019 that we have had a pageant at St. James's at the 5:00 service on Christmas Eve. Soon after the Nativity Walk in 2022, a group of parents approached me saying they really wanted the pageant back on Christmas Eve and that they were willing to help make it happen. So, I began looking into options for a new and improved pageant. As most of you know, the Christmas Pageant is the liturgical event of the year where the children are the most visible. This year was no exception.

So back to my search, I started looking online at pageants and didn't find anything that I thought really fit. Then, I was talking this over at the Shrove Tuesday Women of St. James's luncheon, and Liz Cloud suggested the pageant that she saw one year at her daughter's Methodist Church in Richmond, Virginia. In this pageant, there were no rehearsals except for the narrators, Gabriel, Joseph and Mary. That way, anyone who showed up on Christmas Eve and wanted to participate in the pageant was able to do so. I liked this idea very much, especially considering that with COVID still looming, family health situations could change at a moment's notice. I am sorry to say that at the age of 95, Liz Cloud died on June 1 this past year. She was a wonderfully active member of St. James's for many years, and especially loved the children of this parish. After her death, I contacted her daughter and was able to get a copy of the script they use at her church. In the fall, Joe Rose helped me rewrite the script to make it work for St. James's. I am thrilled with how it all came out and especially grateful for Alan Murchie's incredible musical additions to the pageant. Thank you, Liz, for always thinking of the children of St. James's, and thank you to both Alan and Joe!

On a personal note, as we welcome 2024, I am especially thankful for everyone that made it possible for me to travel to Wilmington for the birth of our precious granddaughter, Channing Ames Hooper. A special thanks to Kerri Raissian and Lou Strillacci who substitute taught KFC for me. Thank you also to Joe and Heidi Rose who covered for me at Mondays Music & More. Watching our family grow over the last few years has been one of greatest blessings of my life. Millie and Channing are truly gifts from God.

Speaking of Mondays Music & More, or as we call it, 3Ms, it is thriving. During this program that Alan and I lead on Mondays, three-year-olds through third graders do crafts and art projects, explore Bible stories, and sing! Right now, we have 18 children enrolled in the program. Over the past year they have sung in church several times on Sunday mornings. Here's to many more performances in 2024!

In 2023, we saw a great increase in attendance and energy here at St. James's. Every Sunday it seems that there are more familiar faces in the pews, and some new faces that we are happy to see as well.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Youth Group! We are having more kids in Youth Group this year than last, and I am excited to see what lies ahead for them. They are a committed and fun group of kids, and they are very welcoming to new members. Join us if you are in middle or high school!

Last, but definitely not least, don't forget about our wonderful diocesan camp, Camp Washington! Please consider sending your children or grandchildren this summer! This is a perfect way to support your children on their spiritual journey. Like Sunday attendance or anything else, start them early and the seed of a life of faith will flourish.

Whew, that is a lot! As I have said so many times before, it is truly a pleasure to work with the children of this parish. It is hard to believe that I have been at this for 20 years, but it is true. Thank you for sharing your wonderful children with me. They are truly a blessing.

Priscilla Hooper, *Director of Youth and Family Ministries*

Report from the Acolytes

THE youth of St. James's who serve as acolytes know they are a part of something special. As they light the candles, lead the processional and recessional, focus our attention on the Gospel reading, and help guide us to Communion, they lend dignity, grace, and an element of pageantry to our worship. It can also be more fun than sitting in the pews with their parents!

2023 was a year for rejuvenation for our acolyte program! We were fortunate to have several children join the program, including Mack Raissian, Quinn Ciccone, and Julian Jane Bowman. We said goodbye (more like see you later, as she came back to serve at the Christmas Eve service!) to Olivia Shuey, a long-time, dedicated acolyte who is now away at college. We thank Olivia for her many years of service to St. James's and we wish her well in all new adventures.

Each acolyte serves about once per month as a crucifer, torch bearer, or Gospel (holder). If you have a teen or pre-teen (3rd grade and above) who is willing to take on this important leadership role, please let me know of their interest in learning more about this unique opportunity.

Deb Morton, *Coordinator*

Report from the Altar Flower Coordinator

THE 2023 calendar year was again full of events to which our floral tradition continued. My personal thanks are once again extended to Cheryl Batter for her organizational skills with maintaining the listing of weekly memorial flowers. Cheryl's constant communication with me and with parishioners allows us to fill the variety of individual requests.

January 2023 was special to us as Fr. Joe Rose was ordained at St. James's Church. We happily provided the flowers for the service and the reception. Special thanks go to Bob for doing all the work in the background! Also, my personal thanks are extended to Heidi Cotter for managing through all the wholesaler invoices for the ordination and throughout the year.

This year's 'Golden-Rod Award' goes to Tom and Sue Archambault for showing up for 'The Greening of the Church' in December for the 3rd year in a row and managing the same job flawlessly! Sue is tall and Tom is taller, and both can reach the pew candles without a ladder! The 'Golden Rod Award' (for those who are not aware) is an actual gold scepter! It was created for a Garden Club Annual Flower Show and since it has been 'dubbed' the Golden Rod. This year it will be presented to Tom and Sue for their dedication to 'Greening the Church'.



For every Sunday this past year, except for Sundays in Lent and Advent, fresh floral arrangements were designed for both the main church sanctuary and for the chapel. This included special events and holy days such as Easter and Christmas. A very special thanks to Claire Burnett and Priscilla Thomas for their floral design gifts and for filling in for me when I am away as well as always coming to the rescue to help with the Easter and Christmas decorating.

In order to continue to have beautiful flowers at both altars throughout the year, we need donations! As the cost of fresh supplies continues to rise, we need to recognize that the account created for this purpose needs to be perpetually funded. Any amount is appreciated for a memorial or to

commemorate a celebration such as the birth of a new grandchild, or a family member's birthday or even an anniversary!

Lastly, I am happy to share that we have an account with the Connecticut Flower Collective for the second year. The CTFC is a collaborative grower's market, offering locally grown specialty cut flowers to the floral industry. There are over 50 member farms from Connecticut, downstate New York, and Rhode Island, accessible through a refrigerated warehouse in Meriden, Connecticut. We will continue to support locally grown flowers throughout the growing months in Connecticut!

Won't you please consider making a donation to the Floral Committee? Please contact Cheryl at any time to make the 'arrangements' and I in turn will work with Cheryl to create a custom arrangement based on your preferences! Thank you all for your continued support with this ministry.

Mary Ann Haar, *Floral Committee Chair*

Report from the Altar Guild

THE few and the faithful who are members of the Altar Guild set the Table in preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist. Working behind the scenes, they ensure the wine and bread are ready in both the chapel and the church for the regular weekly worship. For special festivals, including Christmas and Easter, members of the Altar Guild take extra care that the silver is polished, the linens are fresh, and palms are stripped. A member of the Altar Guild is sometimes present at weddings and funerals to assist if needed.

We are grateful for our Altar Guild team: Elizabeth Gallegos, Kim Hart-Kindelberger, Chris Keesling, Elizabeth Waterman, Linda Fournier, Diane Hunter, Christine Pearson, and Susan Gutierrez. We are always actively seeking anyone who is interested in joining the team, and warmly invite you to shadow members of the Altar Guild some weekend to experience what we do – in order to discern whether this is a ministry of service which you would like to join. If so, please just let us know.

Thank you to all the members of the Altar Guild. Your service is very much appreciated!

Elizabeth Gallegos, *Chair*

Report from the Auction Committee

THE first-ever St. James's online fundraising auction was held for several weeks in November 2023. The tradition at St. James's is to host a large fundraising event and auction every other year, and this was an experiment to see if we could successfully hold a smaller, less labor-intensive fundraising auction during "off" years when there is no live event scheduled. Auction items included perennial favorites from the live auction, such as VIP pews for the Christmas pageant and a St. James's Christmas tree delivered to the winning bidder, along with a variety of other tickets, goods, and services. The event had mixed success, earning about \$1800 for the church. Bidding was not as spirited as it might have been, and some items did not receive any bids — which may have been due to this being a new type of fundraiser for the St. James's community, technological barriers, and/or a need for a different timeline or type of publicity to help recreate the sense of connection and playful competition that makes our live auctions so successful. Thank you to everyone who generously donated goods or services to the online auction, and to all who bid.

Ellen Dollar, Kerri Raissian, Judith Stahl, *Online Auction Volunteers*

Report from the Casseroles Helping Expanding Families (CHEF) Committee

WHAT a wonderful year of St. James's parishioners feeding their fellow sheep! We get pleasure from helping other people but find it difficult to ask or receive help for ourselves; we don't want to "be a burden on others". This year, one recipient of CHEF Ministries meals who would normally have declined the offer, had their spouse very wisely say, "you need to graciously accept this generous offer, because we need it." The CHEF Ministries Team was sure glad they did and nearly a whole week of meals was provided to a family of six who very much appreciated the assistance of meals during a very busy and stressful time.

CHEF Ministries is a team of almost 20 parishioners who are on call to provide meals for fellow families in need. This can be to assist when a new family member arrives, when a beloved family member passes, a big move to the other hemisphere or next town, surgery, injury, you name it; if anyone could use a meal provided by someone else, CHEF Ministries is there to serve! Almost a dozen families benefited from the generosity of time and talent donated by St. James's family members cooking two dozen delicious meals.

Please keep the requests coming so that CHEF Ministries can continue the expansion of these caring and thoughtful acts to help our St. James's family get through a difficult or stressful time in their lives. If you are interested in joining our CHEF Team, or to request a meal for yourself or another family, please contact Martha Parish and we'll snap into action! Mach1goon@gmail.com, 978-505-1333.

Martha Parish, *Coordinator*

Report from Education for Ministry

ST. JAMES'S has hosted an EfM group for over 25 years. EfM is a four-year theological education and reflection program utilizing course materials from The University of the South School of Theology. Each group has a minimum of 6 and maximum of 12 students with one or two mentors.

Current members from St. James's are Loretta Waldman and Jerrod Bowman who are in Year Three; Mike Christ, Susan Ritz, and Heidi Sweeney are new members and are in Year One. The group has two other members from St. James, Farmington and Grace Church, Newington. Over the years St. James's graduates include: Tom Rouse, Susan Powers, Elizabeth Gallegos, Mike Shuey, Audrey Lamy, Jonathan Lewis, Tony and Kerri Raissian, Matt Schott, Hugh Whelan, the late Marge Cunningham, Cheri Evans, Bill Harris, the late Margaret Mair, Deborah and Eric Ross, Barbara Schiller, the late Syd Tansi, the late David Thomas, Trudy Thompson, John Wadsworth, Elizabeth Waterman, and Ron Ward among others. For more information contact: Ron Ward, EfM mentor, 860-463-8057, or rtwtmr@comcast.net.

Ron Ward, *Mentor and Administrator*

Report from the Endowment Committee

THE St. James's Endowment Fund is comprised of all bequests to the Church and any gifts that are specified for the Fund. These gifts are meaningful and fulfilling because they continue to work year after year, generating income and capital appreciation that can be applied to our annual budget and work of the Church. Significantly, this support will grow and continue in the

years to come. Thus, gifts to the Fund are truly a form of "perpetual stewardship."

Each year, per church bylaws, a certain portion of the Fund's income is transferred to the church's Operating Fund to assist with on-going parish expenses. In 2023, the transfer from the endowment fund to the operating fund was \$150,000, more in line with the by-laws formula for Fund transfers that is designed to protect and steadily grow its principal over the long term. (In 2021 and 2022, the transfers were higher than this formula in order to help the church address its pandemic related income and expense imbalances.

The Endowment Committee meets quarterly with Connecticut Wealth Management, the Fund's investment manager, to discuss the overall market, compare the Fund's return to the market's performance and assess the adequacy of the Fund's debt and equity portfolio allocation. Members of the Committee are currently Mike Sherrill, Dick Wenner, Alex Smith, Bob Smith, and me. Each member brings his own research, insights and/or experience to the table to help direct the Committee's work, but we leave the decisions regarding which Fund holdings to buy or sell to New England Guild.

For the one-year period ending September 30 (our most recent quarterly reporting period), a period of generally positive market performance, the Fund experienced a positive return of 13.0%, slightly above the 12.6% return for its target benchmark. This positive performance follows the significant negative returns in both stock and bond markets in 2022 and their adverse impact on the Fund's performance last year. These swings in market performance underscore the importance of the Fund's diversification across various equity and fixed income categories, which helps to mitigate the impact of market volatility on the Fund.

If you have any questions about the Fund or the Committee's work, or if you're considering a contribution to the Fund or serving on the Committee, please reach out to any member of the Committee.

Ted Newton, *Chairman*

Report from the Fourth Friday Family Fun Night

ON the Fourth Friday of the month, the St. James's families gather for a bit of fellowship and fun. In the warmer months, we gather at Fernridge Park. The kids burn off a lot of energy on the playscapes or splash pad, and parents get an opportunity to catch up. In the colder months or in the event of rain, we gather in the Parish Hall at St. James's, and there is typically an age-appropriate movie for the kids. All families are welcome to join. Many of our attendees happen to have younger – and pretty joyful – children. Attending families contribute towards pizza and there are often sides to share – with cookies being the children's favorite. The event does require an RSVP for pizza. If you would like to receive the Evite, please reach out to Kerri Raissian (kerriraissian@gmail.com).

Kerri Raissian, *Coordinator*

Report from the Good News Garden Committee

WE ARE starting the thirteenth year of this rewarding outreach project and think Ann Painter would be pleased with the expansion of beds and the new sustainable greenhouse. Bob and Priscilla Hooper along with Joe Rose and several volunteers laid out the new raised beds along Walden Street, and so many people helped with moving dirt

from the old beds and preparing the greenhouse site - it is impossible to name them all. Joe and Heidi Rose helped with early soil moving and Joe continues to be our main adviser and encourager.

Many people donated soil amendments, fertilizers, seeds, plants, a large wheelbarrow, a rotating compost bin and a soil/compost sifter. The regular compost bin has produced at least one good batch that was spread around plants late this summer. Eggshells from Wednesday breakfast and coffee grounds from most meetings are added to the heaps. Bob Hooper built a Mason bee house which helps attract these excellent pollinators. Chuck Russo continues to be the main engineer for water systems and his work is so appreciated. Some of the garden crew had challenges with surgeries or illnesses but someone was always ready to step up and fill in.

We have been lucky to have weekly or periodic assistance with communications, planting, composting, weeding, and harvesting from John Wadsworth, Susan Ritz, Susan Nelson, Diane Mack, Chuck Kinney, Vera Racine, Carolyn McGaughey, Heidi Sweeney, and Judith Stahl. Cindy Welch and Cheri Evans planned the pollinator bed and had a joyful planting of the bed with the children of the church. The experience of working with each other in the garden was rewarded with developing friendships among us.

We didn't have the issues with creatures decimating crops as last year. It could be the proximity to the street or the height of the raised beds, but we continue to use organic deterrents when needed. We were able to provide The Hartford Catholic Worker House and the Clark Street neighborhood with fresh organically grown vegetables. We harvested a sizable quantity of tomatoes, collard greens, green and yellow beans, cucumbers, peppers, beets, lettuce, Swiss chard, carrots, herbs, scallions, and snap peas. The greenhouse, although arriving too late to really get into production, has helped extend the season with collards, radishes, Swiss chard, parsley, and carrots. We thank Bill and Nora Harris for faithfully transporting the produce every Wednesday to Hartford.

The Hartford Catholic Worker does not accept government funding. The all-volunteer staff relies solely on other volunteers and donations like ours to work with the children and families in the Clark Street neighborhood. They work to secure housing for the homeless and food for the hungry. Our weekly deliveries to the HCW continue to be welcomed each year by those neighborhood families who do not have easy access to quality, fresh produce we provide. We are pleased to be able to support this wonderful mission.

Thank you again to everyone who made this wonderful ministry possible for another year. It's a joy to have the next growing season to explore the potential of both greenhouse and expanded beds. More helpers are always appreciated!

Chuck Russo and Cheryl Wadsworth, *Coordinators*

Report from the Memorial Garden Committee

THIS has been a good year for the garden and this year's committee has really stepped up to keep it especially tidy! The Volutella blight on the pachysandra continues to stymy us however, I plan to tackle it full on in 2024. The distressed Stewartia tree is looking much better after fertilization and aeration by Bartlett Tree Service and re-aiming of the sprinkler heads. We will need both compost and mulch applied in the spring to keep the plants in good health and protected from these hot summer temperatures.

Our gardening season starts in April and ends in November with garden cleanup. In between there is biweekly weeding, pruning, dividing, and planting of summer annuals. This year our team of faithful and talented gardeners consisted of Eileen Jackson, Chuck Kinney, Peggy McManus, Heidi Rose, Susan Ritz, Priscilla Thomas, Loretta Waldman, and Ann Wood. They are a wonderfully dedicated team; however we would welcome additional volunteers both for the opening and closing of the garden as well as to maintain it throughout the growing season. I am happy to speak with you about the garden and will provide training on pruning and identification of weeds and invasives. If you are interested in helping, kindly email me at claireburnett@comcast.net.

Claire Burnett, *Coordinator*

Report from the Outreach Committee

THE activities of the stand-alone committee formerly known as “Outreach,” are now included as part of the new “Mission Committee.” Monthly projects and results are reported in the newsletter and the Sunday bulletin under the “Mission” heading.

In 2023, the ongoing Outreach projects listed below experienced relatively few changes. Emphasis was directed toward maintaining commitments to agencies that provide critical services such as food and housing, and that have long-standing connections to St. James’s parish.

During this past year, we were able to continue our previous level of support for the feeding programs that depend upon St. James’s for assistance. This was possible through outreach funds as well as generous donations from parishioners who stepped forward to help fill in the gaps. In order to maintain our pantry at the present level, we need individuals who are willing to commit themselves to either purchasing nonperishable food items or providing funds on a one-time or monthly basis. Each option affords another opportunity to offer time or give funds to purchase food to feed our hungry neighbors.

The Hartford Catholic Worker Food Pantry: In partnership with the Hartford Catholic Worker, the parishioners of St. James's donate food to the HCW food pantry each week. Donated nonperishable food items include pasta, sauce, cans of tuna, mayo, peanut butter, jelly, and soup along with many other items, and the new addition of diapers as of December. This food is then distributed to families living in the Clarke Street neighborhood in Hartford.

The Stocking Stuffer Mission continued the process of the last few years by filling small white bags with toiletries and socks. Thanks to the generosity of many parishioners, in the form of toiletries and socks or monetary donations, along with a last minute Sign Up Genius online donation request, parishioners gathered and stuffed 200 bags with a pair of warm socks, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream, body lotion, chapsticks, combs, toothbrushes and toothpaste. The bags were delivered to The Open Hearth and The Steward B. McKinney Emergency Shelter to be given to recipients before Christmas.

The following is a list of the ongoing mission activities to which St. James’s members contributed in 2023.

The Two Hundred Identical Sandwiches (THIS) program: In 2023, we continued our sandwich making ministry that provides take-home sandwiches for the clients of Loaves and Fishes after they have enjoyed a hot meal. 200+ sandwiches were made by parishioners as a community service following Sunday services and were delivered by parishioners on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Monday of each month along with casseroles to Loaves and Fishes in Hartford. This ministry has been a vital

part of the mission work that we do at St. James's for more than 30 years. This means that in 2023 the good people of St. James's made well over 7,200 sandwiches to be shared with our friends who rely on the Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen for reliable and healthy nutrition. Thank you to everyone who has helped and continues to help make this happen.

Senior Food Program: In cooperation with Connecticut Foodshare and the Town of West Hartford Department of Social Services, several members of the St. James's community distribute about 59 boxes of dry goods, produce, and cheese each month to senior citizens in need across West Hartford. Many thanks to everyone who has helped with this program, which takes place on the third Thursday of each month.

Hot Meals: On the second and third Monday of each month, St. James's provides tuna, veggie and egg noodle casserole to Loaves & Fishes, Woodland Street, Hartford. For the third Monday, a chicken Caesar salad is prepared for South Park Inn, Main Street, Hartford. Apple sauce and juice are also delivered there. Several volunteers handle the preparation while others make the deliveries. A total of 2,600 hot lunches were served: 1,200 to the clients at Loaves and Fishes, and 1,400 to those at The South Park Inn.

The 24th Annual School Supplies collection: We filled 128 backpacks with tons of supplies and delivered them to the Hartford Catholic Worker and Grace Church Hartford Food Pantry.

Christmas Gifts for the Children of Parkville: In November, St. James's partnered with Grace Episcopal Church, Hartford, to provide clothing and toys for the children of the clients of Grace's incredible Food Pantry. We were given the names of 150 children ranging in age from newborn to 17. Over 75 families/individuals at St. James's contributed more than 700 Christmas gifts to the children of Parkville. Your generosity has provided a much brighter Christmas for so many children and families this year. Thank you for your support of St. James's Outreach Mission programs.

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2023 OUTREACH MISSION EXPENDITURES

<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Donation(\$)</u>
Camp Washington Campership Fund (scholarships)	\$ 2,000
Camp Washington General Fund	\$ 1,000
Feeding Programs	\$ 6,000
Foodshare	\$ 450
Hartford Area Food Pantries	\$ 3,000*
Loaves and Fishes	\$ 400
My Sisters' Place	\$ 400
St. Vincent's Center, Haiti	\$ 2,650
South Park Inn	\$ 600
PACH (Partnership for Andean Community Health)	\$ 1,000
Youth Local Mission	\$ 500
Urgent Needs and Opportunities	\$ <u>2,000</u>
Total	\$ 20,000

* The \$3,000 was distributed among four Hartford Area Agencies that provide food for the poor: The Place of Grace Food Pantry, South Park Inn, Loaves and Fishes Ministries, and The Open Hearth.

Outreach Committee

Report from the Sacred Ministers

THE role of the Sacred Ministers is to assist the clergy in the celebration of all worship services at St. James's on weekdays, Sundays (both 8:00 and 9:30 services), and religious holidays. The opportunities for service include Chalice Bearers (9), Lectors and Intercessors (20), Lay Readers (conduct non-Eucharist services such as Morning Prayer on weekdays), and Lay Eucharistic Ministers (individuals who take the consecrated host to the homebound as an extension of the parish's sacramental life).

Sincere thanks to all who serve in these ministries for your faithfulness and dedication. Interested parishioners who would like to serve in one of these ministries may contact the clergy for more information.

The Rev'd Bob Hooper, *Rector*

Report from the Stewardship Committee

ON behalf of the Stewardship Committee, I want to thank everyone for their participation in this year's campaign. The finances of all churches have faced many challenges over the past few years. While St. James's is not immune from those challenges, the financial support provided by the parish during this time has allowed us to continue with our ministries and the operations of the church. Through January 1, 2024, we have received 132 pledge cards, almost twenty fewer than last year's total number of pledge cards. In a typical year, we receive additional pledge cards after the first of the year so that gap will hopefully close. Of those 132 pledge cards, 6 are from new pledgers. In prior years, we averaged 8-10 new pledges. The challenge comes as we look ahead to 2024. Inflation has decreased but remains higher than higher than normal, which impacts our budget for 2024. Have you been meaning to send your pledge card into the church? It's not too late – simply call the church or email Bob and he will record your pledge. Please do this today so that St. James's has the resources to continue the important work we do within our community. Thank you for your commitment to God's mission and the St. James's community.

Michael Sherrill, *Chair*

Report from the Usher Coordinator

AFTER 2022, which was a year of regrouping and recruiting ushers, 2023 was a year of stability. We now have a group of approximately twenty-five ushers, the same as we did starting the year. We have an instruction manual to address any questions about usher duties. An effort was made at the Volunteer Fair in September to recruit additional ushers, and although there was minor interest, no new ushers were found. Additional recruitment efforts will be done in 2024.

The ushers serve an important role by welcoming worshippers that come to our services and provide bulletins, information, and direction for those who may be new to St. James's. During the service, the ushers enumerate the attendance for distribution of the Eucharist, bring up the elements before collecting the offerings, and collect newcomer information slips after the service. Additionally, the ushers assist, as needed, with sitting worshippers, especially newcomers and during large services such as Christmas and Easter.

Ushering is a great way to become familiar with the church and its members, and it provides an important and needed service for our worship activities. Typically, the commitment is once every four to six weeks and the detail is not strenuous.

I would like to thank all the ushers for their commitment to our services on Sundays and other Holy Days.

Mark Evans, *Coordinator*

Report from the Women of St. James's

THE Women of St. James's (WOSJ) celebrated their second year of meetings following the conclusion of the pandemic. During 2022-2023, our program year began in October 2022 and continued through May 2023, with our Tuesday meetings every other week. For Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's, and the final meeting, we served delicious potluck luncheons. During the Lenten season we served homemade soups. For all the other meetings we brought our own bag lunches with beverages and dessert provided. Several of our Tuesday luncheons offered speakers, which included the Assistant Rector, the Rev. Joe Rose; Cindy Welch (a refresher on hosting full cooked luncheons); our Organist & Choirmaster, the Rev. Alan Murchie; Cindy and Mark Welch (on building an airplane), and the Rev. Bob Hooper on Shrove Tuesday.

Throughout the program year our attendance ranged from 13 to 28 enthusiastic women. This fellowship of caring, supportive individuals participated in two outreach projects: At Christmas we signed over 100 seasonal cards from the WOSJ that were delivered to two local nursing homes, and collected winter hats, scarves, and mittens for children. During Lent we collected non-perishable food for the West Hartford Food Pantry.

All are welcome to join our fellowship and to journey with us as we grow into God's future.

Rachael Desmond and Cindy Welch, *Co-Presidents*

2023 Annual Report from the Treasurer

THE 2023 results for the church operating budget reflect the gifts of our parish as well as the challenges faced during the year – income fell short of its budgeted amount by \$6,333 while expenses exceeded the budgeted amount by more than \$24,900 due in large part to higher than expected expenses associated with the church property and administrative expenses. Overall, the church's financial position at year-end fell short of the budget by \$31,259, or 3.3%.

Income and Expense Summary

The church's operating income is comprised of regular contributions (pledges, seasonal offerings, and Sunday plate offerings), transfers from the Endowment Fund, use of the church facilities by outside groups, contributions made to the Annual Appeal and for other designated purposes and from special fundraising events.

In 2023, pledge income was less than the budgeted amount by \$3,495 (0.6%). Seasonal offerings (primarily Christmas and Easter) were \$484 greater than budgeted and Sunday plate offerings were \$637 more than budgeted. Use of the church by outside organizations continues to increase and income from those groups was \$4,837 more than budgeted. Facilities Income has increased from \$40,000 in 2021 to more than \$80,000 in 2023. Special contributions exceeded its budget by \$366. Income from fund-raising events fell below budget by \$10,700.

The church operating expenses for the year faced challenges with volatile utility rates as well as maintenance and repair of the church facilities. As a result, the Property category exceeded its \$136,400 budget by \$11,219, or 8%. Administration expenses exceeded budget by \$9,890, primarily due to more than \$6,100 in expenses related to the ERC work done. Those expenses were not in the budget. Office supplies and printing and paper expenses also contributed to the overage for the year. Personnel expenses, the largest expense category in the budget, were \$1,780 more than budget, or 0.3%. All expenses categories were continually monitored throughout the year and reviewed with the Vestry at each meeting.

Diocesan Review

The audit of St. James's financial statements for 2022 required by the Diocese was completed and submitted to the Diocese.

Resources

Overseeing the church's operating budget and managing the finances of the church are roles that are carried out by many people - the Rector, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Endowment Committee members, and the Vestry all play a part in this effort. In addition to thanking those listed above, I would like to recognize and thank Heidi Cotter, the church's financial secretary. Heidi quietly and efficiently keeps the books of the church and makes sure that everything is running smoothly.

I would also like to thank our small group of parishioners that count and record the contributions made by parishioners every Sunday.

Michael Sherrill, *Treasurer*

Financials from the Treasurer

EXHIBIT A

St. James's Episcopal Church

ACCOUNTING FUND BALANCES (Unaudited)

January 2023 – December 2023

Fund	Beginning Balance	Direct Transactions	Income	Expense	Transfer	Ending Balance
01 - GENERAL FUND	(4,220.68)	0.00	752,762.65	854,683.44	57,362.04	(48,779.43)
02 - MAJOR MAINTENANCE FUND	35,110.79	0.00	0.00	25,225.47	12,000.00	21,885.32
03 - 1022 FARMINGTON FUND	27,781.58	0.00	38,517.32	31,100.00	(38,004.00)	(2,805.10)
04 - MEMORIAL FUND	3,015.72	0.00	5,205.00	264.00	0.00	7,956.72
05 - VEGETABLE GARDEN FUND	3,176.48	0.00	6,097.50	13,128.07	0.00	(3,854.09)
06 - CAPITAL CAMPAIGN	(90,013.55)	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,284.00	(74,729.55)
07 - REFUGEE MISSION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
11 - MEMORIAL GARDEN FUND	8,867.85	0.00	1,000.00	352.29	0.00	9,515.56
12 - CHOIR DEVELOPMENT FUND	9,856.37	0.00	7,249.54	150.00	0.00	16,955.91
13 - OUTREACH FUND	67,999.00	0.00	8,010.52	102,903.97	100,137.96	73,243.51
15 - CLERGY DISCRETIONARY FD	191.47	0.00	7,558.00	6,040.12	0.00	1,709.35
16 - WOMEN OF ST. JAMES'S	6,635.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,635.12
19 - ORGAN FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
21 - MEMOR. MAINTEN. ENDOW. FD	247,824.09	0.00	28,438.60	0.00	(10,663.59)	265,599.10
22 - CHOIR ENDOWMENT FUND	7,260.88	0.00	833.29	0.00	(312.45)	7,781.72
23 - FLOWER ENDOWMENT FUND	8,031.05	0.00	921.53	0.00	(345.54)	8,607.04
24 - GENERAL ENDOWMENT FUND	2,490,528.48	0.00	269,831.68	0.00	(135,458.42)	2,624,901.74
Totals	2,822,044.65	0.00	1,126,425.63	1,033,847.36	(0.00)	2,914,622.92

EXHIBIT B

St. James's Episcopal Church
2023 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

SUMMARY

	2022		2023	
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
<u>INCOME</u>				
Regular Contributions	\$595,956	\$650,000	\$647,625	(\$2,375)
Investment Income	165,470	150,500	151,321	821
Facilities Income	54,514	76,400	81,237	4,837
Special Contributions	32,190	50,200	50,566	366
Miscellaneous Income	32,579	20,000	10,018	(9,982)
TOTAL INCOME	\$880,709	\$947,100	\$940,767	(\$6,333)

EXPENSES

Administration	\$45,960	\$44,800	\$54,690	\$9,890
Christian Education	1,601	1,500	540	(960)
Evangelism	193	200	215	15
Flowers	5,340	5,000	6,565	1,565
Music	9,691	10,500	11,222	722
Outreach	95,513	100,100	100,138	38
Parish Life	2,017	1,800	2,718	918
Personnel	584,691	657,700	659,480	1,780
Property	147,726	136,400	147,619	11,219
Stewardship	214	200	350	150
Worship	2,167	2,000	1,789	(211)
Miscellaneous	0	200	0	(200)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$895,111	\$960,400	\$985,325	\$24,926

EXCESS: INCOME-EXPENSES	(\$14,403)	(\$13,300)	(\$44,559)	(\$31,259)
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St. James's Episcopal Church
2023 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

DETAILS

<u>INCOME</u>	2022	2023		
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Current Year Pledges	\$574,657	\$625,000	\$610,582	(\$14,418)
Prior Year Pledges	3,234	\$5,500	16,423	10,923
Seasonal Offerings	5,794	\$6,500	6,984	484
Unspecified Offerings	12,271	\$13,000	13,637	637
 Total Regular Contributions	 595,956	 650,000	 647,625	 (2,375)
 Other Endowment Transfer	 165,000	 150,000	 150,000	 0
Other Invest. Inc.	470	500	1,321	821
 Total Investment Income	 165,470	 150,500	 151,321	 821
 Transfer from 1022 Farmington Fd.	 31,104	 38,000	 38,004	 4
Parish House (On-going)	14,120	28,400	19,190	(9,210)
Other Facilities Usage	9,290	10,000	24,043	14,043
 Total Facilities Income	 54,514	 76,400	 81,237	 4,837
 Spec. Contrib. - Gen. Purposes	 28,580	 49,700	 47,011	 (2,689)
Spec. Contrib. - Administration	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Christian Ed.	40	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Evangelism	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Flowers	3,470	500	3,005	2,505
Spec. Contrib. - Music	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Parish Life	100	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Personnel	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Property	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Stewardship	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Worship/Altar	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Other	0	0	550	550
 Special Contributions	 32,190	 50,200	 50,566	 366
 Misc. Income - Spec. Fundraising	 32,579	 20,000	 9,293	 (10,707)
Misc. Income - Other	0	0	725	725
 Total Miscellaneous Income	 32,579	 20,000	 10,018	 (9,982)
TOTAL INCOME	\$880,709	\$947,100	\$940,767	(\$6,333)

St. James's Episcopal Church
2023 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

<u>EXPENSES</u>	2022	2023		
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Telephone	\$11,514	\$9,900	\$10,111	\$211
Office Supplies	4,775	4,000	5,730	1,730
Equipment Rental & Replacement	11,241	12,000	11,941	(59)
Printing & Paper	3,937	4,000	4,906	906
Postage	1,250	1,300	1,634	334
Audit & Accounting	10,000	10,000	16,160	6,160
Membership & Subscriptions	648	500	1,049	549
Advertising	438	500	665	165
Rector's Expense Account	269	100	193	93
Other Administrative Expense	1,889	2,500	2,301	(199)
 Total Administration	 45,960	 44,800	 54,690	 9,890
 Church School	 394	 500	 (36)	 (536)
Confirmation Class	0	200	83	(117)
Youth Programs	214	200	505	305
Lay Training	811	200	(162)	(362)
Speakers - ADG & Others	0	200	0	(200)
Other Christian Education Expense	183	200	150	(50)
 Total Christian Education	 1,601	 1,500	 540	 (960)
 Other Evangelism Expense	 193	 200	 215	 15
 Total Evangelism	 193	 200	 215	 15
 Flowers	 5,340	 5,000	 6,565	 1,565
 Music Supplies & Musicians	 613	 1,000	 0	 (1,000)
Instrument Maintenance	1,123	1,000	1,557	557
Choir Pay	7,805	8,000	9,240	1,240
Other Music Expense	150	500	425	(75)
 Total Music	 9,691	 10,500	 11,222	 722
 Diocesan Pledge Funding	 75,509	 90,100	 90,142	 42
General Outreach Funding	20,004	10,000	9,996	(4)
 Total Outreach Funding	 95,513	 100,100	 100,138	 38

Hospitality	1,089	1,000	1,699	699
Parish Social Events	475	500	228	(272)
Other Parish Life Expense	453	300	792	492
 Total Parish Life	 2,017	 1,800	 2,718	 918

St. James's Episcopal Church
2023 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

EXPENSES
(continued)

	2022		2023	
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Clergy Salaries & Housing Allowance	\$223,327	\$297,700	\$242,700	(\$55,000)
Social Security Allowance	22,914	29,700	29,693	(7)
Clergy Continuing Education	2,798	5,600	2,753	(2,847)
Clergy Pensions & Annuities	42,366	58,200	62,312	4,112
Clergy Life & Health Insurance	45,050	58,700	60,468	1,768
Supply Clergy	0	0	250	250
Lay Staff Salaries	171,725	140,400	189,280	48,880
Lay Staff FICA - Employer Portion	13,872	13,100	11,167	(1,933)
Lay Staff Pension Fund	7,624	7,400	7,650	250
Lay Staff Health & Life Insurance	37,718	45,100	44,100	(1,000)
Temporary/Substitute Lay Staff	5,150	800	1,550	750
Other Personnel Expense	12,149	1,000	7,557	6,557
 Total Personnel	 584,691	 657,700	 659,480	 1,780
 Electric	 12,565	 14,000	 14,296	 296
Gas	28,723	25,000	26,573	1,573
Other Utilities	5,110	5,000	5,446	446
General Maintenance & Repairs	19,450	19,000	24,281	5,281
Maintenance Supplies	3,918	3,000	6,338	3,338
Custodial Services	0	100	0	(100)
Insurance - Property & Liability	37,963	35,800	36,392	592
Lawn Care & Grounds	2,154	2,200	2,979	779
Snow Removal	1,205	1,500	275	(1,225)
Transfer to Major Maintenance Fd.	18,000	12,000	12,000	0
Transfer to Capital Campaign	18,504	18,500	18,504	4
Other Property Expense	135	300	535	235
 Total Property	 147,726	 136,400	 147,619	 11,219
 Other Stewardship	 214	 200	 350	 150
 Total Stewardship	 214	 200	 350	 150
 Church Worship & Altar Supplies	 1,228	 1,200	 642	 (558)
Other Worship Expenses	939	800	1,146	346

Total Worship	2,167	2,000	1,789	(211)
Total Miscellaneous Expense	0	200	0	(200)

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$895,111	\$960,400	\$985,325	\$24,926
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EXCESS: INCOME - EXPENSES	(\$14,403)	(\$13,300)	(\$44,559)	(\$31,259)
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St. James's

EPISCOPAL CHURCH ♦ WEST HARTFORD

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