



2024 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 26, 2025
at 11:00am*

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Table of Contents

Agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting.....	3
Minutes from the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting	4
Letter from the Rector	8
Report from the Senior Warden.....	10
Report from the Junior Warden	11

Staff Reports

Report from the Assistant Rector.....	12
Report from the Organist & Music Director.....	14
Report from the Director of Youth and Family Ministries.....	17

Committee and Program Reports

Report from the Acolytes.....	18
Report from the Altar Flower Coordinator	18
Report from the Altar Guild.....	19
Report from the Auction Committee	19
Report from the Casseroles Helping Expanding Families (CHEF) Committee.....	20
Report from Education for Ministry	20
Report from the Embrace Ministry	21
Report from Endowment Committee	21
Report from Fourth Friday Family Fun Night Coordinator	22
Report from Good News Garden Committee	22
Report from the Memorial Garden Committee.....	23
Report from the Outreach/Mission Committee	23
Report from the Sacred Ministers	26
Report from the Stewardship Committee	26
Report from the Ushers	26
Report from the Women of St. James's	27
Report from the Treasurer.....	28

Financial Reports

Year End Financial Reports from the Treasurer	29
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Agenda

The Annual Parish Meeting
Saint James's Episcopal Church
West Hartford, Connecticut
January 26, 2025
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	
Other Matters Arising	
Adjournment	

**The Annual Parish Meeting
Saint James's Episcopal Church
West Hartford, Connecticut
January 28, 2024
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.

Bob offered an Opening Prayer.

Reading of the Minutes of the Last Meeting. Motion to approve accepted.

Ruth Mitman made a motion to accept the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes; Marth Parish seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Bob Hopper offered his thanks to those rotating off of Vestry (Adam Fisher, Jessica Henning, Jonathan Lewis, and Deb Morton). 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: Doug Compton, Joey Meyer, Liz Normand, and Marilyn Tomlinson.

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

Ted Newton presented the Sr. Warden's Report. In addition to his formal report, which is included in the Annual Report, Ted pointed out what he believes are St. James's defining strengths: great leadership, outstanding music, education, outreach, and affirming fellowship. He offered his thanks to the parish for making all this possible. These achievements are fueled by your (parishioner) generosity, which makes our budget possible. Of course, in addition to financial support, parishioners contribute time and talent which further enhance our worship experience. These offerings allow us to respond to God's call to us. He offered a special thanks to those cycling off and the Executive Committee. He wished the parish a Happy 2024.

Tyler Smith presented the Jr. Warden's Report. Tyler thanked the parish for all they did in 2023. He pointed out the church continues to see record use. Our ability to make this building and grounds both a parish and community resource is only made possible by the involvement of the parish. Thank you for your help with clean-ups, repairs, and set-ups.

Tyler highlighted a few key moments from 2023: our floor refinishing project was a 30-day project (initially projected to be a 3-day project); in the spring the Good News Garden and greenhouse were

installed (this required many sweaty Saturdays); and there are many “everyday” uses by private groups. We also became the official office home of Journey Home, a longstanding partner. We’ve hosted many successful fundraisers this year (Strawberry Festival, FallFest, and we sold 130 trees this past December!). Tyler offered a special thanks to Leon, our Sexton, who maintains our building on a daily basis. 2024 will include a few additional projects like painting the narthex, which will need our collective sweat equity. Tyler ended with thanks to the parish for letting him be our Jr. Warden.

Mike Sherrill presented the Treasurer’s Report. Mike began by offering thanks to the counters, who count the offerings every Sunday, and to Heidi Cotter, our church financial secretary. Mike said that overall, this year could be summed up with the word “challenge.”

We finished in a deficit position: our income was a little over \$6,000 below budget. The main contributors to this were that pledge income was slightly less than budgeted (\$3,495 under budget). Our expenses were about \$25,000 higher than budget with the main contributors being increased natural gas prices, increased property expenses, and our administration costs were higher than expected. Much of the increase in administration costs was due to legal fees required to file for our Employee Retention Credit funds from the IRS. We expect those funds to arrive in 2024. However, taken together, we experienced a deficit in 2023 of \$31,259 (or 3.3%).

We did increase our quarterly draw from our endowment (due to COVID financial pressures) relative to our standard formula to smooth our operating budget. Our plan is to move back to our endowment formula for the 2024 budget.

Looking forward, contribution statements will be sent out soon and the 2024 budget is underway, and we expect to finalize it in the next 4-6 weeks. Please make your 2024 pledge if you have not already done so.

Dick Wenner asked about the status of the capital campaign repayment. Bob reminded the parish that we borrowed from our endowment to complete payment of the capital campaign. We transfer money out from our operating budget to repay the endowment on an annual basis. Dick also asked if the plan to return to the endowment formula meant there would be a planned budget deficit in 2024. Bob answered that we expect to close the gap in the presented budget (i.e., we plan to present a balanced budget).

Bob reminded all parishioners that all St. James’s Committee reports were contained in the 2023 Annual Report, which are available in the cloister, narthex, and online. This gives a broader picture of St. James’s activities.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Assistant Rector Joe Rose shared reflections of the year. Going into 2023, he was pre-ordained. When sitting in his office, Ted asked him about his theology. Joe said that it was about “community.” In speaking with Ted, he remarked that this community is really about Incarnation. We come together to be the hands, feet, and heartbeat of Jesus. St. James’s is a special, multigeneration place that lives its calling in real and authentic ways. As Tyler mentioned, that is through the Good News Garden. This ministry invites us in and feeds people in the Hartford area. This past year, our team harvested 800 pounds of vegetables. With the new greenhouse, we expect to far surpass that in 2024.

Our school backpack drive collected 146 backpacks. And our work with Grace Church allowed us to provide gifts for 150 kids. Most recently, our MLK Day of Service allowed us to help move people into homes and assist CT FoodShare. The teenaged volunteers asked, “when do we get to do it again?”

Joe reflected that this work – and so much more – is what Incarnation looks like to him.

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

Bob began by reiterating his commitment to our fiduciary responsibility to manage the endowment well. He stated he views it as a gift from the past to ensure our future. He then thanked people: the Executive Committee, the Vestry (those rotating off and those coming on), those who chair committees, our Sunday morning teams (chalice bearers, readers, altar guild, flowers), and so many people – thank you to everyone that is involved.

Thank you to those who make our outreach efforts possible. In addition to vegetables from our garden, we supply 1,000 pounds of dry goods per month. We’ve recently added diapers to our collection efforts, which is a real need for families with young children.

Bob thanked each staff member: Leon, Cheryl, and Heidi.

Thank you to Alan and the choir. Thank you to Joe. In recognition of Joe’s contribution to St. James’s, Bob announced a formal title change from Assistant Rector to Associate Rector. And thank you to our clergy associates who assist often and whenever asked.

Finally, Bob thanked Priscilla Hooper for her professional service and her personal support of him in his ministry.

Bob announced that there will be a Rector’s Appeal to supplement our income needs in the 2024 budget.

Prior to the Annual Meeting parishioners were invited to submit questions to Bob in advance. During this portion of the meeting, Bob read each question and provided a response. That is below.

Q: Where are we with the endowment?

A: This was addressed earlier in the meeting.

Q: Now that we have the sound system working, what’s the next big capital thing?

A: We have a lot of places that need painting. We need to address our parking lot and the drainage. Our downspouts don’t drain properly, which causes flooding in the undercroft. The parking lot is in tough shape. A long-term solution would be to tear it up, fix the drainage, and then replace it. In the meanwhile, we will work to patch the potholes. Though our bells were fixed, the sound is muffled, and so the installers are coming back in the next month or so to look at sound.

Q: Where is the income for concerts stated or reflected on the budget?

A: This money goes into the choir fund. This is the only source of funding our choir receives.

Q: Is there a lay leaders group?

A: There are several opportunities for involvement. Most typically, scheduling for lay involvement is done by Bob. If interested in doing that (chalice bearing, usher, acolyte, reader, etc.), please let Bob know. We need additional greeters and ushers. On this note, Tom Rouse schedules the chalice bearers. He will soon have open heart surgery. Please keep Tom and Susan in your prayers.

Q: How do we broaden the base of people involved in our community?

A: Consider the question as it relates to your life – community, liturgically, financially. How do we do this? What would get you more involved. At our upcoming Vestry retreat we will discuss this in more depth: how to get those that are already at St. James’s more involved and how to better welcome newcomers.

Q: What are you doing on your sabbatical?

A: This is a sabbatical year, which occurs every 5 years. This year is a much needed retreat, and Bob appreciates the support of the community and colleagues. The main event will be to walk the Camino de Santiago again. There will also be time with family, and this year, Priscilla will join Bob, and they will have a brief vacation. He will return in the middle of his sabbatical for the Choir Dinner (and to celebrate Priscilla’s 60th birthday). He will be back in a full-time capacity in July. He remarked that the sabbatical is a real gift and privilege.

Bob ended with a few additional announcements:

This is a confirmation year, and so next summer (2025) will be a mission trip year. Mission trips are typically open to youth in 9th grade through high school graduation. As some youth missed the mission trip due to COVID, we will likely include college freshman. Destination options include Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. If you’d like to be involved, please let Bob know.

Tim O’Leary and his partner welcomed a new baby.

Ruth Mitman thanked Bob on behalf of the Vestry.

Blessing and adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,
Kerri M. Raissian

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

January 26, 2025
Annual Parish Meeting

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As we reflect on 2024, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the generosity, faith, and commitment of the St. James's family. Together, we have journeyed through a year of growth, transition, and shared purpose, continually guided by God's love and light. Truly, your generosity—of resources and spirit—makes it all possible.

We began 2024 with renewed energy and a shared commitment to our mission to serve one another and the wider community. We continued our many cherished traditions in worship, music, outreach, education, fellowship, youth programs, and pastoral care. We also introduced a few new initiatives to help us move ever closer to who God is calling us to be as a community of faith. After Easter, I had the privilege of taking a sabbatical—a time for renewal, reconnection, and reflection. It was also quite fun! While I was away, I witnessed the strength, leadership, and generosity within our congregation as you stepped forward to carry on the work of ministry with faith and dedication. St. James's is blessed with incredible lay leadership, and I would be remiss not to thank our executive committee and vestry for their faithfulness and dedication to the mission and ministry of this place.

A special thank you goes to our Senior Warden, Ted Newton, whose term concluded at the end of 2024. Ted has been a true partner in ministry over these past three years. I am also deeply grateful for Kerri Raissian, who completed her term as Clerk. Her energy, organization, commitment, and uncanny ability to keep me on track have been invaluable—a force of nature unto itself. This year also brought significant transitions to our team. We said farewell to The Rev. Joe Rose, whose faithful service left a lasting impact on our community. At the same time, we welcomed The Rev. Rob Lofberg as our new Assistant Rector. Rob's energy and deep faith have already enriched our ministry.

Additionally, The Rev. Alan Murchie transitioned to become the new Rector of St. Thomas's Episcopal Church in New Haven, allowing him to focus more fully on his priestly vocation. In September we joyfully welcomed Michelle Horsley as our new Director of Music. Michelle's incredible energy, dedication, and many gifts have brought fresh inspiration to our liturgy and music programming.

While Joe and Alan are deeply missed, we celebrate the blessings they brought to St. James's and are reminded of the dynamic nature of our shared ministry and the many ways God provides. This year also brought the joy of welcoming new members to St. James's and reconnecting with past members who have returned. Their presence enriches our life together, and we are grateful for the gifts they bring to our shared journey.

Our outreach efforts continued to be a beacon of hope, made possible by your generous hearts and hands. Through countless programs, we have served those in need and strengthened our ties to the broader community, embodying Christ's call to love and serve. Time and again, this congregation has shown its ability to come together and make a difference. Whether through worship, fellowship, acts of kindness or stewardship, your generosity has changed lives and brought God's grace into the world.

As always, there are too many people to name individually for the roles they play in making St. James's the remarkable place that it is. Please know that you are seen, appreciated, and celebrated. As we prepare for 2025, we are called to be bearers of light in a world that often feels dark. Together, we will continue to grow in faith, extend our outreach, and embrace new opportunities to live out God's mission.

Thank you for your unwavering generosity, commitment to St. James's, and love for one another. With God's guidance, we will step boldly into the future, trusting in the light of Christ to lead the way.

With Great Gratitude,

The Rev'd Robert C. Hooper, III
Rector

Report from the Senior Warden

THIS is my last report to you as senior warden. For the past two years, my reports have centered around the positive and inspirational feelings that being a parishioner (and warden) of St. James's evokes. This year it's no different.

Although we said goodbye to Joe Rose and Alan Murchie as they moved on to exciting opportunities in other parishes, we welcomed Rob and Michelle to our parish. With Bob's leadership and Rob and Michelle's many talents, St. James's has continued to offer exceptional worship, pastoral care, and outreach to parishioners, visitors, and the community around us.

St. James's is welcoming and approachable for all ages. When Bob invites everyone to partake in communion, regardless of who they are and where they are in their spiritual journey, to me this is a call for all of us to continue to welcome both stranger and friend alike to be a part of our spiritual and parish life. As he writes in the current newsletter, "Whether it's offering a warm smile as a greeter, extending compassion through outreach ministries, lifting your voice in song, or simply sharing in the joy of community gatherings, there is a place for everyone at St. James's."

Two recent events reflect the St. James's spirit of generosity and sharing God's abundance. In November, so many parish families purchased gifts for the 150 children served by the Grace Church Food Pantry that each child received three presents on average, and so many of you donated socks and toiletries or money to purchase them, that we provided approximately 230 Christmas bags to The Open Hearth and McKinney Men's Shelter for their residents. Our Outreach report includes quite a few other examples.

These outreach efforts, along with our wonderful worship, preaching, music, and fellowship are supported by you and your generous and faithful giving of your time, talent, and treasure. And as an indication of our collective commitment to this parish, the size of the average pledge has increased – just as it did last year. To me, this reflects the importance of St. James's in our lives, and how important it is to sustain the church today and into the future.

Our vestry is comprised of committed, helpful and engaged parishioners, most of whom serve in various other roles that enhance our parish life. I'd like to thank our four outgoing vestry members – Bob Bausmith, Ellen Dollar, Kim Hart-Kindelberger, and Judith Stahl – for all their contributions over the last three years. I'd also like to 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. Kerri is also cycling off the vestry after six years of keeping meticulous minutes and keeping the vestry on track and deserves six rounds of applause for her time and efforts.

But it's not just the vestry members I should be thanking. What has been clear to me for the last three years as senior warden is that each of you helps make St. James's a vibrant worship community and a special place in our lives. Whether you're 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; engaging in the Embrace Ministry, 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 and to make St. James's a growing, vibrant, inclusive, fun-loving, child-friendly community of faith.

Ted Newton, *Senior Warden*

Report from the Junior Warden

2024 proved to be another successful year for St. James! The church continues to see record usage from outside groups including Journey Home. In 2024 we took on multiple improvement projects throughout the year. We started off 2024 with acquiring a much-needed new sound system that will greatly improve the sound quality in the sanctuary. We also patched up the parking lot and did some much-needed tree and landscape work. Additionally, the repairs to the elevator have been completed and the elevator is now “up” and running.

As Spring arrived, we prepared the Walden side lawn for our “Good News Garden.” With the help of so many generous volunteers, we were able to grow and produce vegetables and other plants to help fight food insecurity in our community. Many thanks to all of those who volunteered their time and energy to make 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 use our new greenhouse 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 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.

St. James’s also hosted some amazing fundraisers this past year. The Strawberry Festival was a wonderful event during Memorial Day weekend. And the annual Fall Festival returned and was extremely well attended. The year ended with our silent and live auction, which was a real hit! 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 step into 2025, our SJC community is filled with excitement and anticipation for the year ahead. This year promises to be one of growth and connection. We look forward to deepening our faith and hosting meaningful fellowship events. With the growth of our outreach programs, we’re positioned to serve and support even more people in our community. Additionally, we are ready to embrace the opportunities and challenges that 2025 will bring. Together, we will continue to build a strong, loving, and vibrant community.

Finally, in addition to all those who have volunteered to make St. James 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 St. James's Family,

I AM writing this report to you the week before my ordination to the priesthood and just before the six-month mark of joining this community. As I reflect on my time here, I am grateful for the welcome this community has offered me and for the many ways I have been able to observe the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. It is a joy to be a part of the work, and I am happy to offer you this report as a summary of our work together so far.

Bible Study

This fall, we initiated a community Bible study with the hope of providing a context for growth in knowledge of scripture, spiritual formation, and devotion to God. We began with a three-week overview of the Gospel according to Mark. We started with a group of 7 participants that has grown to be as large as 12, though folks are often traveling and miss a meeting here and there. The response to the Mark study was positive, so we extended our time in that gospel for two weeks. Everyone was eager to continue. We took up a study of Paul's letter to the Philippian Church in October and November. During the Advent season, we decided to spend three weeks studying the 'birth narratives' of Jesus. While our third study was a look at John's prologue, which isn't properly a birth narrative, it fit the Advent theme well. Since we have re-gathered after the Christmas break, we have taken up a series of studies on the so-called 'hard sayings of Jesus.' This study will look at some of Jesus's more difficult teachings that can either be misunderstood or inspire us toward a life of discipleship. As we get closer to the spring, we will take up a study from the Old Testament.

Overall, this group has been one of the more rewarding aspects of my work here at St. James's. Some in our group are taking up reading scripture for the first time in their lives, while others are well-seasoned in their exploration of the Bible. Each of our sessions has prompted meaningful conversations about what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Important interpretive and historical questions have also come up. There seems to be a growing hunger for spiritual growth within the group, as well as an eagerness to gain a greater facility with scripture.

Youth and Mission Trip

Another highlight of my time at St. James's has been partnering with Priscilla and Bob on the Youth Group and our upcoming mission trip. In the fall, we hosted the first diocesan Youth Group in partnership with Camp Washington. This was a great event that allowed our young parishioners to develop relationships with other kids around the diocese. It was a fun event with good food and games along with some rousing camp songs at the end of our time together. Building from this experience, our second Youth Group meeting was well attended and maintained the momentum from the diocesan event. As we were meeting just before Thanksgiving, we shared moments of gratitude while providing food and games for kids to enjoy.

While it has been joyful to gather this group, we are mindful of our goal of planning our upcoming mission trip to Ecuador. We have partnered with PACH (Partners for Andean Community Health). Through PACH, we will be able to service the Andean community by supporting their medical caravans, which provide health services to communities in need. We will also offer cross-cultural immersion and the opportunity to explore the Ecuadorian countryside.

Ongoing Projects

There are a series of other highlights of my time at St. James's that could fall under the category of ongoing projects. One amazing experience was partnering with our Music Director, Michelle Horsley. We teamed up to offer adult forums ahead of both the Storytime and Ave Maria music

programs. In each case, we were able to bring what I hope was a thoughtful theological reflection alongside these amazing musical performances. Michelle and I enjoyed working together and are hopeful we can continue to create additional offerings. I have also been happy to support the Good News Garden as they have continued to develop a beautiful and productive season. My role is somewhat ancillary, as I usually simply check-in and see how I can support them. However, it has been a joy to simply connect and work with the folks who have made this project a vital part of our community. A third ongoing project is just beginning. I have coordinated with Cheri Evans, Susan Ritz, and Chris Keesling about reimagining our healing prayer ministry. This is an ongoing conversation that will be taking shape as we head into the spring. We are hopeful that we can contribute to a culture of prayer within our community that uplifts the pastoral care needs among us while also offering opportunities for parishioners to grow in various prayer practices. Finally, I have sought to engage the community through social media by sharing these stories on St. James's Facebook and Instagram pages. I find that we are mutually enriched and encouraged when we hear about the good things happening in our midst. Social media has been an avenue of encouragement for those who are eager to see what is happening in the community.

These experiences have contributed to a fantastic start here at St. James's. All of this has happened while I am in my final steps of discernment and formation for the priesthood. I could not be more grateful for the support and growth that I have experienced here.

With gratitude,
The Rev. Robert M. Lofberg, *Assistant Rector*

Report from the Organist & Music Director

It has been five months since the beginning of our time together and I am filled with immense gratitude for the work we've been able to do together so far! My time at St. James's began in August, overlapping by a few weeks with the end of Alan's illustrious tenure and even allowing for a Sunday in which we both contributed musically to the worship service. I am deeply grateful to take on the stewardship of our music ministry here, which continues to be a vibrant, intergenerational, and integral part of the community.

August: August 18th marked my first Sunday as the Director of Music. One week later, Alan Murchie presented a wonderful concert with violinist Gary Capozziello, performing works by Brahms, Clementi, and Mozart. During this month, the choir rooms were decluttered and reorganized, and the organist office was overhauled completely with new paint and baseboards. New systems were set up and accounts created during this transitional time.

September: September marked the beginning of our program year, resuming weekly rehearsals with our Children's Choir ("3M's"), St. James's Choristers, and St. James's Adult Choir. Two weeks later on Sept 15th, our adult choir sang in a performance of the Fauré Requiem at the Hartt School of Music alongside singers from Chorus Angelicus and St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, with Alan Murchie on piano and Gabriel Löfvall conducting.

October: In addition to our regular music offerings, this year we hosted the Hartford AGO's 34th annual PipeScreams, a giant Halloween-themed organ concert featuring a dozen organists of all ages offering silly, costumed performances of spooky repertoire in between ridiculous theatrical vignettes. An elaborate stage was built, complete with bubbling cauldron, swinging coffin door, light projections, etc. We are exceptionally grateful to Bob Hooper, Nicole Nigh, Adam Fisher, and Mary Ann Haar for their craftsmanship. Preceding the concert, the audience enjoyed seasonal treats around a bonfire while Chion Wolf (of CT-Public Radio) and Lyla Fisher told ghost stories. The spectacle drew a large crowd, particularly of families outside the church community, increasing the exposure of St. James's and also inspiring the next generation of organists. The month also included our Blessing of the Animals service and two adult forum presentations leading up to Storytime.

November: The month of November began with a worship service honoring All Saints Day, with another very special music event taking place shortly thereafter. Storytime was a musical program that combined the messages of classic children's stories with choral anthems and spoken poetry/scripture as an event which was undoubtedly the first of its kind here, specifically crafted with our intergenerational music community in mind. For several months leading up to it, the children of 3M's read these books, had meaningful discussions of them, and drew their own illustrations for the bulletin art. All three of our singing ensembles were prominently featured in the program as well as 15 readers of all ages who brought these stories to life in an imaginative bedtime storyworld which took over the chancel area. The themes of these stories were tied into our own faith practices - combining Goodnight Moon with Evening Prayer, Rite II from The Book of Common Prayer, for example. We were delighted by the enthusiastic reception to this new idea.

December: For our seasonal music offering, we chose a specific vision of highlighting intersectional female composers and authors in a Christmas music program called Ave Maria. Our choirs sang new choral works paired with poetry and theological reflections, all written by women throughout the past 1000 years. This program was also an opportunity for us to increase the diversity of our music library, which previously only contained 6 titles (of the 645 total) written by women (0.9%). This is the case with most sacred choral libraries and we were excited to add 8 new scores to our

collection, with intention to continue expanding that vision. In December, I was also grateful to be a speaker for a Women of St. James's meeting and for more fellowship opportunities over the holidays. The month concluded with a myriad of Christmas Eve music offerings, including the Christmas Pageant which featured 4 special pieces sung by the children/youth as well as a late-night Christmas Eve service which included a 30min prelude of choral/string/organ works, prominently featuring the Kramer family and other soloists.

In addition to our own events this past fall, we hosted a variety of other community concerts including those of Hall High School, Conard High School, I Giovani Solisti, Farmington Valley Chorale, West Hartford Women's Chorale, and CONCORA.

In the past few months, the adult choir has welcomed 6 new members, increasing our total to 22 singers. We currently have 8 choristers (including 3 new members) and several new singers in our "3M" children's choir contingent, which fluctuates between 8-12 participants. With these ensembles combined, there are around 40 singers from ages 3+, all of whom rehearse weekly and sing regularly in worship. Our adult choir offered 40 anthems between Sept-Dec and our children's choir & choristers were featured on 7 different Sundays. Our music has included instrumentalists such as Anya Fisher on upright bass, the Kramer family on strings, Lily Owens on oboe, as well as vocal soloists Brian Joy, Dale Smith, Lindsay Fawber, Camden Jacobs, Laurel Raissian, Porsche Iloeje, Anya Fisher, Mara Suttman-Lea, Evie Normand, Louisa Smith, and Lee & Benjamin Dollar.

Many efforts have also been made to better organize and communicate within our music ministries. We now keep singer rosters, names on choir cubbies, chorister sign—in logs, etc. At the beginning of the season, we created and distributed a brochure to outline all our music events throughout the year as well as information about our ensembles. Within our choirs, we now have shared online documents, which are regularly updated with all upcoming repertoire and events. We're also taking proactive steps to promote outside of the immediate church community.

Looking ahead into the spring of 2025, we are excited to continue growing this music ministry not only in numbers but also in depth! We look forward to upcoming concerts like Pedal Points in January, Whiffenpoofs in February, and Annual Choir Dinner in May as well as our special services like Holy Week / Easter, Pentecost Jazz Mass, Collaborative Chorister Evensong. We are also excited to think about the bigger picture and to plan with intention. This includes tasks like implementing a new plan for marketing / social media which has outreach beyond our community bulletin boards and which also includes a consistent plan for signage and poster distribution. I'm also launching a pedagogical structure of music theory, aural training, composition, etc. for the choristers' musical growth instead of simply teaching repertoire. We hope to deepen the community of our adult choir by having more opportunities for fellowship and by building on old as well as new relationships. We aim to plan future music seasons which include a balance of beloved traditions, new and creative programs, and the presenting of touring artists. We're also committed to being collaborators in our greater Hartford / West Hartford community and will be prioritizing this as well.

On a personal note, I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to the St. James's Adult Choir, for their warm welcome, adaptability, and encouragement; to the St. James's Choristers, who may be our smallest ensemble by numbers, but are very large in spirit, with musicianship that is dedicated and

quickly expanding; the “3M” contingent / children’s choir, which always brings indefatigably joyful voices to our parish; and for the parents/guardians for their trust and support. It is an honor to work alongside Priscilla Hooper, with her imaginative and collegial spirit. Lou Strillacci is a tremendous help and guiding presence for this young group as well. I am particularly grateful to Rev. Rob Lofberg, for his collaborations on various adult forums and for his enthusiasm to engage ideas as they come, with good humor and helpfulness. It is a blessing to have the wonderful, steadfast work of Cheryl Batter in the office and of Leon Fraser around the church grounds as well as Heidi Cotter and Stephanie Latif in the church financial office. I am grateful for the vestry’s guidance and visioning, which is engaged and collaborative. And finally, for Rev. Bob Hooper’s immeasurable leadership and support as we have navigated the first few months of my time here. I am most grateful for a boss whose discerning, honest, can-do attitude and leadership not only looks outside of the box but builds outside of it as well.

May this parish be greatly blessed in the coming year as we continue listening for God’s voice and living into our mission to be a people of faith, hope, and love.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Michelle Horsley, *Organist & Director of Music*

Report from the Director of Youth and Family Ministries

EVERY year, I write my annual report right after the Christmas Pageant, which this year was pure joy for me! When I first started working at St. James's as the Director of Family Ministries, the pageant caused me a lot of stress. I worried about everything that could go wrong for weeks before Christmas Eve. One year, I worried so much that I threw up on the way to church on Christmas Eve! I am happy to report that I no longer feel that kind of stress. I have learned through the years that it will all be ok and even if it is not, that will be ok, too. This year, like last year, the pageant had 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 and felt that it was very much in line with St. James's philosophy of welcoming everyone.

I started this report by saying that the pageant was pure joy for me this year. That is in large part because working with Michelle Horsley made it that way. This year, we added two performances by our 3Ms (Mondays Music & More) singers, and a wonderful solo of, "Mary Did You Know," sung by Anya Fisher. Both the 3Ms singing and Anya's solo were amazing! I only remember one pageant in the past when the congregation broke out in spontaneous applause, and they did that three times during the pageant! A special thanks also to Louise Strillacci for helping with the pageant and also for helping Mondays in and Mondays out with our 3Ms. Michelle and I are deeply indebted to you for all your help. Thank you.

Speaking of 3Ms, we have about 20 children who come on Mondays to sing and learn more about Bible stories and the church. This is our second year of 3Ms, and I am happy to report that it is thriving. If you know any child between three and third grade that might be interested in joining us on most Mondays from 4 to 5:15, please contact me at prisannehooper@gmail.com. We would love to see this program grow even more!

As I said in my January/February newsletter, we invited the fifth graders to join youth group in November and they are an energetic and large bunch! Thank you to all the parents who encourage their children to join us at youth group. Making those friendships is key to a successful confirmation program and mission trip in the future. Most of us are much more likely to get involved in something if we have friends involved. Children are even more so that way.

To sum things up, as we head into 2025, I am excited by all the energy at St. James's. I hope and pray that most of you will take advantage of the incredible opportunities for you and your children. It is truly one of my greatest blessings to be a part of so many wonderful children's lives. Thank you for sharing them with me!

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!

In 2024, St. James's was fortunate to be able to increase participation in our acolyte program. We were fortunate to have a few new children join the program, including Camden Jacobs and Walter Bowman. Since our current acolytes skew to the younger ages, we did not have anyone graduate and move away this year, which is always helpful.

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. Thank you to all of the kids who participate in the acolyte program, and thanks to their parents as well for getting them to church and giving them the opportunity to be part of the worship.

Deb Morton, *Coordinator*

Report from the Altar Flower Coordinator

THE 2024 calendar year was again full of events to which our floral tradition continued. With our new Organist and Director of Music, Michelle Horsley, there were several more events held here at the church where there was the opportunity to enhance the Sanctuary and also both front and rear Narthex's with welcoming seasonal displays!

In October of 2024, the annual theatrical organ concert, PIPESCREAMS, sponsored by The Greater Hartford Chapter of the AGO, both created and conceived by Michelle, allowed us the perfect opportunity to think outside 'Sanctuary Box' and to convert the church into a mini Hogwart's School complete with a haunted forest and a sorcerer's magic caldron! Many thanks to those who dedicated their time to help with design and clean-up! Never did I think there were floral design needs beyond formal altar displays, and it didn't stop there! In early November, the STORYTIME event allowed the paring of music and beloved stories for children of all ages to hear and remember meaningful words of wisdom for all times. My thanks to the children who helped with the battery-operated candles and the beautiful oversized stuffed teddy bear! Lastly, for the beautiful AVE MARIA event the Sanctuary was transformed with the scent of fresh eucalyptus and candles. Thank you to all of the members who helped with the window alcove displays, the central Candle Lighting Station and the placement of what seemed like hundreds of tea lights on the altar steps! Your kind and diligent efforts at set-up and clean-up accounted for a truly beautiful environment for a concert of exquisite beauty to highlight women composers at Advent. Thank you, Michelle, for the opportunity to extend our 'floral stems and branches' this past season, and we look forward to future collaborations!

My personal thanks 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 for memorials and also for individuals who wish to donate to celebrate the birth of a new grandchild or a family member's birthday or commemorate an important event in

the collective memory of the church community or in the work that is achieved by the many dedicated members on the committees here at St. James's.

This year, the coveted 'Golden-Rod Award' for 2024 goes to Priscilla Thomas for ALWAYS showing up to decorate for Easter and Christmas for 10 years+ and who I have come to rely on as an expert floral designer! Additionally, she comes early and stays late and happily takes on any job and is now coaching the newbies! Thank you is hardly enough to the Sweeneys who have graciously relinquished the 'Golden Rod' for Priscilla to exhibit in her personal display case throughout 2025, no matter how attached Sue was to it!

For every Sunday, except for Sundays in Lent and Advent, fresh floral arrangements are designed for both the main Sanctuary and the Chapel. This includes special events and holy days such as Easter and Christmas. In order to continue this tradition throughout the year we need donations! The suggested amount is \$100 but we graciously accept any amount offered. Won't you please consider donating 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: Linda Fournier, Elizabeth Gallegos, Susan Gutierrez, Diane Hunter, Chris Keesling, Kim Hart-Kindelberger, Christine Pearson, and Elizabeth Waterman. 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 2024 Auction theme was "Grease is the Word", and it was a great success. While enjoying appetizers and dinner (all Greek!) and an ice cream bar (all Grease!), the auction's 120 attendees were able to bid on nearly 90 silent and live auction items. In addition to having lots of fun as a parish, we raised money to support St. James's outreach ministries. The net revenue from the auction was approximately \$28,500, which was about \$8,000 over our fundraising goal.

The Auction was a collective effort of the parish. The Committee was Co-chaired by Kerri Raissian and Judith Stahl. While many people helped to make the auction a success, we owe special thanks to (and in no particular order): Kate Jackson, Elizabeth Gallegos, Jonathan Lewis, Bob Hooper, Priscilla Hooper, Chris Keesling, Ellen Painter Dollar, Maureen Bowman, Jen Jacobs, Greg Jacobs, Tony Raissian, Mike Sherrill, Rob Lofberg, David Dynowski, Kim Hart-Kindelberger, and Priscilla Thomas.

Many parish members generously donated or actively solicited items for the auction. The auction depends on this kind of generosity, and we are so very grateful for all that you did to assist. And of course, those who attended made the evening complete. A special thank you and congratulations to the auction's winning bidders.

Kerri Raissian, *Co-chair*

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". We had a very full first half of the year, then requests died off the second half of the year. Don't hesitate to reach out if there is any need, big or small.

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! A half dozen families benefited from the generosity of time and talent donated by St. James's family members cooking over 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 Four and will graduate in May 2025. Susan Ritz and Heidi Sweeney are in Year Two. The group has two other members one each from St. James, Farmington and Trinity, Hartford. Over the years, St.

James's graduates included: Tom Rouse, Susan Powers, Elizabeth Gallegos, Mike Shuey, Audrey Lamy, Jonathan Lewis, Tony and Kerri Raissian, Matt Schott, Hugh Whelan, Cheri Evans, Bill Harris, Deborah and Eric Ross, Barbara Schiller, Trudy Thompson, John Wadsworth, Elizabeth Waterman, and Ron Ward. Graduates also include the late Marge Cunningham, Margaret Mair, David Thomas, and Syd Tansi, a former group Mentor. For more information contact: Ron Ward, EfM mentor, 860-463-8057, or rtwtmr@comcast.net.

Ron Ward, *Mentor and Administrator*

Report from the Embrace Ministry

IN the spring of 2024, following a church book reading of "The Amen Effect" by Sharon Braus, Marilyn Tomlinson and I met with then Assistant Rector Joe Rose to discuss creating a ministry to provide support to parishioners who were homebound or could benefit from assistance due to health concerns or other life challenges. By late summer 5 parishioners (Chris Keesling, Susan Powers, Diane Hunter, Sue Nelson, and Mari Merwin) volunteered to join us. Since then, we have provided friendly phone contact, mailed encouraging cards and visited several parishioners. The biggest identified need has been transportation, and we have been able to provide rides to church, medical appointments, etc., for a number of parishioners who were unable to drive. More recently we took on the sending of birthday cards from St. James's to children who are members of the parish. Our plan is to remain flexible in what we can provide, recognizing that the needs of parishioners will change over time. We continue to meet bi-monthly to discuss the ministry and new ideas of how we can invite people into God's love through acts big and small.

Susan Ritz, *coordinator*

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 2024, the transfer from the endowment fund to the operating fund was \$147,000, slightly less than in 2023 and in line with the by-laws formula for Fund transfers that is designed to protect and steadily grow its principle over the long term. (In 2021 and 2022, the transfers were higher than this formula 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. While each member brings their own insights and/or experience to the table to help direct the Committee's work, we leave the decisions regarding which Fund holdings to buy or sell to Connecticut Wealth Management.

For the 2024 calendar year, a period generally positive in equity market performance and relatively

flat bond market performance, the Fund experienced a positive return of 9.41%, below the 12.46% return for its target benchmark. This performance follows positive performance in 2023, but significantly negative returns in both stock and bond markets in 2022. 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

FROM January to August, on the Fourth Friday of the month, the St. James's families gathered for a bit of fellowship and fun. In the warmer months, we gathered at Fernridge Park. The kids burned off a lot of energy on the playscapes or splash pad, and parents got an opportunity to catch up. In the colder months or in the event of rain, we gathered in the Parish Hall at St. James's, and there was an age-appropriate movie for the kids.

Due to other commitments, I am unable to continue as the coordinator of this event. So, "Fourth Friday Family Fun Nights" are on a pause. If you are interested in taking over this committee, please speak to the rector, Bob Hooper.

Kerri Raissian, *Coordinator*

Report from the Good News Garden Committee

THIS fourteenth year of our outreach program delivered a diverse assortment of fresh organic vegetables each week to the Hartford Catholic Worker House in Hartford. When we had smaller amounts of produce Grace Episcopal was glad to have our donations. Cheryl Wadsworth called the initial meeting to decide which vegetables to grow and when to begin planting. Our wonderful volunteers this year included Chuck Kinney, Diane Mack, Sue Nelson, Vera Racine, Susan Ritz, John Wadsworth, and Deb Walker from St James, Farmington. Susan Ritz provided weekly photos and reports which appeared occasionally in the bulletin on Sundays and sent out weekly reminders for our Wednesday gardening duties. Chuck Kinney and Chuck Russo set up the soaker hoses to provide the appropriate amount of water and set the delivery schedule with timers.

Susan Ritz, Sue Nelson and others prepared and planted annual flowers in the pollinator garden with the children's help during their KFC time. This bed has been attracting honeybees, mason bees, butterflies and other pollinators. It has become self-sustaining needing little supplemental water once the flowers begin to grow and bloom. Perennials in the bed also are very hardy and reliable.

This year's harvests have provided collards, green and yellow beans, peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, beet green, Swiss chard, carrots, squash, scallions, snap peas, and herbs. In addition, other vegetables were donated by members as well as parishioners and friends. We thank Bill and Nora Harris who faithfully delivered our offering each week.

The greenhouse carried through the winter with hoops and covers over a good sized crop of collards, carrots, and radishes which we harvested in March. We cleared the greenhouse for

warm weather crops soon after and moved some of the collards to Walden Street beds. This year we decided to try growing tomatoes and several other vegetables inside the greenhouse. The decision was based on the hope that there would be some protection from squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, mice, and birds which cause damage each year.

We had some successes and some failures caused by the wide variation in weather patterns. At times the inside temperature went higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit even with the automatic vents open. Several weeks without significant rainfall interfered with our goal of using only natural irrigation. Tomatoes grew very large but didn't produce much until we pruned heavily and temperatures dropped. There is also an ongoing learning curve using rain barrels and drip irrigation.

As the outdoor growing season ended and the crops in the greenhouse died of cold, we planted vegetables that are cold hardy to see if we are able to grow them again over this winter. This last month has been a challenge for the plants with lower temperatures than last winter inside the house. It will be interesting to see how they do, and as in everything garden-related, we keep the hope that our efforts will be fruitful!

Chuck Russo and Cheryl Wadsworth, *Coordinators*

Report from the Memorial Garden Committee

HOW blessed we are to have such a faithful and talented group of volunteers to keep the Memorial Garden shipshape year after year! In case you didn't know there is a plaque on the wall near the garden listing all the former parishioners who are interred there. The garden design is based upon the Trinity in that the three beds are named the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are plaques indicating what the name is on the side of each section. It was designed to be a place of mediation and solace. The garden looked well this year despite the drought. Other than the annuals, the plants seemed to take it in stride, including our weak Stewartia tree.

Our gardening season begins 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 Chuck Kinney, Peggy McManus, Susan Ritz, Priscilla Thomas, Loretta Waldman and Ann Wood. Please consider volunteering for this important ministry, we could use some additional volunteers. While we have a wonderfully dedicated team, we could use some additional help both for the opening and closing of the garden as well as to maintain it throughout the growing season. I am happy to talk 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

IN 2024, 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.

Along with many of our longstanding outreach/mission programs, we added a Three Kings Diaper Drive to our efforts. So many parishioners generously donated diapers and money to purchase them. In the end, we collected over 6,000 diapers. These diapers are being distributed through the Grace Church Food Pantry to the families they serve weekly. While diapers may seem like a little thing, they are not to so many that struggle with the costs associated with a family. Anything that we can do to lighten the load of so many who the world has forgotten is exactly what Jesus calls us to do. The Diaper drive is just one more example of the good and faithful answering God's call to care.

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 approximately 230 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 2024.

The Two Hundred Identical Sandwiches (THIS) program: In 2024, 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 2024 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 helped and continue 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 50 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 26th Annual School Supplies collection: We filled 170 backpacks with tons of supplies and delivered them to the families served by Grace Church Food Pantry, The Bridge Family Center, Hartford Catholic Worker, and social workers at West Hartford’s Morley School.

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 148 children ranging in age from newborn to 17. Over 70 families/individuals at St. James’s contributed approximately 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.

Winter Coat Drive: In November and December, parishioners provided winter coats for the St. James’s coat drive. We collected 43 coats. Bob Hooper and Doug Compton delivered half to The Hartford Catholic Worker and the balance to The McKinney Men’s Shelter in Hartford. Both received our donations with a great deal of appreciation. This is one more example of how St. James’s provides hope within the local community. Matthew 25:35-40, where Jesus states, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me."

†††

2024 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
Hartford Catholic Worker Feeding Programs	\$ 2,000
Hartford Area Food Pantries	\$ 3,000*
Loaves and Fishes	\$ 400
South Park Inn	\$ 600
PACH (Partnership for Andean Community Health)	\$ 1,000
Youth Local Mission	\$ 500
Outreach Projects (Christmas & Easter)	\$ 1,000
Urgent Needs and Opportunities	\$ <u>2,500</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 (10), Lectors and Intercessors (20), Lay Readers (conduct non-Eucharist services), Acolytes (14), and Lay Eucharistic Ministers (2) (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, 2025, we have received 120 pledge cards, or roughly thirty-five 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 120 pledge cards, 7 are from new pledgers. In prior years, we averaged 8-10 new pledges. The challenge comes as we look ahead to 2025. Inflation has tempered but the impact of multiple years of higher inflation continues to challenge our budget for 2025. 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

WE currently have a group of twenty-one ushers. In most cases, this is satisfactory to cover our needs with most people ushering once every four to six weeks. However, we will need to build our usher pool in 2025 in order to keep the current time spacing and make sure that we have coverage during major holidays. We will start recruiting in the spring and early fall and then provide two to three training sessions. Please let me know if you feel called to this ministry.

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

RACHAEL and Cindy enthusiastically continue to carry on as Co-Presidents of the Women of St. James's. The current Executive Board is very engaging and passionate about our mission to provide fellowship, culture, enrichment, and spirituality to our small but mighty group. Our first speaker was Alan Murchie, "An Epiphany Reflection," followed by several clergy speakers such as John Mitman, Joan Phelps, and Curtis Farr. We ended our 2023-2024 program year with Sarah Taylor, daughter of Eileen Jackson, with an interesting presentation about "Native Plants of Connecticut." In October 2024, Bob Hooper updated us on his sabbatical, "Camino de Santiago," and our new Assistant Rector, Rob Lofberg, enlightened us regarding his life journey through faith. Once again, Chris Fisher entertained us with a video and photo presentation of his trip to South America. Our final program for 2024 had an intriguing title: "A Pebble, a Sandwich & A Feather." Our new Music Director, Michelle Horsley, explained the correlation of these items to her musical/faith journey. We continued to fulfill our outreach opportunities such as Christmas cards to nursing homes and food donations to the food bank.

Our 2025 program year will be full of hospitality through many potluck buffets and bagged lunches. Of course, we continue to enjoy homemade soup luncheons during Lent. Please refer to the WOSJ booklet so not to miss out! With God's help and guidance, we can enjoy a world of fellowship for years to come!

Rachael Desmond and Cindy Welch, *Co-Presidents*

2024 Annual Report from the Treasurer

THE 2024 results for the church operating budget reflect the gifts of our parish in what continue to be challenging times – income exceeded its budgeted amount by \$18,740 while expenses exceeded the budgeted amount by more than \$5,021 due in large part to higher than expected expenses associated with the church property and personnel expenses. Overall, the church’s financial position at year-end was greater than budgeted by \$13,719, or 1.4%.

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 2024, current year pledge income was less than the budgeted amount by \$1,116 (0.2%). Seasonal offerings (primarily Christmas and Easter) were \$2,481 less than budgeted and Sunday plate offerings were \$317 more than budgeted. Use of the church by outside organizations continues to increase and income from those groups was \$2,826 more than budgeted. Facilities Income has increased from \$40,000 in 2021 to close to \$79,000 in 2024. Special contributions exceeded its budget by \$10,966. A very successful fall auction resulted in income from fund-raising events exceeding its budget by \$12,911.

The church operating expenses for the year faced challenges with volatile utility rates. As a result, the Property category exceeded its \$115,700 budget by \$12,824, or 11%. Personnel expenses, the largest expense category in the budget, were \$5,104 more than budget, or 0.8%. All expenses categories were continually monitored throughout the year and reviewed with the Vestry at each meeting.

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. After more than sixteen years serving as the Financial Secretary, Heidi retired in early December. Stephanie Latif has taken over Heidi’s responsibilities and is doing a great job keeping the books of the church and making 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 2024 – December 2024

Fund	Beginning Balance	Direct Transactions	Income	Expense	Transfer	Ending Balance
01 - GENERAL FUND	(48,779.43)	0.00	818,244.09	862,633.77	58,108.62	(35,060.49)
02 - MAJOR MAINTENANCE FUND	21,885.32	0.00	55,938.31	50,822.93	8,004.00	35,004.70
03 - 1022 FARMINGTON FUND	(2,805.10)	0.00	38,017.32	0.00	(27,996.00)	7,216.22
04 - MEMORIAL FUND	7,956.72	0.00	1,279.00	820.72	0.00	8,415.00
05 - VEGETABLE GARDEN FUND	(3,854.09)	0.00	0.00	452.52	0.00	(4,306.61)
06 - CAPITAL CAMPAIGN	(74,729.55)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(3,220.00)	(77,949.55)
11 - MEMORIAL GARDEN FUND	9,515.56	0.00	11,000.00	1,723.10	0.00	18,792.46
12 - CHOIR DEVELOPMENT FUND	16,955.91	0.00	2,214.09	3,053.65	0.00	16,116.35
13 - OUTREACH FUND	73,243.51	0.00	16,284.95	109,059.90	108,883.38	89,351.94
15 - CLERGY DISCRETIONARY FUND	1,709.35	0.00	3,350.00	5,018.20	0.00	41.15
16 - WOMEN OF ST. JAMES'S	6,635.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,635.12
21 - MEMOR. MAINTEN. ENDOW. FD	269,295.81	0.00	21,088.87	0.00	(13,933.76)	276,450.92
22 - CHOIR ENDOWMENT FUND	7,890.03	0.00	617.95	0.00	(408.28)	8,099.70
23 - FLOWER ENDOWMENT FUND	8,726.83	0.00	683.36	0.00	(451.52)	8,958.67
24 - GENERAL ENDOWMENT FUND	2,659,976.93	0.00	200,196.08	0.00	(128,986.44)	2,731,186.57
Totals	2,953,622.92	0.00	1,168,914.02	1,033,584.79	0.00	3,088,952.15

St. James’s Episcopal Church
2024 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

SUMMARY

	2023		2024	
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
<u>INCOME</u>				
Regular Contributions	\$647,625	\$656,700	\$647,814	(\$8,886)
Investment Income	151,321	147,500	148,393	893
Facilities Income	81,237	76,000	78,826	2,826
Special Contributions	50,566	67,300	78,296	10,996
Miscellaneous Income	10,018	27,000	39,911	12,911
TOTAL INCOME	\$940,767	\$974,500	\$993,240	\$18,740

EXPENSES

Administration	\$54,690	\$49,500	\$39,902	(\$9,598)
Christian Education	540	1,400	1,199	(201)
Evangelism	215	200	504	304
Flowers	6,565	6,000	6,074	74
Music	11,222	11,700	11,010	(690)
Outreach	100,138	109,000	108,883	(117)
Parish Life	2,718	4,400	1,598	(2,802)
Personnel	659,480	674,400	679,504	5,104
Property	147,619	115,700	128,524	12,824
Stewardship	350	200	369	169
Worship	1,789	1,800	1,935	135
Miscellaneous	0	200	20	(180)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$985,325	\$974,500	\$979,521	\$5,021

EXCESS: INCOME- EXPENSES	(\$44,559)	\$0	\$13,719	\$13,719
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**St. James's Episcopal Church
2024 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY**

DETAILS

<u>INCOME</u>	2023	2024		
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Current Year Pledges	\$610,582	\$629,700	\$628,584	(\$1,116)
Prior Year Pledges	16,423	\$8,000	2,395	(5,605)
Seasonal Offerings	6,984	\$6,000	3,519	(2,481)
Unspecified Offerings	13,637	\$13,000	13,317	317
Total Regular Contributions	647,625	656,700	647,814	(8,886)
Other Endowment Transfer	150,000	147,000	147,000	0
Other Invest. Inc.	1,321	500	1,393	893
Total Investment Income	151,321	147,500	148,393	893
Transfer from 1022 Farmington Fd.	38,004	28,000	27,996	(4)
Parish House (On-going)	19,190	24,000	14,610	(9,390)
Other Facilities Usage	24,043	24,000	36,220	12,220
Total Facilities Income	81,237	76,000	78,826	2,826
Spec. Contrib. - Gen. Purposes	47,011	37,400	44,892	7,492
Spec. Contrib. - Administration	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Christian Ed.	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Evangelism	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Flowers	3,005	2,500	3,325	825
Spec. Contrib. - Music	0	0	0	0
Spec. Contrib. - Parish Life	0	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	550	27,400	30,078	2,678
Special Contributions	50,566	67,300	78,296	10,996
Misc. Income - Spec. Fundraising	9,293	27,000	39,123	12,123
Misc. Income - Other	725	0	788	788
Total Miscellaneous Income	10,018	27,000	39,911	12,911
TOTAL INCOME	\$940,767	\$974,500	\$993,240	18,740

St. James's Episcopal Church
2024 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

EXPENSES

	2023	2024		
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Telephone	\$10,111	\$10,100	\$9,127	(\$973)
Office Supplies	5,730	5,500	7,979	2,479
Equipment Rental & Replacement	11,941	12,000	11,343	(657)
Printing & Paper	4,906	5,000	4,664	(336)
Postage	1,634	1,800	1,829	29
Audit & Accounting	16,160	11,000	1,000	(10,000)
Membership & Subscriptions	1,049	1,000	956	(44)
Advertising	665	500	608	108
Rector's Expense Account	193	100	141	41
Other Administrative Expense	2,301	2,500	2,255	(245)
Total Administration	54,690	49,500	39,902	(9,598)
Church School	(36)	200	70	(130)
Confirmation Class	83	400	262	(138)
Youth Programs	505	400	72	(328)
Lay Training	(162)	200	653	453
Speakers - ADG & Others	0	0	0	0
Other Christian Education Expense	150	200	142	(58)
Total Christian Education	540	1,400	1,199	(201)
Other Evangelism Expense	215	200	504	304
Total Evangelism	215	200	504	304
Flowers	6,565	6,000	6,074	74
Music Supplies & Musicians	0	500	420	(80)
Instrument Maintenance	1,557	1,500	780	(720)
Choir Pay	9,240	9,200	9,515	315
Other Music Expense	425	500	295	(205)
Total Music	11,222	11,700	11,010	(690)
Diocesan Pledge Funding	90,142	89,000	88,879	(121)
General Outreach Funding	9,996	20,000	20,004	4

Total Outreach Funding	100,138	109,000	108,883	(117)
Hospitality	1,699	2,500	1,028	(1,472)
Parish Social Events	228	1,300	396	(904)
Rector Ministry	0	0	69	69
Other Parish Life Expense	792	600	104	(496)
Total Parish Life	2,718	4,400	1,598	(2,802)

St. James's Episcopal Church
2024 INCOME STATEMENT
GENERAL FUND ONLY

EXPENSES
(continued)

	2023		2024	
	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>VARIANCE</u>
Clergy Salaries & Housing Allowance	\$242,700	\$306,400	\$238,280	(\$68,120)
Social Security Allowance	29,693	30,600	27,574	(3,026)
Clergy Continuing Education	2,753	5,600	3,496	(2,104)
Clergy Pensions & Annuities	62,312	59,900	49,207	(10,693)
Clergy Life & Health Insurance	60,468	63,200	62,440	(760)
Supply Clergy	250	0	200	200
Lay Staff Salaries	189,280	137,800	209,431	71,631
Lay Staff FICA - Employer Portion	11,167	13,000	15,515	2,515
Lay Staff Pension Fund	7,650	7,900	10,692	2,792
Lay Staff Health & Life Insurance	44,100	48,200	53,358	5,158
Temporary/Substitute Lay Staff	1,550	800	1,750	950
Other Personnel Expense	7,557	1,000	7,561	6,561
Total Personnel	659,480	674,400	679,504	5,104
Electric	14,296	12,000	16,516	4,516
Gas	26,573	18,000	24,308	6,308
Other Utilities	5,446	5,500	5,158	(342)
General Maintenance & Repairs	24,281	22,000	15,667	(6,333)
Maintenance Supplies	6,338	4,500	5,135	635
Custodial Services	0	0	0	0
Insurance - Property & Liability	36,392	41,200	48,714	7,514
Lawn Care & Grounds	2,979	2,500	3,912	1,412
Snow Removal	275	1,700	975	(725)
Transfer to Major Maintenance Fd.	12,000	8,000	8,004	4
Transfer to Capital Campaign	18,504	0	0	0
Other Property Expense	535	300	135	(165)
Total Property	147,619	115,700	128,524	12,824
Other Stewardship	350	200	369	169
Total Stewardship	350	200	369	169
Church Worship & Altar Supplies	642	1,000	1,196	196
Other Worship Expenses	1,146	800	739	(61)

Total Worship	1,789	1,800	1,935	135
Total Miscellaneous Expense	0	200	20	(180)

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$985,325	\$974,500	\$979,521	\$5,021
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EXCESS: INCOME - EXPENSES	(\$44,559)	\$0	\$13,719	\$13,719
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St. James's

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