

ANNUAL REPORT

for 2024

**Presented to the parish at the Annual Meeting
on January 26, 2025**

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**679 Farmington Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06119**

ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL MEETING – JANUARY 26, 2025

ANNUAL REPORT CONTENTS

Page		
3	Meeting Agenda	
4	Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting	
9	Rector's Report	The Reverend Todd FitzGerald
10	Wardens' Report	Eleanor Barnes & Stewart Murchie
10	Associate Rector's Report	The Reverend Margie Baker
12	Treasurers' Report	John Wilcox
16	Interim Music Director's Report	Walden Moore
17	Music at the Red Door	Jeff Verney
18	Stewardship Committee	Robert Eikel & Laura Roche
18	Investment Committee	Jack Barnes
19	Finance Committee	John Wilcox
19	Capital Campaign	Eleanor Barnes & Virginia Van Dyk
20	1841 Legacy Society (Planned Giving)	Staff
21	Layreaders	John Kauczka
21	Altar Guild	Buffy Ineson
22	Acolytes	Staff
22	Ushers	Laura Dake Roche
23	Healing Prayers Ministry	Wes Winterbottom
23	Communications	Ellen Painter Dollar
24	Community Service	Lisa Mahoney
25	Spring Fling	Julia O'Brien
25	Christmas Festival	Matteo Donnelly
26	House Committee	Stephen Crocker
28	2024 Donors List	

St. John's Episcopal Church Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 26, 2025
9 a.m. in Hubbard Hall

Agenda

Opening Prayer & Call to Order

Acceptance of 2024 Annual Meeting minutes

Vestry elections

Wardens (one-year term)

Eleanor Barnes
Stewart Murchie

Treasurers (one-year term)

David McCary
John Wilcox

Vestry members (three-year term)

Kim Byrd, Matteo Donnelly, Susan Fay, Jeff Verney

Vestry member (two-year term to complete an unexpired vacated term)

Stacey Samuel Bannon

Delegates to Convention

Eleanor Barnes
Sharon Henes
Alternate – Robert Eikel

Thanking outgoing vestry members

Anne Harney (treasurer), Lissie Brooks, Marcos Donnelly, Rosa Guzzo, Mary Honyotski

Resolutions

- 1) Motion to authorize the treasurers or either warden to borrow up to \$10,000 annually without calling for a vestry vote.
- 2) Motion to authorize the vestry to fill a vacancy to serve until the next parish meeting.
- 3) Motion to allow the co-treasurers or either warden to sell any securities received in payment of pledges or other donations.

Reports

Rector's Report – Todd FitzGerald
Wardens' Report – Eleanor Barnes & Stewart Murchie
Associate Rector's Report – Margie Baker
Music Report – Walden Moore
Financial Report – John Wilcox

Thanking outgoing interim director of music

Walden Moore

New Business

Adjournment

St. John's Episcopal Church Annual Meeting
January 28, 2024
9 a.m. in Hubbard Hall

Todd FitzGerald called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and opened with prayer. He noted that a quorum for the annual meeting, per our bylaws, is at least 10% of our active membership as stated on the most recent parochial report. Our active membership on the parochial report for 2022 was 373, for a quorum of 38 people, which was met and exceeded.

A motion to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes as written was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

A. Elections

The following slate of nominees was presented. There were no nominees from the floor.

Wardens (one-year term)

Eleanor Barnes
Stewart Murchie

Treasurers (one-year term)

Anne Harney
David McCary

Vestry members (three-year term)

Ginger Gillespie, Lauren Mascola, Linda Schatz, Brenda Zanta

Delegates to Convention

Eleanor Barnes, Stewart Murchie, Alternate – Robert Eikel

A motion to elect all of the above-named people to their respective positions was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. Todd thanked those who were elected for saying “yes” to the invitation to serve in this capacity.

Appreciations – Todd FitzGerald thanked the three people rotating off the vestry this year (Annabel Clapp, Robert Eikel, Julia O'Brien) and Ginger Gillespie, who served as warden for the past year and is now moving into a regular vestry position. Todd mentioned the specific gifts that each of these people brought to their vestry service, and expressed gratitude that they will continue to participate in many other ministry areas. He mentioned that Annabel plans to step away from serving as chair of the Christmas Festival, so there's an opportunity for someone new to take on that role.

B. Annual Resolutions – The three annual resolutions related to parish management during the coming year were presented:

1. Motion to authorize the treasurers or either warden to borrow up to \$10,000 annually without calling for a vestry vote.
2. Motion to authorize the vestry to fill a vacancy to serve until the next parish meeting.
3. Motion to allow the treasurer or either warden to sell any securities received in payment of pledges or other donations.

A motion to approve all three annual resolutions was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

C. Priest in Charge's Report – Todd FitzGerald

Todd spoke about the two areas on which he concentrated in his written annual report: worship and pastoral ministry.

Worship - We continue to see new people coming to worship at St. John's (including new babies!) which is a blessing and a gift. He invited parishioners to come to church each Sunday with the intent of feeding our own souls and also meeting at least one new person (not necessarily someone new to the church, just someone you don't know). St. John's offered several alternate worship opportunities in 2023, including daily Morning Prayer held by telephone conference call, and monthly Celtic worship in Hubbard Hall.

Pastoral ministry - One-on-one pastoral ministry is central to what we do at St. John's, but pastoral care goes beyond that. Church governance and administration can also be seen as pastoral ministry. When we are thoughtful and strategic about our policies, procedures, and communications, we are caring for our whole parish system. In 2023, we engaged in that kind of pastoral ministry in several ways. We updated and improved printed communication materials, such as our funeral planning booklet and 1841 Legacy Society (planned giving) brochure. A compensation study group comprising Todd and several vestry members (Ginger Gillespie, Anne Harney, Tom Oberholtzer, Julia O'Brien) examined staff compensation and job descriptions, compiled external information (job descriptions and compensation information from other churches and related organizations), and made recommendations to the wardens and treasurers about staff salary ranges and job titles. Vestry leaders and Todd also fine-tuned the budgeting process and looked at the four standing committees required by our bylaws (investment, finance, nominating, house). The Nominating Committee consists of vestry members who are completing their final term, along with the priest in charge/rector and wardens. In late 2023, the committee undertook a successful process to nominate the vestry members and officers who were elected today. We do not currently have a Finance Committee, but in 2023 began discerning how that committee might be convened and operate to support parish financial administration. That work will continue in 2024.

Christ continues to call to us, and throughout the past year, Todd has witnessed that call and our responses to it. To quote parishioner Harriet Odlum at the end of her life in late 2023, we are always being held and loved by God. We are then sent forth to share the good news of what God is doing in our lives with a hurting and broken world.

D. Wardens' Report – Stewart Murchie

The word "warden" refers to someone in the role of guardian, keeper, or steward. That's how Stewart sees the role of warden, as stewarding the St. John's community. The report that he and his co-warden Ginger Gillespie wrote for the Annual Report was focused on thanks, because there is so much work being done to support and preserve this community, and parishioners offer so much talent, insight, and commitment to that endeavor. The result is a healthy church with increased pledges, increased involvement, and clear processes for discerning our way forward. Stewart thanked the staff for all they do for the church, and the compensation study group for helping to clarify how we express our thanks to the staff through compensation.

He also thanked the House Committee for their ongoing work on the complex and important project to replace our HVAC (heating and cooling) system, and the Investment Committee for their insights that help us make wise financial decisions. The specific trajectory of the HVAC project is still being discerned. We have received several bids, we plan to submit at least one grant application, we have

researched credits/incentives being offered for organizations upgrading to more sustainable HVAC systems, and we anticipate forming a committee to begin work on a capital campaign. Our goal is to preserve and improve a key asset of this church—our physical plant—and ensure that we make sound decisions to support our long-term financial health. We will need parishioners to help with this project, such as serving on a capital campaign committee or helping with grant proposals. The wardens will continue to facilitate this work, in conversation with the House Committee and Investment Committee. Stewart is confident that we can do this difficult and important work well.

Stewart closed by thanking his co-warden for the past year, Ginger Gillepsie. The job of warden is intense and collaborative, and she has been an ideal partner in this work. Ginger is an example of “Christian goodness” who throughout this past year has exhibited wisdom, warmth, understanding, and an ability to push back gently. Stewart is excited to work with Eleanor Barnes as co-warden in the year to come, and will greatly miss working with Ginger.

E. Associate Rector’s Report – Margie Baker

Todd introduced Margie by sharing that she has been promoted to from assistant rector to associate rector. Her job has grown significantly since she was hired in 2019, and she shares extensively in the work of liturgy, pastoral care, preaching, and oversight of programs and people, which is the kind of work done by an associate rector. Similarly, the compensation study group recognized that Ellen Painter Dollar has responsibilities beyond those of a parish administrator/manager. She has oversight over the entire parish system, while also being involved in many of the details, and brings expertise in writing, editing, graphic design, and communications to her role as well. Therefore, she is now director of operations and communications.

Margie’s written contribution to the Annual Report provides an overview of all that’s going on with children, youth, and families at St. John’s, and she chose to highlight just a few of those things. We now employ two professional nursery workers as well as youth/young adult nursery assistants to provide consistent high-quality child care on Sunday mornings. This ministry supports both children and their parents, who can participate in worship with confidence that their children are well cared for.

We tried some new programming this past year, such as our first-ever trivia night (with another one scheduled this spring) and a monthly online book club organized by Linda Schatz. The April book club meeting will be intergenerational, for middle and high school youth as well as adults.

We have many new acolytes and younger kids who are excited about joining this ministry when they’re old enough. We are looking for joyful, vital, and imperfect service—the goal is growth and not perfection.

Margie expressed gratitude for the community, for all she continues to learn, and especially for those who minister with children, youth, and families, whom she does not refer to as “volunteers,” because we are all ministers. She reviewed events coming up this spring and summer, including a new intergenerational Vacation Bible School held June 17 to 20 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. She encouraged everyone to look around at all that goes on at St. John’s, know you are a part of it, and invite others to come and see all that is happening here.

F. Music Director’s Report – Scott Lamlein

Scott encouraged everyone to read his written report, which has extensive information about the many activities and programs that are part of our music ministry.

In August 2023, we had another wonderful Kids Community Music Camp with 25 kids participating. Scott is grateful to his co-camp director, Calida Jones. We recently learned that we need to become licensed as a day camp, which requires a lot of work but is also an indication that this program is growing.

The Choir School continues to grow, and they had a wonderful annual choir camp at Incarnation Center last summer. Scott is grateful to Margie and everyone involved in Sunday School and other programming for children, who ensure that Choir School kids can participate in the life of the church. Many of the big Music at the Red Door events (such as Lessons & Carols) help support the Choir School's ministry to form children into young musicians and spiritual leaders.

Thank you to Karan Emerick for her many years of support and leadership of Music at the Red Door, most recently as board president. Jeff Verney is the new president, Stephan Christiansen continues as treasurer, and board members are Nat Reeves, Steve Metcalf, Todd FitzGerald, Betsy Chicares, Susan Fay, and Rebecca Bourret. Ex officio members of the board are Scott (artistic director) along with Ben Mabrey (intern) and Ray Giolitto (director of operations for Red Door). In his hourly paid position, Ray also helps administer the church's music program, including managing service listings on the web site, researching musician bios, licensing the music we share in worship and via the livestream, and helping to manage our livestream ministry.

Many of the events sponsored by Music at the Red Door, such as Choral Evensong and Pipes Alive!, provide easy opportunities for inviting someone to come to church with you. Scott is grateful for this community and all of your support.

G. **Treasurers' Report** – Anne Harney

Anne thanked everyone for attending on a snowy morning like this. David McCary, co-treasurer, could not attend this meeting, but Anne thanked him for his hard work this past year, especially the extensive research he did re: options for financing the upcoming HVAC project. Anne provided a three-page handout with information about 2023 financial results and the 2024 budget.

2023 Financial Results– The past year continued an overall positive financial trend. Total income was about 5% over budget. Pledge receipts were nearly 26% over budget, and we collected 98.4% of all pledged funds, which is amazing and surpasses the 95% collection rate for which we budgeted. Third-party rental funds and fundraising income (from the Spring Fling and Christmas Festival) were both over budget. Expenses were slightly under budget for several reasons, including the staff's diligence in controlling expenses whenever possible. We drew \$285,000 from the endowment in 2023 to support church operations, which is 4% of the three-year rolling average of our endowment. Anne explained that while our budgets make it look like we're going to need as much as a 6% endowment draw, we consistently draw about 4%. This is in part because our budget includes some non-cash line items, such as depreciation.

One page of Anne's handout included a few financial facts, for example: In 2023, it cost \$2,942/day to operate the church, and in 2024, we have budgeted \$3,071/day. Average pledge for 2024 = \$3,468. Salary and payroll expenses account for about 62% of our budgeted expenses, while the physical plant accounts for about 21%. Pledges and gifts support 56.5% of expenses.

2024 Budget – The vestry approved the 2024 budget at their December 19 meeting. There have been no changes since then other than fine-tuning pledge numbers as a few more pledges came in. Pledges for 2024 are 5% higher than for 2023. Anne thanked Laura Roche, Matt Ciscel, and the Stewardship

Committee for all of their work to ensure a successful pledge campaign, and thanked all parishioners for their generosity.

The total budget for 2024 is around \$1.1 million, with a budgeted shortfall of \$423,000, which would require an endowment draw of about 6%. But as explained previously, our actual cash endowment draw is consistently lower than that, around 4%. How the upcoming HVAC project will affect our endowment draws in 2024 and 2025 remains to be determined as we make decisions about how to fund that project.

HVAC Project – We have received three bids so far which average more than \$900,000. There are several ways we could finance this project:

- **Borrow the funds.** David McCary has been talking with Webster Bank about this possibility.
- **Draw money from the endowment.**
- **Receive grant funds.** Molly Cooper, a parishioner, is working on an application now to the National Fund for Sacred Spaces, which makes grants from \$50,000 to \$500,000 and requires recipients to undertake a capital campaign to match grant funds.
- **Hold a capital campaign.**
- **Receive credits and/or discounts from incentive programs for organizations installing more sustainable, environmentally sound equipment.**

We will most likely end up doing a combination of these things, and it’s like putting a puzzle together to figure out the best way forward.

H. New Business

Todd gave each of the outgoing vestry members a small gift from the parish to thank them for their service, and asked that members of the vestry stand up for recognition.

Kim Byrd mentioned that a small committee worked this year on raising the profile of the 1841 Legacy Society, which recognizes those who have included St. John’s in their estate planning. She pointed out the 1841 Legacy Society report in the Annual Report, and a new brochure that has more information about the society and planned giving. Knowing how important our endowment is to our ongoing operations, it’s important that we continue to add to it, and planned gifts and bequests are one way to do that. Kim encouraged anyone who wants further conversation about planned giving to talk with one of the committee members listed in the annual report, or one of the clergy.

Margie invited everyone to join the Sunday School kids in the back of Hubbard Hall after the meeting, where there were several activities that anyone could participate in, including a coloring poster, blessing rocks, and a prayer chain.

There was no other New Business.

The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Painter Dollar
Director of Operations & Communications

Rector's Report

During 2024, St. John's Church has continued to grow. In 2017, for example, there were 125 pledging households that gave \$400,000 in pledge receipts. For 2025, roughly 170 households have pledged about \$640,000, which is a 14% increase in total pledges compared with last year, along with a 7% increase in the average pledge amount and roughly 30 new pledging households. As the current parishioners take more responsibility for the church's operating budget, the vestry is empowered to maintain a prudent endowment draw while fully supporting a vast array of ministries and generous staff compensation.

In addition to growing in pledging households, total receipts, and new pledgers, St. John's has continued to grow in the efficiencies of its administrative structure. In 2024, as in previous years, St. John's included many efforts to promote good organization in the ways we communicate, form committees, handle conflict, and make decisions. Some of the most important ways that St. John's attended to these governing priorities included staff transitions, budgeting processes, building renovations, and the launch of a capital campaign.

In April, our director of music of almost 10 years left to take another position. In the six months that followed, staff and lay leaders worked diligently to hire a replacement in this important position. A job description was updated and posted, applications were received, a search committee was formed, interviews were completed, and a new director of music was hired at the end of October. Thanks to the dedication of the choirs, two interim directors, many supply musicians, and other staff and volunteers, the music program continued to thrive during the transition. During the director of music transition, my position also changed from temporary appointment as priest in charge to a more permanent position as rector. These transitions required a tremendous amount of time and collaboration, and thanks to our healthy administrative structures, St. John's was able to effectively navigate these changes.

In the fall, the St. John's administrative apparatus was put under even greater stress as we navigated phase one of a capital campaign, an annual stewardship campaign, the church's budgeting process with the involvement of a new finance committee, and the replacement of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Throughout all these complex efforts, staff and lay leaders worked closely to communicate with one another, and with outside vendors and consultants. Our committee structure enabled the House Committee, the Stewardship Committee, and the Finance Committee to collaborate with the staff and empower the vestry to make informed decisions on behalf of the church. And most important, all these efforts were characterized by respectful interactions and by a shared care for St. John's.

As we move into 2025, effective governance positions the church to exercise a ministry of welcome on several fronts. As previously mentioned, St. John's was blessed to have a significant group of new people join the church in 2024. My wife, Amy, and I were able to officially welcome many of them at a "newcomer's gathering" at our house in November. Moreover, St. John's will welcome four clergy who will generously volunteer their time and expertise in the year ahead. Former rector, Joe Pace, will join us as occasional preacher, and three clergy who are new members of St. John's will join us as preachers and teachers: Rebecca Bourret, Mary Lynn Dell, and Nancy Wright. And finally, the vestry is excited to welcome six new lay leaders (John Wilcox, Kim Byrd, Jeff Verney, Susan Fay, Matteo Donnelly, and Stacey Samuel-Bannon) who have agreed to serve on the vestry and share their gifts to further strengthen our governing structures as we continue to join God's mission in and through St. John's Church.

Faithfully submitted,
Todd FitzGerald, rector

Wardens' Report

As wardens, we feel immense gratitude for the opportunity to serve a parish so filled with passion, faith, talent, and hard work. It is a privilege to work alongside incredible clergy, staff, and fellow parishioners. We look forward to a year ahead with great promise, fueled by our great collective work in 2024.

As we begin 2025, it's an opportunity to reflect on all that was accomplished in 2024:

- In May 2024, Todd FitzGerald accepted the call to serve as the 15th rector of St. John's. We are thrilled that Todd, Amy, Stella, and Florie will continue to lead and be part of our parish family! And we were also blessed in June 2024 to celebrate five years with our associate rector, Margie Baker, and her family: Jenn, Jamie, and Eden.
- Following the departure of Scott Lamlein, our exceptional director of music, the music program was able to go from strength to strength with Walden Moore as our interim director of music. A search committee, led by Buffy Ineson and Caleb Peck and comprising choir members and parents, parishioners, staff, and clergy, selected Dr. Nicholas (Nick) Capozzoli to continue to build our music programs and ministries.
- The House Committee, led by Steve Crocker, finalized its recommendation for a new heating and cooling system. The recommendation was subsequently supported by the newly formed Finance Committee and the vestry. By the end of the year, much of the work was completed, bringing us a reliable and efficient system to heat and cool the campus for many years to come.
- The newly formed Finance Committee, led by John Wilcox, proved instrumental not only in the analysis of the HVAC system replacement, but also in the annual budget process and management of the church's endowment. This committee brings together members of the Investment Committee, the treasurers, the wardens, and several parishioners.
- The vestry approved the formation of a capital campaign to pay for the new HVAC system and additional parish needs. The campaign, led by Virginia Van Dyk and Eleanor Barnes, began with parish-wide "cottage meetings" to engage parishioners in conversation and discern where God is calling us as a parish. Consistent themes emerged and are being included in a case statement and goals to be shared with the parish in the new year.
- Our stewardship campaign, exceptionally led by Laura Roche and Robert Eikel, called parishioners to give in gratitude for God's grace and to build up the body of Christ. The campaign realized a significant increase in pledging households and income for St. John's.
- A Kitchen Guild has begun organizing and managing this great resource, which supports our work with feeding ministries and is frequently used for church activities and community events that take place in our building.

We thank all those who are leading, participating in, and exploring the opportunities we have here at St. John's to live out our faith. The energy, enthusiasm, and momentum are palpable. Let us continue to do God's work, care for one another (inside and outside our parish), and welcome all who come through our doors.

Faithfully submitted,

Eleanor Barnes & Stewart Murchie, wardens

Associate Rector's Report

Sunday School and Nursery

The Sunday School and nursery programs continue to thrive. We have weekly Sunday School for children ages 3-17 and weekly nursery care for children 6 and under.

- Our primary class (ages 3-6) meets weekly in their classroom to explore the foundations of the Christian faith. This fall we welcomed two new teachers to the primary classroom, Enid Oberholtzer and Audrey Baker, who work with Jenn Baker and Robert Eikel, our returning primary teachers.
- Our elementary, middle, and high school classes meet in their own classrooms on Choir School weeks and in a one-room schoolhouse setting on non-Choir School weeks. This rhythm allows our teachers to have flexibility and lets our children work across age groups in fun and appropriate ways. This year the one-room schoolhouse is led by Donielle Joslyn and Jeff Verney.
- On Choir School weeks, the elementary class focuses on deepening and expanding students' faith foundation, led by Akilah Williams and Jeff Verney.
- This fall, the middle school class rewrote the Christmas Pageant by studying Scripture and past pageants and then creating something that reflected their theology. This year's class felt it was important to tell more of Joseph's story, which led to a new scene based on Matthew 1! Our middle school teachers are Matt Ciscel and Leah Lorenzo.
- The high school class, led by Angela Allen-Peck and Buffy Ineson, focuses on how to live out their faith in their lives. This group asks big questions and enjoys deep conversations.
- Our nursery program has flourished this year under the care of two professional nursery workers and several youth and young adult workers. We have three workers each week caring for anywhere from one to 12 children depending on the week.

If you feel called to the ministry of Sunday School, please let me know! There's always room for more teachers, and teaching Sunday School is a profound way to shape the future and deepen your own faith.

EYC

Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) is a weekly gathering for youth in grades 6-12 (or equivalent). We meet on Sunday evenings 5pm-7pm. In 2024, EYC was a space for fellowship, service, formation, and fun. Some 2024 highlights were the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, hosting Trivia Night, the Dignity Grows packing party, spring *and* fall lock-ins, and a video scavenger hunt in Elizabeth Park. We are blessed with several adults who support our teens and tweens: Kate Eikel and Matt Ciscel, who lead the GPL (service-oriented) programs, Sharon Henes, our youth advisor, and Robin Brown, our seminarian intern.

Christmas Pageant

One of the highlights of my year is always the St. John's Christmas Pageant, and 2024 was no exception. We had more than 40 children and youth involved, but the best number is 24: twenty-four adults (and young adults) helped the kids tell the story of Christ's birth! We are so lucky to have so many folks in the parish with a heart for helping. This is a blessing and, based on conversations with colleagues, not normal at all. Thank you to Sharon Henes, Kate Eikel, Akilah Williams, Danielle Pieratti, Sara Wigmore, Jaime Patten, Katie Reardon, Annabel Trickett-Clapp, Marcos Donnelly, Liana Douillet Guzman, Matt Ciscel, Angela Allen-Peck, Erica Williams, Pia Mara Santomauro, Sue Murphy, Livvy Lorenzo, Lilah Lorenzo, Morgan Babbitt, Meghan Hayes, Keitha Campo, Keely Stater, and Kristi Curran. And a special shout-out to Buffy Ineson, Robert Eikel, and Jack Barnes, **who built us a third camel**.

Monday Night Bible Study

Monday Night Bible Study continues weekly in Zoom. What began as two or three folks gathering during the pandemic has grown into a loving virtual community averaging 10 participants weekly. We explore a topic over several weeks, and there is never any homework or preparation required. Topics in 2024 included Exodus, 1 John, Acts of the Apostles, and an Advent study called Holy Darkness, Holy Light. We're currently studying Luke's parables, and you are welcome to join!

This spring we will hold our third Bible Study Retreat on Friday-Saturday, April 11-12 at Camp Washington. Registration opens soon.

Book Club

In fall 2023 we tried on a new idea: St. John's book club. The idea was to read one novel per month, and the genre is best described as fiction with theological flair. We've read C.S. Lewis, Geraldine Brooks, Octavia Butler, and others. In 2024 we added an intergenerational read for each season! Our first was Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, and this fall was TJ Klune's *House in the Cerulean Sea*. Join us this spring! We gather the first Thursday of the month in Zoom. Our February read is *Small Things like These* by Claire Keegan. In March we will read *My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok, and our April intergenerational read is *A Wrinkle in Time*. We have a few copies of each book available in the office.

Choir Camp

2024 was a year of transition in the music program, and I was able to support that transition by leading Choir Camp in August. It was a gift to teach and conduct music with our choristers! There are so many fun traditions that are part of St. John's Choir Camp (sung compline! the Angelus! siesta olé!). I am also grateful to not be doing it this year, since we've hired a new director of music.

Seminarian Intern

This fall we welcomed Robin Brown, our seminarian intern from Yale Divinity School. Robin is a postulant for holy orders in the diocese of Southern Virginia and will be with us through May. She has preached and is leading Adult Forum offerings this spring as well as trying out various other roles and learning experiences. Her natural curiosity and gifts for ministry have been and continue to be a blessing to this community. Also, she is kind, funny, and an all-around wonderful human! If you haven't met her, please introduce yourself.

Sabbatical

This fall I will take a three-month sabbatical. Sabbatical comes from the same root as *sabbath* and is a time for intentional and extended rest. Priests in the diocese of Connecticut are encouraged to take a sabbatical after serving a parish for five years; I am in my sixth. Most of my time will be spent locally, but I will go away on retreat to the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) in Cambridge, MA, and Jenn and I will take a trip or two. I will be out of the office Monday, September 22 through Sunday, December 21. This means that I will miss the Christmas Pageant, but it will be in good hands.

Faithfully submitted,

Margie Baker, associate rector

Treasurers' Report

2024 Financial Results

St. John's 2024 financial results were very positive in terms of both our cash-based operating results and investment performance:

- *Revenue*: Revenue increased over last year by 5.5% and outperformed our budget by 7.5%, with all revenue sources (pledges, contributions, fundraising, rental income, other) growing over last year and all exceeding budget expectations.
- *Operating expenses*: Operating expenses *decreased* by 2.7% (or \$27k) vs. last year, while we budgeted an *increase* of 4.4% or \$47k. Part of this expense outperformance (though not all) was due to our music director's departure before year-end.
- *Net result*: The combination of higher revenue and lower operating expenses resulted in a meaningful improvement in our operating deficit to \$244,087, down from last year's \$310,401 and significantly lower than our budgeted operating deficit of \$365,547.

- *Investment returns:* In addition, investment returns (net of fees) from our endowment were strong, totaling \$669,895 or 9.4% of our starting year endowment balance.

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>2024 Actual</u>
Operating Income	\$711,153	\$697,500	\$750,229
Operating Expense*	<u>\$1,021,555</u>	<u>\$1,063,047</u>	<u>\$994,316</u>
Operating result*	-\$310,401	-\$365,547	-\$244,087

*Excludes non-cash expenses due to year-over-year variability

These are strong results that reflect our continued growth in stewardship and discipline in expense management.

There is one additional consideration, however, that should be noted with regard to our results. Our capital expenditures, which are not reflected in our *cash-based operating expenses*, were very significant in 2024. These included the replacement of our boiler and, more notably, the replacement of HVAC system.

Capital Expenditures

As background, capital expenditures (“CapEx”) are long-term investments in the upgrading of our physical plant. From an accounting standpoint, they are expensed on a gradual basis through a recurring depreciation charge. They are not expensed immediately because they are viewed as assets with a useful life that spans many years, and as such expensing them over time better matches the expense with their use.

Because depreciation expense is not a “cash” expense, insofar as it is incurred after the actual expenditure is made, it is sometimes viewed as a “not real” expense. (And was excluded in our operating results above given its year-over-year variability.) But the expense is real; it is just that its timing does not align with the actual disbursement of cash.

Our capital expenditures in 2024, for our new boiler and HVAC system, were very significant relative to recent history. And while not “expensed” in our operating results, they nonetheless required real cash outlays. To pay for this equipment, an endowment draw (beyond what was used to support operations) and a bank loan were used. This resulted in a net decrease in our endowment balance (despite the strong investment gains) and the addition of ~\$350k in debt (and interest costs) as of YE2024. While the upcoming capital campaign may provide funds to offset these expenditures, financing costs and lower endowment income will be incurred until that time.

Budget Sustainability and Endowment Draw

As we consider the sustainability of our budgeting decisions and the appropriate level of endowment draw, we must consider the following questions:

- *The operating budget:* What is our cash-based operating deficit as a percentage of our endowment? How does this “draw rate” compare to actual investment returns?
- *Capital expenditures:* What is a reasonable expectation for capital expenditures in an “average” year, understanding that actual expenditures may be meaningfully more or less in any given year. Are we providing for a CapEx allowance when we evaluate our draw rate?
- *Endowment returns:* What level of returns do we expect from the endowment? Do we want the endowment to grow over time so that, given inflation, its relative contribution holds constant?

Cash-based operating budget: For 2024, our cash-based operating deficit was 3.5% of our 2024 average endowment balance. This compares to 4.7% deficit in 2023 and a 4.3% deficit in 2022.

Capital expenditures: Our budgeted “allowance” for capital expenditures in 2024 (a combination of depreciation charges and an explicit CapEx allowance entry) was \$58,000 or 0.83% of our average endowment balance. This was up slightly from the 2023 level of \$52,500 (0.80%).

However, in looking at our actual capital expenditures over the past 10 years (including this year’s HVAC and boiler), the Finance Committee estimated that the expected average level of CapEx in a given year should be closer to \$100,000 per year (or 1.4% of our 2024 endowment). This is ~80% higher than the \$55k average of the prior two years.

Endowment returns: As noted above, our 2024 return was a very strong 9.4%. This followed an equally strong 9.7% in 2023, but in 2022 returns were actually negative at -16.7%. As a result, the compound annualized return over the 3-year period was 0.7%. If we go back further to 2018, returns averaged 5.5% over that 7-year period.

Total endowment draw: In assessing our draw, we need to consider both the actual operating deficit and the expected average level of Cap Ex, as compared to expected average returns:

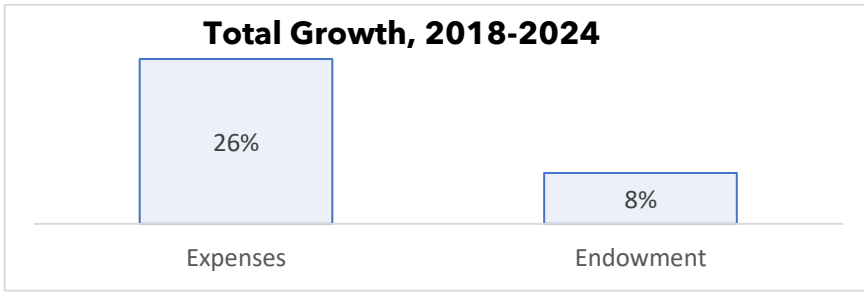
<u>Draw @ Budgeted CapEx</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Actual Cash-Based Operating Draw Rate	4.3%	4.7%	3.5%
Budgeted ‘CapEx allowance’ Draw Rate	<u>0.8%</u>	<u>0.8%</u>	<u>0.8%</u>
Total Expected Endowment Draw Rate	5.1%	5.5%	4.3%
Avg 7-yr Endowment Return	<u>5.5%</u>	<u>5.5%</u>	<u>5.5%</u>
Net Expected Endowment Growth	0.4%	0.0%	1.2%

<u>Draw @ Expected CapEx</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Actual Cash-Based Operating Draw Rate	4.3%	4.7%	3.5%
Updated Expected CapEx Draw Rate	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>
Total Expected Endowment Draw Rate	5.7%	6.1%	4.9%
Avg 7-yr Endowment Return	<u>5.5%</u>	<u>5.5%</u>	<u>5.5%</u>
Net Expected Endowment Growth	-0.2%	-0.6%	0.6%

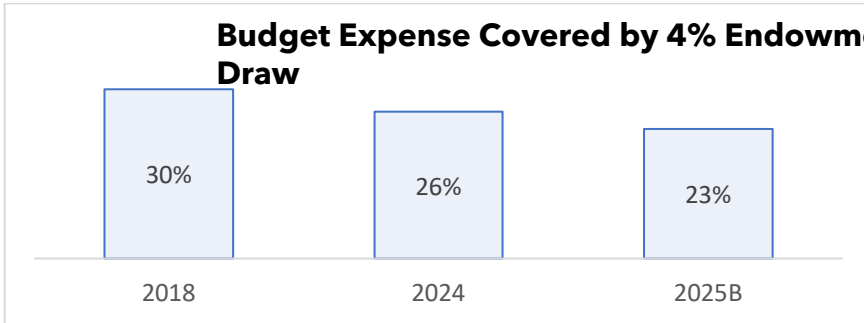
The above analysis would suggest that we are operating slightly better than a break-even draw rate using our old CapEx assumption, and at roughly break-even with our revised CapEx assumption, assuming for both that endowment performance continues at 5-6% per year.

While true in absolute terms, what the above analysis misses is the impact of inflation. Because the cost of operating St. John’s will continue to grow over time, the endowment must also grow if we expect it to cover a consistent percentage of our operating expenses.

If we compare 2018 to 2024, our operating expenses have increased by 26% while our endowment has increased by less than 8%. (Note: If we compare 2018 to budgeted rather than actual 2024 results, expense growth would have been +34%.)



In determining our target endowment draw, therefore, we should target a level that allows for stronger net annual endowment growth (e.g., 2%/year) so that the endowment can support our expenses and ministries at a consistent level. This has not been the case recently, as the endowment’s relative contribution has diminished:



2025 Budget

For 2025, our budget continues to support our robust programing, beautiful physical plant, and talented clergy and staff, while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Several factors in 2025 make the budget outlook less favorable than 2024, though there are several offsets, most notably a very strong stewardship campaign:

- *Revenue:* Pledge receipts are budgeted at \$600k, up over 10% versus our actual 2024 result of \$545k. This is a tremendous result and reflects the incredible momentum we have as a parish. Offsetting this, however, is a decrease in budgeted rental income of \$53,000. This is largely driven by the loss of the parking lot rental income, a development beyond our control. Total operating income is budgeted to decrease by \$13k (~2%) vs. 2024.
- *Operating Expenses:* Total operating expenses are budgeted to grow by \$108k or 10.9%, driven by higher staff expenses (including a full-year music director) and an HVAC-related loan expense of \$43k. Other operating expenses are expected to decline modestly.
- *Net result:* Taken together, the budget projects a cash-based operating deficit of \$366k. This is \$120k less favorable than our 2024 actuals, but virtually identical to our budgeted 2024 outcome.

	<u>2024 Budget</u>	<u>2024 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>
Operating Income	\$697,500	\$750,229	\$737,000
Operating Expense*	\$1,063,047	\$994,316	\$1,103,000
Operating result*	-\$365,547	-\$244,087	-\$366,003

*Excludes non-cash expenses due to year-over-year variability

While this may appear to be a step back relative to our 2024 result, our budgeted expenses are actually flat to the 2024 budget when adjusted for the loan expense. And if we adjust for the loan and the loss of parking revenue, the projected deficit decreases to ~\$280k (close to our 2024 result) despite higher staff expense.

Looking Forward

In summary, we should feel very positive about our financial progress and the current position of St. John’s. Membership and pledge income are increasing, our ministries are robust and growing, and our endowment’s

size is holding steady. Very few congregations can say this, and for that we can thank the inspirational leadership and dedication of our clergy and staff, and the leadership, engagement, and generosity of our parishioners.

There is still work to do, of course, as we are not yet in a position that is financially sustainable over the long term. Revenue growth needs to outpace expenses and the endowment balance needs to grow for St. John's to be able to maintain its full set of ministries into the future.

With the momentum of an outstanding stewardship campaign and the imminent launch of our first capital campaign in over 30 years, we have every reason to look forward with confidence and excitement.

Faithfully submitted.

John A. Wilcox, Finance Committee chair and treasurer-elect

Interim Music Director's Report

Music at St. John's has continued uninterrupted during the interim period after Scott left following Easter. In the spring, Christopher Houlihan served as interim director, conducting the choirs and playing services until the end of the choir season, followed by summer organ substitutes Christa Rakich (St. John's organ artist-in-residence), Doug Johnson, Mary Pan, and Ted Babbitt. The August Choir Camp was capably handled by Margie Baker, Ted Babbitt, Ram Tysoe (former choral scholar), Daaé Ransom (former head chorister), and Kristi Harrington (Daaé's mom and our camp nurse). I began a five-month tenure as interim director of music in early September, assisted by Ray Giolitto handling bulletin music notes and all matters for Music at the Red Door, along with patient staff members and volunteers of whom I will speak later.

The Adult Choir and Choir School have maintained their normal schedule of Sunday service singing with a few slight adjustments of rehearsal schedule for the sake of efficiency. Membership in both groups has been stable. They were joined by a new alto choral scholar in September, with another joining in temporarily after the departure of three choral scholars after the 2023-2024 program year. It is the intention that four Choral Scholar positions will be filled for 2025. The choral scholars continue to not only assist by leading their sections in each rehearsal and service, but also assisting with the Choir School rehearsals during the 5 pm hour on Wednesdays.

Given that I have served part-time in what is very much a full-time position, Sunday afternoon Evensongs were temporarily suspended until the arrival of the new music director and the next complete season. In October, after an extensive search and initial online interviews, Todd, assisted by the Search Committee and choirs, conducted in-person auditions for two finalists, after which Nick Capozzoli was chosen as St. John's next director of music.

The choirs have worked diligently in the interim period. As the holiday season approached, they maintained their tradition of leading singing in Hubbard Hall at the Christmas Festival, presenting a well-attended and beautifully sung service of Lessons and Carols (sponsored by Music at the Red Door), and culminating in two lovely services on Christmas Eve. Parishioner and Choir School graduate Ted Babbitt, currently a student in organ at Mercer University, ably assisted at the organ at both Christmas Eve services and played Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and Christmas I services. Ted is but one example of the impact of St. John's Choir School program on our young people; he has just become director of music at All Saints Church in Warner Robins, GA, as he continues his education at Mercer. Special musical assistance was also provided during the fall by flutists Betsy Chicares and Nancy Skeelee.

Care and maintenance for our fine and beloved Austin organ and Steinway pianos is ongoing and we have dealt with an additional challenge of a shifting environment as our HVAC systems have been completely overhauled. The Choir Room piano is undergoing evaluation for future work needed as the extreme dry conditions that the cold weather brings causes the wood parts (pianos are 85% wood parts) to dry out, shrink, and crack. Nick will pick up this work upon his arrival.

My tenure as interim director comes to a close on the day of this report. It has been a singular honor to serve St. John's in this capacity following my retirement from Trinity, New Haven. You have warmly welcomed me and helped me feel at home during these months. The building and instruments are indeed unique and inspiring, but it is the people that make music at St. John's what it is. My thanks to our clergy, Todd and Margie; our deacon, Walter; and to our dear Ellen, Dwight, and Peggy, who have been endlessly patient and supportive as I had a crash course in the program (and who took on extra duties usually done by the director of music). Thanks to Ray Giolitto for his endless hours of help with office logistics and Red Door, and to Betty Knorr, our choir librarian. And special thanks go to our Adult and Choir School singers themselves—it has been an absolute pleasure to conduct and guide you through many hard-working and joyful hours of rehearsals and services. Much credit and thanks go to our hard-working Choir School parents and, indeed, to all the people of St. John's—you are at the heart of music at St. John's. You have now brought a wonderful new director of music to West Hartford in Nick Capozzoli, and I will follow with great interest the work that he will begin this coming week. St. John's and Nick will always be in my prayers and in my thoughts in the days ahead. Thanks to you, I carry with me many fond memories of these days at St. John's.

Respectfully submitted,
Walden Moore, interim director of music

Music at the Red Door

Music at the Red Door, whose goal each season is to provide compelling music to fill the souls of the community and celebrate the power of music to bring people together, is incorporated as a non-profit and keeps its finances separate from those of the church, although it is a ministry of St. John's. Calendar year 2024 featured the second half of the 2023-2024 season (January through June) and the first half of the 2024-2025 season (September through December). Regular season concerts included Pipes Alive! half-hour organ recitals on the first Sundays of the month, Choral Evensong services during the first half of the year, and performances by the ensemble-in-residence New World Trio. 2024 also included major events such as Spring Chamber Music featuring Leonid Sigal & Friends, and Jazz at the Red Door with Nat Reeves and Friends. A well-attended and very successful Kids Community Music Camp was held for one week in August, where 30 children were invited to explore the joys of music at St. John's by learning to sing, play violin, dance, and drum.

The concert series and summer music camp are sustained by generous individual donors, donations from community businesses, grants, and volunteers. Total income for calendar year came in at \$70,000, which was a decrease of \$7,000 from 2023 due to changes in the programming in light of the departure of Scott Lamlein during the first half of the year. This change in programming also resulted in expenses dropping about \$5,500 from 2023 expenses, and we experienced a slight loss for the year which was comparable to 2023's bottom line results. The good news is that we maintain a very strong and liquid balance sheet, positioning us well to fund excellent programming in 2025 as our new music director comes on board.

Finally, I want recognize Ray Giolitto, the operations director for Music at the Red Door, for his extraordinary work supporting this year's programming and summer camp after Scott left to assume his new position. Ray is the lifeblood of all things Music at the Red Door, and gratitude abounds for all that he does week in and week

out to make this program such a success! I also want to express my deep gratitude to our incredible board which comprises Rebecca Bourret, Betsy Chicares, Stephan Christiansen (our wonderful treasurer), Susan Fay, Karan Emerick, Steve Metcalf, and Nat Reeves, as well as the Rev. Todd Fitzgerald who serves as an ex-officio voting board member. This amazing team does fabulous work to bring this ministry to life, enriching the lives of the 2,000+ in person and online patrons who attend the various concerts during the year.

Faithfully submitted,
Jeff Verney, board president

Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee began by reading *More Blessed to Give* by John MacNaughton, which gave us a wonderful foundation to review our campaign themes for the year. We stressed our gratitude for our many blessings and discussed proportional giving in our campaign materials. David McCary added beautiful photos for our notecards that more than 40 parishioners used to write personal notes to accompany pledge cards. Rachel Boccio, Susie Sarkisian, Keitha Campo, and Caleb Peck shared personal testimonials and Robert Eikel presented at the adult forum and worship services.

The parish responded faithfully and generously to the 2025 stewardship campaign. 176 households pledged a total of \$642,000 to build up the Body of Christ in St. John's parish, an increase of 14.6% over last year. 61% of pledging households increased their pledge or pledged for the first time.

These generous gifts are tangible signs of our gratitude to God for all our many blessings, and are necessary for the parish to operate and witness to God's love in the world. St. John's depends on current members' pledges to keep the lights on, the building heated, the music flowing, the clergy ministering and our staff supporting. Every pledge is essential to support God's work in and through this parish.

Thank you to Todd, Margie, Ellen, and Peggy for their invaluable support and counsel, and thank you all from the 2024 Stewardship Committee,

Robert Eikel and Laura Roche, co-chairs

Eleanor Barnes, Kimberley Byrd, Matthew Ciscel, Robert Eikel, David McCary, Stewart Murchie, Caleb Peck, Susie Sarkisian

Investment Committee

Despite uncertainty this year around interest rates, ongoing tensions abroad, and the U.S. election, 2024 proved to be another strong year for investors. U.S. stocks had another banner year as the S&P 500 returned over 25% boosted by superior performance concentrated mainly in our country's largest technology companies, dubbed the "Magnificent 7." International stocks were up 3.8% for the year as investors' concerns post-election caused international stocks to sell off sharply. U.S. bonds returned 1.3% in 2024 as post-election inflation woes caused interest rates to increase and bond prices to decline.

The endowment continues to be well-diversified to reduce risk and maintain stability over the long term. Assets finished the year at \$6.9 million, with investments returning 9.6% in 2024 and adding over \$664,000 in investment gains. Our average annual return on the endowment since March 2020 has equaled 8.3% per year.

We continue to work closely with our advisors, Fiducient Advisors, who have been instrumental in navigating these volatile markets. Our committee's mission, as entrusted by the vestry, remains to select an independent investment advisor to manage our funds and measure our actual results against the standards set in our

investment policy statement. We meet at least twice a year with Fiducient to review our performance and strategy.

As part of our governance process, Fiducient provides the committee with an annual spending analysis to guide sustainable support for St. John's Episcopal Church's operations. However, to truly fulfill our mission, we must rely on the generosity of our congregation. This year we are undertaking our first major capital campaign since 1993. By contributing to the campaign, you help ensure that the church's vital ministries—such as caring for those in need, fostering spiritual growth, and nurturing a welcoming community—can flourish for generations to come. Together, through your support, we can uphold St. John's legacy of faith and service.

We understand that volatility and uncertainty are part of the investment landscape, and as such, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the careful stewardship of the endowment. As we approach 2025, our focus will be on ensuring the portfolio's resilience while collaborating closely with our advisors to responsibly manage the endowed assets.

It is my privilege to provide this report on behalf of the full Investment Committee.

Faithfully submitted,

Jack Barnes, chair

Committee Members: Chris Byrd, Stephan Christiansen, David McCary, John Roche, Alex Vance

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee, having been dormant for the past several years, was reconstituted in early 2024 to support the vestry and parish leadership in managing our parish's financial position and its decision making.

The role of the committee is to undertake analysis and provide recommendations on strategically important financial decisions facing St. John's. It is not a decision-making body, nor does it develop specific proposals on relevant financial topics (such as the annual budget or major capital expenditures). Rather, the committee reviews proposals from parish clergy, staff, and leadership, and offers analysis, feedback, and recommendations. This provides the vestry—which is the decision-making body—with an additional perspective and “check and balance” on these proposals, giving them greater capacity to focus on the issues of greatest importance.

Major topics covered in 2024 included an assessment of the proposed replacement of the church's heating and cooling system (HVAC), an examination of the appropriate approach for capital expenditure planning, and the 2025 budget.

We look forward to continued engagement in 2025 to further inform our collective decision-making, and we thank our fellow parishioners for their ongoing financial support of our church. Without strong stewardship, the vibrant community and robust activities of St. John's would not be possible.

Respectfully submitted,

John Wilcox, chair

Finance Committee membership: Todd FitzGerald, Eleanor Barnes, Stewart Murchie, Anne Harney, Dave McCary, Chris Byrd, Tim Goetz, Tom Oberholtzer

Capital Campaign

A capital campaign was launched in 2024 as an opportunity for the parish to dream about and discover, together, where God is calling us to direct our ministries and resources in the years to come. The need and decision to install a new heating and cooling system was the initial impetus for the campaign, but it was long overdue, as it

is customary to have capital campaigns every 10-15 years, and it has been more than 30 years since our last one. The process is meant to help us identify and appreciate our strengths, as well as to invite parishioners, clergy, and staff to explore where God is calling us. Virginia Van Dyk and Eleanor Barnes are serving as co-chairs for the capital campaign, and working closely with Todd and Ellen. An outside consultant has been hired to provide guidance on the campaign process.

In the fall, “cottage meetings” were hosted at St. John’s and in parishioner homes. There were many positive themes that emerged from those meetings. People shared the joy that existing ministries bring to them:

- Worship: Appreciation for our excellent clergy, music, and choir; beautiful sanctuary; and the opportunity to volunteer and serve in ministries such as Altar Guild, ushers, and layreaders.
- Outreach: Helping our neighbors through the Blessing Box, Loaves & Fishes, Journey Home, and neighborhood trash pick-up.
- Children and Youth: Choir School, EYC, Sunday School, pageant, and pilgrimage.
- Fellowship: Bible Study, Twelfth Night celebration and tree burning, sharing flowers after Sunday services, youth group, volunteering for the Christmas Festival and the Spring Fling.

There were also ideas for introducing, expanding, or enhancing parish ministries in the following categories: Buildings & Grounds, Fellowship, Outreach, Education, and Spiritual Growth. Virginia, Eleanor, Todd, and Ellen are currently working with Julia O’Brien, Rosa Guzzo, and Jeff Verney to create a “case statement” to articulate specific ideas and the costs of proposed projects. The case statement will soon be shared with the parish with an invitation to provide feedback and support. Through conversation and solicitation, parish participation will be sought as we work to secure a healthy future for St. John’s.

If you have feedback or questions about this process, at any time, please reach out to Eleanor, Virginia or Todd.

With hope and faith,

Eleanor Barnes & Virginia Van Dyk

The 1841 Legacy Society (Planned Giving)

The mission of the Planned Giving committee is to help our parishioners, as they are able, to leave a lasting legacy to St. John’s Church by remembering the church in their estate planning. These gifts go a long way in helping the church reach its many missions serving both our members and the community at large. Anyone who informs the church that they have included St. John’s in their estate planning becomes a member of the 1841 Legacy Society.

In 2024, we received a generous bequest from Audrey Walker, a long-time and faithful member of St. John’s and the 1841 Legacy Society, who died in November 2024.

To those of you who have already made provisions in your estate planning, we thank you. If you are thinking about it, we have prepared a brochure to help you get started. Brochures are available from the information cart in Hubbard Hall, or you may also call the office and we will be glad to mail the information to you. The clergy, staff, and volunteers are available to speak to you if you have any questions. We can also provide your financial advisors with the information they need to complete your documents. We would love to add you to the 1841 Legacy Society. The only requirement is that you inform us of your intention to include St. John’s in your estate planning.

Listed below are the current members of the 1841 Legacy Society, to whom we are very grateful for their generosity to St. John’s. **Please contact the office to let us know if you have included St. John’s in your estate plans so we can add you to the membership!**

The 1841 Legacy Society

Beverley Baker	Ellen & Ben Flynn	Joe Pace
David Booth Beers	Beth & Joel Grieco	Ginny & Mark Proft
Jenefer Berall	Carrie & Jonathan Hammond	Laura & John Roche
Rachel Boccio	Bette-Jane Hardersen	Jim Sharp
Lissie & Lynn Brooks	Susie & Ross Hatch	Pat & Alex Vance
Kim & Chris Byrd	Priscilla Hexter	Virginia Van Dyk & John
Buffy Cech	Buffy & John Ineson	Wilcox
Susan & Brian Clemow	Dianne Jones	Lyn Walker
Helen Cooke	Lisa & Mike Mahoney	Wes Winterbottom
Christine Doty	Dan Minster	
Rich Flinchbaugh	Julia & Jim O'Brien	

Layreaders

Layreading continues to be a key ministry at St. John's. It is a great way for parishioners to become involved. The layreaders perform scripture readings on Sunday, lead the Prayers of the People, and act as chalice bearer during Holy Eucharist. At the 8 a.m. services, the layreaders light candles prior to the service and extinguish them afterwards. We participate in special services during Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and Easter, and we can be asked to serve at a funeral or wedding held at St. John's. In 2024, it was my honor to participate as a layreader during Todd's installation service.

Since taking over as the leader of this team in March 2024, we have added two additional layreaders, for a total of 19. The layreader training document created by Jyothsna Diaz in 2023 made the onboarding process of new layreaders very efficient. We are blessed to have a very dedicated team of layreaders that enjoy participating during mass. We are all looking forward to another great year of service to St. John's.

Faithfully submitted,
John Kauczka, chair

Altar Guild

This year, as always, has been a busy and joyful year, celebrating in our beautiful church and in the cloister garden.

The Altar Guild is a group of men and women of St. John's who are called to serve God by preparing the altar for worship and tending to the decoration of the church for each season of the church calendar. We perform our duties with great care and pride, making the church a beautiful place to worship. We look after the linens, silver, brass, and flowers, and make sure the clergy have all they need for each service.

Membership is open to all parishioners and new members are welcome and encouraged. Our membership as of January 2025 is 11 members. We recently welcomed Ruth Crespi, and we hope to add some additional new members this year to our lively group.

Services

The Altar Guild set up and take down for all Holy Eucharist services on Sundays and holidays. They also help with all baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

Other Duties

- Clean and polish all silver and brass used for the services.
- Wash and iron all linens used for services. Many thanks to Bette-Jane Hardersen for her service.
- Keep track of supplies needed for the services, such as wine, wafers, and candles. Many thanks to Ellen for coordinating and ordering those supplies.

A special thank you to Bill Lockery for his dedication to the Wednesday evening services and his attention polishing the brass.

Respectfully submitted,

Buffy Ineson, chair

Altar Guild members: June Aziz, Eti Akpan, Matteo Donnelly, Kate Eikel, Bill Lockery,, Barbara Roos, Jo-Ann Sadosky, Carol Sonne, Brenda Zanta, Ruth Crespi

Acolytes

We again held an acolyte training in the fall and have welcomed several new acolytes to this ministry. Acolyting is open to children and youth in 3rd grade and above. Some of our acolytes also sing with the Choir School; when choristers are scheduled to acolyte on a Sunday when they are also singing, we modify their acolyte duties as needed. Please let Margie or Ellen know if you/your child are interested. There will be another training in the fall of 2025.

Head Acolytes: Jamie Baker, Danielle Branco, Dorian Ciscel, Bradley Crocker, Jx Eikel, Caleb Worrell

Acolytes: Eden Baker, Jayden Donnelly, Mason Donnelly, Virginia Eikel, Bobby Eikel, Atticus Finkell, Ezekiel Latif, Selma Waddington, Brielle Worrell, Luke Yelland

Ushers

The St. John's usher ministry is a welcoming ministry. Several new parishioners shared that they came back to St. John's because of how warmly they were greeted upon their first visit—you may remember your first time! Maybe you only notice us in the aisles assisting during the offering and communion, but we also are the eyes and ears of the clergy during the service, alerting them to any newcomers or comments we may hear. Often people need directions, or to have a children's activity kit pointed out. We count and secure the offering and do a quick cleanup (those left behind bulletins...) after the service.

We had several ushers move or retire from our group but have added five new volunteers. We continue to have four usher teams and our group is currently 24 strong. We are always looking to add to our ministry! Ushering is a great job for new St. John's members—you generally serve only once a month, no specific liturgical knowledge is needed, and it's social! Join us!

Faithfully Submitted,

Laura Roche and Don Polk, head ushers

2024 Ushers: Audrey Baker, Eleanor Barnes, Jo Anne Burgh, Matt Ciscel, Annabel Trickett-Clapp*, Molly Cooper, Robert Eikel, Geoff Emerick, Ellen Flynn, Mary Honyotski, Ryan Honyotski, Dan Minster, Stewart Murchie, Enid Oberholtzer, Julia O'Brien*, Don Polk*, Laura Roche*, John Roche, Mark Sarkisian, Susie Sarkisian, David Vandermeulen, Virginia Van Dyk, Erika Weinstock, and Wes Winterbottom*

*Team Leader

Healing Prayers Ministry

"Close your eyes and feel the warmth of a thousand sunrises on your skin. That's the love of God soaking into your bones, mending what's broken".

"Each day is a gift, even the difficult ones. Take comfort in knowing God is with you every step of the way."

"The same God who parted the seas and raised the dead is still the one who holds you tenderly in the palm of his hand. He's got this."

These three anonymous quotations provide insight into the heart of what St. John's Healing Prayers Ministry is all about. Put simply, it is God who does the healing with his grace, love, and kindness. In ways that are sometimes quite unexpected, St. John's healing prayer ministers, by praying confidentially with someone, help that person to feel that God is listening, already knows what the person is asking prayers for, and that God's healing will occur. Healing prayers help to confirm that God desires our health and our wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.

Over the past year, the Healing Prayers Ministry has continued to offer prayers after communion at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday service. This low-key ministry provides yet one more very personal way in which we can help each other, through prayer, connect with God during times of sorrow and during times of joy. Since God already knows, it is not necessary to share details when asking for healing prayers. It's okay to say simply "Pray for me." It is a common feeling of healing prayer team members that, "One gets a great deal more out of doing it than one puts into it."

Plans for St. John's Healing Prayer Ministry during 2025 include continuing to provide healing prayers after communion, providing training for members of our faith community who may be interested in praying with others and joining the team, and providing spiritual development and support for St. John's Healing Prayers Ministry team members.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a healing prayer minister, please contact any of the members of the team, Todd, or Margie.

Respectfully submitted,
Wes Winterbottom, chair

Healing prayer team members: Chris Byrd, Annabel Trickett-Clapp, Tim Goetz, David Grimaldi, Sharon Henes, Sarah Kieffer, Karen Licht, Enid Oberholtzer, Jo-Ann Sadosky

Communications

The major ways that we communicate with the parish and our community are through the Sunday bulletin (think of it as a weekly printed newsletter), our weekly e-newsletters sent on Thursdays and Sundays, social media, outdoor signage in front of the church and on the town green, our web site, and occasional paid ads for holiday services. By engaging with as many of these communication tools as possible, you'll always know what's happening at St. John's! Please help us spread the word by sharing our social media posts or inviting a friend to a special event.

A wonderful tool for internal communication with other parishioners is our membership database, Realm. The staff and clergy use Realm to manage member records, pledges, giving, and more, and it also has many features that are useful to parishioners, such as an online directory where you can look up an email or phone number for someone you want to reach out to. In addition to accessing the directory, setting up login credentials in Realm enables you to update your own membership profile with accurate information and a

current photo (photos are particularly useful for parishioners who want to get to know more people or put a face to a name!), make a pledge, set up one-time or recurring pledge payments or gifts, see a complete record of your giving, register and pay for events, and communicate with your ministry groups. All of this can be done on a computer or with the Realm Connect smartphone app. Try it out, and contact me if you have questions about setting up your login or using the software. Realm is most useful to everyone when more people learn to use it and keep their information current.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Painter Dollar, director of operations and communications

Community Service: Helping our neighbors through action

The Community Service Committee at St. John's Episcopal Church is committed to living out Christ's love through outreach and service to our local community. In 2024, we focused on deepening our connections with local organizations and individuals in need, offering our support through a variety of programs that foster hope and provide assistance.

Local Outreach: In 2024, our efforts continued to strengthen our partnerships with local organizations, and our parishioners actively contributed to these initiatives. We supported Loaves & Fishes Ministries, providing hot meals and sandwiches to those experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. Our ongoing work with Journey Home allowed us to help families transitioning out of homelessness by offering both material and emotional support.

We also worked closely with independent schools in Hartford—Trinity Academy, Covenant Prep, and Grace Academy—providing resources and mentoring to students in need of academic support. These partnerships are vital to helping students overcome barriers to education and achieve success. Through our engagement with West Hartford Adult Education, we assisted immigrants and refugees by providing free classroom space for as many as eight ESOL and citizenship classes every week during the school year, plus a six-week summer session. These classes help students improve their language skills and become more fully integrated into the community.

Volunteer Engagement: In 2024, we saw increased participation from our congregation, as volunteers of all ages came together to serve at various events and donate goods to families, food banks, and educational programs. Blessing Bags, non-perishable food collections for Grace Episcopal Church, and St. John's Blessing Box are well supported by parishioners who donate food, toiletries, and other necessities. Neighborhood trash clean-up days and the Christmas project with Hartford Health Care's Stronger Families/Stronger Futures (SF2), through which we provided gift cards and children's books for 60 families, were extremely successful as well.

Whether preparing meals, providing Christmas gifts and books, or supporting life-long education, our parish continues to demonstrate the true spirit of Christian service. We are incredibly grateful for the support of St. John's parishioners who generously give their time, talents, and resources.

As we look ahead to 2025, we will continue to financially support some partner programs but will pull back from programs that have more established funding sources. Our focus on engagement and volunteering will continue with all of our partner organizations. We are excited to again work with Journey Home in February to Adopt-a-Family, and will re-engage with Habitat for Humanity this spring and build a St. John's team! Please join us in serving our community with compassion and faith.

Respectfully submitted by the 2024 Community Service Committee:

Angela Allen-Peck, Rachel Boccio, Eleanor Barnes, Lissie Brooks, Molly Cooper, Kate Eikel, Robert Eikel, Mary Honyotski, Beth Kauczka, Jeff Kinney, Lisa Mahoney (chair), Lauren Mascola, Laura Roche, Stacey Samuel Bannon, and John Swift.

Spring Fling

The Spring Fling occurred on Friday, May 31, 2024. This has become an annual tradition of a live auction and silent auction, all centered around food donated by parishioners. For the second year we had a wine pull and some “tasty takeaways” available for purchase at a set price to take home the evening of the event. Colin Gillespie did a wonderful job in his last turn as auctioneer. It is also a social and community-building event, and many commented afterward about how many people they’d met. Approximately 100 people attended, many of whom were relatively new to the parish. The event raised \$12,500.

Many thanks to a wonderful committee – many of whom volunteered for the first time:

Rachel Boccio, Lissie Brooks, Lindsey Carlisle, Betsy Chicares, Marcos Donnelly, Susan Fay, Amy FitzGerald, Rosa Guzzo, Lauren Mascola, Laura Roche, Barbara Roos, Pia Mara Santomaura, Virginia Van Dyk

And many who volunteered the night of event.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia O’Brien, chair

Christmas Festival

The St. John’s Christmas festival was held on Saturday, December 7th and was a resounding success, showcasing the community’s spirit and bringing joy to attendees. We brought back some festival favorites and added some new holiday features to add spirit and cheer. The Chic Boutique and Christmas Knits made their return. In addition, we offered our third annual St. John’s exclusive ornament, this year’s featuring the stained-glass windows above the high altar, to adorn Christmas trees throughout Connecticut and beyond. Our savory Christmas café served delicious grilled cheese sandwiches, soups, snacks and sodas. We also stocked the cooler and freezer with quart-sized soups that were a popular choice for people to enjoy after the festival. We also displayed and raffled several coveted baskets filled with goodies to satisfy everyone’s liking. Of course, let us not forget the competitive online auction.

Newly added this year were Christmas collectibles and crafting décor for sale, a “photo station” to record memories to last a lifetime, and a craft area and to entertain our littlest festival-goers. Hubbard Hall was decked out with whimsy and cheer to celebrate the festivities for the holiday season. With the direction of Walden Moore, members of the Choir School and Adult Choir entertained us with their angelic voices and off-the-chart talents.

In a favorite festival tradition, the church halls were adorned with beautifully curated wreaths to fit anyone’s home décor. We held our wreath decoration party on December 5th and indeed it was a party. With food, drinks, bows, ribbons, hot glue, flowers, and cute trinkets, we made beautifully presented wreaths while having fun with fellow parishioners. The evening was filled with laughter, sharing stories, and Christmas carols that highlighted the community bond we share in this sacred place.

We had many volunteers to help staff the shopping stations on the festival day. This year we introduced a holiday shopping tracker, which aided in more accurate tracking of purchases and kept everything organized,

as shoppers felt a sense of pride in supporting this great church as they filled out the ornaments on their tracker, indicating the amount of their purchases from each area.

I would like to thank ALL the volunteers who helped make the event such a success. While I can't name everyone, it would be remiss to not mention a few who were the section coordinators of the festival: Eleanor Barnes ran the Christmas Café; Annabel Trickett-Clapp managed and displayed the Christmas Collectibles; Mary Honyotski organized the Chic Boutique; Heidi Gostyla made, donated, and sold her beautiful knit goods; Marcos Donnelly created Christmas Crafts décor; Beth Kauczka baked, coordinated, and sold Christmas baked goods; Lindsey Carlisle coordinated soup making; Janet Babbitt and Kate Eikel hosted the kids crafting corner; Barbara sourced wreaths and organized the wreath-making; Ellen Painter Dollar who handles all behind-the-scenes needs and is an excellent partner; and finally Dwight Latif, who sets up, takes down, and does everything in between.

Once again, thank you to all who contributed both behind the scenes and on the front lines. Through the generous and thoughtful donations of time, money, energy, food, Christmas décor, and other items to make our festival a resounding success, this year we net profited \$10,683.80. I am thankful to the parishioners, community, family, and friends of St. John's. The feedback that was received was overwhelmingly positive. While this year the festival was a huge success, we had some learnings, growing pains, and decisions to be made to make future events more successful. One of many changes to come in 2025 is that we will host the festival the weekend before Thanksgiving rather than the first weekend in December. These changes will bring new life, energy, sense of community, and success for years to come. Stay tuned and I can't wait to share with you and once again chair the Christmas Festival of 2025.

Respectfully submitted,
Matteo Donnelly, Christmas Festival chair 2024

House Committee

Mission

The House Committee is dedicated to the maintenance and enhancement of St. John's Episcopal Church of West Hartford and its buildings and property. This committee plans for long-term maintenance, including the negotiation and management of contracts for any major repairs and enhancements approved by the vestry, and with suggestions submitted by parishioners.

Membership

The membership of the House Committee in 2024 was Stephen Crocker (chair), Dwight Latif, Buffy Ineson, Jenn Baker, Mark Proft, and John Roche. Committee meetings in 2024 took place monthly and on an as-needed basis. Monthly meetings, most often on a Wednesday evening, are scheduled at the mutual convenience of membership and visiting presenters. All meetings are open to parishioners.

2024 Accomplishments

Over the last calendar year, the House Committee has been particularly busy with the HVAC project. However, we also attended to several important deferred maintenance and upkeep projects:

- Parking lots were repainted and defined parking spots created for the main driveway
- Removal of a curb in parking lot allowed for additional parking spots and an additional handicapped-parking spot that is now in full compliance with ADA guidelines
- Replaced eight windows in the sexton house, which were installed by Dwight and Steve
- All iron railings around church were inspected, repaired, and repainted

- New custom wrought iron covers were installed over all basement windows for security
- A new gas boiler was installed when the previous one failed and the back-up boiler became inoperable
- Installation of a new heat pump HVAC system began in September 2024 and is expected to be completed by the end of January 2025
- The fire inspector identified numerous issues to be addressed by the House Committee, including replacement of 30-year-old emergency exit lights, many of which were determined to no longer function
- All old rotted wooden fence posts behind the church were replaced and new signage was installed
- Continued slate repair on the church roof and sexton house

2025 Initiatives

The key projects on the docket for 2025 will include:

1. church security and security system upgrades
2. review and develop plans for any capital campaign project proposals
3. continue with replacement of old, drafty windows in the sexton's house
4. perform energy audits of church buildings and the sexton's house
5. continue to maintain our beautiful buildings and grounds with minor improvements
6. continue slate repairs on church building and finding ways to prevent weather damage

Suggestions

The committee welcomes input from all members of the parish. Suggestions may be given to any of the House Committee members or submitted via the church office. Updates to the parish on any major projects may include town hall style meetings to present findings and recommendations.

Many thanks to our wardens and the chairs of the Investment and Finance committees for their assistance with the HVAC project. The House Committee would also like to acknowledge Dwight, Peggy, and Ellen for their support and enabling us to work with them to maintain our beautiful parish!

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Crocker, chair

2024 Donors

The following people generously supported St. John's mission and ministries by making gifts or pledge payments between 1/1/2024 and 12/31/2024.

Eti Akpan	Ruth Crespi	Tim Goetz
Randolph Allen	Stephen Crocker & Rosa Guzzo	Robyn & Alice Goshorn
Dianne Antos	David Dangremond	Jeffrey & Heidi Gostyla
June Aziz	Allyson Davis	Craig & Anne Grant
Brad & Janet Babbitt	Carol Davis	Kevin Graver & Donald Giustiniani
Bob & Mary Bainbridge	Ashley De Las Casas	Joel & Beth Grieco
Audrey & Kyle Baker	George & Diane Depasquale	David Grimaldi
Beverly Baker	William Depatie	Liana Guzman & Nicole Douillet
Florence Baker	Dave & Young Hee Derby	Jonathan & Carrie Hammond
John & Mary Baker	Francesco DeThomasis	Ann Hanlon
Margie & Jenn Baker	Carlos & Vijaya Jyothsna Diaz	Bette-Jane Hardersen
Jack & Eleanor Barnes	Pam Dimock	Mary Hardy
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Richard Barstow	Susan Donaldson	Cisalee Harrell
Richard & Wendy Bartlett	Jayden Donnelly	Jane A Harris
David & Marian Beers	Mason Donnelly	Susan Harrison
David Beisler	Matteo & Marcos Donnelly	Matthew & Kara Hart
Mike Biondi & Ginny Kemp	Christine Doty	Ross & Susie Hatch
Eloise Biscoe	Joe Duffy	Randall & Anne Hayes
Shirley Blean	Linda Dunakin	Patricia and Ronald Hensley
Rachel Boccio	William & Hope Eakins	Ryan & Jenn Hill
Paula Bokros	Nancy Eaton	Robert Hines
Steven & Patricia Bourret	Bobby Eikel	Bob Hoffman
James Bradley	Jx Eikel	Mary & Ryan Honyotski
Carlos Branco & Allison Tichy	Robert & Kate Eikel	Christopher Houlihan
Lynn & Lissie Brooks	Virginia Eikel	Frisha Hugessen
Jo Anne Burgh	Geoffrey & Karan Emerick	Margaret Hughes
Chris & Kim Byrd	Jennifer Evans	Ann Hutchinson
Robert Caldwell	Linda Evans	Douglas & Tita Hyland
Keitha & Kevin Campo	Tucker Hunn Warner Jr.	John & Buffy Ineson
Katharine Carle	Janet Faude	Richard Jacques
Robert Cathcart	Susan Fay & Craig Ahmer	Linda Jankowski
Steve Chambers	G. Donald Ferree	Eric Johnson
Cynthia Chanaca	Elizabeth Fiacre	Dianne Jones
Betsy & Greg Chicares	Martha Fine	Donielle & Rick Joslyn
Jonathan & Susan Chorey	Todd & Amy FitzGerald	Iacovos Katsipis & Carla Abdo-Katsipis
Stephan & Francine Christiansen	Rich Flinchbaugh	John & Beth Kauczka
John & Martha Church	Ben & Ellen Flynn	Martha Kayser
Matthew & Alina Ciscel	Danielle Foint	Bert & Mary Jo Keating
Elijah Clapp & Annabel Trickett-Clapp	Nancy Forte	Jane Keating
Brian & Susan Clemow	Kevin Gabriel	Dolores Kelliher & Anne Andrews
Kate Coley	Daniel George	Kelly & Bob Kennedy
Edith Connolly	Shamiram George	Sarah Kieffer
Helen Cooke	Colin & Ginger Gillespie	Jeffrey Kinney & Rebecca Bourret
Molly Cooper	Mark & Margaret Goad	
	Jerry & Emma Goetz	

Sam Kinney & Morgan Hilliard
Betty Knorr
Peter Kramer & Ariel Falconer
Ann Krissing
David & Debby Kvam
Pamela Lamlein
Scott & Mary Beth Lamlein
Richard Lammlin
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Nancy Pedersen
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Christa Rakich & Janis Milroy
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Abi Reilly
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Carla & Jonathan Richardson
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Marilyn Rockwell
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Liselle Ruggiero
Cornelia Russell
Lynn & Peter Russell
William Russell
Jo-Ann Sadosky
Susan Sample
Stacey & Kelsey Samuel Bannon
Susie & Mark Sarkisian
Judith M Schaffer
Linda Schatz
Michael & Nancy Scheetz
Jim Sharp
Tema & Mark Silk
Claudia Skarvinko
Nancy Skeele
Spencer & Mary Sloan
Sammy Slough
Kirk Smith
William & Margaret Smith

Carol Sonne
Mark & Keely Stater
Christoph & Dale Stretz
John Swift & Lauren Mascola
Paul & Susan Murphy Thaxton
Abraham & Sera Thomas
Calvert Bowie Thomas
Margaret Thomas
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Audrey Walker
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Edith Ward
Janet Ward
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Erica Weinstock
Michael & Jackie Wells
Ted Whittemore
Patrick & Sara Wigmore
Daphne H. Wilcox
John Wilcox & Virginia Van Dyk
Sherwood & Maggie Willard
Wallace Willard
Akilah Williams & Komi Barrow
C. Williams
Vincent & Erica Williams
Dennis & Jeanne Winkleblack
Wes Winterbottom
Andrew & Joanna Worrell
Nancy Wright
Matthew Yelland & Danielle
Pieratti
Brenda Zanta

St. John's Episcopal Church

A place to discover connections with God and one another in Christ

www.sjparish.net

679 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, Connecticut 06119

860 523 5201 office@sjparish.net



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays at 8 a.m.: Spoken Holy Eucharist

Sundays at 10:30 a.m.: Choral Holy Eucharist

Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.: Spoken Holy Eucharist

STAFF

The Rev. Todd FitzGerald (todd@sjparish.net) *Rector*
The Rev. Margie Baker (margie@sjparish.net) *Associate Rector*
The Rev. Walter McKenney *Deacon*
Ellen Painter Dollar (ellen@sjparish.net) *Director of Operations & Communications*
Dwight Latif (dwight@sjparish.net) *Sexton*
Walden Moore (rwmoore56@gmail.com) *Interim Director of Music*
Peggy O'Toole (peggy@sjparish.net) *Financial Administrator*
Robin Brown *Seminarian Intern*
Christa Rakich *Organ Artist-in-Residence*
Ralph Valentine *Organist and Choirmaster Emeritus*

VESTRY

Eleanor Barnes *Warden*
Stewart Murchie *Warden*
Anne Harney and David McCary *Co-Treasurers*
2022–24: Lissie Brooks, Marcos Donnelly, Rosa Guzzo, Mary Honyotski
2023–25: Angela Allen-Peck, John Nowacki, Tom Oberholtzer
2024–26: Lauren Mascola, Brenda Zanta