



ST. JOHN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
2023 ANNUAL MEETING

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 21, 2024

100 Chapel Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801

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www.stjohnsnh.org

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SECTION ONE – CLERK’S REPORT: ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES 2023

Clerk’s Report: 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2023

At 9:00 AM the Annual Meeting was called to order by Rev. Rob Stevens

Senior Warden Chuck Silva opened the meeting and encouraged the continued support for the Stewardship Campaign. Rob led us in an opening prayer.

Steve Falci asked for a motion to approve 2022 Annual Meetings minutes.

Chris Sieve made the motion which was seconded by Brad Lown and the motion was subsequently approved.

Vestry Nominations: Steve thanked Allison Dudas, Lizzie Bristow, Barry Heckler for their service on the Vestry and introduced the slate of new candidates to serve 3 year terms on the Vestry: Brooke Basset, Mike Rainboth and Ken Slover.

Jane Holloway made the motion to approve the slate, John Rice seconded, and the slate was subsequently approved.

Treasurers Report: Kelly Boston’s presented the Treasurer’s Report.

2022 financial performance exceeded expectations and we start another year in a position of financial strength, which is reflected in our budget planning for 2023.

For 2022, our overall operating revenue was \$1,085,909 and our expenses \$1,052,805. With our pledge and plate offerings and strong parking revenue we covered our operating expenses. We will end our year with a surplus which includes our full annual endowment draw. That surplus is ~ \$96K. She offered a big thank you to our community not only for their annual giving but for continued generosity in our mission and support of our programs. We are thriving financially due to their support.

A couple of other key highlights to mention for 2022:

Personnel expenses were favorable as Rob continues his efforts to find the right candidate as our new Associate Rector.

Building & Grounds was unfavorable as we had unplanned repairs.

Program reimbursement was lower related to the Choir School.

We continued to have fiscal responsibility with our capital project, overcoming a few challenges along the way which resulted in upward budget adjustment. Overall, we raised \$1.975 million and had capital expenditures of \$1.971. We anticipate a few thousand dollars of final expenses.

The vestry approved a balanced 2023 Operating budget of nearly \$1.2 Million dollars on Thursday. Our overall revenue and expenses are planned at \$1,180,440. Most of our revenue stream comes from two sources, our Parishioners, and the Parking Revenue. As of today, we are at nearly 95% of our Pledge target dollars. Our 2023 goals are to recruit an Associate Rector and maximize parking revenue so we can continue to grow our programming.

We will continue to manage expenses accordingly. Our expenses have been approved with diligence which includes:

A staff increase aligned with Diocese guidelines.

A slight increase in health insurance per our provider.

Our contribution (pledge) to Diocese

And proper funding in building & grounds for the upkeep of our facilities.

For 2023, we are planning a \$75K withdrawal from the endowment or 4.95% of the 5 year average balance of the Endowment fund. This is aligned with our Investment/Spending Policy

Building Committee: Junior Warden Gerry Simpkins gave the Building Committee report and noted all the extensive improvements to building and facilities over the last 8 years, culminating with the completion of Roberts Hall. Gerry thanked the Buildings and Grounds Committee and Kelly and Chuck for their support in bringing Roberts Hall to fruition and especially noted the contribution of Reggie Baird who orchestrated the project from inception. Gerry thanked the community for their support.

Gerry noted that there are plans for solar panels and continued maintenance and repair.

Fun Facts: Ashley Wade presented a summary of facts related to Parish Life, Communications Youth and Children Ministries, Worship and Liturgy and Outreach:

Parish Life:

- 67 Humans attended a Parish Retreat at Merrowvista (including 27 Children & Youth)
- Over 100 in-person small group adult formation meetings gathered in 2022.
- 180 People have created a Realm account.
- Daily Reflections were sent to an average of 700 individual email addresses.
- Hours Reggie and Gerry spent working on Robert's Hall countless number of hours.

Communications:

- St. John's website had 16K unique visitors in 2022, including visits from 78 countries.

- worldwide the website recorded 7.1K clicks, which is a 204% increase year over year.
- 724 email addresses are subscribed to receive our weekly communications.
- 209K emails were sent in the last year, resulting in 140.6K emails opened by recipients, and 11.3K click-throughs. Our email open rate was 68%, which was a 14% increase from 2021 and 25% above the industry average.
- 81 new subscribers joined our email communications in 2022.
- 245 Instagram followers, including 45 new followers in 2022.
- 553 Facebook likes, including 54 new page likes in 2022.
- 542 YouTube subscribers

Youth and Children Ministries:

- 5 Youth and their families celebrated Rite 13 on May 22, 2022
- 43 Children and Youth members performed in the Christmas Pageant
- 18 Children, 5 Youth, and 2 Adult Teachers were engaged by the 1st Summer Theater Camp.

Worship and Liturgy:

- 350 pre-produced videos
- 146 Live-streamed videos
- 300 people attended Lessons & Carols in person, currently 568 views on SJC YouTube Channel
- Over 1.5K views of Presiding Bishop Curry's service at SJC
- Currently 30 members in the Parish Choir

Outreach:

- 13 Polar Packs shared with unhoused or marginally housed people.
- 51 Common Table Lunches served, rain, snow, or shine.
- Over 5,000 baked goods from volunteers
- Over \$20,000 raised for Ukraine and sent through Episcopal Relief and Development.

Rob expressed profound gratitude for:

The staff for all their contributions. Michelle and Rebecca for their work in Parish Administration. Anne for serving us so well in her transition and for being his partner in ministry. Jen for her leadership of the music program and "using music to love people." Olin, "director of everything" for his contribution to the music program and for advancing our technology. Ashley for "managing it all." The Vestry Chuck

Silva for his leadership and constant presence Gerry and Reggie for all they did Barry, Lizzie, and Allie for their service on the Vestry.

After a few questions, John Rice made the motion to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Jane Holloway, and the annual meeting came to an end.

The Annual Meeting concluded at approximately 9:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Falci, Clerk

March 25, 2023

SECTION TWO – RECTOR’S REPORT

January 15, 2024

Dear St. John’s,

I have heard my self say, “SJC is in a sweet spot” more than a few times in the past few months. While there are always challenges, there is a palpable joyfulness in our community. I see it when I show up at the Monday morning breakfast, attend an ordination for a much loved new member of our staff, witness the youth of our parish fill the kitchen during a Youth Cooking Wednesday afternoon as they prepare dinner for CrossRoads House and Dover Children’s Home, see Roberts Hall full of workers restoring our beloved cross-stitched kneelers, participate in the Celebration of Life of one of our dear ones that has gone to be with God, and each and every Sunday as we gather to glorify God in worship. This is an incredibly incomplete list and I encourage you to add your moments of joy. I have also witnessed this joy in the personal moments of care and love shared within this community. They are too numerous to count.

This reflection on 2023 fills me with overwhelming gratitude for this community of SJC. If you hear anything in this report please hear, “Thank you” and “I love you.”

Thank you to the SJC staff. Anne, Rebecca, Jen, Olin, Michelle, Ashley, Carrie-Anne, Ally, and Aaron. Your talent, love and dedication is unmatched, and we are ALL better for it. Counting you all as my colleagues in ministry is one of my greatest blessings. I love you.

Thank you Vestry of SJC. You are steady and present, providing calm and intentional leadership, always with the right touch of humor. Chuck, Kelly, Gerry and Steve, as our officers, led the way. I love you.

Finally, Thank YOU. If you are reading this, you are a big part of the Joy that I write about here. We have much to celebrate. We are by all accounts a healthy and thriving community. Thank you for “showing up” and sharing your gifts and your light. I love you.

While we have much to celebrate, and celebrate we will, we also have much work to do. God is moving in our world and we have the incredible privilege, opportunity and responsibility to pray, listen and work to participate as fully as possible in God’s purpose. This purpose is to be kind, to be gentle, to be fierce and above all things, to LOVE. May we be bold and LOVE Big!

Peace be with you,

Rob

SECTION THREE – SENIOR WARDEN REPORT

2023 was another significant year for St. John's. After completing the Roberts Hall project, the focus turned to filling staffing gaps – most notably the Associate Rector position. We closed the year with a shiny new Associate Rector, Aaron Jenkyn. Aaron came on Board in August and was ordained last month. For those of us fortunate enough to have participated, it was a powerful experience. I am grateful to have been able to be present at the bright dawn of her career as a fully ordained priest, and we should deem ourselves blessed to accompany her on the first steps of that journey. I think you will agree with me when I say that we have already started to feel the impact of her presence, and to benefit from the complementary gifts she brings to our clergy team.

With Rob, Aaron and Anne, we have three different, truly unique voices and visions to guide, challenge, comfort and connect with each of us. We could not be blessed with a better – or broader – clergy team.

Ally Dudas also joined Rob's team last year as our Director of Youth Ministries. An experienced educator and student of pastoral ministry, Ally strengthens our capacity to promote engagement with the older kids in our St. John's family with relevant programming and service opportunities. We are lucky to have her.

From liturgy, to music, to youth ministry and technology, Rob and his team continue to make St. John's the caring and engaging community of faith that we all love and enjoy. Financially, we continued to enjoy strong parking revenue and, even more importantly, exceeded our annual stewardship target by over \$50,000. Looking at 2024, as of the date of this letter we have already exceeded our pledge goal of \$600,000, with pledges from 228 individuals and families, and are pleased to be able to present another balanced budget for the coming year. (We are still thirty pledges shy of last year's total, so if you have not yet gotten your pledge in, this would be a great time to do so.)

For further details on the 2024 achievements, please read the individual reports from Rob, Kelly, Gerry, the members of Rob's team and the various ministry reports.

I want to thank Rob, Aaron, Anne, Jennifer, Ashley, Olin, Rebecca, Ally and Michelle for all they did to make 2023 the best St. John's year ever. Thanks as well to our officers: Treasurer Kelly Boston, Junior Warden Gerry Simpkins and Secretary Steve Falci - and the vestry: Chris Nettleton, Randy Philbrook, Anne McSally, Tom Gruen, Andy Bangs, Veronique Doherty, Ken Slover, Mike Rainboth and Brooke Bassett.

And most importantly, thanks to all of you for helping make St. John's great.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Silva, Senior Warden

SECTION FOUR – JUNIOR WARDEN’S REPORT

Now that construction is done our focus shifts to upkeep and maintenance: With new construction comes increase areas of focus, maintaining Roberts Hall, cleaning and inspection of fire suppressant system in kitchen, maintenance and annual inspection of elevator and lift and cleaning and upkeep of the mini split units Roberts hall.

Some of the repairs coming up in 2024 -

- Fire Alarm system(upgrade)
- Repair stone wall behind dumpster
- Spot Pointing brick wall along Bow St and repair pier caps
- 46’ wall cap repair in lower lot along Bow St
- Replace bearings in church bell
- Sealcoating upper and lower parking lots

So as you can see there is a lot to do around St John’s and I have to send out a big thank you to Reggie Baird and Randy Carey for their help in doing some of the work.

One last thing to bring up and that is solar panels: Reggie and I went to a conference back in October and a contractor from that event has given us a bid and we are awaiting a second. Our hope is to install solar panel this year but no later than 2025. Installing panels on both sides of the roof on Thaxter Hall will cover close to 90% of our electric in Thaxter hall, Roberts hall and the church. If we proceed, we will need to make a decision about how to finance any initial capital costs, which may include a separate fundraising effort, possible financing by the contractor (which is repaid by sharing some of the benefits of lower energy costs through a power purchase agreement), or a combination of the two.

Your pledges make all this possible so *Thank You* and *God Bless!*

Respectfully submitted,

Gerry Simpkins, Jr. Warden

SECTION FOUR – TREASURER’S REPORT

Treasurer’s Report

Our 2023 financial performance exceeded expectations and we start another year in a position of financial strength, which is reflected in our budget planning for 2024.

I am pleased to report that we had a successful full audit of the 2022 financials by our new auditors, from Nesseralla & Company, LLC a public accounting firm from Plymouth, Massachusetts. There were a couple of minor findings which were reviewed in detail with the Vestry and improvements have already been implemented. We continue to operate on a three-year rotating cycle - compilation, review, and full audit. In the first half of 2024 we will have a compilation for our 2023 financials.

2023 Operating Revenue & Expenses

We are reporting on preliminary 2023 financial results. Final audited results will be available once our audit is completed in the first half of this year. Our operating income is higher than our operating expenses therefore we are ending the year with a surplus. A detailed "line" item report of 2023 revenue and expenses is posted on the St. John's website, www.stjohnsnh.org, in the Annual Reports section.

Revenue Summary:

2023 operating revenue totaled \$1,156,939, about \$148K more than our budget of \$1,008,892. Nearly 65% (similar to 2022) of our income was from pledge and plate offerings. This amount included a one-time gift of \$60K that we had deferred from a prior year and recorded as income in 2023. As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible support from each of you. Your financial support allows us to continue and grow our mission with our amazing team and maintain our beautiful church and buildings.

Parking revenue (Metered, Leased and Passes) was much higher than budget, primarily related to favorable parking revenue from downtown patrons, offset in part by a reduction in the number of spaces leased by Cambridge Trust. Revenue associated with parking was at \$340K, about \$12K more than our budget of \$328K.

With the completion of our capital improvement projects we are able to provide an even more welcoming environment for programs and activities. We hosted more events this year and experienced a nice increase in facility usage revenue of \$14K, compared to the \$3K we had budgeted.

In the table below, you will find the operating revenue, by category, for 2023 compared to our 2023 budget, including a brief explanation of some of the variances:

| Revenue Category | Actual 2023 | | Budget 2023 | | Act vs Bud Variance | | Comments on Variances |
|--|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| | \$ | % of Total | \$ | % of Total | \$ | % | |
| Pledge Offerings | \$ 605,865 | 52.4% | \$ 550,000 | 54.0% | \$ 55,865 | 10.2% | 2022 Goal was \$550K & 300 pledges, actuals higher than budget assumptions strong parking due primarily due to extension of CT Lease |
| All Parking | \$ 340,544 | 29.4% | \$ 328,480 | 32.2% | \$ 12,064 | 3.7% | |
| Plate Offerings | \$ 141,616 | 12.2% | \$ 111,500 | 10.9% | \$ 30,116 | 27.0% | 2023 includes a deferred gift (\$60K), add'l gift of \$6K and favorable plate vs. budget actuals include summer programming |
| Program & Outreach Reimbursement | \$ 9,831 | 0.8% | \$ 1,000 | 0.1% | \$ 8,831 | 883.1% | |
| Building & Ground Income | \$ 16,484 | 1.4% | \$ 5,000 | 0.5% | \$ 11,484 | 229.7% | includes reimbursement from CT which was not planned in budget and offsets expense below more events than budget assumptions |
| Facility Usage | \$ 14,345 | 1.2% | \$ 3,000 | 0.3% | \$ 11,345 | 378.2% | |
| All Other | \$ 14,080 | 1.2% | \$ 4,224 | 0.4% | \$ 9,856 | 233.3% | |
| Investment Income | \$ 7,729 | 0.7% | \$ 3,541 | 0.3% | \$ 4,188 | 118.3% | stronger investment income than budget assumptions |
| Grants & Gifts | \$ 6,446 | 0.6% | \$ 2,217 | 0.2% | \$ 4,229 | 190.8% | actuals include Diocese grant for "Outside the Box" |
| Prior Year Pledges | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ - | - | |
| Total Operating Revenue | \$ 1,156,939 | 100% | \$ 1,008,962 | 99% | \$ 147,977 | 14.7% | |
| Endowment Draw | \$ 75,000 | | \$ 75,000 | | \$ - | 0.0% | assumes 4.9% of rolling 5 yr average of endowment value in 2023 budget |
| Choir School Offset | \$ - | | \$ - | | \$ - | - | |
| Gifts | \$ - | | \$ - | | \$ - | - | |
| Prior Year Surplus | \$ 87,445 | | \$ 96,478 | | \$ (9,033) | - | |
| Total Op Revenue & Endowment Draw | \$ 1,319,384 | | \$ 1,180,440 | | \$ 138,944 | 11.8% | |

We withdrew our budgeted 2023 endowment draw of \$75K as planned.

Expense Summary:

Our 2023 expenses totaled \$1,159,460, about \$21K lower than our budget of \$1,180,440.

Our largest category of expense is people: Clergy and Lay staff. The favorability in the expenses compared to budget is primarily related to our Associate Rector position not being filled until August; our budget assumption was that it would be filled by April. Now fully staffed with an amazing team you can feel the energy in church and with our technology when you physically cannot be here. The enthusiasm with which they continued to lead us in worship, song and prayer is felt all around us with amongst all generations.

Building & Grounds expense was also lower than expected. This favorability is related to lower utilities costs, general & cleaning supplies, and funding for repairs not needed during 2023.

Several cost categories spent higher than budget. The 2023 parish pledge to the Diocese ended up higher than budgeted, as it is driven by prior year income which was higher than budget assumptions. Income tax expense was slightly higher which was a reflection of the higher parking revenue, offset in part by a prior year tax overpayment. Property tax expense was higher due to lower property tax reimbursement payments from Cambridge Trust as we reduced the number of spaces being leased to them during the year. Outreach and programs (adult, youth, and children's) is higher based on summer programming. Music was also slightly higher than budget due to guest organist fees.

In addition to our operating expenses we also made some modest capital expenditures (defined as the purchase of any tangible asset with a value of \$5K or more and useful life of more than three years). These included the interior and exterior railings and a portion of the fire protection systems upgrade, which began in 2023 and will be completed in Q1 2024.

In the table below, you will find operating expenses, by category, for 2023 compared to our 2023

budget, including a brief explanation of some of the variances:

| Expense Category | Actual 2023 | % of Total | Budget 2023 | % of Total | Act vs Bud Variance | | Comments on Variances |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | | \$ | % | |
| Personnel | \$ 704,769 | 60.8% | \$ 745,643 | 59.0% | \$ 40,874 | 5.5% | essentially due to Assoc Reactor planned hire in Apr 23 vs actual Aug 23 start |
| Building & Grounds | \$ 105,302 | 9.1% | \$ 116,981 | 9.3% | \$ 11,679 | 10.0% | primarily related to \$9K of \$10K budgeted not used for maintenance for Rob's house |
| Diocesan Pledge | \$ 149,631 | 12.9% | \$ 134,709 | 10.7% | \$ (14,922) | -11.1% | budget assumptions lower than actual |
| Income Taxes | \$ 54,899 | 4.7% | \$ 52,170 | 4.1% | \$ (2,729) | -5.2% | actuals aligned with parking revenue |
| Administrative/Offices | \$ 44,807 | 3.9% | \$ 45,221 | 3.6% | \$ 414 | 0.9% | |
| Music | \$ 32,070 | 2.8% | \$ 30,850 | 2.4% | \$ (1,220) | -4.0% | budget assumptions lower than actual for music director substitutes |
| Property Taxes | \$ 31,755 | 2.7% | \$ 19,768 | 1.6% | \$ (11,987) | -60.6% | CT lease extended which was not planned in budget |
| Insurance | \$ 18,965 | 1.6% | \$ 18,809 | 1.5% | \$ (156) | -0.8% | |
| Outreach | \$ 4,835 | 0.4% | \$ 6,000 | 0.5% | \$ 1,165 | 19.4% | lower than budget assumptions |
| Adult/Children/Youth Programs | \$ 10,908 | 0.9% | \$ 8,589 | 0.7% | \$ (2,319) | -27.0% | includes Summer programming which is offset by income |
| Worship | \$ 1,290 | 0.1% | \$ 1,700 | 0.1% | \$ 410 | 24.1% | lower than budget assumptions |
| All Other | \$ 230 | 0.0% | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ (230) | | |
| Total Operating Expenses | \$ 1,159,460 | 100.0% | \$ 1,180,440 | 93% | \$ 20,980 | 1.8% | |
| Capital Improvements | \$ 87,445 | | \$ - | | \$ (87,445) | | |
| Total Op Expenses & Other | \$ 1,246,905 | | \$ 1,180,440 | | \$ (66,465) | -5.6% | |
| Expected Surplus/(Shortfall) | \$ 72,479 | | \$ - | | \$ (72,479) | | expected based on preliminary 2023 financials (18 Jan 24) |

With total revenue of \$1,319,384 minus total expenses of \$1,246,905, we anticipate ending the year with an operating surplus of \$72.5K.

Endowment (Long-Term Investment Funds)

Our endowment exists for two purposes: to help fund annual programming and outreach activities, while continuing to grow, in the long term, to fund future programming and outreach. The objective of the management of the investments of the Church is to preserve and enhance the purchasing power of the principal of the funds without taking unusual risks, employing a total return approach when possible and thereby providing real long-term financial support for the Church's mission.

Our endowment balance as of December 31st is \$2,313,539. We took one authorized withdrawal during 2023 of \$75,000 (or 4.9% of the 5-year average balance). We received two legacy gifts during 2023 that increased our endowment by \$759,985. And after a big loss during 2022, the market turned around and we experienced asset growth of \$198,841 during the year.

Below is a summary of our endowment activity over the past five years:

| Endowment Values Last 5 Years | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Starting Balance | \$1,493,929 | \$1,338,626 | \$1,496,740 | \$1,614,683 | \$1,716,488 | \$1,429,713 |
| Growth | (\$90,303) | \$222,114 | \$182,943 | \$182,115 | (\$233,371) | \$198,841 |
| Withdraws: Operating | (\$65,000) | (\$64,000) | (\$65,000) | (\$80,310) | (\$63,404) | (\$75,000) |
| Gifts | | | | | \$10,000 | \$759,985 |
| Ending Balance | \$1,338,626 | \$1,496,740 | \$1,614,683 | \$1,716,488 | \$1,429,713 | \$2,313,539 |
| % of draw (5 Yr Rolling Avg) | | 4.5% | 4.5% | 5.4% | 4.1% | 4.9% |

We would like to continue to recognize the work of our Investment Committee: John Hebert, Sandra Pagel, and Gerry Simpkins. Their work is highly valued and appreciated.

2024 Operating Budget

The Vestry is pleased to announce that we have approved a balanced 2024 Operating Budget of approximately \$1.3 Million.

2024 revenue is planned at \$1,297,080. As in recent years, the vast majority of our operating revenue (over 85%) comes from two sources: our Parishioners support (stewardship, about 65%) and the parking revenue (about 30%). Additional budgeted 2024 non-operating revenue or income also includes an anticipated endowment draw of \$75,700, our 2023 operating surplus, a generous gift one-time, and additional fundraising for Choir School.

About 65% of our operating income is planned from stewardship offerings: Pledge and Plate. Our Pledge assumption for 2024 is \$600K (our campaign goal from 300 pledges). As of the date of this report, we have recorded pledge commitments from 228 families or individuals achieving our financial goal, however it is not too late to pledge to help us meet our goal of 300. Your pledges and contributions are what sustain our liturgy, music, education, community outreach, and many other activities that happen at St. John's.

Thank you very much for your continued generosity and helping us sustain our mission and activities!!

In the table below, you will find the operating revenue, by category, for our 2024 Budget comparing to 2023 Actual (preliminary) including a comment to explain the variance:

| Revenue Category | Actual 2023 | % of Total | Budget 2024 | % of Total | Act 23 vs Bud 24 | | Comments on Variances |
|--|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|---|
| | | | | | \$ | % | |
| Pledge Offerings | \$ 605,865 | 52.4% | \$ 600,000 | 58.9% | \$ 5,865 | 1.0% | 2024 Goal is \$600K & 300 pledges, 2023 actuals higher than budget assumptions (\$550K) |
| All Parking | \$ 340,544 | 29.4% | \$ 298,276 | 29.3% | \$ 42,268 | 14.2% | |
| Plate Offerings | \$ 141,616 | 12.2% | \$ 61,900 | 6.1% | \$ 79,716 | 128.8% | 2024 reflects lower guaranteed parking |
| Program & Outreach Reimbursement | \$ 9,831 | 0.8% | \$ 7,000 | 0.7% | \$ 2,831 | 40.4% | 2023 includes a deferred gift (\$60K), add'l gift of \$6K and favorable plate vs. budget |
| Building & Ground Income | \$ 16,484 | 1.4% | \$ 5,534 | 0.5% | \$ 10,950 | 197.9% | 2023 higher for funding for Adult & Youth programming |
| Facility Usage | \$ 14,345 | 1.2% | \$ 13,625 | 1.3% | \$ 720 | 5.3% | 2024 includes lower reimbursement from CT |
| All Other | \$ 14,080 | 1.2% | \$ 5,124 | 0.5% | \$ 8,956 | 174.8% | 2024 aligned w/ 2023 facility usage |
| Investment Income | \$ 7,729 | 0.7% | \$ 3,541 | 0.3% | \$ 4,187 | 118.2% | 2023 includes sale of Van & YoC Management Fee for several years & 2024 includes one year of YoC |
| Grants & Gifts | \$ 6,446 | 0.6% | \$ 23,900 | 2.3% | \$ (17,454) | -73.0% | 2024 includes two Diocese grant for staffing (\$22K); 2023 includes grant for "Outside the Box" |
| Prior Year Pledges | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ - | - | |
| Total Operating Revenue | \$ 1,156,939 | 100% | \$ 1,018,901 | 100% | \$ 138,038 | 13.5% | |
| Endowment Draw | \$ 75,000 | | \$ 75,700 | | \$ (700) | -0.9% | assumes 4.5% (in Bud 24) of rolling 5 yr average of endowment value vs. 4.9% in 2023 budget fundraising to offset choir school mission generous one-time gift to support our mission & activities in 2024 |
| Choir School Fundraising | \$ - | | \$ 30,000 | | \$ (30,000) | -100.0% | |
| Gifts | \$ - | | \$ 100,000 | | \$ (100,000) | -100.0% | |
| Prior Year Surplus | \$ 87,445 | | \$ 72,479 | | \$ 14,966 | 20.6% | |
| Total Op Revenue & Endowment Draw | \$ 1,319,384 | | \$ 1,297,080 | | \$ 22,304 | 1.7% | |

Notable budget assumptions for revenue include:

- Pledges of \$600K, aligned with the 2024 Annual Campaign.
- Plate of \$61.9K
- Generous gift of \$100K to assist in supporting our mission and activities
- Parking revenue assumptions (\$298K) aligned with strong revenue streams for the past five years. 2024 excludes the full renewal of the Cambridge Trust parking lease.
- 4.5% endowment draw (of the rolling 5-year average balance) for operations per our investment policy.
- Fundraising for Choir School to support the personnel and programming to facilitate this amazing ministry.

In the table below, you will find the operating expenses, by category, for our 2024 Budget comparing to preliminary 2023 Actuals including a comment to explain the variance:

| Expense Category | Actual 2023 | | Budget 2024 | | Act 23 vs Bud 24 | | Comments on Variances |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--|
| | \$ | % of Total | \$ | % of Total | \$ | % | |
| Personnel | \$ 704,769 | 60.8% | \$ 790,288 | 62.5% | \$ 85,519 | 10.8% | Assoc Reactor full year vs. Aug 23 start, plus new FTE, 4% increase in health care, 1-3% COLA 2024 includes funding according to our maintenance plan |
| Building & Grounds | \$ 105,302 | 9.1% | \$ 118,214 | 9.4% | \$ 12,913 | 10.9% | |
| Diocesan Pledge | \$ 149,631 | 12.9% | \$ 158,065 | 12.5% | \$ 8,434 | 5.3% | 2023 includes 2022 overpymt and 2024 calculated on taxable parking income primarily related to audit fees; 2023 was a full audit vs. 2024 a compilation 2024 aligned with budget request |
| Income Taxes | \$ 54,899 | 4.7% | \$ 52,880 | 4.2% | \$ (2,019) | -3.8% | |
| Administrative/Offices | \$ 44,807 | 3.9% | \$ 39,221 | 3.1% | \$ (5,586) | -14.2% | increase YoY for worker's comp insurance lower outreach in 2023 vs planned in 2024 lower youth group programing in 2023 vs planned in 2024 |
| Music | \$ 32,070 | 2.8% | \$ 30,000 | 2.4% | \$ (2,070) | -6.9% | |
| Property Taxes | \$ 31,755 | 2.7% | \$ 32,697 | 2.6% | \$ 942 | 2.9% | 2023 includes finishing Roberts Hall, 2/3 of Fire Alarm System; 2024 includes completion of Fire Alarm |
| Insurance | \$ 18,965 | 1.6% | \$ 19,963 | 1.6% | \$ 998 | 5.0% | |
| Outreach | \$ 4,835 | 0.4% | \$ 6,000 | 0.5% | \$ 1,165 | 19.4% | 2023 actuals as of 18 Jan 23 |
| Adult/Children/Youth Programs | \$ 10,908 | 0.9% | \$ 14,589 | 1.2% | \$ 3,681 | 25.2% | |
| Worship | \$ 1,290 | 0.1% | \$ 1,700 | 0.1% | \$ 410 | 24.1% | |
| All Other | \$ 230 | 0.0% | \$ - | 0.0% | \$ (230) | | |
| Total Operating Expenses | \$ 1,159,460 | 100.0% | \$ 1,263,617 | 100% | \$ 104,157 | 8.2% | |
| Capital Improvements | \$ 87,445 | | \$ 25,141 | | \$ (62,304) | -247.8% | |
| Total Op Expenses & Other | \$ 1,246,905 | | \$ 1,288,758 | | \$ 41,853 | 3.2% | |
| Expected Surplus/(Shortfall) | \$ 72,479 | | \$ 8,322 | | \$ (64,157) | | |

Notable 2024 budget assumptions for expenses include:

- Full staff for a full year to support programs, care, and outreach. (Reflects anticipated aggregate compensation expense increase of 1-3%, in line with Diocesan guidelines.)
- Health insurance premium increase of ~4%.
- Our contribution to the work of the Episcopal Church in NH.
- Maintenance funding (in Building & Grounds) for our facility upkeep and repairs based on our maintenance plan for our buildings.
- Slightly lower Administrative/Office expense lower due to reduced audit scope in 2024 (compilation vs. full audit).
- Income & Property taxes aligned with income assumptions.
- Capital expenditures to complete the upgrade to the Fire Alarm system and other smaller projects.

We budget as close as possible to "break-even" as a non-profit organization and manage our budget accordingly, and our 2024 plan includes a small surplus of \$8K. As a reminder, we have other important self-funding programs, such as Common Table, that are part of our mission, but not part of the operating budget.

In conclusion it is a collective effort that makes financial success possible. I like to recognize the

collaborative efforts who make this happen...

- our staff who manage their budgets each year,
- our Vestry for providing financial oversight each month
- our volunteers who step in and make things happen
- and our parishioners who give either in pledge or plate each week;

Our community is thriving and it is because of all of you! Thank you!

The Vestry posts our meeting minutes each month, and at any time, if you have any questions and/or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

As always, with gratitude for being part of the St. John's Community,

Kelly Boston, Treasurer

SECTION FIVE – ASSOCIATE RECTOR/ASSOCIATE FOR PASTORAL CARE REPORT

During this year of new beginnings and transitions we write to you in partnership, delighted by the opportunity to work together alongside Rob Stevens and our very gifted staff and the many volunteers who make up St. John's ministries. We are both filled with gratitude for the privilege of serving at St. John's, Aaron as Associate Rector and Anne as Associate for Pastoral Care. Aaron arrived in August and began to get to know the community as she served as a Deacon until her ordination as Priest, celebrated here at St. John's on December 13, 2023.

Gratitude abounds for all who have given generously of their time and talent throughout 2023 in a rich variety of ways. Heartfelt thanks to all involved in the following ministries:

Adult Formation/Worship

Advent Hope: Our Advent offering this year took the form of an intergenerational gathering to plant paperwhite bulbs and talk about the gifts Advent brings in helping us to still our hearts as we wait and watch for God amongst us. Participants ranged in age from 2 to 87 and more than 70 bulbs were planted and taken home. Additional materials and suggested resources were provided for at home use, including Gayle Boss's book All Creation Waits. Daily reflections during this season were focused on Advent themes with an emphasis on the ways we can turn to creation to help us see that darkness is not the end, but a door for new beginnings.

Blue Christmas Service – On December 21, the 'longest night' we offered our Blue Christmas Service, both in person and livestreamed in conjunction with the Digital Mission of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire. This service is offered to honor the tension there can be between the joy of the festive season and the reality of loss and grief that needs space in which to be held. Prior to the Blue Christmas Service, members of our community joined in a vigil for the unhoused in Market Square, organized by Crossroads.

Discussions on the Vocabulary of our Faith - Throughout the Season of Lent we gathered for reflection and conversation on Sundays mornings after church and in the late afternoon before the evening Compline service. The Rev. Rob Stevens and the Rev. Anne Williamson lead discussions based on Frederick Buechner's book 'Beyond Words: Daily Readings on the ABC's of Faith.

Good Friday Walk – Stations of the Cross on the Black Heritage Trail – we again partnered with the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire to offer both an online experience of the Stations of the Cross paired with stops on the Black Heritage Trail in Portsmouth as well as a return to the in-person offering which took place after the noon Good Friday service, was oversubscribed and very moving. This is the sixth year of our partnership with the Black Heritage Trail, for which we are very grateful.

'Praying in the New Year' – Thank to **Steve Falci**, **Diane Harvey** and **Sam DeFlicht** for facilitating a discussion group on prayer. This group served as an opportunity to come together at the start of the new year for those present to share their experiences of prayer, to learn from each other and explore new ways to connect with God. The group met three times on Zoom, using James Martins book Learning to Pray as an optional text.

Reading Between The Lines – Please see the RBTL report but a big thank you to **Diane Harvey** for leading our weekly Bible Study. RBTL meets on Wednesdays at 10:30am-12pm in the Philbrick Room; the time together concludes with Noonday Prayer. All are welcome!

Outreach

Reports are offered elsewhere on St. John's various outreach initiatives but we would like to highlight the generosity of the SJC community which continued with support for the 2023 **'Fill The Hall' for Gather** event in June. Thank you to the **Outside the Box** Committee for their continued work to support Gather and other local organizations. Additionally, there was also a very successful fundraising initiative for **The American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem** which raised \$3,150 for ongoing humanitarian and faith-based aid in the Holy Land.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care at St. John's is not a web of control but rather a network of support, organic and varied in nature, not perfect (perfectly imperfect as the staff have said about walking through these last three years) but beautiful. This network of support is seen in the generous gifts of time, talent and treasure offered by our wonderful St. John's community.

There are separate reports for many of these ministries but this is a small sample of the care this community continues to offer:

Parishioners have cared for one another by writing, calling and emailing other parishioners, taking people shopping or shopping for them; knitting prayer shawls, **'Wrapped in Love'** making quilts for the Linus Project, thank you to **Joyce Hoelzer and Linda McVay** for shepherding this effort; the **'Exploring Loss'** group continues to meet, giving space and connection to those who are grieving, (thank you **Anne McSally** for facilitating), we continue to work with those with hearing assistance devices to connect through the **AudioFetch** technology directly to the sound system (**Olin Johannessen** continues to lead our technical innovations that have significant pastoral impacts!), delivering lilies and poinsettias to bring cheer; giving gift cards and donations for gift cards (the generosity of the SJC community continues and we are able to give out an amazing number of supermarket gift cards to address food insecurity in this time); organizing and supporting food drives for **Gather** in June, providing housing support to prevent homelessness; funding and preparing **Polar Packs** (thank you to **Ann and Peter Tarlton** for your continued effort here!) for those experiencing homelessness; preparing meals – throughout the year – weekly in person and to-go meals by **Common Table** as well as the **Monday Breakfast** which meets every Monday and gathered a wide variety of folks on Christmas morning! The **youth of SJC** also cook for **Cross Roads House** and **Dover Children's Home** once a month. We have returned to the joy of **Coffee Hour**, **Parish Dinners** and **Receptions** following funeral services – the labor of many hands and important points of connection in our care for one another! Food has been prepared and offered to those recovering from illness or surgery, and in November there were again deliveries to mainly homebound community elders of wonderful apple crisps and applesauce prepared by the youth of SJC. I remain so grateful for all those who continue to pray for the needs of our community, the wider community and the world in these challenging times.

A big thank you to our Eucharistic Visitors: to **Jane Holway**, **Sarah McEvoy** and **Linda McVay** for their years of dedication to this ministry and we welcomed four new Eucharistic Visitors this year: **Steve Falci**, **Kathi Hardi**, **Ken Moore** and **Sandy Tanis**. We are so grateful for you all!

There is a role for clergy in the organizing and offering of pastoral care and there have been more baptisms, weddings and funerals in this last year with the ability to livestream services becoming ever more sophisticated. Rob, Aaron and I continue to walk with members of the St. John's community and the larger community in times of joy and sorrow.

If you know of someone who is in need of support, or if you have time, talent or treasure to offer, please let me know: anne@stjohnsnh.org

Safe Church

After a pause in Safe Church training offered through the Diocese during 2021 & 2022 the online trainings and database are now available and we are working towards full compliance. All staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable populations have either completed or have been notified of the need to complete Safe Church training and background checks. Safe Church guidelines are displayed on the notice boards in the Narthex of St. John's, in Thaxter Hall and at Tebbetts house.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Aaron B. Jenkyn

Associate Rector

The Rev. Anne C. Williamson

Associate for Pastoral Care

SECTION SIX – MUSIC AND LITURGY REPORT

Music and Liturgy

The music ministry at St. John’s exists to serve and enhance our worship life. The volunteers and staff work cooperatively to integrate diverse and well-performed music into our worship services. From Anglican Chant to contemporary Christian music, gospel to classical, our worship has incorporated and explored a plethora of musical styles. This inclusivity not only provides a well-rounded musical experience but also fosters unity and a sense of belonging in our congregation. We have witnessed the power of music to transcend cultural and generational boundaries, bringing people together in worship and praise.

I am pleased to report our music ministry continues to grow in physical numbers and talent, consisting of several ensembles: the Parish Choir, Youth Music / Choir School at St. John’s, and the Compline Choir. Our Choral Scholars (Morgan King, Maggie O’Neill, Christina DeMaio, Andrew Sokol, and Joe Harris) support all our ensembles by providing professional vocal leadership for each rehearsal and performance. I would like to specifically thank John Stromgren and Peter Urquhart for their contributions to the music ministry in 2023. John has fostered a wonderful sense of inclusivity and community in the Compline Choir, not only leading services at St. John’s during Lent, but also “taking the show on the road” for services at St. George’s in Durham. John also works with our Parish Choir to incorporate Anglican Chant in our worship services at least once a month. Peter generously shares his choral compositions with the Parish Choir – we were pleased to debut his choral arrangement, All People on Earth Do Dwell in November. Both John and Peter have stepped in to lead our choir when I am away, sometimes with very little notice. I am grateful for their reliable leadership. I would also like to thank Sally Murphy and Ellen Kingsbury for their assistance in organizing our choral music library.

I am proud to lead this ministry along with Olin Johannessen, Associate Director of Music, but the St. John’s music ministry truly owes its success to the unwavering dedication and passion of our volunteers. Week after week, members of our Parish Choir commit their time and talents to ensure that our worship services are filled with inspirational and uplifting music. They are wonderful, loving, hardworking individuals, using the beauty of music to care for and love our community. It is a true joy to work with this ensemble.

Some highlights of 2023:

- In person and virtual Compline Choir offerings each Sunday during Lent
- The 2023 Youth Musical – Seussical, Jr. in February
- Choral-led services during Holy Week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday services
- Chapel Street Band concert to benefit The Choir School at St. John’s (with guest appearances by the Parish Choir and The Choir School)
- All Saints Vespers in November
- Lessons and Carols in December
- The 2023 Christmas Pageant lead by the youth
- 3 Christmas Eve services – musical participants included Youth Music, Parish Choir, Choral Scholars, and brass quintet

2023 was a highly fulfilling program year for music and worship at St. John’s, and we look forward to many more opportunities in 2024. We will once again offer mini virtual Compline videos to supplement our in-person offerings during the Sundays in Lent. The American Spiritual Ensemble will perform at St. John’s on April 7th – thank you, Olin, for your hard work securing this inspiring performance for our greater community! We also are thrilled to collaborate with Kevin Siegfried and the Shaker community of Sabbathday Lake to present a concert on May 19th celebrating the 250th anniversary of Shakers in America. Eager for more details? Stay tuned!

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Mulhern

Director of Music and Liturgy

THE CHOIR SCHOOL

Prepared January, 2024 by Olin Johannessen, and Ashley Wade

St. John's Choir School

The Choir School is thriving under Olin Johannessen, Jennifer McPherson, and Ashley Wade as co-directors. The partnership with Dondero Elementary School continues to be mutually beneficial as we are able to offer high-quality extracurricular music education for their students, and we are given permission to lead our program in their music room Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. We finished our spring 2023 semester with a huge fundraising event featuring the teachers of the Choir School along with a few special guests as we became "The Chapel Street Band." This event was supported by parents, volunteers and parishioners, and raised over \$10,000 for our program. Donations coming in after the fact brought us closer to \$15,000. The band was joined onstage by the students of the Choir School for several uplifting numbers, and students participated in other ways, too; by offering spoken testimonials describing the impact that their participation has had on their lives, helping their parents sell raffle tickets, and ushering attendees to their seats as well.

Leading up to the fall semester, Olin Johannessen placed countless phone calls and emails to area music and chorus teachers, with the goal of expanding our network of sending schools for our Wednesday program. These efforts have not immediately yielded results but are an important signal of the desire to align our program with the greater-Seacoast music education community.

In addition to reaching out to other schools within the area, we also put time and energy into recruiting another highly-qualified choral and vocal music educator to bolster our Choir School and Youth Music staff. In fall 2022 we welcomed Christina DeMaio as a vocal coach and co-teacher, and as of fall 2023 we welcomed Maggie O'Neill as an additional co-teacher. Maggie brings with her positive energy and buoyant spirit a wealth of youth choral education experience, both as a singer and later as an Associate Director of ChildrenSong of New Jersey, a treble youth choir program in Haddonfield, NJ, as well as from her higher education at the Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, NJ.

YOUTH MUSIC PROGRAM

St. John's Youth Music Program

Fall 2023 saw another successful return of our Wednesday afternoon Youth Music and Sunday Cherub Choir programs on-campus at St. John's. Staffed by Ashley Wade, Jennifer McPherson, Christina DeMaio, Maggie O'Neill and Olin Johannessen, plans were set prior to the start of the fall 2023 semester to run this multifaceted program again in a way that would enable enrolled students not only

to have a high-caliber choral music experience, similar to our Choir School students, but also to branch out into more theatrical performance opportunities such as our beloved annual Christmas Pageant, as well as the goal staging a winter Youth Musical Theater production, “Seussical, Jr.,” which was a smashing success with two fantastic performances. It was our first musical production since the COVID lockdown.

With the desire to run these similar-but-different youth music programs partially in-parallel from a repertoire and curriculum standpoint through three fall performances, including an October performance during the Stewardship Campaign, a performance on the morning of All-Saints day, and a big performance during the Service of Lessons and Carols in December, we worked hard to establish effective communication among staff as well as a sensible weekly rhythm to our instruction in order to ensure superior preparation of our students regardless of whether they rehearsed twice per-week at Dondero, or once per-week at SJC. It is worth noting that all of these groups are run on a non-auditioned basis and are open to any interested students willing to make the commitment to participate fully at no charge.

With bravery, confidence, and excellence, students in our combined Choir School/SJC Youth Choir went above and beyond as never before, and have performed all of their repertoire without any adult assistance during the performances. We have never attempted this before, and it is not without its bumps in the road, but the pride students feel in this trust we place in them, and their sense of achievement far outweighs any fuzzy notes or issues in the performance. We are proud of the level of excellence in choral musicianship that went into preparing for their performances.

Our Wednesday program continues to benefit from several dedicated and loving volunteers who join us each Wednesday afternoon, serving snack with a lot of love and care to our students, offering a warm welcome and a friendly person to tell about their day. We are so grateful to Elaine Wilson, Bertha Rocray, and Robin Burdick for their consistent presence and participation in this ministry.

And finally, we are grateful to Christina DeMaio and Maggie O’Neill for taking the lead on Sunday mornings to gather and teach our youngest performers (age 4-8) in the St. John’s Cherub Choir. Taking elements of our Choir School curriculum, our youngest singers are learning the basics of good technique and musicianship skills with fun game and age-appropriate repertoire. A young children’s choir with 14 students that sing and perform is a blessing for St. John’s and the greater Seacoast community. We are happy to welcome any families who are interested in a program like ours. It is never a pre-requisite to be a member of the church.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Wade and Olin Johannessen

SECTION SEVEN – CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES REPORT

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

In 2023 we witnessed the growth of our programs, welcoming new families and volunteers to our community. Over the summer, Ashley Wade coordinated with Laura Ludes, Gerry Simpkins, and Randy Carey to renovate a classroom on the lower level of Thaxter Hall, reclaiming a space from our construction projects. A new carpet was installed in two of the classrooms and after a coat of fresh paint, the space transformed from a dingy basement room to a welcoming and comfortable space for our youngest community members and volunteers to thrive.

Every summer, as we prepare for the new program year, there is a week or so when we roll up our sleeves, clean, take inventory, and organize. Sherry and Tom Herzig have helped in this effort for several years. Their loving hand over our spaces helps hold us together for the entire program year. The annual reset is a priceless gift to me, as the director, and our community of adult leaders who come into the spaces with children to make it their own. I am so grateful for that expression of support.

With a new classroom, our Sunday school offerings expanded, as well as our team of volunteer leaders. The classrooms are named according to the pillars of our formational process: Play, Wonder, Explore, and Learn.

- **Play:** our nursery and early childcare option for Sunday mornings is led by Brenna Jantzen with assistance from Maeve Stevenot and youth member Nina Little.
- **Wonder:** our early elementary classroom is led by Sarah Duddy-Vaillancourt with assistance from youth member Ella Luke.
- **Explore:** our middle elementary classroom is led by Christine Hudson, Travis Downs, Sarah Brown, and Matt Glenn.
- **Learn:** our upper elementary classroom is led by veteran team Brad Lown, Tom Gruen, and Joe Weir.

The commitment and love of these adult and youth leaders enables us to offer a robust Sunday morning program to children of all ages, and we are very grateful for their flexibility and willingness to lead and be led by the amazing children of St. John’s.

We utilized the *Weaving God’s Promises* curriculum in 2023, along with some Godly Playstorytelling. Seeking a more meaningful experience for all, Ashley Wade, Allison Dudas, and Aaron Jenkyn began building out themes for formation to hold together all ages and curriculum options under a bigger umbrella. The hope is that a theme would help guide our year with more intentionality, allow us to grow deeper into who we are as a community, and be able to speak to who / why we are together on Sunday mornings more effectively. This is an effort to build meaning and to be more welcoming; to

speak the message of who we are as a community more naturally, to name what we believe in and how to connect in our ministry. At the outset of the new program year in the Fall of 2023, we worked through the themes of Creation, Thanksgiving, and Advent (Waiting with God's Creation).

In June we ran our Community Theater Camp for the second year in a row, doubling enrollment (32 campers and 6 youth counselors) and expanding our leadership. Kendall Mood returned as our director with the very capable Li Blanchard and Liam Ellis as her supporting lead teachers. Ashley Wade and Christina DeMaio assisted with administrative and teaching duties, and the whole week ended in a dynamic showcase of camper talent.

Our Easter Giving Eggs returned in 2023. The children learned and discussed throughout Lent how to make meaning of the Easter message and we raised money for the children to offer to causes they identified as sacred: Hunger & Feeding People, Creation Care, and Refugee /Humanitarian Aid. Through the support of our community, they were empowered to give away over \$3K to causes they felt strongly connected to – collecting reusable wooden eggs was still so fun, and to engage with that second step – giving the eggs back – to watch the baskets overflow for the different causes they care about was a simple yet visible way for them to connect with the act of giving.

The result of these conversations with the Children and the money raised through the 'giving egg' effort is a budding relationship with Kittery Land Trust, Gather NH, and the Episcopal Relief and Development fund. We had plans to engage with educational programs in partnership with Kittery Land Trust and Gather in 2023, which were in planning stages but never materialized. I hope to return to this initiative in 2024. The Easter Giving Eggs is meant to be fun and create an avenue for the children in our community to feel the power of giving our treasures and hearts, and to create real ties to the community and put ourselves in the pathways of the organizations and leaders who are actively working on these causes that we care about and support. In all areas I seek to make connections and bring the Children's lives closer to these causes they care about. Thank you to all those community members who gave so generously to the Easter Giving Eggs effort, and for seeing the value of empowering the Children in our community to think about their own treasures and how to think about stewardship of God's incredible creation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Wade

Director of Communications and Children's Music and Ministries

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Allison Dudas joined the staff as Director of Youth Ministries in August. Working part time, she's stepped into the role that many staff and volunteers worked hard to fill previously, in hopes of expanding our offerings. We are excited to explicitly show up for the middle and high school students in our community.

The Youth Cooking Ministry has continued with great fervor. We are seeing between 15 and 20 volunteers every month- with students from Dover, Portsmouth and Kittery. Sue Nalewajk takes on the role of Cook Leader for these Wednesdays. We've also spent a few Sunday mornings doing service work like apple picking, apple pie baking and raking. Michelle Tyminski took the lead on apple crisp making as she often does. Sara Marchessault continues to show up consistently as a youth group leader no matter our activity. We are grateful to have so many volunteer leaders! We've featured our service on our social media handles-- be sure to check out Instagram and Youtube! There's more to come this winter and spring!

Sara Marchessault continues to spearhead the Sunday morning youth group meetings. We are so grateful to her for her consistency and the great care and patience she shows the middle schoolers as we work through our Rite 13 curriculum.

Ally initially offered a weekly yoga class to teens but, unfortunately, no one came! She is looking for more ways to show up for our teens and is willing to be creative. We are hoping to take a weekend away at Merrowvista with our youth at the end of March as well as offer some babysitting nights to our parishioners with small children.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Dudas

Director of Youth Ministries

SECTION EIGHT – COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY REPORTS

COMMUNICATIONS

Our communications efforts continue with daily reflections, twice weekly e-news, website, and social media. Every week we are offering a St. John's musical reflection and Gospel reflection as well as a Sermon Series reflection. Communications are focused on spreading the word about what's going on with our church programs, stewardship efforts, and how we interact with the community around us (outreach and partnership). We have challenged ourselves to refresh our welcoming messages and look harder for places where we could be clearer about how to step into the community of St. John's.

The new sign on the front of the church reflects our new leadership and thoughtfully designed messages that will cycle through the year to help highlight our culture and liturgical offerings. We look forward to growing in our accessibility and using our resources to make St. John's an ever-more welcoming environment for all.

2023 picked up on the momentum of 2022 and continued to crescendo right through Christmas Eve and the end of the year. Our re-emergence into a more normal existence together is felt in so many places. I feel a renewed sense of reciprocity between what we, the staff, envision and work toward, and what is coming back to us in presence, energy, and enthusiasm.

Highlights of my time this year include Sunday School classes, a Rite 13 Ceremony, Summer Theater Camp, Summer Sundays in the Garden, the Parish Retreat at Merrowvista, combined Children's and Adult choirs singing when Bishop Curry visited, wonderful volunteers continuing to serve or beginning new ministries, a bursting parish dinner, family gatherings, and a most joyful Christmas pageant!

COMMUNITY

We welcomed 53 humans, including 22 Children and Youth to play together at our Parish Retreat at Merrowvista in September. Delighting in God's creation, downtime, play, and adventure, we only wish the weekend was longer.

In 2023, families gathered for family nights, hikes, and community dinners. Parish Dinners in Thaxter Hall brimmed with energy as volunteers cooked and served with full hearts. A highlight was preparing Advent bulbs in Roberts Hall in late November under the guidance of The Rev. Aaron Jenkyn and volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Wade

Director of Communications and Children's Music and Ministries

SECTION NINE – TECHNOLOGY MINISTRY REPORT

St. John’s Episcopal Church

Annual Report: Digital Content and Technology

Prepared January, 2024, by Olin Johannessen

Director of Digital Content, Associate for Music and Youth

I. Introduction, Overview

Since last year’s annual report, we have continued to streamline processes around our weekly live-streamed services and additional digital content offerings. We are pushing out both Rite I and Rite II Sunday services most weeks throughout the program year and offering pre-produced content when scheduling around holidays/vacation and/or staffing considerations present a challenge. We are offering repackaged content from our Sunday services weekly in the form of our Sermon Series each Tuesday and our Music Series each Wednesday, utilizing our Daily Reflection program and email lists to distribute to, as well as continuing to populate our playlists on YouTube with these separate short-form videos. Our YouTube subscription rates have continued to grow steadily and organically. There are areas where we’d like to continue developing new ideas for digital content that is not part of our regularly streamed live worship services, and some things we’ve already begun doing that are working well that we plan to continue.

II. New Technology in our Church

After the old speaker amplifier fried-out on Christmas Eve, 2022, we worked with WHB Concert Productions, our audio vendor, and Nichols Electric on working up a quote for the purchase and installation of new speakers, a new signal processing amplifier, new wiring, and installation of the speakers in our sanctuary. The purchase was approved, the equipment was ordered, installation began on March 6, and was finished about a week later. We have noticed an enormous improvement in both the clarity and quality of sound in the church, and are extremely pleased with how it turned out.

III. Areas of growth, by the numbers

Being our primary outward-facing digital platform, our engagement with, and understanding of YouTube is essential. We track views on a weekly basis, respond to positive comments, flag, report and remove spam or inappropriate comments, and brainstorm strategies to help continue to grow our digital audience in an organic and holistic way (we do not pay for promotion or “buy” views). A bit of information on how YouTube defines a “view” to help you contextualize the numbers:

“Views:” YouTube defines a “view” as “a viewer-initiated intended play, and the video has been despammed by YouTube's algorithm. In other words, the video was played by a human on one device, and YouTube confirms it to be a legitimate view.”

(source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-does-youtube-count-views#:~:text=What%20Counts%20as%20a%20View,to%20be%20a%20legitimate%20view> Accessed 1-16-22)

Some numbers to help contextualize the engagement we enjoy from our YouTube presence:

| | Mar 19, 2020 - Aug 14, 2021 | Aug 15, 2021 - Jan 15, 2023 | Jan 16, 2023 - Jan 9, 2024 |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Subscribers | 312 | 542 (74% growth) | 698 (29% growth) |
| Pre-produced videos | 350 | 63 | 2 |
| Live-streamed videos | 146 | 320 | 272 |
| Views, as calculated by YouTube | 60,900 | 51,500 | 40,360 |
| Percentage of views from subscribers and (<i>non-subscribers</i>) | 24.70% (75.3%) | 34.20% (65.8%) | 37.30% (62.7%) |

Analysis: we are continuing to see steady and organic growth in our subscriber count; it may seem like small growth, but it is important growth. Having subscribers consistently tuning in regularly helps us, as well as capturing their interest and pushing out to others who are connected to them on YouTube. There are ways of rapidly adding subscribers which we continue to choose not to use in the interest of allowing a holistic and steady pattern of growth to continue to develop. We continue to believe that the spiritual strength of our offerings must guide the growth of our digital platform and offerings. It is remarkable to think that we have more than doubled our YouTube subscriber count since transitioning from pre-produced content to live-streamed content. I believe that as we continue to share short-form content in addition to our worship services and special services, we will continue to see that

“percentage of views from subscribers” increase as well. Sharing what makes St. John’s a special place to worship is really important to creating and supporting a vibrant online community as well.

We continue most weeks to offer “Gospel Reflections,” sometimes in video form, and other times in written form, all distributed via our Daily Reflections distribution email list. Having separate, non-liturgical offerings such as music videos continues to be a big asset in drawing individuals to our content and by extension, our channel. We believe that the development of more short-form video content may help in furthering our organic growth. Offering things that are “of St. John’s” in belief system, voice, and style, but fall outside of the regular worship experience, are on our list of new ideas to work with to further engage both new and returning visitors to our YouTube channel. We continue to dream and plan as a team to develop these new ideas for separate content offerings and can do so as a result of our creative team, as well as our learning and growth with our technology.

IV. Identifying areas of potential future growth

a. There are areas where we believe it is important to prioritize bringing in professionals to assist with our larger services particularly when Olin, who also serves as Associate for Music, is needed as a singer and/or conductor with the Youth music program or Parish Choir. This modest budget has been established more or less as a paid-services fund for these predictable year-to-year expenses which are planned in advance for those larger services. For FY23 this account came in under budget.

b. Olin believes that further recruitment and training of parishioners to the technology ministry is necessary in order to make sure that things can be covered in his absence, whether physically not here at SJC, or being needed in another area such as music on any given Sunday.

c. The issue of additional lighting has not been resolved yet but is still on our radar, including the purchase of a dedicated light board, which allows for remote control and fine-tuning of the lighting, as well as some additional spotlights for other areas of the church to enhance both in-person and live-streamed quality.

d. We continue to rent additional microphones for special services, i.e. times when we have a choir performing upstairs during one portion of the service and a special musical offering or separate choral performance downstairs. It is the wish of the technology department to ultimately be able to purchase

more microphones to give us greater flexibility to run recording sessions, host more specialized musical groups and individuals, and to continue to offer our space as a viable recording venue for those involved with our music ministry, as well as outside renters and guests.

V. Thanks

We wish to recognize a few parishioners who have consistently made our technology ministry an important part of their St. John's life: Bruce Hoelzer, who streams the 8:00am Rite I service almost every week, all year. Chuck Silva, who continues to pick up the phone whenever I call to ask for support, either in the form of running the production during a 10:00am Rite II or special evening service when I'm involved heavily in the music portion, or unable to be there at all, and is never afraid to dive in and run the stream. Zuri Wemple, who has shown wonderful growth in his ability to run both sound and video, and whose eye for the artistic side of camera work has dazzled all who've watched his productions. Thanks also to Justin Haight who has supported on the video and audio side of things as well when needed.

SECTION TEN – COMMITTEES AND MINISTRIES REPORT

ALTAR GUILD

Saint John's Church Altar Guild has been part of our church since 1930 when it was organized by Faye Ganter, wife of the Rev. Marshall Ganter. In the beginning, only women served on the guild and they wore gloves as well as head covering. And there was no talking.

As you can tell many things have changed! But the purpose of the Altar Guild remains the same; to prepare the altar for all services.

Presently, the Altar Guild has 27 members who work in teams of 4-6 for a month at a time. There are countless people who help with the many required tasks. To all who help, many thanks for your support.

The Guild is a service ministry and all members enjoy the service and the friendships that develop.

If you are interested in serving or helping on this rewarding ministry, please contact Bertha Rocray or any Altar Guild member.

Bertha H. Rocray, Altar Guild Directress

Virginia Edwards, Treasurer

BREAKFAST CLUB

We are a new ministry, starting about a year ago, that encompasses conversations and good, hearty hot food.

A group of eight gentlemen, sometimes called “ The Boys,“ start cooking on Monday mornings around 5:30 am and serve breakfast from 6:30 am to 8:15 am. We usually serve 25 to 35 guests and had a record of 65 guests on Christmas morning.

Our menu always includes coffee, tea, juice, scrambled eggs, sautéed vegetables, a breakfast meat, hash browned potatoes, fresh fruit, and toast. Occasionally, we offer other breakfast specials such as pancakes, breakfast sandwiches, french toast, various muffins, grits, spam and corn beef hash.

So please join us on Monday for a hearty meal to start your day.

Bob Nalewajk

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Thanks to the hard work and oversight of the Building Committee, the exquisite architectural design by our historic church Architect, Michael Campbell, the construction coordination of our General Contractor, Reggie Baird, with the assistance of our Jr. Warden, Gerry Simpkins, and the superb work of our sub-contractors (Nesius Masonry, John Rogers Carpentry, Perry Bros. Construction, T.Roy Construction, Holway Electric, Fern Lessard Roofing, MJA Plumbing), we now have:

- (1) a new roof and lightning rod protection system, interior lighting and sound system for the Church,
- (2) a safe, beautiful, handicapped accessible addition joining St. John’s and Thaxter Hall—The Roberts Fellowship Hall—and
- (3) a newly renovated Thaxter Hall and Kitchen

The new addition looks like its been here since St. John’s, the oldest Episcopal Church and the first two story all-brick Church of any denomination in the history of New Hampshire, was first constructed. Our new addition is truly a seamless connector between The Church On The Hill and Thaxter Hall, providing Parishioners and guests with access to the Church from Thaxter at the Lower Middle Parking Lot, by our new Elevator and Chair Lift.

With the Patio in the back, the Parish now has not only the new indoor space provided by Roberts Fellowship Hall but, also, a wonderful outdoor gathering area.

The renovation of Thaxter Hall and its adjoining Kitchen now provides a wonderful space with up-dated Kitchen facilities for Parishioner gatherings, St. John's Outreach Guests, and those who would like an historic, beautiful venue for bridal showers, wedding receptions, baptismal gatherings, graduation parties, and other special events.

A special "thank you" to our Sr. Warden, Chuck Silva, Treasurer, Kelly Boston, Committee Members Randy Carey, Anne McSally, Bob Nalewajk and, last but certainly not least, our Rector, Rob Stevens, for all their support and hard work to help keep these Projects on track, within Budget, and on schedule.

None of what will be enjoyed by all who come to St. John's, our Church On The Hill, could have been accomplished, especially during the challenging times with which we were confronted as a result of COVID, without the good and hard-working friends named in this Report.

Thank you all for a job exceptionally well done, and one we can all be very proud of forever.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Heckler

SJC Bldg Cmttee

January 10, 2024

CENTERING PRAYER

Contemporary Centering Prayer is a contemplative form of silent prayer based on the ancient prayer practices of the desert fathers. Thomas Keating, a trappist monk and priest, is known as the principal founder of the revival of this form of Christian prayer. He has written and spoken extensively on Centering Prayer in books, interviews, videos and two movies. There is a Thomas Keating website as well as other online resources about him for anyone who is interested.

In recent decades Centering Prayer has seen a resurgence in popularity among Christians seeking a deepening personal relationship with God. On our spiritual journey through this life, in a world that can often be seemingly out of control, Centering Prayer helps us stay focused on what it means to be Christian.

A Centering Prayer group meets each Thursday morning in the Philbrick Room in the Parish Hall at Saint John's from 10:30 - 11:30. After a short reading, there is a 20 minutes period of silent prayer and then a shared time for reflection and discussion. The hour closes with a short time of (non-silent) prayer.

In 2023 a second Centering Prayer group was formed, meeting each Sunday morning at 9am in Tebbetts house between services, led by Derek Birch. This group met for four months, from October through December and is currently on hiatus.

Anyone interested in joining our group or who would like to learn more about this type of prayer is always welcome to join us. If you have questions feel free to contact Dick Siener or Joan Christy care of the parish office, 1-603-436-8283.

Respectively,
Joan F. Christy

COMMON TABLE

This year marks the twenty second year the Common Table free lunch program serves meals to the Seacoast Community! According to chef, Sue Nalawajk, the numbers have increased this year from 120

to 140 diners. Bagged lunches to go are available in the lower parking lot or folks can have a sit down meal inside Thaxter hall.

We are blessed to have a number of volunteer chefs who continue to provide nutritious meals and are also fortunate to have the culinary services of the JGroup and the Portsmouth High School Culinary Arts program from time to time.

This past Thanksgiving, about seventy Blessing bags filled with toiletries and warm items were lovingly prepared by Bobbi Koch for those in need.

New cabinets were installed in one of the side rooms to hold dishes and paper supplies for Common Table and we are doing our part to use compostable paper supplies.

The Cornerstone School continues to send a group each week for community service and the young folks bring their smiles and caring hearts under the leadership of their teacher, Rob Keyes, who has been providing help for at least twenty years!

A non profit, Tiffany's Closet, comes to the parking lot each month bringing free clothing to all who need it and the health van continues to offer their services

Many volunteers donate their time, especially the chefs, plus the dishwashers, tablesetters, pantry overseer, dessert bakers and those that wash the linens. And a big thank you to those who deliver meals to homebound parishioners. Thank you to all who participate and make this happen every Thursday!

It is not all work and no play as the volunteers enjoy gathering in homes for fellowship and fun. We sent the DeSalvos off to Maryland for a year and honored the Dessert Brigade and linen folks with an appreciation luncheon. We also, sadly, said a farewell to Dick Coraine, one of our oldest volunteers, as he departed to be with family in California and farewell to Joann Andres who passed on. We will miss their beautiful spirits and smiles.

We would love to have you come to Thaxter hall any Thursday at noon and enjoy conversation and community. Your monetary donations are always appreciated to keep this outreach program thriving. Checks are made out to the Common Table.

Luke 6::21 Jesus said, " Blessed are you who hunger now,

For you shall be satisfied."

Let your light shine!

Respectfully, Suzi Raeside and Judy Roberts, co-chairs

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS & READERS

Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers, otherwise known as Readers and EMs

The dedication of this group continues to impress us all. As we have returned to almost normal service routines, their adaptability is notable, for no two weeks are truly alike. There have been several new faces added to the mix, and we have lost several of our faithful. There is always room for more, and the clergy will happily speak to any interested participants.

Respectfully submitted,

Lacey Bangs and Diane Harvey

EXPLORING LOSS GROUP

The Exploring Loss Group serves as an informal, peer to peer gathering where participants discuss the death of a person in one's life along with the ensuing loss experience. The group is open to all St. John's Church parishioners.

The goals of the group include: bringing parishioners together in a comfortable, relaxed setting; sharing stories and ideas surrounding the death of a person in their life; discovering additional needs that may exist; and, assisting one another in the church community.

The group met in September, October, and November. Each session was one hour from 12:30 to 1:30 on various Tuesdays in the Philbrick Room. The December gathering included a beautiful tea inspired by Sandra Pagel with food provided by all.

About 20 people have shown interest with weekly attendance generally between 4 and 6 people. Anne McSally serves as the ministry's organizer and leader with review and guidance from the Rev. Anne Williamson and feedback from participants. The group will continue to meet in 2024. Stay tuned for the dates.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anne McSally

1-7-2024

GOING GREEN PROJECT

A program to “go green” was initiated on Kick-off Sunday in September, 2023. The goal of this program was to increase the use of waste composting and recycling at SJC, instead of throwing these items away where they would be headed to the landfill. Here’s what was accomplished:

- A centralized location for storing disposable/compostable paperware and utensils was designated in the closet next to the elevator in Thaxter Hall. Several pantry cabinets were installed for these items. The church’s table linens are also now stored in these cabinets for easy access. Any SJC group needing supplies can find them here.
- All disposable paperware and utensils used at SJC are now compostable, instead of throwing them away in the garbage. They are stored in the pantry cabinets mentioned above. Any item from this closet should be disposed in the compost bin.
- A labeling system for the various waste bins was started. Please look for a red pail to dispose of your compostable items, a grey bin for recyclable items, a white pail for plastic films and a black pail for all other wastes.
- The red compost bins are used for compostable wastes including food scraps, paper napkins and disposable plasticware and utensils. Mr. Fox’s Service carts these wastes away each week.
- The grey bins will continue to be used for recycle – paper, cardboard, glass, metal and plastic bottles. When full, they are emptied into the totes usually outside the kitchen. The Breakfast Club brings them out to the curb for the City to pick up.
- The white box is from Gather and is for the deposition of plastic films – shopping bags, dry cleaner bags, bubble wrap, plastic shipping envelopes, etc. Parishioners can bring their waste plastic films to be reused here. Gather is very excited about SJC participating in their program. These plastic films are brought to Gather each Thursday when CT brings extra food to them. Gather has a contractor who turns these waste films into park benches.
- Lastly, the black bins are for garbage – all that’s left after recycling and composting what we can. Bags of garbage are brought down to the dumpster in the lower parking lot.

With the installation of this program, SJC was able to reduce the size of its dumpster used for disposal of garbage from 6 to 2 cubic yards.

Thanks to all for your enthusiastic reception towards this effort. Please continue to support composting and recycling at SJC. Contact Sue Nalewajk if you have any questions about this program.

Respectfully submitted,
Sus Nalewajk

KNEELER RESTORATION PROJECT

Have you noticed kneelers missing from your pew?

In the 1960's, Rosamond Thaxter (1895 - 1989; (Celia Thaxter's granddaughter)) returned from a trip to England where she saw beautiful needlepoint cushions and kneelers in the churches she visited, and thought that St. John's should have them, too. It wasn't long before parishioners started designing and stitching needlepoint canvases. In the ensuing few decades most of the 169 canvases for our 180 pew kneelers were completed by approximately 80 women and 6 men.

Father Gordon Allen, who came to us from England, also appreciated the needlepoint. On a trip there, he ordered the canvases and yarns to cover the 7 Altar Rail cushions. These were completed in the 1970s by Beatrice Batchelder, Barbara Widen, Esther Sawyer, Priscilla Mullen, Trudy Redmayne and Marion Hamer. Rosamond Thaxter (Aunt Rozzie) completed kneeler #1, Cantate Domino, (Sing to God.) With luck, you'll find it in Pew 81.

Many of the first kneelers were done in Bargello. Bargello is a type of needlepoint made up of upright stitches in a mathematical pattern, usually in a flame or curved pattern. As the project progressed the kneelers became more pictorial or symbolic. Some were done as memorials or inspired by religious books or scenes. Many of our kneelers were hand painted and designed by our own parishioners, including Rieta Brothwell, Trudy Redmayne, Thérèse (Tess) Parrish, and others, whose names we can only guess at.

After accidentally tipping over a kneeler one Sunday and watching a bunch of stuff fall out of it, I realized we needed to restore our kneelers. They were now about 50 years old, and the original foam stuffing was dry and powdery and no longer serving its function. At the same time, Wendy Blood was planning to photograph and document the kneelers for a book for posterity. We came together on the project and mapped it out in the fall of 2022.

Over the years, the kneelers have been stood upon, (children in wet winter boots) had food, gum, coffee, and wax spilled or dripped on them and they have been used as footrests. Additionally, the synthetic materials that were used when they were originally assembled are disintegrating. Their beauty and the thousands of hours and love that went into stitching them originally deserve to be honored and respected.

Lacey Bangs had a lot of the information about the original project, and we started searching for some partially completed canvases that were "out there somewhere." Six more were located and are being / have been completed in the past year! Please seek out "The Lord is My Shepherd," begun 50 years ago and finished last year by Wendy Blood and upholstered a month ago by her. It's gorgeous. We also were able to locate the stash of yarn and spent months airing it out from being stored in the damp church undercroft.

In March of 2023 we began the needlepoint kneeler restoration project. We put the word out for volunteers, and about 30 people have signed up to help with this project that would otherwise be

prohibitively expensive if we were to have professionals take care of it. All are welcome. The work isn't hard.

Wendy and I started doing research on upholstery materials; on how to wash needlepoint canvases; how to block them, etc. Our team of volunteers meet about every three weeks at church to disassemble and reassemble the kneelers. We take the canvases home to wash and block them; bring them back for reupholstering. Before reupholstering, all original stuffing has been removed. Teddy Blood repaints the legs and applies new foot pads. Some of the canvases need to have extra binding tape put on the sides of the canvas, to make them fit the kneeler.

Wendy does that part. A variety of experienced stitchers add missing stitches after matching yarns from our huge stash. We're removing stains, wax, encrusted gum, etc. We are grateful for all the volunteers working on the project.

All the materials used for reupholstering are natural and organic. 100% linen, organic sheep wool roving and organic sheep wool felt. We've made two trips to New York State to get super high quality wool that is lovely to work with. Hopefully the kneelers will last another 100 years!!!! The wool yarns have held up beautifully, and, once washed, you can see the glorious colors of the canvases. We found a store in Freeport that sells the yarns we need IF we run out or can't find the necessary colors to match.

Once all the canvases are back on the kneelers, we will be photographing them and creating a book with appendices loaded with historical information. You can tell when a kneeler is done by identifying a white bow on the corner of it. 25% of the kneelers have been restored to date.

We do plan an appeal in the spring of 2024 to help offset the costs of the materials, and hope that you will want to sponsor a kneeler or two. Having removed 2 half-pews from church, for mobility access, we no longer need 11 more canvases done. Now we only need five more designed and stitched once the six outstanding have been installed. Making progress!

Please use them to kneel on, and not as a footrest. Or, remove your shoes and those of your children first. We are grateful for your help in this regard.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Howard and Wendy Blood *on behalf of our amazing team*

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Outside the Box in 2023

We join with so many others at St John's with humility and gratitude for the gifts we receive every day. We are guided by our Bishop Rob Hirschfeld who said, "God's love refuses to be kept in a box."

Outside the Box is organized by a small steering committee who meets to plan, invite, and schedule speakers to come to St John's to tell their story. We serve a simple lunch and encourage community, conversation and discussion. We welcome all ideas for future talks and invite you to join us.

We were informed and challenged and grateful to be part of our St John's family that offers hospitality and support to so many organisations doing extraordinary work.

In 2023 we heard from RAIN for the Sahel and Sahara – a Nigere NGO facing the extremes of climate change and more recently a sudden political coup. "I got Bridged" returned and we learnt about Carey Cottage and the support available to fledgling local NGOs. Marty Chapman, Executive Chairman of the NH Housing Partnership, and Kathleen Paradis, Vice President of Residential Lending of the NH Community Loan Fund, shared how real estate non-profits work to develop and finance affordable housing in the Seacoast area and throughout the state.

We are also delighted that our application on behalf of RAIN for the Sahel was granted a Diocesan sustainable development grant of \$3900 and our support for the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem appeal raised \$3150.

Respectfully submitted by steering committee - Carol Gruen, Sandie Dika, Charlie Bickford, Suzy Raeside, Elaine Wilson, Sandra Pagel, Linda Cheatham, Ken Hale, Ned Thompson, Barb Sobol, Sooky Lassen and with gratitude to Rev Aaron Jenkins

POLAR PACKS

Thirteen Polar Packs were distributed during the 2021/2022 winter, to include six each by Cross Roads and Salvation Army. Sixteen Polar Packs, eight with two person tents, have been pre-positioned for the 2022/2023 winter. We increased Cross Roads from six to eight, after conducting a survey, as they have expanded homeless services. Average cost per Polar Pack is \$250. Kittery Trading Post continues to be a strong supporter of our efforts, with close to a 30% discount on purchases and a very organized and efficient processing of purchase orders. We all appreciate the continued interest by many parishioners and welcome contributions to the Polar Pack fund.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter W Tarlton

RECEPTION COMMITTEE

The Receptions committee provides funeral and other receptions for St. Johns. Although our committee is composed of about 10 parishioners, the whole congregation provides the homemade dishes served. This year we have had help from many of our Common Table volunteers at our receptions.

This year was a light one on numbers, but heavy on our hearts as we honored Anne Rehner, Elaine VanDyke, Robert E Stevens, Carl Gettelman, Carolyn Ohlsen, and JoAnn Andres (reception Jan. 20, 2024).

In December, we had the pleasure of putting on a gala reception for Aaron's ordination. This was another example of the whole community being involved.

It is a special ministry to be able to lift the spirits of those with so many other things on their plate in times of both sadness and joy.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzi Raeside

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Nearly every Wednesday morning from September through May you will find a group of St. John's folk gathered in the Philbrick Room for Reading Between the Lines. We meet to explore one of the scriptures for the coming Sunday using a resource published by The Educational Center in Charlotte, NC. As the center describes their resource, "Reading Between the Lines offers a different way to engage the stories of the Bible, to connect them with the world around us, and to explore the resonances those stories stir in our inmost depths."

The time we spend on Wednesday s from 10:30-noon is a time to share faith, to open ourselvesto questions and wonder, and to experience the mystery of God. We've grown to an average of 15-18 people over the last year, but there's always room to add more chairs. Please join us!

Each Wednesday is a session in itself, so come when you can.

Diane Harvey, Convenor

USHERS

The St. John's Ushering Team is currently having a great year and we are blessed to have nearly a full staff to usher on Sundays and at Funerals. We have approximately 25 Ushers with 22 being active week to week this year. Our goal is to always have 1 Head Usher and 4 ushers on the schedule on Sundays. We currently have 3 active Head Ushers to lead the teams each Sunday. Down from 5 Head Ushers a year ago. I will be looking to increase both the numbers on our Ushering team as well as Head Ushers as we head into the new calendar year and look forward to having some new faces on our team! The St. John's Ministry/Job Fair in September enabled us to add a couple of new ushers for the 2023/2024 program year. There are always a few ushers that go inactive each year (aging out, relocating, etc.). Ideally, we will continue to look for a couple of more Ushers to add to the staff this year. Our mission each week is to be a welcoming presence as the first faces people will see as they enter church on Sunday. We also want to make sure our congregation and guests have a positive experience throughout our services!

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Carey

WRAPPED IN LOVE

Wrapped in Love Blanket Ministry was initiated in September 2022. We have donated about 75 quilts to the Seacoast chapter of Project Linus. In November, invitations were sent to Episcopal churches in Rockingham and Strafford countries to join our ministry. Christ Church in Exeter replied that they would like to join in this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hoelzter