

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **for 2020**

**Presented to the parish at the Annual Meeting  
on January 31, 2021**

**ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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

# ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL MEETING - JANUARY 31, 2021

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**St. John's Episcopal Church Annual Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 31, 2021**  
**Following the 10:30 a.m. service - Online via Zoom**

**Agenda**

**Opening Prayer & Call to Order**

**Acceptance of 2020 Annual Meeting minutes**

**Vestry elections**

**Warden (One-Year Term)**

Geoffrey Emerick  
Virginia Van Dyk

**Co-Treasurers (One-Year Term)**

Tim Goetz  
John Roche

**Vestry members (Three-year Term)**

Robert Eikel, Kara Hart, Julia O'Brien, Martin Wheeler

**Delegates to Convention**

Virginia Van Dyk, Geoff Emerick, Alternate - Tim Goetz

**Farewell to outgoing vestry members**

Steve Crocker, Ann Hutchinson, Alex Nelson

**Resolutions**

- 1) Motion to authorize the treasurers or either warden to borrow up to \$10,000 annually without calling a parish meeting.
- 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**

**Wardens' Report** – Geoffrey Emerick & Virginia Van Dyk

**Assistant Rector's Report** – Margie Baker

**Music Report** – Scott Lamlein

**Stewardship Report** – Kim Byrd & Matt Ciscel

**Financial Report** – John Roche & Tim Goetz

**New Business**

**Adjournment**

**St. John's Episcopal Church, West Hartford, CT**  
**Annual Meeting**  
January 26, 2020

The Annual Meeting of St. John's Episcopal Church was called to order at 9:34 a.m. by the Reverend Susan Pinkerton. The Reverend Margie Baker offered an opening prayer.

- A. The minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting were approved as written.
- B. The nominees for the Vestry were introduced:

**Wardens:** *Elected for one-year term*

Geoffrey Emerick and Virginia Van Dyk

**Co-Treasurers:** *Elected for one-year term*

Tim Goetz and John Roche

**Vestry members:** *Elected for a three-year term*

June Aziz, Jyothsna Diaz, Anne Harney

Motions to elect all nominees were made, seconded and carried.

- C. Rector Susan Pinkerton thanked outgoing warden Wes Winterbottom, who expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and praised the congregation for its talents. She also thanked outgoing stewardship chairs Eleanor Barnes and Stewart Murchie for their three years of leadership in this position, during which they helped reverse the previous downward trend in both pledge amounts and number of pledging units.
- D. Three annual resolutions were presented as follows:
  - a. Motion to authorize the treasurers or either warden to borrow up to \$10,000 annually without calling a parish meeting.
  - b. Motion to authorize the vestry to fill a vacancy to serve until the next parish meeting.
  - c. Motion to allow the treasurer or either warden to sell any securities received in payment of pledges or other donations.

All three motions were seconded and carried.

- E. **Rector's Report** – Susan Pinkerton

Susan identified the three ongoing priorities for 2019: growth, communications, stewardship. Progress was made in all priority areas, with growth in new members, increased pledges, and new communication strategies, including expanded use of social media.

Susan was very pleased to welcome our curate, Margie Baker, and her family to St. John's this year. Special thanks were mentioned for Matt Ciscel and Annabel Clapp for their outstanding work on the search that led to Margie's hiring. Margie is bringing great excitement to a new Christian formation program for children and youth, and is a valuable member of the clergy in providing pastoral care and preaching. With Margie as a much-welcomed resource, Faith Forums are planned for every Sunday during the school year, which means we are offering educational opportunities for all ages each week.

We initiated a First Sunday Lunch program this year as part of our expanded ministry of hospitality. It has been very well attended and enjoyed.

We increased our use of social media this past year, both to reach parishioners and to advertise to the wider community. Susan recognized Ellen Painter Dollar's essential role in this effort.

The community garden was expanded to nine raised beds (from six), and free vegetables were offered weekly on the corner of Farmington Avenue and South Highland Street.

EfM (Education for Ministry) continues with our community of seekers learning how to bring the Gospel alive in their lives.

Susan noted that we offer a stipend opportunity for youth volunteers to serve as nursery workers during church services.

Susan highlighted new areas to explore in 2020 to see where the Spirit is calling us:

Global Missions – Our support to Haiti was suspended due to lack of transparency in finances. A task force will explore other opportunities for world outreach.

Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation – Building on a strong series of activities in 2019, we are exploring other opportunities to learn how to address systemic racism. In a related effort to build connections with our diverse community, St. John's hosted an interfaith panel with Joel Lohr representing Christianity, Rabbi Pincus representing Judaism, and Aida Mansoor representing Islam. Additional interfaith efforts are planned, starting this spring with lunch and a tour at St. John's, followed by tours of Congregation Beth Israel and the Berlin Mosque.

Susan gave many thanks for the contributions of so many to create the richness of this community. In particular, she recognized Nany Pedersen and Buffy Ineson for their efforts behind the scenes with the Altar Guild ministry. Nancy is moving out of the chair position after many years of service (even she could not remember how many!) and received an orchid in thanks. Buffy will be the incoming chair.

**F. Wardens' Report – Wesley Winterbottom & Virginia Van Dyk**

Outgoing Warden Wes Winterbottom described St. John's with three important words: Growing, welcoming, and accepting. He said St. John's has earned its reputation for accepting people of diverse backgrounds. New members report feeling welcomed when they came to St John's. Our statistics attest to our growth.

St John's has a wealth of talent in our clergy, and the staff is creative, frugal and a great team to work with. Wes went on to praise the many volunteers within the parish who lead the many ministries that make a difference in the lives of other people.

The process we went through to hire a curate was aggressively managed. With the limited supply of seminarians, we started early in the fall of 2018 looking for candidates. Matt Ciscel and Annabel Clapp did a great job and were instrumental in facilitating Margie's hiring.

The 2020 budget process included a two-day retreat at Camp Washington with the treasurers, wardens, rector and financial administrator, who ensured that the budget would allow us to hire a curate. Virginia Van Dyk mentioned that the budget process helped her get to know better the wonderful talent in the parish, and those who came before us and funded the endowment, which supports all we do. Virginia encouraged everyone to keep giving so we can continue funding and securing the good work that we do here.

**G. Stewardship Report – Eleanor Barnes & Stewart Murchie**

Eleanor Barnes spoke about the current stewardship process that is built on the stories of parish members. She recognized Dave McCary's excellent photography skills, which support the mailing of

attractive notecards with personal notes encouraging people to pledge. The current process has led to increases in both the total amount pledged and the number of pledging units. This is especially noteworthy because it has reversed the previous downward trend in both areas. Achieving increased pledging is important because it allows us to more effectively plan church operations and ministries.

Susan announced that Eleanor and Stewart were at the end of their three-year terms as stewardship chairs, and the new chairs will be Kim Byrd and Matt Ciscel. Susan also asked Stewardship Committee members who were present to stand to be recognized.

Before temporarily adjourning, Susan recognized outgoing vestry member Andrew Worrell for his three years of service.

*The meeting adjourned temporarily at 10:15 a.m. for the 10:30 service. It was called to order again at 12 noon.*

#### H. **Treasurers' Report** – Tim Goetz and John Roche

2019 was a very positive year financially. We exceeded the income plan and managed expenses below plan. John thanked the staff for being so frugal across the board to find savings in every area. In addition, Susan again refused a salary increase for 2019, helping to keep costs down. We made cutbacks to Global Missions, and there was a reduction in the diocesan contribution because of an accounting change for the way we handle long-term maintenance expenses; we are going back to a depreciation model. Included in the operation expense savings is the benefit of having the curate in the budget for the full year, but on board for only half a year. There was an initial error in budgeting for her benefits and housing, so the savings from the unfilled vacancy were offset by unplanned housing expenses. On the other side of the ledger, we had \$30,000 over planned pledge receipts, plus an unexpected gift. To make things even better, investment results were above average and above plan. The result was that we ended the year close to our goal of limiting the draw on the endowment to 5%. Stewart Murchie and Eleanor Barnes deserve thanks for increased pledges, allowing for easier budgeting and reversing the prior trend of declining pledge numbers.

For 2020, we will continue to plan for current staff and programs, as well as strengthen education. Compensation costs will increase because the curate will be employed all year, and for the first time in three years, staff will be given a pay increase. Susan has accepted her first pay increase since arriving at St. John's, which is long overdue in light of the double duty she has been serving in the absence of another full-time clergy person. Use of the depreciation model will continue allowing for a reduced diocesan contribution amount.

The net draw on the endowment planned for 2020 is 6.5%, against a target of 5%, which we know is not a sustainable number. But we make this plan with the expectation that strengthened education, ministries, and programming will help continue our growth trend, and we are willing to make this investment.

It costs about \$2,400/day to run our church. At 20% growth, that figure is \$2,600/day for 2020. Pledges and gifts support 70% of our building and operations costs. The average pledge is \$3,181 and the median pledge amount is about \$2,100. Stabilizing and increasing pledge income is vital to our planning efforts. The music program has also been instrumental in expanding our ministries and connections with the wider community.

In 2020, there will be significant capital expenditures to alleviate repeated basement flooding by installing an improved drainage system for an estimated \$100,000. While insurance covers repairs related to water damage (new paint, flooring, etc.), it does not cover fixing the problem that causes water damage.

Tim Goetz concluded the budget discussion by noting that 2019 had challenges, and that the staff and vestry did a great job steering us successfully through those challenges.

I. **Appreciations** – Susan Pinkerton

Susan thanked the following people for their dedication to the parish:

- Tim Goetz and John Roche for an outstanding job as co-treasurers
- Chris Byrd for heading the Investment Committee
- Jeff Verney as head of the lay readers
- Laura Roche as head of the ushers
- Dave Grimaldi and Karen Licht as co-chairs of the Planned Giving Committee
- Karen Licht, Iakovos Katsipis and Carla Abdo-Katsipis for running the 2019 Christmas Festival
- Danielle Foint for her leadership of the Community Garden this past year

J. **Curate's Report** – Margie Baker

Margie shared her enthusiasm for the education program as a warm and welcoming place for children and youth, from the nursery through high school. There are currently 20 kids who attend Sunday School on choir days, while non-choir days average 14 kids. The Children's Chapel program during the 10:30 service averages 10 to 12 participants most Sundays.

Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) for 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders meets every Sunday (except Superbowl Sunday!) for activities that are "90% fun and 10% Jesus." Attendance varies from three to 13 participants. The message is that we are always here for them when they can come. EYC includes service projects, games, and fellowship. The recent Christmas Pageant engaged children of all ages, and we had 40 participants. Moving ahead, we are looking forward to the 8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation Class.

In June 2021, the high school youth will go on a pilgrimage to Camus on the island of Mull in Scotland. On the island there will be no wi-fi, no electricity, no cell phones, and maybe very little hot water. Mull is a "thin place" where the separation between heaven and earth is scant, which makes it a good space to learn about God, self and each other.

K. **Music Report** – Scott Lamlein

Scott started his remarks noting that the organ died in the middle of the service today, and that the kids responded beautifully to moving down from the choir rows to the piano in the nave.

Music is a vehicle of our faith and permeates all activities at St. John's. A large percentage of the church is involved in the music program at St. John's, either by singing, being a parent of singer, or supporting music programming and events through volunteering and financial support.

Highlights of the year included:

- A group of adult and youth choir members traveled to sing at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, with a stop at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City on the way home.
- We held our first Music at the Red Door Kids' Community Music Camp in June, run by Calida Jones. The camp provides a variety of musical experiences for children, especially those from the neighboring West End of Hartford, who often have little access to ongoing, high-quality music education.

Douglas Hyland, who spearheaded the effort to incorporate Music at the Red Door as a nonprofit organization run by St. John's, has stepped down as board chair, and Scott expressed gratitude for Douglas's many contributions.

As there was no New Business, the meeting concluded with attendees saying the Lord's Prayer together. Susan reminded new vestry members and wardens of their orientation meeting in the Reception Room immediately following the Annual Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Ware

## Rector's Report

The position of rector is vacant as of January 1, 2021, as we conduct a search for a new priest in charge. The following is a summary of the Reverend Susan Pinkerton's rector's reports to the vestry in 2020.

- The First Sunday Lunch program started off with enthusiastic participation in the first months of 2020, after which it was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Susan was in regular conversation in early 2020 with Joel Lohr of Hartford Seminary, Rabbi Michael Pincus of Congregation Beth Israel, and Aida Mansoor of Hartford Seminary and the Berlin Mosque regarding interfaith initiatives, including an interfaith panel presentation at a Sunday morning Faith Forum, and an interfaith tour scheduled for March 15, which was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- With the move to online services and the closing of the church building in mid-March due to the pandemic, pastoral care became especially important. Throughout the year, Susan and Margie reached out regularly to parishioners, particularly older and homebound members, as did the vestry. By the end of 2020, the Healing Prayers Ministry started a program called Caring Callers, with 13 volunteers who regularly call parishioners to check in.
- The bishops started holding a weekly Zoom meeting in March for clergy and wardens to get updates about the pandemic response and brainstorm together. Susan, Margie, and the wardens attended these meetings regularly throughout the year.
- Susan held up the hard work that the staff did throughout the year to continue providing worship, education, music, fellowship, financial management, parish administration, building and grounds maintenance, and pastoral care during the pandemic, including the technical expertise that Scott Lamlein brought to expanding and fine-tuning our livestreaming capability.
- Susan met regularly with the stewardship chairs and Stewardship Committee, starting in the spring, to support them in leading another successful annual pledge campaign.
- A Re-Entry Task Force was formed in May to plan and oversee safety measures for a partial return to in-person services for part of the year (outdoor Sunday services from late July through early November, and a short period of indoor 8 a.m. Sunday services in early fall). One result was the formation of a new Vergers Guild under the leadership of Steve Crocker.
- The Rector's Discretionary Fund was made available to help parishioners and community members facing financial hardship due to the pandemic. Several parishioners made generous donations to the fund to help in this effort.
- The Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation Committee gained several new members and, in cooperation with St. James's, began a series of lay-led virtual discussion groups using the Sacred Ground curriculum of the national Episcopal Church.
- In August and September, thanks to the leadership of Dwight Latif and the House Committee, we completed much-needed improvements to our drainage system to prevent regular basement flooding.
- We enlisted the help of four volunteer "Garden Captains" (Jenn Baker, Carol Davis-Fiske, Danielle Foint, Janis Milroy) to manage the community garden and oversee garden volunteers. We were able to give away vegetables to neighbors in need throughout the summer and early fall, which was especially important during this time of increased food insecurity.

## Wardens' Report

It is a strange thing, indeed, to have an Annual Meeting....

How did you think we would continue that sentence? ...on Zoom? ...without a potluck lunch? ...without a rector???

Any of those would work! 2020 was a year of strange things and incredible challenges, affecting all aspects of our life as a faith community. Yet thanks to our dedicated clergy, staff and parishioners, we rose to meet those challenges.

One long year ago, our rector Susan Pinkerton led us as we celebrated our first Annual Meeting with Margie; our new First Sunday Lunch program; our Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation Ministry; our interfaith programs; the third anniversary of our Celtic Contemplative Service; the three additional beds in our Community Garden; and so much more. We had much to celebrate. Yet by mid-March, the church was closed and the vestry was meeting on a conference call. This pandemic has turned everything upside-down, leaving no one untouched by fear, loss, and grief.

Yet, we were not conquered. We called upon our faith, and each other, and we adapted. We were so fortunate to have already-established technology that allowed us to carry on livestreamed services, prayer groups, and musical events. We learned to Zoom. We held some wonderful outdoor services while the weather allowed, and some deeply moving 8 a.m. Sunday indoor services, until we entered a more restricted phase once again. Nothing looks exactly the same right now, but we are still standing. Not only have we adapted much of our work, we have even initiated new things! Daily online Noonday Prayer, Zoom Bible study, Sacred Ground, a Caring Caller ministry, and more.

We speak often of our unparalleled team, without whom none of this would have been possible: Margie Baker, newly promoted from curate to assistant rector; Ellen Dollar, parish manager; Scott Lamlein, music director; Peggy O'Toole, financial administrator; and Dwight Latif, sexton. This year, more than ever, they have helped to keep St. John's not just surviving, but thriving in many ways.

We also owe a great deal of thanks to our deep bench of talented lay leaders, who guide our community in many important ways. Although no one can stand up for recognition this year, please look at the back of your Annual Report to see the names of your vestry members, including our treasurers, Tim Goetz and John Roche, who leapt into action when our finances were tenuous early in the pandemic, and together with Peggy, successfully applied for our first government loan.

Please also have a look at the Annual Report table of contents to see how many parishioners are involved in ministries at St. John's. Please read through their individual reports, both to learn about what is happening at St. John's and to consider how you might get more deeply involved. At the bottom of each report, you will see a list of the members involved. Ask any one of them about what they are doing and how it brings meaning to their lives. There is no telling when we will be safely together again, but please think about how you can get more involved with our ministries, get involved for the first time, or create a new one!

As the Annual Meeting is a time to reflect, it seems appropriate to celebrate Susan Pinkerton. As Susan said last year, "No matter your position on political, environmental and social justice issues, we all need a safe place where we can gather and call it home – our spiritual home." She helped to make St. John's just such a place, even in the midst of tremendous upheaval. Most important, her light leadership touch led us fearlessly to a place where we could survive without her.

We are closing the books on a tumultuous year, shaking our heads about all we have endured, but looking with optimism and excitement toward our next chapter. Next year, God willing, we will hold this meeting again in Hubbard Hall, led by our new priest in charge. Please let us know if we can do anything to help you, and please keep all of us in your prayers as we navigate this transition together.

Geoff Emerick and Virginia Van Dyk  
Wardens

## **Assistant Rector's Report**

As with all things 2020, this report must be broken into two parts: pre-pandemic and pandemic.

Before the lockdown in mid-March, Sunday School for children of all ages happened every Sunday. Our youngest members (three to six years old) learned the stories of our faith using the Beulah Land curriculum and Godly Play stories. Elementary, middle, and high school students followed a lectionary-based curriculum where they explored the Gospel reading for the week. Confirmation class for those in grades 8 and above began February 23 and took place in the high school class. We regularly had 10 to 12 students in the class. In January, February, and early March, our average attendance was above 20 participants across all levels. High school nursery workers cared for our youngest members from 9 a.m. to noon every Sunday.

In addition to Sunday School, we also offered weekly Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) for middle and high schoolers. In the first two-and-a-half months of the year, we made meals and sandwiches for Loaves and Fishes, planned youth worship and Shrove Tuesday, played games, and participated in WeHa Youth Group, a collaboration among St. John's, First Church in West Hartford Center, and Westminster Presbyterian. In January, we had just begun a new initiative to hold youth-led worship on the third Sunday of the month. This was a chance for the youth of St. John's to reflect on what worship means and build something meaningful as a gift to the wider congregation. The brief service began at 5:30 p.m. and was followed by a potluck.

Pre-pandemic worship also included our children and youth in important roles. In addition to leading worship as choristers and acolytes, children in the pews were invited to bring up nonperishable food donations during the offertory, a sometimes noisy but always joyful way to take part in worship. This increased the amount of food we are able to give to Grace Seventh Day Adventist Church Food Pantry. During the sermon, Nicene Creed, and Prayers of the People, children were invited to go to the education wing for Children's Chapel, where they sang, prayed, and heard an age-appropriate message on the week's readings. We had a growing number of volunteer Children's Chapel leaders. Something new we tried in 2020 was merging the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper with an Ash Wednesday-eve service for children and families. Around 60 people attended the dinner, and 40 people, of all ages and stages, stayed for the imposition of ashes.

And then came the initial pandemic lockdown in mid-March, and everything needed to change quickly. Worship became livestream-only: no acolytes, no choristers, no food offering. Confirmation class continued through Lent in Zoom. After Easter, we began offering Zoom Sunday School for children through middle school. We tried hosting EYC on Zoom a few times, without much success.

In the spring, we continued to creatively make space for worship, fellowship, and formation. We added new things: Friday evening virtual Happy Hour for all ages, which lasted for a few months; Tuesday Family Happy Hour, which is still going strong; and parish pen pals, where we sent addressed, stamped envelopes and note cards to homebound members so that they could write a note to children and youth of the parish. We began offering YouTube Children's Chapel videos each week with music, prayer, and an age-appropriate lesson, which are viewed not only by St. John's families, but also by others around the diocese. In lieu of an in-person

Good Friday children's liturgy, Robert Eikel led the children of our parish through a virtual Good Friday lesson.

From July through early November, we added a 5 p.m. outdoor service, which drew new and returning members. The service routinely had 40 or more people in attendance. In the fall, we added games and activities for children after some of those 5 p.m. services, and offered family movie nights on the lawn in September and October. This was successful within the parish, and also built bridges with our neighbors. We plan to expand the family movie nights for summer 2021, hosting them once a month May to September, and putting up signs the week before to alert passers-by. Another new experiment this summer was Vacation Bible School at home, around the theme of creation. Families had everything they needed for five lessons on the beauty and wonder of creation. Churches around the diocese and around the country used our materials. We hope to offer an in-person, outdoor VBS this summer, the week of June 21-25. Please mark your calendars, tell your friends, and consider volunteering as an adult volunteer, youth volunteer, or snack angel.

This fall, with the help of Sunday School teachers, we continued Zoom Sunday School for kids from kindergarten through middle school. This fall we learned about saints, using a free curriculum from Forward Movement. We added saints of color to the curriculum and found ways to stress God's love of diversity as seen in creation and in the variety of gifts of the saints. Families gathered in the rain on All Saints Day to have a parade of saints on the parish grounds. Children researched a saint and then showed up in costume. In October and November, we tried on the idea of an anti-racism parenting group. The attendance was low, but the conversations were deep. EYC began meeting in November to make sandwiches for Loaves and Fishes, pack blessing bags and Advent in a Bag, and write notes to homebound members.

For Advent, we prepared and gave out Advent in a Bag, with four weeks of worship, reflection, and activities to prepare for Christmas at home. This was a fun way to involve members in getting supplies, packing the bags, and celebrating the season together.

Another important Advent tradition that we adapted was the Christmas pageant. With the help of 11 parish families along with Scott Lamlein, cantors Britt and Cate Emerick, signer Paul Shaker, and costume designer Buffy Ineson, we were able to create a beautiful, hopeful, and poignant virtual Christmas pageant.

Looking ahead, the pandemic still affects us. There will be no pilgrimage to Scotland this summer, as travel is still risky. Sunday School will be in Zoom for the rest of the school year. Beginning in January, we narrowed the age for Sunday School to K-5, and now offer a Sunday afternoon youth Bible study for middle and high schoolers, led by Robert Eikel. The plan is to continue youth Bible study in Zoom through February, and then move outside in March and April as we tackle *Dismantling Racism*, a curriculum from the Diocese of Atlanta and the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing. We will have a fire pit, and youths will bring their own chairs and blankets. Many thanks to Colin Gillespie, Kara Hart, and Buffy Ineson for their dedication to this program.

By this fall, we hope to be back to in-person Sunday School, in-person worship with acolytes and choir, and a nursery staffed by our fantastic high schoolers. We are waiting to hear when we will have a bishop visit, and once we know that date, those who completed confirmation class will be able to be confirmed. Depending on demand, we might also offer another confirmation class next year.

Because of the pandemic and Susan's retirement, the scope of my ministry at St. John's has widened beyond children, youth, and families. Early in the pandemic, I began teaching a Monday night Bible study, where attendance has grown over the past 10 months. We have touched on Psalms, the books of Jonah, Ruth, and Job, the beginnings of the gospels, and now we are in the midst of learning more about women in Hebrew Scripture. Please consider dropping in—you are very welcome!

We have also been offering Zoom Noonday Prayer Monday to Friday since the beginning of the pandemic. Noonday Prayer is part of the daily office in the *Book of Common Prayer*. This short service includes Scripture and prayers, and lasts about 10 minutes. Please consider dropping by.

Many thanks to Wes Winterbottom and Sarah Kieffer for reimagining how the Healing Prayers Ministry can continue to care for parishioners during the pandemic, when they're unable to pray with people in person. They have begun a Caring Callers ministry, with 13 volunteers reaching out to members of the parish. If you would appreciate a call, please let me or Ellen know.

I want to end with deep gratitude for the members of this parish, new and old, who give of their time, talents, and treasure to support the children and youth of this parish, but also one another and the greater community. Special thanks to our pandemic Sunday School teachers Akilah Williams, Kate and Robert Eikel, and Leah Lorenzo; to our EYC volunteers Angela Peck, Matt Ciscel, Ginny Kemp, Geoff Emerick, and Steve Chambers; and to our *Dismantling Racism* team, Colin Gillespie, Kara Hart, and Buffy Ineson.

Please consider if God is calling you to work with our children and youth in the coming year. In normal times, Sunday School teachers alternate weeks, bringing God's love and the stories of our faith to the children and youth of St. John's. Children's Chapel leaders make an inviting and prayerful place for responding to the Gospel; musical talent is not required. EYC volunteers and dinner angels help the youth of our parish feel connected and loved. The pageant was a success because of the many adult and youth volunteers who made light work of a large task.

Sunday School teacher recruitment for 2021–2022 begins in March, and we are always seeking EYC advisors and Children's Chapel leaders. Please prayerfully consider whether God might be calling you to support our youngest members through one of these ministries.

Margie Baker, Assistant Rector

## Stewardship

The 2021 stewardship campaign this past summer and fall yielded commitments of \$452,786 as of January 20, which is down less than half a percent from last year's campaign result. Given the considerable challenges faced by many members of our congregation and our community as a whole this year, this level of pledging highlights the strength and resilience of our parish, our mission, and our shared faith. It also reflects the hard work of a vibrant Stewardship Committee and dedicated church staff, and the generosity and commitment of our parishioners. Despite the challenges we have faced, this campaign result allows us to continue our important work and strengthen the parish in the year ahead.

The total number of pledging households is down to 133 from 143 in 2020, but the average pledge increased to \$3,404 from \$3,181 in 2020 (a 7% increase). Of 114 carry-over pledges from 2020, 97 maintained or increased their previous pledge. There were also 19 new pledging households who together pledged nearly \$26,000. Below is a graph showing the five-year trends in number of pledging households and total pledges given.

In 2021, as our society emerges gradually from the pandemic and we are able to gather in our parish building again, the Stewardship Committee will meet again to continue helping the parish grow and move forward from the challenges that we have faced.

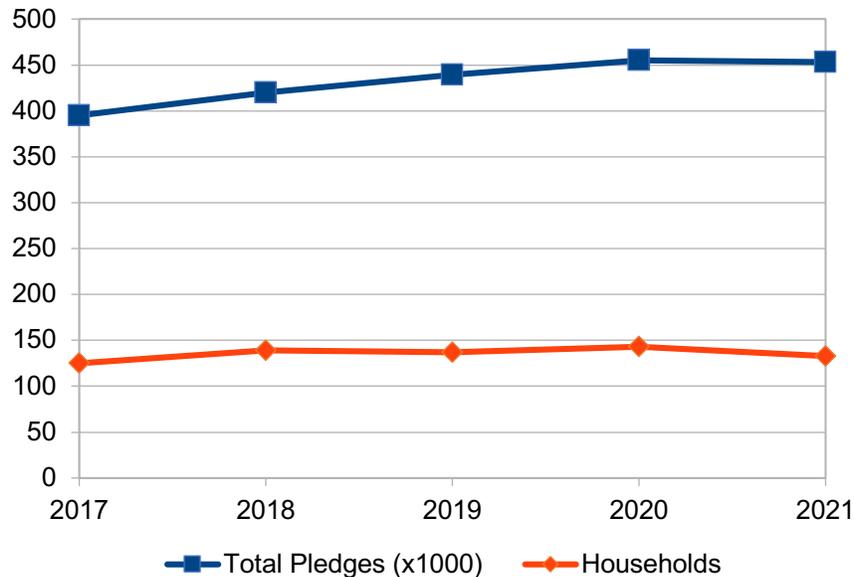
Thank you for giving generously to St. John's Church!

Faithfully submitted,

Kim Byrd and Matt Ciscel, on behalf of your Stewardship Committee

*June Aziz, Janet Babbitt, Eleanor Barnes, Susan Clemow, David McCary, Stewart Murchie, John Wilcox*

**Pledge Trend 2017-2021**



## **Investment Committee**

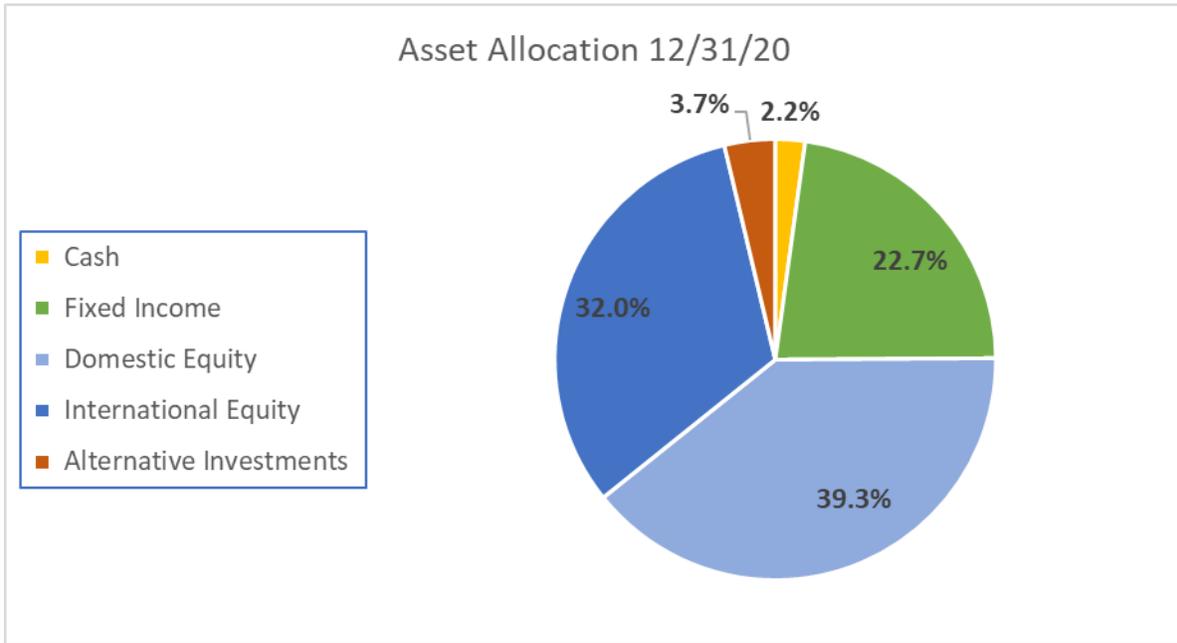
### **Overview**

2020 was a tumultuous year for financial markets. Following steep declines in March and April, the markets, and St. John's endowment, recovered strongly. Our diversified asset allocation strategy and the steady leadership of our new outside advisors helped us weather the storm well. Nonetheless, the swift and significant gyrations of 2020 should serve as a cautionary tale that what goes up can and will go down from time to time. Further, though the endowment has grown in nominal terms, its inflation-adjusted balance has in fact declined over time. Continued spending above our policy has put increased pressure on a vital source of support for the parish's mission.

### **Investment Strategy and Asset Allocation**

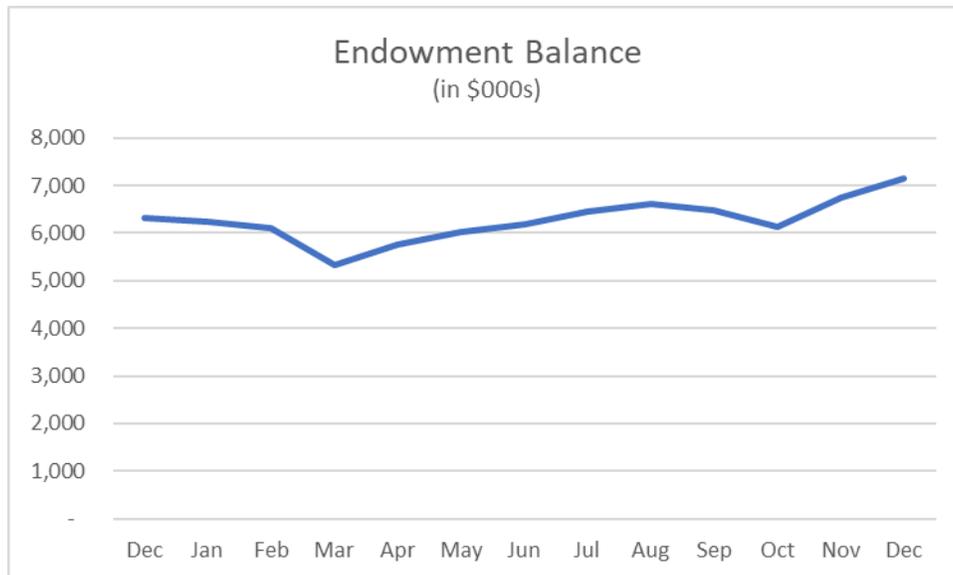
The vestry delegates to the Investment Committee the oversight of our investment advisor, DeMeo, Schneider & Associates. The objectives of the endowment are expected to be achieved through an investment strategy that employs a diversified portfolio, which may include, but is not limited to, large-cap, mid-cap, and small-cap U.S. equities; international equities (both developed and emerging market); bonds; alternative investments (e.g., real assets, commodities); and cash.

At year end, the endowment was well diversified, within the guidelines adopted by the vestry:



### Endowment Performance

During 2020, the value of the endowment increased from \$6.3 million to \$7.2 million. The months in between were a roller coaster ride, as the pandemic roiled financial markets worldwide. The St. John’s endowment lost 15% of its value in the first quarter, before the markets began their strong recovery:



As of March 1, the management of the endowment funds transitioned from State Street to DeMeo Schneider. Consequently, the endowment’s performance is reported here from that date. From 3/1 to 12/31, the endowment returned 21.7%, which was better than the market benchmark of 21.4%. This continues our experience of outperformance, which stretches back over 10 years under State Street’s management. When all the dust settled from a choppy 2020, market returns were significantly higher than normal and not an indication of future long-term returns.

### Evaluating the Endowment Against Its Objectives

The objectives of the endowment, as adopted by the vestry and codified in our Investment Policy Statement, are as follows:

- To protect and preserve the assets and to provide current income and long-term capital appreciation to support the ministries of St. John's Episcopal Church.

*The endowment has grown over time, weathered multiple market storms, and continues to be a critical source of funds to support the operations and mission of the parish.*

- To preserve the real (inflation-adjusted) purchasing power of the endowment.

*While the endowment has grown, it has not maintained its purchasing power over the past 20 years. At year-end 2000, the endowment's balance was \$6.1 million. In inflation-adjusted (2000) dollars, the year-end 2020 balance was \$4.75 million, an inflation-adjusted decrease of 22%. Consistent spending from the endowment above our policy (5% of the three-year average endowment balance) has been the cause of this decline.*

- To achieve the highest possible return consistent with a prudent regard for legal considerations, fiduciary responsibility, and safety of capital.

*The endowment's investment portfolio returns have been above benchmark over the long term. The endowment has weathered significant financial market downturns (in 2000, 2008-09, and 2020) and recovered well.*

- To follow a total return policy that will allow for a reasonable (and annually determined) payout as well as growth of capital, after inflation.

*While total returns on the endowment portfolio have enabled payouts to support the mission of the parish, those payouts have consistently exceeded our policy, which is on the aggressive end of nationwide endowment best practices. As a result, the endowment's value has declined after inflation.*

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In 2020 we made an important change in the management of the portfolio by engaging DeMeo Schneider to replace State Street. While a fair evaluation of our new advisor's performance must wait a bit, our first 10 months' experience has been very positive. In addition to good portfolio returns, DeMeo Schneider has been responsive and proactive, and their governance process is comprehensive and disciplined.

Our long-term trends are a warning sign. The endowment has not held its inflation-adjusted value over the long term, even after an unusually strong 2020, due to spending above our policy.

After three years, I am passing the mantle of committee chair to David Grimaldi. David is an active, faithful, and spiritual member of our parish family who brings strong leadership and experience to the role. His contributions to the committee's deliberations, and his wise counsel to me as chair, have been invaluable. I could not be more gratified that he has agreed to serve. The committee, and our endowment, are in good hands.

St. John's is unusually fortunate to have strong depth in a committee of knowledgeable, experienced, wise, and committed members. They are listed below. It has been an honor to lead this group.

Faithfully submitted,

Chris Byrd, Chair

*Committee Members: Stephan Christiansen, Tim Goetz, David Grimaldi, Stewart Murchie, Hal Rives, John Roche, Alex Vance*

## **Treasurers' Report on 2020 Financial Results and 2021 Budget**

We would like to thank all parishioners who supported St. John's throughout 2020. When we first closed the building in March, donations, pledge payments and gifts slowed dramatically. We as treasurers were concerned and reached out for your support. Your response was overwhelming and allowed us to continue as a parish without making any drastic financial changes. Thank you very much!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our former rector Susan Pinkerton. There are many things that can be said about Susan's leadership at St. John's, but from a strictly budgetary perspective, Susan made fiscal responsibility a priority. Susan led by example; her sacrifices set the tone for everyone else around her, and not only did we find more ways to save money during her tenure, but we also grew as a parish.

Your continued support and our reduced spending resulted in favorable financial results for 2020. Our contributions and gifts increased and exceeded budget, while operating expenses came in below budget. Pledge receipts and other sources of income for the parish were \$35,833 over budget. This increase is largely due to your generosity, and a greater percentage of our pledges being fulfilled compared to prior years.

With the building closed, and reductions in most variable costs, total expenses were down \$58,229.18 from the prior year and were \$72,356.20 less than we budgeted.

The financial strength of 2020 allowed us to finally move forward with a long overdue, necessary but expensive drainage project in the Cloister Garden, to end the damage caused by regular flooding in the basement.

### **St. John's Church OPERATING FUND RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS For the year ended Decemeber 31, 2020**

	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
Income			
Pledge Receipts	\$415,000	\$440,507	\$415,000
Other Income	\$98,000	\$132,326	\$199,822
Parking lot rental	\$48,000	\$24,000	\$12,000
Total Income	\$561,000	\$596,833	\$626,822
Operating Expenses			
Compensation Clergy	\$262,755	\$264,299	\$273,699
Compensation Lay	\$286,924	\$269,677	\$277,854
Plant Operations	\$203,695	\$178,377	\$202,596
Administrative Expenses	\$56,647	\$47,918	\$40,183
Parish Programs	\$38,800	\$17,612	\$17,900
Total Operating Expenses	\$848,822	\$777,883	\$812,232
Operating Surplus/ (Shortfall)	-\$287,822	-\$181,050	-\$185,410
Ministry Outside the Parish			
Outreach	\$35,500	\$26,000	\$31,100
Diocesan and Consortium	\$74,294	\$80,292	\$85,329
Total Ministry Outside the Parish	\$109,794	\$106,292	\$116,429
Total Expense	\$958,615	\$884,175	\$928,661
Net Income (Loss)	-\$397,615	-\$287,342	-\$301,839
Budget Shortfall as a % of Rolling 3 Year Avg Endow	6.5%	4.7%	4.7%

#### **Receipts**

Our total receipts for 2020 were 6% above budget, but 1.9% below 2019 receipts. Pledge income received in 2020 was \$440,507, almost 97% of the original pledges of \$455,000. This exceeds our historic yield of less than 95%. Other Income, including fundraising, parking rental and room rentals, was down, but offset by some generous individual gifts, and an increase in trust income.

In addition to the support of our parishioners, St. Johns applied for and received a PPP loan in the amount of \$109,000, which should be fully forgivable based on the loan guidelines. This loan allowed us to keep both our full-time and supplemental staff employed at substantially the same levels as before, and assured our valued employees that St. John's would be their work home, even when things looked uncertain for us financially.

### **Expenses**

The uncertainty of 2020 required us to be even more disciplined in our expense control, reducing operating expenses in almost every category. The staff was extremely diligent again, reducing costs in almost every controllable area. Unfortunately, some of our largest expense reductions were due to the building closure and reductions in a wide variety of activities and parish programs.

Total expenses for 2020 were \$72,356.20 below budget. The majority of this came from the building closure and limitations on outreach and parish programs for three-quarters of the year. These areas all saw roughly a 30% decrease in expenses.

In addition to the reduced expenses, we were able to defer many of our personnel and plant operation expenses to later in the year. This, along with the overwhelming response of the parish to our call for pledge prepayments, allowed our funds to grow in the endowment before withdrawing them for use.

### **Net Shortfall and Endowment Draw**

Our net budget shortfall was \$289,425.47 as compared with the \$397,615 budgeted, which resulted in a budget deficit of 4.7% of the three-year average endowment value. This represents the third consecutive year we have been within our endowment draw guidelines, but unfortunately, this year it was not necessarily for the right reasons.<sup>1</sup>

### **Summary**

The 2020 budget was a commitment to continue investing in the future of St. John's. The impact of the pandemic clearly changed the vision and look of that growth. However, what it did not do is impact St. John's financial strength. Our committed staff, supportive parishioners, a PPP loan, and good returns for our endowment led to a strong year financially. There is still work to do, but we are well-positioned financially to do that work and see that growth.

## **2021 Budget**

### **Overview**

The 2021 budget continues to support our growth initiative. We continue our investments in staff and programs that support expansion and ministries as we look to re-engage the parish community. It is more important now than ever that we be well-positioned to financially support our traditional and NEW methods of engagement and outreach. The success of our online services and various other online offerings, the amount of virtual attendance, pledges, and the success of both the music program and programs for children and youth during this pandemic prove that we are continuing to move in the right direction. With greater confidence than ever, the vestry reaffirmed this with the 2021 budget.

### **Receipts**

We have budgeted to keep our pledge receipts even at \$415,000. We appreciate your continued support during this difficult time, and we continue to take a conservative approach toward one-time gifts. We have budgeted a reduction in third-party rentals and fundraising income, as we anticipate the building closure impacting these line items for at least the first half of 2021.

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<sup>1</sup>2020 4.7%  
2019 5.1%  
2018 4.4%

We expect the PPP loan to be forgiven in 2021, which will add a one-time infusion of \$109,000 to our income for 2021. This program worked as designed by keeping our employees mostly fully employed, and it allows us to limit our dependence on the endowment for 2021, but it is a one-time source of revenue. It will also increase our diocesan contribution for 2022.

### **Expenditures**

Total operating expenditures (within the walls of the church) for 2021 are budgeted to decrease by \$33,349 over the 2020 budget yet increase by \$34,349 over the actual expense from 2020. This is related almost entirely to the building remaining closed, and most parish life and outreach ministries being limited for the first part of 2021.

### **Net Shortfall and Endowment Draw**

The 2021 budget has projected a net shortfall of \$301,839 which is \$10,690 less than the 2020 actual shortfall. Without the expected \$109,000 PPP loan forgiveness, we would have budgeted a 6.5% endowment draw. The additional \$109,000 in one time revenue allows us to budget a 2021 endowment draw of 4.7%, which is below our 5% target.

### **Summary**

The last few years have positioned St. John's well. Your continued support, increased pledges, and a culture of responsible spending by our staff have provided us with opportunities to grow both our parish and our mission. The 2021 budget reflects these opportunities. The vestry has recommended we continue to invest further in our future and the mission Christ has given to all of us.

### **Music at the Red Door**

The Music at the Red Door program continued to show financial stability even during this difficult year. Income of \$53,021 was generated during 2020, which was only 17% below the budgeted amount of \$64,000. This decrease was more than offset by 2020 expenses of \$37,561, which was 35% below the budgeted amount of \$58,000. The 2021 budget predicts \$58,000 in income and \$54,068 in expenses, for a projected net gain of \$3,932.

Faithfully submitted.

John Roche & Tim Goetz, Treasurers

## **Music Director's Report**

Each year begins with new hope. Who could have guessed what 2020 would bring? It all started out normal, and then by mid-March our world had turned upside down and changed into something we could not have imagined. The words "new normal" get thrown around constantly, yet we are unsure what that will look like in the short- and long-term. St. John's has been a portrait of resiliency, strength, and inspiration during these many months, and I am prouder than ever to serve as your director of music.

During the first two-and-a-half months of 2020, we were on a strong path of growth. Two major concerts happened, including a wonderful concert by the organist of St. Paul's, London, Simon Johnson, and our choir's first concert of jazz, shared with Nat Reeves and friends. Evensong services were sung by the choirs of Trinity Church, Hartford, and by the Voices of Concinnity, and three Pipes Alive! recitals brought different audiences. Our nave was alive with music and worship! I began an earlier-than-usual process of planning for September and the *next* program year (2020–2021), as I was set to be away on sabbatical from early May through early August. By March 15<sup>th</sup>, I had completed a full season plan for Music at the Red Door (including a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* by our choir and orchestra scheduled for March 2021) and researched and selected all 100

choral anthems for the upcoming season, including Lessons & Carols. Because of a new inspiration among many of my Anglican church musician colleagues, my choral music plan included many more anthems written by female composers – almost half.

On Ash Wednesday, between greeting visitors at Ashes to Go in the narthex, Susan and I were talking about the increasing coronavirus threat, and she said, “I think our livestream might end up being how we do church soon.” I laughed at first, then saw that she was serious, and then said, “I don’t think it will come to that, but it’s good that we have it just in case.” A very brief two weeks later, that is exactly what it came to.

We were lucky, blessed, and ahead of the game when it all happened, as we had been livestreaming our services since early 2018. The system was not perfect (remember the service with the flickering people??), but enabled us to shift into online-only worship and concerts on a Saturday and be up and running on that same Sunday—all while I was North Carolina visiting our son and his family! Quickly, we adapted and began providing online opportunities for a parish of people in shock—Margie started the Noonday Prayer service on Zoom (Do you remember not knowing what Zoom is?) and I began a series of Wednesday online recitals that very week.

We tried different versions of Eucharist-without-Eucharist and Morning Prayer at the 10:30 service, for a while with a cantor. Then, when a scary study said that singing was a “super spreader,” we stopped having sung music altogether. The organ supplied an opportunity to encourage at-home singing, and I was gratified to hear that many people did that very thing during Sunday services. Eventually, in September, we were able to safely add a cantor back to lead the singing. During the summer and fall, we were able to gather outside for services, and a rota of musicians added beauty and grace to those services.

That same scary study made it clear that our choirs would be hit hardest and longest by the pandemic. Not being able to gather in person was bad enough, but on top of that, even the technology would fail us: Due to the internet lag inherent in Zoom meetings (or any other platform), having a group of singers sing together with their sound happening at the same time is impossible—laughable, even, if it wasn’t so upsetting. Both choirs continue to gather on Zoom anyway, with a very modified, not-ideal rehearsal method. Everybody must mute themselves and sing along with my one-sided leadership. They hear me, but not each other, and I don’t hear them either. So, it is an exercise in trust and self-evaluation. We finish a section of music, and I ask, “How did you do?” They respond by holding up their rating of one to five fingers. Or, especially with the youth, I’ll occasionally work with an individual unmuted, as an example for the rest.

To sing a Sunday anthem (or seven in one shot, as they did for Lessons and Carols), the singers must make an individual video of themselves singing the piece while watching and listening to me in a master recording video. They send those videos to me, and I spend many hours in my basement lining them up with each other, adjusting volume, adding reverb and audio adjustments, and finally cropping the videos into the now-familiar squares. It’s a lot of work for everyone and requires a great deal of individual practice and bravery. Before, singers came to choir knowing they would be in a room full of other singers, and that synergy would help everyone learn quickly and never feel alone. Now, everything is alone and there is almost no help. It has not been for everyone, and about a third of the Adult Choir does not participate in virtual anthems. The important “church within a church” community aspect of the choir is very much missing, and connecting in Zoom is a pale replacement. The Youth Choir, however, has been resilient, connected, dedicated, and almost 100% engaged throughout the pandemic, including meeting for 15-minute individual musicianship coaching with me each week. They are a bright light in my life during these challenging times.

One of the biggest issues to wrestle with at the outset of the pandemic was our choral scholars—professional singers who form the backbone of our choral program. Many of my colleagues were forced to simply lay off

their staff singers right away. We were worried about income at St. John's for several weeks in the spring, but once an ask went out, the donations started coming in, including many of you paying off your pledges early. Your generosity enabled us to pay our singers in full for their expected appearances in March, April, and May, and to pay their normal rate but for a reduced workload in the fall (Zoom rehearsals, cantoring for Sundays, and recorded anthems). Of the five staff singers, the two who are musicians "on the side" opted out of payment completely, allowing us significant savings. The remaining three singers make their living from various musical endeavors, and I am grateful that we can continue supporting them. They continue to add so much to our program.

In response to the death of George Floyd in June and the ensuing resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, a call went up among church musicians to look at our repertoire and continue the work of diversifying the composers represented. Since then, a regular part of my work has been research of organ and choral music written by people of color for inclusion in our services with more regularity, similar to the work I put into researching female composers. It has been enlightening and fun, and a bio and photo have been included in the bulletin each week highlighting some of the people who create the music presented.

Amid the musical things, constant time was devoted to the livestream technical side. Going from livestreaming "on the side" to it being our primary mode of worship meant significant change. We had software issues early on (Holy Week was particularly difficult, with Maundy Thursday services stalling several times), which necessitated moving the computer from the vesting room to the organ console. For a period of months, I was playing the organ and running the stream simultaneously, which meant holding the final chord of a hymn while fumbling for the mouse to remove the text from the shot. Francis Lamlein and I organized a "stream team" and since then either he, Ray Giolitto, or Ted Babbitt have attended every service or concert and run the stream, allowing us to add different angles and shots to the production. We have stretched the usage of what is really a security camera to its limit, and thankfully a grant to Music at the Red Door will allow us to upgrade the system soon. We'll be very prepared to continue streaming when we return to in-person worship, as we have built a congregation of folks from far away. Our YouTube subscribers recently surpassed 700!

I'm grateful to Ted Babbitt, our organ scholar, who recorded most of the organ accompaniments for the choir this year. He and I both put together home virtual organs earlier in the year, primarily as practice instruments. Who knew they'd be used for virtual services? I'm also grateful to our artist-in-residence, Christa Rakich; whether she's been teaching at Oberlin or home, she has regularly sent recordings of her amazing playing for us to use in services or concerts. I have a file of her inspiring voluntaries that will help lighten that side of my workload well into Lent. And Ray Giolitto has continued to be an amazing assistant—working up the service music listings and YouTube entries week in and week out.

Music at the Red Door has continued to shine throughout all of this, as we have shifted concerts to our online platform along with our worship services. While other arts organizations have suffered greatly, our series has continued to operate because we have never relied heavily on ticket sales for our operating income. We postponed our annual fund drive to early September, and, while a bit lower than last year, the amount and number of contributions were still excellent. Along with reducing expenses (due to things like cancelling that previously mentioned Mozart concert), we can continue presenting concerts online and investing heavily in publicity. The first weekend in March will feature two concerts celebrating 25 years of our amazing Austin organ—look out for those and tell your friends, even and especially those who live far away!

Perhaps the hardest program to cancel in 2020 was the Kids' Community Music Camp. Calida Jones, our camp director and urban music expert, continues to work with us, and we are planning to move forward with camp in August 2021, and expand to a second camp during the December holiday break from school. Just because

the pandemic happened does not mean the need evaporated, and we have not lost sight of this important ministry to children in the West End of Hartford.

As we go forward in 2021, there is hope on the horizon, but much worry still around us. We are moving forward with “after COVID” plans, including that Mozart concert, resuming outdoor services, inviting small groups to indoor events, and finally, eventually, choir—in person, in some way. When? Still no idea. My sabbatical has been delayed another year to 2022, and I could use that break more than ever. My heart still hurts every time I hear a recording of a choir singing together—and hurts more when I read of how many people have died just today. And yet, I am, at the top of my list, grateful. Grateful for our amazing staff and wardens who are deep in conversation daily about St. John’s; for Susan, whom I will deeply miss but who has left us strong and ready for the next chapter; for choir members and choir parents who remain committed to a program that is much changed; for parishioners and concert-goers who tune in, check in, say positive and supportive words, and even sing at home; for my amazing wife who is “in this” all with me, every day; and above all for God’s grace in the midst of such tremendous difficulty. My faith is stronger than ever.

We were asked to think about and share the silver linings at one point during 2020, and for me the biggest one was this: I learned that music is way more important to people than I thought it was. A giant worry when this all began was that music would fall into the list of “optional” or, worse, “frivolous.” We took a risk and presented worship music, concerts, and endless recordings, hoping that we were doing something that lifted people up, and found out—by the number of people who watched, commented, and thanked us—that not only is music welcome in tough times, but a necessity. Never have I felt that my work has been more relevant and gratifying. Thank you all so much for your support. Stay safe, stay strong, and keep singing.

Respectfully submitted,  
Scott Lamlein  
Director of Music

## **Layreaders & Hughes Home**

St. John’s is blessed by a dedicated group of layreaders and Hughes Home musicians. Layreaders serve throughout the year at our services by reading the lessons and prayers and assisting with communion. In addition, St. John’s holds a service at the Hughes Health & Rehabilitation Center every Sunday in which a layreader leads a Morning Prayer service. A highlight of the service is the support of our loyal group of musicians who play the piano and lead us in song. These are such important ministries—a huge thank you to all who donate their time and energy!

During this past year, our Hughes Home ministry ended in late February and our ministry at St. John’s ended in mid-March. In early 2021, layreaders were asked to once again participate in the 10:30 a.m. service each Sunday, an invitation that was joyfully received. We look forward to resuming our full ministry at St. John’s and the Hughes Home once it is safe to do so. As always, we welcome additional members to this ministry, either as a layreader or a piano player at Hughes Home.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Verney, Chair

### **Layreaders**

Bess Amamoo, David Beers, Lissie Brooks, Kim Byrd,  
Jyothsna Diaz, John Hardy, Cindy Lawler, Paul Shaker,  
Paul Smith, Christoph Stretz, Jeff Verney, Wes  
Winterbottom

### **Hughes Home Musicians**

Natalie Giana, Ray Giolitto, Helen Hughlett, Ann  
Hutchinson, Steve Metcalf,

## Altar Guild

As with every aspect of life at this time, this has been a very unusual year for the Altar Guild.

Starting in March, as we adapted to virtual services, communion was not part of services for several months, so Altar Guild duties were reduced to making sure the altar hangings were the correct color. During the summer, we began once again celebrating communion, though not distributing it. In the interest of limiting potential virus exposure for both the Altar Guild members and church staff, I have been serving as the sole Altar Guild attendant.

I look forward to the near future when we can gather as a group again to share the duties of the Altar Guild.

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 December 2020 is 12 people.

### 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. Thank you especially to Shirley Blean and Betty Jane Hardersen for their ironing expertise.
- Order supplies of wine, wafers and candles (with Ellen's help).

Respectfully submitted,

Buffy Ineson, Chair

*Altar Guild members: Bess Amamoo, June Aziz, Shirley Blean, Conny DeLuca, Kate Eikel, Rosa Guzzo, Betty Jane Hardersen, Ginny Kemp, Nancy Pedersen, Paul Shaker, Carol Sonne*

## Acolytes

The acolyte program has been temporarily suspended since the church building closed and services were moved online in March 2020. We look forward to resuming the acolyte program some time in 2021!

Head Acolyte (through June 2020): Margaret Babbitt

*Acolytes: Morgan Babbitt, James Baker, Dawson Biondi, Elise Biondi, Dorian Ciscel, Elsa Ciscel, Bradley Crocker, Britt Emerick, Genella Evans, Ford Gillespie, Isabel Grant, Aviyah Lohr, Alice Murchie, Claire O'Brien, Caleb Worrell, Ethen Worrell*

## Ushers & Vergers

The St John's ushers are a dedicated group of 28 volunteers representing an important welcoming ministry. We are the first friendly faces greeting both our regular parishioners on Sundays as well as identifying and welcoming visitors and newcomers to St Johns. We don't just pass out bulletins and collect the offerings. We act as tour guides, answer questions, and make sure the congregation experience is a smooth one, assisting in transitions during the service. We communicate congregation needs to the clergy during the services.

While the closing of the church building in March paused our activities, the usher group was not held back for long. After many months of online-only services, and careful planning—including measuring indoor spaces and drawing “pews” on the west lawn—we assisted with the resumption of in-person services both outdoors and for a few weeks this fall, 8 a.m. indoor services, which we hope will resume soon.

This year brought many challenges, but also a new ministry—the St. John’s Verger Guild, led by Stephen Crocker. This ministry developed out of a desire to have a highly recognizable cohort of individuals who would be available to ensure COVID guidelines were followed during services. The Verger Guild currently has seven members (listed below). On account of the ongoing pandemic, the vergers’ duties, training and official ratification as a recognized guild of the Episcopal Church are expected to develop over the next year.

We were able to keep the entire group included and informed of our activities and plans, with regular updates, even if for various reasons some of our group were not comfortable with in-person services yet. The usher group is always seeking new members. Ushering is a FUN, social and vital job. Please let one of us know if you would like to try it—even if it’s just once!

#### **2020/21 Ushers:**

Laura Dake Roche, chair

*John Amamoo, Emhart Aziz, Brad Babbitt, Eleanor Barnes, Shirley Blean, Philip Chapman, Matt Ciscel, Annabel Clapp, Susan Clemow, Stephen Crocker, Robert Eikel, Geoff Emerick, Karan Emerick, Ben Flynn, Ellen Flynn, Edwin Genece, Jeff Gostyla, Troy Gostyla, Bette-Jane Hardersen, Sarah Kieffer, Julia O’Brien, Don Polk, John Roche, Paul Shaker, Jeff Verney, Akilah Williams, Wes Winterbottom*

#### **2020/21 Vergers:**

Stephen Crocker, chair

*Annabel Clapp, Robert Eikel, Giselle Genece, John Nowacki, John Roche, Cleveland Williams*

## **Healing Prayers Ministry**

The Healing Prayers Team made a good faith effort to continue to make healing prayers available as much as possible to the St. John’s community during the trying times of 2020. Through mid-March, healing prayers were offered after communion at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday service. For the remainder of the year, healing prayers were available after Sunday afternoon outside services, as well as in response to requests sent to the St. John’s office. Until in-person services begin again, healing prayers will continue to be offered in response to requests. Requests are always confidential.

**I’m a little embarrassed to ask for a prayer.** This is something we hear from time to time. However, most of us would not be embarrassed to be seen at a medical physician’s office. That’s a normal part of maintaining our physical health. Healing prayers are a normal part of worship at St. John’s. Everything we say at healing prayers stays where it is said. Confidentiality is part of the training of every healing minister and we guard your privacy. You can share as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing, and a simple “Please pray for me,” is fine. If you would like a prayer for healing, please contact the office and a St. John’s healing minister will be in touch with you.

If you are interested in joining this important and rewarding ministry, please contact any of the members of the Healing Prayers Team.

Wes Winterbottom, chair

*Healing Prayer Team: Chris Byrd, Ginger Gillespie, David Grimaldi, Sarah Kieffer, Cindy Lawler, Karen Licht, Paul Shaker*

## Celtic Worship

This is our fourth year. We have continued Celtic worship every first Sunday of the month at 4:30, except for three months in summer. Beginning in April, we have been holding our services on Zoom. Worship is created and lead by the team listed below. The phenomenal creativity, giftedness and wisdom of the team is inspirational. We hope it becomes a model for how we do church in the future.

Celtic worship is a contemplative service. When in the sanctuary, we begin with communal silence, singing, a reflection on the theme, chanting, healing prayer, a candle lighting station and a written prayer station, and a station of Celtic saints. Our worship lasts a little over an hour followed by a reception and discussion. On Zoom we begin with singing and follow the same order of service. We respond to healing prayer requests left privately in the chat.

We usually have around 60 people in person and 50 on Zoom. Our team includes musicians, poets, social media and communication people, cooks, and two ordained clergy. Because of meeting and working so closely to create this worship experience, the team has grown to trust one another and grown in confidence. Of course, working so closely together on a shared goal has grown friendships among us.

We are reaching folks that are looking for a way to worship that doesn't require church membership. To build community and get to know each other, we are having a 45-minute discussion on the theme after the service for whoever wants to participate.

Because of the close connection between Celtic spirituality and nature, contemplative walks are periodically held. These walks are done on local wooded paths where the terrain is suitable for all, including Tanager Hill Preserve of the Simsbury Land Trust and the Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford. The walks are done in silence (with face masks and social distancing), stopping frequently for spiritual contemplative readings. As an example, for December 2020's walk, the theme was "Sacred Light in the Darkness"; passages from the Hebrew, African Kwanzaa and Christian traditions were offered. From the greatly increased attendance at the November and December 2020 walks, it appears that there are many folks who are hungry for a safe place to be in community, so we plan to offer Celtic contemplative walks more frequently in 2021.

This shared ministry of creating Celtic worship and teaching Celtic theology has been a profound learning experience in shared leadership. The team is female and male. It has taught us that empowering the voices of folks to teach us what they know about God through music and poetry, healing and art is an inspired way to bring to folks the fullness of the experience that is possible when worshiping God in community. This ministry is teaching all of us to trust the Spirit to inspire our worship by our offering our particular giftedness. And to trust the Spirit to bring the folks to our services who want to be part of our worship and community.

The Reverend Dr. Molly Mazey O'Neill Loudon, facilitator for Celtic Worship Team

*Celtic Worship Team: Mary Cole, Cheri Evans, John Hardy, Charmaine Harkins, Tom Neal, The Rev. Susan Pinkerton, Norb Spencer, Jeff Verney, Wes Winterbottom*

## Communications

Improving our communication strategies has been a priority at St. John's for several years, and the challenges of 2020 required us to step up our communications even more. With nearly all services, operations and ministries moving online due to the pandemic, we increased the number of e-mail newsletters we send out to ensure that everyone with online access would have current information and be able to easily participate. We now send three e-newsletters every week: The Monday e-news includes an inspirational "Monday Moment" (a poem, prayer, reflection, or musical recording), a schedule for the week, and a link to the previous day's

Sunday service video; the Thursday e-news provides comprehensive information about events and other news; and the Sunday morning e-news includes that day's Christian education and service schedule, with links. In addition, Margie sends out a Children, Youth and Families e-newsletter every Tuesday, parishioners receive all e-newsletters related to Music at the Red Door concerts, and we send occasional stand-alone e-newsletters with pastoral letters, news of deaths in the St. John's community, notices of special events, etc. We strive to meet everyone's need to stay informed with their need for manageable e-mail inboxes! Overall, we've received positive feedback from parishioners, who say they appreciate receiving the latest information on a regular basis. Recognizing that a small number of parishioners do not have online access, we send mailings about once a month to this group, including printed items such as Forward Day by Day devotionals and Sunday bulletins.

Because the web site is the first place that newcomers go to learn more about our community, we work to keep the web site updated, particularly the home page, with important information easy to find. We recently completed a page-by-page edit of the home page to ensure that candidates for our priest in charge position will be able to get current information and see what a vibrant, active community we have at St. John's.

We had little opportunity to share printed communications materials this year (which led to savings of printing costs) and had few on-site events to which we could invite the wider community. Once the pandemic subsides, we will ramp up our efforts to publicize events, such as the Christmas Festival, to our neighbors. One gratifying experience of 2020 was hearing from people who live in nearby houses and apartments, who have told us how grateful they are for such things as outdoor movie nights they could join and our beautiful lit Christmas tree. When we had to cut down the big old copper beech tree, we learned that it had been a source of beauty and comfort for many neighbors. We have learned anew this year that the most effective way to reach our community is to be a source of connection and beauty in their daily lives.

We continue to use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect with the parish and wider community, but we need your help, as successful social media efforts rely on your participation. Please follow St. John's on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; share St. John's posts with people you know; and sign up for our e-mail newsletters to get the latest news and information. Send us your photos, including photos of you and your family participating in at-home and online offerings, so we can share them. Invite people to try out our services, concerts and special events—with nearly everything online right now, they can join us from the comfort of home! YOU are the best messengers to share the wonderful community that is St. John's!

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen Painter Dollar,  
Parish Manager

## **Community Service in Action**

How are we involved in the local community? How are we participating in God's mission outside our doors?

Our community service ministry is more important than ever with three key areas of focus: food, housing/basic needs and education/literacy. We remain committed to sharing our parish pledge contributions and connecting parishioners with volunteer opportunities. This year, we actively worked with proven community leaders and organizations in the Greater Hartford area, despite the physical challenges that this difficult year served up.

In 2020, with a budget of \$40,500, we provided hot meals, pantry bags, and snacks through our partnership with Loaves & Fishes Ministries <http://www.loavesfishesministries.org/>, worked to end homelessness with

Journey Home <https://journeyhomect.org/>, supported underserved families with Family Life Education <http://www.familylifeedu.org/en/> and provided energy assistance to families through Operation Fuel <https://operationfuel.org/>.

We also offered life-long learning and literacy with our support of Trinity Academy (children grades 1-4 <https://www.trinityday.org/>), Covenant Preparatory School (boys grades 5-8 <https://www.covenantprep.org/>), Grace Academy (girls grades 5-8 <https://www.graceacademyhartford.org/>), and adult ESOL classes administered through West Hartford Continuing Education (<https://www.whlifelearn.org/Adult-Enrichment/>).

Our community service collaborations were enhanced by other outreach programs too.

- Blessing Bags for neighbors and nonperishable food for Grace Seventh Day Adventist's Food Pantry and West Hartford's Food Pantry offered comfort, help and hope.
- Music at the Red Door virtual concerts benefitted Foodshare, Journey Home, and Loaves & Fishes.
- \$6,275 in gift cards joyously given by parishioners made for a very Merry Christmas for 60 families in Hartford Healthcare's Stronger Families, Stronger Futures (SF2) network.

### **Words of thanks from Community Partners**

As a long-term member of the Loaves & Fishes Food Ministry, I want to extend to St. John's loyal supporters a heartfelt THANK YOU for your "Red Door" donations, sandwiches, casseroles, and the \$1,000 donation for our thankful and needy clients.

- *Loaves & Fishes*

In times of darkness, you give light, warmth, and hope. Thank you for powering people.

- *Operation Fuel*

We are deeply grateful for your support. You are truly transforming lives at our school.

- *Grace Academy*

Thank you for your support and being a part of the Covenant Difference! - *Covenant Prep*

The adaptability of youth, the amazing determination of a great teaching staff, as well as community supporters, like St. John's Episcopal Church were key factors that pulled us through. - *Trinity Academy*

Like so many out there, 2020 has been a challenging year for Journey Home. Yet, despite the pandemic, we were still able to accomplish unthinkable progress towards some of our goals. Most importantly, we have continued to see a decrease in chronic homelessness in Greater Hartford, now reaching an 80% decrease since 2015. - *Journey Home*

Our clients need us now more than ever. St. John's is such a wonderful neighbor, stretching out beyond WH into the inner city. We cherish the partnership we have developed over the years. - *Family Life Education*

One family of 6 lost everything during the holiday snow storm as a fire broke out in their apartment. Placed temporarily in a hotel, they received a larger amount in gift cards [donated by St. John's parishioners] which allowed them to purchase gifts, clothing, and other basic items they needed. The ongoing support of St. John's is priceless to us. - *Stronger Families, Stronger Futures (SF2)*

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Mahoney, chair

Committee members: *Lissie Brooks, Matt Ciscel, Robert Eikel, Mary Hardy, Sarah Kieffer, Tina McCary, Laura Roche, Virginia Van Dyk (vestry liaison)*

## St. John's Community Partnership Program for English Language Learners

What a year! 2020 has been a series of new challenges for everyone and the ESOL program sponsored by St. John's has been no exception.

We began the 2020 Winter/Spring semester with four ESOL classes and a citizenship class at St. John's. One of these ESOL classes was supported by a federal grant, and integrated preparation for the initial level of ServSafe certification for those interested in food service jobs. Five of the six students enrolled earned that certification in May. The citizenship class was sponsored by West Hartford Adult Education and enrolled seven students. Unfortunately, that class ran only a couple weeks before the pandemic shut down in-person classes. The other three ESOL classes held at St. John's enrolled 27 students. Across the spring ESOL and citizenship classes we enrolled 26 students from neighboring towns. Welcoming students from other towns is a unique benefit of classes sponsored by St. John's, because the other classes held at town facilities and paid for by the town are only open to West Hartford residents. Peggy Quiros also ran an informal conversation group, which was open to anyone and was very popular, especially with advanced students who have tested out of our mandated ESOL program.

In mid-March, COVID arrived and we suddenly closed for a week and then transitioned to remote instruction. That was a new challenge for our faculty and our students. Some students persisted, while others did not make the transition to remote learning. Beginning students and older students typically had the most difficulty making the transition to remote instruction. About half of the ESOL students at St. John's participated in at least some remote instruction. About a third of those who had begun in-person classes transitioned to become dedicated remote participants. As directed by the state, we offered all our ESOL teachers ongoing employment, using the time they were not teaching to build their expertise in online instruction and the use of Burlington English (BE), a comprehensive, online program we intended to adopt in fall 2020. Given the pandemic, the State Department of Education waived the requirement for post-testing in spring 2020, so we have no data on student gains during the Spring 2020 semester.

The risks associated with the pandemic and the integration of instructional technology led a number of our ESOL teachers to retire. Our retirees included Louise Cox, who taught at the church for many years. We miss her a great deal! Fortunately, Joe Viola and Mary O'Neil have continued to teach.

Planning for Fall 2020 ESOL was a challenge. We initially planned to offer ESOL in a hybrid format using the online BE program as a component to support in-class and independent learning. We ordered a number of Chromebooks and arranged for a secure computer charging cart to be delivered to St. John's. We also purchased a projector to facilitate integrating BE into classroom instruction at the church. Our hope was that the hybrid format would help build students' comfort with the technology and facilitate the transition to remote-only instruction if that became necessary. (Who knew that Chromebooks ordered in May 2020 might not actually be delivered until January 2021!) As the summer went on and the health department and schools developed standards and protocols for reopening, it became evident that we would need to offer our fall ESOL classes as online/remote classes, rather than hybrid classes. We conducted socially distanced, in-person registration and placement testing over two-and-a-half weeks in September, with online classes beginning on September 21. Enrollment in Fall 2020 was smaller than in the past; however, most of the students who registered and joined their online class did persist. Our fall enrollment included eight ESOL students from neighboring towns. They represented all levels and a range of scheduling needs. Rather than restrict them to a single time slot or offer a multi-level class, which is extremely challenging in the online format, we simply enrolled them in the class that best met their needs. (They were enrolled in six different classes.) St. John's sponsored one of the fall ESOL classes. Of the eight students from neighboring towns who initially enrolled, six attended throughout the semester. The post-tests taken in December indicated some appropriate progress, which is good news as it was a relatively short semester.

For Spring 2021, our ESOL classes will again be fully remote, integrating Burlington English. Classes began on January 19 and will run through May 14. As of January 19, 10 of our spring ESOL students come from neighboring towns. We have again assigned each student sponsored by St. John's to the class that best fits their level and schedule. The longer spring semester provides significantly more learning time, and we hope to see notable growth in our students when we compare their initial pre-tests with their May post-tests.

We appreciate St. John's commitment and look forward to a time when we can safely return to face-to-face classes. We do plan to continue using the BE program next year, as it offers a number of ways for students to reinforce and expand their learning outside class time.

Nancy Hoffman, Program Director, Town of West Hartford

Andy Tyskiewicz, Program Facilitator, Town of West Hartford

## **Planned Giving Committee - 1841 Legacy Society**

The mission of the Planned Giving Committee is to increase membership in St John's 1841 Legacy Society and assist donors in planning gifts to the church. Church members can become a member of the society simply by notifying St. John's of their intention to make a bequest to St. John's in their will or through some other financial instrument. This notification does not require you to identify your intended gift, only that you intend to donate.

During 2020, St. John's received one bequest and added one new member to the 1841 Legacy Society. We will always be respectful to those who want to give and remain anonymous.

Respectfully submitted:

Karen Licht & David Grimaldi, co-chairs

## **Christmas Festival**

Due to the pandemic, we made significant changes to the Christmas Festival. The event was held outdoors on Sunday afternoon, December 6 (rescheduled from Saturday, December 5 due to a snowstorm). Despite the cold temperatures, the sun shone brightly and we had many visitors from the parish as well as the neighborhood. We focused volunteer efforts on areas that have traditionally seen the most sales. Due to safety concerns, we did not serve food to be eaten on-site and did not sell secondhand goods. Also new this year was our ability to accept credit and debit card payments. The sales areas and their respective chairpeople were:

Country Kitchen: Ginger Gillespie

Handmade Potholders: Cait Semanie

Christmas Greenery: Lindsey Carlisle & Karan Emerick

Theme-Basket Raffle: Karan Emerick

Homemade Soups: Brooke Whittemore

In addition, we held our first-ever online fundraising auction, which was open for bidding for approximately 10 days around the time of the festival. We had nearly 30 auction items that inspired spirited bidding, including artwork, restaurant gift cards, and a week in a vacation home.

We earned approximately \$6,500 before expenses, which compares favorably with what we've earned at the past few Christmas Festivals. There is agreement that many of the changes made this year should be considered for future years, such as focusing on selling new handmade/homemade items, rather than used

items that require a lot of storage space and volunteer labor to sort and price, and holding at least part of the festival outdoors, which makes the event more attractive and accessible to the wider community.

In addition to the people listed above, we are grateful to Ellen Flynn and June Aziz, who came up with an initial planning document that clarified the many safety and logistical challenges we needed to address; Ginny Kemp, who helped collect donated items for the online auction; and Dwight Latif, who as always did a great deal of work to set up and clean up for the festival. Thanks also to the many parish volunteers who participated in the annual wreath decorating night and took turns staffing sales tables and the cashier station.

Faithfully submitted,  
Ellen Painter Dollar, Parish Manager

## House Committee

The House Committee meets monthly to plan and make decisions to maintain St. John's building and grounds. This year, we oversaw the following projects:

- Paint ceiling and ceiling tiles where water damage occurred
- Re-screw and secure pews and kneelers
- Complete major drainage project so water doesn't get into basement
- Paint lines on exterior stairs for safety
- Fill pothole in front parking lot
- Fix hole with concrete in front of main entrance to church
- Repair downspouts that have been damaged due to snow
- Renew elevator contract
- Repair/replace signs around the building
- Change light ballasts in kitchen and basement
- Maintain security and safety of building and church during COVID-19 era
- Update safety protocols during COVID-19 era

Respectfully submitted,  
David Hrdlicka, chair and Dwight Latif, sexton  
*Committee members: Steve Crocker, Buffy Ineson, Mark Proft*

## Sacred Circle

Sacred Circle has been a group of women who meet monthly during the church season to discuss topics of religion and spirituality. Usually, we have read the Bible or another spiritual text to start our conversation, and then moved to a discussion about how the designated meeting topic applies in our everyday lives. We have focused on deep listening and waited until each speaker is truly finished before another woman starts speaking. Silence and prayers have been used to open and close our meetings.

2020 was our sixth year. Our last meeting at the church was in February before Covid. We met once by Zoom later on in the spring. We hope to resume when it is safe again to meet in person at the church.

Sarah Kieffer, chair

## Men's Bible Study

An ecumenical group of three to seven men continues to gather online each Thursday for an hour, starting at 7 a.m., to “read, mark, and inwardly digest” the Bible. Started four-and-a-half years ago by Matt Fitzsimons, head of school of Grace Academy, the group includes several members of St. John's along with members of other faith communities. Over our time together, we have read the Book of Acts in conjunction with the Letters of Paul, compared and contrasted the Synoptic Gospels, and read about David and the successor kings of Israel, Judah, and surrounding areas in the books of Samuel and Kings. (In case you're wondering, being a king was not a profession that led to long life and a peaceful retirement.) Recently, we started reading Job, which has proved to be fascinating. Our discussions are wide-ranging, incorporating our disparate personal and professional experiences, depth of knowledge of the Bible (or lack thereof), and faith traditions. Little to no advance preparation is required (Matt does the pre-meeting heavy lifting, thankfully), making it possible for those with busy schedules to participate. The readings each week are self-contained, meaning that attendees can actively participate even if they missed the week before. We enjoy each other's company and our expansive discussions. We may even have learned a thing or two about the Bible and our faith. We are grateful to St. John's for making a home for our group and invite any who may be interested to join us.

Brad Babbitt, member

## Office of Historical Research (OHR)

In a 1930 comedy film entitled *Animal Crackers*, Groucho Marx sings a delightful song with the following lyrics:

“Hello, I must be going; I cannot stay; I came to say I must be going; but just the same I'm glad I came...”

I also “must be going.” In January 2020, I “quietly retired” from my volunteer position as parish archivist and historian. At that time, I thanked the Reverend Susan Pinkerton for the tremendous support she had given to me during her tenure here. The same is true for her predecessor, the Reverend Joseph Pace, who asked me to take up the effort over a decade ago.

And now, it is my turn to give appreciation to you, the staff and members of our parish who assisted me in so many ways, including feeding the archives with valuable materials; assisting with tours and presentations; providing research pointers and tips; offering humor, encouragement and space (thanks, Scott!); and putting me back on track when I occasionally lost my way. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Angela Goedicke, a sacred symbolism expert based in Scotland, who gave me hours of pro bono advice and wisdom concerning our windows and sculpture.

If there is such a thing as a labor of love, this volunteer position has been it. As I progressed in the work handed over to me by my excellent predecessor, Gary Wait, I felt more and more that our parish history is both deep—2021 is our 180<sup>th</sup> year—and wide, involving a diverse and accomplished group of individuals connected to St. John's, including world-famous personalities such as author Harriet Beecher Stowe, architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, and Dr. John Franklin Enders, who won the 1954 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

To the many who have worked so hard to make our parish the notable success that it was, is and will be, I paraphrase Charles Dickens, who passed through Hartford the year our first building opened there: “God bless you, everyone!”

Bill Uricchio  
Parish Historian

## Postulant for Ordination

Formation continues to go well. This last year has, as for many, been one of challenges and transitions.

My 2019-2020 academic year was spent finishing course work at Hartford Seminary for the master's degree in transformative leadership and spirituality. The pandemic took quite a toll on seminary life as things shut down in March and everything went virtual. The pandemic's impact went beyond on-campus student life, with some degree programs, including mine, ending. I am very blessed to have a wonderful academic advisor, MT Winter, who found a way to make sure current students working on the degree can still complete the degree and graduate. Because of her commitment to her students, I will be completing the degree this spring. My final project, which focuses on spiritual care during disasters, will be presented in April.

I also spent the academic year in internship at Trinity Church in Brooklyn, Connecticut. I was truly fortunate to have the Rev. Jane Hale as a mentor and teacher through a very unusual internship. The last big church event was the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, a tradition I offered at St. John's many years ago, and then everything went virtual as the pandemic took over. In the final months of internship, I assisted with virtual church on Facebook Live and facilitated Celtic night prayer on Fridays.

At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, I was informed that I would be taking the General Ordination Exam in January 2021. This exam serves as a diagnostic tool in the formation process to determine proficiency in the six canonical areas required for ordination. I took the exam between January 4 and 8. I expect results to come in late February.

Professionally, this last year has been one of transition. In December 2020, I was offered an appointment as an emergency management specialist with FEMA, which I accepted. This week was my final week with Meals on Wheels, and I will begin my new federal career next week. The position is based in Boston; however, I will be working from home likely through June.

My wife Kate is doing well. She accepted a librarian position with the Montville school district in March. It has had some unique challenges as the district shut down for the pandemic four days after she started. The current school year has been a mix of in-person, hybrid, and additional shutdowns, so it still is a challenging work environment for her.

My prayers continue to be with all my sisters and brothers at St. John's, and I am truly blessed and sustained by your prayers.

Blessings,  
Mike Corey

## 2020 Donors

The following people generously supported St. John's mission and ministries in 2020 through their financial pledges and gifts.

Mrs William Abbott	Kristin Eaton	Scott & Mary Beth Lamlein	Mary Russell
Toby & Manuel Aguiar	Nancy Eaton	Jim & Cindy Lawler	Judy Schaffer
Merriol Almond	James Ebert & Allison Read	Albert & Barbara Lennox	Cait Semanie
John & Bess Amamoo	Robert & Kate Eikel	Merrilee Leonhardt	Paul Shaker & Cleveland Williams
Emhart & June Aziz	Geoffrey & Karan Emerick	Karen Licht	Jim Sharp
Brad & Janet Babbitt	Doug Engwall	Tom & Wendy Lincoln	Nancy Skeele
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Beverley Baker	Janet Faude	Owen Long	Paul & Jacqueline Smith
Margie & Jenn Baker	Martha Fine	Luis & Leah Lorenzo	Reuben Smith
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Richard & Wendy Bartlett	Ben & Ellen Flynn, III	Arlene MacIntyre	Charles & Carol Sonne
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Mike Biondi & Ginny Kemp	Nancy Forte	Anthony Marques	Peter & Deborah Spillman
Eloise Biscoe	Gordon & Molly Fowler	William McBride	Mark Stater
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Carlos Branco & Allison Branco	Suzanne Gates	Jackie McCauley	Mary Stoughton
Tichy	Edwin & Giselle Genece	Scott McIntyre	Christoph & Dale Stretz
Lynn & Lissie Brooks	Colin & Ginger Gillespie	Walter McKenney	Patricia Struglia
Chris & Kim Byrd	Tim Goetz	Barbara McKernin	John Swift & Lauren Mascola
Luther & Katharine Carle, Jr	Jeffrey & Heidi Gostyla	Robert & Sarah McQuilkin	Paul Thaxton & Sue Murphy
Stuart & Lindsey Carlisle	Craig & Anne Grant	Patrick Miller	Thaxton
Buffy Cech	Joel & Beth Grieco	Jean Mitchell	Abraham & Sera Thomas
Philip Chapman	David Grimaldi	Marie Montas	Bowie Thomas
Stephan & Francine Christiansen	Casey Gruber	Mrs. Marnie Mueller	Douglas Thomas
John & Martha Church	Jonathan & Carrie Hammond	Stewart & Leah Murchie	Margaret Thomas
Christopher Cipriano	Ann Hanlon	Alexander & Liz Nelson	Trout Brook Landscaping
Dr. Matthew and Mrs. Alina Ciscel	Bette-Jane Hardersen	Ann Newbury	Joanna Tweedie
Elijah & Annabel Clapp	John & Mary Hardy	Patricia Newsom	William & Erika Ulrich
Brian & Susan Clemow	Jessica Harmon	Lil Nolan	Bill Uricchio & Katy Hart
Kathleen Cobb	Anne Harney	John Nowacki & Don Polk	Alex & Pat Vance
Mary Cockram	Jane Harris	Jim & Julia O'Brien	Jeff & Pamela Verney
Don & Mary Cole	Matthew Hart	Harriet Odium	Audrey Walker
Kate Coley	Ross & Susie Hatch	Open Offering	Lyn Walker & Tyler Smith
Robert & Edith Connolly	Eleanor Hayes	Charnley Parr	John & Anne Walsh
Helen Cooke	Randall & Anne Hayes	Caleb Peck	Joan Warner
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V. Crafa	Tripp Hills	William & Agnes Peelle, Jr	Martin Wheeler & Deborah Ferrari
Stephen Crocker & Rosa Guzzo	Barbara Hoffman	Maribelle Pellen	Wende Wheeler
Allyson Davis	David Hrdlicka	Susan Pinkerton	Ted Whitemore
David De Celis	Patricia Hugessen	David & Rennie Polk	John Wilcox & Virginia Van Dyk
Conny DeLuca	Donald Hughlett	David & Sandy Pond	Sherwood & Maggie Willard
Dave Derby	Ann Hutchinson	Joy Pond	Akilah Williams
Carlos & Jyothsna Diaz	John & Buffy Ineson	Mark & Ginny Proft	Dennis & Jeanne Winkleblack
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Martin Dodd	Iacovos Katsipis & Carla Abdo-Katsipis	Christa Rakich & Janis Milroy	Anita Winters
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Helen Douglas	Jillian Kiernan	Stephen & Nancy Roberts	Lorna Wright
Joe Duffy	Betty Knorr	John & Laura Roche	
Janet Duncan	Kenneth Krissinger	Marilyn Rockwell	
William & Hope Eakins	Ann Krissinger	Pieter & Barbara Roos	
	Pamela Lamlein	Duccio & Nina Rosselli Del Turco	





# St. John's Episcopal Church

*A place to discover connections with God and one another*

www.sjparish.net

679 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, Connecticut 06119

860 523 5201 office@sjparish.net



## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday services at 10:30 a.m. (livestream video only).  
Noonday Prayer online via Zoom at 12 p.m. every weekday.

## STAFF

The Rev. Margie Baker (margie@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Assistant Rector</i>
Scott Lamlein (scott@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Director of Music</i>
The Rev. Walter McKenney (walter@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Deacon</i>
Ellen Painter Dollar (ellen@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Parish Manager</i>
Dwight Latif (dwight@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Sexton</i>
Peggy O'Toole (peggy@sjparish.net) .....	<i>Financial Administrator</i>
Christa Rakich .....	<i>Organ Artist-in-Residence</i>
Ralph Valentine .....	<i>Organist and Choirmaster Emeritus</i>

## VESTRY

Geoff Emerick .....	<i>Warden</i>
Virginia Van Dyk .....	<i>Warden</i>
Tim Goetz and John Roche .....	<i>Co-Treasurers</i>
2018–20: Steve Crocker, Ann Hutchinson, Alex Nelson	
2019–21: Ellen Flynn, David Grimaldi, Teresa Lohr	
2020–22: June Aziz, Jyothsna Diaz, Anne Harney	