



St. James'
Annual Report
2023



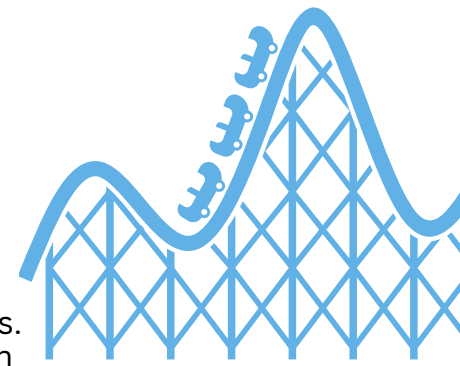
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Priest-In-Charge Message

I'm not sure how I feel about the metaphors of roller coasters. Not everyone likes them and they can imply an uncontrolled and uncomfortable series of ups and downs, twists and turns, and maybe even a little whiplash. But here's the thing: I love roller coasters! And this year has certainly had its shares of twists and turns and ups and downs. Yet, as I look back on my first six months since being called as your Priest-in-Charge, I can honestly say I have experienced more ups than downs!



I was called to St. James', a church which was working its way through a new identity, trying to understand what it meant to be a parish with a part time priest. It was, in a sense, resowing a new garden on fertile ground. By the time I arrived, I got to experience the harvest reaped from all the work the parish performed while in the transition process.

Friends, I have quickly fallen in love with this place. We are a wonderful church built on a wonderful foundation; not one just built of stone but of people, too. In the short time I have been with you, I have been blessed to share with you Sunday mornings, a wonderful ecumenical service at JB Williams park, a service in Hartford at Church by the Pond and so many wonderful conversations held one on one or in small groups throughout the year. And along with worship and conversation and meals, I have truly felt your welcome.

I am grateful too for your patience as I grow into this role. As you might know, along with my work at St. Luke's in South Glastonbury, I also maintained a role at the Episcopal Church in Connecticut's offices in Meriden. Three jobs proved to be a bit too much to take on and as of December 31, 2023 I resigned my position at the Commons. It is now a great blessing to serve two parishes in Glastonbury and focus on Christ's mission here locally, throughout the region and perhaps even the world.

When I look back on this year, I see a people of hope and faith, things unseeable but still known to all of us. We find such great inspiration in community and in communion with each other. We are truly blessed by Christ's presence at St. James' and with that presence and with each other we are capable of facing the challenges that might lay ahead.

One challenge is our budget. Your vestry has approved a budget showing a deficit in 2024. That deficit, because we realized a surplus in 2023 is manageable, and yet, it is not maintainable. We are just as much subject to trends in religious participation and giving as any other church. Overall, most churches in the Mainline, along with some evangelical and non-denominational churches, are experiencing declines in attendance and giving.

Priest-In-Charge Message (continued)

Yet while those trends are real, we do not have to give into them. St. James' is a resilient parish and strong. We are also creative. As we progress through the year we will engage in a conversation around how not to just close a single year's deficit but to ensure we are present in Glastonbury serving God and God's mission throughout the coming decades and beyond. I look forward to beginning this conversation at the Annual Meeting.

Along with finances though, I offer one other challenge: I want you to know this is your parish and I ask that you think creatively about that idea. Which ministries would you like to join? What ministry do you wish to create? How do you think we should serve Christ and how do you envision us bringing the Word into the neighborhood, the region, and the world?

When I look at St. James' I see a beautiful, dynamic, and open congregation so very much in love with Jesus and each other. That is our gift. That is our blessing. Along with those blessings is the work, for which I am so grateful, performed by a staff who loves this church and you. I give thanks to Dawn, Jim, and Joanna for all that they did in 2023 and will do in 2024.

We are also blessed by a vestry who navigated a period of transition expertly and adroitly. My own transition to being your Priest in Charge would not have gone as smoothly without the work they performed to keep this parish running.

We are truly blessed as well by ministry leaders who work so hard to not only keep the lights on and the boiler boiling but serve in so many ways the community in which we live, work, and have our being. Please join me in giving thanks to God for all these folks do. We are blessed!

I close this letter where I started, reflecting on a roller coaster year that brought many thrills and many joys. And I close this letter too anticipating our joy in serving God together in this coming year. I covet your prayers, patience, and love. As ever, I promise you the same.

Faithfully and with great hopefulness,
I am
The Rev. Matt Handi
Priest in Charge
St. James' Episcopal Church in Glastonbury



Priest Associate's Report

My designation as Priest Associate means that I am a clergy member of the parish who has retired from full-time ministry. As such, I have offered to help out in a clergy role as needed and desired by the Priest-in-Charge and the larger community as I am available. Given the severe shortage of ordained Episcopal Clergy, I am discovering that "retirement" is more an aspiration than a reality.

It was my honor and privilege to serve as what amounted to an "interim" supply clergy assignment during the 13 months following Rev. Denise Cabana's resignation. While the congregation was ably led by Sr. Warden Debbie O'Donnell, my role was to support and advise her and the Vestry, help to guide her and the parish through the various steps of discernment and preparations for calling a new Priest in Charge, and to offer regular Sunday worship services.

During that time, we continued St. James' involvement in our various community outreach activities, and also organized a number of community-wide events on an ecumenical basis – the worship in the park, the Hot Cat Jazz Band outdoor service with St. Luke's and St. Mark's, and the ecumenically organized and coordinated Ash Wednesday, Lenten and Holy Week services.

With the calling of Fr. Matt as our new Priest in Charge, I was simultaneously called (literally in the same week) to serve in a similar role at Grace Episcopal Church, Windsor, following the retirement of their Rector, where I serve 2-3 Sundays per month and one day per week. I continue to assist Debbie O'Donnell and the team with the Panera Bread deliveries. .Know how much I treasured my service with you all during the interim time. I look forward to being back with you as often as I am able.

Your brother in Christ, Don+





Senior Warden's Report

As I write my last Senior Warden's report, I am tempted to reflect on the last 3 years of my term (i.e., being closed for Covid, zoom church, a cautious reopening in 2021, financial worries, loss of our Rector in 2022, our "transition"-on our own with no rector for 1 year, and then, appointment of a new, one-half time Priest-in-Charge in July, 2023).

But instead, let's focus on where the beginning of 2024 finds St. James.' Worship on Sunday mornings is amazing with all our regular players (ushers, altar guild, flower guild, choir, on-line streamers, those who get the slide projections of the service up on the screens, lectors, and lay Eucharistic ministers), and now the Reverend Matt Handi leading us along with the voices of our lay preachers. Meanwhile, Dan, Mitch, and Jeff are guiding our children and youth during the service.

St. James' is more than Sunday mornings. We work to impact our town and region since we believe it is part of our mission as Christians. Each of the three Celtic Vespers services in 2023 brought in 60-80 people, most of whom were not from St. James'. Our Outreach (Faith in Action) work is substantial. Described later in this document, St. James' "outreach" missions have a wide breadth. We work with 7 other faith communities in town to address the needs of our community (food insecurity-adult (Town Food Bank) and schoolchildren (Backpack program), Carol's Closet, etc.). Weekly, we pick up Panera "Dough-nations" bread and take it to the Hands-on-Hartford food bank. Valerie Huestis coordinates an Engaging the Community format that described the need of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe in South Dakota one Wednesday evening this fall.

We believe that it is also our mission to open our doors to host three evenings a week to Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon groups at no charge. Our doors are open to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts as coordinated by Alison Banker.. Lions Club held their Pancake Breakfast in our Parish Hall during AppleFest in October.

The vestry, officers, and finance committee, as well as our parish administrator (Dawn Hardwick) and bookkeeper (Joanna Rivera-Bremmer) work in close collaboration with the Rev. Matt to ensure all of the moving parts of St. James' are supported to carry out God's work. Your financial support, be it by your pledging or other contribution and your time and talents are vital to these efforts. In 2023, your vestry showed significant dedication to St. James' to cover all of the diocese steps needed to call the Reverend Matt Handi to us. I am grateful for all of the additional hours the vestry volunteered as well as their thoughtful consideration.

I am confident that St. James' is a healthy, thriving parish as we begin 2024. I encourage you to find your passion amongst our many missions or suggest a new one. I invite you to join our efforts to "be a church!"

Respectfully submitted, Debbie O'Donnell, Senior Warden



Junior Warden's Report

My first stint as a Junior Warden was over 30 years ago at a church in Western Massachusetts. While so much has changed in the Episcopal Church over the past three decades, the Junior Warden's position has pretty much remained the same. If one is elected to this position, you can pretty much count on having to deal with a whole bunch of building and property maintenance and repair. One is constantly deciding if the fix, task, or issue can be done by you or another volunteer, or should it be done by a paid contractor. Another key decision is whether something can or should be repaired or replaced. Those of you who know me can easily guess which way I'm going to lean when thinking about those decisions. I am a great believer in repair versus replace and do-it-yourself. Fortunately, we also have a number of members who generously devote their time and resources to keeping our facilities in pretty good shape. (I will not name them here, as you probably know who they are.) As anyone who owns a home knows full well, there are always more repair and upkeep projects than one has time for, or that maybe even shouldn't be attempted. This is certainly true here at St. James'.

That said, the Facilities component of the 2023 operating budget came in under budget, primarily due to lower than anticipated fuel costs and some deferred repair and maintenance. While budgeting for fuel costs is always going to be tricky, the cost of energy is always going to be a significant part of the Facilities budget. In that light (no pun intended) I expect to soon receive a proposal for work designed to cut our energy usage. It is incentivized through Eversource, and includes insulation and cooling equipment upgrades, more efficient lighting and more completely modernized heating systems. I hope to be able to report the specifics to the vestry at our February meeting. I will remind you that some of our Joining Jesus money can be earmarked for capital improvements. This energy use reduction opportunity may be a very good choice for one of these improvements.

Finally, I must mention the fact that our stalwart group of handymen and women needs some additional and honestly, younger, blood. I plan to propose some projects to the parish asking for help and even leadership from those of you who are currently on the sidelines. Please seriously consider sharing your time and talents. I know we are all busy. Together we can continue to make our facility attractive, welcoming and an enhancement to our various ministries.

I look forward to serving as your Junior Warden for another year.

Respectfully submitted, Don Gardner

Treasurer's Report

This year presented a new set of challenges as the Church transitioned with our new Priest in Charge. The 2023 budget contemplated the changes and actual reductions in labor costs during the year and allowed us to show excess despite the decrease in the level of pledge offerings from 2022.

2023 Highlights:

- The Every Member Canvas resulted in 2023 pledges of \$201,950 from 65 pledge units and a 13% decline from pledges of \$232,431 and 78 pledge units for 2022.
- The monthly lease with Whole Foods was approved by the Diocese that increased the monthly lease amount from \$2,500 to \$3,500 during 2023.
- With the market uncertainty outside of the end of the year, we were fortunate again to be able to avoid a withdrawal from endowment in 2023, thus protecting our endowment balance.
- The balance of the St James' loan with the Diocese was \$47,200 at 12/31/2023 at an attractive rate of 3.5%, which is being paid over 60 months and provides working capital flexibility.
- Withdrawals from the Joining Jesus Campaign for 2023 were used to pay Diocesan Loan interest and the Joining Jesus fund balance was \$169,300 at 12/31/2023.

The Year in Review - 2023:

St James' Vestry approved an operating budget for 2023 with total budgeted expenses of \$280,800 down from \$302,600 for 2022 due to a planned reduction in rector expense reflecting a mid-year hire for the part time Priest-in-Charge. A break even budget was planned with revenues of \$280,800.

Budgeted revenues comprised:

- Pledge Offerings: \$210,000 (\$208,100 received as of December 31, 2023)
- Other Offerings: \$12,000 (\$7,600 received as of December 31, 2023)
- Holiday Offerings: \$4,800 (\$5,300 received as of December 31, 2023)
- Other Operating Income: \$54,000 (\$49,000 parking rental and \$5,000 facility use donations \$ 50,600 received as of December 31, 2023)
- Permanent Endowment: \$0 (No amount drawn)

St. James ended 2023 with approximately \$47,300 remaining in the General Fund after beginning the year with \$23,800. Parish members provided important support with actual pledge receipts falling just short of budgeted pledges by \$1,900. Other offerings and Holiday Offerings fell short of the budgeted amounts by \$3,900. The Whole Foods lease expired on 10/31/2022 and lease payments were missed for November and December of 2022. For 2023, Whole Foods (Amazon) began paying \$3,500 monthly as of 11/01/2022 and paid the missing 2 payments for 2022 and 12 payments for 2023 bringing the lease current and staying current with a total of \$49,000 in payments. To take advantage of excess cash, treasury bills and notes were opened at Charles Schwab with rolling maturities that earned approximately \$1,900 during 2023.

Treasurer's Report (continued)

or 2023, the majority (87%) of the budgeted operating expenses consisted of employee expenses and supply services, \$139,900, facilities expenses, \$68,600, and the Diocesan pledge, \$37,100. Total operating expenses budgeted in 2023 were \$280,800 and St James' ended 2023 by actually expending approximately \$257,100. Expenses for 2023 were under budget by \$23,700 due mainly to a more optimistic assumption for the hiring timeline of the priest in charge, reducing payroll by \$10,000 and increasing supply costs by \$6,300 and less hours entered by the bookkeeper, \$9,800. Facilities expenses, before December re-allocation, were lower than expected by \$9,500 due mainly to lower utility costs. As a result, actual revenues for 2023 of \$274,500 exceeded actual expenses of \$257,100 leading to an excess of \$17,400.

St. James' received \$44,500 of Joining Jesus income this year and spent a total of \$1,900 of the funds. Expenditures were for Diocesan loan interest. After receipts and expenditures, the balance within the Joining Jesus Fund was \$169,300 at 12/31/2023. Excess funds were invested in short term US Treasury instruments to allow the funds to gain a return, approximately 2,900 during 2023, and provide additional amounts for future Joining Jesus activities. Joining Jesus pledge payments of \$389,600 or 85% of the original \$461,000 of pledges, which amounts include Camp Washington contributions, have been received with the remaining balance of pledges to be received totaling \$71,400 as of 12/31/2023.

The Year Ahead – 2024:

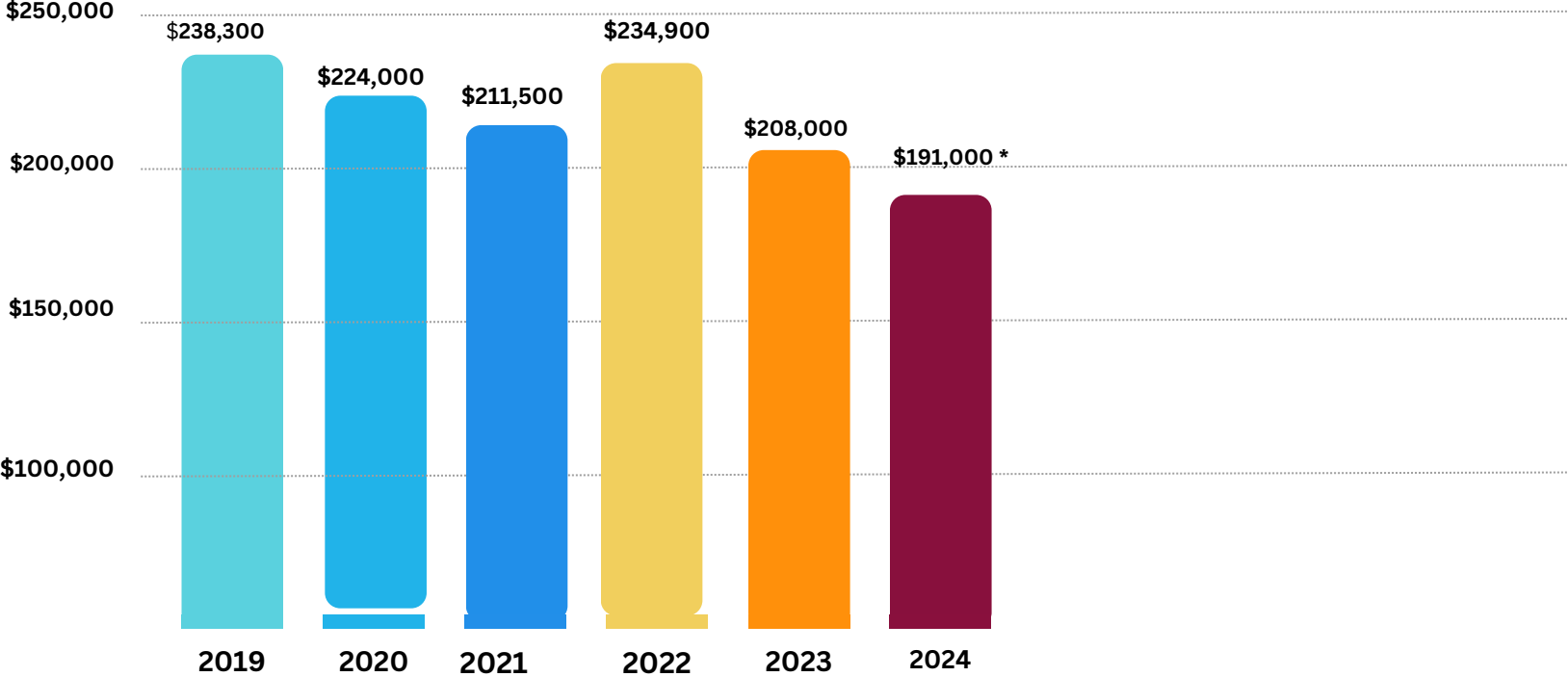
St. James' budget indicates total income of \$271,000 for 2024. Budgeted income will be funded with forecasted offerings of \$191,000 from pledges and \$18,000 of estimated income from plate and holiday offerings. Additional revenue of \$62,000 is forecast to be generated from donations for facilities use, mostly from the Whole Foods parking agreement, \$42,000, Draws from the Endowment Fund of 15,000 and \$3,000 from interest on treasury bills/notes. The General Endowment balance was approximately \$289,000 as of 11/30/2023. Pledged offerings budgeted for 2024 of \$191,000 are 9.0% below the amount budgeted for 2023. A six year comparison is presented below indicating recent trends with pledges. (**See Page 10**)

On the expense side, the budget reflects raises for personnel in step with the Diocese and other expense items were adjusted based upon the experience in 2023 and anticipation for how the church will operate in 2024. Outreach of \$5,500, equivalent to 2% of revenue, was used for budgeted expenses during 2024. Total budgeted expenses for 2024 are \$302,200, a 7.6% increase from budgeted expenses of \$280,800 for 2023, that reflects a full year with the Priest in Charge and expected greater hours worked by the bookkeeper. (See Page 11 for Income and Expense Chart)

In summary, St. James' has a \$31,100 shortfall in its budget for 2024. Pledges for 2024 are down from 2023, and as indicated above increases in payroll expenses. St James has avoided a draw against the endowment for the last two years, thus preserving its investments value during a period of volatile financial markets. Additionally, excess income of 17,400 from 2023 and residue from the earlier SBA Loan forgiveness provided a \$47,300 General Fund balance at 12/31/2023 that will be used to fund the deficit budget. Continuation at these budget deficit levels is not sustainable. Fortunately, we have the funds for 2024 that will allow us time to explore ideas and alternatives for improvement.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Dugger, Treasurer

Annual Pledge Income Since 2019



2024 amount represents amount pledged as of 1/1/24

INCOME & EXPENSES			
	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Operating Income			
Pledge Offerings	\$210,000	\$208,092	\$191,000
Other Offerings	16,800	12,897	18,000
Facilities	54,000	50,590	44,000
Endowment	0	0	15,000
Interest	0	1,859	3,000
Other Operating Income	0	1,024	0
TOTAL	\$280,800	\$274,462	\$271,000
Expenses			
Rector Compensation	\$51,946	\$41,875	\$83,504
Supply Clergy (Organist)	10,733	16,998	5,700
All other Staffing	77,202	69,933	80,372
Office Expenses	19,644	18,656	23,810
Diocese Contribution	35,300	37,092	27,500
St James Outreach	5,500	5,438	5,500
Facilities Expense	68,600	59,052	65,670
Commission Expenses	10,875	7,607	9,140
Other Operating Expense	1,000	450	1,000
TOTAL	\$280,800	\$257,101	\$302,196
Income vs Expenses	\$0	\$17,361	(\$31,196)



Music at St. James' offers praises to God and serves our community through inspiring hymns, anthems, organ music, and special services.

We embrace diversity through the use of three hymnals and music from many cultures, medieval times to the present.

**Music
2023**



Services



Compline (March)
in collaboration with the Men's Group Dinner

Red Letter Day (July)

HCC Cat Jazz Band (June)

Music provided by Red Letter Day
Center, Faith, and Love
All are welcome!



Advent Lessons and Carols
(December)

Christmas Eve (December)

Easter Day (April)



Outreach



Celtic Vespers ▲
(March, April, & October)

Women sing at Seabury ►
(December)



Concert



Thanksgivings



Choir party for
Barbara & David
Buddington (August)

New choir cubbies



Christian Formation (Sunday School) Report

Sunday school K-4 classes were held in-person and occasionally simultaneously by Zoom each Sunday. We have had between 3 and 8 children weekly. Church school curriculum alternates between following the lectionary page (gospel and readings for the day), and classic bible subjects, such as the Ten Commandments, Noah's Ark, Jesus' Baptism, etc. The classroom lesson is coupled with art work that parallels the subject matter to provide some repetition (make an impression) and to engage thought We also make ornaments for the Jesse Tree during advent and make Easter crafts!

Teachers:

- Jeff Lebert typically leads the class in readings and lessons and is invaluable. The children identify with Jeff and enjoy interaction with him.
- Catherine Chester and Caroline Chester, college and high-school kids, are periodic additions to the classroom. They are skilled art consultants that help small hands with larger tasks and discourage children from painting themselves or their siblings.
- Mitchell Chester shows up every week and has the best seat in the classroom. Right up front! His witty banter and thoughtful input to the lessons amuses and impresses himself. Only.

Respectfully submitted,
Mitch Chester



Middle School High School Formation

St James' is blessed to have a wonderful group of High Schoolers & Middle Schoolers. They often overlap and are always up for interesting challenges as they explore what it might mean to be a young Episcopalian. During our explorations, the following questions were recently asked: Who wrote the Gospels anyway? Who do you trust the most? How are we going to assemble this gingerbread house with our hands all tied together?!

We have a great group of Confirmation Candidates doing extra consideration through the Spring of 2024. Many of these kids you have been at St James' since birth and work hard to balance busy lives outside of church with time at church. When you see a young adult in church or at coffee hour, you should definitely chat with them and be impressed :)

Respectfully submitted, Dan Aramini

Adult Christian Formation

Let's define how our Adult Bible Study serves God in the words of Philip Ryken on C. S. Lewis: "the importance that C.S. Lewis placed on biblical truth for Christian discipleship. For Lewis, Holy Scripture was the supreme authority for faith and practice, and reading the Bible had life-giving influence for the Christian."

This past year, we read and discussed 'The Revelation to John', which we continued from 2022. Then, we discussed The Prophet Ezekiel, The Minor Prophet Micah and we read over the summer "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence". When we returned in the fall we read and discussed "The Episcopal Way" by Eric H. F. Law and Stephanie Spellers and started The Gospel According to John.

The blessings of this year were many, but if I had to pick one, it was "The Episcopal Way". We all learned something about the Episcopal Church's history and role in the world. We also learned why we do the things we do in an Episcopal way. We would recommend reading this book to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Episcopal Church and why and how we do things in the Episcopal way.

For 2024 we are looking forward to completing the Gospel of John and looking forward to discussing how the Old Testament Prophets are reflected in the New Testament Gospels.

Respectfully submitted, Clint Dixon

Worship Committee Report

Worship Highlights of the year included:

- Visit by Bishop Laura on January 15, 2023.
- In June we hosted 40+ people for breakfast and nearly 110 people at the outdoor Eucharist, including our friends at The Lutheran Church of St. Mark.
- In October we joined with The Lutheran Church of St. Mark and St Luke's at an outdoor service at JB Williams Park.
- A record-breaking number in attendance 188 for the 4pm Christmas Eve service and 30 people at 10pm.
- People continue to enjoy viewing the service online thanks to our streaming volunteers.
- A variety of preaching voices throughout the year during the transition with our new PIC Matt Handi, Priest Associate Don Hamer, supply clergy and our lay preachers.
- Transition back to pre-covid practices including the Healing Ministry during Eucharist, communion being distributed from the rail and a return to the common cup, still offering people options.



Stewardship Report

They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought, it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. - Jeremiah 17:8

In September, clergy and committee members attended Zoom classes sponsored by the Episcopal church discussing different ways to enrich our stewardship program. Classes focused on tailoring and personalizing campaigns to individual parish needs. Primary take-aways involved creating an annual stewardship calendar that includes unique materials for our parish.

The fall drive was generally well received with good participation across the congregation. Based on a passage from the prophet Jeremiah, the annual stewardship campaign, Rooted in Abundance, explored ways we are inspired to give because so much has been given to us.



We give because of the love we have experienced in the story of our faith. And because we are inspired by the work we can do as a community. Weekly reflections identified metaphors of trees, roots, flowers and families as examples of ways we dig deep into what nourishes us to transform that goodness into work, service, and joy in a world that needs us.

Our constant rub is between Jesus' command in scripture to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's (financial obligations) and unto God what is God's or spiritual obligations. Our present-day realities dictate that we use money to help support and finance our various ministries. For example, we do not pay our clergy, staff, and light bills with sheaves of wheat or wool from sheep or goats. Instead, each fall parishioners are encouraged to make an annual pledge for the next calendar year which allows the vestry and finance committee to better predict the church's income and guestimate what ministries we can reasonably support.

Our committee strives to encourage each of us to acknowledge that all our resources ultimately come from God and responding by returning a portion in thanksgiving back to Him. All are welcome to join us in this ministry.

Respectfully submitted, Jeannette Brown, Chair

OUTREACH

In our Baptism Covenant we commit “ to serve Christ in all persons”. In 2023 St.James’ community served Christ in many ways including Carol’s Closet, Lunch in the Park, hawkwing, Food Pantry Ministry, ETC Engaging the Community, Shawl Ministry and Blood Drive. These ministries have individual reports. Other programs include:

Glastonbury Links Together : an interfaith grass roots organization developed as the non-profit arm to support needs in the Glastonbury community. They subsidize the new self-serve Glastonbury food bank that serves 200 families per month.

Back Pack program: we work with South Congregational Church providing weekend food to children. Presently 25 students are served .

Panera Bread Ministry: On Sunday a volunteer from St. James’ picks up the left-over bread and pastries (over 50 pounds each week) . The bread is then delivered to Hands on Hartford.

Holiday Giving: We asked, and the parish delivered in many ways including a new ministry. We provided Christmas gifts to a family of 8 through Olive Branch. These families are working with DCF.

Financial Investments January-December 2023

- River East Resettlement Alliance \$ 1000
- Covenant Soup Kitchen \$ 1000
- Backpack Food Program \$ 500
- Glastonbury Food Bank \$2400.
- hawkwing \$500
- Heads Up Hartford \$500.
- Lunch in the Park \$500.
- Open Hearth \$ 500.
- Trinity Academy \$ 500.
- Episcopal Relief Fund for Maui \$ 500.



In 2024 we hope to support St. Vincent’s School in Haiti and to partner with St. Luke’s for Camp Hispanola. We will continue to respond to needs/programs that are important to our parishioners, so please let us hear from you!

Respectfully submitted, Debbie Hamer



Food Pantry Ministry

To support food insecure families in our area, throughout the year we collected unexpired non-perishable food items and took these donations to area food pantries, currently the Glastonbury Food Bank and the Manna Community Pantry (a program sponsored by Hands on Hartford). In November and December, we held special collections for Thanksgiving and Christmas, seeking to meet the needs of struggling families and to brighten their lives during the holidays. To support our brothers and sisters in Christ, members of St. James' are asked to consider adding an item or two for our food pantry ministry to their shopping cart as they do their weekly food shopping.

Respectfully submitted, Valerie Huestis

Lunch in the Park

Lunch in the Park is a ministry that provides bagged lunches following Church by the Pond, a weekly outdoor service near the Bushnell Park carousel in Hartford coordinated by Christ Church Cathedral. The celebrants are Episcopal and Lutheran clergy from Greater Hartford. About 20-50 people, many of them homeless and living in shelters, attend the service and/or gather for lunch. St. James' is one of many local ecumenical organizations that provide lunch following the service. In April and September of 2023, St. James' volunteers prepared 45-50 bag lunches containing two sandwiches with condiment packets, chips, cookies, fruit and a napkin plus bottled water. Several of the volunteers then attended the service and distributed the lunches to the attendees afterwards.

In 2024 we will participate in this ministry on June 29 th .

Respectfully submitted, Valerie Huestis

Carol's Closet Report

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God”. (Hebrews 13:16)



Carol's Closet provides paper goods and personal care items to our neighbors in need. We completed our eighth year of monthly distributions in September. The Congregational Church in South Glastonbury offers pet food and supplies at each of our monthly distributions. At each Carol's Closet, healing prayers are offered. Many of our guests look forward to these prayers.

The following are some statistics from the Closet:

- Since Carol's Closet opened, we have served 11,198 individuals.
- In 2023 Carol's Closet gave 5,370 pieces of merchandise in 938 bags.
- In 2023 we served 1,484 individuals, averaging 124 per month.
- To date we have given 39,716 pieces of merchandise in 6,343 bags.

Carol's Closet receives numerous donations of household goods and clothing. Everything that is donated is also offered to our guests. Everything we give to our guests is free of charge.

We continue to collaborate with the faith-based community in Glastonbury who devotedly offer needed items, and financial support. Our partners in this ministry are:

- Buckingham Congregational Church
- Congregational Church in South Glastonbury
- First Church of Christ Congregational
- The Lutheran Church of St. Mark

Carol's Closet (continued)

The Glastonbury Food Bank and Glastonbury Social Services are community organizations we have networked and collaborated with to identify individuals and families who would benefit from Carol's Closet. Word of mouth by our guests continues to be our best marketing tool.

We are anticipating continual growth in 2024, since we are still realizing growth each month. In 2023 we had 71 new guests. As an ongoing ministry with constant financial needs to purchase product, along with the growth we have seen in 2023, we will continue to need and seek monetary and product donations. We express our thanks to all who have embraced and generously supported this ministry through contributions of products, financial support, labor, and prayers.

Submitted by: Marie Dixon, Director

hawkwing Christmas Toy & Gift Drive

hawkwing is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Glastonbury that is dedicated to changing the lives and healing the hearts of the Cheyenne River Sioux/Lakota Tribe in South Dakota. In October and early November we collected Christmas gifts for the children (toddler through elementary school) and teens (high school) of the tribe. The photo shows all the toys and gifts donated by our parishioners to brighten their Christmas Day. Old and young alike helped box all of these donated items after church on Sunday November 12th, and Rochelle Ripley (founder of hawkwing) met us at the hawkwing warehouse the following Tuesday to accept our Christmas gifts. She was thrilled and thankful to receive all these donations on behalf of her people, and all the boxes & bags were loaded onto a tractor trailer on Saturday November 18th to be transported to the reservation.

To quote Margaret Mead:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Respectfully submitted, Valerie Huestis



River East Resettlement Alliance

The River East Resettlement Alliance (RERA) had an extremely busy year. We continued to work with our Syrian family, supporting them through many transitions and life situations including serious health issues for the mom. RERA has dwindled in size from our original starting point of about 30 members from various organizations, including St. James, to about 10 active members. Our St. James participants include myself and Amy Haynes.

This year, the triplets graduated from Manchester High School with high honors, worked a summer job as counselors at a church camp across the street from their house, and completed their first semester at CCSU earning many A's. The family's lease expired in October on their Manchester apartment and they decided to move to New Britain so the girls could be close to CCSU. We looked at a dozen apartments with them and completed applications on several, finally finding one they could afford with a lovely landlord who adores the family and within walking distance of CCSU. They moved in mid-October and have settled in nicely. Mom and Dad are still working in Manchester and commute to their jobs every day in their car. They are progressing toward independence, however still need our help as the parents have not made much progress on their English skills.

RERA is looking to expand and add members so that they can take on another refugee family. If St. James wishes to continue as an active part of RERA, additional volunteers will be needed as neither I nor Amy will be continuing on with a new family. It has been a very rewarding experience and we both highly recommend it and are happy to speak with anyone considering joining this ministry.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Gleason Finance Chair, RERA

Engaging the Community Report

Late in 2022 we began a new ministry called Engaging the Community aka etc with the intent to engage the residents of Glastonbury and its surrounding towns in hospitality and fellowship on a monthly basis. In 2023 we offered the following events, inviting the public to visit St. James' and to experience the compassion and caring of our faith community:

- February – “Caregiving in 2023” by Gayle Kataja, MS, RNC, retired Director of Education and Quality at Connecticut Community Care, Inc.
- March – Celtic Vespers with a special theme on St. Francis
- April – Celtic Vespers with a special theme on John Muir
- May – “Estate Planning and the Probate Court Process” by The Rev. Dr. Donald Hamer, Priest Associate at St. James' and former judge for the Probate District of Glastonbury.
- September - a presentation on hawkwing, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to changing the lives and healing the hearts of the Cheyenne River Sioux/Lakota Tribe in South Dakota by Rochelle Ripley, founder of hawkwing,
- October – Celtic Vespers featuring music of Wild Notes and women’s choir

Currently a Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED course, Earth Day presentations, a June concert by Wild Notes to benefit hawkwing, a Celtic Vespers service on St. Patrick’s Day in March and other events/presentations are in the planning stages. Members of St. James' are encouraged to invite family, friends and neighbors to join them for these fellowship events.

Respectively submitted,

Valerie Huestis



Lay Delegates Report Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut Annual Convention October 2023

ECCT's 239 th Annual Convention was held in Hartford on October 27 th -28 th , 2023. the .Reverends Don Hamer and Matt Handi as well as Lay Delegates Dan Aramini and Lisa Gleason were in attendance.. Information about the Convention are available on the ECCT website here:<https://www.episcopalct.org/annual-convention/>



The business of the day and a half convention included the voting on and approval of 8 Resolutions. We were blessed to be among the voting members who approved two Resolutions presented by the Task Force on Reparations, led by our own Rev. Don Hamer.

First, the Convention approved the appropriation of \$20,000 for an Historical Analysis of ECCT Endowments and to Support Congregations Desiring to Join in the Work of Racial Reparations. This means \$10,000 will be appropriated to fund a professional historical analysis of the sources of endowed funds to determine if any represent financial gain derived directly or indirectly through the slave trade or slavery. Another \$10,000 will be appropriated in support of congregations wishing to enter this work.

Second, the Convention acknowledged the 175 th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in CT and the pain and injustice of the more than 200-year legacy of slavery and the complicity of the Episcopal Church, its leadership & members. Further, the Convention approved the appropriation of \$2.5M from unrestricted endowed funds as initial funding to generate investment income for an ECCT Reparations Fund. The Fund will be used to achieve the goals of racial reconciliation, justice, and the healing of wounds caused by chattel slavery and its continuing impact on the people of color in the state.

Additionally, we passed a resolution Repudiating Discriminatory Legislation and Harmful Rhetoric Targeted at Transgender, Non-binary, and Gender Non-conforming Persons. The Rev Matt Handi led the effort to commend the ECCT resolution to the national General Convention in 2024.

It was an honor to be part of these historic votes to move the ECCT beyond talk and toward action.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Gleason & Dan Aramini



Flower Guild Report

The Flower Guild at St James' is responsible for flowers on the altar each week, plantings outside and in the foyer and special occasions like Easter and Christmas. We each enjoy our special ministry.

We follow the seasons on the church calendar. It is a very personal mission- working in the quiet peaceful church and bringing out the beauty of the season. We also like to help generous people who contribute to have special flowers altar to celebrate birthdays anniversaries or a life well lived.

This year decorating for Christmas Eve was a bit complicated when 4 Advent and Christmas Eve fell on the same day, but it was a joyful time decorating the church with the help of many parishioners and delicious appetizers by Jeannette Brown. Many hands made light work. Hope we can do it together again for special celebrations in the coming year.

We also have ideas for creating a welcoming entrance to our church with plants, flowers and wreaths during the year. We added one new member this year and would love to welcome others.

Respectfully submitted, Caryl Donovan

Altar Guild Report

For this past year of 2023, the members and adjunct members of St. James' Altar Guild continued to support the weekly services of the church. Each Sunday a team was responsible for the changing of altar hangings according to the liturgical season, care of fair linens, vestments, candles, wine, wafers, and any others needs requested by the presiding clergy. In keeping with recommended diocesan cautions, until the first week of Advent, consecrated wine was distributed only in the recyclable, plastic communion cups. The common cup was again, offered beginning on the first week of Advent. To keep our services as inclusive as possible, St. James' continues to offer gluten-free wafers and grape juice.

In 2023 the Rev. Don Hamer or supply clergy offered Holy Eucharist at 10 a.m. on most Sundays. In July the parish welcomed the Rev. Matt Handi as priest-in-charge. Service time was modified to 10:15 to accommodate the new priest's commitment at St. Luke's. Christmas Eve services were held at 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. with a Christmas Day service at St. Lukes'. In the spring, thanks to a generous gift from a faithful parishioner, the altar guild purchased a new green chasuble and stole to match the green superfrontal purchased in 2022.

Cherie Cooper and I extend grateful thanks to all team members who prepared and cleaned-up after services each Sunday. We welcome any parishioner to this quiet, contemplative and rewarding ministry. Please speak to any current member of the Altar Guild if you would like to join us.

Respectfully submitted,

Cherie Cooper and Patricia Goodrich



Pastoral Care Report

St.James' is blessed with many individuals who care for others when the need arises. Regular meetings of this group of ministries resumed in 2023. Here are the ways pastoral care happened in 2023:

Prayer Tree – in 2023, thousands of prayers were prayed by the Prayer Tree, a group of individuals who pray in their homes. This group prays for confidential needs, the names mentioned in Prayers of the People, and the requests placed in the Prayer Box, located in the entrance to the sanctuary.

Lay Eucharistic Visitors – these are individuals who are licensed and trained to bring communion to people's homes or bedsides who cannot attend church. Forty one visits happened in 2023.

Healing Ministry – the return of this wonderful ministry happened in 2023 as volunteers provide individual laying on of hands to people in the sanctuary after communion and during Carol's Closet.

Meals of Comfort – when requested, individuals provide meals to someone who is ill or isolated. This act warms not just their stomachs but their hearts for those who receive the meals and those who make and deliver them. These volunteers provide food for Carol's Closet Saturdays, Blood Drives, and parish meetings

In 2024, there is a dream to resume note making and writing to people in need and to hold meetings in person throughout the year to pray for people they are serving.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Dunston and Gail Lebert



Communications Committee Report

The Communications Committee works to regularly spread the way that God is working in our community to all - people who are active , to those who are interested and those who are curious .

In 2023 we tackled a variety of activities including:

- Happenings, our weekly email was “born” working with Dawn Hardwick our Parish Administrator The new email system, Constant Contact, makes all communication done via email easier to post, simpler to track, and is much easier to read. Each week we send to 244 email boxes. 67% are opened (compared national average of open rate for faith based communities of 45%)
- Regular Facebook postings increased our followers to over 600.
- Jim Barry created the Sunday handout that each week provides service information and unique content targeted specifically at visitors.
- Over 20 media mentions reached out and educating the seeker.
- 15-foot banner was hung facing Main Street

It is a blessing to hear when our communication been helpful bringing people into St. James’ or that our own St. James’ community has learned something new. Whether it is hearing that someone attends Celtic Vespers because of the Facebook post, or amazement at the Outreach we do based on a handout or seeing a press release in the Glastonbury Citizen sharing our event with the community. Communication blessings abound.

Our dream is to create more effective ways to reach people and share our love of Christ and the spiritual welcome we offer to all who are seeking a deeper connection with God. In 2024 we plan to launch a new St. James’ logo, a revised website, and more. We welcome feedback and ideas.

Respectfully submitted, Gail Lebert





Newcomers Report

The highlight of 2023 was the Newcomers' luncheon that was held after worship on Sunday, June 4th. Forty three families were invited, because we had not held a gathering of Newcomers since before Covid.

Vestry members and Rev. Don Hamer welcomed about 25 adults and children who attended the luncheon. It was wonderful for us all to get to know each other better, and to learn more about the church community and beliefs. We always learn from each other.

While it is everyone's role to be welcoming to all who come to worship with us, a dream for 2024 is to re establish an active committee to welcome visitors and encourage the community to worship with us.



Editor's note: Thanks to the 20+ writers and photographers who collected information, wrote reports, and took photos chronicling our life together for this Annual Report. Thanks be to God for a blessed 2023!