



2024

# Annual Report

St. James'  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH in  
Glastonbury



# Table of Content



**Cover photo captions listed clockwise starting at the top left side:**

Pastor Cheryl Hoffman and Rev. Matt Handi presiding at the Joint Worship Service at JB Williams Park

St. James' and St. Luke's apple picking with Bishop Laura at Belltown Orchards

Coffee Hour buddies

Carol's Closet volunteers

Coffee Hour generations

St. James' and St. Luke's friends and family at the rained out Yard Goats game

Welcome to the newly baptized

Message from PIC The Rev. Matt Handi	3-4
Priest Associate's Report	5
Senior Warden's Report	6
Junior Warden's Report	7
Treasurer's Report	8-11
Deficit Reduction Report	12
Music Ministry Report	13
Christian Formation Report	14-15
Worship Report	16
Stewardship Report	17-18
Outreach Report	19-21
Carol's Closet	22-23
Backpack Report	24
Engaging the Community Report	25
Episcopal Church of CT Lay Delegate Report	26
Flower Guild Report	27
Altar Guild Report	28
Pastoral Care Report	29
Communications Report	30
Newcomers Report	31
Shawl Ministry Report	32
Blood Drive Report	33

## Priest-In-Charge Report

Dear Friends in Christ; dear saints:

As I think about this past year, I think of all of you. This was a good year for the parish, our deficit was lower than expected; our pledging was higher than expected. We are beginning to turn what was a somewhat tenuous financial situation into one that is improving. While we will not be presenting a balanced budget in 2025, we will be presenting one with a lower expected deficit than the one projected in 2024. So many of you answered our stewardship campaign's request that increase your 2025 pledge and I am so grateful that you did!

We also fed each other at coffee hours and men's group dinners. More importantly, we fed those starving for food and starving for connection to God. We made and handed out sandwiches with those who hunger at Bushnell Park. Through our outreach work we gathered boxes and boxes of food to be distributed at the Glastonbury Food Bank. Through our work with Glastonbury Links Together, we were able to donate even more food to the food bank and supported the feeding of school children through their backpack program each month of the school year.

Our Average Sunday Attendance remained steady and we were able to feed each other spiritually in person and online via the hard work of our dedicated streaming team. More importantly, we gathered week after week to worship together a God we love beside people we love and then went out in the world to share that love. This is a place of love and what was always clear to me becomes more and more obvious as my tenure here grows longer: this love is real, sincere, and holy.

We continued to grow into a model of two parishes being served by one priest. We gathered to share Morning Prayer together on Fifth Sundays, a service we are so blessed to be led by our lay celebrants and lay preachers. It was such a joy for me to be present in the congregation worshipping with you all. We shared pancakes together on Shrove Tuesday, we shared shelter together when we took cover at what would be a rained-out Yard Goats game. We shared in book studies and pageants. I am excited to help grow this relationship, following it wherever God is leading us to be.

Now, there are concerns that we need to address now and not later. There is that deficit I spoke of earlier and while it is projected to be smaller than last year, it is still there and it is still eating into our cash reserves. To address this deficit, I formed a deficit reduction task force charged with finding ways to reduce our anticipated short fall. Ed Crow, Valerie Huestis, Rick Edwards, and Bob Dugger agreed to serve on the task force and we are blessed that they answered the call to serve.



## Priest-in-Charge Message (continued)

The full Deficit Reduction Task Force report can be found on Page 12 but I will summarize here: The task force proposed three main ideas to reduce the deficit: Reduce expenses, increase revenue, and increase membership. We will be looking at all expenses over the coming year to better understand where any reductions might occur.

We have also begun to investigate increasing revenue through offering up space in the parish to be rented by outside entities. While we have had some nibbles thus far, we actually had one bite! Mothers Against Drunk Driving are now renting our parish hall quarterly and we are realizing income from that relationship. It is a small amount of rent realized per year, but it is not insignificant. To support this effort, your vestry has approved the use of Joining Jesus in the Missional Age Capital Campaign funds to go towards building improvements and improving energy efficiency throughout the parish.

The third point, increasing parish membership, is an important one. Too often, we can look at the trends throughout most churches and see decline. We can look at that decline and shrug our shoulders saying, “there is nothing to be done.” Or we can share the message of the gospel in our lives and in our work and in our actions. I choose the latter and I think so too do all of you! We will focus on programs bringing people through the doors; we will continue popular programs such as Celtic Vespers and we will try new ones focusing on children and families.

Ultimately, though, it is on each of us to ask. Ask your neighbor. Ask your friend. Ask those searching for something missing in their lives. Ask. Ask them all to come to church. To join you on a Sunday. To join you at Vespers. To join you at a Yard Goats game. We will only grow if we extend ourselves by sharing Christ’s message of love and acceptance for all.

Friends, it has been a good year here at St. James’ and I am blessed to serve as your priest. I am grateful for all you!

Faithfully,  
The Rev. Matt Handi  
Priest-in-Charge.



## Priest Associate's Report

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as Priest Associate at St. James', where my family joined when we moved back to Glastonbury in 1985 and where I was supported through the ordination process. My role as a retired clergy person is to support the congregation as requested by Fr. Matt. Because of the dire shortage of clergy in Connecticut (and really throughout all of the so-called "mainline" churches just about everywhere) I have also been serving for the past 18 months as Interim Pastor at Grace Episcopal Church in Windsor. I have been able to arrange my schedule such that I am blessed to officiate the Service of Holy Eucharist generally on the fourth Sunday of each month when Fr. Matt is scheduled to be away.

One highlight in 2024 was the Pet Lollapalooza in October, when St James' invited the community to bring their pets to be blessed. This event commemorates St. Francis, the patron saint of animals. It was wonderful to meet and pray with many different pets and their owners.

Fr. Matt and I have discussed the possibility of my doing some sort of adult formation work, perhaps in conjunction with Grace, Windsor in the coming year. It is always a joy to be back with my St. James' family and I look forward to growing with you in the coming year.

Your brother in Christ, Don+



## Senior Warden's Report

It has been another successful year of worship, service, outreach, and fellowship at St. James'. Most Sundays were led by Rev. Matt, other Sundays by Rev. Don Hamer, and yet other Sundays by supply clergy or John O'Donnell (our resident Morning Prayer liturgist). We together have communally worshiped and shared inspirational moments in our sanctuary, and even in the great outdoors. As always, we are thankful for the service and commitment of our lay readers, chalice bearers, ushers and the ever faithful Altar Guild members who make our worship space so beautiful and refreshing. Our services were blessed with wonderful, varied music from our Minister of Music Jim Barry and the Choir members, not to mention special musical offerings of jazz, Celtic music, and fabulous instrumentalists. To complement the inspiring homilies of ordained clergy, we also enjoyed the differing perspectives and interpretations of our many lay homilists. We successfully streamed our services to participants at home through the services of our faithful video technicians. We also continued the tradition of several ecumenical services with other faith communities in the area, and of course enjoy our common services and activities with St. Luke's just down the road. Lay eucharist ministry brought communion to those not able to attend services in person.

Our youth continue to be served in our Church School and teen ministries, and we enjoyed the help of our nursery attendant, providing options for families. Giving young people the chance to also participate in worship has been a real blessing.

Our outreach and service ministries continue to serve the needs of communities near and far, from Carol's Closet, donating to the local food bank, Church by the Pond in Hartford, supporting a school in Haiti, and the Lakota Community in South Dakota, to name just some. We provide space for several AA meetings each week, a vital service to the community, and we had special offerings of school backpacks, the shawl ministry and families who received children's Christmas gifts. The men's dinners provided welcome fellowship and comradery for male parishioners and others in the community. We also offered interesting topical evenings open to all, on subjects relevant to our daily lives. Book groups and regular Bible study sessions have opened our minds and hearts.

Your officers and Vestry, as well other parishioners who have stepped up to address financial planning challenges (some of which have stemmed from some turnover in our bookkeeping personnel) serve as an inspiration to all of us, and remind us that serving God's kingdom on earth often requires practical skills and genuine commitment, all of which they have demonstrated in great abundance. Many thanks to all who have served, and those who will offer to serve. Please consider offering your talents and skills; there are roles that do not require significant time commitments, but that can be so rewarding – and you get a wonderful opportunity to get to know some of your fellow parishioners better. Christian community includes all of us!

## Junior Warden's Report

Another year has come and gone. There is much to report on the “what we got done this year” side. Of course there is also a list of “opportunities”. After you read over these two lists, please contact me if you have any questions. And, for the opportunities, let me know of additional items and/or how you may be willing to help. (dbgardner79@gmail.com)



### Accomplishments

- Though it took almost all year to finalize and approve our energy efficiency project, funded by the Joining Jesus funds, we expect to have the improved insulation, sealing, and lighting conversions (fluorescent to LED) completed by the middle of February. (See Opportunities below for the heating system component.)
- Two elusive roof leaks in the Parish Hall roof seem to have finally been fixed.
- The vestry committed additional Joining Jesus funds to renovating the Meeting Room (the room at the south end of the downstairs hallway), allowing us to advertise it for rental use.
- The room upstairs that looks out over the atrium was completely cleared out of a significant amount of storage, file cabinets, and Art-in-the-Abbey support material.
- The room directly behind the “Jesus” window was also completely emptied of mostly archival material and documentation.
- A significant collection of historical records, that for years have ended up being stored in several places, were all brought to a central location and reviewed to keep or properly dispose.

### Opportunities

- The landscaping around the building needs a point person for ongoing maintenance.
- The portion of our central heating system that is controlled by compressed air (primarily serving the Parish Hall building, upstairs and down) remains in need of an upgrade, repair, or modernization. Some creative improvements were made; however, it remains inefficient and less than desirable.
- The mortar or pointing of the church's brownstone exterior has deteriorated in many areas leaving holes for moisture to enter. A detailed assessment was conducted, and we are awaiting a proposal for repairs. This is another good candidate for the use of some Joining Jesus funds.
- The Parish Hall needs a spruce-up, including refinishing the wood floor, painting, and repairing the room dividers. As with the Meeting Room our aim is to attract paying users.
- Several areas of the sanctuary walls need repainting and possible repair

Respectfully submitted, Don Gardner

## Treasurer's Report

The year again presented foreseen and unforeseen challenges as the year began with an expected \$31,000 budget deficit for the first full year with our new Priest- in- Charge. For the Treasurer, the year was further complicated by the lack of consistency with our bookkeeper and an added development when our bank account was compromised during the first quarter. By the summer, financial information became a continuous struggle. With all of the bad news, God would provide good news as members of our parish displayed their generosity in significantly increasing their pledge payments lowering the deficit amount significantly improving our outlook. And more good news, Valerie Huestis stepped up donating a considerable amount of time in supporting the record keeping and analysis needs plus we were fortunate to gain Kate Botelho's assistance as an interim bookkeeper, who stepped in and stabilized bookkeeping during her term.

### 2024 Highlights:

- The Every Member Canvas resulted in 2025 pledges of \$207,700 from 67 pledge units and a 9% increase over pledges of \$191,000 and 61 pledge units for 2024.
- We were fortunate again to experience a market increase that allowed us to withdraw \$15,000 from our permanent endowment account and yet experience growth from \$313,700 at 12/31/2023 to \$335,900 at 12/31/2024 excluding the 2024 contributions.
- The balance of the St James loan with the Diocese was \$28,600 at 12/31/2024 at an attractive rate of 3.5%, which will be repaid in a year and a half.
- Withdrawals from the Joining Jesus Campaign for 2024 were used to add to the permanent endowment, to pay Diocesan Loan interest and to fund energy improvement costs.

### The Year in Review - 2024:

St James Vestry approved an operating budget for 2024 with total budgeted expenses of \$302,200 up from \$280,800 for 2023 due to a planned increase in rector expense reflecting a full year for the Priest in Charge. A deficit budget was planned with revenues of \$271,000. Budgeted revenues comprised:

- Pledge Offerings: \$191,000 (\$205,200 received)
- Other Offerings: \$12,000 (\$5,500 received)
- Holiday Offerings: \$6,000 (\$6,200 received)
- Other Operating Income: \$47,000 (\$42,000 parking rental, \$2,000 facility use donations, \$3,000 interest income) (\$50,200 received)
- Permanent Endowment: \$15,000 (\$15,000 received)



## Treasurer's Report (cont.)

St. James ended 2024 with approximately \$52,300 remaining in the General Fund after beginning the year with \$50,100. Parish members provided important support with actual pledge receipts exceeding budgeted pledges by \$14,200. Other and Holiday Offerings fell short of the budgeted amounts by \$6,300. The Wholefoods lease that expires on 10/31/2025 generated significant revenue with \$42,000 in payments, 15% of revenue. Taking advantage of the current rate environment, treasury bills and notes and a savings account earned approximately \$5,000 during 2024.

For 2024, as usual, the majority of the budgeted operating expenses (87% of expenses for 2024) consisted of employee expenses and supply services, \$169,600, facilities expenses, \$65,700, and the Diocesan pledge, \$27,500. Total operating expenses budgeted in 2024 were \$302,200 and St James ended 2024 by actually expending approximately \$286,800. Expenses for 2024 were under budget by \$15,900 due mainly to a reduction in supply priest/organist costs of \$2,500 and a reduction in bookkeeper payroll, \$7,500. The remaining reductions were spread over the other expense categories. As a result, actual revenues for 2024 of \$282,900 were lower than actual expenses of \$286,800 leaving a deficit of \$(3,900).

St. James received \$7,200 of Joining Jesus income during 2024 and spent a total of \$37,700 of the funds. Expenditures were for Diocesan loan interest, \$1,400, energy improvement costs, \$5,500, and a contribution to the permanent endowment, \$30,800. After receipts and expenditures, the balance within the Joining Jesus Fund was \$139,100 at 12/31/2024. Excess funds were invested in short term US Treasury instruments to allow the funds to gain a return, approximately 5,200 during 2024, and provide additional amounts for future Joining Jesus activities. Joining Jesus pledge payments of \$396,800, which amounts include Camp Washington contributions, have been received with the remaining balance of pledges to be received totaling \$7,900 as of 12/31/2024.

### The Year Ahead – 2025:

St. James budget indicates total income of \$292,700 for 2025. Budgeted income will be funded with offerings of \$207,700 from pledges and \$14,000 of estimated income from plate and holiday offerings. Additional revenue of \$71,000 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 \$22,500 and \$2,500 from interest on treasury bills/notes. The Permanent Endowment balance was approximately \$367,900 as of 12/31/2024.

Pledged offerings budgeted for 2025 of \$207,700 are 8.7% above the amount budgeted for 2024. See the next page for a three year trend of pledging income.

## Treasurer's Report (cont.)

In summary, St. James had planned for a \$31,100 shortfall in its budget for 2024. Due to the generosity of our parishioners, actual results ended in a deficit of \$3,900. Pledges for 2025 are up from 2024, and, although the budgeted deficit is much less than last year's 2023 deficit of \$31,000, a budget deficit of \$16,900 is still anticipated. Excess income from 2023 and residue from the earlier SBA Loan forgiveness provided a \$52,300 General Fund balance at 12/31/2024 that will be used to fund the deficit budget. It is important for the church's long term sustainability to minimize or eliminate the deficits.

Concerning handling of the bookkeeping and record keeping, we will be looking for a bookkeeper to replace Kate, who ended her assignment with us. Fortunately, Rick Edwards has offered to provide some assistance with Valerie Huestis in maintaining our financial records as we renew efforts to find a part time bookkeeper. Thanks to all of you for your support of our parish.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Dugger, Treasurer

## Pledge Income

2022	<b>\$234,900</b>
2023	\$208,000
2024	\$205,200
2025*( Pledged Amount)	\$207,700

INCOME & EXPENSES			
	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2025 Budget
Operating Income			
Pledge Offerings	\$191,000	\$205,234	\$207,700
Other Offerings	\$18,000	\$11,621	\$14,000
Facilities	\$44,000	\$45,128	\$46,000
Endowment	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$22,500
Interest	\$3,000	\$5,047	\$2,500
Other Operating Income	0	\$840	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$271,000</b>	<b>\$282,870</b>	<b>\$292,700</b>
Expenses			
Rector Compensation	\$83,500	\$81,806	\$87,600
Supply Clergy (Organist)	\$5,700	\$3,223	\$4,200
All other Staffing	\$80,400	\$73,405	\$85,200
Office Expenses	\$23,800	\$23,252	\$19,500
Diocese Contribution	\$27,500	\$27,549	\$27,700
St James Outreach	\$5,500	\$5,431	\$5,500
Facilities Expense	\$65,700	\$65,127	\$69,200
Commission Expenses	\$9,100	\$6,104	\$9,700
Other Operating Expense	\$1,000	\$942	\$1,000
TOTAL	\$302,200	\$286,839	\$309,600
Difference Income vs Expenses	(\$31,200)	(\$3,969)	(\$16,900)

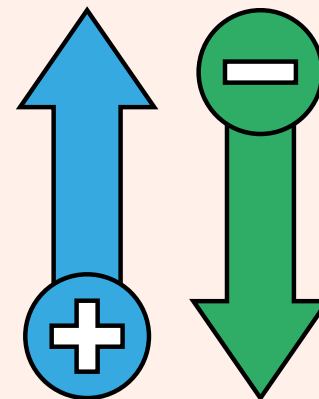
## Deficit Reduction Task Force Report

Committee members: Rick Edwards, Bob Dugger, Valerie Huestis, Ed Crow

Three opportunities to impact deficit: 1) increase income, 2) reduce expenses and 3) increase parish membership

### ▣ **Increase income**

- o rent parish hall and downstairs meeting room and investigate other rental opportunities
- o encourage/solicit donations to endowment fund
- o hold 1-2 fundraisers during the year
- o conduct every member canvas as part of 2025 stewardship campaign
- o increase endowment withdrawal rate to 6%
- o research and apply for grants offered by ECCT
- o sell surplus church items and/or selective items donated by parishioners via auction, online marketplace, etc.
- o increase parking lot rental fee in next Whole Foods contract negotiation
- o hold another capital campaign in 2-3 years to increase our endowment fund balance and generate additional income for annual withdrawals



### ▣ **Reduce expenses**

- o ask parishioners to volunteer for selective renovation and maintenance tasks
- o review both recurring and periodic expenses for their necessity, level of service, alternatives, etc.

### ▣ **Increase parish membership**

- o invite people to visit St. James' in addition to services by offering programs such as a children's story hour, Silent Book Club, activities/events for singles, etc. on a regularly scheduled basis
- o establish a ministry to contact/visit fellow parishioners who haven't attended recently
- o solicit volunteers for the Newcomers Committee and to take a welcome basket to newcomers
- o increase involvement/sponsorship in community-wide events



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 2024




Lenten Compline attended by Men's Dinner Group (March)

Easter Day (April) Choir and instrumentalists



Red Letter Day Contemporary music (August)



Jazz Sunday (June)



Advent Lessons & Carols Adult Choir and guest singers (December)



Christmas Eve with Adult Choir, harp, & instrumentalists (December)



Celtic Vespers (March and November) Women's Choir and Wild Notes instrumentalists



Women's Choir sings at Seabury (December)



Hymn Festival with five Glastonbury choirs 110+ performers (May)



## Christian Formation (Sunday School) Report

Sunday School is held from the Prelude until the Peace every week, when we join the congregation for the offertory and communion. At the K-4 age level, we aim to build basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity and to instill that Christianity is an every-day thing and not just for Sundays. The curriculum is sometimes centered around the Gospel for the day and sometimes explores classic New Testament and Old Testament stories (Noah and the Great Flood, Ten Commandments, (anything starring Charleton Heston), John the Baptist, Jesus' Miracles, Easter, Pentecost, etc.)

Teachers:

Jeff Lebert reads stories from his extensive and personally donated collection of Bible Story Books (many series and volumes). Jeff is a true gift to the children. He is warm, affable, and is just a big kid himself! His trivia questions keep us all laughing!

Mitchell is glad to have the patience to endure the blessings of working with kids (it is very rewarding) and is the minister of snacks. Mitchell generally prepares lessons that follow the Gospel of the Day or seasonal church events.

Hopes and optimism for 2025 is that as the 4<sup>th</sup> graders move up with the MS+5 gang next year, that they remember, and share some of the lessons learned during their K-4 years.

Respectfully submitted, Mitch Chester



## **Middle School High School Formation Report**

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 2025. Many of these kids 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 Report**

Why is it important for Adult Bible Study? It is important for many reasons. First, learning things you didn't know about God, his word and second, spiritual growth. Plus it's fun and instructive learning how others interpret God's word. This year we finished up from the previous year, the study of The Gospel of John. Then, Habakuk (theme, faith in the face of chaos) and started on the thirteen Pauline Epistles. We finished Ephesians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, Philemon, First and Second Corinthians and First Timothy. For our summer reading "Companions on the Episcopal Way (Church's Teachings for a Changing World, Book 9, Conversations about the History, Theology, Social Witness, Ethics, Ministry, Scripture, Worship, Companionship and Conversation with God, Yourself, The Community, The Neighborhood and My Enemy all in the context of The Episcopal Way).

Respectfully submitted - Clint Dixon

## Worship Committee Report

The year included:

**Strong preaching:** A variety of preaching voices throughout the year including: our priest-in-charge the Reverend Matt Handi, Priest Associate the Reverend Don Hamer, supply clergy and our lay preachers Dan Aramini, Clint Dixon, Fred Faulkner, Gail Lebert, John O'Donnell, and Erin Perrelli. Graduating High School Senior Caroline Chester also preached on Youth Sunday in June.

**Traditions:** A new tradition of the Alleluia banner that was created by the Sunday School class children was continued in 2024. The banner is carried out during the church service before Ash Wednesday and returns in a procession on Easter Sunday. Another tradition of the dove was carried out in front of the procession at Pentecost.

**Readings:** In the summer we began using pre produced handouts that offer people the opportunity to take the Collect and Readings home with them.

**Streaming:** One might call them our Virtual Vergers, the volunteers who help to record and stream our services each week. Their services help our prayers, and music and liturgy to reach anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

**Outdoor Worship:** We continued to join with The Lutheran Church of St. Mark and St. Luke's for two outdoor services. One was held in our parking lot in June and was combined with music from Hot Cats Jazz band and the second in September was at JB Williams Park.

**Services:** Seven children were baptized and one wedding was celebrated in 2024. On the 5th Sundays St. James' and St. Luke's held a Joint Morning Prayer Service.





## Stewardship Report

This year's annual stewardship campaign, Walk in Love, explored ways we are inspired to love others because God loved us first. We give because of the love we have experienced in our journey in our journey of our faith. And because we are inspired by the work we can do as a community.

“Walk in Love” the offertory sentence begins, “as Christ loved us...” These words are said at the pivotal moment in our liturgy as we move from the reading of and response to the Word – into the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is affecting to observe that we mark this moment of transition with an invitation to walk in love: this is something we cannot do alone – it implies connection and community. Whether we walk with our children or our spouse or rely on the help of a friend or neighbor to come to church, we come together as a community bringing our gifts forward; first the bread and wine followed by offering plates, food donations and finally ourselves. When we gather in love, bless, break, and share our gifts and ourselves with the world, we bring healing and transformation to our world.

Each fall St. James' 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 guesstimate what ministries we can reasonably support. The fall drive was well received with good participation. In response to Reverend Matt's invitation to increase our annual pledge by 10% if possible, 77% of our congregation pledged an increase to support the ministry of St. James. Our pledged amount for 2024 from 61 parishioners totaled \$194,282. Pledged amounts for the 2025 campaign from 67 parishioners totaled: \$207,716. This includes 6 new pledgers supporting our ministry here.

St. James' parishioners responded very well to the campaign that funds 2025. Several members also shared their thoughts about where they recognized God walking with them. As we walk on our own faith journeys, let us continue to look for evidence of God's footprints in our lives.

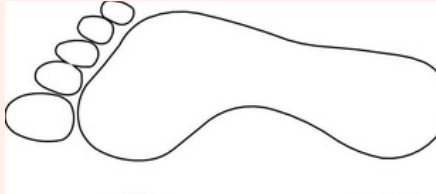
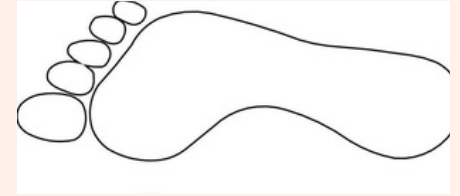
Respectfully submitted, Jeannette Brown, Chair



# Where do you see God walking with you?

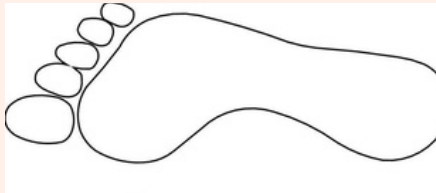
Parishioners answered the question below as part of the Stewardship campaign.

**“When I was unemployed and down to my last dollar, while walking a \$20 bill landed at my feet and I knew it was God’s hand. The following week I was hired by a great company. God is SO good.”**



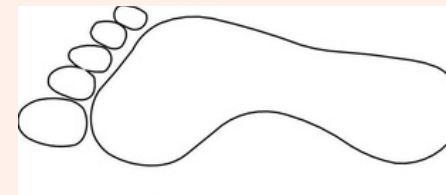
**“I see God when I see people helping people, especially during the great times of need as the recent flooding and hurricanes. These are the times God brings us together to support and love our neighbors who are strangers.”**

**“After my husband, Mother, and Father passed away within 3 years, I was searching for peace. I came to St. James’ and was immediately welcomed. I felt the love of a community in my time of need. St. James’ became my family that day. ”**



**“I felt God with me when my friend was killed in a car accident when I was age 14. In the midst of my grief, the stability and HIS love gave me a calm and perspective that allowed me to heal.”**

**“When I had heart surgery I was overwhelmed with the grace of God. So many people from St. James’ and other parts of my life were overflowing with kindness, prayers and help. God was definitely there!”**



**“I love the phrase of “Walking in Love”. It reminds me of walking in nature, where God always feels close by.”**

**“I think I feel God’s presence when friends and family supported us at the time of my parents’ deaths.”**

## Outreach Report

Outreach action in 2024 provided help to people in need. The actions included financial support for organizations from the St. James' budget and from individuals in our community. There were many volunteers who gave their talent and resources. We want to respond to the needs around us and the ones that matter to you. Please let us hear from you!

### **Food Ministries are a large part of the Outreach work and finances including:**

***Glastonbury Food Bank and Manna:*** ongoing food collections. Non-perishable food items are collected for the Glastonbury Food Bank and for Manna, food pantry at Hands on Hartford in Hartford.

***Panera Bread Ministry:*** each Sunday a volunteer from St. James' picks up the left-over bread and pastries. The bread is then delivered on Monday to "Hands on Hartford". We routinely bring over 50 pounds of bread every week!  
(See separate report for information on Lunch in the Park)

### **Seasonal Outreach efforts include:**

***Back to School Back Packs:*** back packs and \$30 gift cards were collected for Glastonbury Social Services in August 2024 and distributed to Glastonbury school-aged children. We delivered 17 backpacks and 20 gift cards for school supplies.

***Pet Lollapalooza:*** planned by Becky Hoyt. It was quite an event! There were vendors, a Memory Board, a bake sale and of course Blessing of the Animals. The proceeds (\$330 dollars) went to the two non-profits that attended: CT Humane Society and Protectors of Animals.

***Turkeys for Thanksgiving:*** the parish donated and delivered fifteen \$25 gift cards to purchase turkeys.

## Outreach Report ( cont.)

**Christmas Family Giving:** gifts were purchased for a family in need. Before Christmas, a small group of us had the pleasure of meeting with Debbie, the mother of our Christmas family. Debbie's family was assigned to us by Jackie Ford, Director of The Olive Branch. The Olive Branch is a part of DCF in CT. Debbie shared her story with us and told us how much DCF helped her make the changes required to bring her twin daughters back home. There were tears shed, smiles,

and laughter as well. I like to think of what we experienced as a "God Moment". Thank you to everyone who participated in the gift of giving this year. You made a difference! This ministry was coordinated by Marie Dixon and Debbie Hamer.

**Operation Christmas Box:**– Shoe boxes filled with gifts were collected. (See separate reports for Carol's Closet, Shawl Ministry and Blood Drive)



## St James' Outreach Financial Investments

We support not only Glastonbury but regional and beyond Connecticut. In 2024 we supported St. Vincent's School in Haiti and partnered with St. Luke's for Camp Hispaniola also in Haiti.

### **Financial Investments January 2024 to December 2024**

Covenant Soup Kitchen \$1,000

Glastonbury Food Bank \$500

Open Hearth \$500

Episcopal Relief Fund for Hurricane and for Ukraine \$1,000

FISH ( Glastonbury) \$200

Team inc. (flood relief in Connecticut) \$200

Olive Branch \$500

Total St. James' giving \$3,900

The Outreach Committee welcomes input from all parishioners. Meetings are posted in the Happenings. We would love to have you join us! Cheryl Turner will assume the Chair position as I step down.

Respectively submitted, Debbie Hamer



## **Lunch in the Park Report**

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 to 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 provides lunch following the service.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> 2024, St. James' volunteers prepared 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 2025 we are scheduled to make lunches on April 5<sup>th</sup> and October 25<sup>th</sup>. There are opportunities to help by making sandwiches, baking cookies, donating bottled water and bananas. This ministry is coordinated by Debbie Hamer and Susan Wright.

Respectfully submitted, Debbie Hamer and Susan Wright

## Carol's Closet Report

Carol's Closet Mission: Respond to human need through loving service, in partnership with local faith-based communities.

*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 some paper goods and personal care items to our neighbors in need. We completed our tenth year of service in September. This ministry is making a difference in Glastonbury.

The following are some statistics from the Closet:

- Since Carol's Closet opened, we have served 14,214 individuals.
- In 2024 Carol's Closet gave out 5,592 pieces of merchandise in 999 bags.
- In 2024 we served 1,532 individuals.
- To date we have given out 50,678 pieces of merchandise in 8,280 bags.
- In addition to the bags, Carol's Closet receives numerous donations of household goods and clothing and other items. Clothing has become an important part of Carol's Closet. We receive donations from our parish, and all of our partnering parishes. Everything that is donated is also offered to our guests. Everything we give out to our guests is free of charge. All staff is volunteer.
- Currently we have 180 on our guest register.
- At each Carol's Closet Saturday gathering, healing prayers are offered. Many of our guests look forward to these prayers.
- The Congregational Church in South Glastonbury offers a ministry of pet food and pet supplies at each of our monthly distributions.



## Carol's Closet Report (cont.)

We continue to collaborate and network with our faith-based community in Glastonbury who devotedly offer needed items, and financial support. Their participation is much appreciated.

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



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 2025. The last report from the Glastonbury Food Pantry indicated that they are now supporting more than 200 households each month. In 2024 we welcomed 25 new guests. As an ongoing ministry with constant financial needs to purchase product, along with the growth we have seen in 2024, 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.

God of Justice, open our eyes to see you in the face of the poor.  
Open our ears to hear you in the cries of the exploited.

Open our mouths to defend you in the public squares as well as in private deeds.  
Remind us that what we do to the least of these, we do unto you.

Submitted by: Marie Dixon, Director

## Backpack Program Report

Once a month, St. James' collaborates with volunteers from South Congregational Church to pack backpacks (bags) for identified students at five Glastonbury elementary schools with healthy, easy-to-prepare food for kid-friendly weekend meals.

The "Backpack Program" is a longstanding, national program for elementary school children who may be food-insecure under the Feeding America initiative in about 10,000 schools, nationwide. St. James' participates with at least five other faith communities in town to cover each weekend. The Glastonbury Links Together (GLT) group initiated this student support in 2021.

Currently, Erin Perrelli and Debbie O'Donnell help pack, monthly. South Congregational and St. James' split the costs for the specific food purchases (as recommended by Feeding America). For further information, look up "backpack program" on the Feeding America site or do not hesitate to contact Debbie O'Donnell.

Respectfully submitted, Debbie O'Donnell





## Engaging the Community Report

In 2022 we began 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 2024 we offered the following events, inviting the public to visit St. James' and to experience the compassion and caring of our faith community:

- February – hosted the onsite skills portion of an American Red Cross “Adult & Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED Certification Class”
- March – “Celtic Vespers” - a traditional candlelight service including readings, prayers and music by Wild Notes and a women’s choir
- April – “Downsizing Done Right” by Ralph Labazzo, appraiser and auctioneer
- May – hosted a concert by Wild Notes to benefit hawkwing, a 501(c)(3) organization based in Glastonbury that is dedicated to changing the lives and healing the hearts of the people of the Cheyenne River Sioux/Lakota Tribe in South Dakota.
- June – “Easy Gardening – Straight Talk About Gardening with Native Plants” by Ted Johnson of Wildscape Artisans
- November – “Celtic Vespers” - a traditional candlelight service including readings, prayers and music by Wild Notes and a women’s choir



Currently a number of events/presentations are in the planning stages for this year. 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 2024

ECCT's 240th Annual Convention was held at a new venue this year. Nearly 300 clerical and lay delegates from across Connecticut gathered in the new Bristol Event Center on October 25 & 26 (2024). the Reverends Matt Handi and Don Hamer as well as Lay Delegates Dan Aramini and Lisa Gleason were in attendance. All materials and information about the Convention are available on the ECCT website here: <https://www.episcopalct.org/annual-convention/>.



The convention celebrated newly ordained and newly assigned clerical staff as well as those in the Deaconate & Priesthood processes. Special shoutouts went to Reverend Canon Tim Hodapp and Robin Hammeal-Urban for their many years of exceptional service and pending 2024 retirements.

Bishop Jeff Mello's address echoed the theme of the event (One Vine; Many Branches) It is definitely worth a replay (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ss6nxzhOVZO/>)

There was strong support for almost all resolutions, including the annual budget, clerical compensation, recognition of May 5th as Red Dress Day, procedural and administrative considerations, and church mergers. After vigorous discussion, the convention soundly defeated a resolution proposing earlier due dates for future resolutions which could impact pending budgets. Congratulations to the Reverend Matt who was elected to the Standing Committee.

It was wonderful to see friends from all around the state and meet new people, too. The jazz band Theodicy helped to make Friday night's dinner and Saturday's service very special. Consider attending in 2025 whether you are a delegate or not! It was an honor to represent St James'.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Gleason and Dan Aramini



## Flower Guild Report

The Flower Guild at St James' is made up of 6 wonderful team members who enjoy this quiet, personal ministry. Each person offers their own ideas and gifts to the job. Last year we added another idea of having the congregation participate in the major decorating for Easter and Christmas. It was well received by all and we did it again this Christmas. We think it gave the congregation a feeling of family.

As we move through the church seasons, the flowers highlight the altar and bring a lot of joy to our congregation. Members of the congregation are encouraged to let us know of special occasions they would like to honor. A few have even assisted us in the making of the arrangements.

Please feel free to let us know so we can plan for that by leaving a message with Dawn. We also plant flowers outside in the urns from spring thru early winter making a welcoming statement to all arriving at our doors.

Respectfully submitted, Caryl Donovan

## Altar Guild Report

For this past year of 2024, 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. With the easing of COVID restrictions, consecrated wine is now distributed via the common cup; recyclable, plastic communion cups are only used as requested by the parishioner. To keep our services as inclusive as possible, St. James' continues to offer gluten-free wafers and grape juice.

This past year, Holy Eucharist was offered at 10:15 a.m. on most Sundays by the Rev. Matt Handi as priest-in-charge. Christmas Eve service was held at 6 PM with a Christmas Day service at 9:00 AM.

This past year we lost Becky Hoyt, who passed away, a faithful and dependable altar guild member. She was always cheerful and especially accommodating during the Advent and Christmas seasons. She will be missed.

Cherie Cooper and I extend grateful thanks to all team members who prepared and cleaned-up after services each Sunday. In the spring, we plan to offer a brief Saturday refresher class for current members or parishioners interested in learning more about our work. Often people believe that this ministry is restricted to women only; however, there is no gender or age preference to helping prepare the church for services.

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

*So, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

Mark 11: 24

St. James' is blessed with individuals who care for others when the need arises. Here are the ways pastoral care happened in 2024:

**Prayer Tree** – 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. Please reach out to the office if you have a prayer request.

**Lay Eucharistic Visitors** – these are lay people who are licensed and trained to bring communion to people's homes or bedsides.

**Healing Ministry** – Volunteers provide individual laying on of hands to people in the sanctuary after communion and monthly 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. These volunteers also provide food for Carol's Closet on Saturdays, blood drives, and parish meetings.

**Birthday Cards** – a volunteer is sending out birthday cards to everyone in our parish family who has provided their address to the office.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Donston and Gail Lebert



## Communications Report

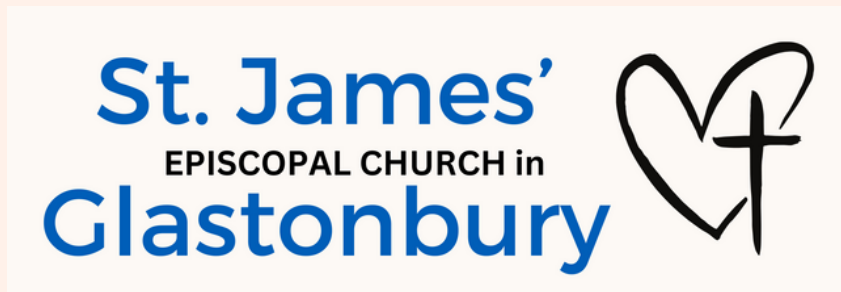
The Communications Committee works to regularly spread the way that God is working in our community. We think about our messaging in terms of three different audiences: people who are active and knowledgeable about St. James', people who are somewhat engaged in our community, and people who are curious.

In 2024 we tackled a variety of activities including:

- Updated the St. James' logo. If you spot a place that needs an updated logo, please let us know.
- Regular social media postings on Facebook - St. James' currently has 619 followers and 88 Instagram followers. Please like us or spread the word. We are also working to grow our content in Instagram.
- Worked with Dawn Hardwick, our Parish Administrator, to create an electronic sign-up sheet for events. Please try it out when you see it.
- Lenten and Advent advertising For St. James' and St. Luke's in the Glastonbury Citizen and River East . Cost was shared with St. Luke's.
- Three new elements in Happenings – a weekly poll that has been popular, Getting to Know the Vestry Series this summer, and Ministry Shout Outs.
- Streaming Worship Services – Live Stream on YouTube each Sunday. An average of 35 people either watch it live or during the following week. Viewers can access the Lessons and Weekly bulletin on the St. James' website to follow along or use their Book of Common prayer.
- Website – updated regularly and a good resource for the calendar of events, weekly sermons and weekly lessons/bulletins.

Please share St. James' communications with others.

Respectfully submitted, Gail Lebert





## **Newcomers Report**

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” Hebrews 13:2

St. James' has welcomed several new families and individuals to our church family in 2024. Many of our members have extended greetings during the peace, during the service, as well as during coffee hour.

Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to organize a formal event to welcome our new family members in 2024. However, we are planning to change that in 2025, and will be excited to receive ideas that will help us expand our church family and create stronger connections. We are very much looking forward to continuing our work to re-energize the Newcomers Committee so we can implement some welcoming activities this year.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Wright

## Shawl Ministry Report

In 2024 our Shawl Ministry activities at St. James' slowed as other demands and activities have claimed members' time. We are sincerely grateful that many of our intrepid knitters continued their craft throughout the year making shawls, lap robes, baby blankets and hats, supplying St. James' with items for distribution.

Once again, a special thanks to former parishioner Martha Bristol Demers who, after moving to Florida, enlisted her southern friends in creating hundreds of beautifully knitted and crocheted goods which she shipped north to us three times this year.



Marie Dixon has been instrumental in creating and distributing pocket prayer shawls at Carol's Closet and keeping a tray of these tiny remembrance shawls available in the atrium.

Many facilities are still reluctant to accept handmade goods as they remain cautious about spreading COVID. However, the Shawl Ministry distributed: 1 shawl to a parishioner's family member following a cancer diagnosis, 7 baptismal baby blankets, and 2 newborn baby blankets to parishioners and friends.

This year the Shawl Ministry is planning a Lenten retreat in mid-March to reconnect and fellowship with all members, encourage knitting as a Lenten discipline, and welcome interested longtime knitters or new knitters. The Shawl Ministry always welcomes donations and/or new crafters to join us in this rewarding ministry.

,  
Respectfully submitted, Jeannette Brown and Patricia Goodrich



## American Red Cross Blood Drives Report

Each year our blood drives provide wonderful opportunities to put our faith into action! Donating blood saves lives and is a perfect marriage of outreach to those in need and faithful stewardship of our personal resources.

In 2024 our 4 seasonal blood drives collected a total of 157 usable pints of blood! Each pint can be centrifuged and divided into 3 separate components before being infused in someone in need -- potentially, saving 3 different lives. In spite of tremendous advances in technology, there is still no substitute for donated blood.

Because each donation is typed, tested and screened for antibodies before it is infused into a patient, blood product must be on the shelf and waiting when needed or in emergency.

We are extremely grateful to those St.James' parishioners who stepped up to give the gift of life at our blood drives. In 2025 we will hold 4 more drives and invite you to consider a new year's resolution to be a life saver for someone in need. It's quick and easy, taking about 75 minutes from start to finish. Thank you to all who participated by donating blood, greeting folks, making sandwiches or nibbles or setting-up and cleaning-up. New donors are encouraged to join us in this rewarding ministry this year.

Respectfully submitted, Jeannette Brown



*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!*

Month	Usable Pints
March	37
June	46
October	42
December	32